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REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

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Gothic Matters: Introduction

Once considered escapist or closely linked to fantasy, the Gothic genre (or mode, as scholars increasingly call it) has recently begun to be explored for its material concerns and engagement with real-world matters. This issue of *Text Matters* features essays that develop this line of inquiry, focusing on how the Gothic attempts to matter in concrete and critical ways, and mapping its rhetorical and aesthetic strategies of intervention and narration, affect and influence. The pun in the title of this volume—"Gothic Matters"—is intended to acknowledge both the material concerns of the Gothic as a genre and the continuing relevance and value of the cultural work performed by the Gothic, i.e. why it *matters*.

The Gothic is the brainchild of the eighteenth century, an eminently modern aesthetic mode, obsessed with the cultural changes that were remapping Europe and North America. Born in the wake of the first global war—the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War)—the Gothic quickly became associated with violent and sensational plots, an aesthetics of emotional extremes, graphic depictions of bodily injury, and finally, revolution itself. De Sade famously linked the Gothic to the political violence of the era when he suggested that Gothic novels were the "necessary fruits of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe." More recent observers and scholars of the Gothic have noted its inherently political and reformist bent, often tackling controversial social issues such as the social control of women, aristocratic privilege and class power relations, as well as traditional institutions including the church, the prison and the family (cf. Ledoux). The body was inevitably at the center of these explorations: its pain, discipline and control at the heart of the Gothic's critical concerns.

If revolutionary politics were the most obvious cultural context for some observers, the larger tectonic shifts in epistemology and moral judgment were also at stake. Changes in science, in political philosophy, and cultural values all impacted the Gothic, bringing with them a fascination with cultural relativism, the complexities of social justice, and a new self-awareness about history. The Gothic staged and interrogated these questions with its narratives of cultural otherness, excessive revenge, and repressed or

buried crimes that reverberated throughout family lines and local legends. Inherently sceptical of the Enlightenment values that nevertheless underpin its critiques of traditional institutions, the Gothic interested itself in alternative epistemologies such as folk culture, family legends, and rumors. A genre of the forgotten, unspoken and buried, the Gothic gave voice to characters that normally had no voice or weight in society. Although often subversive, the Gothic was not inherently or inevitably so, and more conservative or even paranoid and reactionary formations exist, most notably what critics recently have come to call the Imperial Gothic, which uses the rhetoric of monstrosity to depict racial and colonial others.

Nevertheless, the most interesting cultural work of the Gothic is linked to its creative explorations of the non-normative aspects of human life, such as the body in its queer, raced, gendered and physical materiality. It is no coincidence that many of the following essays focus specifically on the body and its subversive materiality. The volume opens with two essays that take up the issue of the body specifically within the context of the French Revolution. The first, by Agnieszka Łowczanin, examines representations of female bodies in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and argues that they serve as interventions in the debates around revolutionary violence taking place in England at the time. Making connections between the real-life treatment of Marie Antoinette and some of her entourage, for example, and the description of women characters in Lewis's novel, Łowczanin shows that Lewis expresses ambivalence about mob violence as well as contemporary conventions of femininity. The second essay continues with the French Revolution as backdrop for the early Gothic and takes up the work of Giovanni Aldini on freshly executed corpses. Aldini was the nephew of Luigi Galvani—the Italian physicist known for his work on galvanic electricity—and the better known of the two in England, travelling across Europe with widely publicized experiments on the dead. In her essay on Aldini, the guillotine, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Kristen Lacefield argues that the novel can be better understood in relation to the complex cultural meaning of the guillotine. Specifically, this instrument came to represent the double-edged nature of three cultural developments: the intrusions of modern science into natural biological processes, the emergence of materialist theories in science and medicine, and the sensational reports of revolutionary violence in France.

The next essay crosses the Atlantic and examines an autobiographical work by one of the great American Transcendentalists, Margaret Fuller. Monika Elbert shows how Fuller's *Memoirs* reveal a writer haunted by a younger sister's death and the memory of her strict and overbearing father, who travels to the Great Lakes on a Romantic search for wholeness,

only to discover a Gothic landscape of capitalist waste and Indian geno-cide. Elbert uses an EcoGothic approach in order to focus on Fuller's rep-resentations of nature as terrifying and savage on the one hand, but also a victim of the rapacious advances of greedy settlers. In a nuanced critique, Elbert analyzes the ambivalence and complexity of Fuller's depiction of a gothicized nature and demonstrates the usefulness of the Gothic as trope to evoke the painful but creatively generative alienation of being an excep-tional woman in the nineteenth century. Finally, Elbert shows that Fuller's journey through the landscape of the Great Lakes is as much epistemologi-cal and political as it is physical and emotional.

Karen E. Macfarlane's essay continues the volume's investigation of how the Gothic navigates through shifting regimes of knowledge and specifically the epistemological anxieties that were inherent to the colo-nial enterprise. The body is once more the epicenter of this network of mappings—a charged interface between the classificatory ambitions of the Victorian era and the many aspects of the unknown and unclassifiable that regularly beguiled it. Focusing on stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard about mysterious and disembodied hands, Macfarlane ex-amines the uncanniness that accompanies a colonial reduction of the other to commodified object. The next essay continues to explore the Gothic epistemologies generated by dismembered and disarticulated bodies. Neil Forsyth's "The Tell-Tale Hand," with its obvious allusion to Poe's famous "The Tell-Tale Heart," begins with Sherwood Anderson's story "Hands" from *Winesburg, Ohio*, and takes us on an extraordinary journey through the work of Caravaggio and Rodin, twentieth-century horror cinema, the Swiss hand surgeon Claude Verdan and the discoveries of contemporary cognitive science to explore some of the uncanny aspects of the embodied self. A theme that runs through the essay is the disjunction between what we know with our minds and what we know and do with our bodies, an epistemological gap that the Gothic has eloquently and forcefully thema-tized across a range of artistic media.

Marie Rose B. Arong's contribution examines another kind of un-canny not knowing, what we could call postcolonial amnesia. In "Nick Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*: Re-imagining the Gothic in a Postcolonial Philippines," Arong shows how Nick Joaquin, an Anglophone Philippine writer from the 1950s, uses the Gothic to explore the issue of the Philip-pine's repressed or forgotten history, i.e. in this case that of the Philippine's Hispanic past, as a form of resistance to the cultural and political domina-tion of America ever since it occupied the island at the beginning of the century. *Cándido's Apocalypse* (1952), though sometimes understood as magical realism in the context of the Latin American Boom movement, is

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in fact better served by being read in terms of the Gothic. The main character, a teenaged boy, begins to see underneath people's clothes and then skin and flesh, something like Roger Corman's *X: The Man With the X-Ray Eyes* (1963), until he sees nothing but skeletons. Arong proposes that Nick Joaquin uses the Gothic to dissect the nation's "neurosis," caused by an ideologically motivated repression of the full complexity of the island's colonial past, and to complicate its national narrative with a bracing dose of Postcolonial Gothic.

Similarly, John Armstrong's essay, "Gothic Matters of De-Composition: The Pastoral Dead in Contemporary American Fiction," explores how contemporary American writers use the Gothic to complicate the American pastoral by planting corpses in the garden of American innocence. Looking at stories and novels by Alice Walker, Stephen King, Raymond Carver, and Cormac McCarthy, Armstrong argues that each of these writers repurposes the pastoral with a Gothic twist in order to "confront America's darkest social and historical matters." More than simply interrogating America's history of violence, however, these narratives also speak "of the cruelties and injustices of the historical and global world we inhabit, cruelties and injustices we regularly put aside in order to live, prosper and consume." Armstrong suggests that Gothic narratives such as these are important to "our social awareness" and constitute "Gothic matters which reflect, delineate and de-compose the horrors of the everyday."

Among the most compelling of quotidian horrors to have emerged in recent decades is a world shaped by neoliberal economics and social philosophy. Many scholars believe that it is no accident that the Gothic has emerged so forcefully at precisely the same moment, and has provided a repertoire of images, tropes and monsters that both reflect and critically explore this new global order (cf. Blake). Marie Liénard-Yeterian's essay thus continues the reflections begun by Armstrong by closely analyzing how Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* turns to the Gothic as a way of confronting contemporary political and economic policies, which promote greed and unprecedented exploitation, surveillance and personal data gathering, and in which human beings are turned into consuming or consumed objects. The body is once more at the heart of these interrogations, the daily life of the protagonists generally preoccupied with procuring the basic necessities to survive as well as avoiding human predators who render literal the Gothic maxim underlying capitalist social relations: it's a dog eat dog world, or, in this case, man eats man. The traditional Gothic landscape of haunted castles or wilderness morphs in McCarthy's novel into a liminal post-apocalyptic space where human civilization has disappeared and

what is left is a bleak twilight backdrop to the real locus of Gothic horror: the human mind and body.

Glen Donnar's essay, "'It's not just a dream. There is a storm coming!': Financial Crisis, Masculine Anxieties and Vulnerable Homes in American Film," also takes the contemporary economic and political landscape as its explicit focus, only this time the apocalypse has not yet happened but the protagonist feels its approach. The pervasive sense of precariousness created by the 2008 economic meltdown and the lack of hope for an economically sustainable future under current political conditions is figured by Gothic-inflected films like *Take Shelter* (2011) and *Winter's Bone* (2010), where protagonists struggle to survive economically in an everyday "made unfamiliar, unsettling and threatening in the face of metaphorical and real (socio-)economic crisis and disorder." Laying bare not only the historical and political anxieties of the moment, the two films also continue the Gothic tradition of interrogating gender from a critical perspective, scrutinizing "otherwise unspeakable national anxieties about male capacity to protect home and family, including through a focus on economic-cultural 'white Otherness.'" In both films, white men are shown as floundering in their expected roles as providers, overwhelmed by forces that threaten them from both outside and inside (including their own failure to master their inner demons), while women, as has always been the case in the Gothic, find themselves taking on protective and more active roles in order to cope with the crisis.

Gender is also the focus of the next essay, Agata Łuksza's "Excess and Lack: Genre Negotiations and Gender-Bending in the *Supernatural* Series," which examines the 11-season *Supernatural* series (CW, 2005–) about two monster-hunting brothers. Like many Gothic texts, the series addresses and complicates traditional masculinity, partly through self-reflexive and meta-fictional generic playfulness, also a recurring feature of the Gothic since Horace Walpole wrote the first Gothic novel as a formal experiment and gender-bending romp that began with a young man crushed by a giant helmet. The next essay also takes generic hybridity as its point of departure, examining the Gothic rewritings of the western that involve Native American vampires. Adopting a tacitly Postcolonial Gothic approach, Corinna Lenhardt teases out the difference between commodified versions of vampiric Indians used by white film-makers from a more critical repurposing of the vampire myth by Native American authors and film-makers. Many of these films take war as their backdrop, raising troubling questions about where savagery really lies. By using the ultra-malleable trope of the vampire, Lenhardt shows how contemporary Native American storytellers

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deconstruct the myth of the Indian savage and interrogate the racial meanings of monster myths.

Justyna Stępień looks at another critical rewriting of the vampire trope, reading Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2014) as an aesthetic response to contemporary postindustrial culture, which she argues has become a "culture of death." Against the Gothic industrial backdrop of today's post-apocalyptic Detroit, two ageless vampires attempt to use art, literature and music as fragments to shore themselves up, like T. S. Eliot, against the ruins of neoliberal America overtaken by zombie-like humans intent on turning everything into a commodity. Jarmusch's film is an homage to the lost culture of an indie and alternative America, a tradition carried on by the Gothic, the film seems to suggest, while the rest of the country sinks into the twilight afterlife of American empire. In such a world, it is the Gothic monster, now a hipster vampire, who has something to teach humans who have lost their humanity.

Finally, Barry Murnane concludes the volume with an analysis of a contemporary British series *In the Flesh* (BBC 2014–15) which imagines a world in which a zombie invasion has been stopped and "cured" medically by a private pharmaceutical company that produces an antidote allowing zombies to function "normally" and return to their families. In his article "*In the Flesh* and the Gothic Pharmacology of Everyday Life; or Into and Out of the Gothic," Murnane shows how the series poses anxious questions about our current world, where biopolitics and neoliberalism converge to produce entire pharmaceutically managed populations, to the greater profit of the corporate medicine industry which is only too eager to make people dependent on their products to function in their daily lives. Murnane argues that a preoccupation with medicine, narcotics, poisons and other mind-altering substances has defined the Gothic from the start, as has a recurring concern with the material forces shaping the modern subject. Taking this materialist tradition as a point of departure, Murnane examines how the show exposes the Gothic underpinnings of the way Big Pharma has undertaken to pacify and zombify populations rendered pathological or disabled by the economic ravages of austerity, financial speculation and unregulated market forces. In typical Gothic fashion, the show breaks down distinctions between the normal and the monstrous, and suggests that we are all subjects in a necropolitical economy. However, instead of ceding to despair or distraction, Murnane asks us to consider that the Gothic, like the *pharmakon*, may offer a "sly form of cultural therapeutics" through its narratives of monstrosity and horror (Baldick and Mighall 210). In this way, the Gothic may turn out to matter not only as a warning system and a critical lens, but also as a homeopathic antidote. If storytelling helps us

see the dark forces shaping our world, perhaps it can also help us narrate our way back to the radical and revolutionary human values that emerged alongside the Gothic at the dawn of modernity in the late eighteenth century—democracy, social justice, feminism, and a chastened universalism that can undo the legacy of race, class and colonial domination.

This volume, as always, also includes several articles, reviews, and interviews on slightly different topics. Małgorzata Dąbrowska, a historian specializing in the Middle Ages in Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, contributes an article on Trebizond, a state of the Byzantine imperial family in the period from the thirteenth till the fifteenth century. Dąbrowska shows that, like Byzantium through the influence of Yeats, Trebizond has made a mark on English literature (though admittedly to a smaller extent). The best-known is Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956), but what is perhaps more interesting for readers of this volume is the Dracula connection. It was the same Turkish troops who conquered Trebizond in 1461 that were dispatched to meet with Vlad III Dracul, the Voivode of Wallachia, inviting him to pay the overdue ransom levied on "infidels" and provide five hundred boys for the Turkish army. Vlad Dracul suspected a trap and ambushed the Sultan's forces and impaled them, earning the now familiar moniker "Vlad the Impaler." Centuries later, Bram Stoker would make his descendant into a famous monster, the vampire Dracula.

Next, Dorota Filipczak examines how Malcolm Lowry alludes to Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz's "The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" in his highly intertextual novella, "Through the Panama" (published posthumously in 1961), bringing new insight on how to read this unclassifiable late work by Lowry. Filipczak focuses on the importance of the machine in this work, arguing that an ambivalent sense of threat haunts the narrative, and exploring the various forms of liminality that this fictionalized travel memoir generates. Liminality is also the subject of the following essay, Agata G. Handley's examination of the work and poetic voice of Tony Harrison, a poet whose working-class background left him with a life-long sense of cultural and literary in-betweenness. Drawing on the sociological thought of Zygmunt Bauman and Stuart Hall, Handley considers the relationship between the ongoing process of poetic identity formation and the liminal position of the speaker in Harrison's poetry, exemplified in "On Not Being Milton," an initial poem in the sonnet sequence *The School of Eloquence*. Harrison's poetical reflection on liminality conveyed in the tropes of the opposition between the center and peripheries, the marginal and the mainstream, the deprived and the privileged, can be traced to his personal experience as a man who due to his education has never felt at home in either the world of literature or the reality of his working-class background, thus

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subjecting himself to constantly transgressing the boundaries and experiencing perpetual change while commenting on cultural and social transformations in contemporary Britain.

Finally, three book reviews and two interviews. First, Tomasz Fisiak reviews the impressive collection of essays edited by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright, *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic* (Cambridge UP 2014), which situates Radcliffe in her cultural context and particularly her relationship to Romanticism. A review of Charles I. Armstrong's *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History* by Wit Pietrzak continues the discussion of Yeats begun in Małgorzata Dąbrowska's essay on Trebizond and Byzantium. Pietrzak shows how Armstrong sets out to mark out a middle ground between the formalist criticism that dominated Yeats scholarship for much of the century and the recent resurgence of biographical criticism, but does not quite manage to escape existing critical paradigms. A third review by Antoni Górny examines Anna Pochmara's *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (2011), a study of how several major figures of the Harlem Renaissance dealt with the issue of black manhood and masculinity, a perennially vexed issue in African American culture.

The volume comes to a close with two interviews: Krzysztof Majer of the University of Łódź interviews Canadian novelist and playwright Bill Gaston, and Joanna Kosmalska (also from Łódź) interviews Uilleam Blacker (University College London), co-author, with Olesya Khromeychuk, of *Penetrating Europe, or Migrants Have Talent*, which premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2016.

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The Monk by M. G. Lewis: Revolution, Religion and the Female Body

ABSTRACT

This paper reads *The Monk* by M. G. Lewis in the context of the literary and visual responses to the French Revolution, suggesting that its digestion of the horrors across the Channel is exhibited especially in its depictions of women. Lewis plays with public and domestic representations of femininity, steeped in social expectation and a rich cultural and religious imaginary. The novel's ambivalence in the representation of femininity draws on the one hand on Catholic symbolism, especially its depictions of the Madonna and the virgin saints, and on the other, on the way the revolutionaries used the body of the queen, Marie Antoinette, to portray the corruption of the royal family. *The Monk* fictionalizes the ways in which the female body was exposed, both by the Church and by the Revolution, and appropriated to become a highly politicized entity, a tool in ideological argumentation.

Most early Gothic novels written in the eighteenth century offered an escapist adventure into territories which, though disturbed by subversive forces, were safely removed from the boundaries of their readers' households, which was one of the reasons for their growing appeal. Their readers were transported into the realms of desired unfamiliarity, where a capacity for strangeness expanded, and there was always more than met the eye. Foreign, continental territory and a leap back in time prepared the ground for otherness, ensuring for British readers an exotic spatial and temporal distancing, a practice initiated by Horace Walpole in 1764 and continued by successive practitioners of literary Gothicism, most notably Ann Radcliffe and M. G. Lewis. Using history and geography as fanciful backdrops against which their actions were set, these early Gothic novels were notorious for their lack of historical insight and geographical accuracy. However, it is this distancing and imprecision that has been interpreted as offering a safe ground for a discussion of the here and now. Even though there is a disparity between the reality of the readers and the fictitious reality of the characters, it is precisely their indirectness that makes the literary commentaries so appealing and effective. Whether set in Otranto, Naples or Madrid, the Apennines, Gascony or the Pyrenees, Gothic novels can be read as barometers of their era, as veiled and embroidered versions of the ailments and anxieties of their times.

This paper is a reading of the most notorious Gothic novel of the period, M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), in the context of the atmosphere and the legacy—literary and visual—of the political upheavals of the late eighteenth century, and especially those of the French Revolution. Of the Gothic novels written in the 1790s, *The Monk*, in its representation of institutionalized terror and directness of bodily horror, most explicitly dramatizes the tenor and the resonances of the revolt in France. The contention here is that the novel's absorption and digestion of the rebellious energies of its era is exhibited especially in its depictions of women, and channelled into subversive games with public and domestic representations of femininity, steeped in social expectation and a rich cultural and religious imaginary.

From the moment of its publication, *The Monk* gained a reputation for being an iconoclastic attack on metonymies of Catholicism as perceived by a Protestant eye: its convents and monasteries, celibacy, Mariology and ceremonial glam. Lewis exposes and toys with representations of female bodies which he detects at the core of Catholic symbolism, like representations of the Madonna and the virgin saints. But if *The Monk* is to be seen as dramatizing the rebellious fervour of its time and the unprecedented radicalism taking place just across the Channel, its imagery—a brazen

attack on the Church—is seen as a reworking of the Revolution's attack on the Crown, and later also of the democratic French government's anticlerical policies and de-Christianization. Imagistically, an attack on the Church as an institution becomes conflated with an attack on the Crown as the novel's transgressive tableaux draw both on the ways visualizations of the *ancien régime* were created and then deconstructed by the revolutionaries, and on the ways in which the Revolution, reduced to a series of images, imprinted itself on the English imagination.

The institutions of the Church and the Crown were associated in the public imagination with their females, often beautified and bejewelled, the Virgin Mary and female saints, and Marie Antoinette respectively. In *The Monk,* Lewis scrapes off the glittered surface of Church rituals—like the elaborate processions on the various feast days which abound in Spain—in the same way as the Revolution did with those of the Crown, in order to expose Catholicism as a hierarchical system of idolatry and control, relying on fabricated images of women. Underneath the jewelled coat of religious devotion elevating virginity and obedience—guarded in *The Monk* by the female character of the Prioress—Lewis sees a hub of vileness, corruption and hypocrisy, in much the same way as under the diamond necklaces, elaborate couture and gowns of the Bourbons, the revolutionaries saw their incompetence, immorality and social injustice incarnate.

At this point the novel problematizes the ambivalence inherent in the understanding and representation of femininity: veiled, confined and untouchable on the one hand, and exposed, adorned and abused on the other. In this respect, *The Monk* is a fictional digestion of the ways in which the female body, expected to be secluded within the confinements of domesticity, was dragged both by the Church and by the Revolution into the public eye to become a highly politicized entity, appropriated as a tool in ideological argumentation. Lewis plays out the ambivalences of political revolts in which the female body used as a symbol undergoes a transition: from a spectacle of display to a spectacle of degradation. Since tied to femaleness is the notion of the beautiful and the fragile, at the moment of revolt its representation is in crisis, abused and transgressed by the Church, radicals and anti-radicals alike.

Lewis's own way of representing the female body—clothed and unclothed, revered and defiled, beautified and mutilated—is explained within the context of such politically-engaged texts as Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Burke's treatise in particular relies on a highly aestheticized and emotional rhetoric which appropriates the body of Marie Antoinette to serve as a metonymy for the disproportionate

suffering and humiliation of the royal family. In this respect it continues the project of public appropriation of the female royal body and demonstrates how, on both sides of the barricade, certain paradigms of femaleness can be exploited to become weapons in the political sphere. All these texts reveal the degree to which religious, social and moral meanings in those unstable times, riddled with truly Gothic anxiety, were projected on to the female body so that it became a message board, a stage on which this era's numerous political dramas were performed.

They were written in a period of discontent both at home and on the Continent, closing a century during which Britain was constantly affected by or a witness to wars, rebellions and revolutions. The last decades of the eighteenth century especially were, for Britain, not only rife in armed involvement overseas, but also endangered by the rapid spread of revolutionary ideas on the Continent. From the beginning, the responses the French Revolution provoked among the British varied and oscillated. If, at first, it "was greeted with general enthusiasm in Britain" (Harvie 433) and across enlightened Europe as a laudable revolt against the oppressions of totalitarianism, as events unfolded, the attitudes of both British politicians and the public became more sharply divided, with many sympathizers growing disillusioned and recoiling from the spread of Jacobin bloodshed.

The politically engaged writing which followed the storming of the Bastille bears testimony to this polarization and the shifts of opinion. The first notable response fuelling controversy over how to read the events in France was the anniversary sermon for the Glorious Revolution delivered on 4 November 1789 by Dr. Richard Price, the new Whig and Dissenter, who saw the storming of the Bastille in the light of events at home a hundred years earlier, and those of the American Revolution. Price believed that radical development of this zest for liberty would, with time, become universal and lead to replacing the hereditary power of the monarchs "with the rule of law, and priests with the rule of reason and conscience" (Todd x). These claims provoked Edmund Burke's refutation in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in November 1790. An attack on the revolutionaries and a defence of monarchic rule, it came as a shocking volte-face after his enthusiastic support of the rights of colonialists during the American Revolutionary War. Burke expressed exactly "what the establishment felt: . . . remove customary deference and force would rule" (Harvie 433). Burke's *Reflections* spawned over fifty responses, the first being Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, published anonymously in December 1790 (Todd xi), and the most popular, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* of 1791–1792. Burke's *Reflections* sold 19,000 copies in its first year, and 30,000 over the next five (Todd xi), whereas

Paine's *The Rights of Man* sold 200,000 copies, a startling number "for a society still only semi-literate" (Harvie 433). The number of copies these political works sold indicates not only the demand for this sort of engaged writing among the English reading public, but also the extent to which the ideas they propagated and images they provoked circulated in popular consciousness at that time.

The numerous political caricatures were another potent source of commentary which fed the popular imagination by reducing words to the appealing brevity of images. They constructed "a visual apparatus through which basic information about key players and occurrences could be communicated," but, significantly, they did so by means of "canny manipulation of verism and distortion" (Kromm 123). As the events in France rapidly advanced, they took for the most part an anti-revolutionary stance. Among the most famous examples are: Thomas Rowlandson's *The Contrast 1792* (1792), James Gillray's depiction of the royal family's recapture during their flight to Varennes in the etching *French Democrats Surprising the Royal Runaways* (1792), *John Bull's Progress* (1793), and the gruesomely crude and direct *A Family of Sans-Culottes Refreshing after the Fatigues of the Day* (1792). It is probably the bestiality and the horrific indifference of men, women and children alike to the cannibalized human parts, depicted as commodity and commonplace articles in this print, that most poignantly capture the significance of the transition from the commended idealism of the initial phase of the Revolution to the unfathomable reality of the years to come. Gillray's later caricature, *The Promis'd Horrors of the French Invasion* of 1796, the same year that saw the publication of *The Monk*, was meant to bring home to the English the political consequences of the spread of revolutionary ideas in a scene which enacts the invasion of London by French soldiers, and the destruction of the pivotal symbols of English democracy: the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights, bundled together with Acts of Parliament and various statutes and labelled "Waste paper." Images like these made the English public realize that revolutionary tumult, while ideologically admirable when it commenced, incited unprecedentedly wild energy and provoked unfathomable, inhuman destruction before it could ever produce the desired effects.

Unlike political pamphlets and caricatures, which comment on the Revolution directly—whether discrediting it, like Burke and Gillray, or supporting some of its claims, like Wollstonecraft and Paine—Gothic fiction, as has been said, never directly engages in commentary on, or representation of, historical events. However, though ostensibly removed to the times of the Counter-Reformation, it embodies a large degree of political tension and atmosphere related to the events of the years of its writing

and publication. At the time when the most notable Gothic novels were written, events in France had gone beyond the reforms—at first welcomed in progressive British circles—leading to, as was believed, constitutional monarchy seen in the light of the native Glorious Revolution. Britain was already at war with France, the Reign of Terror had taken its toll of tens of thousands, the royal family had been guillotined and the starting point of the Revolution, the storming of the Bastille, had turned from a symbol of the overthrow of the despotic power of royalty into a symbol of violence and aberration more shocking than those it sought to avert. The changes were implemented by the brutal elimination of everyone associated with the old regime, and carried out by an uncontrolled mob who did not stop short at mutilating the bodies of their enemies, as evidenced, for example, by the fate of the remains of the queen's confidante, Marie Louise, the Princesse de Lamballe.

Although the horrors of the French Revolution were never mentioned directly by Gothic writers, they affected their artistic imagination, supplying ever more daring imagery and demanding new diction to accommodate the monstrous reality. In his *Representations of Revolution (1789–1820)*, Ronald Paulson claims that the Gothic served "as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to understand what was happening across the channel in the 1790s" (217), whereas Maggie Kilgour, looking from a literary perspective, sees the Revolution as supplying an invigorating energy to the genre, which might have come to "an aesthetic dead-end" if the events in France "had not made it an appropriate vehicle for embodying relevant political and aesthetic questions . . . as the Terror proved fertile for a literature of terror" (23). Writing in 1797, an anonymous commentator of *Monthly Magazine* bemoaned the fact that the novels of the day "exactly and faithfully copied THE SYSTEM OF TERROR, if not in our streets, and in our fields, at least in our circulating libraries, and in our closets" ("Terrorist System" 102) and blamed the Revolution for the fact that "our genius has become hysterical, and our taste epileptic" (103).

The Monk embodies exactly this heat of political conflict, social fervour and the ambivalence of revolt. The provenance of its moral instability, of the disruption of accepted notions of the human, of the decline of authority and subversion of aesthetic and gender paradigms, of the fact that in *The Monk* "nothing is what it seems" (Punter 79), has been acknowledged by many critics as an artistic digestion springing directly from the ambience of terror in which Europe was seeped as a consequence of the revolt in France.[1] Its first literary commentator, the Marquis de Sade,

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[1] Paulson (219–25), Kilgour (159–60), Whitlark (1–8), Davenport-Hines (178–79).

in his "Reflections on the Novel" in *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings* (1800), said of *The Monk* that it "was the necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe" (qtd. in Sage 49). Sade considered Lewis's novel "superior on all accounts" to other works of this kind—especially "to the bizarre flashes of the brilliant imagination of Radcliffe"—because, at that unstable time, it was necessary to appeal to the supernatural and hellish realms for imagery gripping enough for readers, who were by then "familiar with the extent of the miseries which evil men were able to heap upon mankind" (qtd. in Sage 48, 49). Gothic tropes "could no longer be presented naively; they had all been familiarized and sophisticated by the events in France" (Paulson 221).

Paulson claims that Sade's perception of Lewis as a writer acknowledging the extent of miseries endured by Europeans "hardly explains Lewis." In Paulson's opinion *The Monk* was for its author "largely an aesthetic expression," whereby the mixture of tones it displays can be explained "in terms of a Jacobean tragicomedy" and a play with "the aesthetic of sublimity" (220). One cannot but agree with his claim that *The Monk* is much more of an aesthetic than a political exercise, the novel's theatricality having been critically acknowledged.[2] However, its unprecedented depictions of bodily horror seem to be much more than gaudy displays of ingenious stagecraft. In a critical introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*—Wollstonecraft's immediate reaction to Burke's *Reflections*—Janet Todd draws attention to the fact that Wollstonecraft based her argument and rhetoric on reversing the gender roles in response to Burkean ideas of the sublime and the beautiful, "with its aesthetic genderizing in which beauty became associated with women and sublimity with men" (xiii). It seems that at work in Lewis's novel is a subversive play with "aesthetic genderizing," whereby women are not exclusively associated with beauty in a Burkean sense but also with the dark forces of sublimity.

Firstly, this is facilitated by an aestheticized reversal of, and games with, gender roles and gender performativity. The most notorious examples here are connected with the character of Matilda, who initially poses for a pictorial representation of the Madonna, making the virgin Abbott Ambrosio experience the sublimity of religious worship, which quickly transforms into unabashed erotic ecstasy. She then cross-dresses and inhabits a Madrid monastery as the virgin novice Rosario, to be in the end exposed as the embodiment of a demon. In contacts with her, Ambrosio progresses from the experience of "the enjoyment of pleasure," a pleasure that is initially "stolen, and not forced upon" him (Burke, *A Philosophical*

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[2] Kilgour (145–46, 150–53, 156), McEvoy (xxx), Spooner (43).

Enquiry qtd. in Sage 37–38), to the experience of fear, which makes him tremble as she leads him along "the passages which . . . formed a sort of Labyrinth" where in "profound obscurity" he takes part in a black magic ritual (Lewis 273, 275). Upon Matilda's inspiration, Ambrosio comes into contact with Lucifer whose sight and power produce emotions of fear and admiration, "secret awe," "delight and wonder" (277), so that, as in contact with the sublime, "strength, violence, pain and terror" rush upon his mind together (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry* qtd. in Sage 38). Also the depiction of the novel's victim, Antonia, though in a less spectacular manner, progresses from the incarnation of beauty and innocence, veiled from head to foot when Lorenzo spots her for the first time in the Church of the Capuchins, to the unclothed Venus de Medici when the same Lorenzo in the same church gives rein to his erotic imagination and undresses her in his mind's eye. Finally, Antonia's ravisher Ambrosio sees in her his "sweet Girl" (Lewis 381), but after the rape, the same pair of eyes perceive her as a "Fatal Witch" (385) and a serpent he fears and wants to recoil from.

Secondly, if, according to Burke, the experience of the awe-inspiring sublime is unattainable without the accessories of terror and obscurity, when transferred to the political and religious arena, it becomes precisely the desired emotion aroused by the figures of power, whether derived from the heavenly kingdom or from the divinely appointed monarchic authority. Religious and royal ceremonies alike were fashioned to mark distinction and to distance both the humble believer and the subject of the state from the source of reverence. The glitter of the glamorous gear was associated both with the royal wardrobe, like that of Marie Antoinette, and with elaborate church ceremonies, during which, especially in Spain, the effigies of saints were richly adorned. Representations of Virgin Mary whose chastity was a gem, were similarly depicted in a jewelled fashion, like in the baroque churches and convents of the Counter-Reformation Madrid in *The Monk*. The institutions that the Revolution sought to abolish, the Court and ultimately the Church, were associated with wealth and represented by beautified images of women, transmogrified, constrained, if not handicapped, and, in a truly Gothic manner, almost obscured by the dazzle of glitter.[3]

On this theme too, Lewis comments with tongue-in-cheek audacity. The villainous Prioress secures for her novices only virgins from the most illustrious families, and St. Clare is the patron of their convent. In its vaults, a dazzling ruby sparkles on the finger of her statue. Quite significantly,

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[3] Cf. the so-called Diamond Necklace Affair, crucial in discrediting the reputation of the royal family (Schama 203–10).

however, the historical St. Clare of Assisi was an ardent follower of St. Francis, lived the life of poverty and austerity and was the cofoundress of the Order of Poor Ladies (Robinson 4).

As has been said, the Revolution, among many things, demonstrated the extent to which the female body can be appropriated and certain paradigms of femaleness can be exploited to become weapons in the political sphere. Lewis's novel does not respond to this in the form of an intellectual rhetorical exercise, as was the case in Wollstonecraft's text, but digests it by means of a theatrical subversion feeding on recognizable tableaux constructing femininity. He depicts the unbridled sexuality of women, de-beautifies them and problematizes their transformation into political bodies in a showy and highly aestheticized manner. Moreover, his novel contains instances of conferring not only agency, sexual as well as political, but also horrendous evil on women, which can be read as imagistically digested reverberations of ambiguities inherent in the unprecedented political shocks across the Channel.

If *The Monk* is a "fable of revolution" (Paulson 221), it is also in the way it enacts group reaction to institutional abuse and stages a true rupture of the established order to erase hypocrisy and oppression. The most immediately recognizable revolutionary scenes in the novel involve the overthrow of the convent, originally aimed not to eradicate this institution, but to dethrone the villainous and tyrannical Prioress responsible for the alleged death of Agnes, sister of the Duke of Medina. The revolt is planned to take place during an elaborately staged procession in honour of St. Clare, which is engineered as a display of "pomp and opulence" (Lewis 348–49). Elitism, institutional rigour and expectance of reverence for its procedures "to which no Prophane was ever admitted" (345) may be read as parallel to the absurdity of court rituals at Versailles, which "fetishized the royal body" and admitted only high ranking aristocrats.[4] In both cases the upkeep of power and the necessity for institutionalized grandeur are associated with a cliquish practice meant to endorse the importance not only of its main objects, but also of its selected participants, and by means of an elaborate complexity to distance them from the "Prophanes."

During the procession, one of the nuns, St. Ursula, plays the main role in disclosing the vileness taking place behind the closed doors of the convent. Risking her life, she takes courage, ascends a throne on the glittering Machine prepared for the procession and from there addresses "the surrounding multitude" (Lewis 350). Significantly, she begins her speech

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[4] Schama mentions that among aristocrats at Versailles "hierarchies were established according to who might pass the King's slipper or hand the Queen her chemise" (211).

by making apologies for her sex, excusing her public appearance and conduct, which to the gathered crowds must appear as "strange and unseemly . . . when considered to be adopted by a Female and a Nun" (350). Though powerfully emotional, her speech is logical, and she is composed and undeterred by the novelty and inappropriateness of her first public appearance. The scene can also be read as ridiculing in one go the necessity of beauty to stand with femaleness and glitter with religious reverence. Lewis playfully tones down the inappropriateness of St. Ursula's undertaking by using a lavish display of jewels and ornaments in the background to her advantage, as elements which warrant her femininity in the eyes of the crowds. St. Ursula's words gain agency and credibility because, speaking from the throne, she assumes a position of authority, whereas the crowd, seeing a beautiful virgin addressing them from the "most brilliant ornament" (348) are, in effect, experiencing a surrogate of the lavish spectacle for which they had gathered.

The scenes that follow seem almost the enactment of the frenzy of the populace known from the September massacres of 1792 in Paris. When St. Ursula exposes to the mob the atrocious dealings of the Prioress, their determination to execute immediate justice cannot be checked. *Vox populi* becomes *vox dei*. Vain are the protestations of Lorenzo and Don Ramirez that, the Domina's crimes notwithstanding, she should undergo a trial and therefore be legally subject solely to the Inquisition. The fury of the mob dominates this scene. Despite the presence of the protectors of order, the archers and the guards, and of the men who attempt to stand for the rightful execution of justice, Lorenzo and his friends, the crowd swells into a "multitude of voices," an indeterminate mass acquiring a new assorted identity, levelling its components into one ferocious swarm, referred to as "the Populace," "the Throng" and "the multitude" (Lewis 355). This representation of collective violence clearly parallels the Burkean imagery of fluid from *Reflections*, where he refers to the revolutionary mob using phrases like "the wild *gas*, the fixed air," "the liquor" and "frothy surface," which is "plainly broke loose" (Burke 6–7; italics in the original). Burke applies the same terminology to refer to the unchecked crowds of the populace when he highlights similarities between the French Revolution and the native Gordon Riots, during which Lord George Gordon "raised a mob" and "pulled down all our prisons" (Burke, *Reflections* 81).

The most poignant Revolution-inspired imagery follows when the "People continued to press onwards." The crowd breaks the cordon of guards, takes hold of its victim, the Domina, and proceeds "to take upon her a most summary and cruel vengeance" (356). Seeking justice for her barbarities, the mob abandons the precepts of the Enlightenment, which

would dictate that she be handed over to the tribunal. The rioters are determined to stage what they imagine must have been the suffering and degradation she inflicted on her victims.

> The rioters heeded nothing but the gratification of their barbarous vengeance. They refused to listen to her: They showed her every sort of insult, loaded her with mud and filth, and called her by the most opprobrious appellations. They tore her one from one another, and each new Tormentor was more savage than the former. They . . . dragged her through the Streets, spurning her, trampling her, and treating her with every species of cruelty which hate or vindictive fury could invent. At length a Flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence. (Lewis 356)

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In the end, mob aggression extends beyond the infliction of pain to the mutilation of the corpse, in an act of final disrespect and annihilation which echoes Achilles mistreating the body of Hector for twelve days in *The Iliad*, and foreshadows twentieth-century mob executions of justice on political dictators like Mussolini or Ceausescu.

> Yet, though she no longer felt their insults, the Rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-used it, till it became no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting. (356)

This scene of group vengeance on the Prioress, horrendous in its detail, is a fictitious enactment of what revolutionary massacres must have looked like to the English imagination. Written after the death of the French royals when the guillotine reached the untouchables, and the guillotined acquired a name recognizable by everyone, this scene similarly gives a face to the deadly consequences of revolutionary horror. Its attention on the destructive energies of an angry mob can be read as echoing the way in which the bodies of the members of the *ancien régime* were treated at the time of the Massacres. The body of king Louis XVI, for example, was intended to be "turned to nothingness" in order "to obliterate the remains . . . so thoroughly that nothing at all would survive except mortal dirt" (Schama 673).

The logic applied by the French revolutionary mob during executions, fictionalized by Lewis in this "moment of popular frenzy" (356), is one of exact reciprocity, as in Hammurabi's law of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." In this Babylonian code, social and legal meanings were statutorily conferred on the victim's body, appropriating it in the

implementation of justice. Yet the potency of the scene above lies not only in the way Lewis "exploits the dramatic resonances of the revolution and its anticlericalism," but also in the way he recognizes the energies of the mob: "bloodthirsty, completely out of control, animal-like in its ferocity" (Paulson 219). Just as in Gillray's caricature, the revolutionaries are presented in *The Monk* as no better than the tyrants. If Lewis's Spain of the Inquisition bears parallels with, and offers commentary on, revolutionary France, it also does so in its depiction of the ambivalence of mob action, during which laudable claims of justice are forgotten and the boundaries between victim and victimizer no longer apply.

Luis-Vincent Thomas suggests that by disrespecting and disfiguring the remains of their victims in an act that guarantees their complete annihilation, the oppressors perform a double murder (67–68), the result of which is a contradiction of the concept of the good and beautiful death, seen as an extension to, and a confirmation of, the laudable life. In an act of mutilation, the violated body changes its status from social, public, inscribed in a sartorial code, from a body, as Bakhtin would have it, "completed," "finished" and "closed," to one that is unmasked and unveiled, to use a Gothic trope. Suffering, then often ruptured, it transforms into a Bakhtinian "body of grotesque realism . . . hideous and formless," a body that is made to go "out to meet the world," one whose parts "are open to the outside world" (Bakhtin 29, 26).

Such public exposure of the female body, expected to be veiled and hidden from the public eye, must be seen as the most cruel punishment to which it can be subjected. In *The Monk*, on the one hand, the formlessness and the hideousness of what remains of the Prioress serves as a metonymy for her sinfulness and corruption. Moral order is restored by subjecting her to the hyperbolically bad death the mob feels she deserves. On the other hand, however, Lewis seems to be addressing the contentious issue of female public involvement and the consequences of the violation of the doctrine of separate spheres. The Prioress is punished not only for her crimes but also for occupying the position of power, which involved staging public events, and thus annulling the division between separate spheres. The consequences of women's public activity, as the Revolution evidenced, were believed to be devastating for women. Their growing "interference in politics" was severely criticized in Britain, especially after the outbreak of war in 1793 (Kromm 131), and British iconography of the period best demonstrates the condemnation of women's public involvement. Significantly, the representational appeal of the 1790s' prints rests on situating female activity "within the satirical discourse of madness" and "sexualised monstrosity" (Kromm 131, 130).

As has been shown, the Parisian September massacres brought not only execution, but also the mutilation of the bodies of their victims, and, in the case of women, the mutilation of their bodies became almost public dissection, as was the case with the barbarous treatment of the Princesse de Lamballe. The extent of its defilement can be seen gruesomely foreshadowed in what at the time seemed the mere artistic representation of unfathomable hyperbolic savagery of Gillray's *A Family of Sans Culottes*.[5] In this cartoon Gillray depicted a sans culotte household, in which human bodies are dissected, dismembered and then devoured. The final act of execution is carried out post-mortem, so that it is not the act of death, but the mutilation of the bodies that is the final infliction of justice. A severed head on a platter, an eyeball on a spoon, human entrails in a bucket, a bare female breast squeezed by one of the ravenous revolutionaries' buttocks are for him metonyms of the new bestial political practice. Gillray was one of those cartoonists who "anatomized politics, revealing it to be a theatre of cruelty in which the body was incessantly battered" (Porter 242).

In *The Monk*, the linking of execution with eroticism and a public display of the female body is introduced in the opening scenes, when in a dream vision Lorenzo sees Antonia snatched by a dreadful "Unknown" who tortures her "with his odious caresses" (28). With the aid of supernatural powers she manages to escape and ascend to heaven, but "her white Robe was left in his possession." Naked, she darts upwards. The barbarity and profanity of the revolutionaries is echoed in the tripartite inscription on the monster's forehead, "Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!"—a blatant mockery of the new religion of "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*."[6] However, the example of linking execution with eroticism carried out with greatest finesse in the novel is in the final scenes of the procession. Here, Lewis merely mentions the names of the saints who are personified by beautiful novices. They were all early Christian martyrs who died executed for their faith by the defilement of their bodies, so the procession becomes a public celebration of their mutilation. It is certainly no coincidence that Lewis chooses to depict the figures of St. Lucia, St. Lucy, sentenced to

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[5] The maiming of de Lamballe's body is differently conveyed by historians; however, in popular consciousness it remains remembered as one of the most horribly publically abused. All accounts confirm that her head was severed and then "stuck on a pike" to be "carried in triumph through the streets of Paris" and in front of the queen, who fainted before she saw "the blond curls" of her confidante bob "repellently in the air" (Schama 635). Imagined to be a partner of Marie Antoinette in Sapphic orgies, according to other reports, apparently just after the trial, the Princesse de Lamballe was handed to the mob, lynched, then her breasts were cut off and genitals sliced (Davenport-Hines 170).

[6] I mention this scene in my analysis of the abject in Walpole and Lewis. Cf. "Convention, Repetition and Abjection: The Way of the Gothic," *Text Matters* 4 (2014): 190.

defilement in a brothel (Bridge 414), and St. Catherine of Alexandria, tortured when she refused to yield to her suitor, emperor Maxentius, and declared she had consecrated her virginity to Jesus (Clugnet 445–46). The last of the personified saints is St. Genevieve, the patron saint of Paris, whose prayers saved the city from destruction by the barbarians when the troops of Attila and his Huns were marching through Gaul in 451 (MacErlean 414). In these two scenes—involving the assumption of Antonia escaping the profane monster, and the novices parading as abused saints—Lewis is critical of certain elements of Catholic theology, and its need for female victimization. A woman must be degraded and her body defiled. Only then, its bejewelled and beautified representation can be elevated, and she can become a revered, martyred symbol of faith. But, by depicting the monster's sacrilegious intrusion into the interior of the church, Lewis seems to be equally critical of the radical spiritual and material erasure of all religious tradition, and its ideological replacement the Revolution attempted.

This mixing of the two spheres, the public and the domestic, is also a quality that features in the representations of the Revolution in both Burke's response and in the caricatures by Gillray, like *John Bull's Progress* (1793) or *The Blessings of Peace, the Curses of War* (1795). One of the most memorable images Burke uses in his argumentation against the events in France is the image of the royal family captured in a domestic scene, where he appropriates into political rhetoric the aesthetic load of "beauty in distress" from *A Philosophical Enquiry*, which was later to become one of the favourite Gothic tropes. In this passage Burke appeals to emotion in a manner comparable with Gillray who likewise speaks through images of domestic familiarity rather than those featuring politicians:

> [O]n the morning of the 6th of October, 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled, melancholy repose. . . . A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with . . . blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with a hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and, through ways unknown to the murderers, had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment.
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> This king, to say no more of him, and this queen, and their infant children, (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people,) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world, which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcases. Thence they were conducted into the capital of their kingdom. (*Reflections* 68–69)

Surprised by a band of assassins at night in her bedroom, Marie Antoinette is suddenly stripped of the privileged position she was born to, brought up in and then married to, denied the protective shield of the divine aura of royalty, exposed and turned into a mere "persecuted woman." Her tragic plight is additionally underscored by the fact that, as Burke imagines it, to seek relief at the feet of the king, her man, himself a persecuted victim at the mercy of the ruffians, the queen ends up on her knees in front of him.

This particular detail of the capture of the royal family reveals Burke's poetic licence with a historical moment. Firstly, the public reputation of the king had by then long been destroyed—Louis XVI was no longer envisioned as Father-of-the-*Patrie* to look up to or appeal to for help—and, secondly, in his married life too, traditional roles had long been reversed, quite contrary to the established Bourbon ways. Just as Louis was notorious for being "awkward, secluded and retiring," his wife gained a reputation for enjoying her freedoms and being "brazenly outgoing" (Schama 213). Therefore, Burke's envisioning of the capture reads as a wishful restoration of a long-lost royal reputation. Putting the queen at the feet of her husband, he creates a pictorial representation of a respectable traditional family, with the woman obediently subscribing to the norms of domesticity, a far cry from the reality in the household of the last of the Bourbons. This visual manipulation, with the reader as a sympathizing spectator, is part of Burke's political rhetoric, which turns the queen's apparent nakedness from an emblem of her notorious libertinism into a signifier of the ruffians' brutality. Their violence is encoded in her nakedness, in her "naked, shivering nature" fully exposed, just as it is in the "scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses" of the domestics (Burke, *Reflections* 74, 69). Marie Antoinette in this scene is but an ordinary being. Caught unawares, she is not given a chance to put on her royal garment, a weapon of reverence, a shield that defies any form of opposition. What is left in a moment such as this is humanity laid bare, the queen degraded to the position of being "but a woman" (Burke, *Reflections* 74). And, according to Burke, "a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order" (74).

This scene—especially the historically disproved exposure of Marie Antoinette—can be seen in the light of pre-revolutionary, anti-royalist propaganda. Daring and explicit seditious writings made the body of the queen public property, and appropriated it to epitomize the corruption of nobility. These texts draw on scenarios set out by popular imagination which linked the "political constitution of the state" with the moral and "physical constitution" of the royal court (Schama 211), especially of its female constituent. They resulted in the creation of what Schama calls "sexual demonologies," which contributed to the "phenomenally rapid erosion of royal authority in

the late 1780s" (225).[7] One of the schemes employed in the pathetic deconstruction of the image of the queen rested on using Marie Antoinette's love for the neoclassical informality of simple, cotton and muslin gowns, and the directness with which she represented her own femininity. It was seen as confirmation of her "casual disregard for propriety," and then turned into pornographic material (Schama 220).[8] As a consequence, "the conflation of sexual and political crime" became a fact and the need for Revolution was expressed in terms of the debauchery of the queen's body, whereby her "sexual perversions . . . were often treated as political stratagems" (Schama 226, 225).

In Lewis's novel, too, the overthrow of the convent, which is inspired by the coming to light of the greedy and murderous nature of the Prioress, and which causes the disclosure of Ambrosio's "proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful character" (237), is engineered by means of sexual agency and abuse of the bodies of Agnes and Antonia. However, whereas Burke victimizes the passive body of the queen, and implies the demand for a chivalrous sheltering of her from shameful exposure—so that she is restored to the status of more than a woman, that of the queen—the undercurrent directing Lewis's positioning of female characters is radically different. First of all, he seems to confer a certain political agency on to his women without the immediate aid of male agency. A decisive voice in the overthrow of the convent is, after all, given to St. Ursula, who courageously discloses the dealings of the Prioress. As has been said, though her action is deemed highly inappropriate by eighteenth-century standards, which considered it unnatural for a woman to participate in the public sphere—"the language that dignified a public man, demeaned a public woman" (Colley 251)—St. Ursula is not demeaned during her public appearance. Neither is Agnes, who, after the overthrow of the convent, emerges from its vaults "so wretched, so emaciated, so pale" that Lorenzo "doubted to think her Woman" (369). At work in this scene is a mechanism similar to the one used by Burke: Agnes's physical degradation, her emaciation and paleness, speak not of her feminine weakness, but of the Prioress's inhumanity, and justify the zeal, destructive though it became, of

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[7] This seditious writing continued after the outbreak of the Revolution. The titles of the works produced then bear testimony to the extent of the deterioration of the queen's reputation: *The Vaginal Fury of Marie-Antoinette, Wife of Louis* (1791), *The Scandalous and Libertine Private Life of Marie-Antoinette from the Loss of Her Maidenhead to the First of May 1791* (in two volumes) (Arcand 133).

[8] The unconventional and unaffected way the queen fashioned her femininity was captured in the paintings of one of her most important friends, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (Schama 216). For a detailed analysis of the increasing informality of the court and its effects on the perception of the queen, see Catherine Spooner's *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, chapter 2: "Revolution and Revealment: the Gothic Body and the Politics of Décolletage," esp. 23–38.

the convent's destroyers. It is this animalistic femininity—here one "not of the highest order" to quote Burke (*Reflections* 74)—that Lewis spares for survival, whereas chastity, epitomized in the figure of Antonia, and propriety, written in the character of her mother, are made to die.

Agnes's emergence from incarceration in the vaults of the convent can be additionally read as a humanist comment on the last public performance of Marie Antoinette, one of the many she did not stage. The sight of the emaciated and pale Agnes echoes the last glimpses of the queen as she was led in an open carriage from the Conciergerie to the guillotine, in the final spectacle of degradation. The queen turned into "a shrunken, white-haired woman," "gaunt," "thin and wasted" (Schama 799, 796). And, if in a fabricated scene, Burke elevated her traditional role of a wife, the Revolution systematically stripped her of all her social roles, finally also of that of a mother, as the tragic story of her son, the last of the Bourbons, illustrates. So when Agnes walks out with the rotting remains of her child, Lewis seems to be commenting on the recent tragedy of Marie Antoinette—the mother, who was punished for her role of a queen. He seems to be enacting the scenario that Burke could not have envisioned writing his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* back in the early 1790s, the separation of the mother from her only surviving child, who then died of malnutrition and neglect, abandoned to the care of a shoemaker. As *The Monk* nears its end, despite its undeniable aesthetic and ideological radicalism, Lewis's message appears first and foremost humanist.

If *The Monk* is to be read as digesting certain revolutionary horrors, by employing a string of ambivalences, Lewis makes it clear that it is not the Prioress, for all her murderous brutality, hidden under the glitter of religious sham, nor the Monk, for all his dissipation, hypocrisy and moral weakness, that should be made the culprits of revenge. With Ambrosio and the Domina we see a tyranny of institutionalism that curbs personality by denying free access to the world and its ideas; with Antonia, the conduit for this tyranny is her own mother. Lewis detects abuse not in its effects, but in the source: the despotism of educational limitations and institutionalized authoritarianism of religion. For Ambrosio, the beginnings of his monastic education are marked by antagonism between his "real and acquired character" (237). In the process of his instruction, virtues "ill-suited to the Cloister," like benevolence, compassion, and frankness, were "carefully repressed" (237). Seeking reasons for the corruption of the court at Versailles, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft makes a similar claim. The minds of the royals "instead of being cultivated" were, like that of Ambrosio, "warped by education" (Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication* 8). Four years later, following her argumentation from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of*

the French Revolution (1794), she maintains that "education, and the atmosphere of manners in which a character is formed, change the natural laws of humanity" (322). In the case of both the king and "the unfortunate queen of France," their "opening faculties were poisoned in the bud" (Wollstonecraft, *An Historical and Moral View* 323). The king's education "only tended to make him a sensual bigot"; the queen's, concentrated on preparing her for the role she was to play, making her "a complete actress, and an adept in all the arts of coquetry that debauch the mind," encouraging her to spend time "in the most childish manner; without the appearance of any vigour of mind" (Wollstonecraft, *An Historical and Moral View* 324).

For Burke, to perform her social function of a queen, a woman needs to be redefined through the glitter of her imperial dress, because, as Spooner points out, he sees humanity "dependent precisely on qualities such as illusion, romance, imagination, chivalry, figured specifically through sartorial metaphor." That is why Marie Antoinette requires a vast wardrobe to reign in "this realm of illusion" (Spooner 33). In order to secure the position of more than a woman, she needs the protective chivalry of men, of the state, which in turn requires imperial, sartorial metaphor for the upkeep of imagistic idolatry. What comes to the surface in Lewis's novel, for all his love of theatricality, is a disdain for the hypocrisy of such imagistic reverence, and recognition of the sham of visual illusion. That is why those who use and abuse these mechanisms are exposed and brutally eliminated in *The Monk*. However, when the convent is besieged "with persevering rage" and the rioters "battered the walls, threw lighted torches in at the windows, and swore that by break of day not a Nun of St. Clare's order should be left alive" (357), Lewis is making a political statement. He is drawing his readers' attention to the fact that the same people who now overthrow the convent only a few moments ago were the devoted "Dupes of deceptions so ridiculous" and prey to "monkish fetters," and are the same people who flocked to gaze at the parade, those whose hearts were "filled with reverence for religion" (345). Lewis exposes the ambivalence of such upheavals in the indiscriminate treatment of both the vile and the innocent, but he also exposes the extent to which it is the expectations of others that make a man what he is. The same mob who desires the glitter and bestows esteem on artifice, will indiscriminately turn against the figures of authority and veneration. The silent winner of the Lewisean Reign of Terror is multifaceted femininity, animalistic in appearance, beaten by experience, which triumphs without the Burkean glitter. Lewis's is a version of the French Revolution which un-robes it from unnecessary artefacts and idolatry, unglitters its heroines, and guillotines only the most vile personages, the Monk and the Prioress, allowing unadorned humanity to triumph.

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All ideologies rely on images for the creation of their identity and author-ity in the popular consciousness, and Lewis's text can be read as grappling with images of women, brought to the public eye, often in their dutifully do-mestic robes, in his turbulent times, fecund in political, but also the resultant social changes. The same female breast, for centuries an object of religious veneration, as in numerous depictions of Madonna Lactans, was appropriated by official Jacobinism to become in "a secular reworking of traditional images of Virgin Mary" an icon of liberty and prosperity, "an emblem of egalitarian in-clusiveness" as in Boizot's *La France Républicaine* (Schama 768). In a ridicule of such transformations, of conflicting ideologies patched to the same image, Lewis adds one more, the most celebrated, "beauteous Orb" of Matilda (65), the sight of which brings about Ambrosio's moral downfall. In a conflation of images which is a vortex of symbols from the religious, political and icon-ographic reservoir, Lewis creates a transgressive vision which condemns all fanatical zeal. He tears off layer after layer of meaning orbiting the notion of femininity, all in order to get to and elevate its most vital core—bare humanity.

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the Guillotine, and Modern Ontological Anxiety

ABSTRACT

This essay begins by examining the rhetorical significance of the guillotine, an important symbol during the Romantic Period. Lacefield argues that the guillotine symbolized a range of modern ontological juxtapositions and antinomies during the period. Moreover, she argues that the guillotine influenced Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* through Giovanni Aldini, a scientist who experimented on guillotined corpses during the French Revolution and inspired Shelley's characterization of Victor Frankenstein. Given the importance of the guillotine as a powerful metaphor for anxieties emergent during this period, Lacefield employs it as a clue signaling a labyrinth of modern meanings embedded in Shelley's novel, as well as the films they anticipated. In particular, Lacefield analyzes the significance of the guillotine slice itself—the uneasy, indeterminate line that simultaneously separates and joins categories such as life/death, mind/body, spirit/matter, and nature/technology.

Lacefield's interdisciplinary analysis analyzes motifs of decapitation/dismemberment in *Frankenstein* and then moves into a discussion of the novel's exploration of the ontological categories specified above. For example, Frankenstein's Creature, as a kind of cyborg, exists on the contested theoretical "slice" within a number of antinomies: nature/tech, human/inhuman (alive/dead), matter/spirit, etc. These are interesting juxtapositions that point to tensions within each set of categories, and Lacefield discusses the relevance of such dichotomies for questions of modernity posed by materialist theory and technological innovation. Additionally, she incorporates a discussion of films that fuse Shelley's themes with appeals to twentieth-century and post-millennium audiences.

Frankenstein scholarship commonly acknowledges the novel's origins in the creative synergy surrounding Mary Shelley during the summer of 1816 in Geneva. Shelley writes of the conversations—"many and long"—she witnessed between her husband and Byron concerning the nature of life and consciousness (27). Mary Shelley's retrospective introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* notes that her circle was particularly fascinated by galvanism: she writes that Percy and Byron often pondered the possibility that "perhaps a corpse would be reanimated," since "galvanism had given token of such things" (65). The theory of galvanism was developed by Luigi Galvani, an Italian physicist and physician who had attained widespread fame in Europe for his experiments in what he termed *animal electricity*. Galvani's experiments demonstrated a connection between electricity and the nervous system's response, suggesting that the animating life force of human existence might be a physical phenomenon rather than a spiritual one. For this reason, galvanism was a flashpoint of controversy between its proponents and religious leaders of the period.[1]

Scholars often acknowledge Galvani as an important source for *Frankenstein* but neglect to credit his nephew and successor Giovanni Aldini, who was better known to the British public than his uncle due to his fluency in English and his notorious experiments on the dead (his uncle had merely experimented on animals). Aldini travelled throughout Europe conducting sensationalized public experiments on corpses, and these experiments were covered widely in newspaper reports (Gay 30–52). He first achieved notoriety during the French Revolution for frequenting guillotine executions and experimenting with the severed heads of the condemned: he tested the heads post-execution for facial expressions and other signs of residual life, and he also attempted to re-animate them with electricity. Like Victor Frankenstein's use of corpses for scientific research in *Frankenstein*, Aldini searched for the key to life in his experiments on the dead. In fact, it is partly due to Aldini's experiments that guillotine execution attained a distinctive mystique in the popular Romantic imagination (Kershaw 98–99).

Aldini preferred to utilize corpses of the guillotined because of the mechanized precision of guillotine execution: there was a clarity to the guillotine in that it reduced the act of execution to a single moment—a sudden shift from life to death (Gay 51–52). Rather than a more extended process in which the instant of death was difficult to discern (as with a hanging, for example), the guillotine presented death as a distinct,

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[1] See a first-hand account by Giovanni Aldini and Robert Hooper, *An Account of the Late Improvements in Galvanism,* originally published in 1809 (Ulan 2012).

mechanized switch-point from animation to lifelessness. This aspect of guillotine execution accorded with galvanism's notion that life might be generated or halted abruptly with the application or withdrawal of a single electrical charge. Conversely, popular reports of severed heads exhibiting expressions post-guillotining implied that some residual force or "charge" might exist for a time after the execution. For Aldini, guillotine execution reinforced galvanic notions about life and death processes.

By recognizing Aldini's influence on *Frankenstein*, we can see more clearly how Shelley's novel activates associations with the guillotine; that is, *Frankenstein* evinces the very anxieties and tensions symbolized by the guillotine. I argue that viewing Victor as a displacement of Aldini allows for a reading of *Frankenstein* with reference to the guillotine and offers interesting new ways of interpreting Shelley's novel. My analysis emphasizes the historical context that produced Shelley's narrative, specifically the constitutive influence of three particular developments of the Romantic period: (1) the emergence of materialist theories in science and medicine; (2) the intrusion of modern technology into natural biological processes; (3) and grotesque reports of the violence in revolutionary France. Due to the guillotine's association with all three historical developments, I view it as a powerful signifier of the period's modern anxieties and therefore quite instructive in better understanding themes in *Frankenstein*.

The Guillotine and Ontological Paradoxes of Modernity

Prior to the introduction of the guillotine in France in 1792, executioners performed beheadings with a sword or axe. Sometimes it required repeated blows to completely sever the head, and it was very likely for the condemned to bleed to death slowly from his or her wounds before the head could be severed. The victim or the victim's family would sometimes pay the executioner to ensure that the blade was sharp in order for a quick and relatively painless death. Hanging was another common type of execution, a form of death that could take minutes or longer. Other more gruesome methods of executions were also used, such as the wheel or burning at the stake. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, opposition to these punishments slowly grew, due mainly to the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire and Locke, who argued for more humane methods of execution.[2]

The guillotine may have been similar in form and function to other older devices, but it broke new ground. To the leaders of the French

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[2] For a more extensive discussion of Enlightenment attitudes toward capital punishment, see Pagden (46–58).

Revolution, the guillotine was "the technological perfection of impersonal violence" (Janes 45). It was designed to inflict a fast and painless death upon anyone, regardless of age, sex or wealth—an embodiment of such concepts as equality and humanity. In much of Europe prior to the guillotine's approval by the French revolutionary government, generally only the upper classes received the privilege of an execution by decapitation. This class differentiation in execution continued to be the case in much of Europe; however, France's guillotine was available to all. And for the first time, an entire country officially adopted this decapitation machine for all of its executions. The government shipped the same design out to all regions, and each was operated in the same manner, under the same laws; there was to be no local variation.

The committee that developed the guillotine for the French National Assembly was influenced by earlier execution devices such as the Scottish Maiden and the Halifax Gibbet. While these prior instruments usually crushed the neck or used blunt force to take off a head, the committee's new device used a crescent blade and a lunette (a hinged two part yoke to immobilize the victim's neck). The system was operated via a rope and pulley, while the whole construction was mounted on a high platform. The testing of the guillotine took place at a hospital, where three carefully chosen corpses—those of strong, stocky men—were successfully beheaded. The first execution took place on April 25th, 1792, when a highwayman called Nicholas-Jacques Pelletier was killed. After an independent report recommended further changes, a number of alterations in the design occurred: metal trays to collect blood were added, the famous angled blade was introduced, and the designers abandoned the high platform—now replaced by a basic scaffold.

It is easy to see why the quick, methodical movement of the machine should have interested the public. Executions tended to involve a fountain of blood from the victim's neck, and the sheer number of people guillotined could create red pools, if not actual flowing streams. Where executioners once prided themselves on their skill, speed now became the focus. While only fifty-three people were executed by the Halifax Gibbet between 1541 and 1650, some French guillotine executions exceeded that total in a single day (Janes 72). The guillotine even appears to have enjoyed some affection in France for a time. Indeed, popular nicknames like "the national razor," "the widow," and "Madame Guillotine" seem to be more accepting than hostile. In this respect, the guillotine offered yet another set of contradictions, as popular representations of it often reinterpreted a gruesome death-machine as a fashionable and even comical symbol. Very quickly it became a cultural icon affecting fashion, literature,

and even children's toys. In the early years of its use, its symbolism of the Revolution made its popular incarnations as toys and fashion a kind of patriotic act, much like the rise in popularity of flag-pins in America post-9/11. Moreover, executions by guillotine were often an entertainment that attracted great crowds of spectators (although this was not unusual for previous methods of execution). Vendors would sell programs listing the names of those scheduled to die, and people would come day after day and vie for the best seats. Knitting female citizens—famous to us from Dickens's Madame Defarge—formed a cadre of hardcore regulars. Parents would bring their children. Toward the end of the Terror, however, attendance thinned considerably. It thinned, perhaps, because the guillotine in daily use seemed to betray its first purpose as a humane instrument: very quickly, it became a symbol of the sanguinary aspect of the Revolution.

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Beyond its political significance, the guillotine generated a number of ontological anxieties. The designers of the guillotine regarded the replacement of the human element (the executioner) with a machine as a humane improvement, but it also replaced the emphasis on an interpersonal act between the condemned and the executioner with a technological act, transforming a natural process (death) to a mechanized one, suggesting an emerging modern tension between the categories of nature and technology. The mechanization of execution also had the effect of intensifying the focus on the moment of death itself—a distinct, clearly delineated, and exact point that captured the popular imagination. As Mike Dash notes, "It was so quick, so clean, so bloodily final that it was hard for an execution-going public accustomed to the protracted struggles of [earlier execution methods] to believe that life could be extinguished quite so swiftly" (128). This aspect of swiftness elicited a particular anxiety, as it seemed, unnaturally, to compress death into a single second. And while guillotine execution itself occasionally required more than one release of the blade—especially if the machine was faulty or the blade lacked the requisite sharpness—the replacement of a swordsman by a machine created a perception of guillotine execution as a clinical, instantaneous event rather than a humanized process. Moreover, the collection of heads that accrued beneath the guillotine instilled a sense of the victims as headless, lifeless dolls—a disturbing image to those many who preferred to think of human identity in terms of spiritual subjectivity rather than biological materiality.

Paradoxically, the guillotine also aroused fears of a protracted agony. The blade cut quickly enough so that there was relatively little impact on the brain case, and perhaps less likelihood of immediate unconsciousness than with a more violent decapitation, or long-drop hanging. Execution witnesses told numerous stories of blinking eyelids, moving eyes, movement of the mouth,

and even an expression of "unequivocal indignation" on the face of the decapitated Charlotte Corday when the executioner slapped her face post-decapitation (Dash 76). Such reported facial expressions post-execution suggested that consciousness might continue for seconds or even minutes after head was severed, and this possibility generated considerable anxiety and speculation. After an execution, it was not uncommon for the head of the condemned to be picked up and turned toward the body so that the last image the condemned would see as he/she exited this world would be blood flowing from his/her severed neck. This debate over the consciousness of the condemned also informed perceptions of guillotine execution in England and colored the ways in which expatriates living in France during the Revolution and the Terror depicted the guillotine in their reports back to England.

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Scientists in several countries have tried to perform definitive experiments on severed human heads as recently as 1956. Inevitably, the evidence is only anecdotal. What appears to be a head responding to the sound of its name, or to the pain of a pinprick, may be only random muscle twitching or automatic reflex action, with no awareness involved. It is also possible that the massive drop in cerebral blood pressure would have caused victims to lose consciousness in several seconds.

In the decades following the guillotine's installation in revolutionary France, a number of European physiologists conducted experiments to determine what the condemned were capable of perceiving post-execution. The expanding controversy over the possible persistence of consciousness in severed heads was fueled by such research and by sensationalized news reports. An intriguing study was performed in 1803 in France on seven guillotined criminals (Kershaw 76–81). Physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, and medical students comprised the research team. Two of the students stood directly beneath the scaffold during and after the execution. It was their task to check for any signs of consciousness immediately after decapitation. One student held the head firmly in both hands for concentrated observation of the face, while the other shouted, "Do you hear me?" in the ears. Alternating tasks, they did this with seven heads whose stationary eyelids varied from total retraction to total occlusion. In no instance did the researchers observe any reaction. Ultimately, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century physiologists were unable to settle the question of whether the condemned retained some degree of consciousness after execution, and speculation persisted within the scientific community and the wider public.

The guillotine thus seemed to suggest an indeterminate ontological state, what Rebecca Comray calls a "transitionless transition" that "simultaneously reinforces and erodes the distinction between dying and living"

(97–98). She explains that guillotine execution rendered death "at once punctual and precise, and radically indeterminate: both incontestable and yet infinitely uncertain" (Comray 98). Some British expatriates in France described gruesome guillotinings that heightened physical expressions of the condemned post-execution, thus provoking British readers' doubts about the device's alleged "humanitarianism." The often sympathetic and sentimental descriptions of the condemned added to the abolitionist spirit of the age, which Mark Canuel discusses at length in his book on the death penalty and the abolition movement.[3] Concerns about guillotine execution also corresponded to the emphasis on sensibility in the eighteenth century (Vila 66). Offering a new paradigm for thinking about human consciousness, the interest in *feeling* made torture and execution seem more heinous than before and intensified concerns over the execution experience.

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One of the most significant aspects of guillotine execution was its evocation of emerging materialist theories in science and philosophy. While materialism is most often associated with late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century neuroscience, it emerged centuries earlier in Enlightenment-era philosophy and science. Moreover, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as proto-materialist theories began to take shape, they generated a great deal of controversy due to their contradiction of religious notions of the soul. The idea that identity was nothing more than mere matter was anathema to those who believed in a spiritual dimension to life and hope for an afterlife. Guillotine execution often elicited popular anxiety precisely due to the focus it generated on the relationship between the head (brain) and the body and the questions it raised about consciousness. It is therefore no surprise that a scientist such as Giovanni Aldini whose experiments sought to prove that life could be generated through solely physical means (electricity) was also fascinated by guillotine execution. In his notorious experiments widely publicized throughout Europe, Aldini sought to regenerate the bodies of the guillotined with electricity.

The multifaceted, complex kinds of interest generated by the guillotine point to fundamental anxieties about modernity, anxieties exemplified by the dichotomies *mind/body*, *matter/spirit*, *life/death*, and *nature/technology*. Guillotine execution represents such modern antinomies in an especially powerful way and signifies a theoretical paradigm of juxtaposition and asyndeton, as opposed to the paradigm of organicism commonly associated with Romanticism. This disruptive pattern appears pervasively but unpredictably in Gothic literature and, I would argue, is a significant symptom of modernity.

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[3] See Canuel (30–36, 55–61, and 63–65).

Theoretical Slices in *Frankenstein*

My points of focus in this essay are the four theoretical juxtapositions evoked by the guillotine—head/body, matter/spirit, life/death, and nature/technology—and their manifestations in *Frankenstein*. In particular, I enlist the image of the guillotine *slice* as a metaphor for the line that paradoxically separates and joins opposing sides of the ontological dichotomies listed above. I would argue that *Frankenstein* interrogates these theoretical *slicings* by simultaneously blurring and sharpening the boundaries between categories.

