

**GOTH RHIZOMES: QUEER DIFFERENCE IN MINOR GOTHIC
LITERATURE**

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH
YORK UNIVERSITY,
TORONTO, ONTARIO

October 2013

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Abstract

This project identifies three minor authors in three historical periods, applying deconstructive and queer theory to their writings and to their biographies. The resulting analysis traces gothic effects through other, more familiar texts and figures in order to bring about re-readings that disrupt certain monolithic understandings of literary and sexual identity over time. With a focus on gender transitivity and sexual dissidence, and the insights afforded by queer readings in which queer is framed as a verb, the analysis opens up ways of reading genre through the experimental theories of Deleuze and Guattari. Going beyond identifying major and minor gothic literature, I propose that we understand the literary gothic as a writing machine that produces goth-identified subjects. Tracing concepts like Minor Literature, Rhizome, Becoming-other, the Refrain, and the Body without Organs through fictional and life narratives from Charlotte Dacre, Percy Shelley, Count Eric Stenbock, and Poppy Z. Brite (Billy Martin), I suggest ways in which my reading of minor figures and their works has implications for how we might re-read works by major authors Jane Austen (*Northanger Abbey*) and Henry James (“The Jolly Corner”), and works by popular author Anne Rice (with a particular focus on the character Lestat and the later novel *Tale of the Body Thief*). Similar to the Foucauldian notion of the subject as simultaneously an effect of and a producer of discourse, the turn to Deleuze and Guattari requires a more explicit addressing of agency on the part of authors and readers. A micropolitics of the self through prose narrative is derived, as against a grand narrative of influence, filiation, and static sexual definition.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to three of my family members.

First, to my late grandmother, Maeve Antoinette (Harty) Holmes, who arrived from Ireland in the 1950s and became the first woman to sell furniture in the flagship Eaton's store. Years later, she was also the only family member who seemed unconcerned about my odd fashion and makeup (or at least she kept any critical opinions to herself). She admired academia and great literature, but it was her subversive love of things popular, spooky, queer, and liberatory that has stayed with me since our early days attending theatre, meeting her friends, and poring over her modest but eclectic library (not only did we both love Oscar Wilde, she had also been a Stoker fan from the beginning – she read and kept an early edition of his *Lair of the White Worm*). I know she would be thrilled to see my topic acknowledged in an academy that once would have thought it too low for critical consideration.

Second, and most materially, to my spouse Dr. Morgan Holmes and our son Nicholas. They have an unvarnished view of a process almost as old as we are as a family, having seen me defer, abandon, return, repeat, fret, sweat, create, enjoy, and also hate the process of a PhD over some two decades. When I left my programme in 2000, I thought I would make quick work of the half-written dissertation and return triumphant. The fact that I have been able to trudge back after a long, slow journey away, much humbled and much matured, is because of their patience, their lessons, and their love. Thank goodness Morgan opened that pub door a quarter century ago in the midwinter cold to chase away demons with me, to create lives and knowledge together.

Acknowledgments

Genuine thanks go first to my dissertation committee for evincing in equal parts sagacity, patience and longevity since they assembled in the late 1990s. My supervisor Kim Michasiw's passion for things both gothic and well-wrought kept me coming back even when I thought I had best drop the whole endeavour, both of us knowing I'd have to disappear again for lengthy periods. Ian Balfour and Julia Creet have been enthusiastic and astute readers with an array of lenses that have suited a rather interdisciplinary project perfectly. The questions and suggestions they provided at the first and final stages are a formidable backdrop of psychoanalytic, rhetorical, Marxist, postmodern and queer criticism that – even if only a little made it into the final version – could not help but expand my depth of thinking about gothic texts and goth subcultures.

Friends, family and colleagues deserve special consideration for feeding, challenging, and cheering my eternal return to this work. Singling out individuals seems uncharitable toward the rest, but Denise Stockley deserves some kind of above-and-beyond award for reading drafts and helping me plan my return. I would like to thank all my colleagues in the global educational development community, including the Challenging Academic Development Collective, who have helped me to bring my deconstructive and critical theories from my “former” discipline into an intellectually fulfilling career at conferences and in print. From them I have learned invaluable lessons about feedback and collaborative writing. Undergraduate and graduate professors and fellow students – too many to mention – have inspired and kept me on my toes since the 1980s, perhaps without knowing it.

Throughout my non-academic career, I have had truly supportive supervisors. Beth Popham at Trent understood what it is to care about literary research and teaching while being an administrator; Julia Christensen Hughes at Guelph supported my unusual grant application to visit archives abroad; Donna Ellis and Geoff McBoyle at Waterloo approved my Fall 2012 study leave that brought the project to its ready state. Guelph and Waterloo, through regular research days and Staff Association grants, have been materially helpful beyond what support staff like me are enculturated to expect.

The ever-widening community of gothic studies and queer studies scholars welcomed me early and often into informal dialogues at conferences and elsewhere. Among dozens of critical friends, I wish to honour the memory of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who supported me early on as I was framing my question. A model of scholarly care and intellectual generosity, she talked to me about my project and sent me one of her own copies of *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* when I was having difficulty acquiring one. Finally, had Darren Wershler not mentioned in 1992 “this awesome novel with vampires riding around in a van blaring Bauhaus and drinking Chartreuse” and said “You’ve got to read it,” it is possible that I might never have connected the dots I now see slightly more clearly.

Portions of Chapter 3 would have been impossible to write were it not for the gracious and thorough efforts of Fiorella Superbi at i Tatti – though the main reason for Harvard’s outpost here is to preserve the collections of Bernard and Mary Berenson, Fiorella has kept careful account of the letters and stories of Count Stenbock that found their home there through Mary, his close friend up to his death. David Tibet’s care with republications of some of these stories, getting them into my hands to play with, has been

truly impressive. The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto supplied my earliest encounters with Stenbock texts.

Parts of Chapter 4, revised and updated for the current work, have appeared previously in *Gothic Studies* 9:1 (2007) and in *Romanticism on the Net* 44 (2006). Some initial thoughts on Count Stenbock's "True Story of a Vampire" (much more developed in Chapter 3) appear in my previously published essay "Coming out of the coffin: Gay Males and Queer Goths in Contemporary Vampire Fiction" *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon. (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 1997).

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Preface: Goth(ic) In/Vestments

My own investment in specifically lesbian, gay, bi and trans projects is very much linked to my history with gothic literature and with goth identity through music and fashion. This history is itself a kind of gothic narrative, one of deterritorialization by adoption, family displacement and veils, later informed by both local and global goth scenes in which my self-identification as a bi male seemed most possible. Goth scenes and goths since the 1970s (and, I shall argue, certain kinds of predecessor goth-identified subjects) have been sites of potential disruptions of heteronormative discourse.

Many years ago, I noticed a conference paper title¹ implying that androgynous goth boys' gay aspect was one constructed or romanticized by straight goth women, rather than actually present in the boys themselves. In my experience, on the other hand, the goth scene of the 1980s had been a space in which teens of both (or more, or neither) sexes could be "out" as gay or bisexual long before many of my contemporaries were able to be. However, I also thought I should be careful in my claims about my own history; I could be wrong, after all. So I asked the question of a popular queer studies listserv at the time. I wanted to know what people thought of the idea of goth boys as queer or androgynous *only to the extent that heterosexuality was recuperable* at the end of the night.

I received one reply from another conference-goer from California. She recounted a narrative of her own about a pretty-boy goth whose female "girlfriend" (so everyone assumed) turned out to be a dyke dominatrix who sent him out regularly to recruit young women for her bloodletting pleasures. Not all apparently heterosexual relationships are

¹ At Queer Frontiers, University of Southern California, 1995

what they seem, of course, but it seemed to me that the ratio of sexual alterity or alternatives may be higher in goth scenes² than in other youth subcultures. This is overstated by Carol Siegel in *Goth's Dark Empire* (a point to which I will return), or at least stated too narrowly as masochistic identification in her work, but many stories of coming out amongst my own gay male, lesbian and transgender peers (in academia or outside it) included at least some goth identifications. In our personal histories, goth gets either periodized as a necessary stage, or recalled fondly as a welcoming space for misfits of many descriptions.

At the same time, however, a self-identified gay male (at the time) made the following reply to my listserv query: “My only thought is that on Friday nights the most effeminate looking men (long hair, plenty of make-up, very languid air) are always holding hands with women who look like their identical twin” (anonymized, Q-Study-L, April 14th, 1995). The implication is that the man is therefore straight. Such a view is borne out by limited questionnaire data in the only empirical study that I can locate (Paul Hodkinson, whose *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture* relies both on his own insider status from the early 1990s and on some questionnaire research with 112 responses). Both Hodkinson and Catherine Spooner (in *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*) caution humanities scholars against assuming that goth androgyny is necessarily subversive in terms of sexuality and gender norms.

And yet, two goths of apparently opposite sex holding hands might as easily be an ironic and playful flip-off to the norm, or a self-protective move during a drug trip or walk down potentially dangerous streets, as a sign of actual heterosexuality. What if the

² See pages 33-41, below, for my more specific account of goth, identity, and scene in relation to gothic writing.

androgynous male's body is non-normate in some medicalized way? Or is on a path toward trans identity? What if the "identical twin" woman were a goth dyke whose self-presentation is high femme? This speaks to the invisibility of femme lesbian subjects; with an androgynous man, she must be straight... and yet there is no reason to assume so, and at least one to assume not (goth itself as a space of deliberate play). Heterosexuality ought not to be the default setting, the unmarked category that it clearly is for even supposedly enlightened queer scholars on academic listservs. My project has always been about multiplying this "only thought" that seems to take over many representational regimes.

Perhaps this explains something about how the bestselling author Anne Rice and the unusually aggressive horror writer Poppy Z. Brite became the pretext for my whole project. Both authors use gothic conventions and music scene tropes to offer alternative gender and sexuality possibilities. In a kind of subjective solipsism, Rice is also responsible for some of my own identifications in said goth scenes (part of my self-fashioning came after a certain obsession with her first three vampire novels), whereas Brite seemed more of an unmet friend when *Lost Souls* was published. My literary historical questions have to do with a search, pre-Brite but after reading Brite, for similar texts and authors to the transgressive queer goth themes in older gothic narratives. There is a political immediacy to my project even after many intervening years that has to do with my own history, and coexists (mostly comfortably) with a more scholarly, detached interest in a literary genre or author biographies.

