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A NEW COMPANION TO

THE GOTHIC

EDITED BY

DAVID PUNTER

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I would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of two colleagues who are no longer with us: Julia Briggs, a colleague of supreme culture and grace; and Allan Lloyd Smith, a fine scholar and a true friend

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Introduction
The Ghost of a History

David Punter

This book, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, succeeds the original *Companion to the Gothic*, which was first published in 2000. Large parts of it follow from its predecessor, but it is also different in significant ways: it contains twelve further newly commissioned essays, and many of the essays contained in the earlier volume have been altered and updated to keep pace with change and development in Gothic writing, criticism, and theory.

But as with its predecessor, the book still has two aims. The first is to introduce the reader to Gothic writing over the last 250 years, its varieties and major features, its dominant modes and different sub-genres. The second is to present some of the most significant and interesting contemporary approaches to the Gothic, and thus inevitably to bring the reader into contact with some of the ideas that have most shaped, and are continuing to shape, Gothic criticism.

Both of these aims, however, have their own complexities. To turn first to the question of Gothic writing, it needs at once to be said that the notion of what constitutes Gothic writing is a contested site. Everybody would, of course, agree that it makes sense to consider the early masters and mistresses of the genre – Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis – as Gothic writers, but even these early figures were often also writing in quite different genres. By the time we read Mary Shelley, the question of whether the "original Gothic" has already fallen apart, become transmuted into different forms, left only traces to be picked up and reutilized by later writers – for perhaps quite different purposes and often perhaps quite anxiously – is already a vexed one.

Dickens, to take an example, is a writer whom we might hesitate to call Gothic; indeed, we might feel that his work would be in some way demeaned by such a label. But the prevalence of claustrophobia in Dickens, the foreclosure of escape from institution or destitution, the grotesque exaggeration of character and location, are all

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recognizably "Gothic" features, even as they play a crucial role in establishing whatever it is we mean by the category and stereotype of the "Dickensian."

Most historians of the Gothic would agree that a cluster of texts towards the end of the nineteenth century, by such writers as Stoker, Stevenson, Wells, and Wilde, constitutes a kind of Gothic renaissance, although quite why this should have been so has been subject to various interpretations. Many, again, would agree that the ghost story, in its classic Edwardian form, has some relation to the older Gothic. But beyond this, as we move into the twentieth century, we encounter, as we might expect, further fragmentation. Where might we – to take a particularly intriguing example – locate the "Gothic moment" in modernism? Or might we prefer to see in modernism precisely that movement of the mind that seeks to exorcise the ghost, to clean out the house, ruined though it may be, and assert the possibility of a life that is not haunted as it situates itself resolutely in a present that strains towards the future?

Perhaps if we follow that line by acknowledging the way in which futurism itself came to stand as a fascinating and problematic specter on the scene of the twentieth century, we would be envisaging a response sufficient to suggest that matters are more complex, that exorcism is always fraught with difficulty and liable to produce a return of the repressed. Certainly postmodernism has seen a further set of dealings with terror and even a reinvigoration of the apparently more dated trappings of the Gothic (one might think, for example, of the extraordinary, nightmarish castles so frequently encountered in the pages of Iain Banks), but on the other hand one could say that, after all, in postmodernism everything is resurrected, or at least reexamined, if only to be consigned again to the generically confused charnel-house of history.

So here there are many uncertainties, and it is obviously possible to view this uncertainty about the field of Gothic writing as, if not exactly a virtue, at least a significant resistance to canonization: this book, for example, is not going to answer the question "What is Gothic?" any more than any other book has managed to provide an enduring answer to questions such as "What is the novel?" or "What is romanticism?" What can, however, be said – and I am now moving on to the second issue, of the relation between Gothic and contemporary ideas – is that, in recent years in particular, we have found ourselves at a peculiar confluence between the major motifs of the Gothic and a set of ways of thinking increasingly current in contemporary criticism and theory.

Gothic speaks of phantoms: the neo-psychoanalytic ideas of Abraham and Torok, following Freud, are based on a redescription of the phantom. Gothic takes place – very frequently – in crypts: Abraham and Torok, again, make the crypt the cornerstone of their psychic topography. The Gothic speaks of – indeed, we might say it attempts to invoke – specters: Derrida, in, for example, *Specters of Marx*, chooses the same post-Marxist rhetoric to talk about what we might term the "suppressed of Europe." Gothic has to do with the uncanny: the uncanny has now come to form one of the major sites on which reinvestigations of the mind, from both the psychoanalytic and also the neuropsychological points of view, can take place. And Gothic speaks, incessantly, of bodily harm and the wound: the wound signifies trauma, and recent years have seen a veritable explosion in studies of trauma at individual, communal and global levels,

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an orientation which, we can only suppose in the light of recent conflicts and their terrible human consequences, will only become more urgent.

These are just five examples – there are more. But we need to be very careful about this curious collocation, as we need to be when any mode of criticism appears to get too close to its subject matter and finds itself losing the critical distance of alienation. On the one hand, we need to say that the forging of these tools for criticism, or more importantly the psycho-political constellation that has permitted this resonant "forgery," gives us a potentially powerful grasp of new ways of understanding the Gothic, wherever we take its parameters to be. But on the other, we also need to say that part of the issue here is clearly that contemporary theory is increasingly itself haunted – haunted especially by a painful understanding of the uncanny nature of knowledge itself, haunted by an awareness of the disjunction between theory and practice, haunted, like Gothic, by the weight of a history, just behind its shoulder, which proves resistant not only to understanding but, more importantly, to change.

But perhaps again this is the wrong – or at least an insufficient – way to put it, for perhaps what Gothic and much contemporary criticism and cultural commentary share is indeed an overarching, even a sublime, *awareness* of mutability, an understanding of the ways in which history itself, and certainly narratives of history, are not stable, do not constitute a rock onto which we might cling – indeed, as Gothic has always sought to demonstrate to us, there are no such rocks, there is no sure foundation. There is, to paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, only distortion – slips of the tongue, tricks of the eye, which ensure that what we see is always haunted by something else, by that which has not quite been seen, in history or in text – just as Gothic itself, we might say, consists of a series of texts which are always dependent on other texts, texts which they are not, texts which are ceaselessly invoked while no less ceaselessly misread, models of *méconnaissance* in the form of lost manuscripts, of misheard messages in cyberspace, in the attempt to validate that which cannot be validated, the self-sufficiency, the autonomy of a textuality that is already ruined beyond repair.

The thirty-six chapters in this new volume – there were only twenty-four in its predecessor – seek, in ways that I hope are extremely diverse, to address the two aims of the book as I have tried to state them, and they are divided into six parts. The first part seeks to supply some essential background to what we mean by "Gothic" and naturally reminds us that "Gothic" is, in any case, a contested term, a revival of a revival, a late addition to an etymological and historical stock that moves from the Goths themselves, with their ambiguous place in a real "history" (normally as the quintessential barbarians), through the grandeurs of medieval Gothic art and architecture, and on to the "Gothic revival" itself, with, I suppose, the constant reminders around us, in Britain at least, that (politically) parliament sits in a Gothic palace of fantastical proportions, while (culturally) the British Library has recently been rehoused, admittedly not in a Gothic building, but beside St. Pancras station, one of the most extreme versions of Victorian Gothic urban architecture. In this part, Fred Botting's scene-setting opening essay, Robin Sowerby's work on the early Goths, and Neil Cornwell's contribution on European Gothic are now supplemented by an essay

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on Gothic Shakespeare by Dale Townshend and one on the Gothic ballad by Doug Thomson.

The chapters in Part I (and I do not intend in this brief introduction to discuss each chapter in detail) suggest to us something of this history; they also remind us of the geographic spread of the Gothic, its presence within a significant stream of European culture, and they thus begin to suggest to us some of the concatenations of history and geography that conditioned the rise of Gothic and also provide it with a great deal of its subject matter. Part II, consisting of essays by Robert Miles on Radcliffe and Lewis, Nora Crook on Mary Shelley, Ian Duncan on Scott, Hogg and Scottish Gothic, Victor Sage on Maturin, LeFanu, and Irish Gothic, and David Worrall on Gothic drama, moves on to give some account of the major writers and generic formations of the "original" Gothic period, although even here, as I have suggested above, it is difficult to keep within strict boundaries, and the need to look, for example, at different national literatures in English reveals, as we would expect, that as social and cultural pressures differ, so too will the cycle of appearance, maturation, and vanishing of those genres that might carry their weight.

What Part II reveals, I hope, is therefore also something of the political contexts of early Gothic. There was a time when it was the fashion to suppose that Gothic, because of its fantastical settings and melodramatic presentation, constituted in some sense an escape from social concerns. It would, I think, he difficult these days to understand what an "escape" of such a kind might look like, to imagine a literature removed from its psychological or sociological contexts. But more specifically, what is revealed in this part is not only that, for example, the early writers were – as of course they must have been – responsive in important ways to the gender culture of their times, or that the author of *Frankenstein* was concerned with the political implications of the scientific and technological developments that she saw – or at least sensed – around her, but also that Gothic was, from its very inception, a form that related very closely to issues of national assertion and social organization, and which even, on occasion, could "take the stage" in foregrounding social issues and in forming social consciousness.

It is perhaps important to say at this point that in the list I have given above of the political involvements and responses of the Gothic, I have deliberately elided issues that might seem to us to be, as it were, "conscious" – Scott's devotion to the evolution of a Scottish nationhood, for example – with those that might seem "unconscious" – say, Radcliffe's sensitivity to the plight of persecuted women in the late eighteenth century. This, I think, is a continuing crux of critical involvement with the Gothic. Just as our understanding of the relations between the conscious and the unconscious have ripened since Freud's early topographies and the surprisingly regressive schematizations of Lacan, so our understanding of the complexities of dealing with the psychology of Gothic textuality has also deepened.

In moving on to Part III, this issue is very much to the foreground. The confessed aims of ghost-story writers, for example, which used to be seen as "explanatory" of their fiction, need now to be seen as texts themselves, to be placed alongside the

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"original" texts themselves but possessed of no more heuristic power than any other text. The trajectory here through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I ought to say, is obviously exemplary rather than "complete," whatever that might mean. There are many, many other texts that might have been mentioned, but the chapters in this part provide a series of insights into moments, as it were, in the continuing history – or should it be the post-history? – of the Gothic. In this part, Allan Lloyd Smith addresses nineteenth-century Gothic; Julia Briggs the ghost story; Glennis Byron the phenomenon of Gothic in the 1890s; and William Hughes the continuing journey of the vampire. Clive Bloom speaks of horror fiction; Gina Wisker returns us to the vampire from a specifically female point of view; Heidi Kaye introduces us to Gothic film; and I say something of poetry and the uncanny.

There might seem, in Part III, to be something of an excessive attention – even, perhaps, an addiction – to vampires. This is partly because of continuing critical attention, and the apparently endless creative reinterpretation that the vampire motif continues to receive. It seems as though each new social crux – from class anxieties through later nineteenth-century sexual liberation and on to later struggles around race and sexual orientation – traces its own representation on the curious body of the vampire. I here have to confess that, had I been called upon to predict the fate of the vampire when writing the original (whatever that may have been!) of this Introduction in 2000, I could never have guessed at the veritable explosion of vampire tales and vampire-related cultural phenomena which have soaked the first decade of the twenty-first century in fake (I hope and presume) blood. And, as we would expect, to follow the history of representations of the vampire (although even to use the term is, of course, in some sense to participate in what might strictly seem a "hysterical" debate about their "reality") is also to trace another debate that is particularly evident in this part, which is about explicitness.

Obviously, a crucial feature of the developments of the texts that we think of as Gothic, from the late eighteenth century into the twenty-first, is the increase in, even the exorbitation of, the available terrain of description: physical events and violations, pathologized psychic representations, and the possibilities for representing these, first on the printed page but now in many other media besides, have altered radically over these 250 years. Yet one interesting feature of the Gothic, if we consider the difference between the classic ghost story and the more brutal forms of horror fiction, is not so much how Gothic has "kept up to date," whatever that might mean, but rather how it seeks to enact for us a continuing psychic balancing act whereby the explicit and the contemporary can in some way be put into relation with the most archaic – of forms, but also of psychic materials. Some would say that this is the force of the Gothic; if so, it is also the force of the two most powerful sources of contemporary cultural ideas: psychoanalysis, through its insistence on the power of primeval instincts (one might look, for example, at Anne Rice's "explanations" of her characters) and deconstruction, in its insistence on the impossibility of the fading away of what we might paradoxically call the "originary trace" (*The Blair Witch Project* may be a suitable example). Perhaps one might be able to put it even more simply, in a world of

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replicas, forgeries, replays, simulacra, media piracy: what is old, the Gothic seems to continue to ask, and what is new?

Part IV provides a different set of coordinates for these connections between Gothic and the contemporary, in particular inspecting, on the one hand, modes of collaboration between Gothic writing and its criticism and, on the other, ways in which Gothic opens onto its own other, especially in the sense that the sometimes ponderous overseriousness of Gothic paves the way for its own deflation. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall's essay concentrates on these issues as does, from a different perspective, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's. One thing we might conclude from the critiques in this part is that Gothic (although this may well be true of all other genres) is, as a generic institution, always engaged in conjuring its own others: a critical other, which will not let either its achievements or its deficiencies rest (and this "critical other" is conjured in the essay by Michelle Massé); and/or a "mood other," which will forever harass and snap at the heels of any attempt at self-elevation, will continually remind us that attempts to secure grandeur for the human plight will be met in return by the necessity of the human body to discredit and undignify itself at the very moment when spirit is trying is to vindicate its divine connections, showing off the most impressive cards on its mantelpiece. What, we might ask, is therefore "abjected" by Gothic's credentials? In an attempt to address this question, this part therefore contains three new essays which address the ways in which Gothic abuts onto "other scenarios": Vijay Mishra's on the Gothic sublime; Julia Round's on Gothic and the graphic novel; and Catherine Spooner's on contemporary Goth culture.

Part V is wholly new, and seeks to address an issue which has become of increasing importance to definitions or descriptions of the Gothic over the first decade of the twenty-first century. This issue is essentially about the relationship between Gothic and globalization, and it is a vexed and complicated one. Another way of putting it would be: Does each cultural source have its own "home-grown" version of the "Gothic," or is the Gothic a Western European/US export/import which contemporary writers, TV producers, and film companies across the world have chosen to adopt/adapt in the name of their endless (yet entirely reasonable, given the inequities currently concealed beneath the bland brand-name "global") search for markets for non-Western products (which might also be "Goth culture" under a different name)? Not less important is the way in which these essays broach the question of the relation between "Gothic" and "local" folklore, whatever "local" might mean. Has Gothic become, in the contemporary marketplace, a means of expression for local ghosts, or a means of imposition of Western conceptions which have no idea of, to take but one example of ignorance, the enduring cultural and communal power of the ancestors? You will find essays in this part which address all of these issues. There is a synoptic essay by Glennis Byron, director of the only project so far on global Gothic; followed by essays by Ken Gelder on Australian Gothic, Ian Conrich on New Zealand Gothic, Cynthia Sugars on Canadian Gothic, Katarzyna Ancuta on Asian Gothic, and Charles Inouye on Japanese Gothic. Of course, this last disjunction is bizarre, because Japan is part of Asia, but perhaps this signals the differences between geographic and cul-

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tural orders, at least where Gothic is concerned. I should add that there are many other territories – I think it is important to prefer the word to "nations" – whose relation to the Gothic could have been mentioned; but perhaps this could be the start of something larger.

Part VI brings together a series of chapters that encounter the moment of contemporary criticism through some of its most crucial practitioners and motifs: feminist criticism, deconstruction, queer theory; psychopathology, abjection, magical realism. Five of these essays appeared in the first *Companion*: Kate Ferguson Ellis on the Gothic heroine; Stephen Bruhm on Stephen King and the "queer"; Scott Brewster on Gothic and madness; Jerrold E. Hogle on the ghost of the counterfeit; and Lucie Armitt on magical realism. To this I have added an essay by Joanne Watkiss on hospitality and the Gothic. Gothic, the writers in this part each variously assert, *continues*; it continues to engage with both new materials and new mechanisms of interpretation. Perhaps, then, it might not be absurd to say that part of the force of the Gothic is precisely that it continues: it continues, as it were, against the odds, with its apparatus in shreds, its diagnostics discredited, its authors – and critics – pilloried by the cultural police and made to look foolish by their own controversies; but it also continues unshakeably to provide us with images that, no matter how we shake our heads in vexation, woe, or intellectual pity, will not stop pestering us.

Pest, pester, pestilence: Is the Gothic, to engage in a little etymological arabesque, pestifugous, or is it a pestiduct? Does is spread contamination, or might it provide a channel for the expulsion of contaminating materials? What Gothic perhaps suggests is that such a differentiation is impossible, that we cannot tell whether the materials of Gothic, however their currency is handled by writers or in other media, will serve to draw the plague of images (which is, put in another language, the terror of repetition) away from us, or whether the very repetition, the insoluble dilemma of how to rid ourselves of vampires and monsters of our own making, will embed these images of unease, of dis-ease, more uncontrollably in the heart.

These, at any rate, are some the issues we come across, so many of the writers here remind us, when looking both at the contemporary writing of the Gothic and at current critical attempts to engage with it. Yet in looking at matters in these ways, there is always the hovering danger that despite attempts to examine crucial contexts, we are still privileging the textual "moment" above all others. For "Gothic" has other contemporary manifestations, as you will see in this book, but before mentioning them it seems worth suggesting that there is a relation between Gothic writing – with its intense privileging of the material word and thus, inextricably, of the lost word, the "destroyed" manuscript – and that privileging of language that has now become the *Leitmotif* of critical theory. We might think of Lacan's assertion that the unconscious is structured like a language, or of Derrida's that there is nothing outside the text; susceptible to multiple interpretations though both of these formulations are, one "reading" of them would be in terms of a desperate rearguard attempt to privilege both speech and the written text at a time when, among those audiences for whom Western critics and theorists write, there is a problematic decrease in the articulacy

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and literacy necessary to understand their words (this is no different in 2011 from 2000). It is possible to think here of a refusal to see the troubling possibility that the unconscious, whatever it might be, is *not* structured like a language, might indeed not be structured at all, or of the equally troubling insistence that, despite Derrida's late ethical turn, there is indeed something outside the text. Two things, in fact: we might refer to them as the outer world and the inner world; but we might also argue – and here is where Gothic gets caught up again – that they are linked quite specifically by the pain of the wound.

If we want to take up this heretical approach, we might say that in terms of the outer world the Gothic confronts us with several contemporary problems, and we cannot be too delicate in our handling of them. For example, how do we interpret contemporary manifestations of "Goth culture," and how do we connect it with older versions of the "Gothic"? I notice that when I wrote the first version of this Introduction, I was writing in the immediate aftermath of the Denver school massacre (predicted, in some sense, in many a Gothic text), aware that the two youths who committed the slaughter of several students were referred to by some of their schoolmates as "Goths." Those schoolmates also made a very clear connection between this "affiliation of style" and a sense of "inner exile" on the part of the killers. This process of the demonization of the Goth/ic has, of course, an ancient history; but one which is continually being given new inflections according to the dictates of new sociocultural orders.

Perhaps, however, this might then lead us to suppose that to interpret the Gothic correctly we need to pay attention not only to an already conventional dialectic of civilization and barbarism, important though that is, but also to a phenomenon of inner exile, in which whatever melodramatic scenario the spurned ego enacts for itself on the cave walls can be seen, under certain cultural circumstances, as a potential for acting out. Under these circumstances – and I have argued this elsewhere – the question of available cultural materials can be readily used as a legal panacea, a societal alibi. The real question would be: What is the nature and genesis of the darkened imagination that will find in the available cultural materials sustenance for a program as devastating, as extreme, as pathological as the behaviors described in *The Monk*; ambiguously hailed in such contemporary writers as Bret Easton Ellis; acted out in a series of (usually teenage) incidents across the West? But also, and following from that, rather than treating Gothic as a form of incitement, can we still find in it an oblique but necessary source of understanding?

It is important then to think about certain kinds of boundary (and some of the chapters in this book suggest that Gothic is all about boundaries). It is important, for example, to think about boundaries – of some kind – around the writer, the artist, and to remember that representations do not "hold" in the cultural psyche unless they find an answering resonance. I think, as I have indicated above, that we might be looking astray if we now seek this response at the level purely of articulacy, literacy, the word; to imagine that possibility is, paradoxically, to risk sinking back into an unexamined archaism.

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Yet perhaps, in this discussion, archaism in some form, and especially in its preverbal shape, is everything; perhaps we might be driven to think that Gothic, even in its most bourgeois forms – and there have been plenty of those – remains popular, remains current, even develops in currency, because it gives *permission*. Quite what it gives permission for is, inevitably, never known, cannot be predicted in advance, and cannot be *owned* in words; perhaps there is no preset program that Gothic will "turn on," in any of the senses of that phrase, and the extraordinary versatility of contemporary vampire imagery may be evidence for that. But if Gothic has come to serve as a kind of cultural threshold, or as a repertoire of images that fatally undercut the "verbal compact" on which, among other things, the modern state rests, then more than ever it deserves and needs to be investigated. And I hope that these more political and, indeed, dangerous questions, questions that cannot be endstopped, as unconscious processes which may threaten grievous harm to the body of culture cannot be endstopped, at the boundary of the word, will be in readers' minds as they survey the material, old and new, discussed in this book and the critical questions – themselves also old and new –raised in the course of what continues to be an energetic, ongoing (even if exemplarily ruinous) debate.

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Part I
Gothic Backgrounds

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1
In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture

Fred Botting

The Enlightenment, which produced the maxims and models of modern culture, also invented the Gothic. Moreover, the Enlightenment can itself be considered a reinvention, in the sense that the neoclassical values dominating British society in the eighteenth century constituted a conscious recovery and redeployment of ideas gleaned from Greek and Roman writers. After the Renaissance, the classical tradition was associated with civilized, humane, and polite civic culture, its moral and aesthetic values privileged as the basis of virtuous behavior, harmonious social relations, and mature artistic practices. Eighteenth-century writers liked to refer to their present as "modern" and thus distinct from both a classical antiquity appreciated in its historical continuity and a feudal past regarded as a barbaric and primitive stage, the dominance of which had been discontinued. Such an overarching remodeling of cultural values required an extensive rewriting of history.

Here, the word "Gothic" assumes its powerful, if negative, significance: it condenses a variety of historical elements and meanings opposed to the categories valued in the eighteenth century. In this respect, "the real history of 'Gothic' begins with the eighteenth century," when it signified a "barbarous," "medieval," and "supernatural" past (Longueil, 1923, 453–4). Used derogatively about art, architecture, and writing that failed to conform to the standards of neoclassical taste, "Gothic" signified the lack of reason, morality, and beauty of feudal beliefs, customs, and works. The projection of the present onto a Gothic past occurred, however, as part of the wider processes of political, economic, and social upheaval: emerging at a time of bourgeois and industrial revolution, a time of Enlightenment philosophy and increasingly secular views, the eighteenth-century Gothic fascination with a past of chivalry, violence, magical beings, and malevolent aristocrats is bound up with the shifts from feudal to commercial practices in which notions of property, government, and society

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were undergoing massive transformations. Along with these shifts, ideas about nature, art, and subjectivity were also reassessed. "Gothic" thus resonates as much with anxieties and fears concerning the crises and changes in the present as with any terrors of the past.

The rejection of feudal barbarity, superstition, and tyranny was necessary to a culture defining itself in diametrically opposed terms: its progress, civilization, and maturity depended on the distance it established between the values of the present and the past. The condensation, under the single term "Gothic," of all that was devalued in the Augustan period thus provided a dis-continuous point of cultural consolidation and differentiation.[1] With the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), "Gothic" also emerges as a critical term (Longueil, 1923, 453–6). And fiction, as a fabricated history, appears as a crucial condition of this emergence. Horace Walpole's novel, the first "Gothic story," introduces many of the features that came to define a new genre of fiction, like the feudal historical and architectural setting, the deposed noble heir and the ghostly, supernatural machinations. Walpole's two prefaces also allude to work of antiquarians with which he was familiar: the "translator" of the story claims it was printed in Gothic script in Italy in 1529 but originates at the time of the Crusades. According with one theory of the origin of romances promoted by antiquarians, the historical background is used to defend the text against contemporary accusations that it may encourage error and superstition: such beliefs are appropriate to the dark ages in which they were written (Walpole, 1982, 3–4).[2] The need to judge romantic and feudal productions according to their own, rather than classical, rules of composition had been advanced by writers like Richard Hurd a few years earlier. Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) also follows antiquarians in locating Shakespeare within a native, Gothic tradition. Not only are the dramatic force and the supernatural and mysterious devices of this recovered imaginative genius of English poetry used by Walpole, but he is proffered as an exemplary literary figure in the second preface to the story.

The literary and fictional background to the Gothic revival is clearly manifested as an artificial or fabricated aesthetic phenomenon. Jerrold Hogle notes how *The Castle of Otranto* is embroiled in various levels of counterfeiting: a fake translation by a fake translator of a fake medieval story by a fake author, the novel turns on a false nobleman unlawfully inheriting both title and property through a false will and attempting to secure a false lineage through nefarious schemes. The centerpiece of the story, too, is fabricated from a fake Gothic castle. Strawberry Hill, Walpole's country house in Twickenham, was designed as a Gothic edifice and built using a variety of architectural and decorative styles, which, Hogle notes, "divorces artifacts from their foundations" and thereby separates substance from representation (Hogle, 1994, 23–5). Diane Ames notes the literary and fantastic basis of Walpole's construction: "this whimsical congregation of analogies is not an attempt at archaeological truth in the manner of nineteenth-century Gothic buildings, which failed to achieve it. At Strawberry Hill there are no failures, only fictions." The building, moreover, was composed using "artificial materials," like papier-mâché (Ames, 1979, 352–3). Indeed, the pri-

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ority of representations over actuality is evinced in two anecdotes about Strawberry Hill: in one, Mrs. Barbauld is reputed to have arrived at the house asking to see the castle of Otranto; in the other, Lady Craven is said to have sent Walpole a drawing of the castle of Otranto in Italy. He, however, denied all knowledge of this building, claiming to have taken the "very sonorous" name from a map alone (Summers, 1931, 79).

The artificiality that surrounds the historical and cultural origins of Gothic productions remained a site of both criticism and emulation in the course of the eighteenth century. Old romances, ballads, and poetry, recovered by scholars like Percy, and decaying, medieval ruins were perceived in a new and more favorable light as somber but picturesque and sublime additions to cultural and natural landscape. The new taste for productions of the Gothic ages also found an outlet in numerous fabricated artifacts from the past: James Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760) was the most famous work of fake Scottish antiquity, but eighteenth-century poetic appeals to the spirit of the Celtic bards were common in the works of Thomas Gray, William Collins, and Joseph Warton. Ruins, too, sprang up across the countryside to decorate the gloomier or more rugged corners of estates, while Walpole and William Beckford, at Fonthill Abbey, built their own Gothic mansions. The taste is satirized neatly in an exchange from *The Clandestine Marriage*, a drama by Colman and Garrick: a rich merchant, showing an aristocratic guest around his estate, remarks of some ruins that "they are reckoned very fine ones too. You would think them ready to tumble on your head. It has cost me a hundred and fifty pounds to put my ruins in thorough repair" (Summers, 1931, 80). The emphasis on the cost of the ruin and the respective status of host and guest signal the cultural and commodity value of this relic of a feudal past within the commercial world of the eighteenth century: rather than inheriting wealth in an aristocratic manner, the merchant has bought his property from the profits of trade, and along with it the ruin of feudal practices as well.[3] In restoring the ruin, moreover, the merchant not only displays the supersession of an economy based on land ownership by that of commerce and the mobile property of credit, but proudly displays it as a sign of his fabricated continuity with the past.

The history in which Gothic circulates is a fabrication of the eighteenth century as it articulates the long passage from the feudal orders of chivalry and religiously sanctioned sovereignty to the increasingly secularized and commercial political economy of liberalism.[4] "Gothic" functions as the mirror of eighteenth-century mores and values: a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present, its darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection. In Foucauldian terms, this version of the Gothic mirror operates utopically as "the inverted analogy with the real space of society" (Foucault, 1986, 24). Hence, the mirror, a "placeless place," enables self-definition through "a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself" and produces a sense of depth and distance in "the virtual space that opens up behind the surface" (24). The utopic mirror of eighteenth-century Gothic history, however, not only delivers a sense of discontinuity through inversion and distancing, but also allows for a perfected reflection, an idealization of elements

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of the past and the establishment of a continuity with the present: here the myth of the Goths appears as a "product of fantasy invented to serve specific political and emotional purposes" (Madoff, 1979, 337).

For Robert Miles, "the myth of the Goth was first and foremost an ideological construction," at work, notably in the fiction of Ann Radcliffe, as "a cipher for middle class values" in opposition to the "Oriental," who serves as a figure "for aristocratic abuse and luxury" (Miles, 1995, 43). The distinction between bourgeois and aristocratic characteristics structures Radcliffe's portrayals of her villains, so that in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) the evil Marquis de Montalt is an immoral, selfish monster devoid of compassion or familial feeling and intent only on satisfying his base and materialistic appetites. In contrast, another aristocrat, La Luc, is held up as a moral, rational, and almost Protestant paternal figure, wise, kind, and responsible in the affairs of the rural community over which he presides. The ending, too, emphasizes the embourgeoisement of Gothic figures with its invocation of a rational and middle-class fantasy of virtue rewarded.[5] Significantly, as E. J. Clery notes in her reading of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1793), the victory of virtue is accompanied by the restitution of property: chivalric virtues are superseded by commercial values so that "virtue" means "economic viability." Indeed, the heroine must treat herself as a "commodity" in a consumer culture where virtue signals the subjection of women to the laws governing the exchange of property (Clery, 1995, 122).

For Angela Keane, discussing Gothic and the aesthetic tradition of the picturesque as "ambivalent signs of British national identity," the appeal to a Gothic past of strength, nobility, and liberty recalls "both the nature of a stolen British liberty and of the barbaric culture out of which native neoclassicism triumphantly arose" (Keane, 1995, 99, 102). The fantasy that sustains continuity with an idealized and naturalized national past, in opposition to artificial and imported tyrannies of absolutist monarchy, elevates the parliamentary and constitutional tradition of British government. The gradual development of British institutions preserves the continuity of a nation embracing monarchy, church, and aristocracy along with the improvements of commercial enterprise and bourgeois society. It is, like the law, a "commodious labyrinth" of careful reform and amendment in which the Goths stand as "the symbolic guarantee of a rational 'democratic' heritage" (Sage, 1988, 139). Samuel Kliger refers to this political deployment of the myth of the Goths in England as "Gothic propaganda," though his description seems more in tune with a notion of ideology in that, touching the "greatest and humblest citizens," the tracts on Gothic liberty and free constitutional spirit defined "the desire indicated in their sense of collective moral being which alone deserves the name of 'nation'" (Kliger, 1952, 209). This desire, moreover, articulating the collective bonds of nationhood, is structured, not on a "real" past, but on an imagined, mythical source of unity: "Perhaps it is true that the Gothic ideal in England remained no more than an ideal" (239).

Ideal though the Gothic political myth may have been, it continued to exert effects throughout the century. In the heated political debates occasioned by the Revolution in France, "Gothic" looms large and divisively. Edmund Burke's virulent attack on

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revolutionaries and reformers, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), repeatedly recalls a Gothic heritage to contrast an ordered and civilized England with a monstrously unnatural, irrational, and barbaric France. The bloodless Revolution of 1688 and the unwritten constitution that followed are cited as the basis of English liberty and order, preserving not only the monarchy, nobility, and church, but also the rights of men. A spirit lacking in a Europe beset by revolutionary ideas, the spirit of religion and the gentleman, is also celebrated by Burke as a source of liberty, continuity, and social unity since it maintains the customs, manners, sentiments, and morals that bind a nation together. This appeal to a chivalric, romantic code of conduct upheld by gallant and honorable gentlemen is most evident when Burke nostalgically recalls a visit to the French court years before the Revolution: captivated by the presence of the French queen, he remarks how he "thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult." "But the age of chivalry," he sentimentally acknowledges, "is gone. – That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever" (Burke, 1969, 170).

This chivalric tradition of respecting an ideal femininity, moreover, was regularly celebrated in the eighteenth century as one of the distinctive and valuable characteristics of Gothic culture (Kliger, 1952, 223). Ironically, it was a woman who, in her rapid and critical response to Burke's *Reflections*, vigorously attacked the irrational "Gothic" assumptions of his argument. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, published as an open letter to Burke in 1790, rebuts his notion of gentlemanly conduct as the "Gothic affability" appropriate to "the condescension of a Baron, not the civility of a liberal man" (Wollstonecraft, 1989, V, 17). She also questions the Gothic heritage of legal and political constitutional amendment, asking why it is necessary "to repair an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials? Why were the legislators obliged to rake amongst heterogenous ruins; to rebuild old walls, whose foundations could scarcely be explored . . . ?" (Wollstonecraft, 1989, V, 41). Indeed, for Wollstonecraft, Burke only mourns "the idle tapestry that decorated a gothic pile, and the dronish bell that summoned the fat priest to prayer" (V, 58). Wollstonecraft's radical rationalist critique, based on a thoroughly enlightened morality, has no time for Gothic sentiments associated with aristocratic injustice and inhumanity. Her terms, though not her political position, reiterate the criticism of Gothic fiction which, in the panic of the 1790s, presented romances as serious threats to social order, to the point where, as the Marquis de Sade noted, fiction and politics became dangerous bedfellows, the former a product of the "revolutionary shocks" reverberating around Europe (Sade, 1989, 109).

The poet and critic T. J. Matthias also associates popular fiction and revolutionary politics. For him, however, the "Gothic" of the Gothic novel, which had become so popular in the previous decade, retained none of the glamour and national value of the Goths. Fiction, like radical pamphlets, encouraged licentious and corrupt behavior, both sexual and political in form. The link between Gothic fictions and revolutionary actions is evident in Matthias's representation of the "Gallic frenzy" caused

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by novels and the "superstitious corruption," "lawless lustihood," and rapacious brutality of villainous Frenchmen (Matthias, 1805, 4). In contrast to Matthias's association of corrupting fiction and politics, another writer and critic equally appalled by events in France makes a strong, if unfashionable, case for the beneficial and stabilizing effects of the Gothic romance. Clara Reeve, who had years before promoted a more sober, reasonable, and bourgeois type of romance in her novel *The Old English Baron* (1778), prefaced her *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793) with comments promoting the work as, in Arthur Cooke's words, an "antidote to the new philosophy by presenting a glorification of the manners and customs of medieval times." Reeve writes of her intention

> to give a faithful picture of a well-governed kingdom, wherein a true subordination of ranks and degrees was observed, and of a great prince at the head of it.
>
> The new philosophy of the present day avows a levelling principle, and declares that a state of anarchy is more beautiful than that of order and regularity. There is nothing more likely to convince mankind of the errors of these men, than to set before them examples of good government, and warnings of the mischievous consequences of their principles. (Cooke, 1951, 433)

In Reeve's version of the Gothic romance a continuity is evinced between the myth of the Goths as a national and political fantasy and fiction as its support. In Matthias's account, assuming eighteenth-century judgments of the corrupting effects of popular fiction, an absolute division between the novel and good social and political order is underlined. The ambivalence of "Gothic" as a critical term again appears: not only is it a utopic mirror that preserves an imagined and ideal continuity with the past, but it also serves as an inverted reflection marking a distinct break in the progress of history.

The ambivalence of "Gothic," moreover, appears within eighteenth-century aesthetic criticism, crossing boundaries and disrupting categories as much as it serves to preserve them. The Gothic mirror offers a heterogeneous and conflicting reflection of the present. This is particularly evident in the terms that Reeve uses to promote the effectiveness of the Gothic romance in the troubled political times of the 1790s: she employs standard eighteenth-century critical judgments stating that representation should provide examples of virtue or warnings against vice. This distinction, however, was more commonly invoked in the criticism of Gothic fiction rather than in its defense. Indeed, judgments of the value of realistic novels depended on the exclusion of improbable romances. Samuel Richardson makes the contrast explicit as he advances the "easy and natural manner" of the new writing called the novel, arguing that its value emanates from the way that it "might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and the marvellous with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue" (Richardson,

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1964, 41). In her preface to *Evelina* (1778), Fanny Burney warns her reader in similar terms to expect no transportation "to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast and where the sublimity of the *Marvelous* rejects all aid from sober Probability." Where romances display only a "wild strain of the imagination," the novel ought to "exhibit life in its true state" (Johnson, 1986, 175–6); where romances present "fabulous persons and things," novels offer a "picture of real life and manners" (Reeve, 1970, I, 69). The novel's positive image and socially beneficial function emerges in the contrast with the romance: fiction ought to provide examples of good, virtuous behavior through representations of real life and nature, the probability of its depictions bound up with its enlightened and didactic function. Romances were seen to eschew moral and rational instruction and stimulate all kinds of luxurious, superstitious, and indulgent fancies, thereby seducing young readers from the proper paths of social and familial duty and virtuous understanding (Williams, 1970). Here, the specter of unbridled, appetitive consumption shadows the case for the novel: the growing market for fiction offered to a newly leisured middle class by authors, publishers, and circulating libraries threatens, without proper parental supervision, to overwhelm a ravenous reading public with material of no moral, rational, or social value whatsoever (Lovell, 1987).

The mirror invoked in the privileging of novel over romance is that of mimesis: representations of real life and nature ought to encourage the reader's understanding of his/her proper place in society and inculcate the appropriate moral discriminations essential to neoclassical taste. Examples of virtuous and vicious conduct were held up for the emulation or caution of readers, good examples promoted as models while, in clear contrast, immoral, monstrous figures were presented as objects of disgust, warnings against the consequences of improper ideas and behavior. The novel thus serves a useful corrective function in the private confines of domestic consumption: recognizing their own deficiencies in the realistic texts they peruse, readers can act to improve themselves and assume a virtuous place in society. With romances and Gothic fiction, however, the social function of the mirror is distorted, its reflections exceeding the proper balance of identification and correction. The utopic mirror of perfected or inverted reflection is intermingled with a heterotopic form. For Foucault, a heterotopia, in contrast to a utopia, is a "counter-site," an "effectively enacted utopia" in which the real sites of culture are "represented, contested, inverted." The main features of Gothic fiction, in neoclassical terms, are heterotopias: the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dank labyrinths, the marvelous, supernatural events, distant times and customs are not only excluded from the Augustan social world but introduce the passions, desires, and excitements it suppressed. The heterotopic mirror, moreover, exists in reality with palpable effects: "it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy" (Foucault, 1986, 24). The mirror of fiction, too, has a counter-Augustan effect. Not only does it transport readers into remote and unreal places, but it is read in a specific place in the present, thereby disturbing a sense of reality along with the aesthetic values supposed to sustain it. The heterotopic mirror

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"makes the place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through the virtual point which is over there" (Foucault, 1986, 24).

The disturbance of boundaries between proper reality and unreal romantic identification becomes the major concern of eighteenth-century criticism because it disrupts the order discriminating between virtue and vice: mimesis finds itself distorted by the fanciful effects of romance so that readers, instead of imitating paragons of virtuous conduct, are possessed of "a desire of resembling the fictitious heroine of a novel," thus losing any sense of reality (Pye, 1786, 337). "A novel heroine," another critic commented, "though described without a fault, yet if drawn out of nature, may be a very unfit model for imitation" (Cumberland, 1785, 333). The problem of fiction is clearly stated by George Canning when he asks "are not its imperfections so nearly allied to excellence, and does not the excess of its good qualities bear so strong an affinity to imperfection as to require a more matured judgement, a more accurate penetration, to point out the line where virtue ends and vice begins?" (Canning, 1787, 345).

Confounding realistic and fanciful representations, blurring their exemplary and cautionary functions, was detrimental to the undiscriminating eyes of young readers. And yet, this mixture of romance and mimesis formed the basis of Walpole's blend of ancient and modern in which the former was all "imagination and improbability" and the latter copied from nature: instead, Walpole sets out to describe what "mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions" (Walpole, 1982, 7–8), deliberately transporting eighteenth-century figures into romantic worlds. Fiction itself, as much as the landscapes and cultures it represents, operates in the manner of a heterotopia: consumed in the eighteenth century, it nonetheless counteracted the dominance of neoclassical taste with an alternative and seductive vision of society, nature, and art.

The heterotopic mirror not only distorts the proper perception of the relation between present and past, but introduces a divergent reflection in which "Gothic" marks a discontinuity between political and aesthetic versions of history. Indeed, the perception of both art and nature was undergoing significant revision in the course of the eighteenth century, a revision in part enabled by the diverse aesthetic associations of Gothic culture. Aesthetic judgments of architecture employed classical notions of beauty, valuing regularity, simplicity, proportion, and useful, unified design (Home, 1839, 84). In consequence, Gothic architecture was viewed negatively. John Evelyn's *Account of Architects and Architecture* (1697) describes how Goths and Vandals demolished beautiful Greek and Roman buildings, "introducing in their stead, a certain fantastical and licentious Manner of Building, which we have since called *Modern* (or *Gothic* rather), Congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy and *Monkish Piles*, without any just Proportion, Use or Beauty, compared with the truly *Ancient*" (Lovejoy, 1948, 138). Natural beauty, too, was appreciated in the same neoclassical terms for its ordered and harmonious appearance. Anything irregular, unsymmetrical, or disproportioned

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in the natural world was thus seen as a monstrous aberration. Mountains, for instance, were considered "unnatural Protuberances," "Warts" on the otherwise beautiful and ordered surface of nature (Nicholson, 1963, 139). However, with the reevaluations of romance, the aesthetics of the sublime and the imagination, nature was reinvented so that mountains became "temples of Nature," "natural cathedrals," places of wonder and sacred inspiration (2).

The change in perception attending the "return to Nature" associated with the Gothic revival was, Lovejoy notes, "a substitution of one for another way of conceiving of 'Nature' as the norm and model of art" (Lovejoy, 1948, 164). Here, the popularity of the sublime displaces the centrality of beauty in the appreciation of art and nature. For Hugh Blair, the sublime "produces a sort of internal elevation and expansion of the mind above its ordinary state; and fills it with a degree of wonder and astonishment, which it cannot well express" (Blair, 1796, I, 53). The emotion is evoked by previously devalued natural and architectural objects, so that "a great mass of rocks thrown together by the hand of nature with wildness and confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur, than if they had been adjusted to one another with the most accurate symmetry" (I, 59). Gothic architecture, too, is viewed in the same, sublime spirit as mountains: "a Gothic cathedral raises ideas of grandeur undivided upon the mind, by its size, its height, its awful obscurity, its strength, its antiquity, and its durability" (I, 59). And, Blair later observes, romances also deserved to be appreciated for the same reasons: useful and instructive, they, too, expand the mind (I, 70–1).[6]

Romance is thoroughly entwined in the development of a nonclassical aesthetic, involving a new sense of nature and, along with it, a positive notion of imagination and creative originality. In the Dedication to his *Reliques* (1765), a collection of bards and ballads, Thomas Percy comments that these "rude songs of ancient minstrels," "barbarous productions of unpolished ages," should be considered "not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, showing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages" (Percy, 1966, 1–2). Nature and genius are valued attributes of romantic poetry, distinct from the imitations of classical models, as Edward Young contends in *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). Nature is privileged as one of the elements that guarantee the distinction between an original writer and a mere imitator: "the pen of an *Original* Writer . . . out of the barren waste calls forth a blooming spring. Out of that blooming spring an *Imitator* is a transplanter of Laurels which sometimes die on removal, always languish in a foreign soil" (Young, 1966, 10). It is not only creativity that gains from its association with wild natural processes: the imitations of classics, by contrast, are demeaned for their foreign, and implicitly Roman, and unnatural qualities. Indeed, through its connection to nature, romantic poetry came to be seen as a source of mystery and sacred inspiration. Nature, its perception and appreciation, changed when viewed with eyes attuned to the sublimity of romance; conversely, the value and qualities of writing changed as a consequence of a new sense of natural power. Arguing against the weight of neoclassical aesthetic opinion, Richard Hurd presents a powerful image

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in favor of romance as "some almighty River, which the fablings of the poets have made immortal" (Hurd, 1963, 5). He goes on to contest the validity of judging Gothic productions by classical rules before inverting the hierarchy to proclaim "the preeminence of the Gothic manners and fictions, as adapted to the ends of poetry, above the classic" (76). Shakespeare and Spenser head Hurd's list of Gothic poets, since the nature they present and from which they draw inspiration is thoroughly imaginative and nonclassical in form: "a poet, they say, must follow *Nature*; and by Nature we are to suppose can only be meant the known and experienced course of affairs in the world. Whereas the poet has a world of his own, where the experience has less to do, than consistent imagination" (93). The nature associated with poetic imagination is of a higher order than the reality imitated by neoclassical writers: while pertaining to the "marvellous and extraordinary," Hurd notes, it is not unnatural but part of what he calls "these magical and wonderworking Natures" (93). In the heterotopic mirror of the past, then, a new, Gothic nature is discovered, a nature of sublimity and imagination that will be appropriated by romantic poets, while Gothic finds itself relegated to the popular and trashy realm of cheap, formulaic fiction.

Nonetheless, even as Gothic is expelled from the new-forged heights of proper culture, it continues to have heterotopic effects, retaining an aura of the mysteries and terrors of romance while losing the sacred sense of poetic and imaginative vision that gave romance its value. Without the grandeur of a wild and natural past, however, Gothic finds itself as the mirror of a baser nature, a symptom of a voraciously consumeristic commercial culture in which pleasure, sensation, and excitement come from the thrills of a darkly imagined counter-world, embracing the less avowable regions of psyche, family, and society as well as the gloomy remoteness of past cultures and rugged landscapes. Gothic remains ambivalent and heterotopic, reflecting the doubleness of the relationship between present and past. Indeed, Gothic continues to stand as a trope of the history of the present itself, a screen for the consumption and projection of the present onto a past at once distant and close by. The play of distance and proximity, rejection and return, telescopes history, both condensing the past into an object of idealized or negative speculation and unraveling and disarming the gaze of the present with its ambivalent return. In the constructions of the eighteenth century, Gothic embraced both the customs of the medieval period, the diverse writings associated with the northern tribes of Europe and the Elizabethan poets, like Spenser and Shakespeare, who inherited its magical tradition. History was romanced. In the 1930s, stories are set in an early nineteenth century, "now become a 'Gothic' period itself, its customs cruelly repressive in twentieth-century eyes" (Baldick, 1992, xv). Subsequently, the end of the nineteenth century provides the trappings of Gothic mystery and romance: Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, for instance, "authenticates" its Gothic appeal in lurid images of Victorian decadence, a setting that, ironically, served to establish the anxieties of the modernity addressed in the novel itself. Here, again, Gothic remains a bobbin on a string, cast away and pulled back in the constitution of the subject of the present, a subject whose history and modernity will have been.

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Notes

1 Longueil (1923) observes: "the word is 'protean' even in its orthography. The NED lists the spellings Gotic, Gotiq, Gothicke, Gottic, Gothique, Gothic" (453 n.).

2 For discussions of the origins of romance, see Warton (1979, esp. I, 110–48), Mallet (1847), Hurd (1963), Johnston (1964) and Kliger (1952, esp. 210–40).

3 E. J. Clery (1995) writes of attitudes to economic shifts in the period: "for opponents of a market economy, the difference between real and unreal ownership was clear-cut. Mobile property, bound up in the unstable, 'imaginary' mechanisms of speculation and credit, was the threatening alternative to the system of heritable wealth derived from land rents, which laid claim to the values of stability and, by avoiding the abstraction of capital investment and profit, natural law" (74).

4 For a detailed discussion of the political senses of Gothic in England, see Kliger (1952). Mallet (1847) identifies the Gothic spirit of liberty as a legacy to European nations in opposition to a "despotic and military" "yoke of Rome" and an oriental tyranny: "For although the Gothic form of government has been almost everywhere altered, or abolished, have we not retained, in most things, the opinions, the customs, the manners which that government had a tendency to produce? Is not this, in fact, the principal source of that courage, of that aversion to slavery, of that empire of honour which characterize in general the European nations; and of that moderation, of that easiness of access, and peculiar attention to the rights of humanity, which so happily distinguish our sovereigns from the inaccessible and superb tyrants of Asia?" (58).

5 See Punter (1980) for an extended analysis of the bourgeois significance of Gothic fiction.

6 Blair (1796) is careful, however, to distinguish the "magnificent Heroic Romance" from the form of fiction that has "dwindled down to the Familiar Novel" (I, 75).

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2
The Goths in History and Pre-Gothic Gothic

Robin Sowerby

Learning and Rome alike in empire grew,
And arts still followed where her eagles flew;
From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
And the same age saw learning fall, and Rome.
With tyranny, then superstition joined,
As that the body, this enslaved the mind;
Much was believed, but little understood,
And to be dull was construed to be good;
A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
And the Monks finished what the Goths begun.

Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (1709)[1]

It is well known that the use of the term "Gothic" to describe the literary phenomenon that began in the later eighteenth century has little, if anything, to do with the people from whom it is derived. Nevertheless, a companion to the Gothic should contain some mention of the historical Goths and some discussion of the strange history of the term and its uses before Horace Walpole set the seal upon a new usage in English with his famous description of *The Castle of Otranto* as a Gothick story in 1764. It is a fascinating coincidence that at the time when Walpole was writing, Edward Gibbon was meditating his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the first volume of which was published in 1776. That the advent of the Gothic should more or less coincide with the account of the Goths composed by the great historian of the Enlightenment, in a work that recounted their role in the overthrow of the ancient civilization upon which the modern depended, is an irony that might have appealed to Gibbon himself if he could have seen its significance and a circumstance which must still occasion

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fruitful reflection for the modern reader. We could wish to have more of the thoughts of Walpole too, one of Gibbon's first admirers, as he remarked upon the "strange contrast between Roman and Gothic manners."[2]

Through history, the word "Gothic" has always been chiefly defined in contrasting juxtaposition to the Roman, and a constant factor in its various uses, perhaps the only constant factor, has continued to be its antithesis to the Roman or the classical, an antithesis that is wittily expressed by the sophisticated Touchstone when he finds himself among the simple rustics of the forest of Arden: "I am here with thee and thy goats as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths" (*As You Like It*, III.iii.9).[3]

In Renaissance humanism, before its reevaluation in the eighteenth century, "Gothic" had usually, though not quite always, meant non-Roman in a pejorative sense, more a negative definition implying a lack than a description that has much constructive meaning in itself.

> A Gothic library! Of Greece and Rome
> Well purged, and worthy Settle, Banks and Broome.
> (Pope, *The Dunciad* [1728], I, 45–6)

A Gothic library, since the Goths did not have a literature to transmit, is an empty and impossible notion, but in the fantastical context of this highly imaginative work we can appreciate the meaning of Pope's fiction only too well. Earlier humanists seemed to represent such impossible fictions as facts, like Roger Ascham in *The Schoolmaster* (1570) when he talks of

> our beggarly rhyming, brought first into Italy by Goths and Huns when all good verses and all good learning too were destroyed by them, and after carried into France and Germany, and at last received into England by men of excellent wit indeed, but of small learning and less judgement in that behalf. (Ascham, 1967, 145)[4]

Not only is there no written literature, but there is no later record of Gothic oral tales in prose or verse. In this absence of any literature or art of their own, the Goths came to be seen merely as the corrupters and destroyers of the culture of the Romans: of their language, in Dryden's words, "It is little wonder that rolling down through so many ages from the spring of Virgil, it bears along with it the filth and ordures of the Goths and Vandals";[5] and of their artifacts,

> Rome raised not art, but barely kept alive,
> And with old Greece, unequally did strive:
> Till Goths and Vandals, a rude northern race
> Did all the matchless monuments deface.[6]

Yet the balance of history always allows a more moderate view. In his judgment of the Goths, the magisterial Gibbon sounds a cautionary note:

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> The emperor Decius had employed a few months in the works of peace and the administration of justice, when he was summoned to the banks of the Danube by the invasion of the Goths [AD 250]. This is the first considerable occasion in which history mentions that great people, who afterwards broke the Roman power, sacked the Capitol, and reigned in Gaul, Spain, and Italy. So memorable was the part that they acted in the subversion of the Western empire, that the name of Goths is frequently but improperly used as a general appellation of rude and warlike barbarism. (I, 255)[7]

The import of Gibbon's qualification becomes apparent later in his long narrative, but in its early stages the Goths are indeed thoroughgoing pillagers, ravagers, looters, and spoilers (as a glance at the entry under Goths in his index will confirm). Of their conduct in this first Gothic war, the historian is moved to write:

> In the general calamities of mankind, the death of an individual, however exalted, the ruin of an edifice, however famous, are passed over with careless inattention. Yet we cannot forget that the temple of Diana at Ephesus, after having risen with increasing splendour from seven repeated misfortunes, was finally burnt by the Goths in their third naval invasion. The arts of Greece and the wealth of Asia had conspired to erect that sacred and magnificent structure. . . . But the rude savages of the Baltic were destitute of a taste for the elegant arts, and they despised the ideal terrors of a foreign superstition. (I, 281)

Against his better judgment, Gibbon cannot then resist the telling of a famous anecdote revealing Gothic ignorance:

> Another circumstance is related of these invasions, which might deserve our notice, were it not justly to be suspected as the fanciful conceit of a recent sophist. We are told, that in the sack of Athens the Goths had collected all the libraries, and were on the point of setting fire to this funeral pile of Grecian learning, had not one of their chiefs, of more refined policy than his brethren, dissuaded them from the design; by the profound observation, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms. The sagacious counsellor (should the truth of the fact be admitted) reasoned like an ignorant barbarian. In the most polite and powerful nations, genius of every kind has displayed itself about the same period; and the age of science has generally been the age of military virtue and success. (II, 282)[8]

One of the earliest mentions of the Goths is a single short passage in Tacitus's *Germania* (*c.* AD 98):

> Beyond the Lugii is the monarchy of the Gotones: the hand upon the reins closes somewhat tighter here than among the other tribes of Germans, but not so tight yet as to destroy freedom. Then immediately following them and on the ocean are the Rugii and Lemovii. The distinguishing features of all these tribes are round shields, short swords, and a submissive bearing before their kings. (Tacitus, 1958, 324)

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In his description of the early manners of the Goths, Gibbon interprets Tacitus (whose Latin he cites in a note) as follows: "The use of round bucklers and short swords rendered them formidable in a close engagement; the manly obedience which they yielded to hereditary kings gave uncommon union and stability to their councils" (I, 258). In his account of the barbarians, Gibbon has frequent recourse to the *Germania* (which has been an influential text in the formation of German identity), and he has something of its ambivalent attitude toward the tribes beyond the pale of Roman civilization. While Tacitus does not exhibit any romantic regard for the Germans as noble savages, he nevertheless admires their simplicity, purity, and toughness, which are clearly to be contrasted, along with the old Roman virtue of frontier generals like Agricola, with the luxury, corruption, and enervation of the ruling powers of Rome that he delineates in his *Annals* and *Histories.* In the later phases of the Roman empire that are the subject of Gibbon's enquiry, the contrast is even more marked. One of the causes of the decline and fall is Roman corruption and self-betrayal.[9]

In the absence of early written records, there is an element of the mythical about the mysterious Goths, but modern archaeology confirms their early settlement in the Baltic and provides evidence of their migration along the Vistula down to the Black Sea. Their first major incursion into Roman territory from the east in the third century (the occasion of Gibbon's remarks above) was successfully repelled, but subsequently, as they moved toward the lower Danube, the Romans lost the province of Dacia to them, were compelled to pay them tribute for a time and were subject to continuous pressure on their eastern frontier.

In the 340s, the Arian Gothic bishop Ulfilas or Wulfila (d. 383) translated the Bible into the Gothic language in a script based chiefly upon the uncial Greek alphabet and said to have been invented by Ulfilas for the purpose.[10] Earlier in the century, the emperor Constantine had made Christianity the official religion of the empire, so that it may have been Roman policy to attempt the conversion of the barbarians in order to make them more amenable to Roman rule. Christian Goths may no longer have worshipped strange gods, but through their Arian beliefs they remained heretics in the eyes of what became the Catholic orthodoxy. Substantial portions of the Gothic New Testament and some fragments of the Old Testament survive. Apart from this, there is very little in the Gothic language and no literary remains.

In the fourth century, relations between Goths and Romans became increasingly complex. Many Goths served as mercenaries in the Roman army and had fought against Persia before, with the permission of the imperial government, they crossed the Danube in large numbers in 376 into the Roman province of Moesia, to be incorporated into the Roman state as *foederati*, confederate allies. Disputes between the incoming Goths and Roman officials led to war and a grievous Roman defeat at Hadrianople in 378, with the death of the Roman emperor Valens. His successor, Theodosius the Great,[11] effected a union between the Goths and the empire, which did not, however, last beyond his death in 395 and the advent of the charismatic Alaric, made king of the Goths in the same year, who determined to acquire a kingdom rather than serve in a subordinate position in the empire of the Romans.

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After successful campaigns in Greece, he was at first halted in Italy by an able Roman general, Stilicho, but after Stilicho's death he advanced toward Rome itself.

The first part of this Gothic war is the subject of a contemporary poem of some six hundred lines in Latin hexameters, *De Bello Gothico* by Claudian (Claudius Claudianus, *c.*370–*c.*404; see Claudian, 1922, vol. II, 124–73), often called the last classical poet, who composed panegyrics and propagandist poems for the emperor Honorius and for his minister and general Stilicho. The design of the poem is quite simple: to laud Stilicho as the one man whose resolution in the face of the dark threat from hordes of barbaric Goths saved civilization and the Roman state by his defeat of Alaric at the battle of Pollentia (near Turin) in 402. In a hyperbolic style reminiscent of Seneca, the poem seeks to evoke the panic induced by the Gothic terror. It fairly bristles with supernatural horror:

> Then – for fear is by nature a babbler and allows all sorts of tales to be invented and believed – dreams, portents, and omens of ill were discussed on all sides. What, men asked, did that flight of birds portend, what message would heaven fain deliver to mortals by the thunderbolt, what did those prophetic books demand that guard the destiny of Rome? Constant eclipses of the moon alarmed us and night after night throughout the cities of Italy sounded wailings and the beating of brazen gongs to scare the shadow from off her darkened face. Men would not believe that the moon had been defrauded of her brother the sun, forbidden to give light by the interposition of the earth; they thought that Thessalian witches, accompanying the barbarian armies, were darkening her rays with their country's magic spells. Then with these new portents their troubled minds link the signs of the past year and any omens that perchance peaceful days had neglected – showers of stones, bees swarming in strange places, furious fires destroying houses from no known cause, a comet – ne'er seen in heaven without disaster – which first rose where Phoebus lifts his rosy morning beam and old Cepheus shines together with starry Andromeda, his spouse; then it withdrew little by little to the constellation of Lycaon's daughter and with its errant tail dimmed the stars of the Getic Wain until at last its dying fires grew feeble and vanished. (Claudian, 1922, 142–4)

In the final line the poet ends on a note of commanding triumph: "discite vesanae Romam non temnere gentes": "Learn, presumptuous peoples, not to despise Rome." It was unfortunate for Claudian, who died soon after composing this, that Alaric recovered from his defeat and went on in 410 to sack Rome itself. Few people have heard of Pollentia and Stilicho, but the name of Alaric the Goth, the sacker of Rome, lives in fame. It is impossible to read the poem without the perspective of subsequent events. As a result, any reader of Claudian who responds to the evocation of the Gothic terror will find it intensified by their subsequent success.

Alaric was, by the standards of the times, merciful to the Romans and their city. He proceeded to control Italy but died before he could extend his conquests further. He was succeeded as king by his brother-in-law. Immediately after the death of Alaric, Gibbon's narrative continues:

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> The character and political system of the new king of the Goths, may be best understood from his own conversation with an illustrious citizen of Narbonne; who afterwards, in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, related it to St Jerom, in the presence of the historian Orosius. "In the full confidence of valour and victory, I once aspired (said Adolphus) to change the face of the universe; to obliterate the name of Rome; to erect on its ruins the dominion of the Goths; and to acquire, like Augustus, the immortal fame of the founder of a new empire. By repeated experiments, I was gradually convinced that laws are essentially necessary to maintain and regulate a well-constituted state; and that the fierce untractable humour of the Goths was incapable of bearing the salutary yoke of laws, and civil government. From that moment I proposed to myself a different object of glory and ambition; and it is now my sincere wish, that the gratitude of future ages should acknowledge the merit of a stranger, who employed the sword of the Goths, not to subvert, but to restore and maintain, the prosperity of the Roman empire." (II, 212)[12]

Adolph (or Ataulf or Athavulf) concluded a peace with the emperor Honorius, married the daughter of the previous emperor Theodosius, and, assuming the role of a Roman general, proceeded to make war against other barbarians beyond the Alps. The Goths withdrew from Italy.

In the event, the western empire fell not to the Goths but to Odoacer (*c.*434–93), a German of the Scirian tribe who had formerly served in the Roman army and led a mutiny of general barbarian mercenaries against Romulus Augustulus, whom he deposed in 476. "After a reign of fourteen years, Odoacer was oppressed by the superior genius of Theodoric [*c.*454–526], king of the Ostrogoths; a hero alike excellent in the arts of war and of government, who restored an age of peace and prosperity, and whose name still excites and deserves the attention of mankind" (II, 410). Under his rule, Goths and Romans retained their separate institutions, legal systems, and identity:

> Fashion and even convenience, soon persuaded the conquerors to assume the more elegant dress of the natives, but they still persisted in their use of their mother-tongue; and their contempt for the Latin schools was applauded by Theodoric himself, who gratified their prejudices, or his own, by declaring, that the child who had trembled at a rod, would never dare to look upon a sword. (II, 535)

What may confirm Gothic ignorance also might be seen to be a wise and deliberate policy: "It had been the object of Augustus to conceal the introduction of a monarchy; it was the policy of Theodoric to disguise the reign of a Barbarian" (II, 541). Unlike Augustus, Theodoric did not preside over a period of artistic regeneration. On the other hand, neither was his reign one of barbaric destruction: "The Gothic kings, so injuriously accused of the ruin of antiquity, were anxious to preserve the monuments of the nation whom they had subdued" (II, 543). The Gothic king surrounded himself with the best of the Latins: "The ministers of Theodoric, Cassiodorus and Boethius, have reflected on his reign the lustre of their genius and learning" (II, 541–2). His reputation as the best of Goths is tarnished only by his imprisonment in the twilight

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of his reign on a charge of treason of his counsellor Boethius, "the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countrymen" (II, 550), whose *Consolation of Philosophy* was written while he awaited execution.

The successors of Theodoric did not manage to maintain the Gothic kingdom in Italy. Internal Gothic dissension gave the eastern emperor Justinian (483–565) a chance to intervene. After a long campaign conducted by two distinguished generals, first Belisarius and then the eunuch Narses, Justinian eventually annexed a ravaged and depopulated Italy in 552, restoring for a time the unity of the empire now ruled from the eastern capital, Constantinople. The Goths were driven out of Italy, never to return.

It is at this point that we encounter for the first time a history of the Goths from the Gothic point of view, the *Getica*, written about 551 by Jordanes, probably himself a Goth who, though by his own account "an unlearned man" before his "conversion" (Mierow, 1915, 266; for the Latin text, see Mommsen, 1882), became a *notarius*, a secretary or notary in a noble family of the Gothic race. It is written in Latin – not exactly classical Latin, but recognizably Latin nevertheless. Jordanes tells us that the *Getica* is an abridgement of an earlier work in twelve books (now lost) by Cassiodorus (*c.*490–*c.*585), the Italian secretary of Theodoric, who had written this first known ethnic history from the barbarian kingdoms at his master's bidding, probably with the intention of reconciling the Romans to Gothic rule by exalting the Gothic race in general, which he associates with various traditions of the classical past (Goths are said to have fought in the Trojan war and the Amazons were Gothic women) and in particular the house of the Amali to which Theodoric belonged and for which he traced an illustrious pedigree. Following the error of the earlier historian Orosius (fl. 420), Cassiodorus (and therefore Jordanes who followed him) identified the Goths with a Thracian tribe called the Getae (hence the title of Jordanes's work) and identified both with the Scythians, a broad term often rather vaguely applied to peoples living far beyond the Roman frontier in the wastelands of the frozen north. Accordingly, there are some very tall stories about the Goths at the beginning of the *Getica.* At the very beginning he derives the Goths from Scandinavia, a derivation that has usually been accepted (though it is now a matter of scholarly dispute) and has led to the association of the Goths with Scandinavian mythology in later time. Later, he records the division of the Gothic nation into two, with the Ostrogoths in the east and the Visigoths in the west, now thought to have been brought about by an irruption of the Huns; exactly when this occurred is uncertain. Jordanes's purpose has been detected in the repeated references he makes to the marriage of Mathesuentha, widow of Theodoric's successor but two, Witiges, to Germanus, a nephew of Justinian, and the hope he expresses at the end, which comes as a prelude to the praise of the emperor in the penultimate paragraph, for a union between both peoples. His history concludes at a point when the Goths have been defeated in Italy but not yet expelled, and when some rapprochement between Goths and Romans might still have been a realistic hope.

For present purposes this history, put together at a time when Goths and Romans were certainly colliding but when there was the possibility also of their coalescing, is

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of the greatest interest, for it is the nearest extant thing to the record of an actual original Goth: "Let no one believe that to the advantage of the race to which I have spoken – though indeed I trace my own descent from it – I have added aught besides what I have read or learned by enquiry" (Mierow, 1915, 266). He is obviously not a pure Goth or militantly Gothic, for he is writing in Latin (perhaps at Constantinople) and clearly a Romanophile, but he is very much a Goth before a Roman, and there is no doubting his partiality to his subject. In the earlier part of his history Gibbon notes that Jordanes, an Ostrogoth, "forgets a war peculiar to the Visigoths and inglorious to the Gothic name" (I, 1017). His description of the confrontation with Stilicho differs markedly from that of panegyrist Claudian: "this Stilicho, I say, treacherously hurried to Pollentia, a city in the Cottian Alps. There he fell upon the unsuspecting Goths in battle, to the ruin of all Italy and his own disgrace" (Mierow, 1915, 154). He takes obvious pride in Gothic identity (even if much of that identity is factitious): "Nor did they lack teachers of wisdom. Wherefore the Goths have ever been wiser than other barbarians and were nearly like the Greeks . . . " (40). This Goth is sensitive to the imputation of ignorance. When using the language of the Romans he is prepared to call himself a barbarian, but he clearly discriminated among barbarians. Behold the horror with which the Goth contemplates the Huns:

> But after a short space of time, as Orosius relates, the race of the Huns, fiercer than ferocity itself, flamed forth against the Goths. We learn from old traditions that their origin was as follows: Filimer, king of the Goths, son of Gadaric the Great, who was the fifth in succession to hold the rule of the Getae after their departure from the island of Scandza – and who as we have said, entered the land of Scythia with his tribe – found among his people certain witches, whom he called in his native tongue *Haliurunnae.* Suspecting these women, he expelled them from the midst of his race and compelled them to wander in solitary exile afar from his army. There the unclean spirits, who beheld them as they wandered through the wilderness, bestowed their embraces upon them and begat this savage race, which dwelt at first in the swamps, a stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human and having no language save one which bore but slight resemblance to human speech. (121)

Gibbon comments:

> The tale, so full of horror and absurdity, was greedily embraced by the Goths; but while it gratified their hatred, it encreased their fear; since the posterity of daemons and witches might be supposed to inherit some share of the praeternatural powers, as well as the malignant temper, of their parents. (I, 1044)

Unlike the critical Gibbon who understands the cause and effect of such fables, the credulous Goth tells his tale as if it represents a solid truth. In his notes, Gibbon declares that this "execrable origin" is described "with the rancour of a Goth," and he further points to the "strong caricature" that Jordanes draws of the Hunnish face: "they made their foes flee in horror because their swarthy aspect was fearful, and they

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had, if I may call it so, a sort of shapeless lump not a head, with pin-holes rather than eyes" (Mierow, 1915, 127). Perhaps it may be felt that there are the dim glimmerings here of a Gothic sensibility. On the other hand, just as to come to Claudian after Virgil is to experience a sad decline, to come to Jordanes after Tacitus is to be conscious of a precipitate fall; here is the decadence indeed.

It is remarkable that history has nothing more to tell us of the Ostrogoths, who disappeared without a trace except for sporadic reports of a surviving remnant in the Crimea as late as the eighteenth century. The Visigothic kingdom in Spain, however, lasted until its overthrow by the Moors in 711. In the reign of Recared (586–601) the Goths renounced Arianism and embraced the Catholic faith. Thereafter they were increasingly romanized and the Gothic language began to go out of use. There is no trace of it in the modern languages of the Iberian peninsula. Nor is there a Visigothic artistic inheritance. In Italy, the Goths had ruled for a short time (little more than half a century) and had little or no influence on the system of life that emerged after the collapse of the western empire. They were dimly remembered as invaders and destroyers. In Spain, the Goths likewise may have lost their identity, but they were an important element in the making of the modern nation and are honored as such. But through the Renaissance it is the Italian inheritance that has predominated in the shaping of the afterlife of the Goths in early European consciousness, though this is a rather grand way of saying that in the early Renaissance they were despised and largely forgotten.

When Petrarch (1304–74) lamented the ignorance of his times in his *De Ignorantia*, he was hardly exaggerating. It is easy to forget now what a Herculean task it was to recover any accurate sense of the past in the early Renaissance, even after the invention of printing. It is only with the aid of archaeological science that some dim light can be thrown upon the darkness of times for which there are no literary records or where the literary record is meager. The Goths were scarcely an urgent or interesting topic for the modern humanists of Italy who, in their classical revival, particularly of the Latin language, wished to see themselves as the direct heirs of the Romans. The dark ages that succeeded the fall of Rome may be called dark principally because not much is known about them, and in the Renaissance less was known than now. The historians that form the basis of Gibbon's monumental work and are cited in his notes are, for the most part, late, fragmented, and obscure, and their recovery in the Renaissance was also late, partial, and poorly disseminated. It is this lack of proper historical knowledge among Renaissance Italians about their own past that is responsible for the mistaken impression given by Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), the great art critic and former pupil of Michelangelo, in his *Lives of the Artists* (1550), when he associated the architecture of the post-Roman and pre-Renaissance period slightingly with the Goths. This style, which he calls German, differs from the ancient and the modern (Renaissance), being monstrous and barbarous; a confused and disordered style, it was invented by the Goths ("Questa maniera fu trovata da i Gothi")[13] after the destruction in the wars of both ancient buildings and those who knew how to build them.

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Earlier Italian writers had called architecture before Brunelleschi barbarian (an historical as much as an aesthetic judgment, for it was literally the architecture of the barbarians), but Vasari seems to have been the first to associate it specifically with the Goths. Such was his authority as an art critic, without rival for more than two centuries, that his mistake, which was never challenged, gave a whole new life to the adjective "Gothic" when it was applied by later writers to the pre-Renaissance style. It also laid the ground for its reevaluation when a taste for the masterpieces and even the follies of the style returned. Even the severest judgment of the most classicizing humanist could respond to the majesty of Gothic – witness Pope on Shakespeare:

> I will conclude by saying of Shakespeare, that with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his drama, one may look upon his works, in comparison with those that are more finished and regular, as upon an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture, compared with a neat modern building. The latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former more strong and solemn. It must be allowed that in one of these there are materials enough to make many of the other. It has much greater variety, and much the nobler apartments, though we are often conducted to them by dark, odd, and uncouth passages. Nor does the whole fail to strike us with greater reverence, though many of the parts are childish, ill-placed, and unequal to its grandeur. (Hammond 1987, 187)

The aesthetic usage was not the only potentially positive association of the word "Gothic" in the late Renaissance; it also had a potentially strong political and moral connotation.[14] Jordanes's notion that the Goths had come from Scandza, which he called the womb of nations, *vagina gentium*, together with the derivations of other Teutonic peoples from Scandinavia offered an alternative to the Graeco-Roman derivation of all things great and good from the mother of all civilizations, Troy. The loose association of Goths, Getae, and Scythians suggested a general northern identity for which, before the widespread use of the generic adjective "Germanic" or "Teutonic," "Gothic" was the favored term. We might now associate the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes loosely with Teutons; but these peoples might easily have been thought by early antiquarians to be related to the Goths. Jutes, Gutes, Getae, Goti, look and sound rather similar and might easily be confused. Those who did so believed that the Goths had contributed to the formation of the British nation.

Jordanes, whose narrative starts with tales and goes on to migrations, battles, and genealogies, does not have much to say about the laws and customs of the Goths. But this lack is supplied by Tacitus in his *Germania.* What he has to say of the Germanic tribes, in particular his general evocation of peoples with a fierce sense of freedom and manly virtue, came to be associated with the Goths. This might be of general ethical import or have particular political implications. What the Roman historian has to say of the workings of Germanic kingship suggests an alternative tradition to the conventional absolutism of church and state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For Swift, not a romancer, parliaments are a peculiarly Gothic institution brought to England, "by the Saxon princes who first introduced them into this island, from the same original with the other forms of Gothic government in most parts of Europe."[15]

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"Gothic" has proved to be a truly protean term. Some of its associations are apparent in the imagery of the northern side of Pope's Temple of Fame. The western side of this strange imaginative structure (quite monstrous if visualized) is Graeco-Roman, the eastern Assyrian, the southern Egyptian, and the northern Gothic. It is not so much the imagery itself that perhaps makes this description a fitting conclusion as the acknowledgement both of its doubtful and fabulous character and of the strange imaginative process by which the past is memorialized by fame:

> Of Gothic structure was the northern side,
> O'er-wrought with ornaments of barb'rous pride.
> There huge colosses rose, with trophies crowned,
> And runic characters were graved around:
> There sat Zamolxis[16] with erected eyes,
> And Odin here in mimic trances dies.
> There, on rude iron columns smeared with blood,
> The horrid forms of Scythian heroes stood,
> Druids and bards (their once loud harps unstrung)
> And youths that died to be by poets sung.
> These and a thousand more of doubtful fame,
> To whom old fables gave a lasting name,
> In ranks adorned the temple's outward face;
> The wall in lustre and effect like glass,
> Which o'er each object casting various dyes,
> Enlarges some, and others multiplies,
> Nor void of emblems was the mystic wall,
> For thus romantic fame increases all.
>
> (*The Temple of Fame* [1711], 119–36)

Notes

1 Pope's poems are most conveniently available in *The Twickenham Edition* (Butt, 1965). Quotations in this essay have been modernized.

2 To William Mason, Saturday January 27, 1781 (see Lewis, 1955, vol. 29, 98).

3 Ovid, for some unknown reason, was banished by the emperor Augustus to the shores of the Black Sea. It has been suggested that "goats" and "Goths" were pronounced in a similar fashion in Elizabethan times.

4 On the common association of rhyme and the Goths, see Haslag (1963, 58–70).

5 From "The Dedication of the Pastorals," in Kinsley (1958, vol. II, 871).

6 From "To Sir Godfrey Kneller" (1687), in Kinsley (1958, vol. II, 858).

7 For copyright reasons, the text of quotations from Gibbon is derived from early editions; it has then been modernized. For the reader's convenience (since Gibbon's vast work is divided into 71 long chapters, which are not themselves subdivided), page references are given to the most recent Penguin edition by Womersley, which contains an excellent introduction, all Gibbon's notes, his index, and the editor's extensive bibliographical index of Gibbon's reading derived from the notes.

8 In his notes, Gibbon mentions Montaigne's knowledge of this anecdote. It is also retold in Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (see Smith, 1904, vol. I, 188).

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9 A point emphasized by the early Christian fathers, such as St. Augustine and Salvian.

10 This is not to be confused with what we now call Gothic script, which is an invention of the eleventh century, long after the disappearance of the historical Goths. See Bischoff (1990, 127). What is called Visigothic or Mozarabic script, emanating from Spain in the early eighth century, does not look anything like what we now call Gothic; see Bischoff (1990, 96–8). An early reference to Gothic script occurs in Rabelais's *Gargantua* (1532, ch. 14). Reference becomes common in the seventeenth century.

11 *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare's most Gothic play, is based on a fictional story involving Goths and Romans set in the period of Theodosius's reign.

12 The reference is to Orosius, 7, 43 (see Orosius, 1964). The rhythms and magisterial tone are Gibbonian but the words are a surprisingly literal version of the original.

13 The passage occurs in the long general introduction on architecture, sculpture, and painting that precedes Vasari's *Lives* (see Vasari, 1906, vol. 1, 137–8). This general introduction is not included in the Penguin or Everyman edition of the *Lives*, which begin with the shorter Proem that follows the introduction in the original. The passage is quoted in Italian and discussed by E. S. de Beer in de Beer (1948, 147–8). The author summarizes the argument of this most interesting article in an appendix to the final volume of his edition of *The Diary of John Evelyn.* The first recorded use in English of Gothic in relation to architecture is in Evelyn's diary entry for *c.* August 24–7, 1641 (de Beer, 1948, 155).

14 This and the next paragraph provide a summary of salient points brought out by Kliger (1952).

15 In *An Abstract and Fragment of History of England* (1715) (see Davis, 1962, vol. 5, 35). Swift may have imbibed this from the historical essays of Sir William Temple for whom he worked as a young man.

16 Zamolxis, a god of the Getae, and supposed lawgiver of the Scythians.

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3
Gothic Shakespeare

Dale Townshend

What could Elizabeth Montagu possibly have meant when, in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* [*sic*] in 1769, she embraced the subject of her discourse as "our Gothic bard" (Montagu, 1769, 147)? This question seems particularly pertinent in the light of at least two considerations. First, and as Alfred E. Longueil has pointed out, the term "Gothic" only came to assume its modern literary-critical functions as "a mere synonym for that grotesque, ghostly, and violently superhuman" strain in fiction after 1800 – that is, more than three decades after Montagu, and only once the 1790s taste for supernatural fictions set variously in ancient medieval or "Gothic" ages had quite run its course (Longueil, 1923, 459). Secondly, and as the work of Samuel Kliger, Mark Madoff, R. J. Smith, and others has shown, "Gothic" had, since the latter part of the seventeenth century, circulated in Britain with a range of divergent, often contradictory political, ideological, historical, and stylistic implications, perhaps even to the point of rendering a precise definition of the term in the period somewhat of an impossibility (Kliger, 1952; Madoff, 1979; Smith, 1987). By 1769, of course, there was nothing new in Montagu's coupling of Shakespeare with an adjectival sense of the "Gothic": as early as 1725, Alexander Pope's Preface to his six-volume edition, *The Works of Shakespear* [*sic*], had drawn an analogy between the plays of Shakespeare and "an ancient majestic piece of *Gothick* Architecture" (Pope, 1725, xxiii), while in 1765, Samuel Johnson's Preface to his own eight-volume edition, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, had described *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play replete with "the *Gothick* mythology of fairies" (Johnson, 1765, xx). The associations between Shakespeare and the Gothick invoked by both editors are worth exploring further, for together they lead us closer to an historical understanding of what Montagu's identification of Shakespeare as "our Gothic bard" in the late 1760s might have implied.

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Pope's Shakespearean/Gothic-architectural analogy comes by way of a cautious discussion of the playwright's perceived weaknesses: when compared to the "finish'd and regular" façades of a "neat Modern building," the "ancient" plays of Shakespeare, he observes, are characterized by a certain "irregularity" (Pope, 1725, xxiii). But while the former might be "more elegant and glaring," Shakespeare "is not only more 'majestic,' but also 'more strong and solemn'" (Pope, 1725, xxiii). The ancient Gothick pile that, metaphorically speaking, is the Shakespearean *oeuvre* contains within itself "materials enough to make many" of the other, more modern textual structures, Shakespeare thus serving as a solid architectural foundation for countless "nobler apartments" – although, as Pope punningly concedes, we might often be led to them by way of "dark, odd, and uncouth passages" (Pope, 1725, xxiv). Despite their flouting of the very neoclassical ideals of order, balance, rhythm, and proportion that Pope himself was elsewhere keen to advocate, the plays of Shakespeare are as demanding of "greater reverence" as the nation's ancient architectural remains, "tho' many of the Parts are childish, ill-plac'd, and unequal to its grandeur" (Pope, 1725, xxiv). Just as, in time, the organic ornamentations and irregular accretions of a medieval cathedral were thought to exceed the clean, balanced geometries of Palladianism, so Shakespeare's Gothick credentials were thought to reside in his plays' formal resistances to the Aristotelian Unities of time, place, and action, the centrality of which had been enshrined within Augustan aesthetics since the late seventeenth century. As in several contemporary political and historiographical uses of the term, Gothic antiquity signified that which was, by nature, antithetical toward, and invariably in excess of, an imported Greek and Roman classical tradition.

As these architectural metaphors suggest, the Gothick, for Pope, as for many other eighteenth-century critics and cultural commentators, was primarily a category reserved for the description of form, the term signifying a range of structural properties and that seem, from modern literary-critical perceptions of the word, somewhat remote. Through direct reference to Pope's earlier editorial endeavors, Samuel Johnson's preface to his edition of Shakespeare in 1765 would argue a similar point: Shakespeare's "Gothick" qualities resided, at least partly, in matters of structure and form, in an unfortunate disregard for the Aristotelian Unities attributable as much to Shakespeare's historical positioning as anything else, but one which implicated his plays in the problems of anachronism nonetheless: "He [Shakespeare] had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility" (Johnson, 1765, xx). However, while momentarily aligning himself with the critical position of Pope, Johnson at this point introduces the term "Gothick" in a different sense, and to decidedly different rhetorical effect: given Shakespeare's ignorance of Aristotle, the formal weaknesses of which Pope's edition "has endeavoured, with more zeal than judgment, to transfer to his imagined interpolations," we need no longer be surprised to find "*Hector* quoting *Aristotle*, when we see the loves of *Theseus* and *Hippolyta* combined with the *Gothick* mythology of fairies" (Johnson, 1765, xx–xi). While a play such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is, by these standards,

undoubtedly Gothick in a formal sense – in passing from the Athenian Court, to the pastoral world, and back again, the play violates the Aristotelian Unities of time, place, and action – it also becomes, in Johnson's edition, Gothick in another sense too: the Greek mythology of the court coexists here alongside the "Gothick mythology of fairies" (Johnson, 1765, xx–xi). For Johnson, Shakespeare's play is "Gothick" by virtue of both its form and its content.

The distinctions between Gothic form and Gothic content set up in the editorial interchange between Pope and Johnson are crucial to an understanding of the meanings with which the term "Gothic" was inflected in Montagu's description of Shakespeare as "our Gothic bard" four years after Horace Walpole's well-known defense of Shakespeare in his Preface to the second edition of his own "Gothic Story," *The Castle of Otranto*, in 1765. As Walpole here made clear, the "Gothic" properties of *Otranto* resided primarily in its formal suturing of the ancient romance and modern novel, and beyond that, in a coupling of the "sensations of Princes and heroes" with the "deportment of the domestics" modeled upon the Shakespearean example of the gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet* (Walpole, 1765, viii). In Pope, Johnson, Walpole, and Montagu alike, the formal properties of Gothic were conceptualized as belonging to a particular sense of historical time. Although the term in today's categories of critical and historical description somewhat narrowly implies the cultural artifacts of the medieval period in Britain – a period roughly marked out between the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century and Henry Tudor's assumption of the English throne in 1508 – "Gothic" in its eighteenth-century sense was often broadly taken to encompass what is more familiarly regarded today as the renaissance or early modern period: Sophia Lee's *The Recess: A Tale of Other Times* (1783), for instance, a Gothic romance replete with Shakespearean appropriations, is set during the reign of Elizabeth I, while Ann Radcliffe's account of the Gothic past in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) opens in the year 1584. As Thomas Warton's influential discussion of the various orders of Gothic architecture in his *Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser* (1754) made clear, "Gothic" was a form and a style that descriptively encompassed all forms of cultural activity in England prior to the arrival of the Italianate designs of Inigo Jones; for all the adumbrations of neoclassicism perceivable in English culture during the reign of Elizabeth I, Shakespeare, like Spenser and the architectural constructions of the time, could too be described as an Elizabethan writer in whom "much of the old gothic is retained" (Warton, 1762, 185). What Montagu referred to as Shakespeare's "Gothic muse," then, was, in part, the inevitable by-product of the playwright's historical provenance. Shakespeare's Gothic qualities were also thought to inhere in his status as the national English poet, a position which, though conferred and properly consolidated by the late 1760s, was the culmination of a cultural impulse that, as Gary Taylor, Michael Dobson, and Don-John Dugas have shown, had been in place since the mid-seventeenth century (Taylor, 1989; Dobson, 1994; Dugas, 2006). Written, like Walpole's second Preface, as a self-conscious defense of Shakespeare in what was perceived by his patriotic admirers to be a climate of Voltaire-headed French hostility, Montagu's *Essay* mobilizes the term "Gothic" as the name for an indigenous national

tradition that, however benighted it might at times appear, is worthy of veneration and respect nonetheless. While, in the face of the French critique, it is tempting to read the "Gothic" of Montagu's *Essay* as a synonym for all nations included within a composite sense of Great Britain, Robert Crawford has pointed out that the construction of Shakespeare as, specifically, the national "Bard" occurred only after the Ossianic phenomenon of the 1760s: Shakespeare is "our Gothic bard" in a particularly English rather than compositely "British" sense, the cultural figurehead willfully constructed as an equivalent to the bardic legacy of Ossian, and later Burns, in Scotland (Crawford, 2004). As in the editorial endeavors of Pope and Johnson, Shakespeare's Gothic qualities for Montagu could also be marked in his failure to conform to the neoclassicism of French writers such as Corneille and Racine. Counteracting the perceived hegemony of the classical tradition through an appeal to an alternative, proto-Romantic aesthetic founded upon the principles of originality, genius, and sublimity, Montagu embraced Shakespeare as Gothic in all the formal, historical, and national connotations of that term.

And yet, as is the case with Johnson, Montagu's use of the term "Gothic" in the *Essay* occurs specifically within the context of a discussion of the supernatural contents of Shakespeare's plays, and it is this that renders it, for our interests here in the spectral excesses of Gothic fiction, especially pertinent: demonstrating a "peculiar felicity" for praeternatural imaginings, Shakespeare "peopled the woods with nymphs, the rivers with deities; and, that he might still have some being within call to his assistance, he placed responsive echo in the vacant regions of air" (Montagu, 1769, 133–4). Persisting alongside the commonplace assumption that Shakespeare, in Walpole's words in the second Preface, was "That great master of nature" (Walpole, 1765, viii), the English Bard, rather like Prospero in *The Tempest*, was also perceived as commanding mastery over the world of the supernatural. Revivifying an otherwise moribund poetic tradition through his dramatic recourse to "popular superstitions" (Montagu, 1769, 135), Shakespeare was "Gothic" insofar as his supernatural beings – ghosts, fairies, goblins, elves – marked their differences from the nymphs, satyrs, fauns, and triple Geryons of the classical tradition. It was in the eighteenth-century cultural construct that was "Shakespeare," in other words, that national and supernatural connotations of the word "Gothic" came together. In each instance, the "Gothic" superstitions of the English, Montagu argues, are superior to those of ancient Rome and Greece; "Never did the Grecian muse of tragedy," Montagu's comparison with *Hamlet* concludes, "relate a tale so full of pity and terror as is imparted by the ghost" (Montagu, 1769, 168). Behind Shakespeare's supernatural imagination, then, lies a preoccupation with the superstitions of the English nation, the poet's dramatic utilization of these tropes invariably appropriate to the play's action, and never pushing beyond the limits of plausibility established by the popular traditions themselves. Structurally beyond the pale of neoclassical strictures, and trafficking, even in those plays with foreign settings, in a version of the supernatural that was peculiarly English, Shakespeare was the "Gothic bard" in all formal, historical, national, and supernatural connotations of that word.

Given that, in contemporary literary-critical discourse, the formal implications to "Gothic" have largely been replaced by the term's supernatural connotations, it is unsurprising that scholarship, having turned to address the frequently mentioned but, until recently, critically unexplored relationship between Shakespeare and the Gothic, has drawn attention to the apparently Gothic "contents" of Shakespeare's plays. For Jessica Walker, for example, a play such as *Richard III* may be considered as adumbrating a number of the techniques and concerns – monstrosity, ghosts, incestuous marriage, infanticide, usurping villains, curses, nightmares, and secrets – that would be exploited to their full dramatic and sensational effects in countless Gothic romances after *Otranto* (Walker, 2009). Useful though such a critical observation is, it stumbles upon at least two interrelated methodological problems, the first being an overapplication of the term "Gothic" in the supernatural sense of the term to cultural productions that predate the instantiating effects of Walpole's supernatural story by over two and a half centuries, and the second involving the anachronistic application of the category to an early modern writer for whom the categories of "Goth" and "Gothic" held a considerably different range of meanings. Of course, this is not to suggest that a writer's conscious identifications constitute the only legitimate grounds for the generic classification of his/her texts. Longueil has shown that it is even doubtful whether that group of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century writers whom we now consider to be quintessentially Gothic could have thought of themselves in such terms at all; the descriptive categories most frequently applied to the relevant texts in the period included the hydra-like monster that was "modern romance," "horrid" novels, or the "sickly and stupid German tragedies" of Wordsworth's famous formulation. But in the case of Shakespeare, the problem is even more acute, for if his plays themselves are anything to go by, the Bard may not have conceivably thought of himself as "Gothic" in any meaningful sense at all. As Steven Craig has pointed out, Shakespeare's sense of the Gothic, briefly invoked in *As You Like It* but given its most sustained treatment in *Titus Andronicus*, is nominally confined to a sense of the ancient Gothic tribe that sacked Rome in the fifth century, a tendency in keeping with the contemporary historiographical endeavors of writers such as Giorgio Vasari (Craig, 2008). As such, "Gothic" in *Titus Andronicus*, the adjectival form indicating that which is "of the Goths," could only possibly signify the self-serving machinations of Temora, the Goth queen, and the program of barbarism and literally "unspeakable" sexual and physical violence mounted against Lavinia by the Goth brothers Demetrius and Chiron. Although the political structures of Rome themselves in the play present no salutary antidote to Gothic extremism, and while it might ultimately be Aaron the Moor who absorbs the full brunt of the play's racialized explanations of violence, Gothic in *Titus Andronicus* carries meanings that are considerably remote from the positive, Enlightened connotations that the term had come to assume in the historiographical endeavors of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Craig thus insightfully concludes, "Shakespearean Gothic" – that is, the sense of things "Goth" and "Gothic" identifiable in Shakespeare's plays – is radically distinct from a "Gothic Shakespeare," the eighteenth-century construct not only of writers such as Pope,

Johnson, and Montagu, but also, under more modern eyes, of the tireless appropriation of Shakespeare in Gothic fictions in the period from 1790 to 1820 (Craig, 2008, 54). Though texts predating *Otranto*, both Shakespearean and otherwise, might appear to be symptomatic of a nascent "Gothic aesthetic," such identifications are only possible through the benefits of hindsight, the retrospective projections of a modern critical stance which, though firmly located within history, is curiously blind to its own historical positioning. If, as Walker maintains, *Richard III* is a "Gothic" play by virtue of its salient parallels with *Otranto*, such an identification is sustainable only on the basis of retrospection afforded by Walpole's later text. As of old, if everything, including Shakespeare, is "Gothic," the term loses all impact as a category of precise aesthetic, critical, and literary-historical description.

Shakespeare becomes "Gothic" in any modern sense of the word only in and through the act of appropriation, a process of cultural reevaluation initiated in the eighteenth century by Walpole, Montagu, Richard Hurd, Edward Young, and other exponents of the Gothic revival, and consolidated by the incessant replaying of aspects of the Shakespearean *oeuvre* in so many supernatural fictions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the second Preface to the text made clear, Horace Walpole in *Otranto* at once tried to defend Shakespeare from Voltaire and the tide of French attack, but also to legitimize his own literary experiment through seeking to shelter it beneath the "canon" [*sic*] of the national Bard, the "brightest genius" this country has ever known (Walpole, 1765, xv).[1] As her posthumously published essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" made clear, Ann Radcliffe too looked directly to Shakespeare as source and inspiration for some of the most characteristic features of her fiction, including the principle of "accordant circumstances," through which landscape and setting serve as a form of "objective correlative" to passion and feeling, as well as Shakespeare's measured, emulable management of the supernatural.[2] Scholarship in the field has recently begun the task of excavating and assessing the Gothic aesthetic's strong indebtedness to Shakespeare.[3] Still, there is more to be said about the appropriation of Shakespeare in early Gothic writing, particularly in relation to the two definitive tropes that mark out the singularity of the Gothic mode as such: ghost-seeing and villainy, supernatural manifestations of turpitude, and evil's all-too-human embodiments. As E. J. Clery has argued, the novelty of *The Castle of Otranto* lay ostensibly in Walpole's offering up of the ghost, hitherto largely the vehicle for abstruse theological debate, to the commercially driven spectacles of popular entertainment (Clery, 1995). While the Shakespearean antecedents to this process have often been acknowledged, not least of all by Clery herself, what has not been fully appreciated is the extent to which Shakespeare provided early writers of Gothic with precedents for two distinctive modes for ghost-seeing, the one tragically figured in *Hamlet* and the other in *Macbeth*, and each one serving to define and lay down the differences between heroism and villainy, virtue and vice, respectively.

Horace Walpole himself had disclosed an interest in the spectral imaginings of Shakespearean drama long before his hurried writing of *Otranto* over the summer of 1764. On Saturday June 18, 1743, "The Dear Witches: An Interlude; being a Parody

on Some Scenes of Macbeth" was published anonymously in *Old England: or, The Constitutional Journal*, a political magazine managed by one Jeffrey Broadbottom, the *nom de plume* of Philip Stanhope, the Fourth Earl of Chesterfield (Walpole, 1743). Proceeding along the basis of Walpole's reference to the piece in his *Short Notes on the Life of Horatio Walpole*, together with two printed copies and a holographic transcription of the text included in Walpole's commonplace book, Catherine M. S. Alexander has not only managed to determine the text's Walpolean authorship, but also to sketch out some of its possible political meanings (Alexander, 1998). Though Stanhope, the editor of the magazine in which "The Dear Witches" was published, had initially been an ally of Walpole's father, Sir Robert, he had reneged on his allegiances to the Prime Minister over the controversial Excise Bill, eventually becoming one of the main voices in the anti-Walpolean political faction from 1733 onwards. However, following Walpole's defeat and replacement by Carteret and the Patriots in 1742, Stanhope maintained his stance of political opposition, establishing with Pitt the "Broad Bottom" party that would come to play such a significant role in eighteenth-century politics. As his lifelong identification with the predicament of Prince Hamlet indicates, Shakespeare, for Walpole – and, indeed, for so many other writers of Gothic romance after him – had always been associated with the paternal function. Published in 1743, a mere year after Sir Robert's tense withdrawal from public life, "The Dear Witches" rewrites *Macbeth* so as to cast Walpole's father as the murdered King Duncan, and William Pulteney, the First Earl of Bath, as his Macbethian murderer; John Carteret, Pulteney's co-leader of the group of Patriot Whigs, occupies the role and invidious position of Banquo. Like Macbeth in the Shakespearean original, the ambitions of Pulteney in "The Dear Witches" are roused by the prophesies of three witches, the real-life political identities of whom are disclosed in Walpole's holographic transcriptions. Variously hailing Macbeth as Privy Counsellor and Earl of Bath, the witches sow the seeds of rivalry between Macbeth and Banquo by hailing them both as "Treasurer." "Double, Double, Toil and Trouble, / Parties burn and Nonsense bubble," the weird sisters in the Treasury Chamber chant, concocting in their cauldron an infernal brew from all manner of satirically revealing ingredients. In a reworking of the appearance of the three apparitions in Act IV, scene I in Shakespeare's play, the witches cause in the final scene of the piece to appear before Macbeth's eyes three specters; these ghosts, in turn, issue three caveats to their original prophesies, the most notable being that Macbeth should beware Macduff [Henry Pelham], and that Macbeth will "never be discarded" till Broadbottom, the Earl of Chesterfield, political opponent of Pulteney and editor of the very magazine in which "The Dear Witches" was published, becomes "Top O'TH'HILL."

Even if they might only have been fully appreciated by the most astute of readers of *Old England* in the 1740s, the political resonances to Walpole's Shakespearean *roman-à-clef* are intriguing: despite the aspersions cast by his opponents that the Prime Minister had betrayed the principles of Whiggism in becoming a lackey for the sovereign, Sir Robert Walpole, as Duncan, is somewhat uncomfortably cast as king, but only to fall victim to the ambitions of his opponent, William Pulteney; like his Mac-

bethian original, Pulteney's ambition subsequently turns on Banquo/Carteret, his erstwhile accomplice in the act of "regicide." While Carteret was, by all accounts, complicit in Sir Robert's political assassination, it is Pulteney whom Walpole in the piece holds particularly responsible, at once figuring and punishing his villainy through the horrid tendency to perceive specters. Indeed, to the modern reader more familiar with Walpole's better known Gothic productions, "The Dear Witches" is of interest for its graphic figuring of supernatural activity long before its formal inauguration in *The Castle of Otranto*: through a close reworking of Rowe's edition of *Macbeth*, "The Dear Witches" stages a particular way of ghost-seeing that would still be very much in place in Walpole's famous fictional experiment of 1764. Refusing to allow its economy to compromise the ghostly potential of the Shakespearean source, the closing lines of "The Dear Witches" involve a conflation of Macbeth's encounter with the witches in Act IV, scene i with the appearance of the ghost of Banquo before Macbeth in Act III, scene iv: "Thou art too like the Spirit of Banquo!" expostulates Pulteney, "Down! / Thy Pow'r doth fear mine Eye Balls. And thy Hair / [Thou other black-brow'd Wight] is like the first!" Shakespeare serves Walpole as a model for imagining the supernatural: as in Macbeth's perception of the ghost of Banquo in Act III, scene iv, Pulteney's vision of the spirit of Carteret is the externalized projection of a conscience that is riddled with guilt.

These Shakespearean connections between ghost-seeing and guilt would still be very much in place in *Otranto*. Though not without its references to *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*, the first ghostly episode in the text, in which Manfred is pursued by the ghost that leaves the frame of his grandfather's portrait, is primarily Macbethian insofar as it, too, involves a specter that issues out of the villain's sense of culpability. These relations are compounded in the second apparently supernatural episode, in which Manfred, struck by the resemblances between them, mistakes Theodore for the ghost of Alfonso. As the private projection of guilt, this specter is not perceived by the innocent Hippolita, and while Walpole's Hippolita is markedly different from her Shakespearean namesake, her reaction to her husband's spectral perceptions, not to mention her failure to see the ghost herself, directly replays, at once, those of Gertrude in the closet scene, and those of Lady Macbeth in relation to her husband's reactions to the ghost of Banquo. The third manifestation of supernatural activity in *Otranto*, in which the ghost of a skeleton wrapped in a hermit's cowl appears before Frederic, similarly draws upon a Macbethian coupling of ghosts and moral culpability: though initially compliant with Manfred's plans to effect a ghastly exchange of daughters and wards between them, Frederic, admonished by so horrific a representation of his guilt, falls to his knees in repentance. Subsequently, Manfred, in a hallucination that reworks Macbeth's vision of the dagger, stabs his own daughter, only to waken, like the somnambulistic Lady Macbeth, as if from a trance to beat his breast and wring his hands. When Walpole turns from Gothic romance to more narrowly theatrical form in his closet Gothic drama *The Mysterious Mother* in 1768, the Macbethian impulses behind the act of ghost-seeing become even more pronounced (Walpole, 2000). In the play's final scene, the mother who is guilty of deliberate incestuous seduction misrecognizes

in her son's visage the spectral return of her dead husband: "ha! is not that my lord? / He shakes the curtains of the nuptial couch, /And starts to find a son there!" (V.i.332–4). However, as the Countess subsequently realizes, this is no real ghost but only the projected phantasm of her own culpability: "Guilt rushes into my soul – my fancy say thee / Thy father's image" (V.i.367–9).

Though exploited by a writer such as Ann Radcliffe, Nathan Drake's "Shakspeare [*sic*] of Romance Writers," in *The Italian: Or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), the Macbethian couplings of villainy, moral culpability, and a predisposition toward spectral projection would reach their culmination in the fictions of T. J. Horsley Curties, perhaps no more so than in *The Watch Tower: or, the Sons of Ulthona: An Historic Romance* (1803–4), a four-volume Gothic fiction set variously in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland during 1303 and 1304. When not looking, as he had done in his Preface to *Ancient Records, Or, The Abbey of Saint Oswythe* (1801), to Ann Radcliffe, "*Udolpho's* unrivalled Foundress" (Curties, 1801, III, vi) as his fictional inspiration, Curties would invoke Shakespeare, "the Immortal Bard of Avon" and the Gothic muse *par excellence*, as justification for his use of the "real" ghost in the Preface to his first novel, *Ethelwina, Or The House of Fitz-Auburne* (Curties, 1799, iii). Though the title page of *The Watch Tower*, like many other Gothic romances in the period, adopts Mamillius's lines from *The Winter's Tale* – "a sad tale is best for Winter, / I have one of sprites and goblins / I'll tell it softly" – as its epigraph, the narrative opens on a decidedly Macbethian note when the villain Morcar orders his men to enter into the Castle of Ulthona, situated on an imaginary Scottish island to the west of the mainland, in order to murder in their sleep the entire "accursed race" of Ulthona in residence there. Recalling Macbeth's bloody assassination of Duncan, the "ensanguined butchers," we are told, "plunged deep in the bosoms of Ulthona's faithful race their gore drenched poniards!" (Curties, 1803–4, I.3), eventually murdering the noble leader, the Earl of Ulthona, himself. Like his Shakespearean original, Morcar the assassin is troubled by the spectral projections of a guilty conscience from this opening moment onwards. That at least two of his intended victims, including the two sons of the murdered Ulthona, Sigismorn and Adelbert, are not, as it turns out, dead, seems irrelevant, for, believing itself to be guilty, Morcar's conscience is all too susceptible to the conjuring up of awful spectral imaginings: "secret dread, and the fearful images the revived memory of his guilt created, haunted his thoughts, and weakened his firmest purposes. The shades of Sigismorn and his murdered consort roamed through the terrific edifice, and Morcar, though obdurate to every other fear, was keenly alive to all the mystic horrors of superstition, whose principle (grounded on a sickly conscience) had, at times, the power to disarm his boldest designs, and inflict upon his guilt the inward tortures of a self-accusing spirit" (Curties, 1803–4, I.108). As in so many other earlier Gothic texts, *Macbeth* furnishes Horsley Curties with a particular way of ghost-seeing, one in which the guilty mind of the villain conjures up specters and projects them onto the objects and people that surround him.

Although the ghosts that haunt Morcar in *The Watch Tower* are thus explained away as being ultimately of psychological rather than supernatural origin, Curties's narra-

tive nonetheless conserves a sense of the "unexplained supernatural" through recourse to a different mode of ghost-seeing, and one that is equally modeled on a Shakespearean original. For, unbeknown to Morcar, the two sons of Ulthona, Sigismorn and Adelbert, have been secreted away in a recess by Morcar's virtuous wife, Unna. These two young men are continuously visited by the ghosts of their dead parents, specters who, as in *Hamlet*, require of their offspring vengeance and the redressing of past injustices. While Curties's addition of a sibling and the ghost of the mother might seem to depart substantially from the Shakespearean source, the narrative focuses primarily upon the Hamlet-like interactions between the elder son, Sigismorn, and the spirit of his father, one who, as in Shakespeare's play, has returned from "the deep immensity of death's unfathomable region," that "hidden country," albeit more heavenly than purgatorial, "which must not be revealed to mortal ken" in order to "revisit this, the scene of his former earthly joys and final suffering!" (Curties, 1803–4, I.258). Clad in a helmet and visor, the ghost demands that Sigismorn "*redress the murderer*" and "*avenge the guiltless*" (Curties, 1803–4, I.195), and while he might primarily function in the narrative as an avatar of Shakespeare's Danish prince, Sigismorn at times addresses his father's ghost as Brutus does the spirit of Julius Caesar in Act IV, scene ii of that play: "'Speak!' he pronounced, 'wherefore this late and midnight visit? – what would you? – Declare your meaning openly, lest I be tempted to enforce its knowledge, and suspect you of some foul and evil practice, in thus secretly stealing on my rest at the dead hour when all but unquiet spirits are at peace. – speak'" (Curties, 1803–4, I.245). This soon gives way, though, to a more Hamlet-like response, as Sigismorn resolves to follow the ghost wherever it leads, eventually swearing "'by every tie divine or human, by Heaven's eternal justice, by the lightnings of its dread vengeance, and lastly, by thy own dread being, to perform thy awful bidding'" (Curties, 1803–4, I.257). This Shakespearean scenario, in which the ghost of a murdered father materializes before his offspring so as to prompt, through the act of vengeance, the reestablishment of truth and justice is one that is replayed tirelessly throughout Gothic drama and romance of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, figuring prominently in such texts as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest*, and Curties's *Ethelwina* (Townshend, 2008). Though frequently subjected to acts of regendering, *Hamlet* furnishes Gothic with a particular model for the envisioning of specters, one in which ghosts issue forth whenever the work of mourning has been suspended, interrupted, or villainously occluded. Jerrold E. Hogle's influential account of counterfeiting in early Gothic writing, too, has made clear the mode's indebtedness to Shakespeare's tragedy: as that scene in *Otranto* in which the ghost of the portrait mysteriously leaves its frame so clearly indicates, what was already an anxiety pertaining to the "counterfeiting" of signs in *Hamlet* is rendered spectral across the early Gothic tradition; as such, it is the "ghost of the counterfeit" that, for Hogle, constitutes the grounds for the Shakespeare/Gothic relationship (Hogle, 2008). In a number of other instances, the very existence of the three-volume Gothic romance looks to the story told by the ghost of old Hamlet as its origin, its impetus and its *raison d'être*: both Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790)

and the second chapter to her seminal *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) self-consciously employ the lines "I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul" from *Hamlet*, Act I, scene v as epigraph and guiding aesthetic principle.

However, as Curties's *The Watch Tower* so clearly demonstrates, Gothic appropriations of *Hamlet* are counterbalanced by, and juxtaposed with, the alternative model for the envisaging of specters offered up by the guilty projections of Macbeth the regicide. Indeed, throughout early Gothic writing, the virtuous encounter ghosts as if through *Hamlet*, the villainous by way of *Macbeth*. This points to a shared system of hierarchical ordering tacitly informing the work of many early writers of Gothic romance, for in much the same way that it celebrated the obscurity of terror over the immediacy of horror, so Ann Radcliffe's essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" did little to disguise its privileging of the supernatural in *Hamlet* over that of *Macbeth*: "Above every ideal being is the ghost of Hamlet," Mr. W___, Radcliffe's mouthpiece in the dialogue, proclaims (Radcliffe, 1826, 147); but "Who ever suffered for the ghost of Banquo, the gloomy and sublime kind of terror, which that of Hamlet calls forth?," Mr. W___ rhetorically continues, for here, "though deep pity mingles with our surprise and horror, we experience a far less degree of interest, and that interest too of an inferior kind" (Radcliffe, 1826, 149). For Radcliffe, *Macbeth* epitomized the forces of a horror that was all too immediate, *Hamlet* a superior form of sublimity marked out by its obscurity and its incompleteness. And yet, these internal differences in Shakespearean representations of the supernatural became insignificant in the face of broader national differences, for both tragedies were thought to figure modes of ghostliness that were in all ways superior to the chicanery demonstrated, say, by the shady figure of the Sicilian in Friedrich Von Schiller's *The Ghost-seer*. Accordingly, in citing Shakespeare as epigraph, or by appropriating and reworking aspects of his plays within the labyrinthine turns of fictional romance, Gothic writers from Walpole onwards sought to legitimize their own popular-cultural productions by situating them within the national "Gothic" literary heritage that ran from Chaucer, through Spenser and Shakespeare, and into Milton: the classicism of Milton was often overlooked in what was taken to be the embrace of a native English literary tradition. While Shakespearean allusion, citation, and appropriation undoubtedly served to authenticate the low-cultural form that was the Gothic, it was also through the Gothic that Shakespeare was popularized. With his *oeuvre* systematically plundered, his plays often cut up and reduced to a few frequently recycled quotations of horrific or terrific import, Shakespeare, as John Drakakis has argued, was fundamentally "re-territorialised" across so many pages of a "minor literature" (Drakakis, 2008, 10). What started in a Walpolean gesture of bardic protection, veneration, and emulation ended up in the wholesale dispersal of the Bard in the trash of the circulating libraries.

Villainy itself, of course, is a Gothic trope that frequently looks back to Shakespeare for its inspiration, its antecedents, and its defining characteristics. Though he might perceive ghosts in the fashion of Macbeth, the villain in Gothic romance of the 1790s is also often a composite entity modeled on characteristics gleaned piecemeal from Iachimo in *Cymbeline*, Iago from *Othello*, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, from

Richard III. Iachimo's lascivious gazing upon the body of the slumbering Imogen in Act II, scene ii is, as the epigraph to the chapter in which it occurs indicates, directly replayed in Father Ambrosio's scopophilic fetishizing of the sleeping Antonia in the third volume of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. Like Shakespeare's Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the Gothic villain, more aristocratic than regal, is frequently figured in "the winter of [his] discontent" (I.i.1), a dissatisfaction born, as in Shakespeare, in thwarted love and sexual desire: like Richard Gloucester, the villains of *The Old English Baron*, *The Romance of the Forest*, and *The Italian* choose their path of villainy since they too "cannot prove a lover" (I.i.28).[4] The sibling rivalry between Richard and Clarence, a biblical, even primeval, conflict that results in the act of fratricide, is replayed, via the similar scenario presented in *Hamlet*, in numerous Gothic plots during the 1790s, while the murder of the Princes in the tower is retold in the infanticidal fantasies of texts such as P. B. Shelley's *The Cenci* (1819), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Richard's desire to marry his niece Elizabeth in a last-ditch attempt at securing his tenuous claims to power is recalled in Manfred's quasi-incestuous approach upon his intended daughter-in-law Isabella in *Otranto*, while his self-conscious performance of pious humility, together with the hypocrisy of Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, informs the duplicity of Father Ambrosio in *The Monk*: the "naked villainy" of both is clothed "With odd old ends stolen forth of Holy Writ," and both seem saints when mostly they "play the devil" (I.iii.335–7). In almost all instances, the words of the malcontented Iago in *Othello* describe the characteristic pose of the villainous Catholic Father in early Gothic writing well: "I am not what I am" (I.i.65); his hatred, moreover, is often as impassioned as Iago's own, and just as it is Othello who, through the manipulations of Iago, ultimately comes to occupy the place of the villain in Shakespeare's play, so the Gothic villain is often motivated by what Desdemona identifies as the "monstrosity" of jealousy (III. iv.158). With the effects of his anti-social passions etched, like any Shakespearean character, clearly upon his face, the physiognomy of the Gothic villain becomes, in Lady Macbeth's words, "a book where men / May read strange matters" (I.v.60–1), perhaps no more so than in the description of Father Schedoni offered in the second chapter of Radcliffe's *The Italian*: "There was something in his physiognomy extremely singular, and that can not easily be defined. It bore the traces of many passions, which seemed to have fixed the features they no longer animated" (Radcliffe, 1968, 35).

The centrality of Shakespeare to the Gothic would continue to be affirmed in some of the well-known Gothic fictions of the Victorian *fin de siècle*.[5] However, unlike the earlier tradition of Gothic romance from which it derives, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) uses Shakespeare not to invoke the forces of horror and terror so much as to provide a salutary antidote to their excesses, figuring in the text a sanitized world of the aesthetic in which Shakespearean drama has reassuringly stepped in, if only temporarily, to take horror's place. From the outset of the narrative, Dorian Gray, hailed variously as the young Adonis or Narcissus of Henry Wotton's idealizations, embodies a classical, Hellenistic model of stylized Beauty that is as far removed from the irregular and idiosyncratic outlines of the "Gothic" aesthetic as conceivably

possible. It is in his Dandyesque pursuit of a life lived and structured exclusively in and through the experience of art and artistic sensation that Dorian becomes enamored of Sybil Vane, a young and beautiful actress renowned for her performances of Shakespeare's heroines. As Dorian describes them to Wotton, Sybil's acting abilities are marked by nothing if not their versatility, for she is as accomplished as a performer of the roles of such comic figures as Rosalind as she is the more tragic figures of Juliet, Imogen, Ophelia, Cordelia, and Desdemona. The boards of the Shakespearean stage on which she routinely struts and frets is only one aspect of a life that, well beyond the limits of the theatre, has become thoroughly theatrical. It is this collapse of life into art, and vice versa, that attracts the Paterian Aesthete Dorian, as inherently opposed to the stylized contours of classical beauty as the "Gothic" Shakespeare for this Hellenist might be. However, coercing the cynical Wotton into accompanying him to a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, Dorian is made privy that fateful night not to a perfectly realized Shakespearean world of Art so much as a bad performance spoiled and marred by the stammering woodenness of Sybil's performance. In the place thought to be occupied by Beauty, Dorian gazes to his dismay upon the deformed face of Shakespearean monstrosity itself: "He felt as if he had come to look for Miranda and had been met by Caliban" (Wilde, 1974, 80). Repulsed rather than attracted by her intimations of a real-life desire that exceeds the artificial world of Shakespearean romance, Dorian painfully rejects Sybil, permanently embalming her, through suicide, within the tragic role of Ophelia in which he had originally discovered her.

For Dorian, however, the Shakespearean realm of the aesthetic has barely been ruptured and traversed by the pulsations of an unbearable reality when the forces of horror begin to make themselves manifest. With regards to Wilde's text, in fact, the category of a "Gothic Shakespeare" reads oxymoronically, for the end of Shakespeare in *Dorian Gray* marks the advent of horror: returning to his apartment to gaze, clandestinely, upon his own portrait, Dorian notices there, for the first time, "a touch of cruelty in the mouth" (Wilde, 1974, 90). In earlier Gothic fictions, Shakespeare had served as the means through which horror was invoked, figured, and negotiated; when placed alongside other texts in the tradition, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* marks such an important moment in Gothic appropriations of Shakespeare because it is here that the Bard is figured as the very antithesis of horror and terror, the trademarks of Gothic writing itself. E. J. Clery has pointed out the extent to which the famed eighteenth-century Shakespearean actress Sarah Siddons guided and inspired the transgressive fictional endeavors of women Gothic writers as diverse as Ann Radcliffe and Charlotte Dacre in the period (Clery, 2000, 1–24). In Wilde's novel, by contrast, Sybil Vane as Shakespearean actress lives and dies in a hermetically sealed world of Art, one that remains always at considerable remove from the unruly passions of Gothic fictions. But as pleasurable as it might be, not even Sybil Vane's world of Shakespearean theatricality can keep the Gothic excesses of passion, desire, murder, and addiction permanently at bay. All the while that the actress has rehearsed the intricacies of Shakespearean pose and gesture, horror has been waiting patiently in the wings, and it is this horror that begins to speak through its graphic inscriptions

on the portrait the moment that the Shakespearean world of the aesthetic is abandoned. In the face of a horror that seemingly knows no bounds, Dorian becomes increasingly overwhelmed. Somewhat ineffectually, he invokes lines from the question that Polonius addresses to Laertes in Act IV, scene vii of *Hamlet* in order to express his growing sense of unease at the portrait's ghastly metamorphosis: "The memory of the thing is hateful to me. Why do you talk of it? It used to remind me of those curious lines in some play – 'Hamlet,' I think – how do they run? – 'Like the painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart.' Yes: this is what it was like" (Wilde, 1974, 214). Though he lacks the sublime elevation not only of Shakespeare's most villainous characters, but of their later Gothic incarnations too, Dorian's fate is determined, after all, by precisely the same set of constraints: villainy, no matter how it is reconfigured, indelibly writes itself upon the face of its perpetrators. As if to underline this important Shakespearean lesson, Dorian's physiognomy becomes, in the novel's final moments, a ghastly representation of the sinful debts that this villainous dandy has accrued.

This complex interchange between Gothic horror and a sanitized version of Shakespeare plays itself in other well-known fictions of the late nineteenth century too. As Christy Desmet has recently argued, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is a text that is not so much populated as "haunted" by Shakespearean quotation and allusion (Desmet, 2009, 199). This observation is well made, and as Desmet's nuanced reading of the text proceeds to demonstrate, much of Stoker's narrative turns upon a triangulated appropriation of aspects of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, respectively. Desmet's observations are worth exploring further, for, in addition to providing a fresh approach to the somewhat overworked critical preoccupation with gender and sexuality in *Dracula*, they also have much to say about the performance of Shakespeare on stage, from the Bard's own day and up to Stoker's late nineteenth-century present. The echoes of *King Lear* in the Seward/Renfield subplot are the perhaps the most transparent, and, as such, the most easily dealt with. Seward, for instance, has a Lear-like conviction that "that way madness lies" (Stoker, 1998, 263); apocryphal wisdom seems to issue forth from the mouth of a madman or a literal Shakespearean "fool"; and Renfield reworks Lear's "unaccommodated man" speech in Act III, scene iv in his own reference to "'Rats and mice and such small deer,' as Shakespeare has it, 'chicken feed of the larder' they might be called" (Stoker, 1998, 310). As Desmet points out, much of what Seward describes as Renfield's behavior as "a zoöphagous (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker, 1998, 103) involves the horrid inversion and literalization of Gloucester's lines from Act IV, scene i in *King Lear*: "as flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods, / They kill us for their sport"; in this deeply Shakespearean scenario, Desmet continues, the only role that remains neglected and unplayed in *Dracula* is that of Cordelia.

Stoker's use of Shakespeare elsewhere in *Dracula*, however, restores the Shakespearean heroine to center stage, if not in the figure of Cordelia, then at least via Desdemona from *Othello*, Lady Macbeth from Shakespeare's Scottish play, and Ophelia from *Hamlet*. In an early letter to Mina, for instance, Lucy, recounting the wooing of Quincy Morris, describes herself as sympathizing "with poor Desdemona when she

had such a dangerous stem poured in her ear, even by a black man" (Stoker, 1998, 90). Despite this conscious identification, it is the role of Lady Macbeth to which Lucy for much of the novel is most drawn, particularly when, following her vamping by Dracula, she becomes as somnambulistic as her Shakespearean original. Her sleep continuously disturbed, Lucy is equally "troubled with thick-coming fancies / That keep her from her rest" (V.iii.40–1). All too mindful of the threat that Lucy, this Lady Macbethian agent of violence, ruthlessness, and emasculation poses, Van Helsing and his Crew of Light seek firmly to impose upon Lucy the role of the compliant and devoted Ophelia, the salutary, altogether more emulable Shakespearean heroine who is driven beyond the bounds of reason through her dedication to the powers of patriarchy wielded by her father and her lover. Lady Macbeth and Ophelia furnished Stoker with two competing, apparently mutually exclusive models of femininity, aspects of which are identifiable behind most of the representations of women in the novel. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia, even when she is absent from the stage, makes her presence felt through flowers. For instance, Gertrude's account of her watery death in the stirring "There is a willow grows aslant a brook" speech in Act IV, scene vii makes specific mention of the flowers with which the suicidal maiden bedecked herself (IV. ii.139–42); later, during his funeral oration for his sister, Laertes expresses his wish that "from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring" (V.i.222–3); while Gertrude, offering "Sweets to the sweet," bitterly strews her grave with the flowers that should have adorned Ophelia's marriage bed (V.i.227–9). As Stoker's Lucy realizes, the garlands of garlic flowers with which the men are keen to protect her are Ophelia-like in the extreme: "Well, here I am to-night, hoping for sleep, and lying like Ophelia in the play, with 'virgin crants and maiden strewments.' I never liked garlic before, but to-night it is delightful! There is peace in its smell; I feel sleep coming already. Good-night, everybody" (Stoker, 1998, 169). Arthur and Van Helsing attempt to anaesthetize and render comatose the sleep-walking Lady Macbeth with the floral opiates of Ophelia's garland, a garland that is also patriarchy's noose. However, Lady Macbeth does anything but disappear in this enforcement of masculine control. Throughout her treatment, in fact, Lucy plays Shakespeare's innocent Ophelia when conscious, his dangerous *femme fatale* when asleep. As Dr. Seward observes, "It was certainly odd that whenever she got into that lethargic state, with the stertorous breathing, she put the flowers from her; but that when she waked she clutched them close" (Stoker, 1998, 196). Lucy's death is seemingly a victory for patriarchal power, for her funeral, albeit without the controversies surrounding a Christian burial – unlike the suicide, the vampire can only rest in consecrated ground – directly replays Ophelia's death and funeral in *Hamlet*: like Ophelia, Lucy is "a lovely lady garlanded with flowers" (Stoker, 1998, 212), and Arthur mourns her, Hamlet-like, in the sable attire of deepest mourning. When she rises as the Un-dead, however, she returns as the figure of Lady Macbeth, the "Bloofer Lady" who, like Shakespeare's *femme fatale*, has "given suck" to numerous infants prior to dashing them to their deaths, but one whose lips, rather than hands, are stained with the guilty traces of blood. Only once she has been subjected to brutal dismemberment at the

hands of the vampire-hunters does she resume her tragic status: the irreversible death of a young and beautiful Ophelia is a small price to pay for the eradication of the monstrous Lady Macbeth who, at times, possesses her. Working through the leads offered in the Bloofer Lady incident in Chapter 13 of *Dracula*, Desmet has convincingly argued that Stoker intended *Dracula* partly as a paean to the versatility of Ellen Terry, the "leading lady" of the Lyceum, the London theatre of which Stoker was manager, an actress renowned, like Sarah Siddons before her, for her passionate interpretation of Lady Macbeth and the pathos of her Ophelia. Beyond this specific theatrical context, Stoker appropriates Shakespeare in *Dracula* in order to register a sense of horror enshrined in a woman's uncanny, mercurial ability to transform from deranged victim of love to Amazonian perpetrator of violence.

Masculine identity in *Dracula* is equally couched in a network of Shakespearean allusion. Even before he arrives at the Castle, the Macbethian intertext is invoked in Jonathan Harker's recording of "the continuous knocking at my door" (Stoker, 1998, 33) that wakes him from slumber in the Hotel Royale, Klausenburgh, a seemingly insignificant detail that is almost certainly an allusion to the knocking at the gate and other similar auditory hallucinations accounted in *Macbeth*. But if this implies, as in earlier Gothic fictions, a sense of Harker's Macbethian guilt and culpability, this is rapidly dispensed with when, upon his arrival at Castle Dracula, his experience, at least self-consciously and intentionally, becomes more that of Shakespeare's guiltless Prince, the young Hamlet of Denmark. As the case of Lucy clearly reveals, appropriations of *Macbeth* in Stoker's fiction signal the presence of danger, importing into the text a range of sexual and gendered anxieties that can only be counteracted by the sanitizing alternatives afforded by *Hamlet*. Just as the crowing of the cock marks the appearance of the dawn and the disappearance of his father's specter in Shakespeare's play, so Harker's nocturnal discourses with his vampiric host are punctuated by cock-crow and the breaking of the day: as Harker himself acknowledges, "this diary seems horribly like the beginning of the 'Arabian Nights,' for everything has to break off at cockcrow – or like the ghost of Hamlet's father" (Stoker, 1998, 61). However, these textual correspondences are not long in place when Jonathan dangerously reinvokes the Macbethian script by describing his consciousness as being peopled by "all sorts of horrible imaginings" (Stoker, 1998, 65), phantasmatic projections rather like the scorpions, the ghosts, the daggers, and other manifold horrors that plague Macbeth's own. Directly thereafter, though, Harker, as if keen to repress the guilt generated by his passive compliance with Dracula's queer hospitality and his momentary identification with the figure of Macbeth, returns to the guiltlessness of the philosophical Hamlet in order to rework his "What a piece of work is man" speech from Act II, scene ii in the lines "What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man?" (Stoker, 1998, 66). Seeking, simultaneously, to accrue to himself the virtue of the Shakespearean Prince and position the Count, at least initially, as the ghost of a wronged but noble father, Harker is determined to read his experience at the Count's unhomely version of Elsinore through the lens of *Hamlet*: strategically ignoring Hamlet's own resolve to "wipe away all trivial fond records,

/ All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past / That youth and observation copied there" (I.v.99–101), he looks to his tragic idol as justification for his own strange compulsion to write, document and record: "Up to now I never quite knew what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say:– 'My tablets! quick, my tablets! / 'Tis meet that I put it down, etc.', for now, feeling as though my own brain were unhinged or as if the shock had come which must end in its undoing, I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me" (Stoker, 1998, 68).

As tenacious as his conscious identification with the sanitary role of Hamlet might be, Harker's experience at the Castle disconcertingly begins to repeat the script of *Macbeth*, especially when he is approached by the three vampire sisters, the "weird sisters" of both Shakespeare and Stoker's designation. Threatening him, through their penetrative and phallic gestures, with a version of the "unsexing" that Lady Macbeth invites upon herself from the preternatural world of Spirits in Act I, scene iv, Jonathan, already complicit in Dracula's scheme, unwittingly becomes during the vamping scene "quite unmanned in folly" (III.iv.73), the emasculated object of Lady Macbeth's derision and scorn. With his masculine gender-identity brought thus seriously into question, Harker's position at the Castle becomes even more invidious as his experience becomes increasingly Macbethian: as in the Shakespearean original, his role is one that is unavoidably implicated in guilt. To coin the phrase used frequently throughout Stoker's text, Jonathan's "unconscious cerebration," glimpses into the darkness of which are momentarily afforded by his "queer dreams" (Stoker, 1998, 32), is one that is diseased with repressed culpability: the guilt accrued through his delight in the unsexing threatened by the weird sisters – "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker, 1998, 69) – as well as the guilt contingent upon the act of parricide – the impulse toward murdering Dracula, vampiric father and King. As a template for Jonathan's conscious sense of self, Macbeth has nothing to offer him: the role is too fraught with parricidal culpability, ghosts, and the emasculating effects thereof to serve as a comfortable object of identification. Again, then, it is to the safer limits of *Hamlet* that Harker must return, but his determination to abandon *Macbeth* and embrace *Hamlet* is compromised by the fact that he has already been thoroughly unsexed. Indeed, if he has any role to play in *Hamlet* at all, it is not that of the noble Prince, but rather that of the love-sick and mournful Ophelia. Raving in her madness, Ophelia poignantly exits the world of the drama with the words "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (IV.v.69–70). Upon at least two occasions in *Dracula*, Harker closes his journal entries with similarly wistful, Ophelia-like strains: "Goodbye, Mina, if I fail; goodbye, my faithful friend and second father; goodbye, all, and last of all Mina!" (Stoker, 1998, 78) on the morning of June 25, and "Goodbye all! Mina!" on June 29 (Stoker, 1998, 85). As Sister Agatha's letter to Mina indicates, Harker's traumatic experiences at Castle Dracula have induced symptoms of madness remarkably similar to those of the confused and bereaved Ophelia: "He has had some fearful shock – so says our doctor – and in his delirium his ravings have been dreadful; of wolves and poison and blood; of ghosts and demons; and I fear to say of what" (Stoker,

1998, 134). Here, Harker's destination is, in a very literal sense, the same nunnery to which Hamlet had condemned Ophelia in Act III, scene i. Later, upon the death of his surrogate father Mr. Hawkins, Jonathan expresses the depth of grief similar to that experienced by Ophelia at the loss of Polonius. And while men in Stoker's narrative might strive to recover their women from the clutches of Lady Macbeth so that they might play the role of the mad but compliant Ophelia, it is ultimately Jonathan, and not Mina or Lucy, who gets to assume Ophelia's garland of flowers: "put these flowers round your neck," Van Helsing later demands of him, handing him a wreath of withered garlic blossoms (Stoker, 1998, 288). Although he rejects his role of Macbeth in order to aspire to the role of the virtuous Hamlet, it is the role of Ophelia that Jonathan Harker plays most effortlessly, spontaneously, and convincingly. His eventual return to a more suitably masculine role is only facilitated by the utter exclusion of all feminine forms of influence, not least of all in the omission of women from the man's work that is vampire hunting. Men must play men, and women, women, to the extent that when Mina makes her short-lived but powerful Shakespearean debut as the restless Lady Macbeth following the Count's advances, it is altogether less threatening than Jonathan's transsexual performance as Ophelia. Though, during Shakespeare's day, there would have been nothing untoward in a male playing the role of the heroine, the "natural" alliances between the sex of the character and that of the actor/actress playing him/her that had, despite a number of eighteenth-century exceptions, been built up since the Restoration throw into relief the broader gendered anxieties of Stoker's text: unlike the sublimity evoked by the earlier cross-dressing actress Sarah Siddons, Harker's playing of Ophelia is a symptom of the havoc that the vampire has wreaked with the nation's cherished cultural scripts.

In general, Gothic fictions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had appropriated Shakespeare under the impetus of the broader cultural workings of bardology. Even though Gothic writing, from the 1790s through to the 1890s, had placed *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in hierarchical relation to one another, elevating the fixed gendered identities and modes of ghost-seeing envisaged in the former play over the slippages and villainous hallucinations of the latter, there is never any perceivable sense in the earlier works to suggest that Shakespeare is anything other than what the centuries-old process of canonization had made him out to be: the great English Bard who, despite also being the master of nature and human nature, was never more in possession of his powers of original genius than when he was trafficking in the world of the supernatural. Appropriations and adaptations of Shakespeare in Gothic writing of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, often take issue with Shakespeare's bardic status, importing his scripts into their fictions if only as a means of interrogating the gendered ideals, the sexual positions, and the neat system of humanist values that they apparently enshrine. In part, this process relies upon an altogether more literal process of de- and re-territorialization, for while Shakespeare in Gothic fictions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had invariably served the needs of either Englishness or, more broadly, Britishness, his scripts in modern and contemporary Gothic lose their close relations to nationalism in order to become thoroughly globalized cultural

phenomena. Richard Wilson has recently charted the course of "Gothic Shakespeare" in France, from the anti-Shakespearean sentiments expressed in the eighteenth century by Diderot and Voltaire, through to the embrace of Shakespeare's decidedly "Gothic" qualities – specters, revenants, monsters, shadows – in the work of such influential modern theorists as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Foucault (Wilson, 2007). Gothic Shakespeare, today, is, in some senses, the product of French post-structuralist theory. Where literature itself is concerned, "Gothic Shakespeare" in the period from, roughly, the late 1970s to the present day closely parallels, and in some senses exemplifies and embodies, contemporary developments within the academic field of Shakespeare Studies. Often self-consciously informed by the critical scrutiny which such diverse theoretical orientations as cultural materialism, new historicism, deconstruction, postcolonialism, feminism, psychoanalysis, gender studies, and queer theory have brought to bear upon Shakespeare's plays, appropriations of Shakespeare in modern and contemporary Gothic writing take the discourse of bardology to its limits. Of all the modern writers of Gothic, it is arguably Angela Carter who has made the most sustained use of Shakespearean quotation, allusion, adaptation, and appropriation, from her vision of a "Gothic Ophelia" in her first novel *Shadow Dance* (1966), through to the rewriting of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in her last novel *Wise Children* (1991).[6] However, attempting, in her "Overture and Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (1985) to subject Shakespeare to a subversive act of rereading informed by the tenets of postcolonialism and gender theory, Carter sought curiously to foreclose upon the possibilities of a "Gothic Shakespeare" through interrogating the play's construction of the wood in which most of the action is set. Though apparently situated outside Athens, the wood in Carter's story is "really located in the English midlands, possibly near Bletchley" (Carter, 1996, 45). Carter's mouthpiece here is the Golden Herm, Titania's changeling attendant "stolen from an Indian King" in Shakespeare's play. Transported from the tropical Southern Wilds, from a balmy Indian world of spice, mangoes, porphyry, and lapis lazuli to a damp wood during a particularly inclement English summer, the Golden Herm is led to ruminate upon his new locale, incessantly sneezing with a rain-induced cold as she/he does so. "The English wood," the Herm maintains, is barely suited to the horrific turns of Gothic fantasy, for, in reality, it is "nothing like the dark, necromantic forest in which the Northern European imagination begins and ends, where its dead and the witches live, and Baba-yaga stalks about in her house with chicken's feet looking for children in order to eat them" (Carter, 1996, 45). The forest of the Northern nations is qualitatively different from the woods of England, a difference that resides in things other than the number of trees to be found therein. For while an English wood, the Herm continues, might well be moderately labyrinthine and maze-like in places, it is never entirely trackless; being lost in the forests of the North, by contrast, is more likely to effect a horrific erasure of subjectivity without the possibility of discovery, recuperation, or return. And furnishing those who might stray in it with the bounty of nature (mushrooms, dandelions, wild berries, nuts), the English wood never poses any real threat of death. Ultimately,

the difference between the English wood and the Northern forest for the Herm hinges upon the supernatural: as she/he claims, "That forest is haunted; this wood is enchanted" (Carter, 1996, 46). While the sudden movements of the startled animals that populate the English wood might well "'give you a fright'" (Carter, 1996, 46), the locale bears little potential for the extremes of horror and terror, for here, "neither hobgoblin nor foul fiend can daunt your spirit because the English lobs and hobs reflect nothing more than a secular faith in the absence of harm in nature" (Carter, 1996, 46). Transported to Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare's English woods bear no potential for Gothic imagining. Instead, they are the purged and disinfected constructions of nineteenth-century nostalgia, locales utterly cleansed of "the grave, hideous and elemental beings with which the superstition of an earlier age had filled [them]" (Carter, 1996, 46–7), and peopled, through the imaginations of Mendelssohn, Doyle, Morris, and Fuseli, with utterly denatured and castrated fairy-beings. In 1765, Samuel Johnson had described *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play infused with "the *Gothick* mythology of fairies"; reflecting the semantic changes that the term had undergone in two intervening centuries, Carter uses *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in order to interrogate the play's "Gothic" potential.

However, there remains another sense in which Carter's reworking of Shakespeare in this story remains utterly in keeping with the trajectory of much modern and contemporary Gothic fiction: in figuring Titania's changeling as "*hermaphrodite verus*" (Carter, 1996, 44), a golden-skinned hermaphrodite with both a penis and a vagina but with only one testicle and one ovary, she participates in the twentieth-century tradition of Gothic freakery. The freak, one of the most frequently deployed conventions in modern Gothic writing, invariably looks back to Shakespeare for its most characteristic forms: as the recently restored "Special message Prologue" to Tod Browning's early horror film *Freaks* (1932) makes clear, freakish genealogy begins with Shakespeare's Caliban, and works its way through such other Shakespearean figures as Gloucester [Richard III] and Frankenstein's monster. As the veering off of freakishness into sheer monstrosity in Browning's film so clearly demonstrates, it is often to Shakespeare's plays, particularly *The Tempest* and *Richard III*, that writers and producers of Gothic in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries look in their particular figurings of monstrosity and freakery. Certainly, Iain Banks's account of manufactured Frankensteinian monstrosity in *The Wasp Factory* (1984) relies considerably upon the reworking of Shakespeare. Set on Portneil, a remote imaginary island off the Scottish coast, the text immediately recalls *The Tempest*. In Banks's narrative, though, the generally kind and amicable father/daughter relations between Prospero and Miranda are distorted in the pathological relationship between Frank Cauldhame and his father. Beguiled by his father's curious experiments into gender and gendered identity, Frank, born female, is, in the words of Prospero to Miranda, "ignorant of what thou art" (I.ii.18); from the outset, the imposed sexual naiveté of Frank is registered in Shakespearean terms, for it was for years, the retrospective narrator tells us, that he believed that "Fellatio was a character in *Hamlet*" (Banks, 1990, 14). Throughout Frank's account of his life, in fact, Shakespeare features prominently: in one moment of

particularly black humor, Eric, his renegade, psychotic brother, calls home only in order to misquote, unprovoked and entirely out of context, a line from Hamlet's most famous soliloquy in Act III, scene i: "To bed, to sleep; perchance to masturbate. Ah, there's the rub!" (Banks, 1990, 156). Skewed, eroticized, and cited out of context, Shakespeare enters into Gothic writing of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries under the sign of perversion, a precedent set, as Yael Shapira has shown, in the numerous perversions of *Romeo and Juliet* in Lewis's *The Monk* (Shapira, 2009), and more disturbingly, in Mary Shelley's perverse rewriting of the father/daughter relations of *King Lear* and *The Tempest* in her account of inappropriate filial love in *Matilda* (1819) (Townshend, 2007; Weber, 2009). Eventually confronting his father with the fiction of his own emasculation, Frank telllingly describes his father as being "like a magician" (Banks, 1990, 178): turning into pink wax or plasticine what was once thought to be Frank's formalin-preserved testicles, Mr. Cauldhame is revealed to be a wicked Prospero. With the truth of her female sex thus disclosed, Frances, like the heroine of a Shakespearean romance, eagerly and effortlessly steps into her new gendered identity. Performing the scripts of femininity with the same ease with which she had once performed the role of castrated masculinity, all the world, for Frances Lesley Cauldhame, is, indeed, a stage, a cross-dressing Shakespearean comedy in which she has played "the fool all along" (Banks, 1990, 183).

As serial-killing renegade, Frank/Frances Cauldhame is more monster than freak, but it is in Katherine Dunn's postmodern novel *Geek Love* (1989) that the freak of twentieth-century Gothic writing discloses most clearly its indebtedness to Shakespeare. Recalling the conventions of so many early Gothic fictions, the title page of Dunn's novel is presided over by a Shakespearean epigraph, "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine," Prospero's often-quoted lines from Act V, scene i of *The Tempest*. Although it is only the figure of Miranda in Dunn's narrative who occupies, via her name and her subject-position as daughter, an objectively Shakespearean position, other characters in the novel share strong similarities with those in Shakespeare's play: Arty Binewski, the incestuous uncle–father of Miranda, wields a malevolent form of the same patriarchal magic that is commanded by Prospero, while the freakish, disfigured body of Olympia, Miranda's unacknowledged mother, recalls that of the deformed and misshapen Caliban. Here too, Shakespeare enters into modern Gothic under the sign of a perversion: thoroughly revising the sentimental father/daughter relations presented in *The Tempest*, this Prospero-like father is unable to acknowledge his daughter, his freakish thing of darkness, as his own. Olympia seeks to supplement the gap in Miranda's personal history occasioned by the foreclosure of her incestuous parental origins through providing her with a feminized history of her own past, and in so doing, she discloses a gendered blindspot at the heart of the Shakespearean script: folding the role of the freakish Caliban into the figure of Miranda's absent mother, Olympia articulates the feminine version of Miranda's private history that, in *The Tempest*, remains forever unspoken, occluded, and repressed, equipping her daughter in the process with a graphic history of paternal failure, folly, and weakness that will eventually enable her to resist and undermine her father's magical powers. As in the

work of Angela Carter, Dunn's "Gothic Shakespeare" in *Geek Love* relies upon a feminist dismantling and refashioning of the Bard's patriarchal scripts.

These examples of the appropriation of *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* within the context of Gothic freakery are not to suggest that, within modern and contemporary Gothic writing, Shakespeare serves exclusively the needs of horrific embodiment and grotesque corporeality, to the utter exclusion of the more ethereal, terror-inducing turns of the supernatural. Bret Easton Ellis's recent novel *Lunar Park* (2005), for example, returns to *Hamlet*, Gothic writing's richest seam, its most frequently plundered intertextual resource, in order to produce a postmodern Gothic fiction marked by the terror, the paranoia, and the anxiety of the ghostly encounter. Framed by an epigraph taken from act I, scene v of *Hamlet* – "From the table of my memory / I'll wipe away all trivial fond records …" – Ellis's narrative is based upon the most iconic moment in Shakespeare's play: a father who returns as a spectral presence to haunt his son. But the quintessentially "Gothic" nature of Ellis's appropriation lies in the subtle changes he makes to this recognizably Shakespearean scenario: while, in *Hamlet*, it is the ghost of a noble father who makes before his son a not altogether unwelcomed return, in *Lunar Park* it is the specter of a father who, in life, had been "careless, abusive, alcoholic, vain, angry, paranoid" (Ellis, 2005, 5) that returns, provoking in Bret the son the traumas of reawakened memory as he does so. Certainly, the ghost of Bret's father recalls more the pernicious fathers and father-figures featured in the work of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe than the sage paternity of Old Hamlet. Violent, critical, and abusive, Bret's father is similar to the father of Jack Torrance in Stephen King's *The Shining*, a father/son relationship that, in King's novel too, is constructed in terms of a perverted Hamlet/Old Hamlet relation. For Old Hamlet's armor, this ghost substitutes a cream-colored 450 SL Mercedes Benz; in place of Old Hamlet's ghostliness, this father makes his presence felt primarily through flickering appearances on television screens and computer monitors. Nonetheless, the narrative that unfolds remains a recasting of Shakespeare's play in postmodern American suburbia, a classless domestic tragedy played out spatially between the house at 307 Elsinore Lane, Fortinbras Mall, Ophelia Boulevard, Claudius Street, and Horatio Park. While he might be clad more in brightly colored Hawaiian-print shirts than the nighted cloak of the Danish Prince, Bret's life of drug addiction, sexual debauchery, and consumerist excess renders his experience a suitably postmodern equivalent to Hamlet's too, too sullied flesh. Perhaps most significantly, the appearance of the father's ghost in *Lunar Park*, as in so many earlier Gothic texts, is the direct consequence of a failed, halted, or curtailed act of mourning, for having disregarded his father's expressed intentions that his ashes be spread at sea off the coast of Cabo San Lucas, a negligent Bret has had the ashes stored in a safety-deposit box in a branch of Bank of America. As of old, the ghost of the father has returned because the time of mourning is out of joint. But setting this to rights is only one of the specter's motives; his other, more pressing imperative is one that is derived directly from the biblical sentiment invoked by Walpole in the Preface to the first edition of *Otranto*, namely that "the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and

fourth generation." Here, the father's ghost returns with the injunction "to remember," for in accordance with the Walpolean formula, the strained father/son relationship between Bret and his father has played itself out in the relationship between Bret and his own son, Robby, a boy named, in a literal enactment of the horrible circularity of transgenerational guilt, after his paternal grandfather. Unable to offer Robby anything but the most cursory of paternal gestures, Bret becomes a negative version of the father cast not only in the mold of his own father, but of all the cold, sentimentally unengaged fathers who enter into Gothic writing with the figure of Walpole's Manfred. His presence in the house on Elsinore Lane, in turn, becomes as ghostly as that of his father's. "Remember," Robert and Robby both cry, insisting on various forms of inscription while all along Bret seeks the erasure of text and memory. Splicing *Hamlet* with a Walpolean concern with the sins of the father that repeat themselves endlessly in subsequent generations, *Lunar Park* takes the notion of a "Gothic Shakespeare" well into the twenty-first century. However, the movement of the narrative is precisely toward a dislocation of the "Gothic" and the "Shakespearean," a separation out of precisely these two intertextual strands. The warnings issued by the ghost of his own father have powerfully reminded Bret of the terrors of paternal shortcomings, and even if it is only at the insistence of his wife, Bret sets out, through psychotherapy and various self-conscious forms of paternal performance, to heal his relationship with Robby so as to break with the inherited cycle of damage and neglect. But still, the admonishing voice of the spectral father persists. While he may have indeed have been placated by Bret's scattering of his ashes in the desired place during the narrative's closing moments, Robby's disappearance has meant that the father/son relationship of the second generation remains, ultimately, unhealed. Despite the energy that the narrative has directed toward the severing of the coupling of *Hamlet* with a Walpolean vision of endlessly repeated paternal guilt, a "Gothic Shakespeare" in *Lunar Park* remains ultimately very much in place.

These are by no means the only instances of the appropriations of Shakespeare in modern and contemporary Gothic fictions; other prominent examples from the earlier decades of the twentieth century include the insistent illusions to *Othello* in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) – a set of intertextual links that, as Kathleen Butterly Nigro has argued, serves to frame Maxim de Winter more as a jealous, Othello-like assassin than victimized romantic hero (Nigro, 2000) – as well as Shirley Jackson's enlisting of *Twelfth Night* in her chilling exploration of queer modes of desiring in her acclaimed *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959). In a number of other instances within modern culture, it is the cinema screen that marks the logical destination of a "Gothic Shakespeare," not only, as Peter Hutchings has pointed out, overtly in a British horror film such as *Theatre of Blood* (1973), but more subtly in, say, Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971), Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996), and Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1991) (Hutchings, 2008). These and other filmic adaptations of Shakespeare are as indebted to the visual aesthetics of horror film as early forms of Gothic writing had been indebted to Shakespeare. In modern film and performance alike, Shakespeare and the visual elements of Gothic aesthetic have been drawn into a two-way process of exchange, and

in what figures as a defiance of Polonius's advice to Laertes, the Bard has become, in relation to Gothic, both a borrower and a lender. The populist democratization of Shakespeare that this process has constituted achieves perhaps its most extreme forms of realization in what Glennis Byron has identified as the reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*, the tragedy of adolescent love and desire, in Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series (Byron, 2008). Though markedly purged of its eroticism, the dry set-text on the College English curriculum has become the primary bloody intertext of Teen Gothic. In a similar vein, recent Manga versions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* "suit the action to the word" in rendering Shakespeare's texts in graphic images of horror, exploiting the plays' Gothic visual potential in ways not too dissimilar to the endeavors of Henry Fuseli at Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in the late 1780s and 1790s. The passages of purple Shakespearean prose once anthologized in collectible leather-bound editions have been recycled in the black-and-white graphics of Japanese-inspired comic culture. If these shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended: though seemingly antithetical to one another, the terms "Gothic" and "Shakespeare" have been inseparably linked from the start; to separate the terms, one from the other, would be perpetuate on the corpus of the Gothic a form of violence not unlike that inflicted by the Goth brothers Demetrius and Chiron in Shakespeare's own *Titus Andronicus*. Without Shakespeare, the iron tongue of midnight may well cease to toll. *Exit Ghost*. The rest, of course, is silence.

Notes

1 For accounts of the place of Shakespeare in Horace Walpole's familial relations, see Williams (2009) and Townshend (2007, 62–6).

2 For accounts of Ann Radcliffe's use of Shakespeare, see Wright (2008) and Norton (2009).

3 See, for instance, Jeffrey Kahan on W. H. Ireland's use of Shakespeare (Kahan, 2009), as well as Michael Gamer and Robert Miles's (2008) account of Ireland's *Vortigern* as an instance of a "Gothic Shakespeare." For a reading of the Protestant appropriation of Shakespeare's Catholic figures in early Gothic fiction, see Salter (2009).

4 All Shakespearean quotations and parenthetically cited act, scene, and line references in this chapter are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition, Second Edition* (Shakespeare, 2008).

5 For an account of the appropriation of Shakespeare in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818/1831), see Lloyd Smith (2004).

6 For an account of Carter's engagement with Shakespeare across her *oeuvre*, see Julie Sanders's chapter, "Bubblegum and Revolution: Angela Carter's Hybrid Shakespeare" (Sanders, 1998).

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4
European Gothic

Neil Cornwell

"Gothic," as an ethnic and a cultural concept, of course originates in Europe, and manuals of European history tell us that Gothic settlement developed from the east to the south and west. If anything, however, it remains more popularly associated with the north. Leaving aside here detailed considerations of the exact pre-medieval, medieval, and architectural connotations of "Gothic," the cultural revival of the term, particularly in a literary sense, is generally viewed as developing in a reverse direction, from west to east. Certainly, what is now regarded as the Gothic novel, together with the allied phenomenon of "graveyard poetry," stems from eighteenth-century England. The eastward spread, however, soon mingled with kindred local currents and a process of cross-fertilization ensued, embracing structure, style, setting, themes, and common sources. A reverse wind quickly wafted the fashion back to England and beyond, to Ireland and America, as well as back again to eastern Europe, from where certain themes, such as that of the "un-dead," appear to have originated.

The political, social, cultural, and religious anxieties of the eighteenth century were felt Europe-wide (indeed, northern hemisphere-wide) and paraded themselves across the entire continent more or less simultaneously. Consequently, in the view of the Marquis de Sade, "It was therefore necessary [for writers] to call upon hell for aid in the creation of titles that could arouse interest, and to situate in the land of fantasies what was common knowledge, from mere observation of the history of man in this iron age"; the Gothic genre, in his view, was "the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks with which the whole of Europe resounded" (Sade, quoted in Mulvey-Roberts, 1998, 204). The craze for Gothic dates from Horace Walpole's classic formulation of the genre in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), with its combination of economic and sexual intrigue, based on an accursed dynastic succession, to the accompaniment of supernatural manifestations in a southern European medieval Gothic-castle

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setting. Near-contemporaneous European works – and their successors (east and west) – may repeat, vary, extend, or develop alternative emphases upon these ingredients, stereotypical as they soon became. We shall observe that Gothic fiction extended to, or shaded into, psychological analysis, the uncanny (in the senses outlined by Freud and reapplied by Todorov), horror (and/or "terror" in some differentiations), the fantastic, and the marvelous (see Todorov, 1973; Freud, 1990).

A number of extra-literary cultural models were internationally shared, in addition to a primal Gothic or medievalist nostalgia. Pan-European literary images derived from the engravings of Piranesi (particularly the *Carceri d'Invenzione*); his impenetrable imaginary prisons and impossible blueprints, affecting Gothic writers from Walpole in England to Odoevsky in Russia, paralleled in their labyrinthine mental processes the most complex features of Gothic architecture. Images of tyranny or incarceration – within ruin, castle, prison, asylum, or monastery – had their objective correlatives in the architectural monuments of real institutional power (which in turn took on a literary significance): Versailles, the Bastille, the Conciergerie, Charenton, and Notre Dame within France alone – and on a wider European scale the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, the Piombi in Venice, Metternich's Spielberg, or the Peter and Paul Fortress of the Tsars – are prominent examples. Mental and structural landscape juxtaposed with the natural, as alpine scenery vied as a source of inspiration with the rugged vistas of Salvator Rosa and the symbolized depictions of Caspar David Friedrich. Various strands of idealist philosophy (including Jena romanticism and Neoplatonism) joined with the hermetic and esoteric traditions, plus input from Jewish and eastern influences, to furnish Gothic writers with an ideological platform of the mystical, in addition to the Enlightenment-inspired social.

Just as feudalism, or the ancien régime, was threatened and finally confronted by revolution, so did constitutionalism subsequently do battle across Europe with reaction. Gothic fiction, as one facet of romanticism, duly reflected this binary conflict. Traditional dynastic requirements opposed new value systems as the past met the present and fate (or resignation) was challenged by rebellion. From this, within the Gothic idiom, followed a whole series of dualistic clashes. At a spiritual level the supernatural vied with the natural, as mysticism challenged, and was again challenged by, materialism, or religion by science (and cult by pseudo-science). On all planes, death would contend with life. On a sociopolitical, and an individual, level tyrant would rage against victim and victimization would engender vengeance; incarceration would oppose freedom and hierarchy would strive to control individuality; heritage or inheritance would be threatened by subversion or potential, authoritarianism by permissiveness, and, on a sexual level in particular, repression would tilt against desire.

A historical period setting would often give way to the more recent past or even contemporary surroundings, just as exotic locations would be replaceable by more local topography, and the classic chronotope of the Gothic castle could be succeeded by a rural mansion. Gothic in the novel, or tale, could extend to, or incorporate, poem or drama. Nevertheless, typically, Gothic writing would take the form of prose fiction; writers from northern (and mainly Protestant) Europe would set their main

(or most Gothic) works in the (largely Catholic) south; east Europeans would frequently prefer a Western (or at least partly Western) setting; an imposing edifice (whether menacingly metropolitan or forlornly remote) may alternate with an awe-inspiring nature.