The most apparent antinomies employed by Shelley's novel are tech/nature and head/body. The problematic relationship between technology and nature emerges in Victor's use of electricity to generate artificial life, while the head/body dichotomy is represented in the novel's description of the Creature as an assortment of disparate parts, which presumably indicates that his head is, in a sense, disconnected from his body. However, I want to move beyond these apparent themes to examine some of the more subtle juxtapositions in *Frankenstein*, one of which is life/death. I would argue that Shelley's novel merges categories of life and death through repeated descriptions of its characters as barely alive or death-like while at other times emphasizing the sharp discordance between life and death. (We can also see this paradox functioning in John Polidori's *The Vampyre* as well, which germinated alongside *Frankenstein* that fateful summer in Geneva and which engages in categorical juxtaposition with its invention of the *undead* aristocrat, the forerunner of *Dracula* and the vampire of modern cinema.) This descriptive collapsing of the line between existence and death suggests the same preoccupation with boundaries underlying many works of Gothic literature and modern horror.

One such juxtaposition in *Frankenstein* appears in Victor Frankenstein's discussion of his early research, which involves studying corpses and observing processes of biological decay. In one passage in particular, Victor explains the rationale for his morbid scientific approach:

> Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? . . . To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I observed the natural decay and corruption of the human body . . . I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted. I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analyzing all the minutiae of causation from life to death, and death to life . . . (Shelley 62)

Victor here emphasizes death as the key to understanding life, a paradox juxtaposing two seemingly antonymic states. He focuses on the grotesque "corruption of the human body" and "pauses" over the "causation

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from life to death, and death to life"; in effect, he asserts that understanding death is necessary for understanding life (Shelley 62).

Mary Shelley also presents this problematic life/death dichotomy in categorizing the Creature. Neither human nor inhuman, the Creature exists on the metaphorical edge between antithetical categories, in an indeterminate zone somewhere between life and death. In the sense that he is sentient, he is very much alive; but as the derivative product of lifeless corpses, he is ontologically inauthentic. This combination of disparate parts birthed by electricity resembles a machine and foreshadows the cyborgs of modern science fiction. Taken as a whole, Shelley's novel regards the Creature as neither completely dead nor alive and yet both at the same time, blurring the line between two seemingly exclusive states of existence.

Victor, too, exists on this line between categories: enervated, lifeless, and outside of strict ontological categories—neither fully alive nor dead. In one typical passage, Victor bemoans this sense of indeterminacy:

> The blood flowed freely in my veins, but a weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart, which nothing could remove. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit. . . . This state of mind preyed on my health, which had perhaps never entirely recovered from the first shock it had sustained. I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation—deep, dark, deathlike solitude. (Shelley 93)

Victor's internal sense of his indeterminacy corroborates the observation of an outside observer, Walton:

> Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin; but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted. We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in blankets . . . (Shelley 36–37)

Shelley thus introduces Victor as a barely-conscious, emaciated body wrapped in blankets like a corpse clothed in burial cloths.

Shelley consolidates the representation of Victor as half-alive, ever on the verge of slipping entirely into death, in order to emphasize his figurative burial under a weight of depression, guilt, and despair. In effect, she suggests that psychologically Victor exists in a liminal state between life

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and death—physically barely alive and yet always ill, conscious and yet always suffering emotionally, frequently yearning for death. Incidentally, Victor's suicidal ideation is congruent with a different antinomy: idealism/horror. His abrupt shift from youthful optimism to its inverse, horror, functions as a photographic negative, with despair juxtaposed in sharp relief against the character's earlier idealism. We see this juxtaposition in Victor's abrupt attitudinal change after the Creature's "birth":

> The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. . . . I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. . . . I slept indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest of dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death . . . I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of flannel. (Shelley 58–59)

This passage presents a distinct discordance between ardent idealism and "breathless" horror that correlates with its juxtaposition of the antonymic states of life and death.

Significantly, Victor's focus on life's materiality in the above passage evokes an anxiety about the ontological dichotomy matter/spirit. In effect, *Frankenstein* emphasizes a materialist view of life to the exclusion of a spiritual perspective, in which graphic terms like "corpse" and "grave-worms" and Elizabeth's sudden decay from a youthful girl into a rotting corpse trump any notion of an extra-material reality. Victor's materialism also informs his preoccupation with "the natural decay and corruption of the human body," in accordance with his father's "greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. . . . a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which from being the seat of beauty and strength had become food for the worm" (Shelley 58–59). Even after Victor regrets giving life to the Creature, he does not venture into theological arguments or give consideration to whether the Creature might have a soul; spiritual considerations are absent from the novel, save for occasional references to the Creature as an "abomination" and a "demon" (Shelley 102). Victor's motivation for despising his creation seems not to be religious guilt but a basic, involuntary feeling of revulsion. A materialist view also underlies

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Victor's responses to the deaths of Elizabeth and Henry Clerval: he does not speculate on their existence in an afterlife but instead refers to them as merely corpses, a description he also invokes when discussing his dead mother and William. For Victor, the "soul" does not figure into life and death processes, nor does any divine giver of life. He asserts a theoretical equivalency between life and death as interchangeable aspects of an exclusively material biological cycle.

An anxiety about ontological categories also underlies Mary Shelley's subtle allusions to slavery in *Frankenstein*.[4] The most famous reference to slavery occurs in this passage where the Creature declares that he will not submit to "abject slavery" and Victor's fear of the subjugation of the human race:

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> Even if [the Creature and his mate] were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. (Shelley 107)

In addition to their political resonance, I stress that allusions to slavery reinforce the novel's larger anxieties about ontological categories. For just as the Creature in *Frankenstein* exists in an indeterminate, contested space between seemingly distinct categories (life/death, human/inhuman), so does the slave, historically speaking. We see this in the political and philosophical debates about slavery during this period, which often focused on the slave's ontological status—human or subhuman.

The force of Mary Shelley's adducing slavery vs. freedom to her novel's antinomies is clearer if we examine the under-studied fact of Matthew Lewis's visit to Geneva in 1816 when *Frankenstein* was conceived. An owner of a large estate of plantations in Jamaica (inherited recently from his father), Lewis devoted much of his time to the management of his estate and of its numerous slaves. At the time of his visit to Geneva, Lewis was preoccupied with his Jamaican plantations; in fact, his stay in Geneva occurred between two separate voyages he made to Jamaica to oversee his extensive estates. While in Geneva visiting Byron and the Shelleys, Lewis added to his will a codicil stipulating that his heirs were to visit the plantations regularly and were expected to maintain his humanitarian reforms. The codicil was witnessed by Byron, Shelley, and Polidori, who apparently were willing to countenance Lewis's continued support of slavery's continuance. By recognizing Lewis's importance, I will complicate the more

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[4] See Ball (31–58) and Machow (26).

familiar narrative of *Frankenstein's* origin in ghosts, dreams, and thunderstorms and argue that references to slavery in *Frankenstein* are intentional and historically significant.

Lewis's connection to West Indian slavery also provides deeper insight into the Creature's agreement to a permanent exile in Latin America in exchange for a wife. By recognizing Lewis's influence, we can see an implicit allusion in Shelley's novel to the West Indian slave revolts, specifically the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, the only successful slave rebellion antedating *Frankenstein's* composition (Censer and Hunt 124). The Haitian Revolution began as a violent uprising against plantations and slaveholders led by the notorious Jamaican-born voodoo priest Dutty Bookman, who was said to have initiated the revolt with a voodoo ceremony that included an animal sacrifice and the drinking of human blood. According to reports widely circulated in Europe, Bookman controlled his army using voodoo "black magic," apparently a sort of group hypnosis. Bookman's army of slaves raided 1800 plantations in seven days, killing over a thousand slaveholders and constituting, for the European public, a deliberate campaign of "pillage, rape, torture, mutilation, and death" (Censer and Hunt 124). When the Haitian rebellion succeeded in 1804 under Toussaint Louverture (also reported to be a voodoo practitioner), fears abounded in England that its territory in the West Indies—particularly Jamaica—might undergo a similar violent revolution.

One key element of the Haitian Revolution rarely mentioned by scholars was its reliance on the machete as the slaves' primary weapon. At the time, the machete had acquired a horrific mystique in the popular European imagination. Much like today (with its link to genocidal atrocities on the "dark continent" of Africa), the machete carried a particular set of racial connotations. I would argue that the machete's symbolism of revolutionary atrocity in the Romantic Period, along with the fear specifically inspired by its blade—with its power to slice, maim, and decapitate—makes it a symbolic cousin of the guillotine. That is, while both the guillotine and the machete were associated with Enlightenment-era revolution, the mechanized, modern aspects of the guillotine separated it from the supposed primitiveness of the West Indian slave revolts. Perhaps the machete's primitive connotations account for its popularity in narratives that foreground apocalypse and human savagery; we see this dynamic quite markedly in the popular zombie film genre, for example.

The zombie film genre is surprisingly relevant to *Frankenstein*. Those astute scholars who have noted Mary Shelley's allusions to slavery have still missed an important implication of this historical connection. Because Europeans during this period associated the West Indian slave revolts with

voodoo magic, I would argue that Shelley's implicit allusion to the Haitian uprisings entails a related notion of voodoo. Of particular significance to me is the term popularly applied to those believed to be controlled by voodoo hypnosis: "zombies." The term "zombie" originated within the voodoo tradition and still carries this particular connotation among those familiar with voodoo practices. A 2012 Halloween-inspired article in *The New York Times,* entitled "A Zombie is a Slave Forever," explains the significance of the zombie in voodoo and the way that it came to symbolize the horrors of slavery in the West Indies:

> Most people think of them as the walking dead, a being without a soul or someone with no free will. This is true. But the zombie is not an alien enemy who's been [produced] by Hollywood. He is a New World phenomenon that arose from the mixture of old African religious beliefs and the pain of slavery, especially the notoriously merciless and cold-blooded slavery of French-run, pre-independence Haiti. . . . [S]uicide was a frequent recourse of the slaves, who were handy with poisons and powders. . . . And yet, the fear of becoming a zombie might stop them from doing so. . . . To become a zombie was the slave's worst nightmare: to be dead and still a slave, an eternal field hand. It is thought that slave drivers on the plantations, who were usually slaves themselves and sometimes Voodoo priests, used this fear of zombification to keep recalcitrant slaves in order . . . (Wilentz)

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Historically, then, the figure of the zombie functioned symbolically in two distinct ways with respect to slavery: as the article explains, the threat of being rendered a zombie discouraged slaves from suicide and revolution, while simultaneously the popular perception of the Haitian revolutionaries as unconscious voodoo victims endowed them with a powerful, frightening mystique. As I noted earlier, the Creature shares with the historical figure of the slave an indeterminate, contested position between ontological categories of life/death and human/subhuman. The voodoo zombie also exists indeterminately between these ontological categories. In fact, the zombie's ontological indeterminacy is more pronounced than the slave's, since a zombie—depicted as unconscious, ghoulish, and corpse-like—exists even more uneasily on the line between ontological categories.

Beyond the issue of ontological status, I would argue that the implicit allusions in *Frankenstein* to slavery and the Haitian Revolution are ultimately significant because they allow us to identify the Creature as a literary ancestor of one of the most popular "monsters" to later emerge in modern cinema—the sci-fi zombie. That is to say, Mary Shelley's association of the Creature with the slave rebellions in Haiti also functions as

a link between her futuristic theme of technological danger and the traditional zombie mythology of Haitian voodoo. This connection—however unconscious on the author's part—of the novel's central science-fiction concept with an historical event associated with voodoo is intriguing in its prescience, insomuch as it anticipated the way in which twentieth-century horror films would one day re-conceptualize the notion of the zombie, transforming it from the traditional slave-ghoul of voodoo superstition into a modern bio-monster born of scientific hubris.

Emerging Obstetrics Science and Ontological Anxiety in *Frankenstein*

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Abortion and infanticide are familiar motifs in *Frankenstein* criticism, resting chiefly on the Creature's self-description as "the miserable and the abandoned" and "an abortion," as well as on Victor's abortion-like destruction of the female "mate" he creates for his deformed progeny (Shelley 185). What is significant to me about these allusions is that abortion and infanticide necessarily point to the indeterminate ontological status of the fetus and infant, just as the Creature occupies a contested position on the boundary between human/inhuman, alive/dead. The fact that the Creature presents the same kind of categorical uncertainty as the fetus explains why zombie and vampire films—the modern-day versions of "undead" monsters—often include a subplot involving abortion and infanticide. Just like the zombie, the vampire, and Frankenstein's Creature, the fetus exists on the slice within ontological antinomies.

Mary Shelley had only recently given birth to her second child, William, prior to arriving in Geneva that summer. The presence in Geneva of Claire Clairemont, several months pregnant with Byron's child, reinforced a preoccupation with reproduction. It is a truism of *Frankenstein* scholarship that the novel is deeply engaged with reproductive anxieties, not only the current ones but the longstanding factor of Wollstonecraft's death in childbirth from puerperal fever. Ellen Moers initiated the view that *Frankenstein* should be read as "a birth myth" due to Mary Shelley's "chronic and chaotic experience with motherhood":

> Pregnant at sixteen, and almost constantly pregnant throughout the following five years; yet not a secure mother, for she lost most of her babies soon after they were born; and not a lawful mother, for she was not married—not at least when, at the age of eighteen, Mary Godwin began to write *Frankenstein*. So are monsters born. (92)

Treating the novel as a displaced autobiography, Moers reads the monster's birth as a metaphor for distraught young, middle-class woman's anxiety about failed motherhood (92).

If we look more widely than Mary Shelley's own life, we see that *Frankenstein* was published at a time when traditional attitudes about reproduction were being supplanted by obstetrical theories and practices that originated in France and spread to other European countries.[5] This new "scientific" perspective understood childbirth as a medical condition that required the oversight of male physicians—obstetricians—who gradually replaced traditional female midwives. Obstetricians asserted that the profession required extensive medical expertise and the use of surgical instruments, such as the recently invented *curette*, a surgical tool used to remove the uterine lining or its contents by scraping and scooping. *Curettage* remains the second step of the common D&C procedure (dilation and curettage) still performed after miscarriages and abortions. The supplanting of midwifery by obstetrics and its instruments loosely resembled galvanism's goal of generating life artificially through technological intervention. This period also saw a considerable increase in the publication of childbirthing manuals, a trend which scholars such as Alan Bewell largely attribute to the emergence of modern obstetrics (Bewell 105–28). These obstetrics manuals all stress the importance of a knowledge of anatomy and physiology; they also give advice on the symptoms and diagnosis of pregnancy, the disorders peculiar to pregnant women, and various ways to determine the sex of an unborn child. Delivery methods are frequently dealt with in detail, often with plate illustrations of the different kinds of births that a midwife may confront. Some books also comment on the lying-in period and on the diseases of new mothers and their infants. My argument for the surprising metaphoric convergence of obstetrical instruments with the guillotine is strengthened by an under-studied feature of Luigi Galvani's career: before he conducted his famous electric experiments, he was one of Europe's pioneer obstetricians, serving as the Chair of Obstetrics at the University of Bologna's Institute of Sciences and later as the Institute's president.

The rise of obstetrics coincided with the emergence of modern permissiveness about birth control and abortion, especially in France.[6] By superseding church law, the French Revolution legalized practices that had previously been forbidden, including birth control, non-procreative sex acts, and pornography. Of course these had all existed before, but they had

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[5] See Porter.
[6] See McLaren.

been legally suppressed. Respectable young girls in France in 1785 were as limited in their knowledge of sex and birth control as their counterparts in Britain. However, in 1796, that had changed. It was now perfectly legal to sell condoms openly and to instruct buyers on how to use them, as well as to inform the public about the rhythm method or about non-procreative sex acts; pulpy novels featuring such subjects also became legal (Darnton 65–68).

While the French proceeded in one direction regarding abortion, the British moved in another, explains R. Sauer: "The view that the fetus was alive from conception gained in popularity" (85–87). This sentiment resulted in the 1803 passage of the Ellenborough Act, which prohibited abortion after "quickening"—when a woman first feels fetal movement (16–20 weeks)—and established the death penalty for those convicted (although this penalty was rarely sought in abortion-related prosecutions). In 1837, the government extended the Ellenborough Act by removing the distinction between abortion conducted before and after quickening. Such measures indicate the controversy at the time about the status of the fetus, but then—as today—the British public was hardly uniform in its opinion on the subject. In fact, a number of historians suggest that abortion (frequently illegal) as well as infanticide occurred far more often in Britain at this time than the political climate of the time suggests.

What is significant to me about the allusions to abortion and infanticide in *Frankenstein* is that they suggest ontological paradoxes of modernity related to questions about what constitutes a legitimate life. We see this concern even in today's debates about abortion, which foreground arguments about who possesses the more important ontological status, the fetus or the mother. I would also note that the unique relationship between mother and fetus—in which the fetus is not totally separate from but in fact is interrelated with and dependent on the mother—offers an interesting challenge to the idea of stable ontological categories; in this sense, the fetus and mother exist on their own metaphorical slice somewhere between two seemingly oppositional states (self/other, life/death). Perhaps this indeterminacy is one reason why the figure of the monstrous mother is so popular in Gothic literature and modern horror cinema.

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Frankenstein is widely recognized as a seminal work of Gothic literature and proto-science-fiction, a narrative that not only captured certain modern ideas of its time but also prophesied the anxieties that would emerge fully almost two centuries later in response to accelerating technological

and scientific developments. Additionally, *Frankenstein* is also widely credited as the progenitor of a set of modern fiction genres—bio-horror, tech-horror, and the mad-scientist narrative, for example—tremendously popular in literature and film today. Some prominent examples are *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *The Fly* (1958/1986), and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)—all of which inspired numerous sequels and remakes—and the more recent *28 Days Later* (2002), *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), *I Am Legend* (2007), *The Human Centipede* (2010), and *World War Z* (2013), as well as the popular television series *The Walking Dead* (2010–2015). All of these films emphasize the particular anxieties explored in *Frankenstein* and employ similar themes and motifs.

By recognizing Giovanni Aldini's role in *Frankenstein*, we can see more clearly how Shelley's novel activates associations with the guillotine, connections which suggest anxieties about problematic theoretical juxtapositions. Moreover, I would argue Shelley's novel is representative of themes in the wider Gothic and horror genres, which seek to engage with the very same modern paradoxes symbolized by the guillotine.

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Haunting Transcendentalist Landscapes: EcoGothic Politics in Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the reminiscences of Margaret Fuller, feminist activist and member of the American Transcendentalist movement, from her journey to the Great Lakes region, entitled *Summer on the Lakes* (1844), are considered in the light of EcoGothic considerations. The essay shows how Fuller's journey disillusioned her about progress and led to abandoning the serene vision of nature and landscapes reflected in the works of Transcendentalists. The destruction of nature and landscape verging on an ecological catastrophe is presented by Fuller in the perspective of the Gothic, as a price for the technological development driven by the capitalist economy. The Gothic character of *Summer on the Lakes* derives from the mental condition of the writer and a pessimistic vision arising from the debunking of the myth of America as a virgin land. Fuller's work constitutes an EcoGothic tribute to the indigenous inhabitants of America—but also a Gothic live burial of the Native Americans who do still live in the regions she visits—as well as to Mariana and Frederica, unusual and gothicized women excluded from society. By bringing together Fuller's observations about nature, indigenous peoples and marginalized women, the essay shows how Fuller's text prophetically announces the beginning of the end of the American environment.

> "The 'eco' in Ecogothic isn't just about 'going green.' It's about the voices, the dreams and desires, the moral quandaries, the insights and incommensurable differences that are present in our interactions with nature. It is a literary space in which the human cannot take its role as the mover-and-shaker of the universe for granted."
>
> Hilary Scharper, author of the EcoGothic novel *Perdita*[1]

Transcendentalist thinker Margaret Fuller hoped to find solace from personal grief in the natural landscapes she would encounter on her 1843 journey to the Great Lakes. The lingering feeling of the loss of her father, the growing frustration with Emerson manifest in her correspondence with him, and her sense of alienation as a woman in American society all contributed to a growing feeling of depression. As biographer Meg McGavran Murray points out, even though Fuller had recently written her feminist manifesto, "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women" (published in *The Dial*, July 1843), she still had misgivings about herself as a woman of intellectual substance and felt haunted by her male mentors, "No matter how ardently Fuller had argued the equality of men and woman, she still harbored doubts about her worthiness in the eyes not only of Emerson but also of her dead father, who still always seemed to be watching" (198). The image of the haunting father appears in the "Miranda" section of Fuller's "The Great Lawsuit" essay: "To this ideal image of her father, to him whose 'image' lived in her, Fuller paid homage in words that reveal her continuing bondage to a haunting, godlike man, her reluctance to see her dead father as flawed" (Murray 199). Her journey to the Great Lakes might be seen as an attempt to exorcize the influence of her dead father as well as remove herself from the ongoing frustrating communications with the paternalistic and hyper-rational Emerson.[2] The trip to the Midwest afforded Fuller the opportunity to renew herself in an entirely different landscape: "Fuller's dawning knowledge of her power, of a magnetic energy she felt forced to

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[1] From http://perditanovel.com/the-eco-gothic-2/ and https://cayocosta72.wordpress.com/2015/01/12/perdita-by-hilary-scharper. Hilary Scharper continues, "The use of 'who' rather than 'it' to describe Nature captures the Ecogothic's tendency to depict nature as a living, acting, creating, unfolding 'other.'" Interestingly, Hilary Scharper, the Canadian author of an EcoGothic novel *Perdita*, is also scientifically minded, as an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto.

[2] Emerson could never understand or appreciate her mystical or occult side: "her gems, her stones, her flowers, as well as . . . the animal magnetism that seemed to flow from her whenever she wrote" (Murray 202). Fuller, with her sense of difference, hoped that "elsewhere in America she might find a place where she could be, as she put it, 'truly human'" (Murray 202). Emerson would clearly never come to understand Fuller, as he saw the movement of history in masculine terms, as men as movers, and thus he asserts in a journal entry (28 May 1839): "There is no history: There is only Biography" (Porte 219).

repress in the Northeast, generated an anxiety she hoped to overcome by leaving New England and finding a place where society's laws were more tolerant of passionate women like herself" (Murray 202).

Although Fuller's grief was at first internalized, and her sadness cast upon the object of her gaze, whether waterfalls, lakes, or forest, she ultimately quit her subjective feelings of despair for a more coherent vision of her place within the All, emblematic of the Romantic quest for wholeness. In so doing, though, Fuller is ultimately haunted by a national consciousness and feeling of guilt more frightening than the sense of an isolated individual engulfed in grief. The panorama of shame that opens up allows her to move from individual mourning to a chilling encounter with national hauntings. A Gothic landscape of capitalist waste as well as the decimation of Native Americans moves her ultimately to question her place in nature, as a visitor/intruder, as an author, and as a mourner.

Timothy Morton in *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007) has described a type of nihilistic vision of nature, in which the observer is actually rendered helpless in articulating his relationship with nature: "We discover how nature always slips out of reach in the very act of grasping it" (19). Morton argues that nature exists but cannot be perceived in any objective manner by the observer. In fact, he shows how different political agendas have caused the spectator of nature to see the landscape in vastly different ways:

> Since the Romantic period, nature has been used to support the capitalist theory of value and to undermine it; to point out what is intrinsically human, and to exclude the human; to inspire kindness and compassion, and to justify competition and cruelty. (19)

This phantasmagoric image of nature, as Morton presents it (although he does not concern himself with the Gothic), becomes the underpinning for the EcoGothic landscape, as I see it, in Fuller and in Thoreau.[3]

Fuller, as a Transcendentalist, should theoretically derive spiritual sustenance or personal enlightenment from her relationship with Nature,

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[3] Morton does discuss Thoreau's subjective view of nature in passing, through the course of his book, but not in the context I present here. He does not bring up Margaret Fuller's appropriation of the landscape at all. Carmen Birkle does compare Fuller's and Thoreau's travel narratives but makes them seem more similar in a positive way than I do here. Both Annette Kolodny and Jeffrey Steele suggest that Fuller was searching, on a personal level, for a consoling "mother's garden" in her travel to the Midwest. See Lawrence Buell for Thoreau's growing sense of environmentalism. See also William Cronon, who questions Thoreau's optimism in his maxim, "In Wildness is the preservation of the World" (102).

but her musings about culture finally move them away from an authentic relationship with nature (a relationship that Morton would suggest cannot exist after all). She continually resorts to other paradigms to make sense of what she experiences through her senses. Not only does she appropriate the landscape but also the indigenous peoples (whom she equates with the landscape) to make meaning, but Fuller has, at times, a colonizing view of Nature or expansionist view of America: she tries to Europeanize Native Americans or she predicts their demise, and the chasm between the real and the imagined creates a Gothic abyss. In her travel account, *Summer on the Lakes* (published 1844), based on her travels to the Midwest (the then Western frontier) in the summer of 1843, Fuller cannot reconcile the seemingly pastoral vacation with her eventual sense of the wasteland the Great Lakes region actually presents. As Lance Newman points out, "Her trip occurred during the depths of the severe economic crisis of 1837 to 1844, a period of widespread questioning of the historical progressiveness of capitalism." I believe that the EcoGothic quality of the book relates to this historical dilemma as well as to Fuller's own haunted background: that intersecting sense of pessimism is projected onto the natural landscape. It is noteworthy that even though Fuller's traveling companions include a brother/sister team, James Freeman Clarke (replaced later in the excursion by William, the more mystical brother [Murray 202]) and his sister Sarah, Fuller seems very much alone.

In her recent biography of Margaret Fuller, Megan Marshall evokes a rather Gothic scene in the first chapter describing the young Margaret. On the occasion of her little sister Julia Adelaide's death, the three-year-old Margaret witnessed a terrifying *tableau mort*: as Marshall describes it, Margaret suffered "an abrupt loss" as "the baby's nurse, tears streaming, pulled Sarah Margaret into the nursery to view her sister's tiny corpse" (7). Fuller further comments in her *Memoirs*: "I remember the house all still and dark,—the people in their black clothes and dreary faces" (7). Later, according to Marshall, Fuller would recall this dark moment and write, "My first experience of life was one of death" (7). The loss of her sister would strike a chord in her as she later also laments her own childhood. In one of the early semi-biographical studies of Fuller, a Harvard Ph.D. dissertation (1910), entitled *Margaret Fuller and Goethe*, Frederick Augustus Braun pinpoints another dark memory in Fuller's life, namely her father's overbearing pedagogical practices: Braun claims "from early childhood," Timothy Fuller brought up his daughter "in the straight-jacket Puritan manner," forcing her to stay up late to do her recitations. Margaret herself describes herself, in the vein of a Gothic prisoner, as "fettered" (25). And she records the deadening effect of the constant focus on her brain and the neglect of her physical and imaginative

life. As she laments in her *Memoirs*, sounding like a tortured soul of the Puritan stock, there

> was a premature development of the brain, that made me a "youthful prodigy" by day, and by night a victim of spectral illusions, nightmare, and somnambulism, which at the same time prevented the harmonious development of my bodily powers and checked my growth, while later they induced continual headache, weakness and nervous affections, of all kinds. (qtd. in Braun 25)

Later in life, she would mourn for her lost childhood: "Poor child . . . I look back on these glooms and terrors, wherein I was enveloped, and perceived that I had no natural childhood" (qtd. in Braun 25).

Lacking this natural childhood, one that would have entailed less structured learning in the shape of play and exercise, and educated by her father with a Calvinist rigor rather than with the more contemporary Romantic sensibility or pedagogy, it is no wonder that the supernatural realm, with its use of enchantment, its focus on the subconscious imagination, and its psychological signposts, would take such a hold on her. With her visit to the natural landscape in the Midwest, she could weave her personal imaginary into the backdrop with her use of Native American mythology and fabrication of female characters in the shape of mystical and psychic females, like the semi-autobiographical Mariana and the Germanic Seeress of Prevorst. With these figures, she would navigate the forbidden territory, that landscape she could uncover in dreams, and also confront the creative part of her denied by her rational and authoritarian father and the likes of the paternalistic and overbearing Transcendentalist Emerson.

With her childhood trauma later developing into nervousness and moments of physical disability—necessitating visits to the mesmerist, Fuller is accused by one of her earliest biographers,[4] the extremely rational Transcendentalist Emerson, of mysticism or superstition:

> When she turned her head on one side, she alleged she had second sight, like St. Francis. These traits or predispositions made her a willing listener to all the uncertain science of mesmerism and its goblin brood, which have been rife in recent years. (Fuller's *Memoirs* qtd. in Myerson 148)

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[4] Emerson, along with James Freeman Clarke and William Henry Channing, edited and published in 1852 *The Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, and as they were selective in their choice of what (of Fuller's journals) to include and what to reword, I view the text as a type of revisionist biography.

Moreover, pain was a vehicle through which she could access her imagination. One of the notes by Emerson attributes her powerful creative streak to her pain:

> She was all her life time the victim of disease and pain. She read and wrote in bed, and believed that she could understand anything better when she was ill. Pain acted like a girdle, to give tension to her powers. (qtd. in Myerson 148)

In her *Memoirs,* Fuller expresses pain as the source of feeling: "I wish to know and feel my pain, to investigate its nature and its source; I will not have my thoughts diverted, or my feelings soothed" (qtd. in Braun 87).[5]

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Many scholars of American Gothic, taking their cue from Toni Morrison, have commented on the wild imposing landscape and an expansive frontier that European-Americans confronted and then imbued with all their fears in the manner of a child lost in the wilderness, without the support of a mother country.[6] Often, the fear of the unknown is projected upon the indigenous peoples. Fuller has many Gothic moments in her visit to Niagara Falls and to the Great Lakes, but in some ways, her journey, though ostensibly outward, is really a journey inward so she is often blinded to the reality of nature by her ego. In fact, one could start with the paragraph below (from just pages into her travel account, *Summer on the Lakes*) in which Fuller blends together the sublime and sinister aspects of nature in gazing at the thunderous Niagara Falls:

> But all great expression, which, on a superficial survey, seems so easy as well as so simple, furnishes, after a while, to the faithful observer its own standard by which to appreciate it. Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got, at last, a proper

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[5] According to Braun, Fuller's sensibility seemed more Germanic than American, as he aptly focuses on the Fuller–Goethe connection (with Fuller's intense admiration of and devotion to Goethe's works) to meditate on Fuller's own troubled life. Weary of the shortcomings of intellectual life, she aligns herself with Germanic thinking expressed in Goethe's *Faust*—the ever striving tortured Germanic soul craving the All of experience, intellectually, spiritually, and physically. More Germanic than New England Puritan, Fuller is like Goethe's Faust, according to Braun, in wanting to get to the source of feeling, even if that entailed pain.

[6] Toni Morrison describes the early Americans' fear "of being outcast . . . their fear of boundarylessness, of Nature unbridled and crouched for attack, their fear of the so-called civilization; their fear of loneliness, of aggression both external and internal" (37). The sense of haunting or "Gothic" is projected onto the black population, in Morrison's terms, but I would also add indigenous peoples to the fear factor.

foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After awhile it so drew me into itself as to *inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence*. The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. I felt that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe. I realized the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force, with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, images, such as *never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks*; again and again this illusion recurred, and even after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me. (72, emphasis added)[7]

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These are all Gothic moments of fear and pleasure at the thought of losing oneself in a Freudian manner, i.e. confronting eros and thanatos. Fuller connects fear of nature with fear of Native Americans throughout: indeed, the last part of her book is all about "wild" and "savage" Indians, related to wild Gothic nature—and fear of annihilation through the encounter with the unknown. And she sets out to poeticize by domesticating them and Europeanizing them, yearning at some point for another Gothic writer's presence to capture the local color:

I wanted Sir Walter Scott to have been there. If such romantic sketches were suggested to him, by the sight of a few gipsies [sic], not a group near one of these fires but would have furnished him material for a separate canvass. (Fuller 176)

There is a type of colonialist, imperialist swagger though, as she positions herself as the privileged white observer and finally concludes: "I feel that I have learnt [sic] a great deal from the Indians, from observing them even in this broken and degraded condition" (223). Even so, she associates them with the Gothic sublime of "the other" but also with their eradication: "I felt acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures" (223). But at this early juncture of the book, the sense of standing in front of the majestic waterfalls and confronting one's own demise (at least mentally) haunts the book throughout. Niagara Falls make her feel helpless, as if her death is imminent, and she associates the wildness of the waterfall with the wildness of the Indians, whom she

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[7] All further references are to Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*, unless otherwise indicated.

imagines as "naked savages" "stealing behind" her with phallic "uplifted tomahawks" (72). Thus, along with the fear of the wild waterfall and the wild Indian is not just the fear of death—but the thrill of an annihilating sexuality or orgasmic helplessness, associated in Fuller's mind with nature and the native American. But the heart of darkness will be her own—mediated through the natural landscape.

Chapter one, the "Niagara Falls" chapter, is illuminating in that it shows both the pedestrian and sublime qualities of nature. Fuller observes a tourist spitting into the Falls as a means by which to "appropriate it to his own use" (72), and she laments the fact that mankind is heading towards a utilitarian age in which men will "put the bodies of their dead parents in the fields to fertilize them" (72). But she asserts her hope that such occurrences will not be seen "on the historic page to be truly the age or truly the America" (73). Immediately thereafter Fuller turns to the majestic falls to take in the potentially annihilating whirlpool and to meditate upon "the hidden vortex"—and her musings again lead to an image of death: "It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is like to rise suddenly to light here, whether it be up-rooted tree, or body of man or bird" (73). Macabre thoughts about death follow her as she meditates upon the historical violence surrounding the War of 1812 fought in the vicinity of Niagara Falls and then concludes that human misery cannot be stilled by the beauty of the Falls: "It seems strange that men could fight in such a place; but no temple can still the personal griefs and strifes in the breasts of its visitors" (74). Even more unexpectedly, Fuller than meditates upon an image of a captive eagle she sees in the immediate neighborhood: she remarks that it is strange that "an eagle should be chained for a plaything" (74). With this image she reminisces about another captive eagle she had seen in her youth:

> an eagle chained at the balcony of a museum. The people used to poke at it with sticks, and my childish heart would swell with indignation as I saw their insults, and the mien with which they were borne by the monarch-bird. (74)

The image of an injured eagle, tellingly the symbol of the U.S., would be used by Fuller in her 1845 essay for the *Tribune,* in which she announces in a melancholy fashion that too many young men are rushing as a "multitude," following a banner, upon which "the royal Eagle is blazoned, along with the word Expediency" ("Fourth of July" 151). She ends her reverie of the eagle at Niagara Falls with a hopeful thought—that the Niagara eagle, despite his broken wing, would be consoled "by the voice of the cataract" and his connection to a more vital nature. But she does not end the

chapter here. Returning to the hotel, she feels somewhat dejected and bored; the spectacle of Niagara Falls was anticlimactic: "I felt a strange indifference about seeing the aspiration of my life's hopes. I lounged about the rooms, read the stage bills upon the walls, looked over the register . . ." (*Summer on the Lakes* 75). She does end up, during the moonlit evening, visiting the cascading Falls, and then she feels the predictably sublime attitude towards nature, but one that also suggests violent death: "I surveyed how here mutability and unchangeableness were united. I surveyed the conspiring waters rushing against the rocky ledge to overthrow it at one mad plunge" (76). She moves from this perspective to the predictable Romantic adoration of God ("the Being who was the architect of this") to a strange pronouncement of European/American exceptionalism, in terms of the Falls' natural beauty: "Tis true Italy and Swedeland boast of some such things, but we may well say that they be sorry patterns when compared with this of which we do now speak" (77). The image of the enchained eagle will soon turn into the image of oppressed Indians and madwomen as the book proceeds. In many ways, Fuller can identify with the "displaced Indian," as she similarly "felt a stranger in her native land [New England], captive to a culture that prevented her from singing freely and also imprisoned her soul" (Murray 204).

At the start of the second chapter, Fuller, coming up the River Clair, sees Native Americans "for the first time" and compares their "wild" stride favorably to the "rude" gait of the white settlers (79). In typical Transcendentalist mode, she attacks what will be the undoing of any type of spiritual life. She observes the greedy people on the boat with her—"almost all New Englanders, seeking their fortunes" (79). The focus of Fuller's Eco-Gothic critique in this nature narrative will be the attack of the material realm upon the natural landscape: for Fuller, the "clash of material interests" that is "so noisy" (80). Though she starts describing the new settlers in exceptionalist discourse ("They had brought with them their habits of calculation, their cautious manners, their love of polemics" [79]), she ends with a type of funereal regret:

> It grieved me to hear these immigrants who were to be the fathers of a new race, all, from the old man down to the little girl, talking not of what they should do, but of what they should get in the new scene. It was to them a prospect, not of the unfolding nobler energies, but of more ease, and *larger accumulation*. (79–80, emphasis added)

Although Fuller regrets the emphasis on the material realm (and the acquisitive American spirit), she will move forward ominously to a rhetorical

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prediction of the decimation of Indian villages: "the power of fate is with the white man, and the Indian feels it" (139).

The book's pattern continues with similar meditations on nature as Fuller moves between the sublimities and banalities of Nature, between joyful reflections of the newness of European America and a death dirge regarding the disappearing Native American. In terms of the aesthetics of nature and the portrait of a pleasing landscape, Fuller privileges the Native American, but she equates the end of pristine nature with the decimation of Indians, accepting as a bygone fact the end of both. That to me is the Gothic horror of her travel account—Fuller is basically burying the Indians alive. She does see the incursion of Europeans into the landscape as jarringly crass and material: sometimes the "little brown houses" of the settlers in Illinois looked "attractive" from afar, but "when you came near, the slovenliness of the dwelling and the rude way in which objects around it were treated, when so little care would have presented a charming whole, were very repulsive" (96). She sees the new settlers as showing "no thought beyond satisfying the grossest material wants" and proclaims Native Americans as the arbiters of good taste in their appreciation of nature. Fuller proclaims that the Indians are the rightful owners of nature:

> Seeing the traces of the Indians, who chose the most beautiful sites for their dwellings, and whose habits do not break on that aspect of nature under which they were born, we feel as if they were the rightful lords of a beauty they forbore to deform. (96)

In a strange inversion, using a European paradigm, Fuller accuses the European/American settlers of being more barbaric, "more Gothic," than civilized "Roman," and predicts the end of nature: "their mode of cultivation will, in the course of twenty, perhaps ten, years obliterate the natural expression of the country" (96). There is a death dirge throughout memorializing the still living Indian, and the following exclamation captures her attitude as she persistently sees the Indians as remnants of the past, as "traces": "How happy the Indians must have been here! It is not long since they were driven away, and the ground, above and below, is full of their traces" (100).

Although she gothicizes European settlers in the area, she ironically classicizes and thereby humanizes Native Americans. Visiting the site of "an ancient Indian village," she makes a point of telling the reader that the Indians were not dirty or brutal, nor were the children "sad and dull," but their life in nature ennobled them. She does not use the "noble savage" comparison, though; instead, she locates in them the basis of

western civilization, in classical Greek culture: "The whole scene suggested to me a Greek splendor, a Greek sweetness, and I can believe that an Indian brave, accustomed to ramble in such paths, might be mistaken for Apollo" (100). Elsewhere, she makes a point of describing an impressive-looking Indian chief in an encampment near Milwaukie, as "the finest Indian figure [she] saw, more than six feet in height, erect, and of a sullen but grand gait and gesture," someone she deems a "fine sight, not a French-Roman, but a real Roman." In her exuberance to carry western civilization to the indigenous peoples, she overcompensates by alluding to classical ancient myths and heroes, thereby eradicating any true history. But she is always aware of what is destroying Native Americans and their land: an industrialized economy! She insists that missionaries should stop preaching to the Indian but rather "preach to the trader who ruins him" (214)—thus aligning mercantile interests and Christianity with the end of the Indian civilization.

She intersperses the funereal tales of Indians with two seemingly out of place mystical stories about women with a special sixth sense, women at home in nature, women who are gothicized and misunderstood—women who ultimately represent Fuller's fears as well as her sense of singularity. If wild nature threatens to rob Fuller of her identity in her initial chapter on the cascading Niagara Falls, and if encounters with Indians have her confront American-European visions of genocide, then these tales of unusual and gothicized women give her a terrifying sense of home in the wilderness. Just as the Native Americans are losing their homeland, the Gothic wandering figures in Fuller's writing are the dispossessed women. The first of these Gothic heroines, Mariana, is the stock Spanish-Creole woman of Gothic, and the second, the psychic Seeress of Prevorst, comes straight off the pages of a German mystical treatise by Dr. Justinus Kerner. Mariana is another part of her frightened self, her own nature, that Fuller explores and that is her uncharted emotional life, the side of her obstructed by her taskmaster father and also rejected by her cool rational friend Emerson. Fuller includes the stories of these unusual women in a strange matter-of-fact way, as she moves from picturesque sightseeing to an internalized experience in the hotel, a kind of neutral territory, as Hawthorne would have it, between reality and imagination. The ghost of Mariana first appears in a mundane way. Sitting at a hotel table in Chicago, Fuller chances upon a Mrs. Z, the aunt of her childhood friend she had known at boarding school, who informs her of Mariana's death: Fuller bluntly announces her death in the narrative, moving in tone quickly from life to death (as she does with the Indians): "Mariana, so full of life, was dead" (118). Similarly, pages later, in retelling the story of the Seeress of Prevorst, an account of

a ghost-seeing woman written by the attending doctor Justinus Kerner, Fuller will nonchalantly admit that she retreats to the hotel room with this book to stave off traveler's fatigue: "Returning to Milwaukie much fatigued, I entertained myself for a day or two with reading. The book I had brought with me was in strange contrast with the life around me" (145).[8] She goes on to discuss the juxtaposition of the natural with the supernatural she had experienced as a tourist: "Very strange was this vision of an exalted and sensitive existence, which seemed to invade the next sphere, in contrast with the spontaneous, instinctive life, so healthy and so near the ground I had been surveying" (145). Both Mariana and the Seeress represent to Fuller a sense of the primordial meaning, separated from the commercial ventures that terrify her in the ostensibly pure wilderness landscape, and so, these strange women gifted with second sight are allied with the mystical Indians that Fuller sees being exterminated. And so too Mariana and Frederica, the Seeress, are endangered by those men who would try to subdue or hush them—and their loss is felt tremendously.

To return to Timothy Morton's thesis about each individual's subjective view of nature, one wonders whether Fuller actually had any real connection to nature, unspoiled by her Gothic and exceptionalist imagination. Instead, the image of nature is corrupted by Fuller's sense of romance, as she moves from a European to New England point of view and finally to a Native American interpretation. First she maintains quite simply, "All woods suggest pictures" (140). And then she recounts the types, as she moves from European to New England to Western woods: "The European forest, with its long glades and green sunny dells, naturally suggested the figures of armed knight on his proud steed, or maiden, decked in gold and pearl, pricking along them on a snow white palfrey" (140). She moves from European Gothic romance to Puritan images of the conquest of New England nature: she recalls

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[8] This tendency to live through books over experience is shown by her taking time out from her Great Lakes travels to get library books. As Laura L. Mielke points out, while Fuller was in Chicago for two weeks, she made two library visits to get acquainted with the land and inhabitants (100). As Fuller reports in *Summer on the Lakes,* these included works by Indian historians George Catlin and Henry Row Schoolcraft as well as more Gothic writings by Washington Irving. See also essays by Annette Kolodny and Nicole Tonkovich for Fuller's sources on Native Americans. See also Christina Zwarg for Fuller's varying degrees of sympathy for real or imagined Indians. Interestingly, Fuller had written to Emerson about Kerner's book on the mystic Friederike Hauffe (a "really good book" that had landed on her desk [Murray 197]), shortly before her departure to the Midwest; she takes this book along with her on the journey.

the New England woods, wherever the sunlight falls down a longer than usual cart-track, wherever a cleared spot has lain still enough for the trees to look friendly, with their exposed sides cultivated by the light, and the grass to look velvet warm, and be embroidered with flowers. (141)

In contradistinction to a mythologized pristine New England nature, she maintains that the "western woods suggest a different kind of ballad. The Indian legends have, often, an air of the wildest solitude, as has the one Mr. Lowell put into verse, in the last volume" (140–41). Interestingly, she abandons Lowell with his political agenda or sympathy, insisting that she "did not see *those* wild woods" (141, emphasis added). Instead, her aestheticizing vision prompts her to include a poem, "a little romance of love and sorrow," that she writes about a maiden bereft of her knight. Later Fuller turns the tragedy of the Indian into a romance: she speculates about the far-off look in the Indian's gaze and asserts that "half the romance" of his gaze is "that it makes you think of dark and distant places in the forest" (210).

Fuller's view of disembodied nature allows her to move from the natural to the unnatural and finally to the supernatural. The disjunction between the real and the imagined that plagues these female protagonists is also true of Fuller's sense of dislocatedness in her travels to the Midwestern wilderness. Fuller's account of Mariana in *Summer on the Lakes* might be perceived as a variation of Miranda in "A Great Lawsuit" and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, but in *Summer on the Lakes,* the young girl Mariana suffers precisely because she has no guidance from a strong protective father figure (the opposite of Fuller's life), and thus has no boundaries. At the same time, Mariana's Anglo aunt, who acts as guardian, foists a boarding school education upon her. But there is something Fuller envies about Mariana—who is so natural and can fully express her emotions. Mariana is shunned by her peers at the girls' boarding school precisely because she is in touch with her emotions, with a dramatic flair. Not surprisingly, this is not an Anglo girl but the stock figure of (both American and European) Gothic, with her depiction as the exotic other, characterized not simply as Spanish Creole, but associated with Eastern mystics. In a protracted scene, we hear about Mariana not fitting in at school. Her mystical powers ally her with dervishes, mystics, and Gothic sleep-walkers! And also to some extent the Indians whom Fuller is witnessing firsthand, not simply through books, for the first time. Fuller is mesmerized by Mariana's story and is struck most by her dramatic appeal, as an "improvatrice." The Gothically exotic Mariana is first placed within an Eastern boarding school

and her story makes its way to the frontier, incongruously in Fuller's Chicago hotel:

> She had by nature the same habit and power of excitement that is described in the spinning dervishes of the East. Like them, she would spin until all around her were giddy, while her own brain, instead of being disturbed, was excited to great action. Pausing, she would declaim verse of others or her own; act many parts, with strange catch-words and burdens that seemed to act with mystical power on her own fancy, sometimes stimulating her to convulse the hearer with laughter, sometimes to melt him to tears. When her power began to languish, she would spin again till fired to recommence her singular drama . . . with fantasies unknown to life, unknown to heaven or earth. (*Summer on the Lakes* 119)

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The excitement of the dance often kept Mariana up, and we hear "[s]he was also a sleep-walker" (119), a comment which makes the reader think that Fuller is being autobiographical in her description of Mariana.[9] Fuller exposes the true evil in Mariana's case—the contemporary educational system: "the fever of this ardent and too early stimulated nature was constantly increased by the restraints and narrow routine of the boarding school" (125). After the students gang up on her and ridicule her, with the tacit approval of the teachers, Mariana actually goes mad—and her love turns to hatred. She is only cured of her hatred when a despairing woman pleads for help. She returns to her native land, only to marry a man who cannot decipher her—who cannot penetrate her depth. Vacillating between moments of despair and heightened excitement, she finally succumbs to a breakdown of sorts; her husband nurses her back to health for just a short time, and when she relapses, he tires of her and she dies. We hear repeatedly that Mariana had tried to make a "home" with her husband, but that he had only been drawn to her spontaneous and picturesque ways. Fuller dresses her in the garb of melodramatic Gothic: first she says her encounter with Mariana had caused her to think of the heroine of "The Bandit's Bride," a favorite piece of hers in childhood. With Mariana's death, Fuller announces "she has never seen a Bandit's Bride" (*Summer on the Lakes* 123) again. But Fuller also connects her with other unhappy women, who were not heard—Cassandra, for example.

Directly connected to the mad Mariana and her unhappy death is the story about the Prophetess of Prevorst (from Justinus Kerner's *Die Seherin von Prevorst*), another sleepwalker like Mariana, in the next chapter

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[9] See especially Charles Capper (80–82), who suggests that the story of Mariana is autobiographical.

(five) dealing with Wisconsin. If the Spanish Creole looms over the pages ostensibly about Illinois, the German madwoman who was ostracized and deemed mad for her fortune-telling and prophecies (another recurrent Cassandra type for Fuller) appears in Wisconsin. Now it seems odd that the prophetess Frederica Hauffe should appear in this travelogue chapter about Wisconsin (although it was home to an influx of German immigrants). Fuller explains it in this way, as old World Gothic enters the New World journey, that this was reading material she had taken along for the journey, but she notes the incongruity: "Very strange was this vision of an exalted and sensitive existence, which seemed to invade the next sphere, in contrast with the spontaneous, instinctive life, so healthy and so near the ground I had been surveying" (145). But as we have seen, the Midwest frontier was a landscape already on the decline, losing its spontaneous life.

Fuller's account of Justinus Kerner's *The Seeress of Prevorst* brings her back to the quandary posed by Niagara Falls in the opening pages, in which her spirit is overwhelmed by the physical manifestation of nature. The Seeress allows Fuller to make her own Gothic voyage inwards, to feel the pain and wisdom wrought by the Seeress's clairvoyant and sleepwalking states. Justinus Kerner, the author of *The Seeress of Prevorst* and the actual medical doctor attending this simple but gifted daughter of a forester (significantly a child of nature), begins to see beyond the purely physical realm representing his profession.[10] And so Kerner, as doctor and as poet, bridges the gap for Fuller between the Transcendentalist divide of body and soul, as the man of science begins to believe in the spiritual realm of this almost saint-like woman (whom Fuller compares to St. Theresa). Fuller does not deem the Seeress's trances or somnambulic life as markers of disease, but rather as a sign of a higher Transcendentalist thinking: "Better to say she was immersed in the inward state" (158). Fuller's praise and fascination with the clairvoyant Frederica Hauffe continue for another twenty-two pages or so, a really long excursion (and interruption) in Fuller's ostensible discussion of Native Americans. (Indeed, at one point in the next chapter, she aligns

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[10] Even though Kerner was a medical doctor, he was very much interested in hypnosis as a healing modality and in the power of the supernatural realm (hence his fascination with his ghost-seeing patient Frederika). He associated with various mystics and religious types, such as Jung-Stilling, whom Fuller also brings up in the text and to whom I refer later in the main text. Besides writing medical treatises, he also wrote poetry. His poem "The Saw Mill" was translated by the American poet William C. Bryant; the translation appeared in *Graham's Monthly Magazine* (Feb. 1848). It is a poem that captures the same sort of sorrow Fuller feels at witnessing the end of nature for the benefit of capitalist profits. Kerner's macabre poem describes his disturbance at witnessing a saw mill "cleaving through" a majestic fir tree; the tree warns him that soon the wood produced by the mill would be used to make his own coffin.

Frederica with "Guess, the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet," whose face also had the same "oriental cast" [209].) She actually describes the clairvoyant Frederica's visions as the basis for creative inspiration: "I say poetic creation, for to my mind, the ghosts she saw were projections of herself into objective reality" (163). In fact, Fuller is much like Frederica in her ability to project her ghostly figures onto the canvas of her travelogue. Like Dr. Kerner, Fuller accepts Frederica's ability to communicate with the dead as true fact and applauds her gift of listening to the silence within: "Her invention of language seems a natural motion of the mind when left to itself" (164). Seeing her as a poet/mystic, Fuller puts her on the same pedestal as she does Goethe's female character Macaria (from *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre)*, a protagonist Fuller extolled in various of her writings about female genius: here she praises Macaria, who "knew the sun and life circles, also the lives of spirit and soul, as did the forester's daughter of Prevorst" (164). And in the vein of Romantics, Fuller appropriates the disabled body as conducive to a higher spiritual life: Macaria was "compensated for bodily infirmity by a more concentrated and acute state of mind, and consequent accesses of wisdom" (164). In a similar manner, the disabled clairvoyant Frederica can access mystical truth. Kerner's description of her alternates between being a witch, a priestess, and a saint. Fuller ultimately tries to reconcile "poetic facts with their scientific exposition" and in her account of Frederica[11] (and following the tradition of Gothic writers), she ultimately tries to normalize the abnormal and rationalize the fantastic. Though the Seeress of Prevorst dies an untimely death at the age of twenty-nine, she had "traversed a larger portion of the field of thought than all her race before" (171). Fuller concludes the section on the prophetess of Prevorst with a general statement about the preponderance of German ghosts, by naturalizing the supernatural, especially by saying that "[t]here is a family character about all the German ghosts" (168). She connects the Friederike phenomenon with a long history of ghosts (*Theorie der Geisterkunde*, 1808*)* written by the German professor Johann Heinrich Jung (Jung-Stilling), who exchanged his Professorship in economics for a life investigating ghostly apparitions. Margaret Fuller is quite amenable to visitations by German ghosts, evoking a type of domestic ghost who haunted Frederica: "She stands before us, this piety, in a full, high-necked robe, a simple hausfrauish cap, a clear, straightforward blue eye" (168). Fuller shares with Hawthorne the predilection for merging the fantastic with the everyday occurrence. And she denies the excessive fright associated with the ghostly world, preferring instead a homely

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[11] Fuller writes both "Frederica" and "Frederika," once each, but the name is spelled as "Friederike" in the German from which she quotes.

mysticism: "There are no terrible, gloomy ghosts with Spanish mantle or Italian dagger. We feel quite at home with them, and sure of their good faith" (168). She ultimately leaves her excursion into the Germanic world of ghosts and repositions herself in the Midwestern wilderness, ostensibly the purpose of her tract, but bridging the connection between the natural and the supernatural becomes ever more difficult as the world around her (in the material realm) begins to feel more void of meaning.

Fuller tries to obviate the difference between New and Old World Gothic as she locates the idea of the supernatural or mystical in transcendentalist notions of nature. She writes about the similarities in the mythologies of indigenous peoples, European Americans, and Europeans and dispenses with the idea that the Western landscape presents anything we could consider new. In some ways, she cannot imagine an American mythology because of her Eurocentrism; she cannot go beyond the European America of New England she sets out to abandon:

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> Do not blame me that I have written so much about Germany and Hades, while you were looking for news of the West. Here, on the pier, I see disembarking the Germans, the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Swiss. Who knows how much of old legendary lore, of modern wonder, they have already planted amid the Wisconsin forests? Soon, soon their tales of the origin of things, and the Providence which rules them, will be so mingled with those of the Indian, that the very oak trees will not know them apart,—will not know whether itself be a Runic, a Druid, or a Winnebago oak. (171)[12]

It is true that by focusing on a Gothic mythologizing, she unites peoples—and she ostensibly abandons any specific bloodline by intermingling people's stories. But this assimilation has its price—with the death of Nature and of the Native American. In a ghoulish moment, Fuller looks forward to a museum of Indian remains being preserved in a national museum: "there will be a national institute, containing all the remains of the Indians—all that has been preserved by official intercourse at Washington, Caitlin's collection, and a picture gallery as complete as can be made, with a collection of skulls from all parts of the country" (212). As Renée Bergland says of the Native American decimation in another context: "The Indians who are transformed into ghosts cannot be buried or evaded, and the

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[12] This discourse of melding the nationalities together to be the quintessential American without a past, anticipates Theodore Roosevelt's eerie discussion of the hyphenless American (without a European antecedent) and assimilationist politics. See chapter two, "True Americanism," in Roosevelt's book: *American Ideals* (1897).

specter of their forced disappearance haunts the American nation and the American imagination" (5).

And in the end, one might wonder: what has happened to that Margaret Fuller persona as traveler who was initially contemplating the cascades of Niagara Falls in a most mindful but ominously meditative way—as she witnesses her own potential demise in the falls (almost predicting her own death by water)? Fuller ends the book at the end of chapter seven with three seemingly disparate but similar images—of destruction, conquest, defeat, and finally a deadening detachment. She refers to the Mackinaw Indians in their "broken and degraded" condition (223) but then assumes identification with them: "I feel acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures" (223). Moreover, she juxtaposes the "greatness" of the vanquished Indians, with the "majesty of nature in this American continent" (223), although the reader has already witnessed the end of such pristine nature in the narrative. Then she spends her last day in Detroit, where she cannot fathom how the failed General Hull could have even thought of winning the Battle against the British in the War of 1812. From vanquished Indians to vanquished American general, she moves to first the mechanical failures of her day to a view of historical mementoes that would replace the true spirituality of the Indians whom she has encountered. She witnesses what was supposed to be the launching of the boat, *The Wisconsin*, as a sign of American progress, which ends up to be a complete flop, as the vessel "could not be made to stir." On the boat ride from Detroit back to Buffalo, she encounters a phrenologist who tries to hoodwink the tourists and a young lovesick man reading "Butler's Analogy," an attempt at spiritual understanding, which he quickly abandons for carnality when he meets pretty newcomers on the journey. The final view is quite hollow, and one feels as if the bones of Native Americans that she wanted to export to a museum are a sign of this collapsed civilization that the white European has created.

Another episode equally Gothic and horrifying would await the journalist Fuller shortly afterwards—on the streets of New York, a type of underworld where, as a journalist working for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, she encounters the grizzly scenes at the Insane Asylum and the Penitentiary. In her vision of urban Gothic, Fuller explains how poor women would often suffer for their crimes committed as a result of the material realm of economy, the selfsame negative impulse behind the destruction of Native Americans. As Fuller describes it, poor women, envying the clothing, jewels, and lifestyles of the rich would often succumb to theft to obtain worldly goods beyond their reach. And the overspiritualized Mariana or clairvoyant Frederica type recurs in a nervous version of the Gothic

woman. Fuller lapses into stock descriptions taken from Gothic convent tales, when, for example, she focuses on the nun in the Asylum for the Insane in New York: like Mariana, and the Native American Fuller encountered in the Midwestern wilderness, this figure was of "high poetical interest." She wears a Nun's veil, her staring eyes are "bright with a still fire," and she ceaselessly chants the service of the Church: we hear "she was a Catholic, who became insane while preparing to be a Nun" ("Our City Charities" 101–02). But her Gothic presentations of the inmates of the almshouse and prison, and the poor on the streets of NY, a kind of sentimental but jarring depiction of urban landscapes shared by writers like Dickens, was perhaps the only way she could call the lethargic masses to action. And so Fuller moves from gothicizing her internal condition, her personal unhappiness, to finding equally distraught souls in other Gothic landscapes. Her empathy in the city is a great improvement over her oft-times dispassionate observations and complacency or sense of resignation she experienced in her journey to the Great Lakes.

It was her eye-opening tour to the Midwest that allowed Fuller to reconsider her naïve and optimistic New England and Transcendentalist beliefs about progress. The EcoGothic panic ensues from the clash between a primordial vision of the frontier—both the land and the Native American inhabitants—and a pragmatic philosophy of capitalist profits and expansionist dynamics that would eradicate any sense of the mystical that Fuller might wish to retain. Instead, Fuller is convinced that seeing nature from a spiritual point of view—one that would transcend the "real" of the Transcendentalists—would prevent the horrors of commodity culture resulting from the invasion of the Great Lakes by purely materialistic speculators, traders, tourists, and inventors. Much more a Transcendentalist romancer than a travel reporter, Fuller moves between the literacies of the forest and the myths of endangered peoples, whether they be Native American or mystical women, to negotiate a terrain that would bring dignity to all those on the fringes of power. The darkness of the EcoGothic emerges when Fuller makes her *Summer on the Lakes* a type of funereal tribute—to Mariana, Frederica, and the Native Americans, who have all provided her with colorful but somber images in her otherwise lackluster visit to the frontier. We find ourselves with ghosts of Indians, the ghost of Mariana, and the ghost of Frederica—mirroring the ghost of Fuller herself. And Fuller's EcoGothic vision also provides us with a terrifying glimpse of an America that for Fuller can no longer exist, that has, in fact, only existed in a mythologized version of the past. Speaking of the decimation of the Indians towards the end of the book, she proclaims, in the past tense, "There *was* a greatness, unique and precious, which he who does

not feel will never duly appreciate the majesty of nature in this American continent" (223, original emphasis). And that message signals to me the beginning of the end of the American environment.

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Here Be Monsters: Imperialism, Knowledge and the Limits of Empire

ABSTRACT

It has become a truism in discussions of Imperialist literature to state that the British empire was, in a very significant way, a textual exercise. Empire was simultaneously created and perpetuated through a proliferation of texts (governmental, legal, educational, scientific, fictional) driven significantly by a desire for what Thomas Richards describes as "one great system of knowledge." The project of assembling this system assumed that all of the "alien" knowledges that it drew upon could be easily assimilated into existing, "universal" (that is, European) epistemological categories. This belief in "one great system" assumed that knowledges from far-flung outposts of empire could, through careful categorization and control, be made to reinforce, rather than threaten, the authority of imperial epistemic rule. But this movement into "new" epistemic as well as physical spaces opened up the disruptive possibility for and encounter with Foucault's "insurrection of subjugated knowledges." In the Imperial Gothic stories discussed here, the space between "knowing all there is to know" and the inherent unknowability of the "Other" is played out through representations of failures of classification and anxieties about the limits of knowledge. These anxieties are articulated through what is arguably one of the most heavily regulated signifiers of scientific progress at the turn of the century: the body. In an age that was preoccupied with bodies as spectacles that signified everything from criminal behaviour, psychological disorder, moral standing and racial categorization, the mutable, unclassifiable body functions as a signifier that mediates between imperial fantasies of control and definition and *fin-de-siècle* anxieties of dissolution and degeneration. In Imperial Gothic fiction these fears appear as a series of complex explorations of the ways in which the gap between the known and the unknown can be charted on and through a monstrous body that moves outside of stable classification.

It has become a truism in discussions of Imperialist literature to note that the British empire was, in a very significant way, a textual exercise. Empire was made real for the bureaucrats who oversaw it, the British public who supported and celebrated it, and the varied people who were subject to it through a seemingly endless variety of texts: colonial reports, maps, travel narratives, political treatises, legal texts, museum exhibits, school books, newspapers and advertisements, and, of course, works of fiction. The *fin de siècle* was, in England, the high-water mark of British Imperialism but this ostensible success was burdened with an awareness of the contradictions at the core of its elaborate discursive constructions. As Alexandra Warwick notes, even as it celebrated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, "the empire was already feeling, in Arnold's words, 'its huge frame not constructed right,' a fact which was to become absolutely clear in the ensuing years of social tension, strikes and unemployment at home and uprisings in the colonies" (203). The gap between the public performances of Imperial power and the contradictory, sometimes precariously structured discourses that shored it up, between certainties of a stable, identifiable English character—more often than not articulated in terms of race and racial purity—and the influence of and potentially contaminating contact with "the subject races," between the belief that one could, in Kipling's terms, "know all there is to know" about colonial spaces and subjects and the awareness of the vast, unknowable, realities of "subaltern epistemologies" (Foucault, "Two Lectures" 81) was a space that enacted the precarious nature of Empire as it was manifest in the texts upon which it was built. These discursive and imagined spaces between purportedly stable narratives of empire, I will argue here, open up a space for the Gothic in popular English *fin de siècle* narratives.

The proliferation of texts that made up Imperialist narratives rendered most of the far-flung outposts of empire at least superficially *known* to the British public. Geography, indigenous life—human, animal, plant—and everything else that was accessible were catalogued by scientists, described by travellers, discussed in public lectures, and incorporated into popular publications. In this sense, almost everything about Imperial holdings was understood to be known. In the opening line of his 1885 story "The Phantom Rickshaw," Rudyard Kipling states that "One of the few advantages that India has over England is a great Knowability" (26). In the discourse of high Imperialism, assumptions of British racial and cultural superiority presumed, and indeed were predicated on, a comprehensive knowledge of and authority over the "East." By the end of the nineteenth century, however, these assumptions were undercut by an increasing awareness of the vast gaps in that knowledge and representations of the East shifted from

being a fantasy of knowability to a space through which other *fin de siècle* anxieties could be imaginatively explored and, perhaps controlled. As Elaine Showalter has suggested, *fin de siècle* "fears . . . fuelled scientific and political interest in establishing clear lines of demarcation between black and white, East and West" (5). The inadequacy of these demarcations are manifest, in part, in what Patrick Brantlinger has called "Imperial Gothic" (227), a genre in which cultural anxieties about the imperial project itself—fears of regression, invasion, degeneration and dissolution—are played out through narratives of encounters between the rational, ruling West and the mysterious, unknowable East. While the physical "blank spaces" on the maps that fuelled the imaginations of early generations of imperialist writers had been filled in by the late nineteenth century, the terrifying, unknowable, unrepresentable blank spaces that shape the Imperial Gothic remained hidden at the borders of Imperial control.

Gothic narratives are preoccupied with transgression, excess, and instabilities. The Gothic articulates unauthorized spaces at the edges—and at the interstices—of stable cultural narratives. As such the Gothic tends to be less about horror, in Ann Radcliffe's sense, than it is about terror: about a pervasive awareness of something not quite right that lurks just as the edges of vision, in moments of silence and in unauthorized or unfamiliar spaces. My interest in Imperial Gothic here is on the ways in which the space between "knowing all there is to know" and the inherent unknowability of the "Other" is played out through representations of failures of classification and anxieties about the limits of knowledge in *fin de siècle* Gothic fiction. These anxieties are articulated through what is arguably one of the most heavily regulated signifiers of scientific progress at the turn of the century: the body. In an age that was preoccupied with bodies as spectacles that signified everything from criminal behaviour, to psychological disorder, to moral standing and to racial categorization, the mutable, unclassifiable body functions as a signifier that mediates between imperial fantasies of control and definition and *fin-de-siècle* anxieties. In Imperial Gothic fiction these fears appear as a series of complex explorations of the ways in which the gap between the known and the unknown can be charted on and through a body moves outside of stable classification. Theorizing the role of bodies in culture, Judith Butler argues that they "are synechdochal for the social system *per se . . .* [and] any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment" (168). What is at the heart of the uncannily illegible signification of the bodies in these fictional works is the inherent instability of the ideology through which that signification is created. The body functions in the texts I discuss here in two ways: as the body of the Other imported into

English spaces (most often as exhibits or specimens housed in museums and private collections), and as the English body that has travelled into colonial outposts. Imperial Gothic texts that focus on the body—whether the body of the colonizing self or the colonized "other"—focus on the permeability and changeability of the body when it is out of place in order to explore anxieties around gaps in the fantasy of comprehensive knowledge that sustained the belief in the imperial project. This system depended on a series of meticulous but inherently incomplete and unreliable systems of classification. My focus is on two classificatory spaces in these texts: the museum as a cultural performance of control and categorization, and the imposition and maintenance of European control through the performance of power in the body of the colonizer. In both cases—when the body of the Other is transported, classified, displayed in the European museum, and when the "self" moves to the unruly spaces of imperial outposts—the narrative that sustains the fantasy of control is revealed to be not only unstable, but itself irrational, impossible and untenable. These exchanges reveal that the fantasy of a comprehensive knowledge of empire is always undermined by the uncontrollable, ultimately unknowable epistemologies that it tries to contain.

ARCHIVING THE EMPIRE

If the imperial preoccupation with textuality has become a truism, so has an understanding of its almost fetishistic relation to acquiring and categorizing knowledge. In the context of nineteenth century imperialism, Foucault's intersecting matrices power/knowledge are manifest in what Thomas Richards has called "the imperial archive." British explorers, botanists and cartographers (among others) collected information and produced seemingly endless texts about their ever-expanding empire. The elaborate networks of accumulated knowledge were "built around knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum and the Royal Geographical Society, the India Survey, and the universities: [the facts about empire] were thought of as raw knowledge, knowledge awaiting ordering" (Richards 4). The project of assembling the imperial archive assumed that all of the "alien" knowledges that it collected could be easily assimilated into existing, "universal" (that is, European) epistemological categories. This belief in "comprehensive knowledge" assumed that "knowledge was singular and not plural, complete and not partial, global and not local, that all knowledges would ultimately turn out to be concordant in one great system of knowledge" (Richards 7). Local knowledges could thus be made to reinforce, rather than threaten, the authority of imperial epistemic rule.

The imperial archive, then, defined and controlled the relation between knowledges, determined "what can be said" about imperial holdings and the science that sustained them; and regulated the terms through which the knowledge gleaned from these spaces could be disseminated and articulated. Any threat to this regulation of knowledge and enunciability undermines the imagined authority of the archive and of the empire that it stood for.

In spite of the epistemic and political stability that the archive represented, though, the imperial project's movement into "new" spaces opened up the disruptive possibility for the

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> insurrection of subjugated knowledges [which are] . . . the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization . . . but they are also a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (Foucault, "Two Lectures" 81–82)

The contradictions between the enunciation of singularity and the awareness of multiplicity—knowing, paradoxically, all that there is not to know—is the location of terror and horror in Imperial Gothic texts.

BODIES ON DISPLAY

In what Ruth Hoberman calls "museum Gothic," the gap between what nineteenth century theories of the museum articulated as a "disembodied space" in which visitors "were supposed to be so regulated as to be invisible," and the experiences of "actual museum goers" (3) resonated with other concerns about the unclassifiable and uncontrollable within the ostensibly ordered space of the museum. As Andreas Huyssen has argued, "No matter how much the museum, consciously or unconsciously, produces and affirms the symbolic order, there is always a surplus of meaning that exceeds set ideological boundaries" (15). By the end of the nineteenth century, public museums "were inextricably bound up with the nature and practices of imperialism" (Longair and McAleer 1); they were "tools of empire" (MacKenzie 7). As spaces in which objects from far-flung reaches of the empire were collected, catalogued, displayed and written into the master narrative of imperial rule, the excess of meaning imposed by the museum and embodied by these objects becomes a *Gothic* excess and the impossibility of their definitive classification within these "classifying houses" (Hooper-Greenhill 4) renders the regulated space of the museum decidedly uncanny.

There is a strangely easy, but somehow very *un*easy relationship between the Gothic and the Victorian museum. On the one hand, museums are inherently Gothic spaces, filled with objects taken out of context and uncannily frozen in time. Museums embody Gothic preoccupations with the layering of pasts and presents, with unknown histories contained in labyrinthine spaces. But at the same time, those spaces are fundamentally ordered ones in which objects, however uncanny, are contained safely under glass, definitively labelled and categorized and their relations to each other classified and catalogued. In this latter sense—the *making sense* that is the business of the museum—the Gothic seems to have no place at all. But nonetheless there are a significant number of *fin de siècle* stories set in museums and private collections. The intrusion of the irrational, the unclassifiable, and the uncanny into these most rational of spaces plays on and with an underlying anxiety that the elaborate performances of classification and order that the museum enacted in Victorian culture: that the knowledge that these spaces represented might, in fact, not be comprehensive or stable enough to sustain the narrative of British Imperial "progress."