As a slim, effeminate "wimp" or "pussy" and a nerd, I was the target of a lot of masculinist and homophobic anger (words and actions). Sports, student council, working

out with weights or punching bags: none of these activities really mitigated my joining the choir or preferring the company of girls to guys, in the eyes of homophobic peers (and sometimes parents). My solace was, in my small town, the headphones late at night listening alone to Bauhaus, Joy Division, Christian Death, and Siouxsie and the Banshees³. After leaving home and meeting my future spouse Morgan, I found in her catalogue of books the first three novels of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and reckoned I was more like her character Lestat than like many other available models. And in fact, a few short years later when I got involved in occasional text-based fan-fiction type virtual parties on the (pre-visual) web, my character was quite Lestat-like. Although this can be dismissed as merely self-indulgent, one thing we all ("we all" meaning people who were self-identified goth to some extent or another) agreed on was that goth had often been a means of expressing deep-seated dissatisfaction with normative gender and sexuality roles prescribed for us in our social and psychological lives. Anecdote is, of course, only so useful, but as we shall see, the fact that goth functions more as a rhizome-like *scene* than like a proper lineage causes such statements to ring true in more than one locale with more than one set of alienated kids (who were not always quite as white, as middle-class, or as suburban as one might assume). The need to construct and actively

³ Among other bands. I mention these as part of my own entry into goth punk. Although not all four self-identified as such, each was part of scene formation. And much as this is not an autoethnographic dissertation, it is worth noting that many current and former goths – just like anyone in any music scene – signal authenticity by the particular bands we include and exclude from our histories, and at what point in such histories we first started listening. I certainly don't mean to hide from readers my other worn-out records and cassettes from the same period, including "oldies," heavy metal, classic rock, punk, glam, british "shoegazer," 80s pop and New Wave, and classical symphonic music. For more on goth identification, see my introduction, below, as well as Paul Hodkinson's sociological work *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture*; Joshua Gunn's "Marilyn Manson is not Goth;" and Carol Siegel's *Goth's Dark Empire*. For a key text on musical scenes, see Will Straw, "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change."

maintain a lineage draws attention to the unnaturalness of lineage itself – a point made by the dissertation as a whole.

Because of this history, I remain committed to my long-overdue project -- linking gothic reading and writing practices to goth subjectivities -- precisely because of the people who have moved through goth on their way to resistant anti-normative politics of identity and sexuality, the people who have stayed within goth and used it in much the same way, and the people who didn't make it out at all and are no longer with us. It may seem unusual within the discipline for an English project to find its rationale in people's lived experiences. In some sense my work, textual and biographical as it is in the pages that follow, makes strange bedfellows with the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as one of my two overarching theoretical frames. My engagements with queer theory are perhaps best explained in this light; the parts of Deleuze and Guattari's poststructural project that are most about embodied representation are used most effectively in conjunction with critical understandings of sex, gender and sexuality. There is certainly in queer theory an invitation to think about the position of writers and readers as well as (or in relation to) textual analysis.

No analysis of any texts in the following pages is meant to exhaust the meanings in a given work; in fact, in many cases I will be picking up the most minor threads and tying them in surprising ways to isolated events or threads in other texts across time and place. An experiment rather than a method, these tracings offer an often invented continuity across discontinuous terrain. Earlier gothic works could be said also to be doing the work of gothicizing the yet-to-come readers, writers, and texts. The gothic in its classic form sets the scene for more gothic, but also for models of subjects-who-read and

are read by others. This is Haggerty's insight in *Queer Gothic*: the groundwork for psychoanalytic and sexological theory of the late Victorian era is laid by the Gothic many decades prior (perhaps a century). Depth models of the self available to the eighteenth-century audience and writers are different from those available to late nineteenth-century audience and writers; my goal is to take seriously the surfaces of twentieth-century popular culture gothic texts and contexts and map them back in a counter-genealogy⁴ through time. In this procedure, minor works, texts, characters and authors become each others' unmet friends. The major theoretical constructs that will permit this kind of thinking come from the contested assemblage of critical moves that have come to be known as queer theory⁵ (especially insights by Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Ellis Hanson, Judith Halberstam) and from French deconstructive philosophies (especially Deleuze and Guattari along with Foucault).

One further prefatory note about the provenance of the dissertation, this time on its place in my thinking about literature and literary production more generally, will I hope set up the whole more clearly. When this project began in the mid-1990s, I had the deeply-held conviction that gothic texts – in form and substance – could constitute a “minor literature” in whatever historical moment they found themselves inhabiting.

⁴ By counter-genealogy, I mean a genealogy that resists lineage as linear, that seeks to understand the organizing principles of a history that came to be written in a certain way, that seeks to bring the process of subjectivation to bear on the process of literary history. For a Foucauldian, this would simply be genealogical method, on which more in Chapter 1, below, where I compare Foucault's approach to Deleuze and Guattari's. Above, I am thinking of the more common sense of genealogy when I invoke its countercurrent.

⁵ And ironically, it has become common to list the gothic as one of the things queer theorists have in common. Later we shall see the gothic and queer as interoperable – most of the recent works finding in the gothic a particularly queer genre also find queer to be a particularly gothic genre. I would extend that line of thinking to minoritarian deconstruction, which is unsurprising in that Deleuze and Guattari are reacting to, along with Marxism, that very gothic set of texts, Freudian psychoanalysis.

Kafka's "minor literature" is both promoted in itself and held up as a possible template for political deconstruction by postmodern critics Deleuze and Guattari, who see in its imprecise uses of a master language and in its collective enunciation a kind of thirdness that contests fascistic power's consolidation in political binaries (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, 16-27).

At the time, I thought that Gothic texts' own imprecisions and focus on surfaces (formal or affective), together with their curious (and seemingly timeless) attribution to authors and readers who are somehow odd, were an ideal site for a kind of *anachronistic* postmodern thirdness. I understand the move from structuralism to poststructuralism as a promotion of liminality and thirdness, showing the instability of the founding binary oppositions by which the world is apprehended (lived and understood – ontology and epistemology). This thirdness has had many names, theorized variously as Kristeva's "semiotic," Levinas' "illeity," Derrida's "supplement," Foucault's "extradiscursive," and Deleuze/Guattari's "minorization." One could go so far as to find it in the slash between Barthes' S/Z, and in the Lacanian Real. More recently (and more germane to the undoing of the logic of sex and gender identity I am aiming for in this project) third sex, third gender, queer difference, and transgender theories are some consequences of thinking beyond or before dualism.

In the midst of such categorical challenges from my coursework came challenges to the ways in which canonical literature had been established as primarily white, male, formalist, heteronormative, and colonizing. Taken by the postcolonial, feminist, anti-racist, and queer theories that spoke back to the canon, I saw in the gothic a means of tracing not so much an anticanon through literary history but a dark underbelly that might

undo the canon/non-canon binary. In essence, decanonization can *dissipate* canonical despotism rather than replace old with new, or depose one while valuing another. Ideally, I thought, where minor works constituted those cross-currents or tributaries against which the larger canon's "river" defined itself, the gothic impulse in both minor and major works, minor and major authors, could constitute mucky, stony elements of the actual riverbeds that we couldn't normally see. Therefore, an analysis of gothic textuality – and, importantly, identity formation in author, text and readership – would in effect be a decanonizing project.

Where I got stuck, however, was in the details of the texts themselves. They do not always slot themselves so neatly into Deleuzo-Guattarian deconstruction, or queer identity, or gender undoing (some of the strategies I had begun to trace through the history of gothic literature). Obviously, some gothic impulses offer exactly a canonical retrenchment, a conservative politics of text and self, or a reestablishment of norms never effectively undercut by the tendencies their sibling texts might play out differently.

Nevertheless, by anachronizing diachrony a bit, by looking synchronically at pairs of texts and authors, and considering certain kinds of responses or effects in each of three periods, I remain convinced that elements of what I am calling minoritarian gothic can tell us something about the workings of canon formation. The dissertation cannot by itself do justice to history in three completely different eras, nor ought a single dissertation take on all of canon formation or its deformation in a subterranean genre by forgotten authors. It can, though, trace some disjunctions and conjunctions differently than perhaps they've been written before. The move across literary historical periods through gothic figuration is not so very bold (it is what we sometimes call thematic criticism). However, to see in

every gothic text a potentially queer minorization is perhaps to fit material to pre-established theory rather than to analyze that material on its own terms. While it is tempting to see rhizomes and lines of flight everywhere, it is more fruitful to experiment the theory through the texts and thereby test the hypothesis that a certain queer and gothicising reading practice causes new and curious rereadings of what might otherwise seem settled about major literature (whether by this we mean canonical or immensely popular). This, in the end, is all my dissertation can promise.

Chapter 1

Minor Gothic, Queer Theory, and Goth Anachronism

The twin problematic of identity and textuality forms the basis of the following exploratory dissertation. In it, I propose that we think “goth” and “gothic” together.⁶ My contention is that what we call “goth” as a style of self-representation that began in the 1970s in the UK actually arrives much earlier as a subjectivating set of orientations, practices, and self-presentations. Goth is, constructed in a certain way, one condition of possibility for the genesis of gothic fiction – that cluster of forms, criticism, plots, elements, purposes, readers, and writers instantiated in 1764 with Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, having a heyday in the 1790s and generally considered to have continued to the present day in various ways⁷. By folding together two normally distinct but clearly related phenomena in a way that questions typical accounts of linear heritability, I suggest that goth and gothic become active makings – gothing and gothicizing – of queer difference. The grammar, logic, and rhetoric of queer time and queer transitions over that time are found in minor and major authors’ works, especially when read against each other in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of rhizomes.

⁶ Where some may use the capital G for both Goth and Gothic, I have chosen deliberately to use lower-case g in order to reflect this project’s concerns with the minor. Conventions vary amongst the secondary sources consulted.

⁷ Astute readers will notice immediately my sin of omission here: neither goth punk nor gothic writing happened exclusively in the UK. Though my own project centres on the UK and US iterations of both, I gesture toward the transnational nature of goth identity early in Chapter 1. For a more capacious account of gothic as a mode that involves encounters across Europe between literature and philosophy, see Marshall Brown’s *The Gothic Text*. For my own fuller description of goth identity, see 42ff below.

Gothic Plateaus: on the postmodern and queer use of history and identity

In tracing the interpenetration and interdependence of gothic narrative and queer theory, Mair Rigby notes the uncanny recognition of queer subjects in gothic, and gothic subjects in queer theory (46-47). Repetition in both theory and narrative is uncanny when it comes with a difference; the overall contention of this dissertation's encounters with fiction and with theory is that both make use of history and other texts with specific effects. Whether we are in the land of Charlotte Dacre's epigraphs, Count Eric Stenbock's Shelleyisms, or Poppy Z. Brite's bloody and campy aggression, intertextual moves between surfaces treat copies as if there is no original, similar to the misreadings and arbitrary generation of neologisms in Deleuze and Guattari. In a sense this is why Deleuze and Guattari are integral to a study of gothic alterity and utterly useless at once. What I mean by the latter is that they are always already themselves gothic, and other than stating how, there may be little point in pressing them into service. This is not, after all, a dissertation "about" theory. On the other hand, their work can be integral not for its fully-worked out program (it hasn't one, that I can seriously point to and name), nor for its rigour (it is an admittedly partial and fleeting set of projects that are meant to inspire rather than be applied), but rather for its deconstruction of the monolithic maps scholars often attempt to place on a gothic tradition that always slips underneath, away, over, around them.