What we may now see as "classical Gothic," then, will normally involve dynastic disorders, set at some temporal and spatial distance and in a castle or manorial locale; defense, or usurpation, of an inheritance will threaten (and not infrequently inflict) violence upon hapless (usually female) victims amid a supernatural ambience. Often (but not always) the heroine will be saved, the villain unmasked, and the supernatural phenomena dispersed (explained or confirmed, as the case may be). Variations on such a classic Gothic master plot allow the genre to overlap with, or merge into, the fictional modes of psychological realism, the uncanny, the fantastic, or the marvelous (in which, in Todorov's terms, the supernatural may be, respectively, resolved by realistic explanation, never resolved, or found, within the terms of the fiction, to exist). Emphasis on hesitation over the supernatural may result in what we might call "fantastic Gothic"; the establishing of a philosophical, occult, or religious system of dualism (involving perhaps the "existence" of demonic emissaries, revenants, demon lovers, sylphs or salamanders, and confirmed contact or "correspondences" between the two worlds) will push a work into the realm of what might be termed "romantic Gothic" (largely Germanic in origin, termed *dvoemirie* in its Russian utilization, and to be revived later in the nineteenth century as Symbolism); further impetus in that direction would result in the Todorovian marvelous – a fictional world akin to that of Hoffmann's *The Golden Pot*, the "distant lands" of the German romantics, or pure fairy tale. On the psychological side, the accentuation may fall on character analysis (most commonly of villainy) or on a crisis of identity, often introducing the *doppelgänger* theme (which, in its turn, may resolve itself into a supernaturally or psychically induced "double": see Miller, 1987). Greater concentration on setting may define "historical Gothic" or, if contemporaneous, "society Gothic." Other emphases again may lead to "horror" or "criminal" Gothic. A further subdivision is identifiable as "artistic Gothic," in which Gothic elements are involved with, or subordinated to, themes from art or music, bringing into play artistic works or figures (painters or paintings, musical composers or works, the animation of images or statues). In all such cases, some elements at least of the basic, or classic, Gothic ingredients need to be present for the term "Gothic" to remain justifiable. Beyond these widely attested categories of the European Gothic tale, vestigial Gothic traces are to be found throughout what is considered mainstream realist European fiction over the whole of the nineteenth century, leading toward a subsequent neo-Gothic revival, in the main coincidental with symbolism and *fin de siècle* decadence.

The remainder of this chapter will concentrate on the early evolution of a Gothic style in three European literatures – French, German, and Russian, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – and on the process of cross-fertilization that occurred between these literatures and indeed with writing in English; some pointers will also be given toward subsequent Gothic developments.

Not only were the settings of the most prominent examples of the English Gothic novel (by Walpole, Radcliffe, and Lewis) European, but Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), like Wilde's Gothic–decadent play *Salome* a century later, was actually written in French. French, too, was the language of composition of *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*, an extraordinary framed compilation of stories reflecting the darker side of a burgeoning European romanticism, written between about 1797 and 1815 by the polymath Polish nobleman Jan Potocki (who is alleged to have committed suicide in 1815 with a homemade silver bullet). European, as well as English, influences and themes were also important in works by Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving, the first exponents of American Gothic; an Anglo-European element remained vital to this style of American fiction through works by Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, and on to Henry James.

France

In France, in the decade after Walpole had launched the Gothic novel in English, Jacques Cazotte published his short novel *The Devil in Love* (*Le Diable amoureux*, 1772). Cazotte's own life was not short on Gothic qualities: after colonial adventures in the West Indies and a certain captivation with the Martiniste sect of mystical *Illuminati*, Cazotte suffered a final encounter with revolutionary justice under the guillotine in 1792. A work that later caught Todorov's attention (Todorov, 1973, passim), *The Devil in Love* was promoted in the late 1820s as the main instigator of the prose tradition of *le fantastique*, then approaching the height of its popularity in France, and as "a masterpiece of imagination and charm, . . . just about the only French work in which the supernatural is neither a ridiculous phantasmagoria nor a purely satirical frame" (by the critic Jean-Jacques Ampère, quoted in Castex, 1951, 25; my translation). Cazotte's emphasis is on erotic temptation and demonology, but the psychological dimension and underlying dynastic concerns place *The Devil in Love* at the very least on the edge of the Gothic.

Also on the French Gothic margins, but perhaps far less marginal a figure in this respect than sometimes claimed, is the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814). Imprisoned in the Bastille (among other institutions), more than once sentenced to death, and committed to the asylum of Charenton, Sade not surprisingly included a baroque farrago of Gothic elements in his works. While "sadism," in the modern sense of the word, is a phenomenon widely to be found in Gothic fiction, seldom is it employed on the elaborate scale favored by the "divine Marquis." His better-known long works, while featuring extended and repetitious sequences of extreme sadistic maltreatment in Gothic castles, abbeys, or chateaux, are greatly taken up with philosophical disquisitions on the qualities of vice and virtue, based on an extreme moral hedonism. Although a "Gothic case" can be made for, in particular, his best-known novel, *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (see Clery, 1994), closer to the Gothic style in form are some of his lesser-known stories, written in the 1780s. In "Eugène de Franval," a father's

illicit relationship with his beautiful daughter leads beyond incest and Laclos-like sexual intrigue to abduction and murder; in "Florville and Courval," the emphasis on crime is reduced, the protagonists are unconscious of their incestuous affairs, and the dominant force is one of a malignant fate (and the long arm of coincidence). Sade's overall impact on Gothic, fantastic, romantic, and decadent fiction, as on psychoanalysis, would be hard to overestimate (as elaborated in the seminal study by Mario Praz, 1970). For instance, Charlotte Dacre's novel *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806), which appeared chronologically midway between the Gothic romances of Radcliffe and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in addition to drawing on elements from both Radcliffe and Lewis, is at least as close to Sade in its depiction of a heroine with a fully conscious commitment to vice and its weighing, albeit at a less sophisticated level, of the attractions of criminality and the insidious progression of depravity.

Much of what might be called French Gothic fiction can be seen to stem from these prototypes, together with the impact of English Gothic and the German romantics (in particular, from the cult status acquired by Hoffmann in the late 1820s). Such cultural cross-fertilization is exemplified by the publication, in the *Revue de Paris* in 1829, of Scott's critical essay on Hoffmann. The revived vogue for *le fantastique* and *l'école frénétique* can be seen as Gothic offshoots. Crime, horror, and incarceration loom large in the writings of Pétrus Borel (see the tale "Andreas Vesalius the Anatomist," 1833, and his novel *Madame Putiphar*, 1839). Crime and psychological intrigue underpin Balzac's "The Red Inn" (1831); the same author also tried his hand at the artistic fantastic (*Gillette, or The Unknown Masterpiece*, 1831) and at Swedenborgian mysticism (*Séraphita*, 1835). Earlier, the psychological frontiers of nightmare had been tested by Charles Nodier, in his "Smarra, or The Demons of the Night" (1821). Gothic, or near-Gothic, works of one tendency or another emerged also in this period from such prominent writers as Victor Hugo, Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas *père*, Prosper Mérimée, and Gérard de Nerval. The last named left the second part of his main contribution to the genre, *Aurélia, or Dream and Life*, in unrevised form when he hanged himself in 1855. Dumas returns to the Revolution in his harrowing tale of history, horror, and pseudoscience, "The Slap of Charlotte Corday" (1849), and he even fictionalizes Hoffmann within a French Revolutionary setting in "The Woman with the Velvet Necklace" (1851). Later additions to such a list would include Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Maupassant (see the selection in Hale, 1998).

Germany

From Germany, Gottfried Bürger's ballad *Lenore* (1773) provided his European and American successors with one of Gothic's archetypal figures, that of the revenant-bridegroom; the poem was translated into English by Walter Scott and into Russian by Zhukovsky (with versions and adaptations by others). Such an apparition also manifests itself at the climax of Schiller's influential and popular early story *The Ghost-Seer* (1789), itself influenced by Cazotte. This story, which – like *Lenore* – achieved

multiple early translations into English (of itself causing a certain textual confusion), contains many of the ingredients of classic Gothic and the fantastic. A series of mysterious events, occurring in a Venetian setting, are explained as the acts of a Sicilian charlatan (posing as a medium); the remaining narrative, supplied by the Sicilian self-confessed impostor, recenters attention on the story's central figure, variously posturing as Armenian, Russian, officer of the Inquisition, and Franciscan monk, known otherwise only "by the name of the Incomprehensible" (Schiller, 1973, 71). This "Armenian," as he is usually styled, is presented as a demonic figure of wandering-Jewish type pedigree: he seems able to foretell death, detect spiritualist fraud, and produce "actual" spirits at will. The story appears ultimately to retain the supernatural, though some doubt may reside due to the removes and the reliability of narration. It should, however, be noted that the work is considered unfinished and, for present purposes, that the dynastic jealousies underpinning the (concluding) narrative of the Sicilian bring the story firmly back onto Gothic terrain. Coleridge was a great admirer of Schiller, Byron was inspired by *The Ghost-Seer*, and it would be difficult to doubt that Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* was influenced by it.

There also developed in Germany a genre of popular literature, known as the *Trivialromane*, analogous to and influential upon English Gothic fiction (see the famous listing in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*). In particular, a series of novels appeared between 1787 and 1798, under the general title of *Sagen der Vorzeit* ("Days of Yore"), written under the pseudonym of Veit Weber (by one Leonard Wächter). These works were set in the Middle Ages, involving occultism, secret societies, demonic influences, sinister buildings, eccentric characters – indeed, a comprehensive gamut of Gothic and fantastic trappings.

At the turn of the century, the remarkable stories of Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811) and the extraordinary anonymously published *The Nightwatches of Bonaventura* (1804) are not without their Gothic qualities. Kleist's "The Beggarwoman of Locarno," for instance, qualifies as a supreme example of a Gothic miniature (of just three pages). In "The Foundling," a historical Italian setting provides the backdrop for an uncanny doubling (of the foundling Nicolo and the dead Colino) in a series of confusions – of a portrait and its real-life resemblances, and of the living and the dead, in sharp relief against polarities of good and evil. Neither the foundling nor, for that matter, his benefactor, however, can ultimately dodge "the Nemesis that dogs the heels of crime" (Kleist, 1978, 284). Kleist, who was, like Schiller, also a prominent dramatist, tried conclusions with the malignant fates in life, as well as in art – eventually shooting himself (after shooting his co-conspirator) in a macabre suicide pact. Not in entirely dissimilar vein, "Bonaventura," in his sectionalized "Nightwatches," furnishes the reader with a unique admixture of the apocalyptic vision along with the grotesque and the gruesome, underpinned with a substratum of cemetery nihilism.

However, the towering figure of German (and European) romantic prose, in its Gothic–fantastic and *Märchen* modes, was E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822), who followed parallel careers as a composer and a lawyer. Leaving aside here the more magical tales, for which he is still best known, such as *The Sandman* (which deeply intrigued

Freud: see his classic essay on "The 'Uncanny' " [Freud, 1990]), a number of works can be identified as particularly Gothic in form, or massively influential upon the later development of Gothic-type fiction in Europe and America. His most classically Gothic story is perhaps "The Entail" (1817), set in a sinister Castle R. (a real place, Runsitten, on the Baltic coast). Along with the more typically Hoffmannian poetic and musical motifs and romantic interest, the narrator's sensitivities are heightened by reading Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer*, and the presence in the castle of "an evil family secret" and "a dreadful ghost." Dynastic inheritance is the issue; buried treasure and murder unfold; the ghost of the murderer still wails from the ruins.

The by now already traditional figure of the manic monk is developed by Hoffmann in the most Gothic of his novels, *The Devil's Elixirs* (1816) – a fundamental work of the European Gothic style (a welcome and long-overdue reprint of its English translation appeared in 2009). Focusing on the dual concepts of the divided self and the vicissitudes (and the metaphysics) of coincidence, presented through the time-honored Gothic–romantic device of the "manuscript," Hoffmann's novel deals with the expiation of the sins of a degenerate line, by means of conflict between forces of the divine and the demonic and redemption through love. Skillful exploitation of the multitudinous familiar trappings of Gothic horror build this work into a thrilling novel of suspense; and yet the darkness of Brother Medardus's life achieves its ultimate redemption, just as the manifold enigmas of interwoven plot and subplot are granted demystification. The main impact of this novel, however, arose from Hoffmann's treatment, in this most complex of his works, of crises of identity, bizarre and terrifying mental experiences arising under extreme duress, and the theme of doubles. Many subsequent works in the Gothic mode (by Nerval or Gogol, Poe or Dostoevsky, and indeed many others) would seem inconceivable without Hoffmann.

Russia

The first Russian Gothic story is "The Island of Bornholm" (1794), by Nikolai Karamzin (1969). A sentimentalist author of stories, poetry, essays, and travelogues, Karamzin (1760–1826) subsequently turned himself into Russia's first major historian. Under the influence of English and European pre-romanticism, Karamzin's stories emphasize sentimentalist and historical themes, with a tinge of graveyard Gothic (as in his most famous tale, "Poor Liza," of 1792). In just one instance, "The Island of Bornholm," this formula is reversed, to result in a predominantly Gothic tale with the trappings of sentimentalism. Having encountered a lovesick Dane in Gravesend, Karamzin's narrator voyages to the Danish island of Bornholm, where he discovers a "pale young woman" incarcerated in a cavern, in close proximity to a Gothic castle. The "terrible secret" of "the Gravesend stranger" is revealed – to the narrator – but not to the reader. Incest seems the most likely explanation.

Gothic works in Russia remained few and far between before the 1820s. Of passing interest, though, is the little-known novel *Don Corrado de Guerrera, or The Spirit of*

Vengeance and the Barbarity of the Spaniards (1803), by Nikolai Gnedich (better known as the translator into Russian of *The Iliad*). Gnedich had developed a romantic fascination with Shakespeare, the English graveyard poets and the tragedies of Schiller; his novel was dismissed by critics of the time as an exaggerated display of Gothic horrors and has yet to be reprinted. The romantic poet Vasilii Zhukovsky (1783–1852) twice reworked Bürger's *Lenore* into Russian versions *(Svetlana*, 1808–12, and *Liudmila*, 1808) and much later produced a translation (*Lenora*, 1831). Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* had been translated into Russian as early as 1792. French translations of English Gothic fiction were commonly known in Russia (where the educated élite were more accustomed to reading in French than in Russian), and translations of English fiction into Russian were frequently made from the French (as were many of the early translations into English of Russian works). Radcliffe's novels appeared in Russian in the early 1800s, leading a wave of Gothic translations, along with certain works of others falsely attributed to her! These included Lewis's *The Monk* (no less) and *The Romance of the Pyrenees* by a certain Catherine Cuthbertson. Obscure English authors of popular Gothic to achieve appearances in Russian in this period include Anna Maria McKenzie and George Walker (see Vatsuro, 1996).

"Are there really such things? . . . [as Russian novels]," the aged Countess of *The Queen of Spades* (1834) asks her nephew; "I want the sort where the hero doesn't strangle either his father or mother, and there are no drowned bodies" (Pushkin, 1997, 76). Russian prose fiction indeed matured slowly over the first quarter of the nineteenth century and, if there was a heyday of Russian Gothic fiction, it certainly fell in the second quarter. Alexander Bestuzhev (1797–1837), later known under the pen-name "Marlinsky" after being imprisoned and exiled for his role in the Decembrist uprising of 1825 (and subsequently disappearing in action in the Caucasian colonial wars), published, under the impact of Scott, Irving, and Radcliffe, a number of Gothic tales in the 1820s and early 1830s, mostly untranslated into English (see, however, "The Terrible Fortune-Telling," in Korovin, 1984). Mikhail Lermontov (1814–41), by the end of a brief and stormy literary career, left two unfinished works of Gothic fiction, while the major figure of Russian prose in this period, Nikolai Gogol (1809–52), incorporated Gothic settings or features into a number of his Ukrainian and Petersburg tales. An important example of the artistic-Gothic is his Hoffmannian "The Portrait" (1835, toned down in the revision of 1842), which projects a Gothic struggle of good and evil into the creative process, highlighting the eponymous evil-eyed and cursed painting (Gogol, 1995).

However, perhaps the most impressive body of at least a close approximation to a genuine form of Russian Gothic writing belongs to Vladimir Odoevsky (1804–69). This includes several of the stories contained within his philosophical frame-tale *Russian Nights* (1844), along with a number of independent novellas. Most notable of these are his "dilogy" *The Salamander* (1841) and *The Cosmorama* (1839), as well as shorter stories, such as "The Ghost" (see Minto, 1994), which could almost be taken as a whimsical reworking of Hoffmann's "The Entail." Two of Odoevsky's stories, "The Improvisor" from *Russian Nights* (word for word) and (to a lesser degree) "The Sylph"

(1837), it has now come to light (see Cornwell, 1998b), were plagiarized via a French translation of the 1850s by the Irish-American fantastic–Gothic writer Fitz-James O'Brien (1828–62). Frequently dubbed, though not of course entirely accurately, "the Russian Hoffmann," Odoevsky includes a full gamut of occult and Gothic paraphernalia scattered through his collective tales: magical and alchemical effects, the suspension of time and place in an ultra Gothic–romantic extension of the chronotope, supernatural arson and spontaneous human combustion, through to the walking dead. He also specialized in proto-science fiction and anti-utopia, as well as artistic delirium, or a kind of manic *Künstlernovellen*, in tales based on Piranesi, Beethoven, and J. S. Bach (in addition to his careers in literature and government service, Odoevsky was, among many other things, a musicologist and an amateur alchemist).

Like Lermontov (but four years earlier), Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) cut short his literary career through a fatal duel. No text can rival Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* for the position of undisputed masterpiece of Russian Gothic. Neither has any comparable short Russian text (it is a mere thirty pages in length) been accorded such massive critical attention. *The Queen of Spades* can be read as a Gothic tale *par excellence*, as Gothic parody, or – given that it is a prime example of the pure fantastic (and recognized as such by commentators stretching from Dostoevsky to Todorov) – in almost any number of yet further ways: from society tale to psychological study to numerological puzzle (see Cornwell, 1993; Leighton, 1994). Among many possible sources tapped by Pushkin can be numbered *The Devil's Elixirs* and another Hoffmann story, "Gambler's Luck" – both of which feature hallucinations or obsessions with cards. The epitome of the "Petersburg tale" in Russian literature, *The Queen of Spades* extends from its near-contemporary metropolitan Russian setting back in time to the 1770s and geographically west, to the Paris of the *ancien régime* and the pseudo-occultism of the Count Saint-Germain. Economic drive, sexual exploitation, *idée fixe*, the clash of two eras, and the judgment of fate all engage in what is a virtuoso performance of condensed prose. A recent commentator, Andrew Kahn, concludes that: "Like all works of the supernatural and of the Gothic, *The Queen of Spades* tantalizes by a potential naturalistic explanation of the fantastic, and winks now and then at the pseudo-scientific" (Pushkin, 1997, xxvi).

In the following decade, the 1840s, Dostoevsky opened his career with a strong Gothic flourish, with such works as *The Double* (1846) and *The Landlady* (1847). However, his near encounter with a tsarist executioner and an ensuing decade of Siberian exile turned him toward political conservatism and psychological realism; nevertheless, residual Gothic elements are apparent throughout his *oeuvre* and made something of a return in his later period: both "Bobok" and "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," written in the 1870s, were, in their different ways, in part reworkings of Odoevsky's story "The Living Corpse" (published in 1844). Similarly, another acknowledged master of Russian realism, Ivan Turgenev, included a sprinkling of Gothic–fantastic tales among his works, including "Phantoms" (1864) and the late story "Clara Milich" (1883). Still within the 1840s, A. K. (or Aleksei) Tolstoy (a cousin of the famous Lev Tolstoy) published vampire tales (see those in Korovin, 1984; Frayling,

1991). In the main, however, a relatively straight realism was the dominant force in Russian literature until the symbolist movement emerged toward the end of the century, when romantic and Gothic dualities returned with something of a vengeance. In that *fin de siècle* ambience, even the medical realist Anton Chekhov turned his hand to Gothic phantasmagoria – in one tale at least, "The Black Monk" (1894). The demonic, witchcraft and other Gothic appurtenances continued to resurface in Russian literature, even into the Soviet period (most notably in the writings of Mikhail Bulgakov), while the city of St. Petersburg (renamed Petrograd, Leningrad, and finally St. Petersburg again) has continued to exercise its own Gothic-type mystique.

We have already seen a number of instances of cross-fertilization at play in the literary developments outlined above. In recent times, Carlos Fuentes, writing of the literary origins of his novella *Aura*, traced its basic plot (through *The Queen of Spades*, its reworking in *The Aspern Papers* by Henry James and analogously with the figure of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*) back to a Chinese tale, deriving in its turn from "the traditions of the oldest Chinese literature, that tide of narrative centuries that hardly begins to murmur the vastness of its constant themes: the supernatural virgin, the fatal woman, the spectral bride, the couple reunited" (Fuentes, 1988, 38). Such is the process by which literature evolves.

Cazotte's pioneering *The Devil in Love* made its impact on Schiller, Matthew Lewis, and subsequently Hoffmann. We have already commented, in this respect, also on Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer* and Bürger's ballad *Lenore. Frankenstein* had its Russian connections (see Freeborn, 1985) (not least in the final chase over the northern ice); moreover, Odoevsky reviewed Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, the theme of which he later sketched in a powerful short work called "The Last Suicide" (forming a part of *Russian Nights*). Poe's celebrated "double" tale "William Wilson" derived from a Spanish sketch by Washington Irving, in its turn based on an abandoned project of Byron's drawn from Spanish literature and suggested to him by Percy Shelley. As for the German influences on Poe, which were common also to Odoevsky . . . , we cannot begin here to take such things further.

Among the direct influences on Odoevsky were Saint-Martin and Schelling. Odoevsky apart, Cazotte and Balzac were fascinated by the occult tradition and the *Illuminati* (see Balzac's *Séraphita*). Hoffmann, Gautier, and Odoevsky, to name but three, were exercised by divided-self mental states. Cazotte, Bürger, and Gautier portrayed diabolical lovers; vampirism featured in works by Hoffmann, Nodier, Gautier, and A. K. Tolstoy. Schiller, Hoffmann, and Odoevsky exploited the theme of the ghostly curse. Hoffmann, Balzac, Odoevsky, and Gogol combined Gothic trappings with art or music. Pushkin, Eichendorff, and Mérimée employed animated statues. Balzac even composed a sequel to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, entitled *Melmoth reconcilié.* A number of writers of Gothic-type fiction lived, or died, somewhat Gothic lives (by dueling, suicide, or even execution). And so we could continue. And thus, moreover, were assembled throughout European Gothic literature of the first half of the nineteenth century more than sufficient ingredients to fuel and fuel again subsequent Gothic revivals and neo-Gothic movements.

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5
The Gothic Ballad

Douglass H. Thomson

March 1796 saw the publication of two seminal ballads that would open different paths for many writers to follow in the writing of poetic tales of terror: William Taylor's adaptation of G. A. Bürger's "Lenore," in the *Monthly Magazine*; and M. G. Lewis's "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine," in his novel *The Monk* (2004, 3.60–2). Both ballads, in the words of André Parreaux, "took England by storm" (1960, 50). With its pouncing rhythms, splashy onomatopoeia, and archaic diction, Taylor's "Lenora" provided a dramatic model of writing ballads in the old and German style. Four other translations or adaptations of Bürger's tale of terror came into print before the end of 1797.[1] During the same period, "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine" appeared no less than ten times in such periodicals as *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Star*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and many poets, Robert Southey and Walter Scott among them, wrote ballads imitating the anapaestic meter Lewis introduced in the poem. That novel meter and use of contemporary diction established Lewis's ballad as a prototype of the new or "modern" style of writing Gothic ballads. Scott, who would try his hand at both styles, discussed this distinction between what he called "legendary poems" and "real imitation[s] of the old ballads" in his "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" (1830). By legendary poems he meant a "kind of poetry . . . capable of uniting the vigorous numbers and wild fiction, which occasionally charm us in the ancient ballad, with a greater equality of versification, and elegance of sentiment, than we expect to find in the works of a rude age." Both modes have their liabilities. The rude minstrel ballad or imitation of it can lapse into "passages of monotony, languor, and inanity," while the type that aims "to engraft modern refinement upon ancient simplicity" can suffer from affectation, "false taste" and a "discrepancy" between medium and matter (Scott, 2009).

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This survey of the rise and fall of the Gothic ballad from 1790 to 1805 uses as a starting point the distinction between old and new styles and their two different ways of presenting supernatural tales. Many writers attempting to imitate the old ballad sought to evoke its "ancient simplicity" by presenting subjects of terror and the supernatural as they would have been understood in the past, free from a mediating presence or critical reflection, the very features that often characterize the modern style. Southey defined this approach in a letter to Taylor distinguishing his serious ballad, "The Old Woman of Berkeley," from his friend's more ironical treatment of the same subject matter:

> Mine is the ballad of a ballad-maker, believing the whole superstition, and thereby making even the grotesque terrible; yours that of a poet, decorating a known fable, laughing behind a masque of fear. Mine has no invention, not an atom, yet wants none, it is the legend in verse; yours a story of your own . . . (quoted in Robberds, 1843, 2, 112)

While this distinction between a naïve "ballad-maker" and sophisticated "poet" has a provisional value and surfaces repeatedly in contemporary discussions of the poetic tale of terror, several factors complicated the writing and reception of the Gothic ballad during the 1790s. First, we find that many Gothic ballads blur the line between the two categories and actually point to the generic instability of writing tales of terror: some purport to be strict imitations or faithful translations of old ballads but introduce new formal or thematic elements (the line between translation and adaptation can especially prove uncertain); others claim to be "original" compositions but inevitably draw from an established code of terror conventions and imagery; many others come equipped with prefatory notices and editorial glosses that aim to provide bibliographical context (and to avoid charges of plagiarism or to defuse critical alarm), but often work instead to overdetermine or even to confound interpretation. The susceptibility of the Gothic ballad to various forms of parody provides an especially compelling case of this generic volatility: with writers seeking to maximize terror and outdo their competitors, what prevents a ghostly tale, even of the ancient type, from crossing over into bathos?[2] Southey, for the most part an advocate of the old school, noted this problem: "In general these Beelzebub stories [acquire] a mixture of the ludicrous with the terrific, which it is difficult, if possible, to avoid" (quoted in Robberds, 1843, 1. 326).[3] While Southey treats the parodic intervention in such ballads as an almost inherent problem, many travesties of the terrorist-system of poetry writing were more calculated, taking direct aim at what critics deemed its politically subversive nature. Originally conceived of as an appeal to an authentic nationalist consciousness and as an effort to revive a native poetic idiom in pointed opposition to Classical and, especially, French sources, the Gothic, as many recent critical studies have demonstrated, came to be regarded by some reviewers as "culturally invasive, morally corrupting, and politically jacobin" (Gamer, 2000, 144–5). A final factor complexly shaping our understanding of Gothic ballads and their marginality con-

cerns their relation to the more "lyrical" and less incident-driven ballads of emerging Romantic writers. In rehabilitating the poetry of terror, Wordsworth and Coleridge defined an aesthetics that would finally serve to stigmatize the Gothic ballad, even as both drew upon Gothic style and subject matter in their own poetry.

German-Madness: Incorporating Northern Sublimity into English Ballads

In the words of George Borrow, William Taylor of Norwich was recognized as "the founder of the Anglo-German school in England" (Borrow, 1916, 318). After Taylor left the Barbaulds' Palgrave Academy in 1779, he toured Germany, met Goethe, and "became thoroughly versed in [its] language, and master of all the best amongst the original and racy productions of its active press" (Robberds, 1843, 1, 21). This was a heady time, when German writers and literary circles were asserting a national poetic identity in pointed opposition to the French school, and part of the inspiration for that effort came from claiming a kinship with British poetry, especially Shakespeare and the ballad traditions shared by the two countries. In 1790 Taylor and his friend Frank Sayers "construed together" pieces from Goethe, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Johann Heinrich Voss, and Frederic Leopold Stolberg (Taylor, 1830a, xxxi). From this period comes one of the earliest published Gothic ballads, Sayers's "Sir Egwin," a translation of Stolberg's "Die Büßende" ("The Penitent Woman"), which features an erring bride punished by having to drink from the skull of her murdered lover. Taylor's eventually-to-become-famous "Lenora" and several other translations of Bürger's ballads soon followed. Although not published until 1796 in the *Monthly Magazine*, "Lenora" would circulate widely in manuscript and exert a profound influence even before it came into print.

The earliest evidence of this influence can be found in the publication of John Aikin's "Arthur and Matilda" in his *Poems* of 1791, with the following note: "The idea of this piece was taken from a ballad translated by an ingenious friend from the German of Buirgher [*sic*]. The story and scenery are, however, totally different, and the resemblance only consists in a visionary journey" (by "visionary," Aikin means that the main action of the poem – the summoning of Arthur by his specter-bride to a dark cavern – is the product of Arthur's feverish imagination). Aikin met Taylor when he attended the Palgrave Academy run by Aikin's sister, Anna Lætitia Barbauld, and her husband Rochement; in addition to their literary interests, Taylor and Aikin, both staunch dissenters, shared many radical religious and political commitments. This dissenting community, for the most part dedicated to rational inquiry and opposed to superstition, actually played a formative role in the dispersal of the Gothic ballad. Years before, in 1773, John and Anna Aikin had penned one of the earliest defenses of the Gothic imagination with their essay "The Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror, with Sir Bertrand, a Fragment." In 1794, Barbauld electrified an Edinburgh literary society with her reading of her former student's "Lenora," an event

– though he was not present at the time – that aroused the young Walter Scott's interest in writing ballads in the German way. Finally, as editor of the *Monthly Magazine*, John Aikin published Taylor's "Lenora" and "The Lass of Fair Wone" in 1796.

Scott's enthusiasm for the Gothic ballad began with Taylor's "Lenora" and eventually led to a close working relationship with the other leading practitioner of tales of terror, M. G. Lewis. Scott felt that "the prevailing taste in [Germany] might be easily employed as a formidable auxiliary to renewing the spirit of our own" poetry, which he considered at "remarkably low ebb in Britain" during the last ten years of the eighteenth century (Scott, 2009). Having finally obtained in 1797 "copies of Bürger, Schiller, Goethe, and other standard German works," Scott says that he "began to translate on all sides" (Scott, 2009). His translations of Bürger's "Die Wilde Jäger" (as "The Wild Chase") and "Lenore" (as "William and Helen") comprise his first publication, in a "thin quarto," by Manners and Miller of Edinburgh (1796); also from this period comes his translation of Goethe's "Erl-King." In the spring of 1798, Scott's German translations came to the notice of Lewis, who invited Scott to contribute to his anthology of supernatural poetry, originally to be entitled *Tales of Terror*. Scott sent Lewis his first two original compositions, both with Scottish settings, "Glenfinlas; or Lord Ronald's Coronach" and "The Eve of Saint John"; "Frederick and Alice," a "German" ballad modeled on a song by Goethe; and "The Fire-King," a ballad designed for Lewis's grouping of poems on element-kings (inspired by Goethe's "The Erl-King"). Frustrated by delays of Lewis's collection, Scott turned to his friend James Ballantyne, who issued a limited publication entitled *An Apology for Tales of Terror* (1799), which contained Scott's translations of Bürger's ballads and his version of "The Erl-King"; two ballads apiece by Lewis and Southey; and Aikin's "Arthur and Matilda." Eventually, in late 1800, Lewis's "hobgoblin repast" appeared, now entitled *Tales of Wonder*, with the poems Scott had sent to Lewis. While Lewis's collection met generally negative reviews, the critic from the *Anti-Jacobin Review* considered Scott "to be the best of the new species of *horror-breeding* Bards" (Anon., 1801a, 323), an appellation Scott would later gladly disavow.

While Scott's Scottish and German ballads display a fairly sophisticated variety of metrical patterns, his mainly belong to the serious type of Gothic ballads in that they are free of the ironic consciousness that often frames Lewis's poetry of terror. Scott would later object to Lewis's "attempts at what is called pleasantry in English" and his tendency to "throw some gaiety into his lighter pieces, after the manner of the French writers" (Scott, 2009). The issue of modern versus "real imitations of the ancient ballad" became a charged one when Scott turned his attention to four traditional Scottish ballads that Lewis updated for inclusion in *Tales of Wonder*: "Clerk Colvin," "Willy's Lady," "Courteous King Jamie," and "Tam Lin." In the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), Scott pointedly prints more authentic Scottish versions of all four poems with the purpose of restoring their "native simplicity" in opposition to the anglicizing and intrusively Gothic "additions and alterations" supplied by Lewis (the quotations are taken from Scott's head-notes in the *Minstrelsy*). His later "Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad" (1830), while acknowledging Lewis's early

influence and even tutelage, narrates his "escape" from "the general depreciation of the *Tales of Wonder*" (2009). Having renounced his early "German-mad" phase, Scott proceeds to the *Minstrelsy* and establishes his more reputable literary persona as collector and champion of Scotland's literary heritage.[4]

Robert Southey's flirtation with the Gothic muse tracks Scott's involvement in several important ways. He, too, was smitten by Taylor's ballads, writing that "I shall hardly be satisfied till I have got a ballad as good as 'Lenora' " (Southey, 1856, 1, 64). Also, he became entangled with Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* and its controversies, as eight of his Gothic ballads appear in the first edition of that collection. Southey's Gothic ballads traverse the divide between the old and new styles of presenting supernatural themes.[5] Such early ballads as "Donica" and "Rudiger" from his *Poems* of 1797, while employing modern, unadorned diction, are wholly of the serious kind and rely upon the fiction of a "ballad-maker believing the whole superstition." This species of Gothic ballad aligned him with Taylor and Sayers, whom Southey visited in 1798. From this period comes Southey's "The Old Woman of Berkeley," conceived, David Chandler (2003–4) has argued, as "a protest against Coleridge's peculiar development of the German ballad" in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and considered by Taylor as "unquestionably the best original English ballad extant" (quoted in Robberds, 1843, 2, 106). Taylor and Southey felt that capturing true "German sublimity" involved presenting a ghostly tale as "old in the costume of the ideas, as well as of the style and metre – in the very spirit of the superstitions of the days of yore" (quoted in Robberds, 1843, 1, 235–6). Southey could thus term Coleridge's ballad a "Dutch attempt at German sublimity" (1798, 201) because it "lacks the sort of clear, uncluttered narrative that Southey aspired to in his ballads . . . [and] . . . erects its complex narrative on the foundation of a seemingly trivial incident" (Chandler, 2003–4), whereas "incident," the primacy of tale-telling, came first for Southey and Taylor. The emerging aesthetics of Romanticism would eventually favor Coleridge's more psychologically and metaphysically nuanced reworking of the supernatural ballad, but poets like Southey and Taylor who aimed for the "real imitation of the ancient ballad" could reasonably argue that the "Rime" exceeded the mark.

Southey himself found it difficult to maintain the pose of a mere "ballad-maker," but the problem came from a direction far removed from Coleridge's example: the almost inherent susceptibility of the Gothic ballad to parody. Southey noted that such tales almost unavoidably "[acquire] a mixture of the ludicrous with the terrific" (Robberds, 1843, 1, 326). His later Gothic ballads, such as "Bishop Bruno" and "The Pious Painter" (late 1798), succumb to this comic impulse and somewhat surprisingly resemble Lewis's poetic tales. In the first edition of *Tales of Wonder* (1801), Lewis included all of the poems by Southey mentioned above plus "Lord William" (which Southey claimed was "the best of my ballads") and "Cornelius Agrippa's Bloody Book" (possibly a source for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Although some evidence exists that Southey was not initially averse to joining Lewis's project, he insisted on the removal of his ballads from subsequent editions of *Tales of Wonder*.[6] His reluctance to be included in the roll-call of the "new species of *horror-breeding* Bards" clearly stemmed

in part from his desire to distance himself from "that undistinguishing name of Lewis's" (quoted in Robberds, 1843, 2, 113). Like Scott, he also perceived the sharp decline in critical reception of the Gothic ballad and, if anything, he expressed more chagrin about the continuing popularity of what he came to consider his "paltry" ballads (Southey, 1856, 2, 181). By the early 1800s the critical tide had clearly turned against the poetic tale of terror, and the next section of this essay will explore how its most recognizably "modern" practitioner, after helping to create an interest in the Gothic ballad, contributed to its demise.

"Laughing Behind a Masque of Fear": The Gothic Ballad and Parody

The growingly notorious M. G. Lewis of *The Monk* fame wrote several ballads that were early on received by contemporaries as examples of the serious German mode. He drew from Johann Gottfried Herder's *Volkslieder* (1778–9) for German versions of such "Northern" poems as "Elver's Hoh," "King Hacho's Death Song," and "The Erl-King's Daughter," and introduced English reading audiences to Goethe's ballads with his translation of the "Erl-King" (first appearing in the *Monthly Mirror* of 1796). Like Taylor, he had met Goethe during his travels in Germany, and also like Taylor, he became known as an authority regarding its language and literature: Scott went so far as to claim (somewhat forgetting his debt to Taylor) that Lewis was the "person who first attempted to introduce something like the German taste into English fictitious dramatic and poetical composition" (Scott, 2009). His "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogine," first appearing in *The Monk*, ranked only slightly behind Taylor's "Lenora" in terms of its fame as a Gothic ballad prototype. Unlike Taylor, Lewis in most of his ballads employed modern diction, and reviewers repeatedly contrasted his flowing and natural style to the rough sonorities of Taylor's ballads. Coleridge, otherwise a fierce critic of Lewis, nevertheless highlighted these features in his appraisal of the poetry in *The Monk*: "The simplicity and naturalness is his own, and not imitated; for it is made to subsist in congruity with a language perfectly modern, the language of his own times. . . . This, I think, a rare merit" (Coleridge, 1797, 197). Southey took issue with Lewis on just this score: "In all these modern ballads there is a modernism of thought and language-turns, to me very perceptible and unpleasant. . . . He is not versed enough in old English" (Southey, 1849–50, 2, 211–12). While Lewis's modern style differed from the example set by Taylor (and one could argue the same could be said of Southey's *style*), what most set his Gothic ballads apart from the Norwich circle concerns that "modernism of thought," especially his deliberate use of parody and irony.

Francis Jeffrey perceptively characterized Lewis's poetic style as a "mixture of extravagance and jocularity which has impressed most of his writings with the character of a sort of farcical horror" (Jeffrey, 1812, 445). His two-volume collection of Gothic ballads, *Tales of Wonder*, contains a full spectrum of supernatural poetic tales,

ranging from terror to travesty, and many of its ballads blur the line between the two, causing one perplexed reviewer from the *Poetical Register* to remark that "it is difficult to decide whether they are meant to be serious or ludicrous" (Anon., 1801b, 436). This "hobgoblin repast," as Lewis called it, offered its readers quite a menu of Gothic fare: its first volume contains six original ballads by Lewis; several adaptations of German, Danish, and Runic source materials; the ballads of Scott and Southey; two outright burlesques ("Giles Jollup the Grave, and Brown Sally Green" and "The Sailor's Tale"); and several poems which contain editorial notes that mock the taste for Gothic tales. The critic for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* wrote that "[Lewis] certainly does not want abilities, or knowledge, but his talents are strangely perverted, and he sometimes seems even to be employed in throwing a ridicule upon himself" (Anon., 1801a, 323). While this mix of serious and satiric Gothic materials irritated reviewers, the first volume taken in its entirety offers a good example of what Graeme Stones defines as the essence of Romantic parody: a "simultaneous commitment to exalted visions and to a renegade impulse which mockingly dissolves them" (Stones, 2000, xxi).

With Lewis leading the way in mocking the taste for the Gothic ballads he had helped make popular, a spate of parodies appeared that endeavored to put the nail in the coffin. While sharply and often wittily critical of the poetic tale of terror, these parodies testify to how recognizable and defined the genre had become while acknowledging its continuing popular appeal. *Tales of Terror*, often wrongly attributed to Lewis, appeared later in 1801 from the same publishers as *Tales of Wonder* (William Bulmer and Joseph Bell) and carried on its predecessor's interchange of serious and mock Gothic ballads. The volume begins with an "Introductory Dialogue" that pits a critic against an author of Gothic literature, perhaps meant to suggest Lewis. The critic's attack on the Gothic includes such reviewers' staples as "a gossip's story at a winter's fire!" (Anon., 1801c, 10), "the strange workings of a monstrous mind" (27), and a "torpid" genre designed "to freeze some silly female breast with fear" (32–4). The author suggests that given such a slight topic, the critic is wasting his time in "misapplied abuse" (11), but he then goes on to offer a stirring defense of the "Imagination's darkest powers" and a valuable historical account of the Gothic's appeal. Roughly half of the nineteen ballads that follow reflect this positive point of view, including "The Black Canon of Elmham; or, St. Edmond's Eve" (which has garnered its small share of notoriety because it appears in the youthful Percy Shelley's not so *Original Poems by Victor and Cazire*). Counterbalancing these serious Gothic ballads, *Tales of Terror* provides a framing parodic consciousness that elaborates upon the reservations expressed by the critic in the "Introductory Dialogue." Its title page contains a picture of a skeletal Gothic muse in harlequin garb presenting a copy of "Mother Goose's tales" (see Figure 5.1), and Henry Bunbury provided three gruesome engravings that too literally illustrate the Gothic taste for blood and gore. The volume also follows *Tales of Wonder*'s lead in providing outrageous burlesques of the Gothic ballad, the most notable being the maniacally annotated "The Mud-King; or, Smedley's Ghost. A Tale of the Times." "The Mud-King" provides an elaborate send-up of

Figure 5.1

Lewis's "The Fisherman" and relies on dense classical allusion and the model of Pope's *Dunciad* to demolish the taste for Gothic poems.

Several other burlesques of the Gothic ballad appeared in the early 1800s. Bunbury's *Tales of the Devil* (1801) offers a far more consistently satiric treatment of the subject than *Tales of Terror* and includes a swipe at Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Thomas Dermody's *More Wonders!* (1801) and George Watson-Taylor's "The Old Hag in a Red Cloak" (1802) target Lewis's ballads but expand their attack to include all species of "German rubbish." Horace Smith's "Fire and Ale," from *Rejected Addresses, or the New Theatrum Poetarum* (1812), provides a clever burlesque of Lewis's elemental-king ballads. The satires of the Gothic ballad joined the reviewers in focusing on such familiar artistic failings as its reliance on extraordinary incident, its overheated sensibility, and its Jacobin leanings. Indeed, the critic for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* ranked the pernicious effects of *Tales of Wonder* as only slightly less harmful "than political crudities of the detestable Citizen PAINE" (Anon., 1801, 323).

The Female Gothic Ballad

Lost in the wake of these attacks on the Gothic ballad are two remarkable examples of the genre written by women authors, a loss which is hardly surprising given the critical alarm about the allegedly deleterious effect of these poems on their female

readers. Anne Bannerman's *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802) relies upon Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime to create ballads of riddling obscurity and mystery, such as "The Dark Ladie" and "The Prophetess of Salem." Her veiled women and inscrutable sibyls may seem to resemble the female victims so prevalent in Gothic (and especially Lewisite) melodrama, but they resist interrogation and refuse to assume the passive roles typically assigned to them in masculine tales of terror. Adriana Craciun discusses how Bannerman's Gothic ballads "explored the illusions of a feminised ideal, and of an ideal woman, and showed both to be destructive" (Craciun, 2003, 194). Craciun's study, charting the intricate negotiations between "gender and genre" in the reception of the female Gothic ballad, accounts for the neglect of Bannerman's achievement, especially as her poetry became unfairly "tainted by . . . association with the ballads in *The Monk* and *Tales of Wonder*" (Craciun, 2003, 192).

Charlotte Dacre, on the other hand, exploited her association with Lewis and Bürger, and several of her Gothic ballads from *Hours of Solitude* (1805), such as "The Mistress to the Spirit of Her Lover," "To the Shade of Mary Robinson," and "The Power of Love" (featuring a gender-reversal of Goethe's "Der Fischer"), rewrite a favorite scenario from the masculine tradition: the haunting of a fallen woman by a demon lover or revenant (the subject of both "Lenora" and "Alonzo the Brave"). Instead of hapless victims, Dacre's heroines often will, through a potent act of imagination, their meetings with the un-dead, investing the encounters with connotations of "female sexual pleasure and agency" (Craciun, 2003, 126). Craciun argues that Dacre unsettles culturally constructed notions of gender and bodies, as she gives a new and arresting voice to the typically passive Gothic heroine. Dacre's last poem in *Hours of Solitude*, for example, provides a far more sympathetic treatment of the ruined maid in "The Lass of Fair Wone" than does Taylor's translation of Bürger's ballad. Instead of being consigned to the gallows for slaying her infant (Dacre also gets rid of the hair-pin as the engine of destruction), the grief-stricken mother commits suicide, and in place of her skull being deposited near the infant's grave, Dacre creates an image of her mourning ghost still hovering over her child. *The Hours* also offers two parodies of poems from *Tales of Wonder*: "The Elfin-King" and "Grimalkin's Ghost; or, the Water Spirits."

The Gothic ballads of Bannerman and Dacre arguably belong more to the "modern" form of the poetic tale of terror because they introduce a mediating intelligence – a woman's perspective – that reflects critically on the tradition. If anything, their emphasis, respectively, on the Burkean sublime and on an eroticized love beyond the grave, marks them as proto-Romantic (Craciun reads Dacre's "The Mistress to the Spirit of Her Lover" as anticipating the *liebestod* in *Wuthering Heights*). Their innovative ballads represent an advance beyond the dead end of the masculine tradition, but their achievement became lost in the general reaction against Gothic ballads, a reaction, in the case of Bannerman and Dacre, only aggravated by their being women authors. Still, Craciun's recovery of Bannerman and Dacre has not only called attention to their inventive poetry but provided an important new way of rethinking the role of gender in the tradition of Gothic ballads.

From Gothic to Romantic Ballad

Many discussions of the Romantic reaction against Gothic literature cite as exhibit A Wordsworth's withering complaint in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* that these "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse" have produced in the reading public a "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" (Wordsworth, 2008, 177). However, the formulation that most decisively expresses his and Coleridge's critical engagement with the kind of poetry written by Bürger and Lewis appears in the paragraph just preceding his attack on Gothic and German literature: his assertion that what "distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day" is that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and the situation to the feeling" (Wordsworth, 2008, 176). The case against "situation" or "incident" surfaces frequently in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's comments about the Gothic in 1798. After seeing Lewis's *Castle Spectre*, Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth that

> The merit of the *Castle Spectre* consists wholly in its situations. These are all borrowed and absolutely pantomimical . . . . There is not much bustle but situations forever. (Coleridge, 1956, 1, 379)

Wordsworth uses similar terminology in expressing his reservations about Bürger:

> incidents are among the lowest allurements of poetry. Take from Bürger's poems the *incidents*, which are seldom or ever of his own invention, and still much will remain: . . . Still I do not find those higher beauties which can entitle him to the name of a *great* poet.[7]

This criticism receives amplification in the "Preface," with Wordsworth's lament that the mass media of his day caters to the reading public's "craving for extraordinary incident" (Wordsworth, 2008, 177).

Critics have read several of Wordsworth's lyrical ballads as deliberate efforts to "counteract" the "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" that he associated with the Gothic tradition. In his essay "False Themes and Gentle Minds," Geoffrey Hartman discusses how Wordsworth demythologized Bürger's ballads: he argues that "Hart-Leap Well" revises the supernatural drama of "Der Wilde Jäger" through a "reflective encirclement and progressive purification of symbols from Romance" (Hartman, 1968, 57). Peter Mortensen has contrasted the same two ballads to suggest that while Wordsworth's reworking of the hunt downplays Bürger's "direct social protest and anti-aristocratic invective," his poem makes an ecological statement by focusing on "humankind's violent mistreatment of nature" (Mortensen, 2004, 77). Mary Jacobus (1976) reads "The Thorn" as Wordsworth's deliberate attempt to "counteract" the sensationalism of Bürger's "The Lass of Fair Wone," and James H. Averill (1980) works along similar lines in showing how "The Reverie of Poor Susan" disarms

the German poet's "Des Armen Suschens Traum." It seems clear that the German model, particularly Bürger's ballads, provided Wordsworth a context with which to define his own poetic agenda, as he shifts the focus from "incident" and the action of the narrative, the main focus of the Taylor school, to the meditative consciousness of the poet.

The well-known distinction that governed the division of labor for the *Lyrical Ballads* assigned to Coleridge "persons and characters supernatural," a decision in itself that acknowledges the Gothic ballad's significant place in the movement to revitalize British poetry at the end of the century. The progress of a ballad originally intended for *Lyrical Ballads*, "The Three Graves," a poem begun by Wordsworth in early 1797 but taken over by Coleridge the following year, reveals a crucial pattern in the way Coleridge would come to regard his poetry that shared affinities with the Gothic tradition. In his preface to its first appearance in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), Coleridge writes that he originally conceived the fragment, which details the devastating impact of a mother's curse on a peasant couple, not as a "Poem" but as a "common Ballad-tale," a distinction that recalls the one made by Southey and the Norwich school of ballad writing. Whatever "merits" the ballad has, he writes, "are exclusively psychological" (a statement that inevitably brings to mind the better known gloss on "Kubla Khan" "as a psychological curiosity"). Coleridge's assessment of the Gothic materials in his ballad as subliterary puts him in the company of many critics of the tale of terror, including, as we have seen, Scott and Southey, who distanced themselves from their early ballads and their fascination with Bürger. But Coleridge goes one step further:

> I was not led to choose this story from any partiality to tragic, much less to monstrous events (though at the time that I composed the verses, somewhat more than twelve years ago, I was less averse to such subjects than at present), but from finding in it a striking proof of the possible effect on the imagination, from an Idea violently and suddenly impressed on it. (Coleridge, 1997, 207)

Although his project was never fully realized, Coleridge asserts that he was originally attracted to the story not because of anything "monstrous" (the hedging of the parenthetical notwithstanding) but because it contained a redemptive interest in his favorite theoretical arena: the workings of the imagination. In bald terms, the Romantic imagination trumps and anaesthetizes the Gothic.

Steven E. Jones (1999) has demonstrated how a similar vein of logic governs the progress of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" as the poem evolves from the *Lyrical Ballads* to *Sibylline Leaves*. Many studies have read the "Rime" within and against, indebted to yet complicating the Gothic ballad. Jones provides a valuable organization of these readings by studying ways the "revisionist self-editing of *Sibylline Leaves* and the *Biographia Literaria*" responds to the poem's contemporary receptions, especially the parodies it inspired. Jones demonstrates how the poet attempts to transform "the German-influenced horror ballad" of 1798 into "romantic writing more philosophical, transcendent, self-aware, serious – in a word, more worthy of the canon than mere

popular 'spook balladry' could ever hope to be." One finds related critical attempts to rescue "Christabel" from its darker fascinations. Some have relied upon conjectural completions of the poem based on James Gillman's report that Coleridge intended its action to be "partly founded on the notion that the virtuous of the world save the wicked" (Coleridge, 1997, 507). "Perhaps "tis pretty to force together / Thoughts so all unlike each other" (666–7), but it takes quite a bit of forcing to mollify the poem's psychosexual currents through a moralizing reading. One cannot disagree with Michael Gamer's claim that "Christabel" is "unarguably [Coleridge's] most [G]othic" poem (Gamer, 2000, 126).

In his essay "Wordsworth and Goethe in Literary History," Geoffrey Hartman suggests that one might formulate a "Theory of English Literature" in opposition to a "Theory of German Literature" through an analysis of the different ways each literary tradition conceives of the supernatural realm. To formulate these theories, he contrasts Wordsworth's "The Danish Boy" with Goethe's "Erlkönig." The German mode of presenting the supernatural seeks to recover the past on its own terms. As a kind of poetic archaeology, the Germanic aims to resurrect a past profoundly different from the present and requires an act of historical imagination to evoke the bygone consciousness of "the Northern Enchantment." The English mode, on the other hand, offers a form of mediation between past and present; not so much interested in "the supernatural as such" (Hartman, 1975, 402) but in how its imaginative energy haunts the present. English mediations present a more psychologically complex exploration of the relation of past to present. Hartman's definition of the English treatment of supernatural and terrific themes works well for Wordsworth and Coleridge (and, to a degree, for Bannerman and Dacre), but not for British writers, like Taylor, Southey, the early Scott, and Lewis, who first introduced Gothic ballads to the reading public. Their ballads in the "old" style actually accord better with Hartman's definition of the German mode of treating supernatural subjects, as they seek to emulate the "ancient ballad" on its own terms. This effort to capture the old superstitions and credulities frequently met a countering, more sophisticated voice in the presence of parody, a satiric impulse that acknowledged both the popularity of Gothic ballads and the need to rein in enthusiasm for their more subversive tendencies. In the field of Romantic studies, the triumph of Hartman's English mode has pushed the serious tale of poetic terror and, even more so, its parody to the margins of literary study. The increasingly sophisticated presentations of terror in today's popular culture seem destined to ensure that the old Gothic ballad will remain on the fringe. If it took an act of historical imagination for writers like Southey, Taylor, and Lewis to resurrect the old bogeys and superstitions in their writing of ballads, it requires of us an even greater effort to put ourselves in the place of that Edinburgh literary society whose members were "electrified" by Barbauld's reading of "Lenora" or in the person of the young Frederic Leopold Stolberg, who, according to Taylor, experienced an "agony of rapturous terror" in listening to a recitation of the same ballad (Taylor, 1830b, 2. 21). For those of us interested in the historical genesis of Gothic poetry and its various incarnations and repercussions, the imaginative rewards seem worth that effort.

Notes

1 The other four were by John Thomas Stanley, poet laureate Henry J. Pye, William Robert Spencer, and the as yet unknown Walter Scott (see Emerson, 1915).

2 One example from many concerning the fine line dividing serious Gothic ballads from their parody: Charles Lamb, in a letter dated March 15, 1799 that unsettled Southey, mistakenly read "The Old Woman of Berkeley," unquestionably one of Southey's serious ballads, as comic (Lamb, 1935, 2, 151).

3 The passage in Robberds's *Memoir* reads "these Beelzebub stories *require* a mixture of the ludicrous with the terrific," but I agree with David Chandler's suggestion that the more likely intended word choice was "acquire" (see his article "Southey's 'German Sublimity' and Coleridge's 'Dutch Attempt' ").

4 For Scott's use of the term "German-mad," see the letter dated December 13, 1827 to Mrs. Hughes (Scott, 1932–7, 10. 331). See Michael Gamer's *Romanticism and the Gothic* for a discussion of Scott's renunciation of his "German-mad" phase.

5 For an excellent modern edition of Southey's poems, see the *Poetical Works, 1793–1810*, edited by Lynda Pratt (2004).

6 For a discussion of Southey's role in *Tales of Wonder*, see my edition of *Tales of Wonder* (232–8).

7 Wordsworth's estimate of Bürger comes from a letter of Coleridge's to none other than William Taylor, dated January 25, 1800 (see Coleridge, 1956, 1.566).

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Part II

The Original Gothic

6
Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis

Robert Miles

Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis were the two most significant Gothic novelists of the 1790s, an estimate of their importance shared by their contemporaries. Sir Walter Scott claimed that Radcliffe stood at the head of her own school of romance, while Nathan Drake compared her with Shakespeare (see Williams, 1968, 110; Drake, 1970, 359). Where Radcliffe was famous for raising the romance to new poetic heights, Lewis was notorious for being both the author of *The Monk* and an MP. That one of the nation's legislators should flaunt before the public a work displaying, not only "libidinous minuteness" (Coleridge, 1936, 374), but atheism, caused a furore (Peck, 1961, 24–9).

Although Radcliffe and Lewis permanently altered Gothic writing, they did so in different ways. Radcliffe looked back to the novel of sensibility, whereas Lewis opted for "Sadean" sensationalism (see Conger, 1989, 113–49).[1] Where Radcliffe strove toward poetic realism, Lewis exulted in pastiche and irony.[2] And where Radcliffe explained the supernatural as the product of natural causes, Lewis left it as a problem. Radcliffe famously typified their contrasting styles as the difference between horror and terror (Radcliffe, 1826, 145–52). Radcliffe begins with what it is that induces horror or terror in the viewer, where terror forms the basis of the sublime.[3] An explicit representation of threat induces horror, whereas terror depends on obscurity. The difference turns on materiality. Terror is an affair of the mind, of the imagination; when the threat takes a concrete shape, it induces horror, or disgust. When Radcliffe's heroines fear physical injury or rape, they react with horror; when the inciting object is immaterial, such as the suggestion of preternatural agency or the ghostly presence of the divine in nature, they experience uplifting terror. Radcliffe's is a Gothic of sublime terror; Lewis's, of horror, of physicality observed with "libidinous minuteness."

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Despite their differences, they had much in common, including their youth: Radcliffe ended her eight-year publishing career at the age of thirty-two, while Lewis published *The Monk* when he was nineteen. The most notorious link between them was made by the Marquis de Sade, who claimed their novels were "the necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe" (Sade, 1990, 49). Sade's simple point is that novelists of the 1790s were forced to ratchet up their horrors in order to keep pace with the French Revolutionary shambles, an idea supported by the conservative English press, which sought to tarnish the Gothic novel with the punning smear, "the terrorist school" (see Clery, 1995, 148–55). But Sade also has a complex point. In some deep way the Gothic novel was an expression of the historical circumstances that made the French Revolution possible, and even necessary. Critics may not completely grant this second point (Paulson, 1983), but as they have come to see Radcliffe and Lewis as significantly representing the period, so have their reputations risen.

Another way of putting this is that Radcliffe and Lewis have moved inwards from the literary margins. There are many aspects to this inward movement, but perhaps the most general is to do with a shift in critical value. One might describe the critical paradigm of forty or so years ago, of "New Criticism," as a "formalist poetics." This has gradually given way to a "cultural poetics." The New Critics prized finely wrought literary artifacts where form and content were indivisible. Novels tend to be loose baggy monsters at the best of times; Gothic novels, notoriously, are not just loose and baggy, but split at the seams as they conspicuously fail to contain their contents (Napier, 1987). From a New Critical perspective, the efforts of Lewis and Radcliffe were bound to appear marginal. From the vantage point of "cultural poetics," where the emphasis is on what Stephen Greenblatt has influentially termed "self-fashioning," the view is quite different.

"Cultural poetics" would include some of the most influential areas of recent critical investigation, such as "New Historicism," although for our purposes the two most important are feminism and queer theory. As suggested, cultural poetics takes subject-formation, or "self-fashioning," as one of its focuses. One might characterize subject-formation as the process whereby society molds us, as individuals, as "selves," but the process is more subtle than a simple shaping by external forces, for it also involves the unconscious, or even willing, internalization of value. To use a theatrical metaphor, the parts we assume, as ourselves, may be already fashioned for us in language, but there is scope within the part for self-dramatization. We may not have ultimate control over the lines we are given, but through our performance we can draw attention to our part, as a *part*, thus rendering visible an otherwise unconscious process (Greenblatt, 1980).

What such theatrics of transgression might mean in practice is nicely illustrated by Janet Beizer in *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France.* As Beizer's title indicates, her subject is the treatment of hysterical patients in late nineteenth-century French hospitals, such as Salpêtrière, run by Jean-Martin Charcot. Overwhelmingly, hysteria was defined as a female malady. Beizer shows how

the institution, through dermography, literally labeled its female patients as hysterics. Doctors would inscribe a message on the skin of the hysteric, which would then reveal the writing via a line of raised welts. For instance, "SATAN" was inscribed across a patient's back as a way of illustrating her demonic possession. Beizer links the phenomenon to a well-known aspect of the behavior of Charcot's hysterics: they would dramatize their symptoms with slow, theatrical movements for the benefit of consulting physicians, visitors or the curious. On the one hand the women passively accepted the way the institution defined them, internalizing a medical identity, and the power that flowed from this discursive act, to the extent that they bore its message and its meaning on their skin; but on the other hand they drew attention to this process, as process, by transforming it into theatre. Medical discourse presumed to know the truth of the hysteric, a "truth" the women patients transformed into farce through their dramatics. For those attuned to reading the subtleties of the theatrics of transgression, ironies quickly emerge. For instance, the woman with "SATAN" inscribed on her skin is evidently the victim of a powerful quack who is not discovering truth, but imposing an identity. She creatively turns herself, through her body, into a living allegory of a stark truth: identity is not given, but made; and it is given in the interest, not of truth, but of power (Beizer, 1994, 15–29).

The intellectual provenance of the preceding paragraph ultimately lies in the work of the French philosopher, historian and sociologist Michel Foucault. A primary focus of Foucault's work was how the institutionalization of human knowledge, as discourse, shaped the human subject. Although Foucault repudiated all top-down versions of power, he found power most interesting, most readable, at the margins, at points of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, in his highly influential *History of Sexuality*, Foucault's attention comes to rest on those deemed deviant by a new, nineteenth-century medicalization of sexuality: "what came under scrutiny was the sexuality of children, mad men and women, and criminals; the sensuality of those who did not like the opposite sex; reveries, obsessions, petty manias, or great transports of rage" (Foucault, 1981, 38–9; see also Miles, 1993, 10–29). Foucault's list encompasses not just the focuses of much feminist and queer theory, but the subjects of the Gothic novel in general, and Radcliffe and Lewis in particular. Feminism and queer theory have been drawn to the performative aspects of dramas of self-fashioning, to the social margins where "homosexuals" and "hysterics" have been labeled, but where resistance has taken on a visible life through textual representation.[4] For those interested in investigating such representations, Radcliffe and Lewis have come into focus as increasingly interesting subjects.

Female and Male Gothic

"Female Gothic" and "male Gothic" have emerged as convenient tags for identifying the differing schools of Radcliffe and Lewis. Ellen Moers coined the term "female Gothic," by which she meant the historically novel fact that in the late eighteenth

century one found, for the first time, a genre written by women for women (Moers, 1977). Subsequent critics have codified the female Gothic plot as an orphaned heroine in search of an absent mother, pursued by a feudal (patriarchal) father or his substitute, with the whole affair monitored by an impeccable but ineffectual suitor.[5] This may be the female Gothic plot, but it is also the ur-Radcliffe plot, as a perusal of her *oeuvre*, but especially *A Sicilian Romance*, will reveal. The male Gothic has largely been defined in oedipal terms, as the son's conflict with authority (Fiedler, 1966; Hume, 1969, 266–74).

Recent criticism has refined this simple antithesis by adding historical nuance through the biographies of Radcliffe and Lewis. Radcliffe's parents were in trade in Holborn, then, as now, a commercial district of London; and while Radcliffe had some respectable, establishment connections, the majority of her relations were Nonconformists, some with a tendency toward rational Dissent and Unitarianism (Norton, 1998). Politically, this would have meant a radical Whig position, which was indeed the situation of her husband William during the 1790s. For instance, as the editor of *The Morning Chronicle*, he vigorously welcomed the French Revolution in tones indistinguishable from other noted liberals of the period.[6] Lewis's background was, by contrast, "upper class." His father was a senior official in the War Office, and the family had substantial wealth invested in a Jamaican sugar plantation. There was the scandal of his mother (to whom Lewis was devoted), who ran off with the family music teacher; but in the circles in which Lewis's family moved, this was an infamy that could be borne without serious loss of social prestige (Peck, 1961, 6). There is also the matter of Lewis's homosexuality, which was an "open secret" (Tuite, 1997, 12 n. 41). How "open" may be judged by Horace and James Smith's satiric *Rejected Addresses*, which included this anecdote of Lord Byron's: "At a dinner at Monk Lewis's chamber in the Albany, Lord Byron expressed to the writer his determination not to go there again, adding 'I never will dine with a middle-aged man who fills up his table with young ensigns, and has looking glass panels to his book-cases' " (Smith, 1833, 64).

Looking at Radcliffe and Lewis through the lens of the female and male Gothic tended to embed gender differences in the criticism. Regarding them biographically, and therefore in class terms, alters the picture in two main ways. The female Gothic paradigm was strongly influenced by Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, a work that helped entrench the view that women's writing was principally concerned with expressing the inexpressible in female experience (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979). But Radcliffe engages with events in the public sphere as well as the private (Howard, 1994); as much as male novelists of the period, her works are involved in political negotiations, a trafficking ultimately leading back to her Dissenting, Unitarian background.

The second way a biographical look will alter our perception is more complicated and has to do with the "open secret" of Lewis's homosexuality. Up until the French Revolutionary war, England was the European leader in executions. To the thousands who perished on the gibbet, one must add the many more who expired in the stocks. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, judicial murder, far from declining,

was on the rise, including for sodomy, a capital offence (see Tuite, 1997, 6–7; Gatrell, 1994, 100–1, 420–1). The judiciary's main weapon against homosexual practices was the informant; and while it is true that juries were reluctant to convict on the evidence of informants for capital punishment, there was less hesitation if it was a question of the stocks. To find oneself on public display as a convicted sodomite was bad enough, but the occasion frequently stirred the homophobia of the crowd: often the punishment became, not a pelting, but a stoning.[7] Here, as elsewhere, the French Revolution appeared to heighten anxieties; in any event, homosexual persecution intensified across northern Europe during the 1790s (Tuite, 1997, 6).

How, then, did Lewis get away with his "open secret"? As one might expect, the answer involves class. For homosexual men in Lewis's social position, their "secret" was safe as long as their behavior conformed to accepted decorum. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has made the relevant claim that "the Gothic was the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality, at a time when styles of homosexuality, and even its visibility and distinctness, were markers of division and tension between classes as much as between genders" (Sedgwick, 1985, 91). Horace Walpole, William Beckford, Matthew Lewis, Lord Byron, Herman Melville, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde – there is a long list of distinguished male Gothic writers who were either overtly or covertly homosexual. The point here is not that the male Gothic was a uniformly "queer" genre,[8] but that the early male Gothic witnesses the confluence of several things: its main practitioners were upper-class Englishmen (Walpole, Beckford, Lewis) whose homosexuality was either an open secret or one much speculated upon (Haggerty, 1992, 341–52; see Sedgwick, 1985, 92); although their class granted them license, it was in the context of a more general homosexual persecution; and the work of all three displays a recurrent interest in theatricality, with "camp," pastiche, role-playing, excess and androgyny – in other words, with a self-dramatizing self-fashioning.

I began with a series of antitheses: terror/horror; sensibility/sensation; poetic realism/irony; explained/unexplained supernatural; Radcliffe/Lewis. One could say that these antitheses typify differences between the female and male Gothic. But it is only when we add the specificities of class and gender that we arrive at what is (I am willing to hazard) a defensible generalization. And that is that the early female writers of the Gothic are primarily interested in rights, for their class, for their sex, and often both together; whereas the early writers of the male Gothic are more absorbed by the politics of identity. Radcliffe's female Gothic predecessors, such as Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Mrs. Barbauld), Charlotte Smith, and Harriet and Sophia Lee, were from similar, often Nonconformist backgrounds, and, like Radcliffe, they wrote for money, a situation that was largely the same for Radcliffe's peers, such as the necessarily prolific Eliza Parsons or Maria Regina Roche. As we have already seen, the dominant male Gothic writers were similarly cohesive in their quite different upper-class background.

The writers of the female Gothic, then, were primarily absorbed in the struggle for sexual and political rights, together with cash, which is where the two issues

generally come together, whereas the male Gothic aimed to disrupt the legitimacy of normative gender patterns. In other words, the trajectories of the two strands take us, critically, to feminism and queer theory. In the following sections I test this generalization against the work of Radcliffe and Lewis. I do so by concentrating on a theme central to the Gothic: family secrets.

Radcliffe and the Heroine

One of the most conspicuous and significant features of Radcliffe's writing is seldom commented upon: a fundamental drive of her art is the creation of imaginative space for her heroines. The poles of her heroines' lives are live burial and poetic expression. Her heroines are happiest, not when they marry, but when they are left alone in a sylvan setting, free to indulge a pressing need for artistic outlet. Poetry serves a series of functions in Radcliffe's art. The epigraphs from Shakespeare and contemporary British poets announce Radcliffe's literary nationalism. The ostensible target of this literary nationalism was a vogue for French neoclassicism associated with "court culture," but its real task was to raise the status of the vernacular literature above that enjoyed by the classics, a task inflected by class and gender politics.[9] Written in the style of fashionable "pre-romantic" poets, such as Thomas Gray (1716–71), William Collins (1721–59), and James Beattie (1735–1803), Radcliffe's poetry announced her modishness. Textually, her poems created mood while varying the tempo of the narrative. At the same time, they established the romantic *bona fides* of her heroines. But their fundamental meaning was to establish her heroine as a figure of the artist as a young girl. Radcliffe's heroine is not romantic, in the sense of being fatally overcome by her love interest. Generally, her heroine's attitude toward marriage is not an avidly sought consummation of romantic passion, but a prudential contract with a being she can entrust with her fortune and her freedom.[10] Her heroine, rather, is Romantic with a capital "R." Her intensive immersion in the sublime and the picturesque, her readiness to give voice to the spontaneous ode that comes upon the wanderer in nature, are a kind of prolegomenon to the writing of the novel itself. Radcliffe and her heroines are one, but not in any cryptic, biographical sense. Her heroines are the expression, the need itself in action, of Radcliffe's requirement to create room for herself in the world. The egotistically sublime desire to reimagine the world in one's own image, to stamp experience with the imprint of one's own words, is passed over as unexceptionable when taken in the context of, say, a Wordsworth, or a Joyce, or a James; but it seems evident to me that Radcliffe is equally driven by a poetic will to power.

Radcliffe projects the struggle to maintain her voice, as a female writer, into the body of her texts in the displaced form of the heroine under threat. Hence the tendency of her fictions to repeatedly figure the heroine as someone whose imagination is in jeopardy through marriage. Her subplots are littered with the sad histories of mothers, aunts, stepmothers who have been entombed in marriage, where live burial extends metaphorically to include states of being linguistically bereft, such as taking the veil,

being held incommunicado or (in Madame Montoni's case) simply not being listened to. From marriage and a concern for property rights we are led to patriarchy. Her settings may be foreign, but they are, by the same token, conspicuously patriarchal.

If we attend closely to how, and when, Radcliffe invokes the supernatural, we see that it is connected (from *A Sicilian Romance* on) with the threatened discovery of paternal secrets. In this respect Radcliffe harks back to Walpole. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the supernatural is closely linked to the "reawakening" of Manfred's buried family secret, the usurpation of Alfonso. For Walpole, subscription to the supernatural carried its own iconoclastic thrill by breaking the standard narrative of Whig history: that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 delivered us from popish superstition. Radcliffe found her iconoclasm elsewhere, in the pieties of the patriarchal order. "But besides the actual field of the supernatural, there are many equivocal phenomena in our nature, lying within that debatable land where mind and body meet, such as dreams, omens, and presentiments, which admit of being referred by the mind, in an excited state, to supernatural causes . . ." (Rogers, 1994, 132). For Radcliffe, the supernatural is a vehicle for just such "equivocal phenomena" where the appearance of the supernatural unhinges her characters' rationality, providing egress for repressed thoughts, usually linked to suspicions of some unthinkable paternal crime.

The paradigmatic case is Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho.* The dying wish of Emily's father, St. Aubert, was that she should burn his secret papers, hidden under a floorboard in his bedchamber. The reader is primed for the event, because we have already observed St. Aubert sighing over the portrait of an unknown woman, together with other suspicious symptoms of adulterous love. The chapter's epigraph is artfully chosen from *Macbeth:* "Can such things be, / And overcome us like a summer's cloud, / Without our special wonder?" (III.iv.109–11). Having just been visited by Banquo's ghost, Macbeth queries whether such "unreal mockeries" are the fruit of a guilty conscience, or whether they are objective, like the summer's cloud. Emily no sooner proposes to do St. Aubert's bidding than she is haunted by his ghost. The narrator laments that Emily's "excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of the imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called nothing less than momentary madness" (Radcliffe, 1984, 102). The narrator goes on to say: "To this infirm state of her nerves *may be* attributed what she imagined . . ." (my emphasis). The narrator suggests that the spectral visitation that is about to come over Emily is the result of a temporary madness, a cloud that momentarily obscures her reason. The tense is a deliberate equivocation, for, as the epigraph suggests, the spectral visitation may also be Emily's "special [that is, guilty] wonder."

The unfolding passage feeds the reader's suspicions. As Emily enters the bedchamber there appears before her "the countenance of her dead father." Despite the recurring visitation of the paternal specter, Emily manages to compose herself sufficiently to fulfill St. Aubert's wish that she destroy his papers. A loose sheet falls before her eyes, which she reads in spite of her father's command: "she was unconscious, that she was transgressing her father's strict injunction, till a sentence of dreadful import awakened

her attention and her memory together." The sentence "aroused equally her curiosity and terror" (103). Just as Macbeth's guilty conscience conjures Banquo's ghost, so does Emily's her father's shade, a presumption strengthened by "transgressing." Oddly, Emily's response is figured in the language of the sublime ("curiosity and terror").

Emily appears blameless, so where lies her guilt? The curious reader will eventually arrive at an answer. The denouement apprises us of a suspicion hovering on the verge of Emily's consciousness. She is, she fears, illegitimate. Her father's equivocal behavior regarding the mysterious woman in the picture, together with Emily's startling likeness to the Marchioness de Villeroi, produce the suspicion, one the reader naturally shares, given that it is a belief firmly held and cryptically expressed by the repentant nun, Laurentini. Emily's mind never fully entertains the suspicion until she is in a position to banish it, having learned the truth: the mysterious woman in the picture is her aunt, murdered by Laurentini. This, presumably, is the import of the dreadful sentence glimpsed by Emily. But the whole scene, beginning with the epigraph, works to suggest that St. Aubert's spectral countenance is the work of Emily's "special wonder," in which case Emily's transgression would appear to be the ascription of sexual guilt to her father. Gothic horror often arises with the confusion of the literal and the figurative: metaphors come to life as literal fact (such as, in *Otranto*, the "dead hand of the past") while literal events turn metaphoric. The latter is the case here. Emily probes the secret of her father's bedroom (literally, his concealed manuscript), an act that quickly shades with metaphoric possibilities, most of them Freudian (such as the primal scene or Electral conflict).

To resolve Radcliffe's story into the familiar contours of Freudian narrative, however, is to lose much.[11] As we have seen, Radcliffe couches Emily's reaction in the language of the sublime: she responds to her forbidden glimpse with curiosity and terror. Generally, though, the sublime is a potent restorative moment for the heroine. Ellena, in *The Italian*, though imprisoned, draws great sustenance from it. Looking out from her turret window she views "a landscape spread below, whose grandeur awakened all her heart. The consciousness of her prison was lost . . ." (Radcliffe, 1981, 90). The moment is a cue for one of Radcliffe's famous set pieces, a bravura performance of her unrivalled skill for verbal scene painting (see Miles, 1995, 54):

> These precipices were broken cliffs, which, in some places, impended far above their base, and, in others, rose, in nearly perpendicular lines, to the walls of the monastery, which they supported.

The interrupted syntax, the flow of the sentence which registers the sudden movements of Ellena's expanding consciousness, at once sketch the sublime scene while setting it against picturesque irregularity, not so much visibly present, but hinted at by the syntactic rhythms. The sentence invites the reader in, so that we look out, with Ellena; and with hers our gaze rises vertiginously with the suddenly stressed verbs "impended" and "rose." But just as we find ourselves looking up, Radcliffe plunges our attention back downwards:

> Ellena, with a dreadful pleasure, looked down them, shagged as they were with larch, and frequently by lines of gigantic pine bending along the rocky ledges, till her eye rested on the thick chestnut woods that extended over their winding base, and which, softening to the plains, seemed to form a graduation between the variegated cultivation there, and the awful wildness of the rocks above. (90)

The sentence again works through a principle of contrast; as our gaze plummets down the sides of the cliffs, it momentarily rests on the picturesque pine, larch and chestnut, until the line of sight once more stretches out into a scene of immensity, so that the sublime rises, literally, out of the picturesque (variegated) horizon. The principle of contrast is Burke's, implicit in the direct quotation ("dreadful pleasure"). Indeed, Radcliffe shows herself to be a deep student of the sublime, for she outlines the predominant theory of its origin beyond terror: "Here, gazing upon the stupendous imagery around her, looking, as it were, beyond the awful veil which obscures the features of the Deity . . ." (90). The sublime, in the end, is sublime because it is the closest intimation of the divine that nature affords us, a deistic belief stretching back at least to the Earl of Shaftesbury (Price, 1969, 194–213). But in carefully chosen words that echo Immanuel Kant's own sense of the limitations of the poetic sublime, we never penetrate beyond the veil. The sublime experience is only, in the end, a simile for the real thing: "dwelling as with a present God in the midst of his sublime works." For Radcliffe, as with Kant, we never get beyond the "as."

In her representation of the natural sublime, Radcliffe's narrator keeps within the tight bounds of Enlightenment decorum. And yet we can also see the familiar contours of the sublime at work in Emily's glimpse into the paternal manuscript. The experience maintains its oxymoronic, Burkean structure (it mixes "curiosity and terror"), and Emily's mind is heightened – except that here the heightening takes on the character of hysteria: her loss of control is a "momentary madness." This itself is in keeping with Burke, who speaks of the sublime as a moment in which the will is overborne, the controlling self swept away (see Kauffman, 1972, 179–92). Otherwise the situations are quite different. In the natural sublime, the divine order is reaffirmed; in the mysterious manuscript, paternal authority is undermined. However, this is not so much a contradiction as a tension informing a central narrative principle in Radcliffe, generally referred to as the "explained supernatural."

Radcliffe has been much criticized for her use of the explained supernatural (see Rogers, 1994, 54, 86, 97, 101, 121–2). The usual complaint is that the prosaic explanations for her terrific goings-on produce bathos, or, worse, cheat the reader through the creation of unfulfilled expectations. Generally there is bafflement: "Why she should have hesitated to admit of an actual spiritual agency, it is difficult to discover" (Rogers, 1994, 132). Insofar as there is a reason for this fatal narrative flaw, commentators have ascribed it to her late Enlightenment sensitivities: "the supernatural is always feared yet always averted. She was a great deal too enlightened ever to have anything to say to a ghost. In those days the ancient love of superstition had faded, and the new groping after spiritual presences had not begun" (165). There is

substance to this interpretation. Radcliffe's generation was strongly marked by the Gordon riots of 1780, a civil disturbance of terrifying proportions. For rational Dissenters, the riots were a particularly unedifying spectacle. Sparked by Lord George Gordon, the disturbances erupted over the government's attempt to repeal anti-Catholic legislation. In the aftermath of the riots Gordon drifted further into the lunatic fringes of Protestantism. His conversion to Judaism in 1787 reflected his millenarian belief that England, as the "new Jerusalem," would be preceded by the realization of biblical prophecies: "that the millennium would be immediately preceded by the conversion and restoration of the Jews to their former homeland and glory" (McCalman, 1996, 358). Such enthusiastical beliefs were common in radical Dissenting circles. From the point of view of rational Dissent, the Protestant mob and the Catholic "other" were unsettling doubles of each other. According to Protestant demonology, Catholic irrationalism – the credulous belief in miracles – rendered Catholic states unfit for civil government: despotism, mob rule and religious fanaticism were of a single, Catholic piece. But these were precisely the ingredients of the Protestant Gordon riots. For anyone holding on to Enlightenment, deistic values, the supernatural smacked equally of Protestant and Catholic enthusiasm (Tuite, 1997, 1–2).

However, to say that, as a rational Dissenter, Radcliffe was chary of confirming the supernatural, even in fiction, is not the same as accounting for how her fiction works. Radcliffe's interest lies not with the supernatural but with "equivocal phenomena of the mind," which takes us back to the earlier point that the origin of supernatural fear in Radcliffe is principally associated with the penetration of paternal secrets. The point is most obvious in *A Sicilian Romance*, Radcliffe's second novel. The heroines of the tale fear there is a ghost in a dilapidated wing of their father's palazzo; it emerges that the sounds derive from their entombed mother, imprisoned by their father. In *The Romance of the Forest* the focus shifts from apparently supernatural events to "dreams, omens, and presentiments." The heroine, Adeline, experiences prophetic dreams, in which a voice, possibly her father's, warns her of impending danger (as it happens, of incestuous rape at the hands of her uncle). In *Udolpho* the majority of Emily's superstitious fears are linked, in one way or another, with the mystery disclosed by the paternal manuscript.

Lewis's Legitimations

One way of thinking about Horace Walpole's *Otranto* is that it rings the changes on "legitimacy." The work is a fake, a pretend medieval text; it is a product of literary miscegenation, of the illicit blending of romance and novel; the plot concerns an act of usurpation; the action skirts what was, in law, incest; and in the figure of Theodore it raises the question of the legal, biological heir. As we have seen, Radcliffe is also centrally concerned with legitimacy, especially as it relates to the issue of inheritance. The alienation of the heroine from her property rights and entanglements in the

paternal line of inheritance recur as basic elements in her fiction. The close linking of property and identity means that paternal entanglements pose a double threat for the heroine. In this respect Radcliffe could be said to narrow down Walpole's capacious exploration of illegitimacy into aspects of "property": identity, possession and status (Fitzgerald, 1993, 167–70).

Matthew Lewis also explores illegitimacy, and in a sense he goes back to Walpole for the aspects of legitimacy Radcliffe leaves out. Both Radcliffe and Lewis mix genres, but whereas Radcliffe endeavors to "naturalize" her confection, Lewis is transparent about the incongruity of his ingredients. Another way of saying this is that Lewis follows Walpole in turning the Gothic into "camp."[12] There is no doubt that Walpole took a deep, serious, antiquarian interest in his Gothic recreation at Strawberry Hill; but the very incongruity of its scale – never mind the papier-mâché battlements and seventeenth-century arms displayed as family artifacts from the Crusades – announce the house as a piece of theatre, an act of self-dramatization. The house is a pastiche, an imitation conscious of its irremediable belatedness. Just so *The Castle of Otranto*, and so, too, *The Monk:* its deepest fashioning spirit is irony.

Lewis may have been relaxed about *The Monk*'s generic illegitimacy, but that is partly because it is a screen for other, deeper kinds. Lewis's two major works during the 1790s – *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre* – both feature unspeakable secrets. The plot of *The Castle Spectre* (a Drury Lane spectacular) is hackneyed Gothic. Osmond plans to murder his older brother Reginald in order to possess the family fortune and Evalina, Reginald's betrothed, for whom Osmond has an intense passion. Ambushing the returning couple at a river near the castle, Osmond is about to stab Reginald when Evalina interposes her body in an attempt to save her beloved. She receives the point of Osmond's dagger, and dies. Maddened, Osmond brutally stabs Reginald. The action of the play takes place years later. Evalina's daughter, Angela, has come of age; her close physical resemblance to her mother has reawakened Osmond's lust, and he intends to have her, regardless. Meanwhile Angela's lover, Lord Percy, has come to her aid but fallen into Osmond's clutches. In a melodramatic aside, Osmond announces the full extent of his villainy, meditating the bloody murder of Reginald:

> Yes, I am guilty! Heaven! how guilty! Yet lies the fault with me? Did my own pleasures plant in my bosom these tempestuous passions? No! they were given me at my birth; they were sucked in with my existence! Nature formed me for the slave of wild desires; and Fate, as she frowned upon my cradle, exclaimed, "I doom this babe to be a villain and a wretch!" (Cox, 1992, 175)

If a "wretch" who practiced the vice that dare not speak its name were to confess, he would confess very much like this. Once one entertains the suspicion, a number of possible questions emerge. Given the phallic overtones of the dagger and stabbing, to what extent is Evalina's interposition between Osmond and Reginald a screen for Osmond's true object of desire? I said that the plot of *The Castle Spectre* was hackneyed Gothic, but it does contain one original moment. In the denouement it is discovered

that Reginald is not dead but has been rescued by one of Osmond's disloyal servants and kept alive in a dungeon. Attempting to escape, Percy and Angela accidentally discover Reginald, a family reunion interrupted by Osmond. Enraged, he prepares finally to dispatch his brother when, in a tremendous *coup de théâtre*, Evalina's ghost appears to stay Osmond's hand. In that moment, Angela leaps up and fatally stabs her uncle. In terms of Georgian decorum, a knife-wielding woman is inherently masculine, which is to say that a kind of symbolic reciprocity appears to be in effect, where "phallic female" becomes another term for the proscribed sex.

The text then offers us one kind of illegitimacy, only to hint at another of a darker hue. The usurper Osmond wants incestuously to possess his niece as a substitute for another incest, the possession of his sister-in-law. Two kinds of illegitimate possession are brought together, of property and of sex. But behind these two forms lies the shadow of the most illegitimate possession of all. Osmond's confession of a natural, unlawful desire may prompt suspicion, but the evidence, in the end, relies on a series of critically convenient substitutions.

In *The Monk* the evidence is stronger. Or rather, *The Monk* illustrates more clearly the principle of substitution and displacement at work in the play. In *The Monk* there are many unspeakable vices and unnatural acts. The Banditti attempt to murder their house guests in their beds; an older woman abases herself at the feet of a younger man for whom she has contracted an adulterous passion; a nun gives birth; another nun, sexually inflamed, murders her lover at the behest of his brother and is then murdered in turn; an Abbess inhumanly punishes sexual delinquents; a mob pulps the Abbess; and at one stage it even appears that Don Raymond has a liaison with a ghost. But of course the worst depravity is Ambrosio's, who chalks up matricide, incestuous rape, and sibling murder.

Both texts obsessively dwell on illicit passion, Ambrosio gazing on the naked and demure body of his scarcely pubescent sister, Osmond maddened by lust for his sister-in-law. In each case, heterosexual incest is a cipher for a yet more heinous – within the codes of polite writing, a literally unspeakable – desire. *The Monk*'s central narrative principle is to cloak, transparently, the "unspeakable." Ambrosio vents his desires upon the hapless Antonia, but his real, indeed his only, relationship is with Matilda. Ambrosio's first encounter with Matilda is a deception: that is, she appears in the pictorial guise of a madonna. Throughout the novel we are left wondering as to Matilda's true identity, including his/her sex. In our next encounter she appears as Rosario. Here Matilda's cross-dressing is protected by Shakespearean allusion. In referring to his/her secret passion, Rosario mimics Viola's "worm in the bud" speech from *Twelfth Night.* Cross-dressing would ordinarily be transgressive, but here it is "normalized" by theatrical convention sanctified by the national poet. But that same convention deemed that only boy actors should mimic girls dressing up like boys. So when Ambrosio's desire kindles in the presence of Rosario, what lies at the end of the chain of signification mobilized by Rosario's Shakespearean cross-dressing: "boy," or "girl"? The text stages what appears to be an unambiguous disclosure when Matilda bares her "beauteous Orb" (Lewis, 1995, 65), except that this is further complicated when

we discover at the close that Matilda is a "subordinate but crafty spirit" of Lucifer (440). Even here matters are not clear cut, for earlier in the same speech Lucifer tells Ambrosio that he deserves a place near Matilda, "for hell boasts no miscreant more guilty than yourself" (439). If Matilda was an earthly miscreant, she would have started out life as a particular sex, presumably female (as Lucifer habitually employs "her" as the signifying pronoun); but if she is the devil's subordinate spirit, she is, Miltonically at least, a fallen angel and latently a hermaphrodite (although Milton's angels engage in sex, they are sexless in human terms). Matilda's sexual identity is, in fact, alarmingly mobile, for even in the unambiguous guise of woman she displays moments of "manliness" (231).[13]

Whether Matilda is ultimately male or female, or both, or neither, is left as a tease, which is just the point: *The Monk* is about veiling and disguise. In the manner of the theatre, all identities are "parts," or personae. After luxuriating in Matilda's arms the Monk appears in public: "The better to cloak his transgression, He redoubled his pretensions to the semblance of virtue . . ." (226). It is not a simple matter of hypocrisy, for sexual ecstasy kindles his eloquence; his rhetoric more effectively instills "enthusiasm" among his flock (239). In terms of his rhetoric, at least, "falseness" makes Ambrosio "true."

In the end, Ambrosio's desires are insatiable, in the sense that no one love object satisfies him. At times (such as the aftermath of Antonia's rape) this may seem no more than a severe case of post-coital depression. Insatiate desire is also our post-lapsarian condition. But Ambrosio's desire may be insatiable because it is denied its true object. The closest the text gets to disclosing what this object might be is an elaborately staged event which obfuscates as it reveals. In the center of the text, in quick succession, Matilda performs two acts of conjuration. In the first, Antonia's coy, modest, naked body is displayed before Ambrosio in Matilda's magic mirror. In the second, in labyrinthine caverns beneath the monastery, Matilda invokes an androgynous, decidedly camp "Daemon": "a Youth seemingly scarce eighteen, the perfection of whose form and face was unrivalled." The "beautiful" figure, "perfectly naked," with "silken locks" and surrounded by "clouds of rose-coloured lights" (277), appears as the key to Ambrosio's possession of Antonia. The figure, at Matilda's strident behest, finally relinquishes the "myrtle" which will enable Antonia's seduction. The parallelism of the staging raises the question of causation: is the Daemon the key to the sexual possession of Antonia, or is Antonia's image a screen for Ambrosio's true object of desire, the epicene devil? Iconographically the event occurs with Ambrosio literally in a dark maze – in other words, in a state of unresolved confusion. Nevertheless the scene is proleptically significant, for if Matilda is indeed a "crafty spirit," then her true seductive form may be that of a beautiful androgynous boy, which is to say, Rosario.

In the end, the truth is literally buried in labyrinths of conjecture. But *The Monk* does not aim to excavate the truth. On the contrary, it insists upon the mobility, and provisionality, of identity. *The Monk* constantly draws attention to itself as a text, beginning with the "Advertisement" declaring its "plagiarisms," which is another way of announcing that the text is a pastiche, a collation of preexisting material, ironically

assembled. Radcliffean sensibility is satirized, while the explained supernatural is turned on its head: first we get the explanation for the spectral Bleeding Nun (Agnes masquerades as the legendary figure) and *then* the supernatural, when the real ghost unexpectedly turns up. "Virtue in distress" is scandalously inverted, as the outraging of Antonia's modesty stirs not Ambrosio's chivalrous conscience, but his lust. And, as we have seen, narrative loose ends, such as the status of Matilda's identity, are simply left to dangle. But perhaps the most common device for textual destabilization is excess, such as the over-the-top tableau of Agnes in emaciated *déshabillé*, clutching her putrefying baby among the charnel-house corpses. Such theatrical excess underlines *The Monk*'s subliminal message, which is that identity is performative, something which changes with the words, or parts, that constitute it. Indeed, the book's opening scene goes to great lengths to stress that in Madrid (and in the world at large) religion is theatre. Ambrosio's imposture is mimicked by the main characters: Don Lorenzo and Don Raymond assume the part of "cavaliers" while Antonia falls in and out of the part of "sensibility." This may read like satire, but the significant issue this satire conceals is that identity is given, is always already fashioned for us, and is therefore without transcendental value. In the shifting scenes of this Catholic "Vanity Fair," nothing is what it seems; indeed, nothing "is," in the sense of being beyond contestation.

What *The Monk* finally contests is the system of justice that relies upon notions of fixed identity, upon standards of truth capable of distinguishing the natural from the unnatural. The most solemn moment in the book is (or ought to be) Ambrosio's punishment. As a representation of divine justice it ought to have a ring of truth to it; instead, it has the ring of Marlowe's *Faustus*, which it parodies. The imagery of the punishment itself apparently derives from an illustration in Joseph Glanvil's book on witchcraft. According to Lewis's first biography, the imagery made a deep impression on him as a child, when, presumably, he dwelt on whatever sins he felt he had, and the torments due to them (Peck, 1961, 4, 289–90 n. 14). The iconography of the Monk's punishment skirts blasphemy, partly because it parodies Genesis (Ambrosio actively undergoes torture for six days, before resting [dying] on the seventh), and partly because the theatrical excess of his broken, insect-eaten "corse" calls into question the divine justice that has inflicted such gruesome torments upon it. *The Monk* apparently ends with an act of closure (the pious distribution of divine justice), a closure destabilized by its very excess (it appears less divine than pagan, brutal, and arbitrary). For those so minded to read it as homosexual allegory, Ambrosio's spectacular punishment takes on the character of a sodomite in the stocks experiencing the rough justice of the crowd.

Notes

1 The question of Sade's influence on 1790s Gothic fiction is problematic; see Clery (1994, 203–14).

2 For two complementary views on what I mean by "pastiche" here, see Hogle (1994, 23–33) and Sontag (1982, 105–20).

3 According to Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). For the standard work on the eighteenth-century sublime, see Monk (1960). See also Morris (1985, 299–319) and Voller (1994).

4 "Performative" is a key word in gender studies, but especially in the work of Judith Butler, who understands it discursively. "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essences of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler, 1990, 136; see also Butler, 1993). To the discursive I want to add a dramatic meaning to "performative" which rises from the theatrical metaphors and concerns permeating the works of Walpole, Lewis, and Beckford.

5 For the critical literature on the female Gothic, see Miles (1994, 131–42).

6 For this information, I am indebted to E. J. Clery, who has studied *The Morning Chronicle* in the immediate aftermath of 1789. However, it seems that William Radcliffe held on to his democratic principles well into the period of reaction: Joseph Farington reported in 1797 that William Radcliffe was "democratically inclined" (Rogers, 1996, 43).

7 For the rough justice convicted (or simply suspected) sodomites could expect from the crowd, see Tuite (1997, 7) and Norton (1992, 130–3).

8 Sedgwick herself cautions against any generalized categorization. For instance, she differentiates between the works of William Godwin, Mary Shelley, James Hogg, and Charles Maturin, which plot homophobic paranoia, and the works of Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis, which allegorize "unspeakable" desire (1985, 91–2). I follow Sedgwick's division.

9 For a recent account of this, including English patriotism, middle-class assertion, the raising of cultural capital and the cult of sensibility, see Brewer (1997, 56–124).

10 Ellen Moers pioneered this view in modern Radcliffe criticism (Moers, 1977, 136). For the complex representation of property in Radcliffe, see Poovey (1979, 307–30), Clery (1995, 115–30), and Fitzgerald (1997).

11 The most productive psychoanalytic reading of family secrets is to be found in the work of the French analysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. For an excellent study of the relation between their work and literary texts, see Rashkin (1992). For the relation between family secrets and the Gothic, see Miles (1999).

12 I believe Susan Sontag was the first to draw attention to the Gothic's historical links with "camp" (see Sontag, 1982, esp. 109). Otherwise, I follow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in associating camp with the effort to "assume or resume some control over the uses and consequences of historically residual definitions" of "the homosexual" (Sedgwick, 1985, 90).

13 Cf. Tuite (1997), who believes the text unambiguously reveals Matilda's male gender. In *Paradise Lost* the angels engage in sex, of a kind, and variously embody the male or female principle. Although nominal "maleness" appears to be their default state, the most conspicuous feature of angelic sexual identity is mobility. (I am indebted to my colleague Lisa Hopkins for this point.)

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7
Mary Shelley, Author of *Frankenstein*

Nora Crook

What kind of Gothic is *Frankenstein* (1818), one of the most extraordinary books ever written by a nineteen-year-old?[1] Undoubtedly, like the monster it unleashed on the world, it is a hybrid, and one to which every Gothic story that Mary Shelley (1797–1851) is known to have read prior to 1817 made some perceptible contribution.[2] This hybridity has much to do with its seemingly endless capacity to generate diverse, yet often surprisingly compatible, interpretations.

Generically, *Frankenstein* is clearly a tale of terror. Mary Shelley's declared intention was to "awaken thrilling horror" (*Frankenstein*, 1831 Intro.); its sustaining elements are suspense, persecution, and panic. It contains most of the props of Gothic terror fiction, albeit disguised.[3] The moldering abbey is transformed into Victor's laboratory, with Victor as cloistered monk/student. A buried incest motif underlies Victor's betrothal to his "more than sister," Elizabeth. The towering specter becomes an artificial man eight feet high, the secret tribunal becomes the secret ballot of the Geneva magistracy. The villain's pursuit of the maiden becomes the mutual pursuit of Victor and his Creature. It has a fatal portrait (Caroline Frankenstein's) and sublime landscapes (the Alps and the Arctic wastes). The Creature, an Un-dead patched from corpses, is explicitly compared to a vampire and a mummy. The embargoed secret is that of human creation itself.

Reviewing *Frankenstein*, Walter Scott praised its "plain and forcible English," free from "hyperbolical Germanicisms," a point to set against the brickbats *Frankenstein* has frequently (and unjustly) received for its allegedly clumsy style. Yet it has obvious links with the German "shudder-novel." During the famous rainy summer of 1816 at the Villa Diodati near Geneva, it was a French translation of German ghost stories, *Fantasmagoriana*, which incited the Byron and Shelley parties to write their own col-

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lection for publication (see *Frankenstein*, 1831 Intro.; Utterson, 1992).[4] *(Frankenstein* and John Polidori's "The Vampyre" [1819] were the only items successfully completed.) As well as employing, like *Frankenstein*, the "Chinese box" device of nested narratives, *Fantasmagoriana* contains a tale of a man doomed to destroy his race, and another about a demon who takes the form of a dead bride, both of which, Mary Shelley testified, influenced *Frankenstein.* The suitably Germanic title might stem from Schloss Frankenstein, a Rhine castle associated with an alchemist and Rosicrucian, Konrad Dippel (1673–1734), who reputedly experimented with blood and bones to make an elixir of life. The Shelleys certainly passed it during their 1814 Rhine journey and may well have seen it from afar.[5] Early theatrical adaptations, such as *Presumption, or The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), brought out the Germanic resonances and added Gothic trappings. The earliest illustration (1831), following stage practice, gave the laboratory a Gothic window and Victor the clothes of that well-known German university student, Hamlet.

For Mary Shelley, it was not enough that the book should speak to our fears; the fears were to be "mysterious," that is, unconscious and inexplicable sources of psychic disturbance. It is a novel (*the* novel, some would say) about doubling, shadow selves, split personalities. Its endurance is frequently ascribed to its bringing together the "central dualities of a culture in which reason and science were displacing religion as centers of value" (Levine and Knoepflmacher, 1979, 14–16)[6] and in which the instinctual self, separated from the conscious will, reemerges, stigmatized as criminal. Another dimension of its "mystery" is its intimations of an "unspeakable" sexual underworld of androgyny, homoeroticism, necrophilia, and bestiality.[7] Feminist criticism of the last twenty-five years has directed attention to *Frankenstein* as "female Gothic," revealing a specifically *female* unconscious. Influential, here, have been readings of the book as a "birth myth" (the span of Walton's narrative is nine calendar months and a day) or the Creature as "really" female (see Moers, 1977; Gilbert and Gubar, 1979; Johnson, 1982). That *Frankenstein*'s anonymous publication intentionally misled readers into thinking its author a male disciple of William Godwin, Mary Shelley's father, and that her contemporary reputation was that of wielder of a "masculine pen," are circumstances adding zest to these interpretations.

Certain elements encourage psychobiographical readings. *Frankenstein* contains disguised elements of Godwin and Shelley family history.[8] Walton's sister, whose complete name can be deduced to be Margaret Walton Saville, has the same initials as the author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Mary Shelley's first, premature, baby died a cot death in March 1815; there are parallels between Victor's being revived on Walton's ship and her real dream of rubbing the dead baby by the fire and restoring it to life (Shelley, 1987, vol. 1, 70). The attitude of Elizabeth's corpse, "thrown across the bed, her head hanging down," has reminded many of *The Nightmare*, a famous picture that Mary Shelley almost certainly knew: her mother, the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, had been infatuated with its artist, the Swiss Henry Fuseli (see Veeder, 1986, 192–3; Mellor, 1988, 121; on Fuseli and Shelley, see Roberts, 1990). The fictitious Victor can be deduced to have died on September 11, 1797, one day after the

real Wollstonecraft had died of complications following the birth of her daughter. If Victor, in reanimating the dead, is attempting perversely to resurrect his dead mother (his dream of seeing her corpse crawling with grave worms is one of the most appalling images in the book), then Mary Shelley, as author, may be attempting an analogous act. Other psychobiographical readings presuppose conflicted, even murderous, feelings toward her men; the novel is said to dramatize Mary Shelley's suppressed aggression, with Victor standing in for her husband Percy Shelley. And the Creature's first victim, little William, has the same first name as her father, her half-brother and her infant son.[9]

Looser psychobiographical readings see *Frankenstein* as a wrestling with powerful literary fathers, notably Milton. The process of writing becomes Gothic metafiction. Mary Shelley's valediction to her 1831 readers, "And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny to go forth and prosper," has been the cue for drawing an analogy between Victor and herself as boundary-breaking "authors" (see esp. Gilbert and Gubar, 1979).[10] A very influential group of readings treats *Frankenstein* as a critique of male mastery: it is not so much about a woman's fear of breeding monsters as about masculine usurpation of the feminine. Not only does Victor substitute Promethean self-immortalization by artificial means for the "immortality of Nature," to use Thomas Hobbes's phrase, but, having succeeded, he fails in the "motherly" duty of care for his offspring. In this scenario, Mary Shelley as author is a contrast to Victor as creator. He rejects, she cherishes, the hideous progeny.[11]

Contemporary reviewers saw *Frankenstein* as the product of a "Godwinian" school, influenced by the psycho-political thriller *Caleb Williams*, which was published during the climate of fear engendered by the treason trials of 1794 (*Frankenstein* is recognizably set in the 1790s).[12] Today, it is frequently discussed as "political Gothic," a perspective lost in most theatrical and film adaptations, which tend to omit episodes that support such readings (for filmographies, see Wolf, 1993, app. E; Florescu, 1996, app. 4; see also Mank, 1981). Frequently evoked is Edmund Burke's Gothic image, "out of the tomb of the murdered monarchy in France has arisen a vast, tremendous, unformed spectre";[13] Sade's description of *The Monk* as "the necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe" is applied to *Frankenstein* too.[14] *Frankenstein* is read as a paradigm of the French Revolution, with the Creature an emblem of the multitude, or Bonaparte, or revolutionary energy.[15] Victor's dream of creating a new race of beings is analogous to the utopianism that followed the fall of the Bastille in 1789. But a new social order based on liberty, equality, and fraternity yields to its nightmare: war, the guillotine and fratricide, for which the *philosophe* class must take some responsibility because of its lack of foresight and its misguided zeal. This tale of terror is thus, on one level, a tale of The Terror.

The setting (in Geneva) and several incidents (planting an incriminating item on a servant girl, locking the city gates) recall passages in the career of the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose writings ("frenzied by disease or woe, / To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show"),[16] were the intellectual spur to the Revolution. Little William Frankenstein, according to this reading, derives not from

the Williams in Mary Shelley's life but (by contrast) the Swiss national hero William Tell. Tell's energetic patriotism reproves his successors, the complacent Genevese oligarchs, who lavish every advantage on their sons except a training in responsible citizenship. Another hidden narrative warns against European expansionism: Safie weeps at the cruelties perpetrated upon the Native Americans. Nice Henry Clerval seeks new enterprise opportunities in the East (in the 1831 version); is his murder a possible retribution for the plundering of the Orient by trading companies and nabobs?[17] The Creature says that it will immolate itself, but we never see the conflagration; the ending is left open. The reader is at liberty to imagine it at peace, or still abroad, or risen, phoenix-like, from the ashes. In the context of post-Napoleonic Europe in 1816–17, with the reactionary Bourbons back on their thrones and habeas corpus suspended in "free" England, this ending would appear fearful or exhilarating, according to one's political stripe.

Frankenstein's Godwinian lineage gives it not only a political context but also a conceptual framework, which makes it one of the most philosophical of all Gothic novels. Sage has argued that Gothic originates in British Protestantism, which identifies evil with the "old religion" and its "mummeries" (Sage, 1988, esp. ch. 2). Traces of this remain in the settings: Victor "falls" not in Geneva, city of Calvin, but in Catholic Ingolstadt. The rationalist, who has been carefully protected from superstitious terrors by his father, ends by execrating his Creature as a fiend and devil. Unlike, say, Maturin's *Melmoth*, *Frankenstein* is not primarily concerned with the Catholic versus Protestant opposition (indeed, early reviewers obscurely but correctly felt that the book encoded an aversion to all religious orthodoxies). But in its engagement with the Godwinian doctrine of necessity, we can see a secularization of the Calvinistic belief in predestination, crucial to Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

One of the debates that has clung to the book from 1818 to the present is the apportionment of sympathy and blame between the Man and the Monster. Are Victor and his Creature to be seen as machines subject to immutable laws governing mind and matter? If they are (as the strict Godwinian doctrine of necessity would have it), blame is irrelevant; they could not have acted otherwise. Yet most readers judge them as if they had free will, with Victor the more reprehensible because (apparently) the more free. It is Victor who has made the Creature ugly and programmed him for a life of wretchedness; the scientist's remorse and blaming of destiny are suspect as mere rhetorical devices to win over his auditor. By contrast, the Creature, though self-confessedly malicious and calculatedly revengeful, is frequently excused. Godwin was later[18] to spell out his mature position: we always (and rightly) act under the delusion that we have free will, but the case for necessitarianism is still unanswerable. This paradox lies at the heart of the experience of reading *Frankenstein.* The pacing (described as "the accelerated rapidity of a rock rolled down a mountain" by P. B. Shelley [1832]) hurries readers into feeling that the catastrophe is the inevitable result of a chain of previous causes. Yet, stemming the current is a shadowy contrafactual *Frankenstein.* What, for instance, if Caroline Frankenstein had refrained from entering Elizabeth's room, or Victor had refused to make a mate for the Creature? The restless uncertainty

about whether or not the characters are moral automata gives the novel no small part of its dynamism.[19]

But to the twentieth century, *Frankenstein* meant above all science-fiction horror, a genre of which it is the founder-member. Its power to address the fears generated by the seemingly unstoppable momentum of scientific technology (computers replacing humans, death-rays, brain transplants, cloning), if anything, increased as the twentieth century drew to a close. *Frankenstein* invented the archetypal mad scientist, whose vainglorious obsession with realizing *anything* that the human mind can conceive and whose refusal to set artificial limits to human capabilities threaten to destroy the very humanity they claim to benefit and ennoble. For this achievement alone, *Frankenstein* would deserve its reputation as a landmark work of Gothic, and it is, of course, this concept which survives, however transmogrified, in all the film versions of the Frankenstein story.

The scientific machinery and other markers of literary realism, such as the specificity of names in the environs of Geneva (Chêne, Belrive), give *Frankenstein* a local habitation, even at points a humdrum quality. It is often treated as a development of the Radcliffean "explained supernatural." But is it? Contemporary reviews hedged. All agreed that it is a "wild" fiction but seemed uncertain whether it is a tale of the real "supernatural" or of the "marvellous" (like Gulliver's voyage to Lilliput, which requires only an initial suspension of disbelief in a miniature world for the rest to follow). The latter is the view adopted by Scott (1818). On the other hand, *Knight's Quarterly Magazine* (1824) called it "The best instance of natural passions applied to supernatural events that I ever met with," without defining the "supernatural." Most interesting of all, the *Scots Magazine* (1818), while accusing it of "outrageous improbability" as if measuring it against criteria of realism, declared that it had the "air of reality" because it corresponded to a contemporary sense that the era itself was extravagant, theatrical, incredible. Who could have *invented* Napoleon's career?

Improbable narratives frequently include an authenticating preface written by a fictitious editor, who has acted as amanuensis (or arranged the author's posthumous papers or stumbled upon a bundle of letters). It is a given that the "editor" has been at liberty to abridge, expurgate, tidy, or embellish the raw "original." *Frankenstein* provides no such overt machinery, though there are signs that some unseen hand has touched up Walton's letters to his sister. Who has put a conventional dash in "17 – "? Who has updated the narrative with anachronistic quotations from poets of 1816 (Byron and Leigh Hunt)? Did Walton get home? Have the siblings edited the letters together? Or did Walton and his men perish, their fate unknown until some whaler discovered their ship twenty years later, leaving sister Margaret to edit her late brother's remains as a pious duty?

There can be no answers to these questions, and the reader is never sure whether they are proper ones to ask. Mary Shelley may have set out to introduce some irreducible incongruities (such as giving Walton's and Victor's narratives different time scales) that disrupt initial assumptions of realism. A similar uncertainty affects the reliability of the multiple narrators. Walton transmits Victor's narrative (written up

from notes, which are then amended by Victor himself); Victor transmits the Creature's, presumably rendering it into English from the original French; the Creature transmits that of Felix and Safie, deriving it partly from their love letters. Hence, at the heart of this Gothic tale is an epistolary love story which we cannot read. Safie's letters were dictated in Turkish to a bilingual servant, who translated them into French for Felix's benefit. The Creature, from his spy-hole, makes copies of these, which he presents to Victor, assuring him that "they will prove the truth of my tale." Victor in turn shows them to Walton, who considers them the best proof of the existence of the Creature. Yet we have no description of these copies. How can Walton be sure that Victor has not faked them? For that matter, how can we be sure that Victor's story has not been dreamed up by Walton – imaginative, ice-bound, isolated and longing for a friend? True, the crew glimpses the Creature. Are they, then, victims of an optical illusion? In Terry Lovell's words, "The reader cannot be certain whether *Frankenstein* is a marvellous tale governed by a causality outside present scientific knowledge – an instance of the 'scientific marvellous' – or a tale spun out of paranoid delusion and severe sense deprivation" (Lovell, 1987, 60). This makes the novel an example of the "pure-fantastic," to use the terminology of the formalist critic, Tzvetan Todorov. For Todorov, the "pure-fantastic" is an inherently subversive genre, which, forcing the reader to hesitate irresolvably between alternative explanations, calls into question the nature of "reality" itself.

It is often assumed that Mary Shelley's demonic, Gothic side exhausted itself with *Frankenstein*, but Gothic romance continued to punctuate her life. (In 1827 she helped two female friends to elope together disguised as man and wife, the former being the transvestite Mary Diana Dods, author and translator of supernatural Germanic tales [see Bennett, 1994].) Gothic themes – the demon lover, the mother's body, incest, imprisonment, Rosicrucianism, reanimation of a corpse – permeate her later works. None approaches *Frankenstein*'s capacity to terrify, nor was intended to, but they are recognizably written by a driven, haunted woman, and exemplify the power of Gothic to infiltrate other genres: the historical novel, the domestic tale, the travel book. Her writing for periodicals includes at least five items with strongly Gothic elements: "On ghosts" (1824), the comic "Roger Dodsworth, the reanimated Englishman" (written 1826), "The evil eye" (1829), "Transformation" (1830), "The mortal immortal" (1833). In the novella *Mathilda* (written 1819) the sixteen-year-old heroine, about to become the object of her father's incestuous passion, rushes to greet him "dressed in white, covered only by my tartan *rachan*, my hair streaming on my shoulders" and uncannily "shooting across with greater speed than it could be supposed I could give to my boat" (Shelley, 1996b, vol. 2, 34). *The Last Man* (1826), a *danse macabre* set in the twenty-first century, ends with a phantasmagoria among the ruins of Rome and the narrator as eternal wanderer in search of a surviving fellow human. *Falkner* (1837) opens creepily with a child crying "Go away from mamma!" as a stranger throws his body upon her mother's grave and places a cocked pistol to his forehead. He becomes her adoptive father. Later, in a grim scene, another mother's corpse is exhumed, all discolored bones and scraps of black silk (Shelley, 1996b, vol. 7, 1.47, 3.36–7). Even

Perkin Warbeck (1830), straight historical fiction, is premised upon Mary Shelley's fascination with reanimation: against the historians' consensus that young Richard of York was murdered in the Tower, she resurrects him as the true king of England.

Of this corpus of post-*Frankenstein* work, I have selected two for more detailed comment. *Valperga* (1823), written in Italy, revitalizes the link between historical romance and the older Gothic conventions set up by *The Castle of Otranto.* Significantly, "original Gothic" was at home in the medieval Holy Roman Empire (which lasted from 962 until 1806, when Napoleon put the dying creature out of its misery). Secular and religious authority contended for supremacy; these powers were (roughly speaking) polarized between the Germanic and the Italian.[20] Nominally the strong right arm of Christendom, the emperor (usually German) was also overlord of northern Italy, whereas the pope (usually Italian) had spiritual dominion over the emperor. Emperor and pope inevitably and periodically feuded. In *Otranto*, the outlines of this centuries-long power struggle may be discerned. Walpole's Manfred, the proto-Byronic villain, is a metamorphosis of the historic Manfred, king of Sicily (*c.*1232–66), excommunicate, usurper, and one of Mary Shelley's favorite historical characters. Characters with Germanic names in *Otranto* belong to the usurping family (Manfred, Conrad, Matilda), with Frederic, a would-be usurper, having a German-leaning one. The legitimate and innocent tend to have Italianate names (Alfonso, Victoria, Isabella) or names aligned with the early Christian church (Jerome, Theodore). Hippolita shares a Greek name with the defeated queen of the Amazons, representing female subjugation and, perhaps, the subterranean spirit of the ancient Greek colony that preceded Otranto.

Valperga is set in this Gothic time and space, early fourteenth-century Italy, during the feuds of the Ghibellines (pro-emperor) and the Guelfs (pro-pope). Woven into its well-researched text are Gothic features – devils incarnate, dungeons, secret passages, an albino dwarf, cavernous mountains, a wandering Jew figure, prophecy. Its polarities are similar to those found in *Otranto:* Germany and Italy, north and south, fair-haired and dark-haired, the material and the supernatural, dominance and subordination. The Napoleonic hero–villain, Castruccio, a Ghibelline, sides with the German emperors. His enemies are buried alive upside down.[21] He triumphs over everything but death; the only moderating influence comes from his madonna and former betrothed, the Guelf countess of Valperga, the fair-haired Euthanasia dei' Adimari, of Greek name and mixed Germanic–Italian ancestry. Her title sounds Italian but derives ultimately from St. Walburga, whose shrine in Germany was supposed to ooze forth a healing oil. (The saint's cult became amalgamated with the May-Day night orgies known as Walpurgisnacht, when witches ride and couple with devils.)[22]

Valperga's twist to the Gothic plot is to make the hill-top castle not the tyrant's labyrinthine abode of terror, but the site of wise female rule over a loyal feudal community, which its countess is gradually educating toward independence. Hence the beleaguered maiden's efforts are directed toward defending her space, not toward escaping. Castruccio captures the castle in an act of aggravated quasi-rape, reduces it to a "black and hideous ruin" (Shelley, 1996b, vol. 3, 30) and with chivalrous menace places Euthanasia under his "protection." With Valperga obliterated and its owner

bearing this loss with heroic self-command, a hitherto unmentioned fury suddenly appears, the hag Fior di Mandragola, who, all white hair, red eyes, and brown skinniness, dwells in a cave-like woodland cottage reminiscent of the Creature's hovel. As the good angel becomes the malignant devil, so the outrage offered to the madonna of the mountain releases her double, the witch of the forest.

Another double of Euthanasia is the black-haired prophetess Beatrice, whose mother, Wilhelmina of Bohemia, had claimed to be the female messiah and was burnt as a heretic. Into Beatrice's mouth is placed one of Mary Shelley's weirdest dream-evocations:

> There was a vast, black house standing in the midst of the water, a concourse of dark shapes hovered about me; and suddenly I was transported into a boat which was to convey me to that mansion. Strange! another boat like to mine moved beside us; its rowers, the same in number, the same in habiliment, struck the water with their oars at the same time with ours . . . and, though the boats were alike black, yet not like mine did this other cast a black shadow on the water. (Shelley, 1996b, vol. 3, III, 131–2)

By *Valperga*'s end, Beatrice is poisoned and Euthanasia drowned, but the latter's spiritual energy still slumbers beneath the ocean. What the two dead heroines represent – Italian inspirational genius and rational hopes for a united and free Italy – will, the story intimates, rise again in post-Napoleonic Europe.

Rambles in Germany and Italy (1844), Mary Shelley's last published work, celebrates this resurrection, the unification movement known as the Risorgimento. Her editions of Shelley's works had made enough money for her to revisit Germany, Switzerland, and Italy after seventeen years. The result is a charming, sprightly travel book. Europe is safer than in 1814–23; banditti are an endangered species; railways make journeying so convenient! Though set in Gothic country, nothing, seemingly, could be less Gothic.

Yet intercut with the gallery-visiting, the show-places, the commodious Swiss hotels, are melancholy, foreboding passages, glimpses of the *unheimlich*. A contemporary reviewer acutely remarked of *Rambles* that Mary Shelley's monster was not dead but "only sleepeth" (*The Atlas*, 1844). From a steamer she espies the Villa Diodati under a bleak, cloudy sky; there it was that her "hideous progeny" had been conceived:

> Was I the same person who had lived there, the companion of the dead? . . . I looked on the inanimate objects that had surrounded me, which survived, the same in aspect as then, to feel that all my life since was but an unreal phantasmagoria – the shades that gathered round that scene were the realities. . . . (Shelley, 1996b, vol. 8, I, 139–40)

Cholera has recently ravaged Rome, still decaying under papal rule. Reversing Dante, she finds his Inferno in the dungeons where political prisoners have been incarcerated. The oppressive and skeletal hand of a real patriarchal Gothic villain, "one of the most

wicked and treacherous tyrants that ever disgraced humanity" (I, 120), the last Holy Roman Emperor, Francis, predecessor of the present Austrian emperor, still grasps his Italian provinces. Spies and unsealers of private letters, the "guardian angels" of the arch-reactionary Metternich, chancellor of Austria, hover. At Como, site of the villa owned by Victor's bride in the 1831 *Frankenstein*, an English-language teacher goes berserk with a pistol, crying that the Austrians are trying to poison him. Police take him away, meek, in a boat (I, 70–1). A letter strangely disappears, leaving Mary Shelley desolate and apprehensive, stranded in Milan without money; it appears as oddly as it vanished, with a glib explanation from the post office clerk (I, 114–24). She glimpses Count Confalonieri, an old Carbonaro of the suppressed revolution of 1820, a walking ghost released from the notorious dungeon of the Spielberg by a "merciful" Austrian government (I, 121). In Venice the guide ("a character") maintains that at the height of Venetian power its secret tribunals and its prisons "were not so cruel as they were represented." And yet, she adds ironically, "he was proud of the sombre region over whose now stingless horrors he reigned" (II, 86).

The tone alters; the Valpergan black bark of death reappears – no dream now:

> A narrow corridor, with small double-grated windows that barely admit light, but which the sound of the plashing waters beneath penetrates, encloses a series of dungeons. . . . One of the doors . . . leads to a dark cell, in which is a small door that opens on narrow winding stairs; below is the lagune; here the prisoners were embarked on board the gondola, which took them to the Canale Orfano, the drowning place. . . . (II, 86–7)

Turning to more recent events, the guide "whom one might easily have mistaken for a gaoler" attempts to prove that Silvio Pellico, the associate of Confalonieri, had, during his imprisonment in Venice, been given an "airy, lightsome" apartment, when in reality it was a torture chamber, where "multitudinous gnats and dazzling unmitigated sunshine nearly drove him mad." Yet even worse was the Spielberg, under the "*paternal care*" of the emperor Francis, whose pleasure it was to "break the spirit of his *rebel children* by destroying the flesh" and whose study of means to "torment and attenuate – to blight with disease and subdue to despair – puts to shame the fly-killing pastime of Dioclesian" (II, 87–8).[23]

A tremendous Being stalks *Rambles*, and its name is Risorgimento. Young Italy plots against its Father. Nourished by the writings of the illustrious dead (Dante, Alfieri) and the revolutionary secret societies of Naples and Piedmont, it emerges into the light of day. Its quest is the reconstitution and revitalization of the dismembered body of the mother, Italia, a task that it will complete in 1871.

Rambles has been described as an exorcism; it is also Mary Shelley's ultimate resurrection narrative. The first pleasure felt by Victor's Creature as it rambled through the woods was the sight of "a gentle light" rising through the trees and stealing over the heavens, the "radiant form" of the moon, a vision of benignant maternal nature

which never reappears. *Rambles* ends with Mary Shelley enjoying a momentary reverie in a southern European earthly paradise, the Bay of Naples, with the scent of orange trees, the moon hanging "luminous, a pendant sphere of silver fire." Meanwhile, through the immortality bestowed by print, Victor's outcast Creature forever sets off to collect wood for its infernal polar paradise.

Notes

1 Page numbers of the works of Mary Shelley (MWS) are taken from the first editions (unless otherwise stated), as derived from Shelley, 1996b; MWS's Introduction to the 1831 *Frankenstein* is found in most annotated editions, integrally or as an appendix.

2 Among these are *The Sorcerer*, translation (1795) of Veit Weber's *Die Teufelsbeschwörung* (1787), M. G. Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (1799), William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786), William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799), *The Armenian, or The Ghost-Seer*, translation (1800) of Schiller's *Der Geisterseher* (1789), *Hermann d'Unna*, translation (1791) of Christiane Naubert's *Hermann von Unna* (1788); see Shelley (1987, vol. 1, 85–100).

3 An observation made by Eino Railo in *The Haunted Castle* (1927).

4 Byron included his fragmentary vampire tale in the *Mazeppa* volume (1819). Maurice Hindle's edition of *Frankenstein* (Penguin, 1988) appends Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819).

5 Florescu (1996, 56–92) argues for an actual visit.

6 For a study of the *doppelgänger* theme in *Frankenstein*, see Ketterer (1979, 45–65).

7 William Beckford called *Frankenstein* "Perhaps the foulest toadstool that has yet sprung up from the reeking dunghill of the present times" (quoted in Roberts, 1990, 105). For speculation that MWS was aware of Sade's *Justine*, see Mario Praz's introduction to *Frankenstein*, in Fairclough (1968, 31) and Wolf (1993, 127n). In the television film *Frankenstein: The True Story* (dir. Jack Smight, writ. Don Bachardy and Christopher Isherwood, 1973), Victor's unmentionable secret is that his creation is *beautiful.* The film reads MWS's novel as a homophobic text in which male desire for an ideal same-sex friend is demonized.

8 See, for instance, Hill-Miller (1995). On the chronology, see Wolf (1993, 333–7), Mellor (1988, 54–5 and n.), and Shelley (1996a, vol. 1, lxv–lxvi). Robinson shows that, although the dating of the frame and the main narrative are out by a year, MWS planned the chronology with care, probably using a perpetual calendar.

9 Mellor (1988, 47) suggests that the choice of name indicates MWS's horrified recognition in herself of infanticidal potential. Veeder (1986) argues that *Frankenstein* critiques utopian androgyny.

10 For the view that *Frankenstein* permits the anxious author to "express and efface herself ," see Poovey (1982); MWS's authorship was queried as early as 1824. Robinson's work has enabled scholars to judge the extent of Percy Bysshe Shelley's (PBS's) interventions. Corroborating Mellor, Robinson views PBS's role as similar to that of a modern publisher's editor: "PBS suggested and made alterations . . . for the purpose of improving an already excellent narrative . . . MWS accepted the suggestions and alterations that she agreed with" (Shelley, 1996a, vol. 1, lxvii–lxxi).

11 See, for example, Homans (1995). Musselwhite (1987, 43–74) considers that Victor's feverish labor suggests masturbation rather than parturition.

12 Volney's *Ruins* (1791), one of the books overheard by the Creature, offers one such placing date.

13 *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796, ch. 1, para. vi), quoted by Lee Sterrenburg in Levine and Knoepflmacher (1979, 143).

14 *Les Crimes de l'Amour* (1800), quoted in Sage (1990, 49).

15 Influential political readings include those of Sterrenburg (repr. in Levine and Knoepflmacher, 1979), Baldick (1987) and Moretti (1983).

16 Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 3.80.8–9.

17 Mellor argues (conference papers given at New York and Bologna, 1997) that the Creature is Mongoloid and taps into the fear of overrunning by "yellow hordes."

18 In *Thoughts on Man* (1831), published shortly before MWS's revised *Frankenstein.*

19 Many critics, notably Poovey, Mellor, and Butler, argue that MWS revised *Frankenstein* in 1831 to make Victor into a victim of circumstance and thus de-radicalized the novel. In my opinion, the two versions are similar in ideology, but the free-will/determinism issue has been sharpened.

20 Vestiges of an alternative eighteenth-century pedigree, which treated "the Gothick" as "Druidic" and quintessentially British (Sage, 1990, 17–18), appear in *Frankenstein* (Victor's tour of Britain pays particular attention to burial sites) and even *Valperga* (St. Walburga was supposedly a British princess).

21 Not spelled out in *Valperga*, but hinted at (III, 232) and found in MWS's sources.

22 The locale of a key scene (which PBS translated in 1822) in Goethe's *Faust.*

23 "Dioclesian" should be "Domitian," the Roman emperor who sportively threaded live flies on bodkins.

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8

Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Scottish Gothic

Ian Duncan

The literary genealogy and cultural associations of Gothic in eighteenth-century Scotland are different enough from the English case to constitute a separate development. Strictly speaking, the term "Gothic" becomes appropriate to Scottish literature only after 1800, when Walter Scott's romances combined elements from Scottish, English, and Continental European traditions that were themselves internally diverse. Scott assembled his repertoire of topoi around a thematic core which emerged from the vernacular and romance-revival movements of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry. This is not to say that Scottish novelists before Scott did not contribute to the development of English Gothic fiction: Smollett's *The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753) supplied a prototypical villain, representing the libertine will to power, as well as a much-imitated episode, the night in the robbers' house. In this chapter, "Scottish Gothic" will refer to a distinctive Scottish tradition of romantic fiction in prose and verse that originates in James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry in the 1760s and culminates in the work of Scott, James Hogg, and the contributors to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in the 1820s.

The thematic core of Scottish Gothic consists of an association between the *national* and the *uncanny or supernatural.* If Gothic can be understood as "the aesthetic sign of the political defeat of opposition to the British state" (Pittock, 2008, 26), in Scotland it comes to represent – with greater historical and anthropological specificity than in England – the uncanny recursion of a native or ancestral power alienated from modern life. Its fictions elaborate a set of historically determinate intuitions about the nature of modernity, following the definition of modernity as a philosophical category, and a discursive project, in the Scottish Enlightenment human sciences. A series of historical disjunctions, most conspicuously Scotland's loss of political independence at the 1707 Union of Parliaments, but also the growing social division between urban

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professional classes and rural populace and the religious and ethnic divisions between Lowlands and Highlands, informed a wholesale temporal distinction between Scottish modernity – the *habitus* of the middle-class literary subject – and a category of cultural otherness designated as pre-modern. The modern mind consigns those other cultural formations to a superseded, primitive past – but then assuages its new sense of estrangement by reassembling them as constituents of an organic national culture. Scottish Gothic narrates a parody or critique of this nationalist project of romance revival, in which the reanimation of traditional forms is botched or nightmarish rather than restorative. Instead of evoking a familiar way of life, romance desire summons only the dead, wraiths without life or substance, or else demonic forces expelled from the modern order of nature, whose return renders the present alien, unnatural, and fatal, exposing its metaphysical emptiness.

While the historical referent of English Gothic tends to be a superseded imperial, aristocratic regime – Catholic, feudal, or absolutist – the Scottish equivalent designates some version of a broader national culture, shared by a community or people historically separated from the emergent modernity (urban, mercantile and professional, rational and empiricist) of the Lowland Enlightenment. This designation accompanies the Enlightenment theorization of history as a process of economic and cultural modernization – "improvement" – entailing a developmental break with prior stages. Scottish Whig historians narrated the country's evolution beyond a backward, violent past, characterized by tribal and feudal politics, religious wars, and a culture of zealotry and superstition, across the watershed of the 1688 Glorious Revolution and 1707 Union, toward a cosmopolitan civil society flourishing within the imperial economy of the new British state (Kidd, 1993). Assimilation to Britishness meant cultural anglicization and a dismissal of the differential signifiers of Scottish identity as primitive relics, preserved among a backward peasantry. At the same time, the discourse of "improvement" dialectically produced the national cultural past – a national culture *as* past – as a category, a problem, an object of debate. This was especially so in the wake of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, the historical event that most starkly signified the repression of an ancient native culture under the imperatives of British modernization. The Jacobite defeat had a complex effect on Scottish self-perceptions. It at once confirmed the ascendancy of the Anglo-British cultural order of the Lowland Enlightenment, emphasized the schism between improved Lowlands and underdeveloped Highlands and – in the pitiless aftermath of Culloden – shamed Scotland as a whole by association, in English eyes, with the vanquished clans. Meanwhile, Scottish moral philosophers such as Adam Ferguson worried about the erosion of traditional sources of "virtue" in the new commercial society, at the same time as a growing English hostility toward Scottish assimilation tended to discredit the achievement of a refashioned British identity. Such developments encouraged middle-class Scots to reappraise the idea of a lost or suppressed native culture.

John Wilkes's anti-Scot campaigns in *The North Briton* coincided with the "Ossian" sensation of the early 1760s, when James Macpherson followed his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760) with what he claimed were transla-

tions of original epics by Ossian, a third-century Gaelic bard (*Fingal*, 1761; *Temora*, 1763: see Macpherson, 1996). Enormously influential for European romanticism, the Ossian poems initiated one of the principal "Gothic" tropes in modern Scottish literature: the possession of the living by the dead. The vulgar consensus that Macpherson forged these works has recently given way to a more nuanced understanding of an ideologically complex act of synthesis. Macpherson was a Highlander, a member of one of the clans at the heart of the 1745 rising and the subsequent reprisals, and it is not difficult to read the compensatory dynamic by which the Ossian poems revere a heroic Gaelic past. The significance of the Ossianic vision lay, however, in its inclusiveness and portability. Macpherson's translations were promoted and subsidized by Lowland Enlightenment intellectuals, the very agents of assimilation and anglicization; the rediscovered native epic supplied all Scots, not just Highlanders, with a consoling mythology of virtuous ancestors inhabiting a common ancient British heritage. Although English critics would reject this formula, the Ossian poems went on to become the European prototype of an aboriginal high culture that could challenge an imperial classicism on its own terms.

Crucially, however, Macpherson's ancestral nation is lost, extinct, confined to the immateriality of an absolute past. "Songs of other times," the Ossian poems invoke Gaelic culture as a ghostly presence that always turns out, at its own moment of historical being and in its own expressive utterance, to be fading away into some yet remoter anteriority. As disembodied as the wraiths with which they familiarly converse, the Ossianic heroes inhabit an empty, reiterative temporality of haunting and an evanescent scenery of cataracts, mists, and lonely cairns. The characteristic speech act of this world is the elegy, whether spoken by the chieftain mourning his slain children or sung by the aged bard, the last of his race, mourning himself and that posterity which is occupied only by our act of reading. Macpherson's act of translation obliterates the Gaelic original in order to recreate it as a dead poetic language embalmed in English prose. Not just the poem's world, but its sites of production and reception undergo a melancholy dematerialization. The reader of Ossian does not so much return to the past as assist at a return of the dead that draws him too into its shadow (see Womack, 1988; Trumpener, 1997).

An alternative formula for "Scottish Gothic" appeared elsewhere in the eighteenth century, on the ground of a national tradition that insisted on its continuing vivacity. The rural and urban popular culture of Lowland Scotland, combining rich oral traditions with high literacy rates, provided the base for a vernacular poetic revival that was officially ignored by the Enlightenment literati until the appearance of Robert Burns at the end of the 1780s. The new academic discipline of "rhetoric and belles lettres" (promoted by Adam Smith and Hugh Blair) tended to equate poetry in Scots, as well as in Gaelic, with an obsolescent "rustic dialect" and "barbarous and rude" cultural forms (Crawford, 1992, 30–5). This time the division between archaic and modern followed class rather than regional and ethnic lines. Burns himself devoted much of his poetic practice to a sophisticated negotiation among the different sites of culture, tradition, and social class intersected by his career, and in so doing

established a second mode of Scottish Gothic, alternative to Macpherson's elegiac ghost-writing of an extinct world. Rather than translating into English, Burns insists on the lively alterity of Scots as a poetic resource, by means of a heteroglossic juxtaposition of languages, forms, and styles. If "Death and Dr. Hornbook" (1786) casts the satire of improvement (the doctor's trade makes Death himself redundant) within a rural working-class milieu, "Halloween" (1786) frames its Scots verse catalog of peasant beliefs and customs with an anthropological commentary in "enlightened" English notes (a device that would be imitated by national novelists such as Edgeworth and Scott) (see Burns, 1969). The contemporary "Address to the Deil" marks a characteristic technical advance, as it subsumes official cultural registers (including Milton and the Bible) within the dominant vernacular style of the "Bardie" (Burns's mock-heroic title for his own poetic agency).

With "Tam o' Shanter: A Tale" (1791), Burns effectively set the pattern for modern supernatural narrative in Scots. The poem deftly capsizes its status as a folkloric illustration occupying a footnote in Francis Grose's *The Antiquities of Scotland*, and not only because Grose's book has long since become a footnote to Burns's poem. "Tam o' Shanter" ironizes the relation of supernatural "folklore" to common life and to the modern reader, using it to map psychic and cultural spaces of gender difference, homosociality, and a masculine fantasy structure of pleasure, phobia, and prohibition. The poem insists on the carnal solidity, rather than allegorical transparency, of its Ayrshire witches; even if they are figments of a drunken dream, they are rooted in a neighborly, material world of desires, needs, prejudices, and anxieties. "Tam o' Shanter" creates a distinctive genre, to be taken up in tales by Scott, Hogg, and later Scottish authors, of modern vernacular storytelling based on folk tradition. In a mixed register of the comic and sublime, such tales narrate a retributive outburst of demonic forces against an errant (bad or merely feckless) protagonist. In contrast to the elegiac mood of the Ossian poems, this narrative insists on the rough vitality of a popular otherworld, which exerts its power to rebuke – rearrange or merely disarrange – an official decorum.

Burns and Ossian established decisive patterns for the association of national and uncanny themes in the Scottish Gothic that followed: on the one hand, the elegiac hold of a dead past over a living present; on the other, a subversive outburst of energies of popular "superstition." The history of Gothic proper in Scottish letters begins in 1788, when Henry Mackenzie, assiduous literary improver and author of *The Man of Feeling*, read a paper on the German drama to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Opening up a potent aesthetic alternative to politically suspect French taste, Mackenzie initiated the first wave of Germanizing Gothic influence on Scottish literary culture. (The second would come with the more programmatically counter-Enlightenment aesthetic of *Blackwood's Magazine*.) The young Walter Scott began his literary career under the aegis of this counterrevolutionary, if aesthetically radical, German Gothic: after joining a German study group (1792), Scott published his first book, an adaptation of supernatural ballads by Gottfried Bürger, in 1796, and contributed to Matthew Lewis's miscellany *Tales of Wonder* in 1800.

The decisive step came when Scott turned to collecting and imitating the traditional ballads of the Scottish Borders, assembling his own, local (gentry-based) version of an ancestral native culture. The wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France endowed such an enterprise with patriotic gravity. Scott's modern antique ballads on supernatural themes, shot through with "German" horror effects, issued in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), a "Goblin tale" combining Gothic and Ossianic motifs on the ground of a Border-ballad setting. The Ossianic motifs belong to the elegiac frame of the poem, in which the last of the Border minstrels sings of a vanished heroic past. The motif of an uncanny resurgence of dead powers, emanating from the Gothic vaults of Melrose Abbey, occupies the enclosed Lay itself. The removal of the wizard Michael Scott's "black book" from his tomb unleashes a demonic agency which at first disrupts the present but ultimately contributes to the peaceful resolution of its historical conflict, mirrored by the minstrel's final settlement in a climate of pastoral elegy. Scott's poetic synthesis sets the twin valences of Scottish romance revival, the mournful recognition of an extinct past and the uncanny intimation of a revival of buried (but still potent) archaic forces, in dialectical juxtaposition, making the dynamic of revival accessory to its own elegiac surmounting.

Scott's invention of the modern historical novel in *Waverley* (1814) rationalizes the formula of *The Lay* by historicizing it. *Waverley* performs a more thorough absorption of Gothic conventions, taken now from the Gothic novel proper, as well as of the antiquarian–anthropological data of ancestral native culture, by combining them with the schema of Enlightenment philosophical history. Scott takes up the political allegory of British Union established by the Anglo-Irish "National Tale" and infuses it with Gothic romance conventions, symbolically activating a hitherto episodic content of "ancestral native culture" and establishing a more potent and complex narrative apparatus. Those conventions involve not just allusions to, or interventions by, supernatural agencies, but a formal repertoire, which includes plot (labyrinthine, mysterious, driven by a traumatic or secret past), setting (castles and monasteries, ruins, tombs, sublime natural scenery), psychology ("feminine," passive, intensely inward and susceptible, versus a masculine, aristocratic will to power) and textuality (embedded poetic fragments, found manuscripts, the narrative's devolution onto its own cultural and material conditions) (see Robertson, 1994). Young Waverley's "romantic" subjectivity, aesthetically attuned to local atmospheres, occupies an oblique relation to the novel's plot, which delivers the hero to a desirable settlement on condition of the suspension of his conscious agency. Scott derives this ratio of subjectivity, scene, and plotting from the Gothic romances of Ann Radcliffe, and his adaptation of it to historicist and national–cultural themes constitutes one of the important legacies of the Waverley Novels to Victorian fiction. The psychological field of feeling, formally disconnected from historical agency but nevertheless in occult synchrony with it, invests the national field of pre-modern cultural traces with the transformational dynamics of "romance." In the novel's formula, romance must be consigned to the past (psychic as well as national) for a modern settlement to take place; at the same time, this consignment to the historical past makes romance available as the aesthetic

medium through which both past and present can be imaginatively possessed in the modern release from historical conflict (see Duncan, 1992).

Accordingly, the historical theme of *Waverley* articulates a "Gothic" plot on the grand scale: the 1745 Jacobite rebellion represents the disruptive resurgence of a pre-revolutionary past (Catholic, absolutist, feudal, tribal, pagan) into a still raw and uncertain modern dispensation. As in *The Lay*, an Ossianic formula of elegiac recognition – mourning the past as past – resolves this uncanny resurgence: once Jacobitism is safely defeated, Waverley may revere his Highland friends and adopt their cultural trappings. Here, Scott alludes to his Ossianic source by associating Jacobitism, and the Scottish pre-modernity it comes to stand for, overwhelmingly with the Gaelic Highlands. The one supernatural episode in the novel, Fergus MacIvor's ominous encounter with his clan specter, encodes the rising as the last, phantasmal appearance of a dying Gaelic culture that only returns to announce its own historical demise.

Massively influential though *Waverley* was, it is wrong to assume, with many commentators, that Scott simply repeated the same aesthetic and ideological formula throughout his career. The many novels that follow show, rather, a continuous process of creative variation and transformation of the Gothic, national, and historical themes of *Waverley*, changing their relations to one another and extending their allusive range. Through all this, Scott definitively establishes the particular national version of "Gothic" as the resurgence of a pre-modern (popular as well as aristocratic) cultural force. In *Guy Mannering, or The Astrologer* (1815) archaic magical and prophetic agencies (the astrologer of the title, the gypsy Meg Merrilies) collaborate to restore the lost heir to his usurped estate, generously obliterating themselves in the process. *The Antiquary* (1816), a kind of meta-Waverley Novel, offers an intricate, allusive meditation on Scott's sources and contexts, including a virtual anthology of the various historical and cultural referents for the "Gothic": debates about Scottish historical identity, including the controversy over the authenticity of Ossian and the ethnicity of the Highlanders (Celtic or Gothic?); several subplots about the exhumation of past secrets, including one involving buried treasure and a German adept (associating the German with impish fraudulence) and one involving trauma, repression, and guilt among the old aristocracy "that reads like a textbook of Gothic infirmities" (Punter, 2002, 111). Modifying the scheme of *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* (1818) casts the Jacobite nobility as Gothic, doomed, and spectral, in order to set them apart from the primitive vitality of the Gaelic outlaw. *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) attaches Gothic to a complex thematics of maternity and women's bodies, which become the vessels of uncanny and romance energies as they move inside and outside the legal apparatus of the modern state. *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) inverts the relation between Gothic and National Tale: "Gothic" topoi (a curse, a ghost, a repressed heroine), contextualized in the cultural motifs of Border ballads and naturalized in the historical setting, signify a blockage of historical progress and national allegory, overpowered by the drag of ancestral identities.

In *Ivanhoe* (1820), Scott turned away from his historical theme of the modernization of Scotland for a medieval English setting, replete with Gothic scenery and stock figures: a forest, castles and monasteries, wicked barons and prelates, *banditti*, persecuted maidens. Scott undertakes a skeptical enlightenment of this Gothic ancestry, exorcising ghosts and witches, rehearsing the return of the dead (Athelstane's) only in burlesque. *Ivanhoe* draws on an eighteenth-century strain of "loyalist Gothic," initiated with Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, to explore the mythology of English national identity (Watt, 1999). The novel offers an immensely influential redaction of the national themes of Gothic in its account of Englishness as a postcolonial compound, formed out of contending ethnic and cultural strains – some absorbed, some erased or excluded. Subsequent novels chart a range of "cultural Gothics": Tudor Gothic, applying a darker equation of sex and court politics to the English national theme, in *Kenilworth* (1821); Oriental Gothic, an arabesque on the imperial ground, in *The Talisman* (1825). Some of these novels undertake an experimental unsettling of solutions worked out elsewhere, such as the Radcliffean convention of the "explained supernatural." *The Monastery* (1820), Scott's first novel after *Ivanhoe*, returns to the Scottish Borders but to the beginnings of the Reformation – and the twilight of a "Gothic" pre-modernity – and features a doggerel-chanting family specter as the plot's most active figure.

Scott tends to rationalize the Gothic with the resort to historical allegory, making it represent the reactionary force of outcast, ancient cultural identities that must be reabsorbed into the nation as purely aesthetic influences for a modern domestic settlement to be complete. These ideologically powerful narratives of nationality, modernity, and tradition did not go uncontested in Scotland, where a strong contemporary movement of national historical fiction thrived around the commercial and critical success of the Waverley Novels. Of Scott's most interesting rivals, John Galt refused the conventions of Scottish Gothic in his most characteristic work, although this did not prevent him from lapsing into it (*The Spaewife*, 1823; *The Omen*, 1824). In contrast, James Hogg, a Scott protégé, reinvented Scottish Gothic as a powerful and original alternative to the model of fiction devised by Scott. (This dynamic of patronage and rivalry was not limited to Scotland: another major author of revisionist Gothic and national novels, the Irishman Charles Maturin, was also a Scott protégé.)

Hogg established his reputation as "the Ettrick Shepherd," a peasant-poet vitally connected with Border oral traditions; his maternal grandfather was reputed to be the last man who had conversed with the fairies. These traditions provided Hogg with the cultural capital to attempt a literary career, at first under Scott's wing as an author of ballads, tales, and sketches on folkloric themes, and then as the proponent of a "mountain and fairy school" of modern letters in competition with Scott's gentlemanly and historicist "school of chivalry" (Mack, 1972, 118). Hogg followed Scott into the dominant genre of the novel, expanding one of his Border tales, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818), into a short novel on the same historical topic as Scott's *Old Mortality* (1816). Based on legends of the last elemental demon in the Borders, Hogg's story asserts the

authenticity of local peasant culture against Scott's narration from above; nevertheless, the tale resorts (with some embarrassment) to a rationalizing explanation of its supposed supernatural phenomena, a Gothic convention derived from Scott (Ferris, 1991; Duncan, 2007).

Hogg's subsequent works refuse or problematize the convention of the rationalizing retrospect. In *Winter Evening Tales* (1820) and later magazine stories (notably for *Blackwood's Magazine* in the 1820s and *Fraser's Magazine* in the 1830s), Hogg established himself as one of the early European masters of short fiction, specializing in narratives that invoke the supernatural in order to affirm the potency of traditional rural culture – a potency that may reside in its power to reorder worldly affairs, or, more disturbingly, in an irreducibility to outside terms of explanation, a final, opaque otherness. Here Hogg takes up, and develops with great sophistication, the model set by Burns in "Tam o' Shanter." Hogg was acclaimed, and indeed proposed himself, as Burns's heir; but his cultural circumstances were very different from Burns's, in that Hogg understood himself as emerging from a pre-modern, largely pre-literate community, authentically "primitive" but therefore endangered, whereas Burns came from the educated, politically conscious rural working class of south-west Scotland, by no means unconnected to the mainstream of Scottish modernity. If some of Hogg's tales ("Tibby Hyslop's Dream," "The Mysterious Bride," "The Cameronian Preacher's Tale") rehearse a providential intervention of supernatural agents to rectify an earthly injustice or rebuke sinners or scoffers, others aim at unsettling the modern epistemological categories of reality, reason, and experience, refusing the contrary certainty of faith: the events witnessed and narrated remain, to use one of Hogg's favorite words, "unaccountable" ("Adam Bell," "The Brownie of the Black Haggs"). In their vivid concern with physiological and psychological extremities – delirium, paranoia, sadomasochistic obsession – the tales express Hogg's own critical engagement with modernity in post-Enlightenment Edinburgh, as well as with traditions that he himself recognized to be falling into the past.

Hogg's further essays in the historical novel contain his boldest experiments with the conventions and cultural meanings of Gothic. Following *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, these turn into an extended critical argument with Scott's historical fiction. *The Three Perils of Man, or War, Women and Witchcraft* (1822), a "Border romance" paying ostensible homage to Scott in the form of a "prequel" to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, stakes Hogg's claim on the regional traditions colonized by Scott. Hogg juxtaposes two plots, a tonally unstable historical romance and a supernatural adventure featuring the wizard Michael Scott. Hogg grants his supernatural plot full, even exuberant measure, inventing what a postcolonial aesthetic will call "magical realism" – that is, a representation in which supernatural and natural effects occupy the same epistemic dimension. Here, Gothic conventions – an accursed castle, an enchanter, imps and demons, threats of rape and cannibalism – exceed the Gothic framework and assume registers of social realism, black comedy, and the sublime; Hogg even inserts a scene (allegorizing his relation to Scott) in which dueling magicians pit technological illusion against the real thing. Hogg's medieval Borders are not so much a historical setting, the frame

for yet another narrative of modernization, as the domain of ancestral memory and live tradition, asserting their contemporaneity in the time of reading (see Fielding, 1996). Hogg's next full-length prose fiction, *The Three Perils of Woman, or Love, Leasing and Jealousy* (1823), expresses something like the opposite of this revivalist confidence, a bitter devolution of the dominant novelistic genres of the day, feminine domestic fiction and national historical romance, into a disconcertingly materialist uncanny focused on a dead-yet-alive maternal body. Here, as elsewhere (the supernatural interlude in "Basil Lee," 1820), the animated or upright corpse is Hogg's preferred figure for the confounding of both scientific and folkloric modes of representation (Duncan, 2007).

An unnaturally preserved corpse is dug up at the end of Hogg's most famous exercise in the uncanny, and the most original of all versions of Scottish Gothic. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* appeared in the same month, June 1824, as Scott's *Redgauntlet*; together, both novels constitute the summit of a "Scottish Gothic" tradition. *Redgauntlet* is a retrospective meditation on Scott's earlier Scottish novels and their historical and aesthetic themes. With virtuosic allusiveness, it casts the Jacobite dream of reimposing an earlier dispensation as a Gothic plot of subterranean intrigue and aristocratic menace, complete with divided and embedded narratives, an interpolated ghost story and a protagonist who suffers kidnapping and forced transvestism. Scott resorts to comedy for the elegiac key of failure, renouncing the Ossianic sublime and decisively emptying history of its metaphysical charge. The episode of "Wandering Willie's Tale" is often removed from its context and reset in anthologies as Scott's most celebrated "ghost story." (Along with Hogg, Scott was one of the pioneers of the genre, in magazines and annuals.) Narrated in vernacular Scots, "Wandering Willie's Tale" is a bravura exercise in the Burns mode (the plot, with its drunken dream of a visit to Hell, echoes "Tam o' Shanter"), of which Hogg was the reigning master – thus Scott matches Hogg on his own ground. However, the tale's context in *Redgauntlet* invests it with the allegorical force of a fable about the cultural transition between feudal and commercial epochs.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner is, among other things, an unrelenting satire on the cultural assumptions and literary conventions of the Scottish romance revival, as authoritatively defined by Scott (see Kelly, 1989). Much of its scandalous force comes from Hogg's yoking together two, ostensibly antithetical traditions of Romantic fiction, the Scottish historical novel and the "Jacobin" novel of persecution, alienation, and paranoia developed by William Godwin (*Caleb Williams*, 1794; *Mandeville*, 1817). Another "tale of the eighteenth century," set in the period of the Act of Union, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* repudiates the ideological themes associated with Scott's work, narrating the futility of "union" as a state of collective or psychic being. The fatal antagonism between the brothers, or stepbrothers, George Colwan and Robert Wringhim, at once mirrors and exceeds the religious and political divisions of Scottish society. Robert himself is the product of a fixation on theological doctrine, removed from a living cultural tradition, which provokes his disastrous psychic splitting. Haunted by a *doppelgänger* who may be the devil or his

own hallucinatory projection, he embarks on a career of debauchery and murder. Hogg's tale opens up a comprehensive register of the psychological effects that Freud will later analyze as "uncanny": the disintegration of the boundaries of self and other, unstable slidings between literal and figurative meaning, the intimation of powers and causes inaccessible to consciousness.

Fleeing literary Edinburgh at the end of the story, in a sinister reversal of Hogg's own career, Wringhim fails to find refuge among the Border peasantry, except as the component of another local tradition – that of "the suicide's grave." The form of the *Confessions* brilliantly elaborates Gothic themes of the fragmented and buried text. The narrative, like its protagonist, is broken into irreconcilable parts, the frame narrative of an enlightened (but baffled) modern editor, and the early eighteenth-century "Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Sinner" proper. The editor's postscript relates the discovery of this document in the suicide's grave and introduces James Hogg himself as the genuine "Ettrick Shepherd," to whom the editor and his friends apply for information. Hogg, however, refuses to have anything to do with the unseemly business of ransacking a grave for antiquarian trophies, thus signaling a further splitting between the nameless, alienated author of *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and his folk-tradition persona. The division of the author, as well as of his characters and text, comes inexorably to bear upon the reader: we too find ourselves subject to the story's uncanny logic, doubled and split, deprived of solid ground to stand on.

Hogg was one of the original contributors to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, the most important of the Scottish institutions of literary production to flourish in (and beyond) Scott's shadow. Founded in 1817 as a response to the Reform movement and Whig journalistic ascendancy, *Blackwood's Magazine* dedicated itself to the invention of national culture as the ideological basis for a post-revolutionary Tory politics. This flagship of reaction also carried some of the age's most innovative writing and effectively established the monthly miscellany as a vehicle for prose fiction in the nineteenth century. *Blackwood's* also published articles on Scottish traditions and antiquities, on the British empire and colonies, and on affiliated – especially northern and Germanic – national cultures. (The magazine was a major source for the transmission of German romantic philosophy and literature, including Hoffmann's tale *The Devil's Elixir*, which gave Hogg some of his cues for *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.) *Blackwood's* assembled, in short, the cultural repertoire of a modern Gothic counter-Enlightenment, the source of an "organic" nationalist spirituality and sentiment.

At the same time, the magazine generated a new mutation of Gothic fiction that effectively dissolved the association with cultural nationalism. This was the materialist, modernist tale of terror devoted to evoking, in lurid clinical detail, extreme states of physical and psychological sensation. Its protagonists are variously buried alive, lost in a catacomb, crushed in a folding room, or deafened by an enormous bell. While Hogg drew on the genre (notably in *The Three Perils of Woman* and *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*), it was mainly the province of a number of now forgotten writers such as William Mudford and Samuel Warren (represented in Baldick and Morrison, 1995). These *Blackwood's* tales were immensely influential for the rising generation of

English and North American authors who would transform the possibilities of Gothic after the 1830s: Bulwer, Dickens (the interpolated tales in *Pickwick* are pure *Blackwood's*), the Brontës, Poe, and Hawthorne.