As Richards's "knowledge producing institutions," Victorian museums were deeply implicated in creating, connecting, and perpetuating the projects of empire, science, and modernity. Earlier manifestations of the museum were, according to Tony Bennett, focused on creating surprise and provoking wonder by focusing "on the rare and exceptional, on [displaying] objects for their singular qualities rather than for their typicality; on [display for] sensational rather than rational and pedagogical effect" (2). In contrast, the Victorian museum was a self-consciously rational institution that rejected principles of wonder and resonance in favour of order, classification and clearly defined relation; collecting, displaying and performing the fantasy of "comprehensive knowledge." As Roger Luckhurst notes, the nineteenth century museum was "a modern technology" in which objects were "ordered in transparent taxonomies and aesthetic scientific sequencing" (140). The museum's purpose, according to a report published in the *Hull Daily Mail* in 1889, was "to propagate and popularize knowledge" in the British public. In 1895, George Brown Goode articulated his plan for the improvement of public museums in similar terms. He asserts that museums should be set up "so as to use [natural and cultural artefacts] for the increase of knowledge and for the culture and enlightenment of the people" (qtd. in Bennett 24). But while the terms used by contemporary practitioners and theorists of the museum tended to focus on its altruistic potential for the edification and improvement of the British public, its practice was, not surprisingly, unabashedly political. Objects in museums and collections were, then, arranged in order to demonstrate

unambiguous power not only over the physical artefacts themselves and the cultures from which they were taken, but also over what they were *allowed* to mean, what they were able to communicate, their significance in the "order of things" and how they would shape the understanding and thinking of the public who would be edified by them.

That objects in museums were carefully ordered, then, is obvious. But these were also spaces that were involved in very careful social regulation. Just as the "meanings of objects . . . were inflected and even reinvented by the context in which they were displayed," so too, were the responses of museum goers constructed and regulated (Longair and McAleer 8). Museums were places of "organized walking in which an intended message [was] communicated in the form of a (more or less) directed itinerary" (Bennett 7). In this sense, the ideal enterprise of the museum was ordered—not just the arrangement of the objects in relation to each other—divided and displayed according to categories such as use (household objects, weapons, etc.), material (pottery, bronze, etc.), time period, by culture, geography— but the physical space was used to order to regulate the experience and manipulate the response of the visiting public.

Importantly, for my purposes, a significant element in ordering that response was deployed as a way of creating a popular consensus about the Imperial project. More than simply housing and displaying objects, cultures and people from distant corners of Britain's empire, museums performed tangible control over imperial spaces and alien epistemologies. These were places in which the imperial holdings—and British control over them—were "an eternally present spectacle" (Richards 144). As John M. MacKenzie has argued, "the museum, as much as weaponry, the steam engine, [or] the telegraph . . . represented a tool of empire . . . [It] offered a public justification for expansion and the accommodation of nature and peoples to [the] purposes [of empire]" (7). Gathering artefacts from distant parts of the empire into one place enacted a kind of physical containment of the vast and inconceivably varied objects, creatures and cultures that filled the imperial spaces. This performance of physical control, in turn, enacted a kind of epistemic control which, through careful classification and ordering, made it possible to conceive of the imperial project as part of a continuum of historical progress. Classification, ordering, labelling demonstrated unambiguous power over these objects: power not only over the physical artefacts themselves, but also over what they were allowed to mean. In this sense, as Foucault has argued, the nineteenth century museum could be understood as a heterotopia: what he describes as a "single real place," in which "several spaces, several sites that are themselves incompatible [are juxtaposed]" ("Other Spaces" 233). So geographies,

cultures, objects and individuals (alive and dead) which would not otherwise ever have been contained in one physical place, are not only accumulated in the museum, their presence in the same space enacts a kind of simultaneity that creates an ordered, rational narrative of "natural" imperial connection. As heterotopias, museums "create a space as perfect, meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled" (Foucault, "Other Spaces" 8).

While nineteenth century curators and trustees dreamed of the "perfect museum," they were "shadowed by ghosts of disappointment" (Siegel 3). As Jonah Siegel notes, "objects do not generally speak for themselves, and even when they appear to do so they do not necessarily say what their collectors intended" (8). In this sense, all, or at least most, objects in a museum are haunted—if not in the spectral sense of being connected with spirits or ghosts—in the truer sense of being doubled. That is, the objects carry with them the awareness, always, of their previous existence as, for example, household objects in everyday use, or, in the case of specimens and mummies, of creatures or people who lived and who were not objects but subjects. Michael Baxandall has outlined three distinct terms that he argues are at play in the field of exhibitions: "makers of objects, exhibitors of made objects, and viewers of exhibited made objects" (36). I would argue, though, in light of the haunted nature of the artefact, that there is a fourth term at play here, one that throws the uncanny nature of the relations between objects, the setting of the museum and the acts of interpretation that resonate between the object and its viewer into sharp relief: the meaning that is made by the object itself. This is particularly true in Imperial Gothic stories, in which the gap between what the "maker of the object" knew, what the "exhibitors of . . . objects" can know, and the instability and fundamentally incomplete nature of the narrative that they transmit to the viewer of the object, drives the terror of the plots. The desperate rationality of the museum collapses into the disorder of the "other" knowledges barely contained in its exhibits. As a space that enacts the desire for comprehensive knowledge that Richards suggests drove the mania for collecting, ordering, and displaying objects in the service of the imperial project, the museum is a space where English bodies and colonial objects[1] participate in the tensions between the ideals of the relation between the domestication and familiarization of the far-flung outposts

[1] This mania for collecting, ordering and displaying included human cultures and subjects and there were a large number of "ethnographic displays" and "human zoos" throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. This highly problematic performance of imperial control did not make its way into Gothic or horror fiction, and so is not part of my discussion here.

of empire, and the dizzying unknowable difference and individuality that these objects represent.

The possibility of unauthorized exchanges of meaning between the object and the viewer reconfigures not only the ostensible stability of the "maker, exhibitor, viewer" relation, it also exposes the gaps at the centre of the fetishized narrative of comprehensive knowledge that, for Richards and others, was at the core of the imperial project. In almost all of these stories, unsettling gaps in what is known or understood about an artefact are reinforced through representations of fractured, incomplete or dismembered collections.

Interestingly, the unstable bodies that are at the centre of these texts are, more often than not, dismembered and fragmented. The body dismembered in the name of science, commerce or greed is perhaps the most Gothic representation of Julia Kristeva's conception of the abject. The hands and feet that litter these stories are not abjected by their original possessors themselves, it is their reclassification as *objects* which renders them abject in the eyes of the collector and scientist. But, like Kristeva's articulation of this concept, they "disturb identity, system [and] order." They are "in-between, ambiguous" (Pearce 66). Part of that ambiguity is that they are almost inevitably re-membered by "conjuring up their previous context": through reanimation and the appearances of ghostly apparitions.

Perhaps the most interesting of these narratives of dismemberment is Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Brown Hand" (1899). Doyle's story articulates profound anxieties about Western scientific practices and about the invasion of familiar English spaces by the body of the Other. The story takes place in the home of a retired Anglo-Indian surgeon, who is described as "the most distinguished Indian surgeon of his day" (43). His credentials thus established, the story goes on to note that he and his wife have become the victims of a series of ghostly visitations. Sir Dominick, the surgeon, calls upon his nephew, a man of science who had "devoted a great deal of attention to abnormal psychical experiences" (47) for help. Sir Dominick's house is located in rural England, in an area that the narrator notes at length is marked by English history and signs of long-term Anglo-Saxon occupancy. At the centre of this country house in the centre of England is an anatomical collection. One wall of the room is lined with shelves filled with "glass jars containing pathological and anatomical specimens: . . . bloated organs, gaping cysts, distorted bones, odious parasites—a singular exhibition of the products of India" (49). The collection is, itself, described as fragmented: the "greater part," Sir Dominick tells us, was destroyed in a house fire in Bombay. The room is haunted by the ghost

of a man whose hand Sir Dominick amputated in India many years before. The hand, we are told, became part of the collection in lieu of a medical fee. In spite of the "Hill man's" protest that "according to his religion it was an all-important matter that the body should be reunited after death . . . the belief is, of course an old one, and the mummies of the Egyptians arose from an analogous superstition" (53). The initial relation between the British subject and the Other's body as object here is predicated on commercial exchange and on an intellectualized dismissal of the patient's own way of knowing. As in the many stories of mummies whose bodies and body parts are bartered, damaged and lost, Sir Dominick's equally cavalier preservation of the body parts of more contemporary imperial subjects through modern scientific method results in the return of the repressed and on the "object" of scientific study's insistence on being recognized in his own terms.

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In order to solve the mystery of the haunting, the nephew agrees to spend the night in the laboratory, asserting, "I have no pretence to greater physical courage than my neighbours, but familiarity with a subject robs it of those vague and undefined terrors which are the most appalling to the imaginative mind" (50). Asserting the preeminence of rational, western knowledge over more primitive fears, his first glimpse of the ghost comes dangerously close to disrupting his rational certainty:

> with a thrill which all my scientific absorption could not entirely prevent, [I saw] that something was moving slowly along the line of the wall. . . . I dimly discerned a human figure . . . his eyes cast upwards towards the line of bottles which contained those gruesome remnants of humanity. He seemed to examine each jar with attention, then pass on to the next. When he came to the end of the line he stopped, faced me, threw up his hands in a gesture of despair, and vanished from my sight. I have said that he threw up his hands, I should have said his arms, for. . . . He had only one hand! As the sleeves drooped from the upflung arms I saw the left plainly but the right ended in a knobby and unsightly stump. (52)

The handless ghost insists on being re-membered . . . in both senses. His story must be told, his beliefs recognized and his rituals respected. His ghostly presence insists that he becomes more than the object of scientific inquiry or exchange.

The solution to the mystery of the ghost's presence is reached though, through a blend of rational, scientific means and the "occult" knowledges that order the ghost's actions. Doyle's protagonist "consults an authority . . . on earth bound spirits" and the ghost's position as undifferentiated object of imperial intervention continues, even in the story's final exchange:

as the title of Doyle's story suggests, any "brown hand" will do to appease the ghost. While the ghost violently rejects the first replacement hand that he is offered, it is not because he recognizes that it is not his own, but because it is a *left* hand; and it was his right hand that was amputated and kept in the collection. The next night, he accepts the specimen jar containing a right hand—another person's right hand—and leaves forever.

This cavalier attitude that constructs the body of the Other as undifferentiated, commodified object continues in a number of stories, most significantly, in stories that focus on the reanimated mummy.[2] The mummy's presence in Imperial Gothic stories draws attention to a disturbing gap in the turn-of-the-century knowledge systems that sustained the imperial project. While its body may be owned, placed on display or dissected, it is ultimately the most uncanny of objects: familiar and alien, natural and supremely unnatural.

In H. Rider Haggard's "Smith and the Pharaohs" (1912), a similar preoccupation with a dismembered hand reveals the inadequacy of western knowledge and the unsettling limits of imperial power. Smith, an amateur archeologist, has fallen in love with the mask of a beautiful Ancient Egyptian queen. Nothing is known about the "Queen of the Mask" until Smith, after spending years searching for her tomb, finds it and with it a "mummied hand, broken off at the wrist" (151), a broken statue with a barely legible cartouche that identifies her as "Queen Ma-Mei," and a basket of artefacts that he does not describe because, we are told, they can be seen

> in the gold room of the Museum, labelled "Bijouterie de la Reine Ma-Mei . . . Thebes." It may be mentioned that the set is incomplete. For instance, there is but one of the great gold ceremonial earrings . . . and the most beautiful of necklaces has been torn in two—half of it was missing. (151)

In this and other stories,[3] fragments—partial sets, broken objects, incomplete texts and dismembered bodies—draw the focus not to the objects that are labelled in the gold rooms of Museum, but to the parts that have eluded that classification and containment: the "phantom limbs" that haunt the ideal of comprehensive knowledge.

Beyond this emphasis on fragmentation and dismemberment, though, both "Smith and the Pharaohs" and "The Ring of Thoth" (1890), another

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[2] I have discussed the relationship between reanimated mummies and their disruptive potential to western epistemic systems at length in "Mummy Knows Best: Knowledge and the Unknowable in Turn of the Century Mummy Fiction," *Horror Studies* 1.1 (2010): 5–24.

[3] See, for example, H. Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure* (1886), Bram Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903, 1906), and Théophile Gautier's "The Mummy's Foot" (1910).

story by Conan Doyle, focus on unregulated movements within museums themselves. In these stories, unauthorized, unregulated movement in a museum further disturbs the illusion of the order and classification that consolidates the performance of power in the Imperial Archive. After turning over most of the artefacts he found in Ma-Mei's tomb to the Museum in Cairo, Smith finds himself locked in and he is confronted with the ghosts of a group of Egyptian Pharaohs whose speeches reinforce both the limits of western knowledge and of empires. Both Smith and the protagonist from Doyle's story, John Vansittart Smith—who gets locked into the Louvre— act out a Gothic inversion of the prescribed relation between visitors and the physical space of the museum: theirs is a very *dis*organized walking. They wander randomly through the collections after hours, looking behind curtains, losing their way, and peeping into rooms. In these stories, the protagonists, who are both respected Men of Science, are confronted with the inadequacy of their knowledge. In Doyle's story, Vansittart Smith is a preeminent Egyptologist whose research "promised to throw the light upon the first germs of human civilization and the origin of the greater part of our arts and sciences" (203). Yet after hours, in the unregulated time in the heart of the "knowledge producing institution," the museumified objects insist on their own meanings and relations outside of those imposed on them by western epistemic systems. Smith has encountered a porter at the Louvre whose face "was indeed the very face with which his studies made him familiar" (204). There follows a long, detailed description of that face, itemizing the skin "over the temple and cheekbone [that] was as glazed and as shiny as varnished parchment" and the "strange dark eyes" that were "vitreous, with a misty dry shininess, such as [Vansittart] Smith had never seen in a human head before" (205). The porter is at once described as a known, knowable object but also somehow beyond Smith's expertise. Significantly, unlike other objects, the porter's gaze immediately turns on Smith, who, looking into those "strange eyes . . . saw some strong emotion gather in their depths, which rose and deepened until it broke into a look of something akin to both horror and hatred." The encounter disturbs Vansittart Smith so much that "his thoughts refused to return into their natural groove. They would run upon the enigmatic attendant with the sphinx-like face and the parchment skin" (206). The attendant, it turns out, is a powerful priest from Ancient Egypt who discovered an elixir which made him immortal. Indeed, as Smith discovers after he is locked in the Louvre overnight, the mysterious priest knows things that even the most eminent Egyptologists do not and cannot know. His knowledge of the artefacts in the museum's glass cases is disconcertingly "other" than that of the "experts" who placed them there. As Smith watches, the priest rummages through the display cases, moving

all of the objects he comes in contact with out of their place in the order of the museum. He names the unnamed mummy in the display and finds a secret in an unlabelled piece of jewelry. He unwraps a mummy that "had never been unswathed before" (209) and ransacks a case containing a "magnificent collection of early Egyptian rings and stones" (210) in which he finds, unlabelled and unknown to the curators of the museum, the Ring of Thoth in which is hidden the antidote to the potion that made him immortal. More significantly, though, he turns his analytical gaze onto the English expert and derides his knowledge of Egyptology, saying:

> "Your knowledge of the subject is contemptible. The whole keystone of our old life in Egypt was not the inscriptions or monuments of which you make so much, but was our hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge of which you say little or nothing." (211)

The priest's words, uttered in the heart of this "tool of empire," are disruptive and terrifying. While the *fin de siècle* British museum—as an institution, as a centre of knowledge and power, and as a physical space—is founded on principles of rationality, order, and classification, the objects that it houses, as the figures in these stories suggest, are not always so easily contained by these terms nor subject to its power. Objects are able to evoke responses beyond those dictated by the labels and context of an exhibition: they can evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which they came: they resonate, they evoke wonder. These resonances move the viewer's relation to an artefact beyond the explanatory texts that surround it and point to limits of museumified containment, illuminating instead the gaps and tensions between what is visible and what is invisible, what is displayed and what is kept hidden, what is known and what is not known. As MacKenzie notes, the reading of objects in museum exhibitions changes with the gaze of the visitor and so, he concludes in decidedly Gothic terms, "supposedly 'dead' objects speak back and speak often" (12).

Objects that move into English epistemic and physical space bring with them, as these and other Imperial Gothic stories show, a kind of uncanny, disturbing sense of the unruly context from which they came. Their histories, their uses, their fundamental difference belie the systems of categorization, control and knowledge into which the museum, and the other technologies of epistemic control, attempt to place them. The unruliness of the objects reflects a disturbing awareness of the *un*knowability of imperial spaces. Just as the body of the priest in "The Ring of Thoth" refuses to be read as a singular, recognizable text, so the spaces into which the

imperial project moves its "civilizing mission" refuse to adhere to the careful script of imperial definition and control. Bodies, whether the body of the "Other" or the body of the English "Self," are represented in these texts as decidedly unstable in the face of imperial narratives.

CONTAMINATED BODIES

The imperial project's emphasis on obtaining and categorizing knowledge was also inscribed as a fundamentally civilizing one. "England," John Ruskin says in 1873, "must guide human arts, and gather the divine knowledge, of distant nations, [who must be] transformed from savageness to manhood, and redeemed from despairing into peace'" (278). The belief in the transformative influence of European civilization on colonized peoples functions in many ways like Mesmer's notion of animal magnetism which is, he says, "a fluid, universally diffused medium . . . of mutual influence . . . communicated from one body to other bodies" (qtd. in Haddock 354). While I do not want to take this particular connection too far, Mesmer's very popular notion of the "communication" of a "fluid, universally diffused medium" can work as a metaphor for the representation of European influence in imperialist texts and allows us to think about the problematics of the imperial project and the ways that its ideological investment in its "influence" is represented as a troubled, troubling project in the Gothic texts of empire. The body that moves between centre and margins, the body that is infused with authority and a stable, "superior" identity, becomes—in these stories—an uncanny and destabilized object that mediates between the rigorously defined definitions of colonizing Self and colonized Other. The paradoxes at the heart of imperialist discourses of race, science, and the "good work" of spreading civilization are exposed and explored through the representation of the transforming, unstable bodies in the contact zones of empire.

In the text of Empire, and the texts that perpetuated the fantasy of imperial rule, race functioned as one of the primary markers for the European, and particularly the British, right to govern. As Cecil Rhodes contends in 1877, the English made up "the finest race in the world and . . . the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. [We are] the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses" (278). English characters in stories like Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1890) and "The Return of Imray" (1891) belie the ideological machinery of these narratives that conflated stable definitions and articulations of race with unquestionable power and control. The ultimately unstable, illegible bodies of the protagonists in these works create a textual space

that mediates *between* the certainties of oppositional definitions. That is, the permeability of the borders of the transformed, contaminated English body signals an unsettling instability in definitive categories of Self and Other, creating what Balachandra Rajan calls "unlawful matches and divorces of things" (148).

So in spite—or perhaps because of—the public arguments about British racial and cultural superiority made by Rhodes, Ruskin and the rest, the Gothic double of this discourse of European influence is, in Mesmer's terms, an unstable influence that has the potential to move *both ways* between permeable bodies. Imperial Gothic stories explore the fact that the very things that make the spreading of "civilization" possible create the potential for its reversal. This is the horror that is recognized in the Gothic: the ways in which the idea of the influence that one culture can have on another through prolonged and intimate contact could result not in the elevation of the "savage" to "manhood," but in the degeneration of "man" to "savage" or worse. In these texts it is not only the English *body* that is unstable but, more horrifically, it is the racial and cultural positions that that body *signifies* that become unmoored from their ideological apparatus.

In Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast," it seems possible that knowledge—and therefore power—can be obtained through long acquaintance, through study and through controlling and cataloguing narratives. Strickland, who is a recurring protagonist in many of Kipling's Gothic stories, "knows as much about natives of India as is good for any man" ("Mark" 293). As the English authority, he collects native stories, "goes among" the people, and learns the "nature of the Oriental." His position as "expert" on "native life" allows him to both solve the mysteries afflicting the less well-versed characters in the stories and ultimately reveal the limitations of even *his* knowledge. Indeed, knowing "as much as is good for any man" leaves Strickland in the precarious space between native and English epistemologies. Strickland's authority as a police officer is based on his comprehensive knowledge of the "native" mind, language and customs. In contrast, Strickland's friend, Fleete, is supremely ignorant of all things native: "[His] knowledge of natives was, of course, limited and he complained of the difficulties of the language" (293). "The Mark of the Beast" is the story of Fleete's drunken desecration of a statue of Hanuman in a local temple. He is cursed by a faceless silver leper and the curse is manifest in a terrifying physical transformation from human to animal.

Fleete's transformation is articulated along three intersecting trajectories: first, he shifts from the familiar to the uncanny in his movements and comments. Second, he loses his connection with the anglicized spaces in his Indian context and moves toward a problematic affinity for the

indigenous: the well-bred Anglo-Indian horses, for example, are terrified of him, but the indigenous wildlife in the hills embraces him. Finally, he loses his power of speech, something that ultimately contaminates the rest of the narrative, which almost immediately becomes riddled with silences and omissions. Fleete's degeneration is "beyond any human and rational experience" (301) and his descent into monstrosity contaminates his friends, drawing them into the realm of the barbaric and the unspeakable and ultimately even moving them beyond the racial and cultural definitions of Englishness. The scene in which the "Silver Man" is captured by a group of Fleete's friends and horrifically tortured in order to "cure" Fleete is ultimately unrepresentable in the western text: the events are "beyond description," and "cannot be put down here" (304). The excess of horror implodes the text here, collapsing it into itself until nothing can be said, nothing can be asserted with authority or classified with certainty. As Peter Morey argues, these elisions are necessary for the survival of European epistemologies because "to tell the story . . . is to reintegrate irrational events into the rational, linear, narrative valued by the West [used to] frame, represent and govern the East" (210). The narrator describes the group as having "disgraced ourselves as Englishmen forever" (306). In both of these cases the contaminated, transformed Englishman poses a threat beyond the limits of his body: this is not so much *individual* identity that is threatened but the coherent, *collective* identity that sustains the Imperial project.

In another of Kipling's stories, "The Return of Imray" (1891), the protagonist mysteriously disappears and his bungalow is rented out to Strickland of the Police. The bungalow plays a central role in this story: the narrator explains that

> unless you know how Indian bungalows were built you would never have suspected that above the cloth lay the dark three-cornered cavern of the roof, where the beams and the underside of the thatch harboured all manner of rats, bats, ants, and foul things. (17)

The space between the ceiling cloth and the roof is a mysterious, inaccessible space within a space: a physical manifestation of the uncanny within the familiar, "neat," "desirable" bungalow. Left alone in the house while Strickland attends to his duties, the narrator feels "that someone wanted me very urgently . . . but his voice was no more than a husky whisper" (18) and eventually elects to spend his days on the veranda because the bungalow "was much too fully occupied by a tenant with whom I did not wish to interfere" (19). As the story progresses, this uneasiness

becomes a more pronounced fear of the unexplored spaces within the ostensibly controlled, defined domestic spaces of empire.

Eventually, it is revealed that Imray has been murdered by his domestic servant and that his body has been stashed in the rafters above the ceiling cloth "which looked as neat as a whitewashed ceiling" (17). The motive for the murder, Strickland discovers, is Imray's ignorance of "the nature of the Oriental" (24). He laid his hands on the head of the servant's young son who died of fever shortly afterwards. Bahadur Khan, the servant, justifies his actions by saying, "My child was bewitched and I slew the wizard" (24). The gap between epistemologies, like the gap between room and roof, is the space in which the central action of the story takes place. The body of the Englishman is not only endangered in this space, it is transformed completely: Imray is not only murdered, he has become a ghost—insubstantial and speechless, "the thing under the tablecloth" (24). The transformation from Englishman to "thing" reverberates in the gap between the two versions of the event: on the one hand, the scientific, microbial diagnosis of the cause of the child's death; on the other, Bahadur Khan's supernatural explanation. Imray's incorporeal presence in the bungalow testifies to the existence of a kind of knowledge beyond the explanations of European science, while the discovery of his corpse simultaneously restores, imperfectly, the power of the rational. In both of Kipling's stories the paradox of the relation between power and knowledge lies in the ways in which knowledge, while necessary to rule, invades and fundamentally changes the British "self," "the acquisition of knowledge can effect a kind of assimilation; it puts separation, and therefore power, at risk" (Kerr 235).

Fears of degeneration are connected with fears of contamination in these stories. The transformation of the English body challenges narratives of racial purity and the "natural" right of English rule. In Sax Rohmer's novel, *The Green Eyes of Bâst* (1920),[4] this degenerative contamination is manifest in the transforming body of the daughter of an English lord. The dismissal or ignorance of Native systems of knowledge precipitates the English characters' transformation into the unclassifiable manifestation of Gothic instabilities. The monstrous result of their actions foregrounds the fear of contamination that shapes both of these stories; a contamination that, significantly, infects all of the characters around the contaminated figure. In the "Mark of the Beast," the "cure" for the transformation of

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[4] While Rohmer's novel was published after the end of World War One (and so after the end of the long nineteenth century), it can be argued that Rohmer continues the fantasy of imperial control, and the paranoia of invasion scare narratives (in novels like his *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* [1913]), unchanged from its turn of the century predecessors, into the early part of the twentieth century.

the English body results in an unrepresentable degeneration not only for Fleete, but for his companions as well. In *The Green Eyes of Bâst*, the child of empire is a nightmarish blend of beliefs, histories and zoological classifications for whom there is no "cure" except death.

Like Fleete, Nahemah, the monstrous half-cat, half-woman in *The Green Eyes of Bâst*, threatens the integrity of English society and its core of racial purity. Rohmer explores the implications of blending the knowledges of East and West, of ancient Empire and contemporary Empire by imagining what their offspring would look like. Nahemah mediates between the discourses she inhabits, drawing each of them to their Gothic conclusion. The result is a destructive force that is both physically distant from, yet irrefutably connected to, the centre of Imperial control. She is not simply an animal/human hybrid but a complex blend of cultures and cultural texts. Greefe, the doctor whose life's work has been focused on classifying all types of hybridity, and who studies Nahemah closely, notes that she matured "and had (by day) the eyes of an Oriental" and describes her having "the features of a perfect *Ancient Egyptian regularity. . . .* At the age of twelve she was tall, [and] slender, beautifully formed and with a natural elegance and taste which came from the Coverly stock" (278), and, of course, during the festivals of Bâst, she is more predatory cat than human. Nahemah terrifyingly embodies self and other, past empire and present, animal and aristocrat; an illegible blend of categories, textual references, supernatural beliefs, and scientific certainties. She is Rajan's "unlawful match and divorce of things" (148).

These figures add a potent ideological layer to Kelly Hurley's argument about the "abhuman," those "human bodies," she says, "that have lost their claim to a discrete and integral identity . . . bodies that occupy a threshold between two terms of an opposition" (190). As exceeding classification, these figures occupy the threshold, signified by Hurley and others with a slash (human/animal) and that intersecting position becomes the location for an exploration of the troubling cracks that appear in the officially seamless face of the ideology of high Imperialism. In this sense, the blending signals not a hyphenation but a horrific permeability.

Throughout *The Green Eyes of Bâst*, for example, the focus is on individual spaces and bodies that are unclassified and unclassifiable. The novel begins with a description of Sir Marcus Coverly's corpse whose "horribly contorted features presented a kind of mottled green appearance utterly indescribable" (20), and moves through the repeated descriptions of Dr. Greefe as an uncanny blend of figures from Ancient Egyptian mythology, racial and cultural categories. These depictions of "uncanny" bodies culminate in the literally shifting, unspeakable body of Nahemah:

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> Vaguely defined as if in smoke I could perceive the body of the creature to which [the two huge green eyes] belonged. It was slender and sinuous and sometimes I thought it to be that of a human being and sometimes that of an animal. For at one moment it possessed the lines of a woman's form and in the next, with those terrible eyes regarding me from low down upon the ground, it assumed the shape of a crouching beast of prey. (119)

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Nahemah's body is, to use Hurley's terms, "fluctuating, admixed and abominable" (195); like Fleete, it is unintelligible in the terms of any single definitive categorization. As a text, it is illegible.

For Fleete and Nahemah the instability of the European body is significantly one that is articulated in terms of going from human to animal. This differentiates the Gothic and monstrous representations from other Imperialist texts in which the kind of atavism that Patrick Brantlinger describes in his discussion of Imperial Gothic is located in a fear of "going Native" (230). This shift away from humanity is, again, part of the anxieties at the core of imperial discourse played out to their Gothic extreme. If one believed Rhodes's insistence that the English are the "most human" then the move to—and beyond—the animal in these texts places the characters outside of the farthest limits of recognizable humanity and into horrific moments of uncanny indigenization. Fleete's and Nahemah's transformation alienates them not only from English culture but from all human cultures—from humanity itself on the most fundamental of levels.

Possessing the body of the east or being possessed by it, the terror in these stories comes from the knowledge that the body is not inviolable. It is, as Abercrombie Smith's map of human anatomy in Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249" suggests, able, like imperial spaces themselves, to be annexed, invaded, and transformed. More terrifying still, the objects of British imperial knowledge are possessed of their own knowledges which demonstrate, as Brantlinger points out, "that Western rationality may be subverted by the very superstitions it rejects" (184). The narrator of Kipling's stories concludes that his tales, like the beliefs of the characters in them, will not be believed

> in the first place because [they are] unpleasant and, in the second, because it is well known to every right-minded man that the gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned. ("Mark" 307)

Articulating Imperialist anxieties about the limits of knowledge through unstable, fluctuating bodies in these texts reveals a site of mediation that allows for an exploration of the complexities of both imperialist master narratives and the figures who act as uncanny mediators between colonizer and colonized. For the writers of Imperial Gothic, the red map of empire has written across it in bold, but almost invisible letters, "here be monsters."

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The Tell-Tale Hand: Gothic Narratives and the Brain

Abstract

The opening story in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) by Sherwood Anderson is called simply "Hands." It is about a teacher's remarkable hands that sometimes seem to move independently of his will. This essay explores some of the relevant contexts and potential links, beginning with other representations of teachers' hands, such as Caravaggio's St. Matthew and the Angel, early efforts to establish a sign-language for the deaf, and including the Montessori method of teaching children to read and write by tracing the shape of letters with their hands on rough emery paper. The essay then explores filmic hands that betray or work independently of conscious intentions, from *Dr Strangelove, Mad Love,* to *The Beast With Five Fingers*. Discussion of the medical literature about the "double" of our hands in the brain, including "phantom hands," leads on to a series of images that register Rodin's lifelong fascination with sculpting separate hands.

The opening story in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) by Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941) is called simply "Hands." It tells with great sympathy the story of Wing Biddlebaum, a man "meant by nature to be a teacher of youth" and who these days would be named and shamed as a paedophile. His story, we are told early on is "a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name":

> In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. (Anderson 29)

Yet we also learn that

> the hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads. (28–29)

Nonetheless, Wing Biddlebaum

> talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression. (28)

Eventually Wing gets close to a young reporter on the *Winesburg Eagle.* In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum

> lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. (29)

Their conversations usually involve some further activity with the hands:

> When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him

when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease. (29)

The turning point of the story comes one day when Wing is urging George to live a different kind of life, and getting him to dream of a world in which it is possible that young men gather about the feet of an old man beneath a tree and listen to his talk. He becomes so inspired that for once he forgets his hands, which "stole forth and lay upon George Willard's shoulders":

> Pausing in his speech, Wing Biddlebaum looked long and earnestly at George Willard. His eyes glowed. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face. . . . With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. "I must be getting along home. I can talk no more with you," he said nervously. (30)

The narrator goes on to fill in the necessary background to explain this moment. He tells us how, in a small town in Pennsylvania where Wing used to teach, he would talk to his pupils in the evenings on the schoolhouse steps:

> Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. In a way the voice and the hands, the stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were a part of the schoolmaster's effort to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. . . . Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream. (31–32)

And then the tragedy. One boy makes accusations, others follow suit, and soon the teacher is assaulted by some men of the town and driven out. He leaves Pennsylvania and goes to live with an aunt in Winesburg, Ohio:

> Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had

talked of the hands. "Keep your hands to yourself," the saloon keeper had roared, dancing, with fury in the schoolhouse yard. (33)

The meeting with George Willard takes place some twenty years later. George is frightened by the look of terror in Wing's eyes, and decides not to ask him about his hands. As the story ends, Anderson beautifully evokes a picture of the lonely man, pacing his porch and waiting for George to come for a visit. Eventually, when he does not come, Wing sits down to eat.

A recent line-by-line analysis of the story by Stuart Evers (2014) offers little help to understanding its wider context. The sadness of the story obviously derives from the way Wing himself and his friend George are bewildered by the action of the hands: the word *paedophile* is not used, and indeed the label would have destroyed the delicate balance of the tale. The first occurrence of the word *paedophilia* in the OED is a 1906 usage by the sexologist Havelock-Ellis, but it seems only to have emerged from specialist or medical usage when reviews and discussions followed the 1955 publication of *Lolita*.

Language changes: another story in the Winesburg volume also concerns George Willard, and is called "Queer," but the word has its normal earlier meaning of "odd" and does not signal homosexuality. Anderson might just possibly have been aware of the word *paedophile*, given the dating in the OED, but if we now use the word to discuss the story, we import a host of angry, intense meanings from our own time and do not allow the world of 1919 Winesburg to come back to its own life. It is that bewilderment and those strangely uncontrollable hands that are the point of the story, not any modern label that may or may not be pertinent.

There are, however, other contexts with a longer history that may help us better understand this story. Consider first this painting by Caravaggio.[1] St. Matthew is here being taught to write his gospel by a young angel. The situation is the reverse of Anderson's story, and that is clearly part of the fun Caravaggio is having with his topic: the two, teacher and pupil, are physically intertwined. It is a shame this painting, rejected as scandalously inappropriate by the church authorities who had commissioned it, was destroyed by fire in Berlin in the Second World War (though black and white photos, like this one, survive). The central motif, on which the whole design is focused, is the young angel's hand helping the aged disciple's to write, as if for the first time, and even perhaps to read. (The focus is reinforced by the contrast with Matthew's bare feet: as Gordon Campbell notes in his *Dictionary of the Renaissance*, Caravaggio's St. Matthew is the earliest disciple to be shown with dirty feet.) Renaissance guides to writing often follow Quintilian in

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[1]   http://classconnection.s3.amazonaws.com/506/flashcards/1432506/png/picture 11335765388837.png

recommending exactly the procedure represented in the painting: "The pupil, by feeling the movement of the master's hand, comes to appreciate more readily the details, the subtle points, and the essential shape that this letter, which he is trying to learn, should have."[2] In this case, as in many others from the period, the master's hand needs to touch his pupil in order to guide him. Anderson's description of the idyllic paradise of teacher and students before the accusation of paedophilia borrows from the same well of ideas.

It must have been clear in the original painting how the relation of old man to young and attractive angel suggests but reverses the normal relation of pupil to master. From what we know of Caravaggio's pleasure in depicting young men (often his models) it is not difficult to imagine a kind of subtle witticism in the painting directed at those in the know, and this may have been a further reason for the displeasure of the authorities. So the painting may not quite be representing that innocent idyll of learning at all. The painting was replaced in the chapel of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome by one in which the angel has withdrawn to a superior aerial dimension: Matthew looks up to him and listens as he receives the inspiration for his Gospel. In the rejected version, the angel touches the evangelist's body, not only the hand, and engages in direct, physical intervention. The angel intertwines with the old man, apparently whispering into his ear and looking over his shoulder to see if he has finally got it.

This way of imagining master and pupil goes even further back. In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein opens with a long meditation on Augustine's description in the *Confessions* of how he came into language:

> When my elders named some object, and so moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all people. (5)

Starting from there Wittgenstein developed the notion of "ostensive teaching" as one of the primary vehicles for the language games by which we learn the relation of words and the world (7). We learn to read by sensing the intention of the teacher's hand and having that intention made into the sound of a word. Most of us have forgotten how often in our early lives we would tire our parents' patience by endlessly pointing to things and asking "whassat?" We have probably also forgotten that when we first learned to read, we traced the words, even the letters, on the page or slate with our fingers, usually the first or index finger (what the Montessori method teaches).

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[2] Giovan Francesco Cresci, *Il Perfetto Scrittore*, Rome: 1571, 122 (qtd. in Goldberg 91).

But that connection to the page as a corporal experience may not have been entirely forgotten by our bodies. That is the long tradition that Caravaggio represents, with that characteristically witty twist, in his painting.

Nonetheless it is not quite this idyllic world of learning to read and write that Anderson is representing in his story of teacher and pupils. One aspect of the story that is especially striking is the innocence that Wing Biddlebaum retains about himself even after the savage beating, indeed even after twenty years have passed living with his aunt in Winesburg. But the narrator clearly expects the reader to understand what it was that provoked the men of the Pennsylvania town to attack him. The charm of the story resides in the balance between helpless innocence and the cruel, even murderous, attitude of the townspeople. The hand tells a truth of which the head remains ignorant.

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Fig. 1. Children at the Montessori School, courtesy of photographer Frida Azari.

In 1644 the inventor of sign language, John Bulwer, wrote in some dedicatory verses at the front of his linked books *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* about what he called "chirograms" (from the Greek for hand and writing) or hand gestures: "The Tongue and Heart th'intention oft divide, / The *Hand* and Meaning ever are ally'de," which is to say that the tongue may deceive, it may distort, or be distorted by, what is in the heart, but hand gestures tell the truth (qtd. in Sherman 49). Bulwer's concern was not
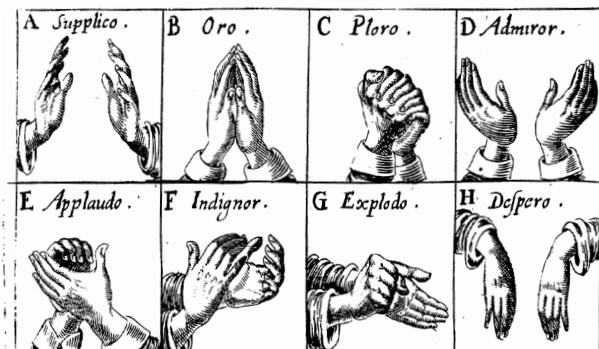

Fig 2. John Bulwer. *Chirologia*. 1644.

so much to denigrate oral communication as to open up another possibility of talking independently with the hands.

Nevertheless the hand that betrays its owner has become a well-known theme in our culture, and in this context Anderson's story takes on further implications. The theme has a comic variant in Peter Sellers's character's repeated efforts to restrain his mechanical arm from giving the Nazi salute in *Dr Strangelove.* The motif goes back at least to a creepy movie of the thirties directed by Karl Freund and entitled *Mad Love* (1935) with Colin Clive and Peter Lorre.[3] The movie has been remade three times, but it is itself a remake of the German *Orlacs Hände,* a 1924 silent film directed by Robert Wiene: a pianist damages his hands in a train crash but has a transplant operation in which a mad doctor gives him a new pair. The pianist can play again. Unfortunately, the hands were taken from the body of a recently hanged criminal, and the previously gentle and sensitive pianist finds the hands starting to take over his life and commit murder.

There is probably no direct link with the Sherwood Anderson story, though we cannot be sure. The novel that is the original of the film was by Maurice Renard, *Les Mains d'Orlac*; it was published in 1920 and translated into English only in 1929. The surgeon portrayed in the novel was based on a real French surgeon of some renown during the early 1900s. His name was Dr. Alexis Carrel (1873–1944) and his experiments with biological transplants and grafting procedures earned him the Nobel Prize in 1912. It is possible that Anderson may have known about him, and yet there is no obvious link with his story "Hands," beyond the sense that the idea of strange and uncontrollable hands was somehow in the air.

There is, however, a clear enough link between that chain of films and another group. This time the theme becomes clearly Gothic because the hands take on a separate, not simply independent, life. The wandering hand in this chain of stories and films is supposed to represent the unconscious desires of the man who loses it. The group begins with one of the better known stories of the English writer William Fryer Harvey (1885–1937), "The Beast with Five Fingers," published in 1928 in a collection with the same punning title. The film of 1946 starred (once again) Peter Lorre. The theatrical release poster, clearly signaling the horror genre, claims that "your flesh will creep at the hand that crawls."[4]

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[3] See the film poster at http://wrongsideoftheart.com/wp-content/gallery/posters-m/mad_love_poster_04.jpg

[4] See the poster at http://kinountersternen.at/wp-content/uploads/beastwithfive-fingersposter1.jpg

Those in the know will perhaps have recognized in the film's musical score Brahms's transcription for the left hand of a Bach violin piece: it is much played throughout the film, and it is often said that the hand of well-known pianist Ervin Nyíregyházi is shown playing it.[5] So here too the plot concerns a pianist and his hands. Francis Ingram, who is immensely rich, lives in a manor house near a small, isolated Italian village. He has suffered a stroke so that his right side is immobile and he uses a wheelchair to get around. He falls in love with his nurse, Julie Holden, and makes a new will leaving her all his money, not knowing she is secretly in love with his friend, Bruce Conrad. A musicologist who is thus disinherited, Hilary Cummins (the Peter Lorre character), tries to expose the affair with Conrad but Ingram, outraged at the slander on his beloved's good name, tries to choke Cummins to death. Only Julie's arrival (after meeting Conrad in the garden) saves him.

Ingram soon falls down the stairs, breaking his neck. (The audience does not see if Ingram was pushed or he fell.) Further machinations about the new will soon follow, and more murders. One night, everyone hears Ingram playing the piano in the main hall, but when they go to check no one is there. The Commissario of police discovers that someone has broken into the Ingram mausoleum and cut off Ingram's left hand. But it seems impossible for anyone to have gotten in or out.

The audience of the film now begins to see a disembodied hand moving around the manor house. The hand attacks Cummins, but he is able to assuage the hand's quest for vengeance by giving the hand Ingram's signet ring. He locks the hand in a closet, but when Conrad and the nurse go to see what has happened, the hand has disappeared. Eventually the previous will is discovered. Again, Ingram's distinctive piano playing is heard. Cummins discovers the hand again, nails it to a board, and puts it in the safe. But it disappears. When Holden discovers the hand, Cummins (becoming more and more mentally unhinged) tries to burn it in the fire. But the hand crawls out and chokes him to death. Commissario Castanio discovers a hidden record player and concludes that Cummins was playing it to scare people. He theorizes, with the realistic get-out clause common in Hollywood Gothic, that Cummins cut off the hand, and committed the murders.

The 1981 film by Oliver Stone entitled simply *The Hand* bears some similarities and has even been called, mistakenly I think, a remake. This film also features a murderous disembodied hand, though a comic book artist's,

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[5] According to Kevin Bazzano, who has written a recent biography of the pianist, there is no evidence that the hand in the film belonged to him, and he has posted that correction on the website: http://www.fugue.us/Nyiregyhazi_discography-2_english.html. The trailer is now on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Iy4EQuiY2s

not a pianist's. Here too a road accident causes the hand to be severed, and it soon takes on its own life, at one point even fighting its erstwhile owner. Eventually the artist, driven mad and in an asylum, is completely in thrall to the hand. The hand murders his psychiatrist, and the film ends with the artist laughing, throwing off his restraints and escaping. This film is also based on a novel, *The Lizard's Tail* by Marc Brandell, and stars Michael Caine and Andrea Marcovicci. In each case the hand is both frightening in itself and also represents the repressed urges of its original owner. The theme of the revealing hand has here become thoroughly Gothic and has shaken off the subtlety or delicate indirectness of Anderson's short story form.[6]

How are we to account for the power of these widely differing images of tell-tale hands? Recent advances in neuroscience may help. People who have a hand amputated often continue to feel it, and are disconcerted by the uncanny separation between what they know to be the case and what their bodies somehow tell them. In fact we possess in our brain a "double" of our hands such that people who have a hand amputated still feel its presence. The hand may have gone, but not the part of the brain that controls it. Long after he lost his right arm in battle, Admiral Nelson had the sensation that his non-existent fingers were digging into his non-existent palm. This led him to believe in the soul and the afterlife. If an arm can survive an amputation, he reasoned, then an entire person can survive annihilation of the physical body.[7]

This reference to Nelson has become common in the scientific literature: the neurologist Oliver Sacks repeats it, for example, in his book *Hallucinations*. Technically, the phantom arm is a hallucination because it involves the perception of something that has no material existence in the outside world. But in an important way, phantom limbs seem not to be a disorder but rather a natural neurological response to a severance and incompleteness that the body cannot accept as final or even real. Sacks points out that "the feeling of a limb as a sensory and motor part of oneself seems to be innate, built-in, hardwired"—what Ahab, in *Moby Dick*, referring to his phantom leg, calls "tingling life" (Sacks 277–80).[8] This is

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[6] Another "classic" film in this horror group is *The Crawling Hand* (1963), in which an astronaut's severed hand falls to earth and turns out to be possessed by a murderous alien. It may be watched as a Community Video here: https://archive.org/details/TheCrawlingHand. A list of many such films and TV shows including an early David Tenant *Doctor Who* is entitled "The Most Exciting Severed Hands of All Time" and may be found at an io9 blog: http://io9.com/5727965/severed-hands-photos.

[7] Descartes was also influenced by the phantom limb phenomenon in his identification of the pineal gland as the seat of the soul: *Philosophical Letters,* p. 69, discussed in Sawday (156).

[8] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, ch. 108: at https://www.gutenberg.org/

given credence by "the case of a girl born without forearms who nevertheless was able to 'move' her phantom hands. As a schoolgirl she would do simple arithmetic by counting with her nonexistent fingers" (277–80).

Over time, a phantom limb may shrink into a painfully paralyzed position. The phantom arm may disappear, while the hand remains, sprouting deformedly from the shoulder, gnarled and digging into its phantom palm with its phantom nails. In these cases the brain has abandoned the limb, because of the absence of visual confirmation of its existence. V. S. Ramachandran, beginning in 1993, gradually invented a simple remedy for this problem—an oblong wooden box with its left and right sides divided by a mirror. The patient puts his good arm into the box, and through the optical illusion of the mirror, he sees the missing arm looking normal and attached to the hand. Upon taking in this sight, the brain plugs the hand back in and the phantom sensation becomes whole and normal again, and so relieves the painful spasms.[9]

The neurological literature can begin to seem as creepy as the Gothic stories themselves. Nevertheless recent advances in the field offer important ways to understand what is happening to our brains when we react to these images. Phantom hands are felt most strongly of all the limbs because such a large area of the brain is devoted to hand movement. In Lausanne, Switzerland, there is a place called the "Musée de la Main." It is run by a Foundation honouring the work and memory of the surgeon Dr. Claude Verdan (1909–2006). A splendid illustrated book *La Main: Cet Univers*, commemorates his work.
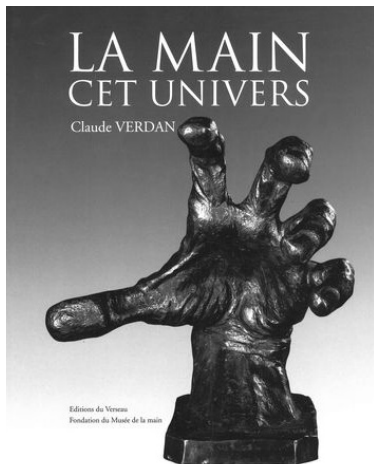
Fig. 3. Cover of the publication *La Main: Cet Univers* by Claude Verdan (Edition du Verseau et Fondation Claude Verdan, 1994). Sculpture: *Main de Rodin*, Wladimir Kouristsine, 1910. Collection Musée de la main UNIL-CHUV. Photo © CEM-CAV-CHUV. Courtesy of the Musée de la Main.

files/2701/2701-h/2701-h.htm, accessed 9 May, 2015. Sacks points out (273–74) that Melville was writing some twenty years before the first identification of the phenomenon in the medical literature by Silas Weir Mitchell (1872).

[9] Qtd. in Sacks 283–84.

The hand is, says Verdan, a cerebral organ. "Our cerebral cortex is composed of well-defined areas that correspond to the peripheral elements of our body" (Verdan 17). By far the largest of these areas is occupied with the operation of the hand. Here is the way he sketches this part of the brain in his book, showing the separate areas for each finger and part of the hand.
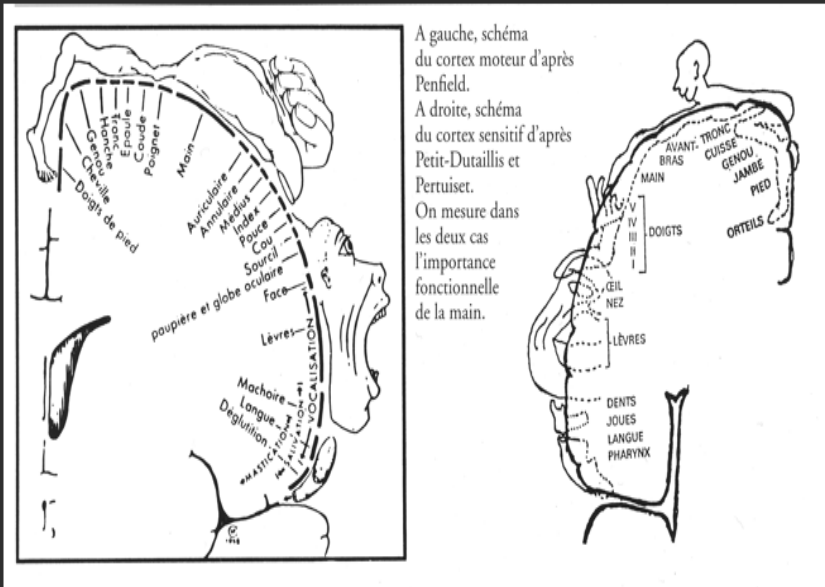
Fig. 4. Claude Verdan. "Sketches of the Brain." From the publication *La Main: Cet Univers* by Claude Verdan (Edition du Verseau et Fondation Claude Verdan, 1994).

In either perspective the hand takes up the largest area of the brain. In addition there is a special pathway in the nervous system, a direct corticospinal tract, that allows individual fingers to be controlled.

Verdan was not only a brilliant surgeon but an amateur sculptor who studied the work of other artists and made a collection of their works. He recognized the greatness of an artist by the way he represents hands. One

example is Picasso's *Guernica*, in which Verdan noted "les mains horribles du point de vue anatomique, avec des doigts boudinés, étendus et écartés, traduisant l'intense révolte d'une population terrorisée par le bonbardement" ("the horribly twisted hands, with their bulging fingers stretching out and spread apart, representing the intense revolt of a population terrorized by the bombardment," 21). Picasso's painting of 1937 has indeed long been understood as a place where the art of horror and the facts of history overlap or reflect each other.

Above all Verdan admired Rodin, and collected several of his hands, or images of them. The cover of his book shows Rodin's own hand as sculpted by a disciple, Vladimir Kouritsin. Verdan admired the way that Rodin's talent allowed him to let every part of the body speak for the whole. His work was well known in the USA at least since Stieglitz promoted him in New York, and by the time Sherwood Anderson wrote his story, Rodin had been sculpting separate images of hands for several years. Here is one of them:

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Fig. 5. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Clenched Hand* or *The Mighty Hand*, small version, c. 1885; sand cast by Alexis Rudier between 1935 and 1950. H. 5.5; W. 4.04; D. 1.93 inches. Courtesy of the Cantor Arts Center @ Stanford University.

As you contemplate this image of Rodin's *Clenched Hand* you may, like me, be tempted to copy it with your own hand, whether right or left, or both.[10] Why? You may say this is because it is such a beautifully made sculpture that it evokes a visceral reaction of the kind that great works of art often do. This is how Rilke put it (he worked for several years as Rodin's secretary and wrote two remarkable essays on him in 1902 and 1907):

> Rodin's work includes hands, small, autonomous hands that, without being a part of any body, are alive. Hands that reach out, angry and menacing, hands whose five spikey fingers seem to howl like the five muzzles of the hound of Hell. Hands that walk, hands that sleep, and hands that wake up, criminal hands, hands with loaded histories, and others that are tired, that want nothing more, that are curled up in a corner like sick animals that know no one can save them. (Rilke 44)

When you start to reflect on your own reaction, you may wonder which kind of hand this one is, whether it is clenched in pain, in fear or in menace, or all three. Rodin's patron Victoria Sackville-West asked the sculptor in a letter dated 17 Jan. 1914 if it is clenched in horror, anger, or suffering.[11] Such reactions are part of the general currency of the way we discuss and experience works of art.

Since Verdan's groundbreaking work, anatomists have continued to marvel at Rodin. An exhibition at Stanford University in the summer of 2014 entitled "Inside Rodin's Hands: Art, Technology, and Surgery" allowed museum visitors to experience Rodin's hands, many of which are held in the university's collection. Students of Dr. James Chang in the medical school, who helped organize the exhibition, now study them in their anatomy classes. Some of the hands are presented as if they were suffering

[10] This variant is in the Stanford University Cantor Arts Center collection. There are perhaps some 30 variants, authenticated by the Rodin Committee. A similar piece was in the possession of Samuel Josefowitz and Ellen Melas Kyriazi, of Lausanne, before being sold by its Canadian owner at Sotheby's on 5 Nov. 2008. It will be included in the *Catalogue critique de l'œuvre Sculpté d'Auguste Rodin* (*Critical Catalogue of the Sculptural Work of Auguste Rodin*), currently in production, under the number 2012-3898B. This work was exhibited by itself on a pedestal: it toured Europe beginning in 1896. A further selection of Rodin hands can be viewed at this website: http://www.slideshare.net/sevnorth/rodin-hands, accessed 4 Aug. 2015.

[11] Cited by Natasha Ruiz-Gómez in a review of Hélène Marraud, *Rodin. La main révèle l'homme* (Paris: Collection Tout L'oeuvre, éditions du musée Rodin, 2005), in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 5.2 (2006). http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn06/50-review/150-rodin-la-main-revele-lhomme. Unfortunately Rodin does not seem to have replied directly to that question.

from established medical conditions and were compared with photographs of patients' hands with the same conditions: the exhibition illustrated how surgeons can nowadays correct such problems. The clenched hand, or a variant of it, is said to have Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, an inherited neurological malady. So one reason for our reaction to Rodin's hands may simply be that they are marvellously exact representations to the point that trainee surgeons can learn from them.

The Stanford exhibition was fascinating, but neglected perhaps the most important part of what Verdan had shown, the role of the brain. The fast-growing field of motor cognition, especially the discovery of mirror neurons, may get us closer to understanding the impact of these images. Mirror neurons are nerve cells in our brains that vibrate however minutely when stimulated by what others do. What we call by the rather vague term "empathy" can now be located in specific areas of the brain. Damage to these areas, for example "the right somatosensory cortices, namely in the insula, S11 and S1 regions of the right cerebral hemisphere" means that "it is not possible for the brain to simulate other body states" (Damasio 115–18, 312). But normally, seeing someone else in pain or joy can produce the same brain and body reaction as if we ourselves were experiencing the emotion. We learn to smile when mother smiles: we even smile inwardly— the phrase has real meaning. We are impelled to move our own bodies, however slightly, by the movements of others, and—this is what is most remarkable—not only by seeing movements in others but even by look- ing at pictures or reading about them. Mirror neurons make our brains, our embodied minds, act as if we ourselves were experiencing whatever that other person is experiencing—or appears to be.[12] The impulse to copy the teacher, or to do with our own hands what Rodin's hand is doing, has come to be called *simulation.*[13] We comprehend the intentions behind an- other's action with the same primary neural structures that are needed to execute the action ourselves.

Rodin experimented in his later career with separate body parts, es- pecially hands, that he would try joining to different bodies to see the effect. This was the period when Dr. Alexis Carrel was practicing, the sur- geon whose experiments with transplants and grafting procedures earned him the Nobel Prize in 1912. As we have seen, Maurice Renard's novel, *Les Mains d'Orlac* was based on his work, and was eventually made into a classic horror film in which separable hands are the key ingredient in the plot. No doubt Rodin's impulse to sculpt those hands and to put the body

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[12] Gibbs offers a synthesis of these discoveries.
[13] A good summary of recent research is Guillemette Bolens (11–16). See also Cartmill et al.

back together in different ways was influenced by this pervasive climate of medical Gothic. Here is a pianist's hand (see link in note 14), one of several such images among Rodin's *oeuvre*.[14]

However tempting it may be to see some overlap between those images and the chain of expressionist films we explored earlier, there is apparently no direct connection. Rilke may have made Rodin aware of some of the German and Austrian artists that later came to be called expressionist, but there is no clear line to be drawn between the artists and the so-called Expressionist movies launched by Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* in 1919, even if the same director did soon make *Orlacs Hände.* If there is any link, we should probably trace it back to the work of that innovative surgeon and his transplants of body parts.[15]

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Perhaps the best known of Rodin's late-period hands is *La Cathédrale*, c. 1908, of which there are also several versions and many different castings. Here is one at the Rodin Museum in Paris.

Fig. 6. La Cathédrale 1908. S. 478. Auguste Rodin Pierre. Bronze. 64 x 29.5 x 31.8 cm. Photographer Christian Baraja. Courtesy of the Musée Rodin, Paris.

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[14] http://boutique.musee-rodin.fr/96–1794-jqzoom/hand-of-a-pianist-rodin.jpg

[15] A painting in the Louvre, Nicolas de Largillière (1656–1746), *Etudes de mains*, suggests a longer history. Several sketches by Albrecht Dürer survive beyond his famous *Praying Hands* in the Albertina Museum, Vienna. A direct influence on Rodin is probable through Swiss philosopher Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801): in his *Essays on Physiognomy,* III, p. 426, is a sketch of several hands accompanied by wild and elaborate interpretations; see Natasha Ruiz-Gómez, "Essence and Evanescence" 103–06. For a wider perspective see Forsyth 294–321.

It is a combination of two different right hands, facing each other and almost intertwined. In an upward movement, the two hands hold an empty space and make up a special shape together. Rodin was convinced the source of the ogival arch (the key to the Gothic in another sense) could be found in such clasped or joined hands. This piece was first entitled *L'arche d'alliance* (*The Ark of the Covenant*), before being named *La Cathédrale* after the publication of Rodin's book of sketches *Les Cathédrales de France*, in 1914. Like the sculpture of the *Clenched Hand*, *La Cathédrale* would, I think, be hard for even the least sensuous person to resist feeling in his or her own hands. Perhaps you will also have the disorienting experience of trying to copy it with your own hands and then realizing these are two right hands.

A good deal of the recent research into mirror neurons concerns perception of hands. In a conference (March 24, 2012) entitled "Being Human," sponsored by the University of California and reported in *Greater Good*, the UC Berkeley journal that publicizes science online,[16] V. S. Ramachandran's presentation, returning once again to the familiar topic, explained

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> that people with a phantom limb have a strong propensity to experience others' pain as their own. . . . When most of us see someone get hurt, mirror neurons in our brains fire in such a way to suggest that we ourselves are experiencing their pain. But our skin knows better: it doesn't send any signal of being hurt (because it's not), and it serves to "veto" the signal sent by the mirror neurons. . . . But when people are missing a limb, there's no skin to veto the brain's signal and indicate that the pain's not real. So when people with a phantom limb observe someone else getting hurt (like by getting pricked in the finger), they feel and react as if they themselves have been hurt—they say "ouch" and pull back their hand.

That seems a helpful way to describe what works of art do to us.[17] Unless you are missing the relevant limb, you may not say "ouch" (although empathy may even go that far in some people) but you will, nevertheless, have the experience.

Thus the Gothic images of hands we have been studying simply translate and intensify what normally happens in our bodies. On one level, we now know, our hands are acting independently of what our consciousness wishes, and it is that sense of separateness that Anderson captured so

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[16] http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/notes_on_being_human
[17] See further Vessel.

delicately in the hands of Wing Biddlebaum, hands which so much alarm their owner, and which in the image that gives him his name in the story are "like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird" (29).

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Nick Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*: Re-imagining the Gothic in a Postcolonial Philippines

ABSTRACT

Nick Joaquin, one of the Philippines' pillars of literature in English, is regrettably known locally for his nostalgic take on the Hispanic aspect of Philippine culture. While Joaquin did spend a great deal of time creatively exploring the Philippines' Hispanic past, he certainly did not do so simply because of nostalgia. As recent studies have shown, Joaquin's classic techniques that often echo the Hispanic influence on Philippine culture may also be considered as a form of resistance against both the American neocolonial influence and the nativist brand of nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the emergence of Gothic criticism in postcolonial writing, Joaquin's works have rarely received the attention they deserve in this critical area.

In this context, this paper explores the idea of the Gothic in Joaquin's writing and how it relates to Joaquin being the "most original voice in postcolonial Philippine writing." In 1972, the University of Queensland Press featured Joaquin's works in its Asian and Pacific writing series. This "new" collection, *Tropical Gothic* (1972), contained his significant early works published in *Prose and Poems* (1952) plus his novellas. This collection's title highlights a specific aspect of Joaquin's writing, that of his propensity to use Gothic tropes such as the blending of the real and the fantastic, or the tragic and the comic, as shown in most of the stories in the collection. In particular, I examine how his novella (*Cándido's Apocalypse*) interrogates the neurosis of the nation—a disconnection from the past and its repercussions on the present/future of the Philippines.

> Nick Joaquin is perfectly right in consistently resisting all attempts to deny history by extirpating the colonial past. It is not an accident that Joaquin demonstrates in his own work that it is in being rooted in the colonial past that his is *the most original voice in postcolonial Philippine writing*.
> (Mojares, *Waiting* 305, emphasis added)

INTRODUCTION

When Nick Joaquin burst onto the Philippine literary scene with exotic stories and bizarre characters such as the story of a pious Catholic woman publicly celebrating pagan traditions to the mortification of her husband or of a woman who believed she had two navels, the critics did not know what to make of it. At the time of his emergence, just a few years after the "formal end" of the American colonial period, Joaquin's stories were significantly different in terms of execution of the English language, which Furay and Bernad would call "lush," and the choice of fantastic plots, which the same scholars found exotic.

Joaquin's writing style in these early short stories published just after the Pacific war would likely bring to mind the label "magical realist" fiction commonly associated with the writers of the Latin American "Boom"[1] of the 1960s such as Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel García Márquez. This resemblance in Joaquin's writing style to Latin American writing, like his Gothic style, is rarely scrutinized in local criticism. Hidalgo notes, "Nick Joaquin's early tales were published during the Commonwealth period, before the Latin American writers were published in Barcelona by Seix Barral and became the phenomenon known as the 'Boom.' And certainly before they were translated into English" (60). This comment clearly situates Joaquin's early writing as a precursor of magical realist writing not just in the Philippines but also when compared to the "Boom."

More than four decades ago, the University of Queensland Press came up with an Asian and Pacific Writing series. According to the series editor, the series wanted to expand the audience of the works of these "contemporary writers and translators in Asia and the Pacific" to a "larger readership in Europe, Africa, and America" (Wilding vii). One of the featured authors was Nick Joaquin. This "new" collection published in 1972, *Tropical Gothic*, contained the majority of his significant early works published

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[1] The "Boom" refers to the significant literary movement in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s marked by publication of novels that used innovative narrative strategies. The "Boom" also coincided with Latin American political upheavals (sparked by the Cuban revolution).

in 1952, *Prose and Poems*, such as the perennial Joaquin favorites, "May Day Eve," and "The Summer Solstice," plus his more recent work at the time of publication: *Doña Jeronima*, *Cándido's Apocalypse*, and *The Order of Melchizedek*.

This collection's title thus highlights Joaquin's conscious engagement with the past in the form of the Gothic. It specifically draws attention to an aspect of Joaquin's writing, that of his propensity to use Gothic tropes such as the ones described by Botting: "the disturbing return of pasts upon presents," the "negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic," "tales of darkness, desire and power" (qtd. in Kahir 6). But until recently this aspect of Joaquin's writing has not been explored critically. Both Blanco and Holden point to Joaquin's peculiar postcolonial strategy of resistance: for Blanco this is through Joaquin's "baroque mode or mentality" (7) as manifested in his play *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* and for Holden this is the "postcolonial Gothic" in his short stories "The Summer Solstice" and "Guardia de Honor" (353). Blanco and Holden also argue in the same line: that the aforementioned "traits" of Joaquin's works and their supposed obsession with the Hispanic past of the Philippines is a form of resistance to both the modernism of the American neocolonial influence and the nativist inclination of Filipino historians and cultural brokers in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this context, I turn to one of his lesser known stories, the novella—*Cándido's Apocalypse*—to explore the narrative strategies Joaquin uses to construct his brand of Gothic: his blending of the real and the fantastic or the tragic and the comic; his deployment of spatiotemporal shifts and of variable focalizers. I begin by discussing Nick Joaquin's background: his personal history and the Philippine socio-cultural situation during the time of his writing. Finally, in my analysis of Joaquin's novella, I argue that while Joaquin uses the Gothic to probe the nation's disconnect from its Hispanic past, he does so with his eye firmly on its repercussions on the present and future of the Philippines. This disconnect, I argue further, has created a sort of neurosis, and it is precisely this neurosis of the nation that Joaquin examines in *Cándido's Apocalypse*. It must be noted than Joaquin's historical re-vision of a postcolonial Philippines is one of many versions; his contemporaries such as N.V. M. González, Bienvenido Santos, Kerima Polotan, Edith Tiempo, and F. Sionil José all had their own postcolonial projects of historical re-visions.

Nick Joaquin's Impetus for Writing

Nick Joaquin was born in 1917 to a deeply religious family in Paco, Manila. His father, Leocadio Joaquin, was a lawyer and also fought with other

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Filipinos like his friend General Emilio Aguinaldo (who later became the first President of the Philippines) during the 1896 Philippine Revolution against Spain. The end of the war with Spain did not mean the end of colonization. Despite the promise of independence from their American "allies," the supposed defeat of Spain also meant the entry of a new colonial master, the Americans. Leocadio Joaquin married his first wife around the time of the revolution but with her death, he remarried in 1906 to Salome Márquez, Joaquin's mother. Salome Márquez was a teacher and despite her young age, she was one of the Filipino teachers selected by the American colonial government to be trained in English by the Thomasites (the American school teachers sent to the Philippines in 1901 in a ship called the USAT *Thomas*).

Joaquin's father had made good money as a lawyer and raised a large family of ten children, with eight boys and two girls. Nick Joaquin was the fifth child in this relatively affluent, religious, Spanish-speaking family. But in the late 1920s, his father "lost the family fortune in an investment in a pioneering oil exploration project somewhere in the Visayas" (Mojares, "Biography"). The death of Nick Joaquin's father a few years after this failed investment became a turning point not only in the family's fortune but especially Joaquin's life.

Joaquin dropped out of high school because he lost interest in learning inside the confined spaces of the classrooms. Even before his father's death, he was a voracious reader. Encouraged by his parents at an early age, he read Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, George Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Willa Cather to name a few (Joaquin, "The Way We Were" 3). When his father died and he dropped out of school, he used this time to read more books. He also worked several odd jobs such as working in a bakery, then moved on to being an assistant in the Tribune, one of the publishing companies in the city (Mojares, "Biography"). This job would mark his entry into the world of print media; on top of being a highly successful poet, playwright, and fictionist in his lifetime, Joaquin was also a respected journalist, writing under the pen name of Quijano de Manila. At the start of his writing career in the 1930s, an insightful Joaquin noticed how the "new" language brought by the Americans together with the introduction of an American educational system alienated Filipino writers in English from their environment:

> When I started writing in the late 1930s I was aware enough of my milieu
> to know that it was missing from our writing in English. The Manila
> I had been born into and had grown up in had yet to appear in our Eng-
> lish fiction. . . . back in the 1930s it was "modern" and even "nationalistic"

to snub anything that wore the name of tradition. . . . The result was a fiction so strictly contemporary that both the authors and their characters seemed to be, as I put it once, "without grandfathers." It was a fiction without perspective. . . . I realize now that what impelled me to start writing was a desire to bring in the perspective, to bring in the grandfathers, to manifest roots. (Joaquin, "The Way We Were" 1–2)

It is precisely this desire to "manifest roots" in order to understand the present and connect it to the future that is most resonant in Joaquin's *oeuvre*.

In his examination of Philippine nationhood, cultural and literary historian Resil Mojares notes that Philippine historiography after Spanish colonization includes an abundance of narratives that strategically mythologize a unified pre-colonial culture, demonize the Spanish colonial times, and exaggerate the role of America in Philippine development and democracy (*Waiting* 286). In the late 1940s, shortly after the "formal end" of the American occupation, Filipino historians were leaning towards a nativist construction of nationhood, one which Joaquin would later call a "dogmatic fixed picture of pre-Hispanic Philippines" ("Nick Joaquin" 65). It was around this time that Joaquin started writing and publishing more stories which often included the Hispanic aspect of Filipino heritage. These works have often led critics of Joaquin to label him as a nostalgic writer, which Joaquin vehemently denied in one of his rare interviews ("Nick Joaquin" 65). Joaquin wrote that his emergence as a writer was "a swimming against the current, a going against the grain" ("The Way We Were" 6). Whereas other writers welcomed the supposed dawn of modernity and followed their American counterparts by writing about "secular" themes, Joaquin chose to write about the now unfashionable Hispanic tradition.

In fact, Joaquin's earlier works written in the 1940s and the 1950s contained more overt Hispanic elements, most notably, the choice of setting and characters—several stories were set in the Spanish colonial times—which probably fuelled the "nostalgic writer" label. But Joaquin's alleged nostalgia, I argue, has always been more than just a recuperation of the Hispanic past. In his attempt "to bring in the [Hispanic] perspective" (Joaquin, "The Way We Were" 2), Joaquin not only manages to problematize the notion of an "authentic Filipino," but he also questions the excessive nostalgia for the very Hispanic past he was trying to recover. In his novella, *Cándido's Apocalypse*—first published in the December 11, 1965 issue of the Philippine Free Press—Joaquin uses more sophisticated narrative strategies to further explore this concept in a contemporary Manila

(1960s) setting. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of these narrative strategies in Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*.

The Past within Us: Joaquin's *Cándido's Apocalypse*

Gina Wisker makes an interesting case for the Gothic mode in postcolonial writing because

> [u]nlike the conventional Gothic, which disturbs but frequently restores order, the postcolonial Gothic shifts what could be seen as order. So, at the end of the text, the reader cannot remain with a worldview free from the haunting of a newly exposed silence and hidden past. (411)

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It is exactly through this hidden past laid bare that Joaquin spins his tale. Curiously, as if to dispel the unwanted tag of being a nostalgic writer, Joaquin turns to the comic to aid in his storytelling. In their illuminating work on the comic turn in Gothic fiction, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik "argued that the comic within the Gothic offers a position of detachment and skepticism toward such cultural nostalgia" (323). For Joaquin to use a kind of comic Gothic in *Cándido's Apocalypse*, I suggest, is to put forward a critique of Philippine modernity that simultaneously registers the disconnect from the Hispanic past because of the uncritical acceptance of American influence but cautions against a zealous nostalgia that impedes the present from developing into a future for the nation.

Told by an omniscient narrator, *Cándido's Apocalypse* is the bizarre story of seventeen-year-old Bobby Heredia as he struggles with what he perceives to be society's increasing fakery exacerbated by the appearance of his imaginary double, Cándido, and a seemingly X-ray visual acuity. The name and/or identity of Cándido comes from Bobby's own recovery of a supposed "forgotten" tradition of naming: "He [Bobby] had heard that in the old days you got whatever name was on the calendar the day you were born" (18) and "he had looked up in the calendar what he should have been called Cándido, martir" (19). It is not clear whether this tradition was a direct Spanish import; San Juan attributes it to the "Catholic folk calendar" (77). In Bobby's recuperation of his supposedly "real" name and/or identity Cándido, Joaquin's stance against "unreasonable affection for the past" ("Nick Joaquin" 65) is brought to light. Bobby becomes the embodiment of Joaquin's critique of Philippine modernity.