A significant barrier to engaging Deleuze and Guattari's challenge to arborescence in history, culture, politics, and aesthetics is the poorly-executed use of their work to date. Nearly every instance of a Deleuze-Guattari reference in gothic studies involves a clever but inaccurate representation of their work. When their concepts are convenient, they are imported without explanation or elaboration, simply because they sound like they fit or exhibit a kind of likeness to the subject under discussion. This is the case even with those critics who otherwise know better. It is as though Deleuze and Guattari cast a spell, a glamour over those of us who would rely on their work to elucidate gothic literature.

Beate Neumeier, for example, for whom feminist fabulist Angela Carter "...provides [the reader/critic] with the concrete textual illustrations of current literary theory" (150), reserves a footnote for Deleuze and Guattari. They provide her with the term "desiring machine" though without any explanation or gloss; presumably this is important because it is also nearly the name of a Carter novel (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffmann*). Richard Dellamora, in his landmark *Masculine Desire*, includes on his first page not one but two Deleuzo-Guattarian mainstays: becoming-woman and micropolitics... again, without any further commentary about how they play out in the texts. Even gothic studies veteran David Punter, in the midst of an otherwise psychological reading of Stephen King's novella "The Sun Dog," makes an oblique and abbreviated reference to an "organ without a body" and an "inorganic organ" when discussing the story's soul- or power-draining camera (*Gothic Pathologies*, 130). He writes,

If we think in some of the terms offered by Deleuze and Guattari, we might say that the camera is the organ without a body, the result of an appalling separation, a deflection of and within a gaze such that we no longer know what is our 'own' and we can no longer find anything of our (point of) view; or rather, perhaps, that it is that 'inorganic organ' which attaches itself to and pervades any body with which it has to do (130).

In support of his assertion, Punter cites -- nonspecifically -- Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (140 n23), in which they propose as a critical category the Body without Organs (not its reverse).

While I find myself in sympathy with the use of "pervade" rather than invade or infect, because it inscribes multiple entry points rather than a single breach (and is therefore more in the spirit of the Deleuze and Guattari invoked), I wonder how organ without a body came from Deleuze and Guattari's "Bodies without Organs" (pure surface, the becoming-surface of organs, the BwO from *A Thousand Plateau's* pages 152 and 159, for example). In any case, the field is opened by Neumeier, Dellamora, and Punter, but clearly not explored.

A more fully worked-out early indebtedness to Deleuze and Guattari can be found in Mark Seltzer's *Serial Killers*. While not precisely about gothic literature as a genre or historical tradition, it covers territory that I would like to include in a more wide-ranging debate about gothic writing and representation but which the space of the dissertation does not permit (although some of what Seltzer has to say is relevant to at least one Poppy Brite novel discussed in my Chapter Four). Crime stories in North American and British culture have a particularly gothic valence, coming as they do out of a related

narrative position. Seltzer's contribution to the semiotics and symbolics of serial killing in America relies on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the self as becoming (*TP*, 31, 68) and of the face as an ordering machine (241, 243-4). Although he uses the term "gothicization" with reference to Deleuze and Guattari, Seltzer seems to mean by it a becoming-uncanny in a more psychoanalytic sense than I will be using here. As part of his assertion that the story of serial killing in America is more than the sheer data management and statistical repetition he has just analyzed, Seltzer claims that

[w]hat surfaces is the intimacy between the life process and the information process -- and the gothicization, or rendering uncanny, of both. This gothic "contagion" appears, for example, in the series of analogies and likenesses that structure such accounts: in the relays between the debris of data.. and the debris of bodies... . It reappears in the equivalences drawn between the subject and the dossier... . (41)

That this becoming is visible in the interstices (relays, equivalences drawn between) of contiguous objects (or series) is what makes Seltzer's adoption of the term close to mine.

Judith Halberstam, in her *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, also uses the term gothicization in the context of Deleuze and Guattari's general attack on a Freudian apolitical libido and on a totalizing Oedipality (8, 9). Halberstam limits herself to the earlier *Anti-Oedipus*; consequently her use of "gothicized" (92) and "gothicizations" (116) bears little relation to the becomings created and defined in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, which form the basis for my comments on the gothicization of narrative, subjectivity, and the canon. Of the figure of Bram Stoker's vampire, Halberstam rightly argues that the "monster Jew produced by

nineteenth-century anti-Semitism represents fears about race, class, gender, sexuality, and empire – this figure is indeed gothicized or transformed into an all-purpose monster” (92).

Initially, Halberstam’s “gothicized” seems to be interchangeable with its “or” neighbor in the same sentence, “transformed” (92). She then goes on to discuss Daniel Paul Schreber’s “gothicization” of the world (116), in which case the verb seems to be part of an affect, or at least part of a libidinal flow. While both these meanings are meant by my use of the verbal form as well, I intend it generally to be a more fluid term, encompassing machinic, rhizomatic, and nomadic operations of gothic writing.

I use the term gothic *writing* deliberately: rather than thinking of gothic as a genre with limits and boundaries that make it recognizable, I concur with James Watt’s assertion in *Contesting the Gothic* that there is no unified tradition striving for recognition since Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Rather, gothic is a mode of writing⁸ that can evanesce in a variety of traditional genres, and can cross-fertilize in unpredictable ways. Each reading of a minor author in each of three historical periods leads, though not always with clear causal or temporal logic, to an “activation” of gothic “rhizomes” in other works. The result is a poststructuralist deconstruction of gender and sexuality arrangements in the texts under consideration, and this is the other original aspect of the dissertation: received wisdom about male, female, homosexual,

⁸ In this one could suggest that it functions like satire, comedy, irony, and so on – that is, independent of form or genre. The cross-fertilisation of gothic mood and strategy across genres, across arts, even from arts to identity performance suggests that this may be so. Indeed, my project overall has implications about the the boundaries that leak between genre in literature and mode crossing into subjectivation.

homosocial, and transgender categories is challenged by gothic narratives that read and rewrite other gothic narratives (including biographical gothics).

More recent uses of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts in relation to the gothic are somewhat more promising. Anna Powell, for example, relies on Deleuze's work as she writes on cinema, time, Bergson and *Interview with the Vampire* (the film). Her exhortations to apply Deleuze and Guattari to gothic literature and film, however, remain suggested directions we might take rather than analyses as such. Adriana Craciun's work on masochism is equally compelling, but again, this rich field for the gothic is based on Deleuze's writings without Guattari, and has fuller attention in Chapter 2. More could be done with it, but Craciun here has made a rigorous beginning, unlike Carol Siegel's insistence on a unilaterally masochistic subject position among goths in her *Goth's Dark Empire*.

How, then, are we best to take up Deleuze and Guattari's work and apply it to bodies, identities, texts in historical terms? They seem to be most effective and understandable when dealing with modernity, with the existing avant-garde in artistic movements, and yet I am contending that they have something to say to gothic modes of writing, reading, and becoming. After all, they themselves write texts that embody (in metaphor and also materially through style) many formal elements familiar to readers of gothic literature: passageways between apparently unlinked places or that end abruptly, veilings and masks, despotic family unities, and metaphors of proliferation (see *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, but also to some extent *Kafka*).

In support of my assertion that Deleuze and Guattari's project is applicable to gothic literature and identity, a brief encounter is warranted with the closely-related

genealogical method of their contemporary and sometime collaborator, Foucault. Although the present dissertation is not itself a genealogy, it does keep returning to moments of emergence (rather than ascribing origins) of gothic and goth discourse. So, Foucault's method clarifies the larger project of which an examination of one literary and subjective mode is a small part. Both Foucauldian genealogy and the minoritarian deconstruction of Deleuze and Guattari's works analyse the coherence-making activity of dominant narratives historically and politically. On some level, all systems of human thought (whether in science, linguistics, history, economics, philosophy) give structure to what is unstructured, and the structuring process (so the theory goes) deliberately masks its own activity. For Foucault, this structuring process is discourse, and its master trope is the genealogical tree (see Weigel for an astute genealogy of genealogies, also discussed briefly below). For Deleuze and Guattari, it is described variously as arborescence, binarizing/biunivocalizing (Faciality), microfascism, etc. (*A Thousand Plateaus*). What unites them with other post-1968 French intellectuals is the mistrust of the "grand recits" (Lyotard) derived from Marxist and Freudian stories about history, culture, self.

How this makes sense in a dissertation on English literature is that the organizing principles of literary history (whether they be founded on formal and rhetorical grounds, value-based decisions, class struggle, canonicity based on identity-based exclusionism, and so on) are very like any other discourse that seeks to make things cohere. To bring Foucault's genealogy or Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-other to bear on canons (or, in this case, modes of writing like the gothic that are often the examples **against which** canonicity establishes itself) is to question the arborified, the linear, the structuring binaries that support the logic of coherence.

Two fundamental principles of Deleuze and Guattari's approach from which all else in this dissertation follows are: first, difference is not secondary or derivative. Difference is not after sameness; even sameness is simply an organizing of difference that masks its organizational efforts.⁹ Second, for Deleuze and Guattari, minor and major are qualities rather than quantities (*Thousand Plateaus*, 291). Minor texts and minor identities are everywhere, including within major or dominant texts and identities, and related to the first point, are themselves the difference on which sameness (canonicity, the logic of identity) relies. The metaphor they use for radical difference and minor qualities (in themselves and within the apparently arboreal) is the rhizome, and it is through the concept of rhizomes transposed into gothic literary history and goth subjectivities that I explore the eruption of the minor into the major over time.

Rhizomes, Minor Literature, and Genealogical schema

We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction... . . . Like hybrids, which are in themselves sterile, born of a sexual union that will not reproduce itself, but which begins over again every time, gaining that much more ground. Unnatural participations or nuptials are the true Nature spanning the kingdoms of nature. Propagation by epidemic, by contagion, has nothing to do with filiation by heredity, even if the two of these

⁹ As Todd May puts it, "What Deleuze wants is not a derivative difference, but difference in itself, a difference that he believes is the source not only of the derivative difference but of the sameness on the basis of which derivative difference is derived" (144). It is worth noting affinities here with Foucault's principles of genealogical and discursive organization of history and culture, and with Derrida's *différance*. It is also worth noting, in relation to my own topic, Jerrold Hogle's analysis of a similar concept and practice through Percy Shelley's writing. See his *Shelley's Process* for a full account of Shelley's rhetorical and conceptual self-deconstructions.

intermingle and require each other. The vampire does not filiate, it infects. (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 241-242)

Martin Saar, in “Genealogy and Subjectivity,” helpfully acknowledges the difficult and sometimes contradictory nature of Foucault’s particular uses of the Nietzschean concept of genealogy. For Saar, we cannot think of the three elements of Foucauldian genealogy without thinking at the same time of the constitutive role subjectivity plays in all three (232). He asks us to consider genealogy as a “mode of writing history or a historical method;... a mode of evaluation, i.e. as critique; and ... as a textual practice or a style specific for a genre” (232). Between history, critique, and style, Saar finds the latter formal element decisive in distinguishing both Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogy from other historico-critical methods (238) and not much attended to by previous commentators. He identifies the “highly rhetorical and hyperbolic” style and the “address” toward a particular audience. I am tempted at this point to draw connections to Deleuze and Guattari’s identification of formal elements in Kafka’s notion of minor literature, specifically the “collective assemblage of enunciation” (*Kafka*, 18): this strikes me as a similar claim about the de-sovereignizing of the author-subject. The “implicating of the addressee” (Saar, 239) in the genealogical story is part rhetoric, but also part hermeneutical constitution of a “we” (Saar, 24). In writing a gothic genealogy, then, just as in pursuing a theory of minor gothic literature, the historian-critic is “successful when his readers take over the writing and start off projecting their own versions of the present” (240).