The most drastic rewriting of Scottish Gothic occurred, however, in a work that effectively represents the end of the post-Enlightenment era of national literature in Edinburgh. The young Thomas Carlyle began his career translating German fiction, experimenting with a novel of his own and – in a decisive turn – contributing to the Whig *Edinburgh Review.* By the 1830s, *Blackwood's* defined an advanced literary sensibility even for those who might not share its politics, and Carlyle's farewell to fiction – and to Scotland – is in some ways thoroughly Blackwoodian (it was published in a *Blackwood's* spin-off, *Fraser's Magazine*). *Sartor Resartus* (1833–4: see Carlyle, 1987) takes up familiar Gothic conventions, such as the found manuscript, narrative framing and textual fragmentation, psychic splitting, supernaturalism, and Germanic cultural identity. But it does so with a vengeance: Carlyle concocts an anti-novel that explodes the genre of antiquarian national *Bildungsroman*, Scottish romanticism generally, and narrative itself as a culture-making technology. The mystifying and ironizing tropes of Gothic have become an end in themselves – a new grammar of prophecy. *Sartor Resartus* marks the liquidation of a tradition (Scott died in 1832, Hogg in 1835) as well as of the local conditions that sustained it. Carlyle's move south after finishing his book acknowledged the decisive ascendancy of London as literary metropolis of the British empire.

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9
Irish Gothic: C. R. Maturin and J. S. LeFanu

Victor Sage

My starting point is a fine essay written more than twenty years ago by Julian Moynahan, in which he quotes the Irish historian F. L. S. Lyons on the Protestant tradition (Moynahan, 1975, 43–53; see also Lyons, 1975). In the long view of history, Lyons comments, the Protestant position in Ireland can be distinguished by four phases: settlement, ascendancy, contraction, and, finally, siege. The outstanding contribution to the Gothic tradition in Irish writing before Bram Stoker belongs to two Huguenot Protestant writers, whose ancestors had fled to Ireland from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685: Charles Robert Maturin (1780–1824) and Joseph Sheridan LeFanu (1814–73), both with family connections in the Irish church, both curiously learned, self-conscious writers, absorbed by their Calvinist heritage and its relation to aesthetics, psychology, and politics, and both with an irresistible attraction to effects of terror and horror. There is something, perhaps, about the Huguenot refugee heritage which gives these writers, perched with varying degrees of discomfort inside a dominant class, a particular sensitivity to the darker implications of a fractured society.[1] Maturin began his career in 1807, still in the ascendancy phase, and by the time of LeFanu's death in 1873 Anglo-Ireland had entered Lyons's third phase of contraction. "But," adds Moynahan, making room for Yeats and Beckett with a graceful touch of retrospective prophecy, "there was a way to go before nightfall."

Maturin's short career as a writer falls in the period between the Act of Union (1801) and the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), a period in which the Irish novel sought to come to grips with changing patterns of identity in its audience (see McCormack, 1991, 1070–82, 1106–15).[2] Maturin was the curate of St. Peter's, Dublin, by the time he published his first novel in 1807, under the pseudonym Dennis Jasper Murphy. The title too, *Fatal Revenge*, was added by the publisher, Longman: so the author's control over the presentation of his work was minimized, for career and

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commercial reasons. The novel was reviewed, anonymously, by Scott in the *Quarterly*, who, while pointing to certain faults, immediately saw the talent of the writer but also his vulnerability, urging him to seek a counselor on whose taste and judgment he could rely. Late in 1812, Maturin apparently heard a rumor that Scott was the reviewer and wrote to him. By this time, Maturin had published two more novels, *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808) and *The Milesian Chief* (1812). Scott's reply is significant:

> My attention was indeed very strongly excited both by the House of Montorio and the Irish tale [i.e. *The Wild Irish Boy*] which it was impossible to confound with the usual stile of novels as they bear strong marks of a powerful imagination and a very uncommon command of language and excite upon the whole a very deep though painful interest. I have regretted if you will forgive me writing with so much freedom that the author has not in some respects rendered his fictions more generally acceptable by mitigating some of their horror. . . . (Ratchford and McCathy, 1937, 7)

Scott, even before his own vastly more successful novelistic career had got under way, was already seeking to "tone down" the characteristically hyperbolic development of what Maturin later called, rather disparagingly, the "Radcliffe-Romance." So began what was effectively a dialogue between different traditions of representation: Maturin's Gothic, deriving directly from Radcliffe and Lewis in the 1790s, and Scott's own rationalized and modernized "historical romance," a genre shrewdly angled toward the changing taste of the period. Maturin at this stage, however, is unrepentant, and shows what a gulf there is between the two writers:

> I am writing at present a poetical Romance, a wild thing that has a Chance of pleasing more than Regular performances, when it is finished I will submit it to you, and most gratefully avail myself of your interest with the Booksellers – tales of superstition were always my favourites, I have in fact been always more conversant with the visions of another world, than the realities of this, and in my Romance I have determined to display all my *diabolical* resources, out-Herod all the Herods of the German school, and get possession of the magic lamp with all its slaves from the Conjuror Lewis himself. I fear however they will never build a palace of *Gold* for me as they did for their Master Aladdin. (Ratchford and McCathy, 1937, 14)

Addressed to Scott, already the best-selling poet and just about to become the best-selling novelist of his age, these remarks have a certain irony, but the passage describes precisely the ambition to hyperbolize the already hyperbolic Gothic genre, which drives Maturin's characteristically intense, dark, and involuted narratives. We see that he himself is responsible for the rather misleading but common slogan amongst his commentators and anthologizers: "wild."

Several of the characteristic features of Maturin's writing appear, fully fledged almost, in his early novels. *Fatal Revenge, or The Family of Montorio* (1807) provides us with a concrete link between the Gothic of Radcliffe and Lewis and the romanticism of Shelley and Byron. It tells, in two separated but interwoven narratives, the story of

the two Italian Montorio brothers, Annibal and Ippolito, young nobles from a great Neapolitan family, who fought and died on the French side in the siege of Barcelona in 1690. Mysteriously, the brothers were said to have fought side by side with a melancholy born of despair. They are of opposite character: Ippolito is fine-minded but outgoing and dissipated, Annibal introspective and gloomy. Gradually, the reader learns the story of their quite separate but parallel temptations by a mysterious stranger, the Dominican monk Schemoli, into the crime of parricide, until finally, with perfect symmetry, their swords meet in their father's body. In a pastiche of the plot of *Hamlet*, Schemoli has, it seems, been usurped by their father, the Count Montorio, and he seeks revenge, apparently from beyond the grave. For most of the novel the reader, like the characters, is teased into believing that Schemoli is a supernatural being.

Some of the grandest touches in the novel derive from the lies Schemoli tells to the brothers, and they in their turn tell to their hearers, or readers. We are placed in the excluded position throughout, scrambling for what footholds of irony we can. Like Shelley's Demogorgon, Schemoli represents himself as a blank space of darkness in history, playing upon their "inward dread of futurity" (Maturin, 1807, II, 13) and suiting his tempter's narrative to the psychology of each in turn. To Annibal he narrates the story of the overwhelming of an ancient city like Herculaneum or Pompeii. A company of sorcerers in the act of raising a body from the dead were overtaken by the volcano and calcined into the walls of their magic temple:

> But now they were compelled by a stronger power than their own, by the power of my companions, to wake from that horrid sleep of existence, to renew their unfinished spell, and to raise the corse that lay in the flames. . . . It was sight of horror, even for an unblessed soul to see them. Rent from the smoking rocks, that they wished might fall on them, and hide them; their forms of metallic and rocky cinder, where the human features horribly struggled through burnt and blackening masses, discoloured and with the calcined and dingy hues of fire, purple, and red, and green; their stony eyes rolling with strange life; their sealed jaws rent open by strange sounds, that were like the rush of subterranean winds, moving around the fire, whose conscious flakes pointed and wound towards them. The spell was finished – the corse was released, and the living dead re-inclosed in their shrouds of adamant. Then words were uttered and characters wrought which no man could hear and live; and I, for further penance, was compelled to enter the body to which the functions of life were restored; and to which I must be confined till my term of sufferance was abridged by the interment of my bones and the punishment of my mortal murderer. (II, 102)

Annibal is reporting the monk's words in a letter to his brother here. Typically, the mysterious "companions" are left a mystery to both character and reader. Ippolito, the recipient of this letter, we largely see from the outside, knowing that he too, his mind weakened by a pursuit of astrology, is being tempted by his dread of futurity and driven mad by the apparently un-dead, burned, and blackened Schemoli. Ippolito's attempts to resist him ("Unhappy boy! You grapple with a chain of adamant") reduce him to the state of:

> the Mexican victims, his heart, the seat of life and sensation, taken out, and held before his eyes, yet panting; to die mentally, yet still feel the burdens and sorrows of the flesh. (II, 449)

Schemoli's plot reverses causality: placing their guilt before the crime, which occupies the place of "myriads of other unclothed embryos of future horror" (II, 85), he actually seduces them into doing the deed. In an ingenious attempt to avoid the fate within him, Ippolito actually confesses, before the event, to the Inquisition. But ironically, the Inquisitor is too understanding.

The text thus exploits at all levels an obsession with final causes. Ippolito is persuaded that he has already committed a murder. The drive of the text is toward a cuspid state between life and death, a sublime state,

> in which the modes of life lay before him, not as they appear to the human mind, mixed, uncertain, and obscure, possessing an eternal power of exciting expectation by novelty, and tempting solicitude by doubt, but all equally near and familiar, and, as it were, in the same plane to his mental eye, as if by some optical deception all the distant objects of a long journey were at once rendered equally large, and striking, and palpable, to one who had but just set out on it. . . . (III, 57–8)

The telescopic sublime, in which the requisite Burkean distance seems to have been eradicated, a conceit familiar to readers of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, is already fully articulated here: the rush of excitement after the Faustian bargain has been struck expresses itself as a diabolic parody of Calvinist predestinarianism, the fantasy of equal distance between past, present and future, to which linear narrative must yield and which only specular refractions can represent.[3]

Maturin's second novel, *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), is often thought of as merely an absurd imitation of Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl.* Certainly in this novel he reverses the assimilation, in *Fatal Revenge*, of love to fear as the ruling passion of his characters: this time, fear is assimilated to love and the romance is set in Ireland. The hero, Ormesby Bethel, is a young Irishman, educated abroad, who returns to Ireland to meet the father he has never seen and falls obsessively in love with an older woman, Lady Montrevor, the wife of an absentee landlord. The novel opens with a set of letters from a young Catholic girl, Emailda St. Clare, who, unbeknownst to Ormesby, is in love with him and watches from afar the way he is wound into the toils of Lady Montrevor. When he finds her letters on the shore, Ormesby dismisses them, in an interesting set of conjunctions, as "evidently the production of a female mind, and that mind most strongly tinted with romance and the Romish religion" (I, 74). Ormesby's soul is ardent: he is uncommitted to any of the systems of belief around him, believing in an imaginary community that inhabits, not the disillusioned Irish landscape of ruins and rack-rented estates, of post-rebellion and Union unease, but the clouds. Retrospectively, he is ironic about his former utopianism:

> I was therefore compelled to admit some shades into the character of my imaginary community; but I resolved they should be such as held a latent affinity with virtue, or could be easily reconciled to it by legislative discipline and cultivation. (I, 102)

What he encounters, instead of any objective correlative to his own naive "political enthusiasm" (I, 121), is an erotic obsession that involves him with the very forces of Irish dissolution, the Montrevors, a company of aristocatic rakes and their hangers-on, whose only reason for being present in Ireland on their estate at all is to dodge Lord Montrevor's London creditors, raise money, and drum up support in the county for his seat in the English parliament.

Narrative in Maturin has a "broken mirror" effect: from the outset he is interested in allegory, structural repetition, variation, refraction, and romance plots of disguise and revelation rather than the assimilation of point of view to a grand sweep of historical narrative. History is a subject, but not a process. His precedents are epic and romance and their parodies in the skeptical and self-conscious games of the eighteenth-century novel, following Cervantes – Swift and Sterne. His originality is to graft all this comic and "modern" textual self-consciousness onto a high romantic mood, which constantly seeks perversity and obsession because they lie outside the formulas of ethics and ontology, and yet high passion demands a reality to match itself. His diabolism is that of Blake, whose voice of the devil is poised ironically between blasphemy and ideological critique. Maturin's aesthetic of the broken or distorting mirror is close to Shelley's in *The Defence of Poetry*.

After he began to correspond with Scott, Maturin came under pressure to "lower" his effects and introduce greater realism into his writing. This is evident in the correspondence about his play *Bertram*, in which he introduced a character called the Black Knight of the Forest, who seduces the hero, Bertram, into murdering his lover, Imogine's husband. Scott immediately pounces on the Black Knight and says he must go, and he is echoed by Byron and the Hon. George Lamb at Drury Lane, who eventually carried out the cuts – it is not possible to put the Devil on the stage, they murmured in unison. And no doubt they were right: the play was the greatest commercial success of his writing life. But when Maturin read what they had done and cried out to Scott in a letter "they have *un-Maturined* it completely," he meant that they had excised the play's inexorability, the Gothic heart of the play, and privately Scott agreed that the Knight's "influence and agency gave to the atrocities of Bertram an appearance of involuntary impulse" (Ratchford and McCathy, 1937, 59, 62). No wonder Maturin was difficult to lionize when he finally arrived in London.

His great Gothic masterpiece, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), emerges as a rather defiant swing back toward the Gothic proper at a time when it was becoming unfashionable, due in part to the all-powerful influence of Scott. It comes hard on the heels of *Women, or Pour et Contre* (1818) (another publisher's title), a romance containing an ironic study of evangelical dissenting Calvinism in Ireland, whose preface reveals this pressure to excise the Gothic in favor of a greater realism.[4] And his last novel, *The Albigenses* (1824), takes the form of a fully fledged historical romance in the Scott

mode, though significantly this choice of heresy as a subject has a strongly anti-Catholic edge to it.

In *Melmoth* we have an encyclopedia of the sublime, which draws together Maturin's self-consciousness about representation, his romantic satanism, and his interest in the perverse, the cuspid states between systems of thought. The "optical deception" referred to in *Fatal Revenge*, by which the traveler sees all of the journey to come as he sets out, becomes the motive for a series of structural repetitions. The adoption of an *Arabian Nights* principle rewrites the Faustian bargain from the point of view of the wanderer, the "Cain of the moral world," who speaks from a perverse and paradoxical nonposition, temporarily outside time, as it were:

> He constantly alluded to events and personages beyond his *possible memory*, – then he checked himself, – then he appeared to go on, with a wild and derisive sneer at his own *absence.* (Maturin, 1997, 228)

The "fact" is – he *was* there: historical narrative is turned inside out. The "nesting" technique is wedded to a "frame-breaking" principle. The law of Maturin's narrative is that whoever speaks breaks the representational frame in which they are embedded. When Catholics speak, they always speak as *representations* of Catholics, and they often ironically serve the cause of Protestant propaganda.[5] Likewise, the numerous "editorial" footnotes to the text, far from having the effect of Scott's antiquarian learning which tends to confirm the authority of the author-figure, often break the frame and act like theatrical double-takes, setting up a kind of dialogue with the narrative itself, providing not authenticity so much as a rather anarchic form of contemporary Irish testimony, and sometimes initiate jarring and even contradictory relations between text and context, fiction and historical fact, often creating further horror rather than authenticity (Maturin, 1997, 251, 256, 257).

The effect of the stories-within-stories is to create large-scale comparisons: we are constantly starting again, allowed to look at belief systems as if they were pieces of sublime architecture, full of a corrupt grandeur, all simultaneously present to thought at a single moment with no "archaeological" sense, no historical feeling for the organic accretions of a religion's "growth."

There is thus a correspondence here between the Al-Araf of the Koran – the partition between Paradise and Hell (Maturin, 1997, 233 and n.) – and the cuspid psychological state of the wanderer's sardonic laughter. The text asks: "Is there more despair in laughter or laughter in despair?" Laughter converted to the sublime – the *risus Sardonicus* – becomes in this text the point at which belief systems reveal themselves. We survey vast historical spaces of time in landscapes between the seventeenth century (the period at which Ireland took its modern shape) and the contemporary (1816) opening of the novel in what is effectively a repeated scene of biblical temptation, echoing Milton's sublime rerun of it, in which Satan takes Christ up to the top of the mountain and shows him the whole of human history; the joke is that Melmoth, having struck the Faustian bargain himself and stepped into Satan's shoes, fails every

time he tempts others, and his failure is providential. But Melmoth is not just Satan – he is a kind of Christ-figure too, a holy fool unconsciously standing out against the temptations of power and even love, and it is on his perverse resistance to history (his own future) that the salvation of the rest of the novel's cast depends.

Like Mary Shelley's monster, he is a being in two places at once, outside human history, staring in at it, and yet subject to time. The novel is full of elaborate horological conceits that express this paradox. Melmoth is both Satan and Adam; and the repeated perversity of his position draws our attention to the scandal existing in all systems at the edge, between Catholicism, Calvinism and Judaism.

LeFanu's career is much longer than Maturin's, spanning the tithe war and the Repeal of the Union movement in the 1830s, the years of the famine and "Young Ireland" (indeed, the European upheavals of 1848), to Gladstone's disestablishment of the Irish church (1868), in which his father had been a dean, and finally the beginnings of the land agitation.

Trained as a lawyer, journalist, magazine writer, newspaper editor, and even would-be Tory politician, LeFanu seems a much more canny, worldly, and various writer than Maturin, approaching his readers by stealth and indirection in a variety of different forms and genres. Equally self-conscious about the means of representation, he begins with a number of macabre and Gothic tales called *The Purcell Papers*, a series published anonymously between 1838 and 1840 in the *Dublin University Magazine* (*DUM*), which purport to be the papers of a parish priest. Interestingly, though in an entirely different key, this development of the Gothic betrays similar contradictions to those of Maturin as he anatomizes, through the repeated motif of the Faustian bargain, the contemporary insecurity of the Big House and the fears of a contemporary landed aristocracy betrayed, as they already felt, by Whig commercialism.

LeFanu's imagination, even at the outset, seems to feel itself at the end of an era – elegiac and yet disrupting the dying fall with sudden negative pockets of demoniac energy, always willing to entertain the idea of a violent resurrection, an atavistic return. In these texts he looks back, through the persona of a Catholic priest whose literary interests belong to an age before Catholic emancipation, toward the oral narratives of the rural peasant community. This antiquarian device is typically complex, opposing oral and written, the "other" and the self: the snobbish tone toward the "alumni of Maynooth" appeared to reinforce the attitudes of his readership toward the contemporary priesthood, while it no doubt gave LeFanu room to express a series of sympathies he could not have done if he had published these "superstitions" under his own name in a magazine which remained, as one writer has put it, "sincerely Protestant, staunchly Unionist, and remorselessly ascendant [*sic*]."

As Irish commentators have shown, the Gothic aesthetic of "nested" testimony and frame-breaking evident in Maturin's narrative style is present in these early texts of LeFanu, and it is also indistinguishable at the outset from the political tensions between writer and audience (see Moynahan, 1975; Coughlan, 1989, 17–39). Kevin O'Sullivan remarks on LeFanu's "skill in distancing his material . . . which, if it does not increase the reader's sense of the probable, tends to lessen his concern about the

improbable" (O'Sullivan, 1972, 12; see also 15). The Chinese box effect of editorial devices flatters a Protestant appropriation of rationality even as it undermines it and looks back toward grander, more generous (Jacobite) days. This textual self-consciousness manifests itself in most of the shorter fiction at which he excelled, including perhaps his finest late collection, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), which has an elaborate outer frame of "editorial" commentary added.

Some of LeFanu's finest stories involve the motif of the Faustian bargain and link it to the psychological and political nightmare, for a landed class, of dispossession. The uncanny transaction begins its long life in "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh" (*DUM*, March 1838) and "Shalken the Painter" (*DUM*, May 1838), continuing through "Ultor de Lacy" (1861) to his brilliant novella *The Haunted Baronet* (*Chronicles of Golden Friars*, 1871), and ending in "Sir Dominick's Bargain" (*All the Year Round*, 1872). In LeFanu the bargain combines Faust and Judas; invariably the victim (having usually gambled his estate away) sells his soul, not for longer life, as in Maturin, but for money. Another hallmark of LeFanu's version of the Faustian bargain, commented on by some, is the horrible physical *reality* of his ghosts. Far from the conventional transparency of revenants, they seem a race of thugs, often posing as eccentric and insolent servants in remote houses, ready to carry their arrogant but destitute aristocratic victims off into the other world by main force when the appointed hour arrives. In his youth LeFanu had lived out in the isolated Glebe House at Abington, Limerick, during the tithe war, and his family had been offered terrifying violence there. In "Sir Robert Ardagh" the tale is told twice, once from the (superstitious, Catholic) point of view of "tradition" and once from the point of view of "rationality" – a condensation of "authenticated" (i.e., Protestant, rational) testimonies from Sir Robert's sisters and wife, even though, within the narrative, Sir Robert himself may belong to an old Jacobite family.[6] The peasant version is supposedly discounted, but rhetorically the two points of view complement each other and the reader is left to judge. In the traditional account, Sir Robert puts up a tremendous struggle with his assailant, and when his remains are found in the glen next morning there is hardly a distinguishable feature, except the hand:

> The right hand, however was uninjured, and in its fingers was clutched, with the fixedness of death, a long lock of coarse sooty hair – the only direct circumstantial evidence of the presence of a second person. So says tradition. (Bleiler, 1964, 347)

The unforgettable figure that this hair adorns – it bushes out from under its oldfashioned, "broad-leafed" hat – appears in several of these stories, squat and powerful and more malevolent each time it is glimpsed, and represents the dynamic incursion of the past into the present, of the "other" into the self. A fallen class of expropriators, isolated in its decaying Big Houses, surrounded by "grand old oaks," makes its final bargain with the Devil and receives its retribution, as the creature stands in the hallway and says, in a careless tone: "If Sir Robert will not come down to me, I must

go up to him" (346). Moynahan detects a "levelling sentiment" in this ominous joke, which is repeated word for word in "Sir Dominick's Bargain."

The other inflection of this grim joke is religious: the other main variation on "going" and "coming" occurs, for example, in *The Haunted Baronet*, where the usurper to the estate, Sir Bale Mardyke, said to bear a resemblance to the more saturnine portraits of Charles II, abuses the feeble, powerless but rightful owner, Philip Feltram, accusing him of having stolen a banknote from his desk.[7] The eccentric wandering preacher, Hugh Cresswell, makes a ringing prophecy that if Sir Bale does not apologize forthwith, Feltram will "go in weakness, and return in power." This is precisely what happens: the story is dominated by a profane resurrection as Feltram, having drowned in the lake, returns "in power," a phrase that is an ironic adaptation of the standard consolation against death from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Philip forces Sir Bale to strike a bargain and then reclaims him and the estate in a terrifying conclusion. The same passage of orthodox consolation is alluded to in *Uncle Silas* (1864) by Cousin Monica, where it is equally undermined.

Sir Bale's journey into the primeval oaks of Cloostedd forest is a memorable trip into a Druidic underworld, in which he encounters Feltram's agent, a figure from the early eighteenth century who is yet alarmingly three-dimensional:

> walking on, he saw seated upon the grass, a strange figure, corpulent, with a great hanging nose, the whole face glowing like copper. He was dressed in a bottle-green, cut-velvet coat, of the style of Queen Anne's reign, with a dusky crimson waistcoat, both overlaid with broad and tarnished gold lace, and his silk stockings on thick swollen legs, with great buckled shoes, straddling on the grass, were rolled up over his knees to his short breeches. This ill-favoured old fellow, with a powdered wig that came down to his shoulders, had a dice-box in each hand, and was apparently playing his left against his right, and calling the throws with a hoarse cawing voice. (Bleiler, 1964, 137)

This Hogarthian psycho-pomp is disturbingly more real, more vitally *there*, than Sir Bale himself. The effect is characteristic of many of the uncanny encounters in LeFanu – the past is more present than the present itself, the ghost more tangible than the perceiving subject, titillating a Victorian readership that was constantly caught on the borders of "superstition."

In "Ultor de Lacy," the pattern is revealed from the other side of the tapestry, as it were; the family is an old Jacobite one, twice attainted, the last members of which have sneaked back into Ireland from the Continent and are living, secretly, in the ruins of their former castle. When the local peasants see lights, they think Ultor ("the last man") and his daughters are ghosts. The twist in the tale is that the ruins really are haunted, by a man in Spanish dress with a claret-mark, who steals away Una, Ultor's beautiful youngest daughter and his last hope of continuing his line in the future. Ultor O'Donnel, a rebel survivor from Kinsale, was put to death by the loyalist Walter de Lacy, having vowed to come back after his death and destroy the lineage of his enemy.

Exhausted families, lineages, estates, their bankrupt members driven to suicide – which is frequently the "rational" (written, evidentiary) explanation of the Faustian bargain offered as an alternative to the "superstitious" (oral, demotic) account – the past (often the seventeenth century) mercilessly and violently encroaching on the present, the cultural and psychological "other" located deep within the self – these are the patterns of revenancy in LeFanu's shorter fictions.

Desperate for money, LeFanu spent the last ten years of his life rewriting his earlier stories and presenting them as full-dress sensation novels for a predominantly English audience. In 1863 he signed a contract with the English publisher Richard Bentley, which prohibited Irish settings. Ever afterwards, he transposed Ireland's landscape and social conditions into various English counties and parts of Wales, but their country mansions and isolated parks with their "grand old trees" retain the special melancholy of Irish Big House isolation. The transposition was first spotted by Elizabeth Bowen in the late 1940s, in a now famous introduction to the classic Gothic tale *Uncle Silas* (1864). Bowen herself came from the same class, and recognized the feeling (LeFanu, 1947, 8).[8]

The preface to *Uncle Silas* desperately tries to creep under the umbrella of Scott as a form of moral and aesthetic protection, but the real drive of this dark masterpiece is transgressive Gothic, not historical romance, despite the fact that it is set back to the 1840s, a period when all forms of radical dissent, including the strange, by now outdated, but heretical creed of Swedenborgianism invoked in the novel, were still felt as politically dangerous. Twenty years previously, before the death of his wife and the political disillusionment that turned him into a legendary recluse, LeFanu had written two historical romances, *The Cock and Anchor* (1845) and *The Fortunes of Turlough O'Brien* (1846), in a bid to become the Irish Scott, absorbing divisions between Celt and Saxon into romantic historical plots in which Jacobites and Protestants come together, both opposed to the Whiggish presence. Inevitably LeFanu was influenced by the Young Ireland movement and seemed to be offering a kind of *rapprochement* to cultural nationalism and the movement for Repeal of the Union. But the general election of 1847 brought the Whigs back in, and the insurrection of 1848 guaranteed LeFanu's retreat from both the politics of entente and the genre of historical romance.[9]

Uncle Silas takes place in the failing twilight of established Protestantism (the Irish church was four years away from disestablishment when it was published) between Catholic emancipation on the one side, long a historical fact, and a proliferation of radical dissenting sects on the other. The story is told from the point of view of Maud Ruthyn, another *ingénue*-narrator, whose naivety is the perfect medium for unconscious revelation. The plot is a deliberate echo of "Bluebeard" and therefore, of course, of *Udolpho.* But the motivation is pure LeFanu. Maud is charged by her ailing father with defending the family honor. As an heiress and therefore a massive temptation to the bankrupt Silas, she is packed off to live with her mysterious kinsman as his ward at his decaying mansion, Bartram-Haugh, deep in the Derbyshire country-

side, to demonstrate to the world that the allegations made about him in the past are wrong.

Again, both brothers represent an older generation of an ancient family facing extinction, willing to lay waste its children in order to survive a little while longer. Maud's father is willing to expose her to a horrible risk, gambling with her life for the family reputation; and Silas, a laudanum addict who has already neglected his own children Milly and Dudley, dragging them up like a pair of rural louts, is willing to murder her. Loyal, indoctrinated Maud, who takes her charge seriously and yet also displays the detached curiosity of the original girl in the fairy tale, itself the heritage of Eve, cannot believe that her uncle is evil; so even when the signs are staring her in the face that he intends to destroy her, she honorably refuses to believe it of her kinsman, putting herself in mortal danger.

One of the strongest points in this complex, ambiguous novel is the skilful irony of the *ingénue* point of view: the reader is allowed to see a long way beyond the naive reportage of Maud, the protagonist. Silas alternates throughout the text, rather as Radcliffe's Montoni does in *Udolpho*, between the Satanic register, his former beauty and fallen nobility showing fitfully through his degradation, and a cheap and hardened criminal. Mesmerized by his tarnished grandeur and blackmailed by the male values of family "honour," Maud is misled by her respect for Silas almost to the point of her own destruction.

Commentators have seen the enigmatic figure of Silas as the Swedenborgian *doppelgänger* of her dead father, and there is indeed a visionary level in some of the book's rhetoric. Maud herself appears to end up as a Swedenborgian, believing that she can see beyond into the "next stage," but this line demands tact: it can be reductive if pressed too far, robbing this finely written text of some of its irony.

There is no space here to comment further and more closely on the mixed form of LeFanu's last novels. His narrative point of view is always fickle and mobile; if one's assumptions are those of realism, it looks simply careless: in both *The House by the Churchyard* and *Wylder's Hand*, he uses a ghost to tell the story, a creature called Charles de Cresseron, a real Huguenot ancestor who fought with King William at the Battle of the Boyne. But Charles is a strange, fading presence in these books, hardly a narrator at all, his principal function being to hold the narrative at bay and make the reader aware of the narrative process itself as it is taking place. This epistemological uncertainty of a "floating space," a site of indeterminacy in which narrative occurs, is as strong a principle in this late work as it is in *The Purcell Papers* and the more celebrated shorter magazine fiction.

In the last ten years of his life, Sheridan LeFanu wrote twelve novels. Like all his work, these still largely unread works have some powerful scenes of Gothic horror in them – LeFanu plays the Jesuit card even in his never reprinted, enigmatic last novel, *Willing to Die* (1873) – and several have been seriously underestimated, despite the fact that they are now beginning to creep back into print for the first time as the reputations of the Victorian sensation novelists begin generally to be revalued.

Notes

1 For a discussion of Calvinism, see Haslam (1994, 44–56). Despite his family connections in the Irish church, Maturin's relations with the hierarchy were tense. His father lost his job in the Irish civil service through alleged malversation of funds and, though he cleared himself, Maturin junior never achieved preferment in the Irish church. He was economically destitute at times. LeFanu, though a member of a well-to-do Irish Protestant family, never seems to have owned much property besides his shares in various papers, and he only rented from his father-in-law the house in Merrion Square, where the plaque now sits on the wall. The day after his death, the bailiffs moved in and emptied all the furniture out, and there was nowhere for his children to go. See the final chapter of McCormack (1980). On "hegemony" in the Irish context, see Eagleton (1995, ch. 2), "Ascendancy and hegemony."

2 For background, Flanagan (1959) is still useful, especially on Edgeworth and Lady Morgan, but the Gothic is dismissed in this book as a source of information.

3 See Haslam (1994) for a discussion of Calvinism's "five points."

4 "*Montorio* (misnamed by the bookseller 'The Fatal revenge', a very book-selling appellation) had some share of popularity, but it was only the popularity of the circulating libraries; it deserves no more, the date of that style of writing was out when I was a boy, and I had not powers to revive it. When I look over those books now, I am not at all surprised at their failure; for, independent of their want of *external* interest (the strongest interest that books can have, in this reading age) they seem to me to want *reality*, vraisemblance; the characters, situations, and language, are drawn from imagination: my limited acquaintance with life denied me any other resource" (Maturin, 1818, Preface).

5 Cf., Chris Baldick's comment: "When . . . Melmoth defends the Protestant view of the Bible against the Catholic Church, and we recall that this uncharacteristic behaviour is being related to us in a Jewish text transmitted by a Catholic, something more is involved than mere clumsiness or forgetfulness" (Maturin, 1997, xv–xvi).

6 The point is McCormack's (1980, 73–4). As he says, Sir Robert is "mutely identified" as Catholic and Jacobite.

7 The plot involves a superstitious legend of gold plate and jewels buried by two Feltram brothers who had joined the king's army and fought at Marston Moor. Sir Bale thinks of this "nursery tale" when it appears that Philip (whom he has patronized as poor for years) is in a position to help him financially. The English Civil War is substituted for the Battle of the Boyne, but the technique of different layers of "explanation" in the text is the same.

8 Quoted in McCormack (1980, 141–2). For Bowen as LeFanu's "inheritor," see also McCormack (1993, 208–352).

9 McCormack's account of this is masterly: see McCormack (1980, 72–110): ch. 3, "Fiction and politics."

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10
The Political Culture of Gothic Drama

David Worrall

At the end of *Marino Faliero*, Byron's drama of 1821, the Venetian "Citizens" (the nomenclature and story deliberately connecting 1790s Jacobinism with the 1820 Cato Street conspiracy [see Worrall, 1992, 187–200]) rush precipitately past "grated gates" barring them from the Doge's execution just as "The gory head rolls down the Giants' Steps!" (Byron, 1821, Preface, V.vi). The theatrical tropology of Cato Street's government plots and subplots had been firmly established in radical journals like *The Black Dwarf.* The "deed of blood" (as the *Dwarf* put it) at the executions was carefully transposed into *Marino Faliero.* Byron, advised by "Monk" Lewis, "more than once" paced out the actual Venetian staircase after consulting a Catholic priest who had witnessed the victim's exhumation (with, alas, "no positive vestige of decapitation"). Although Byron's play displaces the moment of execution into reportage, for the London populace the Newgate scaffold with its posthumous decapitation and disembowelment of traitors was a vivid and immediate spectacle which paralleled the structure of dramatic texts: the stage, an attentive audience, the heroic last speech, a spectacular finale. This chapter will argue that our knowledge of romantic-period Gothic drama can be informed by the politics of an increasingly plebeian theatre.

Seventeen years before Byron's play, *The Wonderful Museum* (February 1804) carried an etching depicting United Irish insurrectionist Colonel Despard as he struggled, pinioned by ropes, to give gesture to his last speech from the scaffold's edge prior to hanging and dismemberment in 1803. Samuel William Henry Ireland's satirical poem on print-collecting, *Chalcographimania* (1814), ridiculed collectors of "masks, taken from the countenances of deceased persons of celebrity and notoriety" and recalled how one such surgeon collector had been refused gratification of "this particular mania" by Despard's widow.[1] Ireland had good reason to be keenly sensitive to the layers of popular interest in treachery memorabilia because his Shakespeare forgery,

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Vortigern (1796, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), amidst much notoriety, had pictured a Gothic dark age replete with murderous traitor, bloody corpses, absentee princes, weak barons, persecuted Scots (II.ii), and Saxon invaders at the gates of London (III.iii).[2] *Vortigern*'s anachronistic use of late eighteenth-century political and social clichés may have helped smoke Ireland out as a forger, but the national dangers posed by the traitor Vortigern, as with Cato Street or Despard, remained resonant at the century's turn. "Shakespeare's" *Vortigern* (from whose text Ireland claimed to have decorously censored an incest plot [Preface]) was the Gothic abyss, an Elizabethan "could-be" history of Dark Ages Britain lost in treachery, civil war, and foreign invasion. It was enough to make the Enlightenment shudder.

The politics of Gothic seem to have been at the back of Byron's mind as he ruminated, somewhat inconsequentially, at the end of the Preface to *Marino Faliero* on Horace Walpole's place as a seminal romance author. *The Count Of Narbonne* (1781, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden), Robert Jephson's circumspect adaptation of *The Castle of Otranto*, had deferentially reduced Walpole's novel to a tale of sensibility, a love plot shorn of the supernatural, but elsewhere Gothic drama maintained its political edge so that Byron's leap between the Earl of Orford and contemporary politics may not have appeared too great.

In Irishman Henry Brooke's folk opera *Little John and the Giants* (1749) a "Family of the Giants" called the Goods ("Plutus . . . Wealth, Galigantus . . . Power, Rumbo . . . Violence, Blunderbore . . . Wrong") mismanage a world of peasants oppressed by courtiers and placemen (Brooke, 1789). The Goods's misrule ("A Giant, sir, a Giant, like a steeple! . . . / The greedy gut, last fair, as I'm a sinner, / Eat up both men and market, at a dinner" [7–8]) must be set to right by Jillian Justice, Queen of May, despite her abduction to their enchanted tower. Brooke's jolly satire (to the tune of "Hosier's Ghost" and "Our Polly is a Sad Slut") made effective political points ("Five dreadful Dragons guard this pile around – / Fraud, Favour, Office, Interest, and Law, / Lords of the pass – and keep the world in awe. / . . . Jillian Justice, here their powers confine") within a simple opposition between mortals and giants ("Fear not; but mark what little men can do, / Whose powers and prowess are inspired by you [Jillian]!"). With a clear ancestry in Jack the Giantkiller, the persecuted younger brother, Johnny Good, distracts the giants with a "raree-show" of idealized political virtue ("I first present you a Prime Minister, / Free from thought or action sinister . . . Here's Humility in high station; / Dignity strip[p]'d of Ostentation; / Friendship here outgoes profession; / Here is Power without Oppression") before Johnny and Jillian initiate their "Mental Dawn" free of gigantic exploitation.

Although *Little John and the Giants* is more faery than Gothic, the political–supernatural was a satirical resource valid for over fifty years and recognizable enough to early nineteenth-century play-goers. In the year of Peterloo, one publisher brought out *Jack the Giant Queller, or Prince Juan, with a Model of a Stamp for the Suppression of Political Pamphlets* (*c.*1819), while Joseph Grove's *The Theatrical House that Jack Built* (1819) – a satire on the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden – imitated William Hone's *The Political House that Jack Built* (1819). The folksy register of these stories provided

a continuum which comfortably includes Lewis's operatic spectacle, *One O'Clock, or The Knight and the Wood Daemon* (1811, Lyceum) with its story of gypsies, mysterious storms, stolen children, and "Hacho, the terrible Giant of the Black Rock" (15) as well as William Barrymore's *Harlequin and Cock Robin, or The Babes in the Wood* (1827, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), which featured an "Abode of Gloom" and figure of "Homicide."[3] The strength of Gothic was that it had the fluidity to encompass high seriousness and low comedy.

A much more sinister political Gothic was present in James Boaden's extraordinary *The Secret Tribunal* (1795, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden).[4] At first sight simply a projection of Edmund Burke's scaremongering over supposed pro-Revolutionary, pan-European illuminist secret societies in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Boaden's *Secret Tribunal*, set in Swabia, is a covert commentary on the British political situation.[5] The first performance of *The Secret Tribunal*, in June 1795, came after the 1794 Suspension of Habeas Corpus and London Corresponding Society (LCS) treason trials but before the notorious Gagging Acts of late 1795.[6] These events, accompanied by early morning police raids and allegations by informers, engendered a contemporary climate popularly known as "Pitt's Terror." The Gothic elements in Boaden's play heighten its effectiveness as political critique. Instead of persecution from Home Secretary and Minister Henry Dundas, a mysterious "Minister of Vengeance" literally stalks *The Secret Tribunal*:

IDA: My father, look, what dark gigantic form,
Stalks solemnly this way?
HOLSTEIN: Hush!
{The Minister of Vengeance approaches.}

The play's murder and treason plot ("accus'd of murder and of treason, / We, the invisible avengers, cite thee" [V.i; p. 60]) concerns an attempt to assassinate the Duke of Wirtemburg and attribute the murder to Swabia's "Secret Tribunal" of judges ("The Invisibles").[7] The most chilling aspect of the play is that the tribunal is fully constituted by the state and operates "in midnight secrecy and silence" where "Judges disguis'd mysteriously decide, / Unknown, unseen, the terrors of mankind!" (II.ii; p. 27). The tribunal's habitual disguise facilitates their infiltration by the assassins, but Boaden's play also stresses their pervasive surveillance: "Their eyes are every where – unseen they hear – / Their agents mingle in the walks of life, / And even our servants are their secret spies" (II.ii; p. 27). *The Secret Tribunal* not only reflects popular concern about government spies and informers aroused after the 1794 LCS trials, but also projects those anxieties into a familiar domestic setting.

The play's denouement is set in the tribunal's "place of subterraneous meeting" (IV.i; p. 53) reached from beneath Wirtemburg's market square. Situating the repressive apparatus of the state underneath the market place destabilizes this ubiquitous center of commercial and domestic life while also serving, in this case, as a typology of Hell:

> All accus'd,
> When the first quarter after midnight tolls,
> Go to the centre of the Market-place –
> Thence they are led before the Secret Judges.
> If guilty, they are never heard of more.
>
> (IV.i; p. 48)

Moreover, in the set directions for *The Secret Tribunal*, Burke's "hollow murmuring under ground" is theatricalized into a Gothic illuminist fantasy: "The Scene represents a spacious Crypt, or vaulted Court of Justice, under ground, of Gothic Architecture. – At the upper end is a luminous Cross of a deep red, and over this, surrounded by Clouds, an Eye, radiated with points of fire" (V.i; p. 59). Burke's spectral "confederacies and correspondencies of the most extraordinary nature" are similarly figured into the text's evocation of an elaborate entry code: "I'll teach you the dark signals . . . / Haste to the market place – One there will meet you: / To his two questions, answer 'earth and groan'" (IV.i; p. 53).

Ultimately, *The Secret Tribunal* equivocates between a condemnation of illuminist subversion and a portrayal of the dangers of collusion between state surveillance and the law. The Epilogue raises the question "But are these institutions quite destroy'd? / Secret Tribunals, are none now employ'd?" only to collapse the answer into mawkish sensibility: "The Heart is the tribunal which we fear, / For ever hid, and yet for ever near; / Its Agents are the Senses." Nevertheless, the faery world of *Little John and the Giants* and the hidden state apparatuses of *The Secret Tribunal* can be located as anxieties figured within the psyche of contemporary political mentalities. Twenty-five years later, the Spencean shoemaker and ultra-radical activist Thomas Preston, already once acquitted of high treason in 1817, escaped arrest at Cato Street only to spend time in prison while the authorities pondered (unforthcoming) charges. From Tothill Fields prison, Preston wrote a highly gothicized (impounded) letter to Home Secretary Sidmouth relating "several nocturnal visitations from Queen Mab" that resulted in his dreaming a *Castle of Otranto*-like levitation, in which a haloed manifestation of executed conspirators, amidst the "scattered fragments of the mangled carcasses" of the authorities, were accompanied by a procession of ghosts of the executed martyrs of the Spa Fields (1816) and Pentrich (1817) risings, all ending in a climactic vision of Sidmouth lynched in "a loathsome Jail," whose "Massy buildings [then] fell in hideous ruin" with a "dreadful crash" (Public Record Office, 1820; see Worrall, 1997, 137–56). Treason, the scaffold, Gothic writing, and plebeian culture are inextricably linked.

This symbiosis of reception between popular drama and political activism was the product, by the 1820s, of the more assertive political engagements of the London audience. The Gothic spectaculars of the 1820s are a response to a plebeian culture that wished to see its tastes reflected and not, as in Jephson's *Count of Narbonne*, deflected. Again, the mid-1790s are indicative of Gothic drama's general ability to be a vehicle of political culture.

Of course, the notion of a generically pure Gothic drama is misleading. The Prologue to Miles Peter Andrews and Frederick Reynolds's *The Mysteries of the Castle* (1795, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden) warned that the play was a "various beverage – a kind of cup; / Of Music, Pantomime, and graver scenes, / Perhaps a dash of terror," but felt it incumbent in January 1795 to comment on how "a neighbouring nation's crimes, / Have spread war wide, and made these – 'Iron Times'." However, what followed was a mélange of timeless Gothic–comic routines:

> I'm numb'd, I'm petrified – I have not a limb to stand upon – soft – let me try (*advances one leg*) yes, I have put my right foot foremost, no, let me take it back again. (*retreats a little*) [*Thunders again . . . Goes towards the doors in the Scene, opens one on the right . . . discovers a Coffin standing on a bier, with a lamp upon it.*] Wheugh! I'm dead and buried! a Coffin! (*shuts door*) and I dare say the sexton will be here before I can say my pray'rs, mum! here he comes. (Andrews, 1795, 39)

While there is obvious generic promiscuity between comedy and Gothic, the expansion of artisan publishing ensured some strange bedfellows. Of increasing importance were radical pressmen with publishing portfolios sufficiently independent to accommodate whatever took their fancy. One such is Anglican clergyman Thomas Sedgwick Whalley's *The Castle of Montval* (1799, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), copublished by Henry Delahay Symonds.[8] If a sub-theme of John Cartwright Cross's musical *The Apparition!* (1794, Theatre Royal, Haymarket) had been Egbert's eventual rescue of Fitz-Allen's daughter from a tower wherein she is "by a mandate from the court, imprison'd" (8), *The Castle of Montval* similarly employed the prominent 1790s theme of incarceration, reflecting the anxieties of a decade that began with the highly mythologized account of the Bastille (Schama, 1989, 389–425). But for Symonds the Bastille was closer to home.

Whalley's plot is based on the story of a French nobleman "immured in a secret dungeon six years, by his cruel son" until saved by a visitor entering "a secret door, concealed by tapestry" (v) leading to his dungeon: "The tapestry is lifted up slowly, and discovers the pale, and haggard, yet reverend figure of an Old Man, with a long white beard, and disordered hair, and dressed in a long flowing black robe" (52). The "Old Man" (Count Montval) dies shortly afterwards, exclaiming "The light! the light!" (72). While Whalley's long-bearded count recalls the similarly hirsute lunatic Bastille inmate known as "Major Whyte" (Schama, 1989, 407) and his Prologue reiterates that "Gallia – where all to mad excess is borne; / . . . supply'd the story," the immediate impetus toward *The Castle of Montval*'s publication may have been sympathies engendered by Symonds's experiences in the British Bastille, Newgate.

At the height of the campaigns against sedition following the May 1792 Royal Proclamation, Newgate bulged with radical pressmen such as Daniel Isaac Eaton, Charles Pigott, and James Ridgway as well as the less famous Symonds. They were all in gaol at the same time and are pictured together in Richard Newton's etching *Promenade in the State Side of Newgate* (October 5, 1793) (George, 1938– , vii, 8342).

In the foreground stands the long-bearded figure of Lord George Gordon (of the 1780 Gordon Riots) who, despite appeals, died of typhoid in Newgate in 1793 after imprisonment there since 1788 (Lloyd, 1794).[9] To Symonds and others, the Gothic horrors of *The Castle of Montval* would not have seemed far-fetched.

Gothic launched the careers of writers such as Douglas Jerrold, whose (now lost) first success *The Living Skeleton* (1825) allowed him to experiment with more politically retrospective plays like *The Mutiny at the Nore* (1830), but even theatrically extravagant spectaculars could be politically conscious (Jerrold, 1914, 1.75). The turn toward visual spectacle was accelerated by Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane) with its "Vision" of Evelina's "Spectre" in "white and flowing garments spotted with blood" (79) and a set that included the "fallen in" "gloomy subterraneous Dungeon" in which the "pale and emaciated" (88) Reginald is imprisoned. His chains broken by some earlier cataclysm, Reginald's dungeon soliloquy relates his exploration of its Piranesi-like interiors ("Haply the late storm, whose pealing thunders were heard e'en in this abyss, may have rent some friendly chasm: – Haply some nook yet unexplored" [90]). Not only does Lewis subtly suggest Reginald's psyche of confinement, but he also explores the sense of loss felt by his play's Negro characters, Saib and Hassan. Lewis's Africans ("an anachronism, I allow," To the Reader, 102), express anti-colonialist sentiments ("European gratitude? – Seek constancy in the winds – fire in ice – darkness in the blaze of sun-shine! – But seek not gratitude in the breast of an European!" [64]) but are also endowed with tragic sensibility ("Saib, I too have loved! I have known how painful it was to leave her on whom my heart hung; how incapable was all else to supply her loss!"). Lewis's text sensitively suggests that their sense of the futility of their improved material circumstances ("I have exchanged want for plenty, fatigue for rest, a wretched hut for a splendid palace. But am I happier? Oh! no!") is combined with racial solidarity ("Still do I regret my native land, and the partners of my poverty" [12]). Together with Motley's jolly anti-clericalism (MOT: "May I ask what was your business in the beech-grove the other evening, when I caught you with buxom Margery the miller's pretty wife?" FATHER PHILIP: ". . . I was whispering in her ear wholesome advice" [4]), the presence of Hassan and Saib confirms Lewis's Gothic as an unexpected vehicle for liberal radicalism.[10]

Lewis's extravagant summoning of the supernatural is a far cry from Jephson's *Count of Narbonne*, but adaptations of his *Tales of Wonder* (1805) became exuberant spectacles in the early 1800s. John Cartwright Cross's *The Fire King, or Albert and Rosalie* (1801, Royal Circus, St. George's Fields) calls for scenes where "the Aerial Spirit appears in an illumined Cloud, and, waving her wand, Skeletons bear the Soldan and Zulema through the Stage, surrounded by flame . . . thunder – a terrific chasm, backed by sulphureous flames opens, and the Fire King, in terror, again appears, bearing in his hand the enchanted sword, crimsoned with blood. – Saracen executioners rush on, and a block rises through the Stage" (Cross, 1809, 180–1), while another version, rejected by Covent Garden, showed "The Princess's Harem" scene in which "six Circassian Slaves bound in light Chains . . . dance, and exeunt" (Anon., II.iii).[11] There was a widespread taste for these hybrid-Gothic entertainments. Even in Worthing, now a

modern English retirement town, but then the resort of Regency overspill from Brighton, in 1820 their Theatre Royal produced, for "First Time These Five Years . . . the Castle Spectre" while also announcing for "The Last Time . . . the Lady and the Devil." In 1821 they produced Planché's *Vampire*, followed by an 1822 season of Moncrieff's *Spectre Bridegroom*, Charles Edward Walker's *The Warlock of the Glen* and a doubling of *The Castle of Andalusia* with "the Farce of Frightened to Death" (Odell, 1953, 76, 78–80, 106, 112).

The rise of spectacular melodrama in the 1820s has a lot to do with the mêlée of class politics. The 1809 Covent Garden "Old Price" riots had political dimensions, but there were many subsequent synergies between artisan radicalism and contemporary theatre. The canon of nineteenth-century melodrama has largely come down to us via what is known as "Duncombes' Edition" of *The New British Theatre* (532 vols, 1825–65), but the Duncombes had their roots in the unrespectable Grub Street press. Father and son pressmen John and Edward Duncombe followed typically pragmatic careers, moving from convictions in 1819 for selling Richard Carlile's journal *The Republican*, through pro-Caroline propaganda (*The Loyal Anthem of God Save the Queen*, 1820), via substantial "crim. con." pornography *(Cox versus Kean . . . The Trial . . . for Criminal Conversation with the Plaintiff's Wife*, 1825), before settling into safer and more lucrative "fanzine"-like partworks *(The Actor's Regalio* and *The Theatrical Olio*, 1820) published alongside such standard melodramas as the quasi-Gothic John Kerr's *Presumptive Guilt, or The Fiery Ordeal* (1818) and [anon.] *Valkyrae, or Harlequin and the Maid of Muscovy* (?1820).[12] Analogously, their fellow pressman John Fairburn published Philip Massinger's Jacobean *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (?1816) to assist his rather greater political commitment (viz. Fairburn's pro-Caroline pamphlets, *A Spy upon Spies, or The Milan Chambermaid . . . by One of the Principal Spies*, 1820, and *Caroline and the Italian Ragamuffins!!*, 1820) and lurid debunking of upper-class folly in the sodomy case, *The Bishop!! Particulars of the Charge against Hon. Percy Jocelyn, Bishop of Clogher, etc.* (1822), while William Molineux, under surveillance in 1818, was the printer of Greenwood's *The Death of Life in London, or Tom and Jerry's Funeral* (1823, Royal Coburg) (Worrall, 1997).

These publications reveal an artisan press volatile and voluble in its attitudes to class. Working-class "free and easy" debating clubs provided ideological forums for "speechifying" "harangues," but the melodramas of the 1820s are also extremely sensitive registers of class difference (see McCalman, 1988; Worrall, 1992; Anon., 1823). The Duncombes' *Actor's Regalio* successfully aped languid aristocratic manners (cf., *Paris is the Only Place, or, Where Shall We Go for The Season, Lady Elinor {Actor's Regalio*, pt 3]), but around this time begins a reflexive urban working-class drama eagerly served by playwrights who knew the social and economic tensions within their audiences. Moncrieff's poem "London Adulteration, or Rogues in Grain, Tea, Coffee, Milk, Beer, Bread, Snuff, Mutton, Port, Gin, Butter, &c&c" in the fourth part of the Duncombes' *Theatrical Olio* accurately catches household concerns, but it was his *Tom and Jerry* which ushered the artisan class's social alterity into drama.[13] Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), Moncrieff's source, with its "flash" or "cant" language, resulted in

a drama less governed by aesthetic convention than by the way in which it could theatricalize or verbalize class difference.

Egan's background, reflected in *Boxiana* (1812), was in pugilistic journalism, while Moncrieff had spent time in King's Bench prison (Moncrieff, 1821). They were a perfect and timely pairing for the post-Cato Street, post-Queen Caroline London scene. While Tom, Jerry, and Logic are nominally gentry, crime and violence are treated in an enthusiastically anti-social and anti-authoritarian manner. If the most typical scene in any *Tom and Jerry* is baiting the "Charley" (watchman),[14] the genre also used the argot of the streets to describe intentional violence:

> . . . the milling JERRY punch'd;
> And as he pluck'd his *bunch of fives* away,
> Mark how the blood of *Charley* follow'd it.
>
> (Anon, ?1824a)

The Gothic ramifications of Tom and Jerry subcultures begin in the "Hells" or gambling dens of St. James's ("Give Logic his choice, he will spend the gay hours / Where claret the hells of dear London pervades"), but by the early 1820s such criminality was being punished by the new horrors of prison treadmills (Moncrieff, 1826, 43; *Life in London*, scene v, p. 25).[15] As one Tom and Jerry spin-off described it:

> Ye bits of blood (the watchman's dread)
> Who love to floor a *Charley*,
> As you delight to strip and fight,
> Come forth and *mill the barley*

The poem is not only comic but belligerently intimidating and recidivist:

> These Treading-mills are fearful ills,
> And he who brought the Bill in,
> Is threaten'd by the *Cribbing coves*,
> That he shall have a *milling.*
> For sure, he shew'd a simple pate,
> To think of felons mending;
> As every *step* which here they take,
> They're still in crime *ascending*

While *Tom and Jerry* "flash" and "cant" argot took grim delight in punning "milling" (fighting) with treadmills, the genre also associated theatres with violence:

> The moon-struck youths, who haunt the stage,
> And spend their master's siller,
> Must here play to another tune,
> 'Tis call'd the *Dusty Miller*
>
> (Anon., ?1824b)

In Charles Dibdin's *The Larks of Logic, Tom and Jerry* (1822, Olympic ["AN EXTRA-Full VAGANZA"]) the lads arrange to "raise a row" "at the theatre" (11) in an intimidating scene ("Loungers, &c. . . . the Box-Doors seen in perspective . . . so that the Audience may understand the scene lies in the Theatre. Enter Tom, Jerry, and Logic, drunk" [11]). After a scuffle, the female object of their stratagems announces "I – I'll never come to a play again – I'm quite terrified" (12).

In the 1820s Gothic drama began to reflect artisan life with fewer generic or aesthetic constraints. Amidst many ponderous puns, *You Must Be Buried: An Extravaganza* (1827, Theatre Royal, Haymarket) combined the Orient with London's East End by featuring Barnaby Boxam, "An undertaker from Aldermanbury & Grand Master of the Funeral Ceremonies of Vak-Vak," newly returned from reforming that country's burials ("before I came . . . the poor barbarous creatures had no idea of a decent well conducted funeral – used to pop 'em in any how – you can't imagine how surprised they were at the first job I had – Every-thing in the English style – Mutes – Feathers – a set & two fours as we say"). The play's Epilogue has Boxam announcing to the audience: "Hope to see you box'd up here every night."[16] This confident ghoulish intimacy typifies the proximity between playwright and audience that is so characteristic of 1820s melodrama.

Against the backdrop of these entertainments with their class reflexivity, it is not surprising that the older Gothic drama, with its roots in Jephson or Whalley, all but disappeared. Richard John Raymond's *The Castle of Paluzzi, or The Extorted Oath: A Serious Drama* (1818, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden) with its fussy architectural fidelity ("A Gothic Saloon . . . of an octagonal form. Two large Casements . . . which open upon a Terrace" [28]) and stereotypical bumpkin ("Paolo is a simple, foolish sort of a fellow – There is no harm in teazing him" [29]) depended for its weak denouement on tricks of light on glass:

> [The Count seizes, drags her [the Countess] into the Closet, and commands her to swear on Ferdinand's body, to keep the secret. – The Ruffians raise their Poniards in a menacing posture. – Half fainting she lifts her hand . . . Zerlina withdraws the Curtain entirely from the Glass, which reflects all that passes in the Closet, and holds up the bloody Dagger, indicating it as a proof of the Murder. Scene closes] (40–1)

The audiences of the 1820s were not likely to defer to the sonorities of *The Castle of Paluzzi* after *The Larks of Logic, Tom and Jerry*.

This is why the single most important feature of Henry Milner's *The Man and the Monster!, or The Fate of Frankenstein* (1826, Royal Coburg) is its confident handling of the (non-Shelleyan) servants, Strutt and Lisetta. Lisetta's tart critique of Frankenstein's life-begetting project ("Who knows, perhaps Mr Frankenstein may get married to[o], and then he'll have better employment than making monsters" [23]) anticipates modern feminist commonplaces, but Strutt's comments on Frankenstein ridicule the inversion of class roles forced on him by the Monster's existence ("[The Monster enters, exultingly bearing Emmeline and her Child, crosses and exit. – Frankenstein follows

him with a staggering step, almost overcome with fatigue and terror. . . . Strut. (coming from his concealment)] 'What ho! Sir! master! Mr Frankenstein! 'Tis Strutt, your faithful servant! He hears me not, but madly still pursues the fiend he cannot hope to master' " [23]). By consistently distancing himself from Frankenstein ("Because his hopeful bantling [small child] chose to amuse itself with strangling a child . . . they have seized hold of me and popped me into this underground apartment, to keep me out of mischief; as if they thought I shared my master's propensities, and had a *penchant* for making of men and strangling of children" [18]), Milner's *The Man and the Monster* is expressive of this artisan alterity. Milner's Strutt (the name is indicative of his self-assurance) employs the argot of *Tom and Jerry* previous to his recapitulation of a Gothic plot cliché:

> Lord, what a chap[17] my master must be, to be sure, when he was making a man – he thought he might as well have a wapper[18] at once, I suppose. Now I say, a little and good for my money. But, however, we have quieted my gentleman, and I think we have done a much better job than my master did in making him. And now I can tell you a secret. This passage leads to the hermitage of father Antonio. . . . ([Milner], 1826, 26)

Surrounded by his peasant friends on the side of Mount Etna prior to the Monster throwing itself into the crater, Strutt has retrieved a situation originating in his master's folly.

Satirizing masters also included ridiculing their scholarly pretensions. In the plot ("I am perfectly perforated in every part with horror – going to marry my daughter and turn Vampire – Ah! no doubt to practise on her" [24]) of Moncrieff's *The Spectre Bridegroom*, the heroine's father is engaged in writing a "grand treatise" on "the Domestic History of Vampires" (7, 23), while in his *Frank-in-Steam, or: The Modern Promise to Pay: A Burlesque Burletta Extravaganza in Two Acts* (1824, Olympic), the eponymous hero ("a natural and experimental Philosopher") is forced to "raise the wind" (i.e., get money) by body-snatching ("He's no better than a Vampyre!").[19]

Such was the popularity of *Tom and Jerry* that Moncrieff's *Frank-in-Steam*'s cemetery scene also had its requisite Charley:

> Thanks to the Magistrates and the Tread Mills we may now sleep in some comfort without being upset by either a Tom Jerry or Logic. Tom has bolted to fight the battles of the Greeks – Jerry . . . is shooting woodcocks in the Country while Logic has forsook his Studies in the Fleet to study Colonization in Van Diemans Land.

Frank-in-Steam's Byron-baiting is as unexpected as Tom and Jerry's sudden appearance in this distant adaptation of Shelley's canonical novel. Once again, it is illustrative of the true alterity of artisan Gothic drama. Like the scene in Greenwood's *The Death of Life in London*, the "Ghost of Corinthian Tom" and Jerry had a habit of suddenly sitting bolt upright in their coffins.

Tom and Jerry announces the arrival of a confident, assertive artisan class which had already commandeered the queen against the king. The Theatres Royal licenses could

be evaded at the Surrey, Royal Coburg, Olympic, and Pavilion. Meanwhile, *Tom and Jerry*'s originator was not without his Gothic moments. In 1824 Pierce Egan published *Recollections of John Thurtell . . . Executed at Hertford . . . for Murdering Mr. W. Weaver, Including Various Anecdotes . . . And a Correct View of the Execution.* In the key to the frontispiece which illustrated the scaffold scene he noted: "6. Dr. Burnett, The Phrenologist . . . 8. A Javelin Man[20] beating down an indecorous reporter. 9. A person well known in the Sporting Circles."[21] Egan's connections with the criminal underworld were enough to cause him to visit the condemned cell and publish an interview. Thurtell's reception of Egan was courteous but he became very agitated at one point: "Could anything be more cruel, unmanly, or diabolical, than to publish in a play-bill, at the Surrey Theatre, that the chaise and horse should be exhibited in which it is said I committed the murder?" (28). On the romantic-period Gothic stage, life imitated art.

Notes

1 Ireland issued a portrait etching of Despard as a separate plate for connoisseurs.

2 Wherever possible, I give the date and place of first performance in the text and the full published title and date in the References.

3 B[ritish] L[ibrary] Add[itional] M[anuscript] s 42887.

4 Boaden's play, in a common practice of the time, appears to be an unacknowledged adaptation of Christiane B. E. Naubert's *Hermann von Unna* (Leipzig, 1788), translated as *Hermann of Unna: A Series of Adventures of the Fifteenth-Century, in which the Proceedings of the Secret Tribunal under the Emperors Winceslaus and Sigismond, Are Delineated* (1794).

5 "Many parts of Europe are in open disorder. In many others there is a hollow murmuring under ground; a confused movement is felt that threatens a general earthquake in the political world. Already confederacies and correspondencies of the most extraordinary nature are forming in several countries" (Burke, 1790). *Hermann of Unna* (ix) makes the connection explicit.

6 The most comprehensive account of these years is Goodwin (1979), the most detailed Emsley (1981, 1985). For an excellent updating of this scholarship, see Philp (1991).

7 "Transfix the body to some blighted oak, / And leave the weapon there; the deed will then / Seem the just vengeance of the Secret Judges, / And none will question the proceeding further" (Boaden, 1795). The pinioned corpse is explained in the "Essay" to *Hermann of Unna* (xvi).

8 The plot may have been based on Whalley's French travels (see Wickham, 1863, vol. 1, 91–7).

9 Lloyd is also in the *Promenade* etching.

10 *The Death of Life in London, or Tom and Jerry's Funeral* (1823) calls for two Negro parts, Billy Waters and African Sall (2, 11–14).

11 Cross's fondness for skeletons is also apparent in *Halloween, or The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A New Grand Scotch Spectacle* (1799), also in *Circusiana*, an adaptation of Ann Radcliffe's novel of 1789.

12 For the Duncombes as pornographers, see McCalman (1988, 204–36). McCalman describes them as brothers, but see the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1994. H. D. Symonds also dabbled in pornography (McCalman, 1988, 205).

13 Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry* (1826) ran at the Adelphi, Strand, for 180 nights from November 1821 to January 1823.

14 A "Charley" is *c.*1812 slang (see Partridge, 1949).

15 Advertised in 1823 was *Tread-Mill, or Tom and Jerry at Brixton, a Mill-Dramatic Burletta . . . Surrey Theatre . . . with . . . "Life in a Slap Bang Crib," and . . . "Life in a Mill."*

16 BL Add Ms 42885. Puns abound: Boxam comes from "Alder-man-bury" but lives in a "snug Villa at Gravesend."

17 "Chap" = "odd fellow" (see Egan, 1823).

18 "wapper" = "anything large" (see Halliwell, 1889).

19 BL Add Ms 42869. The stolen body is that of the (dead drunk) "Bum Bailiff" Snatch, who revives and demands payment. Snatch boards the Margate steamboat, which explodes ("the spectre Bum has upset the Boiler and the Bailiff's blown up!").

20 A prison official armed with a long stick.

21 In a newspaper report excerpted into Egan's pamphlet, an eyewitness wrote: "After regarding the crowd for a moment, he [Thurtell] appeared to recognize an individual beneath him (we believe Mr Pierce Egan)" (11).

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Part III

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Transformations

11
Nineteenth-Century American Gothic

Allan Lloyd Smith

The craze for Gothic fiction begun by Walpole and developed by Matthew Gregory Lewis, William Godwin, and Ann Radcliffe, along with the German writers Friedrich von Schiller and Ludwig Tieck, found an enthusiastic readership in North America, despite – or possibly because of – regular denunciation from the pulpit. The rationalist perspective of the dominant American culture deriving from Locke and the Scottish common sense philosophers Lord Kames and Hugh Blair, subsequently Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, saw tales of specters and superstition as an affront to reason and decency, which no doubt only compounded their attraction for the young writers who were struggling to invent an American literature comparable to that of Europe. Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the three great originators of American fiction, were each much influenced by the Gothic fashion, Washington Irving satirized it in his tales, and even James Fenimore Cooper exploited it in his novels *The Spy*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *The Prairie*.

Cooper complained in 1828 that there were no suitable materials for writers to be found in the new country, "no annals for the historian . . . no obscure fictions for the writer of romance" (Cooper, 1963, vol. 2, 108). His sense of difficulty in finding imaginative sustenance was to be endorsed by Hawthorne, who wrote in 1859 of the "broad and simple daylight" and "common-place prosperity" of his country, so different from the shadow and mystery and sense of gloomy wrong that the ruins of Italy suggested. Without a feudal past and those relics so convenient for the European Gothicist, castles and monasteries and legends, the American landscape seemed an unlikely place for such fictions. Yet four indigenous features were to prove decisive in producing a powerful and long-lasting American variant of the Gothic: the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race, and political utopianism.

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In the early years of the colonies and the young United States, the settlers were acutely conscious that they existed on the verge of a vast wilderness, a land of threat as much as material promise, where many lived in isolation or in small settlements with memories and sometimes real fears of Indian warfare. The legends of seventeenth-century witchcraft in Salem provided for Hawthorne and John Neal those "annals for the historian" that Cooper required. The Puritan consciousness itself, although waning in this period, had established a profoundly "Gothic" imagination of good and evil, and the perilous human experience. Two famous sermons in particular, Michael Wigglesworth's "The Day of Doom" (1662) and Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), illustrate this inheritance:

> All filthy facts, and secret acts,
> however closely done,
> And long concealed, are there revealed
> before the mid-day sun.
> Deeds of the night shunning the light,
> which darkest corners sought,
> To fearfull blame, and endless shame,
> are there most justly brought.
>
> (Wigglesworth, 1994, 317)

Wigglesworth's vision of the cowering wrongdoer pursued by God's angry justice at the Day of Judgment is exceeded by the existential terror of Edwards's revivalist sermon, which pointed out that *every* day is potentially the Day of Judgment:

> That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up. (Edwards, 1967, 101)

If the tendency of such exhortations was to develop a sense of guilt and dread, it was also to foster a tendency to think of sin and virtue in terms of black and white, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. But the actual conjunction of black and white in American society through its unprecedented dependence on slavery, like the conflict between settlers and Native Americans, gave yet another twist to the development of American Gothic. The "power of blackness," to borrow the title of Harry Levin's critique of the contrasts within American romances (1958), was also, as Toni Morrison has argued, a power of definition of the "other," the resident non-American whose abjection supported the self-definition of the dominant whites (Morrison, 1992).

Again, as Jean Baudrillard has remarked, America is "a utopia which has behaved from the beginning as though it were already achieved" (Baudrillard, 1986, 28). The utopian visions of freedom and prosperity that brought the early settlers to North

America gained new vigor from Enlightenment arguments about the possibility of an ideal society and were enshrined in the founding constitutional principles of the United States. But along with the utopian inspiration came profoundly pessimistic insights into the dangers of trusting a society to the undisciplined rule of the majority, fear of faction in democratic government, the rule of the mob, and the danger of a collapse of the whole grand experiment. In the early years of the nineteenth century, as the franchise widened, such anxieties provided a political undertone in fiction as in the rest of public life.

These four factors shaped the American imagination toward Manichean formulations of good and evil and, as Richard Chase says, focused it on alienation and disorder or, as Leslie Fiedler more extravagantly puts it, led American fiction to become "bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, non-realistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic – a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation" (Chase, 1957, 11; Fiedler, 1966, 29).Writing at the peak of the Gothic's popularity in America, when the last decade of the eighteenth century saw a flood of imported English and German works circulating in the booksellers' catalogs, Charles Brockden Brown's novels demonstrate how his Philadelphian empiricist and Enlightenment temper picked up on the technique of "explained supernaturalism" that characterized Ann Radcliffe's work and also dominated the imported German romances – Schiller's *The Ghost-Seer* (1789), Kahlert's *The Necromancer* (1794), or Tschink's *The Victim of Magical Delusion* (1795) – whereby seemingly supernatural events are explained as the products of mental delusion. Most notably, the curious voices heard by Theodore Wieland in Brown's novel *Wieland* (1798), which inspire him to murder his family, originate in the ventriloquism practiced by Carwin for his own shabby purposes. But whereas in the European novels the misapprehensions are largely gratuitous (mistaking the nocturnal activities of bands of robbers for supernatural interventions, for example), Brown enlarges their scope of implication to significant psychological and political conclusions.

The Wieland family has a curious history: arriving in America as a missionary to the Indians, the elder Wieland fails in his project, but becomes a successful entrepreneur while retaining an intense religious belief. On his estate beside the Schuylkill River, he builds himself a small temple where, one evening, he is consumed by mysterious fire, leaving as he dies an enigmatic account that leaves open the possibility of some supernatural element in his death. His orphaned children, Clara and Theodore, establish for themselves what is effectively a private utopia, converting the temple into a summerhouse where they hold free-thinking discussions and readings of poetry and classical literature with their friends, Henri Pleyel and his sister Catherine, who becomes Wieland's wife and mother of his children. An example of the utopian isolation of the little community is Clara's note that six years of uninterrupted happiness had passed, during which the sounds of war in the distance only served "to enhance our enjoyment by affording objects of comparison." Into this Arcadia comes Carwin, a mysterious wandering figure from Ireland, whom we later discover to have been brought up in an Illuminati-like secret society with rationalist but subversive aims.

Carwin's almost magical power of ventriloquy, employed for such mundane purposes as the seduction of Clara's maid, sets off Wieland's latent religious monomania: he murders his wife and children violently, thinking it the will of God, who then demands of him also the sacrifice of his beloved sister Clara; realizing his error at last, Wieland kills himself instead of Clara, who then narrates the story in letters to her friends.

The Wielands's utopia has implicit parallels with the newly constituted United States: it is rationalist, based on Enlightenment principles, and significantly without recourse to external authority. The children have been "saved from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding schools" and left to their own guidance for religious education. The dreadful collapse of this happy and independent society could suggest a pessimism about the future of self-government, as Jane Tompkins points out:

> Brown's picture of the disintegration of the Wielands' miniature society is a more or less direct reflection of Federalist skepticism about the efficacy of religion and education in preparing citizens to govern themselves … the novel's plot offers a direct refutation of the Republican faith in men's capacity to govern themselves without the supports and constraints of an established social order. (Tompkins, 1985, 48, 49)

This would perhaps explain Brown's action on finishing the book; he sent a copy directly to Thomas Jefferson, then the vice-president of the United States. Of course there may be other and less noble reasons for an unknown author to draw his work to the attention of America's leading intellectual, but the thrust of Brown's implicit critique of naive utopianism seems clear enough.

Besides this possible political implication, *Wieland* also offers a devastating attack on the then prevalent psychology of sensations. His fellow Philadelphian, the eminent Dr. Benjamin Rush, was one of the leading theorists of sensationalist psychology, which explained the mind as a product of responses to sensation. But what happens, posits Brown's story, if the sensations themselves are untrustworthy or misinterpreted according to an inner imperative? Wieland is the most extreme example, but Clara, too, and even the rationalist Pleyel fall victim to this. Pleyel refuses to believe in Clara's protestations of fidelity, insisting instead upon the evidence of his own senses, which had in fact been deceived by Carwin. Brown rehearses this dilemma in many of his subsequent novels, eventually coming to the conclusion that inner direction and faith provide the only reliable answer.

There is also a psychosexual undertow in the novel, to do with the question of why Wieland's mania takes the particular form that it does, and why Clara has a prophetic dream in the summerhouse that her beloved brother is a danger to her: "I remembered the gulf to which my brother's invitation had conducted me; I remembered that, when on the brink of danger, the author of my peril was depicted by my fears in his form. Thus realized were the creatures of prophetic sleep, and of wakeful terror" (Brown, 1926, 28–9). At the time when the momentous events begin, Clara is expecting and hoping for Pleyel's proposal of marriage. That her sexuality is awakening too is evident

from the strange fixation that she develops on first encountering the ugly but magnetic Carwin, sketching his face and spending the whole of her time in contemplating the image throughout a stormy day. Wieland's brutal removal of his wife and children and his projected murder of Clara suggest obviously enough a pattern of repressed incestuous desire returning explosively at the point when Clara moves toward independence and sexual initiation. It is, after all, in awaiting Clara's return home that Wieland's mania begins and in her house that he hears the voice requiring him to sacrifice his wife as a proof of his faith. Such political, philosophical, and psychological implications more than justify Brown's claim that in *Wieland*:

> The incidents related are extraordinary and rare. Some of them approach, perhaps, as nearly to the nature of miracles as can be done by that which is not truly miraculous. . . . Some readers may think the conduct of the younger Wieland impossible. In support of this possibility the writer must appeal to Physicians and to men conversant with the latent springs and occasional perversions of the human mind. (Brown, 1926, 3)

Oddly perhaps, the Gothic possibilities of conflict with the Native Americans, which lie at the root of Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799), are not much drawn on by other writers, even by the master of Indian conflict plots, James Fenimore Cooper, whose occasional Gothic motifs, while appearing in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), are found more largely in quasi-European fictions such as *The Bravo* (1831), set in the Venice of the doges, or in the twilight landscape of *The Spy* (1821), his novel about a double agent during the Revolutionary War. But Cooper, like Brown, appreciated the Gothic possibilities of the American wilderness, as the scene of quasi-judicial execution in *The Prairie* demonstrates. Ishmael Bush hangs his brother-in-law, Abiram White, for the murder of his son, by leaving him noosed on a narrow ledge to fall. Bush listens from a distance in the night, hearing unearthly shrieks from the wind and finally one last cry in which there can be no delusion and "to which the imagination could lend no horror." This is, as it were, Gothic realism, using the resources of the wilderness and the primitive emotions of the rough settlers for its effect.

Cooper's worrying at the margins of civilization and savagery announced a new thematics that was to develop ultimately into the western genre on one hand and into southern Gothic on the other. An early exponent of the latter, Edgar Allan Poe, shows in *Arthur Gordon Pym* (1837) how the shadow of white racism may fall even within a comic narrative. *Pym*'s preposterous plot involves stowaways, mutinies, shipwrecks, cannibalism, a *Flying Dutchman* ghost ship, and travel to the ends of the world. It is Gothic in its evocation of claustrophobic terror, when Pym is hiding in the dark hull of a ship, but also and more powerfully in its descriptions of the fearsome natives of Tsalal who cannot abide the color white, have black teeth, and live among rocks which resemble corded bales of cotton, except that they, too, are black. The hoax plot concludes with Pym sailing toward a giant milky white figure, which Henry James, for one, concluded was a thing to remember. Poe, a southerner from Richmond, has his

racism etched throughout, like the natural hieroglyphics of his peculiar invented land, and it emerges on occasion with demonic energy. In his story "Hop Frog," for example, a much abused court jester dwarf has his revenge on the king and his courtiers by encouraging them to dress up as chained gorillas. They are then strung up to the chandelier and their tarred bodies set on fire – a grotesque approximation to southern lynchings.

Poe, for the most part, however, turned his back on specifically American settings and used, rather, a quasi-European setting for his Gothic tales. His stories of morbid introversion employed stylized Gothic items, such as the ancient house of Usher, the incomprehensible architecture of the (English) school in "William Wilson," and the baronial Gothic tower room of "Ligeia," but divorced them from social or historical resonance so that they became symbolist motifs, a technique that was to be later admired by Baudelaire and other French *symbolistes.* The "spiralling intensification" of his narrative technique, as David Punter aptly describes it, gave an extra dimension to situations not uncommon in the *Blackwood's Magazine* of the time, and the immediacy of his first-person narration developed the sensationalism of European Gothic (and of Brockden Brown) into a sharper focus. Scenes of exquisite terror, as in the discovery by the demented narrator of "Berenice" that his nightmare of removing his cousin's teeth while she yet lived must be the truth, or the exposure of the wife's walled-up corpse with the cat feeding off her head in "The Black Cat," push the charnel-house elements of literary Gothic toward the fascination with horror for its own sake that eventuates in the horror film (to whose corpus Poe's work, of course, has frequently contributed).

Supernaturalism is evident in many, though not by any means all, of Poe's tales of terror, but it is not the essential point and is usually explained by the narrator's insanity. The narrator sees his dead Ligeia reanimated in the body of his abused new wife, Rowena; the corpse of M. Valdemar speaks in a mesmeric trance (only to say "Let me die" and to collapse in a putrifying mess as soon as the spell is removed); the fatal embrace of Usher and his supposedly dead sister engenders a collapse of the whole house of Usher; and the message inadvertently daubed on the sail of the ghost ship in "MS Found in a Bottle" spells out the cryptic mirroring of the quest for knowledge in the one word "Discovery." But in none of these episodes of failed utopia do we find anything beyond the horrific materiality of death itself. Nor do attempts to find anachronistic psychological explanations, as in identifications of Roderick Usher with the superego and his sister Madeleine with the id, or Roderick with the mind and Madeleine with the body, prove very convincing. Poe may be explicable himself in terms of Freudian assumptions of unresolved oedipality, as Marie Bonaparte has argued at great length, but his fiction does not resolve itself into this coherent pattern. Poe's great contribution to psychological acuity lies instead in his assumption of a spirit of perversity, detailed in "The Imp of the Perverse" but also operating in "Usher," "The Black Cat," and "The Tell-Tale Heart." This anti-utopian thematic is explored in a preliminary way by Brockden Brown, when Arthur Mervyn's self-deluding projects of benevolence usually result in quite opposite consequences to those intended

(although perhaps related to his unexamined drives). In *Edgar Huntly*, too, the narrator's good intentions backfire in ways that suggest his own inner conflicts. But Poe takes the further step of making the perverse desire to vex the self into the central motivation of his characters, removing the clutter of eighteenth-century rationalist reflection and commentary so that the self-damaging impulse stands out in sharp relief and beyond explanation. The first line of one of his tales, "The Man of the Crowd," reads "es lässt sich nicht lesen" – that is, it does not permit itself to be read – which is precisely true of his Gothic sensationalism: there is a dark impulse beyond understanding which wreaks havoc, operating in complete contradiction to the normative assumption of the early United States polity, that individuals will always seek to act in their own best interests (and therefore can be trusted with democratic self-government and capitalist enterprise).

"The Man of the Crowd," set in London but obviously relevant to the American scene, offers a study of one such aberrant individual, pursued by a fascinated (and to an extent equally perverse) observer. First observed in the early evening, this curious figure roams the city streets among crowds of returning workers, then heads for the busy night spots, always seeking to be one of the throng. In the small hours he is perceived to be desperately seeking company among the few remaining night wanderers and is visibly relieved by the return of the urban mob in the morning. The narrator finds in his mind a confused sense aroused by the figure, ideas of "vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense, of extreme – despair" (Poe, 1970, 267). All the qualities of the promiscuous urban throng are here in contradictory conjunction but suggestive of the dangers of democracy. This story, a foretaste of urban Gothic, does not have a plot and is without significant action. The only clue to the man's behavior is in his clothing: through a rent in his ragged dress the narrator glimpses a dagger, but also a diamond and richer linen beneath the outer rags. This man, the narrator comes to think, is "the type and the genius of deep crime." It is as though Poe senses the possibilities of urban Gothic, as later developed, for example, in *Jekyll and Hyde*, but does not see how to explore it further.

The urban landscape could serve as a version of the incomprehensible castle of early Gothics, but to do so required a thematic inflection, one that several early American writers struggled to discover. Brockden Brown had similarly attempted to read the significance of the urban space in *Arthur Mervyn*, where the yellow fever plague turns Philadelphia into Night Town, and in *Ormond*, again a charnel vision due to the fever. George Lippard, in his best-selling novel *The Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall* (1844), invented an alternative Philadelphia, comprised of rakes, rogues, and cripples involved with a Gothic whorehouse – the secret life behind the virtuous façade. Lippard's pornographic take on the Gothic, reminiscent of Lewis's *The Monk*, combines salacious scenes with social protest against corruption and libertinism, a recipe also not unlike the work of Eugène Sue and later the English George Reynolds. The melodramatic possibilities of city life discovered by Sue and Balzac, the secret interconnections of high and low society, and the suddenness of transition possible in a

crowded promiscuous metropolis (well described in Brooks, 1976) proved immensely popular, although perhaps more for the attractions of *The Quaker City*'s steamy voyeurism than its pretensions to reform.

The urban landscapes of the Gothic, however, are but one aspect of the complex adaptations made by American writers. Poe's stylized use of Gothic motifs points also toward the intense and economical invocations of Gothic elements in the work of Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and later Ambrose Bierce and Henry James. But unlike these later writers, much of Poe's Gothic has a burlesque element. In the early nineteenth century the Gothic vogue had largely passed and it was frequently occasion for satires and parodies, notably Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey.* Some of Poe's tales are overtly comic, such as "How to Write a Blackwood Article," in which a narrator tells of her sensations as her head is slowly cut off by the hand of a giant clock, but others, including his most famous stories, "The Black Cat," "Ligeia," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," are played straight-faced in a way that G. R. Thompson has identified as a version of German romantic irony (Thompson, 1973). Before him, Washington Irving had exploited the comic possibilities of the Gothic "tall tale" in such stories as "The Adventure of the German Student," "The Spectre Bridegroom," and "Dolph Heyliger." In "The German Student" a young man in Paris at the time of the Terror in the French Revolution makes love with a beautiful stranger who is found dead on his bed in the morning. The police investigating remove her diamond-clasped black neck-band, at which her head falls to the floor. Asked if he knows her, the policeman cries "Do I? . . . she was guillotined yesterday!" Irving's narrator finally attests to the truth of his story: "I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a madhouse in Paris." Other writers, such as James Kirke Paulding, who associated with Irving on *Salmagundi*, an early American magazine, and William Gilmore Simms, as well as the later authors John Pendleton Kennedy and William Cullen Bryant, employed a light touch with Gothic elements in their fictions. So, as Poe knew, American readers were already familiar with Gothic pastiche, and it is perhaps surprising that so little of the close critical attention Poe's work has received has acknowledged the comic element in his preposterous stories.

Nathaniel Hawthorne adopted the tone of comic Gothic in his novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). This concerns a house in Salem whose occupants have been regularly the victim of "Maule's Curse." Maule owned the land which Colonel Pyncheon wanted as the site of his home, and, when falsely convicted of witchcraft and destined to be hanged, he cursed Pyncheon, saying in the words of one of the actual Salem victims, "God will give him blood to drink." Pyncheon died choking on his own blood, and so thereafter have his descendants regularly succumbed to the family curse, which provides Hawthorne with the material for a contemporary satire on the evildoing and hypocrisy of respectable villains like Judge Pyncheon, whose character he likens to a magnificent palace with a corpse rotting beneath. The House of Seven Gables, itself erected on a shameful rotting corpse, is thus a version of the Gothic haunted castle, brought up to date and containing a cent shop selling miscellaneous items. But Hawthorne's serious involvement with his theme of rapacious

misappropriation and the evils of inherited wealth overwhelms the comedy to produce a disturbingly sinister effect. It is likely that his own sense of having suffered from the political chicanery of a man like Pyncheon, one Charles Upham who ousted Hawthorne from his customs post by false accusations, sharpened the malice of his pen. In the novel's most memorable scene, the author taunts Judge Pyncheon, after he has died from the traditional family stroke, in thirteen pages of splendid invective:

> What! Thou art not stirred by this last appeal? No; not a jot! And there we see a fly – one of your common houseflies, such as are always buzzing on the window-pane – which has smelt out Governor Pyncheon, and alights now on his forehead, now on his chin, and now, Heaven help us, is creeping over the bridge of his nose, towards the would-be chief-magistrate's wide-open eyes! Canst thou not brush the fly away? Art thou too sluggish? Thou man, that hadst so many busy projects, yesterday! Art thou too weak, that wast so powerful? Not brush away a fly! Nay, then, we give thee up! (Hawthorne, 1995, 234)

Hawthorne's necrophobic taunting anticipates Emily Dickinson's horrifying poem "I Heard a Fly Buzz when I Died," in which the fly, symbol of Beelzebub of course, "interposed" – "Between the light and me." Both exemplify how American writers increasingly came to strike the Gothic note in macabre detailing rather than by invoking the genre *in toto.* This is how the Gothic element occurs in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), itself an instance of the particular legacy of Puritan intensity that I noted earlier. The Salem witchcraft era became for several writers a repository of that gloomy and mysterious past that otherwise seemed unfruitfully absent to the American imagination. John Neal, in *Rachel Dyer* (1828), adopted the 1692 Salem trials as the basis for a popular novel, as did many other authors. Hawthorne used the Salem episode not directly but as a darkening and enriching context for his story of seduction, betrayal and shame. The Governor's Mansion, for example, is decorated with cabalistic inscriptions; Mistress Hibbins is supposed to be a witch; the forest is an unknowable darkness like the castle; the scarlet letter appears in the sky and becomes inscripted on the guilty minister's chest; Chillingworth is a shamanistic figure whose pursuit of Dimmesdale is relentless (in fact, Dimmesdale has, in this story, much the role of the persecuted female in traditional Gothic, tyrannized into self-mutilation and ultimately death by his adversary). But Hawthorne's Gothic here is preeminently psychological, building on Poe's internalizing and anticipating Henry James's use of the mode in his ghost stories, "The Jolly Corner" and *The Turn of the Screw*: the horror is within the self. The dark intensity of Puritan imagination, bordering on mania, is also seen in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil" as well as "Ethan Brand." In each of these tales the protagonist is beset by a religious depravity that distorts the mindscape grotesquely. In his 1850 review of Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Melville said that he admired the "great power of blackness" in him, derived "from that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free" (Melville, 1987, 243). This did indeed continue to preoccupy Hawthorne, whether in the lighter Gothic fantasies of "Rappacinni's Daughter" and the

grotesquerie of "The May-Pole of Merrymount" and "My Cousin Major Moulineux," or the Roman art world of *The Marble Faun* (1860).

The most overtly Gothic of Hawthorne's novels, *The Marble Faun*, envisages the European past as a chronicle of horror and Rome itself as a labyrinth of crime and intrigue, built insecurely over a sea of blood and riddled with the catacombs where some of the most significant events take place. His almost impenetrable plot unites a vision of prelapsarian innocence to the Gothic horror of a sinister monk-like artist's model, who pursues and is murdered by Donatello and his lover Miriam. Miriam is herself obscurely a version of Beatrice Cenci, the girl whose portrait by Guido Reni was much admired in the mid-nineteenth century for its ambiguous linkage of innocent beauty with the double guilt of incest and murder, making her "double-hooded," as Melville memorably expressed the source of this picture's fascination, "by the black crape of the two most horrible crimes (of one of which she is the object, and of the other the agent) possible to civilized humanity – incest and parricide" (quoted in Fiedler, 1966, 417). The unspeakableness of this quintessential Gothic emblem was to be Hawthorne's undoing; this novel falters under the weight of its Gothic mystifications, just as his last works proved unfinishable, Gothics which somehow could not discover their own plots. It is perhaps not coincidental that Melville also based his dark heroine Isabel in *Pierre* (1852) on Beatrice Cenci, and that novel also foundered in what the narrator terms her "ever creeping and condensing haze of ambiguities." As the Gothic moved into the realm of psychological terror, it produced the risk that the psychology of its authors could be overwhelmed by the themes that compelled them toward it.

Melville's story "Benito Cereno" (l856) brings together the psychological Gothic just mentioned with the racial and political aspects discussed earlier. The Spanish slave ship, the *San Dominick*, encountered by a northern American, Captain Amasa Delano, has its dark secrets. It appears to him first in the morning mists as resembling a monastery perched on the Pyrenees, inhabited by cowled monks, and is subsequently likened to some crumbling, deserted chateau, with formal gardens of trailing seaweed and wormy balustrades that threaten to drop the unwary innocent Delano into the depths. The story itself is formally Gothic in its indeterminacy, its epistemological quest for the truth, and the constant windings, false clues, and reversals which incapacitate the reader as much as the innocent sea captain in his Isabella or Emily role. There are incessant references to enchantment, the hull is hearse-like with a wen on its side, the negroes are sphinx-like and the sailors enigmatic, and the ship's bell has a graveyard toll. The hypochondriacal, Usher-ish Benito Cereno himself is read by Delano as a Schedoni villain, set on tricking his way into control of the American's ship; his slave Babo is read as a figure of the humble docility of the black servant. But Delano has read it all wrong, as the ship's name might have told him: the ship is without master, or rather, as the oval sternpiece figuring two *masked* bodies, one of whom is holding his adversary down with a foot to the neck, suggests, the roles are reversed, and Babo is the master of Cereno and the ship. In all, the situation suggests that the master is slave to the servant and, inferentially, that to hold slaves is in fact

to be held by them in that state of anxiety of insurrection that dictates a hysterical authority. More subtly, by returning to the sternpiece motif at the denouement, when Delano himself has his foot on the neck of the unmasked Babo, Melville's story implies the hypocritical collusion of the North with the peculiar institution of the South at the time of rising pre–Civil War tension. Delano and Cereno are doubles of a sort, as their names imply.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, while evidently inhabiting a much more rationalist perspective regarding the horrors of slavery, found the Gothic useful in pressing home her abolitionist argument in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). It has to be remarked, however, that the surprise in this influential novel is not so much that she has some recourse to the Gothic, as that it is not, on the whole, a Gothic work. When Eliza flees the vicious slave traders with her child, slipping out of the tavern where they have come to recapture her in the evening and fleeing across moving blocks of ice on the frozen river, we have a perfect Gothic tableau. But the author resists this in presenting the episode without the expected Gothic accoutrements of anxiety, suspense, and delay. The reason is the centrality of Christian faith in Stowe's worldview: Eliza will be secure because God is with her in the escape. Similarly, Tom's horrific suffering and death at the Legree plantation are absolved from Gothic terror by his noble simplicity of faith, shared by the text. Nor does the death of the angelic child Eva allow any opening to the Gothic; death even more than life is an access to the triumphal realm of Jesus. But in one episode Stowe does allow the Gothic fuller sway. Cassy and her fellow slave Emmeline, both sexual victims of Simon Legree, arrange their escape by exploiting the supernaturalism of Legree and his henchmen and hiding in the supposedly haunted attic until the search is called off. Cassy, it would seem, appears to Legree in the night, or perhaps only in his dream:

> But finally, there came over his sleep a shadow, a horror, an apprehension of something dreadful hanging over him. It was his mother's shroud, he thought; but Cassy had it, holding it up and showing it to him. He heard a confused noise of screams and groanings; and, with it all he knew he was asleep, and he struggled to wake himself. He was half awake. He was sure something was coming into his room. He knew the door was opening, but he could not stir hand or foot. At last he turned, with a start; the door was open, and he saw a hand putting out his light. (Stowe, 1994, 366)

A ghostly figure in white whispers to him "Come! come! come!" as he lies sweating with terror, then the thing is gone and he finds the door securely locked. This episode is clearly enough a grace-note in Cassy's escape plan, but the effects of his discovery of a lock of little Eva's hair provide an even more fully Gothic scene. Legree has destroyed his own mother's keepsake curl because the memory of her reminds him of his evil; yet when he comes across the fetish object that memorializes Eva he reads the curl as the return of his mother's hair: "the long shining curl of fair hair, – hair which, like a living thing, twined itself around Legree's fingers" ("like the charnel worms," comments Susan Wolstenholme in *Gothic (Re)Visions*, "that wrapped themselves around the fingers of the fallen nun Agnes" in *The Monk* in the dungeons under

the suggestively named "St. Clare" convent). The fetishized and "petrifying" hair, like that of the Medusa in Freud's analysis, represents femininity as terrifying, a reading that "provides a figurative account of how fear of the maternal becomes transmuted to hatred, not only of femininity but also of racial darkness (because within the novel this fear of the maternal is cast as explanatory myth of Legree's debased character. Evidently Legree displaces this hatred/fear of the feminine onto the slaves [Wolstenholme, 1993, 88, 90].)"

To find a fear of the feminine at the root of the most Gothic episode of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will hardly surprise readers of the American Gothic, at least from Poe on. "Ligeia," "Usher," "Berenice," "Morella," even "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," where sadistic violence is practiced on the mother and daughter victims (by an orang-utan, of course, which removes any human male complicity in the violation) are all exemplary of Poe's "rational" determination that the death of a beautiful woman must be the literary theme most productive of beauty. Irving's "German Student" comedy of decapitation, as well as the now largely forgotten early American Gothic stories, Richard Henry Dana Snr's "Paul Felton" (1821) and Washington Allston's "Monaldi" (1822), both tales of husbands who murder their beloved wives; Hawthorne's nervous admiration of powerful women and somewhat sadistic elaboration of their demise (in, for example, the death and subsequent mutilation of Zenobia's body in *The Blithedale Romance* [1851]); Melville's sense of the threat posed by Isabel in *Pierre*; James's registration of the damage caused by the innocent governess in *The Turn of the Screw* and the not-so-innocent Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*: all these register an acute anxiety about the role of the feminine in nineteenth-century culture and suggest how gender anxiety feeds into the production of the Gothic. The political agitation for women's rights may well be linked to such ascriptions of uncanny power to the female, although the connection is rarely made overtly (with the exception of James's novel *The Bostonians*). But the perception of women's situation also created a further reach of Gothic, written by women and containing a sense of their own fears and oppression. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) is a powerful expression of the Gothicism inherent in the experience of patriarchal society. Her heroine, condemned to a therapeutic regime that amounts to imprisonment by her husband and his apparently kindly sister, identifies with the figure of a creeping old woman that she perceives behind the wallpaper pattern of the room where she is confined. By the end of the story she has effectively become the spectral woman: "I've got out at last. . . . And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" Other writers of ghost stories, including Emma Dawson, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and the better-known Edith Wharton, similarly used Gothic treatments to express the female experience.

The shadow of patriarchy, slavery, and racism, as of Puritan extremes of the imagination and the political horror of a failed utopianism, fall across these works of American Gothic and direct its shape toward a concern with social and political issues as well as toward an agonized introspection concerning the evil that lies within the self.

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12
The Ghost Story

Julia Briggs

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread . . .
Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Out of the world of utter desolation and wild nightmare that constitutes Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" comes this simile, which is almost a ghost story in miniature: the lonesome road is more familiar than the Mariner's experiences at sea, as is the fear of being followed. But for most of us, the horror that follows us lies in our imagination, whereas here the traveler "knows" what walks behind him. The ambivalence or tension is between certainty and doubt, between the familiar and the feared, between rational occurrence and the inexplicable – and perhaps is the ghost story's chief source of power.

Ghost stories have multiple meanings, but one constant element is the challenge they offer to the rational order and the observed laws of nature, though they may do so in a variety of ways, reintroducing what is perceived as fearful, alien, excluded, or dangerously marginal. The source of terror may intrude into the familiar in the form of the past and the dead or the untamed world of nature, or from the human mind, as dreams do (Banquo's "cursed thoughts which nature gives way to in repose"), or it may come from the rational world itself in the form of a scientific aberration; it may even come from such characteristically human ambitions and activities as war, oppression, and persecution, which the twentieth century made peculiarly its own. Themes such as these are common both to the generically narrower form of the ghost story,

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and to the wider concept of the Gothic. In terms of subject matter, there is an extensive overlap between the two; indeed it could be argued that the most characteristic form taken by the Gothic from, perhaps, 1830 to 1930 is the ghost story. By then, the transformations of the Gothic into new media such as film and radio were well established. The ghost story's commercial aspect provides a further link with the Gothic, which has always been characterized by its wide popular appeal. Virginia Woolf, in an essay of 1918, posed the question, "how are we to account for the strange human craving for the pleasure of feeling afraid which is so much involved in our love of ghost stories?" and supplied the answer, that we enjoy being frightened, so long as it is under circumstances that we can control (Woolf, 1987, 217).

The narrowest definition of the ghost story would describe it as a story about the spirits of the returning dead, but many of the best-known examples of the genre do not strictly conform to this description: M. R. James's "'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad'" involves a horror that is ghost-like in appearance, even clothing itself in a sheet, but what comes in response to the whistle is an evil spirit, an elemental, a demon who rules the winds. Ghost stories are more usefully defined in terms of length, genre, or context than according to the particular types of supernatural visitation that they represent: stories of the spirits of the dead are different in subject, but not in kind, from stories of ghouls, vampires, zombies, and doubles (*doppelgänger*), automata, and the golem, or from tales of witches, wizards, werewolves, and spells (as in M. R. James's "Casting the Runes"). All these various phenomena derive from folklore and oral tales that have been told in the dark since people began to tell each other stories.

Ghost stories constitute a special category of the Gothic and are partly characterized by the fact that their supernatural events remain unexplained. While Gothic novels sought to create a sense of the sublime by exciting "the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible" (Burke, 1958, 39), their supernatural events might be allowed to proliferate without explanation, or, in the alternative model favored by Ann Radcliffe and others, they might be rationally explained away. Ghost stories commonly provide an alternative structure of cause and effect, in which the supernatural is not explained away but offers its own pseudo-explanation according to some kind of spiritual law of action and reaction: an unburied corpse, a murder victim or some other secret apparently buried safely in the past returns to haunt the perpetrator, as in Sheridan LeFanu's "The Familiar" or M. R. James's "A School Story," in which a Latin master is upset by the response he receives to an exercise using the conditional: "Si tu non veneris, ego veniam ad te" ("If you don't come to me, I'll come to you"). Eventually something does come: "he was beastly thin: and he looked as if he was wet all over: and, . . . I'm not at all sure that he was alive." The sequel, or pseudo-explanation, is two clasped bodies, discovered when an old well is cleaned out in Ireland. One of these is identified by the initials on his watch as the hapless schoolmaster. The story implies that the thing that comes back was originally murdered by the schoolmaster, but the further explanation of their relationship, or the motives, other than the dead man's revenge, are left unexplained.

The ghost story's "explanations" do not operate to rationalize or demystify the supernatural events, but rather to set them inside a kind of imaginative logic in which the normal laws of cause and effect are suspended in favor of what Freud termed "animistic" ways of thinking, in which thought itself is a mode of power, in which wishes or fears can actually benefit or do harm – ways of thinking that are characteristic of very small children who haven't yet defined their own limits, but which Western educational traditions have taught us to reject or leave behind. The ghost story reverts to a world in which imagination can produce physical effects, a world that is potentially within our power to change by the energy of our thoughts, yet practically alarming. And of course the ghost story itself lends some degree of credence to the powers of the imagination, since the mere words on the page can, in their limited way, reproduce the effects they describe: once we are in the grip of the narrative, the heartbeat speeds up, the skin sweats, or prickles, and any unexpected noise will cause the reader to jump.

For Sigmund Freud, the explanation for such feelings was rightly set out by the German philosopher, F. W. J. Schelling, for whom "everything is uncanny that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light" (Freud, 1953–74, 241). Ghost stories represent the return of the repressed in its most literal and paradigmatic form, so it should come as no surprise that Freud's 1919 essay "Das 'unheimlich'" ("The 'uncanny'") offers the fullest and most systematic theorization of the form to date. The essay takes the form of an analysis of a story called "The Sandman," by the German fantasy writer E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822). This is a complex tale with at least three different strands: one of these, the story of the sinister doll-maker Dr. Coppola and the doll that he brings to life, was to become the source of the ballet *Coppelia* as well as of the first act of Offenbach's opera *Tales of Hoffmann.* Freud's account shows how the various apparently unrelated elements of the story are in fact all closely linked by a series of thought or verbal associations that conceal an undercurrent of fear, a threat of damage to the eyes, which for Freud conceals a further threat of damage to the penis (this is a male critic writing for male readers). The elaborate layers of meaning and symbolism that Freud unearths were to have a powerful influence on the practice of literary analysis, and their complex interaction within the story must in turn have contributed to his own theories about the operation of the unconscious.

One key element in the story, in Freud's view, is the use of various doubles: "the conclusion of the story makes it quite clear that Coppola the optician really is the lawyer Coppelius and thus also the Sand-Man." In fact the whole narrative is shot through with uncanny repetition of all kinds, such as the automata that, like the doll Olympia, mimic the living. When the hero Nathaniel thinks he understands the strange connections between the various threatening figures in the narrative, he is also clearly undergoing some kind of nervous illness, and the story ends with his suicide. The reader cannot tell whether everything happened as he experienced it, or whether he was suffering from paranoiac delusions – indeed, both could be true at the same time. Jacques Derrida has encouraged us to analyze the processes of production and reproduction, rehearsal, and performance that lie at the heart of literature. Focusing

on these, it soon becomes apparent that many of the most characteristic motifs of the ghost story, even the very ghosts themselves, are reproductions or simulacra of human beings, and many of the other figures that appear in ghost stories – doubles (or *doppelgänger*), automata, manufactured monsters like Frankenstein's, reanimated corpses (or zombies), the golem made from the clay of the dead – are all different forms of reproduction, and that the concept of uncanniness itself is closely connected to disturbing interpretations and the discovery of resisted meanings. Literature, with its fundamental process of mirroring lived life, is by nature uncanny (see Bennett and Royle, 1995).

Hoffmann used his writings to explore his own delusions and fantasies – as did the French poet and writer Gérard de Nerval and the English Thomas de Quincey. None of these wrote ghost stories precisely, but they explored the nonexistent boundaries between reality, fantasy, and delusion in their writings and thus opened a way for the ghost story not merely to give quick thrills but to explore an inner world of images, dreams, trance states, and catalepsy. The development of the Gothic, and the ghost story within it, was itself part of a wider reaction against the rationalism and growing secularization of the Enlightenment, which was in turn reflected in proliferating new philosophies that set out to explore how knowledge was formulated in the mind and how the less conscious processes of the mind operated. The alarmingly persuasive logic of obsession and paranoia was to become the central theme in the work of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, who again never wrote a ghost story in the narrowest sense of that term, yet whose work remains seminal to the form and is permeated by a sense of the uncanny as Freud defined it. Poe's tales of being buried alive, of the resuscitated or returning dead, of tormented bodies and minds, of irrepressible buried secrets created a new and influential literary vocabulary. Stories like "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Imp of the Perverse" dramatized the inexplicable human urge to hurt oneself or others, the desire to throw oneself off a precipice or to torture or kill another living creature – monsters that sleep at the heart of reason. His stories revealed that the ultimate horrors lie not without but within.

As an American writer and a highly idiosyncratic one, Poe's immediate influence was on European literature rather than English, and even on poetry rather than prose, but he set a high value on the self-sufficiency of a short story that might be readily absorbed at a single sitting. While Victorian ghost stories sometimes stretch out to novella length or even become full-scale triple-decker novels, the ghost story is more often thought of as a particular type of short story, though it has not always been characterized by self-sufficiency and some of the earliest ghost stories appeared as insets in longer tales: for example, Walter Scott's "Wandering Willie's Tale" occurs within *Redgauntlet* (1824), the classic werewolf story "The White Wolf of the Hartz Mountains" originally appeared in Frederick Marryat's novel *The Phantom Ship* (1839), while LeFanu's "Authentic Narrative of the Ghost of a Hand" was inset in *The House by the Churchyard* (1863). From its beginnings, Gothic narrative had shown a tendency to proliferate, including interwoven episodes and insets, so that a story's interaction with its frame might itself contribute to the tension between natural and supernatural

explanations. Tzvetan Todorov (1973) has analyzed how this operates in Jan Potocki's *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (written at the beginning of the nineteenth century), and the inset ghost story has survived until the present: it is used, for example, in Kingsley Amis's *The Green Man* (1969), which includes passages from the seventeenth-century diary of Dr. Thomas Underhill, or more containedly in Penelope Fitzgerald's *The Gate of Angels* (1990), in the form of "Dr Matthews' Ghost Story." Both of these are parodies, or rather acts of homage to M. R. James.

Part of the value of an inset narrative, as Todorov points out, is the opportunity it provides to create a tension between narrative and frame by setting up contrasting moods or narratives, a sense of rocking between different conceptions of the universe, different kinds of explanation. One particular and much-used framework that was closely identified with the telling of ghost stories during the nineteenth century was Christmas Eve, traditionally a time for ghosts to appear (like Hallowe'en). Perhaps the Victorians really invented Christmas: at any rate, the situation of the family group huddled around the fireside at the very coldest and darkest time of the year, exchanging stories that ritually exorcised isolation and terror, that asserted the group's solidarity while recognizing its vulnerability, appealed strongly to Charles Dickens. His classic *A Christmas Carol* (1843) appeals to Victorian middle-class smugness while exposing the forces of poverty, greed, and ruthlessness that simultaneously maintained and threatened his society. The ghost of old Marley clanking its chains is deliberately stereotypical, quaintly comic, whereas the specters of Want and Ignorance were as terrible then as they are today.

Dickens first used Christmas as an occasion for the telling of ghost stories in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), where the celebrations at Dingley Dell introduce the tale of the goblins who stole a sexton. Dickens may have borrowed the idea for this frame from Washington Irving's account of "The Christmas Dinner" (1819), which includes "several anecdotes of the fancies of the neighbouring peasantry." In the course of his career, Dickens was to make this particular structure peculiarly his own, writing a series of Christmas books that drew on the supernatural and publishing ghost stories, by himself and others, in the Christmas issues of the magazines he edited – *Household Words* and, after 1859, *All the Year Round.* His own stories "The Trial for Murder" and "The Signalman" both appeared in the latter; Mrs. Gaskell's "The Old Nurse's Tale" and Wilkie Collins's "The Dream Woman" were commissioned by Dickens for Christmas issues of the former. Among the many Victorian ghost stories that make use of a Christmas setting, the most unexpected must be Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), a novella that plays the most elaborate cadenza on genre and the kinds of expectation that this particular genre may set up: James begins by letting us know that "it was gruesome, as, on Christmas eve in an old house, a strange tale should essentially be." An innate sense of form leads him to use the space between frame and inset, as well as the literary echoes within the story itself, to deconstruct the meaning of the unnamed governess's narrative, even while she is narrating it.

The telling of tales around the fireside makes explicit a particular aspect of the ghost story which depends upon a tension between the cosy familiar world of life

(associated with *Heim* and *heimisch* – home and the domestic) and the mysterious and unknowable world of death (*unheimlich*, or uncanny). Victorian ghost stories, in particular, often employed this contrast as their central effect, either by using a setting such as Christmas at Dingley Dell or alternatively through their publishing context: ghost stories typically appeared in periodicals intended for family consumption, like those Dickens edited, or later magazines such as the *Strand.* The ghost story was the product of a divided society which set a high premium on particular forms of social community, above all the family. Yet from the outset, Gothic writing had displayed a marked tendency to represent the family as a source of danger, even as a model of false consciousness: works like Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Shelley's melodrama *The Cenci* (1819), as well as later novels like *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and many other characteristic Gothic fictions, represented the family, not merely as failing its individual members, but as a source of dangerously concealed secrets, even of literal skeletons in the cupboard. While much Victorian fiction veers between asserting family values and exposing their deceptions, the ghost story could do both at the same time.

M. R. James (1862–1936), an early twentieth-century inheritor of Victorian traditions (his own favorite precursor was Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, author of "Carmilla," "Green Tea," and "Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street"), stands conveniently at the center of two centuries of ghost-story writing; he was exceptional in producing four collections and several singletons, and in writing only this particular form of fiction (though as a theologian, bibliographer, and iconographer he was also the author of numerous scholarly works). He brought to the form an exceptional technical mastery, a brilliantly dry tone against which his supernatural horrors are silhouetted. James regarded his ghost stories as *jeux d'esprit* and was reluctant to discuss how he came to write them, though the pictures and texts that constituted his research often provided starting points, as did particular houses or localities. The preface to his second collection notes, in its downbeat way, that it is important to establish a setting that is "fairly familiar and the majority of the characters and their talk such as you may meet or hear any day," since this will "put the reader into the position of saying to himself, 'If I'm not very careful, something of this kind may happen to me!' " James's idea of the familiar and everyday was perhaps less typical than he assumed, since he spent most of his life either at King's College, Cambridge, or at Eton College, but his method of beginning a ghost story "in a placid way" was highly effective and has been widely imitated ever since: "let the ominous thing put out its head, unobtrusively at first, and then more insistently, until it holds the stage," he recommended (James, 1924, vi).

James's view that the element of the supernatural should erupt within the familiar marks another significant point of difference from the Gothic, which more often follows romance in locating its events in exotic or bizarre settings, whereas the ghost story often takes place in a very mundane and often urban context. Richard Dowling called the obscene monkey that haunts the clergyman victim in LeFanu's "Green Tea" "the only probable ghost in fiction," perhaps because it first appears to him on an

omnibus. In "Casting the Runes," M. R. James has the hero, Dunning, warned of his own death in a tramcar. Walter de la Mare (1873–1956), another master of the ghost story, sets his elaborate and often highly intertextual narratives in the underground, in trains, buses, pubs, and teashops, and on one occasion in the station waiting room at Crewe. As Mr. Blake observes in that story, things are not always what they seem: "It's your own mind that learns you before what you look at turns out to be what you expect. Else why should we be alarmed by this here *solid* sometimes? It *looks* all so; but *is* it?" (de la Mare, 1930, 108). The sudden interruption by supernatural events forces us to reconsider the nature of the phenomenological world. It also provides further links both with Freud, whose definition of the uncanny blends together the familiar and the unknown in an unstable cocktail, and with Wordsworth and Coleridge who, in *The Lyrical Ballads*, aimed "to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom," as part of the process of procuring "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith" (Coleridge, 1975, 169).

Yet to read the ghost story merely as a reaching through the familiar to the terror and pleasure of the supernatural, to focus on "the fun of the shudder" (Edith Wharton's phrase), is to underplay the darker aspects of the form. Ghost stories often deal with the most primitive, punitive, and sadistic of impulses, revenge being one of the commonest motifs present in the form. The instinct to inflict upon others the pain we have received is too readily tolerated as a literary theme, as well as a human reaction. The easy acceptance of cruelty implied in some of the story patterns is often reflected in the degree of physical disgust or horror evoked. M. R. James's second story, "Lost Hearts," concerns a necromancer who has drunk the blood of young children to restore his own lost youth. The returning children become objects that generate horror and disgust in the narrator, and in turn in the reader. Perhaps the best account of writing that sets out to horrify and disgust its readers is given by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1982), a book that has nothing to say directly about the ghost story, and yet the concept of abjection as she defines it is strictly relevant to a great many examples of the form, inviting us to think more deeply about the purpose, effect, and workings of writing that sets out to evoke a response of physical, even phobic, disgust.

Kristeva's analysis of abjection is not gendered, although she recognizes that repulsion is projected onto the other, whether in the form of women or Jews. She is not concerned with the significance of gender in the writing of horror, although patriarchal definitions of women as unclean have forged links between women's experience and the physical state of abjection. Certainly, a notable feature both of Gothic writing and of ghost stories has been the large contribution that women writers have made to both forms. One obvious explanation for this is that women have taken up popular and saleable kinds of writing because they have so often been driven by economic motives: during the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth, writing offered women a comparatively secure and respectable way of earning, the levels of exploitation involved being more tolerable than in many other available forms of employment. But it may also be that women writers have felt some special affinity with

freer and more imaginative modes of expression: Gothic, in particular, often includes some element of rebellion against or resistance to existing social forms. A taste for romance or a sensitivity to mood and atmosphere may also have contributed, and the ghost story may have offered an imaginative access to some kinds of spiritual power.

Women were heavily involved in the various spiritualist movements of the nineteenth century, perhaps as a reaction to their wider social and legal disempowerment. Victorian ghost stories often recapitulate the search for evidence for the existence of God that characterized such movements. The writing of ghost stories may have further reflected, even if only vicariously, a concern to reclaim a little of the power and freedom that circumstances denied them. For whatever reason, the period from 1850 to 1880 was particularly rich in women writing ghost stories, and any list of them would have to begin with Elizabeth Gaskell and include Rosa Mulholland, Amelia Edwards, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, LeFanu's niece Rhoda Broughton (*Tales for Christmas Eve*, 1873), Mrs. Riddell (*Weird Stories*, 1882), and Margaret Oliphant (*Stories of the Seen and the Unseen*, 1885). Two women remembered primarily as writers for children, Mrs. Molesworth and E. Nesbit, both wrote memorable ghost stories, and so did "Vernon Lee" (Violet Paget). A list of twentieth-century women writers who wrote memorably in this form would necessarily consist of many of those writing in England and America today; even the most selective listing would include Edith Wharton, May Sinclair, Elizabeth Bowen, Elizabeth Taylor, and, stretching the genre a little, the Gothic tales of Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen).

For Kristeva, the powers of horror have their origins within us; yet they also manifest themselves publicly and historically, in forms of social life: the ghost story as a form concerns itself with either an outer or an inner world. For Dickens in *A Christmas Carol*, the true horrors were Want and Ignorance, the social conditions daily visible upon the London streets, but toward the end of the nineteenth century psychic and psychological aspects became increasingly important, so that, as Virginia Woolf observed, the author "must seek to terrify us not by the ghosts of the dead, but by those ghosts which are living within ourselves" (Woolf, 1987, 218–19). She instanced *The Turn of the Screw*, where the reader's attention is directed to the possibility that the unnamed governess may unknowingly be projecting her own dark fantasies onto her charges, fantasies of a type that Freud's writings would seek to explore. The results of his explorations might well have had the effect of demystifying the ghost story (as happened in Jonathan Miller's dramatization of " 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad' ") and so drawing its teeth. That they did not actually do so is in part a measure of the depth and complexity of the workings of the mind, but it also reflects the fact that the darkness at the heart of Western so-called civilization exploded outwards into history in the most unparalleled and horrifying way in the twentieth century, making it the most irrationally destructive ever known. In an age haunted by the unnumbered ghosts of those who died in horror and pain at the hands of other human beings, the ghost story can only figure as a form of light relief.

Perhaps because we tame horrors and make them manageable by writing about them, some of the twentieth century's darkness has been drawn into its ghost stories.

The unprecedented trauma of the Western Front in World War I produced its own mythologies, such as the strange rumors that sprang up during the retreat from Mons, when angelic shapes seemed to hang in the sky and others saw a beautiful young man on a white horse, claimed by the English as St. George, the French as St. Michael. Legends about saints appearing to rally defeated troops on the battlefield are almost as old as war itself (a similar story is told of St. James, appearing to defend the Spanish from the Moors). On September 29, 1914, when the war had scarcely begun, Arthur Machen published a short story called "The Bowmen," in which St. George returned to northern France with the bowmen of Agincourt, this time to fight the Germans, in answer to a soldier's desperate prayer. Although his story anticipated later rumors, it is unlikely to have been their source (as he later claimed) and was itself probably inspired by Kipling's story of an army of English dead who saved a troop of soldiers from an ambush on the northwestern frontier, "The Lost Legion" (1893). Kipling himself wrote some of the most troubling ghost stories to come out of the war, among them "Swept and Garnished," which dramatizes the blood guilt of the Germans for the massacres of children in Belgium. He also explored the idea pioneered by the psychologist W. H. Rivers, and ultimately derived from Freud, that repressed experience might be unblocked by reenactment, and this provides the central motif in "Fairy-Kist" and "The Woman in His Life."

Kipling's ghost stories of World War I are powerful, knowledgeable, and unflinching, yet his attitudes to courage and military conduct remain those of an older generation, excoriated by the young who turned away from the carnage with disgust at its gratuitousness. But there is a sense in which Elizabeth Bowen might claim to be the recorder *par excellence* of London during the Blitz, perhaps in part because, as Phyllis Lassner writes, "the historical and psychological bridge between the child reader and the adult writer and the two world wars is a compelling matter for Bowen" (1998, 152). Her collection of wartime ghost stories, *The Demon Lover* (1945), gives an extraordinary impression of a city haunted by its dead, the shattered past, and those about to die. The ghosts here are seen as somehow necessary to their victims, almost invented by them to fill the spiritual voids opened by the shock of war. The title story vividly exemplifies Lassner's point: in it, a middle-aged woman is carried off in a taxi "into the hinterland of deserted streets" by her dead soldier lover of World War I in an alarming representation of the anger of those so pointlessly sacrificed. One of the two masterpieces in the collection is "The Happy Autumn Fields," in which a young woman sleeping in a bombed-out house dreams herself back into the life of a Victorian family at a moment before a tragic accident takes place. The other, "Mysterious Kor," is the most strange and hallucinatory of all: "London looked like the moon's capital – shallow, craterless, extinct," yet this is an example not of procuring faith for the shadows of the supernatural (as Coleridge had proposed to do in the *Lyrical Ballads*) but of "exciting a feeling analogous to the supernatural" (as Wordsworth intended). "Mysterious Kor" is also linked with World War I through its intertextuality with Rider Haggard's *She*, which Bowen remembered reading as an adolescent in the years when the thunderclouds of war were gathering.

The darkest events of twentieth-century history could never gloss themselves as entertainment, yet the figure of the ghost has provided a powerful imagery for the darkness of the past and its inescapable historical legacies. Isaac Bashevis Singer has used it to represent the way in which the survivors of the holocaust were drawn by guilt and horror back to the dead, in stories such as "The Lecture" or "The Wedding at Brownsville," while more recently, though not in the form of a short story, Toni Morrison used the figure of the ghost to represent the dark narratives of slavery in her novel *Beloved* (1987), which invokes the deep physical horror that Kristeva had described and analyzed. So the ghost story, with its many symbolisms of a world within us, beyond us or looming out of the past to our destruction, continues to be a potent and living literary form, offering its readers a serious and even self-reflexive message as well as the thrill of fear, and will continue to do so, as long as human life is terminated by the mystery of death, and the workings of nature and our own minds remain opaque to us.

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13
Gothic in the 1890s

Glennis Byron

"One epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline and another is announcing its approach," Max Nordau proclaimed in *Degeneration*, one of the most notorious and, in its way, most Gothic texts of the Victorian *fin de siècle.* "Over the earth the shadows creep with deepening gloom, wrapping all objects in a mysterious dimness, in which all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible. Forms lose their outlines, and are dissolved in floating mist. The day is over, the night draws on" (Nordau, 1896, 5–6). Nordau's description of Western civilization in crisis had a particular resonance for late Victorian Britain. This was an imperial power in decline, threatened by the rise of such new players as Germany and the United States, suffering from the loss of overseas markets, faced with growing unrest in the colonies, and suffused with new doubts about the morality of the imperial mission. This was a highly progressive society now experiencing the social and psychological effects of the Industrial Revolution; crime and disease ran rife within the city slums, aggravated by the influx of farm workers whose livelihood had been destroyed by the agricultural depression. This was a predominantly bourgeois society which, having prided itself on moral superiority, now faced challenges to the traditional values and family structures upon which its much-vaunted superiority was based. Late Victorian Britain had become all too aware of the dark side of progress, all too aware that, as Nordau declared, night was drawing on.

With its atmospheric hints of mysterious fears and terrors, its emphasis on the breaking down of boundaries, the dissolution of certainties, Nordau's grim warning also has a tantalizing Gothic suggestiveness: it could equally serve as a fitting prelude to the arrival of some Gothic horror, a Varney or Dracula perhaps, preparing to insinuate himself into the room of some sleeping maiden. The echoes are not inappropriate:

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the discourse of degeneration articulates much the same fears and anxieties as those traditionally found in the Gothic novel, and as concerns about national, social, and psychic decay began to multiply in late Victorian Britain, so Gothic monstrosity reemerged with a force that had not been matched since the publication of the original Gothic at the previous *fin de siècle.* Such works as R. L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894), H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897)[1] all draw their power from the fears and anxieties attendant upon degeneration, and the horror they explore is the horror prompted by the repeated spectacle of dissolution – the dissolution of the nation, of society, of the human subject itself.

The discourse of degeneration also partakes of a certain Gothic fluidity, spanning a wide variety of discursive fields from statistics to zoology, eugenics to physiology. And what links most of the debates is precisely what links these *fin de siècle* Gothic texts: the drive to define and categorize the features of a culture in crisis, to determine the exact nature of the agents of dissolution and decline. There is the desire to identify what is unfixed, transgressive, other, and threatening, in the hope that it can be contained, its threat defused; and there is the desire to redefine and fix a "norm," to reestablish the boundaries that the threatening other seems to disrupt and destabilize.

The specific nature of this threat was widely debated during the late Victorian age. For some, it was an external force. There was a deluge of invasion scare narratives, such as W. F. Butler's *The Invasion of England* (1892), which focused on the threat from other imperial powers (see Brantlinger, 1988), and of reverse colonization fantasies, which expressed the fear of the supposedly "civilized" world being taken over by "primitive" forces (see Arata, 1990). Similar concerns about the threat to nation and empire pervade Gothic literature of the time. Wells's Dr. Moreau, for example, has been read as the white aristocrat presiding over a colonial society where the "natives" revert to their original primitive form and attack white imperial power. Anxieties about the integrity of the nation and the decline of Britain as an imperial power are most disturbingly gothicized in the 1890s, however, by Richard Marsh's *The Beetle.* From the Orient, described here as the site of chaos and barbarism as opposed to the civilized and ordered world of the West, comes the Beetle, also referred to as "the Woman of Songs" or, more simply, "the Oriental." She is a priestess of Isis who penetrates the very heart of England, the city of London. This is partly to take revenge upon Paul Lessingham, now a prominent politician, who twenty years earlier had been enslaved by the Beetle on a trip to Egypt and had rejected her. And it is partly to find white victims for her barbaric Egyptian rituals. These "orgies of nameless horrors" (Marsh, 1994, 197), as recalled by Lessingham, suggest that the desire to despoil and destroy is at least partly racially motivated: "in each case the sacrificial object was a woman, stripped to the skin, as white as you or I, – and before they burned her they subjected her to every variety of outrage of which even the minds of demons could conceive" (197). The Oriental's apparent hatred of white skins as manifested in these rituals, however, only serves to disguise her desire to possess such a white body for

herself and consequently confirms the supposed "superiority" of the white race. "What a white skin you have," she gloats as, in the guise of an ancient man, he/she lecherously devours with his/her eyes Robert Holt, the naked tramp who stands before her: "What would I not give for a skin as white as that, – ah yes!" (16). Written at a time of increased British military activity in Egypt, *The Beetle* contributes to British fear and anxiety about the Egyptians but also confirms, through the very mouth of the monstrous alien, British superiority, and reassuringly dispels any doubts about the need for the so-called civilizing mission to continue among such a barbarous and dangerous race.

One of the most terrifying things about this Beetle, of course, is that she has not remained in Egypt: she has invaded London. While the specific nature of the threatening other varies among different *fin de siècle* Gothic texts, the "norm" that is threatened, most seem to agree, is located firmly within late Victorian Britain. While earlier Gothic fictions are usually distanced in both time and space, late nineteenth-century Gothic tends to insist, Kathleen Spencer has observed, on "the modernity of the setting – not on the distance between the world of the text and the world of the reader, but on their identity" (Spencer, 1992, 200). As Villiers notes of the evil let loose in Machen's *The Great God Pan*, "it is an old story, an old mystery played in our day, and in dim London streets instead of amidst the vineyards and the olive gardens" (Machen, 1993, 106). The city, center of the British empire, was the key site of 1890s Gothic monstrosity.

And it is not just a matter of some external force invading London: the city itself is now regarded by many as the locus of cultural decay, and the threat, it is suggested, may well come from within. In the title of his influential survey of the degraded living conditions of the poor, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, tellingly echoes the title of Stanley's recently published *In Darkest Africa.* The social explorers who penetrated the heart of the city slums, Booth implies, found it unnecessary to travel as far as Stanley in order to find the realm of darkness. London exudes a sinister sense of menace in much *fin de siècle* Gothic. In Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the city resounds with a "low growl" (Stevenson, 1987, 17) and the "dismal quarter of Soho" is described "like a district of some city in a nightmare" (27). Similarly, as Wilde's Dorian Gray explores the East End, he wanders through "dimly-lit streets, past gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses" to be confronted by "grotesque children" and assaulted by harsh women and cursing drunkards, chattering like "monstrous apes" (Wilde, 1985, 117). There is little need for sublime ruins, wild mountains, and labyrinthine castles; the new Gothic landscape of the city is an equally appropriate source of desolation and menace.

If the city is now the primary Gothic landscape, the primary figure at the heart of most Victorian *fin de siècle* texts is the scientist. Many forms of nineteenth-century materialist science, including Lombrosian criminal anthropology, had attempted to provide tools for identifying and categorizing what was decadent, criminal, abnormal within human nature, to establish and distance what was alien and reaffirm the stabil-

ity of the norm. But science did not just offer reassuring ways of categorizing and ordering, of locating and fixing lines of difference; it was also a transgressive and disruptive force. From evolutionary theories to mental physiology, the study of the workings of the mind, science actually bore much of the responsibility for challenging the stability and integrity of the human subject. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is one of many Gothic texts of the time to draw upon the fears prompted by Darwinian thought that if something can evolve, it can also devolve. A biologist and vivisectionist, Moreau attempts to create humans out of beasts, attempts to imitate and speed up the evolutionary process. But what he is repeatedly faced with is degeneration: "the things drift back again, the stubborn beast flesh grows, day by day, back again" (Wells, 1988, 77). And it is not just the beast people who begin to degenerate. In the opening scene when the shipwrecked men begin to contemplate cannibalism, in the bestial behavior displayed by the captain of the ship that takes Prendick aboard, and in the ultimate dissolution of any order on the island, when Prendick himself slowly reverts to a kind of animal savagery, Wells repeatedly offers the vision of society and the individual in decline: the supposedly "civilized" reverts to the primitive.

More disturbing than the thought of sliding down the evolutionary ladder is the chaotic hybridity that Wells reveals. Hyena-swine, vixen-bear, mare-rhinoceros, and, perhaps the strangest of all, M'Ling, a man formed out of bear, dog, and ox, a "complex trophy of Moreau's horrible skill" (85) – all these creatures are chaotic, transgressive bodies, refusing proper categorization, and, the ultimate horror, they all partake of the human. As Prendick's uncanny recognition of the connection between these creatures and the human race suggests, the boundaries separating the human from the nonhuman are violated. "A strange persuasion came upon me," he writes, "that, save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature" (97). Everyone who comes into contact with the creatures is repulsed, disgusted, troubled by the sight of the chaotic bodies and what these bodies suggest for the stability of the human subject itself – everyone, that is, except Montgomery, who is willing to admit his own kinship with the beast within. Prendick, threatened by such hybridity, responds by insisting upon more clear-cut divisions: "My one idea was to get away from these horrible caricatures of my Maker's image, back to the sweet and wholesome intercourse of men" (99). As he himself admits, his memories of his own kind are somewhat mellowed by distance; there is no evidence of there being much that is "sweet" or "wholesome" about his previous interactions with mankind; nevertheless, the divisions must be insisted upon, the threatening other identified, categorized and distanced; ambiguity must be erased. Montgomery might be the only man on the island actually capable of humane compassion, but because of the threatening parallels with the beast suggested by his attitudes and behavior, he must be repulsed, relegated to the category of beast. Prendick's attempts to reestablish "sane" boundaries, to reaffirm a norm, nevertheless fail, and when he returns to civilization, the men and women he meets seem to him beast people, and he fears "that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that," until "presently the degradation of the Islanders will be

played over again on a larger scale" (136). His only solution is to isolate himself from all, to retreat to the safety of pure and abstract science, to draw one final boundary line – a boundary line between himself and humankind.

The scientists at the center of Victorian Gothic, like latter-day Frankensteins, are frequently shown dabbling with forces that are better left alone. During the *fin de siècle*, what the scientist tends more and more to dabble with is the mind. Moreau himself is much more than just a vivisectionist concerned with the physical modification of living beings: he is also experimenting upon their minds and is clearly familiar with much modern thought emerging out of such new sciences as "mental physiology." As science moved away from its materialist base to explore the less tangible arena of the mind, it became more and more closely implicated in the actual transgression of boundaries. The growing interest in such fields played an even more pivotal role than evolutionary theories in identifying the threat to social and psychic order as an internal threat with its origins in human nature. Mental physiology opened up the mysterious workings of the mind to reveal things that, in the interests of maintaining both social and psychic equilibrium, were often considered better left untouched.

Dr. Raymond, a specialist in cerebral physiology, effects "a trifling rearrangement of certain cells" (1993, 33) in the brain of his young ward Mary in Machen's *The Great God Pan.* As a result, she is able to gaze upon the spirit world; this, we are told, is what the ancients referred to as seeing the great god Pan. Reduced to a "hopeless idiot" (41), Mary dies nine months later, after first giving birth to a daughter, presumably the child of Pan. The malevolent child of this union, Helen Vaughan, commits crimes so unspeakable that they seem to exceed even the "East End Horrors," the five brutal murders of prostitutes by the Ripper in the Whitechapel area during 1888. The fictional "West End Horrors" that Helen engineers, also in 1888, are the suicides of five respectable gentlemen:

> [T]he police had been forced to confess themselves powerless to arrest or to explain the sordid murders of Whitechapel; but before the horrible suicides of Piccadilly and Mayfair they were dumbfounded, for not even the mere ferocity which did duty as an explanation of the crimes of the East End, could be of service in the West. (90)

These men were "rich, prosperous, and to all appearances in love with the world" (90). The "mere ferocity" of what can be expected in the East End seems to pale into insignificance before the "nameless infamies" so shockingly perpetrated in the comfortable homes of the West End.

While the specific nature of these nameless infamies is never actually described, it is clear that Helen prompts the suicides by revealing something so unnatural, so unspeakable, that the thought of it cannot even be entertained without the risk of a descent into madness. Austin is simply unable to read the manuscript given to him by Villiers, which contains an account of the evil entertainments she provides. His eye catches but a few words before, "sick at heart, with white lips and a cold sweat pouring like water from his temples, he flung the paper down" (106). Villiers, who

has been able to read it, can only marvel that such unnatural forces can exist: "How is it that the very sunlight does not turn to blackness before this thing, the hard earth melt and boil beneath such a burden?" (107).

While *The Great God Pan* never manages to specify the exact nature of the threat this Gothic monster poses, it frequently suggests that the trauma represented by Helen has less to do with supernatural forces than with a simple liberation from repression. The text is full of hints that even the basic claim that she is the daughter of Mary and Pan is suspect, although it is no doubt a convenient explanation for her guardian Raymond. The impropriety of his relationship with the seventeen-year-old Mary is certainly suggested by Clarke's vague, unexplained statement that she was "so beautiful that [he] did not wonder at what the doctor had written to him" (39). As Mary, through the operation, sees beyond the veil of this world to the "real" world it hides – in other words, perhaps, is exposed to the full force of the unconscious – so Helen seems to have been born without any social or psychic restraints upon her primitive desires. The threat here then, as in much 1890s Gothic, seems to reside within human nature itself, a nature potentially deviant and destructive when freed from the fetters of social and ethical taboos and codes of behavior, taboos, and codes that, the text ultimately suggests, are necessary for the stability of both society and the individual.

It is the recognition of the primacy and power of unconscious forces that most clearly links *The Great God Pan* with the more notorious *fin de siècle* tale of the scientist, Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* Again, while dabbling in science is certainly implicated in Jekyll's disastrous splitting, the text suggests that the repressive forces of society are equally responsible. England's supposed superiority and consequent civilizing mission to "take up the white man's burden" was based primarily upon a sense of moral superiority, but the strict policing of bourgeois morality needed to uphold this sense of superiority resulted in numerous psychic pressures and problems. As the physical location of Gothic shifts from wild landscape to savage city, so the source of the threat is no longer always located squarely within the marginal groups, the poor and criminal classes, as it is in the works of the social reformers. Rather than allowing the darkness to be projected upon other cultures, other groups, Gothic novels of the Victorian *fin de siècle* often suggest that the evil is sinuously curled around the very heart of the respectable middle-class norm. The corruption unearthed among the apparently comfortable middle and upper classes of Mayfair and Piccadilly is often seen to be even more vile than the crimes committed in the dark, squalid streets of the East End.

In reference to his youth, Jekyll observes that his worst fault was:

> a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection . . . I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. (Stevenson, 1987, 60)

As David Punter has observed of this passage, Jekyll's view here seems to be that "the split in his being has derived much less from the presence within his psyche of an uncontrollable, passionate self than from the force with which that self has been repressed according to the dictates of social convention" (Punter, 1980, 241). The idea that repression produces the monster is certainly supported by the results of Jekyll's later attempts to deny his inner desires: "my devil had been long caged, he came out roaring" (Stevenson, 1987, 69). A similar recognition of the primacy of unconscious forces is found in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, another 1890s text generally considered to focus upon the *doppelgänger* or double. Dorian, who sells his soul for eternal youth while his portrait ages and decays in his place, is warned of the dangers of repression by Sir Henry:

> Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. . . . The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. (Wilde, 1985, 41–2)

While materialist science attempted to offer ways of firmly separating the normal from the deviant, Jekyll's transcendental experimentations in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* undermine all such stable notions of good and evil. The drug he takes, due to an impurity in a particular batch of chemicals, shatters and destroys "the very fortress of identity" (62); the human subject seems to split, but only to reveal a disturbing ambivalence: "although I had now two characters as well as two appearances," he writes, "one was wholly evil, and the other was the same old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair" (64). As Jekyll recognizes at one point, his understanding of his condition is limited:

> [M]an is not truly one but truly two, I say two because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens. (61)

Similarly, Dorian Gray

> used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceived the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex, multiform creature. (175)

"Duality" and "doubleness" are perhaps not totally appropriate terms to use in discussing these texts. Judith Halberstam suggests that in both these Gothic fictions the fear is not simply a "fear of the other, but . . . a paranoid terror of involution or the unravelling of a multiformed ego" (Halberstam, 1995, 55). It is not just a simple question of the conflict between inner and outer; the "fortress of identity" is shaken by the

notion of a multiplicity of unstable selves. We are, however, encouraged by both Jekyll and Dorian to think in terms of duality and duplicity, a far less disturbing concept than multiplicity. Jekyll, as Jerrold E. Hogle notes, fashions Hyde:

> for the public eye, not simply to conceal the division in man (which he only succeeds in revealing) but to ensure that the notion of "two sides" keeps conscious Western thought (Jekyll's included) from sensing a deeper play of differences, a nonbinary polymorphism, at the "base" of human nature. (Hogle, 1988, 161)

This "deeper play of differences" nevertheless repeatedly erupts throughout 1890s Gothic. Fears about the instability of identity are evinced by numerous representations of the shape-shifter, of the metamorphic body which refuses to be fixed or categorized, refuses even to be contained within any stable binary thinking.

Even more horrifying and more threatening to the stability of society than the disturbing hybrids constructed by Moreau or the male *doppelgängers* of Stevenson and Wilde are the monstrous metamorphic female figures that dominate so much late nineteenth-century Gothic. While middle-class Victorian gendered roles may appear rigidly defined and delimited, gender ideology was in fact frequently contested, particularly at the end of the century with the emergence of the "New Woman." The breakdown of traditional gender roles, the confusion of the masculine and the feminine, was seen as a significant indication of cultural decay and corruption, an attack on the stability of the family structure. The conventional opposition of good woman / evil woman is frequently produced by 1890s Gothic, suggesting an attempt to stabilize the notion of proper femininity by identifying the sexually aggressive female who usurps male strength as something alien and monstrous. But the opposition is repeatedly undermined; the pure woman repeatedly metamorphoses into the evil. A parodic instance of such transformation can be seen on Moreau's island: it is the female creatures, initially the most avid upholders of morality, who are the first to regress to their original bestial state. As Prendick notes, some begin to "disregard the injunction of decency – deliberately for the most part. Others even attempted public outrages upon the institution of monogamy" (Wells, 1988, 128). Aggressive female sexuality provokes the reversion to the beast. The revulsion that Prendick experiences in the presence of both male and female beast people is actually the same, Kelly Hurley argues, signaling "his simultaneous recognition and repression of his own abhuman identity, his own affinity with these admixed and abominable species-bodies" (Hurley, 1996, 123); nevertheless, he repeatedly attempts to fix the threatening chaos as the exclusive "property of the female, whose 'lithe' sensuality marks her animal nature" (123). In his attempt to redefine the norm, to establish the integrity of his own identity, the women are the first to be sacrificed.

Machen's Helen in *The Great God Pan* provides a notable instance of the threatening aggressive female who rejects her traditional role and usurps male power, a crime that is made particularly clear by her appropriation of the violence and aggression of the Ripper. But Helen does not just undermine male/female boundaries and

traditional binary thinking: she is the disturbing embodiment of multiplicity. Her supposed father Pan himself embodies chaos and instability; he is described as a presence "that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of form" (38). Helen assumes a variety of disguises as she corrupts all around her, beginning with the young girl Rachel and concluding as she wreaks devastation among the well-to-do bachelors of London. At the moment of her death, before finally reverting to the primal slime, she provides a horrific spectacle of metamorphosis. A doctor who witnesses the sight reports how "the human body . . . thought to be unchangeable and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve":

> I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts . . . at last I saw nothing but a substance as jelly. Then the ladder was ascended again . . . as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form, there finally came death. (114–15)

What is most disturbing is not just that Helen changes from "woman to man, from man to beast," but that she then changes "from beast *to worse than beast*" (120, my emphasis). There is something outwith binary thinking that she embraces, something that is unspeakable, unknowable, something that cannot be expressed within the limits of conventional thought and can be grasped only through a visceral reaction of repulsion. All the men who come in contact with Helen, as well as those who witness her final metamorphosis, react with horror, with a "feeling of repulsion" (79), a "loathing of soul" (115), an "utter blackness of despair" (97).

The metamorphic body that so horrifies is even more disturbingly rendered by Richard Marsh's *The Beetle.* This Woman of Songs, surely equaling even Stoker's Count Dracula in the number of boundaries she manages to transgress, is both human and animal, animal and insect, male and female, and, perhaps most shockingly of all, heterosexual and homosexual. This was not only the age of the New Woman, but also the time when society became more aware of homosexuality, when what was termed "sexual inversion" first entered public discourse. Such texts as John Addington Symonds's *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883) and, even more notoriously, Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, published and immediately suppressed in 1897, ensured that homosexuality became the subject of public debate. The resulting sense of a confusion of gender categories was yet one more indication of a widespread degeneration of society.

The Beetle, in her guise as the ancient and ugly man who first assaults Holt, invites the reader to contemplate scenes of sexual "perversion" as she gloats over Holt, prodding his nakedness, thrusting fingers into his mouth, kissing him with "blubber lips." While the female nature of the creature is later established, this does not completely eliminate the suggestion of homoerotic desire. The Beetle physically violates all her victims with her body, and some of her later assaults are on the woman Lessingham

loves, Marjorie Linden. The landlady of the house where Marjorie is molested behind locked doors hears shriek after shriek emitting from the room: Marjorie suffers some kind of violation that is repeatedly described as something "infinitely worse than death" (Marsh, 1994, 207), and Lessingham fears that if she is ever restored to him, she "will be but the mere soiled husk of the Marjorie whom I knew and loved" (250). After three years under supervision as a lunatic, Marjorie rather conveniently recovers from the outrages inflicted upon her with a memory block that prevents her from disclosing the actual nature of these assaults, and the text retreats from making explicit what it has so emphatically insisted upon through suggestion.

The shape-shifting, metamorphic bodies of the Woman of Songs and Helen Vaughan disrupt all the comfortable categories which allow for the defining and fixing of the human subject. Such fluid shifting shapes threaten with their lack of stable identity. The transgressive monsters of Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic are all, in Julia Kristeva's sense of the term, abject. As Kristeva writes in *Powers of Horror*, what causes abjection is "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva, 1982, 4). From beast people to *doppelgänger* to metamorphic female, the monstrous creations of Victorian *fin de siècle* Gothic repeatedly confront the reader with the spectacle of dissolution, repeatedly challenge the stability and integrity of the human subject. And even when the threatening spectacle of multiplicity is ultimately destroyed or repressed, there still remains a sense of excess. The Beetle may come to a sticky end when squashed in a train wreck, leaving only damp, foul-smelling stains on the seat and floor; even here, however, the opinions of the experts who attempt to define and categorize these stains are divided: they are variously said to be produced by human blood, a wild animal such as a cat, the excretion of some variety of lizard, or, rather mundanely, simply paint. To the very end there remains doubt and confusion, at the very least a troubling reminder that there is something that is not accounted for within the boundaries of any "norm"; it has indeed become a time when, in Nordau's words, "all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible."

Note

1 Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, perhaps now the best known of 1890s Gothic texts, shares many of the same concerns as these works; however, as it is dealt with in other chapters it will not be discussed here.

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14
Fictional Vampires in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

William Hughes

The glib insistence – common to both academic criticism and the continuing discourse of Gothic writing – that the vampire and Count Dracula have become effectively synonymous has seriously inhibited the debate on the portrayal and signification of the un-dead in Gothic fiction (see, e.g., Twitchell, 1996). The eponymous anti-hero of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel has become *the* reference point to which the characteristics of other vampires are judged to have adhered, or to have departed from.[1] Stoker's vampire has thus ceased to be merely a fictional character. Frequently styled as the epicenter of a cultural industry of which *Dracula* the novel is but a tangential fragment, Dracula the character is now a preoccupation for both writers and critics, a device to be employed not merely in stylistic guise but also as an indicator of cultural implications that have become the commonplaces of a shared discourse (Gelder, 1994, 65).

In recent vampire fiction, the referencing is frequently ironic. As the urbane revenant Lestat de Lioncourt acutely observes when revealing his un-dead nature to a skeptical, modern audience in Anne Rice's influential 1985 novel *The Vampire Lestat*, "they thought it was delightful that I wasn't just pretending to be any vampire. Or Count Dracula. Everybody was sick of Count Dracula" (Rice, 1990, 20). As Rice suggests in her *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), to which *The Vampire Lestat* forms a sequel, the studied ennui with which the Transylvanian count is dismissed rings hollow in a literary community where vampires are consistently scripted as self-consciously drawing not merely on Stoker's novel but additionally upon the visual imagery associated with its many cinematic reinterpretations. Lestat, for example, is typified by another vampire as "the pale and deadly lord in the velvet cloak" (Rice, 1990, 507). Similarly, where Lestat's sometime companion Louis de Pointe du Lac may gaze with equanimity on crucifixes and dismiss much of vampire folklore as

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"bull-shit," his "finely tailored black coat" and "the long folds of the cape" which he affects recall his affinity not merely with Stoker's Count Dracula as a man "clad in black from head to foot," but also with Bela Lugosi's meticulous evening dress and voluminous opera cloak in the 1931 Universal film adaptation of the novel (Rice, 1977, 27, 6; Stoker, 1982, 15).[2]

Academic criticism in the last quarter of the twentieth century, while frequently acknowledging the implications of the blurring of boundaries between Stoker's novel and its subsequent replications in film and narrative, has seldom aspired to the ironic detachment that characterizes the work of practicing authors such as Rice. The tone of many critics appears even, at times, somewhat reverent. James B. Twitchell, for example, in a study that considers the theme of vampirism in fiction and poetry from the romantic period to that of D. H. Lawrence, argues that: "Ironically, *Dracula*, the greatest vampire novel, is the work of literature that takes the vampire out of fiction and returns him to folklore" (Twitchell, 1996, 132). Twitchell is here arguably articulating something more than an established convention in the discourse of Gothic criticism, in that his words carry a resonance beyond the mere utterance of cliché superlatives.[3] In the context of how academic criticism has read the vampire, Twitchell's appropriation of folklore as an image to convey the cultural significance of *Dracula* points to his critique's participation in a process of myth-making that has progressively foregrounded Stoker's novel as an arbitrary high point in the alleged evolution of vampirism in literature. As the rhetoric of Rosemary Jackson's psychoanalytic study *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* testifies, in such readings *Dracula* may function without further question as "a culmination of nineteenth-century English Gothic" (Jackson, 1984, 118). The "folklore" of which Twitchell speaks is thus not that of the eighteenth-century divine Dom Augustine Calmet, whose *Traité sur les apparitions des esprits . . .* (1746, revised 1751) was read in English translation by Stoker during his research for *Dracula.* It is, rather, a twentieth-century folklore of origins and simulacra which has attempted to fix *Dracula* as an immutable and convenient midpoint between the closing years of the romantic movement in the early nineteenth century and the postmodernity of the last quarter of the twentieth. As Renfield is, in Seward's estimation in *Dracula*, "mixed up with the Count in an indexy kind of way," so Stoker's novel, both as an artifact and as a text that has been and is being interpreted and reinterpreted, is equally "mixed up" with the production and criticism of vampire fiction both before and after the supposed watershed of 1897 (Stoker, 1982, 248).

It appears seemingly impossible, therefore, to talk about the vampire without making at least tacit reference to *Dracula* as a pivotal text. Yet such a presupposition may form the basis of a reciprocal mode of discourse on the vampire, where reference to *Dracula*, and to the interpretation of Stoker's novel, may serve to illuminate a wider range of vampire fictions through their shared or conflicting implications. *Dracula*, in this sense, may be made to represent nothing more than a convenient space in which conflicting commentaries on the meaning of the vampire may meet – a forum in which the psychoanalytic may engage in debate, for example, with readings premised upon gender, queer theory, and the discourses of medicine, all of which hold

implications relevant to the wider range of vampire fictions to which *Dracula* has been traditionally related as a synecdoche.

Modern criticism's preoccupation with sexuality dominates – and indeed inhibits the development of – the debate on vampirism. Regarded as erotic, the vampire functions as a vehicle through which criticism may advance with equal ease either psychoanalytic or cultural assertions. The sexualized vampire is thus read alternately as the embodiment of authorial neuroses and as the coded expression of more general cultural fears of which the author is, consciously or unconsciously, an observer.[4] Vampirism is a practice that lends itself to such readings. Described frequently as a "kiss" but carrying with it pain and blood analogous to those of defloration or violent intercourse, the vampire's bite is at once oral and yet penetrative (Stoker, 1982, 38; Dyer, 1988, 54–5). As such, it blurs the boundaries between foreplay and coitus, between the violent and the erotic, between the prelude and the consummation.[5] The vampire occupies what is superficially a conventional male or female body and yet may with equal ease prey both outside and within the family, and upon either or both genders, thus complicating conventional patterns of desire. In its sexualized quest for blood, therefore, the vampire is capable of disrupting what have been culturally perceived as discrete patterns of sexual behavior, and of evading the taboos that polarize heterosexuality and homosexuality. The vampire represents, in this sense, the liberation of those sexual activities or desires that have been allegedly proscribed or censored in society or repressed within the self.[6] For the critic, eager to evade participation in the "modern sexual repression" of Foucault's "Other Victorians," it is thus tempting – if not imperative – to regard vampirism as being first and foremost, to use Carol Davison's words, "a thoroughly *Victorian* displacement of the traditional sex act" (Foucault, 1981, 5; Davison, 1997b, 27, my emphasis).

This recourse to sexuality, however, arguably represents – for both fictional character and commentating critic – the edge of an epistemological problem. Quite simply, the vampire may not be as sexual as the preoccupations of the perceiving discourses suggest it ought to be. The difficulties inherent in explaining the behavior of a vampire within a secular, empiricist discourse are crystallized in Dr. Seward's description of the vampirized Lucy in Chapter 16 of *Dracula.* Horrified and yet fascinated by the transformation of Lucy's mortal "purity" into the "voluptuous wantonness" of the vampire state, Seward, a medical practitioner, recalls her graveyard invitation to her former fiancé, Arthur Holmwood:

> Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come! (Stoker, 1982, 211)

Lucy, as a vampire, clearly desires blood rather than semen, for all her adoption of the manners of a sexual coquette. Her behavior here is thus not unequivocally directed toward achieving a conventional sexual union. Yet Seward regards her words as if they *were* conventionally sexual, depicting both them and her as "wanton" and – because her "forwardness" is premarital – "unclean" (211). The contextual discourses support-

ing the comparatively unknown field of female sexuality are here used to contain the event when a conventional medical discourse is apparently perceived as inadequate.

A similar reaction is, however, evidenced by many modern critical assessments of the incident, for all their revision of Seward's condemnation of Lucy's sexualized state. Nina Auerbach, for example, insists that "As a vampire, Lucy the flirt is purified into Lucy the wife" and that "for the first time she wants her prospective husband and no one else" (Auerbach, 1995, 80). Again, the imposition of a sexual code permits the text to be contained, or rather categorized: Lucy comes to represent in such readings a hitherto repressed libido freed from restraint through an act analogous to sexuality or, alternatively, an expression of the author's ambivalence to female sexuality. The "displacement" here is arguably one where sexuality is scripted *onto* the event, rather than revealed as an act of coding. Sexuality functions as the key to the uncanny, the "real" meaning behind the unease associated with the supernatural.

This rendering of vampiric behavior through the discourses of sexuality in both fictional description and critical commentary contrasts markedly, however, with the construction of vampirism in the earlier fictions which criticism advances as the literary precursors of *Dracula* (Carlson, 1977, 26–8). Though David Skal, among other critics, asserts that James Malcolm Rymer's 1847 "penny dreadful" serial novel *Varney the Vampyre* "stabilized the conventions of literary vampirism for future horror writers – most notably Bram Stoker," it is clear that Lord Francis Varney, the vampire of the title, behaves in anything but a seductive manner during his frequent nocturnal encounters (Skal, 1996, 210). Despite occasional references to the "beautiful rounded limbs" of the virginal victims, Varney is consistently rendered as less than human, described by the narrator as an "it" rather than the "he" with which Jonathan Harker recalls Dracula. Varney is a figure of comprehensive – rather than simply sexual – violence:

> The eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back, and the principal feature next to those dreadful eyes is the teeth – the fearful-looking teeth – projecting like those of some wild animal, hideously, glaringly white, and fang-like. It approaches the bed with a strange, gliding movement. It clashes together the long nails that literally appear to hang from the finger ends. No sound comes from its lips. (Rymer, 1991, 150)

There is no sense, in this description, of Varney being a figure who may walk abroad unnoticed in society, as Polidori's earlier Lord Ruthven had done and as Stoker's Count Dracula would later aspire to do (Stoker, 1982, 20). Varney is quite simply too blatant a predator to occupy the position of a conventional sexual menace – a figure who, it is assumed, may vanish again into the anonymity of the crowd once his appetite is satisfied.[7] The vampire's attack, again, reads more like an act of rape or violent physical assault than the protracted encounters in *Dracula*, which may be read as expressing an element of erotic pleasure for the victim. In contrast to Mina's confession that "strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him," Rymer's narrator constructs a series of scenarios characterized by forced participation (Stoker, 1982, 287). One such encounter concludes:

> He drags her head to the bed's edge. He forces it back by the long hair still entwined in his grasp. With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth – a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. *The girl has swooned and the vampyre is at his hideous repast!* (Rymer, 1991, 151)

Blood, in Rymer's narrative, does not double for semen. For all the location of the attack – the victim's bedroom – the language of the account asserts that the vampire seeks primarily to feed, not to seduce: the alluring tone of the seductive Lucy or the aristocratic mannerisms of Count Dracula are, similarly, in no way prefigured by Varney.[8]

To return to *Dracula*, the same desire for sustenance arguably lies behind the behavior of the vampirized Lucy. There is a congruence between her living and post-mortem states in that, in both cases, the absorption of blood is a prerequisite for her survival. Ingestion replaces transfusion, though the persistence of her pallor and lassitude after death signal a continuation of her pathological condition for all the transition of blood from its initial status as a medicine to that of a foodstuff.[9] Her "languor," if we acknowledge her need to replenish a depleted circulatory system, is less associated with what Victor Sage terms "the abnegation of the will" in the face of sexual arousal than with the medical portrayal of a body suffering conventional blood loss (Sage, 1988, 186). In Victorian medical works a less resilient circulation was customarily described as "languid" (Lewis, 1899, 109). The signification of the term is thus in context not exclusively sexual. It is only in a critical discourse influenced by psychoanalysis – where the connection that "In the unconscious mind blood is commonly an equivalent for semen" has been forcefully and frequently made – that such a closure has become possible (Jones, 1991, 411). Rendered at greater length than the earlier writings of Polidori and Rymer, and embodying detailed accounts of the transfer of blood not merely between the vampire and his prey but also between the (male) vampire hunters and the (female) victim, *Dracula* has consequently become a text that may with ease be continually appropriated by this discourse. For all this, as Robert Mighall argues in an important revisionist study of *Dracula*, "a vampire is sometimes only a vampire, and not a sexual menace" (Mighall, 1998, 74).