The story begins, innocuously enough, in the Heredia household. Bobby's mother, Ineng, is on the phone with Mr. Henson who is telling her that Bobby came home to their house the previous night with

his son Pete and that he was willing to bring him home. The narrator describes a comically chaotic scene during this phone conversation: the patriarch, Totong, preparing for work and "pretending" (3) to be unaffected by the news; Sophie, Bobby's younger sister, getting hysterical because she wails that Bobby "would do anything" (3) to spoil her birthday party; Junior, Bobby's youngest sibling, having breakfast and getting a rise out of Sophie: "What kinda party you having anyway. . . . You having dog meat?" While the practice of eating dog meat in the Philippines exists, in urban areas like Manila it is rare and typically relegated to the *pulutan* (food eaten while drinking alcohol). It is worth noting that the stigma of eating dog meat may be traced to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis that included a Philippine Reservation and where the featured "wild tribes" of the Igorots "became [one of] the most popular displays on the reservation" (Rydell 172). The popularity of these "wild tribes," who supposedly had a "normal" appetite for dog meat (Melencio), for the American audience may have also sparked the myth of *all* Filipinos as dogeaters. Even the authenticity of the claim that all Igorots eat dog meat has been rejected by present-day Igorots who point to the killing of dogs in their culture as a form of sacrificial ritual.

The fact that Joaquin includes this in the novella is significant for two reasons: firstly, it brings to mind the stigma that comes with eating dog meat and secondly, it parodies the practice to highlight Bobby's perceived "overacting" nature of society. When Junior mentions it to Sophie she is incensed because why would anyone, let alone a highly modern lady like her, want to eat dog meat? Sophie's intense reaction may also suggest her rejection of her "own" culture. Or does it? As Joaquin expands this discourse on "dog meat" to the second time it appears in the story, Bobby and his *barkada* (close group of friends) are preparing a white dog for *pulutan* with their beer. It is a horrible scene; the narrator explicitly describes the brutal killing of the dog, the drinking of its blood, and the roasting of its meat. But it is also made comic by the description of Bobby and his friends thrashing about and vomiting. Bobby even acknowledges this: "he himself was reeling about . . . and talking funny, quite aware that all this was overacting but thinking what the hell, there are no rules any more, life is a discard and so am I" (36). Joaquin's strategic choice to exoticize the eating of dog meat in this scene inverts the stigma imposed on the practice by the Americans, and here he links it with other "overacting" habits that include several American imported practices. It is a subtle strategy, one that has been sometimes misread as Joaquin's tendency to glorify folk traditions.

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The narrator mirrors the chaos in the opening scene throughout the story via the non-linear presentation of events. As we wait to know when Bobby comes home, the narrator starts to make us ask other questions: why is Bobby not yet home? And where has Bobby been? The narrator achieves this detective-like exposition by the use of a dizzying spatiotemporal transition between events without any use of spatiotemporal markers. After that opening scene in the Heredia house, the story moves to a local cake shop where Ineng meets with her friends; the ladies ask her about the rumor that Bobby had aimed a gun at his schoolmate and adversary Pompoy Morel. Ineng tells them that while he did aim the gun at Pompoy during a band rehearsal at their house for Sophie's birthday, Bobby did not fire the gun. The narration then cuts to the school's prefect's office where Totong is in a meeting with the prefect, discussing not only the shooting incident between his son and Pompoy but also offensive remarks Bobby had made about school officials. The prefect tells Totong: "Your son . . . referred to certain, uh, secrets of the persons he insulted, which can only mean he had been spying on us or prying into our private lives" (7). These opening scenes, which seem like a simple narration of events to move the story along, prove to be otherwise later in the story.

These rapid shifts in spatiotemporal coordinates go through several scenes: at an ice cream parlor with Sophie and her friend Minnie, Bobby's ex-girlfriend, at the school grounds with Junior during recess, in the Heredia's backyard with Inday, the family's house help, and finally we are taken back inside the house. The entire family including Ineng's sister, Menchu, and even Minnie are all waiting for Bobby's arrival. It is worth noting that in these scenes, Joaquin's flare for dialogue is at its finest as he navigates through several characters using not only the now common postcolonial device of the appropriation of the colonial language(s)—we see several untranslated Spanish and Tagalog words mixed with a distinctly American English—but he is also quite adept at handling generation-specific linguistic nuances like the "streetcorner talk" (19).

This narrative strategy of abrupt spatiotemporal shifts also heightens the anticipation of the disclosure, which is now transformed to: what is wrong with Bobby? While Bobby finally does come home, the narrator again postpones our discovery as he takes us for another ride because now we are given access to Bobby's "version" of events. Joaquin deploys two strategies at this juncture: the narrator allows Bobby and his fantastic double Cándido to focalize some of the events as well as "speak" through him (via psychonarration and free indirect discourse).

I suggest, then, that Joaquin uses the comic Gothic in the novella's focus on Bobby's misadventures with his double Cándido. When Bobby "become[s]

Cándido" (25) it parallels Bobby's disillusionment with the "overacting" (19) nature of society including his own parents. Using free indirect discourse, the narrator renders Bobby's thoughts regarding overacting:

> Overacting had been the word in his crowd at that time and he had made it his grading mark. . . . Boogie was basic, the twist was standard, but everything else, especially the mau-mau, was overacting. . . . Streetcorner talk like diahe and tepok and ayós na and 'lis d'yan was natural but Cano slang idiom like get lost or real gone or dig that was overacting. (19)

This goes on for an entire page; this technique of piling on the words and sentences is classic Joaquin. According to Paul Sharrad, "Joaquin is not just using flashy technique or recondite form, he is bringing the past of his own country, both historical and literary, back to life" (363). By "overacting" Bobby refers to the superficiality of society that on the surface may be read as Joaquin's critique of the American influence that was pervasive during those times.

It is worth noting that while Joaquin consistently portrays American influences such as those that Bobby laments are "overacting" in unflattering light, especially in this novella, he does so by focusing on the misappropriation of such influences by some Filipinos. In fact, however, Joaquin was fond of films, which the Americans brought with them. Considering Joaquin had been writing movie reviews for the Philippine Free Press during this period (Casper 89), it is not too far-fetched to think that he would have seen a lot of films and would have been influenced by some of them. Nowhere is this clearer than in Joaquin's use of what Casper calls "cinematic techniques" such as the "quick cuts, fades, superimposition" (89) that I also described earlier. So it is not surprising to find in Joaquin's novella similarities with the plot of a relatively successful 1963 American film, *X: The Man With X-Ray Eyes*, directed by Roger Corman. The sci-fi film also uses a protagonist with X-ray vision who initially sees naked bodies but later sees more disturbing images. In this film, a scientist named Dr. Xavier develops a special liquid formula for the eyes to enhance vision; he is unsatisfied with just testing on animals or volunteers so he decides to use it himself. Just like Bobby, the doctor starts to see through clothes and is horrified by the extent of his new abilities. Whereas the film ends tragically for Dr. X who decides to blind himself rather than continue to live with his vision, Bobby not only regains his normal vision after getting a flesh wound from a gunshot fired by Pompoy, but this incident also frees him from Cándido.

Before Bobby's eventual separation from Cándido, in a series of comic events, Bobby/Cándido encounters one naked human being after the

other. He sees his parents, his doctor, everyone at school including his classmates, his teachers, the principal, and even the prefect naked. At this point, Bobby/Cándido also starts seeing physical defects: the principal's hernia, the prefect's disfigured genital organ. These were the "secrets" mentioned earlier by the prefect to Bobby's father; the sight of these defects had so embarrassed Bobby that he could not help but comically blurt out the truth to these school officials. Bobby/Cándido runs to the one safe place he remembers—his grandmother's house—the ancestral home that also represents a connection to the Hispanic past where he and his family spent happy summers devoid of the "overacting" that had now consumed society including his own family. It is clear later in the story that Joaquin paints the grandmother and what she represents—the unfashionable Hispanic past—as the only one untouched by "overacting" since she is the only character Bobby/Cándido never sees naked.

When the narrator finally takes us back to Bobby/Cándido coming home after his futile hunt for Pompoy, the story takes another turn because now Bobby/Cándido sees not only naked bodies but skeletons. His entire family, including the girl he dated, Minnie, and even Inday have all become skeletons: "What he saw was, he supposed, what pictures in medical books showed: the human anatomy with brain, bone, artery, nerve, ligament, joint and internal organs exposed" (40). What is very interesting about the fantastic turn in this scene is that the narrator equates the skeletons with machines:

> He could recognize vein and brain, bone and tissues, and the various organs, but only now realized how closely all these together *resembled an engine* and he saw them as coiled springs, wheels, axles, cogs, tubes, cylinders, valves, ball bearings, pistons, nuts and bolts, wires and batteries, even the dark blood veining the mechanism looking for all the world as practical, as unemotional, as gasoline. (41, emphasis added)

At this point, Bobby/Cándido realizes that "the nakedness of the flesh that so sickened him was yet the shape of the person. . . . If you stripped the skin from a person what remained was anonymous machinery" (41). The implication with Bobby/Cándido's epiphany is that while Bobby's identification as Cándido allowed him to see beyond society's layers of superficiality, he was only left with an even more heightened sense of anxiety about his present. So at the sight of these skeletons he realizes that it is even more disturbing to be disconnected from the flesh, from the present and no matter how "overacting," how superficial it has made society, he now yearns for the old Bobby, "wanting to be himself, wanting to be now not Cándido but Bobby" (42).

While Bobby faces this horrific scene of supposedly familiar bodies now only seen as unfamiliar skeletons moving like machines, Joaquin does not dwell on it too long. In fact as Bobby waxes poetic about the soul and flesh, Joaquin comically ends the scene with Bobby running away like mad from the sight of his eager ex-girlfriend Minnie's "lipless grin on that small, white, smooth, hollow skull he could look into through big holes and nose" (43). As Horner and Zlosnik suggest, "if the 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" (327). In the case of *Cándido's Apocalypse*, while Bobby's experience of fantastically seeing naked bodies then skeletons dramatizes the horror of some of the aspects of Philippine modernity, the comic *within* Joaquin's Gothic seems to give rise to a laughter directed at a variety of things: initially at the uncritical acceptance of American ways and dismissal of both pre-Hispanic and Hispanic traditions, and then at the overzealous nostalgia for the past resulting in the contempt of the present.

CONCLUSION

Cándido's Apocalypse does not *end* in tragedy or the loss of Bobby's life. The story closes with Bobby leaving the hospital and as he turns around he sees

> Cándido on the sidewalk wistfully shrug his shoulders and wave a hand and then buttoning up Bobby's Beatle shirt, digging fists into Bobby's beige trousers, go off in Bobby's boosters in the other direction, up Taft way, where the traffic was and the sunshine. (56)

While Bobby seems to have lived through a nightmarish ordeal, he survives the apocalypse. True to form, the story serves to disrupt order. It is then possible to read into the title another aspect of the novella's doubleness. In Joaquin's choice of Cándido as Bobby's double, he plays at the double implications of the word: Cándido, used not only as Bobby's folk Catholic birth name but also meaning simple or even naive. By suggesting Cándido's apocalypse in the title, Joaquin may not be suggesting Cándido's destruction as he seems to be one going on his merry way, rather the demise of naivety as Bobby himself figures out: "One would have to strike a balance between loving people too much and judging them too hard" (55). The title can also be taken as Cándido's revelation to Bobby for it was he after all who opened Bobby's eyes.

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In a way, the nature of Joaquin's critique of Philippine modernity is represented in this novella: while he does sympathize with Bobby/Cándido's despair over the disconnect of the present from the Hispanic past, he is well aware of the pitfalls that come with this excessive attachment to the past. As Philip Holden astutely observes regarding the other stories in *Tropical Gothic*, Joaquin populates his stories with "an appeal to the continuities of an organic, pre-Hispanic past, then it also registers the contradictions of that appeal" (364). In the case of *Cándido's Apocalypse*, Joaquin's engagement of this ambivalence takes the form of the Gothic. It is precisely in the interweaving of the real and fantastic or the tragic and the comic that Joaquin's novella parallels the postcolonial situation of the Philippines. The "schizophrenic visions" (Sharrad 358) of Bobby Heredia are formally portrayed through the rapid and unmarked spatiotemporal shifts and the variable focalization oscillating between Bobby and Cándido. While Joaquin leaves his ending of *Cándido's Apocalypse* ambiguous—Bobby survives but so does Cándido—he is emphatic in his critique of how the nation has handled the disconnection from the past as shown in his favorable portrayal of Bobby's grandmother. But as he portrays in Bobby's encounters with Cándido, the past is not something you can easily manage. It needs to be very carefully understood and only then, to borrow Édouard Glissant's words, can "the prophetic visions of the past" be truly useful in the nation's present and eventual future.

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Gothic Matters of De-Composition: The Pastoral Dead in Contemporary American Fiction

ABSTRACT

In Alice Walker's vignette "The Flowers," a young black girl's walk in the woods is interrupted when she treads "smack" into the skull of a lynched man. As her name predicates, Myop's age and innocence obstruct her from seeing deeply into the full implications of the scene, while the more worldly reader is jarred and confronted with a whole history of racial violence and slavery. The skeleton, its teeth cracked and broken, is a temporal irruption, a Gothic "smack" that shatters the transience of the pastoral scene with the intrusion of a deeper past from which dead matter/material de-composes (disturbs, unsettles, undoes) the story's present with the violent matter/issue of racism. Walker's story is representative of an important trope in fiction, where the pastoral dead speak through the details of their remains, and the temporal fabric of text is disrupted by the very substance of death.

Against the backdrops of Terry Gifford's post-pastoral and Fred Botting's Gothic understanding of the literary corpse as "negative[ly] sublime," this essay explores the fictional dead as matter unfettered by genre, consistently signifying beyond their own inanimate silences, revealing suppressed and unpalatable themes of racial and sexual violence, child abuse and cannibalistic consumerism. Along with Walker's story, this study considers these ideas through new readings of Stephen King's novella *The Body*, Raymond Carver's story "So Much Water So Close to Home," and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. While these writers may form an unlikely grouping in terms of style, each uses pastoral remains as significant material, deploying the dead as Gothic entities that force the reader to confront America's darkest social and historical matters.

In the second of his six elements of the post-pastoral, Terry Gifford prescribes "the recognition of a creative-destructive universe equally in balance in a continuous momentum of birth and death, death and rebirth, growth and decay, ecstasy and dissolution" (*Pastoral* 153). The theory allows for an ecocritical understanding of the bleaker aspects of nature, registering the same "awe" (*Pastoral* 151) and "humility" (153) shown to its sublimity. But what happens when the pastoral is the site of unnatural death outside of the creation-destruction cycle? Can the post-pastoral (with its eventual need to read inter-connectedness between individuals and their environment), absorb the human horrors of abuse, neglect, rape and murder? Just as Gifford finds "awe" in nature's deathly forces, so Fred Botting, in his tracking of the Gothic through its myriad incarnations, posits a "negative sublime" in the encounter with corpses and the dead, "a moment of freezing, contraction and horror which signals a temporality that cannot be recuperated by the mortal subject" (69). Both natural death process and corpses themselves, it seems, share sublimity as a property, albeit in different forms. Yet while the dead in fiction can be ephemerally sublime, they may also be dually temporal, offering moments of sudden horror in their discovery, then exposing history in their propensity to remain. The dead explored here, discovered in pastoral and post-pastoral settings, are difficult to incorporate into the optimistic idea of an interdependent ecology. In this sense, they are aberrations, Gothic matters which communicate both the localized brutality of their own demise and the human horrors evident in their remains.

One such historical matter is that of America's history of racial violence and murder. In Alice Walker's vignette "The Flowers," a ten-year-old African American girl, Myop, wanders a mile or so from her family's cabin into the woods and treads "smack" (36) into a skull. The reader at first has no idea who the man was ("He had been a tall man" [36]) or how long he has been there. The story's lack of any clear sign of modernity or antiquity (aside from a "sharecropper cabin" [35]) means this could be the early post-bellum American South or the 1960s or any time in between. The vague time setting of the story is crucial, of course, as America's history of lynching black men stretches from the time of slavery, through post-Civil War Reconstruction all the way up to the late twentieth century. In fact, re-reading a story like Walker's now, in light of the spate of recent murders of black men by American police, it seems questionable as to whether lynching has really ended or whether summary executions without due process have rather mutated into an equally disturbing contemporary form. For the identity of the skeleton in "The Flowers," Walker relies on the reader's understanding of history. We know Myop is black and poor from "her dark brown hand" (35) and "the rusty boards of her sharecropper cabin"

(35) respectively. The skeleton itself, while never once clearly described as that of a black man, is littered with evidence which plays on our complicit knowledge and draws our assumptions: the "blue denim" (36) of "overalls," "the rotted remains of a noose," "cracked" and "broken" (36) teeth—a farm worker beaten, hung and left unburied. While Myop, as her name suggests, is too short-sighted, naïve and innocent to see the import of her discovery, the adult reader's awareness is activated, and the initial, climactic "smack" of unfamiliar horror, the "moment of freezing" (as Botting might call it), when the pastoral scene of flower-picking is shattered by the sudden appearance of the dead, is replaced with a slower, more lasting sense of America's all too familiar past and present of racial violence and murder. The skeleton in Walker's story, then, functions within both sensory and cerebral temporalities, a momentary physical shock or "smack" followed by deeper historical consideration.

The story's shift from pastoral to Gothic is important to our understanding of the significance of the skeleton, as Walker uses subverted literary modes and allusions to emphasize the true temporal depth of horror beneath the surface of the discovery. The story begins in the pastoral mode, full of fecund nature and bucolic innocence:

> It seemed to Myop as she skipped lightly from hen house to pigpen to smokehouse that the days had never been as beautiful as these. The air held a keenness that made her nose twitch. The harvesting of the corn and cotton, peanuts and squash, made each day a golden surprise that caused excited little tremors to run up her jaws. (35)

Yet the pastoral idyll (with its long history of romanticizing the feudal status quo) is undercut from the outset with the words "It seemed." Indeed, the whole story takes place around this fragile membrane/hymen of *seems* and *is*, and the movement from pastoral to Gothic is a transition from façade/veneer/surface to the revelation of a more permanent material truth in the form of skull, broken teeth and bones. The ripe and transient harvest of the first paragraph (above) is a cruel prefiguring of the *strange fruit* rotting for years in the woods. The lyrics of Billy Holiday's blues song "Strange Fruit" are themselves pertinent to Walker's story, also making that same shift from *seems* to *is*: "Pastoral scene of the gallant South / The bulging eyes, the twisted mouth" (Meeropol). The childish lightness of Myop's absentminded play at the beginning of the story makes it hard not to feel a sense of rape (at least violation) when she is later suddenly surrounded by remnants of male mob violence, her ignorance of which accentuates the dramatic irony of the reader's

complicity and knowledge that, even though *she* may not understand it now, her innocence has been irreversibly bloodstained. Walker deploys an interesting paradox, then, with the replacing of a pastoral *seems* with a Gothic *is*. While the Gothic is often associated with what seems, ethereal ghosts, the supernatural, strange creatures and monsters which inhabit the dark, the skeleton in this story is a Gothic signifier of material truth and history, revealing racial violence and murder beneath America's pastoral image of itself. Walker's use of the pastoral here is itself a dual conceit, at once parodying the white nostalgic mode seeking to show rural harmony between master and tenant/slave, and continuing a tradition of black pastoral which "celebrates the kinship that African Americans felt with the southern land while reconciling the oppression that their forbears suffered on that land" (Stave 45–46). Gifford might argue here that Walker's introduction of the Gothic into the idyllic rural setting is contiguous with his sixth property of post-pastoral, where "the exploitation of the planet is of the same mindset as the exploitation of women and minorities" (*Pastoral* 164). But we have to assume that what Myop returns with is an unprocessed knowledge of the historical aberration of racial violence, signified in the Gothic matter of the long-remaining, unburied bones, whose discovery override concern for the natural environment in the story.

The gothicizing of pastoral in the story actually begins before the "smack" of the grim discovery, as earlier, when she is collecting flowers, Myop worries about the presence of "snakes" (36) and the keenness of the air at the beginning is replaced by a more claustrophobic atmosphere of "damp" and "silence close and deep" (36). The mention of "snakes" foreshadows "the coiled and rotted remains of a noose," "a ring around the rose's root" "blending benignly" (36) into the soil, phonically mimicking the old nursery rhyme of the plague, here representing a *black death* of an altogether different nature. Yet the "snakes" also inform an Edenic reading of the story, in which the skeleton is the tasted fruit and the knowledge gained as Myop is "initiated" (to use Harold Bloom's word [464]) into the reality of America in her own doubly subjugated position within it as female and black. When Myop steps "smack" into the skull's eyes, then, her own cultural and historical myopia are paradoxically counterbalanced by the blind sockets, through which the reader sees with clarity both Myop's situation and the history of America itself as a nation built on racial enslavement and violence. The skeleton is thus a Gothic matter of truth, activating and subverting literary modes of pastoral and old imaginings of America as Eden, cutting through the abstractions of *seems* with the Gothic/historical material of *is*.

While Walker's story is a dually temporal Gothic irruption signifying a suppressed history through literary and cultural allusion, the dead body of a raped and murdered young woman in Raymond Carver's "So Much Water So Close to Home" is at the centre of rife misogyny and sexual violence which permeates the story's representation of American suburban and rural society. As with "The Flowers," the corpse in Carver's story also works as a Gothic intrusion of truth, revealing a pervading pastoralism as a mythic veil barely concealing a much uglier primitive masculinity. The story centres on the collapse of Claire's and Stuart's marriage after Stuart and his friends have found the dead body of a young woman floating in the Naches River. The crux of Claire's sense of horror regarding her husband is the fact that he and his three friends, rather than reporting the body immediately, continue to fish for a further day after tying the dead girl to branches so that she will not float away. Further to this, we learn that Stuart initiated sex with Claire immediately upon his return from the trip, before telling her about the body. While Carver's story is not expressly Gothic in content or form, the woman's corpse communicates with the other elements of the story from a *post mortem* Gothic position as material or matter which illuminates the central horrors of the story, the marriage itself and the surrounding ubiquity of male sexual violence towards women.

Carver's title is almost meaningless until it is placed within the full context of the question Claire asks after she knows what has happened: "So much water so close to home, why did they have to go so many miles away to fish?" (191). Innocuous at first, the question, however, is pivotal as the answer reveals Stuart's pastoral impulse as a facet of his overt masculinity. G. P. Lainsbury has argued that "the wilderness idyll in the story functions as a period of respite" (45) for Stuart and his friends. But while this contention does reveal the trope of retreat and return within the text, it does not explore the true horror this pastoralism conceals and its correlation with male violence in the story. Described by Claire, Stuart is seen as grotesque and even monstrous. The first sentence of the story—"My husband eats with good appetite"—introduces a male menace accentuated by the primitive omission of the article *a*, and this continues into further physical descriptions: "his hands, the broad fingers, knuckles covered with hair" (189), "his hairy legs and thick sleeping fingers" (192). In her discussion of "hypermasculine monsters," Dana Oswald argues that "they are monsters who exceed the boundaries of civilised masculinity in appetites for food, sex, and violence" (347). Claire Renzetti and Jeffrey Edleson list the characteristics of hypermasculinity as "body hair, strength, aggression and outward appearance" (qtd. in Oswald 347). Interestingly,

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Oswald's analysis is focused primarily on "giants, vampires, and were-wolves" (347), yet through the female narrator's observations in "So Much Water So Close to Home," and alerted by the horror of the sexually murdered woman on the Gothic periphery of the story, Carver's reader sees also the quotidian male monster, the husband living inside the house.

This masculine monstrosity and menace within the domestic space of the story is continually mirrored and highlighted by the extreme sexual violence configured in the corpse, which is raped symbolically even after death. The first and actual rape prior to death has already been committed, but in the group of men finding the woman "floating face down in the river, nude," (187) Carver alerts us to a further figurative gang rape. His use of "nude" instead of *naked* alludes, in one word, to Western culture's long history of sexual consumption of the female body, from the high art of Classical and Renaissance sculpture and painting to the twentieth and twenty-first century's proliferation of pornography (recently reported as a chronic internet addiction among teenage boys [Sanghani]), and this male gaze or visual rape is continued in the story:

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> they all came to look at her. . . . They took flashlights and stumbled down to the river. The wind was up, a cold wind, and waves from the river lapped the sandy bank. One of the men, I don't know who, it might have been Stuart, he could have done it, waded into the water and took the girl by the fingers and pulled her, still face down, closer to shore, into shallow water, and then took a piece of nylon cord and tied it around her wrist and then secured the cord to the tree roots, all the while the flashlights of the other men played over the girl's body. (Carver 187)

Within the male need for the wilderness and the acting out of American frontierism through boyish pursuits (Carver seems to be saying), exist the much darker impulses of sexual domination and violence. Stuart's and his friends' need for pastoral "respite" from their respective lives and marriages is essentially punished or at least tested by the dead woman, and it is a test they fail abysmally by continuing to play instead of helping her; as Claire says to Stuart at one stage, "she needed help" (186). The nostalgia underlying the men's pastoral impulses evidently does not extend to the chivalry of helping a woman in need. The corpse, therefore, is again a Gothic reminder of pastoral as myth, and Carver's situating of the raped, dead woman within the desired virgin landscape of the men's primitive fantasies mocks idealistic constructions of nature with their own tired metaphors of land as essentially female. America's "single dominating metaphor," according to Annette Kolodny, "regression from the cares of adult

life and a return to the primal warmth of womb or breast in a feminine landscape" (6), is brutally undermined here by the female corpse, whose suffered violations (*ante* and *post mortem*) reflect violence against women and the ongoing destruction of the land. In *Jindabyne* (Ray Lawrence's 2006 Australian film version of the story), as the men reach their remote destination, Stuart says "this place is not for women." Carver's riposte to the metaphor of the "feminine landscape" is here doubly extended. Firstly, Stuart directly reveals the outright sexism of his pastoral desires; and secondly, the dead woman in the film is aboriginal, and her murder and *post mortem* mistreatment by white men are reconfigurations in microcosm of a whole history of colonial subjugation, violence against women, and land grabbing.

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The repetitions of rape in the story, real and figurative, reflect Claire's and Stuart's marriage, so that domestic, suburban, and rural spaces are all permeated with an overpowering sense of male sexual violence. Stuart's sexual advances upon Claire throughout the story grow increasingly inappropriate and are continued in spite of Claire's shock and anger once she knows of his mistreatment of the dead woman's body. These advances range from minimal—"He gets to his feet and touches me on the hip as he goes past" (Carver 190)—to more forceful and uncomfortable—"He stands in front of me with a little grin, trying to catch my eyes, and then puts his arm around my waist. With his other hand he takes my free hand and puts it on the front of his pants" (195)—to verbal abuse and sexual assault:

> He drains his glass and stands up, not taking his eyes from me. "I think I know what you need, honey. Let me play doctor, okay. Just take it easy now." He reaches an arm around my waist and with his other hand begins to unbutton my jacket, then my blouse. "First things first," he says, trying to joke.
> "Not now, please," I say.
> "Not now, please," he says, teasing. "Please nothing." Then he steps behind me and locks an arm around my waist. One of his hands slips beneath my brassiere.
> "Stop, stop, stop," I say. I stamp on his toes.
> And then I am lifted up and then falling. I sit on the floor looking up at him and my neck hurts and my skirt is over my knees. He leans down and says, "You go to hell then, do you hear, bitch? I hope your cunt drops off before I touch it again." (203)

The increase of violence in Stuart's sexual bullying of Claire is made more disturbing by the reader's knowledge of the raped and murdered female body, that most extreme symbol/object/matter of male sexual

violence, signifying from the margins of the story where their marriage may eventually lead. Claire even remembers Stuart saying five years after they were married, "someday this affair (his words; 'this affair') will end in violence" (193). Earlier in the story, Claire recounts a brief tale from her youth about Arlene Hubly, who was decapitated and dumped in a river by two brothers. "It happened when I was a girl" (191), she says. Carver surrounds his central character/narrator (Claire) with extreme sexualized horror—rape, murder, mutilation—present and past, and the women's corpses in the story mirror simultaneously the burgeoning violence in her own marriage and home and the ever-present endgame of an endemically misogynistic society in which men act out primitive pastoralist fantasies based on masculine myths. In Stuart's finding of the dead woman and his failing to help her (or rather his abusing her), the corpse's essential Gothicness reflects his own monstrous masculinity as an abusive husband and potential rapist. This is confirmed when Claire tries to sleep in the spare room, only to have Stuart break the lock and "stand there in his underwear" (203–04). The woman's corpse in Carver's story acts as a Gothic, post-pastoral extremity, revealing not just the dark history of her own demise within a culture that has failed her, but also the ubiquitous, ongoing, everyday horrors of violence against women and domestic abuse.

Similar dynamics are present in Stephen King's novella *The Body*, in which a group of young boys (ages twelve to thirteen) set out to find the dead body of Ray Brower, a boy of their age who has gone missing while apparently out picking blueberries alone in the woods. The similarities of premise among King's, Walker's and Carver's stories reach far beyond the simple fact of finding skeletons and corpses in rural settings, although this in itself is important. Again, I want to contend here that the eponymous body in King's story acts as an extremity reflecting the horrors of the everyday. The corpse itself, given extra significance as being that of a child, is again readable as a Gothic material/matter of truth, contaminating tropes of pastoral idyll and retreat as it decays in the woods and haunts the boys' imaginations as a screaming ghost. The idea of pastoral in King's story is there to be countered, much like the myths of American frontierism and masculinity informing the boys' quest. The story possesses a pastoral shape of retreat and return, with the boys heading out of town on their mission to return two days later. But King precludes any notions of an idyllic, virgin land with Gordie's description of the scene as they set off:

Behind us was Castle Rock spread out on the long hill that was known as Castle View, surrounding its green and shady common. Further down Castle River you could see the stacks of the woolen mill spewing smoke

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into a sky the colour gunmetal and spewing waste into the water. The Jolly Furniture Barn was on our left. And straight ahead of us the railroad tracks, bright and heliographing in the sun. They paralleled the Castle River, which was on our left. (438)

The factory chimneys spoil the view and highlight the pollution of the air and water, and in the railway tracks which give the boys their route to heroism and Ray Brower's body, King invokes the full spectrum of Leo Marx's *Machine in the Garden* metaphor, from "machine technology . . . [as] a proper part of the landscape" (220) as he sees it in George Inness's *Lackawanna Valley* painting to "the machine represent[ing] the forces working against the dream of pastoral fulfillment" (358) in *The Great Gatsby*'s "valley of ashes." The train appears later in *The Body* as a mechanical monster/murderer (like Gatsby's car), chasing the boys across the trestle, having already killed Ray Brower. Further on in the journey, the boys come across "great pit" in a junkyard:

> It was maybe eighty feet deep and filled with all the American things that get empty, wear out, or just don't work anymore. . . . A little girl's dolly looking amazedly between her thighs as she gave birth to stuffing. An overturned Studebaker automobile with its chrome bullet nose glittering in the sun like some Buck Rogers missile. One of those giant water bottles they have in office buildings, transformed by the summer sun into a hot, blazing sapphire. (444)

The potentially idyllic town of Castle Rock, Maine, then, has a surrounding countryside of progress and decline, and the disregarded objects of boom-time postwar consumerism—toys, cars, office equipment—undermine the metaphorical harmony of America's machines in the garden with a sense of waste and decay, given its fullest expression in the body of the dead child who, when finally found, is also a rotting old piece of junk with "ants and bugs all over his face and neck" (544). Much like in Carver's and Walker's stories, then, the corpse in King's signifies and transmits meaning from a Gothic, post-pastoral location among a complex system of symbols which simultaneously communicate American history, literature, and myth.

In many ways, King's novella is a classic rites of passage tale in which the protagonists—Gordie (the narrator), Chris, Teddy, and Vern—all on the verge of adolescence, view Ray Brower's dead body as their chance to become local heroes. Early in the story, King creates a connection between the corpse and this sense of initiation when Gordie tells us in

the first chapter, "I was twelve going on thirteen when I first saw a dead human being" (385). The implied meaning of this, beyond being an excellent hook for King's ghoulish readership, is that death (or at least the acknowledgement of our mortality) is part of growing up, something that everyone has to confront sooner or later. Part of a collection of novellas entitled *Different Seasons*, *The Body* makes up the "Autumn" section, "Fall from Innocence," further suggesting its identity as a coming-of-age tale. But there is a dark irony to all this, in that what the boys seem so desperate to achieve—hero status, local fame and manhood—King represents as empty, violent, grotesque and miserable. This is best shown by surveying the male adults in the story, all of whom are failed and desperate characters. Teddy constantly emulates his father who "stormed the beach at Normandy" (390) but is now in "the loony bin up at Togus," "crazier'n a shithouse rat" (459), according to Milo Pressman, himself a sad, obese junkyard owner who seems to live for setting his dog Chopper on trespassers. Chris's father is an alcoholic who beats him and leaves loaded guns around the house. Ace Merril, the local tough guy the boys confront at the climax of the story, is shown later as a sad drunk who never left Castle Rock. George Dusset is a local shopkeeper who nostalgically moons over Gordie's dead brother Denny's football skills whilst trying to rip Gordie off for small change. And Gordie's father, who is already sixty-three and old enough to be a grandfather, is a shattered figure, unable to move on from the death of his eldest son, ignoring and neglecting his youngest boy, constantly watering the dead soil of his garden. Odd, then, perverse even (or perhaps not), that the boys should mimic the adult masculine world, playing cards, smoking, obsessing over guns, and "calling each other pussies" (447) when their role models are such broken men. At every opportunity, King undermines American myths of masculinity, of soldiers, cowboys, and rock'n'roll rebels, by showing the men in this story as weak, abusive, and hapless, and the boys' aping of manhood is thus shown as eventually empty.

While the corpse of the dead boy is a sad reminder of a life unfulfilled, of adulthood and manhood unreached, perhaps its most significant function is as an indicator of neglect and abuse within and throughout the community. This is a common expression of King's work, where children are often at the mercy of adults who are violent, predatory, or simply unworthy of their roles as parents or guardians—Jack Torrance in *The Shining* is perhaps King's most famous example. Although Ray Brower is not murdered by an adult but rather "knocked . . . out of his keds" (408) by a train, when placed within the context of the other children in the story he becomes a facet of this wholesale mistreatment. The very fact of his

death is suggestive of an American failure, as his own attempt at pastoral retreat (picking blueberries) meets with death at the hands (or wheels) of industrialized America, in which space for children to roam unmolested in solitary adventure has been compromised by the gain of land development, factories and railways. It is apt then that the boys who come to find/rescue him are all abused and neglected themselves. Gordie describes himself as "the Invisible Boy" (392), his talent for writing having been overlooked and ignored by his parents in the shadow of his brother's more masculine football prowess. At the outset of their adventure, Chris says "[m]y dad will hide me anyway," because "[h]e's on a really mean streak this time" (402). Vern is bullied by his older brother and abused by just about everyone for being overweight and half-witted. Teddy idolizes his father's war heroics in spite of the fact he held both of Teddy's ears to a stove, deforming him for life and damaging his hearing. In Gordie's story of the pie-eating competition, Davie "Lard-Ass" Hogan is ridiculed for his obesity by the whole town, including the adults and even his own school principal. And in Chris's story of the stolen milk money, the reader learns that he gave it back only to have the teacher Old Lady Simons spend it on a new skirt and let Chris take the blame. To some extent, *The Body* is one of King's least Gothic stories; there are no vampires, ghosts, or child-murdering clowns. Yet Ray Brower is there to remind us of the "adult monsters" (509) within the community, dealing out horror on a more banal and daily basis, and the corpse is a Gothic matter symbolic of the everyday neglect and abuse of children, consciously and unconsciously put aside ("abjected" as Julia Kristeva might say) in order for society to function. John Sears argues that "[i]n King's Gothic death is monstrous, an unrepresentable, faceless otherness constantly threatening the teeming, contemporaneous living world of his fictions" (183). This is only partly accurate. When Gordie and his friends finally find Ray Brower their initial reaction would seem to support Sears's argument and Botting's "negative sublime": "Did any of us breathe?" asks Gordie. "I didn't" (543). But this moment of frozen horror is followed by understanding and realization. "That finally rammed it all the way home for me. The kid was dead" (543). In *The Body*, while death does at times convey this "faceless otherness," its material matter in the form of the child's corpse is also a fully-faced reflection of what is "threatening" and "monstrous" in life itself, a warning and reminder of the myriad adult horrors hiding around children at all times, far more real and frightening than any ghost or vampire.

All of the stories discussed so far deal with skeletons and corpses in rural settings signifying the horrors of history and the everyday, Gothic intrusions disrupting the last vestiges of redundant pastoral imaginings. In

Cormac McCarthy's 2005 novel *The Road*, both of these elements, pastoral and corpse, are given perhaps one of their most extreme literary encounters. The body in question, that of an infant child, is seen only for the briefest of moments and given little description beyond matter of fact, yet it stays with the reader, causing feelings of shock and even anger at being drawn toward this horror of horrors:

> They walked into the little clearing, the boy clutching his hand. They'd taken everything with them except whatever black thing was skewered over the coals. He was standing there checking the perimeter when the boy turned and buried his face against him. He looked quickly to see what had happened. What is it? he said. What is it? The boy shook his head. Oh Papa, he said. He turned and looked again. What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. He bent and picked the boy up and started for the road with him, holding him close. I'm sorry, he whispered. I'm sorry. (198)

The apologies at the end of this episode could almost be to the reader, and while some might be tempted to charge McCarthy with gratuitousness here, the scene needs to be addressed in context with the post-apocalyptic world of the novel quite literally de-composing itself around the two central protagonists, a man and a boy on the road, heading south in a hopeless quest for some kind of safety, shelter, or salvation. The reader is never told exactly what has befallen the earth, something globally catastrophic is all we know—a solar flare, a nuclear war, some environmental firestorm. Essentially, it does not matter, as McCarthy is more interested in the human reaction to apocalypse than its causes. The incident above, whilst shocking, is merely part of an array of dreadful moments and episodes including trees uprooting themselves and a cellar full of emaciated and mutilated people waiting for their turn to be killed, cooked and eaten. John Hillcote's film version (2009) does not include the incident in question, the director feeling, presumably, that "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit" would be too much for audiences to stomach. Yet for McCarthy, I would argue, the image is almost essential as a scene of Gothic horror completely in keeping with this unravelling world, shedding a dark light on just how far humanity can fall on its descent into oblivion.

At a conference called *Fear, Horror and Terror* in 2011, a presenter gave a spirited defence of mothers as a rebuke to McCarthy's novel, accusing the author of misogyny in his portrayal of the mother's abandonment of her husband and child and her choice of death over the struggle to stay alive with her family. The presenter, however (herself a new mother she told the

audience), had missed the crucial point that (in McCarthy's apocalyptic novel) the world in which her argument was based—with all of its socially determined practices and assumptions, including gender roles—has ended. The mother's choice of death in the novel (which leaves the father and the boy alone) is in keeping with the same process of Gothic de-composition to which the baby's corpse is central. *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic world is in reverse. As the narrator muses at one point, "perhaps in the world's destruction it would be possible at last to see how it was made. The ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be" (277). While the consolation of some theological or scientific revelation of the Earth's making in the process of its destruction is never given, the "ponderous counterspectacle" of human civilization "ceasing to be" is indeed revealed. And although we are at the end of times, there is an unmistakable, historical familiarity to McCarthy's hellish vision of the near or not so distant future. Hiding in the woods, the man and the boy watch a band of roving cannibals passing along the road:

> An army in tennis shoes, tramping. Carrying three-foot lengths of pipe with leather wrappings. Lanyards at the wrist. Some of the pipes were threaded through with lengths of chain fitted at their ends with every manner of bludgeon. They clanked past, marching with a swaying gait like wind-up toys. Bearded, their breath smoking through their masks. Shh, he said. Shh. The phalanx following carried spears or lances tassled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge upcountry . . . behind them came the wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted and yoked with dogcollars and yoked to each other. (92)

While this ragged gang is clothed and armed with remnants of the present, "tennis shoes" and "trucksprings," the "Lanyards," "wagons," "slaves," "catamites," and "lances tassled with ribbons" are reminiscent of some medieval crusade or army of Goths. The "wagons" and "slaves" also speak of American history—the frontier, the West, slavery—as this ugly representation of humanity marches simultaneously toward global end and national past.

The novel itself plays out this reversal in form. It has no chapters, and the dialogue is clipped. Sometimes it is difficult to decipher who is talking, the boy or the father, as their relationship loses its sense of pre-apocalyptic, traditional patriarchal shape. And language itself is fading with a landscape that no longer needs it:

> The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than one would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. Drawing down like something trying to preserve heat. In time to wink out forever. (88)

Without being didactic, McCarthy's words are pregnant with warning when read with knowledge of current crises of climate change, global warming, extinction rates, overpopulation and garbage-filled seas. Viewed alongside and among these examples of culture, civilization and the planet itself in fast regression, the shocking image of the charred baby corpse, conceived and gestated purely for its meat, we have to presume, is perhaps the ultimate symbol of hopeless reversal, parents eating their children, a Gothic matter to evoke the West's cultural and mythological past (Cronus/Saturn) and represent the end in its awful denial of any sense of future.

In the film version, when they come across another corpse decomposing in an upstairs bedroom of a derelict house, the father says to the boy, "nothing we haven't seen before." He is talking about their experience together on the road, of course, but he is also talking directly to the audience. Erik Hage claims that

> *The Road* presents a world that, in the wake of some unnamed apocalyptic catastrophe, has dissolved into a primordial condition devoid of nature, culture, law, personal identity, government, economics, territorial borders, agriculture, literature, commerce, art—or any recognizable feature of the world in which we live. (140)

While Hage's list of things "dissolved" is correct, his failure to recognize "feature[s] of the world in which we live" is surprising as, taken separately, the elements of McCarthy's world-in-reverse are indeed "nothing we haven't seen before": environmental catastrophe and devastation, murderous gangs who rape, kill, and steal children, hellish scenes of burnt bodies strewn post-explosion, people trafficked, tortured and kept as slaves, and cannibalism, even, recurrent throughout Western history at times of apocalyptic deprivation. In one of the very few lighter moments of the novel, the father finds a can of Coca-Cola in an old vending machine. The boy drinks from it and belches. "What is it, Papa?" he asks (23). He was born during the apocalypse and knows almost nothing of the world before. There is of course a horrible irony undercutting even this gentle moment

of relief, as this symbol of mass consumerism is almost all that is left in a world where people are now consuming each other. The narrator makes reference to this when he says, "No more balefires on the distant ridges. He thought the bloodcults must have all consumed one another" (16). Commenting on the cannibalism at the end of his film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (1989), Peter Greenaway says "once we've stuffed the whole world into our mouths, ultimately we'll end up eating ourselves" (Bartolovic 205). Again, the baby's corpse, discovered as it is about to be eaten, is at the centre of this dreadful prophecy, that when there is nothing left to live for or consume, society will turn upon and consume itself. As with the other stories discussed here, this most disturbing of ideas and most shocking of corpses is an extremity in a network of signification which, as well as engulfing the reader in a moment of "negative sublime," serves as a Gothic reminder to heed the past and present in order to avoid the cannibalistic apocalypse of the novel's future. In his discussion of *The Road* as an exemplary post-pastoral text, Gifford argues that "[b]ecause the novel is set in the future it can be read as a warning of the possible outcomes if we do not do 'right' whilst there is still time to act" ("Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*" 24). But it is only the novel's post-apocalyptic setting which connotes "the future," as all the other elements in the story are reflective of the world today.

Like Hillcote's film, Gifford's post-pastoral reading of *The Road* avoids discussion of the infant corpse, as do many other critical studies of McCarthy's novel. Gifford says that there is a debate "between those who see *The Road* as one of deep despair or one of remnant hope" ("Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*" 25). His post-pastoral reading falls into the category of the latter. But this seems a rather pointless debate, because the novel's strength lies precisely in its plurality. It contains hope—the relationship of father and son and the boy's survival and new family—and despair, the infant corpse on a spit about to be eaten, the cannibalism into which humanity has descended, and the wholesale destruction of the natural environment. In good fiction, as in life, surely hope and despair coexist. It seems odd to me that someone would analyze or film *The Road* and avoid its most disturbing image, but as Kristeva says, corpses are often seen as "the utmost in abjection," "death infecting life" (4). Perhaps this partly explains why they are often avoided in academic critiques seeking an optimistic conclusion. But recent news has given us images of drowned children's corpses washed up on pristine Mediterranean beaches, mass graves unearthed in the jungles of southern Thailand, a woman's body in a suitcase in a London canal, and countless unfortunate victims of terrible crimes and catastrophes. Are these also matters to be glossed over

and avoided? In "The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It," Stephen Bruhm observes that

> life constantly reminds us that we are moving toward death, or at least obsolescence, and that life we must continually strive to hold together. Paradoxically, we need the consistent consciousness of death provided by the gothic in order to understand and want life. (274)

This seems a worthy role for the Gothic, as a constant shocking reminder through death that we are alive. But in the contemporary fiction explored here in the work of Walker, Carver, King and McCarthy we could extend Bruhm's argument even further, as the dead bodies therein speak of not just the nightmares of our own unconscious minds as we move irresistibly toward death, but of the cruelties and injustices of the historical and global world we inhabit, cruelties and injustices we regularly put aside in order to live, prosper and consume. While the pastoral dead in contemporary fiction may symbolize the "utmost in abjection," they are also materials of the utmost significance to our social awareness, Gothic matters which reflect, delineate and de-compose the horrors of the everyday.

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Gothic Trouble: Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the Globalized Order

ABSTRACT

The article explores the way American author Cormac McCarthy uses the Gothic genre in his novel *The Road* as a means to address what has been called "our globalized order," in particular the way it has turned human beings into consuming or consumed entities. Some dimensions of this globalized order indeed involve the reintroduction of slavery through human trafficking, unprecedented greed and labor capitalism, surveillance and personal data gathering. Hannah Arendt notes in *The Origin of Totalitarianism* that the disasters of the twentieth century had proved that a globalized order might "produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages." The artist's task is to find the right language and images to address the breaking of the world. French philosopher J. P. Dupuy, for example, has argued that the financial world is a way to contain (*contenir*) the violence of competition, placing it into acceptable (symbolic) forms away from primal physical competition. McCarthy's graphic use of Gothic tropes—including cannibalism, the wild forest, the haunted house, the chase, the conflict between light and darkness, the blurring of boundaries between different categories—creates a shock. The article also addresses the larger question of the impact of globalization on Gothic literature, and the impact of Gothic literature on real world matters as it contributes to and reflects upon and challenges global regimes of economic, social and economic power. In other words, what is the cultural work that the Gothic does in the present?

> "Road, where the chains have been dragging, where the bones
> of the dead are still lying."
> (Dmitri Shostakovich, qtd. in O'Brien 29)

Geoffrey O'Brien, reviewing November 2014 Metropolitan Opera productions of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, notes that "each in its way posed questions about how the horrors of history are somehow transmuted into the exuberance of art" and

> each also obliquely instilled an eerie consciousness of these works as messages displaced in time, sending out signals originally aimed at spectators in Russia in 1934 or London in 1587 that we intercept and read by our own lights, as if they were delayed warnings or cries for help. (29)

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This article aims to show that Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* issues similar "warnings" and "cries."

The Gothic genre was contemporary with major upheavals and societal changes; it first developed as an alternative narrative to the dominion of Reason in the eighteenth century and has retained its countercultural power. It articulates topical fears while engaging with the past, its weight and terrifying elements. The American Gothic, particularly in the Southern context, has been used to excavate and explore historical hauntings. As Keith Cartwright puts it, the Gothic "provides a framework for labyrinthine excavations of the repressed knowledge at the base of our national edifice" (20). Gothic works write Americanness by dealing with national obsessions—the encounter with the Other (such as the wilderness or the Indian)—and guilt; they perform cultural work within American society and articulate epistemological takes on reality, abnormality and normalcy.[1]

Contemporary fiction and cinema are thus characterized by Gothic interactions with specific cultural anxieties. Our concerns emerge out of some unresolved issues of the past such as the environmental crisis, rising poverty and illiteracy rates, cutting down jobs following outsourcing to technology, domination of financial capital, and rise of terrorism in its most gruesome deployments. The denial of the human cost of such

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[1] A work like *Deliverance* (novel and film) depicts the shift from a lawful order to a lawless world of chaos and savagery. It probes into the possibility of a return of the wild from the wilderness, and glances at "horror" with its attending heart of darkness—human and ecological.

developments—only framed by corporations as "externalities"—has given rise to new modalities of the return of the repressed. As during the French Revolution, our times have inspired more graphic and disturbing forms of Gothic artistic expression, be it in literary or visual modes. The exploitation of the other—his/her reification—is often gothicized through the figure of the vampire.

Cormac McCarthy's 2006 *The Road* conjures up the legacy of American Gothic literature and moves beyond the national context to address what has been called the "globalized order." The novel engages with current Gothic explorations of psychological and bodily trauma; it reflects the current concerns over consumption and survival.[2] It reuses Gothic tropes such as the wilderness, the haunted house, the chase, the conflict between light and darkness, the blurring of boundaries between different categories, and the encounter with the Uncanny, to dwell upon our imaginative terror when thinking about our contemporary world. It creates the special atmosphere of suspense and terror characteristic of the Gothic mode; its plot proposes a gruesome handling of the human body as the backdrop for the staging of current plagues such as human trafficking and labor capitalism. Its landscape of disaster speaks to the neglect of the world's social and physical infrastructure. An important theme in the novel is transmission: a father (referred to as "the man") tries to describe to his son ("the child") a lost world—the world of "long ago"—and make him share in a common humanity ("being the good guys," "carrying the fire"). This topic resonates with the Gothic's task to transmit something of a lost world—lost to memory or human consciousness through denial, erasure, amnesia, and destruction.

This article will thus explore McCarthy's use of the Gothic mode in his novel *The Road* as a way to explore how our globalized order—which promotes greed and unprecedented exploitation, surveillance and personal data gathering—has turned human beings into consuming or consumed entities.[3] The traditional Gothic landscape (haunted castle or wilderness) has morphed into a twilight space where basic human bearings have disappeared. The human body and mind, rather than just the landscape, are the location for Gothic horror. Whereas zombies—which are often coded as metaphors for alienated white masculinity—and vampires have become

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[2] On the question of *The Road* and consumerist ideas, see for example Susan Kollin's article.

[3] On the question of surveillance and transparency, see for example Cole 26–28. He concludes: "Increasingly, our governments seem to be insisting that our lives be transparent to them, while their policies remain hidden from us. For the sake of democracy itself, we must do all we can to resist that impulse" (28).

the most suggestive means of investigating and questioning a range of topical issues, no such creatures or Gothic bestiary are featured in *The Road*. The distortion goes beyond physical monstrosity and is located in the *human* handling of the *human* body. We will discuss how the novel engages the American imagination and its Gothic tradition as a departure point for a larger human inquiry.

Hannah Arendt writes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

> The calamity of the rightless (the displaced) is not that they are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before the law but that no law exists for them. (qtd. in Bromwich 6)

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She adds that the disasters of the twentieth century had proved that a globalized order might "produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages" (qtd. in Bromwich 6). Arendt's insistence that these "barbarians" wrecking the world are produced "from our midst" suggests how the quintessential Gothic experience—that of the uncanny— pervades our contemporary imagination. The savagery explored by *The Road* is indeed the barbarity induced by an unprecedented greed spawned by our own economic logic. The artist's goal is to represent the "human condition" in the midst of contemporary stirrings, with a prophetic outlook. French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy, for example, has argued that the financial world is a way to contain (*contenir*) the violence of competition, placing it into acceptable (symbolic) forms away from primal—and primary— physical competition. The writer's task is to find the right language and images to address the raw material behind the symbolic gloss. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* reintroduces the literal dimension of violence beyond what some have called the "choreographed violence" and the "symphony of diplomacy," the theatrical deployment of power in state summits and the display of military might on the field through high tech weapons such as drones (the latest avatar of the "surgical" philosophy of warmongering). His graphic use of Gothic tropes creates a shock; in the words of Southern writer Flannery O'Connor: "to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures" (34).

The horror—"what the mind sees," as Stephen King puts it (22)— starts on the first page with the breaking up of the border between reality and dream: reality has turned into a living nightmare as time (human time, that is) has come to a standstill, leaving human beings trapped in a present that opens on to no future—or no past (the world of before

has been lost): "the clocks stopped at 1.17" (McCarthy 52). A twilight universe where light seems to have definitely yielded to darkness begets improbable creatures in an improbable environment. The stanzaic structure of the novel functions as a reminder of the structure of Whitman's poetry when stanzas conjure up different dimensions of American life: in Whitman, to celebrate its coming, in McCarthy, to expose its loss. In both texts, the rawness of the American experience is distilled through poetic images.

Beyond the Whitmanian intertextuality, McCarthy calls upon another dimension of the American imagination—one that speaks directly to the hermeneutics of the Gothic: the question of knowledge. In the novel, the inability to see is emblematic of the inability to know or to move forward (literally and figuratively); it resonates with the place of the senses in the American consciousness, in particular the importance of sight. The signified is—literally— beyond reach because it is beyond sight; human beings are confined to the signifier (the human as food item, as a consumed entity). Apprehending the world no longer takes place through the eyes (the founding myth and gesture initiated in the *periplus*) but through the mouth; the encounter with the world happens through the mouth, inducing some general regressive oral phase.

The novel thus stages a world where human beings have been reduced to the satisfaction of the most basic needs—to eat/to drink—at the expense of all other forms of connection to their environment—be it natural, societal or even familial (parents eating their children, a recurring suggestion in the novel). The notion of progress encoded in the historical allusion through the use of the term "pilgrims" and its attending reference to the building of "a new city on a hill" gives way to a nightmarish vision where the wilderness spawns creatures that are both animal and mineral, alive and dead in a blurring of categories symptomatic of the pervasive chaos and regression:

> Like pilgrims in a fable swallowed up and lost among the inward parts of some granitic beast. . . . And on the far shore a creature that raised its dripping mouth from the rimstone pool and stared into the light where eyes dead white and sightless as the eggs of a spider. Crouching there pale and naked and translucent, its alabaster bones cast up in shadow on the rocks behind it. Its bowels, its beating heart. The brain that pushed in a dull glass bell. (3–4)

Whereas the original move was from a formless "what" into the creation of a shaped "who," as proposed in Native American creation myths

for example, *The Road* imagines a world where "whos" have regressed into "whats": the central question no longer is "Who am I?" but "What do I eat?" Every human encounter indeed involves the "reptilian" gaze of the predator desperately looking for his/her prey (stranger, child, spouse, or pet).

The predatory logic has indeed become the only modality for human interactions, as the man notes when they meet one of the gang members in the woods:

> This was the first human being other than the boy that he'd spoken to in more than a year. My brother at last. The reptilian calculation in those cold and shifting eyes. The gray and rotting teeth. Claggy with human flesh. Who has made of the world a lie every word. (75)

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Such horror resonates with the current disempowerment of individuals when faced with extreme poverty and deprivation. The novel suggests a human lack of agency in the most shocking way to reflect on the legacy of economic systems which have erected financial capital into "the measure of all things" in Protagoras's words, enslaving part of the world in the process. The master/slave dialectic is conjured up in the novel in a scene that offers a *mise en abyme* of the systems of exploitation:

> An army in tennis shoes, tramping. Carrying three-foot lengths of pipe with leather wrappings. Lanyards at the wrist. . . . They clanked past, marching with a swaying gait like wind-up toys. . . . The phalanx following carried spears of lances tasseled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge upcountry . . . behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each. All passed on. (91–92)

The blurring of boundaries characteristic of the Gothic takes an uncanny turn as McCarthy explores the parabolic potential of cannibalism: human beings have been turned into literal food items, as the scene at the mansion suggests. The man and the child come across a human pantry:

> Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous. (110)

As Richard Gray phrases it, the uncanny can be defined as "that scary disconnection of the human from the nonhuman" (116). Borders between the use of material commodities (including food items) and human subjects are collapsed, creating an uncanny encounter. The omnipresence of consumption in *The Road* through the motif of cannibalism (eating/to be eaten) literalizes the imperative of consumer culture (to consume/to be consumed). Significant societal and interpersonal problems are connected to our omnipresent consumption and greed. Consumer culture interferes with human relationships and offers relations of different natures. *The Road* aims to show the effect consumer culture has on humans and on their relationships as human interactions have been radically altered in such a context. Consumer culture infiltrates and impacts every dimension of the human condition and the human relationship to himself/herself and to the other, be it human or animal (in *The Road*, the eating of the pet is emblematic of such a shift).

The "unhomelike nature of the environment," to use Gray's words (116)—its alienated and alienating dimension—characterizes McCarthy's novelistic landscape, both natural and human. In addition to human regression into barbarity, the novel addresses the pervasive material regression of our Western societies in the wake of the lack of investments in public services and infrastructures. Some recent studies point out that our scientific engineering is becoming underused or even obsolete, as it is no longer possible to afford the cost of fixing crumbling bridges. We might have to resort to ferries in a number of places where bridges have not been maintained, fixed or rebuilt in the wake of recent flood damage.[4] Will the bridge—a celebrated icon of American progress—become a useless artifact? *The Road* stages rusting cars and trucks sitting on dilapidated bridges, destroyed highways and roads, "[t]he long concrete sweeps of the interstate exchanges like the ruins of a vast funhouse against the distant murk" (24). These feats of human engineering skills and creativity have regressed to the status of trash. Such landscapes of silent and still disaster offer the perfect contrapuntal image to the current flows of abundance and mobility (people and capital), the fluidity and fluxes of hyperbolic consumption having come to a total standstill. Progress has turned into an ancient curse nagging at the current desolation. The novel narrates the consequences of the greed that prevents—forbids—investing in public goods or services by imagining a haunting fantasy of regression. Deterritorialized objects and obsolete tributes to technological prowess heap into piles of rubbish invading the characters' material and mental space; these discarded agents of the

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[4] See for example McKibben 53–54.

consumer era mirror the landfills which have turned our earth into a huge bin. The conjured up familiar elements (such as vending machines, trailers, cars, gas pumps, convenience stores, shopping carts) morph into the discombobulated protagonists of an uncanny aesthetics of excess. Their quasi-theatrical nature performs the legacy of mankind and its war on the landscape by representing the scars of conflict and abuse.[5] This Gothic landscape stages a spectacle of utmost ruin—physical and moral: "everything to the root along the barren bottomland. . . . The roadside hedges were gone to rows of black and twisted brambles. No sign of life" (21).

The tyranny of evil, with its attending death and destruction, informs the Gothic imagination. The Gothic genre plays with borders and transgressions, and rehearses themes of imprisonment and escape, and chase motifs. McCarthy had already addressed the issue of sheer evil in his 2005 novel *No Country for Old Men*. In *The Road*, he literalizes the formulaic Gothic theme of the conflict between good and evil by imagining a world where light has yielded to darkness (for a reason that remains unknown throughout the novel). The world is now "enshrouded" in ashes: "Nights dark beyond darkness and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world" (3). The characters' life revolves around trying to keep a dim light alive, around them and in them; they are constantly looking for oil or wood or anything to ward off the pervasive darkness (and cold).

The physical conflict is reprised in the moral conflict that is couched along Biblical lines.[6] The novel refers to John's evangelical proclamation of "the Word" and His incarnation in Christ: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1) and "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14). The father sees the child as his "warrant": "He said: If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (5).[7] The mother has chosen death as a "new lover," she cannot face the prospect of the horror awaiting them: "They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. You'd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant" (56). She vanishes one day, without him and the child knowing it, in a desperate offering, her "gift"/the gift of herself[8]:

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[5] See the exhibit *Conflict.Time.Photography*, The Eyal Ofer Galleries, Tate Modern, London, 26 Nov. 2014–15 Mar. 2015.

[6] For work on the religious dimension, and the tension between hope and nihilism, see for example Stephen Frye's book and Allen Josephs's article.

[7] For an analysis of this statement, see for example Béatrice Trotignon 207.

[8] Their discussion ealier in the novel about the number of bullets—the only way out of the horror—makes it clear that she wishes they had thought about suicide when there were enough bullets for each of them : "I should have done it a long time ago. When there

She was gone and the coldness of it was her final gift. She would do it with a flake of obsidian. He'd taught her himself. Sharper than steel. The edge an atom thick. And she was right. There was no argument. . . . In the morning the boy said nothing at all and when they were packed and ready to set out upon the road he turned and looked back at their campside and he said: She's gone isn't she? And he said: Yes, she is. (58)

Her erasure is emblematic of what philosopher Patrick Viveret sees as the "evacuation of eros and the feminine" from the global economy, resulting in a race for "domination and power" (Lasida and Viveret 24). The terrifying presence of evil in *The Road* reads like a counter narrative to hubristic political claims "to rid the world of evil": the novel indeed makes clear that evil is in ourselves. The child's mantra—"we are the good guys"—resonates with bureaucratic euphemisms to describe the so-called "war on terror." The man and the child wage their war on terror by upholding a culture of love and respect for their fellow human beings, rejecting the predatory logic that has prevailed over the world since "the clocks stopped at 1.17," a breaking point which resonates with our own 9/11 historical rupture. The child functions as a moral benchmark: he "negotiates" (a word he learns from his father) to uphold goodness and pleads in favor of others (the little boy, the old man, even the man who robs them of everything); he jeopardizes his own survival by giving away food he will badly need later, as his father insinuates: "When we're out of food you'll have more time to think about it" (175)—all the more so since the man is doomed to a sure death. The gesture of feeding him takes on both absurd and exceptional dimensions, a redemptive free act in this hell of the "numbness and the dull despair" (89). Will the child be a New Adam as he upholds humanitarian ideals by refusing to turn the Other into a "what"? The ending stages a complete family unit (parents and children) that adopts the child. The vision of the "trout" looming up out of a vanished past does not bring closure and relief:

Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the

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were three bullets in the gun instead of two. I was stupid. . . . You have two bullets and then what? You can't protect us. . . . Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. . . . I've taken a new lover. He can give me what you cannot" (McCarthy 57).

deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (286–87)

This ending fails to appease the present and the past—leaving us stranded on a road somewhere, close to nothingness maybe.

The Gothic model reflects on the present by conjuring up a dead past—often through the figure of the ghost. The trout is not the only ghost. *The Road* indeed begets a number of ghosts—dead or alive. McCarthy revisits some national obsessions and "curses," to use William Faulkner's image, in particular abuses connected to the occupation of territory and slavery. At one point, the father and the son come across a camping scene: some people have left in a hurry, abandoning the food they were getting ready to eat:

> They had taken everything with them except whatever black thing was skewered over the coals. He was standing there checking the perimeter when the boy turned and buried his face against him. . . . What the boy had seen was a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on the spit. (198)

The scene offers a gruesome rewriting of the pioneer experience and its legacy of violence. In addition, the recurring suggestion that parents eat—or have eaten—their own children speaks to current political moves aimed at depriving children of basic survival programs and resources (such as the decision to get rid of Food Stamps); the older generation, by appropriating all the resources, "eats" the next one by destroying its chances of thriving and, in some cases, even surviving. As a Southern writer, McCarthy situates the most horrifying scene of the novel in a Southern mansion, "a once grand house sited on a rise above the road" (105). The image of the living food pantry functions as a powerful evocation of contemporary forms of enslavement while conjuring up the legacy of slavery: "He held the boy's hand and they crossed the porch. Chattel slaves had once trod those boards bearing food and drink on silver trays" (106). Last but not least, McCarthy offers a variation on the thematic importance of the place of the wilderness in the American consciousness by imagining the demise of this key protagonist of the American narrative of success, conquest and achievement—a truly original feature of the narrative. What happens when nature has died? The novel imagines the ensuing wasteland—ecological and moral.

Moreover, the novelistic imagination is haunted by the strange ghosts begotten by images of the "richness of a lost world" which the father tries to recapture and recreate for his son. The only way to retrieve this Eurydice is through books since he can less and less rely on his own memories:

The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality. Drawing down like something trying to preserve heat. In time to wink out forever. (89)

Books containing dangerous, transgressive or forbidden information have been part of Gothic props. They contain secret knowledge and haunt the current imagination as a potential alternative—the road no longer taken, to adapt Robert Frost's image. The gothicization of the book in *The Road* speaks to the disappearance of the book in our contemporary culture and the problem of transmission. In the novel, the book is a link to the world of the past; it still exists as a physical object, but the knowledge it presents has been rendered powerless or has vanished. The signified that it refers to has disappeared. Yet its content is transgressive in the sense that it provides a counter narrative to the current chaos where human horror prevails. The child indeed often refers to the books and tries to enact in *his* world what he has read about the *other* world—in particular the credo about "being the good guys" and "carrying the fire" which he repeats like a mantra to ward off his agonizing terror.

Lastly, *The Road* reprises an important Gothic feature: the failure of reason. Gothic literature began as a challenge to the hegemony of reason during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Age; in the same way, *The Road* undermines the rational certainties of our so-called posthuman era with its hubristic genesis of a super human entity destined to unseat human mortality. The novel issues a warning against unwavering rationalism. Our current Information Age, sometimes also called the "technophilic age," has revolutionized the way knowledge is processed, stored, and communicated or shared. The imaginary world of *The Road* shows how such highly organized circuits of information quickly become both unavailable and irrelevant. What has become vital is the knowledge gathered about one's direct physical environment—the kind of knowledge necessary for the prey to outsmart the predator. The novel dismisses the elaborate networks of knowledge to show how absurd they become in the face of extreme adversity. The survivalist minimalism imagined by *The Road* dismantles the technological apparatus that has rendered knowledge both so trivial and so necessary by proposing a grotesque replay of the predicament of the ordinary citizen. The paradigm shift proposed by *The Road* functions as a foil to the current technological and financial teleology; the

novel features the intrinsic weakness of the human against the hubris of technocratic achievements. It also repudiates the model of participation and convergence promoted by digital culture through the display of grim models of cooperation (to enslave and/or eat others). The recurring importance of sight in the novel resonates with our obsession with seeing or being seen; it evokes the cannibalistic voyeurism underlying our surveillance society (at both the individual and collective level), the gathering of data for commercial and marketing purposes.

Towards the end of the first act in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Linda Loman, referring to her husband Willie, warns her sons: "Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person" (56). Her call resonates with a prophetic ring for the Willies of our time. If *The Road* is to be understood as an "apocalyptic" novel at all, it is only if we understand "apocalypse" the way Krzysztof Michalski proposes to do it—not as an event that lies in the future but, in the words of a reviewer Tamsin Shaw, "as a horror that permeates every moment of our lives"—or what some have called "a rolling apocalypse" (Shaw 56). The image of the clock stopped at 1.17 provides another image for this point of no return whose rupture echoes the effect of 9/11 on our consciousness. There is no going back to a sense of normalcy in a world that has been broken asunder, forever divided between a "before" and an "after." The allusion to past horrors—including the Holocaust, as when the child is described as "something out of a deathcamp. Starved, exhausted, sick with fear" (117)—conjures up Adorno's agonizing question: "Is poetry possible after Auschwitz?"

The world described by McCarthy features an order that turns human beings into consuming entities or consumed objects. Likewise, the globalized order functions according to the same predatory logic, feeding off humankind, from personal data consumption for marketing and advertising purposes all the way to bodily forms of enslavement through trafficking. The question raised by *The Road's* Gothic handling of eating is: What does it mean to be human in consumer culture?[9] Richard Gray, commenting on Wendell Berry's 1972 *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural*, notes:

> In terms of the national history, Berry points out, the opposition is one of "pioneers" versus "homesteaders." On a more fundamental, ontological or theological level, it is one of "the road" versus "the wheel." The road . . . posits a linear, progressive notion of life. . . . The embodiment

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[9] See the Lilly Summer for College Teachers organized on the topic in 2014 at Xavier University, led by David J. Burns.

of the linear vision, as far as human practice is concerned, is the ruthless-
ness, the competitiveness and division of the global trade. (118–19)

In the novel, the road might be seen as a visual signifier of the aporia
generated by progress, and a critical inquiry into its legacy. Man's insatia-
ble thirst for knowledge has morphed into plain physical thirst and hunger,
and the road has clearly led to a dead end.

With *The Road*, McCarthy's artistic expression voices the urgency
of fiction to speak for reality. The novel invites its readers to renegotiate
curves and turns in the way to knowledge, generating what Michalski sees,
as described in the review mentioned above, as an "upheaval in our sense
of meaning that follows from our awareness of impending destruction"
(Shaw 56). *The Road* aims at transforming our globalized reality into a nar-
rative and a poetic project, even indictment and warning. Attention must
be paid, indeed.

Finally, McCarthy's novel thus invites us to consider the impact of glo-
balization on literature. It resonates with the latest work done in science
fiction whose main function is to address "the global capitalism's starva-
tion of the indigenous to fatten the capitalist" in the words of scholar Lysa
Rivera (416). Rivera goes on to show how Science Fiction raises an incisive
question: what have we as a society done to get there?[10] We should con-
sider the importance of McCarthy's project and of SF writers, along with
the achievements of other authors such as Thomas Pynchon and Margaret
Atwood, to creating alternative modes of thinking. McCarthy's novel in-
vites us to consider how the cultural work performed by the Gothic is to
transform our "age of innocence" into an age of awareness.

The Road opens a path to reflect creatively on the impact of Gothic
literature on real-world matters as it contributes to and challenges global
regimes of economic, social and economic power. Can the "barbaric yawp"
undergo the Whitmanian transformation into a perfect Song anew? Will
the small human family featured in the final section of the novel make it to
another road? Let us imagine, perhaps, that the last page gestures toward
some faith in humankind after all.[11] The form of the novel, at least, exem-
plifies the demiurgic power of the word again—human and divine.

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[10] She describes how the work of visual and performance artists Guillermo Gomez-
Pena, Roberto Sifuentes and Rubin Ortiz Torres "militated against anti-immigration racism
in the Southland area by creating SF narratives of resistance and parody" (415).

[11] Different interpretations have been given about the last paragraph, in particular. See
for example Trotignon 206–07, Evenson 59 and Schaub's article.

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"It's not just a dream. There is a storm coming!": Financial Crisis, Masculine Anxieties and Vulnerable Homes in American Film

ABSTRACT

Despite the Gothic's much-discussed resurgence in mainstream American culture, the role the late 2000s financial crisis played in sustaining this renaissance has garnered insufficient critical attention. This article finds the Gothic tradition deployed in contemporary American narrative film to explore the impact of economic crisis and threat, and especially masculine anxieties about a perceived incapacity of men and fathers to protect vulnerable families and homes. Variously invoking the American and Southern Gothics, *Take Shelter* (2011) and *Winter's Bone* (2010) represent how the domestic-everyday was made unfamiliar, unsettling and threatening in the face of metaphorical and real (socio-)economic crisis and disorder. The films' explicit engagement with contemporary American economic malaise and instability thus illustrates the Gothic's continued capacity to lay bare historical and cultural moments of national crisis. Illuminating culturally persistent anxieties about the American male condition, *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* materially evoke the Gothic tradition's ability to scrutinize otherwise unspeakable national anxieties about male capacity to protect home and family, including through a focus on economic-cultural "white Otherness." The article further asserts the significance of prominent female assumption of the protective role, yet finds that, rather than individuating the experience of financial crisis on failed men, both films deftly declare its systemic, whole-of-society basis. In so doing, the Gothic sensibility of pervasive anxiety and dread in *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* disrupts dominant national discursive tendencies to revivify American institutions of traditional masculinity, family and home in the wakes of 9/11 and the recession.

