Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies

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Sites for Contemporary Gothic

Recently, I had a strange conversation. A very interested and keen person asked me about the Gothic. Specifically, the question was: "what is the Gothic?". I was immediately thrown by the question, as many probably would be. What is, indeed, the Gothic? After a momentary panic – as many would probably experience, presented with such a task – I ventured into giving an answer, or, at least, whatever kind of answer can be squeezed into five minutes of conversation. I tried to shoehorn in all the terms I could think of that would be useful: uncanny, grotesque, terror, sublime, and many of their similar counterparts. I quickly recounted narrative examples from all sorts of disciplines, just to be on the safe side, knowing that the list was too short and reductive, and that I would not be doing justice to over two hundred and fifty years of scholarship. As my "answer" ended, and I drew a breath of quasi-relief, my interlocutor nodded. Suddenly, however, he said: "I get the general idea, but I am confused…isn't the Gothic just about literature?".

I was stunned. My first reaction was to shout "No, it's not!" to the top of my lungs, but I did decide against it. Nonetheless, how could anyone suggest such a thing? True enough, I had started my journey into the Gothic via literary studies, but as a humble scholar of other narrative forms such as film, animation, and comics, I was outraged. Still, I did not shout, nor did I launch into a philosophical treatise of why "the Gothic" is certainly not "just about literature". I was shocked by the suggestion, but I

could not form an articulate response that would encompass what I saw to be all the multi-faceted varieties of Gothic discourse, all its incarnations, all its mutations. So, in the end, I just limited myself to smiling back and answering: "Not anymore".

In truth, "the Gothic" has not just been about literature for quite some time. Centuries, even. There is no denying, of course, that its inception finds its roots in the literary world, and that the relationship that the Gothic holds with literature is more than just a legacy: it is still a fertile and apt territory for expansion and development. So the marriage with literature is still strong. If one wanted to delve into the expressions of the Gothic into cultural narratives, however, one would need to reach even further into history, where the worlds of folklore and mysticism prove the existence of the "narrative of terror" long before the publication of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. As Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville have recently claimed, via the use of the term "living Gothic", the Gothic exists in the fabric of the everyday, and manifests itself in the structures of life, as well as death (Piatti-Farnell and Beville, 1).

The Gothic, therefore, is not just a literary concern. It is to be found in the cells of film and animation; it lingers in the speech bubbles of comics and graphics novels; it spreads in the digital pixels of videogames; it beats in the notes of music; it runs along the lines of fashion design. The Gothic has the potential to be, as it has often been claimed, "everywhere", and it enjoys this ability by showing itself in often unexpected places. Justin Edwards and Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet have successfully shown that the Gothic is entangled with the narratives of popular culture, through what they call "Pop Goth", a term that is used in reference to "a strand of cultural production that appears in cinema, television, young adult fiction, visual culture and even dark tourism" (Edwards and Monnet, 1). The Gothic has placed itself within the reach of the everyday in many ways, moulding itself into the needs and desires of our 21st century. So, the Gothic is not "just about literature": it would be perhaps more apt to say that the Gothic is "about narrative", whatever form that narrative might take, in whatever cultural context.

The question of where to find "the Gothic" is, of course, entangled with the definition of what we call "contemporary Gothic". In spite of the fact that this is an intrinsically controversial term, it also points us in the direction that, as far as the Gothic is concerned, its manifestations are about re-elaboration as well as invention. Therefore, scholarship focused on contemporary Gothic will be centred primarily on three core ideas: firstly, that the Gothic is not a static concept, but it is mouldable and adaptable to changes in time, place, and, naturally, medium; secondly, that "contemporary" does not mean only focusing on what has been produced in our contextual moment, but re-visiting texts from previous historical times, in view of re-considered knowledge; and thirdly, that the Gothic always has the potential to be about both canon and revolution, and that a flexible understanding of the term is necessary in order to fully capitalise on

its reach. The Gothic is as much about literature as it is about other media and their connection to the ways in which we live, dream, and fear.

This issue of *Aeternum* has been developed in the spirit of this approach to "contemporary Gothic". The articles that have been included offer revisions and re-considerations, as well as new insights, into the Gothic medium, from literature to film, and even music. The scholarship the authors propose highlights the connection between Gothic representation and contextual preoccupations, from the here and now of culture, to the weight of historical and folkloristic narratives. In her article, "'I once more tasked my understanding and my senses': Sensual Stimuli in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly*", Emily Petermann explores the representation of sensorial stimuli in 18th century Gothic fiction, reaching beyond the supremacy of sight alone. Focusing on Charles Brockden Brown's novels *Wieland* (1798) and *Edgar Huntly* (1799), Petermann examines the role of non-visual perception and the way it is presented by the autodiegetic narrators, questioning the 18th century empiricist hypothesis that rational decisions can be made based on the evidence of the senses. Petermann proposes a re-evaluation of well-known Gothic fiction, introducing an innovative way of exploring its structures and thematics. The unreliability of "knowledge", and its inevitable connection to dreaming and the uncanny, is also the centre of David Punter's article "Alan Bilton: Sleepwalking on the Moon". Punter surveys how Bilton offers a reinterpretation of everyday language and cliché, which serves to offset and contrast with the progressively disturbing worlds in which the protagonists find themselves. Instances of *déjà-vu*, hallucinations, and nightmares are surveyed by Punter, discovering how Bilton's "dream world" often resembles "real" scenarios, but seen through a distorting mirror. Punter's article uncovers the dangers of over-familiarisation, and the place the Gothic occupies in this context. While the narrative cores of Petermann's and Punter's articles were produced in different centuries, both authors engage with a re-evaluation of the Gothic in relation to contemporary preoccupations, proving that the thread of Gothic narratives transcends time, even if its manifestations are contextual.

The third article of the issue, Alan Gregory's "Fabricating Narrative Prosthesis: Fashioning (Disabled) Gothic Bodies in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*", continues the exploration of contemporary cultural preoccupations into the realm of popular culture. Gregory offers an exploration of the representation and implications of deformity in Burton's film, evaluating notions of both normality and abnormality in their socio-cultural contexts. Questions of identity and cultural coding animate Gregory's discussion, as well as a re-consideration of corporeal politics in relation to the Gothic and visual media. A desire to re-examine Gothic structures in disciplinary areas that were previously left unexplored is also at the centre of Vittorio Marone's article "A Winterhorde in a Ravenrealm: Immortal's Lyrics as an Expression of Northeroic Gothic". Marone examines the lyrical themes of Norwegian black metal band Immortal, and contends that the specificity and uniqueness of the lyrics is embodied by the fusion of Gothic, Nordic, and heroic themes. This original style, which Marone labels

"Northeroic Gothic", creates a cohesive emotional landscape that represents Immortal's personal concept and mythology. Both Gregory and Marone engage with analyses of the Gothic that are dependent on cultural scrutiny and media fusion, confirming the need to re-examine the Gothic beyond its traditional metaphorical structures.

This issue of *Aeternum* also includes two book reviews, written by Roslyn Weaver and Sarah Baker. The two texts under review continue the analysis of the Gothic in our contemporary moment, renewing the interest in its aesthetic, political, and narrative influences. The reviews are a useful way to conclude this volume as they draw attention to matters that are both contemporary and historical, contextual and transcendental, and expose the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary reach of the Gothic in our multi-media, 21st century world.

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"I once more tasked my understanding and my senses": Sensual Stimuli in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntly*

ABSTRACT

Though Gothic fiction as a genre relies to a large extent on visual stimuli, some of the earliest examples of American Gothic fiction focus on senses other than sight. Charles Brockden Brown's novels Wieland *(1798) and* Edgar Huntly *(1799) do engage with visual imagery such as the pastoral, yet in their most Gothic aspects they revolve around input that is not visual but auditory or haptic. The fact that both novels are narrated in the first-person allows for a focus on the protagonists' complete impressions, rather than being restricted to a view from outside. The novel* Wieland, *with its central device of ventriloquism, places its primary focus on auditory impressions. The eponymous narrator of* Edgar Huntly, *for his part, provides the reader with detailed accounts of his physiological state and finds himself forced to concentrate on senses other than sight to ascertain his situation. These novels exploit a full pantheon of sensory stimuli in creating the Gothic atmosphere necessary to arouse readers' emotions.*

This paper examines the role of non-visual perception in Wieland *and* Edgar Huntly *and the way it is presented by the autodiegetic narrators, who first depend upon their sensory impressions in order to reach rational conclusions, yet find themselves confronted with the unreliability of such sensory information. The Gothic novels* Wieland *and* Edgar Huntly *thus*

question the 18ᵗʰ-century empiricist hypothesis that rational decisions can be made based on the evidence of the senses.

The Gothic has traditionally been associated with the visual – from the appearance of the haunted architecture and the monster in classic Gothic fiction to the tension between what can and what cannot be seen (Kavka 2008) and the prevalence of the sadistic-voyeuristic impulse in Gothic horror film (Mulvey 1975), to name just a few aspects. Accordingly, a number of studies of the genre have concentrated on this aspect, such as Rebecca Stern's 1994 examination of Gothic lighting effects in Victorian novels and, more recently, the essays collected in *Gothic Technologies: Visuality in the Romantic Era*, edited by Robert Miles in 2005. Only very few studies, however, have commented on the role of other senses, such as Frits Noske's analysis of music (1981) and Dale Townshend's comparison of visual and auditory modes (2005), both of which focus on classic Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis. Yet in the literature itself, Patrick Süskind's 1985 novel *Das Parfüm* (along with the 2006 film adaptation directed by Tom Tykwer), for example, demonstrates vividly that a Gothic atmosphere can be predicated even on the sense of smell. Though the visual is the dominant mode of conveying the atmosphere of horror that characterizes the Gothic, it is clearly also possible to involve other senses in the service of this goal. Furthermore, a focus on the senses involved in creating the Gothic atmosphere of emotional uncertainty is an important and understudied aspect of Gothic scholarship to date.

The new field of "sensory history" (see especially Smith 2007) has recently begun to examine the role played by more senses than just sight, exploring their interplay in conveying different kinds of knowledge. And though vision has a history of being considered the dominant mode of perception, the senses have assumed different hierarchies of value throughout history, such that up to the sixteenth century hearing and touch were considered more reliable than vision (Reinarz and Schwarz 2012; 465). The shift in this hierarchy in the eighteenth century, in the Age of Reason, coexists with the rise of empiricism and the focus on sensory input as the basis for rational decisions. The Gothic can of course be read as a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment[1] and Gothic novels such as those of Charles Brockden Brown, as I will argue, are profoundly skeptical of this overreliance on reason. This paper aims to examine the way two American Gothic novels written at the turn of the 19ᵗʰ century employ devices that lead to a focus on senses other than sight. These texts reveal the senses to be an unreliable source of information, expressing a deep-seated fear that the rational façades of both the enlightened individual and of the new Republic may topple on their irrational foundations.

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[1] For example, see Barnard and Shapiro on German sensational fiction – which was extremely popular with Anglophone readers in the 1790s and was a profound influence on *Wieland* in particular – as a critique of Enlightened Absolutism and frustrated modernity (Barnard and Shapiro, Introduction to Brown 2009, xxiv-xxvii).

In Charles Brockden Brown's 1798 novel *Wieland* (Brown 2009) the central device of ventriloquism with its production of mysterious voices emphasizes first and foremost the sense of hearing. In the frontier Gothic novel *Edgar Huntly* (Brown 2006), published just one year later, the main character's sleepwalking leads to his awakening in the pitch blackness of a primeval cave setting, where his inability to see focuses his attention on other senses, particularly touch. Both novels use the disjuncture between vision and its association with the mind and reason and other, more corporeal senses, as a way of critiquing the Enlightenment ideal of rational thought based upon the evidence of the senses. This belief is exemplified by the rise of empiricism and the "sensationalism" of John Locke, who "finds the source of all our ideas, the ideas out of which human knowledge is constructed, in the senses" (Bristow 2010). This position is most clearly represented in Brown's novels by the character of Henry Pleyel in *Wieland*, a character who draws faulty conclusions because the sensory input upon which they are based is deceptive. Brown's novels thus do not simply engage in a romantic exaltation of the senses and emotions in place of enlightened reason, but are profoundly pessimistic about the possibility of rational thought, as it is based upon an insufficient foundation, doomed to failure.[2]

Wieland

Wieland is a first-person narrative of a series of tragedies within the family of the narrator, Clara Wieland. Though she does relate passages that employ visual imagery, particularly focusing on pastoral descriptions of the landscapes surrounding the family house at Mettingen, Pennsylvania, the novel's Gothic force is drawn not from the evidence of sight, but from that of hearing. The central device of ventriloquism is very much in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe's "supernatural explained" and has affinities to her late Gothic novel *The Italian*. Where that novel revolves around a church confessional as the site of revelations that are heard but not seen (Townshend 2005, n. pag.),[3] Brown's *Wieland* uses mysterious voices to create an atmosphere of uncertainty that will prove to have a (partial) rational explanation in Carwin's power to throw his voice and imitate other characters' voices.

One hint at the importance of the senses can be seen in Clara's reaction to such input. In typical Gothic heroine fashion, she frequently sinks into a fainting fit in order to escape the overwhelming impressions of her senses, whether sight, sound, or the

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[2] Interestingly, this seems to represent a return to Cartesian rationalism in contrast to Lockean empiricism: Descarte's "famous doctrine of the dualism of mind and body, that mind and body are two distinct substances, each with its own essence […] casts doubt on the senses as [an] authoritative source of knowledge" (Bristow 2010).

[3] Townshend refers to this denial of the visual in favor of the auditory as a feature of the female Gothic. He contrasts the extravagant focus on the "unruly" gaze in works such as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* with the "disciplining of the gaze" by means of a focus on hearing in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (2005, n. pag.).

racing pulse caused by too much excitement.[4] For example, she faints before her brother's door after what seems to be a dialog between two murderers in her closet (chapter VI), again at Pleyel's house (chapter XII), and finally at her own house when she encounters Carwin again (chapter XXII; twice). Though this is clearly a typical response for a Gothic heroine and should not be overemphasized as evidence for the prominence of sensory stimuli in this novel, it is one of a number of ways in which Brown demonstrates that even such a composed and reasonable character as Clara is thrown into turmoil when her senses offer her unexpected or unaccustomed stimuli. I will return to the difficulties reason has in dealing with the senses below.

But first, let us consider the character who introduces the voices that will unsettle the Wieland family, Francis Carwin. He first appears "on the stage" (Brown 2009, 45) at Mettingen by means of separate visual and auditory impressions on the narrator, Clara, that stand in stark contrast to one another. She first perceives a figure crossing the lawn whom she describes as "ungainly and disproportioned" (45), dressed in the rough and worn clothing of a peasant. Though she recognizes that "there was nothing remarkable in these appearances" (46), she sinks down into a chair to contemplate them, remaining "in the same spot for half an hour, vaguely, and by fits, contemplating the image of this wanderer" (46). Then she hears a voice of someone asking her maid for something to drink, a voice that differs from the rough impression made by the figure on the lawn by virtue of its cultured and melodious nature:

> The words uttered by the person without, affected me as somewhat singular, but what chiefly rendered them remarkable, was the tone that accompanied them. It was wholly new. My brother's voice and Pleyel's were musical and energetic. I had fondly imagined, that, in this respect, they were surpassed by none. Now my mistake was detected. I cannot pretend to communicate the impression that was made upon me by these accents, or to depict the degree in which force and sweetness were blended in them. They were articulated with a distinctness that was unexampled in my experience. But this was not all. The voice was not only mellifluent and clear, but the emphasis was so just, and the modulation so impassioned, that it seemed as if an heart of stone could not fail of being moved by it. It imparted to me an emotion altogether involuntary and incontroulable. When he uttered the words 'for charity's sweet sake,' I dropped the cloth that I held in my hand, my heart overflowed with sympathy, and my eyes with unbidden tears (Brown 2009, 47).

Clara assumes that the figure and the voice belong to two different people, men of different classes and quite different in every respect, and is distressed to learn they are one and the same. From his voice and especially his diction and vocabulary, she

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[4] See the comments by Barnard and Shapiro in their Introduction to *Wieland*: "her fainting at key scenes acts as a circuit breaker that stops the influx of sensations and allows her to regain psychic and embodied balance" (Brown 2009, xxxiii).

assumes he is educated and a man of the same social standing as herself. In addition to these more external factors, his voice in its materiality and acoustic properties produces in Clara a more subjective image of beauty and makes a strong impression upon her emotions: "an emotion altogether involuntary and incontroulable [sic]" (47).[5] When the man comes in where she is sitting to return the cup, she is forced to revise her imagined picture of the person who would belong to such a voice.