For criticism, though, the vampire frequently remains a "menace" even when its threat is not regarded as implicated in sexuality. Indeed, there appears to be a critical imperative that dissociates the vampire from conventional humanity, polarizing the un-dead into a cultural Other whose practices constitute an intervention into the integrity of race and nation or an invasion of the sanctity of home and family. This much is evidenced not only by the work of Mighall but also through the research of Daniel Pick and Victor Sage, all of whom locate the construction of the vampire in *Dracula* by way of *fin de siècle* conceptions of racial and individual degeneration. The focus here is less on sexuality and more on the racial and familial consequences of promiscuous or unregulated sexual activity. As Pick argues of *Dracula:*

> Part of the novel's task was to represent, externalise and kill off a distinct constellation of contemporary fears. Corruption and degeneration, the reader discovers, are

> identifiable, foreign and superable; but the text also recognises a certain sense of failure – an element of horror is always left over, uncontained by the terms of the story. (Pick, 1989, 167)

For both Pick and Sage, the "horror" is a consequence of the failure of the novel – structurally, an uneasy combination of "separate diaries, reports and letters" – to provide a reliable synthesis of the crisis and its solution (Pick, 1989, 168; Sage, 1988, 176–7). Something, it appears, always escapes categorization or observation: the Other is dangerous because its boundaries map over those of the perceiving culture, making it *both* an "enemy within" and an externalized (or externalizable) fear.

Sage's reading of the facial resemblance between Count Dracula and Professor Van Helsing may serve to succinctly illustrate this latter point. Dismissing the obvious possibility that the professor may be nothing more than a superficial parody of the count, Sage utilizes the work of Cesare Lombroso – one of two "scientific" criminologists mentioned in *Dracula* – to argue that both vampire and vampire hunter are constructed according to the conventions of a single medico-legal taxonomy. Sage concludes:

> Here I think we do have a clue to the way in which testimony is used in this novel. Genius, according to [Lombroso's] theory, is a form of degeneracy; it, too, is a throwback. Van Helsing is thus a mirror-image of Dracula, a genius in this sense. They are the only people in the novel who do not make records and keep diaries. They are *perceived*, but not presented as directly perceiving agents to the reader. (Sage, 1988, 182–3)

It is also true that, as the willing victim Iduna in Pat Califia's 1993 short story "The Vampire" remarks, "Humans like to believe that they are the ultimate predators, at the top of the food chain. They sleep secure in the belief that nobody stalks them" (Califia, 1993, 178). The fear expressed in such works is not of the individual vampire glutting his thirst in the manner of Polidori's Lord Ruthven, but of the vampire as epidemic, creating, in Harker's words, "a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (Stoker, 1982, 51). The Othering has entered into reflex: conventional humanity, it appears, has become decadent or at the very least has visibly slowed into a comparative stasis. The vampire signifies the progressive.[10]

A similar form of reflex, based on the transfer of perception and narrative voice from the human to the vampire, arguably characterizes much of the vampire fiction of the late twentieth century. The nineteenth-century vampire is, in the main, narrated rather than narrating: access to the vampire is limited by his or her representation in diaries and letters, or by the conventions of moral outrage or regret that characterize the narratives of participant or omniscient narrators.[11] The twentieth-century vampire is, by contrast, more often than not either a narrator in his or her own right or the central subject of an omniscient third-person narrative: significantly, narratives centered on the experiences of victims of vampirism are often compromised by explicit and unregretted enjoyment or by a desire to enter the vampiric state, even where an

element of repulsion is expressed toward some or all of its conventions (see, e.g., Forrest, 1993).

This change in emphasis has had a profound impact upon the presentation of the vampire lifestyle in fiction. The initial repulsion experienced by new initiates into vampirism, if felt at all, is rapidly replaced by a perception that the un-dead state is nothing more than a parallel lifestyle – a modified, rather than wholly new, existence, typified by a change of diet and the imposition of a few more-or-less onerous restrictions. In some cases, most notably Anne Rice's cycle *The Vampire Chronicles*, un-death is represented as a *positive* enhancement of sensual life – a point of access to sensations that are but imperfectly realized through the inferior organs of mortal consciousness. The jaded Louis, for example, once initiated, expresses "a hunger for new experience, for that which was beautiful and as devastating as my kill" (Rice, 1977, 36). His explicit conviction that vampirism is a state parallel to that of being in love is deflected from a conventional erotic conclusion, however, through the stark realization that the victim is *not* the love object (37). "I saw as a vampire," Louis explains: "It was as if I had only just been able to see colors and shapes for the first time" (24–5; cf. Rice, 1990, 102–3). Again, conventional mortal existence is implicitly debased or deficient when compared to the un-death of the vampire.

The nascent aestheticism of Louis, though, is shallow: its focus is on novelty rather than upon any conception of signification. In many respects the movement from human to vampiric perception represents a liberation from signification. Blood, that most symbolic of substances in both secular and religious discourses, ceases to hold much of its cultural value once the act of perception is transferred to the vampire.[12] Admittedly, there is an undertone of reverence in Louis's conviction that blood embodies "the experience of another's life": once consumed, however, that life almost always ceases to hold the attention of the vampire (Rice, 1977, 34). As the narrator of McMahan's *Vampires Anonymous* (1991) remarks of one twentieth-century vampire, "When the blood is gone, Andrew removes the head and is done with it. He leaves behind only the shell, the rest is someone else's memory" (118). To recall Van Helsing's depiction of blood as the vampire's "*special* pabulum" in *Dracula*, it is more accurate to say that the enhanced value accorded to the sanguine fluid is held primarily by the human perceiver: for the vampire, as both Harker and Van Helsing observe, the substance (and its host) constitute a "banquet," soon forgotten (Stoker, 1982, 239, my emphasis, 51, 295).[13] Count Dracula's gloating, therefore, whether interpreted as being related to sexual or sanguinary conquest, is in many respects little more than the projection back of signification onto those most concerned with its dissemination and interpretation. Though he taunts his pursuers with the boast that "Your girls that you all love are mine already," the focus of the count's words in the vampiric cosmology comes in the closing implication that all who fall under his proprietorship will "be my jackals when I want to feed" (Stoker, 1982, 306). Subsequent vampires in fiction are more likely to avow directly, as does Lucius Shepard's Beheim, that the primary, most instinctual drive is to feed rather than to procreate or dominate (Shepard, 1994, 4).[14]

The ambivalence of the revenant, its ability to prey on both sexes in a manner that resembles at least superficially the conventions of the erotic, has further facilitated the appropriation of the post-*Dracula* vampire by authors with an interest – or a market – in gay or lesbian identities. The implication here is less that of a parallel lifestyle and more of an alternative mode not merely of identity but of community also. To become a vampire, as Van Helsing suggests in *Dracula*, is to become a "man-that-was," to be excluded from the company of those whose epistemological and communicational power permits them to perceive and proclaim themselves as "normal" (Stoker, 1982, 240). Exclusion brings in its wake isolation: Van Helsing, it may be recalled, reassures the coalition against Count Dracula that "we have on our side power of combination – a power denied to the vampire kind" (238). Yet the contemporary gay or lesbian vampire is frequently a partner in a same-sex relationship, or a member of a group that shares sexual aims and aspirations.[15]

The transition between life and un-death parallels in many respects that of an awakening consciousness of homosexual identity, and the awareness that to adopt a gay lifestyle is to discard, or at least marginalize, the cultural standards of heterosexuality. Inducted into vampirism in 1791 by Lestat, for example, Louis faces an immediate identity crisis when his mentor insists that they share a single coffin. Louis's recollection of the event is, significantly, shaped by the coded language of modern homosexuality: "I begged Lestat to let me stay in the closet, but he laughed, astonished" (Rice, 1977, 28). Again, Lestat mocks Louis's frequent attempts to retain relationships with mortals – particularly Babette Freniere, for whom he feels "some measure of love . . . though not the greatest love I've ever felt" (67). Lestat's barbed comment, "these are images for you of what you were and what you still long to be. And in your romance with mortal life, you're dead to your vampire nature!," enforces the notion not merely of separation, but of revised loyalties and identities also (90).

Once entered into, vampirism becomes a commitment carrying a cultural weight similar to that characteristic of separatist as well as counter-culture groups.[16] When the gay vampire Pablo joins an Alcoholics Anonymous-style "self-help" group in order to regulate and cure his vampiric urges in *Vampires Anonymous*, his partner, Andrew Lyall, expresses some doubt as to the value of shame as opposed to self-restraint in the management of personal desire. The language of the closet is clearly present throughout McMahan's novel. For Pablo, his recent history when expressed to the group is "painfully disgusting," involving "midnight trysts in secluded places" and the horrified admission, "I've taken on six in one night. I sought more than their blood" (McMahan, 1991, 16). Significantly, the audience is exclusively male. When the chair of a later meeting concludes "We must stop the consumption of human blood to restore our humanity. . . . The only road back to humanity is total abstinence," the analogy becomes clear: if one cannot be "normal," one must adopt the behaviors that signify normality (153). Those vampires who no longer consume blood may thus be regarded as having successfully "become normal members of society" (152). They have, essentially, entered (or reentered) another community: one that regards vampirism as a disorder rather than an identity.

Blood, even without explicit reference to AIDS, is taboo and dangerous: Vampires Anonymous offers in its place a sanitized, prophylactic, and plastic-coated diet of plasma – a therapeutic substitute. The model adopted by the organization is one of redemption from addiction, as if vampirism were nothing more than an affectation – or a deviance. The rituals of contrite public confession and mutual support further reinforce the notion that the vampire is not "natural," not "normal," the standards of conventional mortal morality being duly imposed upon those necessarily outcast from its culture. One official informs new members that:

> Vampires Anonymous is a support group . . . We are here to help each other spurn the need for human blood. The founders of this organisation know that this task is not an easy one. But our objective is attainable. By seeking other forms of nourishment, we can stop the killing and become normal members of society. (152)

Notably, those who aspire to be "cured" of their vampirism through attendance at these meetings are "strictly stag" (16) and "a pasty bunch of buggerers" (*sic*, 16). One vampire expresses his disgust at having "*put the drain on a laced-up kitten in spiked heels*" (17, original emphasis), another confesses "I come to hang out with the boys . . . I don't believe in this abstinence bull" (25). The association between the vampire and the gay man could not be clearer in this context. Both "deviances" might be corrected simultaneously, as it were, through regular attendance at Vampires Anonymous. It is thus noteworthy that a later phase of the novel depicts an encounter between a female vampire (herself an member of the organization) and a gay mortal, where the former invites the latter to heterosexual congress with the alluring words "I'll cure you . . . You need behavioural modification . . . I'm an expert" (114).

The "ultimate ambition" (152) of Vampires Anonymous is not simply to discourage the predatory encounter with the *human* species that defines vampirism but rather to encourage those afflicted "to abstain from the consumption of *all* blood" (152, my emphasis). This is not so much the vampiric "safe sex" represented by the sterile and packaged plasma as an invitation to "a self-imposed fast" (16) that is also a denial of identity. Quite simply, a vampire who does not drink blood is denying his vampire nature; a gay man, likewise, who rejects or represses his sexuality is in denial of something more fundamental than the pleasure associated with sexual activity. Vampirism and homosexuality are not superficial lifestyle choices, but life itself. This, certainly, is the tenor of the appeal made by one unashamed and unrepentant revenant to those who would seemingly secede from vampirism:

> Are you ready to give up the most natural part of your existence? Can you believe that you can become human again? You are vampires. You cannot reverse the process. (157)

Whatever words may say, whatever intentions may be expressed, a vampire is always a vampire, and a gay man cannot escape the defining presence of his sexuality however emphatically he denies it. Though it may appear to bring about a superficial change

in those who embrace its doctrines, Vampires Anonymous is as questionable a response to vampirism as electric shock treatment and other aversion therapies are in the alleged "cure" of "unwilling" homosexuals.

Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992) advances an intriguing parallel to McMahan's fictional association of gay and vampiric community. Here, again, the essence of an exclusive vampire identity would appear to be undermined by too close an association with mortal bodies and their defining or sustaining practices. Brite's vampires are, innovatively, a breed apart. They do not reproduce through the conversion of a mortal body into an un-dead one (Brite, 1994, 275), but rather exist as a species parallel to "normal" humanity, being biologically "close enough to mate but still as far away from each other as dusk and dawn" (68). Heterosexual congress between vampires and humans thus threatens the integrity of the former species alone, and the stigmata of the hybrids thus born suggest less a compromise and more the resurgence of Victorian fears of racial degeneration. Younger vampires, the novel suggests,

> drank incessantly, even *ate*; they drowned their true natures in gluttony. But they were young. They were of a newer generation. Their chemistry was subtly different; they were hardier, their organs perhaps more-thick walled, less delicate. (59, original emphasis)

Even the characteristically extended canines, unfeigned signifiers of a truly natural vampiric identity, are in literal retreat, for the new generation "wish they had fangs but had to make do with teeth they filed sharp" (5). Prolonged interbreeding has thus reduced the vampire to something indistinguishable from the human in all but appetite and longevity. To stabilize and perpetuate both the physiology and the identity of the vampire thus necessitates the removal of the human from all functions other than that of feeding. Vampiric sexual relations, in other words, must necessarily cease to be bisexual (and reproductive) and become exclusively homosexual. Female vampires, it might be added, are reluctant to engage in coitus as the act of birth inevitably destroys the body of the mother (9–10, 276–8). Maintaining relations exclusively within the species reinforces identity at the same time as ensuring collective strength. *Lost Souls*, notably, concludes with the three remaining male vampires still drinking both chartreuse and blood (the latter discreetly, from a hypodermic needle), and walking amongst mortals, but *not* in female company. If not explicitly portraying the supportive gay community envisaged in *Vampires Anonymous*, the Epilogue to *Lost Souls* still represents a place where essential identity may be assumed and never again betrayed by a retreat into undifferentiated conformity. McMahan's Andrew Lyall would no doubt approve.

In conclusion, it may be argued that Stoker's Count Dracula and McMahan's Andrew Lyall emblematize alternative views as to how the vampire may be regarded in academic criticism. On the one hand, the predominance of *Dracula* as *the* central example in critical studies of vampire fiction supports an academic institution committed to retaining a signifying association that links the vampire with the liberation of repressed sexualities. To fall prey either to the vampire or to the lure of "illicit" or

"immodest" sexual urges is to be subjected to condemnation not merely from the institutions – moral, theological, or legal – of society, but from their equivalents within the self also. Where Van Helsing's words commit Lucy through theology to an eternity in "paths of flame," it is Mina herself who proclaims "I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgement Day!" (Stoker, 1982, 206, 296).

In contrast, however, it is apparent that such condemnation – and self-condemnation – is frequently absent from the vampire fiction of the late twentieth century. Anne Rice's Louis recalls in *Interview with the Vampire* how Lestat "would taunt me with sealed lips when I asked about God or the devil" (Rice, 1977, 42; cf. Rice, 1990, 109). Louis is unable to gain confirmation for the belief in the damnation of the vampire, which he has retained from his mortal life. Behind Lestat's silence lies an absence: quite simply, God and theological morality do not concern the modern vampire, the twentieth-century vampire, even when he is living in a simulacrum of an eighteenth-century world. The question is not even raised by Lyall: there is no implication of the self – the different self, identified through, as well as apart from, sexuality – being condemned. There is little repression, and even less guilt, apparent in these writings. Vampirism is a way of life rather than a deviation. In a pluralistic world, the vampire is simply a minority like any other minority, defining self as well as being defined – often with prejudice – by others. As Lestat suggests, the presence of the vampire may still generate a confusion of identities and a fear of not being able to distinguish with any certainty who exactly *is* the "enemy within": "I stalk the world in mortal dress – the worst of fiends, the monster who looks exactly like everyone else" (Rice, 1990, 250). Divorced in this way from projections founded in a critical commitment to a certain view of the nineteenth century, revenants such as Lestat, Louis, and Andrew may be regarded not as the unequivocal heritage of the last century but, in Lestat's words, "the vampire for these times."

Notes

1 Lucius Shepard's *The Golden* (1993) was, for example, hailed by *Spin* as "the best vampire story since Bram Stoker's original" (Shepard, 1994, i).

2 Similar intertextual gestures include Ryan's parody of Lugosi (McMahan, 1991, 141) and Vlad Tepes's derogatory assessment of both Lugosi and Stoker (Simmons, 1992, 297). Lugosi's image, progressively replicated from the early 1960s onto a myriad of products from toys to confectionery, has become arguably the most potent visual icon of the vampire. Ownership of the wealth generated by the likeness of the actor became the subject of protracted litigation between Lugosi's heirs and Universal Studios (Skal, 1991, 190–5).

3 Compare, for example, David Skal's entry for Stoker's novel in *V is for Vampire*, which proclaims boldly that *Dracula* is "without question the most famous piece of vampire literature in history" (Skal, 1996, 77).

4 For example, Joseph Bierman (1998) argues that Stoker's *Dracula* was modified as a consequence of a childhood fantasy regarding the safety of closed spaces, where David Punter suggests that *Dracula* exposes Stoker's personal

fear of assertive womanhood, emblematized by the cultural figure of the "New Woman" (Punter, 1996, 20–1).

5 The protracted vampire attack in Pat Califia's lesbian short story "The Vampire" (1993) tellingly concludes, "Which penetration made her come? She did not know" (Califia, 1993, 181).

6 For example, Talia Schaffer (1993) reads *Dracula* as the expression of Stoker's ambivalent feelings toward the trials and sexuality of Oscar Wilde, where Daniel Lapin (1995) regards the novel as the unconscious expression of infantile sexual and psychological abuse.

7 This anonymity underpins much of the reporting of the Whitechapel murders in 1888. The crimes of Jack the Ripper have, not surprisingly, been identified as a possible source for *Dracula* (see Davison, 1997a, 164).

8 See Dyer (1988, 56–7) for an interpretation of the bedroom as the primary "symbolic, psychological space" in vampire narratives.

9 The blood transfusions are subject, significantly, to the same sexual interpretations that characterize the critical and textual response to the vampire's bite. Quincey Morris explicitly equates the incident to a *jus primae noctis* (Stoker, 1982, 151).

10 The decadence of humanity is also a frequent – and explicit – theme in late twentieth-century vampire-narrated fiction. See, for example, Simmons (1992, 297).

11 Beyond *Dracula* (1897: epistolary and documentary narrative) a representative list might include Rymer (1847: third-person narrator), Polidori (1819: third-person narrator), LeFanu (1872: participant victim narrator), and R. Hodder's *The Vampire* (1913: participant narrator).

12 For a reading of the multiple significations of blood, see Foucault (1981, 147).

13 Lestat displays a similar disregard for the reverence accorded to death in Western culture (see Rice, 1977, 25–6).

14 The West Coast vampires in *Vampires Anonymous* are particularly cautious in removing the heads of their victims in order to prevent the rise of further revenants from the remains of their diet (see McMahan, 1991, 79).

15 Examples from gay and lesbian fiction include the satirical feminist works by zana (1993), Scott (1993), and Brite (1994).

16 Andrew's hostility toward heterosexual women, both alive and un-dead, is frequently expressed (see McMahan, 1991, 17, 138). A reluctance to engage in nonpredatory contact with mortals is expressed by vampires in both Rice (1990, 238, 239) and Shepard (1994, 3).

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15
Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition

Clive Bloom

What is horror fiction? The answer is as complex and problematic theoretically as it seems simple and uncomplicated practically. Moreover, the question is not helped by the multiplicity of apparently substitutable terms to cover the same thing: Gothic tale, ghost tale, terror romance, Gothic horror. All these titles seem to cover virtually identical literary productions with the definition of one acting almost as a catch-all for the others. This is all given an irritating twist when it becomes clear that while "horror" and "Gothic" are often (if not usually) interchangeable, there are, of course, Gothic tales that are not horror fiction (Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a good example) and horror tales that contain no real Gothic elements (Elizabeth Bowen's "The Cat Jumps"). Within the genre many writers discern technical and stylistic gradations that separate one tale from another in a type of hierarchy of horrific effects. Stephen King, for instance, notes three levels, the most significant being that which calls up "terror" of things unseen but suggested: "it is what the mind sees that makes these stories such quintessential tales of terror" (King, 1986, 36). The second level is that of "fear" and the "horrific," not quite as finely wrought as the first state but able "to [invite] a physical reaction" (27–8). Lastly comes the tale of mere "revulsion" designed to create repulsion.

Historical change, too, has had its effect, and elements that scared our ancestors may or may not scare us; conversely, horror fiction seems to retain archaic elements one would imagine should have been long since abandoned. It is a matter of debate whether horror fiction, especially in its Gothic or ghost mode, is the most conservative of modern genres, closely restricted in its range of emotions (terror, fear, uncertainty, malignity) and technical conventions (the crumbling castle, mansion or haunted house, the vampire, demon, or presiding ghost), or if this is the key to its radical and subversive nature. What then of the horror tale and its power to haunt?

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Edgar Allan Poe, one of the great practitioners of horror fiction, has left nothing to tell us of his intentions in his chosen genre. This, of course, has led critics into endless, and often fruitless, speculation. Only once, in his explanation of his morbidly pathological and highly popular drawing-room poem "The Raven," did he venture to comment on the *technical* requirements needed for singularity of effect and continuity of mood. Poe's "The philosophy of composition" (1846), in which the "explanation" of "The Raven" is to be found, nevertheless scrupulously avoids *direct* reference to horror or the Gothic and is, moreover, itself a type of *pastiche* produced to cash in on the success of "The Raven" – Poe rereading himself and offering an analysis after the event. Thus "The philosophy of composition" becomes a *rewriting* in prose (a replacement) of the initial poem. In the entire nineteenth century, the great age of Gothic, very little else comes our way as explanation of the century's most popular genre; practitioners and critics alike seem silent.

Even at the turn of the twentieth century Henry James could offer only embarrassed disparagement when quizzed about *The Turn of the Screw* (1898): his most famous work was simply a "pot-boiler." For James commercial success and critical acumen existed together in inverse proportion; his silence and dismissal were as much an aesthetic judgment as a neurotic response to mass readerships and the new literacy.

James's contemporaries were equally embarrassed or reticent about trying to offer insights into their own excursions in the supernatural – Edith Wharton for one, whose ghost tales appeared between 1904 and 1937 and whose tale "The Lady's Maids' Bell" includes some biographical references. In a section edited out (self-censored?) from her autobiography, Wharton gives a rare (and confessional) insight into her relationship with supernatural fiction. The tale tells of her time as a child in Germany recovering from an attack of typhoid: during her convalescence she was given a book of Gothic stories by two childhood friends. She tells us that "with [her] intense Celtic sense of the super-natural [*sic*], tales of robbers and ghosts were perilous reading" (Wharton, 1975, 275–6). The book actually caused a serious relapse, resulting in a type of nervous breakdown:

> and when I came to myself, it was to enter a world haunted by formless horrors. I had been naturally a fearless child; now I lived in a state of chronic fear. Fear of *what?* I cannot say – and even at the time, I was never able to formulate my terror. It was like some dark undefinable menace, forever dogging my steps, lurking, and threatening; I was conscious of it wherever I went by day, and at night it made sleep impossible, unless a light and a nursemaid were in the room. (276)

These paranoid and delusory hallucinations lasted until Wharton's teenage years, and her fear (amounting to a morbidly pathological condition) of horror fiction lasted long into her adult life:

> But how long the traces of my illness lasted may be judged from the fact that, till I was twenty-seven or eight, I could not sleep in the room with a book containing a ghost-

> story, and that I have frequently had to burn books of this kind, because it frightened me to know that they were downstairs in the library! (276)

Wharton, occasional and highly successful creator of intense and atmospheric horror and ghost tales for over thirty years, offers only the insight that most of her early life was dominated by a pathological avoidance (amounting to animistic terror) of ghost tales, and all this in a *discarded* fragment of autobiography!

M(ontague) R(hodes) James seems to suggest, in his own Preface to *The Complete Ghost Stories* (1931), that far from having deeply psychic origins, his tales are mere *jeux d'esprit.* In answer to his own rhetorical question as to whether his tales have a personal origin, he gives an emphatic "No." Equally, he dismisses the notion that his tales are based on "real life" incidents related to him by colleagues, again giving an emphatic "No." James does credit atmospheric places with setting off his imagination, and he begrudgingly concedes that others have written about similar subjects to his own, but that is all. He remains obstinately and teasingly evasive. On technique he offers only this:

> I am not conscious of other obligations to literature or local legend, written or oral, except in so far as I have tried to make my ghosts act in ways not inconsistent with the rules of folklore. As for the fragments of ostensible erudition which are scattered about my pages, hardly anything in them is not pure invention; there never was, naturally, any such book as that which I quote in "The Treasure of Abbot Thomas." (James, 1985, 6)

And on the most obvious of questions:

> Do I believe in ghosts? To which I answer that I am prepared to consider evidence and accept it if it satisfies me. (9)

In all, James maintains an ironic and amused distance rather than the outright dismissiveness of Henry James or the avoidance of Edith Wharton. What all three offer is a type of evasiveness inherent in the attitude of many of the best practitioners of the ghostly tale. M. R. James's mock seriousness, Henry James's dismissiveness, Edith Wharton's silence – even Edgar Allan Poe's "revision" in "The philosophy of composition" – suggest both an incapacity and an inherent distaste for a genre at once too visceral *(and* too ephemeral) and too popular. The business of sustained critical analysis of Gothic horror could not take place until practitioners and critics took the genre seriously and were concerned to divine the essential nature of its craft and symbolism.

In Britain, the serious study of horror and ghost fiction fell to a small group of investigators, including Edith Birkhead (1921), Eino Railo (1927), and Montague Summers, of whom Summers is now the only one to have continued in print (see Summers, 1995). Essentially a chronicler and bibliographer, Summers's study of vampire fiction, for instance, ends as a long list of forgotten stories and their authors and publishers with little or no analytic text. Summers's contemporary, H(oward)

P(hilips) Lovecraft's "Supernatural horror in literature" is probably the first and most significant essay on the genre by a practitioner. Most of Lovecraft's essay is taken up with the same bibliographic urge that we find in Summers (as in Stephen King's *Danse Macabre*); however, Lovecraft opens the essay with some general remarks on the intrinsic nature of horror fiction. He begins by invoking the archaic and the traditional, and in so doing elevates the horror tale to an art form demanding serious consideration. Hence:

> The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form. (Lovecraft, 1967, 141)

Appealing to those with "minds of the requisite sensitiveness," the "weird tale" (to use Lovecraft's own terminology) is *the* corrective to "materialistic sophistication" and "insipid idealism" attacking "didactic literature" and the "smiling optimism" of utilitarian fiction. If "the appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow," it is because "it appeals to those capable of sensitive, imaginative detachment" who can step away from the ordinary and everyday. Luckily:

> The sensitive are always with us, and sometimes a curious streak of fancy invades an obscure corner of the very hardest head; so that no amount of rationalization, reform, or Freudian analysis can quite annul the thrill of the chimney-corner whisper or the lonely wood. There is here involved a psychological pattern or tradition of mankind . . . too much a part of our innermost biological heritage. (141)

For Lovecraft, the weird tale evokes in its reader a mental response parallel to, yet quite different from, those processes to which psychoanalysis (all the rage in the 1920s) had attached itself and offered explanation for. As part of humanity's "biological heritage," the weird is an experiential process *out of which* human experience is born. Weird literature evokes that "lost" evolutionary stage whose archaic remains act upon the reader from psychological depths parallel to, but quite different from, the Freudian unconscious or its explanatory pattern. Lovecraft's primeval mind is both more primitive, more visceral and more aqueous than Freud's – more a phenomenon of the species as a whole.

The primeval nature of fear, deeply embedded in our "subconscious mind" and our "inner instincts" and stored in the "residuum of powerful inherited associations," is always capable of being invoked (through either dreams or art) when the cosmic unknown is brought into association and contrasts with the "old instincts in our nervous tissue." Overriding common sense and rational explanation, this leaves us confronted with the "terrible" and "cryptic" power of the "extraterrestrial," "whereof we know nothing and wherein we have no part!"

What of the weird tale itself as a (new and) legitimate form of artistic expression? "It has fallen to the lot of the darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery to

figure chiefly in our popular supernatural folklore" (Lovecraft, 1967, 143). Thus, it is in this that "the literature of cosmic fear" finds its power, driving writers of quite different persuasions to "discharge from their minds certain phantasmal shapes" and put them into literary form.

Here, Lovecraft offers the first of the many analytic distinctions offered by critics of the genre:

> This type of fear-literature must not be confounded with a type externally similar but psychologically widely different; the literature of mere physical fear and the mundanely gruesome. (143)

To this category belong many of the old "sixpenny shockers," "penny dreadfuls," and (ironically for Lovecraft) pulp magazine offerings – mere mechanical and formalized exercises in thrills for their own sake, sensationalized as entertainment. Opposed to these, the truly weird tale has, as well as "atmosphere" and "sensation," the ability to create:

> A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces . . . a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature. (144)

And all this should create a correlative state in which the reader becomes aware in *themselves* of a profound uneasiness and a "sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers."

Lovecraft's essay acts as a bridge between the older ghost tale and contemporary science fiction fantasy (Lovecraft's "cosmic" forces), but his explanation, while necessary, is not *sufficient* to describe the power of the old ghost tale or subsume it under the rubric of science fiction fantasy, of cosmic adventure. In a brief note, Robert Bloch, creator of *Psycho* and erstwhile student of Lovecraft, offers us a further insight:

> On the basis of personal belief and observation, I'd say that those of us who direct our storytelling into darker channels do so because we were perhaps a bit more mindful than most regarding our childhood confusions of identity, *our conflicts* with unpleasant realities and our traumatic encounters with imaginative terror. Although there are significant exceptions, it would appear that the majority of writers who deal with the supernatural have repudiated the tenets of organised religion. In so doing they may have lost the fear of hellfire but they've also sacrificed any hope of heaven. What remains is an all-too-vivid fear of pain and death and a final, total, eternal oblivion. (Underwood and Miller, 1986, 24, my emphasis)

Bloch follows Lovecraft in agreeing that the weird is attached to a primitive or primeval set of psychic conditions (in this case personal and infantile), but he adds the important proviso about "confusions of identity" which, through links of sublimation

and memory, reemerge as the literature of horror. It is also this confusion of identity that leads to an imaginative "nihilism" based upon "death" and "oblivion."

The truly weird tale must contain the threat or actuality of destructive annihilation leading to oblivion. Whence does such a threat arise?

One source (perhaps the most important and least open to explanation) was offered by Lafcadio Hearn in a short story called "Nightmare Touch." Hearn begins with a few prefatory comments on "the fear of ghosts," but his reference to dreaming and dream states is as close as it could possibly be to Freudian analysis:

> Probably the fear of ghosts, as well as the belief in them, had its beginning in dreams. It is a peculiar fear. No other fear is so intense; yet none is so vague. Feelings thus voluminous and dim are super-individual mostly – feelings inherited – feelings made within us by *the experience of the dead.* (Hearn, 1991, 33, my emphasis)

Not only are the fears "super-individual" but they are made "within us by the experience of the dead." What can such a statement mean? Hearn explains:

> Nowhere do I remember reading a plain statement of the reason why ghosts are feared. Ask any ten intelligent persons . . . who remember having once been afraid of ghosts, to tell you exactly why they were afraid – to define the fancy behind the fear – and I doubt whether even one will be able to answer the question. The literature of folklore – oral and written – throws no clear light upon the subject. We find, indeed, various legends of men torn asunder by phantoms; but such gross imaginings could not explain the peculiar quality of ghostly fear. It is not a fear of bodily violence. It is not even a reasoning fear – not a fear that can readily explain itself – which would not be the case if it were founded upon definite ideas of physical danger. Furthermore, although primitive ghosts may have been imagined as capable of tearing and devouring, the common idea of a ghost is certainly that of a being intangible and imponderable.
>
> Now I venture to state boldly that the common fear of ghosts is *the fear of being touched by ghosts* – or, in other words, that the imagined Supernatural is dreaded mainly because of its imagined power to touch. Only to *touch*, remember! – Not to wound or to kill. (39–40)

For Hearn it is not cosmic annihilation that is fearful but demonic *contact* itself, for such contact annuls identity boundaries, thereby providing the equivalent of annihilation. Thus, contact confuses the animate and inanimate, the human and the nonhuman, the living and *the dead.* It brings about that which must not be. The explanation may be evolutionary and demonic but the psychic comprehension of contact goes into nightmare, the realm of "the Nameless":

> Elements of primeval fears – fears older than humanity – doubtless enter into the child-terror of darkness. But the more definite fears of ghosts may very possibly be composed with inherited results of dream-pain – ancestral experience of nightmare. And the intui-

> tive terror of supernatural touch can thus be *evolutionarily* explained. (34, my emphasis)

This nightmare condition is more ancient than humanity, residing in our remote anthropoid ancestors. It is, therefore, *genetic*, not psychological – capable of *evocation* but *not* explanation.

The fear of the living for the dead and the hatred of the living by the dead form the basis for every ghost tale and for almost every classic tale of horror and the supernatural. The taboo against contact is invoked on innumerable fictional occasions throughout horror's history. It can be found in its purest form in such tales as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," Johann Ludwig Tieck's "The Bride of the Grave" (a classic German terror romance), Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla*, W. W. Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw," Robert W. Chambers's "The Yellow Sign," and Clive Barker's novel *The Helbound Heart.* The invocation and return of the dead forms the basis for innumerable zombie tales (as well as being present in *Frankenstein* and tales of cyborgs and robots), but its classic incarnation is in the *vampire tale*.

The vampire tale conflates the return of the dead, contact with the dead, cosmic dread and the crisis of identity provoked by the presence of the dead among the living, and, whether the result of sorcery or mad science, the vampire can only be returned to the grave by exceptional violence:

> "Horrible! Most horrible!" faltered the trembling Walter, and turning away his face, he thrust the dagger into her bosom, exclaiming – "I curse thee for ever!" – and the cold blood gushed upon his hand. Opening her eyes once more, she cast a look of ghastly horror on her husband, and, in a hollow dying accent said – "Thou too art doomed to perdition." (Tieck, 1973)

And here is the end of Sheridan LeFanu's most famous vampire:

> The limbs were perfectly flexible, the flesh elastic; and the leaden coffin floated with blood, in which to a depth of seven inches, the body lay immersed. Here then, were all the admitted signs and proofs of vampirism. The body, therefore, in accordance with the ancient practice, was raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment, in all respects such as might escape from a living person in the last agony. Then the head was struck off, and a torrent of blood flowed from the severed neck. (LeFanu, 1970)

This *second* death is always of an exceptionally disgusting nature, even if the revenant is not vampiric, as offered by Edgar Allan Poe –

> As I rapidly made the mesmeric passes, amid ejaculations of "Dead! Dead!" absolutely *bursting* from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer, his whole frame at once – within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk – crumbled – absolutely

> *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome – of detestable putridity. (Poe, 1931)

– or by Robert W. Chambers:

> They know how the people in the house, aroused by an infernal scream, rushed into my room and found one living and two dead, but they do not know what I shall tell them now; they do not know that the doctor said as he pointed to a horrible decomposed heap on the floor – the livid corpse of the watchman from the church: "I have no theory, no explanation. That man must have been dead for months!" (Chambers, 1970)

Or, here is the death of the revenant "Frank" at the hands of the Cenobites in Clive Barker's *The Hellbound Heart*:

> He was in extremis; hooked through in a dozen or more places, . . . fresh wounds gouged . . . [eyes] pearls in offal. . . . Then he came unsewn. (Barker, 1991)

The revenant reminds us not only of our own *presence* as presence, the weight of our own beingness *in* the world, but it also disturbs the cultural realm of identity.

Nevertheless, the threat of the malevolent spirit or hellbound demon is also curiously a type of *reassurance*, not only because of the innate conservation of *the return* (implying a cyclical cosmos) but because the return is what the reader *wanted*! The demonic embodies both fear of difference and assurance in similarity. The work of M. R. James seems to epitomize this. Revenants reassure and reaffirm values even as they terrorize us.

James's literariness was born of many influences, especially, perhaps, those most associated with the last third of the nineteenth century, during which he spent his formative years in the depopulated rural world of Suffolk. The mixture of stability and crisis that characterized the Edwardian period is hardly apparent. To an *urban* mind it is the importance of the nostalgically *rural*, conditioned by a nascent tourism, that is the central message of these tales. The destructiveness that occurs within the stories is not a manifestation of deep social crisis – a fear of the countryside as alien playground of the "other." These tales are all told knowing the reader *already* knows the rules of the game. The denouements, when they arrive, lift a veil onto nothing at all and are effective acts of psychic disturbance *because* they speak to open and acknowledged desire. This writing is already nostalgic for its own age, let alone a past one; the tales speak of a passing moment. But they augur nothing. P. H. Ditchfield, in his *Charm of the English Village*, talks of the "charm" lent to manor houses by the residence of a friendly ghost! James follows this "tradition," the haunted house as "location" and as viewpoint – the eighteenth-century concept of the picturesque and the local. James's middle-brow vision is itself a last-ditch attempt (albeit unconscious) to avoid extra structural meaning – the sociological and psychological dimensions of modernistic professional writing. In James, the text moves toward a final irrevocable "act,"

but this act, a final curtain, is an elaborate and ritualized moment, played out in haunted bedrooms, studies, libraries, mazes, and ruins.

What lingers in these stories is the atmosphere of the Faustian contract, between the scholar and the demonic. Yet when hell opens it is contentless and vacuous; Count Magnus might linger at the crossroads with his familiar, but the image carries no political message. James's stories belong to modernity and the age of the tourist. Their nostalgia is urban and whimsical and complacently upper middle class, in which literature is something worn lightly and passed over quickly during an idle moment. The demons of this literature are the guides to picturesque "unspoiled" tourist *haunts.* The railway excursion, the baby Austin, the motorbike and sidecar, and the hiker accompany James's prose, nostalgic for rural retreats.

Much went into the creation of these tales, but they refuse to be read as sexual, psychological or social allegories. Indeed, James once said:

> Reticence may be an elderly doctrine to preach, yet from the artistic point of view I am sure it is a sound one. Reticence conduces to effect, blatancy ruins it, and there is much blatancy in a lot of recent stories. They drag in sex too, which is a fatal mistake. (Haining, 1979, 30)

What these tales do is convert such areas into a literary structure – the ghost tale or tale of the supernatural as an aesthetic experience. In such a conversion, the terms are no longer reversible into any meaningful extra-linguistic dimension. While James's tales obfuscate their endings, they *display* their nature. The point of the literary structure of the tales is that nothing is hidden and there is nothing *behind* the horror in M. R. James. And the horror is doubly effective because of its unspoken origin (the horrors rarely have "explanations"). What is left is a series of *images*, stark, eldritch *displays of the beyond* which remain with the atmosphere of haunted places.

The mythic haunted Britain of these tales is essentially an aesthetic place, its ghosts the comfortable fiction of modernity; his "ghosts" and goblins speak not of rupture and absence, but of what all ghosts tell us. Ghosts tell us of stability and permanence. In a world of rapid change they speak of the unchanging and the traditional: the ghost is innately conservative.

By the time James was completing his *oeuvre*, psychological tales had already started to become significant and literary creations now became *symbols*, not of aesthetic craft, but of psychological disturbance.

Freud believed that the repetitively ambivalent relationship between fear and attraction that horror tales create could be explained by his own theory of *das unheimlich* or the uncanny. For Freud, the conjunction of repulsion and fascination was also tied to archaic events, this time not cosmic but personal and repressed. The nature of *the return* and therefore, by association, the revenant is central to Freud's psychological premise; hence:

> If psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every emotional affect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety, then among such cases of

> anxiety there must be a class in which the anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which *recurs.* This class of morbid anxiety would then be no other than what is uncanny, irrespective of whether it originally aroused dread or some other affect. (Bloom, 1998, 50)

Morbid anxiety is therefore the product of archaic psychological elements "old established in the mind" that are "*estranged*" and return after a transformational process of repressive denial. Freud was never able to decide exactly whether such repression was ontogenetic (i.e., self-produced from personal circumstances) or phylogenetic (i.e., produced by species history). He settled, without resolving the issue, for a little of both.

Whether the product of species evolution or personal history, the uncanny and its attached emotional dread are closely tied to the nature of death itself and the fascination with death which itself is productive of both desire and pleasure:

> To many people the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was filled with lustful pleasure – the phantasy, I mean, of *intra-uterine existence.* (Bloom, 1998, 50, my emphasis)

The return of the revenant and the pleasure of the anxiety produced by the weird tale in which the revenant appears are, for Freud, a return to the "memory" of fetal existence – a memory *beyond* the psyche captured in the very fluids of biological origination.

Memories of existence in fetal fluids may or may not be a reality, but the fetal sac itself is far from a fantasy, and it is here, in one of the elemental bodily fluids, that horror sounds the note of revulsion listed by Stephen King in his tripartite division of the genre mentioned at the start of this chapter.

If, for King, revulsion is the lowest form of horror affect, for many contemporary critics, especially academics and feminists, this has become the *central motif* of the horror genre: the body, its fluids, passages, and surfaces, is the registration for horror's symbolic significance. The critic Noel Carroll, in one such study, considers that "these reactions – abomination, nausea, shuddering, revulsion, disgust etc – are characteristically the product of perceiving something to be noxious or impure" (Carroll, 1990, 28). Carroll further qualifies this by adding that only *certain* forms and objects of contamination are appropriate for "art-horror," "such as Dracula [who is] threatening and unpure." Moreover, the fear of the horror object is "usually" (to use Carroll's caveat) associated with fear of *contact* (here interpreted as fear of *pollution*). Thus, art-horror becomes supra-rational, overriding the mechanisms of conscious response with pure emotion, felt through the reactions of the physical body.

The theory of revulsion at bodily fluids and functions seemed particularly useful to feminist theorists of the Gothic who were concerned with the psychological and

symbolic meanings that might lie behind such gruesome entertainment. For Julia Kristeva, this centered on the idea of *abjection*.

Abjection is a theory of identity crisis and centres on the waste or excessive products of the body. These may be "menstrual" or "excremental," but both are forms of "defilement" from which the reader recoils (Kristeva, 1982, 71). Menstrual defilement exists on the register of sexuality and social identity, while the excremental registers an ontological crisis, which in its most extreme form consists of the threat of nonbeing or death. The corpse becomes, thereby, the death that infects life as both waste and excess. Menstrual and other fluids are constantly symbolically reproduced in horror fiction as "hieroglyphs" for all our condensed fears. These fears are archaically embedded in the functions of the body and the way those functions both create and at the same time destabilize the ego.

The products of defilement, products of our bodies, yet now unassimilable and alien, undermine our identity by their presence as both not-us and us. They take on a *ritualistic* and *totemic* symbolism determined by questions of what is clean/dirty, what is I/ not-I, what is inside/outside. The jettisoned objects of the body map the collapse of the stable ego, clearly demonstrating its fragility. And this fragile ego is none other than the phallocentric or male-organized ego whose contact with such fluids resonates with memories of the undifferentiated "ego" of the fetus and the "pre-castration phase" of Freudian theory. What threatens the paternal is the archaic reproductive mother whose powers can only be limited or hinted at in the "phallic" language of literature (Kristeva, 1982, 72, 77). The alien, archaic, fluid-driven, visceral mother constantly threatens to reduce the sane male narrators to quivering jelly, destroying the foundations of social, gendered, and ontological identity and threatening the foundations of language (its power to describe) through the irruption of a pre-linguistic amniotic symbolism. That which *must not be* (here, the Phallic Mother Goddess) is forcibly pushed back into the abyss, forever to return and haunt us.

The principles upon which the horror tale is based can now be summed up. There is always the presence of the supernatural, demonic, violent, and unpredictable, usually present without explanation or logic and glimpsed at the moment it breaks into our world. The demonic threatens the annihilation of human consciousness but, at the same time, assures us of continuity in the eternal, now stripped, nevertheless, of all but a residual religiosity. Unlike the Gothic tale, the horror tale proper refuses rational explanation, appealing to a level of visceral response beyond conscious interpretation. Thus, even scientifically created monsters are demonized, and science is turned into fantasy. Horror is the literature of disjunction. The dark passage that leads to the locked door becomes the paradigmatic scene, symbolic of the meeting of different worlds, the journey to the "other side," the site of the inexplicable at horror's core.

After so much definition, what remains to be said about the significance of horror fiction? For Stephen King, despite the fact that (or maybe because) reading such literature is "a rehearsal for death," it is, nevertheless, "as Republican as a banker in a three piece suit" precisely because of its formulaic and ritualistic techniques and

imagery (Underwood and Miller, 1990, 22). Horror fiction is "conservative" because it appeals to the "teenage" spirit, which, for King, is inherently conservative. Paradoxically, horror fiction fills a "gap" where religion has lapsed, namely that there is an eternal sphere, even if an evil one.

Whitley Strieber, commenting on King's own *oeuvre*, comes to a different conclusion. For Strieber, such literature (especially in its pulp form) "was forbidden and despised"; reading it was therefore an act of "rebellion" against the big lie of political oppression – horror was, and is, *the* literature of conspiracy and therefore a *politicized* literature:

> Horror fiction is the essential fiction of rebellion in modern times. In Stephen King's work it is the rebellion of the middle against all extremes. On one level his books are about supernatural – or at least, inexplicable – horrors. On another, they are about injustice. When I was a young man [Norman Thomas] told me that "the republic stops where the secrets start," and said that the greatest political problem of my generation would be the tendency of bureaucracy to hide behind classification laws. *Firestarter* is a book of rage against the cancerous spread of secrecy in our government. Its message is that governmental secrets diminish the life of the ordinary man. In its fury and its driving narrative power it stands far above the more conventional novels on the subject, with their vapid warnings and constructed prose. (Bloom, 1998, 98)

Clive Barker sees horror fiction as not merely rebellious but subversive, because it offers a holistic account of human behavior and desire:

> Which is to say: our minds. That's where we live, after all. And our minds are extraordinary melting pots, in which sensory information, and the memory of same, and intellectual ruminations, and nightmares, and dreams, simmer in an ever-richer stew. Where else but in works called (often pejoratively) *fantasies* can such a mixture of elements be placed side by side?
>
> And if we once embrace the vision offered in such works, if we once allow the metaphors a home in our psyches, the subversion is under way. We may for the first time see ourselves as a *totality* – valuing our appetite for the forbidden rather than suppressing it, comprehending that our taste for the strange, or the morbid, or the paradoxical, is contrary to what we're brought up to believe, a sign of our good health. So I say *subvert.* And never apologise. (Underwood and Miller, 1986, 51)

For the last hundred years, practitioners and critics have struggled to adequately define the horror tale, its place within the Gothic movement, and its power to terrify, fascinate, and entertain. The end of the twentieth century has seen an acceleration of that process, with horror fiction and its techniques elevated to a status unthought of by earlier generations – no longer just entertainment but a prerequisite condition for other forms of art and criticism. One minute out of fashion, the next in it, it is the horror tale itself that beckons from the grave – literature's own revenant genre.

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16
Love Bites: Contemporary Women's Vampire Fictions

Gina Wisker

We all understand the language of fear, but men and women are raised speaking different dialects of that language.

Liza Tuttle, Intro. to *Skin of the Soul*

Vampirism itself – depicted as uncontrollable desire and as sensual swoon for both victim and vampire – stands as a euphemism for sex, forbidden by social mores. And the sex itself is not of a normative nature.

Victoria Brownworth, Intro. to *Nite Bites*

We usually associate vampires with men, the most famous being Dracula, based on Vlad the Impaler. However, vampiric tendencies are found in women too, encompassing, among others, Elizabeth Bathory, the "Sanguinary Countess" who bathed in the blood of over 600 virgins to remain youthful, and Indian legends of devouring vampiric mothers. Their roots in myth and legend, these bloodthirsty historical figures are the two-dimensional great-grandparents of culturally constructed, constantly metamorphosing fictional vampires. In conventional fictions, women vampires connote unlicensed sexuality and excess, and as such, in conventional times, their invocation of both desire and terror leads to a stake in the heart – death as exorcism of all they represent. Contemporary women writers, however, have found in the figure of the vampire marvelous potential on the one hand for radical reappropriation and, more recently, ironically, to reinforce conventional romantic roles and relationships. The status of vampires as cultural indices and metaphors has been revalued by one strain of contemporary women vampire-fiction writers, the more radical, aligning vampires with a new feminist carnivalesque. Those of the other more recent strain of vampire romance settle for troubled, cursed teens in love, and splice vampire fictions with a

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host of other figures of Gothic horror from werewolves (further troubled teens) to harpies and various hybrids. Some of these fictions celebrate eternal undying love, and some raise issues about cultural hybridity. Vampires in contemporary women's fiction infuse the age-old figure with new life and new potential to comment on what it means to be human.

Vampires have been used by writers and readers as cultural indices since their fictional appearance in the nineteenth century. In an age in which romance exposes the aristocracy and new capitalist rich as evil, the vampire in his frock coat is the archetypal, fatally seductive villain. When foreign invasion threatens a weakening empire, he is a count from foreign parts buying up land and houses, invading spaces, and disrupting heredity and inheritance (Stoker, 1979). When women must appear pure and virtuous angels in the home to underwrite the power of the Victorian patriarch, liable himself to slum it among darker streets and ladies of more dubious morality, the vampire turns up and turns the angel into a voluptuous, voracious, immoral seductress. Cultural terrors have been neatly embodied in his elegant/hideous, godlike/bestial form (Rymer's Varney the vampire [1847], Polidori's Lord Ruthven [1819], Lord Byron as vampiric figure). Destroying vampires with Christian icons reinvests in the safety of conventional belief and restores order. As in all good horror tales, boundaries, tested and strained, are reinforced. The evil is without, order reigns again:

> the pleasure offered by the genre is based on the process of narrative closure in which the horrifying or monstrous is destroyed or contained. . . . the original order is re-established. (Jancovitch, 1992, 9)

The figure of the vampire, that archetypal male villain, seducer, femivore (Schlobin, 1989), has been radically reappropriated and rescripted by contemporary women writers such as Anne Rice, Poppy Z. Brite, Jeanne Kalogridis, Jewelle Gomez, and Sherry Gottlieb. Engaging with the challenge that conventional horror offers, of female victims and sexually voracious monsters, they have revived and reinterpreted the vampire to their own radical ends. They revalue the Mother, infuse their work with the disruptive power of the erotic, and center-stage the vampire in a variety of challenging forms: rock star, *flâneur*, gay/lesbian/queer. These figures provide social critique, highlighting and questioning the enforced fixity of roles and behaviors.

One of the fundamental challenges that the vampire enacts is to philosophical constructions underlying social relations. Whether used as the worst kind of terror to be exorcised or, in its contemporary form, as potential social/sexual transgressor, celebrated as troubled hybrid offering eternal love, the vampire disrupts polarized systems of thought. It undermines and disempowers Western logical tendencies to construct divisive, hierarchical, oppositional structures. In restrictive, repressive eras, the vampire's transgression of gender boundaries, life/death, day/night behavior, and its invasion of the sanctity of body, home, and blood, are elements of its abjection. But in its more radical contemporary form, it is no longer abject, rejected with disgust to ensure identity – Kristeva (1982) clarifies the positioning of woman and Mother

as abject alongside those other elements that need rejecting from the body in order to recognize the self. Instead, it enables us to recognize that the *Other is part of ourselves.* The vampire dramatizes endless potential for radical alternative behavior, for celebrating our Otherness. In their work, contemporary women vampire writers embrace the radical challenge, which this androgynous figure enables, to dismantle patriarchy's reductive binary thought and behavior processes.

Bleeding Hearts and Heaving Bosoms: Conventional Representations of Women as Vampires

> *"Ah, thou art here, demon! Impure courtesan! Drinker of blood and gold!" And he flung holy water upon the corpse and the coffin, over which he traced the sign of the cross with his sprinkler. Poor Clarimonde had no sooner been touched by the blessed spray than her beautiful body crumbled into dust, and became only a shapeless and frightful mass of cinders and half-calcin'd bones.*
>
> Théophile Gautier, "The Beautiful Dead"

In beauty of face no maiden ever equaled her.

. . .

It writhes! it writhes! with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued

Edgar Allan Poe, "Ligeia"

So Gautier and Poe tell of strange, "exquisite" beauties whose early deaths, imbued with a sense of odd terror, lead inevitably to vampiric revival. Ligeia, blood-filled, replaces the second wife, and Clarimonde, un-dead in her casket, must be sprinkled with holy water to finally be destroyed. Each relationship acts as a deadly warning to the hapless male not to be taken in by woman's dissembling treachery. It is the disruption and the instability of identity, and other norms, which so terrifies:

> The female vampire is conventionally represented as abject because she disrupts identity and order. (Dyer, 1988, 54)

> driven by her lust for blood, she does not respect the dictates of the laws which set down the rules of proper sexual conduct. Like the male, the female vampire also represents abjection because she crosses the boundary between the living and the dead, the human and the animal. (Creed, 1993, 110)

Female vampires lurk seductively and dangerously in romantic poetry and nineteenth-century fictions, where they chiefly act as a warning against being taken in by appearances and becoming victim to the evils of women's active sexuality, equated with the demonic.

Keats gives us a version of the deadly, dissembling snake woman Lamia, while in Coleridge's "Christabel," Geraldine's terrifying bosom and side haunt the reader as

they haunted Shelley, who apparently fled screaming at the thought of a woman with "eyes instead of nipples." Fear of the mother is as central to these evocations as sexual lusts and terrors. Geraldine and Christabel indulge in an exorcism of Christabel's protective mother, replacing her with a vampiric embrace. Geraldine is both the opponent of and the replacement for the lost mother. The closeness of the women terrifies the male writer and reader, as it does in Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla*, the first recognizable woman's vampire tale, which it resembles. The beautiful, rootless Countess Marcilla Karnstein, who lives for centuries by vampirizing young women, is a devious, threatening figure for conventional male readers, but less so, perhaps, for women. Carmilla/Millarca/Marcilla inspires and returns warmth and affection with Laura, the young lady with whom she lives as companion/long-term visitor. Laura is drawn to the beautiful lady who haunted her childhood dreams:

> [I felt] a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. . . . I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. . . . It was like the ardour of a lover. . . . (LeFanu, 1992, 178)

Female sexuality, Carmilla's languor and fluidity, are linked to witchcraft: she turns into a large black cat:

> Feline, darkly sensual and threatening in its underlying, cruel violence, Carmilla's unnatural desires are signalled in her choice of females as her victims and the alluring as well as disturbing effects she has on them. . . . (Botting, 1996, 144–5)

Fear and anxiety follow when:

> [Carmilla's] romantic passions are articulated in terms of blood, sacrifice and fatal possession. Laura's susceptibility to Carmilla's disturbing charms is finally interrupted by the reassertion of a male order of meaning and sexual differentiation. (Botting, 1996, 145)

For contemporary readers, this evokes visions of sexual, primitive regression, but also independent feminism. We might not read the relationship between the women as quite as disgusting and terrifying as did LeFanu's contemporaries. Nina Auerbach argues (1995, 53) that it is only through the descriptions of Laura's father and the general, both patriarchal restrictive figures, that Carmilla is seen as ghostly, dangerous, to be destroyed. Indeed, Auerbach (8) tells of a sensitive TV adaptation of *Carmilla* which "reviews LeFanu through the prism of twentieth-century feminism," removing the male narrators and bringing us closer to the female view.

Both Christabel and Carmilla embody male terrors of the power of women and specifically of the mother. The worst horror is the snake-like, overwhelming sexual engulfment of woman by woman, a rendition of the potential lesbian relationship. Both end inconclusively. Coleridge's poem stops short, failing to punish, and Laura hears Carmilla's step even after her banishment.

Female vampires in conventional fictions (and poetry) are terrifying, abject creatures whose voracious sexuality is a product of male transfer of what is both desired and feared. Onto the figure of the female vampire is loaded all the fear and loathing of libidinous enactment. Seen as potential castrator, she appears as dangerously powerful, sexually voracious, and engulfing, equated with the powerful, fecund Mother who has the power to procreate but cannot let the child be itself, cannot let go. Kristeva comments:

> Fear of the archaic mother proves essentially to be a fear of her generative power. It is this power, dreaded, that patrilineal filiation is charged with subduing. (Kristeva, 1982, 102)

The vampire's initial liberation of excess energies and disruption of normality is a very temporary affair. Social order is quickly restored, the cathartic experience nailed down again, to the relief of the conformist audience/readership. This has, of course, always been the role of horror, and of much Gothic (Punter, 1996).

Performative Vampires, *Flâneurs*, Gay Vampires

Anne Rice comments on the imaginative, liberating potential of the vampire:

> the fantasy frame allows me to get to my reality. I'm telling all I know about everybody and everything in these books. It's an irony that as I step into this almost cartoon world, I'm able to touch what I consider to be real . . . this gave me a doorway – a vampire who's able to talk about life and death, and love and loss, and sorrow and misery, and viciousness and grief. (Riley, 1996, 14)

Rice's enormous cult following has foregrounded the thinking, performative vampire. Although she employs male narrators, Rice explores the potential for a feminization of culture in her work insofar as she refuses binary divisions, and enables us to understand both the terror and disgust and the endless beautiful possibilities the vampire represents. Her vampires are not easily categorizable as good/bad or demonic/angelic. Their insecurities align them with the complexities of the postmodern world. They are aware that they enact roles and that all gendered roles are constructs (see Rivière, 1986). Their performative nature is most often employed in "dressing to kill" as a vampire, fulfilling mortals' fantasies in their frock-coated disguises. As members of a parallel world, parasitic upon our own yet longer lasting, they enable us to scrutinize ourselves, to look closely at our equation of desire and disgust, love and death, and to recognize the vampire in ourselves.

Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* begins her vampire chronicles and adoption of the voice and stance of a gay male vampire. Relationships between male vampires are largely homoerotic, alternative family groupings rife with jealousy and ritual, with

interdictions and pretences, closeness and companionship. These affect the performative vampires in the Parisian "Théâtre des Vampires," where the seeming illusion of a vampiric feeding, in the theater, attracts large audiences. The joke is on the audience, who see the actual devouring of mortals on stage, not a performance.

In *Queen of the Damned*, Daniel, the boy interviewer from *Interview with the Vampire*, and his vampire lover, the ever youthful Armand, leader of the Théâtre des Vampires, live a life parallel to the mortals who flock to Armand's "Night Island," a luxury shopping paradise filled with consumer items, mortal excess, existing under scrutiny from Armand who wanders among the night consumers, preying offshore, on smugglers and drug-runners, from his "sleek unlighted speedboat" (Rice, 1994, 114):

> You could buy anything on the Night Island – diamonds, a Coca-cola, books, pianos, parrots, designer fashions, porcelain dolls. All the fine cuisines of the world awaited you. . . . Or you could live adjacent to it, in secret luxury, slipping in and out of the whirl at will. (115)

Living close to mortals and mimicking their dress, their lives, and the mythic versions of vampires mortals fantasize about, vampires in Anne Rice remind us of our own daily role play and masquerade. They blur and shift categories of identity. Through (particularly) Louis's moral and philosophical musings, they challenge the reader's sense of "social givens," of reality and morality. For Rice's characters, vampirism is an alternative religion in a world which Christianity has disappointed. Theirs is a contemporary response to the emptying of sacred values and beliefs.

After the death of her daughter Michelle at six, from a blood disease, Rice turned to writing vampire tales, coping with the unbearable, with death and its everyday closeness, its boundaries and contradictions. She constructed new versions of the age-old myth, exploring the liberating, defiant fantasy that the vampire offers. For others suffering from Aids, or needing to confront and deal with their own or others' deaths, vampire novels provide a "bridge over":

> they are dealing with death at a symbolic and metaphorical remove. . . . My theory is that you don't have to run away from what you are suffering when you read these books. You can experience your thoughts and feelings about it, one step removed. (Riley, 1996, 26)

Poppy Z. Brite's punk, post-Vietnam vampires face death head on to cope with and conquer it, providing that function for their (often) youthful readers.

Vampire Mothers: Anne Rice

Contemporary women's vampire fictions move beyond oppositional readings and refuse binaries, boundaries, and divisions. They explore and embrace the conventionally abject: the mother's body, gay and lesbian sexuality, the erotic. They explore the powers of the archaic mother and reunite male and female with her body in an often telepathic union. Her powers are restored. In so doing, some writers also rescript and

revalue the lesbian vampire, whose conventional script has been one of mere abjection. A different economy of relationship is explored in which blood exchange is revalued as a life-giving activity; birthing and mothering are no longer abjected but celebrated; and the links between mothering, sexuality, feeding, and biting are no longer depicted as perverse and disgusting. Some tales evoke alternative terrors, feeding from the vampire myth to dramatize disruptive alter egos, potentially predatory carers. Most restore the companionate vampire, the reclaimed mother, lover, sister, friend: "these female vampires become the others they dispel," says Auerbach (1995, 50) of Christabel and Carmilla, but it is true also of Akasha in *Queen of the Damned*.

In contemporary women's vampire tales, vampire mothers protect, have telepathic communication with their offspring, and experience mixed feelings about their entry into the eternal life, which is itself a death in life. In "Apologia," Jan Carr explores a mother/daughter relationship. Rose, fed blood with mother's milk, joins Mr. Varna on his nighttime vampiric activities, leaving a trail of dead animals, shunning the sun, sleeping through the day. Her perceptive mother reopens the blood link between them, reversing the separation of daughter and mother to sustain and protect Rose.

Journeying back to the protective Mother, refusing the controls of the symbolic order of the Father, and the recognition of similarity are common features of tales such as "Apologia" and "Immunity," in which an African-American mother feeds from her adopted/stolen daughter Nia, recreating the symbiotic relationships her ancestors, the Ajia, had with Greek incomers to Africa, the Lamia, through which unity they exchanged magic and ended up with the ability both to change shape into animals, especially snakes (a powerful, positive image), in order to hunt, and to look normal during the day. The conventionally demonized Medusa figure is powerfully reclaimed in this feminist tale as a multicultural, multiformed, caring vampire mother living alongside mortals.

Anne Rice's first female vampire in *Interview with the Vampire* is Claudia, "adopted daughter" of Louis and Lestat. She curses her vampire birth but is rescued from certain death. Claudia can never age. The desires that the triad explore both highlight and problematize ways in which men can infantilize women, and daughters play to fathers. Claudia and Madeleine are potentially lesbian vampires in the mold established by *Carmilla.* They also act out the mother/daughter relationship. Claudia seeks a replacement for her mother who died of the plague, while Madeleine seeks a replacement for her dead daughter. This signals a return to the Mother's body, a reunion that patriarchal law forces apart in everyday mortal life. The patriarchal violence of the vampire family of Armand victimizes this closeness in *Interview.* Claudia and Madeleine are left to die clinging together, burned in the sun.

Anne Rice reformulates sexual relations. Her vampires cannot be sexually active, but their creation of other vampires is a moment of both mothering and high eroticism. Close, telepathic bonds are a union of superhuman, everlasting proportions. The homoeroticism of her male vampires, Lestat and Louis, breaches boundaries of conventionally "acceptable" love relations. In *The Vampire Lestat* further taboos are infringed as Lestat's perfect companion and partner for much of the novel is his

mother, made youthful when drinking his blood and offering him her own in an extraordinary version of birthing. This relationship overturns the conventional abjection of the mother and her body by the castration-fearing son. Lestat gives his mother life and takes her, as far as vampires can, as his lover, in a pre-symbolic embrace which reempowers the relationship between mother and child:

> All the memories of my life with her surrounded us; they wove their shroud around us and closed us off from the world, the soft poems and songs of childhood, and the sense of her before words when there had only been the flicker of the light on the ceiling above her pillows and the smell of her all around me and her voice silencing my crying, and then the hatred of her and the need of her, and the losing of her behind a thousand closed doors, and the cruel answers. (Rice, 1985, 174)

Rice's vampires deny bounds of chronological time and the physical bounds of the world, weight, space, movement. They live in Kristeva's "woman's time." Although Gabrielle eventually seeks her own space, their relationship revives over time and distances denied ordinary mortals:

> Ironically, the return to the mother is what allows Rice to kill off and transcend feminist politics . . . sexual difference is a dead issue. (Gelder, 1994, 117)

Gelder argues that claims of Rice's post-feminism contradict her homoeroticism and politics of queer theory. One of Rice's strengths seems to me to be her refusal of those very kinds of polarity in her work. She explores the return to the mother *and* the radical opportunities offered by queer theory in fictional practice. She troubles other conventional divisions: male/female, gay/lesbian. and life/death, self/Other, good/bad, and so on. The transgressive vampire is particularly well placed to explore and enact such questioning and also such queering, such disruptions.

Rice's exploration of relationships and the role of the mother peaks with the story of Akasha the archaic mother and Enkil her husband (*The Vampire Lestat*). "Those who must Be Kept," the burden of memory and lore, sit enthroned, motionless throughout the centuries, guarded by Marius their keeper. The great archaic mother's sexual powers are legendary, exercised (although rarely, Lestat is a favorite) beyond the tomb. As the life-giving and devouring first mother of all, she is a mythic and terrifying force.

Ancient blood rituals are enacted and the mother/destroyer is exposed. Akasha's simplistic response to patriarchy's obvious evils is to kill all men. Lestat points out:

> History is a litany of injustice, noone denies it. But when has a simple solution ever been anything but evil? Only in complexity do we find answers. Through complexity men struggle towards a fairness; it is slow and clumsy, but it's the only way. Simplicity demands too great a sacrifice. It always has. . . . Don't you see? it is not man who is the enemy of the human species. It is the irrational; it is the spiritual when it is divorced from the material; from the lesson in one beating heart or one bleeding vein. (Rice, 1985, 522, 525)

Another argument is that the spiritual on its own causes wars and conflicts. Intervention of the supernatural (here Akasha) alone is negative. Rice's post-feminism inspires a highly ritualistic moment when, for her skewed vision, Akasha is destroyed, her heart and liver ingested by her descendants, the red-haired twins Mekare and Maharet. Her power, cleansed, lives on in one static, iconic, female twin, Akasha's replacement.

The essential *artifice* of the vampire is his/her safety. The novel argues for a creative congruence between the metaphor and the "real" spiritual and material. Rice's thinking vampires are not merely our abject Others. Their thoughts and exploits are woven into a complex web offering multiple perspectives on our own lives. Their transgressions open up the body of the Law, belief, behavior, only very rarely and temporarily closing it down with punishment or restoration of patriarchal order.

Sex and the Night: Vampire Erotic

> *The vampire is everything we love about sex and the night and the dark dream-side of ourselves: adventure on the edge of pain, the thrill to be had from breaking taboos. . . .*
>
> Poppy Z. Brite, *Love in Vein 1*

Liberating energies that merely turn the tables do not enable a fundamental demythologizing and re-mythologizing. They do nothing to expose and critique the way the world works. However, the figure of the vampire in women's writing by Rice, Brite, and others actually alters the meanings and relationships of vampires, particularly vampire women, to radical and liberating effect. Desire, passion, and sexual activities have, as Foucault points out, always been regulated and contained by law and language. The figure of the vampire refuses this containment, liberating the explosive power that these generate, breaking down boundaries, behaviors, taboos, and regulatory practices, denying the constraints of our lives as they fulfill both the terrors (devouring and death) and the promises (undying love and life) of popular myths and fictions.

Anne Rice's homoerotic vampires create new vampires or exchange bodily fluids in erotic moments. Here Daniel, the boy interviewer from *Interview*, is with his lover, Armand:

> he closed his eyes, his body heating slowly, only to burn truly when Armand's blood touched his lips. He heard the distant sighs again, the crying, was it of lost souls? It seemed a great luminous continuity was there, as if all his dreams were suddenly connected and vitally important. . . . (Rice, 1994, 111)

Drinking from a gash in Armand's throat, his life is a mist of "misery and ecstasy" (112). And for lesbian rock vampires:

> the sound in my ear is a howl, but whispered. I cannot be misunderstood. She is only calm for a moment, her sounds still reverberating, when her mouth is on my earlobe,

> then lower. Her teeth catch my flesh. My skin swirls between her lips until my whole body is caught in some whirlpool. My own teeth bang against each other lonely in their shaking. . . . This must be something different, less like falling and more like ascending, less like death and more like being born. . . . It isn't the promise of some transitory fame that makes me smile, it's Sammy, and my knowledge that we will be together longer than fame, longer than forever. (Robson, 1996, 194)

The erotic, conventionally a site for control and prohibition, becomes a site for liberation and exploration in contemporary women's vampire fictions.

Poppy Z. Brite's vampires are, like Anne Rice's, homosexual or bisexual performers. They are southern Gothic rock 'n' roll youths daring the limits of life and death as youthful rebellion in a post-Vietnam age of complacency and hypocrisy. Her imagery resembles that of Jacobean revenge tragedies – tactile, brittle, brilliant, and visceral. Sex and death combine in tantalizing unity. She has produced two collections of vampire erotic tales, *Love in Vein 1* and *2*, and her own *Lost Souls* won a prize in the late 1980s for the best new writer of the homoerotic.

Vampire writers also rescript romance. Sherry Gottlieb's *Love Bite* integrates vampire, romance, and crime narratives when Rusty/Risha, the photographer vampire, offers everlasting life to the cop with a fatal disease, whom she loves. Angela Carter's "Lady in the House of Love" reverses the Sleeping Beauty myth, making the woman vampire victim to romance: Vlad the Impaler's last relative, the vampire countess, dies when she falls for a transitory bicyclist who kisses her cut hand.

Lesbian Vampires

> *The vampire is the queer in its lesbian mode.*
>
> Sue-Ellen Case, "Tracking the Vampire"

If gay male vampires are viewed as transgressive, how much more so are lesbian vampires who combine the abjection of the mother with the sexualized monstrosity of women in male nightmare. They are depicted negatively as the ultimate Otherized horror in films such as *The Loves of Count Yorga, Vampire.* But for contemporary women writers, lesbian vampires are reclaimed figures connoting a creative, liberating challenge.

Zimmerman suggests that the lesbian, by selecting same-sex lovers, embarks on a "journey back to the mother," equating her with the lesbian vampire who causes a flow of blood equivalent to that in birth. More radically, Sue-Ellen Case explains how the lesbian vampire can be read using queer theory, which foregrounds same-sex desire without labeling the gender of those desiring and desired. It destabilizes "the borders of life and death," refusing "the organicism which defines the living as the good" (Case, 1991, 3). In short, the queer "is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny."

In these equations gay and lesbian vampires, defined more encompassingly and flexibly as queer, undercut the divisions of gender, as well as those of life/death, self/

Other, and highlight the performative nature of all gender constructions (cf., Butler, 1991). Case's arguments about the value of lesbian vampire exchange in the new economy of these fictions moves beyond the pre-symbolic rereading of mother and child relations argued in Anne Rice to envisage an "in-between" state, "turning away from the heterosexist fantasy of pre-Oedipal maternal original (life, regeneration) and toward an unoriginal 'in-between' state between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the living and the dead, that Freud (and the Slovenian Lacanians) has left relatively untouched" (Gelder, 1994, 62). The vampire, Case argues, sees no reflection and so avoids the symbolic, and this can be read as a political act, a revaluation of relations which refuses the symbolic/presymbolic argument. So "her proximate vanishing appears as a political strategy; her bite pierces platonic metaphysics and subject/object oppositions; and her fanged kiss brings her, the chosen one, trembling with ontological, orgasmic shifts, into the state of the undead" (Case, in Gelder, 1994, 62).

The figure of the lesbian vampire deconstructs a fascism of the body and mind, dominant ideologies which project a conformist norm.

Twenty-First Century Vampires, Spoofs, and Vampire Lovers

Many twentieth-century feminist vampires were so marvelously transgressive and able to provoke critical consideration of romantic myths and fixed gender roles that it is with some dismay perhaps that we need to look at what strains have been favored more recently. There have been two main developments in the use of the vampire in women's writing. In one, the vampire is a kind of spoof. In the other, he returns to that dressed to kill, debonair, handsome, dark stranger, beloved of romantic fictions, exposed in Rice's work. The vampire is no longer a creature of social radicalism and imaginative exploration, but rather represents an alternative revisioning of the familiar texts where vampiric tendencies were somewhat suspected rather than stated, or instead he is a tortured romantic lead who will be rescuable with the love of a good woman. In the former version there are texts such as Amanda Grange's *Mr. Darcy, Vampyre* (2009) which repeat the myth of undying love while rewriting canonical texts and exposing their subtexts. More particularly, there are vampire romances and works such as Stephenie Meyer's high school set Young Adult series *Twilight* (2005–), which figure the male vampire Edward Cullen as a sexy, dangerous lover, passionate and protective of new girl Bella and determined to enable her to gain a kind of acceptance into his un-dead, blood-drinking family, the "cold ones," the Cullens. As a throwback to conventional romantic heroes, figures such as Edward encourage both erotic fantasies and yearning (Grossman, 2009). With difficult past histories or tendencies, and tropes familiar from Mills and Boon and Barbara Cartland, Meyer's (2005–) work is the most popular of the vampire romance strain which initially emerged in the 1990s. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's historical horror novel *Hotel Transylvania* (1978) introduces the vampire romance subgenre as Count Saint-Germain, an ancient, ethical

time-traveling vampire who loves the young, innocent Madelaine de Montalia. Veteran vampire author Nancy Kilpatrick also works in this genre as "Amarantha Knight," producing erotic reimaginings of classic vampire novels, such as *The Darker Passions: Dracula* (1993) and *The Darker Passions: Carmilla* (1998). From 1993 the Silhouette Shadows series, various chick-lit novels, and genre-spliced crime fiction vampire novels established the genre as capable of the conventional or the challenging. In this context the recent proliferation of fictional vampires include strong female protagonists in urban crime fantasy, such as Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* novels, beginning with *Guilty Pleasures* (1993), evolving into a crime, horror, erotic romance hybrid. Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire* mysteries, from *Dead Until Dark* (2001), and leading into the *True Blood* TV series, are set in an alternate USA where the public revelation of the existence of these supernatural creatures offers a commentary on tolerance and xenophobia.

The erotic mixture of sex and death, the Byronic, romantic, black frock-coated (or well-cut high school clothing) vampire and the agonized but dangerous romantic lead are familiar throughout the range of vampire fictions since their literary inception. Margaret L. Carter (2010) tells us that Vampire romance for young adult (YA) readers really began with L. J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries*, *The Awakening* (1991), in which the heroine is torn between a vampire lover and his brother. Four novels led in 2009 to a TV series, while Smith's *Night World* series began with *Secret Vampire* (1996), a love story between a vampire and a mortal girl dying of cancer. Other YA vampire romances include Katie MacAlister's (as Katie Maxwell) *Got Fangs?* (2005) and the darker Vivian Vande Velde's *Companions of the Night* (1995). Vampires have been recuperated and normalized in many of the vampire romances. Although traditional vampires did not engage in physical sex, refrained from eating ordinary food, and burned up in the sun, many YA vampires suffer few problems with such mortal normality. The men come very close to seeming little more than Gothic male romantic leads, and young vampire women turn out to be jealous bitches, high school buddies, or troubled misfits with a mission. While there are several tales with hybridity at the core, the radical testing of mixed "race" relationships is generally not favored and transformation of mortal into vampire is a dangerous rite of passage for some, to be avoided for others, especially in Meyer's novels.

Margaret Carter, vampire critic and author of paranormal romances, hosted and wrote online for the vampires crypt (discontinued 2002). Her *Different Blood: the Vampire as Alien* (2004) is an excellent guide to trends in vampire fictions, as is S. T. Joshi's *Encyclopedia of the Vampire.*

Conclusion

If horror is to be more than disposable, "boy's own" junk, as I think it can be, then it must listen to voices from both sides of the night.

Liza Tuttle, Intro. to *Skin of the Soul*

> *Vampirism springs not only from paranoia, xenophobia, or immortal longings, but from generosity and shared enthusiasm.*
>
> Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires Ourselves*

Twelfth Night is the carnival moment in the calendar when, in the spirit of saturnalia, all divisions are breached or refused, all rules and hierarchies of being turned upside down. It and its contemporary corollary, the rock concert, are ideal moments for that embodiment of transgressive energies, the vampire.

The vampire myth is reconfigured in different cultural contexts to embody what is feared and desired, and feared just because it is desired. Vampires are popular figures in contemporary women's horror not merely because of their promise of eternal youth, but also because of their naturally transgressive and so potentially revolutionary nature. In the twenty-first century, the vampire has metamorphosed even beyond the radicalism of the late twentieth century. It has become a figure that continues to invite romantic fantasies and so reinforces heterosexual relationships based on undying love, however quite chastely portrayed. It is also the ideal myth to explore and enact an imaginative, radical critique of restrictive, oppressive cultural regimes. More radical vampire fictions reinvest the erotic with its explosive critical power and valorize rather than demonize women's sexuality and power. Much of the radical energy expresses itself through transgression of gender boundaries and engagement in homosexual and lesbian relations, themselves most frequently seen as transgressive and marginal. Vampire fictions and the vampire myth in the hands of contemporary women writers explore and enact the practice based in queer theory by defying boundaries, refusing categories and destructively oriented definitions of difference, expressing the carnivalesque. Some, however, merely reinforce romantic fictions of undying love and the unequal gender roles that such investments tend to rely on. Vampires have some rather nasty social habits, but as metaphors they offer a fascinating parallel and perspective on our own lives. As Nina Auerbach says, "the best vampires are companions" (Auerbach, 1995, vii). They are our others, and ourselves, and in their contemporary feminist reincarnations they afford us a wealth of insights into what it means to be human.

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17
Gothic Film

Heidi Kaye

Gothic, as a genre born in darkness, has a natural affinity with the cinema. Drawing on the nineteenth-century tradition of stage melodrama adaptations, some of the earliest motion pictures were based on Gothic fiction. During the twentieth century, Gothic elements crept into filmic genres from science fiction to film noir and from thriller to comedy, so that it can be difficult to come up with a definitive idea of what constitutes "Gothic film." Along the way, Gothic spawned a brood of side genres, merging into a wider definition of "horror film" including monster movies and slasher films, anything dealing with the supernatural or nightmarish fears.

Early cinema was a spectacle, presenting fantastic illusions to its audience. The trick of moving pictures was itself a novel optical illusion, and as audiences became used to the medium, new camera tricks were devised to maintain this element of wonder. Stage magician Georges Méliès experimented with effects such as disappearances, stop-motion animation, double exposure, running film in reverse, and optical illusion rooms with angled walls and floors which made an actor seem to grow from dwarf to giant. Not surprisingly, Gothic films created spectacles and excited audiences' emotional responses, just as Gothic novels had always done.

The Gothic texts that have been most influential in cinema are the nineteenth-century works, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* In contrast, the classic eighteenth-century Gothic novels *The Castle of Otranto*, by Horace Walpole, and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Ann Radcliffe, have not been filmed; Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* has only appeared in two disappointing Continental films (1972, dir. Ado Kyrou; 1990, dir. Paco Lara). This seems odd since they, like their descendants, were popularly adapted for stage and, with their ghostly apparitions, suspense, dramatic settings, gory imagery, and sexual tension, they share most of the elements that make the other texts so popular

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on film. These earlier texts are more melodramatic and have fewer monsters than *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, and *Dracula*, but Walpole has supernatural events, Lewis real demons, and even Radcliffe, famous for explaining away her ghosts, has the worm-eaten wax *memento mori* and dangerously exciting villains.

Yet perhaps it is the monsters that make the later novels so adaptable to the fears of various times. *Otranto*, *Udolpho*, and *The Monk* require their archaic foreign settings to work at all, but Frankenstein can be a contemporary experimental scientist, Dracula a trendy aristocrat, Jekyll a modern young man struggling against old-fashioned sexual mores. The monsters can be seen as embodying modern fears such as alienation, the horrors of war, and sexually transmitted disease, whereas Walpole, Radcliffe, and Lewis's concerns, despite their pseudo-historical settings, are always of the eighteenth century. Their damsels are always victims, their aristocrats always corrupted by power. Although the sexual and familial themes of these texts may be more timeless, the fears about class situate them firmly in the early phase of the Industrial Revolution.

Gothic in film, like Gothic in fiction, has responded to the concerns of its day, and what follows will provide an overview of this interrelationship, focusing on the many adaptations of the three nineteenth-century texts. Strong visuals, a focus on sexuality and an emphasis on audience response characterize Gothic films just like Gothic fiction. These films make use of technical innovations just as the texts themselves were innovative with the form of the novel.

As with much early cinema, many of the silent Gothic films are either lost or only very brief, and so little analysis can be made of their approach to the tales. However, the number made in the first two decades of the century indicates the popularity of the genre and foreshadows its durability. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* had inspired a play by Thomas Russell Sullivan in 1887. The Selig Polyscope Company hired a Chicago touring company to stage the play for a rather static filming in 1908. In 1909, the Great Northern Company of Copenhagen, or Nordisk, remade the film with an ending indicating that the story had all been a delusion. It was filmed again in America in 1912 (Thanhouser, dir. Lucius Henderson) and 1913 (dir. unknown) and in Britain in the same year (Kineto-Kinemacolor, dir. unknown) in color.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* inspired several melodramas in the nineteenth century, most famously Richard Brinsley Peakes's *Presumption, or The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), which added a comical assistant, Fritz. The story was filmed by Thomas Edison's company in 1910, but unfortunately no prints of this one-reeler survive. The scenario has a happy ending, with the creature's image appearing as Frankenstein's reflection in a mirror, evaporating to leave Frankenstein to live on with his new bride. The film seems to have picked up on the double theme, which stage versions had ignored in stressing the creature's monstrosity. The tale was adapted by the Ocean Film Corporation as *Life Without Soul* (Joseph Smiley, 1915) with a more sympathetic monster and a "just a dream" ending. Oddly, Stoker's *Dracula* remained unfilmed before the war. Stoker himself dramatized the novel soon after its publication, but the Universal film would be based on a play written by John Balderston and Hamilton Deane (1927), which starred Bela Lugosi on Broadway.

Perhaps the film most influential on later Gothic movies is one not based on a Gothic novel. But its striking imagery and evocative themes inspirited the genre. The German expressionism of Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) transformed the American approach to Gothic cinema.[1]

Memories of the real-life horrors of World War I haunted the Gothic films of Wiene and F. W. Murnau. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was written by Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz as an anti-war story. The somnambulist Cesar, controlled by the hypnotist Dr. Caligari, represents the common soldier "sleepwalking" into war, urged on by government manipulation to kill for purposes that are not his own. The fact that Cesar sleeps in a coffin-like box adds to the sense that he is the walking dead, a ghost from among the millions who died in this first war of mass destruction.

Wiene used stylized settings to convey an atmosphere of abnormality. The odd angular buildings and streets and painted-in shadows make this a symbolic stage set rather than a representation of ordinary reality. Something was literally out of kilter in this world. When it turns out, in the original script, that the mad Dr. Caligari was really the head of the local asylum, we see an authority figure's own sanity and status put into question. However, the addition of a frame, in which the whole tale turns out to be a paranoid fantasy told by an asylum inmate, removed the political impact. Now the expressionistic sets became merely the reflection of a madman's worldview, rather than a sane comment on a world gone mad. Yet doubt still remains at the end as to whether the madman has had some real insight. The sinisterly nameless asylum director misdiagnoses Frances the inmate, as S. S. Prawer argues, stating that Frances believes the director to be Caligari, when actually he just claims that the director is imitating a historical character named Caligari (Prawer, 1980, 188–90). Carlos Clarens adds: "why is the epilogue, after order and discipline have been restored, in the same Expressionistic manner?" (Clarens, 1997, 17). Thus the film retains its unsettling edge, keeping viewers uncertain as to what is real and who is to be believed.

Janowitz went on to adapt *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as *The Head of Janus* (*Der Januskopf*, 1921). This much-discussed pirated film version of Stevenson's tale has unfortunately not survived, leaving behind only the script and some still photos. It starred Conrad Veidt (*Caligari*'s Cesar) and was directed by Murnau. Dr. Warren is obsessed by a bust of the two-faced Roman god Janus, which leads him to act out his lust and violence as Mr. O'Connor. The trampling of the child and murder of Carew in the novel are conflated in the film as the murder of a little girl. Janowitz continues the tradition, begun by stage adaptations, of bringing women into Stevenson's story by having O'Connor drag Warren's fiancée to a Whitechapel brothel. In accounting for the many German and American adaptations of the tale in the postwar period, David Skal argues that "the story of a man's – and by way of audience identification, a country's – descent into bestial violence had a clear metaphorical link to the conflagration just past" (Skal, 1993, 140).

Postwar Europe and America were all too familiar with visions of death and mutilation, and art movements such as German expressionism, surrealism, and Dadaism

all reflect these obsessive nightmare images. Gothic films of this era shared in the fascination with and dread of human mortality and fragility. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), an uncredited retelling of *Dracula*, created an image of a haunted, diseased landscape overshadowed by the grotesque vampire Count Orlock. Stylized make-up renders actor Max Schreck half animal, half human, with elements of rat, bat, and other vermin about his pointed ears, chin, nose, and teeth, sunken eyes, pallid complexion, and claw-like hands. The plague that Orlock brings is symbolic of the state of Germany in 1922 and yet the film is safely distanced in 1838. Nevertheless, Orlock's hooked nose and foreignness, and the plague that threatens a German town, point toward the disturbingly anti-Semitic character of the film, given its Weimar context. Ken Gelder notes that Renfield shares some of Orlock's characteristics in his bald, hunched appearance and his reading of Orlock's foreign, hieroglyphic-like correspondence as they engage in their property deal, and thus shares in the vampire-Jew's guilt in threatening the innocent German people whom the pure heroine Ellen must die to protect (Gelder, 1994, 96).

As a horror film, *Nosferatu* seems rather slow and unexciting by modern standards and, as it was cheaply made, may even have seemed somewhat old-fashioned even in its own day. Skal notes that critics did not think much of the film at the time (Skal, 1993, 51–3). It does nevertheless contain some genuinely influential and chilling scenes. Orlock watching the heroine Ellen through the window brings up issues of voyeurism and complicity in the film audience. The vampire's elongated shadow looming toward his victim is a powerful image of darkness threatening to engulf light.

John Barrymore played *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* on stage in New York and then on screen for John S. Robertson in 1920. Barrymore sexualizes the evils of Hyde with his seedy Soho music hall and the introduction of an upper-class fiancée for Jekyll and a lower-class female victim for Hyde. The characterization draws on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, with Carew, his intended's father, luring an innocent Jekyll into exploring his baser nature, saying, like Lord Henry Wotton, "The only way to overcome temptation is to yield to it." Barrymore's Hyde is a leering old man with groping, elongated fingers compared to his sophisticated, inhibited Jekyll, reversing the father/son dichotomy of the novel and not picking up the popular Freudian notion of Hyde embodying youth's repressed sexual appetite, as Fredric March would.

The early days of sound saw Gothic firmly entrenched as a popular genre just as silent films had. Both Universal pictures, James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), draw on stage versions rather than the original novels, simplifying the narratives by making them linear and univocal. Actor–manager Hamilton Deane toured Peggy Webling's *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre* (1927) in Britain in repertory with his own version of *Dracula* (1927), beginning the now traditional linkage of the two tales in the popular imagination as Deane starred in the role of both monster and vampire. Webling's play was the first version to give the monster the name Frankenstein and call its creator Henry, dressing them identically to stress their interchangeable, *doppelgänger* nature.

Many critics have noted that Browning's film, in sticking closely to the play, is highly static with too much action happening off-stage, such as Lucy's vampiric appearance to Mina and Dracula's transformation into a wolf. It is as if the viewer needs additional protection from the threat represented by the vampire, and even his death – which is anti-climactically easy enough in the novel – is too dangerous to show on screen. Only the early parts of the film remain atmospheric, with some striking moments such as Dracula's entrance on the grand staircase of his decaying castle. Lugosi's performance is not nearly as appealing or menacing as he was to be in later vampire films, and the rest of the cast do not help matters.

Browning's *Dracula*, like the various adaptations of *Jekyll and Hyde*, avoided the homosexual possibilities of the text by introducing more conventional heterosexual dynamics, in particular oedipal ones. Instead of Lucy Westenra beginning with three suitors, joking that she desires them all, Lucy Western in Browning's film has only one, her fiancé Arthur Holmwood, as Seward has been transformed into her father and Quincey Morris has simply vanished. The sexual contest in this film is simplified: Dracula is trying to get the women away from the men, rather than trying to gain any hold over the men themselves. Garrett Fox's script makes no reference to Van Helsing's famous line about the men's blood mingling in Lucy's veins, making them all her husbands, which has led critics to discuss the homosocial bonds between them.

Bela Lugosi's famous Hungarian accent may well be in direct opposition to Stoker's count, who spoke English like a native and attempted to pass unremarked, but it does instead offer a chance to portray the film's fear of foreigners. Dracula is an alien presence threatening interwar isolationist America with another entanglement in Europe. Killing Dracula on the characters' home ground avoids following him back "over there" to his European territory. Even the vampire's hoarding of money takes on a new twist in this Depression-era adaptation.

Lugosi was originally considered for the role of the monster in Universal's *Frankenstein*, which in Webling's play had been articulate and intelligent, until he refused to play the now silent character who would be heavily disguised by make-up. Ever since, critics have rejoiced that the part fell to Boris Karloff, who endowed the Creature with both menace and sympathy through his subtle acting, making use of eloquent mime, expressive facial expressions, and emotion-filled eyes.

Whale's film not only represents concerns about the abuse of science and technology, but also a concern about the alienation felt by individuals in a mechanized world that is out of their control. As a Depression-era tale, the film can be seen as an analogy for an economic system out of control, where powerful forces turned back against their supposed masters and in which ordinary citizens felt betrayed by the inaction of those meant to be responsible for their well-being. Frankenstein, as scientist and nobleman, is ineffectual as a leader for his community, played as rather feeble and effete by Colin Clive. The insertion of a criminal's brain into the creature's skull absolves him of responsibility for his acts – his behavior is not retribution against a bad master but an uncontrollable flaw in the system which he is powerless to change. The shabbily

dressed, mute creature stands in for the proletariat, helpless in the grip of the economic slump. Ambiguously, he attracts sympathy through his abuse at society's hands while being portrayed as monstrously destructive in his capacities to take action.

At the conclusion, the monster climbs the windmill bearing his creator, not unlike King Kong kidnapping Fay Wray and carrying her to the top of the Empire State Building. However, here the monster retreats from technology (the lab) and society (the jail) to an archaic building isolated from the town rather than climbing a symbol of that technology in the heart of society. The Creature rejects contemporary society and science, which have brought about this inhumanity and alienation, and, like King Kong and Wall Street financiers after the stock market crash, leaps to his death in despair.

In the sequel, *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), Whale famously camped up the story, making use of Ernest Thesiger's Dr. Pretorius. This film played on, and contributed to, the audience's traditional confusion of creator and creature, in that the bride of Frankenstein is Elizabeth but the Bride referred to in the credits as played by "?" is the mate created for the nameless monster. This doubling continues in having Elsa Lanchester play both the female monster and Mary Shelley in the film's prologue. Such an identification draws out Shelley's sympathy with the creature, an innately peaceful and civilized being in the novel who seeks love and companionship, not egoistic glory cut off from the family and society like his creator. Obvious religious imagery, such as the cross at the blind man's cottage which glows as the scene fades to black and the creature being tied to a cross by the mob, underlines his role as martyr. Karloff's creature is compassionate enough to allow Henry Frankenstein and Elizabeth to live when he destroys himself, his "bride," and the corrupting Dr. Pretorius by blowing up the laboratory.

The set-bound outdoor scenes and kitsch impression of an eastern European setting for both of Whale's films seem to point toward the fact that what is really being represented in fantasy form is contemporary America, not historical foreign parts. Whale uses English actors like Karloff, Clive, and Thesiger mixed with Americans like Dwight Frye and John Boles, showing no attempt to create realistic Germanic accents to match the mayor's *lederhosen.* The imagery draws on the expressionism of *Caligari* and *Nosferatu*, indicating that the real world in which Henry Frankenstein lives is distorted and chaotic.

The contemporary setting of Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932) reflects its own modern concerns and the impact of Freudian psychoanalysis. The dark, foggy, labyrinthine streets of London give an expressionist sense of the confinement and hypocrisy of this society, with its outdated Victorian mores. In the film's opening sequence, a subjective camera presents Jekyll's point of view up to his first transformation into Hyde. The transformation is accompanied by an amplified heartbeat worked into the soundtrack, reflecting the visceral nature of the audience's involvement with the character of the young man hemmed in by conventionalities.

By casting a young Fredric March and giving Jekyll a Freudian explanation of his theories, Mamoulian emphasizes the issue of heterosexuality in the film. The classic

contrast between Jekyll and Hyde is reinforced by the two female characters. Sir Danvers Carew is now the father of Jekyll's fiancée, representing Victorian repression in not allowing the young couple to marry quickly and thus frustrating Jekyll's desires. This gives Jekyll/Hyde a motive to murder Carew, by setting up an oedipal conflict. Jekyll seeks first to sublimate his desires in his research and then, as Hyde, to express them with the barmaid Ivy. Sexual desire is not itself equated with evil in the film, only its repression, which creates the monster Hyde, as Jancovich argues (Jancovich, 1992, 46). Statues of Venus and Cupid continually appear to reinforce the theme of the power of sexual love.

Besides transgressing in sexual terms, Jekyll transcends his class in reaching out to the poor in the charity ward, acting against the snobbery of his own social circle. In this film of the Depression era, Jekyll places himself in league with the needy rather than the rich when he stays at the hospital rather than going to the party, as their splitscreen juxtaposition suggests (see Prawer, 1980, 103). The film itself portrays the upper-class world as sterile in comparison to the vitality of the world Hyde encounters. Jekyll feels an attraction toward Ivy's candid sexuality before Hyde is created.

Victor Fleming's 1941 version of the story, starring Spencer Tracy, closely follows Mamoulian's film. The montage of Freudian visions portraying the transformation scenes represents the psychological journey being portrayed. A notable feature of the film is the women's roles, in which Ingrid Bergman and Lana Turner insisted on being cast against type as Ivy and fiancée, in opposition to the director's original intentions. Both films see the problem of repression as a conflict between nineteenth- and twentieth-century views. Jekyll is not a hypocrite and double dealer; it is his elders who force him to hide his true desires.

The Hammer films offer a highly colored, highly sexualized image of the traditional Gothic texts, tending toward the flamboyance of Grand Guignol instead of suspense. These reflect postwar society and its emphasis on youth culture in conflict with an older generation. The buxom starlets, gory scenes, and decadent settings glamorize the conflict against sexual repression and the class system. Yet these films tend to be strictly moralistic, despite their lascivious appearance. Good and evil are clearly demarcated; evil, along with sexual expression, always gets its comeuppance in the end (see Punter, 1996, 108).

The first Hammer film reanimating a Gothic story, Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), surprised everyone who had thought classic horror dead when it broke records on its release in America and Britain. Peter Cushing's dandified Victor Frankenstein portrays him, in opposition to what David Pirie argues (Pirie, 1973, 69–71), more rather than less like Shelley's character in his obsessive behavior and separation from the domestic world, refusing to include Elizabeth fully in his life or inform her about his research. David Punter is closer to the mark in claiming that Fisher's film expands on the Faustian issues of the novel by focusing on the complex character of Frankenstein (Punter, 1996, 109). Clearly it is Frankenstein who is the monster: he murders a famous scientist to harvest his brain and he forcibly isolates the creature by keeping him chained up in a locked room. We witness not only

Frankenstein's hypocritical affair with his maid, but also how he cruelly disposes of her when she tells him of her pregnancy by locking her in with the monster. When his creature is killed, he immediately reanimates it, knowing fully what horrors it is capable of. Frankenstein accidentally shoots Elizabeth in trying to kill the Creature, thereby acting out his monstrous desire to do away with her. He is "an outlaw scientist who justifies his criminal acts to the bitter end" rather than an anguished, remorseful character (Brunas et al., 1990, 29). Cushing plays him with aristocratic arrogance, dismissing the world's conventions and laws, a member of the ruling classes who has no sense of responsibility for others.

The Creature, played by Christopher Lee, is a grunting, violent beast, with no signs of intelligence or potential benevolence. His first act is to attempt to strangle his creator. The emphasis here is on a "mad scientist" plot where invention and discovery, unrestrained by moral considerations, are the main threats. Frankenstein is motivated by ambition alone, with no positive goals for helping society. The parent's responsibilities to the child are not at issue; the Creature is as anti-social as his creator with no desires for love or companionship.

Fisher frames the film with a mad Frankenstein, whose story of the monster no one believes, trying to convince a priest of his innocence. The only one who can corroborate his story is his friend and tutor Paul Krempe, who refuses to save Frankenstein from the guillotine. Krempe, like the priest, represents a moralistic element, and, as Peter Hutchings argues, Krempe's repeated debates about the social responsibility of the scientist against his friend's insistence on "pure" research represents the concerns which brought about the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in this era (Hutchings, 1993, 104).

The success of *The Curse of Frankenstein* led to Fisher's *Dracula* (1958, retitled *The Horror of Dracula* in America, to avoid infringing on Universal's film title). Universal co-produced the film and turned over the remake rights to their whole library of horror films to Hammer. In the Hammer films, evil is attractive, but that is its danger. Good can be dull, ugly, even deformed. Sexuality unrestrained leads to death. So while these films allow some release of tensions, ultimately they deny excesses of sensuality by punishing transgressors. *The Horror of Dracula* returns to Stoker's novel rather than Balderston's play, although with some crucial differences. Fisher kills off Harker early on and leaves out Renfield and the asylum completely. Van Helsing also denies that vampires can transform themselves into animal shapes, as if to save money on special effects. The setting in Victorian England is used to represent repression, and the vampire is clearly a sexualizing force for both men and women. Even Dracula's nighttime visits to Lucy are repressed and not shown explicitly in the film, only suggested using his appearance at her French windows following the rustling of leaves in the wind, as if they would be sex scenes best unshown.

The ambiguous role of women in the film is cited by Hutchings as indicative of uneasiness about their changing roles in 1950s society. Holding power over mortal men but subservient to Dracula, they are both working women and housewives in the expanding consumerism of the time, feared to be a dangerously feminizing social trend

(Hutchings, 1993, 119). The male members of the "Crew of Light" are portrayed as ineffectual. The only examples of patriarchal authority are Dracula and Van Helsing.

The main contrast is between the sophisticated magnetism of Lee's mostly silent vampire and the rationality of Cushing's Van Helsing, balancing the film upon these two strong characterizations. These two originally foreign characters are played as two English gentlemen fighting overtly over sexuality which the vampire inspires in the women. Clearly there is hypocrisy here, as audiences are allowed their titillation before punishment is meted out to the bosomy vampiresses and their sexy master.

Perhaps the closest adaptation of Stevenson's story was screened in the same year as one of the more outrageous versions. Despite its title, which does not hint at its literary origins, and the alteration of the names of Jekyll and Hyde to Marlowe and Blake, Stephen Weeks's *I, Monster* (1971) faithfully recounts the tale, including characters such as Utterson, Enfield, and Lanyon, who tend to be left out, and not adding a love interest as most films do. The scene of Hyde/Blake trampling the little girl is included, reported by Enfield as eyewitness to Utterson. The presence of Christopher Lee as Dr. Marlowe and Peter Cushing as Utterson gives this Amicus production the air of a Hammer picture. Marlowe uses an injection to transform himself, linking his obsessive, uncontrollable need to become Hyde directly to drug addiction, a topical issue. Lee accomplishes the change from Marlowe to Blake mostly through altering his facial expression from tight-lipped, solemn, tidy Victorian to leering, wild-eyed, unkempt satyr. The camera gives us the newly emerged Blake's view with a fish-eye lens roaming madly around Marlowe's laboratory.

Marlowe is influenced by Freud's work to create a chemical which releases one part of the psyche – either primitive id or conscience-ridden superego, depending on the individual. He first experiments with it on animals and then on his psychoanalytic patients; his placid cat becomes vicious, a shy young woman a sexual vamp, and a hardnosed businessman a guilty schoolboy. We see the first inkling of Marlowe's own hidden nature when he viciously beats the drugged cat to death with a fire iron. When he injects himself, Marlowe becomes a sadist, not necessarily influenced by sex. When Blake is spurned by a woman in a seedy pub, he chases her; she expects him to rape her, but instead he bloodily kills her with his walking stick, much as he did the cat. The violence in the film is sudden, shocking, inexplicable, reflecting an era when scenes of horror appeared in the nightly news items from the Vietnam War. The film ends with a violent spectacle, as Utterson and Blake struggle to push each other out of a window. When an overturned lamp sets the room alight, Blake's clothing catches fire and he falls down a flight of stairs, breaking his neck.

Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) creates familiar Hammer sexual titillation by making Jekyll's alter ego a beautiful, lusty young woman. A brother and sister in the flat above provide romantic interest for the pair. On her first appearance, Sister Hyde examines her naked body approvingly before a mirror, stroking her breasts with the appreciative hand which was just Dr. Jekyll's. This is a male fantasy of becoming female, still objectifying his/her own body, providing a spectacle for the male viewer to enjoy vicariously. This voyeurism is extended when the young man

who lives upstairs opens the door, looking for Jekyll, to see Hyde's breasts in the mirror; he gazes for a long moment before he recovers himself and leaves, allowing the viewer to stare along with him.

Jekyll here is seeking to use female hormones to lengthen the male life-span, a sexist scientific goal which offers nothing to the female life-span, especially since he resorts to killing women in order to obtain the hormones. Not surprisingly, this tale mixes Jack the Ripper and Burke and Hare with *Jekyll and Hyde*, as the doctor does his own dirty work. Jekyll seems not to mind killing Whitechapel prostitutes both as a man and a woman; only when his young lady neighbor is threatened by Hyde does he seek to reassert his male personality to stop her.

Despite the rampant male desires expressed, female sexuality is the villain in this film. Jekyll is reticent toward women, being more interested in the progress of his research. He is teased by a libertine doctor friend that he needs to take time out for such enjoyment. Hyde, strolling confidently around Whitechapel wearing a red dress in the foggy night, makes sexual advances toward both the man upstairs and Jekyll's doctor friend. Near the start of the modern women's movement in the early 1970s, it is not surprising that women should once again be seen as a threat to men, as was the New Woman of the 1880s and 1890s. Hyde is not the feminine part of Jekyll, some kind of Jungian anima, rather she is a male fantasy of a woman with her large breasts and sexual appetite. As a film from this sexually open period it seems oddly puritanical, in that both Jekyll's lecherous doctor friend and Hyde/Jekyll must die, whereas the pure brother and sister live on.

Sexuality is not the villain of Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992); repression is. Coppola makes his count sympathetic and romantic as well as sexually magnetic, as the advertising line "Love Never Dies" attests. Instead of Stoker's rejection of sexual promiscuity and strong women, the film that bears his name portrays the tale of a pair of young "star-crossed lovers" battling against their elders who are powerful in social institutions such as the church, the aristocracy, and medicine. Mina struggles to be with Dracula rather than working against him as linchpin of the efforts of the "Crew of Light." In the end, the romantic plot demands that she, not any of the men, kill Dracula as an act of mercy to end his suffering, rather than an act of vengeance to end his depredations.

Sex divorced from love is still punished in Lucy, but romance underpinning bourgeois gender roles is presented as a different matter. Dracula may literally become a monster in this film when Oldman turns into a giant bat, but only when threatened by the forces of repression when the men enter Mina's bedroom. He has come to Britain mostly to reclaim his reincarnated lost love, and is transformed from the absurd old figure Jonathan encounters in the castle to the cool, shade-wearing, goatee-bearded young trendsetter Mina meets in London, where both are fascinated by the new technology of cinema.[2]

If Coppola's film strengthens the role of Mina to suit more feminist times, Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) expands the female roles to reflect not only his time but also Shelley's own values, as I have discussed elsewhere (Kaye, 1996,

57–71). Branagh beefs up the roles of Elizabeth and Victor's mother as well as fleshing out Justine. Having Victor's mother die in childbirth is a reference to Mary Wollstonecraft's death after Mary Shelley's birth. Branagh's Victor is inspired by his mother's demise to create life out of death, whereas Shelley's nightmare about her own dead baby coming back to life inspired the reanimation scene which was the germ of the novel. Victor's mad obsession is thus contrasted with Shelley's vision of the dangers of men tampering with reproduction and of over-confident geniuses, scientific or artistic.

Elizabeth is more outspoken in this film, even visiting Victor at his laboratory in Ingolstadt to try to get him to give up his work. She is ultimately punished for her assertion by both creature and creator. Whereas the former tears out her heart because no one loves him, the latter cuts off her head and puts it on Justine's body to recreate her in his own way, rather than putting Justine's heart into Elizabeth's body. She is denied further power of articulate speech by the two men, who struggle over her reanimated body as if she were a rag doll, each pulling at an arm. All she can do is assert her will in self-annihilation.

Despite its overt bond with feminism, the film focuses heavily on the Victor/Creature/Walton/Waldman dynamics. Even the commingling of Waldman's brain with his murderer's body creates a male/male relationship, just as the female rivalry between Justine and Elizabeth over Victor is grotesquely resolved in the monstrous combined female creature.

Feminism again would seem to rule Stephen Ferris's *Mary Reilly* (1996), a version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with the almost all-male text reimagined through female eyes, based on Valerie Martin's novel (1991). Not only is Reilly a woman but, as Jekyll's servant, a working-class woman "wrongly" attracted to her upper-middle-class master, she challenges the upper-middle-class world of Stevenson's tale.

The film plugs into 1990s issues such as child abuse, incest, sexual harassment, and rape through Mary's experiences in flashbacks and in the narrative present. However, it is highly contradictory: although, on first meeting, Hyde grabs her breast, makes advances, and shows her lewd drawings, soon Mary seems attracted to him and has a rape fantasy dream about him. Thus the film seems to support Hyde's suggestions that women who say no mean yes and that Mary looked forward to her father's abuse.

Oddly, for the 1990s, all signs of homosexuality are excised and the film is full of women: Mary, the cook, the brothel owner. All of Jekyll's male friends are left out as he isolates himself in his house and laboratory; although Carew is later said to be a friend, we have only seen him at the brothel on his own. With no outside society portrayed, it is never clear why Jekyll feels he needs to be so repressed. Carew seems able to express his sexuality and remain a respected MP, so why should Jekyll be so concerned about what others think of him?

Filming these Gothic novels immediately creates new meanings for the texts simply because of the characteristics of the different media. The monsters of all three novels virtually escape definition, whereas the visual nature of film necessitates a focus

on portraying the image of the monster. Frankenstein's Creature may be called ugly and demonic by Victor, but the reader forms an idea of a gentle, cultured being through the Creature's own words; Hyde is notoriously said to be indescribable by those he encounters, leaving the reader to imagine not only his appearance but the exact nature of his misdeeds; Dracula hardly appears in the novel after the first section, becoming instead a menacing sense of presence behind the events. Visualizing their physical monstrosity tends to lessen the ambiguity of these characters and distance them from the audience's sympathy.

The visual mode does have the advantage of emphasizing issues of voyeurism and complicity as the audience watches and participates in the monster's crimes, sometimes from the monster's point of view. The mode of transmission is simplified in these films, as well as the plot, as in the stage renditions. Multiple narratives and flashback are rarely used until the most recent examples by Branagh, Coppola, and Frears, despite the wider potential of film over theatrical practicalities. Yet novel use of black and white and color photography, camera angles, set designs, make-up, and editing techniques give film an edge in creating a threatening fantasy world which mirrors ours in a distorted manner. Intertextual references, both visual and dramatic, between films add layers of meaning to each new version of one of the traditional tales.

These Gothic tales seem destined to be continually reborn to suit the fears and desires of each new period. The monsters, their creators, and their victims are sufficiently malleable in their indefiniteness to allow them to convey ongoing human concerns and tensions: the need for love, the fear of suffering, the yearning for knowledge, the anxiety over isolation, the desire for power, the terror of mortality. War, sexuality, science, government, economics – concerns about all these topics find their expression through the monstrous images of our dreams and nightmares. The films discussed give us a snapshot of some of the dilemmas of the modern era and how a popular genre attempts to address them. The three nineteenth-century Gothic tales that became part of the popular imagination in the twentieth century certainly did not die with the end of the century; they continue to lurk in the darkness, ready to "Return," produce "Sons" and "Daughters," to seek their "Revenge" on a willing twenty-first-century cinema audience.

Notes

1 Two prewar German films shaped this expressionist style. However, as they had short runs, it would be their postwar remakes, after the impact of *Caligari* and *Nosferatu*, that would truly enter the popular imagination in America. These films are *The Student of Prague* (1913, dir. Stellan Rye), a *doppelgänger* story about a young man who sells his reflection (and thus his soul) to the devil for wealth, and *The Golem* (1915, dir. Paul Wegener and Henrik Galeen), a tale based in Jewish folklore with roots like *Frankenstein*'s in the Prometheus myth. They were remade by Galeen (1926) and Wegener and Carl Boese (1920), respectively. Whereas the 1913 *Student of Prague* survives, only a few stills of the 1915 version of *The*

Golem remain; the latter had only the briefest of releases in New York under the title *The Monster of Fate*, as America broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in its opening week.

2 Gelder argues that this scene is Coppola's knowing reference to early cinema and its use of the fantastic and the erotic (see Gelder, 1994, 87–90). He points out that whereas, in the novel, Mina is in control of the modern technologies with which she deals, here she is submissive in relation to the new technology of the cinema, reflecting her disempowerment in Coppola's film.

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18
Shape and Shadow: On Poetry and the Uncanny

David Punter

> *the Gothic . . . literalises Freud's point of departure regarding the uncanny: the* Unheimlich *as a presentation of the utterly familiar as strange.*
>
> Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness*

In thinking about the Gothic, we are ineluctably led to a series of questions about the uncanny.[1] For example, what kind of thing is the uncanny? Is it a feature that can be isolated in a text or in a series of texts? Is it something that can be demonstrated through techniques of verbal analysis? Is it rather a set of effects of which we might become conscious during and after – or perhaps in some cases before – an act of reading?

A classic locus for such questions would be *Hamlet.* There is, for instance, the question of beginnings and endings. The play *Hamlet* can be said, of course, to have a beginning, on the first page; but even from that, all manner of complexities unravel. The written-out script of the play might be seen to start somewhere; but that is never the beginning of the book in which we find it, in which it will be surrounded by all manner of apparatus, peritexts of all kinds. Then again, there is the question of performance; how many times, after all, might one say that *Hamlet* has begun? Even during a viewing of it in a theater, where is this beginning to be found? As the curtain rolls up, if there is a curtain? As the scene is set? As the first characters enter? As the first words are spoken? Or before that, as, with our cultural knowledge of the play, we find ourselves, even as a merely potential audience, running through *Hamlet*, or perhaps our own Hamlet-like, or Ophelia-like, stances, or what we remember of them, in our minds as we travel to the theater, as we sit in our seats "before the beginning"? Has *Hamlet* ever "begun" at all, or is it something we carry always with us, waiting perhaps to be "animated" by a fresh incarnation, latching on at all points to a pre-

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conceived template which we have, consciously or unconsciously, already in our minds?

In this sense, any play might be said to be uncanny in the sense that any particular manifestation of it might take on the form of a repetition – a repetition, it is true, of that which one did not know could be repeated, a repetition with "difference," but a repetition nonetheless, such that the very notion that an origin, the notion of a *history* of the play or of the text, can be established is put under question in the very first words, the first moments. "Who's there?" asks Barnardo (I.i.1). Who indeed? Who *is* there at this most famous of beginnings, who is able to answer to his or her name? "Nay, answer me," Francisco returns (I.i.2) in this beginning where all certainty is already lost, where the familiar and the unfamiliar are already fatally mixed from the outset, where we know outcomes even before the beginning, where to have begun is already to be set on a fateful course of action in which, from moment to moment, other outcomes are entertained – in fantasy, against all the odds.

In some of the phrases I have used here, I have deliberately touched on what we might refer to as the theory of the uncanny, except that perhaps we might prefer to say that there is not, can never be, a theory of the uncanny, even if there might be ideas about it. The ideas that are probably best known to us are those of Freud. But even here we touch on the ambiguities of beginnings, of origins, and on the question of the familiar and the unfamiliar, since Freud, as he himself puts it, does not belong on this terrain at all; he is a foreign body on it, a man without credentials and without papers. "It is only rarely," he opens his essay on the uncanny, which itself also takes the form of a repetition with difference, a reply to that earlier paper by Jentsch which is so rarely read: "It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics" (Freud, 1953–74, 219). But from this rare encounter, this clash between two foreign bodies, psychoanalysis and aesthetics, springs an argument that has gone on to resonate through critical discourse.

We are perhaps all now familiar with the bare outline of Freud's assault on the redoubt of the uncanny. It hinges on the duplicity inherent in the German word *heimlich*, which starts off its wild career through etymology by meaning, as we might suppose, "homely," and ends up by also encompassing its own opposite, the "unhomely," the unfamiliar. Along this route, this trace of a word through the undergrowth, we can see a number of transitions, ways in which, for example, the notion of what is homely and familiar, what is closest to us, becomes also that which we hold as most secret to ourselves, so that by very virtue of being intimately known to ourselves, the uncanny inevitably becomes that also which is not known, which can never be known, because its very identity, bound up as it is with our own, is jealously guarded, rendered incapable of interpretation or explanation.

In uncanny phenomena, the familiar becomes unfamiliar and then the circle is closed again as the unfamiliar reveals itself as the open secret of that with which we had felt most at home. In Don DeLillo's novel *White Noise*, a cloud of poison gas, comically and euphemistically known in the text as a "toxic event," afflicts people with various ailments. The problem is that people only appear to suffer from these

ailments once they have heard about them in the media. Some, who have not been watching the news assiduously enough, continue to suffer from them even after they have been discounted by the authorities. By way of a grand finale, the cloud afflicts the local populace with a nasty case of déjà vu, which means, among other things, that they come to feel that they have all experienced their own symptoms before.

What does this mean? What does "déjà vu" mean? What could it possibly mean to have a *false* sense of déjà vu, whereby one only imagines one has "been here before," when that is the very structure of déjà vu in the first place (if there is a first place)? In pursuit of these questions, I want to look at four poems: two by Thomas Hardy, "In a Cathedral City" and "Lying Awake," and two by Sylvia Plath, "The Moon and the Yew Tree" and "Winter Trees." But before I move on to them, I want to say a few words about a poem which is another kind of *locus classicus* for the uncanny, Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." I assume that this is a very "familiar" poem; yet what is that familiarity when it is clearly locked in close embrace with an enduring unfamiliarity? "The Ancient Mariner," we might say, is a poem about the very process of the uncanny; it is about a coming home, a return to the familiar, in which nonetheless all is changed. It is about, of course, repetition, but that peculiar kind of repetition in which the origin cannot be found. The mariner stoppeth one of three, indeed; but for how long has he been doing this? What is the status of the wedding guest as a privileged recipient of the tale, and thus what is our status as reader of this "oft-told tale" which can never get itself told? At the end the story is, after all, about to begin again: the "wedding," which would represent some kind of consummation or at least a rite, a punctuation mark in the unfolding tapestry of the tale, is reduced by the end to the marginal; and the margin, that which happens outside the central area of human maturation and ritual, takes over the entire stage, invades it, like a foreign body. So behind the words that we hear there are always other words, the words of the marriage ceremony, for example, which represent the obscured performative of the text, the delayed union of word and action which the poem itself is actually designed to *prevent*, as though the words of the poem stand always in the place of another story which cannot be told, stand always as a kind of erasure of a tale that would be all the more familiar except that it is continually vanishing before our eyes as the mariner supplies his deadly supplement.

And to talk of the margins of Coleridge's text is immediately to call to mind that even the text itself, even forgetting the fact that it is a narrative of loss, of the loss of the tale that it replaces, is multiple and contains its own inextricabilities of text and pretext. Does the poem "follow" from the prose annotations, in the margin, which also purport to tell the story, or at least *a* story – sometimes, it would appear, a quite different story? Or are those marginal glosses themselves the frame into which the poem itself is supposed to fit? What one is struck by on encountering the full text of "The Ancient Mariner" is the profusion of versions, the perversion of telling, a kind of textual multiplicity, replete with erased stanzas (which by their very reproduction as footnotes call attention to the "enduring" ambiguity of "erasure"), a kind of mul-

tiplicity that we can also refer to as a textual instability and as a representation of excess.

Within this excess, repetition is all; and it is so in the very details of the form of the poem: in the way, for instance, that the ballad form itself conjures for us notions of repetition without an origin or, perhaps better, with a lost origin by which the text is perpetually haunted, just as, at a more microtextual level, the text is haunted by repetitions – by repetitions of lines, of figures and, above all, of rhyme. This after all is the "rime" of the ancient mariner, and rhyme itself has its own uncanny qualities, serving as it does precisely to defamiliarize meaning. Rhyme, we might say, is always poised between two absurdities: the absurdity of the nonrhyme where rhyme is expected and the absurdity of the total rhyme, where the mere repetition of the same word leads inevitably to the bathetic, as in the *reductio ad absurdum* of the limerick. Rhyme seems to be in some way the evasion of bathos, an exercise in keeping us suspended within a movement of repetition which at the same time serves the function of deferring an ending, just as some of the stanzas of "The Ancient Mariner" defer the conclusion endemic to the quatrain by the inclusion of an extra line, keeping us suspended, as it were, on a lifeless ocean, prey to a continual looking down into the ocean depths where strange forms and spirits lurk.

If we want to talk further about "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in terms of the uncanny, then the effects well up before our eyes; they "stand up straight" although, of course, they are, like all words, dead, merely the animated simulacra of events, situations, emotions which are long since past, so long since that they have no animation of their own. "The Ancient Mariner" enacts the notion of the word as corpse; thus it effects a redoubling of animism, an incarnation of a type of "life-in-death," which is the property of every text and demonstrates for us the problem that there is indeed a sense in which every text might duly be perceived as uncanny. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a parody of a parable; or perhaps it would be better to say that it shows us the operations by which we seek to convert experience into parable and demonstrates for us the limitations of that process. As with any much briefer proverb, we are capable of reacting at the end with bewilderment, sure that we have been in the presence of something freighted with immense meaning, although what that meaning was, we are unable to say. But unlike the proverb, we end with an added burden to carry, for the proverb does not exhaust us; "The Ancient Mariner," I suggest, does. The mariner certainly exhausts the wedding guest; he is exhausted by the sheer process of waiting, of waiting until the tale, the "rime," is finished, the tension of waiting to cross a threshold while knowing all the time that the burden of this parable, if one can be discerned, is that no crossing of thresholds is in fact possible. Let us suggest this as an uncanny truth: thresholds cannot be crossed. They cannot be crossed because we know, according to myth, that within each threshold lives a small god; and such a god is capable of changing us, as we cross from the outside to the inside or vice versa, into something completely different, such that our very memory will be burned away, erased, will become the substance of erasure.

What will we be left with? Déjà vu, a sense that we have been here before; but although we are certain that we hear the echoes, sense the haunting, of a prior state, what is uncertain is not the memory of that state but the memory of the coherence of the self which, perhaps, experienced it. This or that may have happened, but who was it that was watching, waiting, enduring? Which one of the three were we, and did we despair or hope? How many voices can we hear in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"? How many living corpses can we see against the Gothic shadow-land on which it is enacted? How many colors are there in the sea, and have we seen them all before?

In a Cathedral City

These people have not heard your name;
No loungers in this placid place
Have helped to bruit your beauty's fame.

The grey Cathedral, towards whose face
Bend eyes untold, has not met yours;
Your shade has never swept its base,

Your form has never darked its doors,
Nor have your faultless feet once thrown
A pensive pit-pat on its floors.

Along the street to maids well known
Blithe lovers hum their tender airs,
But in your praise voice not a tone . . .

– Since nought bespeaks you here, or bears,
As I, your imprint through and through,
Here might I rest, till my heart shares
The spot's unconsciousness of you!

This is, we might say, a poem in which everybody, every body, has already gone – gone, perhaps, home. But of course the going home is the going down to the long home, the going home to death, the subsidence into the crypt, with the proviso that the crypt must bear no name, a crypt without inscription. We could readily connect Hardy's "In a Cathedral City" with "The Ancient Mariner" by thinking of them both as Gothic. In this sense "Gothic" would signify a field of hauntings, of course, but also a dealing with the issue of namelessness, a field in which, as in the first words of *Hamlet*, the very notion of stable naming is thrown into doubt, as, typically perhaps, in the convoluted family trees of *Wuthering Heights*, which are, undeniably, unintelligible, linked only by repetition – repetition of names, repetition of syllables – in a mad dance of instability within which all notion of lineage is unseated according to the "law of the orphan," so that the desire for, and the terror of, anonymity becomes the knot around which the text, like Heathcliff, is entangled.

Hardy's poem as I have quoted it lacks a last word, although that word is present in all the printed texts. The word is "Salisbury." What might this word signify in terms of an effort, as it might seem, to "familiarize" the poem? Is it a bathetic effect, an attempt to sidestep the wildness of the labyrinth and to suggest to us that, after all, a ready referent can be found, even in these nameless streets which are the very haunt of ghosts, in the sense of people who, while perfectly real, whatever that might mean, are quintessentially *not there*? Is it a signature effect, as though, since the writer himself is, in some particular sense, nameless, we might ascribe the writing to the stones of a cathedral or a city itself, like a reversal of the epitaph, of the human inscription on stone, so that we have to deal with the inscriptions that stone might make on the human, an inverted memorialization in which the desire, the course of the heart, is toward accepting an inevitable dehumanization, in the wake of which all manner of other curious animisms might spring as we dare to relax the controls that might "mark" the superiority of writing, a poem here, then, in which all possibility of presence is forever on the point of being annulled – as death itself dies?

Eavesdropping, automata, mystery stories are the very stuff of Gothic and of the uncanny: "eavesdropping" itself has a fascinating etymology to do with the homely, the familiar, the secret. Here, at any rate, the notion is validated by the instability of the "you": as always, the secret is in the shifters, in the shifting pronouns. Or maybe the shifters are in secret; maybe the operation of shifters is always in secret, in the sense that while we may know what the poem says, by its very nature as a poem we cannot know to whom it says it; we are always listening, loosening, robbed of response, lost in it, and therefore experiencing the pain of loss. The "you" here – and I mean deliberately to connect this with the "yew"-tree which we shall encounter later on – is an intimate you; it shares with us all manner of secrets; it is a secret sharer, to quote Conrad. Its very intimacy, to revert to Freud, signifies something withheld, something that we hug closely, yet when we inspect it our hair stands on end at the thing that this intimate, this "familiar," has become while we were, so to speak, not looking; we cannot look because we are too close, and were we to look – and to see – then the sense we would have of it would be swamped in . . . what else but our old friend, déjà vu.

Lying Awake

You, Morningtide Star, now are steady-eyed, over the east,
I know it as if I saw you;
You, Beeches, engrave on the sky your thin twigs, even the least;
Had I paper and pencil I'd draw you.

You, Meadow, are white with your counterpane cover of dew,
I see it as if I were there;
You, Churchyard, are lightening faint from the shade of the yew,
The names creeping out everywhere.

Yes: the names cannot be repressed. The names will continue to creep out. Not now, of course, and not in any degree of detail visible to the naked eye attempting to read an inscription; but nevertheless there is a double process here, the unnaming, the achievement of anonymity which is akin to the defamiliarizing of the uncanny, bound back to back with the inevitability of naming, the dissolution of the "you," and of the eye ("I") which cannot be named, under the insidious, "creeping" pressure, which is the pressure of writing itself. Four "you"s, four addressees: are any of them sufficiently stable to keep this invented writing persona in being, or are we here in the presence of a "writer" that is itself a ghost, a phantom? For in this poem, as in the previous one, everything is crucially "not here": the morningtide star is not seen, the beeches will not be drawn, the meadow is unoccupied, the churchyard is . . . well, the churchyard is what churchyards are everywhere, inscribed remnants of nonbeing.

Who, we might fairly ask, looking more closely at the title here, is lying? Is there any truth to be told in a realm of absence, or are we reduced to a fictioning of the states that might fill our being if only we were not, already, gothicized, already ghosts? The steady eyes, the possibility of engraving, the whiteness of the counterpane: are all these signals only of a state to be desired but never achieved, and especially not to be achieved by writing, which is the uncanny perpetuation of the living dead?

Freud, in his essay on the uncanny, speaks, in the context of E. T. A. Hoffmann, of automata, of beings that appear to represent the living while their hearts, as it were, are elsewhere. I take Hardy's aim in this poem to be to effect a close *rapprochement* between this notion and the "state" of the writer. This writer, we might say, is certainly "in a state"; he is in a state of sleeplessness, yet he is also, we might fairly presume, in a state of sleep. In that sleep, he is beset by a sudden incarnation, a sudden animation; yet this animation is of the most peculiar kind, for what is creeping out, what is emerging from the tomb, from the crypt, is . . . names. Not things, not persons – names. What relation might these names bear to the living? Well, the perpetually ambiguous relation that names bear to objects: namely, that they represent them while at the same time signifying their loss. The uncanny fact that this poem suggests to us is that all poems are epitaphs. This is hardly an original thought, but here it is portrayed with an unusual clarity which is a direct effect of the unclarity of the scene depicted: only because nothing whatever is seen or engraved in this poem can we see the full potential of what such a seeing, engraving, inscription, might be like, or, perhaps, might *have been* like, because now, arguably, all such possibility of incarnation is already over. If we are lying awake, then we are doing so in the grave, already, as it were, "en-graved," already consigned to a life-time, a death-time, of sleeplessness.

What would it be like to find that death consists in a continuous sleeplessness? Well, it might, I suppose, be like history, which could be construed as the science of not letting things rest, of continually reconstruing the inscriptions, of continually searching for meaning in those realms where, above all (or perhaps rather *below* all), meaning is not to be found, searching for meaning in the very heartland of the realm

of nonmeaning. History would therefore figure as a process of interference, as a reminder that all burial may be premature, as perhaps merely a reflection of the childhood necessity of interfering in the very possibility of reproduction; and here the uncanny would touch upon the Gothic as the further perversion of history, a torsion of a distortion.

This brings us to another graveyard, circumscribed by the light of the moon and the dark of the yew tree . . .

The Moon and the Yew Tree

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary.
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.
The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God,
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility.
Fumy, spirituous mists inhabit this place
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right,
White as a knuckle and terribly upset.
It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.
Twice on Sunday, the bells startle the sky –
Eight great tongues affirming the Resurrection.
At the end, they soberly bong out their names.

The yew tree points up. It has a Gothic shape.
The eyes lift after it and find the moon.
The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.
Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.
How I would like to believe in tenderness –
The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,
Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.

I have fallen a long way. Clouds are flowering
Blue and mystical over the face of the stars.
Inside the church, the saints will be all blue,
Floating on their delicate feet over the cold pews,
Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.
The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.
And the message of the yew tree is blackness – blackness and silence.

What would there ever be time to say about this poem? In terms of what "time" might we begin to describe it? A time, perhaps, which is an eternal maddening present; a time in which the current moment is uncannily frozen in place and there

is no way to escape, into past or future. Despair, we might hypothesize, is the totality of this presence, the inexorability which leads to compulsive actions, the unbearable weight of being. In this static world, there is no possibility of an observation that might lead the eye – or the I – away from the present moment; there are no doors, in the moon or anywhere else; there are no thresholds over which we might pass. Instead, the moon is, like our own, a face "in its own right"; it is implacably there, and it offers to reveal no secrets. The kind of tension which the moon meaninglessly reflects is, of course, our own tension, sitting transfixed. We might think of the recurring dreams recorded by children of sitting in a room with no windows or doors, staring at, for example, a television screen on which there would be static, meaningless hums, shapes and buzzes. The dreamer knows that when they stop, something monstrous and cannibalistic will appear, but at the same time there is a wish that this would happen, for only thus would there be the possibility of escape from the freeze-frame.

Perhaps the uncanny has to do with those moments when the ceaseless whirl of desire stops (there is something of the fairground here, as there so often is in Plath); perhaps what is uncanny about déjà vu is not that we have been here before, but that we have never escaped. Below the flux of activity would lie, then, a differently structured world, different in its sense of time, endlessly, slowly circling, but without forward progression. One way of referring to this world is as the unconscious. One way of referring to its operation, like that of the Gothic, is as a savage negation of history. The moon is not sweet, not tender; she is instead a constant, unswerving reminder that she has never left our side, that our attempts to escape from the hall of mirrors have met with no success, even while we, like the saints, grow "stiff with holiness." The automaton, then, is not menacing because it seems to be a threat to the self; it is menacing because it suggests to us that it may well be a representation of the self, a repetition with no beginning, that all those eyes in "The Sandman" of which Freud makes play are locked in a circle, sterilized, moved into a pure realm of stasis – which is despair.

The headstones here offer no information; they act merely as a separation, between the self and "where there is to get to," between the present and any other "state" that might provide valid grounds for comparison. How, the poem seems to ask, can one possibly compare one's actions, one's feelings or emotions, with anything else? Everything is *sui generis*, and therefore nothing can be established. The headstones offer a parody of writing, of inscription, of effigy; they have nothing to tell us, unless it be the terror of the phrase, "I live here" – here and nowhere else, in nobody else's mind, in no emotional tie, in no place where there could be any relativization of the excruciating pain of presence. We long, therefore, to be gone, gone as the forms of Hardy's spirits are, gone to somewhere else, even though we know that that "somewhere else" is the realm of the dead, whose actions, if they have any, we might ourselves merely be mimicking in a simulacrum of life. It is not the dead who batten upon us; it is we who replicate *their* actions, we who form a pretext, a marginal gloss, on a world populated by frozen forms.

Yet perhaps this is too pessimistic a reading. The uncanny, of course, lends itself also to the comic. It lends itself to odd moments of recognition, odd moments of not merely feeling that we have been here before, but that we genuinely recognize something even though we may have no ascertainable means of doing so. Perhaps literary criticism is part of the endeavor to substantiate this sense, to bring in, from the dark, fragments of something recognizable, something we can hold up to others sitting round the campfire and say, "Look, I don't know what this is that I found in the forest, but we can all make some agreement on what to call it, can't we?" The trouble is, this does not guarantee that anybody is going to like the revelation; but at least it provides for a moment of social communion, and perhaps it is fair to say that the haunting possibility of that communion also has something to do with the whole mad enterprise of poetry, the attempt, on the one hand, to suggest that there are strangenesses with which one cannot deal while, on the other, to set them forward as possible sites for sharing, possible ways in which a group of feelings might be given an incarnation that will serve, temporarily of course, to unite the disordered phenomena by which we are beset.

Winter Trees

The wet dawn inks are doing their blue dissolve.
On their blotter of fog the trees
Seem a botanical drawing –
Memories growing, ring on ring,
A series of weddings.

Knowing neither abortions nor bitchery,
Truer than women,
They seed so effortlessly!
Tasting the winds, that are footless,
Waist-deep in history –

Full of wings, otherworldliness.
In this, they are Ledas.
O mother of leaves and sweetness
Who are these pietàs?
The shadows of ringdoves chanting, but easing nothing.

I want to return here to the question of history, of being "waist-deep in history," as the poem has it. It might be the winds that are waist-deep in history – Plath's syntax is ambiguous – but more probably it is the trees. Would that perhaps be a position from which one might look out, reflect? The image comes to mind of Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days*, initially waist-deep (but later, of course, rather more substantially buried) in her private hill, a moving torso, limited in motion and response, some kind of automaton here too. And perhaps Winnie also, with her constant harking

back to the good old days, her repetitive, ritualistic attempts to reincarnate a moment other than the present, has something of the aspect of a pietà, as, here, so do the trees, in some sense, we presume, tending, or at least attending to, the miseries of the world, providing something of an act of grace.

The weddings are here too, those endlessly postponed weddings from "The Ancient Mariner," those moments at which it might be asserted that change takes place. In some cultures these acts of change are also changes of naming, but in others not, and always, of course, they are inflected by other power structures. But the "memories growing, ring on ring," the jealousy here of a state of change, however slow, so long as it leaves some evidence behind it . . . we, of course, leave behind us also evidence of our ageing, but in our bodies rather than in our texts: writing cannot provide that evidence, although the Gothic's continuing attempt to produce the discolored vellum, the half-burned manuscript, clearly relates to this attempt to transfer the question of evidence from body to text, so that there shall be at least some evidence for that frightening fiction which we call "memory."

Where then, we might now ask, have we got to? Where is there to get to? In the opening pages of his paper on the uncanny, Freud says a peculiar thing: he says, when apparently discussing the etymology of *heimlich*, that the dictionaries we might turn to tell us nothing new; and he says the reason for this is that "we ourselves speak a language that is foreign" (Freud, 1953–74, 221). What does he mean by this? The foreign is that which is far from our reign, far from our regime, far from our realm; and so, Freud appears to assert, in our most everyday encounters with language we are always coming on to a scene that is peopled with foreigners, strangers, strange words, words that, presumably, are strange even to ourselves. Just as the winter trees have, for Plath, a life that is different from human life, so the life of words, the life of language, even when it tries to be at its most denominative, is still redolent of this foreignness, of this "difference," which sets it apart from the very matters with which it tries to deal. This difference is perhaps frightening; perhaps it threatens, like Hoffmann's sand-man, to tear out our eyes, so that we can no longer "read" the signs we need to read in order to stay alive.

And thus we might say that writing, the Gothic and the uncanny are inextricably bound up, that even the familiarization betokened by the folk-tale is also a mark of the curious savagery by means of which this story – however oft-repeated, however familiar – simultaneously manifests its "difference," makes us feel that as readers we are not what, or where, we are supposed to be, that we are forever obstructed by the foreignness of language, even "our own" language. Thus in every story we hear, in every poem we read, we experience also a haunting, the present absence of some other story which we would more wish to hear, one that would fit the contours of our desire more precisely and thus protect us from the sense of loss we feel when we realize that the voice is *not* our own, that the voice is perhaps not even intelligible or translatable, that the voice, of course, is not even a human voice at all; it is the stoney voice of an inscription, and it is our privilege and our risk to breathe life into this animated corpse which is text.

Mechanism and technique are the essence of the uncanny: the mechanism of the automaton and the further mechanism of the "mechanical complexes," because, according to Freud, what confronts us when we look into the depths, the depths of Coleridge's ocean, however brilliantly colored its snakey inhabitants may appear at first sight, is not a profusion of organic monsters but a series of machines, purring gently below the surface, precisely the stuff of so much science fiction, so many horror movies, the "mechanical complexes" which give not a damn about the frailty of the flesh and are yet born of it.

Where do we go from here? One direction might be further into the uncanny and the chimera, perhaps, or into the cyborg, the relentless impulse of cyber-fiction to remind us of the inextricability of the machine and the human. Or we could take a different direction entirely, into an enquiry about poetry in particular and about the relation of the technical, mechanical means of poetry and the life-form which, perhaps, they support – means like rhyme and rhythm, means of more arcane nomenclature, prosopopoeia and anacoluthon, means that might threaten in more than one sense to "distort the end."

Instead, though, I would like to mention a final passage from Freud which seems to me to have to do with the uncanny, with the Gothic, with poetry and with history, innocuous and quotidian as it may seem: "One may wander about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch, and collide time after time with the same piece of furniture" (Freud, 1953–74, 237). But what is at stake here? A sense, at the very least, of a kind of impersonal patterning, as if there is some pattern to events which is already laid down, some pattern according to which the people have already fled the cathedral city, or as if the winter trees wave their arms according to some predestined movement. We here touch, of course, on the terrain of paranoia; we touch on the sense that there are voices which come from a machine – the psychiatric term is "thought-broadcasting," although it may need to be altered soon in view of new technological developments – and paranoia, déjà vu and the uncanny are, as I have suggested, bound up together.

But these Gothic phenomena are bound up, too, with poetry, and with history: with poetry because poetry is tied to the wheel (as we see from "The Ancient Mariner") of repetition, of "device," perhaps a "banner with a strange device," the wheel that might steer or merely revolve, the wheel to which a corpse might be tied as the power of the ocean and the devices that lie at the bottom of the ocean take control; with history because there is always the danger of tipping over the edge and taking history itself to be a fiction. Where do we draw the line here? Do we draw it on the ground of our knowledge of suffering bodies, suffering in the present or in the past, in Ethiopia, in Ireland, in Kosovo? Or do we draw it on the ground of their textual representation? Perhaps there is something more to be said about the relation between these two realms. Although, of course, poetry can be crucial in bringing suffering to our understanding, perhaps this needs to be taken in two ways: it can do this in terms of some kind of description, by which we probably mean some kind of rememoration or reconstruction; or perhaps it can do it in its very form, in offering a continuing set

of reminders that poetry, writing in general but quintessentially poetry, offers us reminders of loss – loss of the text that might have been written, of the poem we might have managed had time and history been on our side, but loss also of the sense of the past which, even as we try to reconstruct it, serves also to remind us of how much we have lost, of the realm that is continually vanishing, succumbing to Gothic distortions, and taking with it all our tears and anger, all our hopes of a saving politics which could, in turn, resubvert the macabre, uncanny, automatic processes of the poetic text.

Note

1 I wish to acknowledge a debt to Nicholas Royle, with whom I have co-taught courses on the uncanny in recent years.

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Part IV
Gothic Theory and Genre

19
Gothic Criticism

Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall

> *I perceive you have no idea what Gothic is; you have lived too long amidst true taste, to understand venerable barbarism.*
>
> Horace Walpole, letter to Mann (1753)

Critical and historical studies of Gothic fiction have long labored under a curse. The derisive laughter with which William Wordsworth greeted the romances of Ann Radcliffe has echoed down the ages, to the discomfort of most scholars of Gothic studies, who have been obliged either to accept the scornful verdict of criticism upon the deficiencies of Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and their followers, or to devise special strategies to annul its malediction. Until the 1930s, most accounts of Gothic fiction were modestly content to admit that the Gothic was an undistinguished curiosity of literary evolution, which nonetheless merited some scholarly treatment of its sources, influences, biographical contexts, and generic features. Since that time, however, shamefaced antiquarianism has given way to defiance, as the Gothic literary tradition has attracted to it partisans and champions who have advanced ever bolder claims for its value, attempting to cast upon it the reflected glories of literary romanticism and of the political traditions of the French Revolution. This modern phase of Gothic studies we have designated, for reasons that will emerge later, the phase of "Gothic Criticism." This chapter does not attempt a full history of the critical discussion of literary Gothic from the 1760s to the present day; it offers only a partial account of some critical problems and strategies that are typical of the Gothic Criticism of the last seventy years.

We should declare at the outset that we regard the problems as severe and the strategies as radically misguided. In our view, Gothic Criticism has abandoned any credible historical grasp upon its object, which it has tended to reinvent in the image

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of its own projected intellectual goals of psychological "depth" and political "subversion." It has erased fundamental distinctions between Gothic suspicion of the past and romantic nostalgia, mistakenly presenting Gothic literature as a kind of "revolt" against bourgeois rationality, modernity, or Enlightenment. Misconceiving Gothic fictions as examples of anti-realist "fantasy" or dream-writing, it has repeatedly overlooked their manifest temporal, geographic, and ideological referents while constructing increasingly implausible models of their supposed latent fears, desires, and "revolutionary" impulses. As we argue later, Gothic Criticism is condemned to repeat what it has failed to understand and so reproduces in its own discourse what we call the trope of "gothicizing" the past, typically casting the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie in the melodramatic light reserved for the Italian aristocracy or the Spanish Inquisition by Radcliffe and Lewis. The result has been that Gothic Criticism serves less to illuminate a certain body of fiction than to congratulate itself, on behalf of progressive modern opinion, upon its liberation from the dungeons of Victorian sexual repression or social hierarchy. In this respect, Gothic Criticism is not an eccentric current in modern literary debate. In fact it stands as a central, if more colorfully flagrant, instance of the mainstream modernist, postmodernist, and left-formalist campaign against nineteenth-century literary realism and its alleged ideological backwardness.

Fortified by the dominant anti-realism of modernist aesthetics and of post-structuralist theory, Gothic Criticism has been able to rebut the long critical tradition of disparagement, assuming the role of the radical outlaw by accusing "Establishment" critics of ignoring, indeed repressing, the merits of fictional modes other than orthodox realism. "Not surprisingly," writes Rosemary Jackson in her influential *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, "fantastic art has been muted by a tradition of literary criticism concerned with supporting establishment ideals rather than with subverting them" (Jackson, 1981, 173). Such accusations may sometimes be justified, but most critics who have scoffed at the Gothic have done so not in rearguard defense of some realist norm, but in a genuine attempt to discriminate between good romances and bad romances. Nonetheless, it has remained conventional in the rhetoric of Gothic Criticism to bewail the cruel "neglect" of Gothic fiction by the myopic realist oligarchy, even now that a student of literature is more likely to be required to study *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the proliferating secondary works based on them, than, say, *Pamela*, *Adam Bede*, or *Anna of the Five Towns.* Tilting at windmills has become habitual to the oppositional stance of Gothic Criticism, not only because rescuing the persecuted maiden Gothica from the ogre is an attractive chivalric fantasy, but because the cultural politics of modern critical debate grant to vindicators of the marginalized or repressed a special license to evade questions of artistic merit. If it can be maintained that the Gothic tradition has been victimized by a discredited form of bourgeois cultural hegemony – namely, literary realism – then half the battle for its rehabilitation, in these conditions, has already been won. The clinching further move is then to imply that this hegemony is driven to repress the threat or challenge of Gothic fiction, so disturbed is it by nonrealist evocations of its own unspeakable fears, anxieties, and taboos, or so alarmed by the subversive energies

of fantasy and nightmare. Within the romance of contemporary cultural discourse, the Gothic is thus positioned as the alluringly undomesticable "Other" of a petrified cultural order, and so also as the favorite wicked uncle of counter-cultural rebellion. Elizabeth Napier's *The Failure of Gothic* (1987) indecorously pointed out that Gothic novels were artistically and morally incoherent, and has since been much chided for failing to see that incoherence is radically liberating. To the Gothic writers, all is now forgiven, their vices transvalued into virtues.

The Emergence of Gothic Criticism

Just as literary realism assumes many more varied forms than its opponents commonly allow, so the critical positions of anti-realism may derive from widely divergent sources. Gothic Criticism emerged from the uneasy confluence of two antithetical strands of modern romanticism in the 1930s: on the one side the reactionary medievalism of the eccentric bibliophile and vampirologist Montague Summers, and on the other the revolutionary modernism of André Breton, leader of the surrealists. Although clearly situated at opposite ends of the political spectrum, they both inherit a certain common romantic assumption that "dream" or fantasy is in itself the deadly enemy of bourgeois materialistic rationalism. The initial antagonism between their positions, which appears starkly and somewhat comically in the final chapter of Summers's *The Gothic Quest* (1938), was eventually to be smoothed over in the synthesis of Devendra P. Varma's *The Gothic Flame* (1957). Summers and Breton could be reconciled, however, only by placing such an emphasis on the oneiric (dream-based) essence of Gothic, and upon its psychic anti-materialism, that the historical, cultural, and religious implications of the Gothic, upon which these two critics disagreed fundamentally, could be buried away like a guilty secret.

Before reviewing the tensions between Summers and Breton, it will be worth glancing at the state of Gothic studies in the 1920s. Two substantial historical and thematic studies of Gothic fiction appeared in this decade, Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921) and Eino Railo's *The Haunted Castle* (1927), along with an influential pamphlet, Michael Sadleir's *The Northanger Novels* (1927). Numerous articles on Walpole appeared in various periodicals, and the first significant monographs on Radcliffe and Maturin were published. Scholarly journals, notably the *PMLA*, offered important historical articles on Gothic fiction, among which we would highlight two in particular: J. R. Foster's article "The Abbé Prévost and the English novel" (1927) proposes connections between eighteenth-century realist-sentimental novels (not just Prévost's, but those of Samuel Richardson) and the Gothic tradition that have been disregarded in most subsequent Gothic Criticism, while Clara F. McIntyre's "Were the 'Gothic novels' Gothic?" (1921) points out some elementary but often overlooked facts about the chronologies of Gothic novels, showing that most of them were not set in the "Middle Ages" but in later periods. The culmination of this scholarly tradition was the treatment of Gothic in J. M. S. Tompkins's *The Popular Novel*

in England, 1770–1800 (1932) – a solidly researched study which presents Gothic fiction within its fuller historical contexts.

The advent of Gothic Criticism brushed aside the insights of these scholars. It disconnected the Gothic novel from earlier forms of "bourgeois" fiction and emphasized instead its affinities with the higher forms of poetry – the "Graveyard Poets" and, of course, the visionary romanticism of Coleridge and Shelley. At the same time most Gothic Criticism asserted, in the teeth of McIntyre's embarrassing evidence, a direct spiritual continuity between the late eighteenth-century Gothic novel and the twelfth-century Gothic cathedrals. In effect, Gothic Criticism cast aside the difficulties of literary-historical research – the dominant mode of literary study until the 1930s – and replaced them with the simpler convictions of psychic intuition, turning the Gothic novel into a "poetic" revival of medieval sentiment or romance.

Breton's article "Limits not frontiers of surrealism," in Herbert Read's anthology *Surrealism* (1936), claimed Horace Walpole as a precursor of the surrealists, and hailed the Gothic novelists in general for resorting spontaneously to dream and fantasy and thereby "fathoming the secret depths of history" which are inaccessible to Reason (Sage, 1990, 112–15). Breton interprets the central tensions of Gothic fiction in Freudian terms as a struggle between Eros and the "Death Instinct." As we shall see again later, though, such psychological preoccupations can coexist with more distinctly historical insights. As Breton claims, the ruined buildings encountered in Gothic novels "express the collapse of the feudal period; the inevitable ghost which haunts them indicates a peculiarly intense fear of the return of the powers of the past" (Sage, 1990, 113).

Montague Summers's riposte, in his chapter "Surrealism and the Gothic novel," is grounded in snobbery, expressed in the claim that the Gothic novel "is an aristocrat of literature" (Summers, 1938, 397). To him it was genuinely bewildering to find Breton and his followers suggesting that Gothic novels were anti-aristocratic, revolutionary, or even – as we shall see later – anti-Catholic. To Breton's interpretation of Gothic fiction as a representation of escape from the tyranny of a feudal past into an enlightened present, Summers responds: "one may be excused for remarking that the peace and plenty, the culture and stability of the past, seem to many of us entirely preferable to the turmoil, the quarrels, the artistic sterility and chaotic depression of the present" (398). As for the surrealists' association of Gothic with revolutionary impulses, the very word "Revolution" has for Summers so ugly a significance that he cannot bear to see it linked with his favorite genre. After all, he insists – with some justice – the leading Gothicists were anti-revolutionary: Walpole, a true gentleman, would have regarded socialism with disgust; Ann Radcliffe was deeply conservative; Lewis was a capitalist slave-owner; and Maturin was a declared opponent of Godwinian radicalism.

Summers does acknowledge that there was a revolutionary current in the literature of the 1790s and that the minor Gothicist Charlotte Smith was guilty of some liberal indiscretions, but the passing ferment had no lasting significance because, fortunately, this poisonous mischief "was soon stamped out and squashed, in no small part through

the admirable energies of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*" (Summers, 1938, 401). As Summers appears to have been the last commentator on Gothic fiction to have used the adjective "subversive" in pejorative senses, his position may appear now so foreign to the assumptions of recent Gothic Criticism as to be incomprehensible. It does proceed, though, from clear principles. Summers asserted without qualification that the "spirit" of Gothic fiction was the quintessence of romanticism, and that: "The Romanticist is not a revolutionary; he is rather a reactionary. He turns back towards and seeks to revive – in some measure to relive the past" (404). This view of the reactionary nature of romanticism may be tenable in the context of certain currents of French literature, but it is quite implausible in the land of Blake and Shelley. Subsequent Gothic Criticism has accordingly parted company from Summers on this point and aligned itself more with Breton, while usually retaining, however, Summers's assumption that the Gothic is a form of romanticism characterized by nostalgic resistance to bourgeois modernity and enlightenment.

The assimilation of Gothic fiction into romantic and pre-romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages is one of the cardinal errors of Gothic Criticism. Founded on little more than the deceptively playful Preface attached by Horace Walpole to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, this notion of the Gothic as a "Revival" of medieval spirituality overlooks both the fact that most Gothic novels, apart from *Otranto*, have nothing to do with the Middle Ages as such, and the more important tendency of Gothic writers to display a thoroughly modern distrust of past centuries as ages of superstition and tyranny. Summers and Varma both seem to have had religious motives for suppressing these awkward features of Gothic: the former was an ardent Roman Catholic convert, the latter a Hindu mystic. Both assert that reading a Gothic novel is essentially the same kind of experience as worshipping in a twelfth-century Gothic cathedral. "The connexion between the Gothic Romance and Gothic Architecture," writes Summers, "is, so to speak, congenital and indigenous, it goes deep down to and is vitally of the very heart of the matter" (Summers, 1938, 189). Varma's conception of the essential "Gothic spirit," which allegedly unites Chartres and *The Monk*, is even more emphatic: "the Gothic mind," he claims, "loves to brood over the hallowed glory of the past" (Varma, 1957, 18), and even to contemplate the Infinite:

> It is much like the concern of the saint who tries to touch the still centre of intersection of the timeless with time. And when the Gothic novelist attempts the same he remembers the grand design of the cathedrals, and tries to blend into his novel the same volatile ingredients of fear and sorrow, wonder and joy, the nothingness and infinitude of man. The reader is terror-stricken and lost; carried away and redeemed; found and made whole in the same manner. The Gothic novel is a conception as vast and complex as a Gothic cathedral. One finds in them the same sinister overtones and the same solemn grandeur. (16)

Thus, as Varma later asserts, "The Gothic novel was animated by the spirit of Gothic art" (207). "In short," Varma concludes, "it evokes in us the same feelings that the Gothic cathedrals evoked in medieval man" (212). He is able to sustain this claim

only by disregarding the obvious signs of modern skepticism in Gothic fiction, and by reducing the Gothic to an abstract principle of supernaturalism, or what he calls "a quest for the numinous" (211).