INTRODUCTION: THE AMERICAN GOTHIC AND PERIODS OF "CRISIS"

It is critical commonplace that the Gothic resurges in culture in historical moments of national crisis, turmoil and insecurity, interrogating the haunting weight of past deeds and misdeeds to diagnose the troubled present. More specifically for this article, the American Gothic—perhaps once, but no longer critically deemed oxymoronic—explicitly engages the historical and political horrors of American history, and namely the guilt associated with America's originary racial traumas of slavery, conflict and dispossession (Soltysik Monnet 6–25; Goddu 63–65). In so doing, the American Gothic speaks the culturally and politically unspeakable to probe contemporary American traumas and anxieties. In the wake of the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War protests in the 1960s, understandings of the American Gothic were sharpened to communicate its dominant capacity to envision "the American nightmare" (Soltysik Monnet 6). This renewed understanding especially articulates the capacity of the American (and modern) Gothic to equally and forcefully interrogate contemporary horrors as much as historical (and sadly persistent) injustices. Two recent American films that depict the degenerative impacts of financial crisis on the American male, family and home in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008–2009, *Take Shelter* (2011) and *Winter's Bone* (2010), however, extend this temporal relation. Past traumas and misdeeds haunt emphatically in each, yet the Gothic tradition chiefly represents protagonists' present struggles for their family's *fraught future*—the American Dream become nightmare.

The Gothic's resurgence in mainstream American culture over the last decade is routinely linked with a "gothicization of political discourse" that Blake—in contending the effectiveness of the Gothic mode in American culture remains undiminished irrespective of its ubiquity—observes post-9/11 (37). Championed through the Bush Administration's pervasive rhetorical deployment of fear, the Gothic arguably erupted in the so-named War on Terror and popular cultural representations equivalently marked by perceived existential threat, consequent torture and the echoes of military traumas and gender anxieties. Yet the role the late-2000s financial crisis played in sustaining the Gothic's renaissance has garnered insufficient critical attention. Punter argues the modern Gothic transforms the traditional Gothic sense of threat, with dangers largely enshrined as exotic and "over there" now gathering and threatening (from) within as much as without (134). In this sense, the modern Gothic can interrogate contemporary domestic economic horrors as much as foreign political threats or military traumas. Scholarly criticism of the proliferation and perceived misappropriation

of the Gothic tradition in readings of contemporary popular film and television is vociferous (Donnar). Chief among these, Warwick claims scholars and critics overuse the tradition, conveniently and exploitatively deploying a hollow "Gothicky" feeling that disregards the Gothic's singular capacity to speak the unspeakable. Criticisms, however well placed, can implicitly discount the Gothic's unceasing capacity to adapt, grow, appropriate and mutate—including across an evolving and enlarging set of understandings, media and cultural texts—even when they invoke it. Rather than prohibitive, criticisms such as Warwick's act as an important reminder and corrective for (film) scholars to avoid the all-too-convenient deployment of the tradition in schematic analyses or identification of Gothic aesthetic elements or tropes.

Extant film scholarship on the financial crisis has nonetheless largely focused on a resultant tide of male-centric documentaries and melodramas, including *Inside Job* (2010) and *Margin Call* (2011). Negra and Tasker note the "renewal" of the "masculinity in crisis" trope post-recession (2)—seemingly enervating long-standing cultural anxieties often implicitly tied with concerns about American economic decline. Emphasizing tropes of white male injury, these films invariably conclude in a "mode of recuperative failure," with a measure of personal success derived from professional failure. Yet although positioning men as its primary victims, and typically centralizing the failed financial worker, they observe that discourses of masculinity and male crisis have received insufficient attention in recessionary culture. Negra and Tasker also attest, as in previous periods of economic turmoil, that there has been a concomitant "surge in traditionalist discourses of gender and labour," including of a female resourcefulness that proclaims a domesticized, traditionalist femininity (6). Negra and Tasker further find that a "coping females" trope, which implicitly contends that female empowerment requires male disempowerment, attends the "failing males" trope (9). Accordingly, they observe a dearth of female-centred experiences or working-class settings in cultural representations of the recession.

The Gothic's capacity to speak the unspeakable, however, affords real subversive potential. This article asserts the Gothic tradition is provocatively deployed in *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* to represent the effects of economic crisis on working-class and poor Americans. In each, the American and Southern Gothics are variously invoked to articulate and interrogate widespread contemporary American cultural, economic and political instability. In particular, the Southern Gothic—as much a mood of depravity and loss as a subgenre of the Gothic—"is characterized by an emphasis on the grotesque, the macabre, and, very often, the violent" (Punter

and Byron 116–17). Likewise, it often indulges stereotypical myths about Southern cultures, from blue-collar workers to the abject poverty of rural-mountain populations, projecting and thereby displacing national fears and anxieties onto convenient economic-cultural "white Otherness." However, as significantly, the Southern Gothic especially privileges the landscape's symbolic relation to its characters, manifesting inner turmoil, anxiety and violence (Donnar 141). In this final respect particularly, the stoic protagonists in *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* arguably labour in bizarre, off-kilter worlds and against monstrosity, madness and grotesquery to protect family and home from metaphorical and real, impending and endemic (socio-) economic threat and disorder.

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Take Shelter, Masculine Inadequacy and Socioeconomic Anxieties

Echoing the Gothic's traditional concern with inner turmoil made manifest, in *Take Shelter* an envisioned apocalyptic storm reflects a father's increasing mental tumult and possible madness *and* the powerful forces of impending economic collapse. The father's pervasive anxiety, growing paranoia and obsessive desire to protect his family ultimately serve to endanger it—and especially its already tenuous financial security—and require his wife to assume economic control. Set in Ohio, America's Rust Belt, but written with writer-director Jeff Nichols's, a declared Southern writer, native Arkansas in mind, the film is a displaced Southern Gothic. Wrestling directly with ecological instability and climate change, but written at the beginning of the financial crisis, the film's storm allegorizes the uncontrollable and unstoppable forces of capitalism. This overarching context of financial weight subliminally structures family life, and marks the first presentation of Curtis's family and home. Even when Curtis's employee health insurer confirms that it will fund a costly operation to restore their recently deaf daughter's hearing, its emphasized dependence on his continued employment defines him as father and husband.

Take Shelter continues Nichols's interest in sympathetic, stoic male psychologies under pressure. As in Nichols's first film, *Shotgun Stories*, a tale of a family blood feud widely described as Southern Gothic, he engages "at once with a recognizably lived-in blue collar reality and a Southern mythology" (Pinkerton, "Southern Gothic" 49–50). The film opens with Curtis LaForche (Michael Shannon), a crew manager for a sand-mining company, peering worriedly off-screen for ill portents. The film deploys high Gothic sublime and terrifying effects of the natural environment to present the father's apocalyptic visions and confounding dread, as Curtis

"sees" a huge storm before dirty, oily rain begins to fall. The weather pre-figures and mirrors intensifying psychological abnormalities and possible developing madness for the fearful and troubled Curtis, ambiguously reflected, even manifested, by otherworldly natural elements. The off-kilter natural environment violently morphs, shifts and disorients, conjuring the uncanny (or *unheimlich*), an integral feature of the Gothic tradition. The uncanny articulates not only the unsettling tension between the known and the unknown (Soltysik Monnet 23–24), but also how the domestic-everyday is made unfamiliar, unsettling and threatening. The gothicized skies swiftly and repeatedly become strange, discomfiting and incongruous, with birds flying in harried patterns, swarming formations and even dropping dead from the sky. The film here introduces distinct and unsettling perspectival uncertainty between the viewer and Curtis. Throughout, Curtis's visions unclearly distinguish apocalyptic premonitions, inner psychological turmoil or mental illness, the viewer unsure what is real or the projection of a troubled subjectivity, a profound disorientation shared by Curtis.

Along with his dread of an approaching tempest, Curtis suffers from intensifying nightmares of shadowy, silent figures that attempt to abduct his daughter and invade the home, often during torrential rain, storms and lightning. Curtis's fear of Others pathologicizes deeply felt anxieties about his capacity to protect home and family as a father. In his waking screams, these nightmares materially infect his life. Sound bridges, such as intense cracks of thunder, reinforce this discomforting blurring of boundaries between dream and reality, another Gothic staple. The indistinguishability of reality and nightmare, as with Curtis's visions/hallucinations, equally disorients the viewer, whose assumption of Curtis's point-of-view proffers his impression of them as real until they are revealed as nightmares. Linked with prevalent fears about the disruption, takeover or loss of the home in recent horror film (Negra and Tasker 18), the home is not only threatened by the envisioned storm, but also besieged by hostile and malevolent forces within and without. Curtis finds Hannah looking out the living room window, presumably watching the rain. To his horror, he discovers she is looking out at a silent, stationary male figure, menacingly looking in. Hurriedly grabbing the girl, all the door handles begin to violently jiggle, as the man presumably seeks entry. However, the home also threatens the family in its vulnerability and instability, as the entire home then begins shaking before all of the furniture lifts and hangs, momentarily suspended. The home, and perhaps Curtis, is literally unmoored. When Curtis wakes, struggling desperately for rasping breaths, the horrifically transformed everyday is again retrospectively revealed as nightmare. These nightmares

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even leave physical marks, including one in which he is viciously attacked by his dog, leaving him repeatedly clutching his arm in pain over the coming day, compelling him to start building the dog a fence.

Foreshadowing the symbolic return of repressed trauma and the debilitating dread of mental illness, as Curtis works he looks repeatedly and distractedly at their long-dormant underground backyard storm shelter. Deeply uncertain whether he is experiencing delusion or prophesy, ambivalently intuiting both that he is unwell *and* that his nightmares and visions presage a coming apocalypse, Curtis first borrows a book on mental illness and then buys long-life provisions to revive the storm shelter. He also visits his doctor, the first time his mother, who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia, is mentioned. Subsequently visiting her in her assisted-living facility, Curtis asks how her mental illness started. Signalling his childhood trauma, he later vaguely recalls its onset when he was ten, when his mother abandoned him in the family car and went missing for a week. His mother's seemingly insufficient recollection that it was a stressful time is nonetheless immediately enlivened in a succeeding shot that spotlights the family's financial stresses, the camera—and Curtis's eyes—unerringly fixated on the ever-rising cost of gasoline at the pump. Implying the financial crisis is the "absent cause" of Curtis's possible illness and its traumatic consequences (Boyle 19), *Take Shelter* repeatedly emphasizes, even fetishizes, the exact dollar amounts for purchases and expenses that cumulatively build pressure on Curtis.[1]

In its implacable presence, the weather assumes an almost menacing agency. The increasingly violent weather dually provokes an uncanny memory, an uneasy experience of "something familiar which has been repressed" (Soltysik Monnet 23–24). Recalling something past that remains in some sense denied (Punter 130), his childhood trauma returns to haunt, trigger his fears of hereditary mental illness, and revivify his present (and interdependent) financial and paternal anxieties. The anxiety-inducing peals of thunder and cracks of lightning inspire, unleash *and* manifest Curtis's ever more deranged psychological states and seeming descent into paranoia. Compulsively driven by overwhelming forces, whether external or internal, Curtis takes out a risky personal loan, against the family home and without his wife Samantha's (Jessica Chastain) knowledge, to purchase a shipping storage container. He also "borrows" earthmoving equipment from work to remove earth above the old shelter—further exhuming all that was (symbolically) buried—to install the container and

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[1] These include the cost of the shipping container, the cost of his medicine prescription and the gas masks he buys for the shelter.

extend the re-stocked storm shelter. Coupled with his continuing anxieties about his (in)ability to protect home and family, reading the mental illness book only in the long-locked shelter reinforces its link with buried familial trauma and fears of mental illness. In spending entire nights there, the underground shelter also reflects his growing psychological and emotional alienation. Ambivalently, the vulnerability of home and family thus lie both in the incursions of malevolent persons that populate his nightmares *and* the symbolic return of repressed childhood trauma and feared mental illness.

Curtis, profoundly ashamed, only confesses his nightmares about shadowy attackers to Sam after another nightmare ends in a violent seizure: "They always start with a kind of storm . . . Then things, people . . . [the storm] makes them crazy." He also confirms how his dual anxieties, his childhood trauma and hereditary mental health fears, define and motivate his perceived paternal obligations and desire to protect his family: "You know what I came from . . . and I promised myself that I would never leave." Curtis also asks Sam to believe in the reality of his visions and nightmares: "it's not just a dream. It's not just a feeling. I'm afraid something may be coming." This self-perceived cultural expectation is reiterated when his older brother visits and, as Curtis works on the shelter, elliptically invokes an economics of patriarchal protective capacity: "If you don't keep your eye on the ball for one minute in this economy you're screwed . . . Take care of your family. Handle your business."

Ultimately, however, Curtis's obsessive paternal desire to protect family and home endangers it, when he is fired for borrowing equipment without permission. His boss's accusation, "You did this to yourself," places responsibility for economic failure, as Boyle astutely observes, onto working-class individuals (23). Negra and Tasker define the dominant trope of the "experience of recession as feminization," particularly given dominant representations of male joblessness and traditionalist female gender empowerment (15). In this respect, Curtis feels the loss of his job as emasculating. Losing his health insurance and capacity to service the new loan, each precariously hinging on continued employment, jeopardizes Hannah's operation and the family home. In this sense, the horrific blurring of nightmare and reality not only disrupt the home but troublingly blur protective Self and threatening Other. Curtis, as much as the shadowy figures that haunt his nightmares, endangers the family.[2] The use of the

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[2]   Far from recognizing his growing monstrosity, Curtis's perception of threats to the home deepens to include Sam who becomes the violent antagonist in his next nightmare—barefoot, soaking and glancing ominously at a kitchen knife, a heightened horror score implying her new status as a domestic threat.

widescreen frame—which effectively showcases his smallness and vulnerability outdoors—heightens this sense, amplifying Curtis's looming stature in the home to ambivalently signal, as Pinkerton notes, his potential threat ("Trouble in Mind" 47). Curtis's behaviours also recall Punter's observation on contemporary Gothic representations of threat, with dangers gathering and threatening (from) within as much as without. Rather than shadowy, monstrous Others, the threat to the American home and family thus resides within the figure of the father.

However, as much as a portrait of contemporary male fears and threat, *Take Shelter* offers one of marriage, its stresses and resilience. With Curtis unemployed and possibly losing his mind, Sam, who sells clothing at flea markets to fund a desired beach vacation, assumes responsibility for the family's economic decisions, outlining a financial plan that will preserve the home and ensure their daughter's operation. Her symbolic but agreed replacement of the failed husband-father also seeks the sustenance of the family, appending a social condition that they attend a community event as a "normal" family. However, when Curtis gets into a violent altercation with his estranged colleague and friend, he wildly announces his visions of an oncoming catastrophe and seemingly confirms growing hysteria and madness: "There is a storm coming . . . like nothing you have ever seen! . . . 'Cause if this thing comes true, there ain't gonna be any more [*sic*]." His wrathful declamations finally exhausted, Curtis breaks down and weeps upon seeing his daughter's discernible fear of him. Reiterating the denuding of patriarchal authority manifest in Sam's assumption of sole economic governance, she must escort the bared *pater familias* out.

After another nightmare bleeds into wailing storm-warning sirens and Sam's harried exhortations to "wake up!", it seems Curtis's premonitions may become reality. However, after spending the night in the storm shelter, the next morning she tells him, "It's over," and to remove the gas mask he bought them, and unlock and open the shelter door. Indulging the Gothic fear of being trapped or buried alive, the underground shelter no longer connotes safe haven, but the threat of entrapment. When Curtis tries to have her open it, Sam continues working to recuperate the failed father, insisting he must if he "means to stay with us." In tentatively opening the shelter, Curtis confirms the overnight storm has passed and that "it's fine"—a notion equally signalling Curtis's acceptance he must submit to professional help, albeit this time with Sam. In his first session, his psychiatrist subsequently recommends the previously aborted beach vacation before admitting himself for treatment at a psychiatric facility, with each intended to dislocate him from the apparent cause and symptom of his turmoil, the storm shelter. However, while his nightmares and hallucinations

are now medicalized, the film's ambiguous ending on the family beach holiday seemingly recuperates the troubled father.

Curtis's apocalyptic visions apparently come to pass when his daughter points out to sea, causing Curtis to also turn and stare in shock. While the viewer cannot yet see what they can, when Sam comes outside from the beach house, the breadth and severity of the approaching tempest is ominously reflected in the windows. Picking up his daughter, Curtis is also symbolically reinstalled as father, and Sam's nod, after Curtis looks to her for assurance, affirms she too sees the coming storm and the need to swiftly return to the shelter he rightly revived. These moments collectively transform the storm metaphor from analogue into (economic) reality; the tempest Curtis foresees all-too-familiarly representing the financial crisis viewers came to know. The apocalyptic/economic crisis thus re-centres white paternal masculinity, first as victim and finally as prophet. Countering the maternal assumption of economic control and the frightening doubling of the protective paternal Self and monstrous Other as threats to the home, anxieties about white male inadequacy are seemingly relieved. However, the restoration of threatened American masculinity is compromised, uncertain and ambivalent. No interpretation of the much-discussed coda is reassuring: the family either now shares Curtis's hallucinations, the feared storm is real, and they must return to a shelter that signifies re-opened childhood trauma; or Curtis (and the viewer) end the film hopelessly trapped in another hallucination—and a permanent dislocation from reality in realized mental illness. Either way, in *Take Shelter*, white male anxieties, guilt and paranoia linger, for the unsettling tempest cannot be averted and is about to hit.

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WINTER'S BONE AND THE SOUTHERN GOTHIC: LANDSCAPE, HOME AND MALE ABSENCE

Adapted from a 2006 novel of the same name by Daniel Woodrell, *Winter's Bone* depicts an indomitable daughter's nightmarish quest—similarly besieged by hostile and malevolent forces—to safeguard her Ozark family and home after her drug-making father's disappearance.[3] The absence *yet* spectral presence of the father/s signals both male inadequacy and failure *and* the collapse of the corrupted Ozark mountain community, located in the southern half of Missouri bordering Arkansas, formed of abject poverty and rampant methamphetamine production and use. Her quest, which

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[3] While the film is largely faithful to the novel, its production and release into a post-recession America significantly shapes its cultural reception.

requires her to travel from house to house in her efforts to confirm his whereabouts, also articulates the symbolic relation of the landscape to character particularly evocative of the Southern Gothic. She encounters not only ruptured community and familial bonds in their unwelcoming (extended) relatives and his hostile criminal accomplices, but grotesque situations and a prevailing mood of violence, alienation and futility. In so doing, director Debra Granik evocatively establishes "the strangeness of a place" (Berra), signalled in an uncanny portrait of an off-kilter, broken "America," through its repressed economic-cultural "white Other."

Ree Dolly (Jennifer Lawrence), a seventeen-year-old with despairing aspirations of escape via military enlistment, necessarily performs dual roles as *de facto* mother and father, caring for and teaching her young siblings to survive, shoot and cook. The Dolly home is fraught and precarious—their father, Jessup, absent after skipping bail on drug charges and mother, Connie (Valerie Richards), effectively so, medically and psychologically withdrawn, overwhelmed by her husband's repeat failings: "This is the exact shit she went crazy trying to get away from." The film repeatedly highlights Ree's circumscribed life options, particularly given she has dropped out of school to care for her siblings, to signal the realities of endemic poverty—impacts intensified by the Great Recession. In an early scene that marks how embedded these limited alternatives are in the American education system, she first looks bemusedly into a baby-care class using dolls, before looking more longingly at Marine cadets training with wooden guns in the gym. While Ree's separation from each by a glassed door underlines both her exclusion and the stark difference between her child-rearing, gun-toting reality and the fake performances she witnesses (Sorrento 43), she nonetheless signs up for the cadets, wishing for an avenue of escape. However, her later visit with an army recruiter uneasily signals the socio-economic pressures that drive much enlistment, with the substantial sign-on fee clearly trumping ill-defined dreams of travel.

When Jessup does not appear at his arraignment, Ree must locate him inside seven days in order to save their home and her family (her sister will go into foster care and her brother be adopted by covetous relatives), because he placed it and their virgin woods as bond. Her ancestry is also signified in the land, so even in cutting down and selling the woods before eviction, she would symbolically sell away her history and heritage (Sorrento 42). In spite of its state of disrepair, the home's cultural centrality remains undiminished. Without it, Ree declares the family would be "in the field like dogs." Jessup's disappearance nonetheless establishes a pattern of male absence in the community. The permanent absence of Dolly men from the home is confirmed when Ree's uncle, Teardrop (John Hawkes),

does not enter, even upon safely returning Ree after she is beaten. Teardrop, coiled, mangy and dangerous, is also absent when Ree begins her quest, arriving unannounced at his house. Invoking a persistent theme of women acting as gatekeepers and proxies for absent men, his partner speaks in his name. The indictable withdrawal of patriarchal influence, a consequence of endemic poverty, male neglect, drug use and criminality, enforces a matriarchy, but only superficially. When Ree thereafter visits Thump Milton (Ronnie Hall), a powerful local crime boss whose belated appearance provokes not only genuine fear in Ree, but wariness from his own family, she is first met by another gatekeeper, his wife Merab (Dale Dickey). As Berra observes, those who transgress cultural codes are often cast out or ostracized in the Southern Gothic. In Merab's wry assumption that Ree is in the "wrong place, I expect," the woman signals both Ree's violation of unwritten community codes against trespass and Ree as symbolically out-of-place. Further implying her quest breaches accepted gender boundaries, Merab indicts the absence of males to act for Ree: "Don't you got no men, to do this?"

Winter's Bone outwardly indulges the usual cultural myths of exoticized, Othered Southern rural and mountain cultures, designated as insular, corrupt, degenerate, and culturally stagnant. The dysfunctional community, an ill-bred, incestuous network of extended families and criminal relationships, is menacing, and mired in ugly, barbarous violence. However, Granik deftly balances Southern myth and "starkly-realized social reality"—perhaps a virtue of Granik's observational filmmaking style—and adheres to the Southern Gothic literary tradition, rather than its "more overwrought cinematic lineage" (Berra). *Winter's Bone* also presents a complex sense of solidarity and kinship, especially evident when, redolent of other Southern Gothic films (Donnar), the film pleasurably lingers on a domestic, multi-generational family gathering, musical performance and sublime singing. In *Winter's Bone*, the charged immanence of male violence is repeatedly used to silence women—a desperate attempt to displace the perceived feminizing characteristics of joblessness and poverty. Teardrop frighteningly embodies this potential, menacingly and elliptically warning his partner not to challenge him: "I said shut up already . . . with my mouth."[4] Reminiscent of many representations, as Granik recognizes, the otherwise prized defiance and individuality that mountain cultures represent in excess becomes alienating and scary (Bell 28). Typically, governmental and institutional authority is also openly refused, tenuous, even

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[4] Teardrop likewise warns Ree against speaking to her father's sometime accomplice: "You'll end up bit by hogs . . . or wishin' you were."

void, in this domestic-but-foreign space. The locals display open disdain and deep suspicion of authorities like Sheriff Baskin (Garret Dillahunt) and a bondsman, each requiring physical confirmation of Jessup's whereabouts or death, and perceived to have a cynical, parasitic presence dependent on the troubles of local men.

The Gothic hangs on the sublime qualities and terrifying effects of the landscape, but the Southern Gothic particularly privileges the landscape's symbolic relation to its characters (Donnar; Savoy). Cementing *Winter's Bone*'s place within the tradition, the stark, desolate austerity of the Ozark countryside is by turns beautiful and beguiling, uncivilized and unsympathetic, mirroring the character and economic plight of its blighted inhabitants. Most tellingly, Ree's confident peripatetic navigation from house to house establishes her continued connection with the landscape. Her options for travel are admittedly limited—her father took their truck (later found burned out) and she had to give up her horse— but her purposeful walking cannily inverts the Gothic heroine's typically fraught relationship with the terrifying landscape. In regularly cutting across the harsh, nondescript landscape and emerging out of it, she symbolically (re-)establishes control and mastery over her life. Indeed, her unwillingness to get into men's trucks throughout rests not only on reasoned fears of potential male violence—"You have always scared me," she tells her uncle in a rare moment of quiet intimacy and permitted openness—but the lack of control connoted in having her movement circumscribed. Ree's resourcefulness does not mandate a traditionalist femininity, which Negra and Tasker otherwise identify as pervasive in recessionary culture (7). The disruptive significance of her walking emblematizes her agency and challenge to the *status quo*, reiterated across repeated warnings to "get back home" and, by implication, cease talking, questioning and moving. Ree's determined walking thus not only counters community expectations of female immobility and silence, but complexly reinvigorates *and* threatens the community.

This symbolic connection to the landscape has atrophied across the wider Ozark community, with the locals she encounters symbolically immobile, tied to dilapidated networks of ramshackle housing and broken down, rusted vehicles. The debased community is mirrored in the already fraught home, underscored when Ree's neighbour (also her father's cousin) unpersuasively attempts to convince her Jessup died cooking meth. However, with Ree recognizing that the high weeds suggest the explosion happened long ago, the apocalyptic scene of an exploded, blackened house and burned out vehicles she surveys is rather evidence of the home as destroyed *and* toxic. Moreover, the only surviving cultural code is the

prohibition on talking. Indeed, indicative of the community's breakdown, Ree's numerous calls on community codes or blood relations no longer hold (their traditional) significance. On numerous occasions, female gate-keepers talk specifically about *not* talking. Crime, corruption and drugs further encourage an environment of paranoia and silence, with Thump especially unwilling to speak with Ree because "talking just causes witnesses. And he don't want none of those." To talk, as Teardrop observes, goes "against our ways" and invites punishment: declaring Jessup was killed because he started talking and provoking an armed stand-off with the sheriff after asking why he told others that Jessup had become an informant. Even Ree declares her shame *for* her father, because he snitched, with Teardrop troublingly blaming it on Jessup's love for his family, described as "his weakness."

Ree's unwelcome return to Thump's property abruptly announces a Gothic horror aesthetic that persists until film's end. Merab and her sisters, brutally enacting the threat of violence associated with Thump, scald Ree with coffee, beat and drag her by the hair to the barn in his name: "I told you to leave him alone." Recovering from unconsciousness, Ree's blurred vision slowly refocuses on a room filled with iron implements horrifically connoting her possible torture. As well as gatekeepers, women act as surrogates of male violence, *as* Merab assures Teardrop when he arrives and asks if any man hit Ree: "I put the hurt on her." Reiterating the community prohibition on talking, Teardrop vouches "to stand for" his bloodied, though defiant niece in order to return her safely home: "This is a girl that won't tell nobody nothing." Yet in agreeing to "answer for" her, Teardrop assumes responsibility not only for what she may do, but her recent actions and perceived transgressions. Teardrop's capacity for violence is vital to rescuing Ree *and* thereby securing her quest, but recalls the fatalistic sense of violence and death that shadows him and will likely culminate in his demise. In an act of self-sacrifice that symbolically returns him to the family, Teardrop too now stands condemned, whether to exile or death. Safely returned home, the injured Ree endures vivid fever dreams induced by strong painkillers. The Gothic horror aesthetic extends into these dreams, filled with vultures and chainsaws, as the frame transmutes from a colour 1.85:1 aspect ratio to a black and white Academy 1.33:1 ratio. The chilling looped sound of chainsaws cutting down trees both articulates her fear of losing the woods and serves as a macabre harbinger of a cutting *off* that rescues the family's precarious position.

Ree's undaunted efforts to find her father, now presumed dead, across a series of in-between spaces distressingly signify her marking for death. As if recognizing this shared fate, she searches the local cemetery (without

luck) with Teardrop for her father's body in "any humps that ain't yet settled." Thump's wife thereafter knocks at the Dolly door and, wishing to silence community gossip about her family, finally offers to assist Ree: "We'll take you to your daddy's bones. We know the place." Ree's journey is disorienting from the outset, including by virtue of the landscape. A disinclined and distrustful Ree is first obligated to put a sack on her head to mask their route. A subsequent small boat trip also swiftly becomes strange, unsettling and incongruous. Suggestive of a fable, the gothicized waterway assumes an almost menacing agency, *filled* with haunting silence, horrifically enclosed and enveloped in darkness. Invoking the mythic relation of waterways as liminal spaces between life and death, as Sorrento (48) recognizes, when the Thump women finally halt the boat, Merab instructs Ree to "reach down and tug [Jessup] up" from the waters that harbour and conceal her disappeared father. Plunging her hand into the ice-cold water, Ree finds his hand. She cannot saw it off with the chainsaw Merab proffers, yet macabrely holds it while Merab performs the grisly task. John R. Clark (qtd. in Leeuwen), noting the historical function of grotesques *as and for* cultural critique, asserts that contemporary grotesques dramatize the corruption and perversion of entire societies. Accordingly, Ree must retrieve her father's body again for the second hand after she involuntarily allows it to slip back under the water: "they know that trick." The deed done, she again drops his body in horror, as the camera stays on the body of water that will serve as his grave. In *Winter's Bone*, the recently buried trauma haunts too close to the surface, shallow and raw. Further allegorizing the grotesquery of her economic plight—and that poor Americans confront to secure their home—Ree takes her father's severed hands to the sheriff in a plastic shopping bag labelled, "Thank You. Have a Nice Day." Yet the violent return and survival of the repressed (economic) Other in the Gothic tradition holds subversive, socially critical potential.

The South in American film is culturally romanticized and idealized, but more often serves—particularly in the cinematic Southern Gothic—to externalize and project American fears and prejudices on to "a convenient Other" (Pinkerton, "Southern Gothic" 44–45). This displacement seeks to affirm America's civilization and dominance—and insulate it. In this sense, *Winter's Bone* seemingly displaces anxieties about the perceived failures of American males onto monstrous domestic "white Otherness." However, rather than displace its anxieties and failings, the "white Other" becomes "mainstream" America's troubling double, again echoing the Gothic's traditional concern with inner turmoil made manifest. Invariably, however, this exposes prejudice and anxiety alike. While the "cinematic South" is often evocative of an imagined and derided (national) past, it

is also a symbolic and meaningful "repository for the nation's unresolved problems and contradictions" (Barker and McKee 5). American flags conspicuously connect Ozark community and male dysfunction, violence and abandonment with the nation state. Flags in particular signal wider concerns over American masculinity and also the nation's moral culpability for abandoning its economic Others. A flag reflected over the passenger side truck window in which Ree sits awaiting Teardrop's return foreshadows male violence and neglect when Teardrop takes an axe to a Thump family vehicle, and the flag on the Dolly porch is miserably tattered.

Nevertheless, the Ozark community, as embodied by Ree, is not simply representative of doomed white Otherness and masculinity, but female resilience and forbearance that redeems absent father and secures the home. Called "child" repeatedly throughout the boat ride, the grotesque ordeal marks a transitional moment for Ree. Ree dually asserts the honour of her father's name throughout—declaring early on he is dead and "not a runner"—and that she will find him, telling the bondsman: "You know what Dollys are." When the bondsman later confirms the family home is secured, Ree's ability to find Jessup's body restores the Ozark family (name) she sustains: "Bread and butter, I told you." More than this, she compels both Jessup and Teardrop's redemptive acts, however partial or ambivalent. Teardrop's admission he now knows who killed Jessup foreshadows an act of revenge and, playing the banjo, a likely shared fate. In thereafter refusing to take the instrument when he leaves, Teardrop ensures it will become a spectral reminder of the men who played it. In taking on Ree's "sins," Teardrop becomes an unlikely and ambivalent Christ-figure, sacrificing himself to take her place among the dead. Teardrop remains unpredictable, even unreadable to the end (Berra), yet Ree's dogged quest compels his return to the family. More significantly, in recovering her father—retrieving his hands and bringing out his old banjo—the tireless Ree not only redeems fallen paternity, but also replaces it. After Teardrop leaves, Ree assures her siblings—the three depicted as a tight unit—she will not do the same, with permanent male absence demanding her conclusive ascension to family head: "I'd be lost without the weight of you on my back." Unlike Teardrop, Ree's self-sacrifice subordinates her own needs (and pleasures and future) to sustain the family. Berra correctly notes that in Ree's "unwavering courage in the face of adversity," she takes her position among the canon of Gothic heroines. However, most tellingly, Ree's "triumph," much like Curtis's, is constrained, compromised and ambivalent. She can accept but not escape her circumstances, the film subversively admitting the limits of individual empowerment absent systemic change.

CONCLUSION

Winter's Bone and *Take Shelter* showcase bizarre, off-kilter and ugly worlds, monstrosity, madness and grotesquery to interrogate American cultural, economic and political instability in the wakes of 9/11 and the recession. Each film echoes the Gothic's traditional concern with inner turmoil made manifest, and articulates the symbolic relation of the natural environment landscape to character redolent of the American and Southern Gothics, to articulate how the domestic-everyday becomes unfamiliar, unsettling and threatening. In so doing, *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* materially evoke the Gothic's continued subversive capacity to lay bare contemporary moments of national crisis and unease, illuminating unresolved and unrelieved American cultural anxieties about male protective capacity. Specifically, the films represent the cumulative deleterious impacts of the recessionary economic climate to give voice to reinvigorated anxieties about the perceived incapacity of beleaguered (white) American men and fathers to protect vulnerable family, home and nation alike. Most significantly, rather than individuating the experience of financial crisis on "failing males" and the besieged American home in recessionary culture, both *Winter's Bone* and *Take Shelter* deftly declare its systemic basis, unerringly depicting the everyday impacts of wide-scale economic licentiousness and exploitation on working-class and poor Americans. Complicating Negra and Tasker's findings (13), familial traumas are thus located not in individual responsibility and failure, but whole-of-society causes that preclude too-easy narrative triumphs. In speaking these *unspeakables*, both films demonstrate the continuing vital qualities of the Gothic tradition: presenting male crisis and failure absent uncomplicated recuperation and presenting financial hardship and poverty absent comforting fantasies of escape. Nor are male anxieties and failure linked disapprovingly to female empowerment, but rather male inadequacy and absence in *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* compel increased female control to navigate financial crisis and rescue the besieged home. In these respects, both films contest and complicate dominant discourses on the cultural restoration of American males and the home along traditional gender lines. Rather than displacing and erasing cultural fears, in the prominent and unapologetic female assumption of the protective role, the Gothic sensibility of pervasive anxiety, dread and paranoia in *Take Shelter* and *Winter's Bone* unsettles national cultural narratives about revivified American institutions of traditional masculinity, family and home—the American Dream as Nightmare.

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Boy Melodrama: Genre Negotiations and Gender-Bending in the *Supernatural* Series

ABSTRACT

For years *Supernatural* (CW, 2005–) has gained the status of a cult series as well as one of the most passionate and devoted fandoms that has ever emerged. Even though the main concept of the series indicates that *Supernatural* should appeal predominantly to young male viewers, in fact, the fandom is dominated by young women who are the target audience of the CW network. My research is couched in fan studies and audience studies methodological perspectives as it is impossible to understand the phenomenon of *Supernatural* without referring to its fandom and fan practices. However, it focuses on the series' structure in order to explain how this structure enables *Supernatural*'s viewers to challenge and revise prevailing gender roles. *Supernatural* combines elements of divergent TV genres, traditionally associated with either male or female audiences. It opens up to gender hybridity through genre hybridity: by interweaving melodrama with horror and other "masculine" genres the show provides a fascinating example of Gothic television which questions any simplistic gender identifications.

INTRODUCTION

Supernatural (CW, 2005–; henceforth *SPN*) is a multi-generic television show targeted at a young female audience and created in the Gothic mode, though outside the female Gothic tradition as it has been described by Tania Modleski. The series features two brothers on the road, Dean (Jensen Ackles) and Sam Winchester (Jared Padalecki), who selflessly hunt evil and save people, resigning from personal and professional lives of their own. Now entering its eleventh season, *SPN* has gained the status of a cult series and one of the most active, passionate and devoted fandoms that has ever emerged.[1] While this essay does not focus strictly on *SPN* fandom, fan studies and audience studies have shaped my way of thinking about the series. Research conducted by such scholars as John Fiske, Henry Jenkins or Matt Hills, inspired by the works of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies which understand the text as a cultural battlefield of meanings, has changed the way we study popular culture. The image of mass audience as a chaotic crowd of passive consumers, constructed by the Frankfurt School, has been discarded since audience studies prove the polysemy of cultural texts and reveal how those texts are used as a locus of resistance to the dominant order, even when they do not question its primacy (e.g., Radway).

It would be difficult to explain the phenomenon of *SPN* without invoking fan practices or the interdependencies between fandom and the creative team. The series is well-known for its metafictional strategies, including the most radical ones such as subtext messages, insider jokes or addressing viewers and fans directly (e.g., S05E22). The list of reflexive elements structuring *SPN* is impressive: juxtaposition of fictional and real worlds, coexistence of alternative realities, recurrent intertextuality, satire on television, the very self-awareness of the story (García 148). The first of many episodes with clear meta-elements—"Hollywood Babylon" (S02E18)—shows how the Winchesters investigate a haunting case on a horror movie set, but it is "French Mistake" (S06E15) which deserves to be called the most meta-episode of any television programme. In "French Mistake," the boys, as the Winchester brothers are usually called, are thrown into "our" world and find themselves on the set of the *Supernatural* TV series in Vancouver where they pretend to be Jensen Ackles and Jared

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[1] Larsen and Zubernis inform that by the beginning of 2013 the number of *Supernatural* conventions held all over the world exceeded 50 and fans from nearly 200 countries logged onto the *Supernatural Wiki*, the most exhaustive online source on *SPN* (Introduction 5). Moreover, *SPN* fandom tends to call itself the "Family"; the inspiration came from Jared Padalecki, who once said: "I have my family, my on-set family, and then our *Supernatural* family" (qtd. in Casper 78).

Padalecki. Most recently, in "Fan Fiction" (S10E05), the 200th anniversary episode, in order to honour and thank the fandom, the creative team sends the Winchesters to an all-girl school where a musical adaptation of *Supernatural* books (introduced in S04E18) is being prepared. Taking into account how intensive and fruitful the relation between the *SPN* creative team and its fandom is and how deeply this relation influences the series itself, it seems necessary to refer to the methodological approach proposed by fan studies, if a well-grounded analysis of any social representations in *SPN* is to be conducted.

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I claim that the way in which specific genres structure *SPN* strongly affects how gender is represented in the series and how the audience might decode this representation. However, *genre* has to be understood in terms of cultural multifaceted practice rather than simply as an isolated text. As Jason Mittel argues: "We need to look beyond the text as the locus for genre and instead locate genres within the complex interrelations among texts, industries, audiences, and historical contexts" (10). *Genres* should be analyzed as clusters of images, conventions, audience generic knowledge and expectations, inevitably entangled in questions of cultural value and prestige, and therefore, questions of class and gender (Neale; Tudor). In the case of *SPN*, it is important to establish how and why differently gendered genres are implemented by the creative team and interpreted by the audience. *SPN*'s cross-gendered genre hybridity resurfaces within *diegesis* in Dean's interest in chosen texts of popular culture: on the one hand, Dean is a die-hard aficionado of rock music and an enthusiast of the Western (S06E18), both coded as masculine in their appeal; on the other, he turns out to be an avid viewer of a "feminine" soap opera *Dr. Sexy MD* (S05E08).

I apply a cultural perspective to research not only genres, but also gender representations in *SPN*, following Julie d'Acci's advice:

> Representations of gender . . . should not simply be equated with TV depictions of male/female or masculine/feminine characters or personalities. . . . we have to look at the position of characters in plots, at narrative structures as a whole, at genres, at the overall television enterprise. (381)

In other words, d'Acci opts for an "integrated approach," pointing out that factors determining gender representation exist on various levels of production and reception of TV texts—in order to properly describe each particular gender representation, we need to define the social, historical, and economical contexts it which it functions. Furthermore, d'Acci claims that "Representations of the conventional binaries of male/female, masculinity/femininity, man/woman need to be studied not only for how

they get constructed, reproduced, and enforced, but also for how they already are and can continue to be broken apart" (381). Therefore, I will focus on the mechanisms and possibilities embedded in *SPN*'s generic form of questioning traditional gender paradigms, and traditional definition of manhood in particular.

THE LITTLE SHOW THAT COULD

SPN premiered on September 13, 2005, on WB network, owned by Warner Bros., which merged with United Paramount Network owned by CBS the next year, thus creating the CW. The series survived a network merger, the writers' strike, as well as being scheduled on Thursday and Friday. The CW cannot be compared with CBS or NBC—it is a smaller network with fewer resources and the need to struggle for respect. The network is overtly targeted at young, rather affluent adults (18–34), especially young women, which means that its line-up consists mainly of the so-called post-feminist teen shows (Bridgeman 7), which are not held in high esteem and which, interestingly, often belong to the telefantasy genre.

For a decade *SPN* has maintained steady ratings of over 2 million viewers. According to Nielsen 2013–2014 TV season series ratings, 2.81 million people were watching *SPN*'s ninth season finale live, which means that after nine years on air *SPN* was the second most popular CW show, after *Arrow* (3.28 m), though, obviously, it could not compete with comedy hits (e.g., *Big Bang*: 19.96 m) or crime series (e.g., *NCIS*: 19.77 m) produced by the Big Four. For years critics have ignored *SPN* and it has spread mostly by word of mouth, without the help of either a wide-scale network promotional campaign or official social media presence. Gavia Baker-Whitelaw adds that "Over the course of its ninth season, *Supernatural*'s adult audience grew by 27 percent. . . . Honestly, *Supernatural* just doesn't feel like something that should be doing this well. And yet." There is a reason why *SPN* is often referred to as "the Little Show That Could."

Initially the series was conceived as a hybrid of the horror, western and road movie genres organized around the monster-of-the-week; however, it developed its own master narrative and evolved into a "flexi-narrative," which combines self-contained episodes with an idiosyncratic and consistent mythology (Simmons 142). Larsen and Zubernis (*Fandom* 2) claim that the show was expected to appeal primarily to the 18–49 male demographic. Nonetheless, the network did remember about its primary audience—young females—and cast attractive actors in the roles of the protagonists. The results of the casting surprised the creative team. Eric Kripke, the show's creator, explains:

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> When we started out, we were going to make a horror movie every week. It was about the monsters, and it was about Hook Man and Bloody Mary and the urban legends. . . . I would say right around Episode 4 or 5 [of Season 1], Bob Singer [executive producer/director] and I were watching the episodes, and we just started saying, "God, those two guys and their chemistry is so much more interesting than the horror movies we're showing."

As a consequence, the monster-of-the-week became less important than the relationship between the brothers and their familial issues. Moreover, it was soon discovered that *SPN* fandom consisted mainly of women. Nevertheless, this does not imply that *SPN* has no male viewers. As Bill Gorman's research from April 2010 demonstrates, the difference in numbers between female and male viewers is much less impressive in the case of *SPN* (1.27) than, for example, in the case of *The Vampire Diaries* (2.00), another CW hit.[2] The ratio 1.27 actually suggests that *SPN*'s male audience is quite significant, especially if we take into account that women prevail across TV series audiences in general and the gender ratio is in men's favour solely with regard to satiric cartoons, such as *Simpsons* (0.67) or *Family Guy* (0.68). *SPN* fandom is overwhelmingly female, yet Melissa N. Bruce argues that through negotiating television genres *SPN* "works to appeal to multiple audiences" and the above gender ratings confirm her claim.

THE ODD STEP CHILD OF THE CW

Jensen Ackles's thought-provoking statement that *SPN* is "the odd step child of the CW" and that "It's not about Backstreet Boys driving around in a cool car" (qtd. in Larsen and Zubernis, *Fandom* 202–03) is a good point to start a detailed discussion on genre and gender negotiations in *SPN*. The best way to grasp the distinctiveness of *SPN* in CW broadcasts implied by Ackles is to compare the series with another CW long-run hit, *The Vampire Diaries* (2008–; henceforth *TVD*), whose both audience and fandom are mostly female.

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[2] Gorman's research shows the ratio of the ratings for women 18–49 to men 18–49 for the airing of each show during one week in April 2010, for both repeats and original episodes. The research does not include Friday and Saturday shows due to the lack of gender data for those shows.

While the main characters in *SPN* are two brothers engaged in the "family business" of hunting all evil things they would meet on their way, in the centre of *TVD* universe there is a heroine (Elena) and two vampire brothers (Stefan and Damon Salvatore) that are romantically involved with her. The Winchesters are more interested in family than romantic relationships; and unlike Elena and the Salvatores, Sam and Dean function within all-male social groups. The characters' goals differ substantially: in *TVD* the principal aim is to survive constantly resurfacing threats and fall happily in love (a personal goal); *SPN* is about sacrificing one's own happiness for the survival of others and the world in general (a quest, though with a personal motivation). Consequently, *TVD* takes place mostly in private spaces, such as family homes (especially kitchens and personalized bedrooms), while *SPN* keeps changing locations, situating the Winchesters either in public or so-called liminal spaces (e.g., motels). However, what really deeply separates *SPN* from *TVD* and partially accounts for its masculine genre framework is the characters' social class and the aesthetic style it entails.

In *TVD*, everybody and everything is exaggeratedly beautiful as the series represents post-feminist aesthetics and openly appeals to post-feminist female subjects. Almost all characters belong to the upper-middle class: they do not have to worry about money and do not have to work, and they still live in pretty houses, drive expensive cars, and wear fancy clothes. *SPN*, in contrast, casts its characters away from the American class system, making them steal, use fake credit cards or play poker to survive and continue their crusade. So-called "hunters" are dressed in boots and flannel shirts, wear the same jackets for years, keep all their stuff in the car, and exchange gas station gifts for Christmas (S03E08). They are presented as liminal figures, and thus, they become both monsters and heroes of American suburbs (Burnell 47–59). If Sam and Dean can save American suburbanites from their worst nightmares, it is because they possess the attributes of social outcasts: belonging nowhere and having nothing to lose, they can be violent and skilful at inflicting pain if the situation demands it. Such a social profile, which determines also the characters' wardrobe and the artefacts they use, distinguishes *SPN* from other CW series and situates it in a generic and iconographic tradition encoded as masculine.

Furthermore, this social profile merges with the concept of monstrosity that exists within the series. The boys' definition of a monster seems rather simplistic in the beginning of the show: in season one any non-human creature is categorized as a monster. However, the way in which the Winchesters understand and recognize monstrosity becomes more complex with every following episode as brothers encounter "monsters" which

refrain from hurting people and, most importantly, discover monstrosity within themselves. For instance, Sam finds out that his blood contains demonic blood (S02E21) and Dean has to deal with his memories from Hell, where he used to torture other souls (season four). These monstrous aspects of the Winchesters enhance their liminal status of characters forever relegated to live on the margins of American society. I would argue that because of this problematic class status of hunters in general, and Dean Winchester in particular, *SPN* becomes part of the history of the violent action/adventure genre, which is "really the history of modern masculinity" (Barna xi).

Although the Winchesters have to rise to epic challenges and heroically endure physical and emotional suffering for the common good, like a typical action hero they are not only unappreciated, but even persecuted by official authorities. Their everyday sacrifice, initially motivated by personal revenge and family ratio, remains unnoticed as the society is ignorant of the lurking evil and does not recognize their never-ending work which cannot be successfully carried out within the bounds of law. Every season finale starts with the Kansas song "Carry on My Wayward Son," marking the Winchesters as tormented souls and social misfits. The conflict which runs deep in the action genre between a personal and an institutional code of behaviour, or in other words, between honourable outcasts of moral superiority and unfairly privileged white males becomes of pivotal importance in season seven, when the Winchesters fight with the leviathans, i.e. ancient evil creatures released from Purgatory which have taken over the most powerful corporation and intend to enslave humanity by treacherous means.

Barna asserts that "[m]ale heroes of the action genre are often lonely figures, their reason for existence becoming their crusades as families and lovers cast them by the wayside"; however, he adds that "ultimately, the genre is about aggression and the male capacity for it" (57). The question of violence, morally justified violence in particular, is a recurring one in *SPN* and it evolves into a leitmotiv in seasons nine and ten when Dean acquires the so-called Mark of Cain which increases his aggression. Throughout the series it is Dean who opts for black and white morality, and contrary to Sam, rarely has doubts about killing monsters (e.g., S02E17, S07E03) as he is most closely linked with the hyper-masculine action hero. However, with the Mark of Cain on his arm, Dean's penchant for violence spins out of control, and he commits two massacres (S10E09, S10E22), which allows the series to simultaneously indulge in graphic violent scenes and question the issue of "righteous" violence, and therefore, invoke elements essential to the action genre. The

protagonists' class profile and their consequent approach towards violence account for *SPN* "oddity" against the CW's overall post-feminist and female-oriented broadcast strategy.

Supernatural Timeline and Masculine Framework

I divide the *SPN* timeline into two major parts: seasons one to five, the so-called Kripke's Era, when he was in charge of the show, and further seasons broadly known as AK, meaning After Kripke (Kripke resigned from his position, but kept some influence on the show as an executive consultant.) During Kripke's Era the question of the Winchesters' unique destiny occupies a central position in the series' narrative and eventually resolves in the fifth season finale, which could easily have been the series' final episode. In addition to plot continuity, there is also a visible plot escalation: from finding John Winchester, the protagonists' father and killing one demon (the "yellow-eyed demon" responsible for the death of Mary Winchester, the protagonists' mother) in season one to preventing the Apocalypse in season five. Compared to Kripke's Era, seasons six to ten are definitely more self-contained, yet they all deal with the boys-prevented-the-Apocalypse effect. As a result of aborting God's plan for humanity written down in the Scriptures, chaos reigns in Hell and Heaven and, consequently, endangers people, forcing the Winchesters to confront brand new challenges in unknown surroundings and pick sides in fights for power.

This brief timeline focuses on the protagonists' main quests developed in accordance with masculine genres which overtly structure the series: action/adventure, horror, western, and road movie. Before I further elaborate on the masculine framework of *SPN* (apparent in such elements as classic rock music, gore, weapons, etc.) and particular genres, the very issue of the gendered nature of genres demands at least a comment. Even though any research on gendered texts involves a risk of textual and audience essentialism (Duffet 193), we do know from ratings and audience studies that some genres are more or less popular with a female or male audience. The important thing is to remember that it does not mean we automatically understand how women and men are interpreting these cultural texts. There remains the question of how the audience decodes traditionally masculine or feminine narratives, especially if we acknowledge the fact that there is no simple causality between the gender of a viewer and the gender of the character that becomes the point of identification. For instance, Carol J. Clover shows that slash horror viewers, who are predominantly male, surprisingly often change their point of identification between a male monster and a female victim (21–64).

Therefore, I believe that using the concept of gendered television, as has been proposed by Fiske (181–225), might allow us to spot how both television shows and their audiences are actually negotiating and challenging prevailing models of masculinity and femininity.

The aforementioned road movie and western have their own clear signs within the *diegesis*: the 1967 black Chevy Impala, Dean's beloved car, stands for road movie, while the Colt, a legendary weapon which can kill every creature, represents the western. The brothers are in fact most of the time on the road riding through the western-originated space of so-called frontier masculinity, one devoid of both effective institutional justice and domesticity (Palmer 82). The Winchesters possess the unique skills and knowledge necessary to defeat the evil and they act according to their own code of values and sense of justice, much like quintessentially male western (and action) heroes (Neale 131). As for horror, it obviously lies at the bottom of the whole idea of the series and resurfaces in most of the episodes, provided that we point to the opposition between "normality" and the otherness as the core of the genre (Wood 31) and acknowledge narrative tension and monstrosity as basic generic audience expectations (Tudor 457). The premise of *SPN* is to show suspenseful encounters between the Winchesters and all kinds of monsters, including those who remain dormant in their own bodies and psyches.

Apart from referring to specific "masculine" genres, *SPN* also undertakes multiple themes and applies structuring rules typical for masculine genres in general. Basically, it is a story about Midwestern heroes pursuing their quest while dealing with traditionally male issues of sibling rivalry, an unresolved oedipal drama, and the abandonment by a father-like figure. There is a recurring question: where is dad (John)? Or, in seasons one to five, where is God? At the same time, in AK seasons there is only a strong conviction that God is gone, just as dad is dead, especially after Bobby Singer, a substitute father, dies in season seven, leaving the boys truly fatherless. Fiske argues that masculine texts write "three of the most significant cultural producers of the masculine identity—women, work, and marriage" out of its world (204). All three elements hardly exist in *SPN* framework: it's a men's world, free from social constraints. However, as in most masculine texts that deal with issues of independence and authority, there is still tension between the boys' individual dreams and needs, and their hunting quest, as well as their father's expectations of them. Furthermore, Fiske claims that in masculine texts there is a clearly defined hierarchy of main characters and subplots (219). Again *SPN* fulfils this criterion: the brothers remain the focus of the series and all secondary

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characters, especially women, "will always have to exist on their [boys'] terms" (Calvert 104).

How is it then possible that a cultural text embedded in such a clearly masculine framework so strongly appeals to a female audience? I claim that the framework is disrupted with plot and structure elements marked as feminine, and thus masculine genres are simultaneously invoked and contested. In fact, it would be possible to describe a different timeline, one that would expose the bromance of Sam and Dean who ceaselessly suffer from trust issues and hidden agendas to die for each other. The latter obviously leads to many sentimental moments between the brothers and relationship cliff-hangers. Will Sam forgive Dean? Will Dean save Sam? Will either brother share with the other his secret burden? These are questions which belong to the realm of genres such as the soap opera seen as traditionally feminine because of its concern with family life, relationship's turbulences, emotional conflicts and, broadly speaking, the personal. In the following section, I will disclose implicit "feminine" components of *SPN*, which I define as "melodramatic."

GENRE HYBRIDITY: HOW MELODRAMATIC ELEMENTS CHANGE MASCULINE FRAMEWORK

Until the 1970s and the emergence of studies on "family melodrama" encompassing a range of films from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s focused on family tensions undermining American society, often also referred to as "women's films," the term "melodrama" or "meller" had been used as a synonym of "thriller" due to its history on the stage (Neale 168–74). Nineteenth-century melodrama contributed many genres to cinema, including western or action/adventure, however, only romantic and family melodramas (or "melodramas of passion" to use Michael Walker's term) deriving from "modified" or "domestic" stage melodrama maintained association with their melodramatic heritage (Byars 9). Therefore, despite well-grounded research on melodrama understood as a type of sensibility, an imaginative mode or a narrative system originated in modern Western societies (e.g., Brooks, Elsaesser, Gledhill), in this essay by "melodramatic" or "melodrama" I refer only to a feminized "melodrama of passion" which requires pathos and overwrought emotion to appeal to audience sentiments (hence terms such as a "weepy" or a "tearjerker.")

Melodramatic characters suffer extreme emotional duress, which in turn provokes an overwhelming physical sensation (i.e. sensory excess) in the audience (Singer 39–40). Heart-wrenching scenes, particularly among the brothers, are *SPN*'s trademark, the best example being Dean crying

over Sam's dead body (S02E21) or Sam talking about letting Dean down and finally deciding to live for his brother instead of sacrificing himself for humanity (S08E23). Furthermore, the characters repeatedly find themselves in emotional deadlock-situations (Singer 41), when saving each other requires an impossibly high price. *SPN* also eagerly resorts to melodramatic repertoire, mostly by bringing on mysteries about the Winchesters' family and past.

Moreover, in *SPN* we can easily trace constitutive features of soap opera, a "prime televisual example of melodramatic genre" (Fiske 194), identified by Ien Ang in her research on *Dallas* (238–39). Firstly, soap opera situates personal life at the core of the narrative, and thus tells the story from the point of view of the personal. Not only is the Winchesters' quest to fight evil inspired by their personal experience, but it is also presented from their personal perspective and subordinate to their personal dramas. Secondly, soap opera lives on the state of a permanent crisis, which implies an ultimate lack of progress in the narrative. The premise of the series is to keep the brothers in a constant state of threat and emergency that can be lifted solely for a short time. Finally, Ang points to an excessive plot structure, which is crucial for *SPN*, just to mention such plot developments as Dean selling his soul to resurrect Sam (S02E22), Sam being locked in Hell with Lucifer and archangel Michael (S05E22) or Dean dying and transforming into a demon (S09E23).

There are also some mixed aspects of *SPN* structure resulting from merging differently gendered narrative strategies. Most of the episodes, especially in the early seasons, end in the boys' successful performance (which is considered to be typical for masculine texts) as they manage to deal with the case of the week in a satisfying way. However, like a classic soap opera, the series generally lacks narrative closure, because there is always something to hunt and therefore, the brothers' misfortune must continue. Moreover, *SPN* deprives its audience of successful resolution in the series finales, meaning that there is no successful performance in the long run. For instance, in the third season finale (S03E22), regardless of all efforts undertaken to save Dean, he does go to Hell; or, in the final episode of season eight (S08E22), the Winchesters abort their mission to close the gates to Hell in the very last moment. While there is no romance in *SPN*, there is also hardly any sex or one-night stands (except for season one). It is also hard to spot a shirtless Dean or Sam, even though such a form of male body objectification is already well-established in shows targeted at women, and the audience admiration for the brothers' bodies is unquestionable. And, lastly, there is the car: a Chevy Impala which "offers a visual space that is typically masculine,

yet the series uses it as a device through which to filter the more intensely emotional moments that characterize television melodrama and the Winchester brothers' relationship" (Bruce). Therefore, the Impala works as a negotiator of traditionally defined masculinity and male sensitivity borrowed from melodrama.

Gender Hybridity: Body and Personality

In my opinion, the melodrama genre most intensively influences the portrayal of the brothers by "softening" traditional masculinity, and hence shattering any simplistic gender definitions within the series. Contrary to masculine genres, soap opera underlines the sensitivity of good men, retaining clear macho characteristics only for villains (Fiske 223). However, unlike in soap operas, the Winchesters' sensitivity is revealed within the context of a brotherhood, not a heterosexual romance. As Larsen and Zubernis point out, "Since Sam and Dean are brothers, the characters are given a pass for displays of emotion outside the cultural norms of masculinity" (*Fandom* 3). *SPN* often resorts to hurt/comfort story between men, explores the issues of men's emotions as well as shows men sharing feelings with each other, thus breaking boundaries which guard the traditional model of masculinity. In the episode "Mystery Spot" (S03E11), Trickster says to Sam: "Dean's your weakness. Bad guys know it, too." A few episodes later (S03E16), Dean openly acknowledges the feelings the brothers have for each other while talking to Sam: "You're my weak spot. And I'm yours." Such moments between the brothers which often occur while they are either sitting in the Impala or standing near it are especially cherished by the fandom and tellingly referred to as BM moments, i.e. Boy Melodrama.

The infusion of melodramatic components into a masculine framework is a major disrupting factor in the traditional paradigm of masculinity in *SPN*, yet there exist other tactics of gender-bending in the series. For instance, *SPN* plays with the gender structure of the horror genre, simultaneously situating the Winchesters in the narrative structure in both female and male positions. This is particularly clear with regard to possession stories in *SPN*, when the Winchesters' male bodies are turned into monstrous female bodies (Kies 22–33). While melodramatic elements within the horror genre challenge traditional masculinity by introducing male psychological and emotional sensitivity, such a reconfiguration of horror structure additionally questions the image of a male body. Clover shows that, typically, in possession films a female character is immobilized (physically and psychologically) by the very fact of being possessed, and a male character evolves by actively looking for a solution.

Even though the woman seems to be in the centre of the narrative, in fact she functions solely as a passive medium enabling the male hero's journey. Therefore, Clover concludes that "hers is an ABA story of restoration in which she emerges unaware of what has transpired, whereas his is an ABC story of revision or conversion in which he emerges a 'new man'" (98). In *SPN*, the possession scenario is time and again applied to principal male characters, especially to Sam. The younger Winchester is possessed by a female demon, Meg, already in season two (S02E14); and later in season five he becomes a vessel for Lucifer himself (S05E22), yet triggered by a toy from his childhood, he manages to overcome the fallen archangel for a second and execute his own free will. Dean successfully fights against being possessed by the archangel Michael, discarding the argument that becoming Michael's vessel is his destiny (seasons four and five); and throughout season ten Dean struggles not to yield to the demonic power of the Mark of Cain. Unlike female characters in typical possession horrors, the Winchesters sometimes do succeed in preventing the possession or keeping memories of being possessed which then allow them to learn from their possession experience and hence change an ABA story into an ABC story.

Slash Fiction: Bromance instead of Romance

As for actual female characters in *SPN*, we encounter a vast range of women in the series, but none of them survive for long or reach the position of a main character. Many female characters have been written out of the narrative due to poor fan reaction (e.g., Bella Talbot or Jo Harvell planned as love interests for Dean). The fandom rejects every female character that could possibly come between the brothers, while those women who do not pose such a danger because of their age, sexual orientation or clear enemy status are usually warmly received by fans (e.g., Meg, Ellen Harvell, Charlie Bradbury). Samantha Ferris, who played the beloved character of Ellen Harvell, explains: "I'm not a threat. . . . I'm mother figure to these guys" (qtd. in Larsen and Zubernis, *Fangasm* 113). Yet Ellen dies with her daughter in S05E10 in a highly emotional scene. Another beloved character, Charlie, forms a sibling relationship with the brothers, free of any sexual innuendos, as she is a declared lesbian. She is also an independent spirit, a genius hacker, Comic Con attendee and a fantasy genre fangirl distinguished by a great sense of humour and brilliant mind. Nonetheless, she dies (S10E21) while trying to help Sam save Dean from the effects of the Mark of Cain. Because her death devastates Dean and triggers his destructive fury, she is obviously reduced to a narrative tool (despite the fandom's fondness).

While none of the brothers' female love interests have gained fandom's acceptance, angel Castiel (introduced in S04E01), whose close and brotherly relationship with Dean elicits Sam's hidden jealousy, has immediately become the fans' favourite. The fandom has enthusiastically welcomed an alternative bromance, although it has uncompromisingly rebuffed all female characters who could distance the brothers from each other in any way. In response to fandom preferences, heterosexual romances have been marginalized, while male bonding, on the contrary, has been situated at the very heart of the narrative structure. As a result, *SPN* sets aside one of the primary components of traditional masculinity: unquestionable heterosexuality. These facts may become more understandable in view of the *SPN* fan fiction.

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Fan fiction is one of the most creative, controversial and potentially subversive fan practices, which has fascinated scholars from the very beginning of fan studies (e.g., Green, Jenkins and Jenkins). Larsen and Zubernis, aca-fans and fan fiction writers themselves, claim that the fan fiction community is "largely a community of women" and it creates a space where "women feel safe to express their sexual fantasies" (*Fandom* 94). Probably the most popular, but also the most disputed, fan fiction genre in *SPN* fandom is slash fiction, which presents two men in an erotic, romantic, or sexual relationship. Fans engage in Wincest stories (Sam and Dean), or Destiel fantasies (Castiel and Dean), but they also produce real person slash (RPS) called J2 or J-Squared in the case of *SPN* because of the actors' names: Jensen and Jared. The authors of slash fiction are prevailingly female and heterosexual, hence Mirna Cicioni argues that "slash writing reflects some of the ambiguities that characterize the position of women with respect to heterosexuality" (154). She also claims that although slash focuses on men, it "gives voice to some women's desires which are outside the dominant notions of acceptable love relationships" (175). Mark Duffet writes in the same vein that slash is viewed as "an expression of desire in all senses, and an unpoliticized, uncensored forum for female networking" (177). In my opinion, it is justifiable to say that slash serves as a means of rewriting manhood and heterosexuality. *SPN* provides rich, mostly subtext material for slash writers because it questions the traditional paradigm of masculinity on multiple levels, and thus encourages its audience to engage in gender plays.

In fact the show openly acknowledges slash fiction, incorporates its fandom practices, as well as consistently explores all aspects of bromances, and even alludes to their sexual dimension as there are references to Wincest or Destiel in many visual moments, dialogues, and storylines.

The extreme closeness between Sam and Dean is commented on by other characters on several occasions, just to mention the angel Zachariah's remark that the brothers are "psychotically, irrationally, erotically codependent on each other" (S05E16) and every so often they are mistaken for a gay couple by strangers (e.g., S01E08, S02E11, S08E04). In S05E09 Sam and Dean arrive at a convention dedicated to *Supernatural* books which features a panel on "The homoerotic subtext of *Supernatural*." Moreover, the Winchesters meet there two fanboys who role play them and turn out to be a gay couple. Numerous jokes hint at Destiel relation, and Castiel asked by Sam if he likes Dean better, states straightforwardly that they "do share a more profound bond" (S06E03). In S10E05, a fancentric episode, Dean explicitly discusses Wincest and Destiel with a fangirl and later with Sam.

While throughout the series Sam is rather amused with the slash concept, Dean feels uncomfortable about it; as a character more indebted to a classic action hero than his brother, he is particularly sensitive about his masculinity (identified with coarse behaviour and heterosexuality). Therefore, in accordance with *SPN*'s gender politics, he is the one who emerges as the locus of disrupting such a traditional model of manhood by engaging in emotional bromance dramas not only with Sam and Castiel, but also with other male characters, i.e. demon Crowley and vampire Benny. Thus Dean connects action genre with melodrama and plays out the contrast between the definitions of masculinity inscribed in differently gendered genres.

To conclude, *SPN* may be distinguished as an example of an entertaining television show which, by infusing traditionally masculine genres with melodramatic elements marked as feminine, has been offering its audience a special type of a gender-bending text for more than ten years. Although at first this offer was rather unintentional, thanks to genre hybridity it gradually led to gender hybridity that turned out to particularly appeal to female viewers. The case of *SPN* discloses the ideological nature of generic forms and illustrates how it may be transformed within the text itself, but necessarily with regard to audience practices. It demonstrates the subversive power of a broadly understood hybridity as incongruent elements activate the process of negotiating the cultural norms, especially gender definitions. It seems suitable that a revised model of masculinity is tested in the realm of the Gothic, which provides space for all that is oppressed and repressed in a society.

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Wendigos, Eye Killers, Skinwalkers: The Myth of the American Indian Vampire and American Indian "Vampire" Myths

ABSTRACT

We all know vampires. Count Dracula and Nosferatu, maybe Blade and Angel, or Stephenie Meyer's sparkling beau, Edward Cullen. In fact, the Euro-American vampire myth has long become one of the most reliable and bestselling fun-rides the entertainment industries around the world have to offer. Quite recently, however, a new type of fanged villain has entered the mainstream stage: the American Indian vampire. Fully equipped with war bonnets, buckskin clothes, and sharp teeth, the vampires of recent U.S. film productions, such as *Blade, the Series* or the *Twilight Saga*, employ both the Euro-American vampire trope and denigrating discourses of race and savagery. It is also against this backdrop that American Indian authors and filmmakers have set out to renegotiate not only U.S. America's myth of the racially overdrawn "savage Indian," but also the vampire trope per se.

Drawing on American Indian myths and folklore that previous scholarship has placed into direct relationship to the Anglo-European vampire narrative, and on recent U.S. mainstream commodifications of these myths, my paper traces and contextualizes the two oppositional yet intimately linked narratives of American Indian vampirism ensuing today: the commodified image of the "Indian" vampire and the renegotiated vampire tropes created by American Indian authors and filmmakers.

> "The Vampire is *not* universal by any means. Native Americans
> do not have vampires."
> (Dundes 161, emphasis in the original)

> "I took that tradition—the vampire tradition—from where I was,
> and made it mine.
> I stretched it and made it work for my own purpose.
> And that was fun."
> (Carr, qtd. in Arrivé 11)

Culturally Ultra-Adaptable Fangs

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Vampires are the ultimate cultural chameleons. Between their humble mythological roots as "little more than a shambling and mindless" (Punter and Byron 268) revenant, nosferatu or vrykolakas in eighteenth-century Eastern European folklore, and their triumphant and worldwide advance in literature, film, music, on stage and computer screens, as well is in subcultures and fetishes, the vampire has proven to be a culturally ultra-adaptable trope. Without a doubt, contemporary Euro-American instantiations of the trope—Angel, Blade, Stefan Salvatore, and Edward Cullen to name just four—have successfully added to the "domestication" (Gordon and Hollinger 2) of the vampire and concluded its transformation from bloodsucker to ascetic and "from monster to yuppie" (Tomc 96). If indeed "every age embraces the vampire it needs," as Auerbach (145) argues, we are apparently living in an age in need of subjective narratives of humanized, exotically and pleasingly deviant semi-villains, who have long outlived the need to embody the monstrous epitome of the evils of aristocracy, Catholicism, industrialization, and sexual permissiveness; rather, today's vampire "is composed in such a way that he embodies both monstrosity and normality within one endlessly struggling character" (Lenhardt 112).

Despite the vampire's continuous domestication, one can easily trace consistencies in the modern and contemporary, non-scholarly receptions of the trope. As Hughes argues, it is hardly exaggerated to claim that we have conceptualized an archetypal vampire in primarily visual terms, i.e. more precisely, through the modern cinematic adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*:

> The stylistic consistency of film portrayals of the vampire Count, by actors from Bela Lugosi to Christopher Lee, Frank Langella and Gary Oldman, has concretized a cultural image of the vampire as saturnine, noble, sophisticated, mesmeric and, above all, erotic. (252)

If we consider in this respect contemporary U.S. American film and television adaptations of the vampire trope, it becomes apparent that these archetypical characteristics based on visual markers are still in vogue. Modern vampirism ("post Bela Lugosi") replaces monstrous villainy and deviance, conventionally depicted in the colour-coded colonialist imagery of the stereotypical Mediterranean and/or Savage with very visual racist underpinnings,[1] with an excitingly saturnine, seductive, and sophisticated semi-villain, whose deviance is still racially marked, but whitewashed to the utmost extent. In fact, by continuously shifting the narrative perspective from the object of the narrative to the subject, vampire protagonists and focalizers in contemporary U.S. American mainstream media function as the norm (regarding race, class, gender, and ethics) against which instantiations of deviant villainy (again regarding race, class, gender, and ethics) stand out and become opposable. In other words, the humanization of the contemporary Euro-American vampire does not result in a "post-race" vampire trope that would have outlasted depictions of "the colonized subject as the terrible and fearsome 'other' who symbolizes the literally dark self of the colonizer and assures him of his own moral integrity and identity" (Althans 69). Rather, recent bestsellers like Meyer's *Twilight Saga* with its widely marketed central conflict between the pure white and rational vampire and his infantile, dark-skinned and semi-naked Indian[2] werewolf counterpart, make clear that race still informs the vampire trope. However, this should not induce us to dismiss the trope altogether.

As was mentioned before, the vampire trope is culturally ultra-adaptable. It employs a fixed canon of narrative conventions (e.g., characters, props, settings, plot structures, filmic techniques) and, thus, reiterates a dominant discourse of otherness—potentially from the perspective of those who are denigrated as being "other" (in terms of race, class, and gender). This trope, therefore, can produce highly politically charged texts that not only envision a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse, but aim at changing this discourse altogether. Vampires trade and quote stereotypes but they offer the potential to quote with a twist, to "constitute transformations" (Hutcheon 150). This twist can either describe the new

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[1] Scholarship refers to this writing strategy as "Imperial Gothic." Brantlinger suggests confining the Imperial Gothic to the period between 1880 and 1914, which roughly represents the heyday of the British Empire and of a vampire fiction before its cinematic rebirth.