Though his physical appearance is ugly and exhibits evidence of poverty, such that she perceives a great distance in their social status, his voice is mellifluous and speaks of culture and intellect. While the visual stimuli are repulsive, the auditory stimuli attract Clara. Interestingly, *both* exert a strange fascination upon her, and she spends the rest of the day musing on this enigmatic figure. This contrast between vision and hearing, early in the novel, hints at the almost magical power of Carwin's voice, which will prove so dangerous later on. Furthermore, the different senses clearly provide different and conflicting information and thus are an early indication of the inadequacy of information from any one source.

Sensory information is explicitly relied upon as the basis for rational judgment, such as when Clara worries about her brother's belief in supernatural explanations for the voices he hears and which the others discount as a "deception of the senses" (Brown 2009, 32). While Pleyel suggests Wieland may have been deceived in the voice he heard, Clara worries that this is the onset of madness, and in fact both suppositions foreshadow events to follow later in the narrative. She tells the reader: "The will is the tool of the understanding, which must fashion its conclusions on the notices of sense. If the senses be depraved, it is impossible to calculate the evils that may flow from the consequent deductions of the understanding"(33). This is the novel's most explicit statement of the "epistemological crisis" at its core (Hagenbüchle 1988, 122 and passim). Though according to Lockean empiricism – in contrast to the reliance on a priori knowledge of Cartesian rationalism (see e.g. Bristow 2010) – the understanding must draw its information from some source, such as sensory perceptions, the novel proves this to be an unstable foundation as the senses are indeed "deceived" and "depraved." In the case of Carwin's ventriloquized voices, the senses of Clara, Theodore, and Pleyel are repeatedly deceived; in the case of the voices heard by Theodore Wieland commanding him to execute his family – assuming we accept Carwin's declaration of innocence – his senses are depraved. In both cases, the reliance on sensory information leads to false conclusions, demonstrating the failure of reason to accurately make sense of the physical environment and yielding a fundamentally pessimistic view of man, as Hagenbüchle has argued (1988; 144).

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[5] Still, this power, too, appears to be learned rather than innate: she emphasizes not only the musicality and energy of the voice, but its just emphasis and impassioned modulation, qualities that can be controlled, and which already in this passage demonstrate Carwin's ability to manipulate the emotions of his listener.

Edgar Huntly

Much attention has been given to the contrast between the two main settings of *Edgar Huntly*, the civilized settlement of Solebury and the savage wilderness of Norwalk, and their impact on the title character and narrator, Edgar Huntly. Specifically, the "desert tract called Norwalk" (Brown 2006, 15) seems to trigger in Edgar a regression to a more primitive self very much in contrast with his previous character. Where he had been a Quaker pacifist, motivated by a desire for truth and a wish to perform benevolent actions for his fellow man, in Norwalk he becomes a cold-blooded killer, driven by the need for survival and lower desires such as revenge. Where he had aspired to rational thought, in the wilderness he becomes the creature of emotions and physical sensations. This contrast is reminiscent of the power of the frontier – "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner 1967, 3) – as characterized by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893.

> The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. […] It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. […] Before long […] he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion (Turner 1967, 4).

Furthermore, he says, the frontier "calls out militant qualities and reveals the imprint of wilderness conditions upon the psychology and morals as well as upon the institutions of the people" (65). Confronted with the wilderness, men (and it is nearly always men in this position; see Cronon 1995, 8) "shed the trappings of civilization," including their rationality, and "rediscover[] their primitive racial energies" (Cronon 1995, 7), which is particularly appropriate in describing the Indian-killer Edgar. While this experience of the frontier is celebrated by Turner as conducive to creativity, independence, and democracy, as well as constituting an essential ingredient in the formation of an American national character, Brown's novel portrays Edgar's change of character in a much more negative light. This transformation of a rational man to a physical animal is a major element of the Gothic atmosphere of the text. While the Indians Edgar encounters could be seen as an indigenous North American version of the Gothic monster (though one little exploited by other American Gothic fiction; Lloyd-Smith 113), the much more frightening monster is certainly the one he discovers within himself.

In focusing on the role of senses other than sight in the Gothic, I would like to look more closely at the way Edgar's regression in the wilderness, his transformation into a savage or animal, is connected to a reliance on physicality that includes a high degree of sensory information. His first foray into the wilderness of Norwalk, following the sleep-walking Clithero, contains not only visual references to the scene as "rugged, picturesque and wild" (Brown 2006, 15) but also descriptions of the cold night air, the

way his muscles and joints feel from the exertion, and other haptic sensations: "My pulse began to beat more slowly, and the moisture that incommoded me ceased to flow. The coolness which, for a little time, was delicious, presently increased to shivering, and I found it necessary to change my posture, in order to preserve my blood from congealing" (16). Likewise, in waiting for Clithero to emerge from the cave into which he has disappeared, Edgar relies on his sense of hearing to detect the sleeper's steps, which "could not move without a noise which would be echoed to, on all sides, by the abruptnesses by which this valley was surrounded" (16). This reliance on auditory clues is made necessary by impediments to sight, in the increasing darkness as the night progresses.

In the central scene that marks the dramatic turning point of the story, extreme darkness leads to a focus on other senses to the exclusion of sight. Edgar finds himself in unfamiliar surroundings, in a rock cave in utter darkness, rather than in the bed at his uncle's house where he had fallen asleep. Though he does not immediately realize the implications of this, the reader discovers that Edgar, like Clithero, suffers from sleep-walking. Completely unable to see when he first awakens in the cave, Edgar attempts to make sense of his situation by feeling the surface of the rock on which he sits and the walls around him, as well as noticing the physical sensations of his cold and aching limbs, his hunger, and his thirst. Edgar himself mentions this reliance on the sense of sight and how its absence forces him to attend to other senses:

> Since my sight availed nothing to the knowledge of my condition, I betook myself to other instruments. The element which I breathed was stagnant and cold. The spot where I lay was rugged and hard. I was neither naked nor clothed – a shirt and trossers composed my dress, and the shoes and stockings, which always accompanied these, were now wanting. What could I infer from this scanty garb, this chilling atmosphere, this stony bed? (Brown 2006, 107-108).

He then proceeds to feel his way along the stone walls of the cave, "rugged and impenetrable" (108), but can find no aperture. Concentrating on his "excruciating sensations" (108) leads him only to speculate on a possible imprisonment in a dungeon or a live burial in a tomb,[6] until the sensation of his growing hunger causes him to make a more concerted effort to escape. "I once more tasked my understanding and my senses," Edgar relates, in order "to discover the nature of my present situation and the means of escape" (109). This effort causes him to explore his sense of hearing, "listen[ing] to catch some sound" and "exert[ing] [his] voice" (109). This produces echoes that give him information about the pit in which he finds himself, but serve primarily to increase his despair as they can only be reconciled with the conflicting

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[6] These possible explanations for Edgar's plight not only allow Brown to gently poke fun at Gothic conventions of entrapment but serve as powerful examples of the failure of inductive reasoning typical of his novels, as Hagenbüchle has argued (see e.g. 124, 138).

evidence provided by feeling his way along the walls with his hands when he realizes he must have fallen to the bottom of a deep pit.

Though he was previously very much focused on rational inquiry and explanation of his circumstances, concentrating on the mind rather than the body, he now primarily considers his physical needs as an animal, as hunger causes him to fantasize about killing and eating an animal, foreshadowing his confrontation with the panther soon after. This much-discussed scene, in which he kills a panther and eats its still-warm flesh, vividly reveals this embodiment and Edgar's increasing distance from the rational processes of the mind. This offers a brief instance of the senses of smell and taste, as he feeds on "the yet warm blood and reeking fibres of a brute" (112), which produce agonizing stomach pains. He then regrets this action with its painful consequences – "I bitterly lamented my inordinate avidity. The excruciations of famine were better than the agonies which this abhorred meal had produced" (112) – but later congratulates himself for "act[ing] without foresight," for

> no wisdom could have prescribed more salutary measures. The panther was slain, not from a view to the relief of my hunger, but from the self-preserving and involuntary impulse. Had I fore-known the pangs to which my ravenous and bloody meal would give birth, I should have carefully abstained, and yet these pangs were a useful effort of nature to subdue and convert to nourishment the matter I had swallowed. (113)

Clearly, conscious choices would have led Edgar to make mistakes, but following his instincts of "self-preservation," he does what is necessary to survive. It is significant that the stomach ache he suffers is now considered a "useful effort of nature" – a natural process in the animal world to which Edgar has now returned. At the same time, Edgar's need to rationalize his actions is still very much in evidence here and will continue throughout his narrative. Though he justifies himself by means of such explanations, the actual reasons for his actions must be sought not in logic but in instinct – such as the drive for self-preservation – and in emotions like revenge.

The lack of sight that characterizes Edgar's initiation into the physical world of the wilderness is associated elsewhere in the novel with a lack of understanding of both the self and others. Edgar makes use of the metaphor of blindness as follows:

> Disastrous and humiliating is the state of man! By his own hands is constructed the mass of misery and error in which his steps are forever involved. […] How little cognizance have men over the actions and motives of each other? How total is our blindness with regard to our own performances! (Brown 2006, 185).

Clithero also uses the metaphor of blindness in this sense when Edgar seeks a confession from him: "You, like others, are blind to the most momentous consequences of your own actions" (25).

This blindness is comparable to the novel's central metaphor of sleepwalking, which characterizes both men. Sleepwalking, as Edgar tells his reader(s) early in the novel, although he is at this point unaware that he also suffers from this condition, "denotes a mind sorely wounded" such that the sleepwalker is "shut out from a knowledge of their intire [sic] condition" (11). This condition is a case of the physical body acting without the conscious control of the mind. The body-mind split I have described in his behavior in the wilderness, reminiscent of Cartesian dualism (see Bristow 2010), is thus directly connected to the means by which he arrived there, as his trials in the wilderness are brought about by the fact of his sleepwalking. If Edgar's rational thought processes are short-circuited, so to speak, by virtue of his being asleep, he must focus on the physical, on the senses. In contrast to the Lockean rationality of Pleyel in *Wieland*, in which rational judgment is formed on the basis of evidence from the senses, however flawed, the primeval wilderness of *Edgar Huntly* is not conducive to rational behavior at all. The attempts at rational explanation Edgar provides are self-justification that is often contradictory and/or illogical, as when he claims never to have been subject to any desire for revenge, and yet clearly is motivated by this impulse in at least some of the Indian killings that follow. Likewise, he makes contradictory statements about the extent of his prowess as a woodsman, being alternately unfit for such an expedition and feeling perfectly at home in Norwalk.[7]

This suggestion that reason may be opposed to the senses, rather than based upon them also occurs in *Wieland*, when a disembodied voice produced by Carwin says to Wieland that he should "cease to cherish [his] delusion: not heaven or hell, but thy senses have misled thee to commit these acts. Shake off thy phrenzy [sic], and ascend into rational and human. Be lunatic no longer" (Brown 2009, 172). A focus on the mistaken information provided by the senses leads to a frenzy, to delusion, to lunatic acts that are neither rational nor even human. Significantly, Brown draws from Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia* his understanding of madness as an illness, one that encompasses both Edgar's sleepwalking and Wieland's mania, as a disorder of the senses (See Barnard and Shapiro, Introduction to Brown 2006, xviii). Similarly, in Edgar's animal-like state in the wilderness, he behaves in a similarly non-human, frenzied state, though

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[7] Edgar's comments on his hunting prowess exhibit similar contradictions, as he claims a distaste for hunting ("my temper never delighted in carnage and blood"; Brown 2006, 84) and yet seems to have trained himself to kill predatory animals to the point of significant skill: "It was much otherwise, however, with regard to rattlesnakes and panthers. These I thought it no breach of duty to exterminate wherever they could be found. […] Assiduous exercise had made me master of […] the Tom-hawk. With this I have often severed an oak branch and cut the sinews of a cat-o'mountain, at the distance of sixty feet" (84). This ambivalence of course prefigures his similarly ambivalent attitudes towards the killing of Indians soon after.

the borders between these two states are presented as very fluid. The civilized Edgar, a respected member of a Quaker community, is just as capable of killing as are his so-called "savage" victims, whether Native Americans or predatory animals. This implies the weakness of reason, when it can be so easily circumvented or abandoned. If even the best of people, such as Edgar and Clara initially seem to be,[8] contain this potential for violence, Bill Christophersen is surely right in reading the novels as "negat[ing] the optimistic philosophy and psychology of the Enlightenment, presenting man as naturally depraved, prey to evils beyond his control" (1993, 32).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I turn to the effect of this focus on sensory impressions in the two novels on the narratives themselves. Both Clara and Edgar are so absorbed by their experiences – which Edgar, even more than Clara, describes in terms of the senses – that their narratives suffer in terms of coherence, logic, and accuracy. Both first-person narrators describe their initial inability to write down their experiences; Edgar writes: "[t]ill now, to hold a steadfast pen was impossible; to disengage my senses from the scene that was passing or approaching" (Brown 2006, 5). Clara, for her part, is so overcome with emotion at the memory of Carwin's later actions that describing him provokes physical symptoms of distress:

> Now it is that I begin to perceive the difficulty of the task which I have undertaken; but it would be weakness to shrink from it. My blood is congealed: and my fingers are palsied when I call up his image. Shame upon my cowardly and infirm heart!" (Brown 2009, 45).

Beyond this, both express explicit concern that their narratives will suffer by virtue of the trauma they continue to feel in connection with those experiences.[9] Edgar prefaces his narrative of the events beginning with his climactic awakening in the cave with this caveat:

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[8] Clara is repeatedly held up as the best of all women, such as when Carwin attempts to test her after hearing such praise of her bravery from her maid, Judith (Brown 2009, 152-153), or when Pleyel laments what he perceives as her fall from honor into depravity (96-98).

[9] That these events can be accurately described as traumatic is clear from the symptoms they produce in the two characters. Clara is so upset by events that she falls ill for a long period (Brown 2009, 121-123, 133) and believes she will die before completing the narrative or upon its completion (see e.g. 166, 171, 175). Edgar in turn later suffers from a fear of the dark: "Possibly, the period will arrive when I shall look back without agony on the perils I have undergone. That period is still distant. Solitude and sleep are now no more than the signals to summon up a tribe of ugly phantoms. Famine, and blindness, and death, and savage enemies, never fail to be conjured up by the silence and darkness of the night. I cannot dissipate them by any efforts of reason. My cowardice requires the perpetual consolation of light. My heart droops when I mark the decline of the sun, and I never sleep but with a candle burning at my pillow. If, by any chance, I should awake and find myself immersed in darkness, I know not what act of desperation I might be suddenly impelled to commit" (Brown 2006, 106).

I am not certain, however, that I shall relate them in an intelligible manner. One image runs into another, sensations succeed in so rapid a train, that I fear, I shall be unable to distribute and express them with sufficient perspicuity. (Brown 2006, 106)

Clara, too, offers such metareferential comments on her narrative, recognizing that it is the tension between the narrating and experiencing self[10] that causes her such difficulty:

My narrative may be invaded by inaccuracy and confusion; but if I live no longer, I will, at least, live to complete it. What but ambiguities, abruptnesses, and dark transitions, can be expected from the historian who is, at the same time, the sufferer of these disasters? (Brown 2009, 114)

The rational, logical faculties of the narrating self are thus impaired by the emotional confusion of the experiencing self. This confusion arises from an influx of sensory impressions and the emotions they produce, which the rational faculty is unable to control and interpret adequately.

While characters in both novels attempt to come to terms with their surroundings by means of input from the senses, these attempts are confounded, as sensory stimuli in Brown's novels are unreliable for a variety of reasons. This indeterminacy is located on several levels, from the contradictory nature of that input itself, its capacity for manipulation and deception by others, the danger of a diseased understanding perceiving stimuli that are not in fact real or misinterpreting them, or the way a descent into the realm of the lower, more corporeal senses may lead to an abandonment of the higher faculties of reason and logic. Indeed, one of the main messages of *Wieland* could be taken to be a pessimistic rejection of the ideal of reason altogether. Not only is reason based on flawed information from the senses, but to equate one's own rational conclusions with truth is hubris, as Theodore Wieland proclaims during his trial: "You say that I am guilty. Impious and rash! Thus to usurp the prerogatives of your Maker! to set up your bounded views and halting reason, as the measure of truth!" (Brown 2009, 134). The Gothic monster in Brown's novels is thus revealed to be the human being who aspires to rationality and falsely attempts to suppress the physical animal within, as he is doomed to remain a slave to his instincts and to his senses.