Summers's and Varma's construction of Gothic fiction as a "Gothic Revival" of medieval faith or wonder may now appear eccentric in expression, but their assumptions persist in, for instance, Maurice Lévy's *Le Roman gothique anglais* (1968), in Linda Bayer-Berenbaum's *The Gothic Imagination* (1987), and in Maggie Kilgour's more recent *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (1995). Kilgour argues that:

> The gothic is symptomatic of a nostalgia for the past which idealises the medieval world as one of wholeness. . . . This retrospective view of the past serves to contrast it with a modern bourgeois society, made up of atomistic possessive individuals, who have no essential relation to each other. (Kilgour, 1995, 11)

According to Kilgour's account, moreover, "the gothic looks backwards to a kinder simpler paradise lost of harmonious relations that existed before the nasty modern world of irreconcilable opposition and conflict" (15); it is even claimed that Gothic fiction constitutes "a critique of Protestant bourgeois values" (11). If these remarks had been applied to the writings of Pugin or Ruskin, they might make credible sense. As applied to the Gothic novel, they display such an "irreconcilable opposition" between critical illusion and textual evidence that one can only iterate the obvious in reply: most Gothic novels have little to do with "the medieval world," especially not an idealized one; they represent the past not as paradisal but as "nasty" in its "possessive" curtailing of individual liberties; and they gratefully endorse Protestant bourgeois values as "kinder" than those of feudal barons.

Insistence upon the nostalgic medievalism of Gothic fiction is commonly followed by attempts to align the Gothicists as closely as possible with the mainstreams of poetic romanticism. The standard account of Gothic fiction for the last thirty years, David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980, revised 1996) represents in most respects a huge advance upon the eccentric muddles of the Summers/Varma tradition, but it retains their assumption that the Gothic embodies an essentially romantic and poetic project. Punter's opening chapter concurs with Robert Kiely's view (in Kiely's *The Romantic Novel in England* [1972]) that "many of the traditions out of which Gothic fiction grew were not in themselves novelistic but poetic and dramatic" (Punter, 1996, I.16) – a perfectly just observation, but as Punter develops it the poetic sources of Gothic overshadow the prosaic. His second chapter, on the "Origins of Gothic fiction," follows Varma's round-up of pre-romantic currents in eighteenth-century culture – antiquarianism, Ossianism, graveyard poetry, sensibility, sublimity – and places an unusual emphasis on the poetry of Parnell and Young as a major root of the Gothic. Although Punter notices in passing that "it is Richardson who is by far the most important progenitor of the kinds of fiction being written in the final three decades of the century" (I.25), the affiliations of Gothic with enlightened bourgeois realism are quickly forgotten in *The Literature of Terror*, and a major chapter, "Gothic and

romanticism," is devoted to an attempt to establish connections between Gothic and five of the canonical English romantic poets – connections that turn out to be fairly tenuous. In the traditionally defensive traditions of Gothic Criticism, though, Punter seems to require for Gothic fiction some testimony of its high romantic credentials as "part of its validation as a focus of critical interest" (I.87).

Attempted alignments of Gothic fiction with romantic and pre-romantic poetry serve not only to make the school of Walpole and Lewis appear more serious and respectable, but also to place it centrally within a familiar cultural history of a romantic or proto-romantic "revolt" or reaction against what Summers condemned as the shallow materialism of the Augustan age, a rediscovery of what Punter calls "the notion of psychological depth which the bland superficialities of the Enlightenment had tried to obliterate" (I.27). Whether or not it appeals, as *The Literature of Terror* often does, to "depth," a continuing consensus in Gothic Criticism subsumes the Gothic into an anti-Enlightenment rebellion and disregards the vital elements of modern rationality, Protestant skepticism and enlightened Whiggery that are, in our view, essential to Gothic fiction.

For Montague Summers, the value of Gothic fiction lay in its reassertion of the *truths* of the supernatural against the blinkered atheism of the Augustans: "This crass materialism is met by the simple truth that witchcraft is a very real and terrible thing, for we are wiser in this than they; that the supernatural is about and around us ever; that the veil trembles and is very thin" (Summers, 1938, 45). Varma claims that the Gothic romance "records a revolt against the oppressive materialism of the time" (Varma, 1957, 18). Both, as we have seen, present the Gothic as a healthy revival of medieval modes of spirituality. Since they wrote, the emphasis of Gothic Criticism has shifted from spirituality to psychological "depth," but the idea that Gothic fiction is a kind of "protest" against the blindness of Enlightenment rationalism has survived without much challenge. Jackson's chapter on Gothic fiction in her *Fantasy* opens by declaring that: "Unreason, silenced throughout the Enlightenment period, erupts in the fantastic art of Sade, Goya and horror fiction" (Jackson, 1981, 95). Kilgour, again, claims that: "Like Romanticism, the gothic is especially a revolt against a mechanistic or atomistic view of the world and relations, in favour of recovering an earlier organic model" (Kilgour, 1995, 11).

Gothic Criticism has done little to define the nature of Gothic fiction except by the broadest kinds of negation: the Gothic is cast as the opposite of Enlightenment reason, as it is the opposite of bourgeois literary realism. Gothic writing is thus placed within a large family of nonrealistic, fabulous, or "fantastic" texts, from which there is no pressing need to distinguish it. It is above all, in Herbert Read's words, "a dream literature" (Varma, 1957, viii) or, in the words of a later critic, "a literature of nightmare" (MacAndrew, 1979, 1). William Patrick Day's *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* (1985) insists that: "The world of Gothic fantasy is an imitation of the world of the dream, the hallucination, in which that which is real and which is imaginary fade into one" (30). Two major problems flow from such an oneiric conception of Gothic fiction. The first is recurrent generic confusion; the second, which we treat more

fully below, is the prevalent de-historicizing of Gothic writing and of its cultural referents.

The two most valuably innovative works in this field in the 1980s – Punter's *The Literature of Terror* and Jackson's *Fantasy* – are both in fact broad surveys of literary traditions somewhat larger than Gothic itself. Jackson's book embraces all kinds of fabulous, grotesque, uncanny, marvelous, dystopian, and supernatural fictions, while Punter's – despite its subtitle, *A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* – accommodates romantic poems, historical romances, thrillers, and horror movies, many of which are not truly Gothic. It is in many ways a virtue of these works that they treat Gothic fictions alongside related kinds of writing, Punter's account of novels of persecution from Godwin to Pynchon being a notably commendable example. But their assimilation of Gothic into broader categories defined on the basis of perennial psychological impulses – whether terror or fantasy – tends to erase its distinctive features. This is a recurrent problem in Gothic Criticism, and its most obvious symptom is the unreflecting habit of treating *Frankenstein* as a "Gothic" novel on the flimsy basis that its subject matter is horrifying or unnatural. Punter, to be sure, carefully observes that this designation is open to doubt, but Jackson includes Mary Shelley's novel in her chapter on the Gothic without such qualification. In this she follows Varma, Robert D. Hume (1969), and the standard student text, Peter Faircloughs *Three Gothic Novels* (1968). These widespread confusions derive from and further reinforce the assumption of Gothic Criticism that the "Gothic" is to be defined not according to observable features of theme and setting but according to the realms of psychological depth from which it is supposed to originate (dream, fantasy) or the psychological responses it is believed to provoke (fear, terror, horror). Gothic Criticism is commonly unable and unwilling to distinguish its supposed object from the generality of fearful or horrible narratives.

Turning now to the de-historicizing bias of Gothic Criticism, we may illustrate the problem by observing the clearest symptom of this delinquency: its embarrassed silence upon the matter of early Gothic fiction's anti-Catholicism. Where Gothic Criticism notices this important feature at all, it dismisses it as a "superficial" irritation of no particular significance by comparison with the deeper psychological substance of these narratives. In the scholarly tradition of Gothic studies up to and including Joyce Tompkins's *The Popular Novel in England*, it was well understood that anti-Catholic satire was a major feature of early Gothic fiction and that Protestant readers found these novels welcome as endorsements of what Tompkins calls their complacency in their liberation from priestcraft, vulgar superstition, and popish persecution, at a time when the Spanish Inquisition, although inactive, had still not been formally dissolved. With the arrival of a new Freudian agenda for Gothic Criticism in the writings of Breton and his followers, however, the fears and phobias of Gothic fiction quickly became internalized as a primal psychomachia, while the most enduring and formative ideological conflict of modern European history disappeared into the footnotes.

At the same time the leading Gothicist in England, styling himself the Reverend Doctor Alphonsus Joseph-Mary Augustus Montague Summers, had, as a zealous Catholic, his own curious reasons for distracting attention away from the aggressive Protestantism of early Gothic writings. Convinced that the Gothic novels represented a nostalgically romantic "revival" of the supernatural beliefs of the great Age of Faith, Summers insisted, against the anti-Catholic surrealists, that "there is no true romanticism apart from Catholic influence and feeling" (Summers, 1938, 390). Had he ever attempted a study of William Blake, or had his history of Gothic fiction ever got as far as Maturin, Summers would have had extraordinary difficulties in maintaining such a position; and indeed his *Gothic Quest* goes through some remarkable contortions in denying the obvious.

> Although we are bound to allow that here and there a distinct "anti-Roman feeling" is to be found in the pages of certain writers, it would be foolish to insist upon any militant protestantism . . . in the Gothic novelists. These authors employed abbots and convents, friars and cloisters, "cowled monks with scapulars," "veiled nuns with rosaries," because such properties were exotic, they were mysterious, and capable of the highest romantic treatment. (Summers, 1938, 195–6)

The "laughable inaccuracies" (196) whereby Gothic novelists describe friars as monks or vice versa are, in Summers's view, clear evidence of their lack of serious sectarian intent, indicating that they chose conventual settings merely on account of the melancholy and mysterious atmosphere of the remote and the exotic. In the case of such a virulently anti-Catholic novel as Lewis's *The Monk*, Summers has to resort to more desperate gestures. Apparently inspired by some sort of posthumous infatuation with the glamorous homosexual Lewis, Summers indulgently brushes away Lewis's alleged blasphemies as youthful *jeux d'esprit* of no malevolent significance: "His convents, his monks and nuns I regard as harmless, a mere fairyland of melodramatic adventure, delightfully mysterious and transpontine, having no relation at all to reality" (Summers, 1938, 222).

The problem with any attempt to explain away the Gothicists' usual setting of their tales in Catholic countries and institutions as some mere exoticism is that it fails to explain why they adopted southern Europe rather than – like Beckford – the truly exotic Orient. Varma follows Summers in accounting for this "longing for the South, for an alien and distant setting" as a romantic escape from the everyday (Varma, 1957, 61). His account of *The Monk* likewise manages to overlook the novel's anti-Catholic tendency, but Varma is obliged to acknowledge the problem when he comes to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer.* But even after quoting numerous examples of anti-Catholic sentiment in *Melmoth*, he feels able to claim that in Gothic fiction "there are no direct theological attacks" on the Roman Catholic church and that it is only "the incidental vestments, not the doctrine of Catholicism, that serve as a source of terror" (219). Varma's misreading of Maturin's serious purpose emerges glaringly when he

refers to this devout Protestant clergyman's "avowed atheism" (220) and when he remarks that: "It is curious that Maturin, a priest, should have introduced in his works sentiments averse to Christianity" (170). Such an elementary failure to distinguish Protestantism from atheism would have been regarded by Ann Radcliffe and most of her readers as a disqualification from understanding Gothic novels; but in the discourse of Gothic Criticism such differences, because they are cultural rather than psychological, count for nothing. Indeed, one finds in Punter's *The Literature of Terror* a similar lack of interest in religious referents and even a repetition of Varma's confusion when Punter observes in Maturin "an anticlericalism, surprising in a priest" (Punter, 1996, I.124).

In spite of some significant attempts to recall attention to the importance of Protestant–Catholic conflict in Gothic fiction (Bostrom, 1963; Sage, 1988), the tendency to disregard such surface "details" in the pursuit of psychological "depth" remains peculiarly persistent in Gothic Criticism. Anne Williams's *Art of Darkness* (1995) employs the Freudian concept of the "compromise formation" to provide an oedipal explanation for early Gothic fiction's obsession with monastic institutions. As she explains:

> these family dynamics are equally inherent in the structure of the Roman Catholic Church, where monks and nuns are "brothers" and "sisters", where priests are called "father" and abbesses "mother". The various communities live in religious "houses". . . . The early Gothic's conventional insistence on the historicity of these narratives may thus signal what Freud called a "compromise formation" in the dream work; to say that this culture and these events are enormously distant and yet absolutely authentic, historically true, satisfies the dreamer's need both to deny and to confront a troubling reality. (Williams, 1995, 46)

Characteristically, the metaphorical is given more weight than the literal, the psychological more than the historical, and the hidden and symbolic more than the ostensible. By means of a minor psychoanalytic adjustment, Gothic fiction's historically and ideologically conditioned view of supposed Catholic and monastic abuses is explained in terms of its opposite – a wholly familiar domestic situation shared by the late eighteenth- and late twentieth-century reader alike. For Williams, "our culture" is "'realized' as a medieval abbey or an ancestral mansion" (46). The more the novelist insists that his or her narrative is about there and then, the more it reveals that it is about here and now – precisely *our own* here and now.

The collapse of history into universal psychology has been a consistent feature of Gothic Criticism since at least the 1930s. André Breton's ruminations on the *romans noirs* referred to above include the encouraging observation that, viewed against the background of the French Revolution, "the ruins [of Gothic fiction] appear suddenly so full of significance in that they express the collapse of the feudal period; the inevitable ghost which haunts them indicates a peculiarly intense fear of the return of the powers of the past." This insight is, however, unfortunately negated by the subsequent turn to psychology – the inevitable ghost that still haunts Gothic Criticism. Breton

continues: "the subterranean passages represent the difficulty and periods of the dark path followed by each individual towards the light" (Sage, 1990, 113). History is evoked only to be collapsed into the psychodrama enacted by "each individual," irrespective of culture, context or period. Leslie Fiedler's boldly stimulating book *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960, revised 1966) illustrates even more lavishly the lurch from a recognition of Gothic fiction's bourgeois-Protestant critique of a corrupt past (Fiedler, 1984, 132–8) to a belief that it is "fundamentally anti-bourgeois" (127) in releasing the primal terrors of the unconscious. Taking up the same topic of the archetypal ruin, he claims that "such crumbling edifices project the world of collapsed ego-ideals," and further that: "The upper and the lower levels of the ruined castle or abbey represent the contradictory fears at the heart of gothic terror: the dread of the super-ego . . . and of the id" (131–2). Twenty years on, David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* likewise swings from glimpses of a sense in which Gothic is "partly an attitude towards history" to the less cautious declaration that "Gothic fiction is erotic at root" (Punter, 1996, I.144, II.191).

Explicit rejections of the importance of history and topography also abound in Gothic Criticism. William Patrick Day asserts that the Gothic world is "a world of utter subjectivity," which "reject[s] the very idea of history" (Day, 1985, 33). Similarly, for Coral Ann Howells, the Gothic "looks away from the here and now, into past times or distant locales (or to put it more accurately, into a fantasy world which is both timeless and placeless . . .)" (Howells, 1978, 7–8). Again, the novelists' careful insistence that their works take place in the past or far away (invariably announced in the first paragraphs or the titles or subtitles – "A *Gothic* tale," *An Italian Romance*) is misread as an indifference to such considerations. The indifference, though, belongs not to the Gothic novelist but to the interpreter – an especially (and literally) far-fetched instance of this being Jackson's placing of the action of *Frankenstein* in the Antarctic rather than the Arctic (Jackson, 1981, 100).

The most striking thing about this tendency is how markedly it departs from some of the earliest accounts of the characteristics of Gothic fiction. Consider Sir Walter Scott's comments on the Radcliffean Gothic in his Introduction to an 1824 edition of her novels. According to Scott, Mrs. Radcliffe had:

> selected for her place of action the south of Europe, where the human passions, like the weeds of the climate, are supposed to attain portentous growth under the fostering sun; . . . and where feudal tyranny and Catholic superstition still continue to exercise their sway over the slave and bigot. . . . These circumstances are skilfully selected, to give probability to events which could not, without great violation of truth, be represented as having taken place in England. (Sage, 1990, 59)

For Scott, the exotic distance employed by Radcliffe serves the interests of *probability* rather than fantasy; and far from being indifferent to setting, she "skilfully selected" these locales in the interests of a supposed sociopolitical truth. This "truth" is a culturally conditioned one, premised on chauvinism and sectarianism, but is nonetheless

endorsed by those who consumed or commentated on its representations. Scott understands the motivations of the early Gothic and, unlike modern commentators, is prepared to accept the accuracy of its historical representations, which accorded with the political needs and standards of the time. There is nothing of "nostalgia" or "escapism" in his formulation: Italy, Spain, and southern France were chosen because, to the Protestant mind, they were firmly associated with the twin yoke of feudal politics and popish deception, from which they had still to emancipate themselves. Put simply, Gothic novels were set in the Catholic south because, "without great violation of truth," Gothic (that is, "medieval") practices were believed still to prevail there. Such representations drew upon and reinforced the cultural identity of the middle-class Protestant readership, which could thrill to the scenes of political and religious persecution safe in the knowledge that they themselves had awoken from such historical nightmares. Gothic fiction is essentially *Whiggish*, in the sense classically defined by Herbert Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931): it "studies the past with reference to the present," sorting historical actors into the categories of "men who furthered progress and the men who tried to hinder it" (Butterfield, 1959, 11). It delights in depicting the delusions and iniquities of a (mythical) social order and celebrating its defeat by modern progressive values.

This partisan and self-consciously Protestant approach to historical representation in Gothic novels has been mistaken by many critics for an "indifference" to history, on the grounds of its manifest anachronism. Gothic Criticism here disastrously misunderstands the motivations of Gothic fictional historicity and its purposeful deployment of anachronistic emphases to structure its narrative effects. The anachronism resides principally in the evident "modernity" of the typical heroes and heroines who feature in novels with "historical" settings. As has often been remarked, these characters think and feel very much like their original readers and are manifestly out of place in their purportedly "historical" settings: Clara F. McIntyre pointed out in 1921 that Radcliffe's characters, "although they live in deserted abbeys or wild castles, have the manners and customs of eighteenth-century England" (McIntyre, 1921, 656). Far from indicating negligence or somnambulism, this chronological discrepancy is the prime motivation of these narratives, and that which provides their central dramatic interest. For if the good characters are "modern" types drawn from Richardsonian sentimental fiction, the villains are characteristically archaic, their principal function being to represent the values of a benighted antiquity. Modern values are confirmed and modern virtues rewarded in the denouement, when the heroine escapes finally from the clutches of the Inquisition and is allowed to marry the suitor of her choice as she takes up residence in a tastefully designed villa, allowing the feudal castle to fall into ruins. That is why a typical "historical" Gothic tale is set on what Robert Miles has called the "Gothic cusp" (Miles, 1995, 87): situated between the modern and the medieval worlds, the narrative witnesses the birth of modernity, which is achieved in one generation.

Anachronistic representation can also be identified in novels that are nearly contemporary with their original readers or are somewhat vague about exactly when they

are set, the most famous example being Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). And yet, as Scott's comments suggest, the southern European and Catholic settings sanctioned such depictions. To the Protestant mind, Italy, Spain, and southern France were as much temporal as geographic realms, representing, as one critic puts it, "a contemporary, continental medieval period" (Tarr, 1946, 9). After all, the Inquisition survived until 1834, and thus the English tourist, like the one who features in the first pages of Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), could encounter "Gothic" institutions merely by visiting Catholic countries, traveling in time as well as space. Gothic novels thus thrive on anachronistic emphases, and their narrative effects derive from the clash between "modernity" and "antiquity," whether the former finds itself misplaced in the latter, or the latter lives beyond its proper scope and survives into the present.

It was the second anachronistic emphasis that came to prevail as the Gothic mode developed in the nineteenth century. The madwomen who raved in their attics or circled morosely around their forlorn wedding cakes, the Silas Ruthyns or Percival Glydes who brought Udolphian sexual politics to contemporary Britain, the Varneys and Draculas, four hundred years old and Counting, all derived their "Gothic" status principally from their out-of-placeness, their dissynchronicity with the modern Victorian world of technology and progress into which they intrude. The last-named – Stoker's vampire count – has generated a remarkable amount of critical attention, becoming the central focus of a tendency that has emerged in recent years and now dominates critical interest in Victorian Gothic fiction. We shall call the central feature of this tendency the "anxiety model," and explain why this offers the clearest support for our claim that Gothic Criticism now functions as a "Gothic" form of discourse in its own right, compelled to reproduce what it fails to understand.

Fear and Trembling in the Bourgeois Psyche

The body of criticism to which we refer has the merit of attempting to contextualize late nineteenth-century Gothic, basing its methodology on a perceived relationship between horror text and the cultural context of the *fin de siècle.* But it relies on the doubtful assumption that the Gothic writings of the period offer an index to supposedly widespread and deeply felt "fears" which troubled the middle classes at this time. Stephen Arata's *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (1996), in which many of the texts discussed are Gothic, provides a key example of this approach. It shows how "historically specific" concerns are "cast into narrative, into stories a culture tells itself in order to account for its troubles and perhaps assuage its anxieties." These include "but [are] not limited to the retrenchment of empire, the spread of urban slums, the growth of the "criminal" classes, the proliferation of "deviant" sexualities . . . and even the demise of the three-decker novel" (Arata, 1996, 1). That the *fin de siècle* witnessed a return of the Gothic appears here to confirm what is now the axiomatic assumption that the bourgeoisie at this period was "anxious" and that this is reflected in its horror fiction. Thus, for Arata, Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* "articulates

in Gothic fiction's exaggerated tones late-Victorian anxieties concerning degeneration [and] atavism," with Mr. Hyde embodying "a bourgeois readership's worst fears" (35) and in general "plumb[ing] deep pools of patriarchal anxiety" (43), while *Dracula* "articulates, in distorted but vivid fashion, some of the culture's more harrowing anxieties" (126) about race, gender, and sexuality. "Yet one can argue," Arata continues, "that it is precisely the business of Gothic fiction to articulate anxieties as a prelude to mastering them" (126). A similar view is expressed by Kelly Hurley, who also focuses on the late nineteenth century and explains how the Gothic emerges "at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises" (Hurley, 1996, 5). But is it the "business" of Gothic fiction to "articulate" or "negotiate" anxieties? Is it not rather the "business" of the Gothic to be scary or sensational? This does not amount to the same thing.

The assumption that cultural "anxiety" is reflected or articulated in Gothic fiction is not only rather simplistic: it is tautological. Horror fiction is used to confirm the critic's own unproven point of departure, that this "oppressive" culture was terrified by its ideological "Others"; and thus if the Gothic features the Other in demonic form, these demonic forms must reflect society's fears about the Other. As Arata reasons, "given, too, widespread British fears over the degeneration of their 'stock', Dracula's threat would inevitably have been perceived in racial terms" (Arata, 1996, 117) – but, we must ask, inevitably perceived by whom, other than by the critic who is blessed with the insights of "modernity" and a critical practice that enables the "latent" script to emerge? Since Gothic horror fiction has a *generic obligation* to evoke or produce fear, it is in principle the *least* reliable index of supposedly "widespread" anxieties. One might with equally misplaced confidence cite *Punch* magazine or the comic opera of Gilbert and Sullivan to establish the widespread cheerfulness and levity of Victorian culture. Furthermore, while most recent readings of the *fin de siècle* purport to be "historicist" in emphasis, their reliance upon allegorical interpretations in which Demon stands for Deviant, and upon an unexamined model of "bourgeois fears" as the motivation for fiction, ultimately undermines their historicist credentials, once more allowing "psychology" (fear of the "abject," fear of the "other") to hold the field.

While the passage from anxious context to fearful text is tautologically simplistic in this tradition, there is nonetheless scope for critical ingenuity in the interpretations that the text's supposed "symbolism" encourages. This is one of the principal reasons why Count Dracula has become the hero of recent Gothic Criticism. His protean nature and almost complete silence mean that he can be fashioned into a variety of forms, without saying anything embarrassing to contradict these formulations. Space does not permit even a brief survey of the myriad (political, racial, and principally sexual) forms the count's "threat" has taken over recent years; we will focus on a claim that has been made on a number of occasions which makes a virtue of this indeterminacy. As Gothic Criticism explores the "collective anxieties of the bourgeoisie of this period" (Arata, 1996, 32), so Dracula can best serve his function if he embodies all of these and more. Judith Halberstam has argued that "the others Dracula has absorbed and who live on in him, take on the historically specific contours of race,

class, gender and sexuality . . . the vampire Dracula, in other words, is a composite of otherness that manifests itself as the horror essential to dark, foreign and perverse bodies" (Halberstam, 1995, 89, 90). Such a claim can be used to resolve what, on the surface, might appear to be contradictory positions. For example, Dracula's composite otherness allows Burton Hatlen to reason that:

> In driving Dracula back to his lair, the English characters and their allies thus seem to be defending themselves not only against a sexual and a cultural threat but also against a social threat, the threat of a revolutionary assault by the dark, foul-smelling, lustful lower classes upon the citadels of privilege. (Carter, 1988, 130–1)

To support this idea he observes that: "Like the coal miner, Dracula comes out of the lower depths; like the peasant his life is rooted in the soil" (130). It is not that Dracula's nobility (not to mention his mountainous domicile) has been forgotten, for: "At the same time, Count Dracula also represents, paradoxically, another kind of threat to the *haute bourgeoisie*, the threat posed by [the] aristocracy" (131). As Hatlen explains: "It is 'otherness' itself, not some particular social group, that Dracula represents; and, for the bourgeoisie, the modes of otherness are infinite" (131). It is this belief in the infinite modes of bourgeois anxiety that generates the seemingly infinite readings of Stoker's vampire and is the foundation of the most recent trends in Gothic Criticism. Dracula's threat/appeal resides less in what he is – a vampire – than in what he is not – "Victorian." The vampire itself has become a cipher, merely the vehicle for the desires and agendas of modern critical discourse, and the pretext for the latest Gothic melodrama to be enacted.

Such readings are melodramatic in so far as they are wholly dependent on the understanding that the (white male heterosexual) Victorians are the villains (defined by their transparent adherence to "orthodox" standards of morality and oppressive gender, class, race, and sexual allegiances), while the vampire is the heroic subverter of these values. Once established, these principles allow the critic's will to subversion and interpretative ingenuity full scope. Christopher Craft's highly influential essay, "'Kiss me with those red lips': gender and inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (1984), illustrates this tendency, in which the pursuit of sexual "subversion" amounts to something of a secular faith. This is Craft's reading of the measures taken to counteract the effects of vampirism, starting with Van Helsing's blood transfusions:

> Lucy, now toothed like the Count, usurps the function of penetration . . . [T]hese men race to reinscribe, with a series of pointed instruments, the line of demarcation which enables the definition of gender. To save Lucy from the mobilization of desire, Van Helsing and the Crew of Light counteract Dracula's subversive series of penetrations with a more conventional series of their own. (Craft, 1990, 228–9)

By "conventional penetrations" Craft means sexual intercourse: "these transfusions, in short, are sexual" (229). What is never really established, though, is why Dracula's blood-sucking "penetrations" are "subversive," whereas Van Helsing's insertions of

hypodermic needles are merely "conventional." Craft assumes once again that hypodermic injections are erotic when he discusses Van Helsing's injecting Mina with morphine: "Dracula enters at the neck, Van Helsing at the limb; each *evades available orifices and refuses to submit to the dangers of vaginal contact.* This shared displacement is telling: to *make your own holes is an ultimate arrogance* [which acknowledges] the threatening power imagined to inhabit woman's available openings" (235, our emphases). The drinking of blood and the insertion of a needle are first assumed to be "sexual," and once this is granted, the critic can then find it sinisterly "telling" that a manifestly nonsexual penetration "refuses to submit" to the norms of truly sexual activity. This reading is wholly dependent upon the a priori assumptions that vampirism is sexually subversive and that the "conventional" Victorian patriarchs are the villains of the piece. It is within such closed circles of illogic that Gothic Criticism stages its melodrama of interpretative "trangression."

We have designated the dominant modern tradition of reading in this field as "Gothic Criticism" because it reproduces the Whiggish strategies of the Gothic fictional mode itself. As we pointed out above, Gothic novels with historical settings, such as *Otranto* or *Udolpho*, feature heroes and heroines who are blessed with modern attitudes and sensibilities. They are the reader's counterparts, menaced by the Gothic past in the form of feudal despots and corrupt ecclesiastics. This emphasis on anachronism is reversed but still maintained where the context is modern and proximate: here, the threat derives from Gothic vestiges which survive into the present and threaten the values of modernity, as in *Dracula*, in which the four-hundred-year-old atavistic demon invades the world of science, technology, and progress – the "nineteenth century up to date with a vengeance" (Stoker, 1993, 51). It is no accident that two of Dracula's opponents are scientists, a circumstance that heightens the disruptive potential of this historical reversion.

Modern Gothic Criticism, especially when it focuses on the vampire's supposed sexual "subversiveness," effects a reversal of its own and in so doing makes of *Dracula* its own neo-Gothic narrative. For now it is the Victorian context, which for Stoker signified modernity, that has become "Gothic" in its own right. The Victorian age, as depicted in Gothic Criticism, is rewritten as a dark age of Gothic delusion and tyranny. Van Helsing's "Crew of Light" are now read as benighted oppressors, the direct equivalents of the feudal tyrants and deluded priests of the Radcliffean tradition. Count Dracula remains an anachronism, but by virtue of his supposed *modernity*, not his atavism: it is his Victorian antagonists who now represent the "Gothic" past and all its repressive follies.

Revalued as, in Carol A. Senf's phrase, a "missionary of desire" (Carter, 1988, 166), the vampire brings sexual and ideological enlightenment and thus becomes, despite his great antiquity, the reader's counterpart, the "modern" figure in the text. Gothic Criticism thus identifies with the vampire and demonizes what Burton Hatlen calls his "pallid, prissy asexual" antagonists, the Victorians whom we delight in punishing through the vampire's agency (Carter, 1988, 130). Stoker's original scenario is thus inverted, and yet the Gothic structure of the archaic clashing with the modern stays

in place. This Whiggish melodrama of modernity in conflict with the dark age of repressive Victorianism is played out in the pages of *Dracula* criticism, which has made itself a new arena for Gothic historical fantasy. So, for Hatlen, Stoker's text reflects "our desire (by 'our' I mean middle-class whites)" to be "sexually violated by the 'dark,' 'foul-smelling' outsider" (Carter, 1988, 133), while for another critic, "it is not far-fetched to claim that Count Dracula offers himself as a privileged focus for any inquiry into the possibilities of liberation within Western civilization" (Wood, 1983, 175). The "liberation" that the vampire brings is principally sexual liberation, the basis of "our" own modernity and enlightenment. In this process, older Gothic prejudices are forgotten. David Pirie, for example, finds it "not surprising that once [Stoker] hit on a theme as visually arresting and sexually liberating as the demon aristocrat vampire, what he eventually wrote would have proved irresistible to the film-makers of the twentieth century" (Pirie, 1977, 31). Demons and aristocrats, once associated with the enslavement of mind or body, are now "liberating" and associated with the values and tastes of "modernity." Gothic Criticism's readings of Stoker's text now situate it on a new Gothic "cusp," a borderland between the dark ages of repression and the bright future of sexual and social enlightenment. Thus Pirie speculates on the likely reaction of Stoker's original readers: "if the Victorians shivered, it may have been because they rightly wondered how long the sexual energy that Dracula represented could be kept safely out of sight across the sea and 'beyond the forest' " (30). Like the first Gothic authors, the critic knows the outcome of history and can depict the historical past as a battleground for the conflict between progressive individuals and the agents of reaction. An atavistic aristocrat can become a new Whig hero, once vampires have been eroticized and sexuality has been accepted as the basis of modern "enlightenment."

Dracula criticism, then, is the principal example of the deployment of what we have termed the "anxiety model" in the recent phase of Gothic Criticism. This tradition employs a model of culture and history premised on fear, experienced by a surrealist caricature of a bourgeoisie trembling in their frock coats at each and every deviation from a rigid, but largely mythical, stable middle-class consensus. Anything that deviates from this standard is hailed as "subversive," with Dracula standing as the eternal principle of subversion – Otherness itself, to be fashioned according to the desires and agendas of the critic. Yet "subversion" in this discourse is invariably an acceptable postmodern euphemism for the older Whiggish conception of the "progressive." For what the Victorians are represented as being most "anxious" about is, strangely, not the persistence of the Gothic past, but the arrival of *the enlightened future*, in the shape of "our" emancipated sexualities, "our" egalitarian righteousness.

David Punter has offered this striking model of the terror-stricken condition of the bourgeoisie: "Ever watchful against 'unnatural' change, the middle class is perfectly imaged in the form of the person sitting rigidly in the darkened chamber while monstrous faces press against the windows" (Punter, 1996, II.201–2). This figure is now perfectly imagined for our own satisfaction: in Gothic Criticism, it is our faces that press against that window. Punter's image of the rigid person (originally a "man" in

the 1980 edition) was offered in an attempt to explain a bourgeois taste for horror fiction and at least acknowledged a degree of pleasure (albeit strangely masochistic) in its consumption. More recent developments in Gothic Criticism have elected this figure of the anxious bourgeois paterfamilias to stand as *the* representative of an historical period, carrying an enormous weight of ideological and theoretical significance. From psychoanalysis, such Gothic Criticism has taken a model of middle-class respectability divided against itself, deeply riven by and in conflict with uncontrollable forces; from post-structuralism it has taken the model of "violent hierarchies," in which the dominant constructs its identity by the constant suppression of the subordinate; and from neo-Marxist theory it has taken a model of the "political unconscious," the unsaid of a given historical period, which modern criticism is called upon to articulate, finding in the past "subversive" validations of the desires and agendas of the present. Situated on the threshold of a dreaded modernity, the anxious bourgeois is now assailed on all sides by the combined forces of ideological "otherness" and subversion as defined by the collective agendas of late twentieth-century identity politics. In the recent focus upon the *fin de siècle* as the cradle of these agendas, the Gothic, far from being marginalized, has become central to the concerns of contemporary critical discourse. All the more reason, then, to submit the strategies and presuppositions of Gothic Criticism to skeptical scrutiny.

A properly critical reassessment of Gothic Criticism's assumptions will sooner or later need to confront its received view of the bourgeoisie paralyzed by dread – a view best captured by Punter's claim that "to a 'middle class', everything is a source of fear except perfect stasis" (Punter, 1996, II.201). If one approaches the bourgeoisie from a different starting point though – from the stock exchange rather than from the psychiatric couch – one is likely to be led to the opposite conclusion: that everything is a source of profit except perfect stasis. At least in Marx's account, the bourgeoisie is the most restlessly dynamic and iconoclastic class in history, driven as it is to embark upon ceaseless transformation and innovation. It always includes, of course, a panicky rearguard of gloomy Calvinist bankrupts and floodgates-of-anarchy ideologues for whom the disruptive social consequences of such transformations spell imminent doom; but the true bourgeois can afford to regard his "Others" not with terror but with equanimity or even delight, because, from opium fiends in China to wielders of "Pink Dollars" in California, they represent what he loves best – a new market. Except in brief periods of openly revolutionary disturbance, the prevailing mood of the bourgeoisie is commonly accepted to be one of well-fed complacency. There are good practical reasons why the middle class should sleep more soundly than other social groups can; and there is no evidence that it sleeps less soundly after curling up with a titillating anthology of vampire stories. Indeed, it is likely that an awareness of bourgeois complacency is precisely the irritant that impels the modernist intelligentsia to *wish* paralyzing dread upon the bourgeoisie, as if "we" could catch its guilty conscience by means of nonrealist literary art, as Hamlet does with Claudius. The figure of the terrified bourgeois in Gothic Criticism is a fantasy projected by vengeful frustration, shaped like a wax effigy in a species of literary-theoretical voodoo.

Gothic fiction is neither an "aristocrat" of letters, as Summers wished it to be, nor a form of "popular" cultural insurgence, as it is sometimes assumed to be in film studies, but a bourgeois genre. To acknowledge this is to take a first step toward a sane assessment of its allegedly "subversive" qualities. David Punter's clear insistence upon this point is among the most valuable illuminations offered by *The Literature of Terror*, which casts doubt upon any directly or unambiguously subversive role for Gothic writing (Punter, 1996, II. 196–7). The psychodynamic model employed in this phase of Gothic Criticism in fact requires that a text include both radical and reactionary impulses in conflict with one another. Rosemary Jackson likewise points out "the difficulty of reading Gothic as politically subversive" (Jackson, 1981, 96–7) and indeed argues that most Gothic fiction is conservative in tendency. Drawing upon the left-formalist tradition of Barthes and Kristeva, in which formal disjunction or "openness" is equated with radicalism and formal "closure" is assumed to be ideologically regressive, Jackson divides Gothic texts into the majority, in which the "threat" to bourgeois subjectivity is contained, and those few (including *Melmoth* and, not surprisingly, *Dracula*) whose open structures obstruct such conservative recuperation. The notion that Gothic writing is in some way uniformly or automatically an expression of "revolutionary" impulses, derived by some critics from the obscure remarks of the Marquis de Sade, is now more commonly qualified by a discrimination between conservative and "subversive" varieties of Gothic.

The impact of feminist literary studies upon readings of Gothic has, in this respect, been significantly mixed. In its focus upon such questions as family structure, patriarchal inheritance, domestic ideology, women's property rights, codes of sensibility, and the composition of an evolving reading public, feminist scholarship has opened some of the most promising routes to historical knowledge of the Gothic genre's special features, as in Kate Ferguson Ellis's *The Contested Castle* (1989) and Jacqueline Howard's *Reading Gothic Fiction* (1994). On the other hand, the construction since the 1970s of the predominantly universalizing category of the "female Gothic," as an embodiment of some invariable female "experience" or of the archetypal "female principle," leads straight out of history into the timeless melodrama in which (wicked) "male Gothic" texts always express terror of the eternal "(M)other" while (good) female Gothic texts are revealed to be – as Anne Williams claims – not just "empowering" but "revolutionary" (Williams, 1995, 138).

The sorting of the Gothic canon into supposedly revolutionary and reactionary texts and the less crude sifting of progressive and regressive elements within the same texts have become tedious scholastic exercises in anachronism. Gothic fiction was in one remarkably weak sense "revolutionary," in that it upheld, against any imagined reversion to feudalism, the principles of the Glorious Revolution of 1689, from which no further revolutionary commitment to democracy automatically follows. Although Gothic Criticism wishes such novels to be excitingly subversive or, failing that, to be scandalously reactionary, the sad truth is that they are just tamely humanitarian: they creditably encourage respect for women's property rights, and they imply that rape, arbitrary imprisonment, and torture are, on the whole, a bad thing. If we set aside

the semi-Gothic fiction of William Godwin, the quest for some remote flicker of Jacobinism in this tradition, which engrosses even such a valuable recent work as Robert Miles's *Ann Radcliffe* (1995), is a wild goose chase whose abandonment is long overdue.

We would not wish to leave, in conclusion, the impression that Gothic Criticism itself is an unchanging and unchallenged monolith of anti-historical delusion. On the contrary, as we have indicated, it has been from the start an uneven compound of historical awareness and universalizing psychological speculation, notably in the writings of Breton, Fiedler, and Punter. Since the 1980s, moreover, its authority has encountered significant questioning and defections. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980, revised 1986) issued an important challenge to Gothic Criticism's model of "depth" and "surface," while Victor Sage's exploration of Protestant modes of testimony in his *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (1988) pointedly turned its back upon the dominant Freudian agenda. Since then, there have been more emphatic signs of a return to careful historical specification, in the works mentioned above by Ellis (1989) and Howard (1994), in E. J. Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (1995), and in Robert Miles's two books, *Gothic Writing, 1750–1820* (1993) and *Ann Radcliffe* (1995), to name only the more prominent examples. These departures from the long-standing assumptions of Gothic Criticism have shown that it is both possible and reinvigorating to step outside the "circles of fear and desire."

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20
The Gothic Sublime

Vijay Mishra

"I now come to the Precepts of Longinus, and pretend to shew from them, that the greatest Sublimity is to be deriv'd from Religious Ideas," wrote John Dennis (1657–1734) (see Morris, 1972, 14). Dennis's re-reading of the sublime as an engagement with religious ideas (suggesting indeed that great art is always religious art) is, quite possibly, the first conscious reworking of the Longinian sublime toward other, here religious, ends. Since then, the genealogy of the sublime has been extensively treated, with Dennis's own "Enthusiastic passion" and Edmund Burke's terror as the "source of the *sublime*" (1968, 39) being important theoretical departure points whenever an age has addressed issues concerning the "unpresentable." Samuel H. Monk's path-breaking book *The Sublime* (first published in 1935) set the scene remarkably well: "in theories of the sublime [unlike theories of the beautiful, which are "relatively trim and respectable"] one catches the century somewhat off its guard, sees it, as it were, without powder and pomatum, whalebone and patches" (Monk, 1960, 3). The metaphors look a little ungainly now, a little dated too, but by pointing out how the sublime with its capacity to momentarily embrace a rupture in the economy of reason catches the spirit of an age, Monk makes an important statement about the power and role of the sublime. The sublime catches ideas off their guard, which is why, especially since the eighteenth century, it has been appropriated as a valuable conceptual framework for an understanding of judgments of reflection. Monk is of course indebted to Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Judgment* [the *Third Critique*] (1790), where matters of judgment (whose source was always Dennis's "Enthusiastic passion" "to be looked for . . . only in our ideas"; see Kant, 1986, 97) had to be established on principles independent of "pure" and "practical" reason. Referring to Kant's well-known definitions of the beautiful and the sublime, Paul de Man, a fine theorist, certainly got it right when he suggested that against the beautiful as a "metaphysical

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and ideological principle," the sublime aspired "to being a transcendental one" (1996, 73).

A "circumstantial document" which located the sublime as a transcendental category quite early "was Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*" (Abrams, 1973, 99), first published, in Latin, in 1681–9, and a more prescriptive document, a little later, was, of course, none other than Edmund Burke's own treatise on the sublime and the beautiful. In Burnet's reading, the sublime represented the infinite power of a "stern but just God" who, after the Fall or the Great Flood, purposively ruined a pristine, "beautiful," world with rocks, crags, cliffs, mountains, and the like. The two antithetical qualities of the sublime and the beautiful are necessarily expressions of a powerful God, contraries which the Romantic imagination found inescapable. The idea gets inflected in Barbara Novak's influential study of American landscape painting as "a theodicy of the landscape," where the artist is a God-like spectator, for whom nature exists via an all-pervading perceiver responsible both for its awesome splendor and its serene beauty. Here the sublime, a feature as much of the object (God, nature) as it is of the mind, is evocative of a more self-conscious religious quietism. American landscape artists and poets invoked silence (the lake as a sheeted glass, water "like molten glass cooled but not congealed"[1]) as they worked gradually toward the "Christianization of the sublime" (Novak, 1995, 37). It followed that the sublime was part of a moral universe with a decidedly political meaning. The sense of moral self-righteousness embedded especially in the experience of the (religious) artist – artists such as Frederic Edwin Church and Thomas Cole – pointed toward a will to conquer the landscape, for it seemed that God had given the Christian artist ownership of the full splendor of a hitherto uncharted America. In this reading, the vision of the savage beauty of the landscape (available, after Kant of course, only to those affected by the Law of Reason) was not apocalyptic but revealing. It is here that silence, which was in the traditional, older sublime "unsettling, even awesome" (39), is given a positive spin and light (which turns "matter into spirit" (41)) begins to signal "the newly Christianised sublime" (42). This sublime though does not lead necessarily to a mystical oneness (except in "luminist quietism," where the labor of the artist disappears), but to dualistic distancing from God, which again reinforced a distinctly Christian religious attitude grounded in a sense of ethical responsibility. The Romantic imagination, one suspects, internalized the sublime through a re-projection of feelings and emotions that the object aroused and by holding on to the belief that the poetic models were those of God himself: in the words of M. H. Abrams, "this form is not in the material; it is in the designer before it ever enters the stone" (1958, 43). As a visionary "sublime poet," William Blake, too, in Northrop Frye's foundational reading, was "among the first of European idealists able to link his own tradition of thought with the *Bhagavadgita*" (Frye, 1972, 173), a quasi-monist text in which God declares himself as Logos, the origin of everything. But on the whole, whether defined in Blakean or Wordsworthian terms, or in terms of early nineteenth-century American landscape painting, the sublime was a largely unified category, the source of which was some immense power, understood with reference to the majestic in nature,

and linked both to the object and to the "perceiver's state of mind" (Novak, 1995, 35).

In Novak's reading of American landscape painting, we come close to the sublime as a fundamentally religious category which is linked to the idea of wonder, awe, majesty, and, indeed, to a sense of nonrational attachments to the figure of God, as the idea of God is embraced through feeling and emotion (which is not the same as anti-reason); God becomes not simply a matter of the faculty of reason but also a faculty of (aesthetic) judgment. In this different, nonrational, numinous understanding of God, the subject confronts an absolute Other, a wholly Other, who exists beyond concepts; he is, as Rudolf Otto says, "*ineffable* – in the sense that [he] completely eludes apprehension in terms of concepts" (1970, 5). There is a numinous awakening from within as the mind turns spontaneously to an experience which arises only after "the category of 'the numinous' is called into play" (11). To this quality Otto gave the name *mysterium tremendum*, a condition "before which we do not reason but bow."[2] The latter is a particular experience of the numinous, an experience which may vary from rapture to spasmodic convulsions but is always a negative sublime – uncanny, unfamiliar, awe-inspiring, beyond representation, and the like. Yet the point that Otto makes is that at the heart of the *mysterium tremendum* (as the words themselves suggest) is a "religious dread" (the antecedent of which is in fact a "daemonic dread"; Otto, 1970, 14). The sublime here is a "negative pleasure" (*negativ Lust*) which is why for Otto a benign, abstract God must be reconfigured into a "terrible power" who arouses in the believer feelings of dread, terror, and mystery, albeit in ways which emerge as positive feelings. To do the latter, as Christianity did, this terrible power has to be distanced from the negative sublime and re-conceptualized as a "mere moral allegory" (Eliade, 1987, 9), for to not do so would, as the case of the mystics or more generally the monists showed, lead to the oceanic feeling of self-dissolution, to a "form of demonic rapture that has as its effect, and often as its first intention, the removal of responsibility" (Derrida, 1996, 1). We come to it a little later, but what is being foreshadowed in the failure to transform the negative sublime into a moral allegory is precisely the semantics of the Gothic sublime.

The words used for the *mysterium tremendum* – dread, terror, mystery – words signifying an *Unlust* (*negativ Lust*), a daemonic dread, a negative pleasure, were also seen as the source of the sublime by Burke. In his foundational thesis on the sublime and the beautiful, Burke had noted the source of the sublime as residing in those things which excited "the ideas of pain, and danger" or aroused in us a sense of the terrible or terror generally. The sublime then was associated with "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (1968, 39). This "strongest emotion" Burke identified as "Astonishment," his version of the *mysterium tremendum* where the "mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object." The capitulation of the subject in the face of this "Astonishment" (Burke had used the phrase "the state of the soul") is not unlike the religious experience, and profoundly so. Burke has been used by most theorists of the Gothic as an important precursor of the literary Gothic insofar as his insistence on

the sublime as a quality of the object (which in turn made our senses excitable) is seen to be a key determinant of the sublime discourses of the Gothic. Thus, in one of the best books on the subject of Gothic literature, Maggie Kilgour explains Emily's lack of power in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as arising from the villain Montoni's "impenetrability," because he is "the human version of the sublimity of the mountains" (1996, 119). This is a Burkean understanding of the sublime where the sublime is a feature of the object, which in turn arouses in us a sense of both awe and desire. The question one asks, however, is, "Where does one locate the sublime, in the object or in us"? Burke, it seems, has a bet each way and the Gothic, as most critics have implicitly presumed, does the same.

We return to Immanuel Kant (compulsively in a way) to discover a much clearer proposition in that it is the subject ("an epistemological entrepreneur" in the words of Terry Eagleton, 1990, 72) who sees the sublime as a transcendental principle for which the ground must be found "merely in ourselves and the attitude of mind that introduces sublimity into the representation of nature" (Kant, 1986, 93). Unlike the rhetorical sublime of Longinus or the medieval *sublimitas* and *humilitas* (both "ethico-theological categories"), to Kant "the sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense" (98). This is not an easy sentence to understand, and certainly not in Meredith's translation, but in the overall context of the *Third Critique* it is clear that the condition of the sublime arises from imagination's own failure (in spite of Romanticism's unqualified belief in it) to satisfy reason's demand for totality. It falls to reason, then, to lead the imagination to the condition of the sublime, to the condition at once tremendous and mysterious, at once religious and demonic, at once against Reason's own principles and its wish to countenance it regardless. It is as if there is a momentary letting-go of the Law of Reason as the imagination is pushed to a crisis point, to the condition of excess (emotional, aesthetic, cognitive, and the like[3]) so that it enters into its own abyss, into a chaos from which, if not recalled, it could never return. Neil Hertz referred to it as a "mental overload . . . the drama of the imagination's collapse and reason's intervention" (1978, 62, 73) since sublimity, after Kant, "does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind" (114).

The religious mind transforms mystery and dread into a moral allegory; the daemonic is in some ways tamed; life becomes liveable; the subject is ethically responsible. None of these seems to hold for the Gothic subject for whom the sublime, in the metaphysical terms in which it is being defined here, inhabits the "*pure daemon*" in us. The latter phrase is Friedrich von Schiller's (1966, 210), whose thinking takes us to a sublime which eludes the Law of Reason. This sublime – the Gothic sublime – takes us to a sublime which is the very opposite of the religious sublime. For whereas the terror of God is transformed into another narrative via moral allegory, and therefore implies transcendence over our fears, its very opposite is found in a literary mode which has come to be known as the Gothic. To speak of the latter through the language of the sublime is relatively recent and surfaced, as a fully formed reading of the mode, quite late. In a sense, the Gothic has to be divided from itself, the genre as an

aesthetic object separated from the genre as epistemology. As an aesthetic the genre is, by definition, after Kant's *Third Critique*, in itself morally good since both the beautiful and the sublime are essentially moral experiences. We are doing something quite different here, disentangling the aesthetic from the formal and suggesting that the Gothic occupies an ambiguous position where it is at once moral (and therefore a matter of moral aesthetic judgment) and anti-moral, because it denies transcendence and therefore transformation of experience into a moral allegory.

The sublime lent itself to these seemingly mutually exclusive moral propositions in that it was seen as a sign of the power of reason as well as source of images which signified its very opposite. In the Gothic, desire becomes a thing-in-itself and since desire is founded on a lack (we desire the unpresentable, the impossible), the oceanic/pleasure principle, this death instinct, becomes the goal of life. But because the pleasure principle would make conscious life unbearable, it gets sublimated, its underlying drive repressed so that the unsayable is converted "into the said, the unseeable into the seen" (Levine, 1985, 397). The Gothic then locates itself in that gap, in the space of the momentary letting-go which Reason awards Imagination. In this space there is no room for self-transcendence, as the subject simply dissolves itself into the pleasure principle. It is the voice from the crypt (the deathly space of all Gothic narratives) which wishes to write the narrative of the gap, that infinitesimal lapse on the part of Reason when it gives way to chaos and the mind embraces the full terror of the sublime. The subject declares "I am my own abyss"; life and will forego their struggle as Gothicscapes of "despondency and madness" are embraced with no thought of returning to the Law of Reason. In these Gothicscapes, two figures may be singled out and both – Piranesi (1720–1778) and Fuseli (1741–1825) – provide us with graphic illustrations of the feverish imagination that underpins the Gothic experience. A little hurriedly, our point of entry is Thomas De Quincey's broadly autobiographical essay *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822).

De Quincey recalls Coleridge's reaction upon seeing Piranesi's set of plates titled *Dreams*. Some of the plates "represented vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults . . . expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome" (1989, 163). On the unfinished stairs, wherever we look, however high they are, we locate Piranesi himself sitting or standing on the "very brink of the abyss" (164). There is nowhere else for him to go "except into the depths below" (163). The "power of endless growth and self-reproduction" (164) which De Quincey locates in Piranesi is the power that induces in the Gothic subject a will to contemplate the sublime in all its negativity, to see its tremendous mystery, its unpresentability, in Derrida's astute reading, as a "presentation . . . inadequate to the idea of reason [but presented nevertheless] in its very inadequation" (1987, 131). The great Italian critic of Romantic agony, Mario Praz, referred to Piranesi as "'Gothic' in a wider sense than that of a mere imitation of style" (Praz, 1967, 92) because Piranesi's "spiral stairs become the symbol of an anxiety . . . with no possibility of escape . . . [and] there is no redemption at the end" (Praz, 1983, 20). Piranesi's laudanum-induced (as both Coleridge and De Quincey

felt) inventive architectural designs have the perspective of a mole seeing huge, ruined colonnades from below, thereby disturbing the presumed sanctity of an objective (and architecturally correct) point of view. In both the *Carceri* ("Prisons") and *Le Antichità Romane* ("Antiquities of Rome"), we get an unsettling sense of ruins, a sense of "wings" cut off in mid-flight, sections collapsing, with vegetation challenging art through cracks and hollows. In the *Carceri* more specifically, the central image is often of torture, with occasional epigraphs summoning up the texts' relationship to prison lore. One epigraph in the *Carceri* reads *ad terrorem increscent(tis) audaciae*, which is a slight misquotation from Livy Book 1, Chapter 33. The full sentence, which is a description of the Mamertine Prison in the life of Ancus Marcius, reads *carcer ad terrorem increscentis audaciae media urbe imminens foro aedificatur*, "a prison was built in the middle of the city right above the forum, to inspire terror against the ever growing lawlessness." The phrase quoted by Piranesi is purposefully elliptical, as the conjunction of terror and bold recklessness (*audaciae* is strictly boldness) insinuates the incarceration of the inhabitants of the dungeons in his *carceri*, a *mysterium tremendum* which is all negativity suggestive of a feverish sombreness, a daemonization of the spirit (Mishra, 1994, 270). Layers and layers of levels – in an almost infinite series of architectural profusion – flow in and out of the drawings. And for all that the view remains from below – hellish visions indeed. Pulleys and chains, huge, clanging door knobs, a network of heavy wooden stairs, rafters, beams, and walkways suspended in the air camouflage and belittle naked human beings, their hands tied behind and ready to be impaled by the active aggressiveness of the architecture. Yet the *Carceri*, like the *Antichità*, remains monotonous, compulsively repeating some unspeakable horror forever foreclosed.

Horace Walpole, founder of the Gothic novel, spoke of the "sublime dreams of Piranesi" which, with their architectural motifs, made their way into his foundational *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Piranesi's grandeur and wildness, his fantastic juxtapositions and architectural boldness, his Gothic sublimities and discontinuous montage are conventions which govern this short novel. The latter's origins, as Walpole declared in a letter to Rev. William Cole on March 9, 1765, lay in a dream in which he "thought [himself] in an ancient castle" where "on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase" was a "gigantic hand in armour" (Lewis et al., 1937, 88–9). What followed was a kind of automatic writing growing out of an "enfevered imagination" (Mishra, 1994, 55–6, 57). The center of the Gothic novel unsurprisingly became the space of a castle which was rendered through the threatening etchings, the cluttered and unrealizable designs of Piranesi. For the Gothic, this rendition of space created an "immense structure of possibility" (Holland and Sherman, 1977) for the construction of a ruthless father, a yielding mother, a would-be rapist, an innocent victim (invariably a woman), as well as the compulsively inquisitive reader who, in spite of the threat of castration, enters this world. As Piranesi's nightmare house, a ruined prison "littered with mechanisms of torture," it is the locality of infinite residues of unconscious material, a markedly untrustworthy site, in fact a "cruel, ingenious cage" (Foucault, 1979, 202). In these Piranesi-inspired Gothicscapes, Gothic narratives

work themselves out, but since these scapes defy all logic, they insinuate an unreal world, a simulacral, nightmarish domain of uncanny resemblances. Freud's well-known essay "The Uncanny" draws our attention to two interrelated themes located in the Gothicscape (Freud, 1985, 335–76). The first is the fear of castration arising out of the figure of the threatening patriarch; the second is our compulsion to return to the repressed moment or act. Central to both these concepts is the theme of the double which, in the Gothic, becomes "the uncanny harbinger of death" (357). The double carries with it residues of a more primitive moment in the development of the subject when "the ego had not yet marked itself sharply from the external world and from other people" (358) and had not quite entered the realm of difference. In other words, without an identity of the self with reference to a wholly Other, there is a strong sense of self-extinction even when Reason (had the subject entered the "symbolic" world of difference) demands detachment and understanding. The source of terror, the *mysterium tremendum*, now regresses into a trace, a memory, a recollection, that is firmly located in the unconscious, where it must compulsively repeat self-annihilation in the sublime. With Freud's redefinition of terror as the return of the repressed and our relationship to death as an instance of the *Unheimliche*, the Gothic sublime begins to make a lot more sense; death is the always recurring/repeating presence that threatens the subject but to which it compulsively returns. In the Gothic sublime – the purely negative sublime – the superego is all anxiety, as it threatens and then destroys the ego's own equilibrium. The point is that the *tremendum*, the terror, which in Kant was a compensatory offer made to the Imagination by Reason to capture for a moment the indeterminate, frenzied, moment of the sublime, is precisely the sublime as captured in Piranesi's etchings and in the Gothic texts. The fleeting moment is decisive here for, in the Gothic, that moment never returns to the Law of Reason. The figure of the rational subject is now a delirious Piranesi figure looking back at Reason for permission to possess what is clearly an illicit joy, an impossible object of desire. In this encounter with the dreadful Other, there is no room for the transformation of the dread into a moral allegory, for in embracing the sublime the subject, and ourselves as implied Gothic readers, cannot return to the security of Reason. It is for this reason that the Gothic is beyond transcendence.

We return to the pages of De Quincey's hallucinatory work to discover that De Quincey also mentions Fuseli, albeit only in passing, as another person like himself who dared to possess "splendid dreams," though in his case seemingly through eating raw meat (165). If Piranesi provides us with Gothic technology of space, another psychological space is provided by Henry (Johann Heinrich) Fuseli's paintings. Born in Zurich in 1741 and ordained as a Zwinglian minister in 1761, he moved to London in 1764, having abandoned his religious calling, and determined to be a painter, with his lover Johann Caspar Lavatar in tow. Although his oeuvre is extensive, he is renowned for just one painting, "The Nightmare," a print of which hung conspicuously in Freud's Vienna office too. It is this painting which the anonymous obituary writer of the *New Monthly Magazine* had in mind when he wrote on "The Late Mr Fuseli" in May 1831:

> His domain was in air and hell, the clouds and grave. . . . He had little in common with earth. It was he who made real and visible to us the vague and insubstantial phantoms which haunt like dim dreams the oppressed imagination. . . . (quoted in Powell, 1973, 19)

I want to pause here for a brief commentary on "The Nightmare" before concluding this essay with reference to Tim Burton's *Batman* movies and Salman Rushdie's most complex novel, via Beckford's *Vathek*. In James Whale's film version of *Frankenstein* (1931), as well as in all subsequent versions depicting the unconscious or dead state of Elizabeth, the directors read Mary Shelley's description of the event through the figure of Fuseli's woman lying on a bed. There is, indeed, some evidence that in Mary Shelley's own description, Fuseli's painting was what she had in mind. Although she could not have remembered (unless told later in her adult life) that her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, who died soon after giving birth to her, had been rejected as a lover by Fuseli, the painting itself was so well known (there were several variants of the original composition by Fuseli himself and a number of caricatures too) that it is almost certain that Mary was aware of Fuseli's painting. I begin with Mary Shelley's description:

> She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. . . . – her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. (Shelley, 1993, 165)

Fuseli's "The Nightmare" was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1782. It is a composition comprising of four elements: a sleeping girl, an incubus or nightmare squatting on her abdomen, the head of a horse ("a literalisation of the nightmare"; Markman, 2000, 8) peering through the curtain, and a table and dressing mirror at the foot of the bed. The mirror has no image and the table has a tray and somewhat suggestive phallic jars. The bed on which the sleeping girl, in virginal white, lies sprawled is covered with heavy shawls and duvets, lemon yellow and salmon pink in color. The incubus is yellow-brown, the curtains deep orange, and the horse's head a dark brown. The sleeper does not see either the incubus or the horse, although as a scene of a nightmare they are part of her waking thoughts. Nicolas Powell is surely correct in seeing the painting as a visual description of Dr. Johnson's definition of the word "nightmare" in his *Dictionary* and Dr. John Bond's account of it in *An Essay on the Incubus, or Nightmare* (1753). Dr. Johnson defined it as "A morbid oppression in the night, resembling the pressure of weight upon the breast," and Dr. Bond wrote of the incubus seizing "people sleeping on their backs . . . [and the nightmare] begins with frightful dreams . . . violent oppression of the breast" (Powell, 1973, 50–1). The painting caught the imagination of Erasmus Darwin, who referred to the woman's "snow-white limbs [hanging] helpless from the bed" and the demon-ape who drank "with leathern ears her tender cries" in his long didactic poem "The Loves of the Plants." Although Horace Walpole, surprisingly in the context of his own Gothic novel, found the work "shocking" and in so doing expressed an unease

about dreams generally, Fuseli's painting captured another encounter with the idea of the terrifying – a sublimated dread – which made its way into Gothic literature. In the later version, the painting is narrower and more upright, with white, gray, and black as the dominant colors. The woman in white lies on white bed sheets and the head of a white horse with flowing mane picks up her colors and, one presumes, her demeanor. The incubus is less threatening than in the 1781 painting, and seems more playful, almost like a cat with a pipe in his hand. The table is behind the woman, not in front, while the mirror captures, one suspects, part of the woman's white dress. With her knees raised, the woman lies on a bolster in a more seductively enticing posture, in a "pose of sexual abandon" suggesting, as Ellis Markman writes, "this conjunction of nightmare and sexual longing" (2000, 8). Primarily in black and white with both colors toned with brown, the woman is thought to be Anna Landolt, who spurned Fuseli as lover (Wolstenholme, 1993, 40). The act may explain a not very pleasing face, with hammocks for eyes and unpleasant lips. The woman in white is fast asleep, with her hands and long hair falling over the pillow down to the floor. She is in a long, white nightdress, right leg curled, the left curling around and touching her right foot. The sole of the left foot is fully visible, as are the toes of both feet. Description of this sort does not give us the full import of the painting. It is the totality of the discrete elements in the painting – the horse's head, the incubus, the sleeping woman, and the unspeakable text of pending violation – that leaves the strongest impression. Martin Myrone, although more interested in reading the Gothic sublime as a statement about an emergent consumerist society – a sublime which depicted a "society foundered on ephemeral consumer choices and shifting social fashion" (in many ways like our own global postmodern society) – nevertheless connects Fuseli to the world of Gothic literature with its tales of ghosts and witches (Myrone, 2001, 44).

Piranesi and Fuseli capture two spaces, both charged with symbolic meanings, which underpin the Gothic imagination. They also suggestively draw us toward mysteries which drag the subject into its abyss, and do violence to the imagination. The texts of this genre – notably Radcliffe's *The Italian*, Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* – are shadowed by Piranesi's engravings and Fuseli's painting. But the Gothic sublime is not simply an historical phenomenon, although its foundational texts and theory are to be located in a period which also produced great Romantic poetry, music, and painting. Its frightening truth lay in its negation of the transcendental and healing principles of the Romantic sublime, for which the great proof text was Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence." In the selfless acts of the Leech Gatherer, the Wordsworthian subject-poet finds redemption and is drawn back from madness. Against this, the Gothic subject finds no redeeming wanderer and embraces the demon within. The texts are nightmares from which one never recovers, as these nightmares signify mysteries which can be neither framed nor allegorized, for to frame them would create the texts as beautiful and to allegorize them would reinforce the moral attributes of the aesthetic. To make the Gothic sublime a transhistorical, affective principle, I wish

to turn, as promised, to Burton's *Batman* films and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, entering the latter, as again promised, via Beckford's *Vathek*.

All those years ago, the anonymous writer of Fuseli's obituary had referred to Fuseli's art as a form which "made real and visible to us the vague and insubstantial phantoms which haunt like dim dreams the oppressed imagination." Tim Burton's two film noir renditions of the Batman mythos created by Bob Kane for DC Comics in 1939 are texts which we can use to thematize the persistence of the Gothic sublime in late (post)modernity. The original comic constructed heroic justice as the flip side of Gothic fear, so that the unspeakable, the tremendous mystery, can be transformed into a moral allegory. In the comic, as circulated on any number of Batman Internet sites, the orphan boy Bruce Wayne, now a rich, muscular young man, wishes to become "a terrible creature of the night" whose disguise "must be able to strike terror into their {the criminals'} hearts." The words chosen have a negative prophetic cadence, like the Monster's words to Frankenstein ("*I shall be with you on your wedding-night*" – Shelley, 1993, 161) or Dr. Caligari's ("You shall become Caligari"), or any number of utterances from Dracula. The words chosen, though, even when directed toward the idea of justice, cannot hide their internal perversity, the avenger's quest from which Shakespeare wishes to save Hamlet, because the moral allegory here can only recoup its own double – the moralist self-creating his own Gothic monster. Exactly fifty years later, Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) enters into the ambiguous nature of the narrative of the comic and, unsurprisingly, turns to Piranesian Gothicscapes and Fuseli's dark corridors of the mind to explore the Manichean principle that evil may well result from an excessive insistence on the good.

Like Luchino Visconti's *La Notti Bianche* (1957) and earlier German expressionist films such as Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), Friedrich Murnau's *Nosferatu*: *A Symphony of Terror* (1922), and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), Burton constructs a studio cityscape which works on what may be called a dream logic, captured as well in his "assemblage of drawings, early films, sculptures, concept art, puppets and cinematic ephemera."[4] Using a deep blue-black color palette, the *mises-en-scènes* self-consciously work on the semiotics of a *réalisme poétique* in that the spaces so constructed have no recognizable geographic referents as such. The establishing shot of Gotham City (the semantic connection to "Gothic" is far too obvious) continue to work with the same dark blue-black colors. As the narrative located in the city unfolds, the streets are framed by Piranesian architecture (albeit one with strong echoes of Nazi-fascist art-deco designs), with the color red breaking the somber monotony. Neon lights signpost key buildings – "Monarch Theatre," "Weissmann," and the like – as the camera regularly captures in single shots street scenes confined by dark chimneys, huge domes, and statues, and swirling architectural contours which have no function other than to construct the city itself as dark, cavernous, and threatening Gothic spaces without windows. There is a self-conscious historical anachronism too, with the location of the present in the past, so that dated cars, newspapers (the *Gotham Globe* makes clear references to a talk by President Truman at Princeton, checking Soviet aggression, and the like), and costumes exist alongside and work in

tandem with the moment of the filming itself. This kind of historical anomaly is used throughout the film as a homage to DC Comics, which worked on the reverse principle of the future embedded in the present.

In this Piranesian Gothicscape, two figures work through, symbolically, the narrative of the (negative) sublime. Although Batman is the epic vigilante driven by a passion for justice and the Joker his very opposite, a figure of absolute evil ("first fully functioning homicidal artist" as he calls himself), they are both damaged creatures behind masks which signify what one is not: the Joker's mask is that of a clown whose visage is threatening, while Batman's is that of the Gothic vampire who emerges as a redeemer. It is the classic Gothic contradiction and neither the clown, for he congenitally cannot, nor Batman, who can but does not, is able to transcend the masks they wear. We turn again to the idea of the Gothic double so well crafted in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the Doctor creates the Monster who is his own perverse mirror image: "my form is the filthy type of yours, more horrid from its very resemblance" (105). The Joker is in a sense Batman's creation, since it is Batman who lets Jack Napier fall in the sulfuric vat which forever defaces him. The doctor's surgery where Napier undergoes face reconstruction is a hellish den, no different from Frankenstein's "workshop of filthy creation" (36). A single light bulb, walls smeared with blood, deformed scalpels, scissors, and dirty rags are the properties of the scene in which the doctor declares, "See what I have to work with." Upon removing the bandage, the doctor sees his filthy reconstruction and remarks, "My God," to which Napier yells, "Mirror! Mirror!" "The nerves were completely severed," consoles the Doctor. This time Napier laughs, it is a long frenzied laugh; he breaks the light bulb and staggers, his body seen as if in silhouette like that of the classic sublime monster of Mary Shelley's imagination. His laughter continues as the image dissolves to take us back to Bruce Wayne's "castle," which has its own hidden passages and caves.

In this *Doppelgänger* setup, it is the Joker who refuses moral allegorization, while Batman persists with it. The Joker's inner darkness is made explicit; he prefers dark paintings and does not deface one of these in the "Fluegelheim" (based on New York's Guggenheim) Museum – and, one suspects, would not have defaced Fuseli's "The Nightmare" either if it were in the museum. Batman has his own museum where he keeps armors of medieval knights, signifiers of the more accommodating and less threatening chivalric Gothic. But beneath this museum are the dark passages which lead to the Bat cave, outside which bats ("they're great survivors," says Batman) roam freely. It is in this cave, which is also a museum of sorts, where Batman's description of the Joker as a "psychotic" is met with Vicki Vale's remark, "Some people say the same thing about you. You are not exactly normal are you?" Soon after, we see Vicki Vale lying in bed in her own apartment, in a posture so reminiscent of the classic Fuseli painting. When Bruce Wayne sees her again he says, "My life is really complex," as he tries to explain what is clearly a split in his personality. At this juncture, we get the first extended encounter between Bruce Wayne as a "normal" citizen and the Joker, Batman's Other (the abnormal Other as seen in James Whale's Monster with the abnormal brain in the 1931 film version of *Frankenstein*), who is also the killer of

Wayne's parents. In Mary Shelley, the Monster did not kill Frankenstein's parents, but he does kill his brother and wife. Here, Batman confronts the Monster/Joker as a figure who is responsible for the ultimate homicide and an act which happened in front of a child. It is an act which returns to him like a traumatic event that had been enacted in the time of the film itself, as the film begins with Batman saving the lives of a child and his parents soon after their own departure from Monarch Theatre. The Monster had said to Frankenstein "*I shall be with you on your wedding-night*"; what Bruce Wayne recalls are the Joker's poetic words upon killing his parents, "You've ever danced with the devil in a pale moonlight?"

Although there is the usual coda in the film – Vicki Vale deflecting her journalist friend Eddie's request for a picture of Batman, Batman's commitment to a crime-free Gotham City, and the final image as the camera moves upwards to the highest building to capture Batman standing alone, looking at the bat image projected in the sky – the Joker–Batman *Doppelgänger* narrative reaches its high point in a *danse macabre* (to the music of Danny Elfman, the film's music composer) in a Gothic cathedral. The scene is constructed with predictable references to the beauty and the beast folk tale and the hunchback of Notre Dame, with properties which reinforce their intertextual presence. As Batman, finally, breaks the momentum of the Joker's dance with Vicki Vale (she in white, he in lurid lavender-purple) with a massive hit to the Joker's face (his dentures fall off, his make-up blemished), he replies, "You idiot, you made me, you dropped me in the barrel of chemicals . . . I killed your parents . . . I made you and you made me." This crucial scene takes place in Piranesi's Gothicscape, where the Joker dances with the maiden in Fuseli's painting. Tim Burton carefully signals the connections as the film comes to its climax, and makes it even more explicit with the Joker's death linked to the weight of a griffin-gargoyle, which Batman attaches to the Joker's ankle as he attempts to hold onto a ladder that would have taken him to the safety of a helicopter.

Tim Burton's sequel to *Batman* (1989), *Batman Returns* (1992), works on similar structures of cinematic representation with spaces created with the same kind of Gothic look: the house in which the deformed Cobblepot is born, the lair of the penguins in an erstwhile zoo, and, of course, the architecture of Gotham City itself. Other references drawn from different mythos – black cats and their mysterious powers which transform Miss Kyle into Cat Woman, echoes of Herod's dictat to kill all (first-born) sons and so on – are brought into the narrative diegesis of the film to suggest the kinds of Gothic excess associated with the genre. If there is a persistence of the Gothic sublime which, in Burton's Batman films as well, declares a pervasive nontranscendence at the very heart of its epistemological core (that the contradictions cannot be resolved), in the modern novel itself the Gothic sublime continues to make its presence felt. I want to conclude with reference to a novel and a writer whose associations with the Gothic have only recently been thought through critically. The writer is Salman Rushdie, whose novel *The Satanic Verses* will be used to complete the theme of this chapter as we move beyond the architectural (Piranesi) and the nightmarish (Fuseli) Gothicscapes to the idea of the demonic in religious belief itself.

There is nothing absolutely original in the move I make here. In a collection of essays entitled *Empire and the Gothic*, the editors Andrew Smith and William Hughes write about the Gothic as a "fantastical literary form" which challenges "post-enlightenment notions of rationality" (2003, 1). Monsters, vampires, ghosts, and others of a similar ilk populate the genre; their acts dismantle a unitary concept of reason; the genre provides postcolonial writers especially with discursive registers and thematic entry points for a dismantling of an instrumental rationality which, in the hands of imperialism, was aimed at transforming all colonial subjects into unified Enlightenment beings. What colonial discourses under the aegis of an imperialist agenda did was to read "monstrosity" or "terror" into any colonial subject (Kant had isolated the Terra del Fuegan and the Australian Aboriginal as the extreme instances of those excluded from Reason and therefore inassimilable) which defied Enlightenment rational categorization. Thus essays in this collection on Jean Rhys's female Gothic in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on Arundhati Roy's haunting trauma in *The God of Small Things*, and on Gothic travel writing demonstrate the kinds of theoretical capital which the Gothic brings to the aberrant Other who, in the end, is always read in the shadow of Frankenstein's creation. The Gothic as a form which challenges Enlightenment reason has strong supporters – Punter, Botting, and Kilgour among them – and, as the essays in the Smith and Hughes collection show, does lead to creative readings of postcolonial works. What is not pushed far enough is the Gothic as an instance of the sublime which, while making way for a splitting of reason (*Vernunftspaltung*), confronts the *mysterium tremendum* in a manner which questions the status of representation itself. Although not offered quite so explicitly, Andrew Teverson's essay in the collection makes suggestive moves in that direction and may be used as a useful entry point into Salman Rushdie.

For Teverson, since the nation need not be represented in transcendental terms, he views the nontranscendental "idea" of the Gothic sublime as a template with which to address this issue. To him, Salman Rushdie's classic *Midnight's Children* demonstrates how a postcolonial understanding of the nation parts company with a colonial Enlightenment national ideal of the unified nation (the legacy of colonialism). Creatively reworking Homi Bhabha's reading of the imagined nature of the nation-state, Teverson suggests that the "Gothic irruption, as a mechanism of the sublime, reminds us that representation is always under threat from excess" (2003, 211). The postcolonial nation-state is a matter of people coming together, sometimes through willed repression, at other times through collective dreaming. For Rushdie, India becomes a nation which Indians temporarily agreed to dream. The Gothic thus provides Rushdie with an alternative reason, a reason which allows for the construction of a nation against Enlightenment principles of the unity of the subject (all citizens are alike) and the unity of the nation (all nations are bound by a collectively understood definition of nationalism). The argument is epistemologically persuasive inasmuch as it draws parallels between a Gothic splitting of reason and a discrepant idea of the postcolonial nation. For Rushdie though, the Gothic provides him with a "habitus" (something self-evidently given, as it "*goes without saying because it comes without*

saying"; see Bourdieu, 1977, 167) by way of a power which cannot be transformed into a moral allegory. In other words, the Gothic has two elements of value to him: Gothicscapes as sublime architecture and narratives of excess (both of these are understood well by Teverson). Teverson had chosen *Midnight's Children* as his proof text; a more persuasive case in the context of the Gothic sublime may be made with reference to Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The lineage from the Gothic to Rushdie, however, is not straightforward, as Rushdie's work is not a simple tale of terror and the *mysterium tremendum* (the sublime's defining moment) is not an encounter with the ineffable as such, but with the problematic of representation in a religious tradition, here Islam, where the sublime is a matter of the absolute nonrepresentation of the Numinous. We are fortunate in that there is a mediating "Gothic" text which may be strategically deployed to read Rushdie. It is a text which brings to the Gothic genre a typically English/European orientalist reading of *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, introduced into Europe by Antoine Galland's French translation in 1704 and other translations of Oriental works. The text in question is William Beckford's generically unstable *Vathek*.

Vathek, first published in French in 1782 when William Beckford ("England's wealthiest son" as Byron called him) was barely twenty-two and translated into English by the Rev. Samuel Henley in 1786, with unusually extensive notes borrowed from contemporary orientalist writings, is a work of leisurely bourgeois eccentricity curiously celebrated by Romantics (Byron, who wrote the long Orientalist poem "The Giaour" after the infidel in the novel), Pre-Raphaelites (Swinburne), and Symbolists (Mallarmé) alike. The work is very much a young man's obsession with what can only be called Orientalist fascination with Islamic lore, and especially Mahound/Mahomet's revealed text, in which perhaps the most fascinating figure is neither the Prophet nor God but Satan. The latter had been the subtext of Gothic writers, but no writer before Beckford (Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, or Anna Laetitia Aikin) had made his role in a Manichean world of the Gothic explicit. Although there is no evidence that Beckford's orientalist fossicking had taken him to a direct encounter with the Qur'ān, it is obvious that the various commentaries on Oriental texts would have introduced him to the general narrative of the book and, especially, to the fate of Satan or Eblis. Milton had, of course, made Satan the great anti-hero of the epic, to whom he had given his best lines. In the Qur'ān there is a similar fascination with Satan, accounts of whose expulsion from Paradise are given, fully, at least four times (*sūras* 7,15,17, and 38). Eblis or Satan's crime is overbearing hubris on the grounds that since he was created out of "smokeless fire," but Adam out of clay, he was the superior being. Condemned by God for his ego, he makes his design on humankind plain, as we read in one of the *sūras*:

> "Because You have led me into sin," he declared, "I will waylay Your servants as they walk on Your straight path, then spring upon them from the front and from the rear, from their right and from their left. Then You will find the greater part of them ungrateful." (Dawood, 1999, *sūra* 7:16–17)

The eponymous hero of Beckford's novel, the epicurean and frightful Vathek, with his Kubla Khan-like "stately pleasure domes," is the object of Satan's temptation. Vathek's flaw is that he is congenitally predisposed toward pleasure, as Europe believed every sultan in the Orient was. The narrative which follows – Vathek's construction of a Babel-like tower, the sudden "eruptions" of ambiguous or undecipherable verses, the magical powers of Vathek's mother Carathis, herself Greek, the arrival in court of the mysterious Giaour (or the Indian Infidel), Vathek's Faust-like traversal through "a sea of blood" for a "power which will make [all] tremble" (Beckford, 1983, 105) – is in many ways less interesting than the thematic of the traveler, here Vathek, who arrives at the "infernal empire" of Eblis in the company of his forced paramour Nouronihar. Eblis's empire is described as an immense hall with "subterranean fire" (108), and "fantastic spirits, of either sex" who dance "lasciviously, at the sound of music" (109). The "vast multitude" in this hellish dungeon has "the livid paleness of death . . . [and their] eyes resemble[d] those phosphoric meteors" (110–11). The halls and galleries are illuminated by pyramids of fire (a metaphor borrowed directly from Milton, 1971, II:1013). As for Eblis/Satan himself, his "noble and regular features seemed to have been tarnished by malignant vapours" (Beckford, 1983, 111) as he distinguishes himself (a creature of fire) from "creatures of clay." The fleshless form of one of the pre-Adamite kings, Soliman Ben Daoud, is singled out, as his "ineffable torments" of "unrelenting fire" suggest the fate that awaits Vathek, whose life had been marked by the same sense of curiosity, love of pleasure, and defiance of the laws of God. Carathis, too, is welcomed by Eblis, to whom she pays her "compliments with considerable firmness" as she marches, "in triumph, through a vapour of perfumes amidst the acclamations of all the malignant spirits" (118), before her own heart becomes "a receptacle of eternal fire" (119). Vathek's fate is the same, but Beckford transforms this perverse *mysterium tremendum* into a moral allegory with the words, "Such was, and such should be, the punishment of unrestrained passions and atrocious deeds!" (120).

To say that Beckford mediates Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) does not mean that Rushdie operates centrally from within an orientalist discourse.[5] What is of value is the manner in which the Gothic *mysterium tremendum* makes its way into a postcolonial Gothic, the point of the exercise being a demonstration of the persistence of the Gothic sublime in late modernity. At one level, it is unquestionable that the Gothic presents us with an instance of a kind of splitting of reason which allows for alternative "reasons" to be given legitimacy, especially in postcolonial writings. That issue has been canvassed widely enough. What has not been addressed is the core of the Gothic sublime, which argues for a nontranscendental sublime that may be reformulated as another, negative, gift of death or, to put it in a different language, a "gift" where the sacrifice of Isaac is not ameliorated by the arrival of the sacrificial ram. For Rushdie, the nonnegotiable nature of Islamic revelation provides a belief system which may be rethought and radically critiqued through a return to the Gothic. One of the key ideas in this major world monotheistic religion is the role of Satan in waylaying the believer, precisely the role of Eblis in *Vathek*. We have noted the persistence of the damnation of Satan by God in the Qur'ān and, in Beckford's fantasy, the conse-

quences of familiarity with Satan against the dictates of God. But Rushdie seems to be implying that the narrative of Satan as given in the received text of the holy book does not provide the religion with the necessary transcendence over evil; on the contrary, it suggests the persistence of a Manichean principle where the demonic and the angelic fuse into one.

Although the role of Satan in tempting Adam is narrated in the Qur'ān and Satan's role admonished on a number of occasions, only once is there an insinuation that he may have tempered with the holy book itself. For the believer, the insinuation is an instance of *takfīr* (a declaration of unbelief) and hence of itself heretical, which is why it does not exist in the received text. Referred to as the "story of the cranes" (*qissat al-gharānīq*) in the Islamic tradition but "satanic verses" by Western scholars, the erasure of the suggestive apostasy raises questions about the likelihood of Satan actually tempting Muhammad. The early commentators during the first two centuries of Islam had, however, raised the issue especially in their epic and prophetic biographies (the *sīra-maghāzī*), where the incident is thought to have occurred during the fifth year of Muhammad's mission.[6] Muhammad had received the revelation of the *Sūrat al-Najm* ("The Star"), which he recites to the Quraysh leaders of Mecca with whom he wished to arrive at a reconciliation as to the rights of his followers. In the early Qur'ānic exegesis, it is stated that when Muhammad reached verses 19–20 of *sūra* 53 of the revealed Book ("Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other?" – Rushdie, 1988, 114), Satan inserts two verses in the revelation which Muhammad, quite possibly for the moment inattentive, accepted as divine ("They are the exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed" – Rushdie, 1988, 114). At this, the Quraysh leaders were happy and prostrated themselves alongside the believers (Qur'ān 53: 62). Later, Muhammad returns to Angel Gibreel (Gabriel) and recants the satanic verses, which disappear from the holy book forever. The satanic verses are replaced by the admonition that Allah had vested no powers in these Meccan goddesses. It is important to note that Islamic *tafsīr* (religious exegesis) stressed this incident in the first few centuries of the spread of the religion, and the writings of al-Tabari (d. 913) certainly make this point. It was only later – and as late as the fourth century of the Islamic calendar – that commentators like al-'Arabī (d. 1148) and al-Yahsubī (d. 1149) rejected the historicity of the incident of the satanic verses outright on the grounds that this was contrary to the "doctrine of '*ismat al-anbiyā*'" or "the divine protection of prophets from sin and error." To believe otherwise meant committing the cardinal sin of *shirk* (the name, as *Shark*, given by Rushdie to the residents of Jahilia/Mecca – Rushdie, 1988, 95) and had to be denounced as *kufr* (unbelief). And since there were no recorded eyewitnesses to the incident (essential for legitimate historical transmission), it was rejected outright by later Muslim scholars but found support, much later, in the works of a number of European orientalists, such as William Muir, D. Margoliouth, W. Montgomery Watt, Maxime Robinson, and F. E. Peters. The criticism made about Rushdie is that in reopening the historicity of the incident he too has taken sides with these orientalists. Shahab Ahmed, from whose lucid essay I have borrowed the foregoing summary,

however, makes the important point that, sadly, Rushdie's novel did not lead to "debates among Muslims over the historicity of the satanic verses incident." Instead, it only led to an affirmation of the principles of *shirk* and *kufr*.

To Rushdie, the issue is not so much about the historicity of the event as it is about a mystery which believers had transformed into an allegory. When John Dennis spoke of the "greatest Sublimity" as an idea which can only be "deriv'd from Religious Ideas," he was doing nothing less than engaging in precisely an allegorization of the ineffable mystery of God. The Gothic, of course, refuses this principle and sees religious belief equally from the Piranesian underside – that is, from the side of Eblis – because central to it is a Manichean worldview of the coexistence of Satan and God. If I am correct in reading Rushdie's own take along these lines, then Rushdie's Gothic reading of Islam is, from the believer's point of view, pure apostasy and therefore an instance of a declaration of *takfir* or declaration of unbelief. The argument of the coexistence is hoisted onto Gibreel Farishta, erstwhile Bollywood film star, through whom is reenacted the great *mysterium tremendum* of Islamic revelation. When Gibreel "slides heavy-lidded towards visions of his angeling," he recalls his mother's moniker for him – "Shaitan," Arabic for Satan/Eblis. He "sees beginnings, Shaitan cast down from the sky . . . [as he sings] from hell below his soft seductive verses" (Rushdie, 1988, 91); he reveals the sacred text to the businessman, to the "medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym: Mahound" (93); but he also knows that the "archangel is actually *inside the Prophet*" (110). It was through Shaitan, masquerading as an angel, that Mahound received the verses which he must now repudiate:

> "It was the Devil," he says aloud to the empty air, making it true by giving it voice. "The last time, it was Shaitan." This is what he has *heard* in his *listening*, that he has been tricked, that the Devil came to him in the guise of the archangel, so that the verses he memorized, the ones he recited in the poetry tent, were not the real thing but its diabolic opposite, not godly, but satanic. He returns to the city as quickly as he can, to expunge the foul verses that reek of brimstone and sulphur, to strike them from the record for ever and ever, so that they will survive in just one or two unreliable collections of old traditions and orthodox interpreters will try and unwrite their story, but Gibreel, hovering-watching from his highest camera angle, knows one small detail, just one tiny thing that's a bit of a problem here, namely that *it was me both times, baba, me first and second also me*. From my mouth, both the statement and the repudiation, verses and converses, universes and reverses, the whole thing, and we all know how my mouth got worked. (123)

Orthodox interpreters certainly "unwrote" the narrative by excluding Shaitan from the narrative and presenting the *mysterium tremendum* as the message of an absent God, frightening and vengeful, who has to be transformed into the merciful through an allegory which leads to self-transcendence. The satanic verses, however, posits the Gothic underbelly of belief, the voice of Satan from the crypt which spells out the demonic against the spiritual. The Gothic sublime has a tenacious grip at once on matters relating to the epistemologies of belief and on artistic representation.

This chapter has looked at three sides to the Gothic sublime: first, its representational architectural scapes through the etchings of Piranesi; secondly, through the enfevered and nightmarish invasions of Fuseli, where the Gothic was always a matter of the return of the repressed and of compulsive repetition; and finally through a Manichean worldview in which the Satanic invades the frightening mystery of God and destabilizes any allegorization of the *mysterium tremendum*. The Gothic sublime has this tenacity because it is based on a pure negativity which culture dare not encounter in real life, but whose truth has to be acknowledged in art.

Notes

1 See Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 128; quoted in Novak (1995, 41).
2 W. Temple, cited in the *OED*.
3 For a fuller discussion of the condition of excess in the Gothic, see Botting (1996).
4 See Bodey (2010, 6); see also *Tim Burton: The Exhibition* at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (Melbourne) 24 June–October 10, 2010.
5 For Rushdie's use of "hobson-jobson," see especially Mishra (2009).
6 Here and in what follows on the subject of the Islamic history of the "satanic verses," I draw upon Ahmed (2004).

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21
Psychoanalysis and the Gothic

Michelle A. Massé

The connection between literature and psychoanalysis is as old as psychoanalysis itself. For the psychoanalytic critic, the elements, structures, and themes that constitute the "make-believe" world of the literary text speak to the desires and fears of both authors and readers. To be an adult is to know the distinction between fantasy and reality, passionate longings and pragmatic limitation. And yet, as adults we give up nothing of infantile wishes: we simply become more cautious, more crafty in shaping those early desires into forms that are acceptable to ourselves, and which may even be applauded by our societies.

Using condensation, displacement, and various representational modes as tools, we carefully rework our desires into the stuff of dreams, in which we can safely experience what we do not want to acknowledge in waking life. In daydreams and neurotic symptoms, we use the mechanisms of defense to construct systems that satisfy basic desires while still letting us function adequately in the "real" world. Dreams and daydreams are stories written by ourselves for ourselves, though. In literature, we weave the beautifully elaborated fabric of language that lets us articulate what could not otherwise be known or said, not only for ourselves but for others also.

Freud and others in psychoanalysis' first generation drew upon literature both for examples of psychoanalytic insight and as prior statements of what they themselves were struggling to understand. All literature is subject to such analysis, but in the compressed, time-honed forms of myth and fairy tale, they often saw the nuclei of our most abiding concerns. In "Creative writers and day-dreaming," Freud also identified writers of what we would now call "popular culture" texts as providing particularly fruitful objects for psychoanalytic investigation, because it is "the less pretentious authors of novels, romances, and short stories, who nevertheless have the widest and

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most eager circle of readers of both sexes" (Freud, 1953–74a, 149). In such texts, the "secondary elaboration" through which we reshape primal material seemed less densely wrought, the wishful, forbidden desires more clearly evident. The enthusiasm of readers for such genres further underscores their power, a power often nervously depreciated by relegating them to the realm of "low" culture.

The Gothic is such a genre, one that is important to psychoanalytic critical inquiry not solely for its ongoing popularity and easily recognizable motifs, but for the affinities between its central concerns and those of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis examines how and why our most strongly held beliefs and perceptions are sometimes at odds with empirical evidence. We work incessantly to maintain a simulacrum of congruence between fantasy and reality, but the boundaries blur in the most routine of everyday events, such as "slips of the tongue," daydreams, or simply dissonance between what other people mean as opposed to what we want to hear. Usually we quickly reconcile such breaches, but when it cannot be done readily, Freud tells us that this gap can call forth the uncanny, which is "often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced" (Freud, 1953–74c, 244).

The Gothic protagonist, such as Emily in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, also lives in a world that seems "more like the visions of a distempered imagination, than the circumstances of truth" (Radcliffe, 1970, 329). Gothic novels, like psychoanalysis, explore the ostensibly irrational or "distempered." They examine the ways in which seemingly idiosyncratic or "excessive" responses may in fact tell us more than can be dreamed of in a rationalist philosophy, as Leslie Fiedler asserted in his early and influential study:

> There *is* a place in men's lives where pictures do in fact bleed, ghosts gibber and shriek, maidens run forever through mysterious landscapes from nameless foes; that place is, of course, the world of dreams and of the repressed guilts and fears that motivate them. This world the dogmatic optimism and shallow psychology of the Age of Reason had denied; and yet this world it is the final, perhaps the essential, purpose of the Gothic romance to assert. (Fiedler, 1966, 140)

Indeed, Kelly Hurley credits the Gothic with "invention" of a systematic discourse of the irrational, an "invention" that precedes Freud's first glimmerings about the unconscious (Hurley, 1997, 6).

Some critics agree with this but then claim that, precisely because psychoanalysis grows from the same cultural unease as the Gothic, it is itself a sociocultural symptom, with no more explanatory force than any novel. Such arguments, however, often presume that there are other, objective methodologies uncontaminated by cultural influences, that there is something suspect about any methodology (or genre) where one can say, as a character does in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, "'*Emotions are my events*'" (Maturin, 1968, 204), or that attention to the hidden and unconscious precludes social change. These conclusions ignore a critical tenet of psychoanalysis, however: we *cannot* understand individual and cultural expression –

or effect lasting change – without careful consideration of the hinted-at, the hidden, and the denied.

If the Gothic can be said to influence psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis in its turn illuminates the Gothic explicitly and implicitly. For example, late nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels sometimes refer to psychoanalytic concepts or feature a psychiatrist-like figure or "alienist" who boldly explores psychic territory where no one has gone before. William Patrick Day rightfully repudiates any simplistic family tree, however:

> The Gothic is not a crude anticipation of Freudianism, nor its unacknowledged father. Rather, the two are cousins. . . . The Gothic arises out of the immediate needs of the reading public to . . . articulate and define the turbulence of their psychic existence. We may see Freud as the intellectual counterpart of this process. (Day, 1985, 179)

Finally, neither the Gothic nor psychoanalysis is the other's oedipal child. Psychoanalysis and the Gothic are cognate historical strands made up of the same human hopes and anxieties and then woven into particular patterns by the movements of sociocultural change.

The Gothic, criticism of the Gothic, and psychoanalysis are thus themselves subject to analysis. Each has its own history, formed by the internal development of the discipline or genre, as well as by the ways in which it shapes and reflects culture. Even if psychoanalysis is not an objective system that one can use to play doctor with the literary text, it is indeed a mode of thinking about and interpreting aspects of life. Psychoanalytic textual criticism fulfills the same task, although it limits its arena of investigation to texts, a term that encompasses many forms. Analysts – a term that here describes practitioners in both fields – share what Eugenia DeLamotte identifies as "the essential activity of the Gothic protagonist," "interpretation" (DeLamotte, 1989, 24).

In thinking about psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism of the Gothic, then, it is important to keep in mind the ways in which both modes of interpretation have evolved, because this helps us to make sense of the vast range of interpretative strategies that can be rightfully identified as "psychoanalytic." The stages of "elements," "structures and themes," and "systems" that organize this chapter smooth over exceptions, ambiguities, and alternative movements, as all such schema do; they do not outline a smoothly unfurling historical amelioration.

Sometimes shifts in psychoanalytic and literary critical emphases happen in tandem; sometimes there is a lag on one side or the other. And, as in human development, all stages continue to operate simultaneously, although one may be ascendant at a given time. The individual at the genital stage, for example, still has decided oral and anal interests. Similarly, the analysis of individual symbols that was paramount in early interpretation, whether in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* or the New Criticism, is still important for contemporary practitioners. If we think of the changing emphases in both psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic Gothic criticism over

time in terms of their own stages – "elements," "structures and themes," and "systems" – we have a rough gauge for both historical development and individual interpreters' practice.

Elements

In early psychoanalytic studies and psychoanalytic literary criticism of the Gothic, both the text and the patient seem self-contained. Although both models acknowledge formative factors, analysis usually proceeds as though dealing with a finished product: the text is autotelic, or contains all significance within itself, and the patient's identity primarily intra-psychic. The emphasis is upon elements, or the smallest units of interpretation, and these elements are then used to identify types or categories. The stance of psychoanalysts or critics is ostensibly objective: they can ferret out the meaning that people and texts unwittingly represent. Their conclusions are often presented as authoritative, although that attitude is actually at odds with psychoanalytic and critical premises.

During what I am calling the "elements" stage, Freud developed two models for psychic functioning, the topographical (unconscious, conscious and pre-conscious) and the structural (id, ego, superego). These provided fertile ground for Gothic criticism, as did several key issues related to these models: the interpretation of dreams (with its emphasis upon symbolization, manifest and latent content, dream-work, and a central "wish"), repression as a central defense in neurosis, the role of the past in symptom formation, and nosology, or the classification of disease.

At the center of Freud's early work is the wish – a heartfelt desire which, when forbidden, will struggle its way to indirect expression even when accompanied by pain. The "silence, solitude, and darkness" in which the uncanny thrives come from infantile anxiety or fear – the same fear that resides at the heart of the Gothic, as Ellen Moers, David Punter, Judith Wilt, and others argue (Freud, 1953–74c, 252; Moers, 1977, 138; Punter, 1980, 21; Wilt, 1980, 5).

Understanding the prominence of such fear in the Gothic required a toolbox of interpretative strategies for which psychoanalysis was superbly suited. Early critical studies (up to approximately the mid-1960s) of the genre drew extensively upon psychoanalytic insight, even when the discipline was not specifically invoked. In the same way that we may refer to "complexes," "Freudian slips," or "denial" without necessarily knowing their full complexity, early critics recognized the elements, themes, and structures of the Gothic as indisputably psychological.

Freud's analysis of symbols in *The Interpretation of Dreams* specified that each dream is the result of a wish, that there is a manifest and latent level to the dream, and that the symbols through which the dream enacts itself are stitched together by condensation (compression of many emotions and ideas) and displacement (transferring affect to another figure), drawing upon residues of the day's memories to address older concerns. This mode of analysis was tailor-made, as it were, for the Gothic, that liter-

ary celebration of the dream state. The veils, specters, dreams, hidden passages, and imperfectly understood but foreboding messages that punctuate the text seemed fraught, like actual dreams, with an unknown significance.

Just as early psychoanalysts thought that simply identifying the latent or unconscious meaning should prove sufficient for full understanding (this later proved to be incorrect), so too early critical practice suggested that it was possible to identify *the* meaning of a symbol. Indeed, early critical studies were often organized as lexicons of Gothic motifs with set meanings. Although theory asserted that symbols were complex, multivalent units, practice often processed them through the most simple of metaphoric mills, so that A equaled B. It is important, however, that we recognize this basic metaphoric mode as a necessary first step, similar to that which every budding critic takes when first triumphantly discovering the "secret meaning" of an image, as well as the power and titillation that accompanies such knowledge.

Although Freud, too, emphasized that symbols and symptoms are overdetermined, or may fulfill several needs, and cautioned against assuming a universal meaning for symbols (a caution he himself often ignored), the Gothic's elements provided a rich field for elementary genital-hunting analysis. Every sword became a penis, every dark passageway a vagina. While such local analysis may provide a partial truth, it also presents the same problems as those found in early psychoanalytic practice. Patients who were told the meaning of a particular symptom often had a burst of response, or abreaction – and then went on to form new symptoms. So, too, the literary text proved resistant to such neat formulas; a residue of uncertainty and incompleteness usually remained.

Freud himself was puzzled by this repetition and developed the structural model of id/ego/superego to explain more fully what he was seeing, and himself experiencing. Following Freud's lead, Carl Jung posited a similar tripartite system made up of archetypes he called the shadow, persona, and anima. In both schools, interpretation moves from the isolated act or symbol, with its conscious and unconscious dimensions, to consideration of it in relation to other elements of the psyche. If, in literary critical terms, the emphasis upon single elements assigned fixed meanings is the metaphoric, we can call this mode the allegorical.

Because characters in the Gothic are frequently flat, the genre lends itself easily to allegorical interpretation, in which individual characters or structural features, such as setting, are seen as significant because of what they represent. For example, a critic might say that the hero stands for the ego, the punitive older male for the superego, and the villain for the id; or that the castle is the ego, the dungeon the id, and the monastery the superego. The most common instance of allegorical analysis is recognition of the double or divided self.

Some early and important readings of the Gothic, such as Fiedler's, relied primarily upon this model. Such allegorical analysis can show patterns not readily discerned through metaphoric interpretation, but its most common failing is the construction of a new whole that bears little resemblance to the original and that leaves out stray parts, as Eve Sedgwick observes:

> At most, psychological criticism has been able to pair two characters who are "doubles" into one self; but when the same formal structure divides non-personified spaces of units of the narrative, it seems to fall away from interpretation. (Sedgwick, 1980, 35)

The final result, like Frankenstein's creation, may speak more to the desire and ingenuity of the creator than to the needs of the creature, and may not be quite as pretty as one had hoped.

Interpretation in the elements stage that emphasizes defense mechanisms and classification provides new insights while running many of the same risks; rather than being inductive, it may so emphasize deduction that conclusions inevitably support the principles with which one began. Marie Bonaparte's psychobiography of Edgar Allan Poe, for instance, exemplifies the ways in which the analysand – or Gothic text – can be reduced to a bundle of symptoms. Latent or unconscious materials have the weight of truth: what is sequestered in the dungeon seems to have more significance than what is on display in the drawing-room, the present to have less import than the individual, familial, and social past.

The defense mechanisms most invoked by both metaphoric and allegorical psychoanalytic criticism are repression and resistance. Through their use, analysts can assert the supremacy of the rational or real, to which Gothic protagonists and patients are presumed to have little access. "Resisting" patients, heroines, and texts are then declared to be repressing their own truths. This is frequently so, of course, and indeed this analytic insistence, when joined to an interest in pathology (or "dark romanticism" in the literary realm), also helps in the construction of often-useful systems of classification allied to the allegorical mode.

Thus, while Freud used literary texts as well as clinical experience to create what he called "character types," early literary critics identified a host of Theophrastian categories, or thumbnail sketches, that populated the Gothic, such as "La Belle Dame," the Faustian overreacher, the satanic tempter. Of these, none was so popular as the Persecuted Maiden, recognizable as Freud's hysteric, and there is an uncanny similarity between the narratives that inform some of Freud's early case histories, such as "Dora," and the Gothic (Massé, 1992, 16–19). Fiedler and others may argue that the male is inevitably the center of Gothic (Fiedler, 1966, 128), but it is the female who is primarily used to explain why that is so; within psychoanalysis, she plays the same utilitarian handmaid's role. Like one of Charcot's hypnotized hysterics, frozen into an attitude that simultaneously displays her desire and denies her wish for its fulfillment, the Gothic woman is fair analytic game.

The treatment of the hysteric and of the Gothic woman, both prototypical figures, underscores the strengths and limitations of the elements stage. Her presumed passivity and lack of self-knowledge make her into an easily diagnosed case presentation, a *tabula rasa* for interpretation. The critic's superior stance may manifest itself in snide humor about her repression, which is evidenced both mimetically and diegetically; the marriage plot, seen as a self-explanatory formula, moots issues of character devel-

opment over time; her wishes and dreams seem transparent once one knows how to decipher them.

And yet, she and other prototypical figures or diagnostic types (who do not often fare much better) are the precipitants for analytic change. While on the one hand we can, in hindsight, astutely critique the limitations of early methods, on the other we must also acknowledge the cultural strictures that led to their selective emphases or omissions, as well as their foundational contributions. Both forms of analysis have their own repetition compulsion, a drive to return to what has not yet been resolved or worked through satisfactorily, which mandates more complex analysis in later stages.

Structures and Themes

The stage that I am here calling "structures and themes" blends into both the "elements" and "systems" stages; it recapitulates and anticipates other emphases, while also having its own. Late stages of development, as I noted earlier, do not mean that earlier ones have disappeared. So, too, people show curiosity about later stages even when most focused on the current one. Children whose main project is toilet-training nonetheless find their genitals fascinating; myths or fairy tales contain within them hints of later narrative preoccupations.

Within the elements stage, generic and diagnostic categories remain fairly rigid, but the scope and definitions of these categories expand during the structures and themes stage (approximately 1965–80). Nomenclature *is* identity within early psychoanalysis: "she is an hysteric" is a summative statement that leaves little else to be known. When analytic attention moves to more nuanced understandings of the ego and of developmental stages, however, classification becomes more flexible, categories more descriptive than reifying. A patient might indeed be hysterical, but his whole identity is not assumed to be packed into the term "hysteric." There is a similar transition in criticism from the early focus upon *the* Gothic novel, a genre with certain distinctive features that was prominent between 1764 (Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*) and 1820 (Maturin's *Melmoth*). In the second stage, however, "Gothic" increasingly becomes an adjective as well as a noun, a literary mode as well as a genre. Texts written in different periods and cultures (particularly the United States) are regularly discussed as "Gothic," albeit far removed from the historical events that helped to spawn the first generation.

The demographics of these newly expanded populations lessen the usefulness of classification by elements. Too much does not quite fit now, and the broader patterns of structures and themes provide fuller accounts of resemblances as well as allowing for new questions and formulations that arise from differences. As the patient – or text – demonstrates its own complexity, the role of analyst/interpreter becomes less god-like, more human. In addition, analysts' own ego needs become an acknowledged

part of interpretative activity. Counter-transference, or the therapist's own defenses in regard to a patient, denies the dispassionate absoluteness of the therapist's conclusions; reader-response criticism achieves the same end. The reader/critic reads through her own "identity theme," as Norman Holland and Leona Sherman claim (1977). No longer the objective translator of arcana, "the reader has turned suddenly into creative participant," Punter states (1980, 97). Lastly, the diachronic dimension inherent to developmental schema further undermines interpretative certainty: the end of the story/genre/life cannot be fully known. To oversimplify greatly, we might say that the key question shifts from "What are you trying to hide from, deny, or repress with this behaviour?" to "What are you trying to preserve and achieve?"

This shift comes about, in part, from emphasis on the active role of the ego – on how it works to achieve adequate and purposive functioning – and puts both patients and Gothic characters in a new light. No longer immobile and passive recipients of external stimuli, they are seen as agents who act as well as react. The nature of the stimuli then itself becomes a topic of investigation.

In England, the object-relations school, best represented by Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott, emphasized the child's playful self-creation and the mother/child dyad. Within the United States, Erik Erikson's work stressed the infant's eager growth and powers of adaptation as well as the cultural and familial expectations that shape adult identity. Both traditions significantly modify Freud's developmental schema and highlight the temporal dimension of character development.

Throughout this stage, critical discussion moves increasingly from dissection of the single character to consideration of the whole text, from isolated novel to genre. While discussion in the elements stage, for example, might localize psychoanalytic issues within a single character or symbol, that which draws upon structures and themes will recognize and address more far-ranging manifestations. Thus, rather than analyzing individual characters as the repositories of the text's paranoia, hysteria, voyeurism, sadism, or masochism (the most often-noted attributes of the Gothic), criticism in this stage will move toward identification of these responses as not only content-specific themes but as structural issues. The discussion of paranoia, for instance, is no longer limited to a character's conviction that someone is out to "get" him, but is extended to recognizing paranoia as a structural feature evident in the text's "hiding" of meaning from scrutiny via multiple or imbedded narratives, hidden manuscripts, lost letters, or enigmatic warnings. In third-stage or systemic analysis, we will hesitate to dismiss "paranoid" expectations without careful inquiry into whether or not this character has good cause to expect scrutiny or danger from external sources.

Patterns thus become more elaborate and wide-ranging than in the elements stage's classifications, in part because the shift to ego or object-relations psychology encourages analysis of "round" characters, whereas "flats" were more useful for early classifications. Psychoanalysis proper usually does not deal with psychosis (which could be viewed as the therapeutic equivalent of the "flat" character, recognizable for one inflexible constellation of attributes) because transference, or relationship with another,

cannot be established. The earlier, related flattening of even neurosis now becomes modulated to a more contextualized identification of individuals' characteristic mode of response in times of stress and recognition that such response is a part, and not the whole, of identity.

In considering the panoply of issues relating to psychosocial development, both psychoanalysis and Gothic criticism of this stage tend to begin by focusing upon the male character as normative and, usually, upon the oedipal plot. Even within this concentration, however, other issues of sex, class, race, and culture start to become manifest.

Two commonplaces of Gothic criticism, both of which depend upon the Oedipus complex, can help to show this emergence of new concerns. Ambrosio, in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, can be seen as an oedipal figure. Although he is an orphan (a textual erasure of the past that supports the "family romance" of the individual as self-created), he enacts the mandates of the oedipal struggle through the most lofty of surrogates, the parental arms of the Catholic church. In his ambitious virtue, he supplants all other "Fathers," and nothing less than the Madonna excites his lust. His end, like that of most oedipal outlaws, is not happy: he is himself destroyed by what he sought to control. What we see in *The Castle of Otranto* is a mirror image of the young man's oedipal ambitions. The mighty prince Manfred, himself married, nonetheless wants to wed the fiancée of his dead son and to kill the filial surrogate whom she loves.

Neither plot nor character can be contained by the rubric "Faustian overreacher," nor do they fit smoothly into the standard oedipal outline, wherein the young male wants to kill daddy and bed mummy. When considered via developmental or ego psychology, each representation not only embodies psychological insights but also serves as an expansion or critique of those insights. Manfred's plot suggests that generational struggle is not always initiated by the younger "separated one" and directed against what Wilt calls the "great old ones" (Wilt, 1980, 19, 12). The "great old ones," skillful manipulators of cultural codes, want to maintain their power and extirpate potential usurpers: this does not signal a benign authority. Even the dastardly Ambrosio is the result of "the contest for superiority between his real and acquired character" (Lewis, 1973, 237); it is the Fathers who train him to the very qualities for which they damn him. In both novels, authority – or "reality" – works *against* what Freud held forth as the desideratum of analysis, "common unhappiness," or what Punter describes as that of Kleinian development, "a reasonable oscillation between feelings of hope and despair." These Gothic fictions, like others, "deal in interruptions of this maturing process," and the interruptions are seldom self-initiated (Punter, 1989, 22).

Just as male characters become more fully fleshed in analysis, seen as dynamic representations of ego development rather than part-objects, so, too, female characters begin to stir and come to life. No longer cast as emblems of the Persecuted Maiden or other archetypes, their textual histories begin to be noted, the ways in which they, too, have been carefully schooled in their roles discussed, and the reality of their textual dangers acknowledged. As Margaret Doody states: "It is in the Gothic novel

that women writers could first accuse the "real world" of falsehood and deep disorder" (Doody, 1977, 560). Those accusations are now heard.

The questioning of the sane and benevolent real world that begins with a closer look at the young/old male struggle thus continues through another binary opposition, male/female. Here, too, myths suddenly seem strangely different. If it is true, as Moers claims, that "property seems to loom larger than love in *Udolpho*" (Moers, 1977, 207), then perhaps criticism has constructed its own secret spaces in which to confine unruly issues, themes, and characters which might suggest that Gothic dread is anything other than an individual or familial problem. The emphasis upon interpersonal relations and development destabilizes previously secure plots in psychoanalysis also. The possibility of a different story, for women particularly, leads to the "discovery" in both fields of what was always there and to curiosity about what might remain unseen.

Systems

In the structures and themes stage, elements are increasingly not discrete items but parts of constellations in which their meanings may vary according to the way they cluster or the order of their presentation. Pattern, seen in other novels and other patients, is fully as important as constituent parts. Interpretation acknowledges the ambiguity of texts and of life: the "definitive" reading no longer seems quite so achievable or desirable. Toward the end of this stage, important new structures are identified, and binaries such as male/female, gay/straight, mother/daughter, upper-/working-class are added to the older/young male divide that figured in the Gothic and psychoanalysis from the first. There is still a tendency, as pronounced as in the elements stage, to laud each localized pattern as "the" pattern. And yet, the insistence upon interpersonal relations, rather than upon the patient or character as *isolato*, suggests that there is at least *one* other who serves as a microcosm of social existence.

That other may be the mother, as object relations maintains (thus mandating a full reassessment of the oedipal), or some other figure. No matter how the "other" is identified, though, the ascendant part of the binary points insistently to still larger social structures. Just as elements reconfigure as structures or themes, so, from about 1980 on, the latter begin to be understood during the systems stage in paradigmatic relation to one another and in conjunction with other systems.

Throughout this third stage, questioning of boundaries – whether within the psyche, between self and other, between genres, or between disciplines – is paramount. For the purposes of this discussion, I call this new understanding "identity" psychology; in the textual criticism arena, "cultural studies" is the term. We move from the analytic session or the genre to a connection of these interpretative frames with others. In so doing, we pay new attention to time, place, and synchronic structures, and find exhilarating new possibilities for inquiry. Why is there so little attention to race in psychoanalysis? Can displacement not be understood not only as a specific, localized

mechanism, but as an explanation for the role of servants in the Gothic? The acknowledgement of patient – and text – autonomy first proposed in the structures and themes stage leads to a corollary question: What are the psychoanalyst's and the critic's self-interest and complicity in maintaining the genealogies of power? And, most importantly, how and why have different approaches to understanding the Gothic remained segregated so that psychoanalytic modes usually have little to do with feminist, socio-historical, Marxist, or even theological ones?

The text, then, seems no more stable than did the patient of the elements stage, and the psychoanalyst's status is also shaky. What does he want to institute as "cure," and why? Indeed, the term "client" becomes a common synonym for "patient," a shift that denies the label of disease and underscores the economic nexus that made Freud so uneasy. (If the therapist is a servant dependent upon the wages of the employer, what then?)

Turning to uncomfortable, gross issues such as economics, whether in the analytic hour or through assessment of property in the Gothic, points to a return of the (repressed) manifest, a sort of purloined Gothic, always there while we sought assiduously for it elsewhere. Inverting rationalist privileging in the manifest/latent binary, as well as others, led to important new perspectives in stages one and two. In systemic analysis, however, simple reversal (which leaves the binary structure intact) no longer seems adequate to explain what goes on within psychoanalysis or the Gothic, as Sedgwick maintains in critiquing content-predominant analysis:

> But their plunge to the thematics of depth and from there to a psychology of depth has left unexplained the most characteristic and daring areas of Gothic convention, those that point the reader's attention back to surfaces. (Sedgwick, 1980, 140–1)

The renewed focus on surfaces, as well as continued analysis of the latent, begin to unravel definition by opposition. "Both/and" assumes the force "either/or" exerted in stages one and two.

The most important premise of cultural studies is that textual practices, broadly construed, affect material bodies in the real world. Within psychoanalysis, the contemporary emphasis on therapy, or working through a specific issue, tacitly cedes the same truth. In both realms, what I am calling "identity" is acknowledged as multi-faceted: we are not defined solely by the romance plot, the economic plot or even the psychoanalytic plot. Instead, all operate simultaneously, while we yet maintain a core identity that makes us recognizable to ourselves over time and in different contexts, whether kissing someone, taking an exam, or paying a bill. To some extent, this identity is an analogy for the Gothic itself, which can be seen as informing multiple cultural texts, whether legal, medical, or economic.

One of the most popular contemporary psychoanalytic approaches to the Gothic, Lacanian, can pay exquisite attention to the surface but is at odds with much of what has just been stated. Lacanian interpretation, often yoked to post-structuralist methodologies, sees identity itself as structured like a language, but the belief in a mother

tongue, or core identity, is chimerical on the subject's part. Fragmentation, like the flickering play of language between the symbolic and the imaginary registers, is to be acknowledged and sought. Even in the Gothic realm, the dissolution of boundaries can be deeply disturbing, as we have seen; within the psychoanalytic, it is gravely doubtful whether someone spouting word salad in a psychotic episode would laud what Rosemary Jackson would argue as appropriately subversive: "to disrupt or eat away at the 'syntax' or *structure* by which order is made" (Jackson, 1981, 72).

Nonetheless, post-structuralist, Lacanian models can provide intriguing ideas about the Gothic. Robert Miles, for example, draws upon Foucault, in conjunction with Lacan and others, to construct a "genealogy" of the Gothic that, "in repudiating evolutionary models . . . directs our attention to the 'intertextual' character of Gothic writing" (Miles, 1993, 4). The Bakhtinian carnivalesque celebration of the fragmented self, however, implicitly assumes a return to order or what older psychoanalytic models might describe as "regression in the service of the ego." Post-structuralist models can also bring together seemingly disparate issues in important and insightful ways, as in Hurley's use of Kristeva's semiotic (imaginary, pre-oedipal) to consider both the Gothic and Darwin's theory of evolution. By foregrounding the loss of all boundaries, or dissolution into the abhuman, Hurley addresses issues of race and masculinity in the Gothic that evidence themselves as "hysterical nausea" (Hurley, 1997, 104–11).

Anglo-feminist and Marxist theories also acknowledge the fragmentation of identity, but seldom applaud it. They are the precursors of cultural studies in their adamant insistence that there must be some coherence between theory and practice in the real world. As Margaret Homans rightfully notes, "the coming true of a dream, the discovery in the object world of what was at one time purely subjective, is actually more frightening than the subjective experience itself" (Homans, 1983, 267). What she calls "literalisation" situates horror in the real world, a conclusion already proposed in second-stage analysis, but now developed still further. Within the frame of object relations, particularly as articulated in Nancy Chodorow's influential assessment of mother/daughter bonds, the Gothic becomes, as Claire Kahane asserts, a mirror for the "mysteries of identity and the temptation to lose it by merging with a mother imago who threatens all boundaries between self and other," but also a representation of the mother's own cultural curtailment (Kahane, 1985, 340).

Third-stage analysis thus refuses single causative diagrams or oppositional logic. The gaze, for example, becomes itself an object of scrutiny because of the way in which it enables or forbids entrance into cultural orders, as Susan Wolstenholme argues: "the Gothic structure of looking and being-looked-at offers certain "covers" for the coding of women within the text" (Wolstenholme, 1993, 12). The attributes assigned to looking/being looked at, like those of speech/silence, however, no longer seem so neatly marshaled on each side when the power of *not* looking or speaking seems as possible as the vulnerability of *having* to look or speak. So, too, the earlier focus on male/female relations, via what sometimes seems the omnipresent heterosexual plot, becomes the more complex, multidisciplinary arena of gender studies, so that

masculinity is no longer the "norm" against which the enigmas of femininity can be measured, but a mystery for analysis in its own right. Presuming that identity is best embodied in the male, the white, the upper class or the heterosexual is no longer the gold standard of interpretation.

The boundaries between the text or analytic session and the real world become less clear, their purpose more suspect. Tania Modleski observes that "The Gothic has been used . . . to connect the social with the psychological, the personal with the political" (Modleski, 1984, 83). The time-honored binary of the individual/society itself begins to dissolve as we examine the ideological stakes that insist that the individual psyche or text is the preserve of horror. The Gothic's own repetition becomes a "pointed reminder of cultural amnesia" (Massé, 1992, 3).

Refusing to accept the preset boundary line between fantasy and reality also leads to joining forces with other modalities and systems. Film, frequently referred to in contemporary studies, is one instance, but so, too, is the crossing of disciplinary boundaries suggested by Punter's *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, the Body and the Law* (1998). In this chapter's analysis, then, we find that we live in a Gothic world, and that the role of interpreters is not to reconcile the individual to that Gothic regime, but instead to train our analytic gaze upon the forces that preserve and maintain it.

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22
Comic Gothic

Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik

Although Gothic writing is now firmly established within the academy, its comic dimension has only recently begun to receive critical attention. In his ground-breaking, Freudian–Marxist study of the Gothic, *The Literature of Terror*, published in 1980, David Punter defines three elements that lie at the "heart" of Gothic writing. These are: the concept of paranoia, the notion of the barbaric, and the nature of the taboo – "aspects of the terrifying to which Gothic constantly, and hauntedly, returns" (Punter, 1996, 184). *The Literature of Terror* presents Gothic writing as a textual engagement with profound social collective neuroses, the study of which can teach us much about cultural and political oppression. Punter's work set the tone for many critical works of the 1980s and early 1990s, during which time Gothic moved in from the margins to become a respectable area of academic enquiry within literary studies. Despite some differences of opinion about what constitutes "Gothic," most critics would probably agree that Gothic writing always concerns itself with boundaries and their instabilities, whether between the quick/the dead, eros/thanatos, pain/pleasure, "real"/"unreal," "natural"/"supernatural," material/transcendent, man/machine, human/vampire, or "masculine"/"feminine," Such a concern with the permeability of boundaries, it has been suggested, manifests a deep anxiety about the coherence of the modern subject. Robert Miles, for example, claims that although, "The Gothic may evince no single dialectic . . . there is broad agreement that the Gothic represents the subject in a state of deracination, of the self finding itself dispossessed in its own house, in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation" (Miles, 2002, 3). Indeed, Gothic writers deliberately exploit the fear of the "Other" encroaching upon the apparent order of the post-Enlightenment world in order to achieve their effects. Thus, lines of confrontation between good and evil are invariably drawn up early in the plot of the Gothic novel, and satisfactory resolution depends upon the clear reestablishment

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of acceptable boundaries. However, the threat of their being breached again always remains: hence, of course, the rich progeny spawned by *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*. The effect of such texts is to generate fear: the Gothic text challenges the reader with the question "What are you afraid of?" and, in bringing this question to the surface, therapeutically evokes feelings of horror, terror, and revulsion.[1] Unspeakable fears are frequently embodied in external threats such as the vampire or the monster. However, the form such threats take is influenced by historical moment; to that extent, abjection is both temporally and culturally inflected – what terrified the eighteenth-century reader will not frighten the twenty-first century cyberspace surfer (see Hogle, 1999).

However, while form may change, certain characteristics of the Gothic remain constant. For example, while concerned at the level of plot to reestablish "good," the Gothic text is frequently marked by an obsession with violence, darkness, and death; with "evil" as a supernatural force; with the "uncanny" as an inexplicable phenomenon. This is indeed Gothic as a literature of terror, a literature which reflects the fact that the "uncanny is inextricably bound up with the history of the Enlightenment and with European and North American Romanticism" (Royle, 2003, 8). Seen in this light, Gothic writing can be construed as religious in the broadest sense of the word, in that it functions to sustain the idea of transcendence in a society that has become increasingly secular since the Renaissance. Indeed, Fred Botting has noted that Gothic texts are "attempts to explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, efforts to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle" (Botting, 1996, 23). Like melodrama (which Peter Brooks describes as "a form for a post-sacred era"), the Gothic text also polarizes and hyperdramatizes "forces in conflict" in order to offer what he calls a "moral manichaeism" (Brooks, 1995, viii and 5) made textually evident in the Gothic by that anxious play on boundaries we have already noted. It is not surprising then to find that, historically, melodrama emerges at roughly the same moment as the Gothic, coming into its own at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Brooks argues that each nourished the other, but whereas melodrama tends "to move toward a clear nomination of the moral universe" (Brooks, 1995, 17) by assigning good and evil to individuals, the Gothic – through its use of the eerie and the uncanny – sustains the notion of an immanent, inexplicable, and terrifying world, albeit one in which God is dead or merely ineffective against diabolic forces.

The critical preoccupation with the uncanny (as identified by Freud in his seminal essay entitled "On the 'Uncanny'," 1919) during the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the privileging of a methodology based on psychoanalysis that seeks to bring to the surface what is hidden in the Gothic text. This resulted in a relative neglect of the formal play of surface effects, despite Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's pioneering work in this area (Sedgwick, 1981).[2] We shall argue here that most orthodox accounts of what is Gothic do not seem to capture the hybridity of many Gothic novels, which includes their juxtaposition of incongruous textual effects. Such incongruity opens up the possibility of a comic turn in the presence of horror or terror. In this way, Gothic's tendency to

hybridity makes possible a mixed response to the loss of transcendence that characterizes the modern condition. Perhaps in the academy we have overlooked the comic in the Gothic – or too quickly pathologized it as the hysterical laughter of comic relief – in our desire to present Gothic texts as suitable cases for academic treatment. Paul Lewis, Victor Sage, Philip Stevick, Sybil Korff Vincent, and Julian Wolfreys have written important essays on the comic in specific Gothic texts, and in our own *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2005) we offered a book-length study of this topic.[3] However, considering that there is a clear trajectory of comic Gothic from the hybrid *The Castle of Otranto* through to the present day, this is a small and rather belated body of criticism. If, as Brooks suggests, melodrama and the Gothic gesture theatrically toward a lost transcendence, then it could be argued that the comic within the Gothic offers a position of detachment and skepticism toward such cultural nostalgia. This is not simply to suggest that the Gothic comic turn functions as a fifth columnist for Enlightenment values. Rather, we see it as the beginning of a deconstructionist turn inherent within modernity. Such a perspective breaks the cultural twinning of the Gothic and the psychoanalytic: it is not for nothing that Stella Gibbons sends Cousin Judith, the fixated Gothic mother, off for a luxurious bout of psychoanalytic treatment at the end of *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932). In similar vein, Patrick McGrath shows us the founding fathers of psychoanalysis literally cut down to size as little manikins in "The Skewer" (1988).

The comic turn in Gothic is not an aberration or a corruption of a "serious" genre; rather, it is intrinsic to a mode of writing that has been hybrid since its very inception. Just as Brooks argues that "the melodramatic mode is an inescapable dimension of modern consciousness" (Brooks, 1995, vii) we suggest here that the comic within the Gothic foregrounds a self-reflexivity and dialectical impulse intrinsic to the modern subject. Rather than setting up a binary between "serious" and "comic" Gothic texts, it is perhaps best to think of Gothic writing as a spectrum that, at one end, produces horror writing containing moments of comic hysteria or relief and, at the other, works in which there are clear signals that nothing is to be taken seriously. The comic Gothic turn self-consciously uses Gothic's propensity to bare the device in order to allay the reader's learnt response of fear, horror, and anxiety when encountering certain plots and tropes. Nevertheless, it still functions within Gothic as a critique of modernity. In this sense, the comic Gothic turn is the Gothic's own *doppelgänger*.

Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764, is usually identified as the first Gothic novel in English. This claim is incontestable, insofar as *The Castle of Otranto* was the first work to announce itself as "A Gothic Story" – although, as E. J. Clery has pointed out, "it was at precisely the moment that *Otranto* was revealed to be a modern work that the adjective 'Gothic' was first applied to it."[4] Yet in this tale of death, incest, malevolent intrigue, and the supernatural, Walpole offers his readers several moments of farcical humor, combining the uncanny and the melodramatic to comic effect. One of these takes place when Bianca, a young female servant, expresses her terror at having seen a supernaturally large hand within the confines of the castle:

> At that instant, Bianca burst into the room, with a wildness in her look and gestures that spoke the utmost terror. "Oh! My Lord, my Lord!" cried she, "We are all undone! It is come again! It is come again! – "What is come again?" cried Manfred, amazed. – "Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand! – Support me! I am terrified out of my senses" cried Bianca; "I will not sleep in the castle tonight. Where shall I go? My things may come after me tomorrow. – Would I had been content to wed Francesco! This comes of ambition!" (Walpole, 1986, 135)

Bianca's servant perspective, with her concern about her "things," strikes an incongruous note of practicality and materialism in the midst of high feeling presented so melodramatically. Her immediate concern about what she owns (not much, presumably) and what she should or should not strive for in a rapidly changing social world ("Would I had been content to wed Francesco!") comically relativizes the larger themes of inheritance, primogeniture, property, marriages of convenience, and aristocratic lineage that inform the main plot. There are many such moments in Walpole's novel. In his second preface to *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1765, Horace Walpole provocatively drew attention to the hybrid nature of his work, proudly announcing its blending of ancient romance (tales of chivalry and myth) with modern romance (the eighteenth-century novel) and, in the spirit of Shakespeare, the mingling of the tragic and the comic within the same text. This retrieval of the bard's agenda had much to do with the construction of an English national identity that separated itself from European culture, including Voltaire's judgment that to mix buffoonery and solemnity was "intolerable" (Walpole, 1986, 45). Walpole's polemical preface thus thumbs the nose at the eighteenth-century embrace of Enlightenment taxonomies which influenced the editing of Shakespeare's plays, "correcting" them by eliminating, amongst other things, the very hybrid elements that make Shakespeare's work so distinctive. However, whereas modern critics of the Gothic have been happy to accept the mingling of ancient with modern romance in *The Castle of Otranto*, they have been less interested in Walpole's use of farce and humor. Yet Walpole himself recognized the work's comic elements: in writing to his friend Elie de Beaumont, he remarked " 'If I make you laugh, for I cannot flatter myself that I shall make you cry, I shall be content' " (Clery, 1995, xxii). On learning that many readers were taking the novel seriously, he told Madame du Deffand, "presque tout le monde en fut le dupe" (Davenport-Hines, 1998, 136).

However, by the time Clara Reeve was writing her novel *The Old English Baron* during the late 1770s, the excess that induces laughter was seen as a threat to the Gothic novel's potential for inducing fear, perhaps because of the cultural assimilation of Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) during the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1777, anticipating Elizabeth Napier's 1987 attack on the Gothic as absurdly extravagant, Clara Reeve castigated Walpole for embracing excess:

> a sword so large as to require an hundred men to lift it; a helmet that by its own weight forces a passage through a court-yard into an arched vault, big enough for a man to go

> through; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit's cowl . . . (Reeve, 1967, 3)

Fortunately, however, many subsequent Gothic writers have followed in Walpole's footsteps rather than in Reeve's, attracted by those very elements of humor, fakery, and melodrama in *The Castle of Otranto.* This is not to say, of course, that Walpole's novel does not have a serious, even tragic, dimension: its engagement with the transition from a feudal, aristocratic society to one in which status is based on property and on the maintenance of property through the suitable marriages of offspring is entirely topical; in that sense it relates keenly to the Marriage Act of 1753 which had been devised, it seems, to award ambitious parents more power so that they could prevent clandestine marriages taking place (Davenport-Hines, 1998, 3).

Given its hybridity and its popularity, it is perhaps no coincidence that the rise of the Gothic novel is roughly contemporary not only with the birth of melodrama but also with the rise of the circus and of opera as popular entertainment.[5] Indeed, Anne Williams sees the larger-than-life qualities of Walpole's novel as closely related to opera, which Walpole attended regularly; on finding "there are nearly 600 references to opera in the index to the Yale edition of Walpole's correspondence," Williams concluded that "Horace Walpole went to the opera all the time" (Williams, 2000, 108). Elevated later by exclusivity and expense, opera was not always regarded as high culture. John Dennis, writing in 1706, attacked opera as an art form that was foreign, effeminate, and Gothic:

> there is something in the *Italian* Opera, which is Barbarous and Gothick . . . nothing can be more Gothick than an Opera, since nothing can be more oppos'd to the antient Tragedy, than the modern Tragedy in Musick; because, the one is reasonable, the other ridiculous; the one is artful, the other absurd; the one beneficial; the other pernicious; in short, the one natural, and the other monstrous. (Williams, 2000, 111 and 112)

The creators of early Gothic and early opera are, then, both castigated for ignoring generic conventions; for embracing surface rather than depth; for delight in excess: the result is "absurd" and "monstrous" works that make you laugh as well as cry. The same ambivalent response is evoked by both melodrama and the circus (in the latter case, particularly in the classic clown performances that seek to plumb the depths of pathos as well as the far reaches of helpless laughter).[6]

Once we accept that the Gothic is part of this complex and popular cultural response to modernity, and that the roots of the Gothic lie in the comic as well as the tragic, we are able to see later Gothic texts rather differently. For example, what Emma McEvoy calls "a dangerous sense of parody" in *The Monk* we could simply see as Lewis daring to push the hybridity so evident in Walpole's work to new extremes (Lewis, 1995, xxviii). Less obviously, perhaps, Ann Radcliffe's work flirts with Walpole's comic legacy. *The Italian* (1797) not only perpetuates the emphasis on property and lineage set up in *The Castle of Otranto*, but also metaphorically draws attention several times to the close relationship between horror and laughter in a way that suggests a

metafictive awareness. For example, late in the novel, Schedoni and Ellena, guided by a peasant, arrive in Rome and pass close by the walls of the Inquisition building. Here they come across a fair where peasants "in their holiday cloaths" are enjoying themselves:

> Here was a band of musicians, and there a group of dancers; on one spot the *outré* humour of a zanni provoked the never-failing laugh of the Italian rabble, in another the *improvisatore*, by the pathos of his story, and the persuasive sensibility of his strains, was holding the attention of his auditors, as in the bands of magic. Farther on was a stage raised for a display of fireworks, and near this a theatre, where a mimic opera, the "shadow of a shade," was exhibiting, whence the roar of laughter, excited by the principal *buffo* within, mingled with the heterogeneous voices of the vendors of ice, macaroni, sherbet, and diavoloni, without. (Radcliffe, 1991, 273)

This episode clearly lends itself to a Bakhtinian reading in which the voices of the fair, or carnival, can be heard against the privileged voices of aristocratic authority that dominate the plot. Yet the passage can also be taken as a self-reflexive comment by the writer on her own blend of humor and horror, measured out rather differently from the heady and salacious mixture served up by Matthew Lewis in *The Monk*. Forced to stop near a stage "on which some persons grotesquely dressed, were performing," Ellena and Schedoni witness a tragedy turned to comedy by the actors' "strange gestures" and "uncouth recitation" (Radcliffe, 1991, 274). Yet the narrator's critical and seemingly authoritative dismissal of the entertainment is itself destabilized, since the peasant guide, entirely caught up in the story of Virginia which is being performed, and who is ignorant of Schedoni's own recently abandoned attempt to murder Ellena (whom he at one point believed to be his daughter), calls out "Look! Signor, see! Signor, what a scoundrel! What a villain! See! He has murdered his own daughter!" (Radcliffe, 1991, 274). Here, Radcliffe, like Shakespeare, demonstrates that "the play's the thing"; that, as in *Hamlet*, there is no clear dividing line in this text between "reality" and the fictional representation of that "reality"; indeed, the latter might just be closer to "truth" than the former. Moreover, Schedoni's earlier comment (on the peasant's convoluted and – characteristically – unfinished tale of Old Marco) that "the narrative resembles a delirious dream, more than a reality" (Radcliffe, 1991, 284) applies also to this later scene with its mingling of nightmare, farce, coincidence, comedy, and terror. There is perhaps here a wry self-reflexivity and even an implicit awareness that the Gothic (like melodrama and opera – and unlike naturalism or realism) presents, to use Eric Bentley's words, the "expression of emotion in the pure histrionic form of dreams" (Brooks, 1995, 12). Its value in this context is that, in mingling emotional opposites such as mirth and terror, it reflects the psychic world more accurately than realist writing – which is not to deny its simultaneous reflection of contemporary anxieties and values. In this sense, the strange player scene in *The Italian* offers both a corrective to the competing demand for realism in the new form of the novel and an early understanding that theatricality, comedy, and melodrama are essential weapons in the Gothic text's rejection of naturalism as a dominant mode

for representing modern subjectivity. It is not surprising, then, to find that authors such as Charlotte Brontë (in, for example, her description of the midnight fête scene in Chapter 38 of *Villette*) and George Meredith (in the "living statue" scene in *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*) chose to preserve this form of creative eclecticism in an attempt to temper the claims of realism (see also John, 2001).

Victor Sage, in his essay "Gothic Laughter: Farce and Horror in Five Texts," cites Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* as "a very clear example of the peculiarly close relationship between horror and humour in the Gothic novel" and goes on to present *Dracula* (1897) as "both a theory and an example of the peculiarly self-conscious complexities of humour which attach themselves to the gothic tradition" (Sage, 1994, 190, 197). Comparing the Gothic novel with the theatre, Sage argues that "the mistaken identity and the exaggerated, mechanical withholding of information, which is the driving force of stage farce, becomes in the context of the Gothic a metaphor for epistemological doubt and theological unease in the presence of death" (Sage, 1994, 193). Both Sage and Philip Stevick seem to agree that the "surface" element of Gothic fiction allows for an easy dialectic between the rational and the irrational, emotion and intellect, artificiality and authenticity, and, above all, between horror and laughter. Indeed, it is the Gothic's preoccupation with "surface" that enables it so easily to embrace a comic as well as a tragic perspective, resulting in what Peter Berger has described as a "distinctive diagnosis of the world" (Berger, 1997, 34).

For if Gothic demonstrates the horror attaching to such a shifting and unstable world, it also, in its comic and ludic aspects, celebrates the possibilities thereby released. Certain novels by more recent writers demonstrate this celebratory embrace of Gothic instability. Muriel Spark's ebullient and quasi-demonic Dougal Douglas, in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), emerges victorious from his encounter with the forces of goodness, determinedly pursuing his picaresque career as a free spirit at the end of the novel but not before having wreaked havoc in working-class Peckham. Acting as what we might call a catalytic converter within a novel of comic Gothic turns, Dougal is the uncanny presence through which Spark probes the stifling constraints of the vestiges of a conservative Christianity morality in a community in thrall to material values. The oblique reference to Blake's vision of the angel in the tree on Peckham Rye, made through another character's sudden awareness (prompted by the Rye "looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it") that "there was another world than this," invokes a previous text to indicate loss of the deepest kind, but within an overall context of comic irreverence (Spark, 1963, 111). Hilary Mantel's *Fludd* (1989) also contains an ambiguous and uncanny figure; Fludd intervenes in a Gothic world of Catholic oppression and anxiety in order to set others free. Based on the real Fludd, a scholar and alchemist born in 1574, Hilary Mantel's character, with his "bloodless," "pointed" fingers and his "corpse-like pallor," is able to enter the minds of those around him: Miss Dempsey experiences "a whisper at the back of her mind, and only he could have put it there: I have come to transform you, transformation is my business" (Mantel, 1999, 46, 106, 55). His earlier trade of "releasing matter from spirit" (Mantel, 1999, 109) has translated itself into releasing

spirit from matter and, in awakening Sister Philomena to sexual desire, he frees her from a fossilized religious dogma and the social practices that accompany it. It is no coincidence that both novels are set in the 1950s, Spark and Mantel using comic Gothic to critique the after effects of World War II which produced an anti-liberal ideology laced with a new materialism.

Jerrold E. Hogle has suggested that the binary of "fakery"/"authenticity" that helps structure the Gothic novel is indicative of a specifically modern and fractured subjectivity.[7] This is perhaps most evident in the Gothic novel's interest in intertextuality and its playful concern with reproduction and fakery. Walpole's embrace of the fake can most obviously be seen in his Strawberry Hill home (his "Gothic villa") in Twickenham, and in the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764 as a true translation by "William Marshall, Gent." of a sixteenth-century Italian manuscript by "Onuphrio Muralto," supposedly a "Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas of Otranto." This element of fakery combines with the high degree of hybridity in Walpole's text to produce a mode of writing that is not only at odds with realism and naturalism, but is also unusually self-reflexive and ludic. The fragmentation and stylization characteristic of melodrama often takes the form in Gothic narratives of the framing tale or reference to a previous tale or lost text; for example, the myth of Prometheus and Milton's *Paradise Lost* function in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as indicators of loss. Thus meaning, and with it authenticity, is constantly deferred to another textual source. In this sense, the Gothic text can be seen as taking up a skeptical position toward authority and morality and as problematizing authenticity and legitimacy. But the Gothic's emphasis on fakery in the representation of extremes of feeling and experience inevitably invites the ludicrous excess of further layers of fakery in the form of parody, another dimension of the comic. The Gothic text's tendency to self-parody is well expressed by Chris Baldick in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*: "Many Gothic tales are already half way to sending themselves up" (Baldick, 1992, xxiii). Given both the prominence of Romanticism in literary studies and the nineteenth-century construction of Romanticism as defined by the unique and individual nature of imaginative experience, it is not surprising that parody has, until relatively recently, been seen as derivative, lightweight, and parasitical. It is only since the early 1990s that work by critics such as Linda Hutcheon (1985), Margaret Rose (1993), and Simon Dentith (2000) has claimed some sophistication for parodic writing, arguing that, in foregrounding its own textuality, parody represents part of a complex cultural dialogue.

Parody differs from travesty, pastiche, and satire in that travesty reduces the target text to something ludicrous, pastiche "works by imitation rather than direct transformation" (Dentith, 2000, 11) and satire does not necessarily engage with precursive texts. This is not to say that we see the cultural function of parody as limited and anodyne, since it is clear that it can function satirically in certain contexts. Indeed, parody's comic engagement with precursive texts allows not only an irreverent response to target works and authors but also enables the writer, if he or she chooses, to engage critically with aspects of the contemporary world. It is thus essential to place parody

within its historical and cultural moment. For example, both Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) – which parodies Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* – and Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813) – which parodies mercilessly dozens of contemporary popular Gothic novels – also engage with questions of law. Given that Barrett was a lawyer and Edgeworth very well acquainted with the sort of legal struggles that define the plot of her best-known work, this is not surprising. Both novels, while hugely entertaining, are concerned with the rapid development of the legal framework in England and Ireland in the eighteenth century; indeed, the density of legal terminology in *Castle Rackrent* is striking. Both works envisage the freedoms which might be accorded to the new legal subject while noting that those very freedoms would also accelerate the destruction of the old order.[8] This ambivalence, which results from a combination of nostalgia and a desire for change, frequently marks comic Gothic, especially its parodic mode.

It is also clear that certain kinds of parody, in self-consciously foregrounding intertextuality, draw attention to writing itself, so that they offer both a reflection on fiction and the act of writing fictions. Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976), for example, is deeply immersed in the negotiations between writing and readerships. Joan Foster is one of Atwood's unreliable first-person narrators who, at the opening of the novel, is in flight from the complications of a multiple literary and personal life after having staged a fake suicide in Lake Ontario. Under the name of Louisa K. Delacourt, she writes mass-market Gothic romances; interestingly, Atwood's comments in interview indicate an acute awareness of the significance of such narratives in women's lives.[9] The relationship between Joan's writing and her life with its plural identities is at the core of the novel and the heart of the maze that is its central metaphor. In the act of writing, Joan penetrates to the "central plot" of her heroine's maze and her commercial narrative becomes a mode of confrontation with these multiple selves (Atwood, 1982, 341). A novel of its time, *Lady Oracle* reminds us powerfully that the personal is also political; the literature of parody becomes also a literature of irony and a literature of liberation. Thus parody can function as a key aspect of comic Gothic, not in the traditional sense of being parasitic upon an "original" text, but because, through "repetition with critical difference" (Hutcheon, 1985, 6), it foregrounds the production of the modern subject through discourse. In this sense, parody can offer Gothic a comic turn. This turn frequently allows a fresh perspective on a changing world, one of accommodation rather than terrified apprehension. As the Gothic novel evolved in the late twentieth century, this dialogic and metafictional strain inherent in Gothic writing became even more evident. It is therefore not surprising to find the work of authors such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and Patrick McGrath marked by a heavy intertextuality.

We suggested earlier that the comic turn in Gothic is not an aberration or a corruption of a "serious" genre but, rather, a key aspect of Gothic's essential hybridity. In the comic turn what we see is an exploitation of the stylized theatricality of the Gothic device, which is always teetering on the edge of self-parody. The result is not so much an abdication of the powers of horror as a process of turning them to creative

purpose. This effect is different from the humor inadvertently evoked by the use of outworn devices that simply repeat, but that do so without "critical difference." Comic Gothic moments, then, invite a conscious, self-reflexive engagement with the Gothic mode that sets up a different kind of contract between the reader and the text, offering a measure of detachment from scenes of pain and suffering that would be disturbing in a different Gothic context.

Although George Meredith and Henri Bergson offered important reflections on the nature of laughter and comedy during the nineteenth century (Sypher, 1980), theoretical work on comedy by major twentieth-century critics is relatively sparse: Northrop Frye and C. L. Barber examined the role of comedy in transforming disorder to order; Bakhtin related comedy to carnival. In a different key, Freud's theory of wit and the unconscious, first published in 1905, focuses on regression and aggression. If the Bakhtinian critical model of carnival allows humor only an exceptional reign in temporal terms, then the psychoanalytic model tends to recoup the comic into the psychopathology of everyday life rather than analyzing it positively as a cultural manifestation of modernity. Even Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, which presents itself as dealing with the normal rather than with pathological psychology, finally turns on a model of regression (Freud's argument being that jokes allow us to retrieve a euphoric state similar to that we experienced in childhood when, in fact, we had no need of humor as such). Thus, neither the Bakhtinian nor the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective constructs the comic as part of the "normal." In contrast, the texts that we would claim as comic Gothic recognize the complexity of the "normal" and of the modern subject; they also demonstrate an acceptance of what it means to be part of a social world in which the traditional assumed link between signifier and signified no longer pertains. The comic is part of this complexity. As Fred Botting has noted:

> Laughter, activating a diabolical play that exceeds the attempt of sacred horror to expel or control it, is associated with the play of signs, narratives and interpretations, a play that is itself ambivalent in the way it is constructed as either rationally open and liberating or devilishly, anarchically irreverent. (Botting, 1996, 172)

What, then, do we mean by comic Gothic? The Gothic text's tendency to self-parody results in a variety of comic turns. We have suggested that it is perhaps best to think of Gothic writing as a spectrum that, at one end, produces horror writing containing moments of comic hysteria or relief and, at the other, works in which there are clear signals that nothing is to be taken seriously. Gothic's preoccupation with death places one kind of comic turn in a long tradition: that of the grin of the skull beneath the skin. This aligns with graveyard or gallows humor and is expressed graphically by one of Gothic's famous characters, Van Helsing in *Dracula*, through the figure of "King Laugh." At the other extreme we have the comic turn which consists entirely of spoof renderings of Gothic tropes and devices; these have enjoyed considerable popularity over recent years and include *The Addams Family*, *The Rocky Horror Picture*

Show, and *Dracula: Dead and Loving It*. Some texts execute a full turn so that they embrace the closure of comedy; examples include Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813) and, in ironic mode, Stella Gibbons's *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932). Such works offer the closure of classic festive comedy, as identified by Northrop Frye and C. L. Barber, and frequently end in a suitable marriage. At the same time, however, they throw the frames of social reference into doubt and make moral judgment appear a matter of relativity: it is in this sense that the comic can function as intellectually liberating, despite closures that appear to be conservative in restoring the individual to the society. Where the full comic turn takes a satirical direction, closure gestures toward the more characteristically modern vision of the absurd. This is the comic turn that embraces nihilism; thus we enter the cul-de-sac of meaninglessness that can follow from the loss of transcendence. The fate of Evelyn Waugh's Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust* (1934), who spends his last days reading Dickens to a madman in the heart of the Brazilian jungle, is an example of this kind of satiric comic turn.

The comic turn in more ambiguous texts often involves various kinds of physical grotesque as the loss of classical laws of symmetry and proportion, in relation to the human, quickly leads us to the grotesque body. In comic Gothic, however, such loss of symmetry does not manifest itself in the horrific corporeality of a Frankenstein's creature or an atavistic Hyde, but in the comically presented excess of flesh that constitutes Cherubina's mother in *The Heroine* (1813), Ruth Patchett in Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983), Fevvers in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), and the Dog Woman in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). The irreverent celebration of such excess tends to the licensing of transgression; these texts therefore lend themselves more easily to Bakhtin's thoughts on carnival in *Rabelais and his World* and to Stallybrass and White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* than to Kayser's emphasis on the grotesque as sinister, as Mary Russo points out (Russo, 1995, 7). Gothic's tendency to the sinister grotesque is easily converted to the comic flamboyance of the grotesque as excess, particularly during periods of rapid change resulting in a sense of instability and flux. This, in turn, means that the tropes and devices used within horror Gothic need continually to renew themselves in order to sustain their power to terrify. Frankenstein's monster, as visualized in James Whale's film version of 1931, no longer generates fear but has been domesticated and now features on bubble-gum wrappers and crisp packets. Within modernity, monsters soon become domesticated through commodification and so monstrosity has to take a different form for each generation. Indeed, during the phase of late capitalism, it sometimes seems that while the Gothic monstrous has become reduced to a plastic toy, new monstrosities are now accommodated within the quotidian: the super-surveillance of individuals through advances in information technology; the attack on New York's Trade Center twin towers; cloning in the world of medical science.

Yet Gothic's dialogue with the progress of science has often shown a propensity for the comic turn, allowing not only the expression of fear and anxiety in the face of medical or scientific advances, but also a celebration of the possibilities thereby released. The comic turn in Gothic thus often indicates ambivalence in the face of the

new. This has always been the case, as the Gothic representation of the automaton or the mechanical doll illustrates. On the one hand, the Gothic text often portrays the breakdown of the boundary between human and mechanical as sinister. Such a work will present the automaton as a thing that breaches "natural" boundaries and is a threat to humanity. In Kayser's words:

> The mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it. Among the most persistent motifs of the grotesque we find human bodies reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata, and their faces frozen into masks. (Kayser, 1957, 183)

On the other hand, however, in his essay "Laughter," written in 1900, Bergson defines the "mechanical" imitation of human behavior as a source of humor, relating marionettes and "lifeless automata" to a form of artifice that creates amusement (Sypher, 1980, 82–3) – such amusement working culturally to protect us from spiritual death by mechanization. So it would seem that although, at one end of its spectrum, the Gothic presents us with a nightmare vision of automation, at the other end, the comic turn allows a representation of the automaton as ridiculously artificial, thus relativizing a threatening aspect of modernity. If, as Kayser concludes, "THE GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD" (*sic*) (Kayser, 1957, 184) then one effect of the Gothic comic turn is to make such an "estranged" world more bearable for, in its irreverent dialogue with the uncanny and the supernatural, the comic turn in Gothic writing offers a fresh perspective on modernity, seeing it as hugely entertaining and productive as well as threatening. Nicholas Royle has noted that:

> Inextricably bound up with thoughts of home and dispossession, the homely and unhomely, property and alienation, the uncanny becomes, in the words of Anthony Vidler, "a metaphor for a fundamentally unlivable modern condition." (Royle, 2003, 6)

If this is the case, perhaps in subjecting the uncanny to various funny turns, comic Gothic helps to make the modern condition more livable.

Notes

1 William Veeder explores the therapeutic function of Gothic writing in "The nurturance of the Gothic: *The Turn of the Screw*" (1999).

2 For later work in this area, see Henderson (1994) and Hogle (1994, 23–33).

3 See Stevick (1979, 221–39); Vincent (1983, 153–63); Lewis (1989), especially Chapter 4, "Humour and fear in the Gothic" (111–53); Sage (1994, 190–203); Wolfreys (2002), especially Chapter 1, "'I wants to make your flesh creep': Dickens and the Comic Gothic" (25–53); and Horner and Zlosnik (2005). This essay is a revised version of the introduction to *Gothic and the Comic Turn.* We are grateful to Palgrave Macmillan for permission to use material from the book.

4 Walpole's novel was first presented as a translation from the Italian and published anonymously in December 1764. However, the second edition, published in April 1765,

acknowledged Walpole's authorship and added the subtitle "A Gothic Story" (see Clery, 1995, 54). For the quotation from Clery, see her introduction to *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 1996, xv).

5 The circus seems to have originated in the eighteenth century, the first proto-circus being, according to Peter Berger, "an arena for equestrian exhibitions started by one Philip Astley on the outskirts of London in 1768" (Berger, 1997, 76) – four years after the publication of *The Castle of Otranto*. Within the literary tradition, the circus, like the Gothic effect, has frequently been used as an implicit critique of Enlightenment progress. An obvious nineteenth-century example is Charles Dickens's use of the circus in *Hard Times*, published in 1854. Twentieth-century examples include Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984).

6 Clowns remain ambiguous figures, often evoking fear and well as mirth. Pathological fear of clowns is a recognized phobia – coulrophobia. Stephen King uses "Pennywise the Clown" as a herald for the nameless and amorphous monster that lurks beneath the town of Derry in his 1986 novel, *It*. In the television series *Seinfeld*, there was a running joke about the coulrophobia of Kramer, one of the main characters.

7 See Jerrold E. Hogle's essay in this volume, "The Gothic ghost of the counterfeit and the progress of abjection" and Hogle (2002, 1–20).

8 For a more detailed reading of these novels as examples of comic Gothic, see Horner and Zlosnik (2005, 19–43).

9 See Atwood's interviews with Karla Hammond (1978) quoted in Ingersoll (1990) and Becker (1999).

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23
Gothic and the Graphic Novel

Julia Round

Horror and comics are old friends: the grisly genre and graphic medium have frequently conspired together in Britain and America. The British tradition of mass-produced art can be traced back to fifteenth-century woodcuts sold in the streets that showed gruesome scenes of executions. Their prose equivalents would emerge in the nineteenth century as "Penny Dreadfuls" – fictional story papers that provided serialized and disposable pulp entertainment (Sabin, 1996, 11–14). Subsequently, the notorious horror comics boom of the 1950s and consequent Senate investigations censored the American comics industry and medium.[1] However, both mainstream imprints (such as DC Vertigo) and independent companies (for example, Top Shelf Productions) have since continued to publish horrifying comics with psychological or adult themes. It therefore seems arguable that the British Gothic tradition has influenced the structuring and content of Western comics today. This essay will seek to explore this claim through close reading and discussion of *From Hell* (Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, first published 1988–92).[2]

From Hell is a graphic novel based around the real-life "Jack the Ripper" murders that took place in London, England, in 1888, and takes its name from the "address" given on one of the letters sent to police claiming to be from the murderer. It is meticulously researched and written by English writer Alan Moore and illustrated in black and white by Scottish artist Eddie Campbell. This essay will use Gothic critical theory to explore this comic, initially examining its use of tropes such as ghosts, transformation, and absorption. It argues that these elements inform comics' use of strategies such as retroactive continuity, and can also help define the position of the comics reader as a kind of "spectral author" who, although absent, must nonetheless contribute to the story. It then examines *From Hell*'s construction of a haunted chronology and relates these observations to comics' depiction of time-as-space and

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embedded story arcs. Finally, it discusses the Gothic construction (and simultaneous questioning) of the nature of fact and fiction and relates this to the hyperreality of the comics page. The essay concludes by noting similar themes in other contemporary comics, and drawing further links between the Gothic mode and the comics medium.