[2] A brief note on terminology: I use "American Indian" as an umbrella term for indigenous North American peoples when it is not feasible to use the name of a specific nation or tribe. "Indian" refers only to the stereotypical representation of American Indian peoples in contemporary U.S. mainstream media.

context/genre, etc. in which the narrative conventions are employed, or it can describe the discourse-altering reiteration the author undertakes. While some contemporary instantiations of the vampire trope indeed repeat old racialized stereotypes in new contexts, and therefore strengthen the underlying discriminating discourse, other vampires are constructed as opposing agents actively and critically engaging with their own conventional make-up in order to make visible and change the hateful discourse they have been subjected to. In the words of Jewelle Gomez, the author of *The Gilda Stories*, featuring the African American lesbian vampire, Gilda:

> The challenge for me was to create a *new* mythology, to strip away the dogma that has shaped the vampire figure within the rather narrow Western, Caucasian expectation, and to recreate a heroic figure within a broader, more ancient cultural frame of reference. (87–88, original emphasis)

We are today in the fascinating position of witnessing a new instantiation of the vampire trope and getting a first-hand account of its cultural adaptability, arguably even "universality" (Brodman and Doan ix): the American Indian vampire. Fully equipped with war bonnets, buckskin clothes, and bared fangs, the American Indian vampires of recent U.S. (film) productions, such as *Blade: The Series* or the *Twilight Saga*, quote the vampire trope and denigrating discourses of race and savagery. It is also against this backdrop that American Indian authors and filmmakers have set out to renegotiate not only U.S. America's myth of the racially overdrawn "savage Indian," but also the vampire trope per se. Welcoming the American Indian vampire into the truly extended family of (Euro-)American vampires enables us in the following to reconsider the narrative techniques and strategies employed on both sides of the discursive arena in creating culturally adapted American Indian vampire trope(s).

THE MYTH OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN VAMPIRE

Our tour of (American) Indian vampires starts with an exemplary look at contemporary U.S. mainstream film productions, keeping in mind that cinematic adaptations, past and present, play an essential role in the construction and maintenance of the vampire's cultural image. Two key strategies in the development of this new vampire can be traced.

First, the conflation of the Euro-American vampire trope with the racially denigrating discourse of "Indian savagery" (either of the Ignoble or Noble strain) has resulted in a U.S. American vampire fantasy dressed in

the well-known stereotypical attire of the "Indian" and acting according to the limited logic of ignoble/noble savagery. We can encounter this type of American Indian vampire in Spike TV's 2006 television action series, *Blade: The Series* and among the ascetic vampires in the series conclusion of *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn—Part 2.*

Created by David S. Goyer and Geoff Johns, *Blade: The Series* premiered on Spike on 28 June 2006 (and was cancelled after the first season). Kirk Jones stars as human-vampire hybrid in the title role, supported by Jill Wagner as Krista Starr, Neil Jackson as antagonist Marcus Van Sciver, and Nelson Lee as Blade's sidekick Shen. Loosely basing both on the Marvel Comics character and the film series (1998–2004), Goyer and Johns include several character types and settings into the story that have not been featured before—most notably an Indian vampire tribe.

Though present in tension-building flashbacks from the pilot episodes onward, the American Indian vampire moves centre-stage in the series' tenth episode, "Angels and Demons," which Félix Enríquez Alcalá directed. In consecutive flashback visions into the sepia-tinted Detroit of 1899 the episode discloses when, how, and why antagonist Marcus was turned into a vampire. Upon his resistance to a local protection racket run by a vampire, Marcus has to consecutively endure being beaten up, witnessing his wife's murder, and being nailed inside a coffin that is transported to the shores of the Detroit River and left with the nameless Indian vampire tribe residing there. To the constant beating drums off camera, vampires sporting tomahawks and clad in tanned buckskin and fur, adorned with beads, necklaces, hairbands and red feathers, snarl and growl in the same voice as an omnipresent black wolf (seemingly lacking the human power of speech); with the camera cutting in a shift in perspectives from a mid shot of the snarling black wolf to the mid shot of the tribe's likewise snarling and gruesomely face-painted leader (played by Trevor Carroll), aptly wearing a black and red headdress resembling the shape of the wolf's head, we finally witness the bite and the ensuing torture of Marcus at the stake.

Without a doubt, Alcalá's staging of Indian vampires is not only consistent with, but also essentially limited to, the Ignoble Savage stereotype. More wolf than man, these speechless, inhuman "demons" (cf. episode title) function as the justification for the antagonists' villainy. They also qualify Marcus's vampirism as civilized, informed by human grief, and as "domesticated" in the above-mentioned sense.

While *Blade: The Series* and its ignoble savage-inspired vampires have thus far dodged scholarly attention, the *Twilight Saga*'s portrayal of an Indian werewolf tribe, problematically referred to as the Quileutes people (an American Indian people indeed living in Washington State), has

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generated volumes of criticism as well as an engaging back-and-forth exchange between involved actors, communities, and scholarship.[3] What has been overlooked thus far is the fact that *Twilight* not only stages Indian werewolf/human hybrids, but also an Indian vampire (Huilen, played by Lipan Apache/Mexican-American actress Marisa Quinn) and an Indian vampire/human hybrid (Nahuel, played by non-American-Indian actor Jorge Daniel Prado).

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In director Bill Condon's *Breaking Dawn—Part 2*, the fifth and final instalment of the film series, Huilen and her nephew Nahuel are introduced as the last resort for peacefully resolving the escalated conflict between the Cullen family and the Volturi. Upon the climax of the battle vision, the camera establishes an extreme long shot, the soft background music stops, and against the backdrop of snowy whiteness and distant grey fir trees, we see two human shapes approaching the battle scene. While the characters are still hardly discernible, the focus switches to extreme close-up shots of bare feet walking in leather sandals, to a man's bare back, to black hair braids tied with leather strings, to regalia and adornment; synchronized sounds of walking on snow contextualize the shots as describing the approaching strangers. Now in close vicinity to the battle, an aerial shot quickly establishes the location of the newcomers as well as the other characters' reactions to them before smoothly ascending until we face Nahuel and Huilen at eye level and in a full shot. Called upon as witnesses to the innocence of the hybrid human/vampire child Renesmee and, thus, as pacifying force, Nahuel calmly narrates his story smiled upon by his aunt Huilen (Marisa Quinn), who has no speaking part. Despite the snowed-under scenery they are clad in universal Indian attire, i.e. highly sexualized costumes of "Indianness," somewhat reminiscent of nineteenth-century Plains Indians' clothing and adornment practices; they certainly echo Peter van Lent's observation that "Native heroes all have glistening, coppery skin and long, raven-black hair . . . and they usually wear little more than a breechclout" (214).

When Nahuel and Huilen are explained to be members of the Brazilian Ticuna tribe, this racialized depiction and commodification of American Indian peoples is taken to extremes. Employing the same basic narrative strategies as Alcalá in *Blade: The Series*, Condon (and Meyer in her respective novel) uses a readily available stereotype and recreates "for a whole new generation as 'cool' and sexier than ever" (Burke 208) an imagery of

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[3] For an overview of the debate and the key points of criticism put forward by scholars regarding racialization and exoticization as well as commodification of American Indian peoples and myths, cf. Burke.

the indigenous peoples encompassing the anachronistic and culturally frozen Indian. Reminding us of the visual underpinnings of today's cultural image of the vampire (cf. Hughes 252), Berkhofer argues that for "most whites throughout the past five centuries, the Indian of imagination and ideology has been as real, perhaps more real, than the Native Americans of actual existence and contact" (79); contemporary U.S. mainstream productions play a key part in this eclipsing of cultural diversity in favour of a commodified, marketable, and ready-made simulacrum of "Indianness."

Adding the Euro-American vampire trope to the Indian imagery does not only boost sales figures, but could very well entail the "most dangerous element" (Burke 216) of the commodification of American Indian peoples. By integrating the Indian into an epic of supernatural vampires and werewolves, and by connecting the fantastic personnel more or less subtly through pseudo-American Indian mythologies, *Blade: The Series* and the *Twilight Saga* create a visual and narrative network that effectively stages American Indians and their myths as being as fantastic—and fictional—as vampires.

Closely related to this "mythologization" of the American Indian (as) vampire is the second strategy employed in recent U.S. American film productions: the adaptation and commodification of American Indian mythological characters and narrative elements infused with, and structured by, the Euro-American vampire trope. *Ravenous*, a 1999 U.S. American horror film written by Ted Griffin and directed by Antonia Bird, can readily be considered a fitting case in point.

Set in the western United States during the Mexican–American War, *Ravenous* traces the journey of Captain John Boyd (Guy Pearce), recently both promoted for single-handedly defeating the enemy command and posted to a remote outpost when his commanding officer finds out about Boyd's cowardly playing dead among the bodies of his massacred comrades during the battle. Joining the seven peculiar inhabitants of Fort Spencer in the Sierra Nevada, Boyd's first duty is to accompany a rescue team's search for a lost party of settlers. Colquhoun (Robert Carlyle), a Scottish stranger, informs the soldiers about the party's whereabouts and admits that the starving members of the party had to revert to cannibalism to survive. Although George (Joseph Runningfox), the local American Indian scout, warns the rescue party about the cannibalistic stranger and relates him to the Wendigo myth (a man consuming the flesh of other men takes up their strengths but becomes a demon cursed by a never-ceasing hunger for human flesh), the party is lured into the trap, and slaughtered and eaten by the Wendigo. Once more the sole survivor of a massacre, Boyd finds himself badly injured and in the presence of a companion's corpse. Remembering

the Wendigo myth, Boyd eats the flesh of his dead comrade to stay alive and heal enough to make it back to Fort Spencer. When the Wendigo returns, too, wounded Boyd has to decide between eating enough human flesh to turn into a fully fledged Wendigo himself, and dying. He chooses to eat in order to face his antagonist and to end both their demonic existences in the final fight scene.

In the non-indigenous reception, the Wendigo myth, as defined by Margaret Atwood in *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*, is a traditional story[4] of the "Algonquian-speaking people such as the Woodland Cree and the Ojibway," dealing with a creature's "ravenous hunger for human flesh" (66) often narratively framed by "a time of scarcity, which gives rise to hunger, which gives rise to selfishness" (67). Drawing mainly on traditional narratives of the Canadian North, Atwood describes the Wendigo more closely as a physically superior "giant spirit-creature" (66), a creature that, aside from its ravenous hunger, can be defined *ex negativo* by its lacking human speech, warmth, and gender.

Without a doubt, *Ravenous* employs key aspects of the American Indian Wendigo myth, in fact communicates them directly and in Algonquin through the American Indian character George. However, Bird infuses mythological elements of American Indian origin with character traits and imagery foreign to the Wendigo: the saturnine, eloquent, sophisticated, and seductive antagonist, lusting for blood to such an extreme that he licks the blood-soaked bandages of a wounded soldier trembling with excitement, recalls with great clarity the Euro-American vampire. Consider in this respect also the two opening scenes (i.e. the promotion ceremony for Captain Boyd interspersed with brief battle-field flashbacks and, disconnected by means of the opening credit sequence, the introduction of Boyd to Fort Spencer now interspersed with prolonged flashbacks). Framed in a series of jump-cut close-up shots of red wine pouring, steaks dripping blood, lips chewing, and Boyd's more and more disgusted face, Bird uses the opening scene to connect blood with blood and cuts a gruesome flashback sequence (the lead character's live burial under a pile of corpses) right into the extreme close-up of the blood-soaked meat.

While the first opening scene lets us assume that we are witnessing a traumatized soldier, unable to eat rare meat that recalls the disfigured

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[4] According to the *OED*, a "myth" is a "traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or natural phenomenon."

and blood-soaked comrades he betrayed on the battlefield, the second introductory sequence (Boyd at Fort Spencer) qualifies this first impression by infusing the vampire trope more clearly than the previous allusions to blood and consumption. Against the background of the snowed-under fort, extreme close-up shots on Boyd's head (hairline and the upper part of his forehead are cut off, thus highlighting Boyd's eyes, nose, and mouth) introduce prolonged flashbacks. Explaining himself to his commanding officer, Boyd comments in voiceover on his being buried alive under his dead comrades with their "blood running down [his] throat" until "something had changed" enabling him to escape the pile of blood and gore. What this changed something entails is narrated visually: forced to swallow his dead comrades' blood, Boyd bares his bloody teeth and pushes and tears his way out. Emerging from the dead, Bird cuts in a full shot, showing Boyd in a surprisingly clean uniform, his mouth smeared with dripping blood, and ready to kill his enemies with his bare hands.

Claiming that "the undead-cannibal movie" (Maslin), *Ravenous*, "avoids most of the clichés of the vampire movie by using cannibalism, and most of the clichés of the cannibal movie by using vampirism" (Ebert), some reviewers indeed put forward a vampire-based interpretation that "ignores the myth of the Wendigo as the driving force" and thus "necessarily strips it [the film] of its cultural specificity" (DiMarco 152). What Bird's adaptation (and commodification) of the Wendigo myth infused with Euro-American vampire imagery rather suggests is a product of "European imagination [that] meets and crosses with the Native indigenous one" (Atwood 64). The strength of *Ravenous* in this respect is not so much the creation of another gorily entertaining filmic character, but the self-reflexive stance with which the film adapts and translates the Wendigo myth into mainstream Euro-American cinematic traditions.

The Wendigo myth, as mentioned above, is narrated in Algonquin by George; it is also simultaneously translated into English by Colonel Hart. Consider Hart's interpretation of George's tale (the absent Ojibwa voice is indicated by ellipses):

[The Wendigo] in an old Indian myth from the North . . . a man eats another's flesh . . . it's usually an enemy . . . and he takes . . . steals . . . his strength . . . essence . . . his spirit . . . and his hunger becomes craven . . . insatiable . . . and the more he eats, the more he wants, too . . . and the more he eats the stronger he becomes. George, people don't still do this, do they? . . . like man eats the body of Jesus Christ every Sunday. (*Ravenous*)

Just as the film (the narrative as well as the cinematic techniques) itself, Hart's translation fosters a resemblance between the Wendigo myth and the vampire trope. This self-reflexive elaboration of the act of translating one culture's myth into another culture's mythological vocabulary stages both the "move whereby one culture's story is adapted by another" (Di-Marco 144) and the process of infusing a Euro-American trope into an American Indian myth.

Note, however, the limits of this translation process enacted through the clear and unchanging role allocation. The American Indian characters (George, and his sister Martha played by Sheila Tousey) share their indigenous knowledge and warn about the endemic "Wendigoism" while staying unaffected by the demonic threat themselves. By explicitly limiting the "going Wendigo" (Atwood 62) threat derived from American Indian mythology and infused with a Euro-American vampire imagery to white, male U.S. American soldiers, the film offers a truly biting and multilayered critique of the U.S. American Manifest Destiny mindset, of colonialism, and boundless consumption informed by self-interest only.

American Indian "Vampire" Myths

In folklore, an American Indian vampire myth does not exist. Falling into the fallacies of Eurocentrism twice, Western scholarship, however, has a tradition of selecting and describing American Indian "myths bear[ing] a resemblance to the Euro-American vampire" (Doan 138; cf. also Keyworth; Bell; Nutini and Roberts) within old ethnographic records of fellow Western scholars[5] and, thus, of subsuming highly culture-specific and diverse mythological key figures—such as the Corn Mother of the Hopi, the Nahua people's Tlahuelpuchi, the "Grandmother of Tharonhiaougon"[6] of the Huron creation story, and the Wendigo myth encountered above—under the Euro-American umbrella term "vampire." And yet, we encounter both fully fledged American Indian "vampires" and poetically rendered allusions to the vampire trope in contemporary American Indian cultural (print, film, and web) productions. Indeed, today a diverse, culture-specific, and highly hybrid trope is emerging from the continuous reiteration and transcultural

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[5] James E. Doan, for example, bases his argument on Henry Reichert Voth's 1905 depiction of the Hopi's "corn goddess" myth (Doan 139), and on James Terell's 1892 interpretation of the Cherokee's "demonic ogre who ate human lungs and liver and resided in a cave in Tusquittee Mountain" (Doan 137), meaning the U'tlunta or Spear-Finger myth.

[6] The descriptive name for Ata-entsic, "Grandmother of Tharonhiaougon," was introduced in Joseph-François Lafitau's encounters with the Huron and Iroquois in the early eighteenth century (ca. 1720); cf. Wonderley 62.

hybridization of Euro-American vampirism and American Indian literary and mythological conventions.

Often referred to as the first fully fledged American Indian vampire novel, Aaron Albert Carr's *Eye Killers* (1995) constitutes a good starting point for conceptualizing the American Indian variety of "vampirism." Carefully blending the Euro-American vampire plot with Navajo/Laguna Pueblo myth, Carr constructs the novel's antagonist explicitly not as a vampire, but as an Eye Killer shimmering between the nineteenth-century European vampire with colonial American underpinnings and the Eye Killer myth that is part of the Navajo creation story. Eye Killers, Carr points out, are almost "holy beings," they reign "above us, so they are both good and evil" while still showing "totally human" characteristics (Arrivé 13). Thus, suspended and fluctuating between good and evil, powerful and weak, American and European, Navajo and white, the Eye Killer reconciles all those dichotomies the Euro-American vampire trope premises as essentially irreconcilable. Aware of the significant shift of control and power—and the fun involved in commodifying a Euro-American trope for the profit of American Indian peoples, Carr summarizes:

> I am now on the other side, I was the one with control. I think that is something that Indian people appreciate, when we do take control of our own imagery. And so, in a sense, I took that tradition—the vampire tradition—from where I was, and made it mine. I stretched it and made it work for my own purpose. And that was fun. Murnau's [*Nosferatu*'s] imagery was mine too. I could use it. In the same sense Curtis is saying these people are mine and I can manipulate them and I can make them be what I want them to be . . . . And that is what I did with the vampires, with the European images. One of the comments I get from Indian people is "I didn't know we could do that kind of thing," "I didn't know we could write about that kind of stuff." And I think it is because we need to get to the point when we can say: "this is mine too," "this film we see, I can take this and mess around with it too." (Arrivé 11)

Contemporary American Indian cinematic productions indeed have reached the point that Carr envisions. They creatively claim the Euro-American vampire trope, make use of it strategically as a means to reiterate critically and in a discourse-altering way the underlying racial stereotypes, and, at the same time, they write themselves, their cultural backgrounds, and political interests into North America's cultural consciousness. As in my discussion of the U.S. American invention of an Indian vampire, I focus my following discussion of the adaptation of the vampire in American Indian films on two key strategies: the adaptive infusion

of the Euro-American vampire trope into American Indian film (thus picking up where we left *Ravenous*) and the construction of fully fledged American Indian "vampires" as a result of a discourse-changing reiteration of the racially denigrating Euro-American vampire trope from the perspective of those who have been made the object of this denigration (thus adding a counter-strategy to the Indian vampires of *Blade: The Series* and *Twilight*'s *Breaking Dawn–Part 2*).

As if directly reacting to Bird's *Ravenous*, the 2002 television film *Skinwalkers* (directed by Chris Eyre as part of the PBS *Mystery!* series) infuses the Navajo/Diné legend and trope of the *yee naaldlooshii*, or Skinwalker, with an adaptation of the Euro-American vampire trope. The film is loosely based on Toni Hillermans's 1986 novel and focuses on Navajo tribal police officer Jim Chee (Adam Beach) and Lt. Joe Leaphorn (Wes Studi). True to the conventions of supernatural mystery fiction, Chee, a cop training to be a medicine man, connects the serial killer at large in the Navajo Nation to ancient folklore, while his pragmatic partner Leaphorn trusts hard facts only. Confronted with the mutilated bodies of three dead medicine men, ancient symbols drawn in blood, footprints that turn into paw prints, a desecrated grave, arrow tips made of human bone and a shotgun attack with human bone beads, Chee and Leaphorn disagree on whether they are facing a real Skinwalker or a person mimicking the legend, but finally succeed in tracking down the killer: Dr. Stone (also known as William Yazzie, played by Michael Greyeyes), the Diné tribal medical centre's chief physician.

For a non-Navajo scholar researching the Skinwalker legend, the most likely result is frustration. Understanding that the lack of Navajo accounts on the Skinwalker is tied to it being considered a taboo subject, which is "seldom discussed with members outside the tribe, and rarely even inside it" (Jones),[7] I limit my description of the Skinwalker to what seems to be the core narrative: the Skinwalker is usually a medicine man who has obtained the supernatural power to shapeshift into animals at will "through breaking a cultural taboo, including murder, seduction, or the corrupting of a family member" (Jones). In *Skinwalkers*, as the plural suggests, two intertwined renderings of the legendary creatures advance the plot—and both integrate visual and narrative allusions to the Euro-American vampire trope.

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[7] *Skinwalkers* depicts the taboo in two respects: on the level of the narrative, Leaphorn (after searching for information online) asks medicine man Sam Wilson about Skinwalkers and is instantaneously walked out on. On the level of Eyre's direction, the legend of the Skinwalker as well as specific aspects of Navajo/Diné culture, ceremony and mythology connected to the legend are evoked, visually touched upon, but never disclosed or explained.

The vampire trope is called upon to visualize and to re-mythologize the film's core concern: "a biligaana sickness that needed biligaana medicine" ("a white man's sickness that needed a white man's cure", both *Skinwalkers*). The biligaana sickness is contextualized as lead poisoning and connected to the Dinétah Paints "factory in the middle of the community (Dinétah translates to "among the people/Navajo") and its polluting of the water. An invisible threat making the people "sick in the stomach, sick in the head" (*Skinwalkers*), the biligaana sickness—and with it the biligaana vampire trope—is closely tied to the Skinwalkers.

The first unmasked Skinwalker is Ruben Maze (Noah Watts), the leader of a local gang residing in the abandoned Dinétah Paints factory. Showing clear symptoms of lead poisoning, Ruben intentionally mimics the legend by leaving bloody symbols and shooting up Chee's trailer with human bone beads in the dark in order "to scare Officer Chee" (*Skinwalkers*). The mimicking Skinwalker, however, should not be mistaken as a mere red herring in the crime mystery. Though intending to play pretence, the human bone beads fired at Chee bring him "a curse" by getting "under [his] skin" (*Skinwalkers*); Chee begins to have visions when looking into his mirror and gets more and more aggressive up to the point of physically abusing a suspect. Interestingly, the human bone beads hit Chee in the side of his neck, leaving him with a bleeding wound that closely resembles the wound caused by a vampire's bite. Already plagued by visions, Chee treats the wound traditionally with yarrow root and puts a band-aid on it. The white band-aid covering a wound infected by white beads from now on functions as a stigma, a visual marker reminding us of the incident, the curse, and the biligaana sickness. Chee's wound eventually heals with the help of Dr. Stone's white man's cure, Bacitracin, but the stigma is simultaneously replaced and carried on by the identically, though fatally, wounded neck of Wilson Sam.

The second Skinwalker is Dr. Stone, who is "not your typical Navajo" (*Skinwalkers*) but the serial killer of medicine men. Blaming traditional medicine and the Navajo "stick wavers" (*Skinwalkers*) for not preventing the bloodbath with which his sick, lead-poisoned father erased his biological family, William Yazzie returns from his white adoptive family (the Stones) to the Navajo Nation to seek revenge. When Chee confronts the culturally alienated and morally deprived Stone at Big Rock creek, he is attacked and nearly drowned by the Skinwalker. Looking up from under the water surface, the camera cuts in a close-up of Stone's face, his mouth wide open in an inaudible scream, his face immobile but for the distortions the movement of the water surface causes. Without losing this focus, Eyre cuts in an image of a second face, overlapping the first but moving with the

water surface and blurry: Stone is morphed into the Skinwalker. The overlapping face (still immobile, mouth open) has very white skin, blacked-out eyes and black streaks running down the face from the eyes. While Chee sees the Skinwalker's face for the first time, the viewer has already encountered it briefly during Leaphorn's research on depictions of the Skinwalker legend and most likely also as part of the Euro-American vampire imagery (the wide-open mouth suspended over the victim, the blacked-out eyes, the extremely pale skin). The conflation of the Skinwalker and the vampire images in the climatic depiction of the antagonist gives a bleak and predatory face to environmental racism, to the white man's sickness and its immediate and long-term results on the Navajo community.

While the strategic conflation of American Indian tropes with the vampire in order to visualize and subvert the harmful influences of racism and (ongoing) colonization on American Indian peoples today can be traced in a number of contemporary American Indian films,[8] fully fledged American Indian film "vampires" are rare indeed. By now, this should not come as a surprise. The vampire trope and its Euro-American literary and cultural history cannot be translated directly into an American Indian context. The reiteration and re-mythologizing of the trope, the transcultural adaptation of it, necessarily changes the vampire and charges it with new culture-specific meanings and contexts. In other words, if speaking of "the vampire" in contemporary American Indian media to highlight the strategic infusion of the Euro-American trope, we essentially require the quotation marks.

And yet, as I write this essay, the "Navajo Vampire film [that] could be the next *Twilight*" (*Native News Online* Staff) is being shot and directed by Joanelle Romero in New Mexico, possibly as a franchise starter. An adaptation of David and Aimée Thurlo's novel of the same name, *Second Sunrise* (scheduled for release in 2016 by Red Nation Films) will revolve around "a case of plutonium [that] brings a Navajo nightwalker (vampire) and a no-nonsense FBI agent together. While deadly shapeshifters stalk them, Lee Nez and his beautiful partner must stop the power-mad Nazi who created him" ("*Second Sunrise*—the Movie").

Emphasizing repeatedly the filmmakers' policy of a ninety-five percent American Indian cast and crew, the production has cast actors such as Eddie Spears as Lee Nez, Sage Galesi as Diane Lopez, Balthazar Getty as

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[8] To add just two examples: Alex Smith and Andrew J. Smith's 2013 film, *Winter in the Blood* (produced by Sherman Alexie), as well as Chris Eyre's *Skins* (2002) focus on alcoholism haunting American Indian reservations and visualize it in terms of vampirism (bottled blood, unquenchable thirst) and colonialism in the above-mentioned way.

Wolfgang Muller, and A. Martinez as Bowlegs. The film, Martinez states in a Red Nation Media press release (19 August 2014), "takes the legends that have come out of Europe and puts them up against the stories of skinwalkers/ shapeshifters that have arisen in Native American culture . . ." ("*Second Sunrise*—the Movie").

Most significantly, *Second Sunrise* has been marketed as "the next *Twilight*" from the start. Taping directly into the debate of the depiction and involvement of American Indians in the *Twilight Saga*, co-producer Rosemary Marks states in an interview with *Native News Online*, "It [*Second Sunrise*] has all the elements—exotic locations, death-defying thrills, and hot Native stars—to be as successful as the *Twilight Saga*" (*Native News Online* Staff). To top it all off, the official homepage of the project copies one of the *Twilight* franchise's marketing pillars and invites its visitors in the "Fan" section to become part of "Team Shapeshifters," "Team Lee Nez—Navajo Vampire," or "Team Wolfgang Muller—German Vampire" ("*Second Sunrise*—the Movie"). While it is difficult to qualify this strategy in relation to the unfinished film, it certainly has created visibility and is supporting Romero's explicit goal: to create "an American Indian feature film that has the opportunity to break through at the box office" ("*Second Sunrise*—the Movie"). Using the vampire trope's bestselling success story as a means to access the American mainstream marketplace with an American Indian film production, too, is a creative and politically charged strategy of countering colonialism and marginalization by reinventing the "vampire."

Concluding Remarks

Understanding the vampire as a culturally and medially ultra-adaptable trope that trades and quotes stereotypes but also offers the potential to quote with a twist, to "constitute transformations" (Hutcheon 150), I have exemplarily analyzed and conceptualized the two opposed yet intimately linked narratives of (American) Indian vampirism ensuing today: the commodified myth of the (pseudo-)American Indian vampire of U.S. mainstream film productions, and the renegotiated "vampire" tropes created by American Indian authors and filmmakers.

Some contemporary U.S. film productions, e.g., *Blade: The Series* and the *Twilight Saga*, depict and enact persistently, appealingly, and in a highly marketable way the racialized vampire of the Euro-American Imperial Gothic tradition. Interchangeably dressing "the Indian" up as vampire or equipping the vampire with the ever-present war bonnet, these films reenact racism for worldwide audiences in utterly appealing and easily digestible images.

Due to the vampire's ultra-adaptable (or should we say "shapeshifting") nature, we can also encounter renegotiated and re-mythologized "vampire" narratives by American Indian writers and filmmakers who loudly oppose the appropriated and racialized imagery of "Indianness." By hybridization and inversion of the Euro-American vampire trope, American Indian filmmakers and authors such as Eyre, Alexie and Carr create a powerful postcolonial message in colonial times. Seen in connection to the uncompromising will fuelling *Second Sunrise* to turn the American Indian "vampire" into the next global box office sensation and to include American Indian film into Euro-American mainstream consciousness, American Indian "vampire" myths and the myth of the American Indian vampire are destined for a head-on collision.

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Transgression of Postindustrial Dissonance and Excess: (Re)valuation of Gothicism in Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*

ABSTRACT

The paper gives insight into the revaluation of popular Gothic aesthetics in Jim Jarmusch's 2014 production *Only Lovers Left Alive.* Drawing on critical theory and the postmodern theoretical framework, the article suggests that the film transgresses contemporary culture immersed in a "culture of death" that has produced a vast amount of cultural texts under the rubric of "Gothicism." By considering Jean Baudrillard's concept of transaesthetics and Judith Halberstam's writings on contemporary monstrosity, the paper shows that a commodified Gothic mode has lost its older deconstructive functions that operated on the margins of the mainstream. Now entirely focused on the duplication of the same aesthetic codes and signs, Gothic productions conform to the rules of postindustrial culture, enriching entertainment imagery with the neutralized concept of "otherness." Hence, the article engages primarily with Jarmusch's indie aesthetics that goes beyond easily recognizable patterns and generic conventions and allows the director to emphasize that the arts are rejuvenating forces, the antidote to a commoditized environment. Then, the focus is on the construction of main characters—Adam and Eve, ageless vampires and spouses—who thanks to nostalgic theatricality and performance reconfigure the mainstream monstrosity. Ultimately, the article emphasizes that Jarmusch's film, to a large extent, becomes a warning against the inevitable results of advanced capitalism practiced on a global scale.

> This is no longer a productive space, but a kind of ciphering strip, a coding and decoding tape, a tape recording magnetized with signs. It is an aesthetic reality, to be sure, but no longer by virtue of art's pre-mediation and distance, but through a kind of elevation to the second power, via the anticipation and the immanence of the code.
>
> (Baudrillard 146)

The article focuses on the revaluation of Gothicism in Jim Jarmusch's latest film *Only Lovers Left Alive.* While delimiting postindustrial ethics of accumulation and material production, the paper stresses that Jarmusch's film subverts popular culture mechanisms to redefine its simulated surroundings and normative categories. Thus, the film implies a criticism of the homogeneity of cultural codes in the context of the postindustrial condition. In a way, the paper argues that Jarmusch's cultivation of cinematic liminality, which is characterized by the elusiveness and indeterminacy of his characters and aesthetics, becomes a continuing negotiation with mainstream trends.

In his essay "Symbolic Exchange and Death" (1984), Jean Baudrillard refers to Walter Benjamin's assertion of the indefinite reproducibility in its modern industrial phase to draw a comparison between premodern society dominated by symbolic exchange[1] and the succeeding development of capitalism. While following Benjamin's line of reasoning, Jean Baudrillard unfolds categories and taxonomies via which information is habitually transmitted, and cultural capital is co-opted in the postindustrial phase. In this sense, the text implies that the processes of meticulous duplication of visual material accompanied by aestheticization of the every day, contributed to the elimination of symbolic exchange and death as natural components of the cycles of life. In effect, having annulled all alternatives to itself, capitalism entered a new era of simulation in which social reproduction replaces production as the organizing force (146), ultimately contributing to a postmodern break.

Since postmodern societies are organized around the appropriations of forms and codes, art, economy and politics mutually exchange signs to neutralize and ultimately dissolve all differences. In this light, forms of artistic subversion appear to be futile since the system's economy forthwith regulates non-normative activities.[2] As a matter of fact, at this level,

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[1] For Baudrillard, symbolic exchange is understood as an alternative to the values and practices of capitalist system as its activities and practices do not comply with the rules of production.

[2] As Jean Baudrillard points out, "the capitalist system is the master: like God, it can bind and unbind energies, but what it cannot do (and also what it cannot escape), is to be

the dominance of "sign value" over a value/exchange distinction controls the world. Under the conditions of postmodernity, where signs no longer refer to either reality or signifying principles but themselves, the reproduction of the same cultural codes is immanent in its repetitions. Hence, aesthetic value is based on the visual repetition of the same material. In fact, Baudrillard repeatedly emphasizes in his succeeding publications that reality has become absorbed by the "hyperreality of the code and simulation, triggering a fabrication of effects, artificial world without meaning" (Baudrillard 120). Interestingly, as the philosopher concludes, "there is no longer such a thing as ideology; there are only simulacra" (120), a procession of the same signs that govern our reality.

Subsequently, limitless combinations of visual material brought a dramatic increase in the production of imagery that ultimately contributed, following Jean Baudrillard's "The Transparency of Evil" (1994), to the formation of transaesthetics. This aesthetic reconfiguration exceeds itself, losing its purpose and specificity. Moreover, as Douglas Kellner highlights, reality is characterized by total simulation in which "there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without a reference to anything whatsoever, by virtue of sure contiguity" (219). In fact, when there are no criteria for value, taste and judgment, everything collapses in "a morass of indifference and inertia" (Kellner 220). In this manner, the ethics of accumulation of material results in the anaesthetization and desacralization of morality, producing a culture of death understood here as an absence of the human behind simulations.

Bearing in mind the account as mentioned above, one may still wonder what kind of effect anaesthetization has on contemporary Gothic aesthetics. Needless to say, popular culture immersed in a "culture of death" has produced a vast amount of cultural texts under the rubric of "Gothicism," by degrees contributing to its revaluation. It is worth emphasizing that the Gothic genre—constructed as a marginalized, antirational, subversive, immoral and uncanny discourse—since its early beginnings has been a part of the popular culture market. However, the processes of anaesthetization accelerated by consumer culture have significantly affected the major tenets of its aesthetics. In effect, recycled Gothic conventions have saturated contemporary cultural texts to the point at which they provide normative images of vampire youths and soul-hunting cyborgs, zombies and Gothic settings to modern consumers (Hogle 287). In other words, a normalized and commodified Gothic aesthetics now constitutes a part of everyday

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reversible. The process of value is irreversible" (124). Therefore, the emphasis is on the repetition of the same formulae that decrease the subversive potential of subjects.

iconography as it has lost its deconstructive functions that initially operated on the margins of the mainstream.

This redefinition of Gothicism in popular culture is particularly emphasized in the writings of Judith Halberstam, who draws comparisons between cultural texts from recent years and the Gothic novels of the nineteenth century. As Halberstam asserts, the texts from the nineteenth century "revealed certain material conditions of the production of horror, made strange the categories of beauty, humanity and identity that we still cling to" (6). As Halberstam subsequently points out, the Gothic in its early stage as "a rhetorical style and narrative structure was designed to produce fear and desire within readers . . . that emanated from the vertiginous excess of meaning" (2). In this structural model, "the experience of horror came from the realization that meaning itself runs riot" (2).[3] However, now entirely focused on the duplication of the same aesthetic codes and signs, Gothic cultural texts conform to homogenous popular culture. In fact, they have enriched popular imagery with what was formerly associated with the concept of "otherness." In other words, naturalization / neutralization of previously dialectically opposed terms (good vs. evil; man vs. woman; self vs. the other; normality vs. monstrosity; body vs. mind) has led to the repetition and domination of the same cultural codes.

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Following this line of thinking, exposure to the fusion of previously contradictory material, which is now received in the form of a cultural pulp, generates inertia among contemporary consumers who eventually become ignorant of the content of consumed cultural texts. Contrariwise, consumers are concentrated on a quantity of simulations and their immediate visibility. These apathetic reactions of consumers derive from the fact that, referring once again to Jean Baudrillard, we are exposed to the same "genesis of simulacra" (128). Hence, the Gothic can be now represented as potentially meaning anything. It can be a lifestyle of its own, aesthetics, fashion and music that all attach to symbols of death, darkness and depressive moods, melancholy, sublime aspects of terror and horror. Hence, initially aestheticized Gothic works are transformed into anaesthetized cultural forms devoid of their transgressive character that would allow them to express a critical voice on socio-cultural constructs.

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[3] Since its beginnings Gothic convention has been a subversive tool that filtered, as Fred Botting emphasizes, "threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. If not a purely negative term, Gothic writing remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic" (1). Postmodern culture has revaluated this boundless style characterized by excess and ambivalence.

The commercialized Gothic aesthetics has been subverted by Jim Jarmusch in *Only Lovers Left Alive,* released in 2014. Indeed, for the artist who cultivates aesthetic marginality and produces films under minimal conditions with a small group of friends—associated mainly with the avant-garde, New York pop vanguard, performance art and club culture—the above-mentioned economic and cultural exploitation constitutes an undesirable trend in independent filmmaking. Therefore, not surprisingly, the director engages in a dialogue with cinematic and artistic conventions imposed by the popular culture industry to explore the conceptual possibilities of Gothic narrative. In doing so, Jim Jarmusch revaluates contemporary popular Gothic aesthetics to produce a cinematic vision that is a mixture of experimental art combined with the influence of pop, minimalism, classic street photography and performance, the currents that dominated the 1960s avant-garde. Placing himself beyond easily recognizable patterns and generic conventions, Jarmusch emphasizes that the arts are not just a reason to live, but are rejuvenating forces and an antidote to a commoditized environment.

Therefore, to determine the indie character of his production, Jarmusch decides to compose a minimalist narrative line in *Only Lovers Left Alive* which contrasts with contemporary mainstream vampire films. His ageless vampires Adam and Eve, who are spouses, take us on a journey through the streets of Detroit and Tangier rather than on a killing spree present in the majority of significant Gothic Hollywood productions. As Jarmusch's characters are both outsiders and loners, they have been living for centuries separately on the two continents, meeting only in critical moments of their lives. Having experienced various events throughout the centuries, they know the history of humanity in a timeline by having lived through it, but from the margins, from the shadows, as if observing it from the shadows. Additionally, we get to know that they used to lead attractive lives, socializing with the greatest poets, composers and writers. However, now Adam, a sensitive musician and outcast, lives in one of Detroit's derelict mansions and experiences depression. At the same time, Eve is in Morocco, hanging out with Christopher Marlowe, who has been a vampire for 400 years. Still, she drops everything to be with Adam. In effect, for the next 90 minutes of screen time, the spouses are together, mostly just admiring music, retelling stories from the past and discussing the posthuman present.

At this stage, it would be helpful to take into consideration Robert Miles's publication *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*, which defines the Gothic "as not a genre as such, nor a specific style set by a system of conventions . . . but a discursive site, a carnivalesque mode for representations

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of the fragmented subject" (28). Analyzed from that perspective, Jarmusch's vision of disordered postindustrial reality with highly pronounced aesthetics comfortably fits this definition of Gothicism. As a matter of fact, from the establishing shots, one realizes that Jarmusch's film is a crossover between cinematic genres and music styles. Interestingly enough, similar artistic assemblages enabled visual and performing artists to transgress the boundary between art and everyday life, creating bohemian counterculture in the sixties. Undeniably, Jarmusch's collage of sounds and visual elements that accompany almost each and every scene in the film is inspired by the countercultural acts, punk music and cinema. In effect, the viewers are exposed to constant audiovisual stimuli that come from different backgrounds. Raw, chaotic, bleak, noisy and often improvized, the film's scenes quickly redefine structure-oriented conventions used by the majority of mainstream film productions. However, contrary to one's expectations, the subjects in *Only Lovers Left Alive* "do not rebel; they recur rhythmically as a sort of visual riff overlaid on the dialogue and the (in)action" (Suarez 94). Thus, one gains an impression of being involved in an apocalyptic vision that takes place in a paralyzed urban space in which vampires play the major roles. In this respect, Jarmusch's production implies that liminal production can revaluate highly commercialized artistic forms, bringing them back to the stage where a distinctly reflexive form of narrative plays a substantial role.

Detroit as a locus of the film's action intensifies this alienating effect of confinement and socio-cultural suppression. There is no denying the fact that disorganized cities, houses filled with primitive energies and occult pasts, constituted the landscape of literary and cinematic works in the classical Gothic format from the early part of the twentieth century, bringing a sense of terror and horror which disturbed the present. In fact, as Fred Botting summarizes, "old castles, houses and ruins, as in wild landscapes and labyrinthine cities, situate heroines and readers at the limits of normal worlds and mores" in Gothic texts (21). In a sense, urban areas constituted places onto which cultural fears and fantasies could be projected (22).

Nevertheless, the derelict and abandoned city of Detroit is devoid of these intensities and deregulating forces as its dwellers cannot resist even the passivity of its surroundings. Hence, Adam often indicates that contemporary urban space became a shelter for "zombies" and melancholic recluses who are tempted by its anomic landscape. In fact, Detroit, which was a former industrial paradise and a promised land, is now a dead desert abandoned by the state and partially by its residents. Also, cultural life has vanished in these liminal urban surroundings and what is left there are empty buildings without their former artistic vibes. At this point, it is

worth referring once again to Jean Baudrillard who claims in his studies on postindustrial cities that "the cemetery no longer exists because modern cities have taken over its function" (127). Undeniably, this critical voice can be easily applied to Detroit, which became a ghost town, having conformed to the politics of de-industrialization. In this manner, postindustrial Detroit with its exuberant gloom and existential agony aptly illustrates the destructive effects of late capitalism. In a way, Jarmusch draws a picture of the collapse of the substantial values of Western civilization left without ethical and cultural directions.

To accentuate the contrast between dehumanized mass production and the sophistication of the artistic world from the past, Jarmusch divides his characters into vampires and zombies. It is apparent from the initial scenes that it is the vampires that become increasingly humanized and sympathetic, whereas human beings embody all the features naturally ascribed to zombies. In fact, Jarmusch redefines the concept of a vampire present in contemporary popular culture imagery, adopting certain features from Gothic texts of previous centuries. Hence, for instance, the director replaces the everlasting youth, beauty and vitality of contemporary vampires with the sensitive individualism of his characters who genuinely desire to grasp the meaning of "self."

Since humans, as Adam consistently implies, are now "emotionally and spiritually dead " (*Only Lovers Left Alive*), the stability and achievements of our civilization are gradually undermined. In such conditions, it is the vampires whose role is to restore order. Therefore, in contrast to classical representations of vampires who were both villains and ghostly diabolical agents who "demanded not a return to reason and morality, but a re-awakening of spiritual energies and sacred awe" (Botting 95), Jarmusch's characters might be perceived even as post-vampires as they appear to be more humane than humans themselves. They obey human laws and social norms, protect ethical values neglected by people, trying to surpass the postindustrial mayhem of socio-cultural inertia. And what is more important, Jarmusch's vampires drink blood bought in blood donation centres, which deprives them of their monstrosity even further. Thus, it can be asserted that "they do not wish to destabilize, but to conserve" (Tenga and Zimmerman), respecting humanity and seeking legal alternatives to satisfy their vampirism. In the process, they aim to reform and elevate contemporary lives firmly determined by the consumer industry thanks to their creative powers and promotion of works of art from the past.

By way of contrast, mindless, hideous, passive, destitute of will and individuality, zombies gather in groups and pose a danger on the streets of postindustrial Detroit. As Lev Grossman asserts in his article "Zombies

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Are the New Vampires," "zombies wreak havoc and are a liberalization of what has already happened in our mechanized, depersonalized, consumer-powered age—the death of the individual that continues to lumber forward" (2). Zombies are not capable of noticing the mechanisms of advanced capitalism, such as the technological intrusion and schizoid logics of buying that has dominated our lives and robbed us of our creative powers. Instead, they are attached to consumption that intoxicates their minds. One thing is obvious: zombies in Jarmusch's film do not work towards any goal beyond their fulfillment of simple drives. In that case, they are stirred by materialistic reasons. As Richard Green and K. Silem Mohammad aptly notice,

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> The vampire embodies a form of Nietzschean super-humanity, beyond good and evil, the zombie goes even further beyond. For the vampire, the knowledge that one is doing evil remains as a concept, and with this knowledge comes the erotic charge of unneeded guilt. For the zombie, this is all a non-issue. The zombie is sub-Nietzschean, sub-animal, really it is a Spinozan force of decomposition, an entirely non-moral and completely liberated interaction of matter with other matter. (24)

Adam consciously alienates himself from his surroundings dominated by zombies and their artificial sense of being, also expressing his critical voice on humans. In short, he deliberately positions himself on the margin, as if convinced that his refined music, which is a fusion of different sounds from various epochs, would not be appreciated by any of the contemporary tastes. And even though his artistic output is well-known in underground music circles formed by the younger generation, he avoids contact with the unthinking, undifferentiated consumers. He tries not to be involved in their bleak and repetitive activities. Adam, as he points out on numerous occasions, cannot stand zombies and their fear of imagination, their lack of creative power and the way they treat the world. In fact, in the course of time he is haunted by suicidal thoughts that are the direct result of his obsessive hatred for the external world. In this light, similarly to Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula, Adam is not a tyrant but more a victim and sufferer, artistic soul and a sentimental Romantic hero who does not understand the contemporary world.

In the course of time, Adam's aversion to zombies contributes to his systematic withdrawal from the external world. He is eventually reunited with his wife who comes from Tangier to help him to overcome this misery. An online conversation scene with Eve particularly accentuates his emotional collapse.

Eve: Can't you tell your wife what your problem is?
Adam: It's the zombies. The way they treat the world.
It does feel like I'm the sands at the bottom of an hourglass or something.
Eve: Time to turn it over, then. Oh my liege lord . . . We've been here before . . . Remember? And you missed all the real fun like the Middle Ages, the Tartars, the inquisitions . . . The floods, the plagues . . . (*Only Lovers Left Alive*)

As it is indicated in the dialogue mentioned above, it is Eve who manages to distance herself from the passivity of her surroundings. She claims that they both have to adjust to such conditions as history and this kind of human energy continually repeat. As she notices, contemporary zombies and their actions resemble the invasions of Tatars, or even the Inquisition. Her emotionless and rational attitude emphasizes that the same zombie narrative has been circulating for centuries. However, since people willingly pose a threat transforming themselves into zombies, it is now vampires who could advise humans on how to sustain the balance in their existence.

In contrast to other directors of his generation, Jarmusch is a connoisseur of vintage objects, sounds and stylizations that are predominant in the majority of his *mise-en-scènes* in the film and highlight his aesthetic marginality. Indeed, the director is inspired by the nostalgic dimension of our contemporary culture also determined by the processes of commercialization, especially in the mass media. Nevertheless, he strongly expresses his critical voice on the mechanisms of cultural accumulation. In her essay "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern," Linda Hutcheon notices that nostalgia "allows us to exile from the present as it brings the imagined past near. The ordered, and harmonious past is constructed in conjunction with the present, which in turn is presented as contaminated, complicated and confrontational" (2). Consequently, Jarmusch's vampires are nostalgic about artistic forms and technological inventions from the past. However, they both reject and recombine the constantly changing trends generated by postindustrial production. On the one hand, Jarmusch's film proves that disillusion and failure are the appropriate conditions for nostalgia, which could be defined at its simplest as an escape from reality and an attempt to return to a presupposed golden age. But on the other hand, *Only Lovers Left Alive,* which concentrates on the processes of remembering and forgetting the past, seeks to expose nostalgia through ironical statements that would undermine the assertions of authenticity and originality no longer present in the contemporary world. Hence, Jarmusch uses contrastive approaches while constructing his characters to indicate this ambivalent view on the contemporary artistic life.

Therefore, Adam as an artist cannot stand the systematic ignorance of the tactile and sensual glories of the old things that are regularly replaced by brand new gadgets and appliances. In fact, Adam's house is overfilled with a variety of instruments from different epochs, recordings and scientific inventions that were rejected by industry and which have never been widely used, despite their successful constructive solutions. Interestingly, what strengthens his connection with the "sublime" is his detailed knowledge of the objects and recordings he possesses. By way of contrast, what Adam finds in contemporary music is not remnants of a living romantic tradition, but, as he asserts, "just clichés," often meaningless expressions that invade his audio-visual space. Needless to say, the artistic productions of the past are of no value for the zombies as they are just old songs placed in the procession of simulacra on YouTube. However, it is worth noticing that it is Adam and Eve who at the same time love the funeral music of the seventeenth century and contemporary guitar wizard Jack White, whose childhood home makes a cameo in the film.

Similarly to Adam's passions for sounds, Eve is engrossed in reading and collecting numerous editions of books. She studies them carefully in various languages and learns their content by heart. Thus, viewers are exposed to numerous references to the literary canon, in particular to Shakespeare and Marlowe. These allusions constitute intertextual connections which open for us the multi-layered channel of cinematic and literary borrowings. There is no denying the fact that these extracts are the key to understanding the intellectual power of Jarmusch's post-vampires, whose primary focus is either on intensifying their individual spirit or educating new generations about the intricacies of the past. As consumer culture is dominated mainly by pulp products, Eve and Adam's appreciation of old artistic forms of various cultural backgrounds appears to be the remedy for products of mass quality. Hence, while listening or reading they often alienate themselves from the world, trying to live out the aesthetic hallucination of reality that would transgress spatial and temporal boundaries to depict the universal messages contained in various artistic productions. Whether in Detroit or in Tangier, they both appear to be guardians of the artistic heritage of Western civilization, often recalling transcultural references that would help them to validate the present state of affairs.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Eve tries to be up-to-date with the newest technological advancement and worldwide artistic trends to understand the complexity and mechanisms that govern contemporary conditions. She appears to be in between the two worlds, which makes her even more human in comparison to Adam, as she resembles a present subject who experiences multiphrenic intensities while being exposed to "sensory

overload," "affect-charge-intensities," and "floating signifiers" (Featherstone 64). In fact, Eve is driven by the passion to combat resignation and passivity, cherish the differences and "undo the oppositional dualism majority/minority" (Braidotti 41). She both transcends and affirms the chaos which does not appear to be chaotic at all to her, but rather, following Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, points to infinity as the nth power of becoming (127). In this manner, Eve might be perceived as a nomadic spirit[4] who desires "the self" as a process of constant transformation, while challenging socio-cultural constructs and forming "new ecologies of belonging" (Braidotti 99) to understand the sensibilities of the world.

Additionally, Jarmusch indicates Eve's performative identity and affirmative passion for the transformative flows of life in the scenes that take place outside Adam's house. There is no denying the fact that Eve is depicted visually as an angelic figure who wanders the derelict urban sites, bringing light and hope to the dead city. Her white clothes and light hair contrast with the prevailing gloominess both on the streets of the former industrial city and in Adam's heart. Thus, her appearance and distance from her surroundings perfectly match the ambiance and the colours of bright Tangier, the former mecca for hippies and beatniks in the sixties, offering an alternative to the westernized world. Additionally, Eve's wellbeing results from the fact that she is fearless and tolerant, eager to explore the unknown and enter into a dialogue with the outside world irrespective of all the deformities that are despised so much by Adam. Interestingly, devoid of conflicting emotions, frustrations and antagonisms towards any forms of otherness, she is able to overcome the dialectics of woman/man, master/slave, evil/good, fostering her position which is neither in the centre nor on the margins of society. And even though there is no eruption of revolutionary desire in Eve, she appears to inspire enthusiasm and belief in the transformative power of the social, bringing some hope to the decadent ambiance of Jarmusch's film. Also, in this case, art and a vast knowledge of the world enable the character to heal this socio-cultural fiasco triggered by the policies of global corporations that devour every creative act.

Ultimately, she is the agent and the initiator of all the major actions in the film, willingly taking risks even in the most complex situations. The last scene of the film presents Eve as a hunter, which implies the vampires' despair to survive without blood, and particularly accentuates her

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[4] This essay refers to Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic thought that stresses the dynamic and self-organizing structure of thought processes, "rejecting the psychoanalytical idea of repression, borrowing instead from Spinoza a positive notion of desire as an ontological force of becoming" (Braidotti 2).

transformative nature. Here, Eve performs both male and female roles, transgressing the patriarchal order to act freely beyond socio-cultural constraints. As both vampires make a last resort decision to attack a Moroccan couple, it is Eve who wants to assure herself that the planned act can have a more human dimension.

> Adam: Is that what we're thinking?
> Eve: Adam, really? So fucking 15th century. But they're deliciously beautiful, though, ain't they?
> Adam: What choice do we have, really?
> Eve: But, we're going just to turn them, right?
> Adam: How romantic of you. I'll get the girl, though.
> Eve: Excusez moi. *(Only Lovers Left Alive)*

The closing scene proves that unlike humans, the vampires are not avid consumers, blindly driven by their needs and desires to devour readymade objects, products and patterns of behaviour. Having acknowledged that zombies are the creatures of id, dedicated to mindless self-gratification, the vampirism in this scene appears to transcend socio-cultural amnesia and inertia as the dead zombies are turned eventually into living subjects. The transformation of zombies into vampires may make them realize the consequences of capitalists modes of socio-cultural suppression. In this light, the monstrosity of Adam and Eve may be seen as a definite source of regeneration of human lives.

According to Jean Baudrillard, death is not just subjective or bodily but a form in which determinacy of the subject and value is lost (122–23). The postindustrial conditions of Detroit aptly illustrate this socio-cultural downfall caused by the unification of the capitalist system. Seen from this light, the passive and subjectless zombies of *Only Lovers Left Alive* embody the fragile and dark sides of identity exposed to the processes of advanced globalization of the Western culture. Thus, in their sheer number zombies "have evolved as disenfranchised victims to reveal the ugly reality of corporate greed" (Tenga and Zimmerman). In such conditions, rigorously stylized and nostalgic vampires seek the emotional and aesthetic sophistication that would allow them to transcend their simulated surroundings. Unquestionably, it is artistic and creative forces that enable Jarmusch to revaluate, cross socio-cultural barriers and find an antidote to the anaesthetized conditions of the postindustrial world. In this light, Adam and Eve are the guardians of the ethical, moral and "the real" values once erased by what Baudrillard calls the social reproductive order. At the same time, their task is to retain human notions of the "self." One thing is obvious,

Jarmusch does not want to identify monsters and fix the terms to their deformity but tries to warn us against the inevitable results of capitalism practiced on a global scale. Or maybe, while taking into account the last scene of the film, one should read Jarmusch's film as an attempt, following here Judith Halberstam's statement from *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters,* to indicate that "even though the monsters always represent the disruption of categories, destruction of boundaries and the presence of impurities, we all need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities" (27). Thus, the realization of our inner monstrosity will help us to unfold the socio-cultural constraints and notice the impurities generated by the capitalist monster.

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In the Flesh and the Gothic Pharmacology of Everyday Life; or Into and Out of the Gothic

ABSTRACT

One of the key questions facing Gothic Studies today is that of its migration into and out of its once familiar generic or symbolic modes of representation. The BBC series *In the Flesh* addresses these concerns against the background of a neoliberal medical culture in which pharmaceutical treatments have become powerful tools of socio-economic normalization, either through inducing passivity or in heightening productivity, generating chemically adapted biomachines tuned to think and produce. But the *pharmakon* has always been a risky form of normalization, its poisonous mechanisms threatening to undo its helpful patterns by stealth. This essay discusses the pharmacological and medical contexts of the series in which zombies are subjected to medical management and normalized as "PDS sufferers," thereby locating *In the Flesh* in terms of an already gothicized neoliberal pharmacology of everyday life. It also enquires how the proximity of the symbolic pharmacology of the series to neoliberal medical discourses and practices actually challenges traditional representational patterns of the Gothic and whether the Gothic can still have a role as an alternative cure to society's ills.

The Gothic seems to be a strong currency in the neoliberal era. Since the mid-1990s, and certainly with the success of series like *The Walking Dead*, *Twilight*, *American Horror Story*, or the more art-house *Les Revenants* and *In the Flesh*—for all their differences—there has been a recognizable surge in narratives about monstrous figures and spectral apparitions in film, TV, graphic novels, literature, and music (Spooner 21–25). In a series of articles and in a forthcoming volume, *International Gothic in the Neoliberal Age*, British critic Linnie Blake has linked the current wave of Gothic productivity to the series of "dislocations that free market economics have inflicted in our own, global-imperial age" and the "trauma wrought to global ecology, society, and selves by the vicissitudes of post-1970s global capitalism" ("Neoliberal Adventures" 167; see also "Burton and Swinburne"; Blake and Soltysik Monnet, forthcoming). According to her powerful reading, if Gothic *matters* today, it is because it is preoccupied with *matters* of direct political economic relevance to contemporary audiences. In short, the Gothic is omnipresent because it articulates "collective anxieties over resisting and embracing change in the twenty-first century" (Levina and Bui 2).

It is perhaps unsurprising that zombies, vampires, monsters, and ghosts seem to be everywhere in the cultural production of the present day; neoliberal technologies of everyday life appear to be monstrous, Gothic formations in and of themselves, with biotechnology and organ transplant technologies generating new and confusing states and definitions of living and dying, new vampiric economies of organ and biological trade, and new categories of prosthetic and surgical monstrosity/normality (Murnane, *passim*). This is suggestive on the one hand of a link between fictions in the Gothic mode and the material reality from which these texts emerge and are anchored, but it also asks serious questions about the status of the Gothic and Gothic Studies itself today, as there appears to be a migration into and out of Gothic's once familiar generic and symbolic modes of representation: neoliberal biopolitics and political economy seemingly emerge through uncanny narratives of their own. This is suggestive of a proximity between neoliberal reality and Gothic's fictional representations which challenges traditional understandings of the Gothic as a mode of cultural representation.

Gothic Matters—as the *matters* of the Gothic—implies what critics have understood to be the relationship between fiction and reality; these matters include a range of issues, the programmatic core of which has comprised—at least according to the discipline of Gothic Studies that has developed since the early 1980s—a critical, and indeed subversive, depiction and radical interrogation of the rationally-based assumptions, envisioned goals and normative dimensions of the twin projects of enlightenment and modernity (on subversion, see Jackson; on Gothic as abject negotiation

of bourgeois identities in modernity, see Hogle 296–98, and Punter). The fantastic and grotesque scenarios of Gothic fictions have been construed as mattering because their poisonous mechanisms generate social health by undoing dominant cultural and political narratives as a sly form of cultural therapeutics (Baldick and Mighall 210). Almost from the outset, how Gothic relates to its social environment has been discussed in material terms, concrete *matters*, and one notable medium in this regard has been pharmacological discourse (see e.g., Davison). On a thematic level, pharmaceuticals and poisons are a central concern within the Gothic around 1800; narratives such as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* or Ann Radcliffe's novels (see Miles 131–33) deploy medicines, drugs, poisoning, and intoxication as some of their most powerful plot devices. While a larger project on Gothic pharmacologies would be an interesting topic for future study—and would proceed, for example, through the nineteenth century and De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, continuing on to look at the psychotic worlds in Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* or Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* in the twentieth century—it is notable that several recently successful Gothic graphic novels, films, and television series likewise focus on pharmaceutics as the core of their engagement with contemporary culture. The first film in the *Resident Evil* series starts with an infective agent produced by the shady pharmaceutical concern, the Umbrella Corporation; Channel 4's *Utopia* is based around a pharmaceutical conspiracy involving not only a pseudo-inoculation which actually racially controls the population by inducing infertility, but also a form of medication for a nervous disorder known as Deel's Syndrome called Thoraxin which is later revealed to be an opiate causing the symptoms it is purported to control. Finally, Dominick Mitchell's *In the Flesh* features a form of medication, Neurotriptyline, which reintroduces a state of consciousness into the zombified living dead, returning them to a state of quasi-normality. What these very different Gothic medications and stories have in common is their position within a network of complex biopolitical, economic, psychological, and biomedical issues which are located within a framework of capitalism, with their narratives focusing on the infiltration of political regimes of health by damaging practices of neoliberal privatization and profiteering. They are instances of what Glennis Byron has observed in relation to contemporary discourses of globalization, namely that the processes of expansion and ultimately globalization of neoliberal ideology are "facilitating . . . cultural exchanges that [are] producing new forms of gothic" (2–3). The remainder of this article will trace such Gothic cultural exchanges through the lens of pharmacology as a key part of the architecture of neoliberalism.

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As the defining political and economic paradigm in the West since the mid-1970s, neoliberalism describes a series of processes whereby free market policies, privatization, financial deregulation and speculation, and corporate enterprise over government-led decision making seem apparently without alternative. Emerging from the Chicago School of economics, first tested in the business- and military-dominated Pinochet regime in 1970s' Chile, and associated primarily in the USA and the UK with Reagan and Thatcher, neoliberalism holds that if the economy is deregulated, competitive, rational, efficient and fair, then it will produce largesse for all. One key precondition must be met: a supposedly incompetent and bureaucratic government must dismantle all elements of public life that could interfere with corporate practices, including taxation, social welfare, public education, and public health; matters such as resources, production, distribution and social organization will be most effectively determined by market forces if the government would only limit itself to providing legal protection for private property and contracts—all of which of course has actually better serviced the drive for personal profit and the concentration of wealth over any benevolent social programmes (see Chomsky or Harvey). Promising trickle-down benefits for all through a supposedly efficient free market (Quiggan 137–39) while *actually* rendering a vast proportion of normal mortals into human waste of Dickensian proportions—debtors, exploited workers, medically pacified hordes of clinically depressed and hyperactive consumers, damaged bodies, and damaged youth (Giroux, *Zombie Politics* 44–51; Stiegler, *Taking Care* 12–16)—the excesses of corporate expansionism negate the cynical promise of a benevolent invisible hand while handing out little more than debt and mortgages, resulting in "the pulling apart of social cohesion, and the vanishing of equal opportunities for all" (Wyatt).

The manifest workings of this political economy that ultimately led to the Global Financial Crisis of 2007/2008 are now being re-animated by regimes of austerity for those who profited least and suffered most, an uncanny and horrifying return to/of the policies of supposed market efficiency, privatization, and austerity started by Reagan, Thatcher and co. in the 1980s—a worryingly familiar sort of estranging submission to a disempowering economic logic. This is what Mark Fisher diagnoses as "*Capitalist Realism*": "the widespread sense that not only is [neoliberal] capitalism the only viable political and economic system but that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (2). The repeat behaviour of IMF and ECB austerity measures while demanding privatization of the public sector is what political economists like John Quiggan and social geographers like Jamie Peck have called "zombie" and "undead"

economics, an uncanny and unconscious reflex-response in the service of neoliberal boom and bust economics, "dead ideas still walking among us" (Quiggan title page; Peck). As both Byron and Blake have suggested, neoliberalism and its discourses do not simply lend themselves to Gothic representations, rather they "repeatedly turn to Gothic tropes in articulating the social, cultural and economic impacts of a new world order" themselves (Byron 3) and this capitalist realism is beginning to produce Gothic themes, tropes, and figurations of its own. The already spectral logic of derivative markets is making its unwelcome return; austerity measures like the bedroom tax in the UK push the unwaged and benefit recipients ever further into the regions which themselves have had their infrastructure increasingly "rationalized" away, while in a truly Gothic moment the UK's Department of Work and Pensions was recently forced to admit that it had invented "people" as "case studies" who were actually supportive of the DWP's regime of cuts to sickness benefits and its effects on them (Rawlinson and Perraudin).

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The French cultural theorist Bernard Stiegler describes the "capitalist realism" visible in these accounts as the "fabrication of beliefs" in "autorealistic prophesies within the financial world" (*Taking Care* 182), visible in the attempts to maintain and regenerate belief in the myth of an efficient free market economy. Stiegler is interested in the tools and mechanisms of socio-economic normalization and how neoliberalism has managed, despite its constant states of debt and exceptionality, to constantly reproduce itself. This process can work because of powerful "consciousness industries . . . for the control of collective behavior" (*Taking Care* 34), leading to a toxic, pharmacological state of "behavioral control which is 'narcotic,' that is, which is anaesthetizing and which produces addiction" (Stiegler, *New Critique* 101). The meaning of pharmacology here is "not limited to chemico-therapies but actually concerns all techniques" (*Taking Care* 98–99) such as, for example, "psychotechnologies constituting the media infrastructure" (*New Critique* 101), which are "technologies of stupidity" (*Taking Care* 34); "[s]ymbolic media," he suggests, "are a network of *pharmaka* that have become extremely toxic," leading to phenomena like attention deficit disorders turning the youth into mindless, uncritical consumers (*Taking Care* 85). In short, he is describing the precession of mindless consumption and casualties of capital, the locking into a system in which people are complicit in their own exploitation, disposability, and mental bludgeoning that ever since George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* has been associated with the figure of the zombie (see Shaviro).

For Stiegler, the zombification of humans is a pharmacological process and although pharmacology here has a largely figurative sense, the

problem he describes does indeed have a more literal context in actual techniques of political economy which are pharmaceutical and chemical-based. Given the prominence of pharmaceutical narratives in contemporary Gothic texts, it is notable that the genesis of neoliberalism in the adoption of the Chicago School's economic programme in the late 1970s correlates not only with the birth of Big Pharma, biotech, and experimental medicine, the early structural reforms in the medical and pharmaceutical sciences and industry were *actually* co-developed from the very beginning by Chicago economists working as consultants in a working paper entitled *Regulating New Drugs* from 1972 and popularized by Milton Friedman in his *Newsweek* column (Hogarth 6–8). Melinda Cooper (51–73) and John Abraham in particular have traced these homologies and systematic links since the 1980s. Neurochemical enhancement, adaptation, or regulation creates "new pathways of capital accumulation," meaning good-as-dead bodies emerge as significant actors in social and commercial life, and "life and death become units of productivity in the form of 'enterprized-up' individuals" (Franklin and Lock 13). In *The Selfish Capitalist*, Oliver James traces a correlation between rising levels of mental health issues and the neoliberal mode of capitalism (60), mirrored in the fact that "depression is the condition in the UK that is most treated by the NHS" (Fisher 19). Meanwhile, depression, like anxiety disorders and attention disorders, has been redefined as chemical imbalances, seemingly depoliticizing and "naturalizing" a social and culturally codified condition while providing a lucrative market for multinational pharmaceutical companies to peddle their wares (Blackman 1–4). That there is a political economic construct behind such "naturalized" illnesses can be determined from the financial incentives offered to schools in the USA to classify "unruly" students as ADHD-disabled and medicate with Ritalin (Rose 211). While Rose has deployed a Gothic rhetoric by referring to these "re-made" conceptions of selfhood and the human in these networks as "monstrous" (250), other commentators have traced real life phenomena of Gothic proportions such as the corporeal changes generated by the HIV-medication AZT in Australia (Persson) or the wholesale outsourcing of clinical testing of new medications to poor communities in Africa and Asia in order to avoid the quality and safety regulations in the global north (Crane). There is a real (Gothic) pharmacology of everyday life, it seems.

Such scenarios are also the backdrop to Dominick Mitchell's post-zombie apocalypse drama *In the Flesh*. Set in the Lancashire village of Roarton, the series depicts life after "The Pale Wars" when armed militias of the living—the so-called "Human Volunteer Force"—waged war with

thousands of deceased who had risen from the grave and were reanimated as rabid zombies in "The Rising." The story is picked up when Kieren Walker, a teenager who had committed suicide after his friend, and probably lover, Rick Macy, was shipped off to serve in Afghanistan, returns back to Roarton. He, like others among the undead who weren't killed by the HVF, ended up being treated with a new medication called Neurotriptyline in a private institution in Norfolk. Neurotriptyline kick-starts neurochemical production and hence begins to artificially regenerate the ability of the undead to think rationally and control their murderous urges. Having regained consciousness, been categorized as PDS sufferers ("Partially Deceased Syndrome"), and been provided with daily doses of medication to suppress their thirst for brains, Kieren and the other undead are placed back in their communities to re-integrate.

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Given their medical normalization with Neurotriptyline, *In the Flesh* seems to focus less on the shock and horror of the zombies and more on the social, cultural, and political narratives being told around them. The problem seems to be that Kieren and the others are no longer human but also no longer fully *other* due to their pharmaceutical normalization. While PDS sufferers are haunted by memories of their atrocities, the simple auto-immune response of the community who are forced to adapt to the presence of people who (being dead) should not actually be there anymore, is to declare them "Rotters" and debar them from ordinary community life, treating them as outcasts and scapegoats. But this is a biopolitical distinction which is difficult to uphold, since death has become a matter of pharmaceutical management and hence is clearly a matter of political and economic negotiation.

Whether in the flashbacks to "The Pale Wars" or in the present tense of Roarton five years on, it becomes clear that these stories are inseparable from contemporary British social politics and political economy. From the HVF that seems to have taken the place of an absent national military response to the Rising to the corporation that develops Neurotriptyline in a clinical testing station that also doubles as a prison detention centre; from the chronically understaffed NHS in Roarton that seems to function as a privatized health and detention centre for rabid PDS-patients rounded up by the rechristened vigilante group, "The Roarton Protection Service," to the hordes of PDS-sufferers forced to wear yellow bibs and "pay their debt" to the community on privately administered working schemes—Mitchell's narrative is clearly set against the background of the UK coalition government's misadventures in austerity politics. Seemingly abandoned by mainstream politics, Roarton is a region lacking in any clear form of social cohesion and common welfare and is left to its own devices

to cope with problems of real public health interest, while the government focuses solely on the business of pharmaceutical provision. Indeed, Neurotriptyline and the accompanying health and education programme have all the appearances of a Public Private Partnership: Halperin & Weston produces, markets, and educates patients and carers alike on behalf of the National Health System (the local health centre and the inadequacies of the NHS's Care in the Community programme feature prominently in multiple episodes of the series).

This political narrative is developed in central themes of social violence and power: in opposition to a PDS-tolerant government, a Pro-Living party "Victus" is set up which believes that the immortal undead are unnatural, inhuman, and second-class; PDS sufferers, it claims, are only "one missed dose away" from tearing your head apart. Meanwhile, in response to this increasing prejudice, the PDS sufferers develop an extremist Undead Liberation Army that communicates through the internet and opens up communes preaching the need to embrace their undead status and to reject society's pharmaceutical control and biopolitical normalization. In fact, the ULA distributes its own drug "Blue Oblivion" to the PDS community which temporarily blocks Neurotriptyline and the pharmaceutically-regenerated consciousness, turning them temporarily back into rabid zombies and hence enabling the undead to embrace their true nature. Pharmaceutical control reveals itself as an ambivalent power then: the *pharmakon* is both medicine and poison, opening up debates on the ambivalent position of pharmaceutics in contemporary medicine.

In direct contradiction to its mythologized status as the site of the First Rising, Roarton was and is a place on the margins, left behind in the supposed trickle-down redistribution of wealth of the neoliberal political economy in a Southern England that is mentioned only as a distant, disconnected, and detested political centre. Roarton appears as a grotesque mirror image of David Cameron's "broken society" that simply does not seem able to get back working again (Cameron). A key part of the Victus rhetoric is their demand that PDS sufferers repay their debt to society given that the living are footing the bill for Neurotriptyline, and they instigate "volunteering" schemes curiously reminiscent of community service for ASBO[1]-holders or the coalition government's apprenticeship schemes to get youth unemployment figures down, albeit cast in the mode of a concentration camp rather than benevolent British retail stores. The irony is that nobody seems able to pay their debt to society here and hence there seems to be very little difference between the living and the undead at all.