This, in fact, signals instances of emergence of the gothic text and goth body as mutually constitutive discourses. Sigrid Weigel reminds us that Foucault distinguishes between origin and emergence, and sees the latter as the moment when a body moves “from the wings to open stage” (“Genealogy...”). Weigel then traces the relationship between those “wings” – what Foucault might, I think, consider the extra-discursive, and the will to seek origins. She goes on to perform a genealogy of genealogy, historicizing the concept and demonstrating its master trope, the tree diagram in all its forms, including the “symbolic, iconographic and rhetorical practices, the systems for recording and the techniques of culture through and in which the knowledge of families, races and species or of the succession of life within time is handed down” (ibid). Her conclusion is that the tree is, in the history of genealogy, the master plot or trope; it is the schema that condenses and subsumes “the complex issues of genealogical figures of thought” (ibid).

For gothic literature and embodied goth subjectivity, what this implies is that attempts by literary and cultural critics to fix origins and diagram literary history are bound up in the dominant *techne* of our disciplines (studies of influence, studies of synchronic context, even the simple privileging of rhetorical sophistication to create a canonical lineage). To attempt to isolate moments of emergence, that movement from the “wings to the stage” – as this dissertation clearly does as regards goth subjectivity and minor texts – should also attend to what is happening in those wings (especially in relation to hegemonic stories about the gothic, for example, or about monolithic sexual identities, or about dimorphic sex models).

In fact, this is exactly where the rhizome comes into play. As a figure of non-derivative, primary difference that precedes attempts to arborify (and is always

underneath the apparently-arboreal), the rhizome as an underground stem or a root traveling along a surface offers us a way into the offstage wings (to mix our metaphors) that need not be condensed or subsumed under the sign of origin. I suspect that the rhizome is to Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarian poststructuralism what discourse analysis is to Foucault's genealogical emergence. And the rhizome is also the state of the minor in their conceptual experimentation. Recalling that the minor is a quality (rather than a quantifiable minority group), its capacity to erupt creatively in the major (and thereby minorize the majoritarian dominance that has masked its making-coherent of difference) is exactly what draws us to the gothic writ large, and to the specific instances of gender and sexual trouble in texts by and about Dacre, Stenbock, and Brite/Martin.

Becomings in the gothic: sex, gender, and sexuality

One of Deleuze and Guattari's more provocative statements pertaining to becoming-minor is about sex and gender. For them, male subjects can effect a becoming-woman through creative activity. However, women too must become-woman. No one is born with an identity; they go so far as to link becoming not only to the sex/gender system¹⁰ but to ethnicity, race (more properly in this framework, racialized identity), and cultural identity. That is to say, a woman must become-woman, but also a "Jew" must "become-Jewish" and so on.

¹⁰ The "sex/gender system" is Gayle Rubin's term from her groundbreaking 1975 essay "The Traffic in Women" and it denotes the means by which sexed bodies are, through exchange value, made to produce meanings and economies in particular kinship structures. It remains a powerful concept to this day in a number of fields and I refer to it here knowing full well that its reliance on Marx, Freud, Levi-Strauss and Lacan puts it in play with Deleuze and Guattari's targets; yet both Rubin and the French minoritarian deconstructionists share a liberatory and revolutionary rhetoric.

Becomings play out in various ways in gothic fiction (and will be taken up more specifically in the following chapters), from Matilda's transformations in *The Monk* to Victoria's increasingly animal and masculine subjectivity in *Zofloya*, to Henry and Catherine's exchanges in *Northanger Abbey* and Percy Shelley's taking up by the Decadents in late Victorian England.

The concept of becoming, then, is fundamental to gothicized sex, gender, and sexuality. Becoming-other names the process of difference-making, and I hyphenate it in order to mark its hybridity and contingency. If it is the case that a "Jew" is not "a" Jew until he or she "becomes-Jewish," (*Thousand Plateaus*, 291) and if it is the case equally that a "woman" must "become-woman," why should not a "man" have to "become-man?" For Deleuze and Guattari, it is because a man -- symbolically and really -- *is* already. Man is being rather than becoming because he is the norm, the (seemingly pre-organized) *same* against which "degrees of deviance" (*Thousand Plateaus*, 178) are measured. In order to become-other, male subjects must pass through the category of the feminine. Becoming-woman is a universal aspect of becoming-other, it would seem. This is in fact criticized more or less effectively by Rosi Braidotti in her *Nomadic Subjects*: her claim is that not enough feminist critics have taken deconstruction to task for positing as essential the category of the feminine as a universal "sign of becoming" (185). In this case Derrida is her example, but Deleuze forms the basis for many of her conceptualizations throughout the book (including the title), and it is Deleuze's work that

she simultaneously endorses and critiques when she writes about the positionality of becoming-minor.

One effect of the supernatural in literature, and in gothic literature specifically, is to change the terrain of these programs of becoming and the positions inhabitable on it.

As Braidotti points out,

The more I read Deleuze, the more I am struck by the very real, that is, conceptually plausible notion that in the process of becoming, far from being the dissolution of all identities in a flux where different forms and connections will emerge, may itself be sex-specific, sexually differentiated, and consequently take different forms according to different gendered positions. (121)

I would add that these “different gendered positions” vary historically as well as socially and culturally. Therefore, the dandy in London throughout the nineteenth century will “become” in ways different from the “mannish woman” of modernism, or the “executive” of late global capitalism, for example. The power of the gothic is its writing and rewriting of nomadic gender positions from which and through which people and texts become-other. Is goth another gender? Quite possibly, in at least two ways. First, foundational difference in sex and gender (rather than predeterminedly dimorphic sex mapped to binaristic gender), following the logic of minor and rhizomatic concepts, suggests that coherence is a secondary mapping that masks its own genesis, rather than

third sex or third gender being derivative of an original pair. Second, late twentieth-century becomings recast earlier writers as goths, just as late nineteenth-century becomings do in their own right. When relayed through the representation-machine of vampire gender and vampire sexuality, as they are in Stenbock, Rice, and Brite, the possibilities for becoming are shifted away from the “essentialization of the feminine” (Braidotti, 185) and toward rhizomatic, metonymic proximities. Two effects of this movement in the Anne Rice novels one might consider, then, are a revised notion of childhood and family in the figure of Claudia as a problematic pseudo-daughter, and a revised notion of masculinity in Lestat’s attempt to regain a human body through supernatural switching. I consider the latter in Chapter 4, below.

Judith Butler and Performative Gothic

In her “Foreword” to the second edition of *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler clarifies some of the positions she had been accused of holding or contributing to over the intervening decade since its landmark first edition. She reminds readers that we can consult *Bodies that Matter*, *The Psychic Life of Power*, and *Excitable Speech* for accounts of the materiality of bodies, agency and interiority, and inextricability of linguistic and theatrical elements of performativity, respectively. So much, though, flows from her conception of gender performance and gender as performativity, that she dwells on this a little more.

She explains the genesis of her understanding of performativity as Derridean in the sense that an object is anticipated by a subject, and thereby conjured as exterior and real. Gender is, then, mistaken as an interior truth when in fact it may only be an interior anticipation that then creates an exterior to which the expectation aligns. "In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself" (xiv, xv). She goes on to tie it to repetition and time. "Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv).

Consider, then, what would happen if we were to make the double move of tying this kind of performativity to gender in the gothic, and to the gothic itself. After all, the gothic relies on both performance and performativity for its visibility as gothic. That is to say, the anticipation of a gendered essence and its ritualizations over time in gothic literature are more or less shored up in some of gothic criticism's categories (male gothic, female gothic) and more or less denaturalized in other regimes of criticism (queer theory). The role of this dissertation, then, is to find ways in which there is textual evidence for gothic arrangements of gender that explain the performative in both directions (normative and non-normative).

At the same time, what if we were to think of the gothic and goth themselves as performative? That is to say, gothic is "not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a [canonical] body

[of literature], understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration." And what of the performative gothic that posits an essence outside itself and thereby makes it real?

Butler also explains how it is that the performative can involve both language and theatre, inextricably so. Her critics have sometimes suggested that she favours particular gender troublings, but she is at pains here to remind us that the book is about not assuming rather than about putting in place a new regime of power. It follows, for Butler, that particular subversions are not always disruptive, and can in fact be normative in their effects. An example relevant to the present work is in fact male goth androgyny, as Catherine Spooner rightly notes, but perhaps also high femme goth. Both can be, but neither is necessarily, counternormative. As Butler puts it,

It is important for me to concede, however, that the performance of gender subversion can indicate nothing about sexuality or sexual practice. Gender can be rendered ambiguous without disturbing or reorienting normative sexuality at all. Sometimes gender ambiguity can operate precisely to contain or deflect non-normative sexual practice and thereby work to keep a normative sexuality intact.

(xiv)

She argues against simple analogies -- in this case, equating the formation of race with the formation of gender -- in favour of an analysis that explains when different identities rely on each other for definition and when they don't (xvi).

Finally, Butler offers the idea of coalitional agency as the way forward (not dressing up in the *right* kind of drag, or subverting gender in the *right* sorts of ways). This is a useful and fair-minded approach. "I continue to hope for a coalition of minorities that will transcend the simple categories of identity, that will refuse the erasure

of bisexuality, that will counter and dissipate the violence imposed by restrictive bodily norms" (xxvi).

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and the homosocial

In *Between Men*, with nuanced readings of nineteenth-century British novels, Eve Sedgwick shows that a foundationally homosocial impulse subtends major Victorian literature. By homosocial, Sedgwick refers to a particular triangulation of male-male desire through a woman. It need not be explicitly sexual desire, but it need not *not* be either. Her thesis complements my own and in fact is part of the possibility for thinking it. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, she reminds us to be wary of accepting the formulation “homosexuality as we know it today” (44), for such assumption leads us away from the mechanisms and differences by which identities are constructed and lived in specific times and places. Taking both concerns to heart, my project seeks to find in a *fin-de-siecle* apparently obviously homosexual life and texts some signs of difference and see how this pursuit changes the ways we can understand a text by a more canonical author. At the same time, I test the theories of homosociality which, as Sedgwick rightly identifies, are linked to the development and obsession with character from eighteenth-century literature through the gothic and romantics on, presaging the very psychoanalytical terms by which we attempt to understand more contemporary character, identity, and so on. Hence Chapter 2’s discussion of Charlotte Dacre’s aggressive, passionate heroine and conflation of character with author. This sets up a re-reading practice that helps us to see Catherine Morland’s gothicizing impulse in a new light, and

permits a bridge between the young Percy Shelley in Chapter 2 and the later decadent author (Count Stenbock) in Chapter 3.