Spectrality, Transformation, and Absorption

The symbols and tropes that appear in *From Hell* seem unmistakably Gothic: graves, looming churches, and ghostly images sit alongside symbols such as the pentagram (4.36; 14.9)[3] and the poisoned grapes Gull uses to drug his victims. From the title itself, to Gull's assertions that they are truly "in Hell" (9.31), occult imagery pervades the comic. Ghosts and specters haunt this text, as noted by Lisa Coppin (2003), who claims that the spirits which dominate *From Hell* are made real, despite the circumstances of the tale. For example, in a séance with Queen Victoria, we see the ghost of Prince Albert hovering over Victoria (12.1) – although, as Coppin notes, since Lee acknowledges later he is a fake psychic, this apparition should not be visible. Gull also sees the ghosts of Nicholas Hawksmoor and James Hinton while walking near his house (2.25), who direct him toward a vision of the Masonic god Jahbulon. Finally, scenes that show characters meeting with Kelly the day after her death (as was claimed) also seem ghostly events (11.24–5).

This spectral tendency seems particularly Gothic as it invokes notions of corporeality and the abject: that which is opposed to the self. Julia Kristeva defines the abject as a horror that dissembles the personal (1982, 4, 12) by confronting the self with the other, for example in the image of the corpse or expelled bodily fluids, and so often aligned with sex, death, and the maternal. The focus Moore places on the "cursed" Egyptian sarcophagus of a female musician on display in the British Museum (which appears at 5.18 and is mentioned again at 9.13) also contributes – not only due to the body's haunted legacy, but also when Gull, watching his wife sleeping, imagines the sarcophagus in her place (5.39). Both Gull and Lees are also credited with experiencing Klara Hitler's famous dream (of blood gushing from a church) on the night she conceived Adolf (5.2–3 and Epilogue: 10) and the combined image of abject bodily fluids, maternal terror, and religious iconography seems extremely Gothic. The shockingly violent murders, in which reproductive organs are removed and the women's bodies are systematically and sexually mutilated, also summon the abject in a similar manner, and the fetishized female body as spectacle is a noted trope of the Gothic, as identified by Stoddart (2001).

Coppin argues that dreams and visions such as these draw our attention to the role of seeing; itself a very Gothic trope in this context: as sight is etymologically tied to these notions of apparitions and specters.[4] This spectral trope of haunting can also be related to the role of the comics reader who, although absent, is required to fill the events in gutters between panels, and whose existence is evidenced by these gaps and spaces. Dani Cavallaro defines haunting as a discourse, stating that "the Gothic vision

foregrounds the need to face up to incompleteness as a condition which may not and must not be redeemed" and that within "apparent fullness and fulfillment" exists a simultaneous gap, which is "the precondition of creativity" (Cavallaro, 2002, 63). This dialogic model of creativity is epitomized by the role of the comics reader, whose presence-yet-absence completes the text and creates a linear storyline from the spatial arrangement of panels on the page. Roger Whitson (2006) uses Lacanian psychology to argue that comics situate unpresentable events in the gutters, a process that is often apparent in *From Hell*. For example, the final grisly murder of Marie Kelly takes place over thirty pages. Although the reader may think they are merely watching the progress of Gull's cuts, a panel at a time, the static nature of the artwork means that the motions (and therefore the cuts) occur between panels and are, in fact, our own.

Moore comments, "A murder sounded to me like an interesting human event, a little apocalypse. When it happens it must almost be like punching a hole through the skin of reality. You've stepped outside the social cocoon, you've done something which any culture in the world would regard as transgressive" (Jackson, 2000). As the murders gain a greater hold over Gull's life, he transgresses other social restrictions. He ignores the Queen's orders to cease (8.21) and proceeds to exploit her fear of revolution by explaining that his violence is a warning against the Illuminist movement (9.11), manipulating her into giving her sanction. A Gothic inversion of the master–slave dichotomy is apparent here. This paradox is in fact inherent to the master–slave relationship, as identified by Richard Davenport-Hines (1998), who notes that the master needs the slave for status (whereas the reverse is, of course, not true) and, using other examples such as the vampire, who must be invited in, thereby defines victim complicity as a Gothic trope.

Gull is also enabled to transgress other limits of humanity. Lisa Coppin (2003) argues that the murders enable Gull to transcend his human limitations and ascend to the level of spiritual sight. However, his transgressions are also linked to a literal transformation (in the book's final chapter, called "Gull, ascending"), as in his final vision he becomes a literal Gull (14.6), soaring above the Mediterranean. The physicality of this transformation is stressed as Moore links it to another documented historical event: the rain of blood that fell on the Mediterranean in 1888: "In rapture I explode, a scarlet cloudburst. Fluids from Buck's Row and Mitre Square and Miller's Court, rich and sublime, they flower against the blue Aegean sky" (14.6). Again, the stress on corporeality and use of abject fluids makes this transformation seem particularly Gothic.

Fred Botting defines the Gothic as a "hybrid form, incorporating and transforming other literary forms" (Botting, 1996, 14). *From Hell* reflects this absorption by sprawling into its surrounding timeframe and literature, subsuming both fiction and history by situating the Ripper murders as their source. For example, Robert Louis Stevenson wakes in 1886 (two years before the murders) from a nightmare of Gull, saying, "A doctor. A doctor with the soul of a terrible beast inside him. Women. He rampaged through London trampling women" (14.15), which becomes the inspiration for his novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). In a similar act of absorption, Moore documents a curve of murderous events as Gull visits figures such as Renwick Williams (the

"London Monster," 1788), witnesses in the "Halifax Slasher" case (1938), Myra Hindley and Ian Brady (the "Moors Murderers," 1963), and Peter Sutcliffe (the "Yorkshire Ripper," 1974). Gull appears to Brady in a vision, saying, "In time you shall build a garden for me in a high place, sewn with dismal little flowers" (14.18), a psychogeographic description of Brady's child victims. Gull also makes his presence known when Peter Sutcliffe gives news of his mother's death to his family (14.19). A psychoanalytic reading would demonstrate that Gull's apparitions are linked to documented historical events, such as Brady's hallucinations and Mrs. Sutcliffe's death, which could be also considered the triggers for such murders.

Other intertextual references abound in *From Hell*, and figures of the period such as Joseph Merrick (the Elephant Man) (2.23–4), Oscar Wilde (11.20), the artist Walter Sickert (1.4), the boy Aleister (then Alexander) Crowley (9.4), and the poet W. B. Yeats (9.14–15) also feature. Although some of these meetings are invented, their positioning enables Moore to create a retrospective argument that situates the Ripper murders as a source for subsequent events. For example, Detective Abberline meets a teenaged Alexander Crowley (9.4) and, although this is a fictional encounter, it provides retrospective justification for certain well-documented facts about Crowley – such as his interest in Ripperology and magic – and the theory his character puts forward (that the murderer is killing in special patterns to make himself invisible) was one that was mentioned at the time. Similarly, Moore defines Gull as the source for William Blake's famous painting *The Ghost of a Flea* (*c.*1819–20) (14.10; 14.16), painted during a séance with friend John Varley. *From Hell* recreates these circumstances exactly: during the sketching process, Gull's "jaw falls open in astonishment" (14.16), provoking Blake's well-documented comment that the apparition's pose changed. In so doing, it reinforces Blake's mythology by providing a reason for both his vision and his explanation of the same: that "fleas were inhabited by the souls of such men as were by nature blood thirsty to excess" (Kuijsten, 2007, 72).

In this way, disparate historical figures and viewpoints are woven into a rich tapestry of events and philosophy. This type of retrospective revaluation can be linked to comics' strategy of "retconning" (retroactive continuity), whereby past events are expunged or character parameters reformulated in order to keep long-running stories consistent. Moore's previous work on *Swamp Thing* rewrote this freak creature into a "plant elemental," whose previous incarnations included the golden- and silver-age versions. Other notable examples include Neil Gaiman's epic series *The Sandman* (1989–96), which again used this strategy to completely eclipse the golden-age series upon which it was based by weaving a story whose events surrounded and provided direct/indirect motivation for the original series.[5]

Haunted Chronology

As a mode with its earliest roots in architecture (Punter, 1996, 7), the Gothic retains strong links to a sense of place. A particularly Gothic treatment of London has been

identified by critics such as Dani Cavallaro (2002) and Robert Mighall (2007, 54), who comments that early practitioners "used Gothic conventions to dramatise a deeply divided society." This division is sustained by both the content and aesthetic of *From Hell*, as for example in Chapter 5, where Campbell uses interludes of softened monochrome shades and texture to depict Gull's upper-class life, juxtaposed with Polly Nicholls's hunt for a bed for the night, which is shown in scratchy linework.[6] Cavallaro comments that, "A haunted house is the site/sight upon which collective anxieties converge" (2002, 86) and, through Gull's claims that he has "delivered" the twentieth century (10.33), *From Hell* comments on public fears of an increasingly violent society. David Punter's (1996) definition of the Gothic as a response to social trauma seems particularly relevant here in making Victorian London the haunted site of these collective anxieties, as also seen in other literature.

Merlin Coverley notes that, "In the novels of Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd, Neil Gaiman and numerous others we again find ourselves within an alternative London, as the familiar streets of the modern-day city become increasingly haunted by the revenants of an earlier age" (2005, 51). The notion of buried history, or a second, underlying setting, literally entombed beneath London, also features in China Mievelle's *King Rat* (1998) and Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996).[7] Gaiman in fact personifies his second London, as locations such as Earl's Court and Angel Islington become embodied characters. Similarly, Grant Morrison's current run on *Batman and Robin: Blackest Knight* (#7–9) takes place in a Gothic London (depicted with a balance of whimsy and darkness by Cameron Stewart) as the duo hunt for a hidden Lazarus Pit – technology which can raise the dead. In many of these texts, London is more spirit than city, with a buried and secret identity.

Reviewer Richard Gehr describes *From Hell* as being about the "spiritual archaeology" of the city, stating that "Campbell reconstructs a London that to a large extent no longer exists yet is arguably the book's primary character" (2000, npag).[8] As Mighall also notes, "For Gothic *of* a city rather than just in a city, that city needs a concentration of memories and historical associations" (2007, 57). *From Hell* offers us precisely this: a collection of "ghostly presences of imagined/projected meanings." The comic makes Victorian London itself the Gothic domain, a spectral city that, despite being buried in history, nonetheless still exists in the public consciousness as the Ripper legend is determinedly kept alive in collective memory.

This sense of haunting is most obviously achieved by the theories of co-present time that pervade the comic. These are based on an 1880 pamphlet entitled "What is the Fourth Dimension?" in which Charles Howard Hinton proposed a reimagining of dimensional space. He suggested that points able to move in three dimensions might instead be imagined as successive cross-sections of a static four-dimensional arrangement of lines that were passing through our three-dimensional plane. This idea prefigures the notion of world lines, and of time as a fourth dimension – ideas that appear in Einstein's theory of general relativity (1907–15) – although Hinton did not propose this explicitly, as his article was mainly concerned with the possibility of a fourth spatial dimension.

As the character James Hinton[9] says to William Gull in the first few pages of the book:

> You know Gull, this puts me in mind of some theories that my son, Howard, proposed to me. They suggest that time is a human illusion . . . that all times CO-EXIST in the stupendous whole of eternit. . . . Fourth dimensional patterns within Eternity's monolith would he suggests, seem merely random events to third-dimensional percipients . . . events rising towards inevitable convergence like an archway's line. Let us say something peculiar happens in 1788 . . . a century later, related events take place. Then again, 50 years later. Then 25 years. Then 12. An invisible curve, rising through the centuries. (2.14–15)

Moore uses Hinton's timely publication as the basis for his "architecture of history" and proposes that, as events exist in stasis in "the fourth dimension," time is in fact co-present and we therefore experience cyclical patterns of action throughout history. Throughout *From Hell*, events are multiplied and revisited without recourse to a single, linear chronology. For example, just prior to murdering Annie Chapman, Gull looks through a window to see a man watching television in a flat with a poster of Marilyn Monroe on the wall (7.24). The other murders have a similar temporal ambivalence; as Gull comments during the murder of Liz Stride: "Yes . . . Yes, I remember now . . . This is the one that I didn't finish, isn't it? . . . Has this . . . Has this happened before?" (8.33). His subsequent frenzied attack on Kate Eddowes in Mitre Square then gives way to a vision of a twentieth-century tower block at the same location (8.40).

Gull's final murder of Marie Kelly also includes multiple temporal leaps to both his past and his future. During this sequence, Gull continues the conversation (above) that he has with James Hinton in Chapter 2 (10.10–11), and previews his secret Masonic trial ("Sir William? Are you fit to continue?" (10.24; 12.22)) and subsequent incarceration in a mental hospital ("Tommy, do you know us?" (10.25; 14.3)). In the case of this last, it is interesting to note that, when in the mental hospital, Gull appears unable to speak and is reduced to only making unformed noises ("wuhyubb, nuh. Zuhh . . . " (14.3)). The only coherent speech he makes during the hospital scene are the words he has previously spoken during Kelly's death sequence "No! No, I don't know you! I'm not Tom! I'm NOT JACK. I'm WILLIAM." (10.24; 14.3). A similar occurrence takes place during the murder of Kate Eddowes, where Gull is again reduced to animalistic noises. These points of singular speech within coexistent scenarios again support the static nature of time proposed.

As well as moving freely between moments of his own life, Gull is also transported beyond its limits, experiencing Kelly's murder as a fantastical autopsy whose audience includes Brady and Hindley (10.14–15), and also being transported to a twentieth-century open-plan office (10.20–2). In other Gothic texts, "spatial and psychological confusion are intimately intertwined, both resulting in a disquieting sense of directionlessness" (Cavallaro, 2002, 89) and this scene is no exception. Images are juxtaposed here as Gull hugs Marie Kelly's body in the foreground of a scene that clearly shows a

computer in the background (10.22). The combination of the physicality of the murders with Gull's visits to the incorporeal realm further recalls Cavallaro's discussion of Henry James and the paradox of Gothic materiality: "Understating the material dimension becomes, paradoxically, a means of heightening its significance . . . terror of the indefinite and horror of the corporeal are inextricably interwoven" (2002, 67).

During his final moments in the madhouse, Gull embarks on an even more disturbing flight of fancy that culminates with his transformation into a gull. This begins with a flashback to his youth: as a child on a boat with his father in the blackness of a tunnel (the very scene with which *From Hell* begins), in which his comment "I just made a little sound. I was listening to the echoes . . . " is repeated and followed by "H-Has this happened before? Father?" (2.2; 14.5). During the vision he continues, "I dreamed I was a grown-up man. I dreamed that I was famous for my use of knives. I dreamed that I was dying in a madhouse" (14.5), again casting doubt on the division between "reality" and dreams previously noted.

However, and contrary to Coppin's assertions, these transcorporeal visions are not limited to the occasions of the murders or the final moments of Gull's life. The very first pages of the story proper of *From Hell* begin, as noted, in complete blackness, which is then revealed to be a boat trip in a dark tunnel. The blackness is punctuated only by disparate dialogue that, it will transpire, is taken from various subsequent points in the narrative: a sexual encounter between Gull and his wife on their wedding night (2.1; 2.12); the adult Gull's conversation with James Hinton on the nature of time (2.1; 2,15); and Gull's operation on the unfortunate Annie Crook (2.1; 2.32). Subsequently, the child William's dissection of a mouse segues into the adult/student Gull's invitation to join the Freemasons (which takes place over an autopsy) (2.7). In this way, all time in *From Hell* is again shown to be co-present.

Moore's work has been described as archival in nature (Venezia, 2010) and other critics refer to him as a "nostalgic prophet," suggesting that he presents his own writing as coming from a "messianic rupture" in time (Whitson, 2006). His striking image and persona is that of a storyteller whose words can conjure up worlds ("spelling," perhaps?), akin to a prophet or mage (for his thoughts on this, see *The Mindscape of Alan Moore* – Vylenz, 2003). A practicing magician, Moore aligns creative writing with the bardic tradition ("one of the oldest traditions of magic"; Babcock, 2003) and uses magic ritual in his own creative processes. His transition from atheism to the occult occurred after an experience and interaction with the Roman god Glycon, an experience that Moore describes as:

> . . . outside of Time. There was a perception that all of Time was happening all at once. Linear time was purely a construction of the conscious mind . . . it's only our consciousness that's moving through it [Time], from A to B to C to D. In fact, the whole alphabet's there right from the start. (Babcock, 2003)

The treatment of time in *From Hell* (and its appendix, which makes Moore into a character within the story) obviously supports this conception, while Moore's alphabet metaphor again links the notion to storytelling. He comments further, "I tend to see

magic, in a way, as a kind of language . . . with which to read the universe" (Babcock, 2003).

It even seems possible to link *From Hell*'s temporal structure to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's notion of the crypt and Jodey Castricano's model of cryptomimesis (2001), which explores Gothic themes by linking semiotics to the Gothic's thematic structures. Cryptomimesis refers to a sense of haunting in a work that resists linearization: since "haunting" is both a legacy and a promise, the work can relate to readers not yet existent, previously existent, and also those constantly present. This produces a doubling of meaning whereby the nature of the other is represented by the crypt as both inside/outside (since it hides as it protects; and the inner safe is both within the crypt and positioned outside it).[10]

Moore speaks of Hinton's fourth dimension in distinctly cryptomimetic terms, asking:

> . . . how could you see inside a locked box? Or a sealed envelope? Well in terms of fourth dimension, you could. Just as sort of three-dimensional creatures can see the inside of a two-dimensional square. They're looking down on it through the top, from a dimension that two-dimensional individuals would not have. (Babcock, 2003)

The cryptomimetic model is also apparent in the content of *From Hell*, as a story that is hidden and secret simultaneously forms the centerpiece of the book. As reviewer Richard Gehr (2000) notes, "Campbell uncovers the concealed and often highly erotic energy lying just below its [London's] surface, and *From Hell* burns with this secret, tragic knowledge." The text mimics the construction of the crypt in this oxymoronic way; by giving a voice to the silent female victims, a face to the anonymous Ripper, and a motive to the incomprehensible crimes. Inversions abound, as that which was secret and silent is foregrounded – albeit in a medium whose subcultural status negates any claim to historical validity or "truth."

These observations can also be used to discuss comics' embedded and segmented narratives more generally. Lecercle (2001) notes that embedded narratives are found in classic Gothic texts such as *Frankenstein* (1818), and that *Dracula* (1897) makes use of multiple points of view and a range of voices (except its eponymous character, of course). Earlier books such as *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Charles Maturin, 1820) or *The Saragossa Manuscript* (Jan Potocki, 1805) also rely upon layered narratives and embedded stories, hidden cryptically within an overarching narrative. Comics' use of single issues and trade paperbacks typically allow for wider story arcs that encompass the plots of single issues, and their mobility of voice and view provides for a plethora of narrative voices (both visual and verbal).

Fact and Fiction

As briefly noted, *From Hell* exemplifies the Gothic tendency to question its own veracity, interrogating the nature of fact and fiction. This final section will discuss the ways

in which Moore uses meticulous research to construct his tale from supporting evidence, while simultaneously presenting the same as a work of fictionalized melodrama – a genre that Punter (1996) notes is typical of the Gothic mode. The choice of Jack the Ripper, an anonymous figure who is now more myth than man, is relevant here, as are some of the other villains Moore incorporates. For example, the "Halifax Slasher" attacks (14.13) are more accurately described as events of mass hysteria, as it transpired that the victims injured themselves. Similarly, in the case of Renwick Williams, there was little corroborating evidence and many of the supposed "victims" ultimately retracted their claims.

Footnotes evidencing Moore's extensive research into Masonic customs, police and witness evidence, and a vast number of Ripperology books are included in current editions of *From Hell* as an appendix, and demonstrate that almost every detail of the story is supported with possible evidence. Eddie Campbell's illustrations of Marie Kelly's murder are exact replicas of the police photos of the body, and Gull's tour of London is simultaneously accurate in depicting both detail and perspective of the Hawksmoor churches.[11] Other pictures are reproduced exactly: such as the cover of *Illustrated Police News* reporting Gull's first murder (6.25), which is taken from Melvin Harris's *The Ripper File* (1989). Similarly, and as noted, Moore links Gull's visions to various documented historical events such as the Mediterranean rain of blood, Robert Louis Stevenson's inspirational nightmare, and William Blake's visions, amongst others.

However, Lisa Coppin notes that, despite this overwhelming quantity of evidence and support for every event of the text, it remains as conjecture. Taken from Stephen Knight's book *The Final Solution* (1976), the plot remains so fantastic that it is scarcely credible, and Knight's book has been marketed and received as both a serious exposé and as an elaborate hoax. *From Hell* also takes pains to establish its content as fiction by pointing out the inherently fictional status of all history, emphasizing the conjectural nature of Ripperology, and using self-conscious metaphor in its pictorial elements.[12] The second appendix ("Dance of the Gull Catchers") dramatizes Moore's research and the emergence of Ripperology, literally making fact into fiction, as in the self-conscious cartoon reference "Be vewy vewy quiet. We're hunting Wippers" and accompanying picture of Moore and Campbell with large nets (Appendix II.16). This self-dramatization is a technique Moore has used elsewhere, as discussed by Roger Whitson (2006), who claims that Moore's image as author is reliant upon Slavoj Zizek's notion of parallax, whereby he has fictionalized himself.

The story is event-driven; Moore uses no omniscient narration (with the exception of informing us of place and dates) in the main body of *From Hell*. The only explicit narration is either drawn from police reports or attributed to William Gull during his out-of-body experiences. As Punter argues, the Gothic remains "the dimension of the imperfectly perceived" (1996, 200) and Moore uses comics' hyperrealist narrative to present fact and fiction side by side. Castricano notes the cryptomimetic tendency to provide information in fragments, creating a sense of never being completely sure what is "real," and Moore's comments on his sources exemplify this: "As with much of the violence surrounding these murders, the data is ambiguous, a shifting cloud of

facts and factoids onto which we project the fictions that seem most appropriate to our times and our inclinations" (Appendix I.29). As even facts are revealed to be ambiguous fragments, the epilogue reminds us, through Abberline, that "It's all just stories when all's said and done" (Epilogue, 5).

However, there is a darker side to this conclusion, revealed by Lees's response: "But that's just the thing, it isn't just stories. Those women really died" (Epilogue, 5). Abberline continues: "Now there's just us, knowin' what we know, both washed up 'ere. Can't send a message; can't tell anybody. . . . [M]akes you wonder 'ow much of the world is true" (Epilogue, 9). Again, we are returned to the significance of perception and Cavallero's ideas on the use of falsity and fantasy to construct the Gothic (in *The Turn of the Screw*):

> It may well be the case that the ghastly episodes depicted in the novel are merely products of its protagonist's hideous fantasies. Yet this does not make them any less powerful or indeed any less concrete since, ultimately, fantasies are not at odds with reality but rather interpretations of reality in both its actual and potential manifestations. Ideating fantastic worlds may well be a way of trying to comprehend our own world. (Cavallaro, 2002, 57–8)

The above analysis of Gull's murder of Annie Chapman (interrupted by his vision of a man watching television) also has relevance here, as it is based on fact: Moore notes that this story is taken from *Jack the Ripper: One Hundred Years of Mystery* (Underwood, 1987), whereby a Mr. Chapman (another coincidence) of this address reported seeing a vision of a woman and man walking down a passageway toward his backyard on at least four occasions, in the early hours of the morning, during the autumn months (Appendix I.25). In this way, the most outrageous scenes of the comic are given as much (if not more) truth status than more mundane, fictional events that are either completely fabricated (such as Marie Kelly handing money over to The Old Nichol Gang and discovering they are not the killers (8.26)) or deduced from subsequent events (such as Kate Eddowes coming back to London to report Walter Sickert (8.11)) (Appendix I.27).

This Gothic tendency to play with notions of truth and falsity can be seen in other contemporary comics that make use of the Gothic mode to question our understanding of reality and the nature of storytelling. Mike Carey and Peter Gross's *The Unwritten* (2010) asks what happens when fictional characters become "real" and cross over into our world, building on previous titles such as *Fables* (Bill Willingham, Mark Buckingham, and others, 2002–). *The Unwritten* also explores psychogeographic tropes as the lead character's "literary GPS" (the knowledge of "who wrote what, where") is integral to the plot, which also includes a magic map. At a very basic level, psychogeography also seems to underlie the construction of many superheroes' iconography, personalities and ethos: Swamp Thing literally embodies his environment, while the alignment of Superman with a sunlit Metropolis and Batman with a nocturnal Gotham has been discussed extensively by critics.[13]

The blurring of fact/fiction and the possibilities when breaking the fourth wall are also explored extensively in the work of writers such as Grant Morrison (*Animal Man*, 1988–90, and *The Invisibles*, 1994–2000). Morrison also scripted a play, "Red King Rising" (see Morrison, 1998), which elides the characters of Lewis Carroll, Charles Dodgson, and Jack the Ripper. By juxtaposing Dodgson (the man) with Carroll (the pseudonym), he again questions the boundaries between fact and fiction. This idea is most apparent in *The Invisibles*, which Morrison describes as "a technology" and claims that he and his characters will ultimately be able to cross between their respective worlds: "Within a year we'll see man's first contact with a fictional reality, seriously" (Salisbury, 212). Interestingly, Morrison also talks about the fifth dimension, from where one can view "the universe from outside of all space and all time. You could move through it to any point in spacetime and your body would be seen as a cross-section of three-dimensional parts" (208). Morrison links these extra dimensions with his ideas about fictional worlds, stating: "you can go into any comic or any piece of fiction . . . if you treated that reality as being its own real autonomous world" (213).

Similarly, in *The Sandman* Neil Gaiman explores the nature of dreams as stories, using alternate worlds or dimensions (*A Game of You*, *The Kindly Ones*) which are in general validated, although they may coexist in the same physical space. The importance of perception to multiple fantasy worlds is also mirrored in the semantics of Gaiman's tale, which frequently refers to themes of seeing, most overtly when Morpheus dies and we are repeatedly told that what is being mourned is no more than "A puh-point of view" (1997, 44). Gaiman also explores the power of stories to change lives (*The Sandman* #19, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and *The Sandman* #75, "The Tempest"), and even employs the metaphor (or is it?) of "a downstairs in everybody" (1996, 2.15) that invokes the psychogeographic.

In this way, perception in comics informs the psychological creation of geographic worlds. The stylized art and multiple conflicting perspectives (both verbal and visual) that are sustained by comics' narratology allow the medium to present to us the hyperreal – the real in excess. As argued by Frank Verano (2006, 326), the world of comics is the world of the fictional signifier – seeing in this medium is not accorded the same veracity as in photographic or other visual media. No matter how much it resembles our own, the comic-book world is an alterity: "this world re-placed and dis-located" (Jackson, 1981, 19). Fantastic events and a stylized aesthetic, combined with the use of panels-as-signifiers, mean that comics offer fictional seeing rather than realistic reportage. The black-and-white, penciled nature of the artwork in *From Hell* (and its self-conscious switch to a completely opposed, muted style at various points) only emphasizes this.

Just as these (and other) texts bring into existence and validate multiple worlds, *From Hell* places the well-documented alongside the purely imaginary. It is testament to the hyperrealist world of comics that both sets of events are given equal credence in the narrative, whose far-fetched nature allows it to acknowledge the question of veracity in a particularly Gothic way. As Mr. Lees says, "I made it all up and it all came true anyway" (Prologue, 5).

Comics Narratology

To conclude, this essay will briefly summarize the ways in which the comics medium informs *From Hell*'s Gothic depiction of events, by considering the depiction of time-as-space, the role of the reader, and the use of the hyperreal.

It seems arguable that *From Hell*'s depiction of co-present time relies on a comic aesthetic, where all moments (that is, panels) are co-present in the page's spatial layout. This co-present layout contributes still further to our understanding of the comics' haunted chronology. However, *From Hell*'s particular use of time can be related still further to the medium. Whitson (2006) comments that the comics medium uses "laws of substitution and association" to represent moving characters in a three-dimensional space by means of two-dimensional static pictures. This seems relatable to Hinton's theory of the fourth dimension which, as discussed, proposes that our three-dimensional, moving world is actually a slice of something four-dimensional and static. In this way, it may be that the comics medium demonstrates the truth of this theory as, by being two-dimensional and static it itself represents the subordinate stage of the three-dimensional structure of time that we experience. Is there then something five-dimensional and moving, which the four-dimensional stasis represents . . . and so on?

The role of the reader (as both interpreter and contributory author) also reinforces the notion that "time is a human illusion," as the reader's involvement becomes essential to the creation of narrative time. As Moore comments in *From Hell: The Compleat Scripts*:

> When books are closed, they represent a model of post-Stephen Hawking spacetime, the events within the book depicting past, present and future all contained within a simultaneous whole. When books are opened, two modes of time come into play; time as it seems to pass for the characters and within the book, and time as it appears to pass inside the reader's mind. (Moore and Campbell, 1994, 13)

The time-shifts are created and perceived entirely by the reader upon opening the book. Comics' active readership therefore follows a model noted by classic narrative theorists such as Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser.

In this way, the reader's role can also be viewed as a kind of spectral authorship. Cavallaro comments that, "the rhetoric of haunting erodes not only the dividing line between the real and the imaginary but also the boundaries of the self. Haunting puts us in situations where we cannot be certain whether we are perceiving actual things or hallucinating. At the same time, it makes us unable to establish whether the vision is our own or if somebody else is dreaming it on our behalf" (Cavallaro, 2002, 74). This seems to describe the role of the comics reader perfectly – can our input truly be called our own, directed and limited as it is by the surrounding panels? In Scott McCloud's (1993, 68) famous example of the reader as axe-murderer (due to our crea-

tion of the events which take place in the gutters between panels), it is often forgotten that McCloud puts the axe in our hands.

Finally, the creation and sustenance of the hyperreal is essential in validating hallucination alongside "reality," in a traditionally Gothic manner. Cavallaro notes that "Goethe's own masterpiece, *Faust*, typifies the holistic ethos by annihilating both space and time and by giving visions and real occurrences equal solidity" (2002, 74), and the validation of both spectral and real images in *From Hell* relies upon the kind of "fictional seeing" allowed in comics, whose hyperrealist world is achieved through visual/verbal conflict and stylized art. It therefore presents us with the type of excess of view that belies its events.

By using and relying on these narrative devices, it seems arguable that the comics medium is inherently Gothic in nature. The Gothic themes that *From Hell* explores – nonlinear chronology, spectral authorship, and a hallucinatory reality – are also essential components of comics narratology. *From Hell* demonstrates exactly how well suited comics are to handle extensive, detailed, and even paradoxical narratives, and the qualities it shares with the other comics noted herein indicate the truly Gothic potential of this medium.

Notes

1 For a full discussion, see Nyberg (1998).

2 Space does not permit a full synopsis of *From Hell*, and any uninformed readers should seek this out. In the briefest possible terms, the book names Sir William Gull as the killer, acting on instructions from Queen Victoria (a theory proposed in Stephen Knight's *The Final Solution* [1976]). Gull conducts the murders as ritual killings rather than simple executions, receiving a series of mystical visions and Gnostic experiences of time travel.

3 References from *From Hell* will be given in this form, where 4.36 refers to Chapter 4, page 36.

4 Cavallaro (2002, 75) notes that the etymology of "specter" relates it to the realm of vision by being derived from the Latin *spectare* and *specere* ("to look at").

5 For further discussion of the Gothic nature of retconning/"superscription," see Round (2005).

6 For further discussion of this depiction of London as a divided city, see Round (2008).

7 Originally written for TV by Neil Gaiman and Lenny Henry, then novelized by Gaiman, and finally adapted into a DC Vertigo comic by Mike Carey and Glenn Fabry (2005).

8 For further discussion of the personification of London in *From Hell*, see Round (2008).

9 Father of C. Howard Hinton, who would publish the pamphlet, "What is the fourth dimension?"

10 I have drawn further links between the cryptometric model and the construction of the superhero figure (as thesis/antithesis) in a previous article (Round, 2005).

11 So accurate that fans have even followed the route and produced photographs that replicate Campbell's drawings exactly (see Jason, 2008).

12 For further discussion of fact and fiction in *From Hell*, see Round (2010).

13 Denny O'Neil has famously commented in this regard that "Gotham is Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at 3 a.m., November 28th in a cold year. Metropolis is Manhattan between Fourteenth Street and One Hundred and Tenth Streets on the brightest, sunniest July day of the year" (Boichel, 1991, 9). Examples are numerous, but Matt Wagner

and Dave Stewart's *Trinity* provides a particularly illustrative example of the use of color and composition to associate the hero with his domain: for example, picturing Superman flying upwards over a sunlit Metropolis, while Batman is jumping down into the murk of Gotham (Wagner and Stewart, 2003, 58–9).

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24
Goth Culture

Catherine Spooner

Goth Histories

In August 1979, an art school band from Northampton named after a German aesthetic movement released a nine-minute single, recorded in one take, mourning the death (or perhaps rather celebrating the un-death) of the most iconic screen vampire of them all. Bauhaus's "Bela Lugosi's Dead" is arguably the inaugural moment of Goth culture, the moment when the shock tactics of punk shifted toward the macabre, its studied aggression to self-conscious performativity.[1] Eerie, melodramatic, and unafraid of intellectual posturing, "Bela Lugosi's Dead" anticipated a flood of similar recordings from artists like Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure, and The Sisters of Mercy, and a movement of black-clad, pale-faced, and elaborately coiffed devotees that has persisted to the present day. Goth, as the movement became known, converted Gothic to lifestyle: its adherents enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, the themes and motifs of Gothic literature translated to sartorial style, music, club and home décor, and even social activities – from watching horror films to attending graveyard picnics. While there is enormous diversity both in the tastes and preferences of Goths themselves, and in the way their subculture is defined by others, they remain instantly recognizable through a remarkably coherent visual style.

Attempts to define Goth style usually resort to a list of components, such as a preference for black and deep jewel colors, fetish fabrics, Victoriana, prolific eyeliner, hair dyed black and backcombed or embellished with dreadlocks or colorful extensions, and elaborate footwear. (Gavin Baddeley notes how "Nice boots!" has become a standard Goth chat-up line [2010, 112]). But more significant than the details of the look is the stance behind it: Goth style takes up the attitude of Baudelairean dandyism by valuing artifice above nature, and embracing beauty in decay:

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> This can be translated thematically – the embrace of *memento mori* motifs signifying mortality – or literally, in torn or frayed garments, smudged make-up, and ragged hair. Goth garments are often based around holes: rips or patches; mesh fabrics such as lace or fishnet; items that are tied together (and are frequently coming undone) such as corsets or boots. Holes are the antithesis of perfection: they signal dereliction, fragmentation, decay. They dramatize a body (or soul) falling apart – or unevenly stitched together, like Frankenstein's monster. This effect, however, need not be read as a literal index of the state of the wearer's soul: as in Baudelaire, its appeal is primarily aesthetic. Goth style is underworld dandyism: dandyism as dark double to the more conventionally validated pursuit of beauty. (Spooner, 2008, 152–3)

Goth style can be traced to those conventions of Gothic literature which, as Eve Sedgwick argues, prioritize surface over depth and repeat motifs of veils, shrouds, masks, and disguises (Sedgwick, 1986). Goth style embraces and animates these features of the Gothic, converting them into a particular kind of performative identity, in which the personae of Gothic narrative become figures for imaginative identification and self-dramatization. Some of the most cherished elements of their culture identified by Goths in interview-based research are the opportunities it affords for creativity and self-expression. This, in turn, suggests its perennial appeal to high fashion designers such as John Galliano, Rick Owens, and the late Alexander McQueen, who in recent years have thoroughly ransacked Goth's dressing-up box for their own artistic purposes.

One of the most distinctive features of Goth style is its relationship with the past. As Lauren Goodlad and Michael Bibby suggest, "Goth incorporated elements of *pre*-subcultural literary, philosophical and aesthetic traditions within a continuing process of genealogical construction. . . . [T]he goth tendency to embrace gothic literature and art has made the subculture more dialectically engaged with the past than is typical of most youth cultures" (2007, 3–4). Gothic literature is often defined through its concern with revenant history, whether personal (repressed memories) or collective (ghosts, curses, inheritances, returns from the dead). Goth style often literally disinters historical looks, whether Victorian mourning costume or Weimar decadence, reveling in the imaginative personae they offer. Historical costume is sometimes recreated with painstaking historical accuracy and sometimes mixed and matched into fantasy styles such as Gothic Lolita (based on Victorian children's clothes) or steampunk (which realizes the future envisaged by Victorian science fiction).[2] Sometimes the concern with the past is merely implied by the suggestion of spectrality, dereliction, and decay evoked by torn or diaphanous garments and *memento mori* motifs. The richness and longevity of Goth culture are dependent on its ability to continually cannibalize new styles and bring them into its repertoire, and on its dialectical engagement, as Goodlad and Bibby put it, with a history and culture beyond that of its own immediate existence.

Crucially, Goth itself also has a history and is subject to historical change. Now entering its fourth decade, it is arguably the only youth subculture to sustain a dynamic scene on an international scale over such a long period. The subculture began

in the United Kingdom and spread rapidly to North America and from there to other Western countries. By the end of the twentieth century, enabled by the growth of the World Wide Web, it had become a global phenomenon, with a massive following in Germany and Scandinavia, and an increasing presence in South America, Japan, and Southeast Asia. As Goth expands its territories, its range of meanings grows ever more complex and multivalent.[3] Its relationship with its own history also grows more nuanced, with web sites registering tensions between "Eldergoths" and "Babybats," or between "Trad Goth" and newer offshoots such as EBM (Electronic Body Music) or Emo (Emotional Punk). Goth comprises individuals now in their forties and fifties as well as pre-teens. And it produces a bewildering range of artifacts from music, clothes, and accessories to fanzines, blogs, and web sites; objects such as ornaments or cult collectible figurines; representations in films, novels, and TV programs; "fan" art, fiction, and poetry. Added to these are social practices like shopping or attending clubs and gigs. In the face of this complex culture, it is difficult to ascribe a single meaning or definition to Goth. What is more, Goth has an ambivalent relationship with academic discourse, as this essay will show. But understanding Goth culture is not only interesting in its own right but also crucial in contextualizing the production and consumption of contemporary Gothic texts. In doing so, it makes sense to talk about Goth histories: a series of competing representations and narratives through which meanings are continually renegotiated.

Goth Culture and Gothic Studies

In 1980, just a few months after the seminal release of "Bela Lugosi's Dead," Longman published a book called *The Literature of Terror*, which was retrospectively described as "the first substantial and serious investigation of this tradition in English . . . releasing the study of terror-fiction from the stranglehold of hobbyists into something more like the clear light of twentieth-century critical sanity" (Baldick, 1997, npag). Coinciding with a new-found interest in the Gothic in feminist literary criticism explored in titles by Ellen Moers, Coral Ann Howells, and others, David Punter's scholarly survey of fiction from the late eighteenth century to the present (Punter, 1980) enabled Gothic literature to be taken up as a suitable subject for academic criticism. Goth culture, and Gothic studies, arose virtually simultaneously, twin progeny of the "Gothic times" that novelist Angela Carter hailed slightly earlier in the 1970s (1995, 460). Yet for a long time, Goth has remained the poor relation of Gothic, its illegitimate sibling lurking in the corner of the academic party. Links between the two were, and remain, uncomfortable. Gothic studies sought to confer academic respectability on a noncanonical and hitherto disparaged genre, ultimately with a great degree of success. As Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall state elsewhere in this volume, Gothic novels have become the staple set texts of English Literature degrees – indeed, it might be added that Gothic is now sufficiently institutionalized to appear on the British A-level syllabus. In stark contrast, it was not the business of Goth, as a youth

subculture, to seek respectability or acceptance from its "parent" culture, and from its inception the movement has been indifferent to or has actively disregarded the approval of the establishment.

As Gothic Studies flourished through the 1980s and into the 1990s, therefore, Goth remained largely overlooked by its discourses. Goth culture was regarded with bemusement by academics, who often numbered Goths among their students (ethnographic studies have repeatedly suggested that Goths are likely to be middle-class and tertiary educated), but made no more than superficial links between these students' style and music preferences and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels of their own research. As Sara Martin perceptively noted in a comparatively early essay on the subject, "Gothic scholars don't wear black" (Martin, 2002). Martin suggests that the gap between Gothic Studies and Goth was partly a methodological one, as Gothic Studies in the 1980s and 1990s was dependent on the kind of highly textual psychoanalytic and post-structural criticism that did not translate easily to study of social culture. Moreover, the kind of participant observation or unofficial knowledge necessary to elucidate Goth, she suggests, is unavailable to academics over thirty with no personal experience of the Goth scene. Nevertheless, the shift to a more historical approach to Gothic literature as championed by Baldick and Mighall would necessitate the study of Goth as part of the context of contemporary Gothic.

Despite Martin's indication that Goth should be the province of cultural studies, through the 1980s and 1990s it did not figure in academic studies of youth subcultures any more than it did in literary criticism. The pioneering work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s had largely set the agenda for research into subcultures, and the work of Dick Hebdige (1979), Stuart Hall (e.g., Hall and Jefferson, 1976), and others tended to focus on male, working-class subcultures. Goth was figured by the media as middle-class in its passivity and intellectualism and feminized in its attention to make-up and dress (see Spooner, 2004, 2008) and did not fit into this tradition. Moreover, Goth politics were obscure and subcultural historians were more interested in those, like the club-kids and ravers of the late 1980s and 1990s, who appeared to enact a more straightforwardly politicized resistance to the Criminal Justice Act and police/state control. The rich and complex readings enabled by this dynamic and diverse youth culture eclipsed Goth, which in the late 1980s and early 1990s was undergoing a crisis of confidence, increasingly either co-opted by the mainstream (with bands like The Cure becoming global stadium-fillers) or disappearing into the welter of new music cultures like Madchester, Rave, Industrial, Britpop, and Grunge.

Martin suggests that as younger scholars with a Goth background enter Gothic Studies, things are likely to change, and this was evident from the late 1990s onwards. As the millennium approached, Goth found itself back in fashion in a media eager for stories of *fin-de-siècle* gloom. The increasing globalization of Goth through the medium of the Internet also enabled the regeneration of an underground scene. Goth was in resurgence; the media were taking an interest; PhD funding programs were hungry for new research topics. In the twenty-first century, a series of academic

publications emerged that took Goth highly seriously. These included Paul Hodkinson's *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (2002), Catherine Spooner's *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004) and *Contemporary Gothic* (2006), Carol Siegel's *Goth's Dark Empire* (2005), Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Michael Bibby's edited collection, *Goth: Undead Subculture* (2007), and Dunja Brill's *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality and Style* (2008). Additionally, three major exhibitions, *Street Style* at London's Victoria and Albert Museum (see Polhemus, 1994), *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Twentieth Century Art* at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Arts (see Grunenberg, 1997), and *Gothic: Dark Glamour* at The Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology, New York (Steele and Park, 2008–9) made significant acknowledgments of Goth culture, further documented in the accompanying volumes by Ted Polhemus, Christoph Grunenberg, and Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park, respectively. Meanwhile, mainstream publishing recognized a new niche market and commissioned a number of books, by the likes of Richard Davenport-Hines, Gavin Baddeley, and Nancy Kilpatrick, that aimed to explicate Goth for a popular audience.

Markedly, these volumes took radically different methodological approaches. Hodkinson and Brill followed Martin's directive by engaging in full-blown participant observation studies of their chosen subcultural communities, Hodkinson in the UK and Brill in both the UK and Germany. Spooner, using a cultural materialist, textually based analysis in order to insert Goth into the broader literary tradition, acknowledged the difficulties of converting subcultures into academic knowledge, and insisted on the possibility of commenting only on the cultural associations of Goth and its representation in fiction, film, and other media rather than on the practices or identities of Goths themselves. Siegel, rather problematically, attempted to combine participant observation and textual analysis, both inserting herself as subject in her writing and using Deleuzoguattarian theory to read a variety of films, novels, and musical texts. Her resulting argument is that "Goth should be read as a celebration of S/M practices as liberatory" (2), a claim which she considers descriptive of the "young people" (11) with whom she has discussed her ideas over the course of researching the book, but who tend to form an undifferentiated mass in her writing. Goodlad and Bibby's volume, which included pieces by Hodkinson, Spooner, and Siegel, deliberately incorporated an eclectic range of methodologies from first-person autobiography to highly theorized analysis.

Significantly, all of these studies appeared after a crucial moment in the conversion of Goth subculture into academic discourse. On April 20, 1999, two teenagers in Colorado, USA arrived at school laden with assorted weaponry, and proceeded to attack their teachers and classmates in what subsequently became known as the Columbine High School Massacre. Thirteen were killed and twenty-one injured, before the perpetrators turned their guns on themselves. Although Columbine was not the first time Goth had been associated with violence in the United States, it was the first case to receive full-scale global media coverage. The event provoked debate in all sorts of areas from gun control to classroom bullying, but as a watershed moment, it perhaps had most impact on the reportage of Goth culture. The two boys

responsible for the shootings, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, had tenuous claims to Goth identity – they wore black trench coats and purportedly liked some heavy metal and Industrial music. The American media, seeking to deflect attention from more controversial debates (specifically, gun control) seized on these details and transformed them into a moral panic whereby Goth was a satanic cult with Nazi sympathies, bent on creating horror and mayhem and corrupting the nation's youth. This story was repeated, in slightly varying forms, worldwide. As a result, Goths found themselves forced to address the mainstream in order to dispel these myths, thus resulting in an unprecedented level of cultural visibility. Coinciding with the broadsheets' "revival" of the Goth(ic) aesthetic and its supposed conduciveness to a millennial sensibility, Goth was now definitively on the world stage.

The first academic studies of Goth to be published in the twenty-first century were begun well before Columbine and cannot be attributed specifically to its influence. However, it was now more difficult to dismiss Goth as simply teenagers dressing up: the link with "serious" events legitimized and institutionalized Goth as a serious subject of study. Columbine dragged Goth from the private into the public sphere, both in that it forced what had been a self-consciously "underground" movement under the scrutiny of the global media on an unprecedented scale, and in that it figuratively shifted the realm of Goth from private spaces associated with the feminized activities of dressing up and dancing (bedrooms, specialized club nights) to public ones associated with masculinized violence. Columbine initiated an explosion of discourse on Goth culture in all media, and this both directly and indirectly produced academic commentary. Moreover, the debates about the influence of horror films, violent video games, and extreme music that are routinely evoked in relation to such events key directly back in to old questions about the legitimacy of Gothic.

Goth can no longer be ignored. It affects the way we read Gothic and the way Gothic texts are produced. Some Gothic scholars, moreover, do now wear black: Goth has become not just a subject for academic discourse but the subject of academic discourse.

Reading Goth

How are we to read Goth? Goth is a curiously liminal phenomenon. First, it is important to recognize that Goth is not Gothic. Critics may argue about what precisely constitutes Gothic, but there is a general consensus that they are dealing with texts, and that these texts share a number of generic features and concerns. Goth is not a text, but a practice, a lifestyle, an identity, or a combination of those things. Goths certainly produce texts, and are themselves represented in texts, and many of these texts (though by no means all) can be described as Gothic. *The Craft* (1996), for example, presents its teenage witch protagonists in a recognizable (if Hollywood-ized) Gothic narrative, but *My First Mister* (2001) is an offbeat Indie coming-of-age story that happens to feature a teenage Goth girl as its protagonist. Conversely, early reviews

of the band Joy Division referred to their "Gothic" sound, but in other ways the band are difficult to read as Goth, peripheral to the scene and visual aesthetic. All these texts can be analyzed using conventional literary, filmic, or semiotic approaches, often resulting in valuable insights into how Goth functions, the kind of cultural work it performs, in contemporary culture. Yet Goth itself cannot be reduced to the sum of its representations: it is made up of the practices and identities of thousands of different individuals existing in different social, geographic, and cultural contexts.

As such, Goth might seem to invite ethnographic research, and there have been several successful studies of Goth in these terms, most notably Hodkinson and Brill's monographs mentioned above. Ethnographic approaches, which typically interview participants in a given social group to provide detailed information about their practices and preferences, then analyze this data to identify patterns and interpret their respondents' behavior, enable local insights to emerge and tend to avoid universalizing claims. However, while they are invaluable in assessing what Goths do, what it is like to be a Goth, the gender politics of Goth, and so on, they are less good at explaining what, precisely, is Gothic about Goth. Goth is not like other subcultures, as it proceeds not only from its immediate subcultural precedents, but also from a 250-year tradition, and it has a presence in contemporary culture that transcends its individual participants and surpasses that of virtually any other subculture to date. Goth's unique status among subcultures invites an interdisciplinary approach that takes account of a range of modes of cultural analysis from literary criticism to ethnography, musicology, or fashion theory.

Readings of Goth are further complicated by the fact that subcultures are not hermetically sealed but interact with the mainstream and, indeed, other subcultures. Goth has, at times, flirted with the mainstream: in the late 1980s, Goth briefly became a commercially successful phenomenon, with bands like The Mission, The Sisters of Mercy, All About Eve, and The Cure scoring regular Top 20 hits in the British charts. Latterly, this position has been taken up by a range of bands from Marilyn Manson to Evanescence and My Chemical Romance, who have achieved massive global success. Although some Goths reject bands who achieve mainstream success as too commercial and therefore not "true" Goth, giving rise to debates about definition and ownership within the subculture itself, in fact the relationship between mainstream and underground is a complex one. As Hodkinson demonstrates, Goth has always been organized around commodities, whether records and CDs or clothes and accessories (Hodkinson, 2002). The arrival of the Internet as a tool for shopping and promotion means that the cottage industries which traditionally supplied these commodities reach increasingly wider markets. It can be difficult to draw a line between "authentic" small companies supplying Goth consumers and "inauthentic" ones muscling in on a niche market. By the 2000s, Goth is no longer the preserve of a cottage industry of clothing and jewelry makers; it is mass-marketed through American chains like Hot Topic, clothing brands like Emily the Strange, and movie merchandise like *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Rupert Weinzierl and David Muggleton point out that, "There is a vivid role for subcultural-related practices as an

entrepreneurial engine for the new media, fashion and cultural industries, while many of these young producers themselves have subcultural origins" (2003, 8). As *Gothic: Dark Glamour* at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York demonstrated, it is simplistic to separate clothes designed and worn by subcultural consumers from those of high fashion: influence travels in both directions. In one tableau, "The Victorian Cult of Mourning," two mannequins in similar dresses (one a high fashion evening gown, the other the creation of a Goth designer) faced one another, each mirroring the other's gaze – and both reflected yet again in an ornate mirror hanging behind them. Subcultural style and high fashion remain locked in an endlessly recessive mutual gaze.

Hodkinson, principally addressing Siegel, has argued vociferously for the viability of ethnographic methods over semiotic and textually based ones when reading Goth culture (Hodkinson, 2007). In *Goth's Dark Empire*, Siegel views Goth as inherently disruptive to a normative culture, suggesting that in its celebration of sado-masochistic sexualities it provides a welcome challenge to the "abstinence culture" of the United States. Siegel's local analysis is often persuasive, but her extension of her argument from individual texts to the wider Goth culture tends to conflate representations with the individuals represented. There is a distinction to be drawn, for example, between imaginative engagement with sado-masochism in fiction and its practice in real life. As I have argued elsewhere, "To enjoy a discourse of transgression . . . is not necessarily the same thing as being transgressive" (Spooner, 2004, 165). Jeffrey A. Weinstock shows, for instance, that far from always subverting sexual mores, "Provocative sexual imagery is fashionable in goth advertising and promotion as long as it remains embedded firmly within a heterosexual matrix" (2007, 386) and considers "it is a trendy form of deviancy that fails to constitute a radical rupture with mainstream gender and sexual politics and extends upon, rather than breaks with, American culture's current preoccupation with alternative sexual practices" (395). The final part of this essay, however, aims to mount a defense of textually based readings of Goth culture, by providing a nuanced reading of three novels in terms of the history of Goth subculture, exploring the fictional strategies deployed by three writers in order to negotiate Goth identities, and their role in both representing and constructing Goth culture at a given historical moment.

Fictional Histories

The historical mutability of Goth and its tension with the mainstream can be productively explored by reading examples of fiction from each of its three decades. Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) is a sometimes uncomfortable fit with Goth of the 1980s, coincident with rather than expressive of the newly emergent subculture. *Lost Souls* by Poppy Z. Brite (1992), on the other hand, is a confident expression of subcultural identity that deliberately seeks to both set and challenge Goth boundaries. Douglas Coupland's *The Gum Thief* (2007) swerves from the Gothic tradition by

placing its Goth protagonist in the mundane setting of an office supplies superstore, and in doing so suggests a repositioning of Goth in relation to both mainstream culture and fiction. My intention in reading these texts is not to provide a definitive narrative of Goth through fictional representations – as clearly other choices might produce a different narrative – but rather to demonstrate that Goth, and its representations, are always historically situated and resonate with both a subcultural history and a literary tradition.

Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*, the second book in *The Vampire Chronicles*, is not an explicitly Goth text. Goths do not appear as characters in the novel, and her protagonist's appearance in "white turtleneck shirts and crisp khaki safari jackets, or lush grey velvet blazers with cashmere scarves" (Rice, 1994 [1985], 17–18) is disconcertingly yuppy. However, Rice's early vampire novels have an uncanny knack of anticipating developments in Goth subculture and have been enthusiastically embraced by many Goths. Despite preceding the first wave of Goth, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) created, in its angst-ridden hero Louis and hedonistic anti-hero Lestat, Goth fictional icons. One of the reasons that *Interview with the Vampire* appeals so vividly to Goths is because its narrative mimics one characteristic pattern of subcultural participation: Louis is alienated by his perceived difference from society; he discovers others like himself and briefly enjoys being part of a group sharing an alternative lifestyle and values; then detects signs of conformity within that group and once again distances himself in order to preserve his cherished difference. The novel provided a template for the emergent Goth scene to project itself on to (and boiled down to this skeletal outline, it shares a remarkably similar structure with Brite's *Lost Souls*).

In *The Vampire Lestat*, Lestat romps through the centuries in immaculate period costume, before "outing" himself as the leader of a vampire rock band in the late twentieth century. Brought out of temporary hibernation by a "little unknown band" (Rice, 1994 [1985], 12) called Satan's Night Out rehearsing in the neighborhood, he decides to pursue world domination through global rock stardom. In doing so, he single-handedly converts the counterculture from post-hippy rock ("The beautiful young mortals were all lying about in their rainbow-coloured silk shirts and skintight dungarees smoking hashish cigarettes" [18]) to vampire fans emulating his own gestures ("a regular freak show of theatrical types – punk youngsters, artists, those done up in black capes and white plastic fangs" [576]; "youngsters in their Halloween vampire clothes, faces gleaming with artificial blood, some wearing floppy yellow wigs, some with black rings around their eyes to make them all the more innocent and ghastly" [583]).

The mass adulation Lestat inspires in his fans bears little relation to the Goth music scene of the early to mid-1980s, which, although intense, remained relatively underground, with bands like The Cure and The Sisters of Mercy still only achieving minor chart success, mostly in the UK. Rock star mythology did figure in early Goth recordings: when Bauhaus covered "Ziggy Stardust" in 1982, they presented a gothicized version of David Bowie: a version which, in its verisimilitude to the original, suggests

an unhealthy adulation and proximity even as its lyrics describe a fantasy in which dangerous rock star and obsessed fans vampirically prey on one another.[4] Rice echoes this narrative when she has Lestat state, "there was something vampiric about rock music" (12), but nevertheless Rice's Lestat has more in common with the stadium Bowie of the 1980s than the edgy, androgynous casualty of fame enshrined by Bauhaus. Lestat as rock star anticipates the monumental success of Marilyn Manson a decade or so later, something that the film *Queen of the Damned* (2002) acknowledged, with Manson among several musicians providing the vocals for Stuart Townsend's concert performances as Lestat.

The novel, like Lestat's band, is bombastic, fantastic, and overblown. Lestat lives out a rock star fantasy of excessive consumption. The novel has an uncomfortable relationship with Goth at the time: an aspirational fiction rather than a reflection of the music scene, a translation of the Bowie-myth into a fantasy of omnipotence and excess achieved through new media. As Fred Botting perceives, "Lestat . . . has quickly discerned the differences defining the period: the 1980s is thoroughly hyperreal and everything is filtered through screens of simulation" (2008, 94). Moreover, the tension between bourgeois restraint and aristocratic excess that animated previous centuries (and Rice's previous novel) has been replaced by "a new socio-economic configuration in which excessive spending, useless and irrational consumption and sexual liberation come to the fore as the norms of everyday existence" (95). Lestat's adept manipulation of the mechanisms of celebrity takes vampiric rock music beyond subculture to replicate and prey on the dominant values and modes of representation of the culture as a whole. If Rice's secretive vampires, leading a subterranean existence alongside that of humans, had some of the traits of a subculture, Lestat "sells out" his peers, turning vampirism into a commercial enterprise. He, nevertheless, preserves the subcultural narrative by viewing his own actions in terms of rebellion, as opting for difference in the face of a moribund and rule-bound community.

In other ways, *The Vampire Lestat* does capture a specific mood of 1980s Goth in its emphasis on performative identity. The British club scene in the early 1980s was centered around flamboyant dressing up, whether in the fashionable New Romantic club Blitz or the more underground Goth club the Batcave. Specimen, the house band at the Batcave, treated their live shows as performance art, and several of the early bands, such as Bauhaus, had an art school background. An embrace of the possibilities of performative identity was a major attraction for many Goths in the 1980s (as it still is today). There is an interesting disjunction in Rice's novel between Lestat's provocative public flaunting of his vampire identity and his fans' insistence on reading it *as* a performance: "everywhere the canny innocence, the unfathomable trust that it was art, nothing but art! No one would be hurt. It was safe, this splendid hysteria" (Rice, 1994 [1985], 586). Rice mounts a defense of dark materials that extends to her own art: this is Gothic as catharsis or, as Chris Baldick has described it, "homeopathic" remedy (1992, xiii). By implication Goth too is performative, theatrical in nature; yet wanting to have it all, it aspires to the authenticity of vampire identity. The novel positions its readers as among those fans enjoying Lestat's autobiography

and appreciating it as art, but in the intimacy it creates with the first-person narrator, it also positions them as privileged insiders who know the truth about vampires. Of course, as this is also a novelistic strategy, the result is an endlessly receding play of authenticity and fakery.

Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls*, also a vampire novel, collapses this play of authenticity and fakery to create a book that deliberately seeks to polarize its readers as insiders or outsiders. Brite, whose author blurb and photo on the book jacket advertise her subcultural credentials, is herself positioned by the novel's peripheral materials as insider rather than the more distant *grande dame* figure embodied by Rice. Nevertheless, in interviews Brite claims she felt alienated by the Goth scene at the time she wrote the book and, somewhat disingenuously, repudiates the goth persona as an external construction.[5] As Trevor Holmes writes of another Brite text, "Goth functions as a double articulation . . . which . . . produces a kind of schizoid reading/writing practice" (2007, 74). The book vaunts its possession of what Sarah Thornton has, after Bourdieu, named "subcultural capital" – the insider knowledge that confers status within the subculture (Thornton, 1995). It also challenges externally imposed boundaries, by refusing to name Goth (the word does not appear in the novel) and by the author's constant public renegotiation of her own identity in relation to Goth. Simultaneously affirmed and disavowed, Goth remains highly visible but difficult to pin down. In her caginess about Goth, Brite reflects the prevailing mood of the late 1980s and early 1990s: as Goth became increasingly well-known within the mainstream, members of the subculture felt their identity had been appropriated and frequently renounced the Goth label. Mick Mercer's *Gothic Rock*, for example, quotes Birmingham Goth Giles Wallwork as stating, "the phrase of the times was 'But I'm not a Goth . . .'" (1991, 171).

The novel shows off its subcultural capital by grounding its supernatural elements in an authentically depicted underground scene. Bauhaus and The Cure form shared reference points for the community of Goths and vampires within the novel. Like *The Vampire Lestat*, the novel presents a picture of consumption and excess, but one that is framed by a community that distances itself from the mainstream and values transgression for its own sake. The vampires travel round the southeastern United States in a van swigging Chartreuse and scoffing sweets, in between graphically depicted kills and bouts of frequently homoerotic and occasionally incestuous sex. They are not interested in money, fame, or power, as Lestat is, but rather a more ineffable sense of dingy glamour and belonging to an alternative community, frequently expressed by Brite in terms of family. She has three of her vampires pose for an erotic photographer with linked foreskin-rings, "They stood together, naked and embracing, the three of them as much a family as anyone could be, anywhere, ever" (Brite, 1994 [1992], 83). Despite the symbolism of self-invention suggested by body-modification practices, access to this charmed circle is restricted: vampires, it transpires, are born, not made. The underground does not take kindly to fakes and wannabes. Laine, the fourteen-year-old runaway who wants to be like the novel's vampire anti-hero, Nothing, is savagely killed for his importunate desires.

The collapse of performative identity in the novel reflects a new mood in the subculture: Brite's novel was purportedly drafted in 1989, although it was not published until 1992, and the years of its composition thus spanned a time in which Goth had begun to wane in popularity in the UK, while simultaneously becoming better established in the United States through the increasing popularity of Industrial-style bands like Nine Inch Nails and Ministry. In the context of censure from conservative Christian organizations, Goth became more oppositional and lost many of its more fey stylings and historical associations to take on a more deliberately transgressive, sado-masochistic attitude. Punk and fetish-inspired looks took precedence over historical costume, with body modification techniques such as piercing, tattooing, and scarification becoming increasingly popular. Although Brite's novel enshrines the feminized male, it does so through a discourse of sexual experimentation and transgression, rather than of performativity. In doing so, it captures a specifically pre-Columbine moment, where fictional violence can be embraced as an oppositional strategy.

There are several bands providing diegetic music, as it were, within the novel, but the most significant of these is Lost Souls?, a sort of prototypical alt-country duo.[6] Ghost, the singer from Lost Souls?, describes the audience for one of his gigs at the Sacred Yew, an alternative club in the fictional town of Missing Mile:

> Kids with wide-open innocent faces and easy smiles, kids with long dark hair and eyeliner, kids with razor scars on their wrists, kids already sick of life, kids happy to be alive and drunk and younger than they would ever feel again. . . . They were so young, and they wore their thrift-shop jewelry, their ragged jeans, their black clothes like badges of membership to some arcane club. Some club that required drunkenness – on cheap liquor, on rainy midnights, on poetry or sex. Some club that required love of obscure bands and learning to lie awake at 4:00 A.M., bursting with terrors and wide-awake dreams (196).

Lost Souls? the band here doubles for *Lost Souls* the novel: both share the same audience. In this moment, Brite brings her readership inside the text. This is of a piece with the strategy of the novel as a whole, which deliberately attempts to polarize readers between those who "get it" and those who are shocked and repelled by the sex, violence, and bodily fluids on display.

Lost Souls features vampires who are also Goths, efficiently uniting subcultural aesthetics and literary tradition. Like *The Vampire Lestat*, the novel is unambiguously Gothic, reworking familiar themes in new ways. Douglas Coupland's *The Gum Thief* (2007), on the other hand, uses its Goth protagonist Bethany in a radically different fashion. Coupland is celebrated for his ability to capture the *Zeitgeist* – for example, encapsulating slacker aesthetics in *Generation X* (1991) and post-Columbine trauma in *Hey Nostradamus* (2003) – but has shown no previous interest in Gothic literature. Accordingly, *The Gum Thief* deploys its Goth character as a significant part of a bigger picture, but is not a Gothic novel by any stretch of the imagination. The narrative contrasts the lives of disaffected service workers, whose lives play out in the highly

un-Gothic context of an office supplies superstore, with the manuscript of a comic novella written by one of the lead characters about a washed-up writer and his wife hosting an awful dinner party. Although this inset novella has Gothic traces (a buried secret concerning a lost child, an atmosphere of studied decay), the emphasis on social comedy and the self-consciously ironic tone effectively overcome them. Preoccupied with the banal and the quotidian, *The Gum Thief* defines excess negatively as the extreme self-neglect engendered by alcoholism or depression, not as something to be embraced by an alternative worldview. The Goth has become available as a recognizable "type" within contemporary culture, who can perform a role in mainstream literary fiction.

Coupland, however, plays with readers' preconceptions about Goth. The novel does not position its reader as participant or "insider." Bethany represents Goth as it is sometimes viewed, and pilloried, by outsiders. Her co-worker Roger, writing a fake diary entry in her voice, starts with clichés: "I'm not really dead, but I dress like I want to be. There's something generic about girls like me . . . I wish I were a ghost" (6). She does not have other Goth friends and is not part of a Goth community. Overweight, unglamorous, and mocked by her co-workers, she is ripe for the makeover meted out to the unconventionally dressed in Hollywood movies – except that her makeover, when it comes, is disturbing and her new-found conformity, not her Goth garb, is a sign of her mental distress. The narrative as a whole works to overturn the statement that "There's something generic about girls like me," gradually revealing her individuality. The novel's final epiphany is that Bethany is happier and healthier dressed in black and overweight than she is wearing "cargo shorts, a nylon windbreaker and hiking boots" and working out (249). By accepting and celebrating her Goth identity, she finds the satisfying relationships that have previously eluded her.

The Gum Thief is not Gothic but it is sympathetic to Goths, demolishing stereotypes and suggesting that Bethany's unique self-identity is a kind of heroism in the face of consumer-driven conformity. As such, it provides a surprisingly apt expression of twenty-first century Goth, which post-Columbine has emphasized Goths' rights to be themselves without interference. Published the same year as the murder of self-identified Goth Sophie Lancaster in the UK, it chimes with a mood of tolerance and demystification found in campaigns such as SOPHIE (Stamp Out Prejudice, Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere), which deliberately positioned Goth as a means of "expressing . . . individuality as creative artistic people," as a strategy to combat bullying and violence against members of youth subcultures (Lancaster, 2010). Intriguingly, however, while *The Gum Thief* may deliver Bethany her individuality and still preserve her Goth identity, it only does so by abandoning Gothic narrative.

Reading these three texts in terms of subcultural histories demonstrates the dangers in putting Goth to work as a monolithic phenomenon. Goth may have overarching features enabling its identification, but attempting to fix its meaning underestimates the way that it moves through time, as well as the way individuals

move through subcultures. Coupland's Bethany, for example, relinquishes Goth for part of the narrative; Lestat and Nothing also reposition themselves in relation to vampire and Goth communities as their narratives progress. Each of the three texts is awkwardly positioned in relation to Goth culture: in some ways they accurately capture the mood of their times; in others, Goth proves ineffable and seems always just out of reach. Rice's gauche depiction of the music scene; Brite's discomfort with the Goth label; Coupland's abandonment altogether of the Gothic mode – each text communicates the difficulties of representing subculture as vividly as they capture its particularity. Indeed, this sense of unease may be a prerequisite of successful subcultural fictions: it shows that the subculture is a fluid and active one, always one step ahead of its representation, and it captures that sense of misfit or outsiderdom prized by subcultural participants. The areas of discomfiture are revealing as they open up Goth culture's problems and contradictions. Yet a culture is also constructed through its texts, and Rice and Brite in particular have been instrumental in fostering particular kinds of Goth sensibilities. To conclude, any responsible analysis of Goth culture will explore the localized production of meaning, in different contexts. Goth has a history, as well as an interest *in* history. Goth is a community, with shared interests and concerns, not a prescriptive identity – a culture, not a cult.

Notes

1 Commentators have pointed to earlier moments as inaugurating Goth, such as the release of Joy Division's album *Unknown Pleasures* or Siouxsie and the Banshees' early singles, but while these are clearly important antecedents, it is in "Bela Lugosi's Dead" that all the elements of Goth fully crystallize.

2 Steampunk is the common term for this style, but many adherents prefer to call themselves Steamgoths.

3 This essay does not have space to consider the spread of Goth into Eastern Europe or Japan, which has been productive of further, and sometimes radically different, Goth histories; see other essays in this volume.

4 Bowie appeared as a vampire in Tony Scott's film *The Hunger* (1983), which began with Bauhaus performing "Bela Lugosi's Dead," adding yet another level of self-referentiality to their relationship.

5 The following quotes from Brite are typical:

> At the time I was writing *Lost Souls*, I was more of an observer of the Goth Sub-Culture. I consider myself very much a Goth, but I didn't have a Goth group in Chapel Hill. The Goths there were too cool to have me. (Edmonds, 2010)

> I don't consider myself to have ever been "the literary goth queen" to anybody. Writers aren't responsible for the idiotic ways in which publishers choose to market them. (Kellner, 2010)

> I don't look like a goth, though some of my friends do. I don't try to project a "goth persona" during book signings, interviews, etc. It comes from readers' minds. (Anon., 2010)

6 "Alt Country" grew to prominence in the 1990s and characteristically demonstrated a stripped-down musical style and dark lyrical preoccupations inspired by traditional murder ballads and American Gothic fiction.

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Part V
The Globalization of Gothic

25
Global Gothic

Glennis Byron

In recent years, the field of Gothic Studies has seen some dramatic changes, and one of these, the ever-expanding geographic spread of the Gothic, is registered in the addition of this section for the new edition of the *Companion*. Over the past decade or so, Gothic, it would appear, has gone global.[1] An increasing number of critics worldwide have located their own national forms of Gothic, from New Zealand to Italy, Singapore to Argentina. A rather dizzying proliferation of regional Gothics has also emerged: Margaret Atwood is hailed as the inventor of Southern Ontario Gothic, Lisa Moore's *Alligator* (2005) has given birth to North Atlantic Gothic, Kalpana Swaminathan's *Bougainvillea House* (2005) to Goa Gothic, and Carlos Ruiz Zafón to Barcelona Gothic – to name just a few of the numerous new regional manifestations of the Gothic mode.

In the case of such countries as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the claim for nationally or regionally specific forms of Gothic is relatively uncontroversial. These are usually viewed as outgrowths of an imported Anglo-European genre that, while restaging established Gothic tropes for a new world, subsequently develops distinctively local characteristics. Gothic in these colonial contexts frequently functions to contest the more optimistic foundational narratives of new worlds, and, in a more contemporary context, often continues to give expression to lingering traumas produced by colonial life, with buried pasts resurfacing in horrific form to disturb the present.

More controversially, and putting new pressure on what has always been a much-debated term, other critics have argued for the existence of Gothic traditions quite distinct from those emerging out of the Anglo-European. Henry Hughes, for example, in his pioneering essay "Familiarity of the Strange: Japan's Gothic Tradition," identifies a Japanese Gothic emerging out of a long history of stories of the strange and

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supernatural stretching back centuries to origins in ancient China. For Hughes, the term Gothic does not specify those Japanese authors who were influenced by Western literature, but serves as "a convenient translation term for a similar tradition observable in both cultures" (2000, 12). Andrew Hock Soon Ng further argues that while "Asian literature is rich with narratives of haunting, the uncanny, and the monstrous," because of the critical emphasis on the "social-realist reading which, to a large extent, has hitherto informed the study of Asian literatures," it has lacked "the trope or a critical heritage to discuss these matters"; reading through a Gothic lens, he concludes, can bring into focus previously "obfuscated and peripheralized concerns" (2008, 2–3).

For many, there is a concern that identifying and reading these texts as Gothic is nevertheless a kind of colonial imposition. For others, that concern in itself could be linked to a kind of questionable gatekeeping, at least to the extent that Gothic is seen as a product and symptom of modernity. Given that modernity is increasingly replaced by notions of alternate or multiple modernities in an attempt, as Arif Dirlik observes, "to overcome Eurocentrism and to bring into modernity the voices, experiences and cultural legacies of others" (2003, 276), so it could be argued that responses to modernity similar to what the West has named Gothic have emerged elsewhere, even if differently modulated by other historical and cultural conditions. From this perspective, the problem becomes primarily a matter of naming.

Robert Mighall's suggestion that the "Gothic is a process, not an essence; a rhetoric rather than a store of universal symbols" may have some relevance here. "Epochs, institutions, places, and people are Gothicized, have the Gothic thrust upon them" (1999, xxv), Mighall continues, and so, one might add, do texts. Indeed the very naming of a Global Gothic could be seen as complicit in such a process.

On the other hand, there is much evidence to suggest that "Gothic" is a term which is increasingly being claimed rather than imposed. The recent proliferation of Gothic literature from around the world – the gradual rise, one might say, of a global "Brand Gothic" – may in purely practical terms have something to do with the consolidation of the publishing industry into multinational media conglomerates with an eye on global markets. Gothic has become a lucrative business, and both authors and publishers are well aware that Gothic sells.

The marketing of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's international best seller, *La sombra del viento* (2001), a text now frequently appearing on university courses on the Gothic, provides a particularly striking example of this process. *La sombra del viento* has been translated from the original Castellano into more than forty languages and published in over fifty countries. If Barcelona Gothic previously conjured up only architectural associations – the *Barrio Gótico*, for example, or specific buildings like Santa Maria del Mar – it has now become firmly identified with Zafón and his international best sellers. And yet, when first translated into English as *The Shadow of the Wind* in 2004, *La sombra del viento* was described primarily as a thriller. The *Observer* is typical of early assessments in describing it as a "mildly supernatural thriller, against-the-odds love story and period coming-of-age saga" (Colville, 2004). In terms of influences, the *New*

York Times was similarly typical in speaking of Borges, Eco, and García Márquez (Eder, 2004). In the author notes for my 2005 paperback edition, the book was said to be the first in a "planned set of four based in [Barcelona]" (Zafón, 2005, 508), and the discussion notes at the end of the book conclude with this question: "*The Shadow of the Wind* has been described as 'thriller, historical fiction, occasional farce, existential mystery and passionate love story'. How would you describe it?" (Zafón, 2005, 510). So far, not particularly Gothic.

But the word did begin to creep in, with, for example, *The Times* concluding that it was "at heart an old-fashioned adventure yarn, thoroughly marinated in gothic romanticism" (Lively, 2004), and, significantly, Zafón himself soon began referring to his *Gothic* Barcelona quartet in interviews. By 2007 the status of the book as Gothic had been firmly established, something emphatically confirmed by none other than Stephen King in his monthly column for *Entertainment Weekly*:

> If you thought the true gothic novel died with the 19th century, this will change your mind. *Shadow* is the real deal, a novel full of cheesy splendor and creaking trapdoors, a novel where even the subplots have subplots. There's a haunted house (ah, but by what?) called the Angel of Mist, and the only horror greater than the thing rotting in its bricked-up crypt is (but of course, senor [*sic*]) the horror of doomed love. (King, 2007)

Zafón's English-language web site now actively promotes him as a writer of Gothic fiction.[2] In the web-site introduction to *The Angel's Game* (which, interestingly, focuses on a writer driven to accommodate market demand), we are welcomed, in decidedly Gothic text, "back to the Gothic and mysterious world of the cemetery of forgotten books, where this time things take a devilish turn and the shadows get deeper and deeper." Just in case there is any room for doubt, as one moves through certain pages, candles flicker and fade across the bottom of the screen. Whether Zafón's projected Barcelona quartet is or is not Gothic becomes beside the point: that is, at any rate, how the books are being marketed; and Zafón, formerly a writer of children's fiction, seems to be now popularly acknowledged as an authority on the Gothic, with the *Guardian* recently choosing him to pronounce on the top ten Gothic novels of the twentieth century (Zafón, 2010). The increasingly global nature of Gothic, then, may well be at least partly economically driven, and the expanded understanding of what Gothic might be in the twenty-first century defined as much by marketing strategies as by academic discourse.

Certainly, what is identified as Gothic today is something increasingly detached from any specific historical, social, and cultural "origins," and many of the changes we see in contemporary Gothic, including the proliferation of national and regional forms and the production of Gothic as a lucrative global business, would appear to have much to do with the social, cultural, and economic impacts of globalization. Contemporary Gothic both registers and is impacted upon by the new world order in which people and products move with increasing ease and speed across national boundaries. It is not the aim of this essay to join in the extensive debate over the various competing

narratives and theories of globalization – there is a huge body of globalization literature to be consulted on such issues – but rather to consider in more detail some of the ways in which these flows may have impacted upon the Gothic in recent years, and the implications for our future understanding of what the Gothic mode might be.

While Gothic is obviously not unique in registering the impacts of globalization, it does appear to have a particularly intimate relationship with its processes. In globalization discourse, from Appadurai's cannibal culture to Beck's zombie concepts and Hardt and Negri's golems and vampires, Gothic provides a ready-made language for articulating the social, cultural, and economic impacts of the new world order.[3] And if, as Arif Dirlik notes, globalization has complicated "contradictions between and within societies, including a fundamental contradiction between a seemingly irresistible modernity, and past legacies that not only refuse to go away, but draw renewed vitality from the very globalizing process" (Dirlik, 2003, 275–6), then globalization would appear to land us quite firmly in Gothic territory.

Indeed, Dirlik's comment here would seem to form the basic tenet underlying much recent Gothic, particularly Gothic horror. In a great number of horror films over the past fifteen or so years, influenced most notably perhaps by the *Ringu* cycle, the past is made manifest in spectral form through the exploitation of modern technologies. And in many recent Gothic fictions that critique globalization, such as Tunku Halim's *Dark Demon Rising* (1997), the processes of globalization give "renewed vitality" to "past legacies" as demons of folklore are revived by the breakdown of traditional customs and belief and take on horrific contemporary form.[4] Gothic fictions that address the issue of globalization, particularly those like *Dark Demon Rising* that represent globalization as neo-imperialism, tend to expose the darker side of the new world order, most notably in the ways they register disturbances to traditional identities and cultures. Globalization itself becomes a Gothic manifestation, a material and psychic invasion, a force of contamination and dominance. These fictions, representing the new world order as alien devouring other, tend to be driven, like classic Western eighteenth-century Gothic, by a combination of fear and nostalgia. Appropriating the discourse of the global and the local, they tend to preserve and enforce binary thinking and to articulate a nostalgic fantasy of a return to a culture and tradition, reinstating supposedly "purer" and more "stable" worlds and identities in the face of what are seen as the homogenizing and dehumanizing forces of the new world order.

Interestingly, and perhaps inevitably, Gothic fictions that attack the effects of globalization – particularly Gothic aimed at the popular market – have a peculiar tendency to be the product of its processes. Like *Dark Demon Rising*, Thai director Yuthlert Sippapak's *Buppha Ratree* (2003), for example, is concerned to register anxieties over the impact of globalization on traditional cultures and values. Nevertheless, although loosely adapting the Thai story of Nang Nak, the film simultaneously references both William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) (again like *Dark Demon Rising*) and Takashi Miike's *Audition* (1999) in order to construct a new hybrid form of female monstrosity to embody these fears.

Familiar Gothic tropes are frequently reformulated in order to engage with the anxieties produced by the processes of globalization. Marlene Goldman and Joanne Saul, among others, have even suggested that "part of the explanation for the 'return' of the trope of haunting in contemporary literature and criticism is the unprecedented movement and dislocation of people across the globe associated with the development of global or transnational capitalism" (2006, 648). New sites of Gothic infestations emerge with the spread of late capitalism. Tamara Wagner has noted how, in recent Singaporean fiction, "haunted government housing estates or offices rival relocated cemeteries, forgotten shrines," and other more traditional sites of "preternatural occurrences" (2008, 46). The exploitation of such places, marked by anonymity and a sense of disconnection, is by no means limited to Singapore ghost stories: the blank featureless Swedish housing estate proves the ideal habitat for the vampire Eli in John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In* (2007); while in the Japanese high-rise office block of Taichi Yamada's *Strangers* (2005), it appears inevitable that the protagonist should eventually discover the only other inhabitant to be a ghost.

But if Gothic has recently functioned to articulate globalization as dehumanizing, monstrous, spectral, cannibalistic, an object of anxiety and suspicion, globalization has simultaneously functioned to reconceptualize the Gothic mode in some invigorating ways. Not only has Western Gothic traveled, but one of the effects of the increasing mobility and fluidity of people and products in the globalized world has been a growing awareness that the tropes and strategies the West has associated with the Gothic, such as the ghost, the vampire, and the zombie, have their counterparts in other cultures, however differently these may be inflected by specific histories and belief systems. The flows have consequently by no means been one-directional, as the widespread influence of the black-haired, white-robed *yūrei* of the Japanese horror film perhaps most notably confirms. Such cultural flows are, of course, by no means an entirely new phenomenon within the Gothic. As Terry Hale has shown, Western Gothic was from the start the product of a process of cultural exchange, although then the exchange was primarily Anglo-French-Germanic. Today, as the processes of exchange are expedited and intensified by the increasing mobility of both people and cultural products, the Gothic mode is experiencing what may be its most radical transformation to date.

In globalization studies, the narrative that once conflated globalization with Americanization or Westernization has been replaced by a new emphasis on multidirectional flows. Gothic has energetically participated in the cultural flows and deterritorializations that characterize globalization, and if one of the most striking features of Western Gothic has always been its propensity to prey upon itself, to delight in consuming and recycling certain persistent motifs, then the transnational flows that characterize globalization have functioned both to reinvigorate and intensify this tendency by opening up multiple new fields of play: the literature and film of different countries are feeding off each other to produce new forms of Gothic that reveal the increasing cross-cultural dynamics of the globalized world.

Helen Oyeyemi's *White is For Witching* (2009) offers one recent example of these cross-cultural dynamics. Oyeyemi, a Nigerian-born British writer, combines the traditional British haunted house story with the *soucouyant* of Caribbean folklore, an old woman "who flies from her body and at night consumes her food, the souls of others – soul food! – in a ball of flame" (Oyeyemi, 2009, 147). The *soucouyant*'s only interaction with others is "consumption" (Oyeyemi, 2009, 155), and in this way merges with the house, which, with its welcoming façade and underlying malevolence, seeks to consume its inhabitants, more specifically, the female line of the Silver family who own 29 Barnton Road.

As Gothic begins to incorporate narratives, figures, and tropes from various different countries, awareness of historical and cultural specificities becomes increasingly important, and this has some implications for critical readings of Global Gothic texts. Vampiric creatures may occur throughout the world, but there are significant differences between, for example, contemporary formulations of Asian Pontianaks, vampire figures based on birth demons from folklore, and more conventional Western vampires descended from European folklore. The ghost may recur in many different cultures, but what it represents and how it is seen obviously varies widely. Jodey Castricano, in her reading of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*, provides an excellent analysis of the dangers of "taking up the question of ghosts and spirits in a First Nations context" in terms of "a European, psychoanalytically inflected Gothic" (2006, 806, 809). Reading Tunku Halim's *Dark Demon Rising* similarly necessitates remaining aware of a traditional Malay vision of healing: rather than finding or constructing a myth or story that explains and normalizes the inner workings of the psyche in terms of some neurosis, the shaman looks outward to the demons that are seen to exist on a more conscious and literal level. As new figures from myth and folklore become internationally appropriated, however, a kind of cultural deterritorialization often seems to take place. Jack Priest's young adult novel *Night Witch* (2003) has a Caribbean *soucouyant* traveling to California to retrieve a stolen locket containing the magic potion that provides her immortality. There is a jarring disruption between culture and territory here that is not evident in, for example, *White is for Witching*, where folklore retains its cultural distinctiveness while illuminating the workings of a quite different society.

As Gothic increasingly comes to include, along with its more conventional tropes, such figures as Malaysian pontianaks, Welsh sin eaters, Japanese *baku*, and Caribbean *soucouyants*, there is a growing need to reassess Gothic's relationship with folklore. As the global thrives on producing the local, commodifying it, and marketing it, so contemporary global Gothic increasingly appropriates and commodifies local or regional folklores. The use of La Llorona in Rigoberto Castañeda's 2006 film, *Kilómetro 31*, may, for example, reveal something about the ways in which a figure of folklore, here one common to South and Central America, is appropriated, commodified, and turned from a regionally specific bogeywoman into a Gothic figure for an international audience. The film has no interest in contemporary feminist reformulations of the weeping woman as a heroic figure, a wife betrayed and to be pitied. Nor is the legend even fully exploited for its postcolonial potential to critique the subjugation of the indigenous

peoples of the New World, although the conflict between the Mexican Omar and Spanish Nuño suggests that old hostilities still simmer underneath. Instead, *Kilómetro 31* makes Gothic the cycle of aggression and revenge underlying the La Llorona myth to deal more generally with the horrific returns of the past. The sewers of Mexico City in which the final scenes take place provide an apt metaphor for what lies buried, on both a communal and individual level. Containing the residues of the past, the sewer is associated with purification and cleansing (the Castellano word for underground sewer, *cloaca*, coming from the Latin *clovaca*, to cleanse) and yet is what contains, provides a space for, the waste. In *Kilómetro 31* the past does not want to be cleansed or exorcised; it deceives and betrays in order to achieve its only goal: eternal repetition.

The film simultaneously addresses – to the extent they can still be distinguished – a local and global audience. While its success in Mexico and much of Latin America may have been heavily determined by the home audience's recognition of the "weeping woman" (La Llorona is never directly mentioned), for those unfamiliar with the legend, the film resonates in other ways: there are the visual connections with J-horror, particularly in the representation of the female ghost and the child; the echoes of traditional Western ghost stories with El Encanto, the haunted house complete with creaking door; and the links to more contemporary kinds of hauntings, with echoes of urban legends about phantom hitchhikers and the familiar setting of a modern urban development built over a site of past trauma.

As Gothic of various cultures becomes available in the global marketplace, there is also the very practical matter of translation to be considered. Two factors become of significance in assessing the nature of a Global Gothic: what is translated and how it is translated. With respect to the first issue, in terms of popular fictions, choices will inevitably be made on the basis of proven marketability. It is, for example, interesting that John Adjvide Lindqvist's vampire and zombie novels have been translated into English but, to date, despite that fact that Scandinavian horror has more typically focused on the terrors which lurk in the Nordic wilderness, his book of short stories featuring trolls has not. In terms of older Gothic, publication is not so market driven, thanks to independent publishers such as Udolpho Press, who are doing much to ensure that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fictions from other countries are made available. Udolpho Press has to date translated a number of German *Schauerromane*, and French Gothic, is starting a series on Australian Gothic, and has recently commissioned the translation of what may be the first Russian Gothic, Nikolay Ivanovich Gnedich's *Don Korrado de Guerrera or the Spirit of Vengeance and Barbarity of the Spaniards* (1803).

The second issue, how Gothic is being translated, takes us back to a point that Terry Hale has shown to be of crucial importance for the emergence of Western Gothic in the late eighteenth century.[5] In these fictions, Hale demonstrates, "the level of ideological manipulation which occurred as texts were translated, mistranslated, appropriated, misappropriated, altered and adapted from one language to another was so considerable, and so systematic, that generic mutations were occasioned." But what Hale also argues is that "the genre was also substantially a *product* of that process: that

is, many of the conventions which we associate with the British Gothic novel today arose as a by-product of the translation process" (Hale, 2002, 17).

It is interesting to speculate whether what we come to think about contemporary Gothic in the future might also partly be a product of such translation processes and the ideological manipulations that are involved. One quite startling recent example is Albert Sánchez Piñol's *La pell freda*, first published in Catalan in 2003, and simultaneously in Castellano as *La piel fría*. The book, like Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind*, became an international best seller and has been translated into twenty-five languages. While no one would expect a translation to involve neutral transmission, it is rather startling to find that the English translation, *Cold Skin*, simply ignores a full fourteen pages near the beginning of the original text.[6] In these missing pages, the anonymous narrator relates his background as an Irish orphan who grew up in the years leading to the Easter Rising, served with the Republican army, and then, disillusioned by the ways the victorious new government simply reproduced the behavior of the old, abandoned the cause and, desiring to avoid the world of men, took a position logging the behavior of the winds on an island close to Antarctica that had been ceded by the British to international control. These pages detailing the narrator's upbringing and disillusionment with nationalism are absolutely central to the text's concern with moving from an emphatic sense of place and national identity (there are thirty-two references to different nationalities in the first twenty-one pages) to the sense of absolute placelessness associated with the island, something particularly emphasized by the way it cannot even be seen on the map, but disappears behind the thin line of longitude. I see this movement as crucial to the text's interest in showing the continuation of the cycle of brutality with the movement from the postcolonial to the globalized world, and to its interest in the ways in which the workings of power have – and have not – evolved and transformed.

"Definitively, the world was a predictable place, lacking in novelty," the narrator of *Cold Skin* concludes (Piñol, 2006, 233). As Gothic goes global, repeating, in many ways, the processes that produced the Western Gothic of the eighteenth century – translation and mistranslation, transformation and misreading, appropriation and misappropriation – it might appear that much the same conclusion could be reached about a Global Gothic. But if there is repetition, there is also variation. Gothic continues to be grounded in the counterfeit, but it is a fakery specifically associated with late capitalism, as the very canon becomes increasingly manipulated and defined by global market forces. The conditions of globalization call up familiar Gothic motifs of hauntings, of monsters, of pasts that refuse to lie still and which draw sustenance from the sweep of globalizing forces, emerging with renewed vigor. But the contemporary emergence of these motifs is provoked by new kinds of disturbances to identities and borders, and these motifs are familiar and yet unfamiliar, simultaneously global and local. Increasingly detached from any specific historical, social, or cultural "origins," Gothic as it travels nevertheless inevitably incorporates, and necessitates attention to, different historical, social, and cultural specificities at the same time as it produces figures of collective fears and traces the outlines of a growing global darkness.

Notes

1 About fifteen years ago, David Punter and I were met with some bemusement from publishers when we proposed a series on "Global Gothic," to consist of collections of essays on Gothic fictions from around the world. It is a sign of the times that Manchester University Press has recently confirmed its new "International Gothic" series, to consist of essays on Gothic in all media from around the world. I am grateful to the AHRC for funding my Global Gothic network, and to the members of that network for the stimulating discussions we had over the two years of the project. While we all had our own perspectives on the issues and the group would by no means agree with everything I say here, some of my ideas have definitely come from or been inspired by them.

2 See http://www/carlosruizzafon.co.uk (accessed June 7, 2010).

3 This point is made by Fred Botting and Justin Edwards in "Introduction: Theorising Global Gothic," in the collection of essays that the AHRC Global Gothic network is compiling: *Globalgothic*. An extended analysis of globalization and the Gothic will be found in Botting and Edwards's "Introduction."

4 For a discussion of these issues, see my "'Where Meaning Collapses': Tunku Halim's *Dark Demon Rising* as Global Gothic," in Ng's *Asian Gothic* (2008).

5 In film, the question of how a work is translated is equally important, particularly since subtitles translated can be influenced by a large number of factors, including time, space on screen, and the speed of the dialogue.

6 This is, I should add, by no means anything to do with the UK publisher, Canongate Press. A Canongate editor explained that they had purchased the translation from Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, and that the decision to make the cuts would probably have been the joint decision of the author and that publisher. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, unfortunately, did not respond to my enquiries and so I could not confirm this.

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26
Australian Gothic

Ken Gelder

The Gothic came to Australia as an imported genre, but it quickly adjusted to local predicaments, to the extent that we can fairly identify a set of characteristics associated with the "Australian Gothic" that go right back to the colonial period. In some early commentaries, however, the recently settled Australia seemed to exclude altogether the possibility of the Gothic ever taking root, lacking any connection to the ancient European landscapes that seemed naturally to belong to the Gothic imagination proper. This was the view of the German-born immigrant Frederick Sinnett in 1856, for example – who had founded the *Melbourne Punch* the previous year – when he wrote in the *Journal of Australasia*:

> There may be plenty of dilapidated buildings, but not one, the dilapidation of which is sufficiently venerable by age, to tempt the wandering footsteps of the most arrant *parvenu* of a ghost that ever walked by night. It must be admitted that Mrs Radcliffe's genius would be quite thrown away here; and we must reconcile ourselves to the conviction that the foundations of a second "Castle of Otranto" can hardly be laid in Australia during our time. (Sinnett, 1969, 10)

But colonials were already investing the Australian landscape with what Tom Griffiths has called "the antiquarian imagination" (Griffiths, 1996), as if – even without its dilapidated buildings – it could evoke the foundational tropes of the Gothic just the same. One settler described caves in the "darkly magnificent valley of Mooni Mooni" along the Hawkesbury River in New South Wales as "vaulted and groined like a cathedral" with "clumps of black crag groups about like the relics of a mighty Druidical temple" (cited in Otto, 2006, 30). Colonial explorers went on to reproduce Gothic tropes almost as a matter of course, as they accounted for what they saw. The

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Australian desert seemed as ancient and foreboding as anything out of British Gothic literature, bringing endless wide-open space and the claustrophobia of confinement uncannily together, as Roslynn D. Haynes has described in her study of the Australian desert in literature:

> The most alarming prospect faced by the inland explorers, coming from the confines of heavily populated Britain and Europe, was that of void. This was particularly true of the desert with its repeated vistas of empty horizontal planes under a cloudless, overarching sky. It therefore seems paradoxical that this vast expanse of apparently empty space was so frequently described, in their accounts, in Gothic terms of enclosure and entrapment. (Haynes, 1999, 77)

The apparent emptiness of the Australian desert is the thing that most unsettled colonial explorers as they made their way through it. This is a journal entry from the Indian-born, English-educated Charles Sturt, who had discovered and charted one of Australia's major river systems: "There was scarcely a living creature, even of the feathered race, to be seen to break the stillness of the forest. The native dogs alone wandered about . . . and their melancholy howl, breaking in upon the ear at the dead of night, only served to impress more fully on the mind the absolute loneliness of the desert" (cited in Haynes, 1999, 79). Ernest Favenc was a colonial writer whose popular adventure and Gothic fiction was published extensively in Australia and Britain. In his *The Explorers of Australia and Their Life-Work* (1908), he has this to say about the early Surveyor-General John Oxley (1785?–1828), whose journal evoked the kind of sensibility, produced through his encounter with the Australian "wilderness," that came to underwrite the colonial Gothic narrative form: "He appears to have formed the idea that the interior tract he was approaching was nothing more than a dead and stagnant marsh – a huge, dreary swamp, within whose bounds the inland rivers lost their individuality and merged into a lifeless morass. A more melancholy picture could not be imagined, and with such an awesome thought constantly haunting his mind there is no wonder that he became morbid, and that the dominant tone of his journal . . . is so hopelessly pessimistic" (Favenc, 2006, 16).

The memoirs of colonial explorers – "explorer narratives" – can be long and painful accounts of one disappointment after another, and the theme of the explorer who never returns (like the German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, whose expedition disappeared in 1848) soon became prevalent across a range of Australian fiction and poetry, from J. F. Hogan's *The Lost Explorer* (1890) and Ernest Favenc's *Secret of the Australian Desert* (1895) to Francis Webb's *Leichhardt in Theatre* (1952) and Patrick White's novel *Voss* (1957). "The very emptiness of the desert," Haynes writes, "led the explorers to people it with ghosts" (82). Certainly there is plenty of evidence of the spectralization of the Australian desert landscape by explorers given over to superstitious imaginings. But the explorer himself – so often a foundational and heroic figure for colonial nation-building mythologies – could become ghostly too. This was an available trope for colonial Gothic fiction, which kept the disappearing explorer alive in spectral form.

Guy Boothby, whose exotic *Dr. Nikola* novels became international best sellers in the 1890s, was born in Adelaide, South Australia. A prolific writer and experienced traveler, Boothby wrote across a number of popular genres, including the Gothic. His remarkable story "With Three Phantoms," from his Australian collection *Bushigrams* (1897), begins one sweltering night in Port Darwin "in her Season of Torment." An explorer arrives, preparing to leave for the interior in search of the lost Leichhardt expedition. The narrator observes the event and then forgets about it, moving to a town in northern Queensland. The days get hotter and hotter, and one evening by the light of the moon a man is brought into camp, exhausted and naked, his eyes "devoid of even the faintest spark of life" (196). The "apparition" awakes on an infernal Christmas Eve to tell his story: that he was one of the Port Darwin explorers who had gone to search for Leichhardt, and that their own expedition had met with one disaster after another, each member of the party succumbing to madness and death. Abandoned in the dry Australian interior, he is startled one night to see three horsemen riding toward him, "the moon shining through each horse and rider" (200). The phantom horsemen shadow the lone explorer and guide him to the narrator's camp where, reaching the end of his story, he expires. "With Three Phantoms" is a spectral explorer narrative that presents the opening up of Australia's interior not as a triumph of nation-building, but as a traumatic experience involving the loss of faith and reason. The return home also brings with it no consolation; in fact, the function of the returning spectral explorer is literally to bring the desolation of the Australian interior back *into* the home, drawing them together as if nation-building must always be shadowed by the losses it incurs.

Colonial Australian Gothic fiction often intervenes directly in the process of nation-building, of settlement and home-making in the New World. The Queensland-born Rosa Campbell Praed – the daughter of a pastoralist and politician, and a prolific novelist who later gained popular success in England – published an evocative story called "The Bunyip" in the colonial anthology *Coo-ee: Tales of Australian Life by Australian Ladies* (1891). "The Bunyip" famously begins by claiming this strange mythical figure (usually an animal-spirit of some kind, said to haunt local waterholes and creeks) as authentically Australian, perhaps the only monster that this embryonic nation could at this time properly call its own: "Everyone who has lived in Australia has heard of the bunyip. It is the one respectable flesh-curdling horror of which Australia can boast. The old world has her tales of ghoul and vampire, of Lorelei, spook, and pixie, but Australia has nothing but her Bunyip" (Praed, 2007, 117). It seems to work as an effect on people's lives, for better or worse: as Praed beautifully puts it, the creature "deals out promiscuously benefits and calamities from the same hand." The problem is that, although Aboriginal people seem especially familiar with it – referring to it as "Debil-Debil" and avoiding the waterholes it is supposed to frequent – no settlers ever seem to have seen the bunyip with their own eyes. The story then turns to the business of colonial settlement, as two brothers travel up country to meet a dray "loaded with stores and furniture for the new home to which we were bound" (120). These are colonials who are yet to settle: colonials who are as yet to occupy a

home. The group make camp beside a gloomy swamp and soon "the talk got to eerie things . . . and as we talked a sort of chill seemed up creep over us" (122). They hear a strange cry, like that of a child "in dire distress," and wonder about the possibility of a child lost in the bush, another not uncommon Gothic trope in colonial Australian writing. Going in search of the child, the men are unexpectedly disoriented: "Though we tried to move in the direction of the voice, it was impossible to determine whence it came, so misleading and fitful and will-o'-the-wisp was the sound." Finally, the colonials find the body of a dead young girl whom they identify as Nancy, from a station ominously called Coffin Lid. But she has been dead for some time, a disturbing fact which leads the narrator to wonder if the cry they heard was "the Bunyip, or little Nancy's ghost" (125). What is striking about this story is that these would-be settlers are themselves the victims of a spectral effect – frightened, disoriented, and possessed by nothing more than a sound, by something no settler has actually seen. We shall see other examples of an occulted Australian bush later on. The important point to note here, however, is that all this occurs as the protagonists prepare themselves for settlement, for the occupation of their colonial properties. But settlement is not allowed to happen in this story. "The Bunyip" is Gothic because it offers its would-be settlers – even before they properly arrive – a melancholic glimpse of their own future: where the first steps toward nation-building bring with them disorientation, hauntings, and untimely death.

The novelist and painter Hume Nisbet, born in Stirling, Scotland, traveled through Australia a number of times during the 1860s, 1880s, and 1890s. The title story of his collection, *The Haunted Station* (1894), takes us on another Gothic journey into colonial Australia, giving us a narrator condemned for the murder of his young wife and transported to Western Australia as a convict, where he helps to build roads: literally participating in the colonial nation-building project. Not long afterwards, he escapes and wanders inland where, delirious, he stumbles across a "house of two storeys," which he describes in a very particular way: an "intermediate kind of station, which takes the place of the temporary shanty while the proprietor's bank account is rapidly swelling," built by squatters "after they have decided to stay" (Nisbet, 2007, 174) but still not fully established. This transitional colonial homestead, he tells us, is impressive enough so far inland, but it precedes "stateliness and stone-work": that is, it is built just before the full consolidation and investment of colonial wealth. To the narrator, it already seems spectral. When he ventures inside, it becomes apparent that a settler family and their domestics have been slaughtered in the house; a ghost appears, once a "successful gold-finder," who tells the narrator that he was murdered by his friend, another prospector. That friend then tells the murdered man's wife that her husband "had been killed by the natives," an explanation that seems plausible enough to the wife, reminding us just how closely entwined nation-building was with colonial violence. The ghostly husband is then overtaken with vengeance, possessing the friend and driving him to murder the wife and child and the servants, and then to commit suicide. As he listens, the narrator is hypnotized by the ghost's story and almost possessed in turn; but, imagining that he sees the wife and child and touched

sentimentally by their innocence, he flees the house, which is then struck by lightning and collapses: "the ruin had caught fire . . . and as it burned . . . the reddened smoke eddied about in the same strange shapes which the vapours had assumed the night before, scarlet ghosts of the demon and his victims" (190). Clearly there is something derived from Edgar Allan Poe's "The House of Usher" here; but there is also something peculiarly Australian about the hysterical, escalating predicament this story stages. This early manifestation of colonial settlement is presented as radically abnormal: a place that begins as not-quite-established and then becomes pathologically unstable, totally out of step with colonial wealth creation (the prospector is already dead) and nation-building. The massacre inside the house is self-generated, with colonials murdering colonials or driving themselves to suicide. This is where we find one of the prevailing logics of the colonial Gothic in Australia: in the abnormalizing of places of settlement, where the home (even in the earliest stages of colonial nation-building) is already in ruins and innocence (the innocence of the settler project, for example) is already lost.

The Australian interior was soon imagined as a place of abandoned homesteads and obscured burial sites, as we can see in the Gothic mystery and detection stories of the prolific colonial writer Mary Fortune, for example, or in the Australian-born colonial poet Henry Kendall's "The Hut by the Black Swamp" (1869), a Gothic eulogy to an abandoned homestead that turns the potential triumph of settlement and nation-building into its dark opposite, colonial violence and desolation:

> For on this Hut hath Murder writ
> With bloody fingers hellish things;
> And God will never visit it
> With flower or leaf of sweet-faced Springs,
> Or gentle wings.
>
> (Kendall, 1869, 6)

Kendall and his contemporary Charles Harpur – the son of convict parents – were Australia's two most important colonial poets, heavily influenced by Wordsworth and the Romantics. But nature, for them, is animated in a different way, potentially more ominous, even lethal. In Harpur's best-known long poem, "The Creek of the Four Graves" (1845), five white settlers – colonial entrepreneurs full of promise – venture inland in search of "new streams and wider pastures." But as four of them sleep, "painted Savages" burst into the campsite, full of "dread inherited hate and deadly enmity" (Harpur, 1984, 161). The fifth explorer, Egremont, watches in horror as his friends are massacred, and then he flees for his life, able later on to tell his story to a public eager for stories about "the wild old times." The poem is both a sensationalist rendering of colonial anxiety, and – even as it chronicles the failure of colonial promise – a melancholy way of claiming the landscape in the name of colonialism, the "four long grassy mounds" of the dead explorers memorializing the act of settlement.

A bleaker sort of colonial Gothic narrative can tend to treat settler death as a matter of banal routine, however. The anonymity of the dead in the Australian interior is

perhaps most strikingly rendered in one of Henry Lawson's best-known stories, "The Bush Undertaker" (1892), a Christmas tale that centers around a solitary figure who recognizes and then dutifully buries a corpse in "the grand Australian bush – the nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird, and much that is different from things in other lands" (Lawson, 2007, 146). The "weirdness" of the Australian bush becomes a commonplace evocation for the Australian Gothic, a way of expressing the landscape's capacity for generating darker colonial sensibilities amongst settlers, such as melancholy, anxiety, and dread. An often-cited comment by the London-born novelist Marcus Clarke, a key figure in Australia's colonial literary history, strikingly illustrates this point. Clarke arrived in Melbourne in 1863 when he was seventeen, trying his hand at station life and then going on a disastrous expedition into New South Wales in search of land. Returning to Melbourne, he developed his career as a journalist, editor and writer – and, influenced by the representations of urban life in Balzac, Dickens, and Victor Hugo, he chronicled Bohemian and underworld life in this fast-growing southern city. In 1876, Clarke wrote the preface to a new edition of a book of poetry by Adam Lindsay Gordon, a colonial writer, adventurer, and renowned horseman whose increasing debts had driven him to suicide six years earlier. He pays tribute to Gordon's "manly admiration for healthy living," as if the poet was once an ideal colonial Australian type, masculine and full of promise. But the registering of Gordon's suicide turns the preface into an act of mourning that somehow shifts in time to a moment before the promise of colonialism can even begin to be realized. Clarke drew on Poe to acknowledge Gordon's dismal condition and then transferred that sensibility – what he famously called "Weird Melancholy" – onto an imaginary pre-colonial Australian landscape, to produce an escalating sequence of Gothic-horror images:

> The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade . . . . The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter. The natives aver that, when night comes, from out of the bottomless depth of some lagoon the Bunyip rises, and, in form like monstrous sea-calf, drags his loathsome length from out the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around the fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear – inspiring and gloomy. (Clarke, 1976, 645–6)

This lurid passage sees the Australian bush, Aborigines, and an image of monstrous birth – through that uniquely Australian mythical figure of the bunyip emerging from the "ooze" – all yoked together under the exaggerated sign of the Gothic. Gordon's suicide is the trigger that produces this bizarre slippage, enabling Clarke to slide from the colonial promise of settlement and nation-building to a nightmare of pre-settlement as if colonialism had never happened.

The literary critic Andrew McCann's book, *Marcus Clarke's Bohemia: Literature and Modernity in Colonial Melbourne* (2004), is an excellent study of the colonial Gothic in Clarke's writing. One of his arguments – and the passage above is an example of it

– is that Clarke "sublimates" an "Aboriginal presence" in the bush, replacing it with a Gothic image of the Australian landscape that is "so primal and archaic that it even refuses to lend itself to recognisable seasons or cycles" (McCann, 2004, 173). For McCann, the Australian Gothic, generally speaking, reduces the actualities of colonial violence to a set of affects, offering its reading public recognizably sensationalist but "commodified" entertainments: it is essentially a rather dismissive view of this otherwise evocative genre. He extends his argument about the Australian Gothic's sublimation of Aborigines and violent settler contact by looking at the work of Rosa Campbell Praed. Praed had grown up on a remote station in central Queensland called Naraigin, on land traditionally owned by the Yiman people. In 1857, when she was just six years old, eleven European settlers were massacred by Yiman people at Hornet Bank Station, apparently as an act of retaliation for the abduction and rape of some Aboriginal women. Praed's father joined a large settler vigilante group, who were finally responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Yiman people and their dispossession from their country. For McCann, these events linger in Praed's Australian writing, but in a sublimated, even repressed, way. One example is her novel, *Fugitive Anne: A Romance of the Unexplored Bush* (1902), where Anne Bedo, running away from her drunken, brutal husband, stows away on a ship with her Aboriginal servant and then flees into the interior of northern Queensland ("Leichhardt Land"), where she meets a Danish explorer, Eric Hansen, who tells her he has discovered a lost, ancient civilization: the Red Men of Acan. Influenced by Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), *Fugitive Anne* is one of a number of Lemurian novels produced by colonial Australian writers – others of which include George Firth Scott's *The Last Lemurian* (1898) and Ernest Favenc's *The Secret of the Australian Desert* (1896) – which imagine lost civilizations in the Australian interior. But for McCann, the essentially theosophical notion of Lemuria enabled Praed to find a "way of narrating her Australianness in terms of a fantastic, primeval history that tried to wish away the colonial encounter and its corrosive impact on settler identity" (McCann, 2005, 38). It is, in other words, another repressive or displaced popular literary form.

Gothic Lemurian fantasies certainly work as examples of Tom Griffiths's "antiquarian imagination," making a newly discovered continent both ancient and already civilized. McCann's argument that the Gothic sublimated the fact of colonial contact is persuasive; but there is also the argument that they re-stage it as a kind of fantastic prehistory to the colonial encounter, that foreshadows and in some senses critiques what is to come. Colonial Australian Gothic narratives sublimate and suppress in some ways, but activate or unleash in others. A good example is Marcus Clarke's strange novella, set in Hobart Town, Tasmania, "The Mystery of Major Molineux" (1881) – its title echoing the American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne's macabre story, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," published half a century earlier. The story is built around an absent character, Agnes Tremaine, "a girl of rare promise" whose name haunts the events that follow and impacts on the fortunes of a native-born heroine, Beatrice, an excellent horsewoman who is hurt in a horse riding accident and, for various reasons, never recovers. In contrast to Clarke's account of Adam Lindsay Gordon, then, this story is

about the loss of *womanly* colonial settler optimism. Beatrice's mysterious neighbor, Major Molineux, lives a secluded life in a large castle and seems to carry with him some sort of traumatic secret. His castle (an unusual feature in an Australian story, as Sinnett had anticipated above) is already a "desolate and death-haunted ruin": as if early colonial settlement, invested in the accumulation of wealth, is nevertheless already in decay and decline. For McCann, this Gothic story is repressive because it never once mentions colonial encounters with Aboriginal people in Tasmania: completely occluding the brutal history of massacre and dispossession that saw military forces systemically rid this southern island of its Indigenous populations. The colonial Australian Gothic, he suggests, is "a thin veneer stretched over the horror of history" (McCann, 2004, 215). It is certainly true that this story casts Tasmania as a site defined not by military violence, but instead as somewhere for old soldiers like Major Molineux to retire peacefully – except that he nurses an apparently distressing secret. The castle becomes another pathologized site of colonial settlement, as Beatrice dies under its roof and Molineux concludes events by committing suicide, as if this place without a colonial past is not allowed to have any future. Displaced from the brutal realities of the colonial encounter, it is, however, connected to another kind of colonial violence which was just as important to the development of the Gothic in Australia: the transportation and incarceration of convicts. The story's old, bitterly aggressive convict servant is never mentioned in McCann's reading; more importantly, this servant tells the narrator about another convict buried in a grave on the castle's property, a forger called Arthur Savary who was also, it seems, a suicide and who anticipates Molineux's fate. It is worth noting that the colonial entrepreneur and forger Henry Savery – Australia's first novelist, in fact – had himself died while incarcerated in Tasmania's convict prison Port Arthur in 1842, around the time of the setting of Clarke's story. "Was he doing penance . . . for some frightful crime?" the narrator asks, as he thinks about Major Molineux's "strange disappearance from all society" (Clarke, 2007, 59, 65). Molineux's castle bears a kind of metonymic relation to Tasmania's notorious convict prison, a ruinous place of settlement tied not to the healthy optimism of colonial promise but to concealment, madness, and inexplicable suffering, a place from which its ill-fated protagonists never manage to emerge.

In the 1840s, Tasmania was called Van Diemen's Land and Port Arthur was still a convict penitentiary, its newer "Model Prison" held up as a reformist example of psychological incarceration where, inside "its massive walls, techniques of solitude and silence replaced flagellation as the basic mode of punishment" (Roe, 2001, 579). Roslynn D. Haynes's account of the Australian desert evoking the Gothic tropes of "entrapment and enclosure," cited earlier, is literally realized in this place, as well as in other colonial Australian convict prisons – and there were a significant number of them. Although he only visited Tasmania once, and briefly, in 1870, Clarke's Gothic convict melodrama *His Natural Life* (1874) recounted the convict experience of Port Arthur and Van Diemen's Land through its hero, Richard Devine, a quintessentially innocent man unjustly transported to Australia to experience all the brutalities of penal life in the colonies. The novel makes silence a precondition for Devine, who

changes his name to protect his family; it then throws him into a world of Gothic extremes that includes a sadistic (and possibly pedophilic) commandant and a convict cannibal, Gabbett, with "his slavering mouth, his slowly grinding jaws, his restless fingers, and his bloodshot, wandering eyes" (Clarke, 2001, 133) – a character modeled on an actual escaped convict, Alexander Pearce, who had cannibalized other escapees in the early 1820s and whose body, after he was hanged in Hobart Town, was dissected and studied by medical scientists. Clarke had described Port Arthur and its environs as a "natural penitentiary," surrounded by natural hazards such as the Devil's Blow-Hole as well as the nearby "Island of the Dead," where convicts who had died in prison were often buried. By the time Clarke wrote *His Natural Life*, however, Van Diemen's Land had changed its name to Tasmania (in 1856) and Port Arthur, no longer a dedicated penal colony, had begun to fall into disrepair. In a series of newspaper articles about the site published in Melbourne's *The Argus* in July 1873, Clarke gave Tasmania's now-receding convict history a familiar Gothic sensibility:

> The history of "Convict Discipline" in these colonies is a melancholy one . . . the prisons and barracks erected at such cost in various parts of the colonies have been pulled down or abandoned to other uses, and intelligence has at last reached us of the final dismantling of the last relic . . . the "Natural Penitentiary" of Port Arthur. (Clarke, 1976, 511)

The name-change of the island to Tasmania was in part an effort to dispel the gloomy, unsavory connotations of Van Diemen's Land, and as if the islanders should now forget convicts altogether, the term was effectively removed from public discourse. Anthony Trollope, who had visited Australia twice in the 1870s, expressed the change this way in 1875: "the name of Van Diemen's Land had been stained with ruffianism, and the pretty appellation of Tasmania was given to it" (Trollope, 1978, 171). But the "relic" of Port Arthur continued to cast its shadow as one of Australia's genuine Gothic ruins. For John Frow, in his essay "In the Penal Colony" (1999), Port Arthur is not just a reminder of an otherwise submerged history, it is nothing less than a Gothic point of origin for Australia itself: ". . . its ruined traces bearing ambiguous witness to a whole system of punishment, involuntary exile, and unfree labour which has come to represent the foundational moment of the Australian nation." Frow also writes about the mass murderer, Martin Bryant, who on April 28, 1996 shot and killed thirty-five people at Port Arthur – which by this time had become a popular tourist destination. For Frow, this terrible event returns Tasmanians to their earlier colonial moment of repression, a point he inevitably expresses through Gothic tropes: "Nobody uses Bryant's name, but his denied presence is everywhere. Nobody knows the forms which will lay the ghost. Nobody knows what kind of monument will insert this story into the other story for which this site is known, into that other past which is barely available for understanding" (Frow, 1999).

Tasmania has often been cast as an island haunted, and preoccupied, by its past traumatic events. Jim Davidson sees it as a "landscape containing presences. Perhaps these are more correctly styled absences, not yet fully expiated – the slaughtered

Aborigines, the downtrodden convicts, and hunted species like the diminutive Tasmanian emu and the Gothically named Tasmanian Tiger" (Davidson, 1989, 307). These things are enough to encourage Davidson to coin the term "Tasmanian Gothic," to account for the island's traumatic history as well as its often defiantly proclaimed sense of isolation and difference from mainland Australia. In the early 1870s, Anthony Trollope had declared that Tasmania "already had the feel of an old country" (cited in Davidson, 1989, 316); a derogatory mainland version of this view, however, is that Tasmania is "backward," still not quite modern. Some recent examples of Tasmanian Gothic have either returned to the repressed histories of Van Diemen's Land or staged a narrative that speaks to the island's isolation and uneasy sense of its own marginality: for example, Roger Scholes's award-winning film, *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1987), about a young woman's fear of darkness in the remote Tasmanian highlands; two films about Tasmania's most notorious convict-cannibal, Michael Rowland's *The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce* (2008) and Jonathan auf der Heide's *Van Diemen's Land* (2009); Chloe Hooper's novel, *A Child's Book of True Crime* (2002), where the protagonist's fantasies about herself as a "doomed girl" are entwined with narratives of murder and extinction; and the writer Mudrooroo's hallucinatory *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* series of novels, which begins in 1991 by returning to the traumas of early colonial experience from an Aboriginal perspective.

It is possible to identify a contemporary Aboriginal or Indigenous Gothic narrative form in Australia that includes Mudrooroo's novels, as well as (for example) Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990), which also returns to the colonial scene, where it chronicles a history of brutal violence and exploitation, in the midst of which it stages a pre-colonial struggle between ambitious *kadaitcha* spirit men. Some of the work of Aboriginal artist Tracey Moffatt might also be termed Indigenous Gothic: such as her short film *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989), where an Aboriginal woman lives out her confinement, nursing her dying white mother in an isolated homestead amidst a series of vividly baroque, traumatic recollections; or *BeDevil* (1993), the first feature film directed by an Aboriginal woman. *BeDevil* consists of three ghost stories built around sites that are inhabited by very different kinds of spirits: a black American soldier from World War II who haunts a misty swamp, a young white girl killed on a railway track, and two Aboriginal lovers who haunt a warehouse earmarked for property development by greedy property investors. These ghosts have each been dislocated or, in the case of the young Aboriginal lovers, dispossessed. Yet they also seem more a part of their place than ever before, condemned to remain there and to possess or haunt those who try to live there later on. In fact, those who come afterwards to these sites are drawn to the hauntings and held by them, as if transfixed. Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs discuss this film in their book *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation* (1998), using the verb "to solicit" to describe this particular spectral effect, with its overtones of allure and attraction as well as anxiety and alarm (Gelder and Jacobs, 1998, 21–2). But *BeDevil* also cuts to scenes which show modern Australian settlers ("post-colonisers") away from these sites enjoying themselves, at leisure, playing "innocently" and freely in the sun: frolicking in those

Australian places that seem to be unaffected by shadows. This is a structural aspect of the film's postcolonialism, where nowadays settler Australians' implication in the traumas of colonial violence can seem much less absolute. On the other hand, postcolonial settler "innocence" can also look like willful disavowal, a matter of carelessly forgetting the past and taking for granted the benefits colonialism has brought them. A film like *BeDevil*, which haunts its settlers while at the same time showing them to be remote from colonial sites of trauma, might therefore be understood as "postcolonial Gothic."

Australian cinema has implicated itself in the Gothic since at least the early 1970s. The film critics Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka in fact mark the emergence of Australian Gothic in cinema with Peter Weir's 1971 black comedy *Homesdale* (Dermody and Jacka, 1988, 50). A better-known and more lyrical example of the Australian Gothic in film, however, is Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) – based on the 1967 novel by Joan Lindsay – the story of the disappearance of three girls and their teacher in Victorian bushland on St. Valentine's Day 1900. Mysterious experiences in the bush remain a stock theme of the Australian Gothic, especially those involving inexperienced metropolitan travelers who find themselves stranded in some remote and often deranged outback location. The Canadian director Ted Kotcheff's film *Wake in Fright* (1971) – based on Kenneth Cook's 1961 horror novel – was the first of a number of films drawn to what Jonathan Rayner has called the "Gothic rural community," where the Australian outback town "is portrayed as the repository of warped or degenerate tendencies," a place defined by exaggerated violence, aggressive masculinity, misogyny, xenophobia, and corruption (Rayner, 2001, 28). Greg McLean's *Wolf Creek* (2005) is a more recent example of a Gothic rural horror film, with its two female British tourists coming to grief (their male Australian companion survives) after their car breaks down beside a meteorite crater and they are hoodwinked by a crazed outback hunter who has set up camp in a remote, abandoned mining site. For these characters, the Australian interior is once again literally a place of Gothic "enclosure and entrapment." But the horizontal openness of the landscape can also be exploited for its Gothic effects. George Miller's *Mad Max* (1979) and its two sequels presented a near-future dystopian vision of a primal Australian outback criss-crossed with straight endless roads and inhabited by lawless, threatening gangs of bikers, carjackers, and petrolheads who constantly fight with and elude the police. Miller has astutely noted, "The Americans have a gun culture – we [Australians] have a car culture . . . . Out in the suburbs it's a socially acceptable form of violence. That's the wellspring a film like this has" (cited in O'Regan, 1996, 105). The menacing black car on the highway came to symbolize *Mad Max*'s Gothicness, with the horror of the road in the film linked precisely to its straightness and emptiness: as if violent unpredictable encounters there are the inevitable result of perfect visibility, of seeing all too clearly. Ross Gibson has written about the "Horror Stretch," tracing actual murder cases and disappearances at various locations along the highways of northern Queensland in his study *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (2002). The 1975 murders of Noel and Sophie Weckert enable him to offer a kind of archaeology of horror that takes him back to

"many more murder-scenes from the bloody past of Australia's colonial frontier," concluding that "history lives as a presence in the landscape" (Gibson, 2002, 50).

Some contemporary Australian films, and some novels, too, have staged a return to the colonial scene in order to animate its violence all over again: for example, Kate Grenville's novel *The Secret River* (2005), which tries to recreate the mindset of a colonial settler involved in the massacre of Aborigines, or novels like Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet* (1991) and Andrew McGahan's *The White Earth* (2004) where post-colonizer settlers live out a relationship (positive for Winton, negative for McGahan) to the hauntings that trouble their homesteads. *The Proposition* (2006), a Sam Peckinpah–influenced film directed by John Hillcoat and written by Nick Cave, is a "realistic" portrayal of the stark brutality of colonial Australian frontier experience. Melbourne-born Cave is globally recognized as a singer-songwriter who has helped to shape and embody a contemporary Goth identity: traceable from his earliest band The Boys Next Door (the cover of their 1979 album *Door, Door* featuring the face of a mad surgeon with a gallows imprinted on his forehead) to The Birthday Party and, much later on, The Bad Seeds. His music plays out a reverent, and irreverent, relationship to the Southern American Gothic traditions of a writer like Flannery O'Connor – a key influence on his first novel, *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1989) – and the songs of Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan. But Cave is also tied to the colonial Australian Gothic. He is in the tradition of dark Australian convict narratives with his song "Mercy Seat," for example, or through his role as a prisoner in the film *Ghosts of the Civil Dead* (1988), a bleak representation of daily life in a panoptic penal complex that featured voice-over readings from Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*. The predicament of both the convict and the outlaw seems to have fascinated Cave, drawing him to the ballad form (as in his 1996 album, *Murder Ballads*, with its cover of Dylan's "Death is Not the End"), folk music, and American frontier blues. He co-authored the soundtrack to Andrew Dominik's film, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007), where he also had a cameo role. But *The Proposition* returns the outlaw to the Australian frontier in a colonial Gothic narrative repackaged for a contemporary cinema audience. The film takes extreme colonial violence right into the colonial homestead, the place of settlement and domestic order. Pathologizing its Irish-Australian criminals, it fractures the colonial experience (brother against brother, English against Irish), which it then defines in terms of retribution, murder, and revenge. Cave's work has turned to America and Europe for its influences and its audiences, but like many other contemporary practitioners of the Australian Gothic, he has returned time and time again to tropes and themes already available in the colonial period.

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27
New Zealand Gothic

Ian Conrich

For a country that projects such striking images of a pastoral paradise, it is perhaps surprising to find within the local culture a powerful presence of the Gothic. The myths of New Zealand have presented a country that is clean and green, an environment of tranquility and harmony, a principal landscape offering security and sanctuary. Since the 1950s, a popular belief has also persisted that New Zealand is "a great place to bring up kids" and offers "a great way of life." In contrast, New Zealand fiction, its literature and film, has repeatedly portrayed spaces of isolation, loss, and despair, of a rugged, wild, and treacherous land that can assail and entrap.

Little has been written on New Zealand Gothic, what I termed Kiwi Gothic in a series of lectures in 1994, and explored as a predominantly Pakeha (European) fiction in a later article, "Kiwi Gothic: New Zealand's Cinema of a Perilous Paradise."[1] Looking for comparisons through which I could develop an understanding of New Zealand Gothic, I found there were, in places, strong similarities with American Southern Gothic, with its isolated communities disrupted by the arrival of an outsider, and a landscape that is seemingly "alive." Kiwi Gothic reveals a post-settler society that appears unable to settle, what Sam Neill called a "Cinema of Unease" in his 1996 documentary on the history of New Zealand film.[2] William Schafer, in his 1998 book on New Zealand literature, *Mapping the Godzone*, saw a vulnerability through the fiction and applied Freud's theory of the uncanny to stories that he argued depicted the unhomely.

New Zealand fiction contains a mix of tales of vampires, demons, possessions, necrophilia, crazed medical experiments, serial killers, mutant farm animals, and the living dead. In terms of New Zealand's settler history, this is a young country, and the past is never far away. Family dysfunction, repression, dark secrets, and insanity are recurrent themes, and dominating Kiwi Gothic are the psychosexual and stories

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of spirits and the supernatural. These issues will be developed in this essay through a consideration of New Zealand Gothic, primarily literature and film, but also theatre, painting, and photography. Previously, I have approached the subject through film and the themes of landscape, family, and the domestic space (see Conrich, 2005). In this essay, the different forms of the Gothic will be emphasized and considered through variations in space and place: the land below, the small town, city, domestic home, farm, and the wilderness.

What Lies Beneath

New Zealand's population is slightly greater than four million people, with more than a quarter of that number based in Auckland.[3] The country's five major urban centers combined – Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Hamilton – contain just over half the country's population.[4] Added to this must be the acknowledgment that 75 percent of the population lives on the north island, and that New Zealand's population is concentrated around coastal areas.[5] Geographically, New Zealand is slightly larger than the United Kingdom, but with a population one-fifteenth the size, and with much of that population living within the five main cities, the rest is scattered across a series of small towns that are dotted across an immense landscape.

New Zealand is in a high seismic area, with a series of active fault lines running through the north and south islands, and with one fault line going straight through the center of the capital city, Wellington. With approximately 14,000 earthquakes a year, and approximately 200 of those big enough to be felt, the country has gained the epithet of the Shaky Isles.[6] The largest city, Auckland, is built on a dormant volcanic field that has so far produced forty-eight volcanoes. The lake-filled crater of one, Pupuke, provides the setting for Maurice Gee's children's novel *Under the Mountain* (1979; adapted for a television series 1981; made into a film 2009, directed by Jonathan King), in which a forbidding old New Zealand home conceals an entrance to a network of tunnels that run under Auckland. This Gothic building, with its "spiky roof" (Gee, 1982, 19), is a putrid and abject space. It is on the edge of a lake that smells like "rotten cabbages" (Gee, 1982, 20), and it is in a state of decay unlike any other house in the neighborhood, emitting an overpowering stench "like a dunny" from its cellar.[7] It is both threatening and alluring to the young psychic twins, who notice that the inhabitants (who are revealed to be shape-shifters) rarely emerge. Venturing inside, the twins discover that the house is a cover for a group of slug-like aliens (developed in the film version into Lovecraftian tentacled monsters), who reside in the passages and caverns that are reached from the home via slimy fallopian-like tubes.

Reminders of the tremendous primal forces that shaped Auckland are everywhere, with the visible volcanic cones and craters prompting the question of what lies beneath. New Zealand as an Antipodean land, a country down under, also suggests an underworld and fantasies of a passage beyond. In Vincent Ward's film *The Naviga-*

tor: A Mediaeval Odyssey (1988), a group of medieval Cumbrian miners emerge in modern-day New Zealand via a tunnel that they dig through the center of the Earth. These anachronistic pilgrims, following the visions of a boy, in a journey for salvation from the fourteenth-century Black Death, find that twentieth-century city life is cloaked in darkness and polluted by beast-like machines. Crossing a four-lane motorway is a hellish and alien experience; "this doesn't look like God's work to me!!," shouts Searle (Marshall Napier), as cars and trucks roar past, with the vulnerable Ulf (Noel Appleby) the only one unable to make the crossing, left stranded having "met his nemesis" (Ward et al., 1989, 28). Later, as the pilgrims cross Auckland harbor in a little rowboat, a nuclear submarine rises up from the waters, a Leviathan, "a beast . . . An Omen – an evil" (Ward et al., 1989, 44).[8]

What lies beneath is a thought that occupies Peter Vangioni, who notes that Christchurch, New Zealand's oldest and second largest city, is

> A picturesque city in appearance on the surface, but scratch away at the soil of most of the gardens and you will discover beneath the roses and daffodils a dull and dank layer of blue-grey clay. A stark reminder that the majority of Christchurch is built on what was once a large area of swampland . . .
>
> If you dig deep enough, the clay becomes thick and heavy with a pungent earthy odour hinting at the dark, subterranean environment it occupies. In the hand its texture and coldness seems a little sinister, a cemetery of forests. A good gardener knows not to disturb what lies below. (Vangioni, 2004, 11)[9]

Previously I have argued that if New Zealand, the pastoral paradise, can be observed as an Eden, then there needs to be a recognition that alongside splendor, "excess and disorder" can "exist within this overgrown garden" (Conrich, 2005, 114). This Gothic dichotomy has been explored in *Crush* (1992), Alison Maclean's film of obsession, seduction, and revenge. The film's opening credits are shot over images of the boiling mud pools at Rotorua, New Zealand's foremost thermal region of spurting geysers and hot bubbling water, a tourist attraction which shows just how thin the membrane of the earth is in parts of this land. What lies beneath here is also above, permeating through the soil. In the film's climax, a vengeful Christina (Donogh Rees), severely disabled and mentally impaired from a car crash, finds the strength to walk again, albeit briefly, and to then dramatically push Lane (Marcia Gay Harden), the perpetrator of the crash, off a viewing platform high above a sublime landscape.

Small-Town Gothic

Dominating the area around New Plymouth is Mount Taranaki, a vast almost symmetrical volcanic cone that rises more than 2,500 meters above a surrounding landscape of farmland and small towns. In particular, there is Hawera, a small town that has become synonymous with the term Taranaki Gothic. It was in Hawera that Ronald

Hugh Morrieson wrote his lurid novels, and from where New Zealand small-town Gothic emerged. Morrieson wrote four novels – *The Scarecrow* (1963), *Came A Hot Friday* (1964), *Pallet on the Floor* (1975), and *Predicament* (1976) – set within provincial small-town New Zealand communities, where sex and violence can no longer be contained, society is a harborer of iniquity, and a series of unsettling events are often catalyzed by an outsider. Each novel has been made into a film, with the preeminent *The Scarecrow* the darkest text and the most clearly Gothic.[10]

In *The Scarecrow*, a serial killer, rapist, and necrophiliac, Hubert Salter, played in the film by John Carradine, arrives in the small town of Klynham, having just slit the throat of Daphne Moran, a theatre usherette, whose body is later discovered by boys "semi-submerged in a weed-choked corner" of a pond (Morrieson, 1981, 30).[11] In the novel, Salter is described as death-like, a man "[w]ith claw-like hands" and an appearance like a "zombie" (Morrieson, 1981, 27). A grotesque trickster, he mesmerizes the locals with his knife-swallowing stunts whilst lusting after the sexually burgeoning sixteen-year-old Prudence, or craving bodies from a funeral parlor, where he is eventually found having apparently been sleeping in the coffins.

A cadaverous-looking Carradine, a veteran of classic American horror films, was an apposite actor to play Salter, a monster that seems to almost step out from the screen fiction playing at the local cinema. Salter's appearance intrigues a twelve-year-old Lynette, a fellow passenger on a train, who compares him to a mythical creature: "In spite of the censor's ruling, Lynette had recently seen not one, but an entire series of films about the walking dead and considered herself an authority on the subject" (Morrieson, 1981, 27). Fiction was also to disturb the reality of Hawera, where many locals were unable to forgive Morrieson for the perceived disrepute he brought to the town that served as the locus for his dark imaginations. In 1993, his historic house, its "creepiness . . . legendary," was demolished and replaced with a KFC fast food outlet (Edmond, 2006, 37).

Small-town New Zealand as a site of sexual immorality, traumatic childhoods, and dark pasts also features in the film adaptation of Maurice Gee's novel *In My Father's Den* (published 1972; filmed in 2004 by Brad McGann).[12] Here, the young Celia is revealed to be the half-sister of her teacher, Paul, a celebrated war photographer who returns to his home town too late for his father's funeral. His father's den is a secret space, a refuge in which his father stored books and vinyl music and was able to indulge in pleasures away from the puritanism of his wife. The den is also a space from which a traumatized teenage Paul fled home with the discovery of his girlfriend and father *in flagrante delicto*, an act that leads Paul's despairing and bipolar mother to commit suicide. The subsequent offspring is Celia, a fact unbeknown to Paul, who first meets her in the secret den, which she has discovered within the abandoned home. Celia is later killed within the home of Paul's brother, Andrew, who hides her body in a lake. Andrew's deeply religious wife, Penny, who appears repressed, housebound, and isolated, wrongfully believes that her husband is having an affair with the teenage Celia.

Whilst Paul's photos reveal the global terror of war, the New Zealand provinces present the local horrors of the small-town community, within which family life is

devastated and shattered. Paul, as the international photographer, is the wanderer observing the misery of others, but never able completely to escape a home which conceals terrible transgressions, and is a site of private trauma and death. The family home in this story is one of claustrophobia, mistrust, and fear, and can be seen in several of the domestic spaces, not least Penny's. Mounted on the back of her front door is a large cross, seemingly preventing her from moving beyond the threshold of a home which is bright, modern and open-plan, but in which she appears forever trapped. There is a similar dark paradox within the secret den, which functions as an escape and, with its hoard of cultural knowledge, as a room of enlightenment. But this room which leads nowhere also contains layers of family betrayal and detachment, and like the symbolist painting of *Hope*, by George Frederic Watts, that is framed within its confine, there is actually a greater sense of despair. The small town is a cruel dead-end, a trap that is allegorized in Celia's short story of a town where the tide went out but never came back, that bookends the film. In an attempt to move on, in the film's final scene Paul burns the family home to the ground.

Lawrence Jones is wrong to write that the Kiwi Gothic novel began in 1987 with Noel Virtue's *The Redemption of Elsdon Best* (Jones, 1998, 220). It is an important novel, but other writers were there first. Again, this is a story of small-town religious fanaticism, in which a sensitive young boy who is repeatedly brutally beaten by his parents escapes into an imaginary world. It bears some similarities to Virtue's own childhood in provincial New Zealand, where his Bible-preaching father would beat him with a razor strop, and at the age of fifteen he was institutionalized following an attempted suicide. His parents had also hoped that the electric shock therapy would cure him of his homosexual tendencies (Blundell, 2004). Like *The Scarecrow*, the Gothic erupts from the opening pages of *The Redemption of Elsdon Best*, with Elsdon discovering the mummified body of a dead baby in an attic. The deep uncertainties of youth, and the fearful world presented by adults, are themes that can be found in other Kiwi Gothic texts such as Vincent Ward's films *Vigil* (1984) and *The Navigator: A Mediaeval Odyssey*, and Bruce Mason's play *The End of the Golden Weather* (1959; adapted into a film 1991, directed by Ian Mune), which has its Gothic moments. For a young country that continues to exhibit a fragile and insecure identity, it is revealing that so much New Zealand fiction is presented through the experiences or actions of an adolescent.

For many years, much of what constituted New Zealand popular culture was American in origin, and its impact can be seen especially in the work of Virtue and Morrieson. Virtue, who cites Morrieson, but also the American Southern Gothic writers James Purdy, Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers as influences, says that in New Zealand "[y]ou do get educated in American small town life . . . through books, films, TV – and New Zealand small towns do look like American small towns" (see Blundell, 2004).[13] It is therefore unsurprising to discover similarities between Kiwi Gothic and American Southern Gothic. So many Kiwi Gothic stories emphasize the remoteness of provincial, rural, or farm living, with the immensity of the land overpowering individuals who can appear eccentric, disturbed, or disadvantaged. As in the aforementioned small-town stories, and in other Kiwi Gothic productions such

as the films *Vigil*, *Heart of the Stag* (1985, Michael Firth), and *The Piano* (1993, Jane Campion), families and communities are dysfunctional and isolated, with an individual's ability to fully communicate frequently impeded through oppression or fear, which can be related to either sexuality, or acute religious beliefs. As I have written previously, in these films "the emergence of an outsider disrupts the community and breaks the isolation," a catalyst that is viewed with suspicion or concern and that represents a link to the wider world, and especially the modern life of the city (Conrich and Davy, 1997, 7).

City Limits

The city as a site of Kiwi Gothic is strongest on New Zealand's south island, where it is most visible in the area in and around the two main urban centers of Christchurch and Dunedin. The 2004 Christchurch Art Gallery exhibition, *Coming Home in the Dark*, celebrated a local culture that was viewed as Canterbury Gothic, whilst Dunedin has its own Gothic identity, with several ghost and graveyard tours that maximize the shadowy aspects of the city's past, its Victorian buildings and cemeteries.[14] Recent organized tours in Dunedin include "The Death Rattle" haunted graveyard tour, which states that the "supernatural activity is real,"[15] and "Hair Raiser Tours," which offers a "Ghost Walk" and an "extremely scary" "Six Feet Under Grave Tour."[16] The Death Rattle tour covers the city's southern graveyard, its earliest cemetery which was opened in 1858 and which has some 23,000 burials, whilst the Six Feet Under tour covers the city's northern cemetery which opened in 1872 and which has some 18,000 burials.[17] Both have ceased taking new burials and are in some state of disrepair. With their broken tombstones, decapitated figures, and statues of silent angels, these graves include forgotten markers to some of the city's most haunting histories of mass victims of shipwrecks and tragic city fires from the pioneering days of the nineteenth century.[18]

Like Christchurch, Dunedin was a planned settlement of British settlers who first arrived in the late 1840s and early 1850s and built a number of Victorian Gothic Revival styled buildings. Some of the most notable buildings of this type are ChristChurch Cathedral, Christchurch, St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin, and the central buildings of the University of Otago (Dunedin) found around the Clocktower complex, all of which are still standing today, albeit ChristChurch Cathedral was badly damaged in a recent earthquake. Gothic Revivalism was a deliberate borrowing of the style of architecture and design associated with a period of Gothic medievalism, which became visible in Britain, primarily in new buildings in the nineteenth century.[19] For New Zealand to then relocate a style, that was already borrowed, reveals a new culture that felt the need to construct its heritage in the past of a distant country. New Zealand's settler heritage contains an imported history, which in many ways aimed to give depth and credibility to cities that had only just been established.

Such regional histories are captured in Gothic images and popular fiction that sees the city as a troubled settlement. The historical Victorian buildings of Dunedin and

the smaller neighboring city of Oamaru were redesigned for the steampunk Gothic vampire film *Perfect Creature* (2006, Glenn Standring), which manufactures an alternate virus-afflicted New Zealand, where a super-breed of vampires known as the Brotherhood coexists with humans, until a renegade vampire breaks the truce. Standring's previous film as director was the striking Gothic horror *The Irrefutable Truth About Demons* (2000), which manages to change Wellington into a frightening nighttime underworld of disused warehouses, torture cages, crawlspaces, and disgusting lodgings, into which the film's protagonist Harry Ballard (Karl Urban) is forced, as he attempts to escape a satanic cult that requires him as a sacrifice.

As an example of urban Gothic, *The Irrefutable Truth About Demons* is a strong companion to *Perfect Creature*, with Standring demonstrating an ability to reimagine the New Zealand city, by transforming ordinary spaces into seedy and grimy locations, and monstrous traps and lairs, in which evil appears omnipotent. In creating *Perfect Creature*, production designer Phil Ivey said that they had "gone for a kind of industrial age, Dickensian world," and that there is no "lush green countryside – I think there's one tree in the whole film. And it's dead" (Anon., 2004, 14). The film deliberately removes the common images of a fertile New Zealand landscape and instead focuses on presenting an oppressive environment that blends an architectural heritage of imposing buildings, with signs of an urban impurity. Ivey said that, crucially, Dunedin as a location offered "back alleys . . . great old rusty drainpipes and barbwire fences and the old rusty bars on windows" (Anon., 2004, 16).

The Gothic look of parts of Dunedin had been previously incorporated into the narcotics thriller *Scarfies* (1999, Robert Sarkies), which – whilst not entirely a Gothic film – has an abandoned Gothic house on a hill as a key part of a narrative that sees a group of students trapped by the dilemmas that they encounter in its basement.[20] The large local student population was also fictionalized in the low-budget film *Kung Fu Vampire Killers* (2002, dir. Phil Davison), which exploited the Victorian history of the region and the true accounts of Chinese gold prospectors from the nineteenth century that are buried in Dunedin's old cemeteries. In this film, a student who extracts DNA from the corpse of a Chinese prospector is unaware that it is the body of a vampire and unwittingly unleashes an epidemic of bloodsuckers.

Other films such as the Christchurch-set *Heavenly Creatures* (1994, dir. Peter Jackson) are more faithful in their borrowing of the past, which in this example is the depiction of the true crime of matricide committed by the teenage girls Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme in 1954. The scene of this crime is the subject of a series of diptych photographs by Ann Shelton that record the geographies of dark and violent local histories that Shelton had heard about as she was growing up on the south island.[21] In New Zealand, where horrific crimes or mass murders are rare, these stories became "urban myths" for Shelton, some true and some fictional, which she then photographed as a double image, one a copy of the other but inverted (Shelton, 2003, npag). The photographs, which appear cold and detached, include what was believed to be the grave of Minnie Dean, the Victorian baby farmer found guilty of infanticide and whose garden contained the bodies of three children.[22] Shelton freezes images that are charged

with the past and which create what Chris Kraus says is a "sense that something has happened there. It's a strange kind of displacement, a feeling something is wrong."[23]

Particularly potent is the image of an old ramshackle wooden cell in the grounds of the now demolished Gothic edifice that was once the Seacliff Lunatic Asylum, located just far enough beyond the northern city limits of Dunedin. The writer Janet Frame was once an inmate at this well-known asylum. It also features in the Gothic novel *Haunt* (2000), by Bronwyn Bannister, in which a woman is incarcerated at Seacliff after the discovery of a forsaken and abject three-year-old boy concealed in the outbuilding of a farm.[24] Neglect and rejection are themes that emerge here, with Shelton exploring abandoned asylum buildings further, in another exhibition, in her images of empty secure units at the defunct Lake Alice maximum-security facility. Hanging in a gallery, her row of inverted images of empty hospital buildings constructs a disturbing mythological street of ghostly homes where murderers and maniacs once lived.[25]

In the novels of contemporary writer Paul Cleave, serial killers populate the neighborhoods and streets of Christchurch, where the Gothic psychological thrillers *The Cleaner* (2006), *The Killing Hour* (2007), *Cemetery Lake* (2008), and *Blood Men* (2010) are all set. Written in the first person, which adds to the disturbing immediacy of the stories, they feature serial killers who have raped and murdered multiple women. Cleave's first novel presents both a copycat killer, and a psychopath, the Christchurch Carver, who somehow also manages a day job in the police department. The second novel has a serial killer haunted by the ghosts of his victims; the book opens with the author declaring

> They come for me as I sleep. Their pale faces stare at me . . . They come to remind me of the night, to remind me of what I have done. They do not smile, they do not accuse me; they are just there, looking. (Cleave, 2007, 1)

The third novel opens with a lake within a cemetery releasing a series of bodies that had been dumped by a serial killer in improvised graves, whilst the fourth novel, *Blood Men*, concerns the now grown-up son of a murderer of eleven prostitutes, who fears he is becoming like his father. As the publicity for this book states "Edward Hunter is a quiet family man . . . With a monster inside of him. It's the same monster his serial killer father had . . . The monster is telling him to do things . . . To do dark, evil things . . . "[26]

Christchurch, in these visceral novels, is no garden city of benign weather. It harbors a never-ending series of horrific and brutal femicides, with the killers unable to control their actions and haunted by the past and their crimes. The local summer is described as "[s]chizophrenic weather" (Cleave, 2006, 1) and an intense sun "burns" the skin (Cleave, 2008, 1). Cleave, who likes his readers to be "creeped out" (Cleave, 2010), is attracted to exploring the inner mind of his killers, and also the flip side that he feels is counter to the traditional Edenic imagery of Christchurch. As he says in an interview:

> Christchurch is a great setting for crime – it has two sides to it, there's the picture perfect setting you see on postcards everywhere, but there's also a dark, Gotham City feel . . . I love making Christchurch a character for the books, creating an "alternate" version for the city, where the main character often muses that "Christchurch is broken." (Cleave, 2010)

In these novels it is the family and community that is broken, with the serial killer ruled by unnatural urges that, in *Blood Men*, is approached as a case of possible inherited bad genes. Or, the community is severely ruptured by the killer who penetrates so easily the domestic spaces of his unsuspecting victims.

The Domestic Gothic

Kiwi Gothic fictions have sometimes been offered by their creators as deliberate New Zealand alternatives, or as challenges to the cultural norm. I wondered in an earlier article as to the large number of Gothic films – features and shorts – produced in New Zealand. I proposed that some of these texts could be explained as a reaction against a New Zealand way of life, which "for many has appeared so normal, ordered and consummate that it became mundane and predictable" (Conrich, 2005, 122–3).

The great number and range of Kiwi Gothic films has been overlooked by writers. Jennifer Lawn shows a narrow understanding of New Zealand cinema and builds a curious argument that there is "'almost no' gothic" in New Zealand of the type of tales "associated with Gothic Revival literature"; for instance, tales "involving entrapped heroines [and] the supernatural" (Lawn, 2006, 12). She adds that ghosts are "rare in Pakeha texts," the "slasher tradition is rich enough," and the zombie is the only Gothic monster to have made much of an "inroad" (Lawn, 2006, 13).

In fact, Kiwi Gothic has few zombie narratives, with *Braindead* (1992, dir. Peter Jackson) the rare film example (and even then it is technically not a zombie film), and slasher movies but a handful with *Dead Kids* (1981, dir. Michael Laughlin), *Bridge to Nowhere* (1986, dir. Ian Mune), and *No One Can Hear You* (2000, dir. John Laing). Vampires are the most prevalent monsters, with three films to date, whilst ghost films and those within a Gothic Revival tradition are abundant.[27] The films *Trial Run* (1984, dir. Melanie Read) and *Mr. Wrong* (1985, dir. Gaylene Preston) are important early examples and I have written elsewhere about their Radcliffian properties (Conrich, 2005, 115–17). Other films that have depicted hauntings and supernatural forces include *The Lost Tribe* (1982, dir. John Laing), *The Locals* (2003, dir. Greg Page), *Perfect Strangers* (2003, dir. Gaylene Preston), *Flatmates Wanted* (2004, dir. Gary Davies), *Belief* (2005, dir. Phil Davison), *Down By the Riverside* (2007, dir. Bard Davison and Marama Killen), *When Night Falls* (2007, dir. Alex Gavin), *Diagnosis: Death* (2009, dir. Jason Stutter), and the shorts *Timetrap* (1991, dir. Sally Smith), *The French Doors* (2001, dir. Steve Ayson), and *Nature's Way* (2006, dir. Jane Shearer).

A number of these films are low-budget and independently made but, crucially, they do reveal a culture that continues to return to local stories of the unfamiliar and

supernatural. Moreover, there have been fascinating collections of ghost stories and supernatural experiences in *The New Zealand Ghost Book* (1978) and *Where No Birds Sing* (1998), a gathering of thirty-eight paranormal accounts told by locals.[28] With the publication of the latter book, the editors were inundated with Gothic tales, and so they published a second collection, *When the Wind Calls Your Name* (1999). As they write, "every other person, it seemed . . . had a story to tell."[29]

Kiwi Gothic films are marked by being repeatedly set in fractured neighborhoods and dwellings, not just the small towns and cities, but commonly in homes and houses, which are sites of invasion from foreign, inhuman, or supernatural forces. The extent to which this occurs in Pakeha texts suggests a local unsettlement or vulnerability in reaction to a sense of place. "Especially a new place," writes Schafer (1998, 141), who views the mobilization of the uncanny or unhomely as part of the development of cultural identity:

> In the process of self-definition, cultures need to pass through a stage of hauntedness. This may be a simple analogy for the birth of historical consciousness – one way to gain historical rootedness in other than an abstract, intellectual way is to feel the past is a horror waiting to reinvade the present. If you feel raw, young, unformed, lacking in historical status, a way to gain stature is to acquire suitably ancient ghosts. (Schafer, 1998, 138)

Down by the Riverside locates its horrors in a country house, where in the 1920s a group of five pregnant girls, who are never seen again, had traveled to give birth and pass their children for adoption. Mixing the type of local folklore associated with the murderous baby farmer Minnie Dean, with elements of a traditional haunted house film such as *The Haunting* (1963), an academic and his assistant stay at the home twenty years later in an attempt to unlock its secrets.

The house in *The French Doors* is also a disturbed space, which in this instance is in the process of being made into a homely residence. During the renovation of an old property, a man living alone unwittingly creates a doorway into his home for a shadowy figure that appears to have emerged from an adjacent netherworld. It is only by erecting a set of acquired French doors in his property that this inexplicable zone of perpetual darkness is opened (the area around the rest of the house is in daylight). Horror physically invades this home, with the shadowy figure eventually dragging the man away into the infinite darkness that exists beyond, a reminder of his fate, a living room lamp that was used to peer into the darkness, left abandoned in the grass.

Steve Ayson, the director and writer of *The French Doors*, was also the writer and producer for *Nature's Way*, a very unnerving and haunting short film made five years later. Both have much in common with the celebrated Kiwi Gothic short *Kitchen Sink* (1989, dir. Alison Maclean), another home-alone horror in which a single woman's domestic space is broken by an unholy intruder, a small hairy creature that she yanks from the plug of her kitchen sink, and which soon grows into a strange man. In *Nature's Way*, a man (possibly a pedophile) who randomly picks up a young girl,

murders her and then dumps the body deep within a dense and rain-drenched forest. Back in his home in the Auckland outer suburbs, this man's ordinary life continues, but he becomes haunted by the image of the girl that he believes that he can see at the bottom of his garden, her form merging with the trees in the forest beyond. His home is a subdivision, built on a plot of land cut from the native bush, with nature looming large on the edges of his property. Nature is a force which sees no boundaries, and it is when twisting vines of vegetation are found pushing up through the foundations of this spotless house, and a plant shoot is found in the corner of his hallway carpet, that this increasingly paranoid man panics and rushes back to the forest, where he is trapped. The forest is an unstoppable and overwhelming organic mass, which seems to pursue the man for his crime. The film's director has said that it was important to make the short movie in New Zealand, as there "[t]he bush feels alive and powerful."[30]

Rural Gothic

In Kiwi Gothic, characters struggle against an extreme, potent, and frightening landscape. As Gaylene Preston has commented, "[t]here's something that comes out of the land here which is bloody spooky. I don't feel it anywhere else I've been in the Western world. I feel it when I'm here" (Dennis, 1996, 171). The binary opposition of domestic/wild is central to many examples of Kiwi Gothic, in which the home of the settler offers a shelter against the forces of the wilderness. The thick New Zealand bush and forests are part of the rugged and unpredictable landscape, which the settler repeatedly attempts to master. The wild is, however, not always so easy to control and the settler can be faced with constant challenges that may lead to entrapment, loss, or retreat.

The short film *Possum* (1997, dir. Brad McGann) places an element of the wild within the home, with a feral child "Kid" (who the director says is autistic), imitating the noises of wild animals, viciously biting family members, and chained to her bed at night. This motherless family unit lives in an isolated trapper's hut surrounded by a towering forest, within which the father sets traps to catch ferocious possums. Whilst the father attempts to master the land, he is unable to control his daughter, an "animal" that is disrupting the family home. Kid, who is discussed in conjunction with the devil, and considered possessed, is eventually discovered dead in the forest, accidentally caught in one of her father's traps.

The wild is also a relentless challenge in *Vigil*, a film in which a small family unit, on an isolated sheep farm, struggles to cultivate a storm-swept and soaked valley. The land here isolates and separates individuals within thick hilltop mists, and ruthlessly snatches the father away at the film's start as he stumbles from a cliff-face whilst attempting to rescue a stranded sheep. The distraught daughter rushes back home through a bush that seems to grab at her, branches catching on her clothes and holding her back, in way that is later repeated in a dramatic scene in *The Piano*. The film closes with the unit abandoning the land thwarted by the toil that it demands.