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[10] For a discussion of how this tension is reflected in the linguistic structure of the novel, see Kittel 1990.

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Alan Bilton: Sleepwalking to the Moon

ABSTRACT

This essay addresses Alan Bilton's two published novels, The Sleepwalkers' Ball *(2009) and* The Known and Unknown Sea *(2014). Both novels deal extensively in the uncanny: dream, repetition and doubling are all to the fore, rendering the landscapes of the texts uncertain, and often menacing and dangerous. Bilton also offers a remarkable reinterpretation of everyday language and cliché, which serves to offset and contrast with the progressively disturbing worlds in which the protagonists find themselves. These worlds often resemble 'real' scenarios, but seen through a distorting mirror; in the end, we as readers are never sure whether we have 'been here before', or whether these apparent cases of* déjà-vu *are themselves hallucinations, the result of sickness or over-familiarisation.*

Alan Bilton has published two novels, *The Sleepwalkers' Ball* and *The Known and Unknown Sea*. They are strange, unearthly, sometimes nightmarish books. In particular, they are strongly reminiscent of what James Hillman says at some length in *The Dream and the Underworld* and elsewhere; namely, that the world of dream is always a *darkened* world; Hillman, a Jungian analytical psychologist, goes considerably further and links

this process of darkening to a series of visits to Hades, to the underworld, to realms where light, physical or intellectual, can barely penetrate (Hillman 1979, 7ff.; see also Punter 1998, 214 ff.). This is certainly true of Bilton's novels, but it is also true that just as dream is always, in a sense, built on the day's residues, so too are these two novels set in recognisable locations, albeit weirdly transformed, thrown out of kilter, seen only fitfully and in an uncertain light.

The Sleepwalkers' Ball is set in Scotland, and specifically some of the scenes are distorted figurations of Stirling, a town dominated by its castle and a tourist trap for millions, yet beset by poverty and deprivation. *The Known and Unknown Sea* presents us with more problems of identification, not least because large parts of the action seem to take place on the surface of the moon; but behind this there lies a Welsh setting, probably on the South Wales coast, probably on the estuary of the Severn. Celtic Gothic, then, as Lloyd Jones has observed (Bilton 2009, cover copy); yet Bilton's antecedents seem far less within any Celtic Gothic tradition of which we know, more in the dire fables of the middle European tradition. The ghost of Kafka, at least to my mind, looms terrifyingly large.

Another way of looking at the "darkening" of the texts would be by thinking of black-and-white films (an area in which Bilton is an academic expert [see Bilton forthcoming]). In *The Sleepwalkers' Ball*, to which I will turn first, the decaying, littered streets down which we find ourselves flying in a state of night-time undress rarely offer us a glimpse of colour. The book begins with us, the audience, forming a group of tourists being led round the town by a tour guide. But his understanding of the town is uncanny: we find ourselves zooming in to specific "shots" of tenements, rooms, cafes, and time is similarly distorted. If there is a protagonist, then he is called Hans, but we see him at different times of his life, under different circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, he is "Little Hans".

"Little Hans", we may recall, was the subject of one of Freud's most famous case histories, the "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" , and while I would not want to make too much of this, it is true that this was Freud's first real attempt to identify and deal with what he termed "anxiety-hysteria" (see Freud 1909, 115-17), and as we are swept along by Bilton's pages, coming sometimes close to an almost entirely obscured object of desire, then anxiety to the point of panic is certainly part of what we feel.

And it is hard to say whether this sense is heightened or diminished by the fact that, as readers, we are always part of a multiple, the tourist crowd (see Townshend 2013, 377-94). But this is a strange crowd indeed: perhaps it is entirely composed of ghosts. A comparison which comes to my mind is with Jon McGregor's *Even the Dogs*, the alcoholic protagonist of which, Robert, is dead before the novel begins; the narrative appears to come from a group of addicts who used to use his flat, but they are

disembodied: they hover and gaze on the aftermath of death, but have no power to intervene, just as Bilton's characters – if indeed they are characters at all – have no power to alter the darkened trajectories which propel them through the all-embracing gloom (see McGregor 2010, esp. 163ff.).

But we cannot pause on this: "our guide is signalling for us to move on. This is a haunted place, he says; nothing good can come from here" (Bilton 2009, 36). Yet despite this, there is a curious exhilaration in the narrative: freed from conventional moorings, there is the possibility of roaming through time and space, even if at the end of the day – and in Bilton it almost always seems to be the end of the day – there is – and here is where the analogy with Kafka takes its force – no escape, because we are "approaching the very edge of the world, without light or colour or form. Mind how you go, sir; it's hard to know where the sky ends and the ground begins!" (Bilton 2009, 37).

What passages like this suggest is not only a way in which the physical world might suddenly transfer itself into black-and-white, all colour drained; but also how the scene at which we are looking might, without warning, transform itself into a picture, and not a very well-drawn picture at that: perhaps a picture drawn by a small child (a child with little han[d]s, perhaps), where there is no depth of perspective, no certainty of anchorage, a world where we can only blunder about in a state of hallucination.

Oh, Miss, he was slipping away! His thoughts seemed to have come untethered and
bobbed crazily about the room. Worse still, winter was coming now, a winter of cold
and sleet. The nights felt deeper and darker. "Where am I?" whispered the fella, wrapped
up in his sleeping-bag. To be honest, he was little more than a heap of bedding himself. … (Bilton 2009, 44).

The question of how one might define the human, or even the animate, recurs throughout *The Sleepwalkers' Ball*. Apparent individuals are reduced to mere lines and squiggles on some page which is forever being written, but perhaps makes no sense; or to the same lines and squiggles on a canvas which is being painted all around us, but only in two dimensions, so that in order to find ourselves a place in this realm we have ourselves to become two-dimensional, to fold ourselves as flat as possible in order to have any presence in this radically reduced world. As, perhaps, the poor and the deprived have to fold themselves as flat as possible: in order to survive, in order to avoid prying eyes, in order to escape the deathly attentions of the institutions of the State – the hospital, the poor-house, and of course – for after all this is in some sense Gothic – the castle (see, e.g., Ellis 1989).

Iain Banks's Gothic castles might come to mind, particularly the ruined and ruinous scenario of *A Song of Stone* (see Banks 1997, e.g., 209-10); but in Banks there is the scent of a certain lingering grandeur, which is absent from Bilton's world. The closest we get in *The Sleepwalkers' Ball* to a description of this process of "slipping away" occurs in an address from the tour guide (our own readers' guide, the *psychopompos* in Hillman's terminology [see Hillman 1979, 89, 198, 146]):

> Is there anything more strange to us, ladies and gentlemen, than the mysterious world of
> the subjunctive, that country of endless possibilities, the shadowy world of *what if?* A
> realm where what we fear or imagine or dream holds as much sway as what truly takes
> place, a kingdom where that which might have been carries the same essential weight as
> the way things really are. What an idea, my friends, such an odd notion! And yet, that
> world is never far from us, its intangible border perhaps the finest line of all … (Bilton 2009, 56).

"The finest line of all": the thinnest line, of course, but also perhaps the line which, if only it could be drawn, would be a supreme achievement, but not one that is ever likely to occur in this benighted world of sleepwalkers and the chronically disoriented. The reference to the "subjunctive" is also significant, because alongside the continuing streams of reference to black-and-white films and to children's art, there is a further repertoire here of references to language, such that by the end of the novel we appear to be moving almost entirely in a world of paper, a world where only things that can be noted down can actually occur – although whether historically or proleptically never becomes fully clear.

But the situation is more complicated than this, as our guide tells us as he continues:

> No, this other life exists, as it were, just across the water, its shoreline both a stone's
> throw away from our daily lives yet also a kind of smudge or blur on the horizon, a sort
> of shape half-glimpsed through the fog. And from time to time things are washed up
> from this other shore, the flotsam and jetsam of other lives – a suitcase, for example, or
> a pot bellied wardrobe, or a whole tangle of laundry – carried across the channel by sudden

swells and high tides, the mysterious waves and echoes which lap across this
world (Bilton 2009, 56).

The suitcase, the pot-bellied wardrobe, the tangle of laundry, these are all "things"
which make repeated appearances throughout the novel. Although they might
sometimes appear to be possessions, we are made uncannily aware that they are not, if
anything it is they who "possess" the narrative, their traverses and travails, their
journeyings and their very inconsequentiality comprise the surface on which we live
our lives. Even more importantly, they are resistant to interpretation: in a virtually
Heideggerian sense, they have Being, and the Gothic consequence of this is that as they
have being, so our sense of security in our own being drains away – into, no doubt, the
channel which separates one shore from another, a channel we shall discover in greater
depth in *The Known and Unknown Sea*.

Which is indeed (proleptically) mentioned in *The Sleepwalkers' Ball* (see Bilton
2009, 107); but again, we must move on, we are at our guide's disposal, although
whether the guide is any less phantomatic than his tour group is never clear. We must
move on, for example, to an ancient escalator which, despite its all too obvious
decrepitude, can still remind us that "the wheel that turns the world is still working,
and with it the day and the night" (Bilton 2009, 126). Yet this is not reassuring; it is not
reassuring at all. For the guard who says this (and at this point, as at others, it is not
clear whether the guide is the guard; or the guard is the guide; or whether we are being
guided through otherwise unguarded moments, lest "otherwise" we might slip away)
is "staring off into space" (and so the "stairs" themselves might slip off into space) and
in any (stair)case the person he is addressing has his shoe caught in the escalator and is
preoccupied, is unlikely to benefit from this reassuring wisdom.

Towards the end of the novel, the text becomes clogged (like the escalator) with
other texts, other narratives, other accounts. For example, we find ourselves in
possession of a huge yellow notebook. When I say "we", I mean to allude to a curious
quality of Bilton's writing. For it is in no way clear who the person in the text might be
who is in such possession; and in that absence, in that gap, in that dangerous vacuity, it
is we ourselves, the readers, who find ourselves having to carry dangerous goods over
the spaces in the narrative, the spaces in the painting, the hidden depths of the channel
between the nearer and farther shores.

But what did the yellow notebook say? *Bags and cases spilt out from the luggage
racks, blocking the corridor and filling the train. Beneath these were horrible old
clothes and scraps of fabric and cloth. And beneath those? Skin and bones, the remains
of the departed, the sediment of the dead* (Bilton 2009, 132).

The notion of the "departed" here takes up a specific register in *The Sleepwalkers' Ball*; it
does not only refer to the dead, but also to those sufficiently fortunate to have found a

place on a train which will take them away from the railway station which is continually filling up as the novel progresses. But it is also the case that the "things" themselves overwhelm: as in so many of Ionesco's plays, the things are filled with a life – a sometimes brutal, sometime exuberant, always unintelligible – of their own, which proceeds anyway as apparent characters prove themselves so much less stable, uncertain of their past, their present and their future (see Ionesco 1952).

As the tour guide says, we are approaching the end of our journey; we are approaching the sleepwalkers' ball, and thus the very heart of paradox: for how shall we know whether we have been there or not? What would it be like to live under ever-present (yet also ever-absent|) conditions of amnesia, to live through a night which we will have forgotten in the morning – and which we *know* we will have forgotten in the morning? The book, the text, erases itself: none of the blots and squiggles will survive the endless erasure of the night. And so we might end up in the condition of one of sleepwalkers (if indeed there *are* "different" sleepwalkers) who says, "I thought for a moment I was dreaming a dream which I wasn't even in" (Bilton 2009, 161).

But from that point on, the text involutes on itself, in the figure of a man trying to write down everything that happens to him even as it happens, reduced to writing on whatever substance comes to hand, and it seems to me unnecessarily confusing to attempt to follow the text down into this abyss, to commit to this shoreless *mise en abŷme*; or perhaps it is simply too frightening. For what is also Gothic about *The Sleepwalkers' Ball* is the sense of repetition: no single event "in the past" remains securely in the past, no skeleton remains locked in the closet. As we go on through life, we find ourselves involved in a continuous series of re-meetings: the same objects appear and disappear, the same premonitions (if that can ever be the right word) warn and are ignored, the same features of the past (and clearly the setting is emblematically one of the past, but a past debased by concepts of "heritage") recur, and when we delude ourselves that we are moving forward we are soon caught: wearing, of course, our pyjamas, or nothing at all; totally "unsuited" for the world of the real, as we would so like to see it.

The Known and Unknown Sea takes up many of these themes. Indeed, it would be tempting to say that it develops them, but it is not clear that "development" is an apt word with which to describe Bilton's fiction, except perhaps in the sense of photographic development – which might imply that when you develop a photograph, you can do so in any number of ways, redolent of difference within similarity, of a difficult paradox as to what you might be seeing, have seen, be about to see (see Jones 2011, 57-78).

Which is not to imply at all that the two books are the same. For a start (if there is a start), *The Known and Unknown Sea* has a clear protagonist. His name is Alex; he is very young; and we are in very close proximity to him from the beginning of our narrative

voyage. What else to say about Alex? It is difficult to know, because this is a first-person narrative, and the glimpses we get of Alex from outside are confusing and worrying. In this respect, the narrative technique is reminiscent of J.G. Ballard's in *Empire of the Sun*. There, our young hero, the inmate of a Japanese concentration camp in Shanghai, appears to be surprisingly well-liked by his fellow-inmates and even by some of the guards; it is only as the novel develops that we come to see that their reaction to him is not one of affection but one of horror: he is *so* hyperactive, so anxious to please, so deranged that nobody wants to lay a finger on him (see Ballard 1984, e.g., 115-20).

Perhaps is it thus with Alex: at any rate, Alex is part of a number of people, including members of his own family, who are offered an opportunity to board a ship which will take them from their small coastal town across the bay to a new place, a place they have never seen because it is always shrouded in fog. The entire voyage, however, is also shrouded in fog, and when they arrive at the other side, we find ourselves enveloped in a world of permanent darkness. In an even more estranged way, Bilton's device of the tour guide re-emerges, not that there actually is a tour guide; but the entire journey, and the nature of the "other side", have clear groundings in the terrible consequences of a holiday gone wrong.

The voyage itself is a nightmare. I do not mean that lightly: the repetitive and cheap nature of shipboard entertainment; the presence (or absence) of "closed decks"; the regular disappearance of people on board; the interchangeability of the various stewards and waiters – and even the seamen, although there only seems to be one on board, the excitingly named Able Seaman Able; the captain, who wears a hat which is shaped exactly like a ship; all of these are symptomatic of a journey from which return will be difficult if not impossible.

And where does this journey end up? Well, of course, on the other side of the bay, where Alex and his fellow-voyagers find themselves in a place which is a cross between a hotel, a hospital and an asylum – later on it also becomes a school, or at least part of it does. But this is not the whole story, or indeed perhaps the essence, of this night journey, for this "far shore" is also clearly (albeit not really *very* clearly) the moon. We know this, for example, because of some of the chapter titles: "The Sea of Tranquillity", for instance. We also know it because it appears that there may actually be no gravity in this resort, and hence everybody is advised (advised? required?) to wear "special shoes".

Some of Bilton's previous motifs recur here. For example, there are continuing doubts as to whether the buildings seen on this far shore are actually three-dimensional, or whether they are children's paintings or drawings. There is the permanent darkness, although here the condition is more extreme: the darkness (have they been landed on the dark side of the moon, or is this merely a magnified reflection of the Welsh view of North Somerset [where, I suppose one might say, the sun will never set]) never lifts,

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and with that goes a continuing sense that there is no sense of time, no sense of the passing of the days.

Yet alongside this there goes, as there does in *The Sleepwalkers' Ball*, an ongoing sense of the everyday. There is only one bus at this "resort", so we are told, and it is alarmingly unclear who its driver might be; nevertheless it is a simple little bus, straight out of a child's drawing book, and if its windows are often steamed up, what is so different about that from every school bus one has known? And there is another, far more potent, form of "naturalisation" which operates throughout the book, which I would term the constant referral to cliché.

"The whole town is going to the dogs!' (Auntie Glad)"; '"It's a waiting room, so wait' (Uncle Glyn)"; "'You might as well look for a flake in a snowdrift!'" (Mrs Mook); "'blithe as a bumble bee' (Mum)" (Bilton 2014, 18, 68, 100, 130). Sayings such as these, which clearly relate to a life Alex has known before the night-sea journey, recur on almost every page of the novel. The effect is complicated. Of course one could say that little Alex needs these mottoes in order to attempt to make sense of the confusing, darkened and, it would appear, extremely dangerous and violent world around him. On the other hand, one could say that as with Ballard's protagonist (who is, of course, a younger version of Ballard himself) any bulwark, however rough-fashioned, against impending catastrophe will be welcome.