Finally, against these backdrops, Sedgwick's concepts are pressed into play in a consideration of a postmodern, 1990s pairing of text and context in Chapter 4. While Anne Rice's popular vampire chronicles series stands in for major literature, the minor homosocial function is explored in Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls*. Again, with the conflation of text and author, what has been understood as gay male horror fiction may indeed be something else as well, especially given Brite's own gender-transitive workings-through of identity politics and embodied goth difference¹¹. And indeed Sedgwick, a quarter century ago or more, when writing the preface to her revised dissertation that became *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, predicted our move beyond male and female gothic, or masculine and feminine gothic, or paranoid and hysterical gothic. She writes "In the female-centred readings, this has so far occurred most interestingly through the question of maternity" (vii) – and the "so far" here is what challenged me to think about other modes of reading female-centred texts that do not fit "gender complementary" (Craciun, "The Subject of Violence," 46) models. Where Dacre enacts Sadean femininity (Craciun, "Introduction: Charlotte Dacre and the Vivisection of Virtue," 9), Stenbock Uranian femininity, and Brite transgender masculinity, the gothic is the means by which each forms a coherent set of creative identities (or really alterities) that, I propose, carry forward into other texts as part of a critical reading practice.

¹¹ Although Brite now lives as Billy Martin and I shall hereafter refer to him with the male pronoun, he leaves Poppy Z. Brite on his websites as his name for his professional authorship of horror fiction. I have confirmed this approach with him for the dissertation. See Chapter 4, below.

Rhizomes, goth-identification, and the case of nomadic embodiment

The gothic engages several poststructural and queer themes that have not received sufficient serious attention critically. Existing criticism of the gothic from a deconstructive perspective is sorely lacking in depth and breadth. The rejection of Freudo-Marxism and the troubling of textuality and identity provided by French theory after 1968 seems to have a natural home in (some) gothics -- in fact some of the theory itself (in a kind of Freudian redux) is quite gothic.

Queer theory has found a home much more readily in gothic narrative. Many critics in the last decade and a half have noticed that their peers started out in, or have made major contributions to, consideration of gothic texts in particular (by way of introducing their own gothic studies!). At the same time, Haggerty's *Queer Gothic* and Hughes and Smith's *Queering the Gothic*, two of the most obviously-titled critical takes, feel like initial forays even though they are underwritten by important earlier works by theorists like Sedgwick, Case, Halberstam, and Hanson. Therefore I am reconsidering gothic and goth queerings along two axes: the obvious syntagmatic axis of the late twentieth century, post-Stonewall and about the time of AIDs onward, as well as a less obvious but equally important literary history on the paradigmatic axis (along lines that are far from direct or straight).

Through, then, a combination of gothicizing and gothicized concepts from Deleuze and Guattari, I trace a queer gothic lineage that to date has not been traced.¹² My

¹² Certainly this could also be accomplished as a Foucauldian genealogy; the choice to explore Deleuze and Guattari's similar deconstructive strategies instead has to do with, as stated previously, the deployment of a kind of gothic mode in their own experimental writing. However, as we shall see, Foucault's analysis of discourses is essential and therefore interleaved as necessary.

attempt is to avoid having it function in the typical master trope of origin and lineage – the ancestral tree formation (Weigel) – but instead demonstrate how isolated, creative elements of texts from other flourishes of the gothic (including the first round in the eighteenth and the late Victorian) become transforming, readable moments over time. The queering of the gothic and the gothicizing of the queer includes gender transitivity, aesthetic sensibility, and an account of interiority/exteriority through the texts under consideration. The late nineteenth century in particular forms a kind of crux psychologically for identity formations, and by looking at authors and works both minor and major, as well as drawing connections backward to the Romanticism of Percy Shelley and extreme gothic of *Zofloya* plus forward to the contemporary work of Brito, I am explicitly asking us to reconsider Foucauldian work on sexuality and identity in a logic of active transitivity and rhizomatics.

Famously, Foucault turns on its head the equation of “Victorian” with “sexual repression” or silence. In his *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* he demonstrates that in fact there was a proliferation, an explosion of writing and talking about sex. Classifying, taxonomizing, warning, and so on in medical, legal, educational terms actually constituted identities they sought to explain. It is thus that what had previously been apprehended as acts (censured or taboo or celebrated) became organized as coherent subjective identities. In the case of homosexual identity, Foucault picks, not uncontroversially, “around 1870” (43) as, roughly, the moment at which discourses and the subjects through which they are enacted become more concrete. In his wide-ranging account of sex and sexuality (and more specifically in his re-presentation of Herculine Barbin later), Foucault is practicing exactly what Saar suggests about his genealogical

method: he writes history, he critiques, and he uses a highly rhetorical style that implicates the addressee (Saar, 232, 239). There is much of use here, in particular the interest in the moment of emergence, of “surgissement” from “wings to stage” flagged by Weigel.

Rhizomatics, becomings-other, and minor literature are not unrelated, therefore, to Foucauldian genealogy. Each set of approaches is interested in common critical goals: to understand the logic of organization and coherence when it comes to history and identity; to challenge the reigning structuralisms and Freudo-Marxist orthodoxies of their times; to practice freedom through philosophical and textual experimentation. Deleuze and Guattari, however, take more extreme approaches when it comes to the formal elements of their collaborative writing. *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* are challenging to read not only because of the breadth of their conceptual material, but also because of the material strangeness of their writing practice. They create, they operate, they resist interpretation. They do not wish to see their work together as theories to be applied; rather, they provide us with experimental machines – some perhaps single-use – hoping that we will produce some of our own. In this, and in the intensities they form from transgressive background material (Artaud, Kafka, Bataille, for example), I find that Deleuze and Guattari share resemblances with the minor authors and texts I am analysing. In a recursive and iterative move, then, it makes a perverse kind of sense to run Deleuzo-Guattarian root-stems along the surfaces of Dacre, Stenbock, and Brite as a form of critique itself. Perhaps this is the practice of freeing the decidedly unfree (thematically and historically) gothic tradition from its traditional moorings in history, in depth psychology, in popular culture.

Deleuze and Guattari and literary criticism

It is difficult, to say the least, to follow the contradictory and occasionally dead-end paths of Deleuze and Guattari's theories to come up with anything resembling a method. In fact this is not what we are supposed to do, according to them. There is not a theory to be applied, as they put it. Yet there are programmatic elements to their works, which, as Bruce Baugh suggests in "How Deleuze can help us make Literature work," can be read alongside other works for mutual elucidation.

Where they ask about certain effects and certain machines, I have inserted "gothic" and occasionally "goth" for "certain" in both cases, and it has been productive as a thought experiment. So, to take liberties with Baugh's quotation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, "Given a [gothic and/or goth] effect, what machine is capable of producing it? And given a [gothic and/or goth] machine, what can it be used for?" The answer is characterized by Baugh as having to do with one's goals (the reader's, the critic's, and, one supposes, the writer's) -- and these goals sound quite individual but could turn out to be collective. However, all this implies to me that goal-orientation is unquestionable in the system. I am comfortable simply reading Deleuze and Guattari alongside the gothic for mutual interaction and experimentation. The key for Baugh is that Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic criticism, by "considering the use of literary works" rather than only their interpretations, "maximises the powers of both works and readers, rather than subordinating one to the other" (35).

Where liberatory sexual and gender politics arise in Deleuze and Guattari, at least potentially, Marlene Goldman criticises their inconsistent use of transvestism and drag

when theorizing the possibilities of one of their most important concepts, becoming-other. Unsurprisingly, Deleuze and Guattari suffer from the Franco-centrism of intellectual life in Paris in the 1970s, in which anthropological Others often held keys to philosophy that couldn't possibly be supplied – because of French self-blinding -- by analogous moments at home in the more cosmopolitan France. That is to say, transvestism in other countries might in fact lead to becomings-other, whereas the same at home wouldn't. This is an ethnocentric failing on their part and a Romanticization or exoticization at the same time. Another possible corrective to their work is the same we might make to Kristeva's work (in *Powers of Horror*) on abjection -- work that has fueled much commentary on the gothic and monstrosity in general as a cultural form: its positing of a transhistorical subject.

Why goth?

Given such concerns, why goth? It seems anachronistic at best, simplistically transhistorical at worst, to tie a subcultural fashion and music scene from the 1970s forward to a literary history of a genre or a mode that predates it by over 200 years. Goth style certainly takes many of its cues and templates from gothic themes and figures. Supernatural and macabre imagery, terror and horror, vampires and other monsters, confinement and transformation, among others, all form part of the goth repertoire whether in terms of fashion, event, music, self-presentation, affect. Debates about whether goth is worth considering seriously in scholarship have sharpened in the past two decades. Recent scholarly collections and monographs have appeared within the humanities and social sciences that suggest goth is not going away as a critical category,

in spite of its evolving identity formations. One reason that a scene-based subculture such as goth is fascinating in relation to literary studies is its transnational, intertextual migratory pattern (much like the gothic novels in Europe in the 1790s, translations and mutations abound across linguistic and geographical borders, within texts as well as between them). I am suggesting that there is also a more nuanced transhistorical argument to be made about goth identity in particular. In this case, transhistorical will not mean never-changing, constant (one of the rare times that the prefix “trans” does seem to denote this); instead, goth ranges across history rhizomatically, changing subject and object by turns. Therefore, as we shall see in the following chapters, we get Percy and Mary Shelley gothing and gothed, influenced by Charlotte Dacre as goth, and differently, a goth Jane Austen. Count Eric Stenbock re-goths Percy Shelley along with his cohort of decadent aesthetics, who form a goth template for Henry James to disavow. Goth derivations of Ricean vampire subculture resurface with a difference in the fiction and the real-life parties of Poppy Z. Brite in the 1990s.

Goth is historically moored, of course, and using or abusing it in this way needs to be done with consideration for actual subjects rather than only textual play. There is a danger in taking goth as an emblem of subversion (just as there is in doing the same with gothic fiction). Catherine Spooner points this out eloquently in her *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*: “while the formulations of power within a particular subculture are a potentially fertile topic of investigation, to invest the subculture thereby with a particularly subversive or transgressive potential within the wider culture is problematic” (166). Paul Hodkinson takes a more extreme position about the treatment of goth by humanities text-focused scholars. His *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* relies on more empirical,

qualitative interview approaches and includes elements of autoethnography (Hodkinson was, like me, and like Spooner, a member of the subculture group he now studies). For Hodkinson, not attending to actual goths' self-constructions is to invest the whole subculture with the critic's own textual and critical obsessions rather than deriving an accurate picture of the work goth can do. His specificity is a welcome corrective to such works as Carol Siegel's in *Goth's Dark Empire*, for whom goth seems generally to be found in the iconography of alternative industrial band Nine Inch Nails' videos, and is always about sadomasochism.