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[1] Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

Both groups are victims of a political economy that renders them equally as outsiders; both appear "disposable—nothing more than human waste left to stew in their own misfortune" (Giroux, *Zombie Politics* 2). As dead labour themselves, the living-rendered-metaphorical-zombies of which Henry Giroux has powerfully written appear to be uncanny mirror images of the undead PDS sufferers.

Viewed in this manner, *In the Flesh* provides a disturbing alternative to a recent offering from the field of economics itself and it is in this regard that I would stake a claim for why Gothic *matters* in contemporary society and for why it develops the Gothic *matters* that it does. In their *Economics of the Undead* (2014), Glen Whitman and James Dow discuss the political economy of Gothic popular culture such as *Buffy*, *Resident Evil*, and various other vampire and zombie franchises from the perspective of economic science. The result of this project is "one of the more *optimistic* perspectives you'll find on the undead threat" (x), safe in the belief that their readings show the "vast capacity [of economics] to cope with adversity and somehow make the world a better place" (xi). "[S]ome people may oppose trade with the undead not because of their concern for the humans," Deyo and Mitchell suggest in their contribution to the volume, "but because of their concern for the undead. They might contend that . . . especially zombies are exploited by trade" (120). Invoking neoliberalism's disingenuous free trade optimism, they argue "we wouldn't expect people (including the undead) to . . . trade if it didn't make them better off" (121). "Trading with the undead will involve some element of danger, but it also promises substantial benefits. It's so beneficial that we should jump at the chance to do it" (122). But of course neoliberalism *does* already trade *with* and *in* the undead, an instance of what, following Achille Mbeme, we might term "necropolitical economy," the "generalized instrumentalization of human existence" (14), which is manifested in "the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (11). The increasingly Gothic nature of medicine and science discussed at the outset of this article is a very real instantiation of such necropolitical economic themes and tropes. Medicine has gone about redefining corporeality as a commodity form for which medical anthropology has developed the concepts of "biocapital" (Rose 6, 133) and "bioeconomics" (Cooper 45–49), redefining selfhood and consciousness as something solely somatic and protein based, located in the chemistry of the brain (see Lock 167), and thus enabling redefinitions of death (as brain-death registered by ECG waves) so that living flesh can be converted into circulating commodities as "biovalue" (Rose 32). In the medical practices of the neoliberal era "trading with the undead" can be considered in literal terms: people become materials to be

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upcycled or recycled as tissue "donors," and organ-containers to be harvested for those who can afford to pay for transplant medicine. This has generated a necropolitical selfhood with subjects "kept alive but in a state of injury, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity" (Mbeme 21), a real neoliberal version of uncanny medicine.

One of the key manoeuvres in being able to redefine death as brain death is to rethink identity, subjectivity, and selfhood as a somatic process that is situated in the nerves and cells of the brainstem. According to the authors of the "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Harvard Medical School" (1968), the formative moment in transplant medicine, once the brainstem stops functioning, the "person" ceases to reside in the body and hence the patient can be both dead (i.e. brain-death) and organically alive (i.e. a living heart cadaver suitable for organ harvesting, thing of "biovalue"). In effect, this is a definition of identity that is based solely on a somatic theory of consciousness: the brainstem's function as the physiological site of consciousness is deployed to distinguish life from death. Given that *In the Flesh* is a zombie narrative, it is telling that the presence/absence of higher consciousness has traditionally been taken as the defining characteristic of the zombie too (Kirk 3–4), meaning that these negotiations of death are unavoidably, if unwittingly, linked with the figure of the zombie. A related field in which the broader necropolitical medical redefinitions of consciousness, the somatization of personality, and ultimately life and death, have gained a pharmacological basis has been regenerative medicine and pharmacology. The treatment of diseases such as early-onset dementia deploys neurochemical adjustment to stimulate cellular activity and literally produce new neuronal "life" in patients. Indeed, as Åsberg and Lum have shown, advertising for such pharmaceutical therapies has developed a fetishization of regeneration which segues into an imaginary of vitality and the "life" of the patient. Pitts-Taylor has coined the term "brain plasticity" (636) to describe the socio-medical contexts of neurogenesis and synaptogenesis in this regard, and in July 2015 Eli Lilly published findings on the successes of such drugs in treating Alzheimer's (Knapton).

In the Flesh develops the ambiguities and difficulties which such redefinitions of life and death can cause in modern medicine's necropolitical regime. Neurotriptyline offers a pharmacological preparation through which this story of contemporary medicine can be told. It reverses the process of dying in a manner reminiscent of the practices of regenerative medicine. As an educational film called "Understanding PDS" distributed by Halperin & Weston tells us, Neurotriptyline re-balances and kick-starts the neurochemical functioning of the brainstem amongst the undead, generating new brain cells and brain activity, thereby re-creating consciousness.

While Neurotriptyline itself is not responsible for the original rising, it does enable re-animation, and becomes the medium through which the unsettling, slippery slope from life to death in neoliberal medical practice and political economy is represented; a tool of biopolitical normalization; and the medium through which the ambiguities of neoliberal medical science's pharmacologics of death are played out to question the monstrosity of the living, but, more importantly, the politics of the living that produces the socially sanctioned necropolitical violence that is the Victus party.

It is no accident that medicine and pharmaceutics play such an important role in *In the Flesh*. One of the key testing grounds for neoliberal medical science in the USA and the UK was the development and marketing of psychotropic and psychopharmaceutical medications like Prozac, SSRIs, and Ritalin, offering actual neurochemical tools of control and normalization that heighten productivity or induce passivity, generating chemically adapted biomachines tuned to think and produce in certain ways, Melinda Cooper argues (22–23). As Nikolas Rose has discussed in this respect, what is at stake with drugs such as Ritalin is parents and society desiring to let their children's true selves appear through increasing the levels of dopamine and norepinephrine, thereby heightening alertness, memory, and concentration (98–99). Tellingly, Ritalin is deployed illegally to improve concentration and productivity among students, a marker of its importance in neoliberal pharmacy's programme of "enterprising up" individuals, while naturalizing and depoliticizing mental health as a somatic condition (Healy, "Psychopharmacological Era"). This has occurred much to the pleasure of the pharmaceutical industry who urge us to deal with our problems by taking drugs that will increase their profit margins, while creating "lifelong patients and repeat customers" (Pringle). Over the last 40 years depression and newly created conditions such as stress related disorders, social anxiety, and OCD have all been redefined along these lines (Healy, "Good Science"). Where such pharmacological treatments become immediately Gothic is in the consequences it has for subjectivity and identity: when the body and consciousness become realigned in this technical manner, "biotech . . . does not alienate one's labour from one's person" (as in old fashioned Marxist reading of political economy) "so much as alienate one's body from one's person" (Franklin and Lock 8), turning the body into a site of pharmacological experiment, processing, and "enterprising up," turning even the communication of proteins and chemicals into a site of political economy, the marker of which is how the body itself becomes the sites of investment, speculation, and profitability of Big Pharma.

This sense of disturbing self-estrangement is at the heart of the ambiguities of consciousness, feeling, subjectivity, and ontology throughout

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In the Flesh. These are the concerns that come into view in the strange moments where the normalization and anaesthetization of the undead through Neurotriptyline flip-flop into a genuine "enterprising up" of Amy and Kieren into fully re-animated humans in two key scenes that conflate Neurotriptyline and the ULA'S Blue Oblivion. In the final episode of series two, Kieren is forcibly injected with Blue Oblivion by the leader of the vigilante RPS who hopes to consolidate his political violence by using Kieren as the scapegoat proof of the undead's underlying violence. Although this should return Kieren to an unconscious state, and hence make him a rabid zombie rather than a PDS-sufferer, the camera point of view changes to show us Kieren maintaining, albeit with difficulty, his powers of conscious cognition and choice. Shortly afterwards he, like his friend Amy before him in a similar scene in the previous episode, appears to be regaining full animation. Where her heart had started beating and her senses returned to her, the final images of the series show Kieren beginning to repeat this process, flexing his hands as the sense of touch seemingly returns. If death is defined around consciousness, and consciousness is defined as being enabled through the correct functioning of neurochemicals, then death becomes a question of the correct pharmacology—no longer a biological given, but the subject of biopolitical and bioeconomical negotiations, and, of course, corporate speculation and profiteering. It is worth noting that there *is* actually a tricyclic antidepressant called "Nortriptyline" which is also used to treat various depressive and anxiety disorders, neuropathology, and increasingly also ADHD patients (*Martindale*, Prince et al.).

These issues are likewise important where Blue Oblivion fails to reinstate the undead Kieren's zombie nature (i.e. somatic, unconscious drives for flesh) in the episodes discussed previously, leading instead to a heightened sense of consciousness, control, and, indeed, conscience. If the dead can become re-animated in such a way, then the differences to the living at the core of the necropolitical economy of Victus, the HVF, and the RPS become ever more questionable. For the ULA, as for Kieren's parents, what is at stake in the pharmacological regulation of zombification is the relevant parties' respective definition of what is the "normal" identity of PDS-sufferers such as Kieren: where for Kieren's parents Neurotriptyline very much returns him to the world and enables him to take responsibility for his own life, for the ULA it is the reduction of consciousness and responsibility which in fact defines his new "true" nature. As Kieren and Amy seem to become properly conscious, it is almost as though the enterprized-up pharmacology of *In the Flesh* affects Kieren in the same manner as Ritalin and the other psychopharmacological substances discussed above. Of course, the truly disturbing moment here must be on the part of

the living: if it wasn't bad enough that they are themselves already emerging as dead labour, the human waste of austerity programmes, Kieren and Amy's stories suggest something far more threatening for them. If the dead can become alive by these pharmacological means, then there is no stable difference between the living and PDS-sufferers: the fully humans of Roarton could be, or become, "Rotters" themselves. This is a Gothic pharmacology in the true dual sense of the *pharmakon* as the admixture of poison and cure, the epitome of an order of ambivalent *différance* in which life and death have been subsumed by neoliberal policies. Roarton's zombies are the people of Roarton themselves in more ways than one.

Locating *In the Flesh* in this manner almost by necessity requires us to think more clearly about the status and patterns of representation in contemporary Gothic cultural production. When critics, such as Levina and Bui in their *Monster Culture in the 21ˢᵗ Century*, frame their discussions of narratives like *In the Flesh* by pointing out "how monstrosity has been used to *manage* terror threats, global capitalism crises, new forms of warfare . . . biotechnologies" etc. (2), then Gothic cultural artefacts seem to become identified as an increasingly questionable form of engaging with social reality. The description of the Gothic's present currency as "management" has a worryingly neoliberal ring of its own, making it part of our everyday world where the privatization of public life seems to produce new and more complex layers of management and bureaucracy while purporting to do the opposite. Perhaps the Gothic itself has become part of the "disimagination machine" of neoliberalism of which Giroux speaks and which extends from schools to mainstream media ("Politics of Disimagination")? Viewed against the background of an already Gothic biomedical reality and medical anthropology, Gothic may be taking on the status of a mimetic literary and artistic mode that operates increasingly at the level of metonymy rather than the more distancing metaphorical, fantastic manner in which, say, Stoker's vampire or even Romero's zombies once referred to reality.

Following Mark Fisher's diagnosis of "Capitalist Realism" as a programmatic blindness and concomitant form of cultural production in neoliberalism, perhaps the world that Gothic nowadays projects may in fact only be "an extrapolation or exacerbation of ours than an alternative to it" (2). In this mimetic nature, contemporary Gothic may itself "function primarily to undermine the ability of individuals to think critically" (Giroux, *Zombie Politics* 177) and outside the cognitive frameworks of neoliberalism itself. This Gothic would be less the fantastic displacement of Le Fanu's "in a glass darkly" than a troubling doubling which "naturalizes" the ideology and political economy of neoliberalism, making it appear unavoidable, the

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aesthetics serving "the forces of ethical tranquilization" (Giroux, *Zombie Politics* 177). Contemporary Gothic's *matters* might be making it increasingly difficult for Gothic *to matter* in the way in which we have become accustomed after some 40 years of Gothic Studies as a discipline.

If the genesis of neoliberalism can be traced to the adoption of the Chicago School's economic programme in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this not only correlates with the birth of Big Pharma, biotech, and experimental medicine as this essay has suggested so far, it also correlates strangely with the rising share-value of Gothic Studies in academia as described at the outset of this article. As uncomfortable as this might make Gothic Studies feel, maybe this could have happened precisely because neoliberalism is comfortable with the management of the ghosts, monsters, and zombies inherent to its capitalist structures that Gothic Studies, using these as a key to reading capitalism's structures and formations, has conducted on its behalf. Gothic might not be a therapy against, but rather another psychopharmacological component of neoliberalism's own speculative and spectral organization. Whitman and Dow's *Economics of the Undead* is suggestive of such a problematic account; the very fact that they can read Gothic narratives in the manner they do must be identified as a problem. As discussed at the start of this essay, the Gothic has long been explained in terms of its being a mode of resistance, a counter-discourse, which with its fantastic mode and uncanny displacements of cultural discourses and identities is capable of offering an intellectual antidote to capitalist modernity and its simplifying binaries and dubiously "naturalizing" discursive tendencies (see Kliś for a summary of this argument). The current popularity of the Gothic suggests that it may in fact be normalized and subsumed within precisely these dominant industrial cultural idioms however, as Whitman and Dow suggest—a side-effect of the popularity which has been inherent to Gothic since its inception in the late-eighteenth century, as Dale Townshend has recently argued (Townshend, Interview).

If Gothic matters today, then the mapping of the metonymical relationship between *In the Flesh* and the neoliberal medical discourses of the present discussed in the present article points more towards a diagnostic rather than a therapeutic form of activity. In a culture where trading with the undead is a source of economic optimism, a new speculative instance of venture capital, then it seems to be the case that Gothic Studies needs to consider the status of its reading and viewing practices as a cultural and political therapeutics anew. The *pharmakon* is both poison and cure, however, and if neoliberalism acts as though it can control and manage the Gothic, then this is a pharmacological control that may still prove toxic. The task of Gothic Studies could lie

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in determining how its own particular *pharmakon* can still work, how its *Matters* can indeed *matter*.

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INTERSECTIONS

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Images of Trebizond and the Pontos in Contemporary Literature in English with a Gothic Conclusion

ABSTRACT

A Byzantinist specializing in the history of the Empire of Trebizond (1204–1461), the author presents four books of different genres written in English and devoted to the medieval state on the south coast of the Black Sea. The most spectacular of them is a novel by Rose Macaulay, *Towers of Trebizond*. Dąbrowska wonders whether it is adequate to the Trebizondian past or whether it is a projection of the writer. She compares Macaulay's novel with William Butler Yeats's poems on Byzantium which excited the imagination of readers but were not meant to draw their attention to the Byzantine past. This is, obviously, the privilege of literature. As a historian, Dąbrowska juxtaposes Macaulay's narration with the historical novel by Nicolas J. Holmes, the travelogue written by Michael Pereira and the reports of the last British Consul in Trabzon, Vorley Harris. The author of the article draws the reader's attention to the history of a rather unknown and exotic region. The Empire of Trebizond ceased to exist in 1461, conquered by Mehmed II. At the same time the Sultan's army attacked Wallachia and got a bitter lesson from its ruler Vlad Dracula. But this Romanian hero is remembered not because of his prowess on the battlefield but due to his cruelty which dominated literary fiction and separated historical facts from narrative reality. The contemporary reader is impressed by the image of a dreadful vampire, Dracula. The same goes for Byzantium perceived through the magic stanzas by Yeats, who never visited Istanbul. Rose Macaulay went to Trabzon but her vision of Trebizond is very close to Yeats's images of Byzantium. In her story imagination is stronger than historical reality and it is imagination that seduces the reader.

As a historian of the Empire of Trebizond, generally unknown and therefore a rather exotic state of the Byzantine imperial family of the Great Komnenoi, which operated in 1204–1461 on the southern shore of the Black Sea, I would like to use my perspective while referring to a famous novel by Rose Macaulay, *Towers of Trebizond*. The question whether the title image invoked a myth or whether Trebizond really existed with its mysterious towers might be of interest to academics dealing with contemporary English literature. The case is similar to that of Byzantium, whose fame in the milieu of literary scholars is due to the poems by William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" (217–18) and "Byzantium" (280–81). While the poems have often been the subject of analysis, it is worth stressing that for the author, the name "Byzantium" did not mean the Eastern Roman Empire *per se* but its capital, Constantinople (whose ancient name was Byzantium), a famous city on the Bosporus, captured by the Turks in 1453. Yeats was clearly fascinated by the glamour of the emperor in his golden reception hall—Chrysotriklinos, which guides the reader to the *Book of Ceremonies* written in the 10th century by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (Constantinos Porphyrogennitos). This Byzantine source became popular due to the poet's contemporary, John Bagnell Bury, an eminent Irish historian who gave lectures in Dublin and then in Cambridge in 1893–1927. Yeats was his student in Latin at High School in Dublin (Arkins 22). We can only speculate whether Bury's analysis of the *Book of Ceremonies* published in 1907 inspired Yeats, who in the very same year appeared in Italy because of health reasons. The poet never reached Constantinople, that is Istanbul, but he visited Ravenna and the Byzantine monuments of the 6th century (Arkins 20). He was surely impressed by the golden, colourful mosaics in the basilica of San Vitale, representing the imperial couple: Justinian and Theodora and their court. He did not need to go any further. Whatever was left of the glory of the Byzantine court could be seen in these mosaics, as pointed out by Otto von Simson in *Sacred Fortress. Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna.*

But Byzantine studies have developed since Bury's and Yeats's time and one can find out much more about Byzantium, including the opportunity of an excursion to Turkey in search of the traces of the so-called Second Rome. However abundant are the scholarly studies on Byzantium, many visitors arrive at the Bosporus with Yeats on their mind, as his poem from 1928 became an imaginative record of such a voyage. It is interesting to compare this phenomenon with the influence of contemporary Trabzon in north-eastern Turkey, previously called Trebizond. Are Rose Macaulay's *Towers* from 1956 the same guiding star? To give an answer, it is necessary to introduce the Empire of the Great Komnenoi.

The state emerged in 1204, at the time of the Fourth Crusade, and was a rival to the "Byzantine government in exile" (cf. Angold)—the Nicaean Empire and then to the Byzantines after the reconstruction of the Eastern Roman Empire by Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261. But the rivalry did not last for too long. Michael VIII subjected the Komnenoi to his authority in 1282 but they maintained their sovereignty as an independent state (Geanakoplos 119–37, 327). The Empire of Trebizond flourished due to its geographical position on the southern coast of the Black Sea. Surrounded by the so-called Pontic Alps, it was well protected and soon became the crucial point of commercial exchange between the Black Sea and the Levantine territories. The Italian Republics had much to do with this success. Both Venice and Genoa strengthened their position due to their involvement in this business.

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The Empire of the Great Komnenoi collapsed after the spectacular invasion of Mehmed II, who had already conquered Constantinople in 1453. Thus the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries were the most significant time in the history of Trebizond. Then the state became a part of the Ottoman Empire, and afterwards—a significant part of modern Turkey created by Kemal Pasha, the Ataturk. He started his war for independence in 1919 in Samsun, the Black Sea port. In his policy of promoting the Turkish identity in Asia Minor, he eliminated in a cruel way the long lasting minorities of Armenians and Greeks. The capital of the former Empire of Trebizond, at that time Trabzon, became a purely Turkish town, in which the historical past of the Great Komnenoi was not emphasized. The Komnenian palace was already ruined; the main Byzantine churches were changed into mosques in the 15th century; the city walls were the visible remnants of the previous glory, but the town, as well as the whole region from Sinope to Hopa (Batumi was already in the Soviet Georgia) became completely Turkish.

It did not however discourage scholars from being interested in this easternmost province of Turkey where the glory of the Great Komnenoi was still visible. The research on it began to flourish in the 1970s; it was connected with the well-known names of Anthony Bryer, Sergei Karpov and Rustam Shukurov (Bryer, *The Empire of Trebizond and the Pontos*, *Peoples and Settlement in Anatolia and the Caucasus*; Karpov, *L'impero di Trebizonda*, *Istoriya Trapezundskoy Imperii*; Shukurov, *Velikiye Komnini i Vostok*). While examining particular aspects of the Komnenian Empire they concentrated on the economic connections with the Italian republics as well as with Turkish emirates, which, before the aggression of Osmanlis, enjoyed good relations with Trebizondian emperors whose beautiful daughters they married, thus becoming the allies of their fathers-in-law (Bryer, "Greeks and Turkmens").

But the history of that region had also known earlier heroes, that is the family of Gabras, the dukes of Chaldia in the military structure of the Byzantine state. Their name became famous in the 11th century, when after the defeat of the Byzantine army in the battle with the Seljuks at Manzikert in 1071 (cf. Friendly), Theodore Gabras managed to win Trebizond over from the Turks. His ambitions, however, led him to a rebellion, and it was his son who succeeded him. The family of Gabras became significant in this part of the Empire (Bryer, "A Byzantine Family").

The history of Trebizond has therefore two heroes: the Gabras and the Great Komnenoi, which enlarges the scope of scholarly interests from the 11th century till the end of the Middle Ages. Previous to that, from the 4th till the 11th century, the chroniclers did not take note of any spectacular events in this region. The very eastern part of Asia Minor was a typical border territory, a place of confrontation with Armenia which was of continual interest for Constantinople, especially in its time of imperial glory at the beginning of the 11th century (cf. Catherine Holmes).

In this context it is not surprising that the authors of contemporary studies on the Empire of Trebizond introduce the reader into the history of Gabras and then leave him/her with an outline description of this territory under the Turkish rule. The obligatory element which appears at the beginning of these studies is the expedition of mythological Argonauts to the Colchis[1] and Xenophon of Athens' description of the expedition of the Persian prince Cyrus the Younger in Asia Minor, whose Greek contingents rebelled against their master and escaped up to Trebizond (cf. Waterfield).[2]

Which of these events attracted the attention of contemporary storytellers? Paradoxically, a history of the Empire of Trebizond is not reflected in the belles-lettres. It is a pity, as there are many questions which could be developed in works of fiction. The latest book entitled *Trebizond* was published in 2013 by Nicolas J. Holmes, who "applied to study the Byzantine M.A. course in Birmingham nearly thirty years ago but ended up getting a job in banking."[3] His book, having Trebizond in the title, concerns

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[1] In the company of scholars dealing with the history of literature, I would stress Robert Graves's still attractive book on this myth. Cf. Graves, *The Golden Fleece* (first edition in 1944).

[2] Cyrus the Younger's army, the so-called Ten Thousand, consisted mainly of Greek mercenaries who after their master's death during the battle of Cunaxa in 401 B.C. refused to serve the Persians and withdrew through northern Mesopotamia and Armenia to the Black Sea. Reaching the coast, they started to shout: *Thalatta!* which means "the sea." The Belgian author of the survey of Trebizond refers to this story, also in the title. Cf. Janssens.

[3] Nicolas J. Holmes was Professor Bryer's student. The quotation comes from his letter to A. Bryer dated 24 Nov. 2013. The addressee kindly shared a copy with me.

the 11ᵗʰ century and cannot be any rival to Rose Macaulay's *Towers of Trebizond* which has dominated the readers' imagination since 1956. But anyone who wishes to find there traces of the Great Komnenoi will be disappointed, as the Empire of Trebizond is only an ornament in the story written by an eccentric author. However, there is a common element in the two books. It is the description of the landscape. Significantly, the terrain of the story concerns not only the Black Sea coast but Asia Minor in general, especially its eastern part. This is true for Holmes's story—due to Gabras's vicissitudes commented on in the sources; the same goes for Macaulay's book—due to the road chosen by the main characters who are on a journey.

I followed this geographical trace and I became interested in *The Reports of the Last British Consul in Trabzon, 1949–1956* written by Vorley Harris, and edited by his son Christopher in 2005. Christopher Harris doubted whether his father's book would be useful for me:

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> My father was reporting what he saw in contemporary Trabzon area. He himself never studied classical history, so (unlike many British diplomats) the ancient Greek history did not exercise an influence on him. The typical Trabzonlu of the 1950s and also today knows little about the Byzantine and Comnene past. My father describes what he saw. It is a pity that today's Trabzonlu deny their ancient glorious past.[4]

Being uncertain of the value of his father's reports for my purpose, Christopher Harris suggested the book by Michael Pereira, *East of Trebizond*, which I already had on my desk. Harris finished his e-mail with a crucial remark:

> The Trabzon region is a fertile ground for English travel writers, being wild and unpredictable. However it is the wildness rather than the Byzantine history that inspires these writers.

My opinion was similar but even in Consul Harris's reports I saw the Byzantine traces which were not so visible for his son. Therefore I decided to concentrate on these four authors: Rose Macaulay, Michael Pereira,

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[4] Christopher Harris's e-mail to the author dated 16 Feb. 2014. Harris suggested introducing the novel *Greenmantle* by a Scottish writer, John Buchan (1916), however, it did not involve Trabzon but Constantinople, Sivas and Erzurum in the time of the First World War. The plot concerning the secret agents in this interesting political area resembles the atmosphere of Macaulay's book. Maybe it is even better than her story, but it does not have Trebizond in the content, not even in the title.

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Vorley Harris and Nicolas J. Holmes. Comparing the four texts of completely different kinds I wondered whether it would be possible to notice what I would call the "Yeats's effect," which is visible in the case of Byzantium and its status in literary studies.

The main characters of Rose Macaulay's book: Laurie (alter ego of the author), her aunt Dorothea Foullkes-Corbett, called Dot, and Father Chantry-Pigg launch an expedition to Turkey. The aunt's idea is to liberate the Turkish women while the clergyman dreams about winning them over for the High Anglican Church. The aunt's feminist approach and the priest's conversion mission are at first glance unrealistic, therefore the reader expects something hidden behind the official image. It takes some time to learn that the aunt and the priest are lost on the Turkish-Soviet frontier. The possible scenarios of their vicissitudes in the country behind the Iron Curtain are vague and veiled. We can only speculate, as Turkey at that time was a playground for British and Russian spies (Macaulay 48).

The voyage of these eccentric travellers begins in Istanbul, where they board the ship called *Trabzon* sailing along the Black Sea coast to Hopa near the Russian frontier. The whole group disembarks in Trabzon (Macaulay 54). The reader receives very short information that

> Trebizond was a free Roman city, and the gate to Armenia. Later it was a Greek empire after a Latin conquest of Constantinople, and the Queen of Euxine and the apple of the eye of all Asia. . . . It quickly turns out that it did not look like the capital of the last Byzantine empire but a picturesque Turkish port and town. . . . Expecting the majestic brooding ghost of a fallen empire we saw in a magnificent stagey setting, an untidy Turkish port. (56–57)

Unlike Yeats's poems, Macaulay's book is a recollection of her real voyage to Asia Minor, therefore it is not surprising that the British consul in Trabzon appears in her story. He warns her not to wear a swimming suit which was against the Muslim tradition. Vorley Harris's name is not mentioned, which is obvious as the story was meant to be fiction. The consul, however, mentions the British lady in his reports. It would have been impossible to ignore her arrival and behaviour (Macaulay 108; Harris 15). Laurie prepared for the journey by reading George Finlay's *History of Greece,* Lord Kinross's book *Within the Taurus. A Journey in Asiatic Turkey* and David Talbot-Rice's *Byzantine Painting at Trebizond.* Due to the last book Laurie tried to imagine what the Great Komnenos' capital looked like in the time of glory. She was evidently moved by the city walls and the ruins of the palace:

I was in a banqueting hall where I spent most time, painting and looking out through the windows at the mountains behind and down the steep ravine to the sea in front, and imagining the painted walls and the marble floors and the gold starred roof, and the Comnenus emperors sitting on their golden thrones, and the Byzantine courtiers and clergymen talking to one another, intriguing, arranging murders, discussing Trinity, in which they took such immense interest, talking about the barbarians threatening the empire. . . . All the centuries of lively Byzantine chatter, they have left whispering echoes in the place where the hot sun beat down on the fig trees. (118)

The author visited the famous churches of Our Lady Chrysokephalos and of St. Eugenios but she was mostly impressed by Hagia Sophia,[5] drawing her sketches there (Macaulay 124). She enjoyed the taste of life, eating famous Trebizondian cherries and honey (138). Her story concerns a vast space from the Aegean Sea up to Palestine. She was greatly impressed by Jerusalem, but even there,

between sleeping and waking there rose for me a vision of Trebizond; not Trebizond as I had seen it, but the Trebizond of the world's dreams, of my own dreams, shining towers and domes shimmering on a far horizon . . . and at its heart, at the secret heart of the city and the legend and the glory in which I was caught and held, there was some pattern that I could not unravel, some hard core that I could not make my own, and seeing the pattern and the hard core enshrined within the walls, I turned back from the city and stood outside it, expelled in mortal grief. (162)

At the end of the story the aunt reappears as well as the priest, and the motif of a religious mission, which might have been a cover for spying, becomes intriguing again. There is also a question of the author's religious attitude and her existential wonderings. There is no room to analyze the issue; let me only quote from the interesting conversation she had with her aunt: "I think my dear [the aunt said], the Church used once to be an opiate to you, like that Trebizond enchanter's potion; a kind of euphoric drug" (220). A metaphor of the towers of Trebizond seems to mean something

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[5] The cathedral of the Golden-Headed Virgin, built inside the city walls, near the imperial palace and citadel, was an asylum for the inhabitants in many cases. St. Eugenios, a martyr from the 4th century, was a patron of the Great Komnenoi. The church devoted to him is outside the walls but very close to the palace. The basilica of the Holy Wisdom was built at the seashore, much further from the imperial buildings connected with the two mentioned churches.

safe but unapproachable, shining in comparison with unpredictable dark void of death (Macaulay 222; Ciracli).[6]

Michael Pereira's book is also a testimony of the journey; however, it is not a novel but a travelogue containing the itinerary of his voyage with his friend Tim Smart. Pereira is also a writer of fiction but he was surely charmed by Turkey. He wrote two books: *Istanbul: Aspects of a City* (1968) and *Mountains and a Shore: A Journey Through Southern Turkey* (1966). *East of Trebizond* (1971) is his third text on this subject. The coastal area

> is very fruitful. Its climate is moist and mild, and the lower slopes of the foothills which ring it produce tea and hazel nuts and timber. Only thirty miles inland, however, all this changes: in winter the climate is bitterly cold and the summers are fierce and dry. (*East of Trebizond* 20)

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This geographical observation is an occasion to mention leaders interested in ruling there, not only Jason or Xenophon, but also others "who came with different motives: Pompey to add Armenia and Iberia to the Empire; the Sassanids, to claim the same regions for Iran, Byzantine Emperors and Seljuk chieftains, Ottoman Sultans and Russian Tsars" (21). This sentence proves that Pereira's book is a general survey concerning a very wide period of time.[7] The Trebizondian Empire is only a part of it. How important is it in the story? Writing about the Kingdom of Georgia, the author mentions that Byzantines, Georgians and Armenians did not recognize the menace from the east in the 11th century. The victory of Alp Arslan over Emperor Romanos Diogenes at Manzikert in 1071 opened the Anatolian territory to the Seljuks (Pereira 71). Without mentioning details, Pereira depicts a historical background of the visited territories but this panorama lacks depth. He does more justice to the history of the Great Komnenoi, the rulers of the Trebizondian Empire. Basing this chapter on William Miller's book published in 1925,[8] the author concentrates

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[6] The metaphorical meaning of the novel was analyzed lately by Mustafa Zeki Ciracli. I am grateful to Mr Christopher Harris for sending me a copy of this article.

[7] Pereira's bibliography on the subject of Georgia and Russian conquest of Caucasus includes: W. E. D. Allen, *A History of Georgian People*, London: Kegan Paul, 1932; W. E. D. Allen and P. Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields. History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828–1921*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1953; J. F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, London: Longmans, 1908; D. M. Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, London: Weidenfeld, 1962; H. Setton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801–1917*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.

[8] It is interesting to note that William Miller, the author of the first synthesis of Trebizond, a medievalist contemporary to Bury and Yeats, rejected an academic career as

on the founders of the state and then draws attention to the relations with the Byzantine Empire on the Bosporus, reconstructed by Michael VIII Palaiologos (Pereira, *East* 229–30):

> Both sides seem to have taken a commonsense view of the situation: there was, after all, little that Constantinople could do about her eastern off-shoot whether she wanted to or not. The days when the imperial city could dispatch mighty fleets and armies to bring recalcitrant vassals to heel were long past. She had troubles enough nearer home. Similarly, Trebizond minded her own business. She did not (and could not) attempt to encroach upon Byzantine prerogatives or possessions. Thus an amicable modus vivendi was established, and the relationship between the two dynasties [i.e. Palaiologoi and Komnenoi] was strengthened by inter-marriage. (230)[9]

Pereira mentions the legendary beauty of the Trebizondian princesses, married to Georgian and local Muslim rulers, especially the White and Black Sheep Turkmen clans. Due to this matrimonial policy, the Empire managed to survive for a long time. In his short story of Trebizond, Pereira focuses on the last ruler, David and his niece, Theodora, the wife of Uzun Hasan, the ruler of the White Sheep. The author is moved by the description of the fall of Trebizond by Kritovulos of Imbros (Pereira, *East* 234; Kritovoulos 169–71) and he recalls the idea of the alliance of Uzun Hasan with the Western forces against the Osmanlis (Pereira, *East* 235–36; Dąbrowska, "Uzun Hasan's Project"). It is a pity that the author does not revert to the only Trebizondian chronicler, Michael Panaretos, who described the reign of Emperor Alexios III Komnenos (1349–90). Due to this account the historians learnt a great deal about the local aristocratic elite who were not always friendly to the ruler (Bryer, "The Faithless"; Dąbrowska, "The Trebizondian Lady"). But, when Pereira was writing his book, Panaretos' chronicle was published only in Greek, and it still remains accessible only in this language:

> Trebizond has been called one of the curiosities of history. It has also been called strange and romantic, fabled and exotic. But beneath the myth the core of hard fact remains: for two hundred and a half centuries this small state flourished, fulfilling a thoroughly useful function

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Head of Modern Greek and Byzantine History at King's College, London. The successor of a rich family, he spent his life abroad in the company of his wife.

    [9] Cf. Dąbrowska, "Was There Any Room on Bosporus for a Latin Lady?" *Byzantinoslavica* LXVI 1–2 (2008): 229–39.

as a port and staging-post on one of the great trade routes of history. (Pereira, *East* 237)

This last passage by Pereira brings to mind Rose Macaulay's fascination, now expressed without her emphasis. The historical outline is an introduction to a chapter devoted to the author's and his friend's travel from Istanbul to Hopa which covered 800 miles. The distance from Samsun to Hopa took a half of it, while the road from Trabzon to the Russian frontier—150 miles (238). It gives the reader the image of space as an important factor of political advantage and agricultural profits. While writing about the geographical landscape, Pereira underlines the plantations of tea, which became an important economic asset in the contemporary times. Entering Trabzon, the author is disappointed by its ugliness. It is visible that the Turks do not care about the Byzantine past. He is disgusted with the fact that a new cement factory was built at the seashore and spoils the view. "Damn the Comneni," it seems to say, "and the Ottomans too. This is the twentieth century" (240). This remark shows that, according to the author, contemporary Turks do not appreciate their Ottoman past either. The Byzantine glory of Trebizond remains in such buildings as Hagia Sophia, the Golden-Headed Virgin and St. Eugenios, all of them mosques now. Pereira's description of citadel and palace is very short and far from the exaggerated impressions of Rose Macaulay:

> The visitor arriving in Trebizond for the first time, his head filled with visions, perhaps, of imperial splendors, of beautiful princesses, of misty battlements, of decadent yet somehow noble Emperors . . . will certainly be disappointed. . . . The present-day town—by which I mean the main streets and squares and so on—is, like most Turkish provincial towns, functional rather than beautiful. (Pereira, *East* 242)

The disappointment and complaint were also connected with the Soumela monastery. The landscape was wild; there was nobody on the way, and the frescoes were damaged. The great consolation was the "marvel of its setting, that at least will always remain inviolable" (248). Pereira ends his chapter on contemporary Trebizond with a general remark concerning the border countries, enjoying freedom in the time of strength and mourning their glory after being conquered by the neighbours. The northeastern part of Turkey was a periphery to Constantinople in Byzantine times. A forgotten country, almost a no man's land. In the 13th century these political conditions enabled the Komnenoi to create a state which became crucial in this part of Asia Minor and flourished for a long time.

Pereira's comments on economy and geography make one think about Vorley Harris's reports on this region in the 1950s. The materials are precious as the "Trabzon consulate area was the largest in Turkey" (Harris 23). The author's observations allow the reader to understand the temper of the inhabitants "who are unstable due to the damp and humid climate" (24). In a very small note called "Local antiquities" the consul writes as follows:

> There are many interesting antiquities here in Trabzon. Apart from the old walls of the town, the old harbor built and early Greek churches, there is much of interest for the amateur archeologist. A book called *Byzantine Paintings in Trabzon* by Millet and Talbot-Rice is well worth studying in this context. (28)

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Tout court in this case the consul's son is right. His father did not describe the region from the perspective which might be interesting for a Byzantinist. The reading, however, denies this objection. Vorley Harris left materials devoted to fourteen Turkish administrative units called vilayets.[10] Describing the region of Rize, the author states that the high humidity is favourable for plantations of tea, oranges, lemons, apples and hazelnuts. Almost all the population are Lazes and speak their own peculiar tongue (37, 51). This kind of information leads us towards Anthony Bryer's and David Winfield's study on the topography of the Pontos. The other interesting details concern the city of Van, that is, the borderland of Byzantium in the 11th century. The author notices that "life in winter is hard on this bleak inhospitable Armenian plateau and it was with a feeling of relief that I headed north, towards the Black Sea coast and Trabzon with its mild winter" (Harris 56).

This feeling might have been shared by the Byzantines watching over the eastern frontier of the Empire. In the consul's reports the advantages of living in Trebizond are visible at first glance. The Black Sea zone surrounded by the Pontic Alps is definitely more pleasant in comparison with the Anatolian plateau (81–82): "The ancient city of Trabzon with its Roman, Greek, Genoese and Venetian remains, its coastline and the majestic scenery of the forest clad mountains of the interior is eminently suitable as

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[10] Announced by the British Embassy, he visited them systematically, spoke to the officials and gathered important information concerning the living conditions, climate, health, trade, commerce, agriculture, education and military forces. During his visits the consul presented a film concerning the coronation of HM Elizabeth II. There is a nice coincidence worth mentioning. Later on, during the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Oxford in 1966, Sir Dimitri Obolensky used this material to speak about the Byzantine court ceremonial. At that time Anthony Bryer was working on his thesis devoted to the court of the Great Komnenoi at Trebizond. Prince Obolensky was his supervisor.

a tourist centre," the consul writes, and he complains that the only good hotel is Yesil Yourt, by the way, the one in which Aunt Dot and her company stayed during their journey (99). While reading the descriptions concerning agriculture, one can easily understand that the city as well as the whole region owed its prosperity to the Venetian and Genoese commercial exchange (Karpov, *L'impero*). Sweet cherries, apples, oranges and hazelnuts were not enough to build the high economic position of Trebizond. The author's geographical observations on the port of Samsun connected by a valley with the Anatolian interior allow the reader to think of trade facilities, which built the economic power of the region in the Komnenian times (Harris 161–62). "During the preceding twenty centuries, what is now north-eastern Turkey was generally the eastern frontier of the western world," he says, and this remark is very important for my text (208).

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The borderlands of civilization are fascinating but not well known. They emerge from the darkness of history in the time of a military confrontation as it happened in the 11th century. In 1071 at Manzikert, the Emperor Romanos Diogenes tried to stop the Seljuk invasion on the Byzantine territories. The political circumstances and the battle itself are described in the sources and could be the background of a good historical novel. Nicolas J. Holmes faced this task in his book *Trebizond*.[11] The main plot of his text is a romantic story of Theodore Gabras from Trebizond and his wife, Irene, separated by the Seljuks, and facing many adventures. "They took his family. Now he will take his revenge." These words on the cover invite the reader to dive into the story. The political context is well shown, especially the controversial figure of Andronikos Doukas whose betrayal at the battle of Manzikert was crucial and changed the history of Asia Minor: "One of the most intriguing questions facing Byzantine

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[11] Among the primary sources of the period Holmes appreciates mostly Michael Attaleiates' *Historia* (Ed. I. Bekker, Bonn: 1853). The author complains about the lack of English translation, which actually appeared in the same year. Cf. Michael Attaleiates, *The History,* trans. A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.: Harvard UP, 2013. Others are: Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. E. R. A. Sewter, New Haven: Yale UP, 1953; Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad*, trans. E. R. A. Sewter, ed. P. Frankopan, New York: Penguin, 2009; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography,* trans. E. A. Wallis Budge, London: Oxford UP, 1932. As to secondary sources concerning Romanos Diogenes and battle of Manzikert, Holmes draws special attention to: Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey. A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History, ca. 1071–1330*, trans. J. Jones-Williams, New York: Taplinger, 1968; Spiros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century,* Berkeley: U of California P, 1971; John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565–1204*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999; Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. Anthony Bryer's studies are already mentioned in the text.

historians, in my view is why Romanus [Diogenes] allowed Andronicus to command troops at the battle" (Holmes 315).

But before it happened, the Sultan Alp Arslan preferred not to enter the territory at the Lake Van and offered peace in 1069. Nicolas J. Holmes invites the reader to consider the possibility of that peace between the Emperor and the Sultan who wanted to wage a war against Fatimids, in accordance with the will of the Caliph of Baghdad. "The Caliph has asked that the Qur'an be read by him in Cairo not Constantinople" (135)—Alp Arslan says in the novel. But the war broke out and the Byzantine army was defeated at Manzikert. The Turks took over Trebizond and kept it till 1075 when Theodore Gabras regained the town for the Empire. Nicolas J. Holmes is fascinated by Gabras. He owes his interest in Theodore and Trebizond to Anthony Bryer, whose work enabled him to form

> an impression of Trebizond as a vibrant Greek city that was remarkable in its ability to eject the Turks after the defeat of Manzikert, and which was subsequently able to resist Turkish encroachment for many centuries. (320)

Et voilà! The exotic Trebizond and the Pontos! An outstanding example of the role of the borderlands, being a stronghold of the independence of a state. Because of their peripheral status they could have become independent from the sovereign, as did Theodore Gabras and the Great Komnenoi. This created a special atmosphere which fascinates both the Byzantinists and fans of Byzantium. In the centuries that followed, Mehmed II's conquests made the history of this region so Turkish that Christopher Harris doubted whether his father's diplomatic reports would be useful for me. They are, as the geographical details are very well described and help the imagination when it is necessary to reconstruct the historical events. Christopher Harris, who was brought up in Trabzon, does not like Nicolas J. Holmes's description of brutal and marauding Turks. Indeed, they are cruel in Holmes's narration, but the image of the Byzantines is far from idealistic. Paradoxically, these two books complement each other. Michael Pereira in his travel story is not far from them, but he neglected Gabras and concentrated on the Great Komnenoi, described without any special emotion.

The Great Komnenoi appear in Rose Macaulay's novel where Trebizond is only a pretext to consider existential questions. However, as the author describes the town, its image becomes unrealistic. The emperor clad in gold stands for the Trebizondian state as he does for the splendour of Byzantium in Yeats's poems. It is like a dream, and even a reasonable Byzantinist cannot change it, especially now that the concept has

long been hijacked by popular literary imagination. And yet one thing that Yeats and Macaulay certainly share is their fascination with the beauty of the world that was totally obliterated as a result of the Turkish invasion.

As the Empire of Trebizond was on the eastern frontier of the so-called "Byzantine Commonwealth" (Obolensky), the river Danube was its western boundary. On the other side there were the territories of Wallachia, and I am going to briefly focus on them as a contrast that offsets the transience of the world whose distant echoes inspired Yeats and Macaulay.

After conquering Trebizond in August 1461, Mehmed II dispatched at the end of that year an envoy to Vlad III Dracul,[12] the Voivode of Wallachia, inviting him to Constantinople to pay the delayed *jizya* (the high ransom exacted from the infidels) and to provide five hundred Wallachian boys for the Janissary corps. Suspecting a trap, Vlad Dracul played the dangerous game and moved in with his troops. They were surrounded by the Turkish forces of Hamza Bey but then the Voivod's rearguard arrived, defeated the Sultan's soldiers and impaled them. The main confrontation happened in 1462 when the great Ottoman army crossed the Danube and entered Wallachia. Vlad did not risk the open battle but he harassed the Turks in many skirmishes and finally stopped them on the 17th June before entering his capital Targoviste. The so-called "Night Attack" became a symbol of his invincible power and successful cruelty. He is called Vlad the Impaler for a reason.

But also in this case literature hijacked the historical message. Cruelty was not enough. The scent of blood became more attractive. Another Irishman, Bram Stoker, introduced into his novel, published in 1897, a descendant of the House of Dracoulesti, the vampire Dracula, who won the imagination not only of high society, but also became a hero of popular culture due to the film adaptations where he behaved in accordance with his surname: like a devil (cf. Florescu and McNally). Vlad Dracul, the man who beat the

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[12] Vlad's father, Vlad II, received his surname "Dracul" after entering in 1431 the "Order of the Dragon," founded by Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, to protect Christianity. Dragon—"draco" in Roumanian, was changed into Dracul which means a devil. For a Polish historian it is an opportunity to mention Vlad II's visit to Ladislas III, king of Poland and Hungary before the battle of Varna in 1444. According to Joannes Dlugossius, the eminent Polish chronicler (1415–80), Vlad II appeared in front of the monarch and warned him against the expedition against the Turks. Seeing the King's determination, he offered him two strong horses and two faithful Wallachians knowing the country, who would save the monarch from any disaster. Ladislas III was about to accept these bodyguards but pursuing his mission to fight Murad II, he was killed in the battle of Varna. Cf. Joannes Dlugossius, *Annales seu Chronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, XI–XII (1431–1444), ed. Jerzy Wyrozumski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004, 347–48. The very expressive description of the battle by Dlugossius was taken by the chronicler from the account of Andrea de Pallatio, the papal collector general in Poland in 1442–45.

sultan at his own game, was transformed exclusively into a damned blood-sucking monster. Likewise, the Byzantine Empire was reduced to "the golden dome" in Yeats's poems. Macaulay replicated the construction. So much for the power of history challenged by the literary imagination.

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Intertextual Illuminations: "The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" by Henryk Sienkiewicz in Malcolm Lowry's "Through the Panama"

ABSTRACT

The article offers a reading of "Through the Panama" by Malcom Lowry in light of an intertext connected with Polish literature. Lowry mentions a short story "The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" by the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Nobel prize winner for the whole of his literary output. What Lowry stresses in his intertextual allusion is the perilous illumination that the eponymous lighthouse keeper experiences. The article contends that the condition of the lighthouse keeper anticipates that of the Lowry protagonist who in "Through the Panama" fears death by his own book, or, to take Lowry's other phrase, being "Joyced in his own petard." Basing her analysis on Mieke Bal's idea of a participatory exhibition where the viewer decides how to approach a video installation, and can do so by engaging with a single detail, Filipczak treats Lowry's text as a multimodal work where such a detail may give rise to a reassessment of the reading experience. Since the allusion to the Polish text has only elicited fragmentary responses among the Lowry critics, Filipczak decides to fill in the gap by providing her interpretation of the lighthouse keeper's perilous illumination mentioned by Lowry in the margins of his work, and by analyzing it in the context of major Romantic texts, notably the epic poem *Master Thaddeus* by Adam Mickiewicz whose words trigger the lighthouse keeper's experience, and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose text is quoted in the margins of "Through the Panama." This choice allows to throw a different light on Lowry's work which is also inhabited by echoes of futurist attitude to the machine and the Kafkaesque fear of being locked in one of the many locks of the canal "as if in experience."

The critics of "Through the Panama" stress the importance of the machine for this and other works by Malcolm Lowry (cf. McCarthy 147–48). Michael Wutz discusses the author as the "technologist of the narrative" whose fiction is structured by machines (57). Drawing on Sherrill Grace's handling of Ortega y Gasset's work where an artist becomes an engineer, Wutz explores the tension between Romantic and modern concepts of art in Lowry's published texts and holographs (59). The machine disciplines excessive detail by providing a design (Wutz 57); its significance is both symbolic and literal as I am going to prove later.

Lowry's fascination with machinery and his use of this image as an analogue of literary creation connects with a classic futurist statement by Gino Severini: "Le procédé d'une construction de la machine est analogue au procédé de la construction d'une oeuvre d'art" (qtd. in Berghaus 24). The ambiguity of the futurist attitudes towards the machine was reflected in Marinetti's machinolatria underpinned by anxiety and sense of threat that the spiritualized machine inspires (Berghaus 32). The same quality haunts the margins of Lowry's text. Prior to his entry into the canal, the narrator admits that he or his protagonist is "in the realm of death" (Lowry, "Through the Panama" 37) and yet in the same work he confesses that "the canal is a work of genius" (60).

The passage through the Panama Canal is perilous enough to perpetuate a truly Kafkaesque sense of occlusion generated by the situation of the narrator being caught between the margins of his own narrative. The experience becomes a rite of passage that opens the narrator's self to a disturbing, unclassifiable liminality. The very fact that the narrator is erroneously referred to as Kafka draws the reader's attention to *The Trial* and the pervasive premonition that the main character will be locked in a sinister experience despite his having done nothing wrong. The mistake rings with an ominous allusion to *Under the Volcano*, where the Consul is referred to as Trotsky in response to the question about his name asked by a policeman. Shot as a communist and *pelado*, the Consul illustrates the point that a real threat can lurk in the jest. Trotsky was also murdered in Mexico. The Kafkaesque sense of occlusion in "Through the Panama" is then connected with being imprisoned in one of the intertexts, but also in one's own text rife with Gothic menace. Occlusion becomes only too explicit when the marginalia encroach upon the narrative, thereby limiting the space between the margins.

The graphic design of the middle part of "Through the Panama" reflects the flow of the major text bound on the sides by textual shores composed of allusions to literary works or pieces of geographical and historical information. Lowry repeatedly draws attention to the materiality

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of the narrative the way futurists would draw attention to the material aspects of the machine and a different kind of aesthetic beauty. Also, the machine disrupted the concept of linear time by offering the simultaneity of experiences channeled through the observer's sensory perception. Commenting on the writer's holographs, Wutz contends that "in Lowry's pictorial logic, the centre and the margin become interchangeable sites of composition" (63).

The typographical layout and the inclusion of different documents—an excerpt from a fragment of a newspaper (30), safety regulations in French and English, an immigration card in English and Spanish—turn Lowry's story into a precursor of the multimodal work where characters obsessively collect documents to provide themselves with a personal archive which underpins the message of the book (cf. Hallet 136). In fact, Lowry's anticipation of multimodal techniques is visible in *Under the Volcano,* where a tourist brochure about Tlaxcala, a railroad and bus service schedule and a writing in the public garden are among the many artefacts that complete the meaning of the narrative. As far as "Through the Panama" is concerned, Grace's article actualizes other markers of multimodality in Lowry's text by providing diagrams, photographs of documents and a photograph of a painting extensively commented on in Lowry's text, namely "The Prodigal Son" by Hieronymus Bosch ("A Strange Assembly" 190–91, 195, 206). However, the layout which is meant to imitate the simultaneity of the central and the marginal, as well as their co-existence and conflict, remains the most interesting visual indication of multimodality in "Through the Panama," with shores of comments framing the stream of the narrative. Rather than refer to contextualization advocated by Hallet in his description of a multimodal novel (145), I prefer to use the term "framing" introduced by Mieke Bal to distinguish the neutrally sounding context from the ideological message framing a work of art and thus providing a political comment that feeds into its meaning (Filipczak, "Writing with Images" 26).

While premiering her own and Michelle Williams Gamaker's exhibition *Madame B* in the Museum of Modern Art in Łodź, i.e. in the former factory owner's palace turned into a museum, Mieke Bal effected the connection between her video installation and the site that underlined the bourgeois space and ennui emanating from *Madame B.* Site responsive and participatory, the exhibition invited the viewer to structure the image of the heroine by choosing his or her interpretative path among the differently posited screens from which scenes in Emma's life cascaded simultaneously, only to be connected by the viewer's perception and consciousness. A single detail noticed in one of the simultaneously played film sequences

could give rise to a reassessment of the previous reading, because the experience was never the same (Filipczak, "Framing *Madame B*" 232, 243). Similarly, "Through the Panama" consists of interlocking messages of the main text and marginalia (or the other way around), and if you can be locked in each of the locks of the canal "as it were, in an experience" (57), to take Primrose's words, you can also be locked in an experience of reading connected with a particular intertext that is chosen from among the variety of stimuli cascading from the margins and the main text. What Lowry invites in "Through the Panama" is a "participatory" presence of the reader. Let me then suggest a hitherto barely-observed entry into Lowry's work and see how it can affect our reassessment of "Through the Panama."

Malcolm Lowry's allusion to "The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" by Henryk Sienkiewicz in "Through the Panama" has not garnered sufficient critical attention so far. Nor has it yet resulted in the rereading of the whole work in light of this intertext. Given that Lowry's text, whose subtitle is "The Journal of Sigbjørn Wilderness," is described by the narrator as "a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts" (98), I will contend that the allusion to a short story by Sienkiewicz can provide a connection between some intertexts brought into play here. Sherrill Grace refers to the intrusion of this message into the marginalia as "abrupt and sinister" ("A Strange Assembly" 217). It is indeed because the story completes Sigbjørn's experience and the experience of his characters, as I will demonstrate.

"The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" by the Polish Sienkiewicz must have reached North American audiences through the translation of Jeremiah Curtin, an American who spoke Russian and then decided to learn Polish. His multilingual interests involved a fascination with Slavonic languages (Rybicki 90–91). Michael J. Mikoś and Jan Rybicki revealed a significant contribution of Alma Curtin (the translator's wife) to the final stylistic shape of the English version of Sienkiewicz's texts, but her role in the translation lies beyond the scope of this article (Rybicki 107).

Lowry's erudition was unusual by any standards. He was also aware of the impact of *Quo Vadis* (translated by Curtin), a major novel by Sienkiewicz, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for the whole of his epic output. This text describes the persecution of Christians in Rome during the time of Emperor Nero. In the marginalia Lowry mentions the fact that *Quo Vadis* is being filmed in Rome while he is writing his text. A lengthy excerpt on the process of filming ends with the question "QUO VADIS," which brings us back to one of the final scenes in the novel by Sienkiewicz where the title words are used. Urged by his brethren to flee Rome, apostle Peter encounters Christ outside the city. "Quo vadis, Domine?" he asks,

predictably enough. "I am going to Rome to be recrucified," Jesus answers. At this Peter goes back to the city.

The message then is neither "quasi-allegorical" nor "neo-Platonic," as Grace's text seems to imply ("A Strange Assembly" 217). It is a question connected with the identity of the writer and his protagonists. *Quo vadis*, Sigbjørn Wilderness? *Quo vadis*, Martin Trumbaugh? *Quo vadis*, Geoffrey Firmin? *Quo vadis*, Malcolm Lowry? The novel by Sienkiewicz ends with the hint of the repetition of crucifixion, while one of the major echoes from the novel by Lowry is: "[t]he agony of Martin Trumbaugh is related to the agony of repeating experiences" ("Through the Panama" 47). In light of *Quo Vadis* it acquires another meaning. The word "agony" brings in the context of passion, spiritual torment, eventual unheroic demise, or ordeal. "The agony of repeating experiences" also connects with the lighthouse keeper of Aspinwall. This is how Sienkiewicz describes the main character of his short story:

> It had been his misfortune that as often as he pitched his tent and fixed his fireplace to settle down permanently, some wind tore out the stakes of his tent, whirled away the fire, and bore him on toward destruction. . . . He established a forge in Helena, Arkansas, and that was burned in a great fire which consumed the whole town. . . . But it seemed to him that all the four elements were persecuting him. Those who knew him said that he had no luck, and with that they explained everything. He himself became somewhat of a monomaniac. He believed that some mighty and vengeful hand was pursuing him everywhere, on all lands and waters.

The life of Skawiński (the eponymous lighthouse keeper) immediately invites comparisons with that of Ethan Llewellyn (in *October Ferry to Gabriola*), of whom the local grocer says: "It's like the element follows you around, sir" (123), because fire not only consumed the Llewellyns' house but also shadowed them wherever they went. Skawiński's misadventures intrude upon the consciousness of the narrator in "Through the Panama," because at the sight of the man in the control tower, the narrator is emotionally hijacked by the memory of his defeats which might just as well happen again, but he is not in the know about them yet, unlike the man in the tower "who sees everything that is going to happen" (61). At the same time the man in question embodies the "human mind" in "the control tower of machinery" (Wutz 68), that is, the narrator and the writer surveying their creation.

It is quite noteworthy that while Sigbjørn first describes himself on board of the *Diderot*, he reminisces nostalgically about his place, Lowry's

fictionalized Dollarton, which provided ample material for "Forest Path to the Spring," where Lowry's other alter ego is a jazz musician trying to compose his work in the surroundings that are visualized by the narrator of "Through the Panama":

> This morning, walking through the forest, a moment of intense emotion: the path, sodden, a morass of mud, the sad dripping trees and ocherous fallen leaves; here it all is. I cannot believe I won't be walking down the path tomorrow. (26)

The narrator's "intense emotion" which expresses his being one with the landscape echoes, of course, the same experience of the protagonist in "Forest Path to the Spring," and that of Ethan, who finds refuge in the Edenic landscape, even if the experience is only temporary. All the protagonists yearn for freedom from the agony of "repeating experiences," and so does Skawiński, the lighthouse keeper, who finds it astonishing that he can now sit poised for one activity connected with providing what Lowry calls "illumination" from the lantern. He is no longer tossed by his misadventures, but can enjoy the secure, if solitary, routine of an island to which his food is brought so that he can retrieve it without talking to anyone:

> He gazed, and convinced himself. It might seem that he was looking at the sea for the first time in his life. The lens of the lantern cast into the darkness an enormous triangle of light, beyond which the eye of the old man was lost in the black distance completely, in the distance mysterious and awful. But that distance seemed to run toward the light.

The protagonist of "Forest Path to the Spring" and his wife gaze out to the sea from their shack at various hours of the day and night; they often comment on the natural phenomena such as the "sunrise of the dying moon" (Lowry, "Forest Path" 234) and a myriad of other light effects that turn the frequently ominous landscape into the space of mystical illumination. However, in this text, as in "Through the Panama," the protagonist experiences closeness to the beloved woman and contact with other inhabitants, while Sienkiewicz's protagonist seems to be totally alienated from his kin, and his only contact with the community consists in going to Sunday mass, as a result of which he is termed a decent man by other citizens. What draws attention in this context is the sinister undertone of Lowry's protagonist's enforced separation from Primrose, which the narrator mentions on the same page that flaunts a description of the short story by Sienkiewicz in the marginalia. It seems that the task of providing

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illumination literally or figuratively is fraught with the risk of alienation and loneliness.

That the risk of any illumination is high is ironically intimated by Lowry in a passage about the lighthouse keeper:

> that was the whole point about the poor lighthouse keeper of Aspinwall. That in having another kind of illumination himself, he failed to provide illumination for his lighthouse, in fact went to sleep, which no lighthouse keeper should ever do even if spiritually advanced enough to have an illumination in Aspinwall. (Lowry, "Through the Panama" 63)

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Dismissive as the comment may sound, it opens up the hidden intertextual dimension of Lowry's text through another connection with Polish literature that is not manifested on the surface. The lighthouse keeper of Aspinwall experiences illumination upon reading the invocation to a monumental Polish epic poem *Pan Tadeusz (Master Thaddeus)* by the greatest Polish Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz. The book arrives at the island on the boat with provisions as a token of gratitude from the Polish Society in New York where the lighthouse keeper sent his first salary. The significance of the poem to an exile like Skawiński, and to many other exiles from Poland, which did not then exist as an independent state, was overwhelming. The work offered contact with the native tongue, everyday situations, and fondly remembered objects or entertainments in the life of the Polish gentry. Finally, *Master Thaddeus* was written out of Mickiewicz's nostalgia for his family home during the time of his exile in Paris. It looked back to the times of Napoleon's war against Russia (1812), which gave rise to the renewed hope for regaining independence for the many Poles who followed Napoleon as his soldiers. The last book of *Master Thaddeus* connected with Skawiński's past as an *ułan,* a rider in the army of November uprising (1830–31), arriving at the familiar landscape of his homeland just like the characters from Mickiewicz's text had done earlier.

Curtin did not bother to consult an already-existing translation of the Polish national poem by Maude Ashurst Biggs. He provided a different version of the initial excerpt, whose first words refer to Lithuania as the fatherland, which must strike any foreigner as odd, because the Polish poem refers to what is now a separate state which used to be united with Poland, and through Mickiewicz came to represent the quintessential Polishness. The invocation mentions the basic places of worship for Catholic Poles in the times of Mickiewicz, Jasna Góra (The Bright Mount) of Częstochowa in the Polish part of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Ostra Brama from Vilnius in Lithuania, both associated with nationally

important representations of Madonna. The persona in the invocation of Mickiewicz's poem asks the Madonna to transport his soul back to his fatherland, and this is exactly what happens to Skawiński, whose illumination triggered by the poem takes him back home and eventually puts him to a restful sleep in the old familial haunts. This, however, ruins him as a lighthouse keeper. A boat that was deprived of the usual light crashes against the rocks and although everyone survives, Skawiński loses his job. The only thing that remains with him on his way into further exile is the book by Mickiewicz.

For the reader of Sienkiewicz's short story illumination here is both restorative and destructive. Also, it is connected with a literary work. This, in turn, connects with the experiences of Lowry's characters, in this case Sigbjørn Wilderness/Martin Trumbaugh who fears death by his own book, "by the malign forces it arouses" ("Through the Panama" 36). The motif of danger posed by a work of fiction is enhanced by the statement about the author "Joyced by his own petard" (38), which not only introduces Joyce as one of Lowry's mentors, but also emphasizes the danger posited by one's own experimental creation which can be spiritually explosive. The Madonnas from Mickiewicz's poem quoted in Sienkiewicz's story connect with "the Virgin for those who have nobody them with" (290), as Dr. Vigil puts it in *Under the Volcano* (which is remembered in "Through the Panama"). "Only the bereaved and lonely went there" (Lowry, *Under the Volcano* 290), Dr. Vigil points out, encouraging the Consul to pray for Yvonne's return, and return she does, bringing a promise of Canadian paradise where the marriage might be restored. But this restoration never happens, even if her return seems a miracle just like Skawiński's return to his homeland which takes place only in his dream vision, not in reality. Thus Aspinwall connects with Acapulco: "[w]here else," the narrator of "Through the Panama" wonders, may he pray to the Virgin of Guadeloupe?" (Lowry 39).

The lighthouse keeper's illumination cannot be accommodated by the world he inhabits. It intrudes upon his routine and carries him away into the soundscape of his youth. His experience will never be communicated to local people; they would not understand or sympathize. And yet, even though Skawiński becomes enmeshed in the book he reads and shares the fate of some of its characters, who at some stage also have to flee, he is not killed; there are no "malign forces." Norman Davies, an English historian of Polish culture, does not attribute any definite meaning to the conclusion of the story: "Is Skawiński to be blamed for reading his copy of *Pan Tadeusz*? Is Mickiewicz to be blamed for having written it?" (Davies). The potentially "sinister" story in Lowry's marginalia does not necessarily terrify. The same

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goes for the uneasy gift of illumination. Grace notes in the already classic comment that "Through the Panama" is a descent into hell, haunted by echoes of *Under the Volcano* (*The Voyage* 105), but "through hell there is a path," as the Consul puts it in *Under the Volcano* (Lowry 42). The same goes for the ordeal of Sigbjørn Wilderness. He will cross the canal and eventually reach Europe, whereas the lighthouse keeper's journey will remain exclusively in imagination, his fatherland akin to sunken Atlantis that Wilderness/Lowry will cross on his way home.

The journey of the soul that Lowry scholar Geoffrey Durrant translates into neo-Platonic terms (42–55) can be juxtaposed to its spatial actualization. The spirit of the lighthouse keeper journeys home, and this imaginary journey creates a framing for the journey of Sigbjørn Wilderness. The liminality of the lighthouse keeper connected with him bridging the water and the land (Górnicki 150) makes him an appropriate guide in Sigbjørn's liminal experience between the two worlds symbolized by the Pacific and the Atlantic. Their junction is also shown in the story by Sienkiewicz. The oceans symbolically meet just like the light and darkness, the sea and land, exile and home when Skawiński begins to drift into his dream vision. The seagulls follow the lighthouse keeper in hope of the remains of his food. So does the albatross follow the *Diderot* in search for the temporary shelter for her young. Both Sienkiewicz and Lowry mention only birds as companions of the human journey, highlighting the liminal status of their protagonists.

One of the recurring texts in the marginalia to "Through the Panama" is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which draws attention to the fact that Lowry's use of narrators and marginalia echoes Coleridge's strategy connected with the anxiety of authorship and attempt to provide the creator of the text with extra authority by juxtaposing "the personal voice" against that of "ostensibly objective annotator" in an act of "self-conscious glossing" (Griffiths 208). Extended passages from Coleridge's work in "Through the Panama" highlight Lowry's continual interest in the albatross whose presence haunts the text of the novel and acquires a sinister ring as early as in the phrase "insatiable albatross of the self" (28). The Lowry protagonist who is consigned to the "agony of repeating experiences" is also constrained to repeat the same story, one that is connected with fault, failure and its consequences. This is reinforced by a quotation from Coleridge in the marginalia: "And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land" (47). Interestingly, the message of this Romantic intertext dovetails not only with the condition of Sigbjørn Wilderness. It connects even more fully with Skawiński, whose fate is to repeat the same story of exile instead of returning to the fatherland which is lost

literally and figuratively as the lighthouse keeper is rudely awakened to the consciousness of his own guilt and the loss of good fortune. "The Mariner awakes and his penance begins anew," quotes Lowry in "Through the Panama" (38). In some ways the Mariner's state of mind is representative of the exilic consciousness in which the inability to return home becomes a curse and a source of grief, a familiar condition in Polish exiles. Interestingly, while Lowry was working on his *Voyage That Never Ends,* the area surrounding Vilnius (regained by Poland after WWI) was invaded and cut off by the occupying Soviets during WWII, to become irretrievably lost. It came to symbolize a "murdered Arcadia," and "a spiritual fatherland," finally, a myth (qtd. in Skibińska 185) to the many exiles from the area, or else it turned into the Atlantis of the past. The theme of loss, penance and Kafkaesque occlusion in the canal is thus summed up by the narrator of "Through the Panama":

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> a sense of exile oppresses me. A sense of something else, beyond injustice and misery, extramundane, oppresses, more than desolates, more than confounds me. To pass this place [Acapulco] like this. Would I, one day, pass England, home, like this, on this voyage perhaps by some quirk of fortune not to be able to set foot on it, what is worse, never want to set foot on it? (38)

The passage problematizes emotions connected with self-imposed exile which is caused by different factors in the case of the Ancient Mariner, Skawiński, Trumbaugh, Wilderness and, finally, Lowry himself. However, Skawiński's illumination lies at the heart of the unrevealed knowledge intimated by one of Lowry's glosses. Paul Ricoeur contends that the narrative is the synthesis of the heterogenous (Taylor 130). Let me use "The Lighthouse Keeper of Aspinwall" as a model of the narrative configuration that "mediates, integrates, grasps the manifold and brings them into one story" (Taylor 130). The Panama canal as an ordered structure regulates and channels the diverse stimuli that its observer or author of fiction wants to transform into the material for the book. The perfection of the form represented by the machine contains the fictional universe by preventing it from undermining the design. In a miniature the lighthouse keeper's outpost also represents a regulatory mechanism connected with the form in which Skawiński's memory is safely contained during his time as a lighthouse keeper. When up in his lighthouse, Skawiński imagines himself in dialogue with the sea, for there is no one else; he hears familiar sounds of his language in the roar of the waves but he is protected from their emotional impact by the mechanical routine connected with his job and the

light that guides him towards emotional safety. Confronted with the book that conjures up memories in such a dynamic way, unaided by the light that is not yet switched on, unprotected by the refuge in the lighthouse, Skawiński finds himself at sea spiritually. The excess of memories breaks into his mind and carries him away to finally disrupt his secure life.

Lowry's opus magnum was cut short by his death; *The Voyage That Never Ends* never actually ended because the excess of detail disrupted the disciplining meccano of the design. Considering this, the lighthouse keeper's illumination may be read as the very petard that Joyced the writer. Lowry's ironic tone smooths over the hidden emotional pitfalls of the relatively obscure intertext, and yet the message of the short story by Sienkiewicz puts the order of artistic design into question. The spiritualized meccano that defies the furies of emotional chaos is as tenuous as the life of the passengers of the *Diderot* tossed by the nightly storm.

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On (Not) Being Milton: Tony Harrison's Liminal Voice

ABSTRACT

Tony Harrison's poetry is rooted in the experience of a man who came out of the working class of Leeds and who, avowedly, became a poet and a stranger to his own community. As Harrison duly noted in one interview, from the moment he began his formal education at Leeds Grammar School, he has never felt fully at home in either the world of literature or the world of his working class background, preferring to continually transgress their boundaries and be subject to perpetual change.

The paper examines the relation between poetic identity, whose ongoing construction remains one of the most persistently reoccurring themes of Harrison's work, and the liminal position occupied by the speaker of Harrison's verse. In the context of the sociological thought of such scholars as Zygmunt Bauman and Stuart Hall, the following paper discusses the way in which the idea of being in-between operates in "On Not Being Milton," an initial poem from Harrison's widely acclaimed sonnet sequence *The School of Eloquence*, whose unique character stems partly from the fact that it constitutes an ongoing poetic project which has continued from 1978 onwards, reflecting the social and cultural changes of contemporary Britain.

Born in 1937, Tony Harrison is a poet who crossed the boundary dividing the English working and middle classes. He was one of these children who, due to education reform, received state scholarships, went to grammar schools and as a result had the opportunity to become students representing the first generation of the working class of the North at university level. Reading Harrison's poetry, it seems justifiable to say that his poetic path started not when he published his first poem but much earlier, in 1948, when, as a "scholarship boy," he crossed the threshold of Leeds Grammar School, finding himself from that moment onwards "at the friction point of two cultures,"[1] as Richard Hoggart put it (239). This was a crucial moment, a triggering point that changed the trajectory of Harrison's life, opening doors to the world of eloquence and simultaneously depriving him of a clear identification with the place he grew out of and to which he will be returning again and again in his verse.