The Gothic realism of Ward's film resonates with the paintings of New Zealand artist Grahame Sydney, whose work (especially his experiments in egg tempura) is reminiscent of the regionalism and Gothic symbolism of the American artist Andrew Wyeth. In Sydney's work, solitude, emptiness, and dereliction are viewed within bleak, barren, and austere landscapes, which are often half-lit. These eerie studies are of distinctly depopulated spaces: the paintings *Fog at Stan Cotter's* (1975), *Evan's Shed* (1983), or *Chevrolet* (1977), of an abandoned old car, conjuring a Marie Céleste feel that people were once present (see Sydney et al., 2000). Emptiness is a prevalent theme in New Zealand paintings and can be seen across the work of a range of artists, but it is in the work of Petrus Van der Velden, who lived and painted in New Zealand for much of the period between 1890 and 1913, that the landscape is depicted as most turbulent.[31] As a painter, it was said that Van der Velden was only interested in venturing outside "when the thunder rolled, and wind howled and rain poured" (quoted in Johnstone, 2006, 138). His paintings *Storm at Wellington Heads* (1908) and *Otira Gorge* (1912) are in a late Romanticist style, but they also connect in ways with the work of the seventeenth-century Italian painter Salvator Rosa, with their dramatic locations, wild and rocky landscapes, and heavy weather.

The rural Gothic is possibly most visible in the group of films that focus on the New Zealand farm. As well as *Vigil*, films include *Heart of the Stag*, *Jack Be Nimble* (1993, dir. Garth Maxwell), *The Locals*, *Black Sheep* (2006, dir. Jonathan King), *The Strength of Water* (2009, dir. Armagan Ballantyne), and the short film *Home Kill* (2001, dir. Andrew Bancroft). Farmland covers vast stretches of the country where there has been a struggle to clear and maintain the land away from the existing dense vegetation, and where a population is most regularly in a direct relationship with nature. Swathes of rich farmland can be found in the mid-north island Waikato region, and it is here where the ghost film *The Locals* is situated. Two young city boys from Auckland, searching for a good time, are drawn deep into the small rural backroads, where they discover that the locals are all ghosts who are forever trapped in their provincial afterlife.

In these fictions, the rural ways of farm life, where there is a reliance on the land, traps families and communities within their all-enveloping environment. Other than the presence of a passing poacher, Ethan (Frank Whitten), in *Vigil*, there is no connection with the world beyond in this valley-farm. The sheep farm in *Heart of the Stag*, which like *The Locals* is set in the Waikato, is equally isolated and only discovered by an itinerant male (Bruno Lawrence) when his ute (pickup truck) breaks down. The farming family that emerges here is very isolated and dysfunctional, with a paralyzed mother helpless to prevent her brute of a husband from regularly raping his timorous daughter. Farms in New Zealand fiction would appear to be a fertile territory for family secrets, traumatic childhoods, oppression, and unconventional or distressing behavior. The splatter horror film *Black Sheep* takes this to the extreme. The closest example to date of a local Frankenstein, and a rare example of an eco-horror tale in New Zealand film, this black comedy has an obsessed sheep farmer privately working on genetically modifying his flock. Following the intrusion of environmental activists,

flesh-hungry mutant ovine are released into the countryside, where these normally placid but now rabid creatures are juxtaposed with images of rolling green hills.

The indigenous population of New Zealand, the Maori, have a relationship to *whenua* (the land) that significantly differs from Pakeha positions. *Whenua* is closely tied to the powerful concept of *turangawaewae* (a place to stand), which establishes the Maori as the *tangata whenua* (people of the land), with empowerment from connection to an environment that is forever home. For instance, the placenta, which in Maori is also called *whenua*, is buried and gifted back to the earth when a child is born. The land is deeply ancestral, with many geographic features named and identified as genealogical markers. There is also a prevailing belief in *mauri* (life force) and *wairua* (spirituality), as well as a continued telling of myths and legends, which do contain stories of *taniwha* (monsters), but these are all essential elements in an understanding of origins and an indigenous cultural identity. These are key reasons as to why there is a lack of Maori fiction, or culture, that could be regarded as Gothic. The Gothic is a term that does not sit comfortably with Maori spiritualism and beliefs, and therefore whilst hauntings appear in novels such as Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1983) and Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), to describe these texts as Maori Gothic would be inappropriate.

Any consideration of any Maori fiction as Gothic should consider the context and style in which the narrative is presented. Where Western themes and traditions are adopted, a transcultural indigenous Gothic can emerge. The 2002 thirteen-part television series *Mataku* (which translates as fear, or afraid), was a series of short Maori "tales of the unexpected," that combined Western horror motifs with Maoritanga (Maori culture) and Maori mythology in contemporary New Zealand settings. Episodes include *The Final Plume*, in which a young boy's possession by the spirit of an ancient Maori chief is revealed in scenes reminiscent of *The Exorcist* (1973), and *Divine Intervention*, in which a spirit is summoned by a taxi driver, who wishes to remove a competitor. In New Zealand cinema, a transcultural Maori form of the Gothic was unknown until the 2009 film *The Strength of Water*. In a local tragedy, a young asthmatic girl dies when she becomes trapped inside an abandoned freezer. Her young twin brother is traumatized by the loss, and he spends much of the rest of the film engaging with a sister that only he can see or hear.

The film foregrounds Maoritanga, and it captures the wild landscape and crashing seascape of the Hokianga region in Northland, near the tip of New Zealand, where many Maori reside. This is another isolated small-town community within which some inhabitants feel trapped. The film also belongs to the group of rural films discussed above, with the twins part of a family of poultry farmers who operate a battery farm of egg-laying hens. Combined with these elements are characteristics more associated with a Pakeha small-town Gothic, with a young drifter, Tai (Isaac Barber), who moves into an abandoned home, and who acts as a catalyst for the tragedy. The cursed home, which belonged to his grandfather, is *tapu* (a forbidden place in Maori culture) and Tai, who says he is "bad luck," is ostracized by the community. This is definitely a Maori film, but it also contains many features, both in the story and the

film's design, that establish it as another example of small-town Gothic, and as a fascinating contrast to *In My Father's Den*. The variations in New Zealand's geographies of the Gothic reveal not just traditional examples but texts that are distinctly local and regional with, more recently, multiple cultural influences creating new transcultural interpretations that add to the wealth of Gothic forms in this nation.

Notes

1 *Views from the Edge of the World: New Zealand Film*. British Film Institute, April to July 1994. See Conrich and Davy (1997, 6–7), Conrich (1998, 80), and Conrich (2005, 114–37).

2 *A Cinema of Unease: A Personal Journey by Sam Neill* (1995). Documentary commissioned by the British Film Institute for the "Century of Cinema" series.

3 For the 2006 census figures, see http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?id=9999999&type=region (accessed July 7, 2010).

4 See http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace.aspx (accessed July 7, 2010).

5 See http://www.tourism.net.nz/new-zealand/about-new-zealand/regions/north-island/regional-information.html (accessed July 7, 2010).

6 See http://www/teara.govt.nz/en/earthquakes/1 (accessed July 7, 2010).

7 A dunny is local slang for a toilet, especially one that is located outside.

8 For an extended analysis of this film, see Downie (2000).

9 Hamilton, a major urban area on the north island, was also built on reclaimed swampland. A 2008–9 program of short films from the region toured New Zealand under the title *It Came From the Swamp*.

10 The films are *The Scarecrow* (1982, dir. Sam Pillsbury), *Pallet on the Floor* (1984, dir. Lynton Butler), *Came a Hot Friday* (1985, dir. Ian Mune), and *Predicament* (2010, dir. Jason Stutter).

11 For a discussion of *The Scarecrow* and Morrieson's novels, see Schafer (1998, 121–36, 148–57).

12 The film is set in small-town Central Otago, on the south island. The novel sets the story in Wadesville, on the north island, in suburban West Auckland, a region where Gee (who grew up in the Auckland suburb of Henderson), would set many of his stories.

13 For a short discussion of the horror films which have been made in New Zealand, which have used local communities to represent the American small town, see Conrich (2005, 117).

14 The exhibition *Coming Home in the Dark* took its name from the title of the final short story in the 1995 collection of the same name, by local author Owen Marshall. In this disturbing fiction, a random family of four picnicking in the spectacular landscape around Mount Cook is murdered by two psychopaths.

15 "The Death Rattle," operated in associated with Bottom Bus Deep South Adventures.

16 "Hair Raiser Tours," http://www.hairraiser.freeiz.com

17 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunedin_Southern_Cemetery (accessed July 16, 2010); also http://www.northerncemetery.org.nz/northerncemetery/application/dynamic/cemhistory.cfm (accessed July 16, 2010).

18 For details of the victims of the 1879 Octagon fire, the 1886 wreck of the *SS Taiaroa*, and the 1894 wreck of *SS Wairapapa*, who are buried in Dunedin's northern cemetery, see http://www.northerncemetery.org.nz/northerncemetery/application/dynamic.cemhistory.cfm. For a collection of images of angels in Dunedin's southern cemetery, see http://lloydgodman.net/angels/gallery/NZ/Southern/Southern1.htm.

19 For more on the Gothic Revival, see Sage (1998).

20 Jennifer Lawn (2004) is too eager to see *Scarfies* as a Gothic film.

21 Shelton's photographic work is titled *Doublet (After Heavenly Creatures) Parker/Hulme crime scene, Port Hills, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2001*.

22 Ann Shelton's *Laudanum, Minnie Dean's unmarked Grave Winton cemetery, Southland, New Zealand, 2001*. Minnie Dean is the only woman to have been hanged in New Zealand and she has passed into local folklore, with parents threatening their children that if they don't behave they will be taken to Minnie Dean. A short Gothic fiction film, *The Ballad of Minnie Dean* (2003), imagined her ghost haunting a house.

23 Chris Kraus, interview with Shelton, in Shelton (2003, npag).

24 New Zealand has a deep history of hospitalizing individuals in mental institutions. See Brookes and Thomson (2001), and especially the first two sections of the book, which focus on the Dunedin region. Asylums have featured in Gothic New Zealand films that include *Death Warmed Up* (1984, dir. David Blyth), *The Ugly* (1997, dir. Scott Reynolds), and *The Irrefutable Truth about Demons*.

25 Shelton, photographic work, *Once More from the Street*, 2004.

26 See http://www.paulcleave.co.nz/novels_bloodmen.php (accessed August 8, 2010).

27 The New Zealand vampire films are *Moonrise* (1992, dir. David Blyth), *Kung Fu Vampire Killers*, and *Perfect Creature*. In addition, *30 Days of Night* (2007, dir. David Slade) was filmed using New Zealand locations and facilities.

28 See Jenkins (1978) and Shanks and Potiki (1998). There is also the interesting collection of independently published Gothic short stories in Cain (1996).

29 See the back cover of Shanks and Potiki (1998).

30 "Natural Selection," an interview with Jane Shearer, conducted by Alicia Hamilton, available online at *Mindfood*, http://www.mindfood.com/at-jane-shearer-natures-way-short-film-interview.seo (accessed September 1, 2010).

31 Empty landscapes are associated with leading New Zealand artists such as Rita Angus, Christopher Perkins, and Stanley Palmer, who do not exhibit a Gothic style.

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28
Canadian Gothic

Cynthia Sugars

Perhaps one of the most famous statements of Canadian Gothic expression is the paradoxical finale to Earle Birney's 1962 poem "Can. Lit.," which concludes with the startling claim: "It's only by our lack of ghosts / we're haunted." Birney's poem has been subjected to frequent punning and quotation, and is generally interpreted to mean that Canada lacks an adequately substantive history or culture to render it "haunted" in the sense that European nations (or, indeed, the United States, with which he contrasts Canada in the poem) are haunted. A more considered reading of Birney's text, however, reveals that he is speaking on the level of *perception*. The poem conjures various clichés about Canadian belatedness and practicality, which are belied by the very poem that Birney writes. If the poem attests that there is no such thing as a "haunted" (i.e., adequately uncanny and textured) Canadian culture, the poem, as an example of the supposed lack of "Can. Lit.," undermines its own (apparent) argument. Canadians, his poem argues, are haunted by a sense of colonial inferiority which projects an apparent lack where there is none. It is not that there are no ghosts, but rather that people are too blinkered to see them. Birney's poem expresses an anxiety about historical erasure which, even in its supposedly anti-Gothic assertion, is a concern common to most Gothic fictions. Here the Gothic – as a genre – is conjured as having been effaced. In other words, the absence of Gothic effects is evidence of the absence of cultural memory, which, historically, may be related to two factors: the incongruity of European epistemological systems with the Aboriginal ones they encountered in North America; and the failure of imported European ghosts to make the easy transition to a new world. Questions of authenticity thus haunt and gothicize Canadian spaces, from the beginnings of European settlement in what is now Canada, into the present day. Historical erasure, in a Canadian context, is equated with an absence of Gothic remembering and, by extension, with a sensation of alienation because the Gothic is not

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available to render the home space *(un)heimlich*. This desire for "settled unsettlement" informs much Canadian writing, which, contrary to Birney's assertion, is invested in an obsessive resettling of local ghosts. Birney may be right to suggest that it is not the ghosts that haunt, but the fear that they are inadequate to the task.

This mixed stance with respect to the gothicization of Canada has a long history in Canadian cultural expression.[1] Canada may have the particular distinction of having a Gothic tradition that both is and is not one. This bifurcated condition originates in two interrelated phenomena dating from the periods of first contact and early settlement. On the one hand, Canada was figured as an "empty" and unpeopled land, devoid of legitimate inhabitants, culture, history, antiquity . . . beyond the reach of memories. Gothic renditions of the New World could not easily project anxieties onto the terrors of the past, since the "pastness" of the place, outside of its assumed primordiality, was not evident to newcomers. On the other hand, imperialist responses to the New World figured that land as a place populated by monsters, savages, sublime landscapes, and strange mythical beasts. Indeed, the extensive colonization of North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries coincided with the rise of the Gothic as a genre in Europe, so it is not surprising that we see this mode applied to experiences of the New World. There were thus two dichotomous features of Gothic expression in early Canadian literature: one positing the Canadian wilderness as a Gothic landscape inhabited by savage creatures (animal and human) which posed a threat to the European adventurers; the other conjuring the place as an equally terrifying *terra nullius* that was devoid of Gothic effects or ghosts, with the accompanying implication that the Gothic could not be inscribed on the place in any meaningful way. The latter gave rise to the paradoxical sense that Canada, as a "new" world, was both monstrous and "unhaunted."

Canadian writers have long sought to create homemade legends that could provide an illusion of antiquity, origin, and memory – an approach by which the strange would become comforting. The two traditions outlined above have generated a unique formulation of the Gothic in Canada, yielding a tradition characterized by an active attempt to "gothicize" the Canadian landscape in order to render it "home(l)y." By peopling the landscape with Gothic spirits, early Canadian writers could appeal to a mirage of memory which established their claim to the place as legitimately "theirs." In some instances this entailed affixing a Gothic tradition, imported yet also newly indigenous, of their own. This unique and vivifying use of the Gothic provided legitimating substance to the settler–invader experience of occupation, and gave Aboriginal authors a means to "write back" to the colonizing culture by reasserting their own understanding of the Canadian landscape as infused with indigenous spirits.

Here There Be Monsters

There is a long history of Gothic expression in Canadian literature, reaching back to the colonial foundations of the nation. Indeed, one can argue that Canada learned

to "read" itself through a Gothic lens. The maps of early explorers to North America, with illustrations representing grotesque beasts and sections labeled "here there be monsters," evoke the Gothic nature of peoples' early encounters with the unknown elements of the "new world." One of the most famous emblematic renditions in this tradition is Jan van der Straet's engraving, from 1575, of Amerigo Vespucci "discovering" America. The illustration shows the European explorer protected by the fetish objects of "discovery" (armor, imperial flag, astrolabe, sword, crucifix) as he confronts the allegorical figure of "America," naked in a hammock while her cannibal minions prepare a human feast in the distance. Terry Goldie's discussion of representations of indigenous peoples in Canadian literature delineates the semiotic cluster of the sexual, the savage, and the anachronistic in colonialist accounts of New World peoples. One can recognize in this a gothicized rendition, supplemented in this context by an emphasis on the "prehistoric" nature of Aboriginal peoples and cultures (1989, 17). Paradoxically, this construction of the New World as a primeval place situated outside of historical time – a common figuration of colonized spaces – would lead to subsequent figurations of the New World as a *de-gothicized* space, which lacked a sufficiently antique culture and lineage to grant it an adequately haunted legacy.

Northrop Frye is famous for his comment that early Canadian literature was marked by a "deep terror in regard to nature" (1965, 830). As he puts it, "It is not a terror of the dangers or discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest." Ignoring the perspective of Aboriginal peoples, Frye was nevertheless perceptive in his account of the Gothic nature of first contact and subsequent settler experience, in which the European had nothing but his civilized presumptions to cling to when confronted by "the vast unconsciousness of nature" which seemed "an unanswerable denial of those values" (1965, 830). The meeting between European colonizers and Aboriginal inhabitants resulted in a clash of epistemological, cultural, and spiritual systems. If Aboriginal people inhabited a world flush with spiritual and magical presence, Europeans constructed Aboriginal people as demonic and threatening others, who needed to be conquered, converted, and displaced. Indeed, Native peoples were equated with the landscape as a monstrous presence that threatened to overwhelm the European colonizer from without (as an external threat) and within (as an intrapsychic threat to civilized mores and rational sanity).

A good deal of early Canadian writing figures the landscape as a Gothic location – ancient in its primordiality; terrifying in its dizzying profusion and claustrophobia – and hence equivalent, in kind, with the antiquated and decadent Gothic settings of ancient castles or abbeys. This tradition of Gothic presence embodied in the landscape contributed to the sense that Europeans were "lost" inside the New World – hence Frye's suggestion that the archetypal question for Canadians is not "Who am I?" but "Where is here?" – a dilemma that marks the experience of an expressly non-indigenous intruder who is aware, yet typically in denial, of him- or herself as a "foreign" element.

This dynamic is evident in many early exploration narratives, which corroborate Stephen Greenblatt's (1991) explication of appeals to the "marvelous" as a tool for

appropriation and possession. Processes of entrapment (including literal kidnappings), by which many Europeans sought to "civilize" Aboriginal peoples, became projected onto the people and landscape themselves, whereby the European felt himself to be vulnerable to Aboriginal treachery. This paranoia is evident in numerous exploration accounts, from Jacques Cartier's suspicions, in 1535, that the Iroquois people were planning to ambush him, to John Franklin's fear that the Métis translators and *voyageurs* on his 1820–2 journey were plotting mutiny. Other expressions of a specifically "Northern Gothic" chart a passage from externalized Gothic terror, an objectification of European disorientation, to a yearning for settler emplacement and sustainable haunting. In Robert Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (1907), the northern landscape is a witness to the dreadful events that take place within it: "The Arctic trails have their secret tales / That would make your blood run cold." Interestingly, the Canadian north becomes a properly haunted space only *after* the Europeans have walked through it. Charles Dawson Shanly's poem of 1859, "The Walker of the Snow," tells the tale of a ghostly "snow walker" who leaves no footprints. The hunter who relates the tale of his encounter with the "snow walker" is ambiguous, since we are not sure whether or not he is speaking from beyond the dead. Is the snow walker a figment of his imagination, or is it a northern incubus that feeds on the souls of wayward travelers? Although the snow walker bears a resemblance to the cannibalizing "Windigo" monster of northern Cree tradition, the poem offers an early depiction of an indigenized settler monster (as opposed to an Aboriginal threat). Rather than the polar landscape seeking revenge on the invader who has stumbled into its terrain, the snow walker is dressed like a European frontiersman who is haunting the Canadian north.

The Gothic threat of an encroaching wilderness is the primary thrust of much eastern and central Canadian writing that tells of pioneering in the Canadian backwoods. Tales of struggle and hardship in keeping the bush *out* in effect empower the external monstrosity to invade the settler from within. Such constructions led Frye to identify what he termed the "garrison mentality" in early Canadian literature, a defensive measure in which "isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier'" cling to one another when "confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" (1965, 830). One of the paradigmatic texts in this tradition is John Richardson's 1832 Gothic romance *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy*, which is set during the time of the Pontiac uprising in 1763. In this tale the British garrison of Fort Detroit is attacked by a band of savage Aboriginals, led by Pontiac and his advisor, the demonic Wacousta. From early on, Wacousta is set up as the otherworldly villain of the piece, a vengeful and ghoulish overlord whose "pale and spectral" features align him with "one who is no longer of earth." As a figure of satanic menace, Wacousta is the *über*-savage, the stuff of Canadian settlement nightmare: "His face was painted black as death; and as he stood under the arch of the gateway, . . . this formidable and mysterious enemy might have been likened to the spirit of darkness presiding over his terrible legions." The theme of Gothic estrangement, however, hinges on the revelation of Wacousta's true identity. Wacousta,

it turns out, is in fact Sir Reginald Morton, a British officer who has "gone native" in order to wreak revenge on Charles de Haldimar, the commander of the fort. The novel plays on dualities between civilization and savagery, settled and wild, self and other, only to show how the British garrison has in fact been "infected" from within (metaphorized by the midnight intruder inside the fort). The novel has elicited multiple interpretations for its psychological study of the projective mechanisms involved in colonization. Wacousta is figured as the dark underside of the British imperial enterprise which projects its fears onto Aboriginal peoples, thus rendering them a Gothic source of terror. The novel charts a return of the repressed in more ways than one: the British general's own duplicity comes back to haunt him in the form of an externalized Other, while the British garrison as a whole is haunted by the desires it tries to subdue.

This experience of psychic dissolution, catalyzed by a sensation of engulfment by the Canadian wilderness, is evident in Susanna Moodie's famous account of pioneering in the backwoods of Ontario, *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852). Written from the period of her first arrival in Canada in 1832, the book shows the influence of the British Gothic tradition in its accounting of a lone woman at the mercy of deceitful Americans and grinning hucksters, lost amidst the sublime cathedral of the Ontario forest. The work is a study in the fragmentation of identity as Moodie's civilized notions of middle-class British propriety and education are shattered by the reevaluation of values necessary for survival in the Canadian bush. Moodie's self-reinvention includes moments of profound disarray and estrangement. "[M]y love for Canada," she writes, "was a feeling very nearly allied to that which the condemned criminal entertains for his cell – his only hope of escape being through the portals of the grave." The Yankee neighbors oppress her with their deceitful ways, "rang[ing] themselves upon the door-step, watching my motions, with their black eyes gleaming upon me through their tangled, uncombed locks." This growing paranoia reaches a peak when Moodie finds herself inside a Gothic nightmare of her own creation:

> The night had closed in cold and foggy, and I could no longer distinguish any object at more than a few yards from the door. Bringing in as much wood as I thought would last me for several hours, I closed the door; and for the first time in my life I found myself at night in a house entirely alone. . . . The little brook lifted up its voice in loud, hoarse wailing, or mocked, in its babbling to the stones, the sound of human voices. As it became later, my fears increased in proportion. I grew too superstitious and nervous to keep the door open. I not only closed it, but dragged a heavy box in front, for bolt there was none. (1852, 184)

The wolves that howl at her door, or the stream that launches its accusatory wailing, become an objective correlative of Moodie's sense of intrapsychic unraveling and unbelonging.

This tradition of wilderness Gothic continues into the early twentieth century, though by mid-century it would be displaced by more self-conscious tales of Gothic reinforcement. Duncan Campbell Scott, who worked for the federal government's

Department of Indian Affairs from 1879 to 1932, is known for his gothicized "Indian" poems and weird tales about French Canadian life. Scott's poems are noted for their ambivalent portrayal of Native peoples, the most famous of which is his sonnet "The Onondaga Madonna," in which he depicts an Iroquois mother and child as inverted Christianized representatives of "a weird and waning race." The Native shaman in Scott's "Powassan's Drum" (1926) is an even more terrifying embodiment of Aboriginal "otherness," chanting his incantations which hover in the air like a death sentence directed at the speaker. The poem eerily charts the projective vision of an intruder into the world of Aboriginal mysticism, who interprets the drumming that he hears in the distance as demonic conjuring. The poem resounds with the visceral "throb-throb-throbbing" of Powassan's drum and its delirious vision of an Indian dragging a severed head through the water, as if the surrounding atmosphere is swelling to the point of eruption. The incomprehensibility of the drumming is aligned with the speaker's desperate and increasingly maniacal attempt to make sense of this "pulse of Being." The poem is a perfect encapsulation of the projective fear of European settlers as they interpreted the "marvelous" Other as Gothic nightmare.

Together, these works form part of a tradition of Canadian psychological "wilderness Gothic," from Moodie's fears and paranoia in the backwoods to Earle Birney's 1952 poem "Bushed," in which an unnamed settler finds himself projecting hallucinatory fantasies onto the wilderness that surrounds him. Al Purdy's evocative poem "Wilderness Gothic" (1968) provides a fascinating reworking of this tradition, in which carpenters' repairs on a church spire on Roblin Lake become an allegory for the transition from a mythopoeic Gothic age into the modern era. Structured as a kind of Yeatsian "Second Coming," the dark beast that slouches into the future is the specter of amnesia. In the poem "gothic ancestors peer from medieval sky, / dour faces trapped in photograph albums" only to clop down the road, "groping inside their flesh" for a sign that escapes their grasp as it wings its way into the future. The wilderness Gothic in Purdy's rendition has been converted into degothicized longing, or more simply, a longing for Gothic remembrance. The Gothic ancestors have abandoned the spot, leaving only the high-wire carpenter poised against the backdrop of the trees.

Haunted by a Lack of Ghosts

In conjunction with the oppressive wilderness Gothic tradition in Canadian literature has been an obsession with Gothic absence, which is often evoked by the very wilderness scenarios themselves. This has contributed to a distinctive reworking of Gothic tradition in Canada, manifested in a Freudian *fort-da* dynamic as authors obsessively summon and refute Gothic presence in a process that enables the Gothic to be conjured for very specific, revitalizing effects. In his 1940 essay, "Canadian and Colonial Painting," Frye identified a paradox, whereby the very vacancy of the New World landscape is precisely what constitutes its haunting effect: "a large tract of vacant land

may well affect the people living near it. . . . Explorers, tormented by a sense of the unreality of the unseen, are first; pioneers and traders follow. But the land is still not imaginatively absorbed, and the incubus moves on to haunt the artists" (1971, 199). There is a confusion in Frye's account which is emblematic of Canadian hauntings. For Frye, there is both nothing (vacancy) and something (incubus) that haunts the settler–invader psyche from a perceived "outside." As a materialization of the vacancy, the incubus is an embodied absence, a ghost of a ghost. Adopting a metacritical perspective, one can argue that Canadian authors are haunted by their own uncanny relation to the Gothic tradition itself.

In contrast to the "wilderness Gothic" tradition, then, is a stream that insists on the failure of Gothic potential in Canada. In an 1857 article in the Montreal newspaper *The New Era*, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, one of the Canadian fathers of Confederation, wrote that the Canadian colonies "had grown up suddenly, had no settled order, no ability, no castles which had formerly been strong-holds and told tales of rapine and oppression; their rivers had no names; their streams had no legends; they had no fairies, no superstition . . . ." What is striking in this account is the use of Gothic metaphors to describe what is lacking in the colonies, a strategy that became frequent in early writings about Canada. This notion of Gothic absence is echoed in Thomas Chandler Haliburton's fictionalized collection of Gothic folktales from Nova Scotia, *The Old Judge* (1849). In one of the most well known pieces of the book, "The Witch of Inky Dell," the Old Judge, who is relaying the story, observes that "witches and apparitions have now nearly ceased to honour or alarm us with their company. Forty years ago they were very numerous, and every village and settlement had its ghost or its sorceress. Many well-authenticated tales are told of their sayings and doings, and of their marvellous power . . . ." Haliburton devotes the text to a demonstration of how the colony has been degothicized in the name of political reform. If in conventional Gothic writing the old order is typically regarded as decadent and oppressive, here the old order is conjured as a kind of *memento mori* which, as a fading memory, lends temporary sustenance to a withering present.

An insistence on the "unhaunted" nature of Canada was famously articulated in the writings of Susanna Moodie and her sister Catharine Parr Traill, both of whom migrated to Canada in 1832. While Haliburton suggests that apparitions have abandoned the colonies to give way to a more prosaic present (a sentiment that is echoed in Purdy's poem "Wilderness Gothic"), in *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) Parr Traill suggests that such supernaturals never had a secure place in the country, providing a hasty dismissal of the Canadian backwoods as a site of Gothic potential:

> As to ghosts or spirits they appear totally banished from Canada. This is too matter-of-fact country for such supernaturals to visit. Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that came before us. Fancy would starve for lack of marvellous food to keep her alive in the backwoods. We have neither fay nor fairy, ghost nor bogle, satyr nor wood-nymph; our very forests disdain to shelter dryad or hamadryad. . . . It is the most unpoetical of all lands; there is no scope for imagination; here all is new –

> the very soil seems newly formed; there is no hoary ancient grandeur in these woods. (1836, 153–4)

Moodie echoed this sentiment in *Roughing it in the Bush*, in which she relays her conversation with one of the Yankee settlers. "The country is too new for ghosts," he tells Moodie, "It is only in old countries, like your'n, that are full of sin and wickedness, that people believe in such nonsense." Moodie appears to concur with the man, stating that

> [t]he unpeopled wastes of Canada must present the same aspect to the new settler that the world did to our first parents after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden; all the sin which could defile the spot, or haunt it with the association of departed evil, is concentrated in their own persons. Bad spirits cannot be supposed to linger near a place where crime has never been committed. The belief in ghosts, so prevalent in old countries, must first have had its foundation in the consciousness of guilt. (1852, 267–8)

Moodie's attestation to the absence of Canadian ghosts is belied by her own projections of threatening creatures that haunt the woods surrounding her cabin. Yet there is some truth to her suggestion that guilt is not the central feature of the Canadian Gothic tradition, which is caught up in a fascinating dynamic of metatextual conjuring and distancing. As a tradition, the assertion of Canada's "lack of ghosts" carried over well into the twentieth century, as Earle Birney's poem which opens this essay attests. Only a few years later, Margaret Atwood insisted in her essay "Canadian Monsters" that Canadian literature, by definition, had excluded the Gothic and the supernatural in favor of a more "social-realistic" mode (1977, 98). Robertson Davies echoes these sentiments in many of his critical writings about Canadian literature, which he then compensates for in his highly gothicized novels about small-town Ontario ghosts and freak shows. In 1967, Davies declared that Canada was "undermonstered," while in the introduction to his 1982 collection of ghost stories, *High Spirits*, Davies contended that "Canada needs ghosts, as a dietary supplement . . . to stave off that most dreadful of modern ailments, the Rational Rickets." There is a "protesting too much" quality in these accounts, suggesting a residual anxiety about the incompletion of settlement. As a strategy, it enables a controlled mobilization of Gothic effects for strategic, nation-defining purposes. This desired *fort-da* pull of the Gothic is a prime feature of the Canadian Gothic tradition. Indeed, many of these same commentators, namely Davies and Atwood, elsewhere express an acute sense of living amidst a highly charged Gothic landscape and cultural history. As Davies said in a 1986 interview with Michael Hulse, "in this country . . . the grotesque and the strange are very present, and Gothic goings-on are to be found in every part of Canada. . . . I think that it is something to do with our temperament" (Davis 1989, 254).

Commentators on the American Gothic, such as Allan Lloyd Smith in this *Companion*, identify a similar awareness of cultural belatedness in early American writing. The American response, according to Lloyd Smith, was to turn to a foundational Gothic expression of good and evil. If American writers were able to locate a Gothic

sensibility in the past, this is less true for Canadian authors, whose turn to the "past" yielded up an empty cipher. Eric Savoy identifies the Gothic figure of "exhumation" as being characteristic of American Gothic expression (2002, 178), digging up relics and memories from a repressed past. As I will discuss in the following section, in Canada this becomes transformed into domesticated/homely Gothic figures of implantation and autogenesis. Many contemporary Canadian Gothic fictions have sought to use the Gothic as a form of cultural reinforcement and authentification. Indeed, the plentiful accounts of a projected Gothic absence onto Canadian space translate in the twentieth century into an obsession with the limits of New World authenticity and historiography. The real threat in the Canadian Gothic is not a monstrous or repressed Other, but rather the absence of (Gothic) memory.

Local Familiars: Gothic Infusion

If Canadian authors were plagued by the apparent absence of a legitimating folklore that would authenticate their experience of the place, an anxiety that went hand in hand with the difficulty of establishing an identifiably "Canadian" literature, they responded by seeking to infuse their world with Gothic presence, turning to the Gothic as a form of national substantiation. Gothic motifs could provide historical antiquity and cultural texture, which together would help place settler descendants as secure "inheritors" of the land and its spirit. The creation of a homemade tradition of self-invented ghosts yields up a paradox by which the inherited Gothic was defamiliarized by being rendered "familiar," creating ghosts that were both uncanny and reassuring. This is a useful way of approaching the Canadian Gothic, which is seeking a ghost that both is and is not one. Jonathan Kertzer writes of Canadians' long-standing ambivalence about the idea of a national spirit. If a national literature is to unite spirit and place, the two of these combine in the figure of the *genius loci* (1998, 40), the spirit or ghost of the place. But in a colonial context, the quest for the *genius loci* is always compromised, since both a transplanted culture and an appropriated Aboriginal one have difficulty becoming a "native" culture. There is a conscious act of forging or Gothic self-invention that must take place in order to render the haunting experience "real." One solution was to appropriate Aboriginal mythology, what Goldie refers to as "indigenisation" (1989, 13), but since this is an unconvincing process for those of settler or immigrant heritage, many authors turned instead to the *indigenized settler* as a figure of authenticating Canadianness. In effect, non-Native authors had to forge their own mythology by peopling the Canadian landscape with ghosts in order to secure their subsequent "inheritance" of it.

This version of Gothic yearning finds expression in many Canadian writings, from the turn of the twentieth century up to more overtly "postcolonial" configurations of the present. Howard O'Hagan's strange novel *Tay John* (1939) is a fictionalized rendition of the historical nineteenth-century mixed-race trader "Tay John" (a local mispronunciation of "Tête Jaune"). In O'Hagan's novel, Tay John emerges from the grave

of an Aboriginal woman in the Western Rockies and proceeds to become a legend of the Canadian Northwest. Tay John appears to be the offspring of the fanatical preacher Red Rorty, whose rape of a Shuswap woman leads to his grisly execution. As the child of this union, he becomes an increasingly unsettling figure: both living and dead, Native and White, friend and foe. The novel plays on a series of reported sightings of Tay John, including his wrestling match with a grizzly bear and his chopping off of his own hand, yet his allegiance to the Shuswap people is unclear. As the stuff of legend, Tay John is one of the living dead and may, indeed, portend the inevitable fading out of the Shuswap people. The ambiguity of Tay John's role is evident in his two projects: aiding the settlers in constructing hotels and laying down the railway through the Rockies, and leading the Shuswap migration through the mountains to a place of refuge (in part because they must flee the advance of the railway). Tay John is increasingly aligned with the fringes of settler culture, an allegiance that is emblematized by his incongruously blonde hair, which leaves its stamp on the real-life "Yellowhead Pass" through the Canadian Rockies. At the end of the novel, he retreats mysteriously into the earth, having played out his destiny in the opening up of the West. Like many of these Gothic conjurings in Canadian writing, the haunting figure is fused with the landscape as a way of forging direct settler links through an uncanny form of geographic determinism and genealogical destiny.

Gothic fictions became so prevalent during the nationalist revival period in the 1960s and 1970s that critics coined the term "Southern Ontario Gothic" to describe the predominance of this mode in the writings of Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, Matt Cohen, James Reaney, Timothy Findley, and others. Writing during the period of early postcolonial consciousness in Canada – amidst the drive to resurrect forgotten local histories – most of these authors seek to forge a Gothic presence amidst the seemingly placid Canadian communities that they write about. Their writings share a regionalist emphasis on historical uncovering and legend. James Reaney's sequence of plays, *The Donnellys* (1974–7), based on the real-life feuds among Catholic immigrants in settlement Ontario and the grisly murder of the Donnelly clan, transforms Southern Ontario into a land teeming with local spirits. The Gothic effect has the uncanny ability of charging the local with historical relevance, thus achieving a redemptive effect by infusing Canadian locations with a history they were long seen to lack. The idea that Canada – particularly lower and middle-class WASP Ontario – was deemed worthy of haunting, and worthy of being memorialized, was a symbolic liberation for Canadians during this period (a central theme of Atwood's 1972 cultural–nationalist manifesto *Survival*), who felt themselves in the shadow of the cultural imperialism of the United States. Robertson Davies's symbolic novels of small-town Ontario are some of the most oft-cited texts in this tradition, highlighting the Gothic underlay of Canadian communities in the early twentieth century. His most well-known works are those in "The Deptford Trilogy" – *Fifth Business* (1970), *The Manticore* (1972), and *World of Wonders* (1975) – which are replete with magic, saints, hobos, demons, dwarves, disguises, murders, and an insane wife who is kept chained to the sofa in a family living room.

Undoubtedly the most famous author in this tradition is Margaret Atwood, whose poem sequence *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* appeared in 1970. In the work, Atwood resurrects the historical figure of Susanna Moodie and transforms her into a ghost haunting the Canadian imagination and landscape. Conjuring Moodie as a symbolic ancestor, Atwood argues that Moodie's inherent "paranoid-schizophrenia" with regard to her habitation of Canada is emblematic of a larger Canadian split consciousness. This argument might also apply to the Canadian attitude toward the "absent present" Gothic itself. In these poems, Moodie speaks from beyond the grave to establish herself as a primary ancestor for the Canadian consciousness. The poems have strangely Gothic undertones, in which the boundaries between self and other, human and animal, civilization and wilderness are dissolved as Moodie metamorphoses into a "landed" (and haunted) Canadian. Two years later, Atwood published her archetypal ghost story of Canadian Gothic wish fulfillment, *Surfacing*. The novel charts an emblematic journey into the Canadian wilderness as the protagonist travels in search of her dead father while at the same time retreating to a pioneer existence in a wilderness cabin. Through a kind of underworld descent, the narrator experiences temporary insanity as she sees visions of her parents' ghosts and begins to feel that the woods are haunted by spirits who demand a kind of homage from her. The details of finding the father's drowned corpse echo the historical events surrounding the death of famous Canadian painter Tom Thomson, who mysteriously drowned in the wilderness of Algonquin Park, Ontario, in 1917. By paralleling the father's death with that of Thomson, and conjuring the metaphorical significance of Thomson as a presiding Canadian wilderness spirit, Atwood provides her own nationalist Gothic allegory for 1970s Canada.

Atwood's fascination with the Gothic and the supernatural connects to her interest in unseen or hidden depths in Canadian society. Her interest in Gothic literature reaches back to her undergraduate and postgraduate training, including her unfinished PhD thesis at Harvard, which focused on representations of the supernatural female in Victorian Gothic romances. This concern informs all of her work, culminating most famously in her 1976 Gothic parody, *Lady Oracle*, whose importance in Atwood's *oeuvre* rests in its self-conscious satire of the Gothic genre. The novel's protagonist, Joan Foster, has faked her own suicide at the beginning of the novel to escape the various ruses and disguises under which she has been living. One of her false identities is that of Louisa Delacourt, the pseudonym under which she writes cheap Gothic romances. The novel engages with the theme of illusion and disguise through its presentation of the way Joan self-fashions, indeed "Gothicizes," her identity, constructing herself according to a series of contrived plot-lines.

Like Reaney's Donnelly trilogy, Atwood's 1996 novel *Alias Grace* delves into Canada's Gothic past by reviving the exploits of an infamous Canadian murderess. Based on a famous murder case of 1843, the novel is narrated from the perspective of the possibly schizophrenic Grace Marks, a servant who was accused of murdering her employer and his housekeeper. The novel plays on the instability of historical evidence, framed in the context of late-nineteenth-century theories of mesmerism and spiritualism, as Grace claims to have no conscious recollection of the murders. Grace,

an updated version of Atwood's Susanna Moodie, becomes emblematic of the split settler subject, though here Atwood literalizes the metaphor by portraying Grace as genuinely schizophrenic as she finds herself torn between societies, including that represented by the American psychoanalyst who seeks in Grace his own fantasy of identity loss and escape. Atwood's frequent efforts to gothicize the Canadian past posit a dialogue between past and present, living and dead, that have a reinforcing effect on Canadian cultural and historical memory. Although Allan Hepburn and Michael Hurley claim that Southern Ontario Gothic "exhum[es] the deadening and deforming forces beneath genteel surfaces" (1997, 1085), it would appear that the "deadening" monsters are the un-Gothic elements that are simply not (yet) sufficiently familiar to be haunting. Atwood's and Davies's writings offer not an exhuming but a form of Gothic emplacement (both of the monsters themselves, and of their descendants). The Gothic effects of these texts work to fix Canadians into a variety of local cultures that are infused with ghosts and memory.

This desire for Gothic verification becomes tricky in a Canadian postcolonial context, which on one level seeks the forging of a national identity and culture through the figure of a securely national and postcolonial haunting that will provide authentic texture, but on the other hand recognizes such national ghosts as necessarily phantasmal, ephemeral, and "colonizing." In this context, the notion of "forging" and "forgery" is significant, since by implication the national ghost can only ever be a counterfeit, the ghost of a ghost, a purveyor of a fiction. The quest for postcolonial belonging is a central element of many contemporary Canadian historical fictions, as, for example, in John Steffler's novel *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* (1992), in which the ghost of the historical eighteenth-century Labrador merchant George Cartwright is imprisoned in a purgatorial existence, haunting the English landscape while yearning to be incorporated into the Labrador wilderness. The book charts a process of postcolonial atonement, as the ghost of Cartwright is forced to come to terms with his abuses of the Labrador environment and its Aboriginal peoples. Yet through a curious twist, it emerges that what he is most haunted by is his failure to indigenize. Like Susanna Moodie, Cartwright is the archetype of settler–invader ambivalence, yet with a difference, since he is never allowed to become *of here*. Cartwright's longing is to indigenize himself to Canada, to make himself a *genius loci* of the New World. While the novel charts Cartwright's gradual process of expiation, it renders the explorer a kind of stand-in for contemporary Canadians who seek a postcolonial atonement for the crimes of imperial history. This is achieved at the end of the novel, when Cartwright is finally spirited off to Labrador and becomes incorporated into the landscape through a shamanist ritual in which he is ingested by a white bear. The novel thus charts the paradoxical *unbecoming* of a Canadian as a necessary stage in the forging of a Canadian. It may be that Steffler conjures the only Canadian settler ghost possible – a ghost who is himself haunted and tormented by having been lifted out of his (il)legitimate terrain (Labrador/Canada) precisely because that terrain (and the people in it) has never been authentically his.

Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* (1996) attempts to evade the binary of Native–White legitimation by constructing a hybrid White/Native

ghost infusing the Gothic world of its adolescent White settler protagonist, Beth Weeks. In this novel, the postcolonial fantasy of an authentic Canadian ghost is enacted through the White settlers' possession by the Aboriginal trickster spirit Coyote. However, the novel offers a non-Aboriginal reconstruction of Coyote by associating his spirit with Gothic monstrosity, specifically with male violence and lust. The non-Aboriginal characters who are taken over by Coyote are possessed by a voraciousness that appears to have its roots in an ambivalent occupation of the land. And yet, they are seemingly indigenized by this haunting: to be haunted is to belong to a world suffused with spirit presence. This provides a twist on the conventional motif of Gothic "explanation"; here, erratic behavior is satisfactorily "explained" through possession by an indigenous spirit. In other words, the White characters are deemed worthy of Coyote, whether, like Beth's father, they are possessed by the damaging greed/lust of the trickster spirit, or inspired, like Beth herself, with the gift of second sight. As a coming-of-age story, the novel is concerned with the indigenization of a White settler descendant who is made to claim her rightful place in Turtle Valley (an echo of the Aboriginal designation for North America, Turtle Island). As a postcolonial haunting, the novel engages the problem of colonization through a mystique of hybridity (figuring Coyote as both Aboriginal and White), thus pointing away from historical processes of othering toward the White man's craving for "indigenous" ghosts.

A novel that underscores this motivation for Gothic infusion is Newfoundland author Kenneth Harvey's 2003 novel *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, which depicts a community plagued by a strange breathing disorder (a materialized correlative for melancholia) in the years following the 1992 moratorium on the Newfoundland fisheries. Harvey sets the idea of a cultural–genealogical memory trace alongside the theme of damnation by treating the demise of the cod fishery in supernatural, Gothic terms. His use of the Gothic is worth noting, however, since in this novel the characters are not unsettled by the presence of ghosts, but rather are punished for a failure to believe in their presence. In short, ancestral ghosts are a sign of communal *en*settlement and identity. Even though Harvey's work has been identified for its fixation on the Gothic underside of Newfoundland communities, *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe* is in fact a novel in which the Gothic has too little influence on people's lives, which is why it reasserts itself with a vengeance. The ghosts in this novel, in a kind of thwarted circuit, have been barred from haunting the living, in part because the living no longer believe in their necessity. Here, communal and psychic health *require* an infusion of the Gothic, since the only individuals who are immune to the breathing disorder are those who embrace Gothic visions. In this novel, cultural memory becomes aligned with ancestral inheritance, but because Harvey's characters are in the throes of melancholic amnesia, the ancestral ghosts are presented as in need of recuperation. If the traditional Gothic is motivated by a kind of oedipal relation with past ancestors, the motivation here seems to be a desire for reunification with ancestors, not as uncanny doubles or alter egos, but as figures from the genetic and cultural past whose "presence" is encrypted into the community's cultural composition.

If these instances of a Canadian postcolonial settler Gothic reveal an obsession with establishing a suitably haunted antiquity for contemporary Canadian culture,

including a recurring resuscitation of pioneer spirits, many authors interrogate the impulse behind these nation-forging narratives, which, it is argued, suppress intranational difference. Both groups might be said to be articulating a postcolonial response to colonial history – one in the guise of settler desire and atonement, the other in the form of intranational hauntings – and both turn to the Gothic to secure some form of tentative belonging and communal definition. In many of these works, the nation is given a spectral or phantom presence, as well as being founded on the suppression of specters of "otherness" within. These texts thus demonstrate how the category "Canadian" is itself haunted.

In Wayson Choy's creative memoir, *Paper Shadows* (1999), and his novel, *The Jade Peony* (1995), notions of diasporic relocation and national repression are overlaid with a complex taxonomy of ghosts in mid-twentieth-century Vancouver's Chinatown. More than an account of national exclusion and oppression, his work maps a cultural–historical narrative of transgenerational haunting alongside a personal quest for legitimating, genealogical "here/not-here" ghosts, thereby addressing the unhomeliness of the Canadian locale for outsiders to the official national imaginary. Choy's ghosts are mediators of both historical memory and institutional oppression. At the outset, *Paper Shadows* makes a distinction between the lost Chinese ghosts who long for "home" and wait for their bones to be shipped back to China, and the *bak kwei*, the White men's ghosts, which are full of "spiteful trickery" and yet are the "legitimate" Canadians. The characters in Choy's works are simultaneously haunted and tormented by the ghosts of the mourned-for past, while also reassured by the plethora of ghosts that have followed them from overseas into the quarters of Chinatown. At the same time, the *bak kwei*, or White ghosts, haunt the Chinese, not only with very tangible terrors (like racism and deportation), but also with the truth of Chinese-Canadian insubstantiality, thus rendering the Chinese people ghosts who are themselves condemned to haunt the interstices of the nation's sense of itself. "It's one thing to be aware of ghosts," Choy writes. "It's another to *be* one." The book explores this theme through the motif of "paper shadows," those illegal Chinese immigrants whose "official" identities are based on false papers (the papers of legal immigrants who have died) and who therefore literally inhabit the identities of the dead. These ghosts are given new life in Canada, yet are rendered both invisible (to "real" genealogical memory) and also too highly visible (to the surveillance of state authorities). Layered atop this account of historical trauma are the elusive ghosts of Choy's real and paper ancestors, affirming the power of ancestral lineage in the face of disrupted familial genealogies. If personal and national selfhood are constituted by the internalization of a haunting Other, here Chinese-Canadians prevail as the uncanny shadow of forgery: obliterated from official state memory yet encrypted within communal secrets.

Fusing the haunting ramifications of nation-formation and postcolonialism with a tale of familial trauma marked by stifled ambition, inter-ethnic hatred, and revenge, Ann-Marie MacDonald's widely acclaimed Gothic omnibus *Fall on Your Knees* (1996) conjures a world that is simultaneously inflected by menace and repentance. To "fall on your knees," a phrase from the Catholic Christmas carol "O Holy Night," is to

prostrate oneself, either in awe or in penance, before the presence of the ineffable. Humbling oneself before the ghosts of the past might be the best one can do when confronted with the nightmare of colonial history. If the seething presence of the past infuses the modern, postcolonial era, this is literally so in the Gothic world of MacDonald's early-twentieth-century Cape Breton, where the specter of race haunts the generations of the Piper and Mahmoud families who strive for national legitimation. Himani Bannerji has analyzed the ways Canadian nationhood, despite its embrace of multiculturalism, is defined by a naturalized slippage from European to Anglo-Celtic "Canadian" identity, what Bannerji terms "a liberal democracy with a colonial heart" (2000, 75). In the novel, the father's racial intolerance leaves in its wake a series of monstrosities that plague his descendants. By fathering a child with his own daughter, in part to ensure a pure White bloodline, he calls these demons more fully into being. The embodiment of his fears is the ghost of the drowned infant Ambrose, who returns as the guilty and haunting "ancestral" secret of the Piper family tree. MacDonald's novel takes us through the corridors of civilized atrocity and attests to the infusion of the everyday with the traces of racism's aberrant legacy. The novel thus helps to mitigate the willed amnesia that founds national and familial identities, the condition that continues to inform conceptions of a purportedly postcolonial society.

Aboriginal Ghost-Dancing

The heuristics of a postcolonial Canadian Gothic achieves an illuminating inflection when read alongside the plethora of "Gothic" writings by Canadian Aboriginal authors, from the numerous ghost plays of Daniel David Moses, to the Coyote trickster stories of Thomas King, to the Nanabush plays of Tomson Highway, to the weird and violent short stories of Eden Robinson. I use the term "Gothic" in quotation marks in this context because "Gothic" (like the term "postcolonial") has been subject to much criticism in its application to indigenous literatures. Indeed, the terms "Gothic" or "uncanny" may be inappropriate for this body of literature – a foreign nomenclature that renders what was typically perceived as "natural" to the level of the "super-natural." Many of these works might be said to "write back" to the Gothic genre itself. Jodey Castricano has argued that the "Western psychological model" of Gothic literature does a kind of violence to Aboriginal texts which are invoking the supernatural within a much different epistemology and tradition (2006, 809). If indigenous peoples were traditionally figured by non-Native writers as either demonic savages or noble but "dead" Indians, many Aboriginal authors have responded by burlesquing the gothicized model that aligns superstition and supernaturalism with primitivism or delusion. Such models are incommensurate with Aboriginal traditions that see the spirit world to infuse everyday reality in a harmonious and sustaining way. Castricano's analysis focuses on Canadian Haisla author Eden Robinson, whose novel *Monkey Beach* (2000) concerns a young protagonist, Lisamarie Hill, who has the ability to talk to spirits. Within the novel, this ability is established as a fading cultural power, which

Lisa has inherited from her grandmother. In the interests of "civilizing" her Aboriginality, Lisa's parents send her to a city psychologist who attempts to "cure" her of her visions. When Lisa sees the incubus attached to the doctor's neck, she realizes that her "ghosts" are of a different order. This is not to suggest that the Aboriginal spirits in this novel are all benign. Indeed, Lisa is privy to a number of visitations, not only from the crows who tell her where to search for the body of her dead brother, but also from a little red-haired man who creates mischievous havoc in her room whenever a death is imminent. Lisa is also summoned by spirit voices in the woods who are setting up a trap for her. When these voices pull her under the ocean, she is saved by the benevolence of ancestral ghosts who lead her to the beach, where they gather around a campfire. Robinson's recontextualization of conventional Gothic effects has received a great deal of critical attention, as have her weird and violent short stories in *Traplines* (1996) and *Blood Sports* (2006).

Thomas King's novels are replete with ghosts that expose the amnesia of colonial history. In King's novels, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) and *Truth and Bright Water* (1999), Aboriginal ghosts reappear to lead their people back to cultural tradition. However, King's ancestral ghosts are unmistakably forward-looking, serving as reassuring repositories of memory and desire. They are guiding spirits and whimsical tricksters, often both at once. The Native ghosts in *Green Grass, Running Water* reappear cyclically, countering the "vanishing Indian" motif that has long formed part of cultural discourse about North American Native peoples. *Green Grass* features the spirits of four Indians who are "writing back" to imperial history by rescripting that history – literally by entering Hollywood westerns and altering the endings (what they term "fixing the world"). The haunting effect in King's work is less the result of vengeance or guilt, than that of restitution, recognition, and guidance. If King's ghosts lack the *frisson* of the traditional Gothic uncanny, their unhomeliness is linked not to the incompletion of the project of settlement, but to the incompletion of Aboriginal *displacement*, and, perhaps, to the inadequacy of a postcolonial epistemology that relegates the past to a memory effect rather than to a material here and now.

Cree author Tomson Highway takes a similar approach in his series of "Rez" plays, all of which feature the Ojibway trickster spirit Nanabush. Yet it is Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998) that contains his most extended, and disturbing, treatment of colonialism's mixed legacy for Canadian Aboriginal peoples. As an indictment of the residential school system in early-twentieth-century Canada, the novel offers a critique of imperializing efforts to erase Aboriginal presence from Canada. And yet, the monsters and spirits in the novel are not so easily categorized into colonizer and victim. The novel depicts a spirit world that has both a guiding function and a trickster one. The figure of the mystical Fur Queen functions as a hybrid and highly ambivalent figure – a version of an Aboriginal shaman or Cree trickster who also appears as various "settler" figures encountered by the hero on the path to self-understanding. At the same time, the evil presence of the "Weetigo" (Windigo), the cannibal monster of much Native mythology, becomes associated with a hybrid

composite. It represents at once the abusive priests of the residential school, the modern commercialized metropolis, the internal "dark night of the soul" of the initiate's quest for self-revelation, as well as the cannibalizing monster in Cree legend (who, metaphorically, resides in the recesses of every human heart). As a man-turned-monster, the Weetigo might also represent a critical after-effect of colonialism, for it embodies the ways members of a culture can be induced to turn on their own people.

This approach is brilliantly managed in Joseph Boyden's best-selling 2005 novel *Three Day Road*, a story about two Cree snipers on the battlefields of World War I. Like *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, this novel plays on preconceptions of Aboriginal savagery, while also invoking the Cree legend of the Windigo. Boyden depicts war as a cannibalizing Gothic monster that transforms humans into savages. Yet one of the Cree men (Elijah) begins to literalize this metaphor by enacting the colonialist stereotypes of Aboriginal "savagery": stalking his victims, collecting their scalps, and, eventually, cannibalizing their flesh. Although Elijah "turns" Windigo, this transformation makes him a hero among the Allied troops. The "explanation" for his apparent possession remains unclear – is it something in him, or is it the sickness of imperialism – particularly since the narrative is filtered through the morphine-induced recollections of his friend and rival Xavier Bird, who may himself be possessed by the dreaded Windigo. The novel renders a truly *unheimlich* recording of identity dissolution, possession, and barbarity in the midst of war. More profoundly, through its meditation on ideas of "savagery," it plays on colonialist representations of "aboriginality" *as* uncanny.

This phenomenon achieves a powerful – and acutely uncanny – manifestation in the compelling dramatic text co-written by Maria Campbell and Linda Griffiths, *The Book of Jessica* (1989). *The Book of Jessica* focuses on a strange case of possession and mediation between Canadian Métis activist and author Maria Campbell and non-Native Canadian actress and playwright Linda Griffiths. In *The Book of Jessica*, Campbell asks Griffiths to workshop and perform her traumatic life story. The result is a composite dramatic text (a play framed by the two women's discussion and conflict over its creation) in which the spirit elements of Campbell's Aboriginal cultural background are rendered profoundly uncanny through Griffiths's mediation of them. Griffiths describes her psycho-theatrical method as "sibylling" the other, but admits that this process keeps her emotionally distant from her subjects. Through a weird process of "gothification," the "sibylling" turns into a form of possession, and unleashes Campbell's wrath at seeing her personal and cultural ghosts trotted out on stage for public consumption. In other words, much to Campbell's horror, Griffiths's process converts Campbell's "native spirits" into Gothic specters. While Campbell feels personally and culturally extracted by the process, Griffiths seeks to possess the Aboriginal Gothic by internalizing it as her own mythology. In effect, she wants to appropriate the Real of Aboriginal spirituality and in so doing to "regothicize" the Gothic so that it offers her an authenticating experience of being haunted, a condition which she claims is not properly available to the settler descendant: "When the Native world got opened up to me, it was like coming home . . . . All those tired old images of horses and long dresses, and castles and wizards, and witches . . . all those flogged-out

symbols of magic we whites had beaten to death. . . . Then I saw your culture, and it was like a treasure chest opening up."

This brings us back to a key feature of much Canadian Gothic expression: a search for authorization and authenticity. The paradox in Griffiths's experience is that she becomes "de-subjectified" the more she is "stuffed" with Gothic content that is not her own. Yet without this process of uncanny mediation, she feels hollow, degothicized, extracted. She is thus emblematic of the predicament dramatized in many works of Canadian Gothic. By her own account, she has not been taught *to be* haunted, in part because she believes she lacks inheritance. If such a quandary cannot reinstate a rightful ancestral line – a plot device common to many Gothic texts – it does propel an obsessive replaying of Gothic reinforcement and self-invention.

Note

1 For reasons of space and structural coherence, this essay considers the Gothic tradition within English Canadian writing only. There has been a far different tradition of Gothic writing in French Canada, in part because French settlement has older historical roots and a more secure sense of its literary distinctiveness. Many English Canadian texts, particularly from the nineteenth century, look to French Canada for an infusion of Gothic sustenance (see, for example, William Kirby's 1877 novel *The Golden Dog*). As a way of working through the clash of empires, these works relegate French Canada to a Gothic past which at once infuses the Canadian cultural landscape with local legends while also enabling the English to establish themselves as forces of reason and good colonial management. This is even evident in early English explorers' accounts, such as those by David Thompson and John Franklin, which posit the French *voyageurs*, alongside Aboriginal people, as superstitious and amoral.

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29
Asian Gothic

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The Asian continent is the place four billion people call home. It comprises more than fifty countries with over forty official languages, and the count of spoken languages is estimated at exceeding 2,000. Its inhabitants have been exposed to practically every religion and philosophical belief known to humankind, have been part of both Western and Eastern colonial experience, and have embraced international capital and global markets. Not surprisingly, the Asian diaspora is amongst the largest in the world, with waves of immigrants oscillating between continents on their journeys there and back again. For a researcher, this is a multicultural nightmare in which anything goes, any cultural influence can prove significant, and painting the big picture is likely a futile task.

On a certain level then, anyone attempting to bring together Asia and Gothic in search of some relatively homogenous category is asking for trouble. And since the process of "gothicizing" Asian literatures commonly originates on the outside, courtesy of the English language, one may wonder whether we are not exposing a multitude of cultures to yet another process of linguistic colonialization. Edward Said's implication that the Orient is but a predominantly linguistic category invented to fit the fantasy of the West leads to the inevitable question – How is one to write in English about cultures that have been delegated by the very language to the position of the (silent) Other?

This is why this essay, far from offering the complete picture, should rather be treated as an exploratory journey through some potentially Gothic territories of Asian literatures. For the sake of simplicity, I have decided to limit myself to a part of Asia only, focusing on East, Southeast, and South Asia, with the exclusion of Japan (as Japanese Gothic will be discussed separately). Even with this limitation, the texts discussed here will only provide the reader with a very sketchy idea of the Gothic

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dimensions of the region, but hopefully this can serve as a starting point for further ruminations on the subject.

Bringing Asia into Gothic

Most books about Asia published in English tend to follow a similar pattern. Quite regularly, specialist publications compress the continent to just a few economically significant countries – Japan, China, South Korea, and more recently India. This trend, stimulated chiefly by business interests, is further reinforced through a selective approach to the study of Asian history, cultures, politics, and societies. Cultural anthropologists promote the portrayal of Asia as shaped by Eastern religions and philosophies, mostly Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism with a touch of animistic practices, glossing over significant Muslim populations, or indigenous Christians, whose presence on the continent spans centuries. Furthermore, the suggested homogeneity of Buddhism can also be misleading, for not only should attention be paid to specific denominations within it, but also the interpretation of Buddhist scriptures, rituals, and everyday practices may differ even between the provinces of the same country.

Literary critics pay much attention to examining the postcolonial Asian heritage. Seen from this vantage point, Asian literatures frequently get narrowed down to Indian, Malaysian, or Singaporean writing in English. Significantly less attention is paid to literary works from countries with non-English colonial experience (e.g., Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia), those without a colonial experience (e.g., Thailand), or those with colonial appetites (e.g., China). As only a fraction of literary works written in native Asian languages gets translated into English, it would be rather naïve to treat the available texts as fully representative of various national literatures. If we add the fact that many Asian writers, particularly those writing in English, have been educated in the West and subsequently anthologized as American/British authors, there is much about Asian literatures that has never been discussed before.

Since the word "Gothic" is alien to most Asian languages, with a notable exception of Japanese trying to internalize the label as *goshikku*, it is understandable that Asian scholars show little interest in discussing Asian literatures in terms of the Gothic tradition. In fact, there is a considerable risk that any attempts to use the label externally may meet with local opposition, since the term itself is often understood as degrading national literature to the level of cheap horror paperbacks, and many Asian writers and academics see that as threatening to their literary standing. It is therefore obvious that one needs to proceed with caution, and that our understanding of Gothic has to be adjusted to suit local cultural contexts.

Still, there is no denying that some Asian writers are aware of the existence of Gothic as a literary genre and consciously try to employ Gothic aesthetics in their writing. Their works can be seen as a result of encroaching cultural globalization, a conscious hybridization of local and foreign influences, "feeding off each other to

produce new cross-cultural monstrosities" (Byron, 2008, 33). But there are also those who enter the Gothic tradition more passively and may in fact remain unaware of the potential Gothic readings of their works, as "transgressing taboos, complicity with evil, the dread of life, violence, and the return of the repressed . . . are not specific to any culture or people, but are experienced by all throughout history" (Ng, 2008, 1). We could call these two attitudes "*doing* Gothic" (or consciously acting upon an established generic convention) and "*being* Gothic" (or resorting to the use of Gothic conventions without the intention to follow the specific demands of the genre).

The writers *doing* Gothic often embrace supernatural topics, at times alluding to well-known Gothic texts. S. P. Somtow relocates *Bluebeard's Castle* to *The Other City of Angels*; his short stories involve both Asian and straightforward noncontextualized horror; he has also written a Bangkok-based episode of *The Crow* franchise. The ghost stories of Tunku Halim (Malaysia), Catherine Lim (Singapore), or David Hontiveros (the Philippines) localize the familiar Gothic framework within their respective cultures. The writers *being* Gothic are concerned with political or social horrors, discrimination, abuse of power, corruption, and the resultant violence of everyday life. Some examples can be found in the fiction of Chart Korbjitti (Thailand), Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Indonesia), K. S. Maniam (Malaysia), Vikram Chandra (India), Pira Sudham (Thailand), or – on a more pop-cultural level – Mian Mian (China). Although it may be quite a stretch to market the above authors as Gothic, there is no denying that at least some of their texts yield themselves to Gothic interpretations.

With these initial observations, let us bring into discussion a selection of texts that can contribute to our search for Asian Gothic. Roughly divided into two very broad categories depending on their supernatural or nonsupernatural context, these texts can serve as an entry point to explore the Gothic potential of the region.

Asian Gothic Supernatural Experience, or AnOther Other

Early definitions equated Gothic with the literature of the supernatural. Indeed, Gothic texts abound in ghosts, vampires, zombies, werewolves, and other species of literary monsters. With its strong animistic connection, Asia has more than a fair share of its own real and literary phantoms to reckon with. One significant difference here is that in many parts of Asia, spiritual encounters are part of routine daily existence, since the earthly and spiritual worlds are seen as coexistent. And while there is no denying that some spirits are to be feared, as this response to the supernatural seems to disregard cultural differences, many Asian spirits are seen as arousing reverence instead, and the rules of engagement are negotiated through a combination of bribes and offerings. If the spirits are understood in terms of the ancestors, they are, in fact, expected to meddle with the affairs of the living, and even the malicious ones merit obedience and respect rather than a hasty exorcism.

Still, while the ghosts of the non-kin dead are likely to cause at least an initial ripple of fear in the living, the same cannot be said of other types of supernatural

monsters. The Asian continent is full of supernatural creatures whose descriptions escape traditional Gothic bestiaries. In Thailand, we find a spirit known as *phii krasue*, depicted as a flying female head with hanging entrails. Related creatures can be found in Malaysia and Indonesia (*penanggalan*), and in the Philippines (*manananggal*), although their specific lore may differ. The male counterpart of Thai *phii krasue* is known as *phii krahan*, and it is a specimen even more peculiar than the first one – a full-bodied male spirit that propels himself through the air using two bamboo trays as wings. The Filipino *aswang* is often portrayed as having a long insect-like protrusion of its mouth, thanks to which it can suck out babies from the wombs of pregnant women. *Jiang shi*, better known as "the Chinese hopping vampires," have been immortalized, courtesy of Hong Kong cinema, as the Qing dynasty courtiers. The Taiwanese, Malaysians, and Thais believe in obtaining protection and prosperity by means of keeping and feeding a char-grilled fetus entombed in a jar (*xiaogui*/*toyol*/*kuman tong*). These are but a few of the more extreme examples of spiritual entities that Western readers may not be entirely ready to handle.

This explains why attempts have been made to mold the unruly Asian spirits into the more recognizable and "reader-friendly" forms of Gothic monsters. The great majority of female spirits (*kuntilanak*, *pontianak*, *phii tai thang klom*, etc.) have thus, unsurprisingly, been branded as vampires, regardless of their dietary habits. The fact that in traditional representation many Asian spirits retain their corporeal characteristics has made it relatively easy to "explain" them as zombies. Given the lack of wolves, we have learnt of were-tigers and were-foxes. And yet, take a closer look and these categories crumble, leaving us with the inevitable question – Is Gothic flexible enough to accept anOther Other? For Asian Gothic to become a conceivable category, this question needs to be addressed. One way to begin is by expanding our understanding of the generic structure of the ghost story.

Asian ghost stories can be roughly divided into three groups. In the first group, we find classic folklore-inspired stories written in native languages, such as those of the seventeenth-century Chinese writer Pu Songling, whose 431 "strange tales" from the *Liaozhai* collection are among the most influential "tales of the marvelous," known in Chinese as *chuangqi*. One of the better-known stories from the collection, translated as *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, is "The Painted Skin." The tale introduces a man named Wang who becomes bewitched by a demon wearing the skin of a beautiful young girl. When he learns of the creature's infernal identity, Wang attempts to drive her away, only to have his heart torn out in revenge. The demon is defeated by a Taoist priest and confined to a gourd, leaving behind the skin "complete even to the eyebrows, eyes, hands, and feet" (Pu Songling, 1880, 81). The story ends with Wang's wife undergoing public humiliation when she prostrates herself in front of a local madman. Her reward is a heart that she regurgitates and places in her husband's open chest, bringing him back to life.

The story reads as a morality tale, warning the reader of potential dangers when straying from the righteous path (the husband who brings home a beautiful girl despite being married ends up without a heart) and advocating the virtues of the good

woman (the dutiful wife willing to undergo an ordeal out of devotion to her husband). Originating from the stories known as *zhiguai*, or "accounts of the strange," written in the period of Six Dynasties (AD 220–589), tales such as these served their purpose by representing "creative models both of and for proper relations between the living and the dead" (Campany, 1991, 16). Needless to say, these models frequently remain culturally specific and are not always able to be universalized. As a result, many indigenous Asian ghost stories seem particularly resistant to translation or are in danger of being dismissed as not being "ghostly" enough.

Quite a different approach to the subject can be found in the tales written in English, in compliance with the generic requirements of the English Victorian and Edwardian ghost story. A very good example here can be the collection of *Indian Ghost Stories* originally written in 1914 by S. Mukerji. Although the author worries that his projected English audience may dismiss his stories as incredible and that they represent a certain cultural backwardness of India and its inhabitants, the reader may in fact be excused for not noticing the Indian context of the stories altogether. In the first story of the collection, "His Dead Wife's Photograph," we read about the image of the late wife of a Mr. Smith unexpectedly appearing on the family photograph. The story begins by assuring the reader that the narrator is a man of progress: "Jones had a half-plate Sanderson camera with a Ross lens and a Thornton Picard behind lens shutter, with pneumatic release" (1917, 7). The account of events that leads to the conclusion that the spirit of the dead wife somehow imprinted itself onto the photographic plate is consistent with the fashion of the time to look at spectrography as scientific proof of the existence of the afterlife. There is nothing in the story that would make us read it as specifically Indian, apart from one sentence in which the ghost is described as wearing "a broad-edged *dhoti*," with an explanation in parentheses that "the reader should not forget that all the characters are Indians" (8).

The racial divide seems to permeate the stories. The protagonists are consistently being introduced as modern, level-headed, and rational. Their mental superiority is ascertained by their racial and economic qualities. Without exception, all the main characters are described either as British, or as affluent Indians with English-sounding names, working in government offices. Racial discrimination affects even the world of the spirits. In "The Major's Lease," a respectable British military officer finds himself disturbed at night by "three shadowy forms," of which, he concludes,

> one was distinctly the form of a white man in European night attire, another the form of a white woman, also in night attire, and the third was the form of a black woman, probably an Indian nurse or ayah. (11)

Interestingly, even the world of shadows seems regulated according to skin color, with the white spirits being significantly more defined and visible.

In "What Uncle Saw," the ghost reveals itself to the elderly uncle of the narrator. Despite his Indian origin, the uncle is described as a powerful man working for the government in Calcutta (20), which sets him apart from the uneducated superstitious

native masses whose accounts of supernatural experiences would not have been seen as particularly convincing. The uncle is found in a feverish state after having spent one night in a side-room of his nephew's house. In lieu of an explanation, he relates a story of mysterious knocks on the window and his decision to investigate their cause. "Well in the darkness I saw, I saw –," he says and then dies without finishing the sentence, as if sensing that the reader may well not be ready to face a genuine Indian supernatural encounter.

Contrary to the earlier attempts at universalizing the supernatural experience, modern Asian ghost stories written in English frequently tend to capitalize on the exotic. The stories in question undertake a difficult task of balancing the progressive, rational attitude of the authors/protagonists represented by the use of English and the Western skepticism implied by English with the need to remain faithful to the cultural heritage of the region, which appears to defy Western logic. A case in point can be Singaporean ghost stories, such as those of Catherine Lim. A typical example is the first story of her collection *The Howling Silence*, "Great-Grandfather with Teeth," in which a young student called Kwan, on his return from the United States to Singapore for a holiday, decides to spend the night in his reputedly haunted family house. Motivated by a vision of "tantalising [his] college mates, especially [his] roommate, Bryan Roberts, a dry, cynical Business Studies student, with a cool, detailed description of '[His] Adventures in the Haunted Ancestral Home'" (1999, 8), Kwan continues to view himself as fully capable of staying "detached from the culture of [his] childhood . . . and not be intimidated by the exotic ghosts" (10).

A brief nocturnal visitation by the ghost of his great-grandfather leads Kwan to discover a family secret. He learns of his *Chor Kong*, great-grandfather Tan Siong Teck, a man who had never suffered a day of illness in his life. Endowed at the age of 80 with a set of healthy strong teeth, the grandfather became an object of fear for the family when a fortune-teller identified his teeth as the source of evil: "They were abnormal teeth, too long, too strong, too powerful, indicating a monstrous appetite. They were the teeth of perverted parenthood that would devour its own flesh and blood" (15). Silent accusations, blaming the grandfather's teeth for the death of his offspring, led the man to an act of self-mutilation, in which he removed the "guilty" teeth with a set of household tools and died soon after that. The tale ends with Kwan paying respect to the spirit of his great-grandfather, thanking him for the sacrifice he made to ensure the healthy birth of his great-grandson – in other words, Kwan himself. Despite his earlier resolve, Kwan bows down to the "exotic ghosts" of his childhood culture, because on a closer look he does not find them intimidating, but rather admirable.

The urban setting of contemporary Singapore forms a perfect background for the stories of Catherine Lim, where supernaturalism does not contradict modernity and the characters are steeped in what Gina Wisker calls "an everyday Gothic, a parallel set of behaviours and beliefs as necessary as eating and going to work" (2003, 65). S. P. Somtow takes this even further in his accounts of Thai spiritual materialism which is unable to distinguish between the real and the fantastic. In "The Lottery Night,"

Somtow recounts a specifically Thai custom of retrieving lucky lottery numbers from dead relatives. The story follows a Thai boy, Samraan, sent by his parents to the graveyard to communicate with the spirit of his great-great-aunt. As the night turns into an intensely carnivalesque experience, he witnesses an exorcism, accidentally attracts a filth-eating ghost *phii krasue*, and learns that his American friend Joey is a reincarnation of the great-great-aunt whose spiritual business advice he had come to seek. Indeed, in the morning, Joey comes up with the winning lottery number, but just as the family is about to rejoice in their newly acquired riches we learn that "[a]t that very moment, the army took over the television station and announced that there would be a few changes" (2002, 62).

Noticing Joey's visible fascination with the unfolding military coup, Samraan admires what he sees as an American ability "to feel as though everything around them, no matter how many times the world has seen it, is happening for the first time." He concludes, "Perhaps it is simply that in their country they rarely have revolutions, exorcisms, or lotteries" (63). By this simple act of equating political solutions with supernatural powers and material aspirations, Somtow suggests that in Thailand reality may prove more illusory than fantasy. Interestingly enough, contrasted with an overall comical tone to the story, this final realization may be found significantly more terrifying.

A Thai expatriate himself, Somtow toys with images of estrangement familiar to foreigners trying to "make sense" of Thai culture. And while the act of "explaining" Thai culture affirms its otherness, the fact that Somtow's rationalizations commonly fail shifts the power balance toward the Asian other, demonstrating the pointlessness of the East/West-type dichotomies, replacing the binary with the multilateral. This lets us see how Asian texts can contribute to expanding Gothic beyond its Western origins and promoting its understanding on a global scale.

David Hontiveros's *Penumbra* novellas are an answer to Glennis Byron's call for global Gothic, a new Gothic "form marked by the increasing cross-cultural dynamics of the past century" (2005, 33). In *Craving*, Hontiveros paints a haunting picture of the fears of motherhood, drawing on the folkloric representations of Asian spirits of women who died pregnant or in childbirth and their lost babies (*pontianak*, *langsuyar*, *tianak*). The hunger with which the villagers welcome in their midst Lester and his pregnant wife Anna almost makes one expect a Filipino version of *Rosemary's Baby*. Soon the couple begin to be plagued by a stare of owls inhabiting a mango tree in their garden. Although Anna does not seem to mind, Lester's visions of destruction and decay make him wonder if something is amiss. The realization that the village is in fact a community of women who died in childbirth, and that his wife is about to join them, comes as a surprise but it offers the couple a second chance for happiness.

The conscious intertextuality of the novella with its cross-references to Asian and Western beliefs, literature, and film is hard to miss. And yet, unlike in Somtow, there is no explanation of the "exotic" content, no ridiculing of the "unfitting" elements.

What we are offered instead is a story that can be open to a number of Gothic readings, from within and without its Filipino context; a text accessible to the global reader, as it is clearly a product of that very global cultural dynamics that has become characteristic of the world today. Globalization can be feared, when envisioned as a cultural steamroller flattening all the complexities of local cultures on the way to achieving standardized global understanding. At the same time, however, a global perspective can bring to light formerly invisible local elements and allow for their expression in a larger forum. Before her death and subsequent transformation, Anna dismisses Lester's concerns:

> "We are not the Lutz family, Lester. This isn't Amityville. . . . We haven't seen any ghosts, have we?"
>
> "*No*, Lester thought. *Not ghosts. But I've seen other things*." (71)

Unlike in traditional Gothic narratives that made much of oriental otherness, while conveniently silencing Asian others, when we shift our focus to Asian Gothic, these "other things" need to be accounted for.

Nonsupernatural Asian Gothic(s), or "Same Same but Different"

Just like the ghost stories, nonsupernatural Asian Gothic narratives can be roughly divided into three groups: imitative texts written in accordance with the classic Western Gothic formula; indigenous Asian texts gothicizing existing local conventions; and hybrid texts invoking the play of dichotomies, characteristic of postcolonial Gothic. Imitative Gothic texts assume a Western point of view and exploit the concept of Asia(ns) as the Exotic Other. Local texts redefine Western Gothic conventions in order to replace them with appropriate Asian equivalents, creating a more "Asian" Gothic form. Hybrid texts invoke comparisons between East and West, old and new, local and global, and so on, and are possibly the most self-reflective of the three. Although nonsupernatural Asian texts are rarely openly marketed as "Gothic," many of them invite Gothic interpretations.

The portrayal of Asia as the land of terrifying otherness characteristic of some Western Gothic texts, with representations akin to the 1922 Grand Guignol version of *The Torture Garden* (by Pierre Chaine and Andre de Lorde), has resulted in a promotion of a set of stereotypes that remain valid up to the present day. The oriental world, thus, is frequently conceived of as a mysterious territory steeped in decadent, almost magical, opulence, inhabited by mighty feudal lords who divide their time between terrorizing their subjects and indulging in unimaginable acts of debauchery. Although rare, a similar paradigm can be found in some Asian texts, particularly those written by authors who see themselves as cultural outsiders.

Somtow's *The Other City of Angels* tells the story of Judith Abramovitz, a Jewish-American socialite who, hastily married to a Thai multimillionaire (who may or may not be a compulsive wife-murderer), finds herself thrown into the excessive and ostentatious world of Bangkok's high society, where nothing is what it seems. For Somtow, Bangkok "is the one place in the world where there is absolutely no distinction between illusion and reality" (2007, 91). The novel, thus, assaults the reader with its accumulation of the grotesque, the bizarre, and the illogical that to Somtow amounts to a definition of "Thainess." Aware that this concoction of contradictions is likely to be described as paradoxical, he retorts:

> A paradox . . . can be resolved by attacking it logically. In Thailand, two contradictory things don't just have to *seem* to be true at the same time; they can actually *be* true! So these things aren't paradoxes at all . . . (169)

But when contradictions collapse and give way to the rule of relativity, the only monster left standing is the city; the city of transgressions and excess, reverberating with hollow Gothic laughter at the expense of its inhabitants.

The treatment of the Gothic formula in Kien Nguyen's Vietnamese-American novel *The Tapestries* (2004) seems even more conventional, with its narrative of forbidden love, brutal executions, pirates, treasure maps, haunted mansions, corrupt politicians, and colonial oppression. The book begins with a description of a wedding in which a woman aged twenty-four is married to a seven-year-old child. For Ven, the first wife of Dan Nguyen, this is only the beginning of her misfortunes. In the course of the novel she gets arrested, beaten up, has her tongue cut out, is convicted of a murder she did not commit, is tortured and left for dead, has her face mutilated to hide her identity, gets rejected by the husband to whom she has devoted her life, and loses all hopes for happiness when her new partner dies stabbed in a drunken brawl. She spends the rest of her invisible life pretending she is not there, leaving her husband's favorite food on his doorstep and letting him get on with his life.

Interestingly, this grave victimization of the female character does not spur the male protagonist into action. Introduced to the reader as a helpless child, emasculated by a name change when sold into slavery (from "Dan," signifying tiger, to "Mouse"), unable to execute revenge on his enemy, because as the family patriarch of Dan's beloved he merits respect, Dan's renunciation of action can be seen as characteristic of many Asian heroes who subscribe to the belief that all life is regulated by the forces of karma. Indeed, the fate that befalls the villain in the end can be seen as karmic retribution. For destroying Dan's family, he dies abandoned by his son; for setting Dan's house ablaze, he dies in flames.

As the Buddhist concept of karma, advocating submission to one's fate, is particularly prone to gothicization, it allows for an easy contextualization of Gothic within Asia. Karmic forces are at play in much of Thai literature, seen as responsible for the fatalistic apathy of the characters who believe that "[t]he acceptance of one's fate would make suffering in this life tolerable" (Sudham, 2002, 5). The prevailing belief that

poverty, disease, and any other calamities that befall a person result from the bad deeds committed in this and previous lives has been a frequent trump card played by the rich and powerful to justify their exploitation of the poor. The novels and stories of Pira Sudham, written with an intention "to speak out on behalf of *the battered silent and meek ones*" (7), abound in Gothic tropes employed to demonize the oppressors and invoke the reader's sympathy for the plight of the rural poor, who continue to be taken advantage of "because many of us are illiterate, penurious and ready to accept any hard work at the lowest pay, without complaint, just like buffaloes" (8). The comparison to a buffalo, which in Thai is seen as the gravest insult, can be seen as Sudham's criticism that the mind-maiming religious and state school apparatus, where people are "taught and trained to become utterly obedient, subservient, unthinking, [and] fearing the authorities" (5), somehow compromises their humanity.

The deeply rooted belief in karma, combined with the concern about saving face, another characteristically Asian trope, forms the background of the novels of Chart Korbjitti. *The Judgment* tells the story of Fak, ostracized by fellow villagers for taking the deranged widow of his father as his wife. Although his "crime" is in fact imaginary, as he treats the woman as his mother-in-law, his reputation fades fast and he becomes an easy target of ridicule and exploitation for his neighbors. Disgraced, cheated, beaten up, and arrested, he ends his life drinking himself to death. In the final act of humiliation he is denied a proper funeral, his body being used to test a new cremation furnace instead. Korbjitti's other novel, *No Way Out*, ends on an equally dramatic note:

> Boonma was sentenced to death, but the court commuted the sentence to life imprisonment because of his full confession. He didn't appeal to the Supreme Court. He did nothing, except quietly accept his sentence. Sometimes, late at night, fellow prisoners heard him wailing, like a tortured animal, alone . . . (2003, 136)

Boonma's desire to own a house pushes him and his family into a downward spiral when he becomes a slave worker to an unscrupulous businessman, loses his wife to another man, his daughter to prostitution, his older son to thievery, and his father to suicide, and finally fails in his attempt of murder–suicide, killing his baby son but surviving himself, only to be jailed for life. Poverty, we are told, breeds only more poverty, and the ill-fated decisions are motivated by shame and fear of losing one's face, the Asian equivalents of guilt.

Indeed, guilt is hardly an issue in Asian Gothic texts, as the characters are expected to conform to social pressures, either from the fatalistic belief in karma or to maintain harmony in a collectivist community at all cost. The villagers shun Fak because they see him as a deviant, but simultaneously the fact that he is seen as such suggests to them that he is paying off his karmic debt. In other words, whatever happens to Fak, whatever others in fact do to him, is nothing more than he deserves. The villagers persecuting Fak are therefore not guilty of any form of prejudice or discrimination, for they merely act as the instruments of karmic retribution. Similarly, Boonma's decision to kill his baby and himself, just like his father's decision to commit suicide,

does not result from the feeling of guilt, but rather out of shame that their lives, having no aim, contribute to the suffering of others:

> What am I carrying on for? I can't do anything to help anyone. All I do is cause hardship. If I wasn't around, things wouldn't be like this. . . . What are you living for? There's no point in you going on. It's just an unnecessary torture. At the end of the day, we've all got to die. (112)

Saving face and social harmony are also the reasons why in a story by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Gus Muk's mother turns her back on Inem, a nine-year-old divorcée, who used to work for her. Inem, a daughter of a low-class Indonesian family, is married at the age of eight, a source of income for her parents. From then on, her only function is to be a good wife, "an object to satisfy her husband's sexual desire, to please his ego, to care for his physical welfare, and to be a target of his anger" (Kristono, 2009, 158). When her husband divorces her, she becomes an embarrassment and an economic burden to her family, for which she "could be beaten by anyone at will, by her mother, her brother, her uncles, her neighbors, her aunts" (Toer, 2004, 47), while the rest of the community "continued to uphold propriety" (47). By the end of the story we are told that Inem accepts that her destiny as a woman is to be submissive, and she returns to her family to be abused without a word of protest, yet another convert to culturally induced female masochism.

The story of "Inem" was written over sixty years ago. Writers such as Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Mian Mian depict the struggle of contemporary Asian women to forge new gender identities for themselves. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim's story "Journey" opens with a description of a nightmare:

> Last night, she had dreamt she was shut away in a subterranean world; she had wandered in labyrinths of a thick brown claustrophobia. So dense was the air that her ears felt clogged with cotton-wool, and her feet trod slippery over ground strewn with skulls. This dense silence was her holding her breath, conscious of malevolent eyes in the darkness, watching. Skulls smiled without friendship, then began moving around her, in slow monotony, circling formally, one after the other, as in a ritual dance. She knew then that if she could not open her eyes she would never find her way back. (2009, 108)

The nightmare blends in with the main protagonist's quest that sends her to the sleepy Singaporean suburbia. We are never told exactly what her errand is; it is even not certain if she knows that herself. The little parcel she retrieves "felt of dry leaves and twigs" (110), suggesting herbal medicine of some sort. The description of the effects of the medicine is also vague, but we can speculate that the herbs induced bleeding and resulted in a homemade abortion:

> Dark messes were splattered on the floor, her mother's clothes were blood-red with a flow from some secret wound, while the woman herself squatted, eyes contracted, body rigid and contorted. (112)

The story, permeated with imagery of blood, death, birth, and nursing, seems to delineate a biologically determined concept of femininity. The narrator, one of eight children in the family, unwittingly aids in the abortion of one of her siblings, and though her mother's pain and blood "lay beyond her experience" (112), she finds herself instinctively understanding. The brutal efficiency of the act has an infantilizing effect on the mother, as her daughter washes her weakened body with "hot water from the baby flask" (112) and feeds her milk. With her mother temporarily reduced to a dependent child, the girl is left alone with her nightmares and insecurities, sensing a change in the air, perhaps her own change from a girl into a woman.

Mian Mian's approach to redefining contemporary Chinese femininity is self-exploratory and confessional. On the first page of *Candy*, she writes:

> This book represents some of the tears I couldn't cry, some of the terror behind my smiling eyes. This book exists because one morning as the sun was coming up I told myself that I had to swallow up all of the fear and garbage around me, and once it was inside me I had to transform it all into candy. (2003, 1)

The book is a personalized account of radical social transformations happening in China in the 1990s. We are drawn into the dark world of Hong, filled with misfits, whose idealistic search for freedom and expression of individuality go hand in hand with self-destructiveness, addiction to drugs, sex, and intensely masochistic relationships. Hong and her friends share the disturbed sensitivity of the darkly clad characters of Poppy Z. Brite and Caitlin R. Kiernan, unfit to exist both in the old-type communist China and in the new China, epitomized in the novel by the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen, with its border-zone mentality allowing for the coexistence of legitimate businesses and the shady underworld of gangsters, prostitutes, and opportunists. As a new Chinese woman, Hong is a dangerously explosive mixture of strength and fragility, driven by a desire for self-annihilation, insanely vulnerable, and yet deriving power from her vulnerability. "I am a ditch where water has collected after the rain," (269) writes Mian Mian. Perhaps this can be seen as a metaphor for new Asian femininity, as the old hollowed-out gender models begin to overflow, unable to contain the women within.

The new and the old also counteract in the stories of K. S. Maniam which, like the two texts above, can be seen in terms of Gothic hybrids. In "Terminal," the narrator is summoned to Kuala Lumpur by a friend who grows increasingly paranoid of the changes he has been noticing in the city. He complains about "coldness on the streets" (1996, 5), and insists on participating in a forbidden ritual slaughter of a pig as the only means of upholding humanity. Skeptical at first, eventually the narrator begins to see the city people as marked by dark patches wedged into their cheeks below their eyes, acting as blinkers that "cut off everything except a self-perpetuated vision" (20). This self-absorption is seen as a dehumanizing result of encroaching urbanization. The solutions offered include escape from the city, resistance through a return to the primitive, or seeking solace in contemplation of one's own mortality.

The barbaric slaughter of the pig symbolizes the return of the primitive, understood both in terms of the pre-colonial and the pre-Islamic. The experience is seen as liberating, though it provides the characters with only momentary fulfillment, as in the end "the system" stands triumphant. The remaining two solutions focus on withdrawal from public life in order to mourn the loss in solitude. This ties in with David Punter's definition of postcolonial Gothic foregrounding impossibility and loss, in opposition to Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity understood as "the sum of positive cultural experience" (Punter, 2000, 15). And yet, at the same time, postcolonial Gothic texts such as Maniam's will always be potentially hybrid, as they involve an amalgamation of culturally incompatible conceptual apparatuses.

While Asian Gothic has to be examined in relation to the concept of the postcolonial, it is important to remember that we are dealing with a much more complex issue. Pointing to the "transdiscursivity" of Gothic, Ng argues that "[t]he Gothic, a Western literary heritage, can, with careful modification and attention to historical, ideological and cultural specificities, be deployed to address . . . Asian literatures" (2008, 2). By answering his call for "activating Gothic aesthetics in analyzing Asian writings" (2), one step at a time, we get closer to finding Asian Gothic. At the moment still very much a label without a structure, it begins to fill in with contents. And even if our search for Asian Gothic may not bring us the results we initially expected, at the end of the day we will be glad we have asked the questions.

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30
Japanese Gothic

Charles Shirō Inouye

Aesthetic descriptors help us make sense of human expression, but their easy applicability to all cultures is questionable. If David Punter and Glennis Byron find the term Gothic "notoriously difficult" to define within the Western tradition, then it becomes even harder to clarify its qualities in a widened context that would include Japan (Punter and Byron, 2004). In this essay, I will point out the major features of what might be a Japanese Gothic tradition. I will propose a widening of the term in a way that makes sense for Japan and also makes possible comparisons with other cultures where monotheism, and the rationalism that developed from it, had only limited influence.

The term *goshikku* ゴシック (sometimes also written *gochikku*) is a part of the Japanese language, but only as a transliteration of the English term. Coming from English (rather than Dutch), we can assume that it gained currency during the Meiji period (1868–1912) rather than during the preceding Tokugawa era (1600–1868). As we contemplate the appearance of something that comes into existence at a certain point in time, one problem that immediately comes to mind is the very issue of periods. If we are inclined to agree with those who assume that the Gothic is a modern import from the West to Japan, this raises two questions. First, does Japan's modern period begin with the Meiji period, as this implies? And second, was there nothing Gothic about the richness of monstrosity that characterized the Tokugawa and previous eras?

I am still probably in the minority in arguing that Japan's modern period began during the final decades of the sixteenth century, rather than when Commodore Perry "opened" the country in 1854.[1] Perhaps I am also still an outlier in thinking that modernity is not essentially Western. While the sudden emergence of a term like "Gothic" seems to support the well-established trope of the modern West spreading

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its influence to the rest of the world, the present status of Japan as the major *source* of Gothic influence today gives us pause. Could it be that Japan learned how to be Gothic from the West in the same way that it learned how to build railroads from the English and brick buildings from the Germans? Or does Japan, as the home of Ōtomo Katsuhiro's *Akira* (1988) and as the place from which the J-Horror film *Ring* (Ringu, 1998) by Nakata Hideo (1961–) radiates, have its own (still unnamed yet deeply rooted) Gothic tradition, one that existed well prior to Hirai Tarō's (1894–1965) styling himself Edogawa Ranpo?

There are other reasons to question whether the Gothic was strictly an import to Japan. For one, even if we assume that the Gothic was both Western and modern in nature, the term no longer fits that well in the contemporary West either. This is the generative point of Byron's present project to define the contemporary "Globalgothic," this nearly worldwide explosion of so-called Gothic elements – monstrosity, vampirism, grotesquery, and so on – that forces us to widen our thinking about the Gothic considerably.[2] The simple yet accurate observation that the Gothic has outgrown its modern clothes leaves critics and scholars searching for new ways to understand what the Gothic is, and was.

One possible approach would be to say that a certain *form* of the Gothic appeared and died away. We might call this familiar version *classical Gothic.* Classical Gothic was a modern reaction to the Enlightenment and rationality, one that emphasized terror and horror as a surplus, or that which could not be easily contained by reason. Another approach, which would not preclude but, rather, includes this classic formation of the modern Gothic, would consider the Gothic as a continuously evolving set of aesthetic values. This widened notion of the Gothic would allow us to think of various qualities as they existed even before and after the advent of modernity. Here again, I pose a question that I have raised elsewhere. Why should modernity exert such an influence on our understanding of all cultural phenomena when it was, in fact, merely a small portion of the whole? Being freed from the modern element of traditional formulations of the Gothic, this second broader model would also escape the narrowness of Western preoccupations with horror, death, and so on. Let us call this more inclusive phenomenon the *Pangothic*; and let us set as our goal its clarification, especially in relationship to the modern, classical formulation.

One obvious point of difference would be that, in its classical form, the Gothic is reactionary in essence. Again, it emphasizes those things that modernity did not clean up well enough: the horrifying, the grotesque, the gory and decayed, the un-dead, and so on. As Punter argues, these are all cultural spillovers from a more rationally conceived notion of modern reality, a cleaned up and sanitized world (Punter, 2007). The obvious problem with the order sought by reason, whether strictly modern or not, is that in a place like Japan monsters are ubiquitous, the barrier between the living and the dead is porous, the sacred is readily available, and the repulsive is often playfully received. Should we simply declare Japan a place where classical Gothic sensibilities are impossible, then the matter simply ends here. But why would this explanation be any more valid than the one which claims that Japan is, if anything,

more profoundly Gothic than those places where the term originated? One might argue that the term did not exist because the Japanese did not need it. This could mean, in turn, that the Japanese world was perhaps too Gothic, rather than not Gothic enough, to require definition.

Here, I will argue that Japanese culture is profoundly Gothic, if we are allowed to widen the meaning of the term appropriately: from classical Gothic to Pangothic. If there is one quality of the Japanese Pangothic that is fundamental, it would be that the supernatural is neither good nor bad, neither strictly beneficent or malevolent. According to Kazuhiko Komatsu (2007), whether a being is a *kami* (god) or a *yōkai* (monster) depends on how it is propitiated. In other words, the same being or phenomenon changes according to how it is treated and viewed.

Needless to say, the propitiation of numerous locally found gods is what animism is all about. According to Herbert Plutschow (1996), all major Japanese festivals (*matsuri*) were formalized as propitiations of, as a rule, figures of power who died wrongfully and therefore were capable of coming back to haunt the living as *onryō*, or vengeful spirits. If vengeance provides the logic of Kyoto's ancient Gion Festival (held to placate the spirit of Sugawara no Michizane), it is also central to Tsuruya Nanboku's (1755–1829) gruesome tale of Oiwa's revenge on her philandering husband in the *kabuki* play *Yotsuya Kaidan* (1825). It is similarly the motivating power in Shimizu Takashi's horror film *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2003) where this ancient trope is reactivated in contemporary form. The Japanese *onryō* belongs to no single period in particular.

If in Japan the supernatural can be either helpful or horrifying, this ambiguity has led to a situation where even *yōkai*, the frightening half of this dyad, are themselves only *sometimes* scary. The Japanese often have a familiar and playful regard for the monstrous. This is borne out in many ways. For example, a *kappa* is the city mascot of Tōno, a place made famous by Yanagita Kunio's (1875–1962) early anthropological study of the tales of the supernatural that were told by residents there.[3] As it gained definition during the Tokugawa period, a *kappa* was a monstrous creature that lived in or around bodies of fresh water. It was green, and had a saucer-like area on the top of its head which retained the moisture that gave a *kappa* its extraordinary power. While the literary record gives us many examples of these dangerous beings, during the inter-war period Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) chose to raise the creature to the level of an articulate social critic. In his parodic novella *Kappa* (1926), we cannot help but be impressed with the cultural achievements of Tok the poet, Mag the philosopher, and Krabach the pianist – all high-minded *kappa* souls dedicated to "living vigorously." Less accomplished yet also very human is **Kū**, of the recent animated television production *Ku, the Kappa, and Summer Vacation* (*Kappa no Kū to natsuyasumi*, 2007) by Hara Keiichi (1959–). Hara's *kappa* is endearing. As argued by Michael Dylan Foster (2009), even the earlier efforts of Toriyama Sekien (1712–88), who was the first to catalog Japan's numerous supernatural beings in the eighteenth century, also have a ludic, or playful, intent. Thus, many family lines can be drawn to connect Tajiri Satoshi's (1965–) kid-friendly *pokemon* (pocket monsters) with the various ances-

tors that were catalogued by Sekien hundreds of years earlier. It would be hard, in other words, to say that these present-day manifestations of *kappa* do not all belong to a larger Gothic tradition that began before and continued after the modern period in Japan.

Let us call this fundamental quality of the Japanese supernatural, where various binary qualities readily give way to each other, *bivalent ambiguity.* This readily changeable bivalence is an important feature of Japanese animism in general; and it is, as I will demonstrate, also a contributing factor to Japan's many expressions of the Pangothic. Importantly, both animism and the Pangothic are ancient. During the modern era, animism was largely suppressed by a more positivistic view of reality. Not accidentally, this is when classical Gothicism developed in Japan, when its stress on fear as horror and its de-emphasis on fear as reverence became an important thrust of rationality. It is this modern situation that is exceptional, since bivalent ambiguity requires both kinds of fear.

Essentially local in practice, animism became systematized and de-localized in the late-modern period by the institution of State Shintō, which attempted to provide a conceptual foundation for the modern nation-state by rendering local objects of worship symbolic of a single unified conceptual frame. If Joseph Kitagawa (1987) is right, ancient animism was characterized by its "non-symbolic reading of symbols": the ability to see the sacred nature of things locally present rather than linking them to a higher symbolic or metaphysical order. This is the main reason why animism resisted monotheism, which quickly tends to become symbolized and abstract in its emphasis on the invisible nature of a single omnipresent deity.

During the modern period, expression in general became more symbolic, with the result that animism declined. Consider how the god-attracting stone (*iwasaka*) at Shimogami Shrine in Kyoto became a symbol of the entire nation (and came to be sung about in Japan's newly created national anthem). Conglomerate in nature, the stone came to be considered symbolic of many individual (small stones) bound into a united whole (boulder). Inspired by this sign that linked Japan with a transcendental order of universal truths – such as the superiority of the Japanese race, the invincibility of its military forces, and so on – the Japanese people marched off to war. State Shintō, which was essentially a worship of the emperor as the symbol of the nation, gave them justification to acquire and protect colonial acquisitions. In this way, it was not unlike other monotheistic faiths that gave divine sanction to imperial ambitions.

Needless to say, this mobilization ended disastrously. The horrors of total war led to the incendiary bombing of most Japanese cities, to the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and to unconditional surrender. Discredited by defeat, the modern hegemonic structure that had supported the war effort collapsed. In the ideological vacuum that ensued, animism was gradually revived as a local practice that was no longer necessarily tied to the state apparatus.[4] As such, it helped to return the Japanese to a renewed appreciation of the bivalent ambiguity that lies at the center of the Japanese Gothic, whether pre-modern or, in its present form, postmodern.

To understand this deeply rooted ambiguity, we might consider depictions of women as they have occurred over the millennia. While it is true that the male spirit of Sugawara no Michizane is placated at the Kyoto's Kitano Tenman-gu and at many other shrines throughout the islands, more often Japan's most memorable *onryō* are female. Consider, for example, Lady Rokujō, one of the jealous lovers of the shining Prince Genji. Her jealous spirit wanders beyond her ability to control it. It chokes the life out of Genji's wife Aoi and, perhaps, is also responsible for the death of the hapless Lady of the Evening Faces (Yugao). Like them, the young Murasaki, too, must suffer because of female jealousy, as obsessively narrated in Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*, *c*.1000). At this point in the Heian period, certain Gothic conventions became established – not only jealousy and spirit possession, but also long black hair and pale skin. This particular look will have a bivalent resonance for centuries to come; as will the color combination of red and white – red blood on pale skin, the pallid female body set off by the scarlet inner lining of a wedding kimono, and so on.

Women are lovely, and they are frightening. Because of this dual nature, they are to be treated with great care. In *The Collected Tales Past and Present* (*Konjaku monogatarishū*, *c*.1120), we find a story of a woman who falls in love with a handsome priest who is traveling to the Kumano Shrine to participate in cleansing rituals there. To escape her seductive powers, he tells her that he will come back and visit her on his return home. He takes an alternative route in order to avoid her, however; and when she discovers the deception, she turns into a vengeful snake. As a serpent, she pursues the monk, who seeks a hiding place inside a large bronze bell at the Buddhist temple Dōjōji. Burning with passion, she wraps herself around the bell and turns it red hot. At the tale's end, the bell is lifted to reveal the man reduced to ashes. It was this tale that later became the basis for the well-known Noh play *Dōjōji* (early sixteenth century), which is frequently performed today. The climactic moment when the woman transforms into a serpent has become one of the most famous dance sequences of classical Japanese theater. Its suspenseful quality anticipates the later development of the modern classical Gothic, which relies even more heavily on narrative linearity to establish the increasingly prominent role of horror as suspense. Like modernity itself, classical Gothic is largely about the bad things that are going to happen. In sum, the future is what modernity both desired and feared with similar intensity.

This trope of the beautiful yet deadly woman appears variously, as foxes who transform themselves into seductively alluring women, or as the cold and deadly *yuki onna* (snow woman), whose frigid breath sucks the life out of men lost in wintry mountains. Such are a part of Japan's native oral tradition which, needless to say, is not without its examples of frightening tales. This native sense of ambiguity was greatly amplified by the introduction of Buddhist thought, as we can already see in the example just mentioned. Another case in point would be the Indian diety Hārītī, who came to Japan by way of the Silk Road and the Korean Peninsula. As Kishibōjin, she is a mother who steals and butchers human babies to feed to her own many children. In response to the outcry of suffering that this causes, the Buddha intervenes. He hides

her own eldest son beneath his rice bowl. Searching frantically for her loved one, she feels profound loss. So suffering, she learns to have compassion for others who have suffered because of her actions. She abandons her evil ways, and gains a new life as the protector of all children. Thus, we have this clearly bivalent case where a baby killer becomes the goddess of babies, expressing the latent power in women to be both nurturing and murderous.

Mantei Ōga (1818–90), writing during the final decades of the Tokugawa period, used this story in his graphic novel about Siddhartha, *Eight Aspects of the Buddha's Life* (*Shakka hassō Yamato bunko*, 1845–71). The tale was later revisited by the novelist and playwright Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939), who, in the short story "The Pomegranate" (*Kisshōka*, 1910), furthers his own obsessive interest in making women both threatening and comforting, both seductive and maternal. As a rule, his heroines are beautifully erotic, yet self-sacrificing in the way of the eternal mother who gives up her sanity, and sometimes her life, for the well-being of the male protagonist, who is almost always young and, for various reasons, sexually hesitant.

With *The Holy Man of Mt. Kōya* (*Kōya hijiri*, 1900), Kyōka established a general metanarrative that forms the backbone of most of his subsequent work. In this personal myth, a young man crosses a watery boundary and becomes a trespasser within an unstable realm of eros, death, and metamorphosis.[5] While wandering in this decidedly Gothic territory, he encounters a woman, who is both seductive and maternal. Typically, she acts as a sacrificial savior figure, shedding her blood or experiencing trial and trauma in an intercessory way so that he can return home to a place of safety. Once established, Kyōka produced numerous articulations of this general pattern. In so doing, he drew criticism from the naturalists, who considered his interest in the supernatural nothing less than retrograde. Theirs was supposedly the age of realism, and, in reaction to it, the era of the classical Gothic. Finding fewer and fewer opportunities to publish, Kyōka turned to writing plays that were even more freely imaginative and unabashedly fanciful than his novels and stories. So strangely bizarre were these works of supernatural fantasy that none of them were actually performed during his lifetime. It was not until the 1970s that they began to appear on stage.

Was Kyōka behind his times, or ahead of them? To pose this question is to clarify the nature of the Gothic in Japan. Was Kyōka a throwback to a former Pangothic time? Was he a practitioner of the classical Gothic? Or did he anticipate the postmodern era of Globalgothic? Given the so-called Kyōka boom that was stimulated in the 1970s by well-received performances by the famous *onnagata* (woman impersonator) Bandō Tamasaburō (1950–), and given the very imaginative turn that contemporary Japanese expression has taken since World War II, leading up to Suzuki Seijun's (1923–) visually extravagant, nearly incomprehensible film *Kagero-za*, we might say that Kyōka was actually ahead of his time – too fantastic to be readily appreciated by his contemporaries, who were not prepared to sympathize with Kyōka's penchant for ghosts and monstrosities. But this is only to say that, like the present explosion of figurality that digital graphics has helped to make possible, his career can be seen as a part of a larger Pangothic tradition that, from ancient times, never did encourage a

clear separation between the living and the dead, nor clearly distinguish between fear as horror and fear as reverence. If Kyōka was a modern romantic (and classically Gothic in this sense) who nonetheless anticipated the postmodern age, he was so because he owed much to the ancient pangothic past. All three phases of Japanese Gothic expression – the Pangothic, classical Gothic, and Globalgothic – reside in his work.

In a word, the Japanese Gothic – whether Edogawa Ranpō's progressive imitations of Arthur Conan Doyle or Lafcadio Hearn's (1850–1904) nostalgic attempts to capture Japan's Gothic essence prior to the onset of realism – is all about the commonality of the uncommon and a familiarity with supernatural elements that, once again, owe much to the role that animism has played over the millennia. To be sure, pre-modern, modern, and postmodern manifestations of animism are noticeably different; but they do have a common source in the intimate, lyrical relationship one has with one's immediate surroundings, which were anciently viewed to be animated with many spirits. In the Japanese formulation of the Pangothic, those surroundings are always haunted, though not in an abnormal fashion. Abnormality arises when their bivalent ambiguity gravitates to being *only* horror. This anomaly occurs when the modern period renders the spatial realm an object that is set apart at a distance from the viewer. In this sense, we can say that Japan, too, had its own classical Gothic phase, where the very possibility of an otherworld becomes, by nature, unusual and threatening. Most definitely, this was the thrust of Inoue Enryō's (1858–1919) attempts to explain away all supernatural occurrences as matters of abnormal psychology.

This modern tendency to reduce fear to horror (and to shed the reverential aspect) appears at least as early as Ueda Akinari's (1734–1809) "White Peak" (*Shiramine*, 1776), where the vengeful spirit of the retired emperor Sutoku appears in intimidating fashion:

> In the light I could clearly see his highness's features. His august face flushed crimson. His hair hung down to his knees, tangled like a thorn bush. His eyes were turned up, leaving only the whites exposed, and his fevered breath came in painful gasps. His persimmon-colored robes were covered with soot. His nails had grown as long and sharp as a beast's claws. In every detail he was the impressive, horrifying form of a demon king.[6]

This sort of exaggeration is suggestive. It intimates the beginnings of an understanding of the supernatural as no longer commonplace. As this sense of rarity increased with the onset of positivism, which was inspired by both neo-Confucianism and Dutch Studies, the Japanese Gothic became increasingly one-dimensional. That is, it became centered upon fear as terror, closing off the option of fear as reverence (as the romantic Kyōka would want to restore it). Modern logic would have us believe that in a reasonably organized world there is little to reverence besides our ability to be rational and, therefore, to dwell scientifically, beyond the need to give credence to spirits and other supernatural phenomena.

Of course, reason has a hard time explaining many things. Thus it was that the darker side of Tokugawa life was taken up with great enthusiasm by the *kabuki* theater.

This dramatic form, which began around the turn of the seventeenth century, was focused intently on the twisted. In fact, the word "*kabuki*" itself means distorted or bent. On the *kabuki* stage, distortion was created as a skillful blending of the realistic and the nonrealistic. So it is that even the relatively straightforward *A Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (*Kanadehon Chūshingura*, 1748) features a scene, "Two Shots in the Dark," where a highway robber, Sadakuro, both kills and is killed in macabre fashion. Accidentally shot by Kanpei, who is out hunting wild boar at night, Sadakuro grabs helplessly at the air in his last dying moments. A single note of the shamisen is struck repeatedly, creating a sense of tension as blood oozes from Sadakuro's mouth and flows down his white face and clothing.

The Gothic playwright Tsuruya Nanboku had *Loyal Retainers* in mind when he created *Yotsuya Kaidan.* Giving expression to a world gone awry, far beyond the socially sanctioned revenge that is the theme of *Loyal Retainers*, his "ghost tale" (*kaidan*) became a story of unrelieved mayhem and hopelessness.[7] Oiwa's grotesque deformation, like Tamiya Iemon's madness, pushed stage violence as far as it could go. The aesthetic of this quickly moving yet labyrinthine drama is similar to what we find in the murder-filled graphic novels (*gōkan*) of the time. These works of Gothic fiction are not well studied today, but their role of connecting authors like Kyōka to the ghostly past was crucial to the development of his own romantic imagination, just as they have more recently become sourcebooks for contemporary computer game designers and manga artists.

As is well known, treatments of the *kabuki* stage were a principal focus of *ukiyoe* artists. The Gothic vision of Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) gives us a good sense of both the sophistication and the metamorphic thrust of early-nineteenth-century artistic vision. Even as we move into the Meiji period, the Gothic edge of late *ukiyoe* does not go away. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi's (1839–92) chilling renderings of famous murders are a case in point. In a slightly different way, so are the many nocturnal scenes of Kobayashi Kiyochika's (1847–1915) work. Apparently, he created numerous images of night because photographers, newcomers to the world of image generation, could not produce them. That he felt challenged by this new technology is instructive. In the bright light of the Meiji Enlightenment, the classical Gothic took form as a resistance to the documentary, categorizing impulses of modern rationality.

Modernity's progressive attempt to improve upon the traditional past meant not only a turn to moveable type by Meiji-period writers of novels, but also to oil painting for Meiji-period painters. *Abura-e* was a medium that, like typeset books, was clearly identified with the West. Not unlike the mainstream of modern fiction, Western painting (*yōga*) was similarly realistic in spirit. It was not, therefore, an obvious medium for things Gothic. Harada Naojirō (1863–99) was among those Japanese painters who studied in Europe. His paintings of landscapes are done in single-point perspective, in a way that establishes a reality supposedly freed from the superficial and distorting conventions of Japan's past. The same can be said for Kuroda Seiki's (1866–1924) treatments of the human body, and his Eurocentric concept of the nude as it makes itself felt for the first time in Japan. Not surprisingly, images

of the supernatural are rare in *yōga*. They are more common in Nihonga (Japanese painting), a genre that developed in reaction to Western realism. Needless to say, for the needs of the developing nation, symbolic expressions of a uniform and comprehensive nature were needed to help establish a sociopolitical order where monsters could only be considered abnormal, as the early psychologist Inoue Enryō would have it. To a modern, scientific point of view, all forms of space became a distanced object of observation, not the lyrical home of one's deepest emotions. As anticipated by Inoue's scientific categorizations of monsters, everything and everyone was to be put into place, according to wide-reaching conceptual frames that gave order to reality in a seamless and comprehensive way.[8]

This movement toward a hegemonic vision of reality included, of course, a place in the new world order for Japan itself. It justified Japan's assertion of national superiority and eventually contributed to war on a worldwide scale. As we know, this attempt to reorder the world according to ideological conceptions of world space ended badly for Japan. As a chosen race of divine people, the Japanese overreached themselves and failed. During the Occupation that followed defeat, Sakaguchi Ango (1906–55) emerged as a popular voice of the defeated nation. He argued that Japan's all too orderly sense of modern life had led them to tragedy, and that the solution was a decadent moving away from *bushidō*-inspired militarism and the "historical forces" that had led to Japan's wartime tragedy.

Of course, the monstrous nature of the war effort had already been suggested by the work of manga artists who had been employed by the military to create images of the enemy. Their calling as propagandists for the nation gave them a subject more socially useful than the *eroguro nonsensu* (erotic, grotesque nonsense) that had flourished during the inter-war period. Ironically, the desire to raise the social status of cartoon artists by making their work politically relevant led them to nonsense of a different sort: caricatures of hateful political figures such as Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, who they portrayed as grotesque and demonic. By creating ghoulish images of the enemy, they were in effect preparing Japan for the explosion of monstrous expression that was to follow in the wake of defeat.

If anyone, it was the manga artist and animator Mizuki Shigeru (1922–) who did the most to bring Gothic sentiment back to normal postwar life. As he himself declared on many occasions, his purpose was to restore monstrosity as an antidote to the ideological poisons that had led to imperialism, and to atone for the past nightmares of total war. His work has formed a scathing critique of what had been the *real* monstrosity of modern life: not the modernist *eroguro* fantasies of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1896–1965), and Edogawa Ranpo, but, rather, the well-meaning yet genodical excesses of patriotic zeal that had led Japan to its fatal role in the Pacific War.

In his *War and Japan* (*Sensō to Nihon*, 1991), Mizuki addresses the sensitive subject of Japan's war guilt. Looking back on the calamity that led to the deaths of millions of Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Pacific Islanders, and others, Rat Man – who is a disheveled, opportunistic figure borrowed from the ghoulish world of *Ge, Ge, Ge no*

Kitarō – presents the case that Japan had missed the mark in thinking that it was "no big thing to kill someone who was not a member of the 'Yamato Race'."[9] Had the great popularity of *Kitarō* not made Mizuki a national culture hero, he certainly would not have been able to be as frank and direct in his critique of wartime Japan as he was. Certainly, the cartoonish quality of Rat Man allowed him to have a strong, trustworthy voice. In *Japan and War*, the cartoonish panels speak the truth while the realistic panels show the battle scenes and genocidal rampages that flowed from the falseness of militaristic ideology. Thus, our sympathies lie with the overt distortions of cartoons and not with the covert distortions of realism – so extreme that they appeared (hegemonically) as the very lack of distortion. Here, then, is one major difference between the classical Gothic and its further development as the Globalgothic. Distortion appears as rupture in modern times, whereas in postmodern times it appears as a part of the normal flow of reality.

In the aftermath of genocide and forced indoctrination, postwar Japan turned away from realism and toward the graphic indulgences of manga and anime. The transition from classical Gothic to the Globalgothic, which is a renewed version of the Pangothic, was further assisted by Honda Ishirō's (1911–93) creation of Godzilla (*Gojira*), a monster formed out of the radioactivity of nuclear testing in the South Pacific. Like Mizuki's manga, Godzilla's destructive rampages were an unmistakable critique of war and, especially, of nuclear armaments. But as the film series continued to develop, its critical edge became obscured by the ludic possibilities of Godzilla's highly graphic nature. Rival monsters, such as Mothra, were invented so that, instead of battling for a political cause, Godzilla came to fight for his own survival in a world that was increasingly monster-rich and ever more technologically capable of expressing the excessive graphic elements of the Globalgothic for purposes of entertainment alone.

Perhaps even more than manga, it was the kinetic powers of anime that helped move Japan into the contemporary neo-animistic age of monstrosity and metamorphosis in which we now find ourselves. Miyazaki Hayao's (1941–) vision of postmodern Japan is nothing if not metamorphic and obsessed with the theme of the end of the world. *Totoro* (1988) presents a nostalgic visit to a still sacred Japanese countryside soon to be developed out of existence, while *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001) places us in a contemporary Japan marked by fantasy zones of otherworldly powers. Here in *Spirited Away*, the reappearance of bivalent ambiguity could not be made clearer. Miyazaki's bad witch Yubaba has an identical twin sister, Zeniba, a good witch who helps the young heroine Sen discover her true nature as a compassionate young woman. On the whole, Miyazaki's critique of his society is sharp and biting. But it is less dark than that of many other postmodern artists, who have allowed their sensitivity to express a similar vision of a torn world that is badly in need of redemption.

One of the more anguished visions comes to us from Ōtomo Katsuhiro (1954–). Like Miyazaki's *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushikaa*, 1984), Ōtomo's *Akira* (1988) begins *after* the near destruction of the world. Again, the theme

of the end of the world is a familiar one; and it is one that Ōtomo's aggressive drawing style expresses with great power. The pursuit of weapons of mass destruction that is meant to save the world from destruction only hastens the catastrophic moment of collapse. Reflecting this rather hopeless situation, a postmodern version of bivalent ambiguity appears in the character of Tetsuo, a hopelessly insecure youth who comes to have power well beyond his ability to understand and control. In an unforgettable animated sequence of power gone wild, Tetsuo's body mutates into an ever-expanding, destructive pink ooze that engulfs everything in its path.

Here, then, is the dark potential of the postmodern Gothic: its ability to take dystopian vision to even more intense, more vivid levels than was ever before possible. It is as if the high-octane fuel of digital technology has been poured upon the still smoldering embers of Japan's ancient animistic tradition, leading to a brilliant conflagration that has caught the attention of the world at large. Remaining true to tradition, contemporary Japanese artists vividly and enthusiastically express radical change and transformation in stunning ways, even to the point of erasing the barriers between identifying forms. Such is the post-human message of Oshii Mamoru's (1951–) two films, *Ghost in the Shell I and II* (*Kōkaku kidōtai* I and II, 1995 and 2004). Both works feature cyborgs – Kusanagi and Battō – in leading roles. They are only part human, and this for an important reason. The extent and meaning of their humanness is the principal concern of these two contemplative films. The post-human realm is a world in which human beings, machines, plants, and animals exist on the same nonhierarchical plane. Of course, whether we call it one of animistic equanimity or a nightmarish fall from mortal power depends on what our expectations of the human were to begin with.

Challenging the parameters of the human is precisely the point of the Gothic, now brought into the mainstream by this outpouring of postmodern Japanese expression. Perhaps the greatest value of Gothic expression lies in how it continues to ask very fundamental questions. How human are we? And, what is human? As animism would also have it, perhaps the answers to these questions can only be known in relationship to all that is *not* human. This would include not only the frightful, inhumane aspects of human life that are typically showcased by the classical Gothic. But it would also include the extra-human qualities of the Pangothic as it now becomes a part of the Globalgothic as a worldwide phenomenon.

In sum, the Japanese Gothic cannot be considered apart from various animistic assumptions about reality: the centrality of fear as both reverence and horror; the bivalent ambiguity of supernatural beings that can be either *kami* or *yōkai*, depending on how they are propitiated; the multiplicity and commonplace nature of both gods and monsters; the serious and playful nature of encounters with such beings; the intimate and lyrical relationship between a person and an environment that is populated with the supernatural; the importance, therefore, of space and the visual; the nonsymbolic nature of signs that indicate the sacred and the space in which they occur; an emphasis on the local and concrete over the general and abstract; and the porous barrier between gods and human beings, and between the living and the dead.

During the modern era, as polytheistic beliefs became supplanted by realistic theories of reality and by monotheistic religious systems – such as the cult of the emperor – the monstrous and supernatural came to be associated more completely with the horror of the irrational. Despite the importance of this period to how we view Japan's own version of the classical Gothic, the period has both a noticeable beginning and an end. It stands as an exceptional middle term, a strident modern assertion of the self that sets itself apart from both ancient and postmodern versions of a Pangothic tradition. Today, the Gothic gains expression in a highly technologized, popular form. By limiting the relative importance of the human by expanding the human potential to imagine and express other possibilities – through manga, anime, the novels of Murakami Haruki (1949–), the dolls of Tokyo Kamen, and so on – technology has helped restore fear as both horror and reverence.

Notes

1 A definition of modernity and of Japan's modern period is taken up in *Figurality and the Development of Modern Consciousness* (work in progress).
2 For more on Byron's initiative, see http://www.globalgothic.stir.ac.uk
3 Yanagita Kunio, *Tōno monogatari*. For an English translation, see Morse (2008).
4 This was not the case, of course, with the Yasukuni Shrine, which remains problematic because it is said to enshrine the souls of the Japanese war dead. The visit of a prime minister to this still highly symbolic shrine still has the potential to damage Japan's relationship with other Asian nations, such as Korea and China.
5 Some might be surprised to learn that in Japan, an archipelago, water imagery usually carries a threatening weight. For more on this subject, see Inouye (1991).
6 My translation. For a complete translation of the collection from which this story comes, see Chambers (2007).
7 Actually, it was not clear that the event that inspired *Chūshingura* was socially acceptable. Tokugawa law forbade vendettas of this sort. Yet many were inspired by their lawless act of vengeance, which could be seen as an honoring of an older, traditional law.
8 For more on Inoue's rationalism, see Figal (1999).
9 For a brief discussion and English translation of *War and Japan*, see Penney (2005).

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Part VI
The Continuing Debate

31
Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics

Kate Ferguson Ellis

From its beginnings in the late eighteenth century, the Gothic genre, as seen by critics, has enjoyed a complicated relationship with women. Its feminist defenders have argued that it was practically created by women writers, who took Walpole's one attempt to move the novel away from "a strict adherence to common life" and fashioned a series of conventions that have served ever since to explore the concerns of a growing body of women readers. From this perspective, the earliest male Gothicists undertook to wrest the form from the female hands in which they saw it too firmly grasped.

But other defenders of the genre have disagreed. In 1969 Robert D. Hume argued that the defining feature of the genre was not a persecuted heroine fleeing, or trapped inside, a decaying castle, these features being simply "the sentimental fiction of the day fitted with outlandish trappings," but rather "a complex villain-hero." The genre, thus defined, "offers no conclusions," he said, but leads instead "into a tangle of moral ambiguity for which no meaningful answers can be found" (Hume, 1969, 283, 287, 288).[1] Certainly a genre that privileges moral ambiguity would fare well among critics in ways that the heroine-centered Gothic, whose "trappings" invariably include the happy ending required by its marriage plot, cannot so readily achieve.

The problem, from the eighteenth century until now, is the word "romance," a literary term whose meaning has changed over time but which always seems to be devalued by being paired with a more serious genre. "To the victors belongs the epic, with its linear teleology," David Quint has observed. "[To] the losers belongs romance, with its randomly circular wanderings." Yet the epic, which memorializes the triumph of absolute power wielded by a heroic leader, is disappearing just as the novel is coming into being. "At a time when European monarchies were acquiring power in

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unprecedented concentrations, the epic poems that should have celebrated that power failed artistically" (Quint, 1993, 9).

The staying power of the romance, however, with its nostalgic celebration of aristocratic ideology, was soon undercut by the novel. Initially the object of critical suspicion, the authors of the new genre argued that stories set in the world that the reader knew, far from "the fantastic regions of romance," to use Burney's quotable phrase, would teach their readers to reject the seductions of imaginary pleasures in favor of "sober Probability" (Burney, 1968, 8). Nevertheless reader interest in fantastic regions was attested by the popularity of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel and has sustained its intermittent popularity over two hundred years, especially among women. What this phenomenon says to, and about, women is a question that continues to foster debate among its critics, especially among those of us who are feminists.

Robert Heilman, writing a decade before Hume, argued for a division between "old" and "new" Gothic that would replace "the relatively simple thrill or momentary intensity of feeling sought by the primitive Gothic" with symbolic action and flashes of "anti-Gothic" realism. In the hands of Charlotte Brontë, these modifications lead "away from standardised characterisation toward new levels of human reality, and hence from stock responses toward a new kind of passionate engagement." This new Gothic shares with the old "the discovery and release of new patterns of feeling," but it does it the literary way, through symbolism and irony, and avoids what Heilman sees as "the easy way" taken by earlier Gothicists (Heilman, 1958, 131, 121).

Heilman's emphasis on the release of feelings as the preeminent domain of the Gothic explains the persistence of women as vehicles for delivering its effects. But Eve Sedgwick, writing at the height of the activist phase of the women's movement, was troubled by his dismissal of the work of the first Gothicists (Sedgwick, 1986). By exploring the conventions of the genre rather than dismissing them, she moved the discussion away from arguments that would confer high, rather than low, cultural status on the Gothic and showed how its depths of meaning are an integral part of its "outlandish trappings."

But the word "conventions," which is now seen at work in "realism" no less than in popular, escapist fiction, has resonance outside the realm of literary terminology. From a feminist point of view, the coherence of gender conventions keeps women oppressed. The vast, imprisoning spaces that appear so regularly in the Gothic as castles, monasteries, and actual prisons can be read as metaphors for women's lives under patriarchy, and Hume is not alone in resisting the foreclosure of ambiguity that the marriage plot imposes so relentlessly on the heroine-centered Gothic. Its happy ending requires that the monsters and madwomen, seen by many feminist critics as figures for parts of the female psyche that arouse male fear and hatred, be punished and ostracized, while "the 'good' submissive women have been rewarded with praise, marriage, admiration and sanctification" (Stein, 1983, 124).

Feminist critics of the Gothic are divided on the issue of whether or not its heroines are submissive and thus models of patriarchally defined "goodness" for their readers.

Gilbert and Gubar's influential reading of *Jane Eyre* argues that that novel's madwoman is an embodiment of levels of sexual energy unacceptable to Rochester, Brontë's reformed patriarch-in-the-making. Bertha Mason "not only acts *for* Jane, she acts *like* Jane." As the part of the heroine that responds with rage to ill-treatment, the madwoman propels and protects Jane "until the literal and symbolic death of Bertha frees her from the furies that torment her and makes possible a marriage of equality – makes possible, that is, wholeness within herself" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, 361, 362). As the inaugural figure of the "new" Gothic, Jane is not required to redeem her eighteenth-century predecessors. Nevertheless some feminist readers, myself included, do not quite buy Jane's assertion that she knows "no weariness" of her Edward's society, and wonder if the death of Bertha has not been a prerequisite for contentment with a very confined life.

In Michelle Massé's 1992 study of women, masochism and the Gothic, Jane stands outside the dyad of the beater and the beaten which Massé sees at the center of the genre. If it is a narrow ledge on which to stand, this is because masochism informs not only the Gothic but the institution of heterosexuality it expresses and reproduces. *All* Gothic heroines, Massé claims, "have been taught to want love, in whatever guise, above all else." What is called "normal" feminine development is in fact "a form of culturally induced trauma," of which "the Gothic novel [is] its repetition" (Massé, 1992, 4, 7). This claim is part of a larger debate that divided feminists in the 1980s, with some arguing that romance is merely a form of pornography tailored to the "soft core" erotic tastes of women.[2] "The two genres are linked," Massé suggests, "by their similar ideological messages":

> The Gothic uses woman's whole body as a pawn: she is moved, threatened, discarded, and lost. And, as the whole person is abducted, attacked, and so forth, the subtext metaphorically conveys anxiety about her genital risk. Pornography reverses the synecdochal relation by instead using the part to refer to the whole: a woman is a twat, a cunt, a hole. The depiction of explicitly genital sexual practice which is pornography's métier can be simply a difference in degree, not in kind, from the Gothic's more genteel abuse. (108)

From this perspective, the Gothic itself is locked "in the encapsulating social systems that engender repeated trauma" (19). If women, as its heroines or as its readers, are choosing to remain in this prison, it is because our reading has taught us that love can be found only there. Our only hope, then, is that "we too might awaken *some day* from the Gothic nightmare that is our own as well as our culture's" (9, my emphasis).

This view of the Gothic heroine as an embodiment of the Victorian precept "suffer and be still" is a complete reversal of the one put forward fifteen years earlier by Ellen Moers, her first explicitly feminist champion. Prior to Moers's writing, the word "sentimental," rather than "female," typically qualified the Gothic novel that told her story, linking her to Richardson's virtuous, suffering heroines, Clarissa Harlowe and Clementina Porretta. Ernest Baker, for instance, held that Radcliffe was "well versed

in the novel of sensibility," which conjoined virtue with spectacles of suffering to draw tears from its audience. "Her heroines, one and all, are formed in that mold" (Baker, 1934, 193). Moers takes a different view:

> For Mrs Radcliffe, the Gothic novel was a device to send maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties. In the power of villains, her heroines are forced to do what they could never do alone, whatever their ambitions: scurry up to the top of pasteboard Alps, spy out exotic vistas, penetrate bandit-invested forests. And indoors, inside Mrs Radcliffe's castles, her heroines can scuttle miles along corridors, descend into dungeons, and explore secret chambers without a chaperon because the Gothic castle, however much in ruins, is still an indoor and therefore freely female space. In Mrs Radcliffe's hands, the Gothic novel became a feminine substitute for the picaresque, where heroines could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced, far from home, in fiction. (Moers, 1977, 126)

It was these traveling heroines, Moers maintains, that would later inspire "the whole thrust in women's writings toward physical heroics, toward risk-taking and courage-proving as a gage of heroinism" long after male writers had admitted, with whatever degree of regret or despair, that adventure was no longer a possibility of modern life (131).

Yet important as these comments were for later criticism of the female Gothic, Moers slights the extraordinary amount of traveling that Gothic heroines do out of doors. Emily St. Aubert, whose castle has become metonymic for the terrors of confinement we associate with the genre, spends only a third of the novel in Udolpho. For much of the other two thirds she is traveling, first with her father, then with her aunt and the aunt's new husband, and finally with a young man she has never encountered prior to meeting him – outdoors – and deciding to flee the castle with him. Massé focuses on nineteenth- and twentieth-century heroines and misses their predecessors, who did not wait around to be rescued.

Massé does not trace the Gothic back to the eighteenth century, but Elisabeth Bronfen, whose work is similarly psychoanalytically based, has discussed the Radcliffean heroine as a hysteric whose symptoms demonstrate Freud's thesis that hysterics "suffer from reminiscences" (Freud, 1953–74b, 160). In particular, they suffer from reminiscences of trauma that have been repressed, trauma for which they may not have been actually present but which are filled in, through fantasy, with archaic material. Freud's very complicated theories about fantasy are obviously germane to the study of the Gothic, a genre so protean that the adjective "haunted" points to one of the few features that its members have in common.

Furthermore, the condition of hysteria, not only as it is currently theorized but as it was understood in the eighteenth century, is thematically central to Radcliffe's Gothic world. According to Foucault, in the eighteenth century medical writers began to shift the definition of "hysteria" away from the specific part of the female body with which it had been etymologically linked, and to focus instead on "the nerves," which carried sensations from one part to another. The more easily penetrable the

internal space, this argument goes, the more easily and rapidly can "sympathies" be transmitted, "which explains," Foucault sums up, "why so few women are hysterical when they are accustomed to a hard and laborious life, yet strongly incline to become so when they lead a soft, idle, luxurious and lax existence, or if some sorrow manages to conquer their resolution" (Foucault, 1973, 149; see also Mullan, 1988, 201–40; Barker-Benfield, 1992, 1–36[3]).

The campaign against excessive sympathy in middle-class women, who made up the bulk of the emerging market for the "impassioned writings," was carried on within the Gothic novel as well as in the world where it was published, read and reviewed (see Taylor, 1943).[4] M. St. Aubert's advice to his daughter in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* defines the task whose *successful* performance lays the foundation for the futures of all her sister heroines in the precapitalist Catholic world in which they have been placed:

> Above all, my dear Emily, said he, do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings unless we can in some degree command them. (Radcliffe, 1970, 79–80)

Radcliffe's heroines, exposed repeatedly to sights and sounds that mobilize their "sense of evil," finally succeed in their struggles to find explanations which, if they disappointed some of her critics, were nevertheless essential to the idea of a rational heroine whose suffering is temporary, which is, I would argue, her legacy to the genre.[5]

But Bronfen's Freudian reading of *The Romance of the Forest* does not produce a Gothic heroine whose "sense" outweighs her "sensibility." Adeline is "a fantasizer *par excellence*" and, as such, is "the late eighteenth-century version of the hysteric" (Bronfen, 1994, 172). Bronfen's argument is not that Adeline, who is beautiful, in danger and dependent upon "the kindness of strangers," embodies fantasies of and about women found in her culture and ours. Rather, it is *her own* fantasies that confer upon her the status of the hysteric: "those erotically encoded phantasies of self-aggrandizement which Freud sees at the core of all daydreams" combined with the staging of real traumatic events of her childhood as a repeated scene "that veils a reminiscence without entirely obliterating it" (174–5).

The plot of *The Romance of the Forest* shows Adeline being handed from man to man, each claiming to some extent the role of rescuer. With the death of her mother shortly after her birth, she is given by her uncle to the man who has murdered her father at his command. Raised by this second man as his own child, she is handed over by him to a third when the marquis, her uncle, orders her putative father to murder her because she refuses to enter a convent. This third man, in turn, hands his charge to La Motte, who has fled his creditors with his wife and takes up residence in an abbey that is not only owned by the marquis but is the scene of his crime of fratricide. All

of these men are pressed by expediency to betray Adeline, and their wives are too dependent on them to act as the mother Adeline needs.

In the face of all this, Adeline follows the advice of Radcliffe's most ideal father, St. Aubert. When Mme La Motte imagines Adeline to be the object of her husband's "illicit passion, and her heart, which now outran her judgement, confirmed the supposition and roused all the torturing pangs of jealousy" (Radcliffe, 1986, 46), Adeline is perplexed rather than retaliatory or self-blaming as she tries to explain the sudden coldness of her former friend and protector.

Later, when Adeline discovers La Motte's plans to turn her over to the marquis, she holds to her "sense of good" rather than enter "a state of such wretched suspicion":

> She now endeavored to extenuate the conduct of Madame La Motte, by attributing it to a fear of her husband. "She dare not oppose his will," said she, "else she would warn me of my danger, and assist me to escape from it. No – I will never believe her capable of conspiring my ruin. Terror alone keeps her silent." (150–1)

If Mme La Motte's fantasies show the danger of indulging one's feelings, the marquis's self-aggrandisement takes him in the opposite, Sadean direction. "It is the first proof of a superior mind to liberate itself from prejudices of country or of education," he says to La Motte. "When my life, or what may be essential to my life, requires the sacrifice of another, or even if some passion, wholly unconquerable, requires it, I should be a madman to hesitate" (222).

Fortunately for Adeline, the novel includes real rescuers as well as false ones, and they facilitate her journey along the path that Freud insisted on for his first hysterical patient, Ida Bauer or "Dora." Indeed, it seems to me that Bronfen's fantasizing Adeline resembles Freud's Dora on a number of points. Dora, too, is surrounded by male betrayal, by her father and his two friends, one the husband of his mistress whose advances toward his daughter the father encourages, the other Freud himself, who accuses Dora of repressing erotic feelings for her father's friend and refuses, like her father, to believe that her feelings of disgust and betrayal are genuine. Indeed, Freud's role in this "case" is that of the classic Gothic father, pressuring his "daughter" to marry an older man in whose sexual well-being he has a vicarious investment.

As a number of Freud's feminist critics have pointed out, Freud's first hysterical patient was embedded in a nexus of fantasizers *par excellence,* a circle that included her analyst.[6] It is they for whom it is unimaginable, and thus symptomatic of a deeper sexual disorder, that an adolescent girl would not be aroused by a handsome, virile, older man like Herr K. In a similar move, Bronfen states that, along with the novel's two adolescent male characters, "the Marquis also falls in love with Adeline." "Radcliffe thus confirms Freud's claim," she goes on to say, "that a necessary constituent of daydreams is that all men invariably fall in love with the heroine" (Bronfen, 1994, 173).

This move of Bronfen's is disturbing not so much from a literary point of view as from a political one. A common defense put forward by stalkers, rapists, and

perpetrators of sexual harassment is that the man is overwhelmed by the attractiveness of the woman, who has, in thought if not in action, encouraged him by behavior that expresses *her* fantasies and desire for male attention. If our sexual fantasies, and even our actual erotic responses, function independently from our conscious wishes and beliefs, as a number of studies have shown, then part of Freud's negative legacy for women stems from his claim that fantasies and dreams encode wishes, so that a source of pleasure in fantasy becomes *the truth* of what women want.[7]

In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline recounts several dreams, one about the marquis, her imagined father, the other three about the skeleton that does, in fact, belong to her real father, which Bronfen reads as expressions of masochism and sadism respectively. These dreams function to veil, in Bronfen's reading, without entirely obliterating a more deeply buried memory of her father's death, one that Adeline does not have but whose gaps she fills in with "repressed archaic knowledge" that she hysterically stages. I am arguing that the fantasies Bronfen finds in Adeline's dreams suggest *to Adeline* the content of the marquis's fantasies and repressed memories rather than her own.

By the end of the novel, the heroine, who saw herself wounded in her first dream, is reunited with her young lover, who has wounded, and been wounded by, the marquis. Bronfen concludes her analysis by remarking that: "as the hysteric Adeline finally arrives at the fantasy scene of marriage, she does so by moving from masochism to sadism, from the dream of her own wounded body, of dislocation and paternal threat to the dream of her father's mortality as this enmeshes with her lover's mutilation" (179). This heroine is a metaphor for an incurable romantic illness, not her own but ours. Her prison is the genre whose defining feature she is, one that many feminist critics, Bronfen and Massé in particular, have a hard time loving, even while its distance from "high culture" makes it available to new critical vocabularies and methodologies.

Perhaps this pessimistic assessment of the conjunction "women" and "the Gothic" is part of a larger, postmodern suspicion of "grand narratives," and even of any narratives. The task of the classic Gothic heroine is to escape from the castle that has become her prison, to preside over its demystification, a process that usually requires its violent destruction, and to claim the fortune and lineage that the villain has sought to make his own. Because it is set in a mythic Middle Ages and defies what Fanny Burney called "sober Probability," the genre was the natural heir to the label "romance" from which Burney and her contemporaries were attempting to distance themselves.

Yet "romance," and the young heroine who became its centerpiece, never became legitimate children. Paired with the novel, the linking of women and romance, Laurie Langbauer tells us, becomes "an ever useful ploy of a dominant system":

> Women and romance are constructed within the male order and the established tradition of prose fiction that grows out of and upholds that order; they are constructed as marginal and secondary in order to secure the dominance of men and novels. (Langbauer, 1990, 2)

In his discussion of romance paired with the epic, David Quint claims that the wandering "losers" of romance, a group in which he includes Milton's Adam and Eve, generate more complex narratives than the teleologically driven tales of epic winners, the last of whom is, of course, Milton's God. But the modern romance has itself become end-driven, detached entirely from the word "Gothic" and echoing only faintly the persecuted heroines of the eighteenth century, with whom the pairing that Langbauer decries can be said to have originated.

Unhooked from "romance," the contemporary Gothic might be titled "men on the rampage," a designation that would include more fiction of the last two decades than it would exclude. Women are still present, but they are powerless to stop the rampage and are sometimes its objects.[8] The bourgeois domestic economy that was becoming normative at the time the Gothic first emerged heightened the centrality of the mother to the child's early development and at the same time set up an ideal in which only the man would go out into the "rough world" to work. Women and children become, for the first time, dependents who decrease, rather than increase, the family income. At the same time it is the mother's job to buffer the child from the violence of the "rough world," from wherever it may come.

So "men on the rampage" has been woven into the Gothic from the beginning. Manfred's grandfather, Ricardo, poisoned his boss, the rightful owner of Otranto, and if Manfred abandons his faithful wife, attempts to marry and impregnate his dead son's fiancée in order to produce a male heir, and finally murders his daughter by mistake in order to hold onto this nice piece of real estate, who can blame him? If the eighteenth-century Gothic heroine struggled to redeem and protect the home as haven, "the shelter," as Ruskin called it, "not only from all injury but from all terror, doubt, and division," then it will be to her, and not to him, as Ruskin claimed, that will fall "the failure, the offense, the inevitable error" (Ruskin, 1912, 122).

One strand of feminist criticism of the early Gothic has focused on the absent mother. Claire Kahane finds missing mothers and an "ongoing battle" on the part of heroines "with a mirror image that is both self and other" to be "at the center of the Gothic structure," which allows her "to confront the confusion between mother and daughter and the intricate web of psychic relations that constitute their bond" (Kahane, 1985, 337). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has been read as "a birth myth, and one that was lodged in the novelist's imagination," Moers is convinced, "by the fact that she herself was a mother" (Moers, 1977, 92). Other critics have amplified this idea, noting that maternal death or abandonment is present not only for Victor and his brothers but for Elizabeth, the substitute his mother chose for him on her deathbed, for Justine Moritz, their servant wrongly condemned to death, for Felix and Agatha De Lacey and Felix's beloved Safie, the daughter of a former slave, and, most important of all, for the monster himself (see Tillotson, 1983; Fleenor, 1983, 227–79).

Frankenstein, which enrolls "science" in the service of "men on the rampage," has engendered a type of "hideous progeny" that might be called "cybernetic Gothic." In a related development, Lewis's monk, Ambrosio, who murders the hyper-innocent

Antonia along with Elvira (a mother so concerned with her daughter's purity that she copied out the entire Bible "in her own hand," deleting its "improper" passages), may be seen as the ancestor of Wes Craven's Freddy Krueger, Bret Easton Ellis's Patrick Bateman, and a host of other male characters whose drive for revenge is diffuse. David Punter hypothesizes that "we are here in the presence of a gleeful attack on the culture of therapy and social work," an attack, in other words, on some of the institutions and techniques that have attempted to make sense of, and intervene in, pathogenic behavior like child abuse, which, as in Freddy's case, is so often carried from one generation to the next.[9]

The early versions of the "men on the rampage" Gothic expressed a similar protest against the feminization of culture as their wandering "outsider" villain-heroes saw it.[10] But its misogyny and nihilism were contained within a religious discourse which, however crumbling, linked the Gothic villain to Satan's rebellion and revenge against "the happy pair" as they enjoyed "pleasures not for him ordain'd." At the same time, the Gothic heroine was working from the inside, as it were, as a participant in the debate about women as daughters, wives, mothers, rational beings, writers, and readers in an emerging domestic formation, the "affective nuclear family," working to destabilize the patriarchal underpinnings of this formation, albeit with the aim of reforming it.

Now with Lyotard's predicted end to "the narrative function" with "its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal," the Gothic takes the field, its features no less definitive of "serious literature" than of popular culture. I will make this, my final point, by looking at a novel that was not billed by its publishers nor discussed by its reviewers as a Gothic novel: *Continental Drift* by Russell Banks. Banks's hero, Bob Dubois, is neither a nihilist nor a misogynist. He is "an ordinary man" (Banks, 1985, 419). But once he sees his life in New Hampshire, a life that his wife defends, as an exact repetition of his father's, he declares: "We only *think* we're alive. We watch that fucking TV screen . . . and that makes us forget that we're not like those people at all. We're dead. They're pretty pictures. We're dead people" (34).

Bob's declaration calls to mind one of Eve Sedgwick's Gothic conventions, "live burial," a condition as intolerable for Bob as it is for Lewis's Agnes or Maturin's Alonzo Moncada. Bob therefore escapes, with his wife and resistant daughters, to work with his brother in Florida, where he is drawn more and more deeply into the death-dealing traffic in drugs and illegal aliens from Haiti. Unlike more recognizably Gothic protagonists like Joyce Carol Oates's Richard Everett of *Expensive People*, he does not kill in order to *feel* fully alive but simply to pay his bills. "It's not to live good, pal," his best friend Ave tells him. "It's just to live" (323). Only one thing offers freedom from "live burial" in our world as Bob sees it, and that one thing is more and more money.

Bob's life in the fast lane ultimately leads to a violent, premature death, but his wife and children survive and return to New Hampshire. "He will be to her," Banks concludes, "as Bob's father, brother, and best friend eventually became to him, an example to avoid" (420). In an all-encompassing Gothic world, ordinary women like Elaine Dubois are more likely to be satisfied with what they have than ordinary men

like Bob. One of her daughters, Banks tells us, will marry early and have five children. The other will follow a modified version of her father's road into drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity. Elaine will work in a canning factory until retirement, "the first signs of emphysema starting to close in on her" after a life whose "whole point" has been the raising of her children.

From a feminist point of view this seems an enormous regression. Far from contesting the enclosing walls of the nuclear family, Elaine hangs onto it as the only affective institution left. But unlike the men in the novel, her location outside the relentless capitalist pressures for *more* leaves open the possibility of happiness. Banks does not idealize this location: there is no château waiting for her and a beloved, as there always was for Emily St. Aubert. Nor is it essentialized as the source of her "true womanhood." But an unintended consequence of equality feminism has been that women, released from their essentializing ties to reproduction, are now theoretically "free" to leave the home for the ruthless "world" of production, with its myths of ever-increasing economic power – are free, that is to say, to go on the rampage.

In response to this phenomenon of "late capitalism," the driven working woman so decried by conservative social theorists, feminist theory has increasingly emphasized the positive, if perhaps in part essentialist, differences between the sexes in order to suggest that women are much less likely than men to go on the rampage. Moreover, men like Bob Dubois will be less likely to go down that road if they are not relegated to the status of outsider by social attitudes intent on keeping the rest of us "safe" from them. "Knowledge of the fact of Bob's life and death changes nothing in the world," Banks asserts. "Our celebrating his life and grieving over his death, however, will." In a world gone Gothic, it may be women whose numbers keep this possibility alive.

Notes

1 It should be noted that Hume admired Radcliffe and did not include her in his dismissal of "misnamed" Gothic modes.

2 Whether romance reading is harmful to women depends on the particular critic's view of pornography. For two views, one for and one against, see Snitow (1979, 140–61) and Wagner (1982).

3 Barker-Benfield's remarks about "the incessant references to nature as the source of religious inspiration on which the culture of sensibility insisted" (5) are particularly applicable to the Radcliffean Gothic.

4 The warning about "impassioned writings" is quoted in Tissot (1773). Simon-André Tissot (on whose work, *Traité des nerfs et de leurs maladies* [1778–80], Foucault draws) went on to claim that "of all the causes which have injured the health of women, the principal has been the multiplication of romances within the last century." Women as well as men warned of the dangers of a too heavy or exclusive diet, for women, of "impassioned writings." For Wollstonecraft's views on the work of fellow novelist Charlotte Smith, see Wardle (1947, 1000–9).

5 Scott, for instance, in his entry for Mrs. Ann Radcliffe in his *Biographical Notices* discusses at length Radcliffe's "supernatural explained," suggesting that to leave "something in the shade" may be the best way to satisfy "the taste of two classes of readers; those who, like children, demand that each particular circumstance and incident of the narrative be

fully accounted for; and the more imaginative class," which relishes the moral ambiguity that Robert Hume wants to claim as the true province of the Gothic.

6 One instance of a male fantasy being projected onto a woman as an expression of her wish occurred when Freud questioned Dora about her belief that her father was impotent and asked how this could be if his relationship with Frau K. was a sexual one. When she answered that "there was more than one way of obtaining sexual gratification," Freud immediately concluded that she was talking about fellatio, that is, about giving pleasure to a man rather than receiving it from him by "another way." Several essays in *In Dora's Case* (Bernheimer and Kahane, 1985) take up a point made by Lacan to the effect that "everyone knows that cunnilingus is the artifice most commonly adopted by 'men of means' [the phrase Dora uses ambiguously about her father] whose powers have begun to fail them" (98). Both Herr K. and Philipp Bauer complained that they "got nothing" from their wives, and Hannah S. Decker suggests that by the turn of the century "sex was still alive with the Freuds, but barely" (Decker, 1991, 92). Thus, what Freud called the "excessively repulsive and perverted fantasy of sucking at a penis," which he laboriously connected to Dora's earlier thumb-sucking and breastfeeding (Freud, 1953–74a, 47–52), seems more logically located in Freud's mind than in his patient's.

7 Daniel Goleman (1984) reports on a study of sexual fantasies which found that forced sex was the most popular sexual fantasy among lesbian women, the second most popular among heterosexual men and women and homosexual men. See also Adams, "Is homophobia associated with homosexual arousal?" (1996), which answers the title question in the affirmative.

8 The "bodice-ripper" subgenre of popular romances could be said to take these men, whose "rampage" features, as one of its defining conventions, a rape of the heroine, and bring them to the altar, their irresistible attraction undiminished.

9 Punter (l996), Chapter 7, "Contemporary Gothic Transformations," to which this section of my essay is much indebted.

10 For a fuller discussion of "outsider narratives," see Ellis (1989, 131–78).

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32
Picture This: Stephen King's Queer Gothic

Steven Bruhm

The Overlook Hotel, playground of the rich and famous in Stephen King's 1977 novel *The Shining*, is redolent with homosexuality. Its erratic finances seem to require a gay man's touch for redecorating to keep it in the black. For example, there is the current manager Mr. Ullman, a "fat fairy" (King, 1977, 21) who doubtless powders his hands to keep them smooth and white (65), yet whose capacities as an "officious little prick" (4) and "fucking little faggot" (99) have allowed the Overlook to turn a profit for the first time in years. And before him there was Horace Derwent, the "AC/DC" owner who brought the hotel back from the edge of ruin in 1949, the same Horace Derwent whose ghost continually reappears, trailed by his uxorial lover Roger (who is "only DC" [347]). In a contemporary world where "hommasexshuls" are causing riots – "They get frustrated an have to cut loose. Comin out of the closet, they call it," we hear from Watson, the summer caretaker (21) – Derwent and his queer pals have the aura of metaphor. Their spectral masquerade is a literal coming out of the woodwork, uncloseting as it were. What greater horror could we imagine, then, but to place the white, middle-class, American family – Jack Torrance, unemployed English professor turned hotel caretaker, his lovely wife Wendy, and their six-year-old son Danny – in this queerly framed castle, this Fonthill Abbey of the Colorado Rockies where Jack will eventually go mad and attempt to slay his family? And what greater relief can be afforded us than for Jack finally to kill himself and destroy the hotel, leaving the fractured remains of the family to reconstitute itself at the end of the novel?

The presence of Horace Derwent, Roger, Ullman, and other gay men in *The Shining* replicates the Gothic's long association with male homosexuality. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal work, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (which builds on the structuralist work of her earlier *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*) has

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mapped out the elements of late eighteenth-century Gothic queerness in which King's late twentieth-century characters participate. Sedgwick argues that, among other things, the eighteenth-century Gothic indulged the sensual license of aristocratic authors who were themselves affiliated with sodomitic practices – "Beckford notoriously, Lewis probably, Walpole iffily" (Sedgwick, 1985, 92). Thus, the British Gothic in the late eighteenth century was articulating the very definition of "decadence" that would come metonymically to be associated with homosexuality. This association attaches itself quite obviously to Derwent. But beyond an indulgence/condemnation of the decadent, and perhaps as its epistemological fallout, the Gothic according to Sedgwick laid the groundwork for Freud's equation of paranoia with homosexual panic. Like the case of Dr. Schreber, the paranoid Gothic usually figures a male "who not only is persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male" (Sedgwick, 1985, 91). Such paranoia will become Jack Torrance's. From a photograph of Horace Derwent, "a balding man with eyes that pierced you even from an old newsprint photo" (King, 1977, 156), to the voice of Jack's dead father coming to him over the radio, to the masquerade ball at the end of the novel, the ghosts of the Overlook gradually invade and penetrate Jack's identity. And this threat of homosexual invasion is literalized in the fears of young Danny: he is approached by the ghost of Roger to be told, "I'm going to eat you up, little boy. And I think I'll start with your plump little *cock*" (334). Thus, King effects the first of what we might call a series of queer strategies in the Gothic: an exploration and explosion of heteronormative male subjectivity. By placing Danny and Jack in the arena of historically entrenched male homosocial relations, King documents the anxiety over this forced male proximity, an anxiety that gradually yields psychic dissolution and collapse.