It is not clear whether the depiction of Alex has to do with psychosis; although if psychosis be read as it now increasingly is, not as a condition but rather as a saving response to what may be conceived as the worst plight of all, namely the dissolution of the self, then this may be relevant. At all events, most of the "people" with whom Alex has to do dissolve. His father and mother dissolve in the sense of vanishing, although textually his mother has already dissolved before her disappearance since Alex finds it increasingly difficult to discriminate between her and her sister, his Aunt Bea. What is A, and what is B? And, although it would not do to pursue the puns too far, what is the [C] sea?

And is any of this Gothic? Well, probably, but what is far more clearly Gothic is the presence of werewolves; and, following on from Aunt Bea, the continual recourse to doubles. Let us first consider the werewolves, for they are impatient beasts (so I am told) and may not wait. Werewolves in *The Known and Unknown Sea* are, actually, "male adults in a position of authority"; thus, in little Alex's imagination, any doctor, sea captain, administrator, will sprout an abnormal amount of hair, gape open wide, and threaten to devour. This happens repeatedly throughout the novel.

And yet, having said that, it may not be true, in the sense that this is "little Alex's imagination", for this is not actually the flavour given us. On the contrary, in this respect at least, if in no other, the sense imparted is that Alex is indeed seeing below the

carapace of custom and is glimpsing the hair, the fangs, the rank smell that lie just beneath the surface of institutions.

Perhaps the most frightening scene in the novel occurs when the occupants of the "resort" are taken on an excursion to Schröter's Valley (which is indeed a real location on the moon). Far, however, from going down into a valley, the bus instead takes them up:

It felt less like climbing a mountain than entering a huge, endless tunnel. Was this the
right way? I'd never been this far from the hotel before. Come to think of it, I'd never
been up a mountain before. …Then we were there: at the very top of the world. We
pulled into an empty car park – which is to say, a gravel clearing by a little shed on the
side of a hill – and the bus slid to a halt over by a shallow ditch. Next to the shed you
could make out what seemed to be a number of giant wheels set up alongside a series
of cables and wires (Bilton 2014, 106).

This turns out to be the apparatus for a cable-car, which they board and which climbs unsteadily through the darkness, until they reach a laughably-named "observation platform" (from which nothing can be seen), where they alight. But "we were only half way up the mountain (mountain?) and the thick black cables stretched up high above us" (Bilton 2014, 107). But here the party is divided in two: the younger ones are taken back down the mountain, while the adults are herded on to further cable-cars, leaving the children "watching helplessly while the adults were hoisted up into the black clouds. It looked terribly stormy. Thick grey snow was blowing sideways" (Bilton 2014, 110). Perhaps not surprisingly, the occupants of the cable-cars, including Alex's Aunt Bea and Uncle Glyn, are never seen again.

Towards the end of the novel, it begins to appear increasingly likely that the whole sequence of events has in fact been the product of an illness, a fever, on Alex's part; certainly this is the view of his elder brother Michael, but Alex remains in a state of uncertainty:

Only when I started writing my history of the sickness did I realise just how much
was missing, how much had fallen into the void. I mean, I could remember the boat in

quite amazing detail – the funnels, the decks, the cramped little cabins – but for the life

of me I couldn't recall how we'd got there, the day we set sail, even the actual moment

of landing. The hotel we stayed in had mysteriously turned into the hospital I wound up

in after I got ill. The two schools seemed mixed up with some kind of deportation

centre. Even my sick bed kept moving – from home to the boat to school – just as the

snow somehow turned into paint, a kind of paint "blue as a loved one's eyes" (Uncle Glyn) (Bilton 2014, 196).

But here again there is a concomitant danger of "falling into the void", a *mise en abŷme*. It is true that there are gaps in the narrative of the kind Alex now goes on to describe; but what is *not* happening is that an indubitably clear account is emerging (from the fog) to replace the faults of memory. Similarly, there are points towards the end of the novel where it seems unclear whether Alex is, by this time, actually dead or alive: has the huge, mysterious ship been an illusion, or a metaphor for the transition to the "dark side" (of the moon, of the grave)? As Philip Larkin puts it in his hilariously dourly titled poem "Next, Please", the "sparkling armada of promises" is only an illusion; in fact,

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
No waters breed or break (Larkin 1988, 52).

Freud speaks of the way in which our double appears to remind us of the inevitability of our own always imminent death (see Freud 1919, 234-7); in Bilton it might be said that this "double" spreads and multiplies, with corresponding effects on our doubts as to our own replaceability. Other people appear merely as phantasmatic, as haunting reflections or reminiscences of what they might have been were they alive; or had they, actually, ever lived. In the cemetery which Alex visits shortly after his apparent return (but as what?) from the farther shore, he finds the graves of his mother and father; perhaps they died in some kind of epidemic, which has also been responsible for his own hallucinated condition, but at all events, as at the end of, for example, *Gulliver's Travels*, this "return" is incomplete, it belongs to an imperfect tense:

It was both our town and not our town. The hills were the wrong shape, the sea-wall

bent, Knob Rock on the wrong side of town. It was only when I got a little closer that

I realised what the problem was: the whole place – the houses, the shops, the

streetlights, the "entire kit and caboodle" (Dad) – was only half-built (Bilton 2014, 168; cf. Swift 1726, 335 ff.).

Half-built, or half-destroyed? Reality as a work always under construction, or as the ruins left over from some ill-remembered cataclysm which has left one "crawling from the wreckage"? And what, to conclude, of the moon? Schröter's Valley, yes, and Tycho's Crater, even the mysterious Straight Wall (all these features can be found on a moon-map) but "The Bay of Doubles"? I cannot find it there, but perhaps I am looking at the wrong place, or in the wrong direction, or perhaps my vision is obscured, clouded, fogged over, perhaps these shapes I am seeing as mere lines or squiggles are actually human beings, or perhaps it is the other way round, and all I am seeing are figures from a child's painting book, and my desire, my endless need, is to pretend that they are recognisable human beings; so that I am not alone.

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ALAN GREGORY

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Fabricating Narrative Prosthesis: Fashioning (Disabled) Gothic Bodies in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*

ABSTRACT

In her essay "Costuming the Outsider in Tim Burton's Cinema" (2013), Catherine Spooner identifies Selina Kyle, alias Catwoman, of Batman Returns *(1992) as an archetype of the self-fashioning Gothic body. Furthermore, Spooner cites "Burton"s self-fashioning patchwork girls" (53) as composites of the dark aesthetic which characterises him as a Goth director. Batman Returns' exemplification of Burton's cultivation of a dark visual palette also extends to his presentation of various male figures, particularly the deformed grotesque Oswald Cobblepot. Oswald's disfigured corpus represents a reprisal of the motif of the disabled male body originally examined by Burton in* Edward Scissorhands *(1990). However, unlike Edward, whose ability to create elaborate hedge and ice sculptures with his incomplete hands recodes his disability as, what Michael Bérubé terms, "an exceptionality" (2010), Cobblepot's emergence from his underworld beneath Gotham is dependent upon the erasure of his deformity. This process is initiated by clothing his disabled body in respectability. Costume's contribution to the temporary erasure of Cobblepot's disfigurement adheres to David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's innovative concept, narrative prosthesis (2000), as it initially conceals his deformity from public view, before the prosthetics' ultimate failure to return his disabled body to the invisible status of normalcy. Instead, Cobblepot removes his various fabric prosthetics to facilitate a return to his underworld existence, and a subsequent reclamation of his identity as the Penguin, which allows him to display his deformed corpus organically.*

My name is Jimmy,
But my friends just call me
"The hideous penguin boy."
– Tim Burton, *Jimmy the Hideous Penguin Boy*.[1]

The horror of physical difference has frequently been cited as a prominent thematic concern of the Gothic. David Punter, as cited by Ruth Bienstock Anolik, notes the Gothic's affinity for Otherness figured as physical difference in his observation that: "the Gothic knows about deviant monstrosity and people who seem dangerously unknowable because the empathies of the normative subject are blocked by the deformed body" (Anolik, 3). Punter's inauguration of an evaluation of the disabled body through a Gothic lens highlights a concordance between Gothic representations of disability and discourses of monstrosity which has been evident since the publication of Mary Shelley's canonical Gothic nightmare, *Frankenstein* (1818). Victor Frankenstein's assembly, and subsequent animation, of a physically excessive and deformed creature represents the literary origins of the creation of a cultural archetype of corporeal deformity, which subsequently informed the production of a plethora of monsters in twentieth and twenty-first-century configurations of the Gothic. The spectre of *Frankenstein* is particularly prominent in the dark visual compositions of film-maker, Tim Burton.

The exaggerated contours of Frankenstein's creature provide a monstrous template which informs the representation of the deformed and incomplete male bodies of figures such as *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), emphasising the influence of *Frankenstein*, as a cultural artefact, on Burton's cultivation of a distinctly Gothic oeuvres. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock makes *Frankenstein*'s influence on Burton's body of work more explicit by citing the reworked version of *Frankenweenie* (2012) as an exemplar of the theme of the Frankenstein's monster that has persistently pervaded Burton's filmography:

> *Frankenweenie* ... is obviously intended as a parody of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and, as such, gestures towards an entire history of Gothic literature and film that informs both *Frankenweenie* and Burton's oeuvre more generally; however, the extended and reworked 2012 version of the film, in both its specific details and general themes, also functions as a highly condensed recapitulation of Burton's entire career ... [permitting] insight into the recurring motifs and preoccupations that have structured Burton's body of cinematic work (Weinstock, 2).

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[1] In the documentary, *Shadows of the Bat: The Cinematic Saga of the Dark Knight - Dark Side of the Knight* (2005), Danny DeVito cites Burton's poem, "Jimmy, the Hideous Penguin Boy", subsequently published in *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories* (1997), as an influence on his portrayal of Oswald Cobblepot.

Although Shelley's canonical monster text is most overtly parodied in *Frankenweenie,* the Frankensteinian motifs in Burton's filmography are also evident in the transition from the incomplete body of Edward Scissorhands, to the grotesque corpus of Oswald Cobblepot in *Batman Returns* (1992). The shift from Edward to Oswald emphasises Burton's preoccupation with the theme of the disabled male body, for which *Frankenstein* represents a prominent cultural precedent because of the miscellaneous quality of Victor Frankenstein's creature's deformed body.

Both Edward and Oswald perpetuate the preconditions for cinematic horror, and for horror to become cinematic which, Judith Halberstam suggests, are established by Shelley's seminal monster narrative (Halberstam, 39). By incorporating cinematic horror into her study of Gothic horror and the technology of monsters, Halberstam is able to gesture towards *Frankenstein*'s value as a cultural artefact, while simultaneously recognising its enduring significance as a literary text. Although she acknowledges that it remains the genesis of a viable reading of the text, Halberstam also moves beyond representations of the monstrous body as a locus of fear by suggesting that the patchwork quality of the monster's body invokes an allegory about the monstrosity of textual production:

> The form of the novel is its monstrosity, its form opens out onto excess because, like the monster of the story, the sum of the novel's parts exceed the whole. Its structure, the exoskeleton, and not its dignified contents … make this novel a monster text. The monstrosity of *Frankenstein* is literally built into the textuality of the novel to the point where textual production itself is responsible for generating monsters (Halberstam, 31).

The motif of monstrous textual production is also explored in *Batman Returns*. In Burton's reconfiguration of variant modes of documentation, the shredded documents that attest to Max Shreck's ownership of Gotham's fire traps, but which Oswald has painstakingly pieced back together, function as a cipher for the grotesque contours of Oswald's deformed corpus. Oswald regards the papers as a textual extension of his body; domestic refuse disregarded by the consumerist elite of Gotham City, which he subsequently reforms within the depths of the sewer system. As he proclaims to Max: "What you hide, I discover. What you put in your toilet, I place on my mantel" (Burton, 1992). The documentation that Oswald consciously recycles and tapes together from fragments is therefore symbolic of how his disabled body becomes represented through cultural discourses of monstrosity.

While both of Burton's deformed male figures are informed by *Frankenstein,* Oswald also represents a partial departure from Frankensteinian configurations of monstrosity as a consequence of the organic nature of his creation. Oswald Cobblepot, alias the Penguin, is also a deformed figure who represents an emblem of other forms of monstrous production, including teterogenesis, or "monster birth", a birth which, like

the cultural mythology produced by Shelley's monster narrative, is constantly revised by Burton. Oswald figures as the product of various monstrous births, or rebirths, incited by the citizens of Gotham's collectively impulsive displays of revulsion towards his physical disfigurement, and their subsequent attempts to conceal his disability from public display. The Penguin's multiple rebirths within the cinematic landscape of Gotham City represent a perpetuation of the visual regeneration that he endured during his transition from the panels of *Detective Comics* to the cinema screen. Burton's aesthetic reconfiguration of the character, not as an eloquent and intellectual gentleman of crime, but a former freak show performer with a homicidal grudge, emphasises the physicality of his deformity. It also ultimately influenced a distinct alteration in the way the Penguin was presented in a selection of DC comic books, most notably in Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale's *Batman: Dark Victory* (2001), which embraced Burton's reimagining of the Penguin as a corporeal grotesque.

The prologue to *Batman Returns*, framed by Danny Elfman's musical cue, "Birth of a Penguin", is punctuated by a sequence of audible screams which signal Oswald's arrival into the world. The screams of Oswald's mother, Esther Cobblepot, enduring the pains of childbirth preface baby Oswald's screams immediately following his birth, and Tucker Cobblepot's scream of horror as the new father confronts the ghastly visage of his deformed progeny. In this regard, Burton's representation of Oswald adheres to the cultural construction of teterogenesis noted by Andrew Scahill, who suggests that monstrous childbirth, as a preoccupation with both folklore and scientific discourses, has a long cultural history of expressing anxiety over the reproductive power of the maternal body, including the power to produce non-normative bodies (Scahill, 200). The response of Oswald's parents to their physically deformed offspring is to abandon him to the sewers, secreting him from Gotham City's elitist public sphere. Despite his abandonment by his parents, Oswald's experience of inhabiting a complex network of tunnels beneath Gotham evokes the sensation of occupying another symbolic "maternal cave".[2] Oswald is therefore represented as another archetype of the gynaecological dimensions of horror cinema, descended from Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980). Barbara Creed, who has written extensively on the tropes of monstrous mothers and the threat of maternal engulfment which frequently resonate within Gothic and horror, asserts that: "reconciliation with the maternal body, the body of our origins, is only possible through an encounter with horror, the abject of our culture" (Creed, 41). Burton's visual representation of the reconciliation that Creed theorises about is facilitated by Oswald's parents' abandonment of him in Gotham's sewer system, which returns him to a surrogate womb-like space and conceals his disabled body from view. Thirty three

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[2] In her 1986 article, "Hellivision: An Analysis of Video Games", Gillian Skirrow writes about the construction of game space as a 'maternal cave', arguing that it is central to its appeal to male gamers. Despite it representing an alternative visual platform to film, there remain distinct, aesthetic parallels between the game spaces which Skirrow gestures towards and the womb-like tunnels in the filmic landscape that Burton creates in *Batman Returns*.

years later, when Oswald rises to the surface of Gotham again, another process of concealment is initiated using a variety of cosmetic and fabric prosthetics designed to obscure his disabled body from view and create the illusion of corporeal normalcy.

In *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004), engaging with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Halberstam's respective theorisations of Gothic surfaces, Catherine Spooner cites Frankenstein's creature as the inaugural literary gesture towards the Gothic body as a patchwork entity: "The monster stands for body as garment. If in Shelley's novel it is definitely Frankenstein who plays the part of the tailor, in later versions of the body-as-patchwork the monsters themselves do their own self-fashioning" (Spooner, 2004: 11). Of the various cultural revisions of the Frankensteinian anatomical patchwork, one of the more optimistic visions of monstrous self-fashioning identified by Spooner is Sally Ragdoll of Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993). In her later essay "Costuming the Outsider in Tim Burton's Cinema", Spooner also cites Selina Kyle, of *Batman Returns*, as another emblem of Burton's fixation on the Gothic motif of self-fashioning, suggesting that:

> Catwoman's suit is visibly constructed in a scene in which a frenzied Selina pieces it together out of an old jacket … it is not seamless but crookedly pieced together with visible stitching. The labor of self-fashioning leaves its traces in the obvious seams, thus remaining constantly on show. The poorly pieced together quality reflects Selina's interior state. The Cat suit turns her inside-out, placing the interior on display even as it transforms it into a protective second skin (Spooner, 2013: 53).