At the other extreme, perhaps, is Maggie Kilgour's 1995 dubbing of "The Artist as Goth" -- by which she means, it seems, all gothic writers when their lives and their works intertwine, from Godwin and Mary Shelley onward. Rather than such an expansive use of the term, I am interested in tracing what critical possibilities might emerge by seeking to understand the role gothic plays in the construction of goth identities, and the way in which goth identities themselves repatriate a kind of gothic rhizome from the circumstances and contexts in which earlier texts were produced. That is to say, goth as goth punk, or gothic rock, or goth subculture is fixed in time (variously between 1978 or 1980 and the mid-1990s, although one can find goth elements still around the world even now); however, it is chronologically unstable and, I will argue, destabilizing chronotopically, because of the ways in which it takes up gothic texts and themes for its own representational history. Goth makes goths of prior gothic writers, who themselves predict or prefigure goth affect and activity.¹³

¹³ Note that this identitarian schema does not necessarily serve a liberatory or subversive end, just as it is not necessarily a conservative tactic. It is political, but its politics are of the sort that form a self-guaranteeing discourse. It remains to be determined the extent to

In his *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, musicologist Roy Shuker denotes goth as both musical genre and subcultural style. It is, he says, "influenced by the proto-punk ... of American band The Velvet Underground and the sound experiments of the rock avant-garde" (154). Bands he identifies as goth include Joy Division, Bauhaus, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the Southern Death Cult (155), situating goth's provenance as British and immediately post-punk. Shuker mentions The Sisters of Mercy, The Jesus and Mary Chain, and The Cure as other important exemplars, with the music itself at its core typically including "...a low bass pulse, pounding drumbeats, electronic sound effects, low-pitched vocals, often spoken rather than sung, and with deep, dramatic vocal timbre" (155). This is a fairly uncontroversial portrait of goth beginnings as mediated through UK bands, although as a scene, part of its development and memorialization will include many arguments about which bands actually do and do not belong in the category (self-positioned or otherwise).

Shuker, though, goes on to explain goth as a subculture: "Goth was also a cultural style, with goths characterized by their black clothes and the heavy use of dark eye and face make-up. The genre and its fans were associated with several moral panics around youth suicides in the late 1980s" (155). Now, of course, the moral panic is around school shooters in North America. From Columbine to the most recent shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, connections to goth subculture are often drawn by news media¹⁴. In his

which the discourse serves one or several results. This is a genealogical question that will not be answered herein but remains an animating question for the whole.

¹⁴ See The Daily Mail, UK article by Hayley Peterson constructing killer Adam Lanza as a "Goth Loner," refuted by The Blogging Goth, a student journalist who interviews both Spooner and Hodgkinson here:

<http://theblogginggoth.wordpress.com/2012/12/18/subculture-responds-to-goth-loner-accusation-over-adam-lanza-tragedy/>

wide-ranging 1998 account of the literary and cultural genre *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, Richard Davenport-Hines also situates goth as a cultural style (although his is much more connected to past likenesses admissible as evidence for his portrayal of current goths). Speaking of intertextual citation of David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet* by Poppy Z. Brite in the novel *Drawing Blood*, Davenport-Hines calls the scene of the 1980s and 1990s "always ominously self-referential" (360). Its roots are musical, according to him, beginning with the "shock rock" of Alice Cooper in the early 1970s, followed by "the punks, who in turn preceded the goths" (364). Like Shuker's genealogy, this only tells part of the story. Davenport-Hines, though, is not restricted by the encyclopedic format Shuker has chosen, and so can expand:

Beginning in 1978 there was a proliferation of bands whose musicians had dyed black hair and wore black lipstick torn black lace, fishnet, crushed velvet, chains and white make-up. Their appearance was as eloquent as their lyrics. Indeed, these goths of the late 1970s vied with punks in providing visual vitality to the most dismally unstylish decade of the twentieth century. The goth heyday was around 1980-81: by 1984 the fashion was petering out, although it survived in stubborn remnants for another decade (364).

We can, of course, note that it is still around in both mutated and relatively original forms. In contrast to heavy metal's aggressive, militaristic, sexist music, "the goth style was more submissive. Its hallmark was intelligent cynicism. Goth bands offered dark infamy, ...brigandage..., ...menace, defiance, inversion" (364). And humour; Davenport-Hines concurs with Mick Mercer, historian and popularizer of goth subculture, that while

onstage, goths are quite serious and gloomy, offstage they are often quite full of humour (364).

By the 2000s, more interest in creating a clearer picture making sense of goth had emerged. It is at this point that Spooner's significant redefinition and critique of the subculture is possible; too, Hodkinson's sociological approach to identity and related critique of goth's overtaxialisation is the sign of a maturing field. This a problem he tackles again if anything more strongly in Spooner and McEvoy's *The Routledge Companion to the Gothic* (2007) in his entry "Gothic Music and Subculture." The fact that this term is worthy of inclusion in the key terms collection confirms my hunch a decade earlier that the literary and subcultural gothic and goth links needed to be made. And finally, Lauren Goodlad and Michael Bibby's 2007 collection *Goth: Undead Subculture* signals a serious turn in goth scholarship, taking various critical approaches to the phenomenon organised under the headings Genders, Performances, Localities, Artifacts, Communities, and Practices.

The point, then, is not to force goth or gothic into the contours of a radical, critical, or deconstructive project. Rather, I am interested in what happens to the categories goth and gothic when they take on the active, transformative role in reading practices (analeptic and proleptic) among authors, readers, and intertexts. When goth and gothic, like queer, become verbs: gothing and gothicizing, like queering, open up possibilities for an undoing of monocultures, monolithic identities, even canonicity as such. Goth and gothic can, thought together in this way, function as a mode of becoming-otherwise that may or may not subvert power, but at the very least can help us to see the

contours of its discursive formation in literary history and emergence in self-identificatory practices.

My central contention is that Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature (as a strategic effect-machine) has implications for how we can read the gothic impulse, or mode, or genre in literary history. These implications derive in the first place from what minor literature is capable of doing (not everything, to be sure): Minor literature seems to me to be part of a deconstructive project. That is to say, it is one way AWAY from binarily-constituted dominant truths. Although Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly name it as such, the three important characteristics of a minor literature – in their words “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” – are an affirmative and agential deconstruction of a kind different from the apparently text-bound relativisms of a Derrida, for example.¹⁵ This textual and subject-oriented collective politics we can name “minoritarian deconstruction.” I am claiming that minor *gothic* literature has a corollary in the identity deconstructions effected by minor *goth* reading and self-rewriting. The other important claim that makes this project unique is that even some of the most canonical and/or major works can, read in certain ways, contain minoritarian moments (or potential becomings-other).

¹⁵ I say “apparently” because this is a reductive view of Derrida's actually expansive view of text and reading difference, but it is the currency of the day in dismissing his relevance for a political immediacy. It occurs to me that Deleuze's partnering with the clinical practitioner Guattari may be what, over time, caused some to think of Deleuze as more politically engaged than was Derrida or Foucault, which of course is a falsehood. In any case, the point here is to differentiate, however provisionally, between majoritarian deconstruction of logos, phallus, and so forth, and minoritarian deconstruction's active experimentation with what difference looks like on the ground.

In gothic fiction as in goth self-fashioning, a ‘nomadic’ set of characters, texts, plots, authors, and readers range across surfaces (or at least are less *rooted* than they may seem at first glance). For example, as we shall see, just as men and women goths in the 1990s copied exactly the makeup and clothing of very gothic comic book characters like Death in Neil Gaiman’s *Sandman* series, or the titular hero of J. O’Barr’s *The Crow*, themselves based on goth templates from the 1980s, Percy Shelley in the early 1800s copied the gothic tropes in Charlotte Dacre’s and Matthew Lewis’ works, in turn providing with his life the template for later gothicised versions of childhood and adult aestheticism. Stenbock’s Gabriel in both “True Story of a Vampire” and in his “Other Side: A Breton Legend” seem copied almost directly from Medwin’s and others’ descriptions of Shelley’s youth. By engaging key Deleuze and Guattari concepts such as minor, becoming-other, the refrain, and the rhizome along with queer theory, I frame such self-fashionings as subjectivating bio-fictions in three different century-turnings. Central to the project will be Count Stenbock as a figure of failure on many counts: his literary output, his identity categories, his lack of place. As such, he occupies a privileged place in a study of the minor and helps us to see how minor gothic literature can be a reading program, a pedagogy of reading texts and selves, both backward and forward in literary history.

Each chapter attempts to explain this queer, deconstructive turn in reading gothic textual identities by way of a series of concepts from Deleuze and Guattari’s work. So, in Chapter 2, primarily about late eighteenth and Romantic gothics, minor and major literatures are analysed in terms of “becoming” (in this case, becoming-animal in Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*, becoming-woman in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, and as

I propose, becoming-goth in narratives by and about Percy Shelley). In the chapter on Victorian era fiction, becoming-other is linked to the concept of the “refrain” primarily in work by Count Eric Stenbock, followed by an exploration of gothic gender “nomadism” and transitivity in “The Jolly Corner,” a late tale by Henry James. Then, in the contemporary chapter, texts from the 1970s through to the 1990s are considered in light of the “Body without Organs” especially as it plays out in Anne Rice and Poppy Z. Brite’s vampire fiction.

Finally, a concluding chapter considers the applicability of the theories and findings to early twenty-first-century popular culture. It may well be the case that the rise of web-based social media changes the way gothicizing occurs; with changes in modes of production come changes in audiences, writing practices, and possible textualities. It is entirely possible that the third element of minor literature (the collective enunciation of a politics and of desire) finds its place in the current era of gothic and goth practices. Overshadowed as the possibility may seem by such dominant media formations as the *Twilight* series of vampire novels, the popularity of HBO’s *True Blood* (based on popular novels by Charmaine Harris), the turn to zombies as (arguably) the horrific metaphor of the day, and the shifting focus toward financial austerity in the midst of an apparently unrelated environmental crisis, I remain guardedly sanguine about the critical and counterhegemonic possibilities of goth and gothic to bring – at least for some – difference in the face of attempts to enforce sameness.