Sedgwick's early Gothic work concerns itself mainly with a "homosexual panic" whose real subject is heterosexuality, and particularly heterosexuality as it begins to take shape *qua* sexuality in the early nineteenth century. To understand the more contemporary queer version of that panic, we might turn to Jacques Lacan's 1948 essay, "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis." Here Lacan theorizes:

> the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short, the *imagos* that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of *imagos of the fragmented body.* (Lacan, 1977, 11)

– the imagos, in other words, of the Gothic aesthetic. According to Lacan, the kind of interpenetration of male subjects that Sedgwick will later analyze as gothicized homosexual panic proceeds from his now-famous "mirror stage," in which "the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body" (18), the image of his body in the mirror. Having inaugurated the structure of otherness by first seeing himself as reflection, the child (a male in Lacan's analytic language) is then doomed to seek in the other a confirmation of his self, a confirmation whose very necessity continually invokes in fantasy the imagos of the fragmented body listed above. In

other words, the "triumphant jubilation and playful discovery that characterise, from the sixth month, the child's encounter with his image in the mirror" (18) subtend the very transitivism that destroys the belief in a stable and unified ego. One is forced to let the other in, a force that, within male homosociality, becomes homosexual panic:

> it is by means of an identification with the other that he sees the whole gamut of reactions of bearing and display, whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviour, the slave being identified with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer. (19)

Thus Lacan defines as "captation" a visual fascination with the other that is, in a very real sense, an "erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself," inexorably seeking outside himself "the form on which this organisation of the passions that he will call his ego is based" (19).

To the degree that *The Shining* is interested in tracing the etiology of those imagos, it gives us the vivid and spectacular cinema of Danny Torrance's fantasy life. Danny is a study in mirror-stage symptomology. His mind is "a long and silent corridor . . . lined with mirrors where people seldom looked" (King, 1977, 98). However, he is not alone in that hall of mirrors. He is guided by Tony, an imaginary friend who lives deep down inside him, a friend who manifests himself in the bathroom mirror. Tony is clearly Danny's other, who Danny is but also who he will become. He is Danny's image in "a magic mirror . . . himself in ten years" who makes the current Danny "a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion" (420). But it is also Tony who introduces Danny to the world of the fantasized image, the imago that will come to haunt him at the Overlook. Beginning with the literal and material anxieties Danny feels in the face of his father's alcoholism, unemployment, and thoughts of divorce, Tony then shows Danny the images of the Overlook, images he cannot understand but which reflect perfectly Lacan's Gothic imagos of the fragmented or invaded body: stinging wasps (31), poison (32), a hand dripping blood, a hissing, stalking monster, REDRUM ("MURDER" on the mirror of his consciousness) (33). While these images undoubtedly proceed from the father's own fractured "self-image" (27), they also represent Danny's deepest experience of his own fragmentation, the anxiety produced by the reliance on a mirror other who is both a comforting confirmation of the self – Tony is, after all, Danny's best friend – and a graphic demonstration that the self is always beside itself, a halfling, a fusion.

But while conventional paranoid Gothic narratives like *Caleb Williams*, *Frankenstein*, even *The Shining* represent the mirror imago as male (as in Sedgwick's early analysis), Lacan, following Melanie Klein, sees that other as usually the mother: it is "the *imago* of the mother's body . . . of the mother's internal empire" upon which the "voracious aggression of the subject himself" is founded (Lacan, 1977, 20–1). It is the mother, he argues, who first holds the child before the mirror; it is the mother whose smiles, gestures and coos assure the child that he is not only the subject but the object of maternal pleasure; it is the mother whose implacable otherness intrudes

into the mirror reflection at the same time that she makes that reflection possible. Thus, it is the mother, Lacan suggests, whom we can find embroiled in the child's captation; she is an indelible image hovering about the periphery of the child's identity. And in the Gothic, that mother often appears as a figure of horror – dangerous, suffocating, monstrous, attempting to lure the subject back to the womb, back to the imaginary time before the ego individuation of the mirror stage, back to death. It is that mother who terrorizes Danny in Room 217. A wealthy socialite who committed suicide years earlier, her ghost appears to Danny, as well as to one of the hotel maids and to Dick Hallorann, the hotel chef. This woman is the suffocating mother writ large: Danny's hallucination focuses on her prominent breasts and pubic hair; she approaches him "grinning, her purple lips pulled back in a grimace" (217) and wraps her "fish-smelling hands . . . softly around his throat" (218). She is the mother whom Julia Kristeva, following Lacan, describes as filthy, horrifying, nauseating, corpse-like (Kristeva, 1982, 2–3), a perennial devourer who must be "abjected," cast out, made Gothic "other." As the figure who "simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject" (5), she interrupts the child's self-image at the same time that she makes it possible. Little wonder, then, that she is the first ghost in the Overlook that Danny cannot exorcise by dismissing it as a mere "picture in a book."

But the woman in Room 217 is horrifying only in proportion to her seductive attractiveness. See what takes Danny to her in the first place, the desire that lures him to the hotel room that has, Bluebeard-like, been declared off-limits to him:

> Danny stepped into the bathroom and walked toward the tub dreamily, as if propelled from outside himself, as if this whole thing were one of the dreams Tony had brought him, that he would perhaps see something nice when he pulled the shower curtain back, something Daddy had forgotten or Mommy had lost, something that would make them both happy –
>
> So he pulled the shower curtain back. (217)

The impetus to Room 217 seems less a propulsion forward in the narrative than a return, a search for repair, a regression to a time when the family was fulfilled and happy (as opposed to now, when the parents are on the verge of divorce due to damage sustained by Jack's alcoholism). Danny's captation, his obsessive desire to look "as if propelled from outside himself," foregrounds the text's concern with the child's primary narcissism, his desire to return to an illusion of unity and wholeness before the ruptures of paternal violence. For just as Danny will race to his mother's arms to be rocked and cooed at when the hotel haunts him, so here he seeks through looking a regressed identification with the mother. And what is perhaps most terrifying is that he achieves this identification. Danny is partially strangled by the woman in Room 217, an assault that gestures not only to the suffocating lure of a mother who must be abjected if subjectivation is to occur, but also to Danny's identification with his own mother. She too is almost strangled to death, but by her abusive husband. Nor is Danny the only male Torrance to take up the position of the feminine: moments before the hotel explodes at the end of the novel, Jack arrests himself from killing

Danny by turning his murderous roque mallet upon himself and smashing his own face in. What emerges from that brutalized face is "a strange shifting composite, many faces mixed imperfectly into one," faces that include "the woman in 217" (429). What her face in Jack's dramatizes is the way he occupies the place of his mother by beating himself with the mallet: for his mother had also sustained numerous beatings by her husband's cane, beatings that, in one particularly vivid recollection, attacked and destroyed her face (224). Jack is the beater here but also the beaten; he is the paternal tyrant and s/he who is tyrannized by paternity. Like Danny strangled in the bedroom, Jack adopts the position of the feminine maternal destroyed by the very mirror other of himself, the male self that must abject the feminine if it is to establish and maintain its powerful, phallic individuality. Thus, the Gothic's second queer strategy: it registers the normative male's anxiety of effeminization, his fear that, in becoming the other for another man, he will fall (back) under the sway of the maternal and identify with the very subject position that masculinity has demanded he repudiate.

Yet, while the woman in Room 217 holds to the fore the seductive, destructive lure of "the mother's internal empire," while she figures the normative man's horror of taking up the position of the feminine, she is not the "real" mother, or at least that is not all she is. For the m/other, Lacan argues, is always based on a misrecognition of something more primal, "the narcissistic relation and to the structures of systematic *méconnaissance* and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego" (Lacan, 1977, 21). Following Freud, Lacan links the captation/capture by the image of the mother to the male child's narcissistic need to form an ego on the image of his own intact and complete body. By this logic, captation is founded not (only) on the desire to reclaim the mother – her proximity, her protection, her identity as complete lover of the child – but (also) on the desire to reclaim what the mother *signifies.* If oedipal subjectivation proceeds upon the male child's "recognition" that the mother has been castrated by the father – and certainly Danny Torrance can believe no less – then she signifies for him the phallus, the phallus as removable or detachable in castration; she represents for him the possibility that he, too, may be castrated by the father. This, too, Danny recognizes, as the father pursues him to beat him with the same stick that he used to beat his wife, that beat himself-as-woman-in-217, that beat his mother. And so the "masquerade" of gender is established: the child takes up masculinity as evidenced by his father merely to avoid losing the signifier of that masculinity to the father's castrating potential. In these stirrings of oedipal subjectivation, the mother is then retroactively made into a signifier, one who holds out in fantasy the illusion of wholeness, completion, a time without desire, yet whose very status as fantasized signifier renders her lost to her own meaning. In Lacanian psychoanalysis she comes to represent the lost or losable phallus, the phallus that the child must then phantasmatically desire, the phallus that is *the* imago of the reconstituted, whole, unfragmented body/ego – a phallus whose condition is narcissism.

Following Lacan, Judith Butler (arguably the decade's most influential queer theorist) asserts that this phantasmatic phallus structures the very genesis of the erotic. She writes: "Sexuality is as much motivated by the fantasy of retrieving prohibited

objects as by the desire to remain protected from the threat of punishment that such a retrieval might bring on" (Butler, 1993, 100). More specifically:

> The oedipal scenario depends for its livelihood on the threatening power of its threat, on the resistance to identification with masculine feminization and feminine phallicization. But what happens if the law that deploys the spectral figure of abject homosexuality as a threat becomes itself an inadvertent site of eroticization? (97)

In the logic of psychoanalysis – and in the laws of the Gothic – that inadvertent eroticization seems as inevitable as it is prohibited. For if the male child must identify with the father as a way of assuming culturally conscripted masculinity, yet if (and because) that identification is driven by a phantasmatic investment in his own phallus, then the phallus of masculinity – one's own/that of another – can repeatedly and clearly emerge as the Gothic male subject's desired object. Sedgwick puts it this way: "Oedipal schematics to the contrary, there is no secure boundary between wanting what somebody else (e.g., Daddy) has, and wanting Daddy" (Sedgwick, 1985, 105–6). Butler has it so:

> To identify is not to oppose desire. Identification is a phantasmatic trajectory and resolution of desire; an assumption of place; a territorializing of an object which enables identity through the temporary resolution of desire, but which remains desire, if only in its repudiated form. (Butler, 1993, 99)

Thus we have a third queer Gothic strategy, the one I find most provocative: the effects of a homoerotic narcissism in the male subject, a narcissism made compulsory not only by oedipal subjectivation but by the very demand, at least since Lacan, that the straight male submit his seemingly transparent, unmarked sexuality to introspective analysis and self-consciousness. Forced by the vagaries of homosociality to think about himself in relation to other men, he is made to think about the phallus, his phallus, as a privileged cultural object that demands he desire it, yet condemns his desire.

While *The Shining* documents that tortured desire/prohibition of a male child's identification with the loving, tyrannical father, King makes most clear the effects of phallic narcissism by way of a subplot in Jack's fantasy life. If the inhabitant of Room 217 marked for Danny the eroticized, terrifying return to the mother and to the feminine, it has a very different (or is it the same?) resonance for Jack. With a dream-like uncertainty, Jack enters Room 217 to check out Danny's story of the murderous woman. Approaching the bathtub:

> He flung the curtain open.
>
> Lying in the tub, naked, lolling almost weightless in the water, was George Hatfield, a knife stuck in his chest. The water around him was stained a bright pink. George's eyes were closed. His penis floated limply, like kelp.

> "George –" he heard himself say.
>
> At the word, George's eyes snapped open. They were silver, not human eyes at all. George's hands, fish-white, found the sides of the tub and he pulled himself up to a sitting position. The knife stuck straight out from his chest, equidistantly placed between the nipples. The wound was lipless. (King, 1977, 271)

An overdetermined signifier, George Hatfield is the reason Jack is at the Overlook in the first place: he is the boy Jack beat up at his previous job, and because of whom he had been fired. He is the boy whom Jack had thrown off the debating team for his alleged stuttering, his abuse of a language that it is Jack's business to correct. But more important, George is the boy whom Jack sees as "insolently beautiful" (110–11), whose success in seducing women miserably contrasts Jack's own failing marriage, and who becomes the sympathetic and gorgeously erotic hero of the play Jack is trying to write. Thus, George-as-fantasy teases out the multiple anxieties in Jack that had coalesced into Danny's image of the maternal phallus: he is Jack's loss of sexual power and the desire to get it back; he is Jack's loss of intellectual power and his desire to get it back; he is Jack's loss of self and the desire to get it back. If Lacan is right to suggest that the ego is always a bodily ego, perceived in the physical form of the other, then it is not difficult to interpret Jack's hallucination of George, whose flaccid, floating penis swells metonymically through a projecting knife into the erect body of the ghost who stands in the bathtub, a vision of terrible power: "George was standing now, still fixing him with that inhuman silver glare, but his mouth had drawn back in a dead and grimacing smile" (271). The same erogenous zones that had captivated and captured Danny in the image of the dead woman – breasts, pubis, mouth – here enthrall Jack as George's physical power contrasts with his own disempowerment. George is what Jack wants; George is what Jack can never be.

"There is no need to emphasize," Lacan maintains, "that a coherent theory of the narcissistic phase clarifies the fact of the ambivalence proper to the 'partial drives' of scopophilia, sadomasochism, and homosexuality, as well as the stereotyped, ceremonial formalism of the aggressivity that is manifested in them" (Lacan, 1977, 25). As an antidote to this narcissism, he prescribes "Oedipal identification . . . by which the subject transcends the aggressivity that is constitutive of the primary subjective individuation" (23). But it is here that *The Shining* betrays Lacan, gives the lie to his treatment of narcissism and troubles his normalizing oedipal frame. To the degree that oedipal identification is constitutive of homoerotic desire – wanting the father we can never be – it elicits in Jack Torrance a murderous rage and aggressivity that is not "transcended" by his taking up the place of the father so much as it is *caused* by the requirement to take up that place. (And it is worth noting that, in the strange and shifting composite of faces that are Jack's at the end of the novel, Danny recognizes not only the woman in 217 but also Roger, Horace Derwent's DC lover.) Moreover, such a desire to take (the place of) another male is polyvalent in the novel. At the end of Jack's hallucination of George, the specter's face turns into Danny's; beautiful boys meld. This moment dramatizes Jack's anxiety over his own paternal failure, but it

does something more: it makes of his son an imago of desire, a desire rendered horrible by the mechanisms of the Gothic. If Sedgwick is right to suggest that there is an unstable boundary between wanting what Daddy wants and wanting Daddy, then the reverse might also be true: there is no stable boundary between wanting what Sonny represents and wanting Sonny. By the logic of fantasy, the Overlook's desire to eat Danny up is not disconnected from Jack's desire to "raise" him properly. Why else would Jack appear in Danny's dream as "a tiger in an alien blue-black jungle. A man-eater" (King, 1977, 130)?

Ultimately, visual spectacality is terrifying for Jack – and for the male psychoanalytic subject generally – because it carries with it a kind of knowledge. The male child who "sees" his mother's castration – figured both in her "lack" of protruding genitals and in a primal scene that emblematizes the father's power over her – is then haunted by the vision of the absent phallus, his own absent phallus, sought out in scopophilia. Jack Torrance seems at some level to recognize this indelible quality of the visual: remembering an abstract image of the face of Christ he once saw in catechism class (the image of the phallic father *par excellence*), Jack concludes:

> Once you saw the face of a god in those jumbled blacks and whites, it was everybody out of the pool – you could never unsee it. . . . You had seen it in one gestalt leap, the conscious and unconscious melding in that one shocking moment of understanding. You would always see it. You were damned to always see it. (281)

But if males in *The Shining* are "damned" to captation, it is because the compulsory drive to oedipal identification has made it so; the oedipal son cannot see otherwise. But what of other possibilities? What of an escape, even partially, from the phantasms of oedipal prohibition and desire? Might we look elsewhere in the novel for a more therapeutic or queerly useful deployment of identifications and penetrations that is not overshadowed by the monstrous law of the father? I want now to argue that the novel posits a place of knowledge that is different from that of the oedipal spectacle and of the panicked heterosexual father. It is a place that revalues the kind of "transitivism" that Lacan sees as proceeding from mirror-stage narcissism. It is a place that articulates Stephen King's fourth queer strategy: the revisioning of haunting/transparency/interpenetration through the lens of the homosexual.

"Knowledge is not itself power," writes Eve Sedgwick, "although it is the magnetic field of power. Ignorance and opacity collude or compete with it in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons" (Sedgwick, 1993, 23). *The Shining* understands this dialectic, at least as far as Danny Torrance is concerned. The "knowledge" of paternal violence that imprisons Jack and "damns" him to see the ghosts of the Overlook terrorizes Danny as well, but it does more than that. For Danny, shining is access to power as well as to horror. Danny is represented in the novel as liminal, at the edges of power, cognizant of, yet bewildered by, the mysteries around him, a halfling between son and father. Yet from the outset Danny is clearly the knower, he who possesses the visions. And, unlike the Freudian child who must repress the sexual

content of the primal scene if he is to take up full identification with Daddy, Danny is always aware of the sexual content of his captation. He doesn't shine his parents, he tells Dick Hallorann, because: "It would be like peeking into the bedroom and watching while they're doing the thing that makes babies. . . . And they wouldn't like me peeking at their thinks. It would be dirty" (King, 1977, 83). Danny's ingenuousness here merely betrays that he knows *exactly* what he gets when he shines his parents – when he penetrates them, and allows himself to be penetrated by them. He knows what makes babies, and he knows that this knowledge is forbidden. And this knowingness frames the book, from the hotel's closing day when Danny "sees" a guest thinking that she wants to "get into" the bellboy's pants (70), to the end when Tony tells Danny that "'you knew. . . . You've always known'" the secret of his father and of the Overlook Hotel, that everything is a masquerade, a false face, a lie, an empty box (419). As I have argued elsewhere, what Danny knows is that the Law of the Father is a lie because it is predicated on castration, that the father is always already disempowered by the very genesis of his masculine subjectivity (see Bruhm, 1996). Such knowledge is Danny's only by virtue of his hallucinations, his shining, and it earns him Hallorann's reluctant praise: "'Boy . . . you are gonna know everything there is to know about the human condition before you make ten'" (82). If shining offers us access to what terrifies us, it also offers us the means to defuse and undo what terrifies us.

Danny's knowledge is, of course, courtesy of Tony, his mirror-self, who establishes a same-sex economy of erotic penetration and awareness that the novel calls "shining." Yet, the limitations of that knowledge are clear: as the Other that is bounded by the self, Tony can only show Danny what at some level Danny already knows, what is deep inside him, forgotten but waiting to be resurrected. Thus, for the psychoanalyst, Danny is well on his way to psychosis, a narcissistic fixation that cannot see otherness outside the self and cannot see the self as anything but other. Lacan's prescription: the subject must distance himself from his mirror image enough to engage in the community of citizens who are recognized as distinct – in other words, he must *love* – at the same time as maintaining enough narcissistic ego gratification to recognize himself as a desiring subject seeking his mirror complement in the love object. This dialectic is crucial if we are to avoid psychosis. Pity that Jack Torrance didn't know this: the fact that he cannot maintain a self–other relationship, that he is completely taken over by the hotel and his own father (and his mother, and George), that he becomes One Of Them, completes King's study of the psychotic. But Danny he will rescue from a similar fate. Caught deep in a hallucination of the Overlook's horrors:

> Danny scrambled backward, screaming, and suddenly he was through the wall and falling, tumbling over and over, down the hole, down the rabbit hole and into the land full of sick wonders.
>
> Tony was far below him, also falling.
>
> *(I can't come anymore, Danny . . . he won't let me near you . . . none of them will let me near you . . . get Dick . . . get Dick . . .)*
>
> *"Tony!"* he screamed.
>
> But Tony was gone. (305)

Dick Hallorann, fellow shiner, will be that salvific other.

Dick is crucial to Danny and to the novel, but not because he takes the place of the father and becomes the stable, present phallus with whom Danny and Wendy can cobble together some version of The Family at the end (although that is the narrative's broad outline). Rather, Dick is crucial for the way his shining replaces oedipal panic with something much more fluidly homoerotic. Dick, whose sexual pleasures are strikingly gender-unspecific ("When he wanted fuck, why, he could find a friendly one with no questions asked" [316]); Dick, who shared close quarters with an elusive "Mr. Nevers" (97); Dick, who Wendy momentarily fears is seducing and abducting her son (81); Dick, whose shining is couched in the following language:

> He had probed at the boy's father and he just didn't know. It wasn't like meeting someone who had the shine, or someone who definitely did not. Poking at Danny's father had been . . . strange, as if Jack Torrance had something – *something* – that he was hiding. Or something he was holding in so deeply submerged in himself that it was impossible to get to. (88)

And if this probing and poking into someone's secret has the air of an outing, the conversation about shining that Dick has with Danny absolutely mirrors that of coming out, of telling our secret to a more experienced queer confidant:

> "Get you kinda lonely, thinkin you were the only one?"
>
> Danny, who had been frightened as well as lonely sometimes, nodded. "Am I the only one you ever met?" he asked.
>
> Hallorann laughed and shook his head. "No, child, no. But you shine the hardest."
>
> "Are there lots, then?"
>
> "No," Hallorann said, "but you do run across them." (81)

Yes, Danny shines hard, so hard that when he shines Dick – "Give me a blast. . . . I want to know if you got as much as I think you do. . . . Just think it *hard*" (82) – he makes Dick's mouth bleed. If shining/hallucination/captation is about finding the lost phallus, Dick and Danny seem to complement each other beautifully.

So beautifully, in fact, that they utterly rewrite the very panic of transparency that Sedgwick says constitutes the paranoid Gothic. When Danny invades Hallorann's consciousness in Florida – ("*!!! OH DICK OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE COME !!!*" [306]) – Dick must return to the hotel: "He knew the boy. They had shared each other the way good friends can't even after forty years of it. [It?] He knew the boy and the boy knew him" (316). As Dick tells Danny later, "We can't have any secrets" (445). There are no secrets because both of them shine; both of them see images "like pictures in a book," images that by now have come to perform a range of functions in the novel. To the degree that such pictures stand metonymically as *the* captated specular image of the lost phallus – and doubtless King intends the pun on "dick" – they are the basis of a homosexual narcissism that all men are "damned" to in the Overlook Hotel and in hegemonic American culture. Yet, to the degree that they are

shared, that Danny sees what Dick sees and Dick sees what Danny sees, they indicate the degree to which the imagos of the fragmented self are always inflected by the other – in this case, the other *man,* whose presence is comforting, illuminating, outing. Thus, the shining-as-captation forms a queer bond where differences (dangerous and disturbing) of age, class, and race are stitched into the mirror-sameness of hallucinated imagos, and where homosexual narcissism shuttles between two male subjects. No longer the source of panic, male interpenetration becomes a means of restoring (at least partially) the phallus lost at individuation, one's own phallus, the phallus of another man. Perhaps the difference between the queer purchase on captation and the panicked one can best be summarized by the lines of Danny's grade-school primer: whereas his and Hallorann's queer bond is predicated on the simple imperative "Look, Dick, look" (121) and its multiple denotations, Jack's paranoid psychosis twists around something more terrifying but no less erotically charged: "See Dick? Run!"

In the penultimate scene of the novel, Dick rescues Wendy and Danny from the exploding hotel to return them to civilization, but not before the Overlook has had one more crack at shining Dick. The hotel, that grand and petulant Father, reminds Dick that Danny has in effect murdered Jack and that patricide should not go unpunished. While Hallorann's sympathetic identification with Jack is momentary, it is enough to remind us of the contradiction Leo Bersani sees in the cultural status of gay men: obviously, the gay man is by definition excluded from the realm of normative power relations (and the color of Dick's skin is repeatedly invoked to hammer home that exclusion), yet by virtue of being male the gay man feels the attractive allure to the "socially determined and socially pervasive definition of what it means to be a man" (Bersani, 1988, 209). Indeed, according to Bersani: "The logic of homosexual desire includes the potential for a loving identification with the gay man's enemies" (208). A real terror for the gay reader here is that heterosexuality may become the prohibited other, eroticized precisely because it is prohibited. But within this complex of identifications and their attendant (or supposed) identities is a fifth queer strategy, the one with which I would like to conclude. Like Bersani, Stephen King refuses to sentimentalize the gay male subject; he does not present it as somehow outside or above the cultural discourses that frame it. And it is precisely because that subject is permeable, penetrable, both assertive/insertive and receptive, that it is unfixed. It refuses slavish service to what the demands of identity (*any* identity) will allow. Jack kills himself and almost his family because of his "*selfimage*"; in him masculinity and citizenry become lethal and psychotic. Conversely, to shine, to be shined, is to lose one's "own absent awareness of himself as a unique human creature" (King, 1977, 312), to lose the demands of coherent identity. And if the project of queerness is to liberate the possibility of multiple, complex, even contradictory identifications and desires, if the envisioned (captating?) goal is the dissolution of identity as a prison or regulatory regime, then the queer male self in *The Shining* "advertises," in Bersani's words, "the risk of the sexual itself as the risk of self-dismissal, of *losing sight* of the self, and in so doing it proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* as a mode of ascesis" (Bersani, 1988, 222).

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33
Seeing Things: Gothic and the Madness of Interpretation

Scott Brewster

Reading Gothic makes us see things. In identifying irrationality or pathological disturbance in Gothic writing, we admit, even succumb, to the strange "logic" of fictive madness. In defining madness in a Gothic text, whose pathology is in question? The relationship between literature and mental health is attracting increasing prominence with the rise of the "medical humanities,"[1] but as the history of the sciences of the mind demonstrates, the term "madness" lacks conceptual and clinical precision, and attempts to define or categorize it have generated a "sheer explosion" in the taxonomy of mental disorders over the last century (Porter, 2002, 214). Traditional psychoanalytic approaches have provided familiar yet problematic answers, accounting for the "madness" on display in literary texts by analyzing the pathology of authors or literary characters. Freud describes the writer as "not far removed from neurosis" and "oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs" (Freud, 1973, 423), or as an egotist shaping her/his infantile phantasies into pleasurable aesthetic form (Freud, 1990, 129–41). For classic psychoanalysis, literary madness is an aberration to be exposed or tamed, either by interpretative authority or by the artist's conscious control; madness may even be harnessed or enlisted for creative or therapeutic purposes.[2]

Yet as witnesses to literary madness, can we assume a position safely outside its flickering, enigmatic effects? While the role of the reader attracted little scrutiny from psychoanalytically oriented criticism until the later twentieth century, Freud did emphasize that the analyst, through the effects of transference, is not securely outside the subject or condition he or she analyzes. Psychoanalysis dwells in and repeats the symptoms and obsessions exhibited in the analytic encounter, leaving it perilously close to inhabiting the psychic conflicts it treats. Since critical interpretation involves readerly desires, we cannot recognize and diagnose textual madness without

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implicating our own delusions and anxieties? Shoshana Felman's celebrated reading of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* stresses that the notion of madness in the story is never *given*: the "sane," detached interpreter cannot stand outside the "mad" narrator, since he or she must look through the eyes of that privileged witness whose testimony we must nonetheless question or deny. The governess who guides us through the events ascribes madness to the children she observes, but in deciding whether she is rational or deluded in her judgment, the reader must perforce repeat her interpretative – or diagnostic – gesture, even more tenuously: how can we trust a fictional character, "sane" or otherwise? Thus Felman argues that madness becomes "the rhetorical *condition* of our reading." James's story dramatizes rather than thematizes madness, and offers no metalanguage through which to verify or explain the obsessions of the governess. As Felman concludes: "There is no position from which to judge, to *situate* madness in the other, without being suspect oneself, contaminated and included within the madness one would locate elsewhere" (Felman, 2003, 269).

Henry Maudsley declared in 1895 that "[i]t is in . . . excess that madness lies – in the exaggerated development of natural passions of human nature" (Maudsley, 1895, 314). Madness here is viewed not as extrinsic to "normal," sane behavior, but rather as an uncontrollable surplus of natural feelings and appetites. If Gothic "signifies a writing of excess" (Botting, 1996, 1), then madness is thoroughly a Gothic concern. David Punter argues that the "dreadful pleasure" evoked by Gothic fiction is "the terror that we may be in danger of losing our minds, that the madness exemplified in the text may end up . . . leaving us adrift" (Punter, 1989, 7). Gothic does not merely transcribe disturbed, perverse, or horrifying worlds: its narrative structures and voices are interwoven with and intensify the apparent madness they represent. Gothic's inexhaustible capacity to generate readings resembles an intoxicating excess of meaning. As Punter claims: "In Gothic, we are all suffering from delirium" (Punter, 1996, 186). This essay explores the compelling demands that literary madness places upon protagonists, narrators, and readers, and examines a range of Gothic texts – Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and M. R. James's "A Warning to the Curious" – that elicit in varying degrees the madness of interpretation.

Reading Madness

The self-consciousness that attends the display and observation of madness in Gothic is informed by shifting conceptions and valuations of mental health since the late eighteenth century. Early Gothic emerges in a period when the "close proximity of sensibility and madness" was discernible in discussions concerning the artistic imagination, and in developing debates surrounding nervous disorders such as melancholia, hypochondria, and hysteria in late eighteenth-century England (Howard, 1994, 102). The relationship "between the power of insanity and the authority of language" (Ingram, 1991, 5) is equally crucial in this period. Madness was gradually transformed

from a public spectacle to a subject of institutional confinement, clinical inspection, and classification. In literary and scientific writing, madness becomes a question of rational thought, reflection, and representation. Gothic too progressively internalizes madness. From the outset, it has assembled a cast of aberrant individuals who may be classed to some degree as mad: paranoiacs, schizophrenics, manic obsessives, exorbitant tyrants, overreaching scientists, and serial killers. In this respect, Gothic constitutes a pageant of folly, a theater of lurid exploitation, placing disturbed, vulnerable, and unsettling figures on display, just as madness once provided manipulative entertainment. Yet Gothic at once objectifies and lives out the madness it encounters, striving for a metalanguage to categorize or explain insanity at the same time as it performs, even participates in, that very irrationality. As such, it stages madness "from the inside and the outside" (Brewster, 2005, 79). Across the nineteenth century, supernatural elements in the Gothic gradually shift "from an otherworldly to an intrapsychic realm" (Botting, 2008, 106). Ghosts and monsters are now treated as effects of mental aberration, delusion, and delirium. Yet precisely at the moment reason casts ghosts out of the material world and relocates them in the recesses of the mind, the rational subject becomes prey to the uncanny, unseen, and often unfathomable machinations of the psyche. As Fred Botting argues, the demystification and internalization of the supernatural produces "a limit and challenge to the sway of reason," since "irrationality and mental disturbance show that the mind is never fully under the control of reason" (Botting, 2008, 116).

In his famous history of madness, Michel Foucault remarks that madness has become the "lyrical halo" of mental illness since the Renaissance (Foucault, 1996, 103). Increasingly objectified and diagnosed within the discourses of psychiatry and medical science, madness has been excluded from the realm of reason. Yet, as Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* suggests, if anything is to be reclaimed of madness beyond the clinic and the asylum, then it must be considered as a crisis of reason. This crisis must be evoked, however, in a space beyond the language of reason, eschewing the compromised discursive systems that have monitored and silenced madness for several centuries. Foucault claims that madness opens out such a privileged space within literature from the late nineteenth century onwards. Although madness and mental illness have occupied the same place in the field of excluded (insane) languages, madness has entered the "transgressive fold" of literature, and thus "undoes its relationship . . . with mental illness" (103). The increasing proximity of madness and literature suspends "the reign of language," bringing the phrases "I write" and "I am delirious" into intimate relation. When it interrupts the work of art, madness "opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer . . . where the world is forced to question itself" (Foucault, 1967, 288). Madness constitutes a linguistic or conceptual limit for literature; to encounter madness, to posit meaning or reference "outside" madness risks a collapse into a radically self-reflexive emptiness where "nothing is said" (Foucault, 1996, 101).

The breach provoked by madness erases the analytic distance between "secondary" languages, like critical interpretation, and the experience of madness. Madness thus

resists the confines of reason, according to Foucault, but this argument threatens to consolidate madness as a transcendent Other. Derrida critiques this attempt to write a history of madness "itself," outside the languages of reason and the psychiatric sciences which turned madness into the object or silenced other of reason. Derrida observes that Foucault's archaeology of this silence lends order, system, or language to that silence, thus repeating the capture and objectification of madness by classical reason (Derrida, 1978, 35). Whereas Foucault sees madness expelled from the domain of reason, Derrida traces its inclusion in the *cogito*. For Descartes, madness tests the limits of doubt, and this leads him to welcome insanity into "the most essential interiority of thought" (53). As Descartes makes visible, madness is irreducibly part of reason, inscribed within its foundations:

> A menace to all knowledge, insanity – the hypothesis of insanity – is not an internal modification of knowledge. At no point will knowledge alone be able to dominate madness, to master it in order to objectify it – at least for as long as doubt remains unresolved. (55)

Derrida argues that madness can be thought *within* reason, but only by questioning, or thinking *against*, reason:

> any philosopher or speaking subject . . . who must evoke madness from the interior of thought (and not only from within the body or some extrinsic agency), can do so only in the realm of the possible and in the language of fiction or the fiction of language. (54)

To evoke madness is a fictive or speculative process; from its outset, classical reason sustains the vertiginous possibility that no metalanguage, no objectifying discourse, exists securely outside madness. For Derrida, Foucault's most profound insight lies in demonstrating "that there are crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness" (63). Writing at the edge of delirium – creatively and critically – is the condition of thinking, the unavoidable crisis of reason. As Foucault implies, to follow the silent retreat of madness is simultaneously to track the limits of reason: "far from the pathological, in the region of language, there where it withdraws still without saying anything, an experience is in the process of being born where our thought is at stake" (Foucault, 1996, 103).

If we deploy Derrida's and Foucault's terms, Gothic fiction might be said to produce "crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness," with the fiction of its language authenticating and suspending sanity. Following Peter Brooks's model of psychoanalytic criticism, reading madness in Gothic fiction involves "a willingness, a desire, to enter into the delusional systems of texts, to espouse their hallucinated vision, in an attempt to master and be mastered by their power of conviction" (Brooks, 1987, 16). Freud's essay "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's 'Gradiva'," ostensibly designed to test his theory of dream-interpretation against fictional dreams, demonstrates this desire to occupy delusion and espouse hallucinated vision. For

Freud, Jensen's story typifies psychoanalytic treatment. It depicts the fixation of an archaeologist, Norbert Hanold, with a Roman relief of a woman walking idiosyncratically. Visiting Pompeii, Hanold meets the living embodiment of this figure. By gradually challenging Hanold's assumptions, this woman reveals herself as his childhood sweetheart, Zoe Bertgang. Her surname translates as "one who steps along brilliantly" (the equivalent of the classical Gradiva), indicating Hanold's lexical and erotic obsession, his overinterpretation of signs. Zoe, the "cause" of delusion, thus cures Hanold and returns him to sanity. Zoe, Hanold, Jensen, and Freud all undertake psychic archaeology, each piecing together fragments of speech and behavior, excavating the surface to find buried meaning. The maxim of these interpretative acts is to grant delusion a significance and structure. Freud reproduces Zoe's exemplary psychoanalytic procedure, doubling or emulating the delusion it treats: "Even the serious treatment of a real case of illness of the kind could proceed in no other way than to begin by taking up the same ground as the delusional structure and then investigating it as completely as possible" (Freud, 1990, 47).

For the analyst, to "see" delusion or mental aberration is to mimic or reproduce it, to occupy its place. Freud repeats the repetition deployed by Zoe (analyst), Hanold (patient coming to realization), and Jensen (who writes this "archaeological phantasy"). Yet such a critical endeavor risks sustaining the text's delusions. Freud is forced to stop his discussion, lest "we may really forget that Hanold and Gradiva are only creatures of their author's mind" (116). His interpretation threatens to become carried away, animating those without life – ghosts, literary characters – as if Hanold's delirium has transmitted itself to the reader. Freud recognizes and resists the privileged interpretative role played by Zoe, since to follow in her footsteps would be to inhabit the place of delusion itself and accept reading as a form of madness. This leaves objective analysis on precarious foundations. Any reading raises suspicions "that what we pretended was the author's meaning was in fact only our own" (106–7). This is the delusional possibility that lurks within every act of criticism: analysts/interpreters may "see things" in texts that are the product of their own desires, fantasies, and delusions.

Instead of rejecting this precarious reading position, Freud stresses the continuity between sanity, delusion, and madness. The structure of delusions does not differ fundamentally from "normal" convictions, and these "minor" disturbances in the interplay of mental forces shed light on both healthy psychic states and severe mental illness. Delusion and delirium offer a royal road to the truth of the mind, since every delusion conceals "a grain of truth" (103). The apparently random nature of pathological disorder may harbor a logic:

> There is far less freedom and arbitrariness in mental life . . . than we are inclined to assume – there may even be none at all. What we call chance in the world outside can, as is well known, be resolved into laws. So, too, what we call arbitrariness in the mind rests upon laws, which we are only now beginning to suspect. (35)

This hypothesis raises profound implications for psychoanalytic theory and for interpretation in general. Every sign, every detail, may conceal secret import: the critic/

analyst cannot safely delimit interpretation or deliver a final reading without the possibility of missing some further meaning. In exploring the mind, reading must be excessive, overdetermined, verging on a delirium of knowing. Freud's assertion leaves analysis on the brink of paranoia, as Derrida points out:

> For example, what is the difference between superstition or paranoia on the one hand, and science on the other, if they all mark a compulsive tendency to interpret random signs in order to reconstitute a meaning, a necessity, or a destination? (Derrida, 1984, 20)

If critical perception is susceptible to delusion, like other "normal" convictions, then the analyst is not securely placed to "cure" the delusions of patients or texts. John Lechte proposes a direct relationship between interpretation, delusion, and paranoia:

> paranoia is not a hallucinatory delusion which leaves reason and logic behind, but is, rather, based on a surfeit of reason and interpretation. In a certain sense, paranoia leads to a radical overinterpretation of a text . . . Through the notion of paranoia, madness is not so much in the writer but in the reading. We can thus ask how close such paranoia comes to being a delirium of rationality and interpretation rather than a delirium where meaning and reason would be entirely absent. (Lechte, 1996, 6)

David Punter links Gothic fiction with the concept of paranoia (Punter, 1996, 183); paranoia, or any other pathological category, is not however located "in" particular figures or sites – the pathology of an author or character – but in the process of reading. We should not look outside a text for the source of its madness: madness is already "here," haunting and driving the act of reading. Far from eluding scrutiny, madness in Gothic texts generates an excess or overabundance of interpretation. Let us now turn to several texts that oblige us to read on the edge of delirium.

A Mad Trist: "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Poe's work represents an exemplary case study in classic Freudian pathography. Marie Bonaparte's famous account locates in Poe's family circumstances – namely the disappearance of his father, the early death of his mother, and his short, doomed marriage to his ailing cousin – the origins of the anxieties and obsessions symptomatically expressed in his writing: fear of castration, compulsion repetition, a mother fixation, oedipal ambivalence toward the father, necrophiliac desire, and sadism (Bonaparte, 1949). Shoshana Felman argues, however, that caricatures of Poe, which treat his writing as an accurate transcription of his severe neurosis, totally miss "the radicality of Freud's psychoanalytic insights: their self-critical potential, their power to return upon themselves and to unseat the critic from any guaranteed, authoritative stance of truth" (Felman, 1987, 35). Inviting and resisting diagnosis of its madness, "The Fall of the House of Usher" manifests a similar ability to unground readerly authority.

The Usher house, a "mansion of gloom" with its "vacant eye-like windows" (Poe, 1990, 138) alludes to Roderick Usher's disordered mental state. Apocalyptically confirming physical and psychic degeneration, the fissured house splits apart as Roderick's reason finally cracks. The story gravitates inexorably toward the word "Madman," on which the story hinges. Who is unhinged in the story, however? Roderick's nervous "incoherence" and "inconsistency" – a troubling lack of pattern or system that can be analyzed – proves contagious to an already suggestible narrator. To contemplate the Usher house is unnerving, a "mystery all insoluble" (137). Can we "resolve all into the mere vagaries of madness" (149), as if we know whose madness, or what type of disorder, the story evokes?

Roderick's "malady," an "excessive nervous agitation" (141) and "morbid acuteness of the senses" (142), is related to a vaguely defined hereditary "fault" but never fully diagnosed. Esther Rashkin offers a fascinating and meticulous exploration of this family "condition." References in the text to mental illness, malady, and disorder are cryptonyms, "words that simultaneously hide and mutely voice part of the secret haunting the House of Usher" (Rashkin, 1992, 197). This secret revolves around an infiltration into the family line of a fraudulent heir, a usurpation of the head of the household. The fear of losing one's head – Roderick's "malady" – is thus linked with the family ghost of illegitimacy. By tracing a fictive psychic history through linguistic echoes and patterns, Rashkin identifies a "real" pathological disturbance through the narrative's lexical "madness." Yet the secret she educes excites desire in the *reader*, whose ingenuity and urge to uncover secrets generates the narrative. The reader infiltrates the family line, ushered by the text into the antechamber of madness. To comprehend Roderick's hypersensitivity, the unnerved (or perhaps suggestible) reader must seek out clues and hidden connections to explain his condition: in short, to repeat his excessive agitation, his interpretative mania.

Susceptible to the delirium wrought by the Usher estate, the narrator oscillates between apparent rationality and "the rapid increase of my superstition" (Poe, 1990, 139). Linda Ruth Williams comments that Poe's characters and narrators never "know their experience with the assurance of realist ideals"; they manifest a pervasive psychic uncertainty "more precarious than falsehood, exposing the slippery foundation of utterance" (Williams, 1995, 39). Gazing narcissistically into the tarn as he approaches the Usher house, a "strange fancy" grows in the narrator's mind, typifying the "vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me" (Poe, 1990, 139). The narrator's doubt and confusion mirrors Madeline's physician, with his "mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity" (140). His first glimpse of Madeline produces "utter astonishment not unmingled with dread" as a "sensation of stupor oppressed me" (143). The seductive logic of Roderick's obsessions grows on the narrator: "It was no wonder that his condition terrified – that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (150). On the climactic night, inexplicable nervousness claims "dominion" over the narrator, until "there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm" (150).

This infectious influence underscores the doubling at work in the narrative: the "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature" (149) that connect Roderick and

Madeline, the increasing "intimacy" (144) between Roderick and the narrator, and the events of Sir Launcelot Canning's *Mad Trist*, which find their "counterpart" in reality (153). Reading this Gothic romance to soothe Roderick through the stormy night, the narrator "indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read" (151). To echo Freud and Brooks, the narrator enters a delusional system – that of a narrative or a patient – and encounters madness on its "own" terms. To take up the ground, and repeat another's "folly," in the fiction of language is also to risk the analyst's madness.[3] Summoning ghosts and precipitating madness, the *Mad Trist* imitates Roderick's disordered "fancy": each event in the story is duplicated by "real events" in the Usher house and vindicates Roderick's superstitions, as Madeline emerges from her tomb. The narrator, prey to Roderick's wild influences, is our only "sane" witness; yet his narrative authority spins out of control. He espouses the vision of a fictional tale to relieve what he believes to be Roderick's delusional folly, while his own narrative detachment (itself a reconstruction of events) is progressively traversed by his intoxicating assignation with the Usher madness.

Madeline's dramatic entrance, which appears to shatter the conviction that Roderick is merely deluded, uncovers too much and too little about the folly we read. Roderick may have deliberately interred Madeline alive, the narrator may be complicit in her hasty burial, but we cannot validate the madness of the Usher household with certainty: to enter its space is to risk its narcotic and destructive power. Escaped from her untimely entombment, in her death throes Madeline remains, like the reader, "trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold" (155). The narrator's brain reels as he flees the collapsing house, tottering on the threshold between objective knowledge and delirium. The story collapses upon itself in conflicting directions: its fragments split centrifugally asunder like the natural vortex outside the house, whilst its proliferating narratives are whirled centripetally into dizzying, potentially bottomless, doubt. Throughout Poe's story, narratives confirm narratives and fantasies beget fantasies, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, reason and delirium. These narrative frames – figured by the bounded spaces and thresholds of the mind, house, family, tomb, and doors – *lock in* and *shut out* madness. Self-critical, questioning its limits, the story returns reading to itself, leaving it reeling between critical mastery and the *mise-en-abîme* of interpretation. Our speculations, like Roderick's wild fancies, trespass "upon the kingdom of inorganization" (147).

Consuming Madness: *Dracula*

Discursively voluptuous, in its ability to generate readings, *Dracula* is the paradigmatic Gothic text. As Ken Gelder remarks, the novel has become "productive through its consumption" (Gelder, 1994, 65). He argues that "[c]onsumption in the novel is an obsession which leads to madness" (83), a state exemplified by the lunatic Renfield.

This mad consumerism represents a vampiric economy *par excellence*: to read *Dracula* is to absorb and reproduce narratives. The narrative sustains an interpretative feeding frenzy, inducing us to "enter freely" the alien yet beguiling logic of the vampire. The addictive madness of consumption is thus a thematic and metacritical concern in the novel, reflecting a wider preoccupation with the link between intoxication and insanity within medical discourses across the nineteenth century. Richard J. Walker highlights the inconsistent attitudes toward narcotic intoxicants in medical and cultural representation: addiction was simultaneously abjured and indulged, and intoxication – the self-prescribing Dr. Seward in *Dracula* is a striking example – could be viewed as "both remedy and infection, with its ability to stimulate insanity, and with the oscillation of its effects between ecstasy and insanity" (Walker, 2007, 198). Vampirism and madness are inseparable in the text: both states invite and resist the same methods of investigation, and both produce disturbing and narcotic experiences. To understand Dracula's appetites and desires, and to comprehend Renfield's insanity, is to take up the ground of these "conditions"; the act of interpretation borders on delirium, trance, or illness, reproducing the "disease" it seeks to cure. Identifying closely with delusion or abstraction, interpretation succumbs, like the vampire's victims, to "a sea of wonders" (Stoker, 1993, 26). In occupying a system (delusion, vampirism, madness) and consuming its difference, analysis equally reproduces the vampire's power by inhabiting another's place. Those who "read" vampires or madmen are forced to reflect on their own sanity and proximity to these figures lodged in the interstices of reason. As with Poe, we discern a self-critical gesture in the novel that undoes its aim of extinguishing Dracula's threat through the triumph of reason.

The procedures adopted by the vampire-hunters to rationalize and cure vampirism resemble the techniques of classifying and objectifying madness traced by Foucault. The novel's textual construction combines the accumulation of data drawn from a range of discourses (religion, folklore, science, medicine, and law) with an array of documentary methods (diaries, private and business letters, newspaper reports, legal records, phonograph entries transcribed by typewriter). The vampire thus falls under the shadow of reason, its ancient magic purged from modernity. Yet Harker's closing comment questions the status of these assembled facts:

> We were struck with the fact that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. (444–5)

His disclaimer invites the reader to suspend disbelief and enter the narrative's delusional system, abolishing the distance between skeptical detachment and wild proof of the un-dead. The story's truth and the truth of vampirism are mutually dependent, recalling the intensely introspective, circular doubt which afflicts Poe's narrator.

Writing is a problematic means of preserving sanity in the novel, since it must reproduce the irrational events it records. Harker's journal brings repose from the "queer dreams" (4) stimulated by Transylvania, his faith in accurate facts allaying fears that his brain is "unhinged" (50). Nonetheless, his imagination runs riot when he anticipates Dracula's transfer to London: "for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his taste for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad" (67). This madness of duplication mirrors the lone vampire's mode of consumption. Just as the count's carriage goes "over and over the same ground again" (16), this "awful nightmare" conjured up by Harker's perturbed mind will be "repeated endlessly" (18). Harker's saturation of knowledge leads to brain fever, less a breakdown in health than a delirium of reason, a state which presents a greater danger than Dracula's plague. For Van Helsing, the truth about vampires proves easier to bear than madness (239). Like Dracula, he can induce delirium in others; Mina's first meeting with the good doctor makes her "head whirl round" (225). When persuading Seward to share his conviction about vampires, Van Helsing demands an overdetermined reading that approaches madness, leaving Seward "going in my mind from point to point as a madman, and not a sane one, follows an idea" (237). Van Helsing's "monstrous ideas" about vampires are "outrages on common sense" suggesting an "unhinged" mind (249). Seward subsequently muses that "we must be all mad and that we shall wake to sanity in waistcoats" (327).

The most striking example of analytic repetition is Van Helsing's hypnotism of Mina, the other privileged interpreter in the text. As the group pursues Dracula remorselessly from London to his ancestral home, she voluntarily acts as the medium through which Van Helsing can enter the vampire's mind. He attempts to turn Dracula's mesmeric power back on itself, yet in this hypnotic identification with the vampire, who is the hypnotized subject? Even as hypnosis tries to colonize Dracula's mind, he may be capable of reflecting back the hypnotist's desire to read. Gradually assuming a vampiric state, Mina grows increasingly resistant to hypnosis. Hypnotism, which operates by asking or commanding a subject to suspend rational self-reflection, is an unstable site of power; its uncertain therapeutic value was linked to contemporary medical debates on madness. As J. P. Williams observes, "[t]o Victorian medical men . . . automatism meant loss of conscious control, representing a state of virtual insanity" (Williams, 1985, 233). For example, Hack Tuke characterized hypnotic trance as "artificial insanity," and Joseph Wiglesworth contended that it produces "a tendency towards permanent mental derangement" (Williams, 1985, 235, 242). These exaggerated fears nonetheless disclose the fragile authority of hypnotic trance represented in *Dracula*: to "possess" another's thought is perilously close to inducing or confirming one's own delusion or derangement.

As hypnosis demonstrates, to grant meaning or autonomy to pathological disorder, and reproduce its terms, threatens reason: the doctor/analyst is implicated in maintaining, not treating, insanity. The case study of Renfield epitomizes this danger confronting the psychiatric sciences. Through his "pet" madman, Seward hopes to see

"inside" madness. Renfield is an "index" of the Count's behavior (Stoker, 1993, 274); like his Master, he eludes physical and conceptual constraints, escaping the confines of the asylum (in his ability to project himself beyond his cell) and evading capture within psychiatric categories. For Seward, Renfield's homicidal tendencies mark a wider perversion. Allusions to Nordau and Lombroso situate the lunatic and the vampire within the fields of degeneracy and criminal regression, signaled by a recurrent fascination with physiognomy and a struggle with Dracula's "child-brain." The inmates of late-Victorian asylums were regarded primarily as criminals, lower-class "idiots," or economic victims (Saunders, 1988, 273–96), yet Renfield is a "professional" madman in every sense, including his elemental philosophy. His accumulation of life and appetite for classification and calculation mimic Dracula's behavior, but equally his zoophagous inclinations mirror the novel's textual construction and the growing taxonomical complexity and specialization of nineteenth-century psychiatry. He reasons well (Stoker, 1993, 95), and his thought grows more remote and enticing for the medical mind-reader: "I wish I could fathom his mind . . . I wish I could get some glimpse of his mind or of the cause of his sudden passion" (152). In a prototypical psychoanalytic session, Seward resolves that "I would enter his mind as well as I could and go with him" (324).

The desire to enter Renfield's and Dracula's "deluded" passions takes medical science to the limits of competence and the threshold of reason. Daniel Pick argues that orthodox medicine is "in much the state of a sleep-walker" in the novel, failing to comprehend patients' conditions and "unable to cross conceptual frontiers" (Pick, 1984, 76). Nonetheless, the text espouses the somnambulistic passions of interpreting otherness. Just as he demonstrates a strange affinity with Dracula, Van Helsing talks to Renfield in the tone "of one addressing an equal" (Stoker, 1993, 297), suggesting an intimate reciprocity between reason and madness: "it is the very obliquity of thought and memory which makes mental disease such a fascinating study. Perhaps I may gain more knowledge out of the folly of this madman than I shall from the teaching of the most wise" (307). Van Helsing embraces the folly of interpretation, the method in madness, but only by subsuming unreason into the order of "mental disease." Under the categories of criminality and mental illness, he arrests the infinitely recessive logic of vampirism and madness. Recalling Harker's delirium of overdetermined knowledge, and Seward's concern that "we shall wake to sanity in waistcoats," Van Helsing places reason under restraint, at the precise moment it opens out to madness. The insatiability of interpretation, the ceaseless hunger of knowing, designates the vampire's horror and the madman's fascination.

In *Dracula*, delirium, excess, and the irrational constitute objects of inquiry *and* the condition of analysis. In the text's obsessive need to explain vampires and madness, interpretation verges on the "obliquity of thought," at a moment when many contemporary medical-psychiatrists were concluding that "no complete dividing line lay between sanity and insanity but rather a vast and shadowy borderland" (Pick, 1984, 78). This borderland of reason parallels the European *Mittelland* that is Dracula's natural home, a site of repetition and reversal where reason falls under the shadow of madness.

The Pursuit of Knowledge: M. R. James, "A Warning to the Curious"

At first glance, M. R. James's ghost stories represent unlikely counterparts of the lavish psychological extremity and narcotic scenarios offered by Poe and Stoker. Characteristically dealing with the incursion of the supernatural and irrational into a realm of scholarly contemplation and antiquarian interest, his stories issue metacritical warnings to curious readers about the delusions of interpretation. Duly alerted, we simultaneously yield to these unsettling, reticent stories. "A Warning to the Curious" typifies the dangerous seductions of knowing.

The story involves the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon crown by Paxton, a young visitor to the coastal town of Seaburgh. Paxton is "a reasonable kind of person" but "not quite the ordinary day-tripper" (James, 1987, 258, 260). This crown, reputedly the only survivor of three, is attributed with mythical powers that protect the East Anglian coast from foreign invasion. The "curious matter" of the three crowns is linked to the "curious story" of the Ager family, who claimed to be guardians of the crown. Paxton's curiosity is aroused whilst exploring the architecture of a rural church. An old man tells him about the crowns, and Paxton is forced to assure him "that I didn't disbelieve him" (260). The rector subsequently provokes and resists Paxton's growing belief; the local people know "but don't tell" the crown's location, and the rector does not encourage further inquiries. Prompted by a combination of suggestion and reserve, Paxton the interpreter begins to see things. By a mixture of chance and deduction, Paxton unearths the crown and is immediately haunted by a hostile presence who he believes to be William Ager, the last local descendant of the family of watchers. Paxton senses this indistinct figure constantly; people look behind him "very strangely . . . they didn't look exactly at *me*" (266). With the help of the narrator and his friend Long, Paxton returns the crown but is murdered on the beach by an unknown assailant. Like most of James's interpreters, Paxton's specialist or obsessive concerns oscillate between conviction and delusion. As an object of study, the ancient crown paradoxically cannot be objectified, just as Ager cannot be clearly seen. Apart from the mythical powers claimed for it, when restored to sight the crown awakens its dead guardian and leads to Paxton's violent death.

The peripheral or double vision experienced by Paxton and other characters epitomizes the text's narration. The story has several narrative frames; the first narrative voice records Paxton's story via a "confidant," who "witnesses" and relates the events. Paxton suffers a fatal distraction, and both narrators are also susceptible to being led astray, not least because they trust the veracity of each successive narrator. The first narrator's attention wanders in the opening paragraph, encumbering the reader with "commonplace details" which "come crowding to the point of the pencil when it begins to write of Seaburgh" (257). Writing also takes on a life of its own for the main narrator, whose rational detachment is unsettled by the initial meeting with Paxton: "It became plain to me after a few minutes that this visitor of ours was in

rather a state of fidgets or nerves, which communicated itself to me, and so I put away my writing and turned to at engaging him in talk" (258–9). The narrator abandons his writing and takes up Paxton's narrative, thus perpetuating that nervous excitement. Paxton's story "did seem a lunatic's dream when one thought over it," but his lunacy proves catching: "we were beginning to have inklings of – we didn't know what, and anyhow nerves are infectious" (264).

In every sense, the story involves a disordered point of view. The ghostly Ager inhabits a blind spot in Paxton's vision: he remains in "the tail of my eye" (265) and possesses "some power over the eyes" (266). His shadowy presence then disturbs the narrator's viewpoint, turning the observer into the observed. Paxton, the narrator and Long are perceptive observers, but this vigilance returns upon itself. They become acutely aware of Ager's silent, elusive, and monitory presence, displaying that hypersensitivity toward the unseen witnessed in Poe and Stoker. The pursuit of knowledge produces phantoms, giving way to hallucination or "second" sight. This doubling is typified by Paxton's death. Duped into believing he is following his friends – who in turn pursue him – Paxton chases his "shadow" along the beach until he endures the fate predicted by the narrator: "You can guess what we fancied: how the thing he was following might stop suddenly and turn round on him, and what sort of face it would show, half-seen at first in the mist" (272). His gruesome demise merely confirms the repetition at work in the text. Paxton must return the crown to its resting place, and meets his spectral adversary face to face on the beach. Just as reason pursues madness, the narrative's search for meaning is shadowed and confronted by the object it pursues. The narrator's attempt to piece together Paxton's life founders on that same doubleness or circularity of vision: "Paxton was so totally without connections that all the inquiries that were subsequently made ended in a No Thoroughfare. And I have never been at Seaburgh, or even near it, since" (274).

Observation begins and ends with Paxton: the reader can proceed no further. Paxton's curiosity – and the curiosity he excites – turns radically inward. Yet the narrator transgresses his own resolution; the story returns to this dead end of inquiry. The inconclusive conclusion evokes Todorov's notion of hesitation, revolving around the distinction between supernatural and psychological worlds (Todorov, 1975). In Gothic, this hesitation extends to distinctions between sanity and madness. Reading Gothic, we compulsively interpret random signs, haunted by the possibility that we may be deluded, that we have not seen enough or have seen too much. To pursue delusion leads nowhere but, as these Gothic texts have suggested, we cannot help but undertake this pursuit. The madness we find resides in us: madness in Gothic lies in the reading.

Notes

1 The Madness and Literature Network, a partnership between the University of Nottingham, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Institute of Mental Health, has been established "to develop an interdisciplinary, global dialogue

about the issues raised around representations of madness in literature." For more information, see the Network's web site: http://www.madnessandliterature.org.

2 Jungian approaches can see madness as positively beneficial and enabling for the artistic imagination (Woodman, 2005), with the psychological disintegration exhibited in Gothic texts fostering "psychic health" in its readers (Brennan, 1997, 12).

3 See Felman's discussion of the analyst as fool/*fou* (mad) in Lacan's reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter" (Felman, 1987, 47–8).

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The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Progress of Abjection

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From its beginnings in the eighteenth century, whether in "Gothic revival" architecture or the "Gothic Story" (Horace Walpole's 1765 subtitle for *The Castle of Otranto*), the modern "Gothic" as we know it has been grounded in fakery. Most neo-Gothic "trifles" from the 1740s on, including Walpole's house at Strawberry Hill, were contemporary buildings that quite openly faked their antiqued Gothicism and drew their "authenticity" more from secondhand pictures in books than standing buildings or ruins from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Similarly, *The Castle of Otranto* itself, before it added the "Gothic" label, was – and remains – constituted by layer upon layer of falsity. It was initially published in 1764 as a translation "by William Marshall" of a sixteenth-century Italian manuscript by a priest who was supposedly trying to draw "the populace" back to the "ancient errors and superstitions" of Catholicism after the Reformation – another act of deception – in a way that the Protestant "Marshall" half-admires but cannot endorse in his Preface to the first edition (Walpole, 1996, 1, 5). Within the story, too, the primal crime at the root of all the hauntings in the castle is as much a forgery as it is a murder and usurpation: the falsification of the original Prince's (Alfonso's) bequests by "a fictitious will" so that the property has passed to the line of the chamberlain who poisoned him (Ricardo), the grandfather of the present owner (Manfred), who is now desperate to shore up his claim to Otranto and the fraudulent class-climbing of his family (113, 17–18).

Even the principal hauntings in *Otranto* are by ghosts of representations rather than the shades of bodies. The gigantic armored fragments of Alfonso, beginning with the huge helmet in the castle courtyard, remind their onlookers of an effigy, "the figure in black marble" atop his tomb beneath the Church of St. Nicholas (20), and the ghost of Ricardo appears to Manfred by walking two-dimensionally out of his full-

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length portrait on the wall after first "utter[ing] a deep sigh and heaving its breast" (26).

These blatant – and admitted (10–11) – imitations of the Ghost of the Prince's father in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* seem to differ quite sharply from that three-dimensional figure walking on the battlements at Elsinore, which more directly recalls "the very armour [the former King] had on" in battle (Shakespeare, 1982, I.i.63–4) and graphic memories of his "bones, hearsed in death" (I.iv.47), so much so that the Prince of Denmark does not hesitate to "call [this ghost] Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane" (I.iv.44–5). By contrast, it appears, Walpole's *neo*-"Gothic" specters and virtually all the levels of his "Gothic Story" are signifiers of signifiers, much more prone to drifts from and falsifications of their foundations. In that way, they match how much the very word "Gothic" by 1765 has drifted away from accurate references to the medieval Goths, or even to the churches or the castles of the Middle Ages that often had little to do with the Goths themselves (see Madoff, 1979).

This basis of Gothic fictions in the signs of already partly falsified signs turns out to be fundamental to the development of this mode from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, both in the most influential texts of the Gothic tradition and (as I will show later) in prominent recent variations on these in films as well as novels and stories. Terry Castle has rightly shown us how the Gothic "romances" of Ann Radcliffe in the 1790s are governed by a "spectralisation" of whatever is depicted, a mental turning of every perceived object (especially the obviously "painted" scenery) into a ghost-like figure that is distanced from what it signifies. The transformation of Walpole's sighing portrait into the suddenly breathing artificial creature of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) haunts this monster's creator with several losses of foundational meaning: the creature's distortions of Frankenstein's intentions and thus its independence from his original vision; the reader's inability to decide between its "reality" and falsity (as with a counterfeit coin or a book); its threat to accelerate the supplanting of human reproduction by mechanical or symbolic production; and its reference primarily to older texts as opposed to people or objects (see Cottom, 1980; Hogle, 1980). Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is less about finding a mere duality within a single respectable Victorian body than it is about substituting one "stamp," a "second form and countenance," in the signifying of the self to others. Stevenson's Jekyll deceptively fabricates an "aura or effulgence" that conceals (or "hides") a "war among [his] members," in part by leading his "second form" to "slop[e his] own hand backwards" and commit forgery in the sense of "supplying [his] double with a [different] signature" (Stevenson, 1987, 105–6, 104, 111).

The narratives within narratives of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), too, though its pattern of stories within stories is at least as old as Walpole, go so far as to employ the most modern forms of communication at the time – from newspapers to stenography to photos and phonograph recordings – to show how the "bleeding" of England by the "un-dead" vampire-Count from a castle in Transylvania, along with his metamorphosis from shape to shape, is bound up with the ways that *fin de siècle* selves and "realities" are hollowed out and reconstituted by representations of representations

(see Wicke, 1992). By 1910, Gaston Leroux's original novel *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* points to the skeletal and self-masking "Erik's" artificial underground world beneath the Paris Opera as but one counterfeiting of a modern existence in which "everyone is at a masked ball" above ground or below it, in public or in private (Leroux, 1959, 55, my translation). To penetrate to the Gothic depths of the falsely antiquated palace of the arts in this novel, and hence to get at the deepest truths behind all the "hauntings" on its surface, is to do as Leroux's Opera managers do: to place tribute money in an envelope, as in the purchase of the book, and to receive back from the "underground" blatantly counterfeit notes, ones even labeled "[the Bank of] St Farce" (303), as though there is no level beyond other levels at which signs give way to realities, no place at which points of reference are not already specters of counterfeits.

If, then, the Gothic is so continuously based on ghostings of the already spectral, or at least resymbolizations of what is already symbolic and thus more fake than real, what does this basic and ongoing dimension of it have to do with the Gothic's cultural and psychological force in our culture since 1765? How is its grounding in falsified antiquity connected with what so many students of the Gothic now see in it: the struggle between different discourses based on different class-based ideologies (see Punter, 1980; Miles, 1993; Howard, 1994; Kilgour, 1995)? Why, as ideologies and conflicts between them change over time, does the Gothic's signifying of mere signifiers become more prominent rather than less? What has its recounterfeiting of the already counterfeit to do, especially in these latter texts, with Gothic fiction's much-noted ability to disguise but also to harbor many of the most deep-seated psychological conflicts and anxieties in Western middle-class readers (always the Gothic's principal audience)? How is it that a mode based on a kind of fakery can both contain and arouse those half-conscious/half-unconscious feelings that are the objects of Freudian psychoanalysis, that influential set of schemata for which the neo-Gothic helped to provide a topography?

In particular, how do Gothic fiction's roots in counterfeitings of the past enable it to perform what several more recent critics have found it enacting: a process of "abjection," as defined in Julia Kristeva's neo-Freudian *Powers of Horror* (1980)? In abjection the most multifarious, inconsistent, and conflicted aspects of our beings are "thrown off" onto seemingly repulsive monsters or ghosts that both obscure and reveal this "otherness" from our preferred selves that actually exists very much *within* ourselves. Recalling that "abjection" literally means "throwing off" and "being thrown under," *Powers of Horror* finds the quintessential state of primordial nonidentity to be the condition of being half inside and half outside the mother at the moment of birth and of being half dead and half alive in that state, primordially hovering between logically contradictory states. It is this betwixt-and-betweenness – which can take many other forms, including a person's emergence from a welter of different existential, class, racial, and sexual or gendered conditions – that most of us in the West strive to "throw away" from ourselves as repugnant, and "throw under" a cultural norm as being outside it, in order to interpret ourselves and be interpreted as having a solid "identity," a oneness with ourselves instead of an otherness *from* ourselves *in*

ourselves (Kristeva, 1982, 3–60). The Gothic, we now see, depicts and enacts these very processes of abjection, where fundamental interactions of contrary states and categories are cast off into antiquated and "othered" beings, particularly in *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dracula*, and *The Phantom of the Opera* (see Hogle, 1988, 1998; Halberstam, 1995; Hurley, 1996; Žižek, 1991), the Gothic novels most frequently adapted for stage and screen. Why, then, are specters of what is already counterfeit particularly useful in our culture for these kinds of abjective "otherings," even in theatrical and film versions that are less explicit than their originals about the gothicized "otherings" they all enact? What is it about the Gothic pattern of resymbolizing the fake that lends itself to being a locus of abjection? Why, too, have the different kinds of abjection developed as they have in Gothic fictions over time, along with transformations in how the counterfeit archaism is resignified in the construction of later Gothic works? How and why has Gothic abjection progressed as it has – even recently – as part of the historical, cultural, and artistic development of the Gothic specter of the falsified past? After all, the horror we feel at the monstrous "abject" figure has also proven to be, for both Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, our revulsion when we come too close to directly contacting "the Real," the senseless amorphousness (what Immanuel Kant hinted at in the 1780s with his chaotic "Manifold" bombarding the senses) where all that our representations strive to distinguish is actually a welter of indistinguishable elements concatenating together, like the bodies of mother and child at birth, and there is no separating subjectivities from the welter of physical elements blurring violently into and out of each other, whether these underlie arenas of social interaction or moments of individual perception (see Žižek, 1991). It is this pre-conscious and pre-symbolic welter, for Kant the level of the *Ding an sich* (the "Thing in itself") never fully accessible to the perceiving subject and its representations, that is the ultimate obscurity or dissolution of understanding which Gothic monstrosities and crumbling antiquities intimate as behind them, the ultimate causes of terror and horror. The monstrosities, in fact, keep us from beholding that level of the Thing directly because their references to the Real are re-presented by fake, and thus half-comforting, symbolizations. What is it in Gothic ghosts of the already ghostly that allows them to play such a double game from the 1760s to this day?

I want to propose the beginnings of some answers to these questions here, first by returning to the literary and ideological foundations of the "Gothic" – epitomized by what I call "the ghost of the counterfeit," the symbolic basis of it – and then by discussing how those foundations have been transformed over the last three centuries by drives that are basic to them from the very beginnings of the neo-Gothic mode. To start with, we must realize that Walpolean Gothic fakery is not as different from its source in the Shakespearean specter as it appears to be. In fact, the neo-Gothic turns out to be referring, with its ghosts of various kinds, back to a Renaissance symbolization of the self that was already "counterfeit" in Shakespeare's day (as I will soon show): hence the Gothic sign as the *ghost* of the counterfeit. Fictions arising from the "Gothic revival" therefore oscillate between different discourses of self-definition in the eighteenth century because they are later and more uprooted signifiers of the

conflicts in modes of symbol-making and beliefs about "self fashioning" that arose in fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Europe. Once these ideological tugs-of-war reach the articulations of them in the eighteenth-century Gothic, they manifest the transitional quality of that era for rising middle-class readers, a tug-of-war in which aging and once-aristocratic concepts of signification pull nostalgically backward while newer, more early-capitalist alternatives make cultural capital out of the older ones so as to advance the power of the self through an "enterprise" that is supposedly more "free" than it was.

By allowing such an emphatic conflation of beliefs and interplays of feeling, where ideologies and their symbols pull in different directions at once, Gothic fiction, with its ghosts of counterfeits, becomes a site into which widely felt tensions arising from this state of culture can be transferred, sequestered, disguised, and yet played out. Indeed, such a cultural locus, since it employs symbols from earlier times largely emptied of many older meanings, quite readily becomes a symbolic space into which the fears and horrors generated by early modern cultural changes – including the welter of the Real that such changes help to continue – can be "thrown off" or "thrown under" as though it all exists more in the now obscure and distant past than in the threatening present. This process soon proves malleable enough for different cultural quandaries to be abjected in the Gothic at different times, in part because the basis of the Gothic in the ghost of the counterfeit includes drives toward change within its own dynamic. As these inclinations are carried out, particularly throughout the nineteenth century, the Gothic re-faking of fakery becomes a major repository of the newest contradictions in and anxieties about the unknowable Real in Western life that most need to be abjected by those who face them, so that middle-class Westerners can keep constructing a distinct sense of identity. The progress of abjection in the Gothic is inseparable from the progress of the ghost of the counterfeit, particularly as that symbolic mode and the ideologies at war within it keep employing each other – and acting out abjections – both to conceal and to confront some of the most basic conflicts in Western culture.

When I refer to "the counterfeit" that is recounterfeited by the Gothic, I am borrowing from Jean Baudrillard's history in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) of how Western assumptions about signs have changed in Europe and America since the Middle Ages. By this account, the tacit understanding that signifiers should refer to their referents in ways that are fundamentally "counterfeit" was the most widely assumed, though usually a pre-conscious, belief about signification from the Renaissance to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. Thinking and articulating in terms of the counterfeit meant viewing signs the way Shakespeare's Hamlet sees the Ghost, as drawing us toward an image's "appearance that it is bound to the world" ("I'll call thee Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane"), yet as finally holding out only a "nostalgia for the natural referent of the sign" to which the image might not really be connected (Baudrillard, 1993, 51), so much so that Hamlet also refers to his father's specter as a "questionable" figure that might have merely "assume[d] a pleasing shape" in order to deceive him and others (I.iv.43, II.ii.596). This conflicted view of the sign's refer-

ence is especially visible when Hamlet presents his mother with portraits of his dead father and his uncle/stepfather in her bedchamber and explicitly calls them "The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (III.iv.54). He means *both* that these pictures can be viewed as accurate portraits of the men depicted (including the "grace" of the truly royal brother and the "mildew'd" quality of his usurper) *and* that what is attached to one figure (such as "the precious diadem") can be all too easily transferred to the other, who then becomes a sanctioned but at least partly false substitute for the original king, a counterfeit ruler in the sense of being a fake one (III.iv.55, 64, 100). Such a double conception of "counterfeit" emerged in the Renaissance of the literate classes because that era saw the first widespread effulgence of a truly mercantile or early capitalist economy and the assumptions on which it was based. Educated Europeans felt that they were leaving behind the age of the "*obligatory* sign," the notion of signifiers as always referring to an ordained status in people and things where "assignation is absolute and there is no class mobility" (Baudrillard, 1993, 50). Status and the signs of cultural position associated with it came to be regarded as more transferable depending upon economic success. The quite strict "endogamy of signs prior to status-based orders" gave way to the "transit of values or signs of prestige from one class to another" (51). Signs could therefore serve, on the one hand, as partially empty and nostalgic recollections of older fixed statuses ("King, father, royal Dane") and, on the other, as announcements of statuses that were really recoined from older signs of them, achieved by acquisitive rhetorical shiftings from one person or class to another. The result could be a "questionable shape" that often gained cultural standing only from its observers, whether the person displaying it was originally entitled to that status or not.

It is this duplicity in the counterfeit of the Renaissance and after that the eighteenth-century Gothic, more blatantly than other kinds of fictional discourse, takes to later extremes over a century and a half after the *Hamlet* that it partly imitates. In using the *term* "Gothic" and some of what had become attached to it, though, the Walpolean Gothic exploits even more the transferability of the counterfeit signifier by further uprooting the nostalgic references in its Renaissance "original." The image or fragment of that nostalgia, as in Walpole's ghost of a *portrait* or his enlarged pieces of an *effigy*, takes over the position of the past referent (Hamlet's remembered father) in the neo-Gothic sign. Hence, throughout the "Gothic revival" in the eighteenth century, the remnant of "obligatory" or "natural" meaning is replaced as the sign's point of reference by counterfeits *of* that remnant: portraits or armor hung on walls, painted landscapes (the "picturesque"), illustrations of the medieval "Gothic" in books, performances or editions of Shakespeare, falsely "authentic" reproductions (from sham Gothic "ruins" on estates to James Macpherson's "Ossian" poems), or pieces broken off archaic structures and reassembled quite differently, as in Walpole's Strawberry Hill. The supposedly medieval "endogamy" of sign and status is reduced to a trace of itself, left to be vaguely longed for but also partly thrown away, though never quite completely. Walpole's attraction to the Gothic, he tells us in his letters, is to the relics of "centuries that cannot disappoint one," because "the dead" have become so

disembodied, so merely imaged (as in *Otranto*'s use of Catholic images in which Walpole does not believe), that there is "no reason to quarrel with their emptiness" (Walpole, 1937–83, vol. 10, 192).

The counterfeit, or more precisely the Renaissance counterfeit of the medieval, has now become the evacuated "signified" of the Gothic signifier, which is thus the ghost of the counterfeit. The neo-Gothic is therefore haunted by the ghost of that already spectral past and hence by its re-faking of what is an already a mere emblem of the nearly empty and dead. *The Castle of Otranto* and its immediate progeny consequently reflect, in one direction, a longing for the securities of the "obligatory" medieval sign now receding behind Renaissance representations and, in a counter-direction, the opportunistic manipulation of old symbols by a new class-climbing acquisitiveness (Ricardo's and Manfred's, as well as Walpole's). The "Gothic revival," we should remember, occurs in an economy of increasingly "free-market" enterprise that is trying to look like a process sanctioned by older imperatives, yet is also seeking to regard the old icons as empty of meaning whenever they inhibit post-Renaissance and Protestant acquisition, the aim of the increasingly dominant middle class that becomes the principal readership for "Gothic Stories." Walpole, himself poised between aristocratic and bourgeois capitalist positions (see Clery, 1995, 60–79), thus quickly replaces his fraudulent Preface to *Otranto*'s first edition with a second one in 1765 that acknowledges the initial fakery (thereby becoming its ghost) and then applies the "Gothic" label to the several ghosts of counterfeitings I have already noted in his text, partly as a consequence of – and as a way to further – the success of his "little piece" in the marketplace (Walpole, 1996, 9).

Now we see more of the basic foundations behind Gothic fiction's (in)famous oscillation between "conflicting codes of representation or discourses" (Miles, 1993, 11), which takes the form in *Otranto* and many of its successors of a "contradiction between the traditional claims of landed property and the new claims of the private [bourgeois] family; a conflict between [at least] two versions of economic 'personality'" (Clery, 1995, 77). This struggle and the cultural capacity to symbolize it are based on the fundamental interplay in the Gothic ghost of the counterfeit between regression toward the counterfeits (including the ideologies) of the estate-based past, on the one hand, and the irreverent use of the counterfeit's images, once they are seen to be emptied out, as cultural capital for "free" bourgeois circulation and profit, on the other. Its basis in the ghost of the counterfeit provides the means by which the Gothic, even in the twentieth century, mediates undecidably between social and cultural orders that are simultaneously fading into the past (the priestly and the old aristocratic, for example) and rising into prominence (the capitalist and the industrial or even the post-industrial).

The same basis, in addition, provides an impetus for the Gothic mode to change over time. The counterfeit itself changes into later sets of assumptions about the ways signs refer, especially after its very late stage as a ghost of itself in the eighteenth-century Gothic. Indeed, as the counterfeit becomes its ghost in Western thinking, it is already moving, in the Gothic and elsewhere, toward the early industrial view of

the signifier as a *simulacrum*, a symbol repetitiously manufactured from a pattern or mold (which is itself a ghost of the counterfeit). The turning of the sign's past referent into an empty relic, however nostalgic, which then has to be duplicated to be marketed, means that the grounds of signification must eventually become mechanical "production," where discourse is based on the possibility, albeit one that conceals itself, of "producing an infinite series of potentially identical beings (object-signs) by means of technics," "the *serial* repetition of the same object" (Baudrillard, 1993, 55). Because of this emerging and then accelerating shift, driven even faster by the Industrial Revolution, Walpole could leave orders for reissuing *The Castle of Otranto* and other works from his own printing press at Strawberry Hill (Walpole, 1923, 89); the Gothic, especially after the early works of the extremely "spectral" Radcliffe, could become an industry of imitations of itself in the 1790s as publishers and readers sought "mechanical means to reduplicate [her and their phantasmic] images of the world" (Castle, 1987, 251); and the breathing Gothic specter of what was already counterfeit could eventually become the constructed prototype (or mold) that was the creature of Victor Frankenstein, designed to be the instigator of a "new race," provided that biological reproduction could first be mechanically reproduced in the form of a female creature, potentially a last step prior to people being given over entirely to the industrial manufacture of their very beings (see Hogle, 1998, 192–3).

Moreover, the changes in the Gothic *and* its ghosting of the counterfeit do not stop with the ascendancy of mechanical reproduction. The simulacrum, after all, is inherently inclined, once post-industrial technology permits its transformation, to dissolve itself into sheer *simulation*, the (un)grounding of Western discourse in a hyperreality of signs referring to other signs that cannot root itself even in quasi-industrial molds. Here, "serial production gives way to [the] generation [of images of images] through models" in a "cyberneticized social exchange" that controls Western humanity "by means of prediction, simulation, programmed anticipation and indeterminate mutation, all governed . . . by [a vast] code" of signifiers of signifiers of signifiers (Baudrillard, 1993, 56, 60). Consequently, when the nineteenth century turns toward the twentieth and the industrial simulacrum begins to generate modern and postmodern simulation, Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll finds himself criss-crossed, as if by a "programme [he has] hardwired into [his] cells" (58), with numerous possible self-images (or "auras") offered to him in the simulation discourses of his own day. He consequently realizes that every person "will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens" (Stevenson, 1987, 104; see also Hogle, 1988) – a kind of chaotic "Real" – even though he chooses some particular bifurcations of himself (civilized/troglodytic, high-bourgeois/low-life, etc.) encouraged by discourses that still dominate the code of his moment. Even closer to the turn of the century, Stoker's Dracula so attempts to consume English life before leaving Transylvania, by reading numerous documents from the "London Directory" to "the Law List," that he sets himself up both for turning the English people he penetrates into "un-dead" evacuated images of their former selves and for being gradually "read" and evacuated himself in "the mass of material of which the record [of him] is composed," at the

base of which "there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting" that turns out to be as vampiric as its subject (see Stoker, 1993, 31, 486; also Wicke, 1992). Then, with the twentieth century just under way, Leroux's phantom of the Paris Opera, the supreme institution of "high culture" at the center of its city, reveals that the Opera's attempt to sublimate mixed-class and carnivalesque life into the most refined of high art is really based on the permeability, rather than the solidity, of its class-defining boundaries. The "masked ball" at the Opera created to contain and restrict the carnivalesque can be invaded by a panoply of uninvited simulations, particularly in an intrusion by an Erik costumed as Edgar Allan Poe's "Red Death," who embodies a host of signifiers of signifiers ranging from the operatic to the carnivalesque to the American magazine tale to the popular journalism that was Gaston Leroux's own class-crossing discourse of multiple media (see Leroux, 1959, 175–93; Hogle, 2002). The Gothic becomes increasingly obsessed with representing the specters of modern technology by the twentieth century, as we saw earlier, because the contradictory tensions in the eighteenth-century ghost of the counterfeit have shifted their ground along with the counterfeit's shift in Western culture toward the simulacrum and modern simulation.

As it turns out, too, the very contrary tensions that drive the ghost of the counterfeit and virtually demand the changes in it are the ones that make it possible first to situate the "unconscious" and the "abject" in Gothic fictions and then to fill those outcast locations with changing combinations of "othered" multiplicities. To be sure, Leslie Fiedler was right in the 1960s to suggest that "the memorials to a decaying past" on which the Gothic is based are places where the rising middle class can articulate and mask its anxiety over usurping past aristocratic power – its fear of the "father," one might say – and can simultaneously locate in an archaic "buried darkness" a possible "disintegration of the self" from its loss of older pre-definitions, a dissolution that can also be felt as a regression to the "maternal blackness" (another version of Lacan's "Real") or a desire both to return to and to avoid reabsorption by the "mother" (Fiedler, 1966, 129–32). Such a reading of the Gothic firmly demonstrates that this mode's symbolic structure helped found the "spaces" in the Freudian map of the infantile and pre-conscious psyche, and that psychoanalysis is therefore the product of a particular cultural configuration, a kind of class and generational struggle symbolically rendered, rather than simply a scheme for showing the eternal nature of the mind's "deeper levels."

This helpful view, however, would not have been possible – nor would the Gothic configurations it is often used to interpret – without the basic process of the ghost of the counterfeit already at work, pulling its discourses back toward disintegrating and hollowed-out antecedents and simultaneously allowing those past forms to be transferred into a newer ideological structure of relationships, including newer modes of symbolic exchange, through which the middle class works to define itself. As this symbolic and ideological dynamic proceeds, it opens up a vaguely older and receding "pastness" in its ghosting of the counterfeiting of an even older world, and at the same time it empties that archive of many meanings accepted in those earlier times so that more current anxieties can place what they fear (and conceal themselves) in

that space. If these anxieties are particularly concerned with how an acquisitive class may define itself against its bankrupt "upper" and its "dirty lower" counterparts, then that gaping archival location can become a symbolic repository where all that is "grotesque" for the middle class in itself and its surroundings (its complex "Real") can be cast off as primordial but as "unconscious." This unconscious can be taken, as many middle-class people, especially Freudians, have viewed it, to be a purely psychological container of memory traces and older appetites, a protection of this concept of pure mentality from its wider social dimensions, as in the Gothic's frequent focus since Radcliffe on the internalities of characters' thoughts.

The ghost of the counterfeit and its progeny, though, turn out to be even more necessary for the psychological and class-based "otherings" and their distancings of the Real carried out in the "abjections" of Gothic fictions. What middle-class people need most, in order to seem to have "identity," is a method of apparently removing, from themselves or their immediate environment, inconsistencies that range from physical or psychic sensations that might be characterized as body-, class-, or gender-crossing to social interconnections that might seem too heterogeneous in their mixing of distinct cultural levels, however artificial and ideological such distinctions are. The Gothic, as we have begun to see, provides just the sort of symbolic and backward-looking specters and grotesques that allow betwixt-and-between conditions, particularly layers of different anomalies, to be "thrown over" into them and "thrown under" a seemingly authoritative cultural norm (from Frankenstein's university to the "Crew of Light" in *Dracula* to the phantom's Paris Opera) which declares such mixtures to be irretrievably "other" while they also remain hauntingly attractive. Gothic fictions could not work this way were they not fundamentally governed by ghosts, then simulacra, then simulations of what is already counterfeit in the past. Yet there is also a countering drive in the counterfeit, and even more of one in its later ghost, whereby selves or signs, like infants only partly "inside" mother, strive to throw off these past limits, to break "outside" them (albeit with memories of them), toward a "free-market" quest for self-definition through fragments of older, as well as newer, signifiers circulating in the wider culture. Consequently, the self or signifier in this symbolic scheme wants to increase its mobility toward a status or statuses (such as being the class-climbing owner of a castle, the "father" of a new race, or an opera composer and stockholder) vaguely promised by free-market conditions. It therefore seeks to throw off what pulls it backwards, the Real or the otherness-from-itself connected with being half inside and half outside the maternal/paternal/now counterfeited past, and to do so in recastings of the very archaic and fragmented signs in which the multiplicity of the self seems to be both grounded and disoriented. Employing the ghost of the counterfeit virtually *demands* that there be some abjection, since the process of recounterfeiting is always trying to reach beyond its own anomalous situation, its being pulled backwards and forwards, by reusing the very past counterfeits that it keeps rejecting as empty and dead.

Even so, cultural and psychological abjection, however much it keeps using ghosts of counterfeits well suited for symbolic abjection, does not always "throw off" the same anomalous conditions. There is a close connection between the conflicted

multiplicities that are disguised in a Gothic tale at a certain historical moment and the stage of resituating the counterfeit that is dominant at that particular time. *The Castle of Otranto* abjects, and so is haunted by, a cacophonous mix of class postures and "economic personalities" that blur the aristocratic and the sentimentally bourgeois. After all, it plays out the ghost of the counterfeit at the point of its greatest (if also its most pre-conscious) acceptance, a moment when the "ghostly" side of its symbolic foundation both feels the draw of what the past counterfeit seems to promise and yet rejects many of the cultural conditions or beliefs that once offered that promise, so as to market an ever-acquisitive selfhood which can manipulate empty anachronisms toward the crafting of a "new route" (Walpole, 1996, 10). By the time of *Frankenstein*, the ghost of the counterfeit has been substantially subsumed within the dictates of the rising industrial simulacrum, including the anxieties it causes and the desires it prompts. Frankenstein's creature, clearly a figure in which the ghost of the counterfeit has become a semi-manufactured mold intended to generate copies, is therefore a locus of abjection that grotesquely, but also half-sympathetically, embodies the bourgeoisie's oscillation between pursuing acquisitive middle-class science and industry, on the one hand, and, on the other, acknowledging its Real, yet hidden, connections with the homeless poor, the gigantic working class, women domesticated to the point of invisibility, and several colonized and enslaved races (from the yellow to the black on the creature's face), the economic foundations of all middle-class pursuits which the creature counterfeits and disguises by also serving as a recreation of fake-body experiments by medieval and Renaissance alchemists (see Hogle, 1998, 185–7, 192–4).

It is this very large set of contradictions in middle-class aspiration that the ghost-of-the-counterfeit-become-simulacrum both urges us to face and keeps us from having to accept, all by abjecting the entire complex, along with other anomalies, into an artificial creature that is uncannily like us and radically different from us all at once. Stoker's Dracula, nearly eighty years after *Frankenstein*, also provides a scapegoat "other" onto whom a host of *fin de siècle* English fears – of foreign invasion (especially by Jews), voraciously independent women, the blurring of genders, the mixing of different racial bloods, a sliding between homo- and heterosexuality, the *de*volution that might come with accepting Darwinian evolution, and others – are vividly abjected and sequestered (see Halberstam, 1995, 83–106). These are all located in 1897, though, in a ghost of the counterfeit who is now a series of nearly endless simulations of himself, in large part because he is continually consumed by symbolic technologies that both never seem to quite contain him (either in a mirror or in a recording) and finally reduce him to their ever-multiplying signs of his absence in a virtually bottomless "mass of type-writing." The seemingly intensified threats of mixing races, classes, genders, and sexual orientations are bound up with the fear of people being "bled" by simulations of simulations of them to a point where all simulations are like each other – and thus exchangeable for one another, thereby interpenetrating each other – in being only signs of signs of signs, the harbingers of a technological progress that is both promising and horrifying, especially when these very simulations give way to different versions of them on film.

Indeed, the long history of the Gothic in the cinema, which accelerated most with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929–31 (obviously a time of high anxiety for the upper and middle classes brought closer to – and so needing to distance – the squalid Real), has seen the simulation of the simulacrum of the counterfeit intensify its ghosting of the spectral in the ways an inherently simulative medium has come to reflect a culture permeated by forms of simulated humanity. Of course, the many film versions of *Frankenstein*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dracula*, and *The Phantom of the Opera* across the twentieth century have extrapolated the ghost of the counterfeits in their originals into locations of psychological and cultural abjection all too right for their own more recent times. The results on screen have included creatures with bolts in their heads expressing our fears of what industrial manufacture was doing to us, extreme displays of the cosmetic technology revealing our temptation to "better" ourselves by make-up that greatly distorts us, experiments with photographic double-exposures showing us how our images can be manipulated far beyond our control from the day we are born, and special effects so endlessly able to shape-shift "othered" versions of us that the very basis of our being (our new Real) may well be that capacity to *be* othered more than anything else (see Skal, 2001).

It should hardly be surprising, therefore, that Gothic film by the later twentieth century, by then even more inclined to mix with science fiction than it did in *Frankenstein* or *Jekyll and Hyde*, becomes more and more about facing *and* abjecting our fears of what our frantic and deeply capitalistic quest for simulations might ultimately produce for – and do to – us in our world. Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), the first film in a twenty-year series of four, each with a different director, is nostalgically (if futuristically) Gothic in that its space travel occurs in an antiquated craft both industrial and post-industrial in its anomalous composition (see Scott, 1979). As things turn out, again Gothically, it is on a secret mission for a corporation whose aims are known only to an onboard computer (called "Mother"), which is able to fabricate hypnotic images on its own, and to a "science officer" who turns out to be a cyborg, but is so exactly like the humans around him that he is undetectable for much of the film. Worse yet, the secret is a targeted quest for an extraterrestrial life-form able to penetrate, incubate itself within, and then destroy the male body because, as a space-age variation on Frankenstein's creature, it is an amalgamation of the mechanical and the biological – a mixture needed by the corporation to expand its power globally and intergalactically – and is consequently able to camouflage itself to attack the crew in the walls and piping of the spacecraft, with the objective of being the only entity to return to earth alive as a new simulation of the artificial and "natural" combined. *Alien*, in other words, is quite Gothically about, even as its ghost-of-earlier-counterfeits creature both represents and abjects, the simulation-based drive to seek additional means of simulation to the point where the distinction between the natural and the artificial completely disappears. This is the very fear that Ridley Scott himself will soon confirm in his "urban Gothic" film, *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), where people and the cybernetic "replicants" of them finally become impossible to distinguish as they strive to avoid facing the Real in the decaying and deeply conflicted city of the future.

Such extensions of both the ghost of the counterfeit and its capacity for abjection have consequently accelerated at the dawn of the twenty-first century, even while the once-European-and-then-American development of the Gothic has become broadly internationalized in the face of worldwide fears about post-industrial simulation *and* a chaotic Real, still difficult to face, that has by now become an intra-global morass of increasingly interconnected levels and kinds of being. A popular indicator of this entire recent history is the American film *The Ring* (Verbinski, 2002). This piece of "new Gothic" depicts the contagious killing of all those who view a video tape from which an ominous, pubescent girl ("Samara") emerges from a deep on-screen hole and walks out of the television image, like Walpole's specter of the portrait, with the up-front "cause" being the murdered young woman's clairvoyant telekenesis and how it can join with and be carried, "ring" by "ring," across the "waves" of wired and wireless audiovisual technology – now as able to destroy biological beings as much as only its users once could, bringing on the very death-in-the-midst-of-life that such figures once abjected. Such a simulation of simulations abjects not only the possible Real of a world where there may be nothing outside of simulation, the "death" of the distinctively human being; it also harbors the further suggestion that such a being, though apparently born from a sexual union, really stems from an off-screen and undefined gestation that may or may not have been as inhuman as it was human (an implied blurring of boundaries and thus an obscured welter of the Real). That "abject" is left vague, and hence deeply disguised, in the American *Ring*, but less so in its predecessors from abroad, one of which was a Korean and another a Japanese film, yet with the "root" of all these being Koji Suzuki's novel *Ringu*, first published in Japan in 1991. In Suzuki's *Ringu* especially, "Sadako" (the original Samara) can channel vibrations across different electronic media because she mixes in herself, hermaphroditically, a deep inseparability of the human sexes, as well as an interplay of diseases as common to animals as to humans *and* an interfusion of spiritual with physical levels, mixed with a primal flowing-together of the land and the sea, all of which may look back to a total interpenetration of differences in the primordial "life-substance" of a very "distant past" (Lacan's and "Žižek's" "Real" for sure; Suzuki, 2004, 257). Even today, then, the Gothic casts its terrifying spell upon readers and viewers because of its basic dynamic, the ghost of the counterfeit. It remains that Gothic scheme that opens the shape-shifting spaces for abjecting the "Real" anomalies we all most fear, the ones we therefore "throw off" symbolically, in our ongoing quest for distinctly "human" identities throughout the modern and postmodern worlds.

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35
The Magical Realism of the Contemporary Gothic

Lucie Armitt

In "The 'Uncanny'," Freud's reading of the *unheimlich* repeatedly fastens itself upon items and scenarios of material existence – clockwork toys, identical twins, severed limbs, the mother's genitals – but its significance clearly derives from that more shadowy world we associate with the Gothic. The acceptance that Freud's essay presents us with one of the key landmarks of twentieth-century Gothic narratives relies on our willingness to move between that materiality and a world of immateriality. At the same time, we are also called on to recognize that the Gothic is a deeply sociopolitical mode of writing and, in being such, effects a circular return to and from the ineffable. In this essay, we consider the ground shared between this Gothic pattern and another mode of writing that also deals in ghosts and the shift between materiality and immateriality, namely the magical real. In the novels on which the first part of this essay is based – Iain Banks's *The Crow Road* (1992), Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), Patrick McGrath's *Spider* (1990), and Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1985) – we will consider how the infusion of the Gothic and the magical real provides a new perspective on ghosts, ghosting, and haunted texts, and the ways in which cryptonymy offers us a useful framework for engaging with the modern family. In the coda to this essay, we will consider how these concerns apply also to one of the most popular writing phenomena of the last decade, examining how magic and the Gothic interweave through haunted texts and cryptonymies in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series.

Iain Banks's *The Crow Road* is a perfect illustration of a narrative that both embraces and interrogates many of the conventional trappings of the Gothic: the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of an aristocratic mansion, Gaineamh Castle, which, as we will see, encases the sinister secrets of its master, Fergus Urvill; our unsuspecting

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interloper is Prentice (read ap-Prentice), the amateur detective and reader's representative in the text, who gradually unearths a truth he wishes he did not know and which certainly comes into the category of what Freud, following Schelling, considers the *unheimlich* to represent most clearly, namely "that [which] ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud, 1990, 345). Primarily, *The Crow Road* is a novel about death ("away the Crow road. . . . It meant dying; being dead" (Banks, 1993, 126)), but it is also a novel about cryptonymy, which reaches back to an earlier tradition of the Gothic in employing a landscape combining oppressive architectural structures, extreme atmospherics, and even the hint of a Frankenstein-like birth myth:

> Above, on the hillside, stood the lattice forms of two electricity pylons, straddling the heather like grey gigantic skeletons wreathed in darkness. The black wind howled and there was another blinding flash and a titanic concussion; a line of violet incandescence split the night mid-way between the two huge pylons as energy short-circuited through the air between the wind-whipped power-lines. Charlotte screamed again and the child was born. (97)

At the same time, it is a narrative which recognizes technology that has its own en*crypt*ments, and it is ultimately through a labyrinthine decoding of a set of computer disks that the uncanny emerges, these being at once contemporary and ancient, due to the requirement to use "a vintage Hewlett Packard TouchScreen (which has compatible eight-inch drives) in the [University of London's] Museum of Computing to extract the raw binaries . . ." (373).

This merging of the uncanny and technology also combines with the influence of the magical real. In part this is a by-product of the frequent flights of fancy that emerge out of late twentieth-century recreational drug use:

> The gear was black and powerful like the night . . . Lewis told weird and creepy stories and bizarrely apposite jokes, and the twins . . . looked like proud Mongolian princesses, calmly contemplating creation from the ribbed dome of some fume-filled yurt, midnight-pitched on the endless rolling Asian steppe. (71)

In part, it emanates from within the family, especially family lore, hence the itching moles of Prentice's Grandma Margot, whose funeral opens the narrative, but whose moles, Prentice recalls, were believed to itch "when people are talking about [her], or when something . . . remarkable is happening to the person" (13). This is a motif which would not be out of place in a novel such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), in which we find Naseem Aziz, otherwise known as Reverend Mother, adorned with "two enormous moles like witch's nipples on her face" (Rushdie, 1981, 40) and who is married to Aadam Aziz, grandfather to our central protagonist and storyteller, Saleem Sinai. Aadam Aziz suffers from a perpetually itching nose after he hits it on his prayer-mat covering a "frost-hardened tussock of earth" (10). The result is the congenital inheritance of a large or deformed nose which, on Saleem's face,

blossoms as a "big cucumber" (17). Saleem tells us, "In a country where any physical or mental peculiarity in a child is a source of deep family shame, my parents . . . simply refused to see any more embarrassing things in me . . . I had learned that secrets were not always a bad thing" (169). So, the *unheimlich* is writ large on characters' faces, but only to mask the presence of greater fears. Furthermore, in the case of *The Crow Road*, Margot's moles are taken seriously (and proved to be right), when used as a thermometer for gauging life or death: "She leaned closer still and tapped the mole again. 'Not a sausage, Prentice'" (12).

Magic realism is a disruptive, foreign, fantastic narrative style that fractures the flow of an otherwise seamlessly realist text. The term itself originates from art history, first being coined in 1925 by Franz Roh as a counter-response to what Roh saw as the "exaggerated preference for fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects" typical of the Expressionist movement (Roh, 1995, 16). In other words, its etymology is one that looks to reinvest realism with its own magic, rather than reaching out toward the unreal. And yet, its application to literature has taken the opposite trajectory, allying magic with those incidents of the extraordinary that question the very parameters of the real. In other words, what we find in magic realism (particularly at the dark end of its spectrum where it meets the Gothic) is an uncanniness erupting from a fissure in the ordinary, out of which the extraordinary flows. Take, for instance, the following example from Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, in which we view a portrait of Clara, the central female protagonist:

> The canvas shows a middle-aged woman dressed in white, with silvery hair and the sweet gaze of a trapeze artist, resting in a rocking chair that hangs suspended just above the floor, floating amidst flowered curtains, a vase flying upside down, and a fat black cat that observes the scene like an important gentleman. Influence of Chagall, according to the catalogue, but that is not true. The picture captures precisely the reality the painter witnessed in Clara's house. (Allende, 1986, 306)

Surrealist rather than Gothic in itself, the portrait nevertheless plays with the Gothic cliché of the ancestral portrait, rendered uncanny through the application of an apparently minor detail (eyes that move, or a face that ages), here in the defiance of gravity. The presence of the "fat black cat" is sufficient to carry with it a hint of witchcraft in keeping with what is, in the text as a whole, a type of Gothic magnetism. It is the allure of claustrophobia which – and despite the many instances of travel in *The House of the Spirits* – ultimately constrains characters to a nodal grouping of oppressive houses. The first of these is the derelict mansion at Tres Marías, Esteban Trueba's mining and agricultural site, with its "broken shutters . . . and spider-webs . . . carpeted with a layer of grass, dust, and dried-out leaves" (66). The second is the mansion Trueba buys for Jean de Satigny as a dowry for marrying his estranged daughter Blanca, which de Satigny transforms into a Bluebeard's Castle, and from which Blanca ultimately flees in terror. The third, and most significant, is the "big house on the corner," built by Esteban Trueba on his marriage to Clara and subsequent home to

several generations of the family. Haunted by the spirits of the living and the dead alike, in the most traditional of Gothic fashions this third house is an architectural manifestation of the eccentricities and fallibilities of its generations of inhabitants. This is largely due to Clara, who has numerous annexes built on to house the various incompatible groupings who take up residence within its walls:

> The house filled with political propaganda and with the members of [Esteban's] party, who practically took it by storm, blending in with the hallway ghosts, the Rosicrucians, and the three [spiritualist] Mora sisters. Clara's retinue was gradually pushed into the back rooms of the house, and an invisible border arose . . . the noble, seigneurial architecture began sprouting all sorts of extra little rooms, staircases, turrets, and terraces. Each time a new guest arrived, the bricklayers would arrive and build another addition to the house. The big house on the corner soon came to resemble a labyrinth. (259)

The Gothic is certainly an interiorizing form, claustrophobic in nature and inherently architectural. At the same time, early Gothic typically situates the monuments of the Gothic within vast panoramas and travel, as anybody who has read *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) will attest. Once again, it is the tension between claustrophobia and agoraphobia that provides the cracks through which the uncanny escapes, for as well as providing labyrinths and turrets, *The House of the Spirits* is also a traveler's tale, from Uncle Marcos and his fantastic voyages in the first chapter, through to Jaime and Alba's expedition into the mountains to hide Esteban Trueba's stash of armaments in Chapter 12, and Blanca and Pedro Tercero García's removal to Canada at the end of the text. But as well as literal travel within and beyond geographic boundaries, magic realism fuels fabulous stories from across the world, such as those Clara tells of "[Tibetan] lamas who take salt tea with yak lard . . . the opulent women of Tahiti, the rice fields of China, or the white prairies of the North, where the eternal ice kills animals and men who lose their way" (29).

These continental backdrops provide the perfect terrain for the imposition upon them of a rich, tapestry-like interweaving of stories and this is one of the factors which has tended to distance British fiction from magic realism; similarly, it might be our small-scale, inward-looking island culture that inspires so vividly the claustrophobia of the Gothic. Banks demonstrates, however, how the amalgamation of the historical and the geologic/geographic can supply vastness even to a British (more specifically a Scottish) landscape:

> Within the oceanic depths of time that lay beneath the surface of the present, there had been an age when, appropriately, an entire ocean had separated the rocks that would one day be called Scotland from the rocks that would one day be called England and Wales. That first union came half a billion years ago . . . while that primaeval ocean shrank and closed and all that would become the British Isles still lay south of the equator . . . [Once] Scotland was level with Canada and Siberia and the earth cooler – the glaciers came . . . frozen water etched the mountain rock like steel engraving glass. . . . On walks, on day trips and holidays, [we] found and pointed out the signs

> that told of the past, deciphering the symbols written into the fabric of the land. . . . Here was magic, I remember thinking. . . . (306–8)

The "magic" Prentice identifies in this landscape emerges from that same fissure we identified above, one in which scientific truths take on the same storytelling function as legends and ice carves out its own script upon the world. Such is the power of the scene evoked here that we would not be at all surprised to find Shelley's monster, in *Frankenstein* (1818), striding across the page, for this is, in its reiterated metaphors of etching and deciphering primarily a *narrativizing* landscape. So magic realism reveals a type of geologic palimpsest that interrogates the rational as it coincides with it and tracks its progress.

Thus, despite the disparities in the origins of the two modes, magic realism's amalgamation with the Gothic brings to light a surprising narrative similarity. We might anticipate Alejo Carpentier's observation that the traveler is the reader's representative in works of the magical real, epitomizing our sense of wonder as we turn page after page (Carpentier, 1995), but have we missed the fact that the same is true of the reader of Freud's essay, preoccupied as it also is with the discourse of foreign travel: passengers who find their cabin door, railway compartment, and hotel room marked with the same number; walkers who find themselves embarking upon various "voyages of discovery" which always end up back on the same spot; or recipients of letters from two different countries, both signed by a name about which one has been reading (359–60)? In both contexts, travel is a metaphorical phenomenon which reflects a predilection for journeys into the unknown.

This brings us to Rushdie's novel *Shame*. Employing the magical real to simultaneously root and uproot the reader, the narrator (at this point in the text a fictionalized version of Rushdie himself) asserts:

> The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary . . . I am not writing only about Pakistan. (Rushdie, 1995b, 29)

Shame opens with a similarly labyrinthine architecture to that found in Allende's *The House of the Spirits*:

> Believe me when I tell you that [Omar Khayyam Shakil] stumbled down corridors so long untrodden that his sandalled feet sank into the dust right up to his ankles; that he discovered ruined staircases made impassable by longago [*sic*] earthquakes . . . or in regions of that colossal palace which had been abandoned long ago because of the collapse of their plumbing he would delve into the quake-exposed intricacies of brick drainage systems that had been out of date for centuries. (31)

Family (especially maternity, defined by Freud as that "place where each one of us lived once upon a time," but which remains the most foreign, unknowable space of all (368)) holds the key to the uncanny here. Omar, Rushdie's central male protago-

nist, is born into a maternal legend of shame which is pure magic realism in its amalgamation of the fabulous and the political. He has not one but three mothers, Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny, and birth and death are directly connected, as in *The Crow Road*. Following the death of their father, Old Mr. Shakil, these three daughters throw a party to try and meet potential suitors, as a result of which one of them becomes pregnant. The shame of conception out of wedlock is masked in fable, myth, and superstition, as all three miraculously manifest the physical symptoms of pregnancy as a means of protecting the identity of the "shamed." Cut off from the outside world, their only means of communication is via a ghoulish dumb waiter, fitted with "a spring release . . . worked from inside the house" to make "the whole bottom of the lift fall off justlikethat [*sic*]" and "secret panels which can shoot out eighteen-inch stiletto blades, sharp, sharp" (17). Collectively ennobled, together they fuel a world of speculation:

> there are rumours that they would indolently explore each other's bodies during the languorous drowsiness of the afternoons, and, at night, would weave occult spells to hasten the moment of their father's demise. But evil tongues will say anything, especially about beautiful women who live far away from the denuding eyes of men. (13)

Simultaneously virgin territory and fertile land, these women's collective allure is ripe for the imposition of geographic metaphors and, according to Fawzia Afkal-Khan, the three mothers can be read as "the three countries that ultimately came into being after India's independence from Britain: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh" (Afkal-Khan, 1993, 162). Yet these women are also the product of a father whose view of nation is expressed via a mathematical formula, for Old Mr. Shakil hates what he identifies as the two worlds into which his home town of Q. has been divided, one "inhabited by the indigenous, colonized population" and the second "by the alien colonizers, the Angrez, or British, sahibs" (12). It is into this world of/as oxymoron, constructed from the mathematical conundrum which simultaneously identifies one point of origin (the womb) as three in one and a second point of origin (home) as one divided into two that Omar emerges. Adapting this narrative of the East to one of the West, Rushdie later turns his attention to another outlandish story of a father and his daughter which again reveals the interconnectedness of life and death:

> Not so long ago, in the East End of London, a Pakistani father murdered his only child. . . . Wanting to write about shame, I was at first haunted by the imagined spectre of that dead body. . . . But finally she eluded me, she became a ghost, and I realized that to write about her . . . I would have to go back East. . . . All stories are haunted by the ghosts of the stories they might have been . . . other phantoms are here as well. . . . These ghosts . . . inhabit a country that is entirely unghostly: no spectral "Peccavistan", but Proper London. (115–17)

The East End of so-called "Proper London" is also the setting for Patrick McGrath's novel *Spider*, another narrative about a murder involving a parent and a child, although in this case it is a story of apparent matricide. Dennis, whose alter ego bears the Gothic

name Spider, suffers from paranoid delusions and believes his father to have murdered his mother in order to take up with a prostitute, Hilda Wilkinson. The narrative is full of uncanny doubles, as Spider's confused mind superimposes the living upon the dead. Incarcerated on the charge that he carried out the murder himself, the intrigue of Dennis's story revolves around the uncertainties of conflicting truths. It is tempting to read *Spider* as a straightforward oedipal narrative. Dennis, who confesses to having violent fantasies involving harming his father with "ghosts and chains and torture" (McGrath, 1992, 52), is also clearly in love with his mother:

> She felt my presence, I know she did, there was a reaching up to me, it was quite distinct . . . such was the bond between us: that was something my father couldn't destroy with his tarts and his violence. . . . As soon as I felt her I lay down flat on the soil and whispered to her, *and I shall not write what I said*. (107, my emphasis)

However, alternative possibilities arise through Dennis/Spider's refusal to reveal all and these become articulate through the concept of cryptonymy.

Cryptonymy, a term commonly attributed to the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, refers to the psychoanalytic concept of transgenerational haunting, a form of family narrative in which "what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others" (Abraham, 1987, 387). In these cases the precise nature of the trauma only reveals itself in coded form and via a type of ventriloquism, whereby what we hear from the apparent victim are the phantoms of a trauma belonging to previous generations, but filtered through the voices and personae of the present. That *Spider* is, like the other novels discussed, concerned with the conflict between private and public and inner and outer worlds is clear. The novel is set in the 1950s and Kitchener Street, where Dennis's family lives, not only evokes the name of General Kitchener (Secretary of State for War during World War I) and hence bears living testimony to the death of a generation; it also draws attention to the *kitchen*, the setting for much domestic discord. These associations are given added resonance by the architectural observation that "Kitchener Street was blackly contaminated long before any of these events occurred" (92).

In literal terms, *Spider* follows the type of formula Abraham commonly identifies in cryptonymy:

> The [mother's] family romance was a repressed fantasy . . . the patient . . . [is] being haunted by a phantom, itself due to the tomb enclosed within the psyche of the [mother]. The patient's delirium embodies this phantom and stages the verbal stirrings of a secret buried alive in the [mother's] unconscious. (Abraham, 1987, 289)

In *Spider*, the precise source of the trauma is never articulated. Instead, and once again in line with Abraham's thesis, "the phantom is sustained by secreted words" (Abraham, 1987, 291) or, in this case, the single word "spider." Scuttling across the page and between the lines, this phantom weaves and is woven into a cryptonymy. Right from the start it is clear that Spider, whose nickname is bestowed upon him by his mother,

has become a product of her own making, with his "spidery fingers that seem often not to belong to [him] at all" (McGrath, 1992, 13) and his boyhood inhabitation of "a clotted web" (13) that is surely the landscape of her influence. For Dennis/Spider, his mother's world is a manifestation of the magical real, experienced as a series of narrative fabrications:

> as she talked . . . the dark terrors . . . would be dispelled, replaced by a mood of lyric tenderness . . . fresh cobwebs glistening in the elms at sunrise. She used to tell me about the spiders, about how they did their weaving in the quiet of the night. . . . But it wasn't the webs she'd come to see, she said, for hidden in the lower boughs . . . you'd find a little silk bag . . . [inside which] was a tiny ball of orange beads all glued together . . . those were the spider's eggs. . . . And look, Spider, see how perfect her work is! Not a thread out of place! (42–3)

Sitting, knitting in the kitchen while she spins Dennis a yarn, this mother is, quite simply, the spider in question and, as the passage shifts between "she," "me," and "you" we witness how easily one can be raveled up in an elaborate but seemingly flawless narrative. On one level Dennis must be aware of this ensnaring, because he reworks the narrative fabrications later on by keeping a notebook, which he views as a means to retain autonomous definition: "as the story grew firmer then I grew firmer with it. Conversely, when the story collapsed then so did I" (149).

Embedded notebooks are an important motif in all four novels under discussion here, protagonists "ghost-writing" parallel texts in each one. So, in *The Crow Road*, we are gradually shown the contents of Rory's notebook, also called "The Crow Road" and deciphered by Prentice; in *The House of the Spirits*, we find Clara's notebooks, written up by her granddaughter Alba "*as*" the novel we read. In *Shame*, the ghost-text takes the form of an extended passage in Chapter 9, devoted to the multiply enfolded stories within stories woven onto the surface of eighteen embroidered shawls, stitched by Rani Harappa while under house arrest. Here, the claustrophobia of the Gothic melds with the enchantments of the magical real, for on completion, "she placed each shawl . . . in a black metal trunk full of naphthalene balls and fastened the lock" (190). Duly encased, the placing of these storytelling shawls mirrors, once again, that of the hidden or encrypted text within a text, summed up here in the label they collectively attain: "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great" (191). The tales they tell speak of sexual infidelities, violence, torture, political corruption, all in the name of this despotic politician. Again, Rani sees herself as a spider, whose thread articulates "silver-threaded whispers susurrated across the cloth" (192). At the same time, she imposes upon her own body the shape of a decaying house returning to its roots: "wood, brick tin . . . she was earth and cracks and spiders" (194). In their entirety, these shawls attest to Rawdon Wilson's belief that in the context of the magical real one witnesses a type of enveloping dynamic "within the folding of worlds when one . . . erupts into the other . . . as if two systems of possibility have enfolded each other" (Wilson, 1995, 225). Such folds also return us to the Gothic and a further

chain of Gothic signification originating in concertinaing sheets: winding-sheets, the trickery of invisible ink, ghost-written messages, and encrypted notebooks.

In the case of *Spider*, however, it is also the notebook's secret location that is of interest, hidden up the chimney in an alcove behind the gas fire. Compare Abraham and Torok's own definition of the topography of the crypt, which "is an enclave . . . sealing up the semi-permeable walls of the dynamic Unconscious" and their understanding of the positioning of the ego which, like Spider at his bedroom window:

> is given the task of a cemetery guard . . . keeping an eye on the comings and goings of the members of its immediate family. . . . When it lets in some curious . . . detectives it takes care to serve them with false leads and fake graves. . . . Its motto is: there is always someone smarter than you. (Abraham and Torok, 1990, 65)

Here, then, as in *The Crow Road*, the main character is also an apprentice reader/detective, but in *Spider* this "someone smarter" is required to be the reader beyond the text, despite Abraham and Torok's assumption that we will fail ("smarter *than you*"). In *The Crow Road*, we enlist supernatural help in the shape of a ghost, whose narrative interventions take the form of three italicized passages in Rory's notebook, reproduced in Chapters 8, 10, and 12. The first extract details Fergus Urvill's knowledge of his wife Fiona's infidelity with working-class Lachlan Watt (Lachy), which he reveals to Rory in a deserted cabin and which indiscretion later forms Fergus's defensive motive for murdering Rory. The second details Fergus's espying of the aforementioned moment of infidelity, as he is closeted away in the attic of the castle. The third concerns the death of Fiona through Fergus's vengefully premeditated motor accident. Though all three passages are eventually transposed from the archaic computer disks referred to above, and revealed to Prentice in Chapter 16, their preexistence for us as the aforementioned italicized passages read much earlier gives them autonomous existence for the reader. This, coupled with Banks's use of italicized font, endows them with a more ethereal quality, suggestive of them having been conveyed to us by Rory himself: "speaking" from beyond the grave.

These ghost-texts, however, hold only part of the answer to the riddle; the rest is supplied much earlier on in the novel, in Chapter 4. The shadow-plot to Rory's disappearance is Prentice's own bitter conflict with his father Kenneth, the apex of a triangular paternal/fraternal/avuncular bond built on the magic of storytelling. Chapter 4 offers us Kenneth's own prehistory and outlines a remembered scene, told from Kenneth's point of view, about a game of hide-and-seek played between himself, Fergus, and Lachy as children. Fergus hides in an old castle latrine and when he is found Lachy taunts him by calling him "Big jobbie, big jobbie; big, smelly jobbie!" Kenneth is an onlooker, but as he studies Fergus's nascent aristocratic fury he sees in his face something never fully explained, "the fleeting, extraordinary impression of seeing something buried alive, and felt himself shake suddenly, almost spastically, shivering" (89). What Kenneth prophesies here is, perhaps, that future event when

the adult Fergus witnesses Lachy's penis "buried" in his wife's living body (253), but the full trauma of this phantom derives from a cultural, class-based loathing.

Something similar is at work in Rushdie's *Shame*, where what is encrypted is the full resonance of the term "shame" itself. For a Western reader in particular, though blazoned across the front cover and threaded repeatedly across the novel's pages, the term never seems to translate fully, and this is hindered, rather than helped by Rushdie's continual definition and redefinition of it:

> *Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry "shame" is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shìn rè mìm* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. (Rushdie, 1995b, 38–9)

In a Gothic context, one cannot miss the fact that the opacity in this relationship between *sharam* and shame is mirrored by Freud's own approach to the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in his essay. Nor do we miss the similarity of the enfolding riddles which render shame, shameful, and shameless synonymous rather than (as we would expect) antonymous, comparable to the relationship between *Heim*, *heimlich*, and *unheimlich* about which Freud observes, "among its different shades of meaning the word 'heimlich' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, 'unheimlich'" (Freud, 1990, 345). Giving a postcolonial resonance to the compulsion to repeat, Rushdie's *Shame* ventriloquizes the voices of two cultural codes (Occident and Orient), both intent on repressing those ghosts of the self that are encrypted within the discourses of the "Other."

Although magic realism and the Gothic share a fascination with specters, their treatment in each mode is conventionally different. In magic realism, ghosts are simply "there," usually giving testimony to the voices of those whom society has silenced or rendered "disappeared," but rarely the primary focus of the mystery of a text. In the Gothic, the phantom is that central source, manifesting a secret that disturbs, even chills. When the two come together, we find a perfect territory for cryptonymy, magic realism reminding us of the omnipresence of transgenerational haunting by giving it a shared cultural, political, and mimetic sanction, while the Gothic continues to endow that presence with the sinister particularity of the nuclear family unit.

In the decade that has intervened between the first and the revised edition of this essay, it is interesting to see the two paths magic realism and the Gothic have taken. Nicholas Royle, in his full-length study *The Uncanny* (2003), questions the attempt to draw too close an association between the uncanny and magic realism: "If magical realism can be an 'uncanny' discourse on account of its defamiliarizing of the ordinary, it is also quite capable of "normalizing" and neutralizing itself . . . works of magical realism can be fictions in which anything can happen or un-happen." Royle's preference is clearly for the uncanny over magic realism, which he finally dismisses as a "discourse . . . condemned to an enclosure within the interminable" (Royle, 2003,

161). Cryptonymy, however, follows a very similar trajectory to this, as family trauma is passed down through generations and offers up an alternative approach to ghosts and the houses they haunt. At the same time, magic and its relationship to the Gothic has been prioritized during the period, perhaps as never before, in J. K. Rowling's seven-volume Harry Potter series (1997–2007).

Like *The Crow Road*, the centerpiece of the Harry Potter series is a Gothic mansion (Hogwarts school). Here, our (ap-)prentice is Harry, who begins by inheriting a family myth of parental death in a car crash and discovers that far from having been killed by technology, his parents have been murdered by magic. Also, as in the four novels mentioned above, riddling notebooks play more than a passing part. In Volume 2 of the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), we discover "The Very Secret Diary" (Rowling, 1998, 170ff.) of Tom Riddle, another text within a text which reveals Riddle's own family origins, namely that he is a "Half-blood" born of a "Muggle father, witch mother" and that his mother died shortly after his birth (182). Later we will learn that Tom Riddle is one of several aliases for the character who, as befits one at the source of a cryptonymy is known by most characters as "he who must not be named," but by Harry simply as Voldemort, his parents' murderer.

Thus Harry's story is not simply his: just as Harry can only reveal the contents of Tom Riddle"s diary by over-writing it with his name ("Excited, Harry loaded up his quill . . . and wrote, 'My name is Harry Potter'" (179)), so his own story is over-written with that of his parents. Like Saleem Sinai, with his facial birthmarks and "vegetable" nose (Rushdie, 1981, 180), Harry's face bears the narrativizing mark of family trauma in the form of a lightning-shaped scar, etched onto his face by Voldemort's wand. Early on in the series, Dumbledore makes light of the connection: "Scars can come in useful. I have one myself above my left knee which is a perfect map of the London Underground" (Rowling, 1997, 17). As the series progresses, however, and the magic becomes ever darker, Dumbledore returns to Hogwarts in Volume 6, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), with a "blackened and dead-looking" hand, about which Hermione muses, "there are some injuries you can't cure . . . [such as] old curses . . ." (Rowling, 2005, 157–8). By the end of that volume, Dumbledore will be dead, replaced by his apparent assassin, Professor Snape, a character who (as the similarity of his name to "snake" suggests), resembles McGrath's Spider in that his ambiguity is key to the gradual unveiling of the series' secrets. Snape's own family origins are scarred in "pure-blood" terms, mirroring Voldemort's in being born to a wizarding mother, Eileen Prince, and a muggle father, Tobias Snape, coining for himself the title "half-blood prince." Again, Snape's fate is shown to be bound up with the Potters', Snape having been in love with Harry's mother, Lily, and later having betrayed them both to Voldemort, despite Dumbledore's reassurances to Harry that this act had been "the greatest regret of [Snape's] life . . ." (513).

If we return to where this essay started, with a reference to the material items and scenarios of material existence upon which Freud focuses in his essay on the "Uncanny," we note these include key motifs that are present in the Harry Potter series, such as identical twins (Fred and George Weasley) and severed limbs (Nearly Headless Nick,

otherwise known as "Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington," a ghost whose "whole head swung off his neck and fell on to his shoulder as if it was on a hinge. Someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly" – Rowling, 1997, 92). In addition, it is his maternal birthright that continues to save Harry from death, a rather more positive influence of the mother's genitals on the Gothic than Freud ever envisaged. The key item that is missing, however, is clockwork toys, the very thing we would expect to find in children's literature. There is no genuine child's play in Harry Potter (though there are team-sports such as Quidditch, various tournaments and challenges, and wizard chess) because magic stands in as its substitute: who needs a train set when one can catch the Hogwarts Express from Platform 9¾ at Kings Cross Station? At the same time, there is no television, because there is no technology. In fact, the character who comes closest to indulging in child's play in these novels is Ron's father, Arthur Weasley, who collects muggle souvenirs and is fascinated by how they function; and at this point we recognize that technology, which in novels such as *The Crow Road* is seen as an essential ingredient to a contemporary Gothic novel for adults, is dismissed in this children's series as a mere toy.

What makes Harry Potter distinct in its gothicizing of magic from the magic realism of the contemporary Gothic, is that it returns us to a pre-technological Gothic vision of good and evil in which issues of inheritance, the body, and pure and impure blood reign supreme. It is effectively a nineteenth-century rather than a twenty-first century vision of the Gothic and, more strikingly, it has been "bought wholesale" by children, those very readers who, we are led to believe, cannot exist without technological recreation (the Nintendo DS, the PlayStation, the Wii, the iPhone). At the same time, the Harry Potter series challenges the nineteenth-century vision of the Gothic and those novels discussed in the first part of this essay in another key way: it insists upon the reassertion of the finality of death – no help is available from beyond the grave here. In the first volume of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), Harry encounters the Mirror of Erised (desire read backwards). His encounter with it is not unlike Omar's entry into the labyrinth in *Shame*. Staying at Hogwarts over the Christmas break, Harry tries out his new Invisibility Cloak after dark. Startled by near discovery by Filch, the malevolent caretaker, Harry flees and finds himself in what looks like "a disused classroom" containing "a magnificent mirror, as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame." In it, he sees "his family, for the first time in his life" (Rowling, 1997, 152–3). The new reader eagerly desires this to be the doorway into an after-life that will reconcile Harry with the dead, but the cruelest lesson Harry learns from this encounter is, as Dumbledore tells him, "It shows us nothing more or less then the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live . . ." (157). In the Harry Potter series, unlike in most Gothic narratives, the loss of death is absolute, a message reinforced in Volume 3, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), when Harry's belief that the ghost of his father has saved him from the Dementors is met immediately by Hermione's counter-response: "Harry, your dad's – well – *dead*" (Rowling, 1999, 297). In this of all series, the temptation to use magic to inject the consoling possibility of

reconciliation with dead parents must have been difficult to resist, but equally important to do so. Nearly Headless Nick may float around like a Disney specter, but that is because he is as much a product of the animation of magic as he is a revenant from beyond the grave, and the need to admit to and engage with loss is a key lesson for all children. And it is this which renders the Harry Potter series a collection of texts about cryptonymy. What haunts Harry are not ghosts, but the secrets, fears, and scars endowed upon him by his family and its conflicts – an inheritance to which we can all relate.

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36
Welcome the Coming, Speed the Parting Guest: Hospitality and the Gothic

Joanne Watkiss

The Gothic has always been concerned with the invited, parasitical guest. Contrary to the reassuring position of the uninvited, the threat to the home, institution, and individual has always been invited; the threat is permitted entry to the space of the home before its influences can be felt. Therefore, the Gothic highlights the villainous capabilities of those who have been wrongly trusted, suggesting an inaccuracy of judgment. Just as the guest has authority over the host, the Gothic itself acts as parasite, invading other genres, making itself "host." As Fred Botting suggests, the Gothic "continues to spread, like the infection or disease it has represented and been represented as, to 'gothicise' a host of different sites" (2001, 1). Therefore, the Gothic functions as an ideal plateau for the villainous capabilities of the invited guest who both transforms and usurps the space of the host.

Through Derrida's contemporary ideas, this essay will reconsider classic Gothic texts through their interaction with hospitality. This essay will argue that the persistent Gothic threat is that of the hostile guest: the invited visitor who usurps the space she/he enters. Usurpation (through estates, inheritance, legacy) is a recurrent theme within the Gothic which has not, as yet, been comprehended through hospitality. As a project that could be developed further, this essay focuses on four classic Gothic texts: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or The Moor* (1806), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In Walpole's foundational text, Manfred offers hospitality to Frederic de Vicenza: an act that contributes to the host's downfall. As hostile guest invited into Elvira's home, Ambrosio in *The Monk* preys upon the vulnerable Antonia, violating not only the boundaries of their bodies, but the boundaries of their home. Similarly, Dacre's *Zofloya* presents the parasitical guest of Count Ardolph, who destroys the

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family unit he is welcomed within. Instead of reading the vampire as the dangerous (and uninvited) guest, this essay suggests a counter-reading of Stoker's novel presenting Jonathan and not Dracula as a hostile, invited guest. Instead of the conventional folklore that vampires must be invited to enter a home, the argument presented here will suggest that this rule should apply to all guests, vampiric and human. Therefore, this essay will challenge traditional readings of Dracula as disruptive parasite, suggesting instead that Jonathan and his "team of enlightenment" (the heroes) are the hostile guests who persistently disrupt Dracula's multiple homes. Therefore, this essay will consider the villainous capabilities of the invited guest: the one who is permitted entry within the home, challenging the authority of the host.

Derrida's understanding of hospitality (as outlined in his 2000 text, *Of Hospitality*) is as an impossible event due to a mutual demand between host and guest: hospitality is never offered or received without a prior demand. And yet, through the crossing of a threshold, Derrida argues that the guest always gains authority over the host. By crossing the boundary that dictates ownership of the home (even when invited), the guest usurps the position of host, as the needs of the guest are put first. Therefore, because the crossed threshold belongs to the host, the host loses authority to the guest. As he highlights, the latin *hostis* can be translated as guest or enemy (Derrida, 2000). By opening his home up to others, the host incorporates that which threatens his sense of ownership and the homely within his own home (the uncanny). By inviting the guest into his sanctuary, the host allows the guest to dominate his space, changing it from his home to the home of a stranger. As Derrida suggests, "the guest becomes the host of the host" (2000, 125). Throughout the Gothic, hospitality has focused upon the guest who distorts; the one who has the power to disrupt the home from the inside. In this way, invited guests claim ownership of the homes they are invited to, reducing their hosts to victims.

As a potential "origin" of the Gothic as a genre, Walpole's text provides many of the conventions to which later texts adhere. As the traditional power-hungry father figure, Manfred is so preoccupied with the lineage of his estate that he attempts to place his wife in a convent and remarry the young Isabella, originally intended for his deceased son. In a plotline reminiscent of the court of Henry VIII, Manfred's determination to capture the fleeing Gothic heroine results in the invitation of her father, Frederic, to the Castle of Otranto. Such an act contributes to the halted lineage of Manfred's offspring, dislocating the household further.

As Frederic's knights near the castle, Manfred "ordered the gates of the castle to be flung open for the reception of the stranger knight and his train" (64). Through the opening of the castle doors, Manfred exposes his estate to the sovereignty of another. As Derrida suggests, hospitality results in "threats bearing down on that particular territory of one's own and on the law of private property" (2000, 53). By permitting entry to the stranger and his train, Manfred becomes servant to his guests in his own home: "Manfred, however ill his heart was at ease, endeavoured to inspire the company with mirth. He put several questions to them, but he was answered only by signs. They raised their visors but sufficiently to feed themselves, and that spar-

ingly" (66). In their arrival, the knights immediately occupy a position of authority: to be served and not to serve. Although they are enjoying the feast provided by the host, he is not treated with respect or granted the courtesy of conversation. To answer only "in signs" suggests an avoidance of engagement with the host; an act that results in Manfred's uneasy state. Therefore, the guests are dominating the space of the host as well as inducing a sense of fear within him. As he announces: "Sirs, said the prince, ye are the first guests I have ever treated within these walls, who scorned to hold any intercourse with me: nor has it oft been customary, I ween, for princes to hazard their state and dignity against strangers and mutes" (66). As Manfred recognizes, he risks losing his majesty and authority to those he has invited and shown hospitality. In their refusal to interact with him, the guests ignore his presence and neglect to utilize language, preferring to remain silent. In this instance, the act of hospitality is shown to be a destructive event that renders the most authoritative figure of a prince powerless and uneasy within his own home. As Manfred admits, "by the laws of hospitality and chivalry ye are masters under this roof: ye shall do your pleasure" (67). Furthermore, those who dismiss the host are in the service of Frederic, so Manfred is reduced to a state beneath servants.

As Frederic occupies the castle, his presence changes the events of the narrative considerably. Through his desire to exchange his daughter Isabella for Manfred's daughter Matilda, he duplicates the initial terror the host induced in the Gothic heroine. Frederic's desire for Matilda and Manfred's for Isabella result in a marital and (through children) bloodline connection between the two estates. However, as the host sacrifices his daughter to his guest, he places his lineage in Frederic's hands. Therefore, when Manfred eliminates his last chance of a lineage by his accidental injuring of Matilda, the guest is quick to usurp the role of host and lineage by marrying his own daughter to the new heir, Theodore. As Derrida suggests, "here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say 'come,' but 'enter,' enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in 'come inside,' 'come within me,' not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place" (123). For Derrida, the host must permit ultimate access to the guest, allowing them to take their own place within their own home. Therefore, Frederic usurps Manfred's place and determines his own lineage through the union of Isabella and Theodore.

Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* further develops the transgressive authority figure with his lustful monk, Ambrosio, "who chalks up matricide, incestuous rape and sibling murder" (Miles, 2001, 52). In this text, it is he who acts as invited guest to the home of Elvira and her young daughter, Antonia. Although Ambrosio is ignorant of his origins, Elvira is in fact his mother and Antonia his sister, positioning his murderous acts upon them as transgressive to the extreme. As a trusted figure of the church and the community, Ambrosio has no trouble gaining access to their home, suggesting that "*The Monk's* subliminal message, is that identity is performative, something which changes with the words, or parts, that constitute it" (Miles, 2001, 54). Like Jonathan as solicitor in *Dracula*, Ambrosio plays the part of holy vessel, an

authoritative and moral religious figure. Antonia "opened the chamber-door, presented to her Mother their distinguished Visitor, and having placed an armed-chair by the side of the Bed, withdrew into another department. Elvira was highly gratified by this visit . . . He calmed every fear, and dissipated every scruple" (247). As a sick woman, Elvira's guest initially provides her with some comfort and advice. However, as his visits persist, she realizes that his visits allow him to prey upon the object of his desires: her daughter Antonia. The monk "was not unconscious, that his attempts were highly criminal: He saw clearly the baseness of seducing the innocent Girl: But his passions were too violent to permit his abandoning his design. He resolved to pursue it, let the consequences be what they might. He depended upon finding Antonia in some unguarded moment" (257). Through his transgressive desire, Ambrosio wishes to violate the daughter of the host, and in doing so, violate the authority of the host herself. Therefore, the violation of Antonia's body is aligned with the violation of the boundaries of Elvira's home. As Derrida writes "with this figure of the Foreigner we could compare the figure of . . . the outlaw" (2000, 35). As parasitical guest, Ambrosio acts illegally in his desire to overcome the host and seduce her daughter.

After finding Antonia unguarded, Ambrosio submits to his desires within the home of the host: "wild with desire, He clasped the blushing Trembler in his arms. He fastened his lips greedily upon hers, sucked in her pure delicious breath, violated with his bold hand the treasures of her bosom, and wound around him her soft and yielding limbs" (262). As invited guest, he transgresses his role as adviser and protector by threatening to violate Antonia's most prized possession, her honor. In doing so, Ambrosio jeopardizes the future of both women: without her virginity, Antonia is not worthy of a good marriage to provide for herself and her mother in old age. Although the rape doesn't take place in the home of the host, the obtainment of his desires transpires through events within Elvira's home. As Derrida writes, "how can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite?" (2000, 59). As the violator of the daughter and murderer of the host, Ambrosio is the ultimate parasitical guest: additional to the site of the home whilst utilizing the bodies of the inhabitants for his own desires.

As Elvira becomes suspicious of Ambrosio's visits and witnesses him attempting to violate her daughter, "she judged, that to unmask the Imposter would be no easy matter, the public being so much prejudiced in his favour: and having but few Friends, She thought it dangerous to make herself so powerful an Enemy" (263). After admitting the parasitical guest, the host must rethink her place within society before acting according to the law and acquiring justice: "the law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights" (Derrida, 2000, 25). Therefore, the comforting guest invited into her home has become her enemy: the one who threatens to take away her daughter's honor. As Derrida writes, "Anyone who encroaches on my 'at home,' on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable Foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage" (2000, 53–5). As her adversary, the monk holds Elvira hostage to his own position as guest: he has

not trespassed upon her property and therefore, she must take responsibility for the guest's actions within her own home. In her awkward position, Elvira cannot act as the law and justice would command. Instead, she "contented herself with warning Antonia to be upon her guard, and ordering her, should the Abbot persist in his visits, never to receive them but in company" (264). Even though he has acted illegally within her own home, Elvira cannot achieve punishment of the guest, nor can she stop his visits. All she can do is to change their reception of him by guarding Antonia in his presence. Although the invited guest is a criminal, he must be continually permitted entry, suggesting that "the law of hospitality, the express law that governs the general concept of hospitality, appears as a paradoxical law, pervertible or perverting" (Derrida, 2000, 25). The perversion of the law of hospitality is that the host must submit her home to the guest, despite her ownership of the property. Therefore, hospitality permits the illegal.

Through his attempts to obtain her daughter, Ambrosio returns to their home during the night, breaking in thanks to Matilda's magic. However, although he technically is uninvited, the invited guest can return how and when he pleases – just as the vampire, once invited, can return to a home at his will. Through the moment of invitation, "the right to hospitality commits a household" (Derrida, 2000, 23). As he enters their home without interruption, "the Ravisher stept on, and found himself in the chamber, where slept the innocent Girl, unconscious how dangerous a Visitor was drawing near her Couch" (299). As he approaches his desire, Antonia is unaware of the danger of the visitor. Just as he nears her, he is interrupted by Elvira, the host. In her attempts to prevent his escape, the host attempts to hold the guest prisoner in her home, and yet, she fails, as "the guest becomes the host's host" (2000, 125). Again, the guest holds the host hostage within her home: "He grasped Elvira's throat so as to prevent her continuing her clamour, and with the other, dashing her violently upon the ground . . . pressing his knee upon her stomach with all his strength, endeavoured to put an end to her existence" (303). Through his murder of Elvira, Ambrosio demonstrates the authority of the guest by ending the host's life. He then proceeds to induce a fake death in her daughter so that he can ravish and murder her in the crypts of the abbey. In doing so, he first of all violates the boundaries of the home, then violates the boundaries of their bodies. Therefore, the monk demonstrates the power of the invited guest over the host, not only through unlimited access, but through the ability of the guest to resist the law. Thanks to his invitation, the host renders herself powerless in her home, submitting her property (both home and Antonia) to the visitor: "*as if* the stranger or Foreigner held the keys" (2000, 123). Indicative of Lewis's literary influence, Charlotte Dacre's 1806 novel also engages with the autonomy of the invited guest.

Zofloya, or The Moor[1] opens with a description of the content Loredani family and the arrival of a foreign guest. Although the text raises a variety of reasons for the transgressive behaviors of the Loredani offspring Victoria and Leonardo, the text repeatedly blames the departure of the mother from the family home. Due to the dislocation of the family unit, Leonardo becomes a member of the illegal banditti,

submitting to the seductions of a disreputable female, while Victoria allows herself to be guided to moral ruin through her active desires. However, this essay will argue that the moment of ruin is initiated through the arrival of the parasitical guest, Count Ardolph:

> It was in the midst of the gay reveling in the Pallazzo di Loredani that a stranger arriving at the gates, requested admittance to the Marchese. On being told that one acquainted with his name desired to see him, the Marchese ordered immediately that the person should be admitted; when, the doors of the saloon being thrown open, a graceful figure entered, respectfully bowing and presented to Loredani a letter from the Baron Wurmsburg, a German nobleman, and most intimate friend of his; wherein he requested of the Marchese, that he would exercise his hospitality in favour of Count Ardolph, the bearer, a German likewise, of high rank, fortune and unblemished character. No sooner had the Marchese di Loredani perused the letter, than, with conciliating politeness, he extended his hand to the count, and led him immediately to the upper end of the saloon, where Laurina, her daughter, and the rest of the company, had assembled, that the stranger, on his entrance, might not be disconcerted or pained by fancied observation. He introduced him first to the Marchesa, and then to the company in general. (6)

Although Ardolph is a stranger, he is permitted entry through the words of another: a German nobleman and friend of the Marchese. Therefore, the host grants the stranger entry based on the hospitality that he would show toward Baron Wurmsburg. In this instance, the guest becomes substituted as the friend: an uncanny doubling that results in a big mistake for the host. After he permits Ardolph entry, the Marchese submits his enjoyment to the guest, politely considering him above all others. The host's subservience to the guest is demonstrated by his depth of consideration: by presenting him to the family circle first, he attempts to avoid any uncomfortable attention for the guest. In doing so, he attempts to remove his status as guest and transform him as a familiar member of the group. By presenting him first of all to his wife, the host delivers the parasitical guest to the hearth of the home: the place where the most destructive blow can be delivered.

As with Manfred and Elvira, the host must serve the invited guest to such an extent that their position as host is undermined: "the Foreigner shakes up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal *logos*: the being that is, and the non-being that is not. As though the Foreigner had to begin by contesting the authority of the chief, the father, the master of the family" (Derrida, 2000, 5). By his arrival, Ardolph challenges the authority of the host as his letter of recommendation is invalid and therefore, the Marchese's service to the guest is based on false pretences. He is then "conducted to a splendid apartment in the Pallazzo of the Marchese" (7). The narrative voice reflects upon the significance of this moment as: "to his introduction amid the ill-fated family of Loredani, may be ascribed the origin of those misfortunes which subsequently overwhelmed them" (7). The moment hospitality is granted dictates the downfall of the family that occurs in the remainder of the narrative.

The narrative continues to relate that "he had not been long an envious and ungrateful guest in the house of Loredani, ere he beheld with evil eye the happiness which reigned among them; his soul burned to disfigure the beautiful fabric of a family's happiness, and to scatter around him misery and devastation" (8–9). Through his presence within the home, Ardolph is able to witness their happiness and plot his tyrannical plan: "to achieve this, on whom did the malignant fiend fix his regards? . . . on the wife of his hospitable unsuspecting host! – of the man who daily and hourly showered down civilities and attentions on him . . . such was the gratitude of man to man!" (9). The host's authority is questioned due to his "showering down civilities and attentions" upon the guest. Therefore, the more hospitable the host, the more powerful the guest. The narrative voice suggests that the guest owes the host a debt due to the hospitality granted to him, and yet the guest desires to usurp the role of host by possessing his wife: "absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the Foreigner, but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them" (Derrida, 2000, 25). Not only does the Marchese provide Ardolph with a place of his own, he unwittingly provides him with his own place: to usurp the host and become host himself.

After his seduction of Laurina, Ardolph "bore his victim from the scenes of her past honour and her happiness! – he bore her from her home!" (13). By removing the mother figure from the home, the family unit disintegrates. After her departure, the narrator makes clear the dire consequences: "to blast the doting husband with conviction of his dishonour – to plunge his offspring in eternal ruin and disgrace and to despoil them of the protection and tender services of a mother" (12). Without a mother, the children are disgraced and shunned by society, resulting in a liminal, criminal existence for both. For the Marchese, Ardolph has replaced him as husband and lover to Laurina, a complete usurpation of his position of security and authority: "to paint the horror of Loredani when he discovered the perfidy of those whom his noble heart had cherished and relied on – the wife he had fondly adored, the guest he had received and trusted" (13). The host's horror is not directed at others, but at himself, that he could be open to such duplicity under his own roof. As Derrida explores, hospitality is aligned with hostility as "sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence" (55). Through the violent actions of the guest, Ardolph gains sovereignty over his host, replacing him as husband and disrupting the household. After Laurina's departure, Leonardo runs away and becomes an outlaw and Victoria descends into moral ruin. Hence, the lineage of the Marchese is halted and his children corrupted by their mother's disgrace and the guest's authority: it is through Ardolph's influence – and not their father's – that their characters are formed. And yet, in order to completely usurp the host, the guest murders the Marchese: "thus did he become the *murderer* of the *husband*, as he had been already the *seducer* of his *wife*" (16). Therefore, "for the invited guest as much as for the visitor, the crossing of the threshold always remains a transgressive step" (Derrida, 2000, 75). In the Gothic, the determination of authority takes place at the

threshold: a simultaneous action and reaction that also dominates later nineteenth-century Gothic texts such as *Dracula*.

As the (removed) opening chapter of Bram Stoker's novel, "Dracula's Guest," suggests, the events of the narrative depend upon Dracula exercising hospitality upon his guest, Jonathan Harker. Although conventionally the vampire has been read as the parasitical guest, this essay will propose a counter-reading to suggest that Jonathan occupies the role of hostile visitor. As Van Helsing suggests in relation to Dracula, "he may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be someone of the household who bid him to come; though afterwards he can come as he please" (347). As a stereotypical convention, Van Helsing's statement appears to be specific to vampires. However, if this statement is taken into consideration alongside the other texts under discussion here, it is clear that this convention is typical of all guests, not just vampiric ones. As explored in relation to the monk, once permitted entry, the invited visitor can then come and go as he pleases: a guest cannot be accused of trespass. Such is the case with Jonathan Harker, who represents not only the invited guest, but the invited guest of the law. In his book *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body and The Law,* David Punter states how "eighteenth century fiction, the 'site' of the gothic, is obsessed with the law, with its operations, justifications, limits" (1998, 19). As a solicitor, his presence within Dracula's castle is permitted through the legalities of conveyancing. Therefore, Jonathan possesses the deeds to Dracula's multiple homes, resulting in his repeated entry (and destruction) of Dracula's estates. Such usurpation is a primary fear explored within the Gothic, as is the double "who, we know, might at any moment proclaim him- or herself ruler of the house which we had imagined our own" (Punter, 1998, 17–18). The ultimate destruction of Dracula suggests the authority of the guest to usurp the role of the host and house owner.

The text opens on the threshold of Dracula's castle in Transylvania, through the narrative voice of the guest himself: "of bell or knocker there was no sign; through these frowning walls and dark window openings it was not likely that my voice could penetrate" (162). Without "bell or knocker," the door to the castle resists the entrance and announcement of guests until the host draws back the door: "'Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!' He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince" (163). Ironically, it is from the perspective of Jonathan as guest that the text first introduces the vampiric rule of entry: the first threshold that is crossed belongs to Dracula. Although this moment is presented from Jonathan's point of view, it is Dracula who is horrified by the guest's arrival: now he has been welcomed inside, Jonathan can reenter whenever he wishes. In the seconds before Jonathan crosses the threshold, Dracula is rendered immobile in his own home, fixed in stone by the presence of the guest. As Jonathan crosses the boundary, however, his unease outside of the house is transformed into the confidence of a cross-examiner: "I said interrogatively: – 'Count Dracula?' He bowed in a courtly way as he replied: – 'I am Dracula;

and I bid you welcome, Mr Harker, to my house' " (163). The subservience of the host is apparent through his bowing to Jonathan, and the acceptance of his interrogative tone. As Derrida writes, it is as if "the master were prisoner of his place and his power" (2000, 123).

As a point perhaps neglected in previous readings of the text, Dracula is an impeccable host: he serves Jonathan like royalty: " 'you are my guest. It is late, and my people are not available. Let me see to your comfort myself' " (164). Dracula cooks his meals, cleans his dishes, and Jonathan even "found him making the bed [and] laying the table in the dining room" (173). Dracula also speaks the language of his guest, even though they are in his own country, stating: " 'by our talking I may learn the English intonation; and I would that you tell me when I make error' " (167). In this way, Jonathan acts as teacher and Dracula as pupil: the power of the host is redistributed to the guest. This role reversal is further suggested by Dracula when he wears Jonathan's suit and masquerades as the guest: "it was a new shock to me to find that he had on the suit of clothes which I had worn whilst travelling here" (187). The proximity of Jonathan's suit to Dracula's body suggests the parasitical nature of the law, as if the clothes that form part of the performance of the law have become leeches on Dracula's body. As David Punter writes, "performatives are crucial to the law; they are the very means by which the law retains its tenacious hold on the body of which otherwise it can know nothing" (1998, 7). Jonathan also disobeys the word of the host and explores forbidden parts of the castle. As Dracula dictates: " 'You may go anywhere you wish in the castle, except where the doors are locked' " (168). Like a disobedient child, Jonathan forces entry into a prohibited wing of the castle in deliberate defiance of the host. Furthermore, Dracula is aware of the threat of the guest. As he says to Jonathan: " 'You English have a saying which is close to my heart, for its spirit is that which rules our *boyars*: "Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest." ' " (191). As a phrase "close to his heart," Dracula clearly recognizes the obligation of hospitality and the subsequent relief of the guest's departure.

Jonathan's role as guest is complicated by his occupation as solicitor. Although Jonathan has a service to bestow upon Dracula (just as Dracula serves him as a guest), that service is fraught with benefits for Jonathan. Thanks to his journey to Transylvania, Jonathan gains not only financially, but also through reputation in his superior Mr. Hawkins's eyes. Therefore, after Hawkins's sudden death, Jonathan inherits his estate and position within the law firm. As Mina writes to Lucy: "Mr Hawkins has died very suddenly [and] left [Jonathan] a fortune which to people of our modest bringing up is wealth beyond the dream of avarice" (280). Indeed, Jonathan has a lot to thank Dracula for. As Peter Goodrich suggests, the "lawyer [is] a pettifogging fraud, a hanger on and parasite" (1995, 5). This makes Jonathan the most destructive and parasitical guest encountered so far, as he can rely upon the "long arm of the law" to ensure that he continually usurps Dracula's role as host. As Derrida highlights, "the relationship to the Foreigner is regulated by law" (2000, 73).

Because of Jonathan's involvement in the purchase of Dracula's property in England, Dracula is hostage to the law, as Jonathan holds the keys to his multiple homes. "*The*

law is above the laws. It is thus illegal" (Derrida, 2000, 79). In this sense, the host needs the guest legally to secure his homes, and yet the guest becomes a poisonous influence who ultimately usurps those homes: "We thus enter from the inside: the master of the house is at home, but nonetheless he comes to enter his home through the guest – who comes from outside. The master thus enters from the inside *as if* he came from the outside. He enters his home thanks to the visitor, by the grace of the visitor" (Derrida, 2000, 125). Dracula is only permitted entry into his new homes through the guest: Jonathan has entered all the homes he commissions before meeting with their new owner. Ultimately, Dracula is rendered homeless as his spaces are repeatedly usurped. When the team attempt to drive Dracula out of his homes, Jonathan provides the skeleton keys necessary to access his home at Carfax. Through such forced entry, Van Helsing "cross[es] himself as he cross[es] the threshold" (355). As Jonathan has been permitted entry to Dracula's castle and as his legal representative, Jonathan can enter his homes without further permission – just as once the vampire has been granted access, he can repeatedly enter. "Dr. Van Helsing had taken the key of the hall-door from the bunch, and locked the door in orthodox fashion, putting the key into his pocket when he had done" (358). Once they leave Carfax, Van Helsing removes the keys from inside and places them in his pocket. As suggested earlier, it is "*as if* the stranger or Foreigner held the keys" (Derrida, 2000, 123).

Dracula's other homes, at Piccadilly, Bermondsey, and Mile End, are all accessed by the team, who destroy his resting places. As Van Helsing advises in relation to accessing the Piccadilly home, "'We shall not go so early that the policemen, who have then little to think of, shall deem it strange; but we shall go after ten o'clock, when there are many about, and such things would be done were we indeed owners of the house'" (390–1). By masquerading as the true owners of the house, the team align themselves as host of the space (another instance of Dracula and Jonathan's doubling) and act illegally by hiring a locksmith under the eye of a policeman: "the policeman nodded acquiescence" (395). With approval from the law, the team work to usurp the properties of the host and render him homeless. "Lord Godalming and Quincey Morris, taking accurate notes of the various addresses of the houses in the East and the South, took with them the keys in a great bunch, and set out to destroy the boxes in those places" (396–7). As the team occupy the Piccadilly home, however, they realize that the host is about to enter his home while they are inside. As Dr. Seward narrates: "we all could hear a key softly inserted in the lock of the hall door" (400). Uncannily for Dracula, he enters his own property which is inhabited by guests. "With a swift glance around the room, [Morris] at once laid out our plan of attack" (400) – not only do the team usurp mastery of his house, they also plan to attack the host in his own home. As Derrida proposes, "the host thus becomes a retained hostage, a detained addressee" (2000, 107). On encountering the guest inside, Dracula is forced to flee from his own home: the guest has rendered his home unhomely, suggesting the view that "attorneys are a prime source of discursive contamination" (Punter, 1998, 21).

The team's endless pursuit of the host results in their travel to Transylvania, to track Dracula on his home territory toward the castle. At the end of the text, Van Helsing batters his way into Dracula's castle: "though the doors were all open I broke

them off the rusty hinges" (452). In a display of excessive violence, Van Helsing ensures that the castle cannot house: "before I left the castle I so fixed its entrances that never more can the Count enter there Un-Dead" (454). After the destruction of his final home, Dracula is reduced to ash by the team: an ultimate triumph of guest over host. To return to Derrida, "the one who invites, the inviting host, who becomes the hostage – and who really always has been. And the guest, the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host" (2000, 125).

In a reversal of expectations, it is Jonathan (and the team) who parasitically gains from Dracula. This is emphasized by the repeated emblem of gold in the text. Whilst Jonathan disobeys the host and explores the castle, he notes that "the only thing I found was a great heap of gold in one corner – gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground" (189). The money Jonathan observes is suggestive of the cost of his services and the financial gain he stands to inherit through their transactions. After Jonathan and the team encounter Dracula in his home at Piccadilly, Jonathan cuts Dracula: "the point just cut the cloth of his coat, making a wide gap whence a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold fell out" (401). Again, Dracula is associated with the accumulation of capital for the parasitical guest. This is further suggested by Van Helsing who states: "'for me, I make sure that nothing here may be of use to him if so that he return.' As he spoke he put the money remaining into his pocket; took the title-deeds in the bundle as Harker had left them, and swept the remaining things into the open fireplace, where he set fire to them with a match" (401). The team are not content with the ruin of Dracula's homes and his subsequent return to the homeland: they also remain continually alert to the financial resources he can provide. Reading the vampire as victim is suggested further by contemporary texts such as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005), and Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries* published from 2001 onwards. As William Hughes writes, "the initial repulsion experienced by new initiates into vampirism, if felt at all, is rapidly replaced by a perception that the un-dead state is nothing more than a parallel lifestyle" (2001, 148–9).

As this essay has demonstrated, the Gothic explores the destructive path of the hostile guest. As Frederic, Ambrosio, Count Ardolph, and Jonathan suggest, it is not always the supernatural or monstrous that disrupt the security of the home and family. Instead, as vampire folklore proposes, the one who is invited in has the power to return and continually disrupt the homeliness of the host. As John Ajvide Lindqvist's 2004 novel suggests, the Gothic persistently advises us to *Let the Right One In*.

Note

1 Clearly, the character of Zofloya also functions as parasite to the family network of Berenza and his brother Henriquez. As invited guest, he both serves and undermines the authority of his host. However, as symbolic of demonic influence, his character is rather complex to qualify in these terms.

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