Burton's presentation of Selina's fabricated transformation manufactures a gendered opposition between the two primary antagonists featured in *Batman Returns*. Selina's costume externalises her psychological demons and creates a patchwork surface with distinct lines of stitching which mirror her internal scars. Conversely, Oswald's emergence from his arctic underworld is facilitated by turning him outside-in; cloaking him inside an illusion of civility and concealing his physical deformity from view. Examined through a disability studies lens, this presents Oswald as a cultural symbol of David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's innovative concept of narrative prosthesis (2000), as Oswald's clothing, in addition to his assortment of umbrellas and other paraphernalia, function as a collection of prosthetic devices designed to conceal his physical deformity.

For Mitchell and Snyder, the concept of narrative prosthesis represents a catalyst for the creation of an illusion of physical normalcy:

> A body deemed lacking, unfunctional … needs compensation, and prosthesis helps to effect this end. Yet the prostheticising of a body or a rhetorical figures carries with it ideological assumptions about what is aberrant. The judgement

that a mechanism is faulty is always already profoundly social. The need to restore a disabled body to some semblance of an ordinary wholeness is the key to a false recognition: that disabilities extract one from a social norm or average of bodies and their corresponding … expectations. To prostheticise, in this sense, is to institute a notion of the body within a regime of tolerable deviance. If disability falls too far from an acceptable norm, a prosthetic intervention seeks to accomplish an erasure of difference (Mitchell and Snyder, 6-7).

Despite the stitching in Selina Kyle's second skin representing a visible manifestation of her psychological torment, she is still able to masquerade as a vision of physical normalcy. The severe physicality of the deformity exhibited by Oswald, however, means that an identical display of corporeal normativity is impossible without the implementation of a series of prosthetic devices. For Oswald to manufacture an illusion of corporeal normativity after surfacing from Gotham's underworld, the restoration of his disabled body, in a departure from conventional prosthetics manufactured using plastics and carbon fibre composites, is facilitated by the creation of several physical appendages constructed from fabric.

The polarity that Burton manufactures between Catwoman and the Penguin, by creating a dichotomy between Selina's psychological torment and the physicality of Oswald's deviance from culturally constructed notions of normativity, extends to the different ways in which their bodies become interrogated as a form of Gothicised spectacle. Selina's interior distress, the catalyst for her self-fashioned transformation into Catwoman, ultimately produces an enhancement of her desirability, both inside the fluid contours of her black latex bodysuit, and the backless, sequined gown she wears to Max Shreck's Christmas masquerade ball. The objectification of her two distinct, costumed bodies, by the Penguin and Bruce Wayne respectively, codes her as a sexual fantasy projected by the male gaze, as theorised by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975):

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between the active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle from pin ups to strip-tease ... she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire (Mulvey, 19).

Despite his extraordinary body being constructed by Burton as another form of aesthetically mediated spectacle, Oswald champions an alternative form of oratory exhibitionism, displayed for the consumption of Gotham's electorate and, latterly, his army of missile-armed penguins. His rhetorical showcase deviates from the erotic

impact which Mulvey assigns to the female figure, and which Burton attributes to the divided figure of Selina Kyle/Catwoman, by excluding his physical deformity from his displays. In addition to utilising his clothing to minimise the severity of his corporeal disfigurement, he also displays an evident discomfort with becoming objectified. Oswald's discomposure manifests as he invariably employs a flipper or an umbrella, a prostheticised extension for his flippered hand, to shield his eyes and his abnormal physiognomy from the flashes of cameras and the glare of studio lights. Defying the gaze, however, does not prevent Oswald being looked at. Instead, it merely exposes him to a variant form of ocular interrogation – the stare.

As part of her scholastic dissection of the anatomy of staring, presented in her monograph, *Staring: How We Look* (2009), Rosemarie Garland-Thomson identifies the elemental qualities that collectively constitute the composition of the stare:

> Staring is both simple and complex, both natural and cultural ... Staring is a physiological response. Disturbances in the visual status quo literally catch our eye, drawing us into a staring relationship with a startling sight. Staring is a more forceful form of looking than glancing, glimpsing scanning and other forms of casual looking. Staring is profligate interest, stunned wonder, obsessive ocularity. The daily traffic reports capture staring's disruptive potential with the term "rubbernecking", a canny summation of our reflexive compulsion to look. In line at the supermarket, a freak on the tabloid cover or the sensational photo of a murder victim lures our hapless eyes, trumpeting harsh evidence of the randomness of human embodiment and our own mortality. We may gaze at what we desire, but we stare at what astonishes us (Garland-Thomson, 13).

Oswald's deformed corpus represents a novel stimulus which evokes an impulsive curiosity in his audiences, manifest in their collective indulgence in frequent displays of voyeurism, displaying a filmic variant of Garland-Thomson's cultural conception of staring as "an intense visual exchange" (Garland-Thomson, 9). Oswald's disruption of the familiarity of Gotham's visual and political landscapes, in addition to conventional configurations of physical normalcy, is, however, not permanent. The interchange that Burton stages between Oswald and the various starers impulsively responding to their chosen staree's physical deviance, follows an identical trajectory to that identified by Garland-Thomson when she suggests that, following prolonged exchanges, the curiosity stimulated in a starer through the act of looking at an unfamiliar body is ultimately reduced: "If starers stay the course, their eyes will work towards reducing the strangeness of [an unusual body] by giving it a story. Whatever that story may be, it will not be the same one that started them staring" (Garland-Thomson, 7). For Oswald, the process of reconciliation, and minimalisation, is partially facilitated by the clothes that he wears. The voters' increasing comfort with the fabricated civility manufactured to conceal Oswald's ghastly visage is gifted authenticity by the story of Oswald's genetic origins as a member of Gotham's social elite, which he reclaims by adorning

himself with male garments similar to those worn by his father. Furthermore, Burton configures the intense visual exchange, which ultimately facilitates a reduction of the strangeness of Oswald's deformed corpus, as reciprocal. Just as Gotham's electorate become gradually more familiar with their emergent mayoral candidate's unsightly body, Oswald's becomes more comfortable with the flashes of cameras and the glare of studio lights that are products of the media interest in his story. Consequently, his oratory performances, previously characterised by their understated, tragic dignity, become increasingly extravagant and showy.

One of the more prominent instances of Oswald being fitted with normalising prosthetics is the initiation of his election campaign, orchestrated by the corporate tyrant Max Shreck, to become Gotham's Mayor. As Catherine Spooner suggests: "Made over by a public relations team to become Gotham's Mayor, [Oswald] increasingly struggles to sustain the fiction of his public face, unable to resist the chthonic pull of his underworld existence" (Spooner, 2013: 53). One of the most notable facets of Oswald's extreme makeover, designed to transform him into a desirable, and electable, candidate is that, despite his deformity encompassing his entire corpus, his image consultants, the sickeningly vibrant Jen and Josh, immediately focus on attempting to conceal their client's flippers from public view, with Jen declaring: "Stand still while I slip on these little glove-thingies. Our research tells us that voters like fingers" (Burton, 1992). Furthermore, in the display of tragic dignity performed for the expectant media circus gathered outside Gotham cemetery, waiting to report the discovery of his paternal origins, Oswald also privileges the physical deformity manifest in his upper extremities. Ruminating about his parents' motivations for abandoning him, Oswald philosophically speculates that: "It's human nature to fear the unusual … Perhaps when I held my Tiffany baby rattle with a shiny flipper, instead of five chubby digits, they freaked" (Burton, 1992). Oswald's resigned acceptance of the horror with which his deformed upper extremities are regarded by his parents is presented in opposition to the distinctly animalistic quality of his deformities. Burton's cinematic articulation of cultural anxieties surrounding manifestations of physical difference are subsequently recognised by disability studies scholars, including Rosemarie Garland-Thomson who, in her extensive interrogation of the cultural implications of staring, cites hands as one of the parts of the human anatomy likely to be fixated upon by starers: "Hands make us human, or so we are told. Our opposable thumbs, the prehensile utility, agile fingers, exquisite sensitivity, sleek hairlessness, and protective nails distinguish our hands. We grasp tools, partners, enemies and food with more accuracy and grace than our hoofed, pawed or finned fellow creatures" (Garland-Thomson, 119). The aesthetic qualities that Garland-Thomson attributes to human hands, but which Burton absents from the Gothicised configuration of Oswald's upper extremities, contributes towards the exterior manifestation of Oswald's monstrosity by erasing the markers that conventionally define notions of physical normativity. It is precisely Oswald's deviation from cultural constructions of corporeal normalcy which invites the stare from Gotham's collection of curious starers. Disfigured hands and fingers have subsequently

continued to be incorporated into representations of the Penguin on other visual platforms. In an early sequence of gameplay from the video game *Batman: Arkham City* (2011), Bruce Wayne breaks Oswald's left hand. The bandages that Oswald subsequently utilises to protect his injury close his fingers together, creating an aesthetic replication of a penguin's flipper.

Burton's fixation on Oswald's phalangeal disfigurement is a reprisal of a specific configuration of disability which he initially displays in his presentation of the disabled male body of Edward Scissorhands. The affinity that Burton manufactures between Oswald and Edward is recognised by Helena Bassil-Morozow, who suggests that:

> The Penguin is yet another outgrowth of the disillusioned boy with scissors. The man who looks and feels like a freak, and deliberately emphasises his ugliness, is an amazingly precise allegory of an anxious adult who did not receive much love from his parents. Scissors metamorphose into flippers, real talent becomes a devilish, Hitleresque charisma, and the poor boy's romantic loneliness boils down to rage (Bassil-Morozow, 77).

The real talent that Bassil-Morozow identifies in the hedge and ice sculptures that Edward creates affects the way that Edward and Oswald's disabled bodies are treated during their respective makeovers. Although Edward endures a cosmetic transformation designed to conceal his facial scarring, unlike Oswald, the physical feature of Edward's body that codes him as disabled remains on display, as his utilisation of his incomplete hands to produce art redefines his disability as what Michael Bérubé terms an exceptionality; or super-ability. Despite presenting Oswald as a more antagonistic configuration of the disabled male body than his cinematic predecessor, however, they are unified as Oswald suffers a perpetuation of the ultimate failure of prosthetic devices to sustain an illusion of corporeal normalcy endured by various male Burtonian monsters.

As his election campaign collapses, Oswald retreats from the electorate of Gotham, and towards the sanctuary of his arctic underworld. His withdrawal from the surface of Gotham is concurrent with the removal of several fabric appendages which had initially minimized the display of his disabled body as a form of cultural spectacle Notably, upon his return to his lair, he rages: "My name is not Oswald! It's Penguin! I am not a human being! I am an animal! Cold blooded!" (Burton, 1992). In addition to functioning as a retraction of the speech he delivers to Gotham's media after his discovery of his paternal origins, the Penguin's embrace of his bestial nature is also an inverted echo of John Merrick's proclamation: "I am not an animal! I am a human being!" in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*. Burton's scripted homage to Lynch suggests that Lynch's visual presentation of John Merrick prefigures Burton's reimagining of the Penguin as a Gothicised vision of corporeal monstrosity. The failure of Oswald's fabric prosthetics to conceal his disabled body from Gotham's voters, and the consequent

removal of his cloak of civility, is also the catalyst for a more exaggerated display of corporeal decay.

Burton's scripted allusions to Lynch's vision of Victorian monstrosity extend to the motivations for Oswald's adoption of the clothing of a Victorian gentleman to manufacture the illusion of civility. Analysing Lynch's filmic representation of John Merrick, Catherine Spooner suggests that:

> In *The Elephant Man*, Merrick's assumption of gentlemanly garments is a direct reflection of his sense of self-worth. His naked self is not only shameful and repulsive to others, but in its connection with elephants is suggestively primitive, even atavistic. Clothed, the Elephant Man is civilised; like the subjects of asylum photographs, he is brought back within the realms of bourgeois respectability ... in a portrait of Merrick circa 1889 he appears clothed, dressed in his respectable Sunday best. The Sunday suit imposes familiar limits and shape upon his amorphous body; through clothes he becomes recognisable as "human" (Spooner, 2004: 120).

Oswald's aesthetic appropriation of the visage of the Victorian gentleman is coded by Burton as a similarly retaliatory response to the disgust and revulsion he inspires in both his parents and the citizens of Gotham. Their instinctive reactions are particularly exacerbated by the bestial qualities attributed to his severely deformed corpus, mirroring the suggestion of atavism that Spooner recognises in Lynch's representation of Merrick's physical difference. Burton's figuration of anatomical curiosity, however, partially diversifies from Lynch's illustration of corporeal disfigurement. Merrick's superficial revision of his masculine subjectivity represents an attempt to emulate the gentlemen he encounters in the company of his physician, Frederick Treves. Conversely, Oswald does not require a medically qualified conduit, and formal attire, to authenticate his eminence as a gentleman.

The ensemble chosen by Oswald instead functions as an attempted reclamation of his birthright, and a visual appropriation of the privilege that should have been his as Tucker and Esther Cobblepot's prodigal son. Despite his abandonment in infancy, upon his re-emergence into the corrupted cityscapes of Gotham Oswald deliberately adorns himself with several distinctive cultural markers which Burton attributes to Oswald's father in the prologue to *Batman Returns*. The garments favoured by Tucker Cobblepot evoke the figure of a city swell, characterised by: "top hat, tail coat, greys and blacks, white slips, spatter dashes and ... black-ribboned monocle" (Britain, 216); a stylised recollection which Oswald perpetuates in his attire. Oswald's external display of respectability is therefore validated by a genetic precedent that does not extend to Merrick's attempts to refashion himself as a gentlemen which, in addition to the severity of his corporeal disfigurement, are ultimately rendered empty as a consequence of his working class origins.

Merrick's dreams of becoming an embodiment of gentlemanly elegance and refinement manufacture another point of departure from Burton's avian grotesque. According to Catherine Spooner, David Lynch, informed by Frederick Treves' biographical account, *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923), presents Merrick as infantilised by perpetuating Treves' evasion of Merrick's sexual desires, and by rendering his assumption of gentlemanly dress the fulfilment of an elaborate childish fantasy:

> [Merrick] clearly entertains fantasies of upward mobility that, characteristically for his time, are expressed through dress … however, there was no chance of Merrick passing for a gentleman, for the signs of difference were written too plainly upon the surface of his body. In emulating the gentleman, therefore, he becomes a grotesque parody. Hence Treves rather patronisingly compares his aspirations to the dressing-up games of a child, as "make-believe". This suggests what Halliday and Watt have identified as Lynch's positioning of Merrick as a child, thus evading his adult sexuality. The idea of Merrick really being a "knockabout Don Juan" cannot be entertained by Treves and therefore he infantilises Merrick's desires (Spooner, 2004: 123).

Oswald's physical difference is similarly written across the surface of his body, gesturing towards Burton's presentation of him as a gentleman being identically problematised. His intellect, his assumption of an air of tragic dignity as he confronts the stone spectres of his parents in Gotham cemetery, and the carnal overtones of his sexual desires privilege him with a maturity that Merrick is refused by Treves and Lynch. Despite his clothing also contributing to the preservation of an image of civility, however, the smokescreen Oswald creates is rendered vulnerable by the presence of several appendages to his cloak of respectability. Various mechanic devices and weapons in Oswald's armoury subject him to a process of infantilisation which threatens his meticulously weaved façade of gentility.

Oswald's abandonment by his parents represents the epicentre of the childhood trauma he continues to fixate on during adulthood. The restricted scope of Gothic enactment, in addition to his behavioural childishness, is enhanced by the theatricality with which Oswald transforms his trauma into a form of Gothic spectacle. Although his misshapen corpus is invariably coveted by the tabloid photographers of Gotham City, Oswald's success in prostheticising his deformed body means that the integration of his grotesque figure is minimalised. The Penguin's Gothic spectacle is, instead, created through the use of mechanical appendages, particularly the wooden duck which the Penguin utilises to travel through the labyrinthine tunnels of the Gotham sewer system. The Penguin's mode of transportation gestures towards his endurance of a similar process of infantilisation to that suffered by Joseph Merrick in *The Elephant Man*. While Merrick's regression into childhood is medicalised and orchestrated by his physician, Frederick Treves, however, the Penguin's infantilisation is a product of his own design,

and the manifestation of an emotional stasis caused by his abandonment during childhood. The Penguin's weaponised reconfiguration of a rubber duck, an iconic emblem of childhood, epitomises his malevolent desire to ruin the innocence of the children of Gotham, and project his own childhood misery onto the next generation of Gotham's first born sons, by recoding various icons of infancy as symbols of horror.