Joanna Bourke comments on the British education system in *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890–1960*, providing a useful background for understanding the situation in which children like Harrison found themselves:

> By the 1940s, it was clear . . . that the education system was in crisis and radical reforms were needed. The Education Act of 1944 was advertised as "Free Secondary Education for all." Based on the principle that every child should be educated "according to his age, aptitude and ability," Butler's Act [1944] abolished tuition fees at state maintained schools, raised the leaving age to 15 years and introduced the tripartite system of secondary schools (grammar, modern and technical), which in the 1950s became bipartite (grammar via the 11-plus, and secondary modern). . . . Despite these attempts to promote greater social equality in access to education, class differentials persisted. (117–20)

The authorities ignored the problems working-class children encountered in the classroom, which meant that prejudice and alienation became a daily reality for pupils from the lower stratum of society, who were not

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[1] "Until the 1970s it was largely agreed that the working-class was characterised by distinctive cultural values and practices which stood outside and in opposition to those of the middle and upper classes. A series of landmark studies of working-class culture, especially those carried out between the 1950s and the late 1970s emphasised the distinctive values and solidarities seen as characteristic of working-class life. Examples include studies such as Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961), Dennis et al.'s *Coal is Our Life* (1956), Goldthrope et al.'s *The Affluent Worker* (1968) and Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1977)" (Savage et al. 97).

only financially underprivileged but also spoke local vernacular, considered to be a lesser form of English. Those who chose a university path and decided not to abandon their working-class identity to survive faced a constant fight for respect and recognition in the world of RP speakers and to maintain ties with the place of their origin.

As Harrison duly noted in one interview, from the moment he began his formal education at Leeds Grammar School, he never felt fully "at home" in either "the world of literature with [his] education and identity of the poet" or "in [his] working-class background" (Haffenden 234). Alienated from both, he never sought "redemption or . . . respite in a dream of belonging" (Bauman 14). This kind of attitude, succinctly described by Zygmunt Bauman in *Identity: Conversation with Benedetto Vecchi*, allows Harrison to navigate with ease in "several different linguistic universes" (Bauman 14) and continually transgress the boundaries of these two conflicting worlds. According to Bauman, the question of identity can only occur in a situation where a man is pulled out of "wherever could pass for his natural habitat" (12), which is as much to say that it is always "born out of the crisis of belonging" to a given community (20). Contemporary sociology defines two basic types of community: *communities of life and fate* whose members "live . . . in an indissoluble attachment" (11) and communities which are "welded together solely by ideas and various principles" (11). The former has been denied to Harrison as a result of his education and profession.

The following paper examines the theme of poetic identity, whose ongoing construction remains one of the most persistently reoccurring themes of Harrison's poems and which cannot be seen other than through the prism of the experience of liminality. The fact of being in-between, in transition, in the liminal space, manifests itself in Harrison's works in the interwoven patterns of such oppositions as centre vs. periphery, marginal vs. mainstream or deprived vs. privileged, which operate in selected poems from Harrison's widely acclaimed sonnet sequence *The School of Eloquence*,[2] an ongoing poetic project which has continued from 1978 onwards, reflecting an individual struggle of a poet writing from a liminal space and commenting on social and cultural changes in contemporary Britain. The poem analyzed in the paper entitled "On Not Being Milton" from *The School of Eloquence* sequence contains the germs of numerous issues, such as the issue of language, its role in identity construction and

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[2] *The School of Eloquence* title is used in the article to refer to the entire sequence including *From The School of Eloquence* and *Continuous: 50 Sonnets from The School of Eloquence*.

the issue of rebellion against linguistic dominance of the privileged classes. These unfold over the course of subsequent poems in Harrison's longest poetic project. The poem chosen for analysis in this paper was selected not only on the basis of its undeniable popularity among critics and readers of Harrison's poetry, but primarily because it establishes a powerful relationship between the issues of the individual identity of the poetic "I" and the identity of the English working-class[3] as a stratum of society.

Bauman claims that identity in the contemporary world has to be understood as the goal of an effort and as ongoing task (21). In "On Not Being Milton," the opening sonnet of *The School of Eloquence*, Harrison identifies this task as writing, his chosen method of constructing the poet's identity:

> Read and committed to the flames, I call
> these sixteen lines that go back to my roots
> my *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*
> my growing black enough to fit my boots. (1–4)

In the third line Harrison refers to Aimé Césaire's poem "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal" which means "Notebook of Return to the Native Land." Lines of verse which "go back to . . . [his] roots" ("On Not Being Milton" 2) become lines which restore continuity with the past and have the power to sustain the connection. The first stanza of the poem uses the "elemental" imagery of fire and earth[4] which, together with the verbs denoting movement, gives the act of writing the character of physical transformation. The destructive force of the flames, the processes of growing black and returning to one's roots suggest the transformational power of a language, which penetrates the layers of personal and public histories described in the poem. Writing acquires a concrete direction in time and space: the movement in the poem is the movement into the past and back to the native land, the place of origin. Additionally, the usage of a set metaphor "to go back to one's roots" suggests that the return may be read as a vertical journey, into and underneath; in other words, an inverted growth whose image is strengthened by referencing the blackness of coal

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[3] As with other works in *The School of Eloquence*, Harrison presents the reader with individual working-class characters but also, on a different level, with a working-class community which can be called a collective character of the sequence.

[4] The image of earth (with related images of growth and decay) is an organizing image of Harrison's first collection of poems *Earthworks*. The image of fire reappears in many of the poems of *The School of Eloquence*, for example: "The Fire Eater," "Cremation," or "*Dichtung and Wahrheit*."

as the main natural resource of the English North East. This movement downwards metaphorically represents the intention of the poet who wants to re-establish the position of language spoken as "from below," a language which constitutes the periphery of literary experience but whose roots lie deep in the history and culture of the native land Harrison left in order to read books and gain the privilege of literacy.

The title of the poem, a negative definition of the speaker's self, immediately places the issue of identity in the framework of literature. The reference to John Milton, primarily the quotation from Thomas Gray's elegy,[5] sets the poem, according to Rick Rylance, "in the persistent tradition of the mournful alienation in English writing about the dispossessed" (118). In his elegy, Gray sympathizes with the inglorious Milton from a distance and in a highly literary voice befitting the distinguished elegiac form. Harrison recognizes his affiliation with the tradition of Milton and Gray but does not grant it the privilege of superiority, setting Gray's lines alongside lines written by shoemaker Richard Tidd.[6] His spelling mistake which produces a pun and makes "writing" tantamount to "setting to rights," proves in Harrison's rendering to be no less poetic than Gray's sophisticated metaphors. The blending of these two ideas in one word (i.e. *Righting*) "clinches the connection between articulacy and political activism" (Rylance 116) and signals the analogy between the lack of linguistic eloquence and social marginalization reappearing frequently throughout the sequence. The concluding line, "*Sir, I Ham a very Bad Hand at Righting*" ("On Not Being Milton" 16) italicized within the print of Harrison's poem suggests a quotation and also locates the perspective from which the problem of identity is to be viewed in the subsequent part of *The School of Eloquence*. The speaker of the line does not describe his problem with literacy in terms of aptitude. He does so in terms of identity and as lacking a command of language that might determine who he is. The line develops the meditation on the issue of identity initiated in the title of the poem and may be read as a provocative starting point for a discussion on the nature of social and cultural exclusion. The poem describes the scale according to which the value of language, and thus the position of the individual in the society, is summarily estimated. At the top of the scale reside Milton and Gray, and the elite tradition of art they represent; at the bottom, the regional voice, the barbarian diction unfit for poetry. The poem establishes

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[5] "Three cheers for mute ingloriousness" ("On Not Being Milton" 12) is an allusion to the line from "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by T. Gray: "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest" (59).

[6] Executed with other co-conspirators in 1820 for his part in an attempt to assassinate the Cabinet planned in Cato Street.

the position of the speaker assumed in the majority of subsequent poems. He is a man occupied with the language of Milton and Gray, but who consciously chooses to speak with the voice of Richard Tidd; this combination allows the two languages to coexist in later poems.

The referencing to Richard Tidd is characteristic of Harrison, who dramatizes "personal crisis as representative of larger problems" (Rylance 115) while associating lack of literacy with social degradation. This citation strengthens the analogy "between political and linguistic violence" (Rylance 118) developed in the second stanza of the poem:

> The stutter of the scold out of the branks
> of condescension, class and counter-class
> thickens with glottal to a lumpen mass
> of Ludding morphemes closing up their ranks.
> Each swung cast-iron Enoch of Leeds stress
> Clangs a forged music on the frames of Art,
> The looms of owned language smashed apart!
> ("On Not Being Milton" 5–11)

The voice of the scold, the troublemaker identified in the poem with nineteenth-century Ludditism interferes in the matters of Art while disturbing the rules of mainstream culture. The clash between the standardized version of language, represented by the capitalized "Art," ("On Not Being Milton" 10) and Harrison's native variation, the voice of a rebel and a poet,[7] is rendered in terms of armed conflict. The Leeds accent destroys the frames of Art just as Luddites destroyed "the knitting-frames that were depriving them of livelihoods" (Rylance 117). Art and, consequently, the form of the dominant language, is framed, constructed, exclusive, and owned like the knitting-frames by representatives of a dominant social class. If language is owned, Rylance suggests, "expression is a cultural as well as political activity" (117), and a privilege the working class has rarely been granted.

Harrison's return to the eighteenth and the nineteenth century gains an additional dimension in the light of Tony Crowley's analyses[8] of the history of standardization of English in Great Britain. Crowley argues that the emergence of the standard language was spurred by the social and economic development of the South-East rather than by any linguistic factors

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[7] "Scold" (or "skald")—an Old Norse poet.

[8] Namely: *The Politics of Discourse: The Standard Language Question in British Cultural Debates*. London: Macmillan, 1989. Print.

(198–200). Standardization was followed by codification, which led to the "suppression of optional variability" (Milroy and Milroy 178) and stigmatization of non-standard forms. The fact that a large part of British society continued to speak one of the non-standard varieties, which were and still are perceived as culturally inferior, shows, as Milroy and Milroy argue, that "the universal adoption of the standard has failed" but "promotion of an ideology of a standard has been very successful" (179). According to Crowley, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, "whenever political or cultural crisis threatened, the English language was offered as evidence of underlying or unconscious unity that held together despite all superficial differences" (70). The creation of "social-bonding" (Rylance 119) on the basis of the standardized version excluded those who had no command of the prestigious dialect—that is, among others, members of the British working-class—from the circle of the "shared cultural heritage" (Rylance 119). In the poem, Harrison creates a set of analogies: between linguistic and social suppression, between the linguistic and physical attack and between the frames of Art and the knitting-frames, symbols of the establishment. They shed new light on the seemingly benign "ideology of the standard" which associates standardized English with "the 'positive' social behaviour" (Watts 156) and aesthetic superiority (Crowley 198–200) and by default, non-standard English, with their opposite. The nature of language standardization provides strong historical ground for Harrison's extended metaphor of linguistic expression as rebellion. Harrison looks back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century for historical facts which can give credibility to his metaphors, but, first and foremost, as Rylance suggests, such facts maintain the continuities of linguistic and political working-class experience (119). The metaphors created in the poem such as "the looms of . . . language" and "Enoch of Leeds stress" ("On Not Being Milton" 9, 11) reveal these two lines of experience (the linguistic and political) as inextricably bound. In the poem, "lines" go back to the "roots" ("On Not Being Milton" 2) to the native land of the speaker, but also encompass larger social, cultural and political debate; the "historicity of [Harrison's] poems extends far beyond Beeston"[9] (Rowland 3) towards global issues.

The poem is a revolt against the marginalization of the non-standard forms wrongly labelled as intellectually, morally and aesthetically disadvantageous, but this revolt does not imply unambiguous identification or, as Rylance calls it, "naive solidarity with the non-literary 'other'" (118). Harrison knows that literature is produced primarily outside the working

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[9] The south Leeds district where the poet was born.

classes, and that makes the incorporation of a working-class voice into literature a difficult task. The pun on "forged"[10] ("On Not Being Milton" 10) introduces the idea that the music of working-class expression runs the risk of being a mere imitation of mainstream art, of the language owned by a privileged minority. An example of such "forged" literature according to W. E. Parkinson are the poems of the pitman Joseph Skipsey (1832–1903), who, like Harrison, found himself in a liminal, social space, but whose artistic choices proved to be very different to the ones Harrison made. Wanting a better life, he climbed the social ladder to leave his place of origin. After moving to London to become a curator of Shakespeare's house, Skipsey re-wrote his early work in "acceptable literary language" (Parkinson 110), modelling his diction on the works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This act of domesticating translation from the source language of the pitman into the target language of a middle-class audience resulted in the creation of poems that were culturally sterile. The new versions could no longer express the complexity of working-class experience; they have lost touch with the reality from which they originally stemmed. Parkinson sees the main threat to regional and class poetry in the "conscious literariness" (110) of the poets who chose to write in a language commonly accepted as fit for literature. Although the poetry of Harrison, not so much a "cultural bastard" but an "immigrant" (Parkinson 107–22), to use Parkinson's label, demonstrates that eloquence is not tantamount to the abandonment of regional voice, it appears tantamount to the abandonment of the working-class audience. When we read *The School of Eloquence*, we realize that the citizens of Leeds whose voice Harrison is trying to save from oblivion doubt in the power of poetic word to say the least. The disappointed voice of Harrison's mother in "Bringing Up," the skin's fury in *v.* or silence which falls between the father and the son in "Book Ends" all suggest that the poet will always remain in-between, deprived of the possibility of full identification, caught in the paradoxical position of a working-class author writing for a middle-class reader. Failed attempts at communication between poetic persona Tony Harrison and working-class characters recur in Harrison's verse and suggest that the fight for an undeniable working-class voice may prove difficult, especially for someone who suddenly found himself on the side of the oppressors and whose efforts are continually misunderstood by the oppressed.

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[10] To forge: 1. Create a shape (a metal object) by heating it in a fire or furnace and hammering it. 2. Create something strong, enduring and successful. 3. Produce a fraudulent copy or imitation of something (*Oxford Dictionary of English*).

The opening poem of *The School of Eloquence* renders rejection of the poetic achievements of Milton and Gray purely on the basis of political argument[11] as dubious and unsettling. Smashing the "frames of Art" ("On Not Being Milton" 10) may lead to the victory of "mute ingloriousness," implied in the poem by an ironic "three cheers" ("On Not Being Milton" 12), but will not necessarily result in the creation of an original voice of the working classes. Moreover, the victory itself will be unsatisfactory and short lived, such as that of the nineteenth century Luddites, who were unable to stop the progress of mechanization. In "On Not Being Milton," the scold/skald character, the outsider and the rebel, is the type of ambivalent hero described by William Empson as a man outside society because "too poor for its benefits" (20–21) and so "independent, as the artist claims to be" (20–21). He is allowed by the author to become:

> [A] judge of the society that judges him. This is a source of irony both against him and against the society, and if he is a sympathetic criminal he can be made to suggest both Christ as the scapegoat . . . and the sacrifice tragic hero, who was normally above society rather than below it, which is a further source of irony. (Empson 20–21)

In "On Not Being Milton," the hero has multiple incarnations, more or less liminal and "shadowy identities" (Byrne 22) whose nature is always oppositional and indeterminate. The rebellious scold associated with the Luddites and thus representing a collective rather than individual identity of the underprivileged and the dispossessed is given a specific face in the character of a scapegoat and/or an usurper Richard Tidd. Other historically documented heroes of the poem are Sergio Vieira and Armando Guebuza from the Frelimo movement who articulated their grievance and judgement through political action but also through poetry. Seemingly less ambivalent[12] than the scold, Tidd and the Luddites, they belong in the same category because they are outcasts, both dispossessed and rebellious. Incorporation of their histories into the poem emphasizes the "relationship between poetry, education and politics" (Rylance 121) and invites an analogy between the history of the English working class and the history

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[11] Namely, that they represent the value system of the ruling class.

[12] Although moral ambivalence of the characters is not suggested directly in the poem, it can be claimed on the basis of historical context, and precisely on the disputable nature of Guebuza's political success and his party's electoral victory. For more information of Frelimo movement (Mozambique Liberation Front) and Mozambican fight for independence from Portugal see J. Cabrita, *Mozambique: A Tortuous Road to Democracy*, New York: Macmillan, 2001.

of the colonial and postcolonial independent movements (Rylance 121). The most important element of this analogy is "the experience of a condition of cultural exile" (Rylance 120), a point of contact between the story of Harrison and the story of Mozambican poets engaged in armed conflict and political discussion.

One more persona whose identity remains oppositional and deeply ambiguous in the poem is that of Milton. A fuller discussion of Milton's persona necessitates the differentiation at this point of two key issues: the issue of the ambiguity of the poem's attitude towards Milton, as analyzed by Rick Rylance and Sandie Byrne, and the ambiguity of the poem's attitude towards Milton, created through metaphor and literary allusion within the semantic and formal framework of the poem. The first issue presents itself in the first publication of the sequence *From The School of Eloquence and Other Poems* and is further emphasized in *Continuous: 50 Sonnets from The School of Eloquence* by the addition of a sixteen-line epigraph culled from Milton's famous elegy "Ad Patrem." The epigraph, wrought to resemble one of Harrison's own sonnets (Rylance 118), suggests a humble reading of the title: "I am not Milton, my poems are not as good as his." Conversely, the title, especially if read in the light of subsequent lines, opposes "Milton's Latinate language and his learned classicism" (Rylance 118). The author identifies his own poetry in unison with the poetry of Milton and, revolting against its elite status, both "celebrates the literary and criticizes it" (Rylance 118), remaining again in-between, seemingly indecisive. This latter type of ambiguity, inherent to Milton's persona, is constructed on the basis of an intertextual reference to Gray's poem and the character of the mute, inglorious namesake of the famous poet buried in the country churchyard. His understated presence might easily be overlooked by the reader, since this paraphrase is in no way signposted. Quite the opposite, "mute ingloriousness" ("On Not Being Milton" 12) is made to look as if it was Harrison's utterance, immediate, contemporary and general. The switching of the adjective ("inglorious") for the noun ("ingloriousness") changes the aspect of a person into a state characteristic of an entire stratum of society which remains, like Gray's Milton, buried and silent. Noteworthy too is that the adjective "inglorious" contains two meanings: "unknown,"[13] as in Gray's intentional meaning and pointedly relevant for Harrison, and "disgraceful,"[14] which achieves a specific overtone in the

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[13] This meaning is apparent in the etymology of the word: "Latin *inglorius*, from . . . *gloria* glory . . . not glorious; lacking *fame* or honour 'made an *inglorious* comeback.'" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition, 810).

[14] "shameful, ignominious 'an inglorious defeat.'" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition, 810).

context of Harrison's social discussion. The lack of command of language or, as the following poems of the sequence bear out, a lack of command of the privileged dialect, is for a working-class speaker a source of shame, designating his inevitable marginalization within society. Whereas "ingloriousness" refers to the condition of the working-classes, the adjective "mute" binds this condition with the inability and/or impossibility to speak out and suggests the silence surrounding the issue of language hegemony, which had become an inherent element of an accepted social order.

The understated presence of the inglorious Milton, suggested by the paraphrase, raises the question of meaning in the poem's title and a corollary question about the identity of the speaker. Stuart Hall argues that identities

> emerge within play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marketing of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of identical, naturally-constituted unity—an identity in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive, seamless, without internal differentiation) . . . identities [are] constructed through, not outside, difference. (4)

Hence, identity can be constructed only through the relation to The Other, the relation to "what it is not, what it lacks," to a so-called *constitutive outside* (Derrida, *Positions*; Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Butler, *Bodies that Matter*). The point Harrison makes in his opening sonnet is that the identity of Milton the poet functions "because of [its] capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render outside" (Hall 5) the abject element, that mute ingloriousness embodied by Gray's Milton, his silent alter ego[15] absent from literary history and collective memory. Every identity, continues Hall, "has its margin, an excess, something more" (5) which, even if "silent and unspoken" (5) is necessary to achieve, even if only temporarily, a certain form of unity of the self. A constitution of the self as Ernesto Laclau persuasively argues, "is an act of power" since:

> If . . . an objectivity manages to partially affirm itself it is only by repressing that which threatens it. Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles—white/black, man/woman, etc. What is peculiar to the second term is thus reduced to the function of an accident as opposed to the essentiality of the first.

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[15] A parallel construction is created in Harrison's elegy entitled *v.* where on return to his native Leeds, the poet meets the skin, his working-class Other.

> It is the same with the black-white relationship, in which white, of course, is equivalent to "human being." "Woman" and "black" are thus marks (i.e. marked terms) in contrast to the unmarked terms of "man" and "white." (33)

In following Laclau's arguments, of note must be the relation on the social level between two Miltons, represented by a violent hierarchy, the privileged and the dispossessed, the voice of "Art" ("On Not Being Milton" 10) and the awkward articulation, standard English and the non-standard dialect: fraught dichotomies within which the identity of the ruling class is established through the abjection of working-class values. The established ruling-class identity must be then inevitably threatened (Hall 5) by the marginalized who assume the position of outcasts and outlawed as embodied in Harrison's poetry by ambivalent heroes. The two Miltons comprise one contradictory internal identity, one part of which is under constant destabilization by the other, by "what it leaves out" (Hall 5), what it opposes and what it argues against. On this level, where the glorious Milton stands for poetic eloquence and the inglorious Milton for working-class origin, both terms (poet/working-class man) are marked as dependent upon the set of values which the speaker acknowledges as his own in a given instance of discourse. In this way, the speaker cannot fully identify with either role and remains in a state of continual transgression of boundaries, feeling "alienated from both" worlds and seeking to "give justice to this alienation" (Haffenden 234). He does so by ascribing a special role to the spoken language he used at home: familiar and commonplace, the language of his dead parents commemorated in *The School of Eloquence* sequence. It is the articulation he never abandoned but which he feels he betrayed entering the world of eloquence, practicing Latin and Greek and eventually becoming a poet.

One pertinent adjective chosen by Jerzy Jarniewicz, i.e. "warm" ("ciepły") to describe the quality attributed to the spoken language in Harrison's poems (90), gains additional meaning in the literary context of Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special References to Publications and Entertainments*.[16] In the chapter entitled "'Them' and 'Us,'" Hoggart describes the working-class people's sense of

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[16] The title of one of the chapters of the book became a basis for the title of one of the most well-known of Harrison's poems "Them and [uz]." The poem is dedicated to two people: Leon Cortes, a stand-up comedian, and Professor Richard Hoggart, which further stresses the important role Hoggart's work and biography played for Harrison at the time. Hoggart was similarly to Harrison a working-class child from Leeds who grew up to become a writer concerned with working-class issues.

being members of the group (54) as a "sense of group warmth" (55) which "exercises a powerful hold, and continues to be missed when individuals have moved, financially and probably geographically, out of the working-classes" (55). The sense of working-class community Hoggart refers to is not particularly "self-conscious" (55), it is natural and inherent as opposed to taught and constructed. Herein, communality precedes any organized political or social action just as spoken precedes written language, and just as a spoken literary tradition is primal to a written one:

> [the sense of community] does not draw its main strength from—indeed, it precedes, and is more elementary than—the belief in the need to improve each other's lot jointly which gave rise to such organizations as the Co-operative movement. It arises chiefly from the knowledge it can give. (Hoggart 56–57)

Harrison's choice to make his poems "essentially speech" (Barker 46) may be understood as an attempt at continuity of belonging to the working-class community—a task which can be seen in terms of possibility but not in sureness, since the working-class community "works against the idea of change" and imposes on its members "an extensive . . . pressure to conform" (Hoggart 58). Those who do not, such as a scholarship boy from "Them and [uz]" and "Me Tarzan," "become different through education" (Hoggart 58) and are likely to find themselves in the position of outcast. In Harrison's poetry, the pursuance of continuity of belonging of the poetic "I," which cannot be definitely achieved and remains in process, is historicized and contextualized to represent a continuity of the experience of the working classes, the barbarians, the speakers of dialect. Some of them, such as Hoggart and Harrison, write from the liminal space, some die labelled linguistically incompetent, as it was with Harrison's father.[17] However, though divided by issues of "gender, family, war, politics" (Astley 10), all become in *The School of Eloquence* the "agents of *agon*" (Byrne 23), liminal, ambiguous heroes, and oppositional characters participating in Harrison's struggle to maintain a continuity of culture endangered with extinction and to speak about the value of poetic identity constructed out of contrasting elements, identity which could not have existed without working-class roots. This inclusiveness[18] (Astley 10)

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[17] See: "Marked with D."

[18] Astley uses the term in reference to Harrison's verse, drawing on the linguistic claim that "we punctuate our speech with 'sociocentric tags': Middle-class speakers tend to say *I think* (giving their opinion), an exclusive tag, where working-class speakers will say *you know* (drawing the listener into a shared conversation)" (Astley 13).

resulting in the multiplicity and diversity of voices in Harrison's *The School of Eloquence*, is probably "the strongest legacy" (Astley 10) of the poet's liminal experience.

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REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

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Timeless Radcliffe: A Review of *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014)

The year 2014 was notable from the perspective of both Gothic scholars and casual readers of Gothic fiction. First of all, it marked the 250th anniversary of the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, "the first official Gothic romance and progenitor of an enduring genre" (Snodgrass 69). Moreover, it also marked the 250th birthday of Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), the leading figure of Gothic fiction in the 1790s, whose novels, such as the bestselling *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) or *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1796–97), reformulated the Walpolean model of a Gothic story. No matter that they were simultaneously criticized and revered, their influence on the development of Romantic fiction was undeniable. Even though Radcliffe's *oeuvre* has already undergone a meticulous analysis, not only in Great Britain and the United States (one could list the following works: Joyce M. S. Tompkins's *Ann Radcliffe and Her Influence on Later Writers*, 1980; Robert Miles's *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, 1995; Rictor Norton's *Mistress of Udolpho: the Life of Ann Radcliffe*, 1999), but also in Poland (Marek Błaszak's *Ann Radcliffe's Gothic Romances and the Romantic Revival*, 1991; Witold Ostrowski's "*The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Much More," 1997), an anniversary like this prompted a special commemoration. In June 2014, the University of Sheffield organized an international conference devoted to "the Great Enchantress," which was followed by a publication of a special volume, assessing Radcliffe's body of work and her importance for Gothicism.

The volume entitled *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, published by Cambridge University Press, is divided into three main sections, devoted respectively to "cultural contexts," the author's "creative output" and her links to "Romantic literary culture." The editors, Dale Townshend and Angela Wright, two renowned Gothic scholars themselves, carefully picked a selection of texts by other Gothic specialists. Among them are the aforementioned Robert Miles, as well as Sue Chaplin (author of *Gothic Literature: Texts, Contexts, Connections*, 2011), Jerrold E. Hogle (who penned e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, 2002)

and Diane Long Hoeveler (author of numerous articles, books and book chapters on various aspects of Gothicism). Their articles demonstrate that the fiction of Ann Radcliffe still remains open to new interpretations.

The volume starts with an overwhelmingly detailed text concerning the "critical reception" of Radcliffe's prose and poetry between 1790 and 1850. Its authors, Dale Townshend and Angela Wright, punctiliously collect and quote opinions on Radcliffe's *oeuvre*, referring to versatile documents—press reviews, letters, journal entries, frequently authored by other significant literary figures of that era (i.e. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, William Hazlitt). Most of them favourably assess Radcliffe's work and affirm her "exceptionality, be it aesthetic, generic, political or otherwise; her inventiveness, originality or genius, her central place within the development of the English novel and the history of English letters in general" (Townshend and Wright 14–15). Edward Jacob's article on Radcliffe's influence on print culture in the Romantic period is very similar in tone, and so is Samuel Baker's compelling text about Radcliffe's final novel, *Gaston de Blondeville*, published posthumously in 1826. Jacob explains that "Radcliffe's works transformed the status of the novel within literary culture" (49). Reading these three texts immediately called to mind the previous volume of *Text Matters*, which was devoted to collecting, publishing and archiving as "ways of 'framing of how literary and cultural materials are received'" (Chambers qtd. in Maszewska 7). These words aptly summarize the aims of the reviewed collection—to preserve our memory of Radcliffe's fiction, but also to emphasize her impact on textual culture in general.

Nevertheless, the fragment I found particularly praiseworthy in the first section of the book was Joe Bray's insightful study of the role of portraits in Gothic fiction. The focus of the article obviously lies on Ann Radcliffe; the author, however, skillfully introduces the subject referring to her predecessors, Horace Walpole and Sophia Lee, paying attention to "the ways that portraits can complicate, rather than verify, notions of identity, and cast doubt on the 'mimetic matching' of subject and image" (35).

The second part of the volume explores selected works of the Gothic "enchantress." Alison Milbank, the editor of *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), opens this section with an article devoted to ways of seeing as interpretative modes in Radcliffe's early fiction, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and the aforementioned *A Sicilian Romance*. Milbank suggests that Radcliffe actually tries to impose a particular perspective on her readers:

> Radcliffe . . . wants [them] to learn to see through a kaleidoscope that mixes Shakespeare and the Bible, Shaftesbury and Milton: a lens that

dramatizes the distance between the self and the world for the education of an ethical way of seeing the moral beauty of the created order and through which to imagine and enact social change, however muted. (98)

Focused mostly on the "melancholic gaze" and "ethical lens," Milbank, unfortunately, perfunctorily treats the issue of masterly gaze as a manner of looking and an interpretative device, which, in my opinion, would enrich her valuable study had it been addressed in more depth.

This section also includes a compelling contribution from an acknowledged scholar, Diane Long Hoeveler, whose article covers several different aspects of Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), from codes of femininity inscribed into the novel to, as Hoeveler puts it, a "ruins discourse" (100). The author's vibrant and engaging style compensates for the slightly incoherent structure of her article. Each of its subunits could be, in fact, read as a separate brief analysis. A text of a similar structure can be found in the third part of the volume; however, Sue Chaplin's research into Ann Radcliffe's impact on Romantic fiction gives an impression of more unity.

The third part, the shortest in the volume, touches upon Radcliffe's ties to the Romantic movement in England, and includes the aforementioned article by Chaplin. It also contains two informative and well-researched texts: about Radcliffe's poetry (written by Jane Stabler) and stage adaptations of her novels at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries (penned by Diego Saglia).

Overall, this carefully edited collection merits attention, being a worthy contribution to the field of Radcliffean studies. Quite ironically, its recurring motif, repeated in at least three articles in the collection, is a famous passage from John Keats's letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, in which the poet facetiously imitates Radcliffe's style: "for I am going among Scenery whence I intend to tip you the Damosel Radcliffe—I'll cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense-rock you, and tremendous sound you, and solitude you" (71). Contrary to Keats's tongue-in-cheek comment, the volume confirms that Radcliffe's literary output is so much more than banditti hiding in dark caverns or hypersensitive damsels in distress who swoon at the mere sight of sublime landscapes. The editors explain in the preface that they intended to "extend the appreciation of Radcliffe in critical directions that, to date, are only in the early phases of development, particularly with regards to those aspects of her *oeuvre* that lie beyond the narrow confines of the Gothic" (xiv). Undoubtedly, they successfully attained their ambitious goal.

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Yeats's Genres and Tensions: A Review of Charles I. Armstrong's *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion and History* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013)

The last decade has brought a series of excellent monographs on the life and work of W. B. Yeats. Those have both built on and sought to go beyond R. F. Foster's magisterial two-volume biography in supplying contexts against which to place Yeats the man and the poet. Such studies as Ronald Schuchard's *The Last Minstrels* and Joseph M. Hassett's *W. B. Yeats and the Muses* have tilted the critical balance in favour of biographical approaches, in a sense continuing the work begun by Ellmann and Jeffares, and more recently Terrence Brown and Foster. As a result, Yeats, whose work allured New Critics and attracted deconstructionists, is now approached mainly through the lens of his own life, both public and personal as well as literary. That approach tends to produce high quality criticism that, while being suffused with theoretical insights and postulates, endeavours to cling to lines of explication that the poet himself may have pondered when composing poems. The theoretical background notwithstanding, critics in an overwhelming majority prefer to discuss the internal relations between Yeats's poetry, critical/journalist prose, autobiography and his ample correspondence. This is evidenced in the extremely well-researched introduction *W. B. Yeats in Context*, where much attention is given to the poet's affinity with his friends and family and the battles with his enemies. Amid this vogue, there have been studies like Nicholas Grene's *Yeats's Poetic Codes* and Helen Vendler's *Our Secret Discipline*, which have emphatically drawn attention to Yeats's poems as poems, rather than cryptic, occasionally abstruse, commentaries on his life that call for almost sleuth-like investigation. It is within the latter, far less pronounced tradition, that Charles I. Armstrong's *Reframing Yeats* positions itself.

In the introduction, Armstrong distinguishes between two approaches to Yeats that "privilege form and close reading, on the one hand, and more historical and biographical approaches on the other." He adds that

his "study will seek to mediate between these opposing methodologies" (Armstrong 3). This sounds a high tone for the study even though the following pages, despite their genuinely fresh readings of Yeats's major works, both poems and plays, do not seem to effect a major dam-breaking in Yeats studies. Nevertheless, the in-depth analyses of Yeats's work more than compensate for the fact that the study does not always manage to stay as good as its introductory word. For Armstrong, Yeats is a crucial figure of contemporary poetry, and crucial as it appears for modernism, due to the fact that his poetic gift, as it transpires from the study, outgrows Yeats's declared statements.

Armstrong opens with what is his arguably strongest hand. His reading of Yeats's "General Introduction for My Work" never takes the claims made there at face value and redirects the focus of some oft-quoted passages onto ideas that have received little attention. At the outset, Armstrong trains his critical eye on the striking metaphor of a poet sitting to the breakfast table that Yeats summons twice in the opening pages of his "Introduction": "[a poet] never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria" and later "he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast" (Yeats, *Later Essays* 204). Armstrong rightly emphasizes the pertinence of this insight, as the "Introduction" addresses one of the ideas that have been considered to underpin Yeats's conception of the poet as a creation of his own phantasmagoria (cf. Gould 45–47) and so demands acceptance as a "summation" of Yeats's creative life (Foster xxii). Armstrong is, however, the first to unpack the allusion to breakfast rather than pouncing on the more readily riveting opposition to accident and incoherence, both of which have served to situate Yeats in the current of high modernism. Armstrong observes that "the motif of breakfast can highlight some of the specific aspects of the everyday excluded by Yeats's poetic ideal" (16). Most importantly, "breakfast is an interruption of the poet's proper business of engaging with his own dream world, and the phatic chit-chat of the morning repast constitutes a jarring contrast to the inner theatre of the night" (Armstrong 17). Whereas the night is the time of imagination, self-creation, in a word: of poetry, day-time is the domain of business-like earthly involvements, something Yeats as a public figure and one of the Abbey's directors would have known and come to curse: all this "Theatre business, management of men" (Yeats, *The Poems* 93). Armstrong's analysis draws attention to the conflict with mundaneness that Yeats waged throughout his life; however, despite the wide treatment that this aspect of Yeats's idea of poetry is given (including a thought-provoking suggestion that George Moore might be implicated as a member of the sublunary breakfast-league), Armstrong goes on to argue that

the separation of poetry and the quotidian is not quite this permanent and inflexible in Yeats's oeuvre as a whole. In poetic diction, for instance, he may deny everyday chatter, but he still espouses a kind of ordinariness, trying . . . "to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech." (20)

Moreover, "his investment in traditional Irish poetry pulls him towards that which is common rather than elevated" (Armstrong 20). This tension between the mundane and the elevated is explored with some detail but it is only one of many such inner disputes that this inherently conflicted poet kept up and Armstrong duly probes deeper.

Armstrong devotes a substantial part of his study to the problems with Yeats's biographies, paying particular attention to Foster's *W. B. Yeats: A Life*. He commends Foster's painstakingness but criticizes him for being "less than definitive about Yeats's autobiographical writings" (37). In chapter 4, he seeks to unravel the poet's own pattern of autobiographical self-mythologizing and claims that "the patterning of Yeats's autobiographical writings . . . implies something more than a mere copying of facts. It implies an internal structuring that shapes the events of the story into the organicism of a well-crafted plot" (Armstrong 43). This repeats the classic perception of Yeats's autobiography that early commentators, Ellmann and Jeffares (together with Sean O'Faolain, the best-known author of Yeats's never-written biography), pointed out and seconds the view meticulously discussed nearly half a decade ago by Joseph Ronsley in *Yeats's Autobiography: Life as Symbolic Pattern*. Whereas those critics would recurrently argue that Yeats wrote the autobiographical pieces to construct a self, Armstrong concurs only in part and goes on to assert that

> [Yeats] may desire *muthos*, but he certainly also pulled towards a very modern form of fragmentation. This fragmentation is evident not only in the internal structure of some his memoirs, but also . . . in his tendency to publish discrete and shortish instalments of biographical writing. In the irregular start-stop rhythm of the writing of these instalments, one can locate an even more radical challenge to the form of cohesive life story that Foster and other biographers have tried to construct for Yeats. While their divisions of the life into two or three parts only articulate the unity from within, the poets' (sic) own more diversified approach arguably goes beyond unity. (47)

This is an apposite remark that stresses an aspect of Yeats's life that most biographers have realized but none acknowledged and demonstrated with quite such lucidity.

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Armstrong then carries on to investigate the inner tensions in Yeats's oeuvre, focusing on *A Vision* and its "obtuse parody of scholarly prose" implicit in the paratexts that open the 1936 edition of the treatise. He observes that "it would make more sense to read these metatextual parts of *A Vision* as partially anticipating, say, a work such as Nabokov's *Pale Fire* than simply a poet's bungling attempt to pull off an alien, academic genre" (Armstrong 58). Furthermore, much of his study is devoted to reading particular plays (especially noteworthy is his analysis of *The Player Queen*) and much-discussed later poems like "Easter 1916," which is shown to absorb various registers of orality (100), "Lapis Lazuli," which for Armstrong displays "a transcendence of both [comedy and tragedy]" (91), and *ekphrastic* lyrics such as "The Municipal Gallery Revisited," which shows "Yeats's investment in images leading him to construct a challenging form of poetry characterized by dizzying excess" rather than an "appropriation of tangible solidity, or the attainment of a restful simplicity borrowed from art" (122). He ends by confronting Helen Vendler's study of the ways in which Yeats plays with genres and poetic conventions. He shows that Yeats transcends genres and "[enters] into the impure regions of generic monstrosity," whereby "douzains, sonnets, curtailed sonnet and other short lyric forms overlap and intermix" (Armstrong 138).

Armstrong's is a very well-argued and thoroughly-researched study of Yeats that by all means deserves to be counted among the contemporary classics like *The Last Minstrels*, *Yeats's Poetic Codes* and Edna Longley's *Yeats and Modern Poetry*. That said, it needs to be noted that even though his delving into the hybridization of genre in Yeats's poetry, drama and prose offers fruitful readings, Armstrong's emphasis on a paucity of genre-related studies of Yeats must surprise. It is with an eye to the modifications of genre that critics have long looked into Yeats's poetry, with pertinent commentaries coming especially from textual scholars like Curtis Bradford and more recently Vendler. What distinguishes Armstrong's book is not so much its shifting of critical emphasis to a subject matter thus far left unattended as its unorthodox treatment of this subject matter. Armstrong builds on the existent Yeats scholarship but his skill lies in the ability to shed light on aspects of the poet's work that have been given short shrift. Indeed, this is less of an act of reframing than deepening the insight into the frames already available.

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Review of Anna Pochmara's *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2011)

The history of African American culture—much like the history of almost any culture developed in, or under the influence of, the West—is dominated by the figures of dead men, who loom over all historical studies with a matter-of-factness that has long remained disconcertingly appropriate. Two strategies are typically employed to interrogate this masculine bias. One consists in the exploration of the under-recorded and often unwritten history of the role women played in the formation of a given culture or movement. Such archaeological works often deliberately set out to tackle the bias by highlighting the ways in which history "forgot" about the women—as was the case with Rosa Parks, for years remembered almost exclusively as the lady who refused to give up her seat. The other strategy turns the spotlight on the masculine heroes themselves, questioning the rules of the game instead of trying to play it.

This is the course Anna Pochmara follows in her study of the origins and development of the idea of the "New Negro." Her analysis focuses on how several illustrious Black men of letters involved in the Harlem Renaissance—Alain Locke, Wallace Thurman, Richard Wright—dealt with the question of Black manhood in the racist America of the early twentieth century. With this purpose in mind, Pochmara invokes two well-established theoretical paradigms: Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's anxiety of authorship. In the context of a "manly" struggle for supremacy in Black American culture,

> [t]he black male writer is caught in a double bind between the need to engage in "heroic warfare" with his strong predecessors and the need to establish a legitimate patrilineal lineage, which will both validate black male authorship and set off the specters of social illegitimacy resulting from white men's symbolic and biological fathering of black children. (9–10)

In other words, for an early-twentieth-century Black writer to achieve artistic recognition (i.e. find favour with white readers), he was obliged to produce an art that broke with established conventions while paying heed to a certain tradition of Black art.

The study opens with an analysis of the relations between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois in the context of turn-of-the-century ideas about manliness and masculinity—the transition from the idea of man as the agent of civilization to one of man as the embodiment of virility. According to Pochmara, though Washington pays heed to Victorian values throughout his output, he manages to assert his own masculine privilege in less overt ways, for instance, by citing his popularity as a public speaker among White female audiences. Du Bois, on the other hand, addresses the tension between the two concepts of masculinity more openly. He claims that the racial oppression of Blacks feminizes Black men, enfeebling the Black community. In spite of his firm opposition to Washington's ethics of accommodation, he effectively upholds them by advocating the "respectable" care of Black men over Black women, claiming manliness while eschewing masculinity.

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During the interwar years, with Victorian ideas out of favour, "respectability" lost some of its lustre, while Black male privilege retained virtually all of its allure. Building on the concept of "respectable" Black masculinity responsible for the uplift of the "race," Alain Locke put forward the idea of a "New Negro" that celebrated the manly vigour of the urban Black. In this context, Pochmara highlights the way in which Locke is positioned not as a father of the "New Negro" movement—the Harlem Renaissance—but rather as a midwife: a gesture that neatly circumscribes Black womanhood. Her analysis goes even further by identifying the European roots of the movement, traced to both ancient Greece and the more modern *Jugendkultur* of *fin-de-siècle* Germany. The homoeroticism of Locke's vision is identified as part of a modernism that celebrates masculinity at the expense of the feminine, positing the "ruthless" and "penetrating" new aesthetic against "mawkish" Victorianism (98).

Where Locke glorifies the Black masculine artist, Thurman revels in the infertile figure of the dandy. In his works, Thurman consistently portrays the Black aesthete as a "fake" and a failure whose notion of uplift is highly limited and irrelevant, if not injurious, to the Black community at large. Pochmara devotes significant attention to Thurman's curious reversal of the logic of the "New Negro": while Locke glorified the impact of urban life on Black men, Thurman rued the feminization it brought. Thurman elevated the masculine figure of the "rough" lower-class urban Black above the modernist artist. Pochmara carefully details the writer's

sardonic representations of the intellectual life of the Black elites, whose value is repeatedly challenged by the "normalcy" of the down-to-earth (and typically female) "authentic" Blacks (151–53).

In her study, Pochmara also repeatedly stresses the impact of the racist tropes of Blackness on the formation of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's "New Negro" is purposely distanced from the mythical Black rapist, while the virtual exclusion of women from the programme of the movement reinforces that effect. Thurman's "queerness" and interest in dandyism partly serves the same purpose. Pochmara's decision to close her narrative with a discussion of Richard Wright as the heir of both currents of the Harlem Renaissance is particularly notable: Wright's explicit masculine bias, after all, depended on a rejection of the "respectable" image of Black manhood as a classist fiction (184–88). His works reverse the polarity of Thurman's argument, identifying women as passive objects within the racist system and describing literature as a manly pursuit (189).

Pochmara's argument is fairly compelling—the particular masculine biases involved in the production of the Harlem Renaissance clearly merit the attention she gives them. To study them is to uncover the strategies involved in the definition of the members of the movement and of its purpose. However, the elaborate manner in which the author pursues her subject seems at times to prevent her from developing her claims fully. For example, her discussion of the "criminal" mode of Black urban masculinity, which has been in place since the nineteenth century, appears to evade the role criminality has played since in Black culture. While the figure of the "sweetback" may serve a particular purpose for Thurman, it also stands for the "underground" culture of the ghetto and the long-standing glorification of the sexual Black, as evidenced in the recurrent trope of the Black pimp across innumerable texts of Black popular culture (from the legend of Stack O'Lee to rappers like 50 Cent). In a way, this omission is explained by the perspective of the author, who is explicitly involved in a pursuit of transatlantic connections. Another somewhat disturbing feature is the treatment of significant quotations; Pochmara appears to approach each of them in a manner befitting a poem, highlighting a relatively high number of key terms on each occasion and providing detailed analyses which do not always seem strictly necessary. These problems notwithstanding, *The Making of the New Negro* is an important study whose value is defined by the way in which it reorganizes the common perceptions of the Harlem Renaissance and of the politics of masculinity in Black American literature of the early twentieth century.

"Artful Exaggeration"

Krzysztof Majer (University of Łódź) Interviews Bill Gaston

Krzysztof Majer: To what extent do you think that particular physical space—say, the British Columbia coast, with places like Victoria and Vancouver—has affected your writing? Do you feel that it is particularly tied to the region, or even think of yourself as a regionalist? Also, do you have a sense that your writing is, in some overarching way, Canadian? Or do you perhaps feel part of a broader—say, North American—current of writing? Are such distinctions (cultural, regional, national) important for you?

Bill Gaston: I feel place strongly, either in tune with it or struggling against it, which, strangely, is sort of the same thing. That is, place feels *us*, stroking or punching, as the case may be. This is as true of a rural landscape, as of wilderness, or city or—even more so—a neighbourhood. So I think place makes any writer, whether they know it or not, and if they use the detail of their past and present lives, they are regionalists, by nature if not by design. Joyce and Faulkner are nothing if not regionalists. But in Canada to be thought a "regional writer" is to be damned, or at least to be described as someone who writes about a certain place, usually rural, and who doesn't sell many books. Alice Munro, who has all the hallmarks of the regional writer, is maybe our one exception to this rule. Many Canadian writers share the story of publishers or agents pushing them to change the setting and place names in their novel from Canada to the U.S. in hopes of pandering to American self-interest and selling more books—by abandoning the authenticity that comes from allegiance to place.

I don't think Canadian writers, while writing, think of themselves in terms of region, nationality, or tradition. I certainly don't, and I actively resist using it as strategy. But after-the-act I do love being considered a B.C. writer, and even more so a West Coast writer, if we include everything from here [Victoria, B.C.] to southern California. I feel more cultural kinship with Oregon than with Toronto or Montreal, feel more aesthetically in line with Ken Kesey and Gary Snyder than with Robertson Davies or Mordecai Richler, and likely this is proof of the shaping power of place, beyond political boundaries.

Apart from all that, I think that the West Coast has peculiar and powerful qualities affecting all who live here. "Go west, young

man" has fuelled a particular sensibility for at least a couple of centuries, and now we have a population that has indeed "gone west," finding itself pressed up against a wall of ocean, with nowhere else to go. A lawlessness or restlessness continues, as witnessed by the creative fever found here, most famously in California. North of the American border there's also a wildness, an unforgiving harshness that an intuitive person—a.k.a a writer—can feel issuing from the ground, the stormy coast, the gigantic trees. It isn't welcoming. I think its energy derives from fault lines, and is nothing but tectonic. Laugh if you want. It's not a friendly place, so we won't notice you laughing in any case.

KM: But it's interesting to consider that in some of your books, the characters go east instead, perhaps because there is no route going further the other way. In *The World*, for instance, Stuart Price, who has been pushed to various other limits, drives all the way to Toronto. You have him go through all those places in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario—that first third of the novel feels almost like a reverse *On the Road*, with a "beat" character searching for renewal, and with an acute sense of physical space, of landscape.

BG: I think it's significant that he "goes east" only after he retires, his house burns down, his mar-

riage ends, and he falls out with his daughter! His failed life causes him to reverse his tracks, so to speak, perhaps searching for renewal, but perhaps searching for the culprit, who in this case is embodied in the soulless person who has rejected his house insurance claim. The "going east" intrigues me, in much the same way as the term "widdershins" intrigues me; in witchcraft it means going against the natural order, or literally against the route of the sun. Practitioners will walk widdershins in order to affect some kind of positive change. By shaking things up, I suppose. Stuart does this unknowingly, by driving widdershins across the vastness of Canada, and of course things get even worse before they begin to get better.

KM: My next question is also connected, although deviously, to issues of region and tradition. An early story of yours, titled "A Forest Path," riffs on Malcolm Lowry's famous novella *The Forest Path to the Spring*. Your narrator believes himself to be Lowry's illegitimate offspring, and his evidence is largely textual, taken from that novella. The story seems to parody the situation of a Canadian writer—maybe especially a West-Coast Canadian writer?—who has to grapple with the uncomfortable legacy, the shadow of the Father. Given also that you've written the introduction to the 2014 Penguin edition of *Under the Volcano*, do you feel that Lowry's shadow still

looms large over your writing, and maybe over Canadian writing in general?

BG: I enjoy a complex relationship with Lowry, one that begins with an odd coincidence. As teenagers learning to drink, and forced outdoors to do it, we would gather at "the drinking spot," a forest clearing jutting into the waters of Indian Arm, in a place now called Cates Park, a short hike from where we all lived. There we'd go crazy with booze and psychedelics and whatnot, and only later, doing postgraduate work on Malcolm Lowry, did I learn that this was the spot—we had gathered on *the spot*—where he'd had his last squatter's cabin and wrote *Under the Volcano*. None of us had heard of him. And now a sign went up at the head of our path—Malcolm Lowry Walk. In any case my readings of Lowry built a love-hate relationship. He represented my literary roots, or perhaps my forebears—the monolith of English Literature—while I was a carrier of water and hewer of wood. Canadians simply could not write sentences like the British, and we still can't. At the same time, I saw him as an outsider who had presumed to invade my beloved wilderness—but the English private-school dandy couldn't survive it, couldn't have his tea and sherry, and a cougar simply scared the shit out of him. This of course was my vanity talking: it was alcohol, nothing else, that brought him down.

But I saw his writing as Old World fancy; needlessly verbose, baroque, laden with allusion, symbol and portent. This was the New World, the landscape could kill you, and there was no need for anything but plain speaking. I saw his brilliance to be misguided and ill-used. And in this I was arrogant enough to depict him as a clueless madman in "A Forest Path," my comic response to his *Forest Path to the Spring*, which in truth was nothing but a naïve love story and a needlessly fanciful description of my neighbourhood. I showed a draft of the story to my mother's best friend Dorothy, who'd played lots of bridge with Lowry's wife Marjorie, and she thought it naughty but funny. It was the first piece of fiction I ever wrote, and it remains my most anthologized.

KM: I'm intrigued by the idea that Canadians can't—or won't?—write like Lowry, which I take as a refusal to emulate. Earlier you distanced yourself from Robertson Davies on geographical grounds, but I assume he would be exactly the sort of writer who tried to "write British."

BG: I think we can't *and* wouldn't even if we could. There's no need. Nor would there be readers. So that "shadow of the Father," which is our colonial past, has largely faded, if not vanished, I think. I still admire the effortless correctness and ingenuity of a Martin Amis sentence, but I love more his street smarts and slang-wit

and vast irony. I think the idea is to write like we speak. Good writing needs to belong to, and perhaps have some role in shaping, contemporary thinking and speech, which have a syntax, and ours is not the same as Lowry's and never was, notwithstanding old guard writers like Robertson Davies, who indeed "wrote British." Lowry's language was foreign to us, and now it's also dated, and so even less suitable for public consumption. But I remember quite well my reaction to reading Lowry and, yes, it was partly impatience. It went something like, "You lived a tough, cool, squatter's life in my backyard, and you appreciated this place just like I do—so why aren't you talking to *me*?" He had demons, and lived in a painful fantasy, but he was clearly brilliant—so why didn't he communicate directly to me, like other writers did? And maybe herein lies an opportunity to answer a part of a previous question, about my identifying as a Canadian writer. To generalize grandly, I'll say that Canadian writers are less direct than American writers, but more subtle. And we are less subtle than British writers but more direct. I think we are stylistically well-positioned between the culture that used to dominate us, and the one that continues to, more and more.

KM: Could you tell me something about your other literary or artistic influences, past and present—not necessarily North American? Who do you feel has shaped your sensibility, perception, style?

BG: I see two kinds of writerly influence. The first are those writers I deeply admire, and emulate, actively *trying* to be influenced. This list is long, but would include the Brits Martin Amis, John Fowles, T. S. Eliot, and John Cowper Powys; the Yanks Thomas McGuane, the recently departed Jim Harrison, John Gardner, Hunter S. Thompson, and George Saunders; Canadians Douglas Glover, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Alice Munro. These writers are utterly different from one another, of course, and there are many others, but each of them has something I covet. Another list would be those who influenced me largely without my knowing it, and these would include Dr. Seuss, John Steinbeck, Scott Young and, I have to say, Shakespeare. The Beats, for their sensibilities if not their style, are probably on both lists.

KM: I'll bite. Dr. Seuss?

BG: When my first child was a few months old I began reading to her, lying beside her in bed. (This may sound early to begin reading to a child, but I now take full credit for Lise becoming a published poet.) She would hear the words and become wide-eyed under the pictures, and squirm with excitement beside me. One night I began to read to her Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who!* and

only several words into it, my hair stood on end. I had never read the book before but knew every word by heart—it was from my mother reading it to me, probably many times, when I wasn't much older than Lise. I knew the words, their nonsense and their musicality, in my body. I likely learned rhythm from Seuss; I probably also learned something about words and play, and the freedom from logic. Many Seuss stories have a great sense of calamity and are models of dramatic tension. Who knows what I learned! Babies can learn a lot, some of it subtle. My oldest son had a pronounced sense of irony by the time he was one.

KM: And has teaching literature or creative writing influenced the way you think about it? I recall an interview with Mark A. Jarman, where he said that going over the classics with students again and again has strengthened his appreciation for the way these texts were built, for their form; have you had similar experiences?

BG: My teaching has influenced my writing in a curious way, one that has little to do with appreciation of classic texts and more to do with the *via negativa*. In thirty years of creative writing workshops, I've read mostly student work, not literature, and without denigrating their writing too much I have to say that they are just beginning to find their way, and most of it is mediocre. One result of

decades' wading through mediocrity, trying to think of something helpful to say, is an enhanced appreciation for what in prose narrative does shine, does wink magically from the page. In working to locate gems in the fluid murk, I've had opportunity to learn, and relearn, much about both gems and murk.

KM: Let's talk about how your own fiction is made. Some recurrent themes in your writing, I think, are the breakdown of a family, and—as a flipside of sorts?—establishing unlikely, spontaneous, short-lived alternative communities, alternative families. This is crucial in *The World*, where high school friends are reunited when their family life, or life in general, reaches an especially low point. But you always seem to be interested in families—in what brings them together or tears them apart. Sometimes this can be one and the same thing, like the death of the family dog in "Honouring Honey" or a Leonard Cohen concert in "Geriatric Arena Grope."

BG: The family, or some version of it, including its complete lack, appears to be my reservoir. There's a simple and practical reason for this. When Tolstoy said that all happy families are the same, and all unhappy families different from one another in their unhappiness—something like that—he was identifying a vast garden of conflict that's endlessly nourishing for

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a writer. The conflicts are as endlessly varied as the personalities of the people involved; yet readers can relate to these conflicts because at least to some degree they've tasted something similar, or can imagine it. Maybe most importantly, unlike most political or social conflict, or the man-versus-nature variety, in family conflict there's a ready-made poignancy, because what's reflected is the breakdown of a relationship that is idealized and not expected to fail, or to be anything but perfect. Expectations about family are so rich, and need no explanation. A mother's love, a father's pride, sibling rivalry—none of that needs to be explained, and any deviation from the ideal is instantly rich as a result. Putting conflict within the family is a kind of shortcut for me.

KM: Your writing is often associated with the eerie, the grotesque, the bizarre. I feel that in part this is a response to your most famous collection of short stories, *Gargoyles*, which seemed to be organized around portraits of individuals whose life had been touched by absurdity in one way or another. Although your stories teem with black humour, the atmosphere is really far from grim. Does all this relate to a particular world view, a sense that reality is bizarre and that by foregrounding this quality we get to its core? Is there a connection here with your practice of Buddhism?

BG: The word "humour," black or otherwise, is key here. I think my work is quite funny, if I do say so myself. It disappoints me greatly that not a lot of reviews of my work mention humour. Maybe I'm funny only to myself! The first time I saw David Adams Richards read was a revelation. His writing is famously thought to be dire and grim, but as he read he could hardly contain his laughter, and his laughter was a guide for me, because I could now see where and how his work was actually funny. What before was merely dark, now was dark humour.

We can face up to the human condition: we are flying through space on a watery dirt ball and don't know how this happened or why, or if there is a why, and all sorts of strange and sometimes torturous shit happens to us, yet we have the audacity to become bored, and then we suffer great pain and die. This prototypical absurdity can make us depressed, or become self-protectively insane, or laugh. Perhaps laugh gently. The mention of Buddhism is astute. For fear of boring anybody I'll say only that the Buddhism I adhere to is a view, or way of seeing, rather than a belief of any kind, and that one of its main effects is a heightened sense of absurdity. One great teacher suggests that it deserves not anger or nihilism but a sense of appreciation, because within this absurdity we find great beauty. One name for the situation is "The Cosmic Joke." Another is "Lion's Roar," which suggests that

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the absurd situation we face is also both loud and sincere. In any case, a gentle laugh is my choice, and I find my characters' strange situations to be funny. I'm laughing with their pain, not at it. And I trust that readers will potentially identify with anything strange that they read from me, seeing as they live smack in the middle of the strange themselves. My process is to tease the details so to make the scene almost but not quite larger than life—I call this "artful exaggeration"—in order to make this intention clear and free it from the confines of realism. And also to make it funnier and more entertaining. My psychologically gnarled characters entertain me in any case, and often I type with an inner wry smirk. Again, I'm not looking down at them; I'm identifying fully, and my hope is that readers find familiar ground as well. And perhaps chuckle, rather than wince, in recognition.

KM: You've mentioned the experience of hearing David Adams Richards read aloud, and the relationship between sound and meaning. I'd like to ask about musicality—or perhaps, to use Werner Wolf's term, "musicalization"—in your writing: your texts are awash in musical references. Some are delightfully precise (say, a particular song on an early Brian Eno album); others allude to a certain phase in a band's work, and others still are fairly obscure. I have a sense that 1970s / 1980s rock is very

prominent. Is this a way of building some sort of bond with readers who have similar associations, or "awarding" your characters with some of your own musical taste? Is music a large part of your writing life, and do you see any similarities between the processes?

BG: I find that pinning a certain song or band on a character is a vital, simple way to give them significant flesh. That a character favours the Beatles over the Rolling Stones says a lot. That a person gets mad hearing Abba is revealing. The song or band I use doesn't necessarily reflect or expose my own taste, although it might. And of course anything obscure will be lost on most readers. To say a character loves early Ornette Coleman might not mean much to most readers, but some will know it refers to the birth of a certain kind of improv, others at least will know it refers to jazz, and the rest will know that the character likes music that they don't know anything about, which itself says lots. And I do like harbouring the fantasy of bonding with certain readers. If I reference the vainglory of a certain Strawbs album, for instance, a few people will know exactly what I mean. It's an easily-attained objective correlative.

Another issue entirely is what I consider the musicality of writing itself. I used to play guitar and I composed perhaps a hundred songs. I wasn't talented enough to be professional, and I can't sing,

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but I dropped music mostly because I loved it so much that it could easily satisfy my creative urges and then I would not have written fiction at all. In any case, I may be deluded, or tone-deaf, but I find my prose musical. I'm aware of the rhythms and beats of sentences—I'm never *not* aware of them. I hear them rhythmically, and that's how I compose prose. An old friend of mine, a writer who used to drum in rock bands, would have to change a sentence on page 50 if he changed some words on page 2, certain this would resonate *rhythmically* and the reader would hear it whether they were aware of it or not. I'm not as fanatical as that, but I do hear my developing sentences in terms of their subtle rhythmic patterns and inflections, beyond meaning.

KM: I also notice that the music is rarely foregrounded—even in "Geriatric Arena Grope," the Leonard Cohen-themed story, he is not the main focus. Have you ever been tempted to write a novel or short story with a clearly defined musical theme? Maybe even with a particular musical structure in mind?

BG: I have a new story, which the aforementioned Mark A. Jarman will soon be publishing in *The Fiddlehead*, the journal he edits, entitled "Oscar Peterson's Warm Brown Bum." This might well be the most overtly music-centric thing I've written. In it, a Canadian jazz pianist working a steady gig in an Australian

club must literally move aside when the famous musician comes with his group to perform for a week. Then when he sits back down on the stool recently vacated by Peterson, the wood is still warm—hot, actually—from the heavy-set pianist's bum. Various life-changing things are communicated through the heat. It was fun getting into some descriptions of music, mostly of "feeling" the music, and the inspiration required to play well. But I kept discussion of the actual music well off to the side, mostly because I can't conceive of a story not about people, and in this case the effect music has on them. Yet again I've gone and exaggerated things! But the actual music, good as it was, needed to stay in the background.

KM: Let's circle back to the sense of place. There is an interest, especially in your last two novels, in historical writing, in tapping into the colonial past of Nova Scotia and British Columbia. But especially in the final part of *The World*—the novel which we talked about earlier—history is mediated, inaccessible: the historical document at its centre is a first-person account, translated from a foreign language, and largely invented (by the translator). Is there a larger statement here about writing history—or indeed about the unreliability of translation?

BG: There is, but this larger statement is a simple one, better-elucidated by

others, that sees "history" as a concept made impossible by faulty memory, cultural blindness, racism, ignorance, bias and agendas of all kinds, not to mention time itself and the impossibility of experiencing anything other than the immediate present. The most basic fact is that a person can never translate another's experience, and time and place compound the problem. *The Order of Good Cheer* and more so *The World* indeed play with all that, but are mostly interested in how characters feel about—and make decisions based on—all of these failed translations. In this regard, one might say that any love affair is an attempt, and ultimately a failure, to arrive at a shared language. A close examination of this ongoing failure—by turns funny, poignant, or tragic—is possibly the goal of my fiction. To put it more simply and humanely, we neither speak nor listen all that well, and much sad shit ensues.

KM: At the risk of literalizing some of what you've just said: what has your experience been with having your work translated? Have you been tempted to follow up on the texts to see how they have fared in their new context, or have you perhaps been able to verify them yourself?

BG: I've come to understand that a purely literal translation will not be worth much, and that a good translator is also a good writer— that both context and spirit must be forged anew. I've also learned

that any translation of my work is so far out of my hands that I'd simply best ignore it. My early curiosity about a translation—the novel *Tall Lives*, into French—was particularly painful. The novel was a kind of sustained comic hyperbole bordering on magic realism, involving twin brothers who had been born joined at the big toe and separated at birth by their father, a veterinarian. One twin was naïve, innocent, good, and the other canny, experienced, evil. While in Europe, the bad twin wrote his brother postcards, one of which described his agony at being rejected by the woman of his erotic dreams. His manner was always hyperbolic; for instance, if he drank seven beers he would say that he drank ninety-three. In the postcard, he told his brother that, in order to get over the woman, he had to come home, drink a gallon of vodka and stick a refrigerator up his ass. In the freshly translated version, I knew where to find this postcard and knew enough French to read it. And it said, "When I got home I had to drink too much and have a cold shower." This is exactly the kind of clichéd, expected, mundane language the bad twin would never, *could* never use—in fact it was his mission in life to violate such language. So I was, needless to say, disappointed. And never again tried to read, or ask about, a translation.

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Transcultural Theatre in the UK

Uilleam Blacker Talks to Joanna Kosmalska (University of Łódź)[1]

Joanna Kosmalska: How did you start working with Molodyi Teatr?

Uilleam Blacker: My wife, Olesya Khromeychuk, came up with the idea of starting the theatre group in 2010, and I was involved from the beginning, though not in all the early shows. At first, the group consisted of people who were already friends, mostly Ukrainians, but also Russians and Russian-speakers from Central Asia. The members have changed over the years. It's hazardous to work with migrants as they tend to come and go. Before *Bloody East Europeans*, we had to advertise for new members. Now, we have a mix of British people and Ukrainians. They come from all sorts of backgrounds and do very different day jobs—some work in construction, restaurants, market research, and a couple of us are academics. They also have very diverse experiences of immigration, from the straightforward to the very complicated.

JK: Multicultural and multilingual plays have become quite common in the UK. Was this trend an inspiration for writing *Bloody East Europeans*?

UB: When I set about writing the play, I'd already been part of Molodyi Teatr for a couple of years. The first two shows we did were adaptations of Gogol's early stories set in Ukraine. These were put on, to great success, for the Ukrainian community in London. Then we performed some short original pieces in Ukrainian, taking contemporary poetry and making a performance out of it or adapting Taras Shevchenko's work. We've also done a few *vertep* plays—the traditional Ukrainian Christmas plays, which we adapted with a bit of satirical political humour. We put in some jokes about the Maidan and migration.

But in 2013, we decided to do something longer, and in English, to give ourselves a challenge and to widen our potential audience.

The inspiration for the show came in part when Olesya and I went to a show by the company Ad Infinitum that told the story of Israel in this really funny, quasi-cabaret way. We decided to move away from that format a bit, but we kept the idea of a central narrator, a kind of cabaret atmosphere, and using humour and songs. Another key factor was that the theatre became a space where the members would meet and exchange stories about their lives as migrants in London. One day we realized that we had heard a lot of interesting stories. Given the fact that the public discourse around immigration in the UK was getting worse and worse, we felt it was important to bring migrants' voices into the open.

JK: Is the play then based on true stories?

UB: There are no characters or stories that are exactly based on real people. Olesya and I sat down and recalled all the stories we had heard from the members of the theatre or from other migrants we knew and we began to plot out some ideas for characters, songs, and storylines. We used real migrants to create caricatures and combined real stories of different people into one. I wrote the script and then we read it to the theatre members in order to get their feedback about what seemed convincing, funny, accurate or otherwise.

JK: Was it difficult to assume the voice of a different group and "speak for them"?

UB: I was always aware of it and didn't presume to speak from the migrants' point of view. I'd lived abroad for a couple of years, but in very different circumstances to most of our actors, so I can't claim to share their experience. That's why it was important for me to get feedback and to respond to it. As a result, we changed the play quite a lot during development.

JK: In the play, you have intertwined English with Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Belarusian, Serbian, Hungarian and Georgian. Why did you include such a wide range of languages?

UB: One reason why I wanted to introduce other languages was to underline a key part of the migration experience, which is precisely working across and between languages. It was meant to keep the audience on their toes and disorientate them a bit with words they didn't understand, but also make them think about learning languages. We even make a joke at the beginning of the play that we are going to teach the audience to "speak Eastern European."

Besides, we wanted to show how different Eastern Europeans communicate, or miscommunicate, with each other. This is why we've

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included a scene where a Russian tries to chat up two Polish girls, leading to some misunderstandings. This reflects reality. I've actually witnessed a number of conversations between people from different Slavic countries, where I saw evident cultural differences that came through in the similarity and mismatch of the languages.

The only tricky thing was to find the balance between incorporating words or whole sentences that weren't understandable and making sure that it was clear what was going on. But I think that this problem will come more and more into drama in the UK, as our society has become very diverse.

JK: The actors change accents and make some mistakes throughout the play. Is it because you wanted them to mirror the way migrants speak English?

UB: Yes. But actually this worked in a completely different way than I had expected. In the first draft, I deliberately wrote in lots of typical mistakes that speakers of Ukrainian or Polish make, such as misusing articles or tenses. But when it came to rehearsals, the actors sometimes found these a bit confusing, and started to correct the mistakes but also introduced their own idiosyncrasies. In the end, I realized that, with our group of actors anyway, it made sense to write in standard English and let the foreign inflec-

tions happen naturally in rehearsal. It was interesting to see that everyone was really conscious of how they sounded to native speakers, and they were willing to play that up.

JK: Why did you set the play in Stratford?

UB: We chose the location because Stratford is a typical immigrant area in London. The play is set in an "Eastern European bar," which provides a forum to introduce the audience to a whole range of characters from all over Eastern Europe who have very different immigration experiences. The central character is a naïve student from Ukraine who paid to get documents and a job arranged for her in London and ended up getting involved with some shady people. She panics and calls the police, which brings the UK Border Agency to the bar. Individual stories of other characters are structured around this event.

JK: Where did the idea for the title come from?

UB: It's a phrase that one hears in the UK every so often, and sums up a prejudice that brings whole groups of quite different people under one umbrella. What we wanted to do was to challenge this idea that there is such a coherent, single group as "Eastern Europeans." Sure, they may share some experiences, face similar

challenges, and there may be some social, cultural or political similarities between countries. They sometimes work or socialize together in the UK, and they even share languages (e.g., Ukrainians, Russians and people from the Baltics may all be able to communicate in Russian). But in general, there are also huge differences. There is very little that really unites an Estonian and a Bulgarian, or a Pole and an Albanian. But for a lot of British people, they are all "Eastern Europeans"—poor, desperate and potentially dangerous.

JK: The play was staged in several places.

UB: The premiere was in the Ukrainian Institute in London. Then we performed it at the Ukrainian Club, at a small theatre in central London, Theatro Technis, in a community café in Glasgow that works with migrant women, and at Cambridge University. But our main goal was the Edinburgh Fringe where we did five shows in 2015 and were longlisted for Amnesty International's Freedom of Expression Award.

JK: Was it difficult to get the funding?

UB: Early on we raised money by doing *vertep* performances (it's traditional for *vertep* performers to pass a hat around after the show) and people were very generous. Then we did our shows for free but asked

for donations. In the end, we organized an online fundraising campaign to pay for our trip to Edinburgh. Also, Ukrainian community organizations in London and Edinburgh supported us in putting on shows, rehearsing, getting accommodation, and so on. Of course, we had to put our own money into it, too.

JK: What audience were you aiming *Bloody East Europeans* towards?

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UB: I wrote the play with a British audience in mind. However, our initial audiences were mostly Ukrainian, and at first it was more interesting for our actors to talk to that audience because a lot of the jokes and Ukrainian cultural references we put in were aimed at them. But as it progressed, we got much more mixed audiences. A lot of non-Ukrainian Eastern Europeans came to see us and they gave us a lot of positive feedback. In Edinburgh, the audiences were mostly British. We could tell the viewers' nationality because they reacted in completely different ways to jokes and different scenes in the play. Our main channel of communication and publicity was our Facebook page and Ukrainian community organizations, but we also used posters and flyers, especially in Edinburgh. All of our shows were sold out or nearly sold out. We got a great reception and lots of nice audience feedback online.

JK: Could you tell us a little bit about your new play, *Penetrating Europe, or Migrants Have Talent*?

UB: The new play is built around the format of a talent show, but most of the dialogue is based on interviews we did with Ukrainian migrants about their experiences of migrating to the UK. Some had had good experiences, and some very difficult ones. We then used the interview scripts *verbatim* to build the show—the judges listen to their stories and decide whether they are allowed to stay or whether they get deported. But there's also a lot of singing and dancing, as you might expect—we're trying to combine the serious and sad with the funny and ridiculous. The play is a platform for voicing migrant experience, but it is also a parody on British attitudes to migrants: British people are often convinced that we are doing migrants a favour by letting them in to the UK, and one of the big elements of the current debate is this idea of "points-based" migration, where you judge how useful the migrants are to you. It's a very cynical and self-satisfied attitude and completely forgets that these are human beings. But the play also has another level, it's the intertwined stories of a young woman who comes from Ukraine to the UK and a young British man who travels to Ukraine from the UK, and how they meet: we tried to mirror and contrast the two experiences, which gives some interesting results.

JK: I'm really looking forward to seeing your new play this summer. Thank you for finding the time for this interview.

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