Chapter 2

Gothic Becomings: *Zofloya*, *Northanger Abbey*, and Percy Shelley

Rhetorically queer: deconstructing male-female gothic dimorphism

I was initially drawn to Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* as part of a search for a gothic herstory, a feminist and queer genealogy for the violent, transgressive female figure of twentieth-century gothic and vampire fiction (whether written or written by – that is, whether a character or an author, such as Poppy Z. Brite, or Kathy Acker, or Angela Carter, but also Molly in Gibson's *Neuromancer*, which is a kind of gothic romance in cyberspace among other generic hybridities). In the context of a course on postmodern lesbian culture in the 1990s, I explored Lynda Hart's text *Fatal Women: Lesbianism and the Mark of Aggression*, the comic *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist*, and various female vampires, progeny of Joseph Sheridan Lefanu's *Carmilla* (1872). It began to trouble me that I knew of previous or current examples that were not conscriptable¹⁶ as lesbian in particular, but that were certainly queer in one way or another. Thus I found in

¹⁶ Here and elsewhere I use the term “conscription” and its variations in a specific sense proposed by Harriet and Andrew Lyons, whose *Irregular Connections*, on anthropology and sexuality, is an important contribution not only to their field but to scholars of interdisciplinary studies more generally. The metaphor is rich, and apt for a study of queer gothicism: entry into any given sex/gender system is a neither a natural result of individual psychobiology nor an accident of social groupings, but a more Foucauldian effect of power relations that looks and feels a lot like military conscription, permitting certain kinds of counterpositions or resistances even when it appears one has no choice.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) the marks of degenerate potential lesbianism in Lucy, and in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* evidence of what I might now call a transgender queering of desire in Rosario/Matilda's agency. However, both texts refasten their own queer undoings in different ways; the former by (literally and nominally) seeding Mina with the patriarchal inheritance of the band of male vampire killers, the latter by blaming the devil. Certainly, the queerings manage to slip through, just as it is possible (as Romantics and goths may do) to privilege the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, rather than to take at face value Milton's morality, finally. However, in *Zofloya* we see an unapologetic antiheroine fully committed to evil, whose punishment and moralized narration seem never to contain her excesses. One wonders whether Dacre herself is quite convinced of her narrator's moral tone.

Speaking of the Faustian structure in *The Monk*, Fred Botting notes that Ambrosio's punishment by the devil is so overwrought as to be an unconvincing moral caution, "a weak, even satirical, get-out clause for a novel overindulged in immorality and excess" (77). Dacre's *Zofloya* exercises the same dynamic between extreme action and cautionary narration, with the critical difference that the protagonist – as in a Radcliffe tale or its satire in Austen -- is female, and her heroine never once wavers from or questions her commitment to evil. As Kim Michasiw puts it in his introduction to the Oxford Classics edition of the novel, "The suspicion that Dacre's narrator is of the

Devil's party and knows it perfectly well is unavoidable" (x).

The slippage between author, narrator, and character, just as with Stenbock and his stories in Chapter 3, below, becomes the ground for potential queer filiation across time and literary space (in this case, through Percy Shelley, the link between Dacre and Stenbock). And with Dacre, we may even be speaking about a perverse version of the Godardian intertextuality, "filiation," in which, in this case, the filiative intertext is with aggressive female characters and plots irrespective of authorial gender.¹⁷ This chapter sets out to engage criticism of Dacre with the dissertation's overall position about queer goth identification between author and work, and between work and readers over time. It begins by situating the problematics of gendered authorship – particularly Dacre's fraught position -- in gothic literary history, moves through a minor effect on a major author's own minor text (Austen's *Northanger Abbey*), and settles on Percy Shelley as a hinge figure between Romantic and Victorian goth identification. The mechanics of the textual and subjective heritability, I will argue, turn out not always to map easily onto normative stories of filiation along gender-complementary gothic lines, nor along

¹⁷ Godard's term, a play on the French *fille* or daughter, is used convincingly by Susanne Becker in the latter's study of postmodern gothic form to connect narrative strategies in gothic texts from early to postmodern, European to Canadian. See *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* (17). However, in this case, the particular transgression of an aggressive female character under the sway of Satan maps onto the author and vaults over history to the unmet friends of contemporary femme fatale discourse more through an alignment with queer as the threat of evil. See Lynda Hart's *Fatal Women* for more on this topic generally.

literary-historical lines; the relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's deconstructive concepts "becoming" and "rhizome" will become more clear in the process.¹⁸ Primarily, though not exclusively, the section on Dacre considers "becoming-animal" while that on Austen discusses "becoming-woman" in the context of a (non)heroine. Ambitiously, the section on Percy Shelley introduces another possibility: "becoming-goth." Placing these instances of becomings next to each other is relatively accidental, though less arbitrary than at first glance – hence the positing of a "family rhizome" of the gothic rather than a family tree. That is to say, though there is no direct relationship between all three authors, nor a particular lineage between animal, woman, and goth, elements of each instance of becoming do bear certain traits that move across gothic literary history and goth identity history in surprising ways.

In the first part of this chapter, I resituate the relationships between author, text, audience and gender, as sometimes purposeful, sometimes inadvertent pedagogies of self-formation. In seeking evidence for connections between self and text (in either direction – authorial self or reader self), it is clear that certain queer, gender-transitive moments in

¹⁸ I realize that the mixing of models and metaphors may frustrate here; however, it is not to be taken as a sign of imprecision. In fact, I am attempting to show how links between different forms of inheritance (intertextual, ancestral, genetic, linguistic, and so on) might all be pertinent, with the goal, ultimately, of wondering what heritability looks like among rhizomes rather than as roots and branches. Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as well as the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (4), wonder in similar ways about series, circularities, sedimentations, and non-arboreal or discontinuous models of synchronic and diachronic understanding.

two different texts allow difference to infiltrate even the most major of the pair (in this case, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, with its satirical distance from itself).

My reading of Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* against Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* finds gender queerly gothicized. In turn, the procedures by which gothic brings about a becoming-other in texts and identities set the conditions of possibility for the Romanticization of self in Percy Shelley's textual-biographical representations. Shelley thereby becomes a primary ancestor of the Victorian self-gothing outlined in Chapter 3, below, essentially one sign among others for an emergent discursive identity. The complex relationships between these texts, their authors, and a gothicizing reading practice include a different way of considering sex, gender and sexuality: through the Deleuzian notion of becoming-other, gender-complementary models of gothic genericism are troubled and revised.

What are, though, these gender-complementary models in need of revision? The secondary literature on the gothic has been the site of such a debate for some time. Criticism thematizing sex and gender in the genre together with more general theories about gender and sexuality show how complex the question can be. Typically, the categories Female Gothic and Male Gothic (capitalized by convention in some critical regimes) have been the subject of much debate since the 1970s' resurgence of critical interest in gothic literature. In their introduction to *Female Gothic: New Directions*,

Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith acknowledge the complexity of defining gender and genre concomitantly. They, like many others before and after, situate the rise of the concept “female gothic” with Ellen Moers’ *Literary Women* (1976). As a pioneering work that traced “connections... between ...diverse women writers offered new ways of reading and valuing them and that had a particular political importance” (2) in an emergent feminist critical tradition, Moers’ text can be credited with spawning such influential studies as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “universalizing” (2) *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), and Juliann Fleenor’s more “divergent set of voices” in the essays found in *The Female Gothic* (1983). Wallace and Smith go on to account for the 1990s’ mainstreaming of Female Gothic in literary criticism as a move from “psychoanalytical interpretations to socio-cultural readings” (3), citing Kate Ferguson Ellis’ *The Contested Castle* and Eugenia Delamotte’s *Perils of the Night*, along with the rejection of an identity between textual and authorial gender in Alison Milbank’s *Daughters of the House* (1992). At the same time, they suggest, psychoanalytic criticism in Anne Williams’ *Art of Darkness* analyses “the differences between ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ formulae in terms of narrative technique, plot, their assumptions about the supernatural and their use of horror/terror” (3-4).

Wallace and Smith credit Robert Miles with reinvigorating the field by editing a special issue of *Women’s Writing* in 1994 (4); the contested nature of the category and its

subsequent multiplication as “feminine gothic” (Becker), “lesbian gothic” (Palmer), “women’s gothic” (Clery), or “postfeminist gothic” (Brabon and Genz) (5) suggest it is still in critical play as a concept, however contested.

Yet the concern with gender and authorship, gender and character, gender and plot, gender and reading practice (even reading practices as gendering) is not something newly invented so much as named by Moers; it is clearly a feature of early gothic texts themselves. In her entry on “Gothic Femininities” in Spooner and McEvoy’s *Routledge Companion to the Gothic*, Alison Milbank does not start with a history of Female Gothic versus Male Gothic, but rather links those qualities remarked early in gothic literary history as feminine (especially as emphasised in their earliest parodies, such as Austen’s 1818 *Northanger Abbey* and Barrett’s 1813 *The Heroine*) to their rediscovery as part of 1970s second-wave feminism. In this way, she draws out the story of the rise of “Female Gothic” as a category through writers’ and critics’ concerns with heroines, authorship, and readership (156). She follows Terry Castle and E.J. Clery in their revisions of prior psychological and social approaches to women in gothic literature (as writers, heroines, and readers). For Milbank, an active and engaged, post-Enlightenment female subject is discernable in tropes from Radcliffe throughout the nineteenth-century reiterations of gothic fiction by both men and women.

A similar argument about the rise of the concept “female gothic” is put forward

by Robert Miles. In his “Mother Radcliff,” Miles notes the ways in which the strain of criticism heralded by Ellen Moers – and achieving “its apogee” (43) in Gilbert and Gubar’s *Madwoman in the Attic* – assumes about women writers, content, and audience the same identity as those who, earlier, had dismissed gothic texts as the domain of women – women writers, women’s narrative forms, a female readership – when in fact the historical picture tells a very different story. Nonetheless, Miles seeks to understand the ways in which the conceptual category might still prove critically “viable” after “its first half-century” (44). By considering Female and Male Gothic to have to do with elements of form, plot, and textuality (rather than the gender of the author), he notes that female authors “may intervene in the Male Gothic (think of Charlotte Dacre) and vice versa (think of Francis Lathom or James Boaden)” (46). After considering Radcliffe’s texts in detail, and contrasting those details to their more cursory treatment in Walpole, he concludes that indeed, Female Gothic is still a viable category (including for some male writers, such as Keats) that permits him to analyse the Radcliffean matrix as a “highly successful assemblage of cultural references, eagerly consumed by her audience, that had the effect of significantly raising the status of the culture to which a non-Classically trained woman (or man) may aspire” (51).

In “Contesting the ‘Female Gothic’ in *Zofloya*,” Carol Margaret Davison takes to task several of the critical canards of gothic criticism both feminist and of Dacre in the

past few decades. She is more sanguine about the categorical necessity of Female Gothic than many of her colleagues; essentially her position is that “Female Gothic” is worth continuing to use as a concept if it can include Dacre – to place Dacre solely in the Male Gothic camp (as Miles seems to do, above) is to miss significant elements of the work *Zofloya* does. And yet she refuses to entertain a contemporary feminism’s recasting of *Zofloya* as a critique of patriarchal marriage, taking Adriana Craciun to task for so suggesting. Davison begins by going over familiar ground about Moers and the female gothic, moving onto Horner and Zlosnik’s work as well as the position promoted by Hoeveler on Dacre as anti-feminist. She would like to clear some ground for the possibility that Dacre ought to be understood in context (see Jones on our tendency to overmap) and that gothic writers in general deserve to be analysed in the historicized terms of their own day rather than to be judged by current standards of feminist enlightenment. Her suggestion is that “[t]wentieth-century works such as Stephen King’s *Carrie* (1974) will pick up where *Zofloya* leaves off..., ... greatly complicating the gender divisions that have become oversimplified over the last two centuries, especially in the development of feminist theory and criticism” (42). This may be too strong an indictment of all feminist theory, of course, some of which in its queer and postmodern iterations has led precisely to new ways of seeing difference and indifference in *Zofloya*.