The Penguin's final confrontation with Batman precipitates a visual inversion of his "birth" from his arctic underworld into the metropolis of Gotham, staged by Burton at various points in the filmic narrative of *Batman Returns*. His final descent from the snow covered landscapes of Gotham into the watery depths of his arctic underworld cause him to sustain injuries which exaggerate his deformity further. Having already begun the process of shedding his prosthetics and assorted appendages to retreat beneath the surface of Gotham, the Penguin's final emergence from the lagoon in his lair illustrates that his physical disintegration has progressed to the flesh of his deformed corpus. Bleeding black blood from the orifices in his nose and mouth, the Penguin's final avian waddle towards death is characterised by how debilitated he has become inside the physical boundaries of his disabled body. His shuffle grows increasingly laboured, and the sounds of struggle he emits develop a distinctly animalistic quality. Additionally, in the complete absence of the costume that previously created the illusion of physical normativity, the erosion of the Penguin's façade of humanity is increasingly pronounced. Burton's closing representation of the Penguin's death following the removal of the prosthetics and machinic appendages that were initially employed to conceal his unsightly corpus from the public sphere continues to conform to Mitchell and Snyder's seminal conception of various textual prostheses. As with other disabled male bodies in Burton's filmography, prosthetics ultimately fail to return the disabled body to the invisible status of a normative essence.

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A Winterhorde in a Ravenrealm: Immortal's Lyrics as an Expression of *Northeroic Gothic*

ABSTRACT

This article examines the lyrical themes of the first four studio albums (1992-1997) of the Norwegian black metal band Immortal. It aims at understanding how the gothic is expressed and reinterpreted in the context of an "extreme" music genre, such as black metal, by one of its most influential bands. The specificity and uniqueness of Immortal's lyrics is embodied by the fusion of gothic, Nordic, and heroic themes, which is achieved through haunting descriptions of the imaginary realm of Blashyrkh and the invention of closed compound words (two or more words joined together in a single word) that merge such themes in unitary and liminal figures. This original style, here defined as Northeroic gothic, creates a cohesive emotional landscape that represents Immortal's personal concept and mythology.

This study contributes to the understanding of contemporary gothic from an interdisciplinary perspective that bridges gothic and metal music studies. By analysing the themes and images of Immortal's lyrics, it explores the unvoiced correspondence between the gothic and black metal in one of its most imaginative expressions.

Black metal is an extreme form of heavy metal music characterized by rasping and screamed vocals, a harsh guitar sound, and lyrical themes that include, but are not limited to, Nordic mythology (Dearinger 2012, 5), folklore (Hagen 2011, 194), paganism (Thompson 2012, 11), Satanism (Kahn-Harris 2004, 99), and nationalism (Thompson 2012, 32). It stylistically originated from bands such as Bathory, Celtic Frost, Hellhammer, and Venom (Hagen 2011, 182), flourishing in the early 1990s in Norway through the artistic production of bands such as Burzum, Darkthrone, Emperor, Immortal, and Mayhem (Phillipov 2011, 153). Immortal, founded in 1990 by Olve Eikemo (artistically known as *Abbath*) and Harald Nævdal (*Demonaz*), is globally considered one of the most popular and influential bands in the black metal genre (Hagen 2011, 181).

In the musical sphere, the gothic is not usually associated with the black metal scene, but rather with genres such as goth rock, darkwave, and post-punk. For example, Mick Mercer, an expert and prolific writer on gothic music, did not include Immortal in his encyclopaedia of goth-related bands and performers, titled *Music to Die For* (2009). Further, the concoction of the "gothic black metal" sub-genre signifies the conventional separation of the two realms (the gothic and black metal). Notwithstanding these categorizations, this study suggests that Immortal's lyrics represent a distinctive and situated form of gothic that reshapes traditional gothic tropes through Nordic and heroic themes.

Even within the narrow boundaries of the black metal genre, the gothic, the Nordic, and the heroic, can appear as discrete entities that do not necessarily cross each other's path. For example, the "heroic" component can be inspired by historical or mythological deeds set in different geographical regions, that are not necessarily "Nordic." Some popular black metal bands in this spectrum include SuidAkrA (Celtic mythology), The Elysian Fields (Greek mythology), and Melechesh (Mesopotamian/Sumerian mythology). Further, in bands defined as "gothic black metal" (such as Cradle of Filth and, to a certain extent, Moonspell), dark beauty, vampirism, and horror are prominent themes, while "the North" and the "the heroic" are rather marginal and sporadic references. On the other hand, Immortal merge such themes in a cohesive and original style, here defined as *Northeroic gothic*.

Methods

This study is delimited to Immortal's first four studio albums: *Diabolical Fullmoon Mysticis*m (1992), *Pure Holocaust* (1993), *Battles in the North* (1995), and *Blizzard Beasts* (1997). After these albums, Demonaz, guitarist and lyricist of the band, was diagnosed with a severe form of tendonitis, which prevented him from playing in subsequent releases of the band (http://www.immortalofficial.com). In an interview published on the webzine *Chronicles of Chaos*, Abbath, discussing the fifth album of the band titled *At*

the Heart of Winter (1999), their first release without Demonaz in the official lineup, declared:

> He [Demonaz] offered to write the lyrics and I had a bunch of proposals to the lyrics, inspirations for the lyrics, but he's the expert so I gave him all the credit for it. […] He will probably be working with me when it comes to lyrics in the future; I will do more myself, I am getting more trained now, I am getting better in English, to form sentences in the form of verses (http://www.chroniclesofchaos.com/articles.aspx?id=1-223).

Demonaz continued his work with the band as an external member. This change of status and roles (from active band member to external lyricist and supporter) seems to have stylistically impacted Immortal's lyrics, with a more prominent influence of other members of the band. For this reason, this study is delimited to the first four studio albums of the band, in which Demonaz was an active musician and sole lyricist.

Lyrics have been transcribed verbatim (without corrections or modifications) from the booklets of the albums and analysed through a discourse analysis approach, which is a methodology used to make sense of spoken and written language (Gee 2010, 8; Wood & Kroger 2000, 3), from a thematic and literary perspective (Tan 2012, 628). Song themes in heavy metal have been explored by other scholars (Rafalovich & Schneider 2005, 131; Reyes 2013, 242) and discourse analysis has been used to analyse popular song lyrics (Abrahamsson 2011, 4; Madichie 2011, 171) and heavy metal songs (Harju 2001, 8). The author acknowledges the debates surrounding the use of lyrical analyses in popular music studies, an approach criticized mostly because it separates out words from music and privileges words at the expense of music (Cloonan 2005, 79; Shuker 2013, 79). The author decided to focus on the lyrics of the band in order to analyse the construction of Immortal's own mythology, which is made more evident and explicit in the textual form, even if it is, by no means, limited to it.

In the article, songs are conventionally represented as [number of album-number of song]. For example, "At One With The Earth / Alone With Light In My Eyes" [2-4] is an excerpt from the fourth song of Immortal's second album (see Appendix A). When the author cites song or album titles, this is plainly expressed in the text or as a complement to album-song numbers in brackets. For example, "Frozen By Icewinds" [2-4, song title].

Lyrical Themes: The Gothic, the North, and the Heroic

In their lyrics, Immortal combine traditional gothic conventions and "ingredients" (Hogle & Smith 2009, 2) with the Nordic scenery and heroic narrations situated in the imaginary realm of Blashyrkh. In the following sections, in order to highlight their

distinctive features, these themes are discussed separately, and then, in their unity, which represents Immortal's unique concept and lyrical style.

The Gothic: Darkness and the Supernatural World

In the introduction to the inaugural issue of the journal *Gothic Studies*, Hogle (1999, 3) described the "gothic space" with the following words:

> 'Gothic' spaces or figures have […] always been symbolic locations into which groups of people can ideologically 'throw' what they would like to regard as 'other' than their desired current condition […] *or* what they want to see as the 'true', but now lost, foundations of their cultural positions (a return to primordial origins sometimes viewed as positive alternatives to – or at least forgotten roots of – the present world).

By celebrating the imaginary kingdom of Blashyrkh, Immortal construct their own *gothic space* from a "Northeroic" perspective: a physical and spiritual site enshrined in a mythical North in which natural and supernatural forces recall a glorious past of epic battles amidst coldness and darkness. In this realm, darkness and the supernatural world are overarching gothic themes that permeate all elements. It is here advisable to note that it is not the author's intention to oversimplify gothic themes to "darkness" and "the supernatural world." These two motifs emerged from the analysis as prominent themes of Immortal's lyrics, but they are not intended to encompass the richness and subtlety of gothic preoccupations and research, nor to limit the band's conceptual gamut. In other words, they need to be considered as thematic guides, put forth by the author to make sense of Immortal's variegated lyrical universe, rather than absolute categories that exhaustively define the gothic and the artistic production of the band.

In the world depicted by Immortal, *supernatural creatures* (Gunn 1999, 416) live in profound regions blinded by the deadly white of the moon and the snow ("In The Deadwhite Moonlight" [3-1]; "In Snowblind Visions" [4-4]). A disquieting sensation of "diffuse belowness" immerses the realm and its creatures in a constant state of "being under" something menacing or unknown, which is signalled by an extensive use of terms such as *abyss*, *below*, *beneath*, *burial/buried*, *chasm*, *crypt/cryptic*, *deep*, *descend*, *gorge*, *pit*, *sink*, and *under/underneath*. These descriptions extend the gothic theme of *subterranean spaces* (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1986, 9), such as dungeons and caves, into a limitless open-air and underground tomb ("In deaths cold crypts of snow" [1-2]; "In Time Before Light In Crypts Of Eternal Deeps" [2-7]; "Snowtombed Darkness" [4-7]). In this obscured land, the triumph of darkness corresponds to the death of the sun ("The sun freezes to dust" [1-7]), which is a pervasive theme in Immortal's lyrics and appears in all the analysed albums, in 7 out of 34 songs ([1-4]; [1-7]; [2-3], song title; [2-8]; [3-4]; [4-4], song title; [4-6]).

The reign of Blashyrkh can also be considered a gothic *in/between place* (Gray 2014, 74; Wisker 2007, 412) in which natural and supernatural elements coexist in a covenant of coldness and darkness. Its *liminality* is embodied by the recurring symbol of *the gate*, which represents a physical and spiritual passage to "The Other Side" ([2-7]), "Into A Blacker Dark" ([2-7]), and eternity ("At The End Of The Gate I Wont Stop But Spread My / Wings" [2-6]; "The Light Is Searching To Save The Soul Of Mine / It Is Blind And Cant See The Gate To Immortality" [2-7]).

Gothic tropes and conventions (Beville 2009, 10; Hogle & Smith 2009, 2; Kosofsky Sedgwick 1986, 9-10; Melani 2013, 1) play an important role in the construction of Immortal's personal mythology. They include *solitary spaces and oppressive ruins* ("Under a bloodred moon in the cold wastes of another world" [1-5]; "In Storm I Stand Upon Ruins" [3-8]), *sleep-like and death-like states* that blur the boundaries between life and death ("I Hear Summoning Voices / And Wake From My Funeral Sleep" [2-7]), *nighttime landscapes and unfathomable dreams* ("There Are Nocturnal Paths / To Follow" [3-2]; "Black Winged Wraiths Of Opaque Dreams" [4-4]), *unnatural silences and eerie echoes* ("A mayhemic silence floats" [1-3]; "Echoes Of Our Shadowed Age" [4-2]), *mysterious and powerful apparitions from the past* ("The Ones To Sit Upon / The Elder Thrones / With Shadowed Faces / For The Coming Centuries" [3-1]), *un-human characters and demonic figures* ("On A Frosty Path To Sorrow / Guarded By Unearthly Beasts" [3-7]; "Demons Of Endless Time" [4-7]), *sinister omens and ancestral curses* ("To The Cursed Realms / Of The Winterdemons" [3-6]; "Blackwinged Ravens Cry For Tragedies To Come" [4-3]), as well as *the unspeakable and the sublime* ("Views That Eyes Can Never Bear" [3-7]; "With Tempted Eyes I Dreamwatch Dying Suns" [4-4]; "Mountains Of Might / Icicled Peaks As Far As The Eye Can See" [4-6]). In Immortal's lyrics, these tropes are infused with Nordic and heroic elements that contribute to remodelling the gothic into a unique concept and representation, as discussed in the following sections.

The North: Coldness and the Natural World

In Immortal's lyrics, the characteristic *wild landscape* of gothic novels (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1986, 9) is embodied by a mighty Nordic scenery enshrouded in a mantle of eternal frost. This portrait is represented through a profound affinity with and reverence for nature, which is a constitutive trait of the Norwegian identity (Dearinger 2012, 63), but without the ethno-nationalistic overtones of other black metal bands (Kurtagić 2010, 5). Far from being a mere geographical space, a cardinal direction, or a background setting, the North appears as an idealized place in which the natural world and the freezing climate define and permeate all elements.

In Immortal's lyrics, the North echoes a sense of *verticality of nature* that engenders an *ascending vertigo* prompted by nature's icy cathedrals ("mountains of frost" [1-2]; "Mountains of ice" [1-7]; "Endless Tall Mountainsides" [3-7]). Such

verticality is sustained by nature's turbulent forces (winds, storms, and blizzards) that seem to connect the regions below (valleys, lands, and paths) with the regions above (the moon, the sky, and the Sun). In this colossal, freezing, and inhospitable place, the solitary outsider finds a realm to dwell in. The black metal persona, an individual standing apart from the rest of the society, amplifies a typical trait of the Norwegian personality, that is a tendency to value solitude (Dearinger 2012, 21). In Immortal's lyrics, this solitary (and voluntary) outcast experiences a deep and intimate connection with nature and its freezing climate ("At One With The Earth / Alone With Light In My Eyes" [2-4]; "Alone On The Mountainside / Breathing The Clearest Winds" [4-6]), as they shape and influence each other [2-3]:

> In The Mist Of The Twilight
> You Could See Me Come
> To Walk The Endless Woods Alone
> The Earth Is Freezing
> As I Walk It Become Colder.

In these verses, a freezing earth becomes even colder as the individual walks on it, in solitude ("Alone"), surrounded by an infinite and mysterious nature ("Endless Woods"; "The Mist Of The Twilight"), in a physical and mystical reciprocity.

In the descriptions of nature, the abundant use of blurry and indeterminate words, such as *cloud*, *fog*, *mist*, *nebula*, *shadow*, and *twilight*, contributes to creating a gothic atmosphere of mystery, liminality, and suspenseful stillness, which gives rise to a sinister contrast with the ubiquitous storming of winds and blizzards ("A thousand black clouds storms" [1-3]; "At The Stormy Gates Of Mist" [3-7], song title) and evokes a Nordic rendering of the sublime of the wilderness (Hammill 2003, 50). In these descriptions, nature emerges as a pervasive, enigmatic, and powerful principle that permeates all elements, protecting, hiding, and isolating these majestic lands, and their unearthly creatures, from the rest of the world.

The Heroic: War and the Kingdom of Blashyrkh

War themes are common in black metal. Weapons, such as axes, swords, and spiked clubs, are part of the image of several bands in this genre (Hagen 2011, 49). Immortal's songs are pervaded by a warlike atmosphere ("Proud With Battlelust We Ride / Savagery Towards The Battlefields" [4-5]) that resonates with the power of nature ("Unsilent Storms In The North Abyss" [2-1], song title). In their epic verses, hordes of demonic creatures ("Winterhorde Of Fury" [4-5]) ride across the Northland ("A Ride From The North / To The North" [3-1]) like savage phantoms unleashed in a stormy and decaying realm ("In Storm I Ride / Toward The Shadowruins" [3-8]).

This dark heroism, however, does not represent the "chivalrous" deeds and aspirations of the heroes of classic gothic works, such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Richard Hole's *Arthur, or the Northern Enchantment: A Poetical Romance* (1789), the later rich in Norse references (Rix 2011, 8). It shows instead a beast-like pride and lust for battles and tragic endings in the mournful eternity of frost:

[2-3]
I Believe In Tragedies
I Believe In Desecration
To the North And Into Eternal Winters
To The North In The Grip Of Eternal Frost

[2-5]
Lords Of Tragedies Storm
As The Valley Gates Opens
Decayed Lands Of Sorrow Wait Below
Storming Through Red Clouds And Holocaustwinds

[2-8]
With Winds Of War And Winds Of Cold
Lightning Strike The Northland
Leading Us Into Seasons Of Frost
Stand In The Fog With So Cold A Heart

The setting of these battles is the imaginary kingdom of Blashyrkh, which is the core of Immortal's lyrics and their personal mythology ("Under The Banner Of / Blashyrkh We Ride" [3-1]). Surrounded by an aura of majesty and might, this mythical and mystical Nordic place is the arena in which natural and supernatural forces fight and dwell in a spiritual union with coldness and darkness ("Grim And Frostbitten Kingdoms" [3-2], song title; "A Spectral Spiritkingdom" [3-6]; "In Snowblind Visions / I Let The Darkening Moon / Become The Jewel In My Kingdom" [4-4]).

The Lyrical Construction of the *Northeroic Gothic*

One of the defining characteristics of Immortal's lyrics is the intertwining of the leading themes discussed in the previous sections of the article: *the gothic* (*darkness* and *the supernatural world*), *the North* (*coldness* and *the natural world*), and *the heroic* (*war* and *the kingdom of Blashyrkh*). The communion of these elements creates a unique lyrical style, here defined as *Northeroic gothic*, that embodies Immortal's personal mythology. In this section, these themes are conventionally expressed as:

G = *The gothic*
    Gd = The gothic: *darkness*

Gs = The gothic: *the supernatural world*

N = *The North*
 Nc = The North: *coldness*
 Nn = The North: *the natural world*

H = *The heroic*
 Hw = The heroic: *war*
 Hk = The heroic: *the kingdom of Blashyrkh*

The analysis shows that this unity of themes is achieved on a macro-level (albums and songs) and a micro-level, in at least three dimensions: titles, verses, and closed compound words. For example, several of Immortal's album and song titles merge two of the three leading themes, or even all of them, like in the following song titles:

[3-2]
"Grim And Frostbitten Kingdoms"

Grim [Gd] And Frostbitten [Nc] Kingdoms [Hk]

[3-4]
"Throned By Blackstorms"

Throned [Hk] By Black [Gd] storms [Nn]

[3-6]
"Cursed Realms Of The Winterdemons"

Cursed [Gs] Realms [Hk] Of The Winter [Nc] demons [Gs]

At a verse level, the Norwegian landscape emerges as a naturalistic mirror of dark emotional and spiritual states that are both personal (feeling) and collective (belonging). The fusion of such personal/collective emotions and states of mind is exemplified by the following excerpt [1-4]:

An d silent the walleys in the North
Where I once were a proud warrior
Where I belong wher I bath my soul in doomfirefog
Where I ride deaths cold winds in the battles in the North

These images recall a gothic, Northern, and heroic atmosphere that reverberates with the majesty of a familiar kingdom (signalled through the repetition of the adverb

"Where," the pronoun "I," and the use of the verb "belong") inherited from a glorious past ("I once were"). This excerpt can be then transcribed as:

An d silent the walleys [Nn] in the North [N]
Where [Hk] I once were a proud warrior [Hw]
Where [Hk] I belong [Hk] wher I bath my soul [Gs] in {doom [Gd] fire fog[Nn]} [Gs]
Where I ride [Hw] deaths [Gd] cold [Nc] winds [Nn] in the battles [Hw] in the North [N]

The North appears as a unifying place of the leading themes of Immortal's lyrics: a bound, yet unreachable destination of the epic journey of an outcast *gothic-black metal hero*, half-human and half-demon ("I Am A Demon / A Demon With A Shadowed Face" [2-1]), in communion with a gloomy nature ("One With A Blackening Moonlit" [3-9]), riding in hordes of alike creatures ("Blizzard Beasts" [3-4; 4, album title; 4-2, song title]), embraced by a shroud of coldness and darkness ("The Northern darkness marches through the coldest night" [1-2]; "To the deathlights where the North star awaits" [1-3]; "Northern Darkness Walks / With Me Hand In Hand" [3-7]).

In Immortal's lyrics, Norway is portrayed as a *gothic Northland* ("Through the dark Northern walleys" [1-5]; "A perfect vision of the rising Northland" [1-7, song title]; "Sons Of Northern Darkness [2-5, excerpt of a song of Immortal's second album and title of their seventh album, released in 2002]) through an exaltation of Northern battles ("As a Norse warrior I rode the dark walleys" [1-4]; "North black hordes storms" [1-7]; "Battles In The North" [1-4; 3, album title; 3-1, song title]) and a proud declaration of continuity with a legendary past ("Mighty Were The / Fathers Of Norsemen / And In Us They Shall Return" [3-5]; "Cryptic Visages Centuries Old / Of Those That Rode By My Side" [3-8]; "Domestic Purebred / Of The Everlifted Northsky" [4-5]), which recalls the gothic theme of a relinquished past that returns through apparitions of bygone, yet still powerful characters (Hogle 1999, 3).

The encounter between the gothic and black metal engenders an absolutisation and extremisation of events and elements (in particular, darkness), which is cued by terms such as *perfect* and *pure/purest*, by the suffix *-less* (for example, "endless" [2-3], [3-7], [3-8], [4-7]), and by a widespread use of comparatives, superlatives, and incomparable adjectives (adjectives that describe absolute states) in both song titles ("Blacker Than Darkness" [1-6]; "A Perfect Vision Of The Rising Northland" [1-7]; "Pure Holocaust" [2-8]) and lyrics ("the centers of darkness" [1-3]; "Blackest Rain" [3-9]; "Deepest Gorge" [3-9]). This sense of absoluteness is echoed and reinforced by the representation of time, suspended between past and eternity ("as old as the earth" [1-3]; "Memories / From A Darkshining Past" [3-5]; "time before time" [3-9]), in disquieting and undefined times of the day (*dusk*, *midnight*, *sunset*, and *twilight*) that function as gloomy portals to the *coldest* [1-2], *eternal* [1-2], *black* [1-6], and *deepest* [2-4] night.

A powerful gothic symbol that connects the leading themes of Immortal's lyrics is the raven: its colour is black (*darkness*), it can usually be found in cold regions (*coldness*), and it is a bird (*natural world*) with strong symbolic and mystical overtones (*supernatural world*: "Our Sacred Raven" [3-1]). The raven also symbolizes the *kingdom of Blashyrkh* ("Ravenrealm" [3-1]; "Blashyrkh…Mighty Ravendark" [3-10]; "The Elder Raventhrone" [3-10]) and *war* ("A Ravens Claws Lifted Towards The Sky / In A Sign For The Norse Hordes To Ride" [2-2]). This unity of elements, which is a significant feature of Immortal's lyrics, is also a fundamental quality of the gothic: a liminal locus in which the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, life and death, light and darkness, are blurred, suspended, and fused in ghastly settings and tragic figures. This gothic hybridization of themes (darkness, the supernatural world, coldness, the natural world, war, and the kingdom of Blashyrkh) is omnipresent in Immortal's lyrics, as epitomized by the following two excerpts. The first one is taken from the song titled "Nebular Ravens Winter" [4-3]:

> Ravens Seasons Has Begun
> Melancholic Ageless And Unknown
> Mesmerized You Fall In Our Domain
> Freezing In The Heart

In these verses, coldness ("Freezing"), the natural world ("Ravens"; "Seasons"), war ("You Fall"), the kingdom of Blashyrkh ("In Our Domain"), darkness ("Ravens"; "Melancholic"), and the supernatural world ("Mesmerized"; "Unknown") are set in a time beyond time ("Seasons"; "Has Begun"; "Ageless") and merged in a cohesive unity of themes. The second excerpt is taken from the song titled "Frozen By Icewinds" [2-4]:

> At One With The Earth
> Alone With Light In My Eyes
> The Ravens Circle Around My Tomb
> As I Dream The Night
> Frozen By Icewinds

In these verses, the unity of the individual with the natural world ("At One With The Earth") and the supernatural world (symbolized by the circling ravens), the tension between light and darkness, sleep and death ("With Light In My Eyes"; "My Tomb"; "As I Dream The Night"), and a deadly coldness ("Frozen By Icewinds"), are intertwined in an intimate experience pervaded by a sense of desperate, and yet desired solitude ("At One"; "Alone"; "My Eyes"; "My Tomb"; "I Dream").

Narrowing down the spectrum of analysis, the tight interconnection of gothic, Nordic, and heroic themes appears evident even in as few as one or two subsequent lines, like in the following two examples:

[1-2]
The Northern darkness marches through the coldest night

The Northern [N] darkness [Gd] marches [Hw] through the coldest [Nc] night [Gd]

[1-5]
In these shadows of death I march
In the blue mist of evil

In these shadows [Gd] of death [Gd] I march [Hw]
In the blue mist [Nn] of evil [Gs]

By further narrowing down the examination to smaller units of the discourse, the analysis unveiled one of the most original and fascinating elements of Immortal's lyrics: an extensive use of closed compound words (two or more words joined together in a single word) that merge the gothic, the North, and the heroic in striking unitary figures. Most of these compound words are neologisms (see Appendix B), which is arguably inspired by the Norwegian language, which is very productive in the creation of one-word compounds.

In order to understand if the integration of creative compound words (neologisms) was an original characteristic of Immortal's lyrics, or, instead, a common feature of contemporary Norwegian black metal bands, the author also analysed the English lyrics of the first four studio albums of three of the most influential bands in the genre: Darkthrone (*Soulside Journey*, *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*, *Under a Funeral Moon*, and *Transilvanian Hunger*), Emperor (*In the Nightside Eclipse*, *Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk*, *IX Equilibrium*, and *Prometheus: The Discipline of Fire and Demise*), and Mayhem (*Deathcrush*, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, *Wolf's Lair Abyss*, and *Grand Declaration of War*). A total of six closed compound neologisms were found in Darkthrone's lyrics (*darkside*, *dreamking*, *fullmoon*, *goathorn*, *soulside*, and *tombworld*), four in Emperor's lyrics (*blacksword*, *fullmoon*, *nightspirit*, and *nightsky*), and five in Mayhem's lyrics (*bloodswords*, *deathcrush*, *gutsfuck*, *necrolust*, and *posercorpse*). On the other hand, the lyrics of Immortal's first four studio albums feature a total of 66 compound neologisms (some of them used across songs and albums), which makes this characteristic a unique trait of the band and a structural feature of their artistic production, functional in the construction of their distinctive style.

The creation of such compound words is a powerful expressive tool, as it blends elements, characters, and themes in unitary poetic representations that contribute to the construction of Immortal's personal mythology in a coherent lyrical style. Some combinations are composed of two words, others merge as many as three words (see Appendix C). It is interesting to note that most of these original closed compounds

follow the regular rules of English compounding, such as noun + noun (in 49 out of 66 instances; e.g., "Battlesky" [3-1]) or adjective + noun ("Blackstorm" [1-2; 3-4], "Darksky" [1-7], "Deadwhite" [3-1], "Fullmoon" [1; 1-4; 1-6], and "Longsword" [1-4; 4-5]), while others are more striking in their breach with the language's conventions, such as plural noun + noun ("Ravenswinter" [4-3]) or noun + noun + noun ("Doomfirefog" [1-4] and "Frostdemonstorm" [4-9, song title]). One of the most fascinating closed compounds found in the analysed texts (and the only occurrence of a verb + verb form) is "Dreamwatch" [4-4]:

> In The Forthcoming Breeze
> With Tempted Eyes I Dreamwatch Dying Suns

In this context, "dreamwatch" can be interpreted as a *liminal verb* suspended between *dreaming* and *watching*, which echoes the transitional state of the scene, surrounded by a *forthcoming* breeze (it is not yet there), awaiting with *tempted* eyes (which denotes intention, desire, and anticipation, but not yet action) the faith of *dying* (in flux from life to death) *suns* (the use of the plural contributes to an aura of indefiniteness and mystery). By creating and pervasively using closed compound words, a multiplicity of meanings is condensed into evocative symbols and representations that are gothic not only in their motifs, but also in their synthesis of such elements in hybrid and liminal figures.

The expressive power of the compound words created by Immortal seems to have influenced and inspired several heavy metal bands. An explorative analysis of band names (considering exclusively bands in the black metal genre whose first release was subsequent to Immortal's use of the neologisms) revealed a total of 55 bands from 26 countries whose names could have been derived from 23 of the 66 closed compound neologisms found in Immortal's first four albums (see Appendix D). Of course, this preliminary analysis does not demonstrate the direct origin of such band names, but it suggests that future research could be directed at investigating the cultural influence and generativity of Immortal's themes and compound neologisms in the black metal scene and beyond.

Conclusions

The study of contemporary stylistic and cultural expressions of the gothic in different contexts can lead to a more sophisticated and multifaceted understanding of its identities, qualities, and features, as a living and evolving entity, rather than a set of predetermined tropes. In their albums, Immortal forged a personal gothic mythology based on the imaginary realm of Blashyrkh. The boundaries of this world are instrumental in the formation of a personal style and an inner thematic coherence supported and amplified by the pervasive use of unifying song titles, verses, and closed compound neologisms.

Immortal's original and cohesive rendition of gothic, Nordic, and heroic themes sets them apart in the black metal scene of the 1990s, which mostly drew inspiration from black metal tropes, such as traditional Norse mythology and political, religious, and philosophical proclamations. This also carries implications for the use of the "gothic" adjective in the definition and categorization of artists and genres in the context of music criticism and music studies and suggests that the answer to the question "what is gothic music?" needs to be explored without the baggage (and burden) of commonly accepted labels such as "goth rock" or "gothic black metal."

Further, this study calls attention to the potential of interdisciplinary approaches that connect gothic and heavy metal music studies. For future research, it would be advisable to complement lyrical and thematic explorations (like the one proposed in this study) with multimodal approaches that combine textual and extra-textual analyses, to enrich the understanding of the relationships and interdependencies between the gothic and heavy metal.

In conclusion, this article shows how Immortal's lyrics intensely and coherently combine gothic, Nordic, and heroic themes into unified images. This is achieved through integrative titles and verses, as well as an extensive use of closed compound words (neologisms) that seamlessly combine them in powerful and evocative figures. In this context, in order to define this fusion and unique style, the invention of a new compound term appeared appropriate: the *Northeroic gothic*, which represents the unvoiced correspondence between the gothic and black metal, in Immortal's original interpretation.

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Appendix A

Tracklist of Immortal's First Four Studio Albums (1992-1997)

[1] Diabolical Fullmoon Mysticism (1992)
[1-1] Intro
[1-2] The Call Of The Wintermoon
[1-3] Unholy Forces Of Evil
[1-4] Cryptic Winterstorms
[1-5] Cold Winds Of Funeral Dust
[1-6] Blacker Than Darkness
[1-7] A Perfect Vision Of The Rising Northland

[2] Pure Holocaust (1993)
[2-1] Unsilent Storms In The North Abyss
[2-2] A Sign For The Norse Hordes To Ride
[2-3] The Sun No Longer Rises
[2-4] Frozen By Icewinds
[2-5] Storming Through / Red Clouds And Holocaustwinds
[2-6] Eternal Years On The Path To The Cemetary Gates
[2-7] As The Eternity Opens
[2-8] Pure Holocaust

[3] Battles In The North (1995)
[3-1] Battles In The North
[3-2] Grim And Frostbitten Kingdoms
[3-3] Descent Into Eminent Silence
[3-4] Throned By Blackstorms
[3-5] Moonrise Fields Of Sorrow
[3-6] Cursed Realms Of The Winterdemons
[3-7] At The Stormy Gates Of Mist
[3-8] Through The Halls Of Eternity
[3-9] Circling Above In Time Before Time
[3-10] Blashyrkh (Mighty Ravendark)

[4] Blizzard Beasts (1997)
[4-1] Intro
[4-2] Blizzard Beasts
[4-3] Nebular Ravens Winter
[4-4] Suns That Sank Below
[4-5] Battlefields
[4-6] Mountains Of Might
[4-7] Noctambulant
[4-8] Winter Of The Ages
[4-9] Frostdemonstorm

Appendix B

List of Closed Compound Words (Neologisms) in Immortal's Lyrics (1992-1997)

A = adjective

N = noun

Np = noun (plural)

P = preposition

V = verb

Va = verb in adjectival form (e.g., ending in -ed, -en, or -ing)

Compound word	[Album-Song]	Type of compound
Battlelust	[3-1] [4-5]	N + N
Battlesky	[3-1]	N + N
Beastworld	[4-2]	N + N
Blackstorm	[1-2] [3-4]	A + N
Blackwinged	[4-3]	A + A
Darkshining	[3-5]	A + Va
Darksky	[1-7]	A + N
Deadwhite	[3-1]	A + N
Deathlight	[1-3]	N + N
Decembermoon	[1-6]	N + N
Demonrise	[4-9]	N + N
Demonside	[4-2]	N + N
Demonstorm	[4-9]	N + N
Demonthrone	[4-2]	N + N
Demonworld	[4-3]	N + N
Doomfirefog	[1-4]	N + N + N
Dragonbirth	[3-7]	N + N
Dreamwatch	[4-4]	V + V
Eyestaken	[1-7]	N + Va
Frostdemonstorm	[4-9]	N + N + N
Frostmoon	[3-6]	N + N
Frostwind	[1-7]	N + N
Fullmoon	[1] [1-4] [1-6]	A + N
Goathrone	[1-7]	N + N
Goatmoon	[1-6]	N + N
Goatscalp	[1-7]	N + N
Harnessbell	[2-7]	N + N
Heathenheart	[3-1]	N + N
Holocaustsky	[2-8]	N + N
Holocaustwind	[2-5]	N + N
Icewind	[2-4]	N + N
Irongate	[3-3]	N + N
Longsword	[1-4] [4-5]	A + N
Massacrewind	[1-4]	N + N
Masterfield	[3-1]	N + N

Moonfog	[2-3]	N + N
Mountainguarded	[4-4]	N + A
Northsky	[4-5]	N + N
Phantasmworld	[4-5]	N + N
Ravendark	[3-10]	N + N
Ravengate	[3-10]	N + N
Ravenrealm	[3-1]	N + N
Ravenswinter	[4-3]	Np + N
Raventhrone	[3-10]	N + N
Shadowruin	[3-8]	N + N
Snowblind	[4-4]	N + A
Snowtombed	[4-7]	N + Va
Soulwind	[1-3] [4-3]	N + N
Spiritkingdom	[3-6]	N + N
Spiritside	[4-2]	N + N
Spiritworld	[3-4]	N + N
Stillbreathing	[3-4]	A + Va
Stormscreen	[3-6]	N + N
Underdark	[3-6] [3-9]	P + N
Underdreamed	[3-1]	P + Va
Winterbeast	[4-8]	N + N
Wintercall	[4-7]	N + N
Wintercoffin	[2-1]	N + N
Winterdemon	[3-6] [4-8]	N + N
Wintergate	[4-7]	N + N
Winterhorde	[4-5]	N + N
Wintermoon	[1-2]	N + N
Wintershadow	[1-5]	N + N
Wintersky	[2-6]	N + N
Winterstorm	[1-4]	N + N
Winterwing	[1-2]	N + N

Appendix C

Closed Compound Words (Neologisms) in Immortal's Lyrics: Thematic Table

		The North		The Heroic		The Gothic	
		Coldness	**Natural World**	**War**	**Kingdom of Blashyrkh**	**Darkness**	**Supernatural World**
The North	**Coldness**	Wintercall	Decembermoon Frostmoon Frostwind Icewind Northsky Ravenswinter Winterbeast Wintermoon Wintersky Winterstorm Winterwing	Winterhorde	Wintergate	Darkshining Deadwhite Deathlight Snowblind Snowtombed Wintercoffin Wintershadow	Frostdemonstorm Winterdemon
	Natural World	Decembermoon Frostmoon Frostwind Icewind Northsky Ravenswinter Winterbeast Wintermoon Wintersky Winterstorm Winterwing	Fullmoon Goatmoon Goatscalp Moonfog Mountainguarded Stillbreathing Stormscreen	Battlesky Holocaustsky Holocaustwind Massacrewind	Goathrone Ravengate Ravenrealm Raventhrone	Blackstorm Blackwinged Darksky Doomfirefog Ravendark	Demonstorm Dragonbirth Frostdemonstorm Soulwind Beastworld
The Heroic	**War**	Winterhorde	Battlesky Holocaustsky Holocaustwind Massacrewind	Battlelust Harnessbell Heathenheart Longsword Masterfield			
	Kingdom of Blashyrkh	Wintergate	Goathrone Ravengate Ravenrealm Raventhrone		Irongate	Shadowruin	Demonthrone Spiritkingdom
The Gothic	**Darkness**	Darkshining Deadwhite Deathlight Snowblind Snowtombed Wintercoffin Wintershadow	Blackstorm Blackwinged Darksky Doomfirefog Ravendark		Shadowruin	Underdark	
	Supernatural World	Frostdemonstorm Winterdemon	Demonstorm Dragonbirth Frostdemonstorm Soulwind Beastworld		Demonthrone Spiritkingdom		Demonrise Demonside Demonworld Dreamwatch Eyestaken Phantasmworld Spiritside Spiritworld Underdreamed

Closed Compound Words (Neologisms) in Immortal's Lyrics and Subsequent Names of Black Metal Bands

Band names in the black metal genre have been retrieved in June 2014 from the reference heavy metal website "Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives" (www.metal-archives.com).

Closed compound word (neologism) found in Immortal's albums (1992-1997)	Band name	Country	Year of first appearance of the compound word in an Immortal's album	Year of first release of the band
Battlelust	Battlelust	Sweden	1995	1996
Blackstorm	Blackstorm	USA	1992	1999
Blackwinged	Blackwing	USA	1997	2004
	Blackwinged	Russia	1997	2006
Darkshining	Darkshine	France	1995	1998
	Darkshine	Italy	1995	2001
Demonstorm	Demonstorm	Indonesia	1997	2002
	Demonstorm	Mexico	1997	2004
Demonthrone	Demonthrone	Finland	1997	1998
Frostdemonstorm	Frostdemonstorm	Greece	1997	1998
	Frostdemonstorm	Chile	1997	2006
Frostmoon	Frostmoon Eclipse	Italy	1995	1995
	Frostmoon Eclipse	Germany	1995	1998
	Frostmoon	Norway	1995	1998
Frostwind	Attack of the Northern Frostwinds	Colombia	1992	2000
	Frostwind	Germany	1992	2004
Fullmoon	Dying Fullmoon	Germany	1992	1994
	Fullmoon	Poland	1992	1995
	The Mystic Fullmoon	Poland	1992	1995
	Fullmoon Rise	Russia	1992	1997
	Mystical Fullmoon	Brazil	1992	1997
	Fullmoon Promises	Italy	1992	1998
	Mystical Fullmoon	Italy	1992	1998
	Cold Fullmoon	Czech Rep.	1992	2000
	Midnight Fullmoon	France	1992	2000

	Fullmoon Dweller	Mexico	1992	2008
	Fullmoon Mist	Sweden	1992	2009
	Fullmoon Night	Chile	1992	2009
	Bloodred Fullmoon	Taiwan	1992	2011
Goathrone	Goathrone	Greece	1992	1996
Goatmoon	Goatmoon	Finland	1992	2002
Moonfog	Moonfog	Ireland	1993	1998
	Moonfog Darkness	Russia	1993	2000
	Moonfog	Hungary	1993	2006
Ravendark	Ravendark's Monarchal Canticle	Brazil	1995	2004
Raventhrone	Raventhrone	Canada/Austria	1995	1997
Underdark	Underdark	Ukraine	1995	2005
Wintercoffin	Wintercoffin	USA	1993	2013
Winterdemon	Winterdemon	Finland	1995	2000
Wintergate	Wintergate	Germany	1997	1999
Winterhorde	Winterhorde	Israel	1997	2002
Wintermoon	Wintermoon	Brazil	1992	1994
	Cryptic Wintermoon	Germany	1992	1995
	Wintermoon	Finland	1992	1995
	Wintermoon	Poland	1992	1998
	Wintermoon	Estonia	1992	1999
	Spiritual Wintermoon	Greece	1992	2000
	Wintermoon	Mexico	1992	2002
	Wintermoon	Germany	1992	2003
	Wintermoon	Spain	1992	2005
	Wintermoon	France	1992	2013
Wintershadow	Wintershadow	Spain	1992	2005
Winterstorm	Winterstorm	Spain	1992	2007
	Cryptic Winterstorm	UK	1992	2010
	Winterstorm	Spain	1992	2010

BOOK REVIEW

**Sam George and Bill Hughes, eds. *Open Graves, Open Minds: Representations of Vampires and the Undead from the Enlightenment to the Present Day.*
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. 314 pp. Hard cover. ISBN 978-07190-8941-1.**

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For today's generation of teenagers, it may be difficult to imagine that vampires can be anything other than the objects of desire, given the impact of such romantic figures as *Twilight*'s Edward Cullen and *Buffy*'s Angel. Yet historically, fictional vampires were more usually linked with horror and monstrosity; the shift from this early characterisation to the relatively recent phenomenon of the romanticised vampire hero is a focus of Sam George and Bill Hughes' edited collection, *Open Graves, Open Minds*.

The editors describe their collection in the Introduction as "the first book-length study to analyse and comment on this new strand of sympathetic vampire as it appears in the twenty-first century" (2). As George's Preface explains, this book originated in a conference of 2010 and is part of an ongoing project on vampires and the undead in culture. Nina Auerbach's frequently cited observation – and perhaps overly cited, in this collection – that each generation "embraces the vampire it needs" is echoed in Sam George's own chapter, which opens with the note that there is an "irony of creatures with no reflection becoming such a pervasive reflection of modern culture" (56). This

comment signals the collection's interest in a range of cultural concerns as represented in vampire literature.

The book is not limited to modern representations of sympathetic vampires; instead, the sixteen chapters of *Open Graves* comprise a historical overview of vampire narratives from Enlightenment to present times, dealing with a variety of texts and readings. The Introduction and the second chapter each trace some shifts in the vampire genre from past to present, with the Introduction in particular offering a useful background to the vampire of Enlightenment times and beyond. Conrad Aquilina's Chapter Two then moves on to discuss the influence of Polidori's *The Vampyre* in transforming the vampire from its folkloric origins as a monstrous creature to a more Byronic, romanticised figure: "the bloodsucker had left the graveyard and entered the drawing-room. Groomed and debonair, now he mingles within high society and is often invited into the bedroom" (35). This early period is of interest to many scholars of Gothic, given the now famous meeting in 1816 between Polidori, Byron, and others, where a reading from the *Fantasmagoriana* ghost stories inspired their own creative works of horror; eventually culminating not only in Polidori's *The Vampyre* but also Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Although American vampires dominate current fictions, their literary ancestors were born in Europe, and two chapters on Irish and German vampire fictions analyse the texts in the context of national concerns, revealing rather less sympathetic vampires in the process. The most well-known vampire, Count Dracula of *Dracula*, is the creation of Dublin writer Bram Stoker, a legacy that endures today with the city hosting an annual Bram Stoker Festival celebrating all things gothic. As Julieann Ulin points out in her chapter, Stoker's work has received a good deal of critical attention and readings from an Irish colonial perspective, while less attention has been paid to fellow Dublin writer Sheridan Le Fanu's vampire works, which preceded Stoker's *Dracula*. Ulin addresses this by focusing on Le Fanu's 'The Mysterious Lodger' short story and *Carmilla* novella, arguing that "the great attraction between Irish writers and vampire narratives" (40) is due to parallels of "invited invasion" (41) between Ireland's colonial history with England and the vampire's hold over its victims once invited over the threshold, a popular conceit in vampire literature. If vampirism can act as metaphor for colonial troubles in Ireland, it also finds relevance for Germany's Hitler era, according to Lisa Lampert-Weissig in her chapter on two German writers, George Sylvester Viereck and Hanns Heinz Ewers. Lampert-Weissig suggests that Viereck's and Ewers' vampires help explain their own support for Hitler's regime, in that the vampire characters are an attempt to "justify evil not only because of their connection to a superior calling but also because of their own superiority" (91).

Most other chapters focus on American iterations of vampire fictions, particularly on the recent texts that tend to glamorise and romanticise vampires. Providing a range of readings such as gender, race, sexuality, and religion, many chapters engage with popular contemporary American vampire texts, including

Twilight, *True Blood*, *Buffy*, and *The Vampire Diaries.* Although most contributions interrogate vampire representations, Bill Hughes explores the zombies of Dan Waters' *Generation Dead* – a novel that provided the "open graves, open minds" title of this collection – while Marcus Sedgwick provides a different perspective, that of the author reflecting on his use of vampires in his own literature.

Although the editors suggest that their collection of essays is unlike others in offering a "strong connecting narrative" between all the chapters (3), this is not necessarily self-evident. There is some chronological coherency, with chapters roughly ordered by the publication dates of the texts discussed within them, which is fitting for a collection that is interested in tracing the movement towards humanised vampires. Thematically, however, there is perhaps less obvious coherency, with some chapters somewhat isolated and independent compared with others, although certainly there is significant more dialogue between chapters than in most collections. Perhaps this is inevitable in any collection of essays, especially one that is sourced from contributors from both a conference and elsewhere. This may also be complicated by the inclusion of non-vampire texts such as *Dorian Gray* or *Generation Dead* in the discussions, given the vast majority of the book is on vampires, but such quibbles do not detract from the content itself, for overall the chapters share many themes and concerns.

Not all chapters avoid falling prey to that literary criticism vampiric tendency of devouring texts to wring out every last drop of possible meaning, but the scholarship in these chapters offers much of interest. The primary readership for the work is likely to be academics working within Gothic and other speculative fiction studies, rather than the general public, although the writing is fairly accessible. Each chapter is accompanied by endnotes for citations and other notes, and the book includes an index and a full list of references at the end, split into categories of print/online, film, television, and video games, making it a useful resource for researchers within the field. Given its wide scope, the book should offer something of interest to most readers.

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BOOK REVIEW

Lorna Piatti-Farnell. *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature.*
New York & London: Routledge, 2014. 234 pp. Hard cover. ISBN 978-0415823012.

Reviewed by Sarah Baker (Auckland University of Technology)

The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature offers a critical analysis of the modern vampire and argues the recent rise in representation marks a significant shift in popular culture. Piatti-Farnell notes vampires are everywhere; from television to cinema to literature, and examines the context and impact of this explosion in representation. Vampires are no longer just about alienation and transformation she argues but, are a means to examine contemporary cultural anxieties. Examining the work of J.R Ward, Christopher Farnsworth, Stephenie Meyer, Charlaine Harris, and Lara Adrian, Piatti-Farnell demonstrates how the contemporary vampire is moulded into an enigmatic figure with links to both consumerism and popular culture.

Piatti-Farnell considers the social, political and conceptual implications of the 21st century vampire as both an ambiguously coded creature and a literary trope. The discussion is considered against a post 9/11 context, where political horror, cultural interrogations, medical preoccupations aides the critical uncovering of the growing politics of anxiety, conflict, longing and contested identities.

The book focuses on Anglo-American texts and discusses the connections between popular culture, vampires, Gothic and issues of consumer identity and identification. The vampire, Piatti-Farnell argues, is the archetypal figure of want and yearning and is an example of latent desires made manifest. Though the vampire appears across media, this book focuses on fiction recognising this as the original medium for vampiric representation; it is the fictional framework where the vampire reached its popularity as a Gothic creature. In the 21st century she argues, it is literature that showcases the vampire in its most creative territory.

The themes of the conceptual, political and aesthetic features of the vampire are examined. Piatti-Farnell argues that a new categorisation of vampire emerges against a background of scientific experimentation and technological advances. The discussion around Neo-Gothic is particularly useful as she explores contemporary examples set against the traditional literature of terror.

The book is divided into five chapters exploring multiple themes; genetics, corporality, technology, consumerism and urban landscapes. Chapter one considers the importance of genetics on contemporary vampires and how they act as metaphors for a re-elaboration of discourses around engineering, culture and disease. The second chapter is particularly engrossing with the discussion on the Gothic body: genetics, embodiment and corporeality. Chapter three discusses the vampires influence and how fear is portrayed in varied and often contrasting treatments. It examines the uncanny where the familiar becomes alien through the interactions between vampires and humans, the olfactory register, minions, psychic powers and the digital uncanny. One criticism is this chapter was ambitious in its scope and could have been reduced to a more compact discussion. Chapter four examines vampires and marriage, rituals and customs, while chapter five considers how vampires live in the city and how this is a metaphor for the post 9/11 world. With increased national and cultural insecurity the vampire acts as a metaphor to explore the shift in understanding urban communities and contemporary identity in the 21st century.

An important distinction from previous discussions of vampires is that Piatti-Farnell is less interested in gender and sexuality than in discovering the conceptual relation the vampire holds with important contextual issues such as genetics, hybridisation, corporeality, digital technology, scientific experimentation, luxury living, and branding. This mirrors the changes seen in contemporary vampire literature and these are distinctive concerns of the 21st century. A key frame is an interrogation of the vampire as neo-Gothic, where contemporary elements are explored yet recall those elements of the Gothic tradition. The book expertly explores how twenty-first century literature is now a genre–bending category where the vampire has undergone evolutionary changes.

As Piatti-Farnell notes, the vampire itself does not change rather the technology, the preoccupations and the solutions of a society alter at any given time. The vampire mediates these concerns and "allows their latent nature to become manifest through notions of the monstrous, the desirable and the uncanny" and these changes reflect the cultural context in which the creature is placed (198). This work is highly insightful and a comprehensive examination of the vampire in contemporary literature. This is a significant work of scholarship that will be useful to Gothic and popular culture scholars.

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