What follows from such arguments in my own chapter is that Dacre is not simply

“intervening” in Male Gothic but actually transitioning -- or even unsexing -- her protagonist’s gender, Austen is in fact anatomizing gothic gender and genre using strategic chiasmus, and Percy Shelley gothicizes the masculine Romantic self most explicitly.

In his survey essay on “Gothic Masculinities,” Brian Baker acknowledges the special place European discourses on decadence and degeneration hold in the critical tradition of masculinity-construction in the gothic mode. The instability that results from such a tradition,¹⁹ suggests Baker, ought also to be traced in earlier gothic texts; he sees evidence of the destabilization of the male subject in gothic discourse right from the beginning in Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764). He deconstructs the dyadic relation between reason and passion in literary gothic’s inception, especially through its connections to Enlightenment and to Romantic traditions. Ultimately, he settles on the Kristevan abject as the means by which a male self is fragmented, and his exemplary text turns out to be Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. He does not, in the end, depart from the *fin-de-siecle* terrain covered previously by those to whom he is explicitly indebted (Hurley, 1996; Smith, 2004; Hendershot, 1998). Where he does offer new material (completely appropriately for a brief survey) is in his extension of the

¹⁹ While it may seem premature to speak of the tracing in the gothic of masculinity-construction as a critical tradition rather than a recent trend, we could date it to the 1980s with Sedgwick’s work in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985).

analysis to the Hannibal Lecter series of novels (Harris, 1982, 1989, 1999) and the film version of the second novel (1991). He notes the ways in which Harris draws links between the serial killer and the investigator, and connects this to the “assimilation and cannibalism” (171) of the female by masculine Romanticism (citing Anne K. Mellor, 1993, 26-27). This may in fact have some utility for an analysis of Dacre’s protagonist’s end, as we shall see. However, in so doing, Baker does not delve into the male paranoid gothic theorized by Sedgwick.²⁰ For Sedgwick, much gothic plotting relies on the symptomaticity of the paranoiac.

Sedgwick’s by-now-familiar notion of “homosociality” – the triangulation of male desire for another male relayed through a third, female character – may be pressed into service in a discussion of female desire, though it will operate differently. She notes in *Between Men* that psychological explanations of triangulated desire that assume symmetry do a disservice to the difference changing the players would make, and a disservice to the power differentials that inhere historically between genders as well as between sexual and nonsexual relations between men. An example of a potentially symmetrical reading (that I wish to read as difference instead) in the present study is the

²⁰ In *Between Men*, Sedgwick notes that several nineteenth-century gothic plots play out almost note-for-note the paranoid male homophobia Sigmund Freud analysed in Daniel Paul Schreber’s case. Said plot involves a male who feels persecuted and compelled by another male, with these feelings masking homosexual desire in the hero. Even in earlier gothic texts, the identification of author with work evinces similar dynamics. See pages 91-92 for her initial sketch and the rest of the book for her analysis.

doubling of female desire and the depiction of female aggression in Dacre's *Zofloya*.

Triangulating desire between Victoria and Lilla through Henriquez, as we shall see later, is analogous (in some ways, and of course, because of gender, not in others) to triangulations of homosocial desire between men through a woman. One important difference, among others, is the role of present and absent parents in the formation of female desire.

Because it is less read than some of the other texts, a brief plot synopsis will assist readers to orient my comments above and those that follow. Victoria de Loredani and her brother Leonardo are indulged by their parents from an early age. Their mother Laurina falls in love with Ardolph, a friend of the Marchese, who eventually kills their father and steals away with Laurina and Victoria (partly to avoid a liaison between Victoria and the wealthy Berenza). Victoria and Leonardo are separated (Victoria is confined at her tyrannical aunt's house, where she manipulates the maidservant Catau in her quest to escape); Victoria returns to Berenza in Venice and saves him from an assassin, who turns out to be her brother Leonardo (a fact she keeps to herself) working in the service of his new lover, femme fatale Megalena Strozzi (jealous of Victoria's marriage to Berenza, with whom she had been in love previously). Five years pass and Berenza's brother Henriquez arrives on the scene, betrothed to the young Lilla. Zofloya is the Moorish servant in Henriquez' employ, who also appears in dreams to Victoria (who has fallen in

love with Henriquez and therefore needs to be rid of Berenza and Lilla). General death and destruction ensue after Zofloya aids and abets Victoria's passions with various poisons and kidnappings – Berenza, Henriquez, and Lilla die variously, and the only reuniting is in a Banditti cave (where Leonardo has become a leader) – they manage to get their mother away from Ardolph but it is all too late to save anyone. Laurina dies (unforgiven by Victoria) as a result of Ardolph's abuses, Megalena and Leonardo both commit suicide. Victoria, under Satan's influence, has brought about everyone's death and forsaken her soul, which is annihilated at the end of the tale (all that remains is the narrator's commentary on the whole).

In the middle of her extended discussion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Maggie Kilgour refers to *Zofloya* as one of many texts (including *The Monk*) that centre on the fault of parental example and education for any evils engaged in by their offspring, and generally blame the mother for the sins of the child. Parental indulgence, even if well-meaning, has dire consequences for Victor Frankenstein, but more dire still for Victoria di Loredani. She writes "Most commonly... the gothic lays blame on the mother: Beckford's Vathek has a tyrannical mother, Godwin's Tyrrel an overly permissive one. In Charlotte Dacre's 1806 *Zofloya*, the villainess has been misraised by an irresponsible and overpassionate mother, and in *Dracula*, Lucy's weak mother is partially responsible for her daughter's death." (202) She contrasts this with *Frankenstein's* father-blame,

associating it with Godwin's fiction, and ultimately, Shelley's indictment of Godwin himself (202). However, the argument ignores, at least in Dacre's case, the role of Victoria's *father* in failing to provide a good example for the children and in indulging their every desire.

Adriana Craciun, introducing the Broadview edition of *Zofloya*, places Dacre and her commitment to evil femininity in a little-explored counter-tradition of the femme fatale in nineteenth-century British women's writing in particular; "a tradition" she says "which for too long has been dominated by the realist novel and its heroines" (29). She begins to explore the femme fatale by way of embodiment (through Butler) and eighteenth-century medical discourse (in this case on nymphomania and hermaphroditism). At base, Craciun shows how Dacre's fiction and poetry work against the gender-complementary model of Romanticism and the gothic popularized by earlier critics (such as Anne K. Mellor, Kate Ellis, William Patrick Day, and Anne Williams). Curiously, she posits a female homosocial, citing Sedgwick, but does not raise the question of the male paranoid gothic that would flow naturally from Sedgwick. Of course, a gender-dimorphic and gender-complementary reading of gothic texts does not need to reflect later structures of psychoanalytic truths imposed upon them (or, as it happens, derived from them). It is equally valid to seek in precursor texts from criminality and sexological discourses some determinants of aggressive femme identity.

In her *Fatal Women: Lesbianism and the Mark of Aggression*, Lynda Hart traces the historical moves that constructed the aggressive woman as lesbian, and the lesbian as aggressive woman, in Victorian England. The result was a non-woman, or not-woman – the lesbian became visible (in Hart’s view) in order to shore up a certain conception of woman as non-aggressive. Identity in this case is always after the fact: “Always produced retroactively, identities are belated. Constructed backwards from their structural effects, identities are rather like (after)effects; that is, they are the effects of effects, not the causes for which they are taken” (9). She goes on to situate lesbian identity as a repository for displaced female aggression. The logic of inversion permitted the coming-into-scrutability of the lesbian while making it impossible for her to be seen as woman (9). Hart notes the move from sinfulness to sickness that mirrors a Foucauldian argument about identity. The demonization of lesbian as criminal becomes the demonization of lesbian as pathological. The inversion model available to late Victorians suggests, for Hart, that it is a woman’s aggressiveness (rather than her object choice) that marks her as masculine. However, she reminds us that this is not a linear, supplanting model: both can and do coexist once the latter is established. The former is likely the world in which we find ourselves pre-sexology.²¹

²¹ Annemarie Jagose complicates this trajectory by supplying the notion that lesbian identity can be derived outside the logic of sequence that presumes heterosexual first and subsequently lesbian definition. She argues convincingly that Hart’s own blinders cause a misrepresentation of identities as unidirectional, the minority being derived from the

Such a case can be made prior to Victorian discursive pathologization of aggressiveness in women if we look at Dacre's novel as exemplary. The masculine traits Victoria increasingly shows exist independent of her object choice. That is, whether she is attempting to seduce Berenza or Henriquez, or befriending the servant Catau, or the innocent Lilla, she plots and manipulates like an amoral Sadean figure. Hart connects later texts to Lombroso's famous work on criminal women. The irredeemable female offender is the murderess or the sexual transgressor or invert, and either act qualifies her as not-woman: both qualify her as masculine. "Thus the ultimate violation of the social instinct, murder, and the perversion of the sexual instinct, same-sex desire, were linked as limits that marked the boundaries of femininity. Crossing either one of these borders constituted a transgression from which there was no return" (30). The question is, to what extent can it be claimed that Victoria's masculine and aggressive traits mark her as lesbian outside (that is, earlier than) the historical emergence of the category and its linking to masculinity through such discourses as Lombroso's "born" offender?

Adriana Craciun, importantly for this line of argument, situates female aggression as an index of identity a century earlier with the representation of Mary Lamb as femme

majority. Where Hart suggests that two models of aggression can coexist, nevertheless the resulting identities (masculine woman or lesbian) still rely on a sequence that begins with a self-guaranteeing heterosexual norm. See Jagose's *Inconsequence* for an elaboration.

fatale²². In “The Subject of Violence: Mary Lamb, Femme Fatale,” Craciun (who is, as we have seen above, also a Dacre scholar) rejects the “gender complementary” model that “often reinscribe the rigid gender boundaries that many women and men of the Romantic Period defied” (46). Rather than assuming the gender-complementary feminist critic’s insistence that female aggression renders a woman masculine, Craciun asks us to avoid replicating Charles Lamb’s displacement of Mary’s aggression onto masculine possession (divine or demonic). To do so is to participate in the circularity of the self-authorizing argument “that attributes violence and mastery solely to masculinity” (50). Mary Lamb’s specifically feminine violence clarifies a similar point about Dacre’s portrayal of Victoria.

Craciun is also one of the few people to invoke Deleuze in dealing with gothic heroines. In this case it is not the Deleuze and Guattari of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* or *Kafka*, but Deleuze alone on masochism. He is pressed into service to explain the difference between doing and teaching: Craciun wishes to claim that Dacre has Victoria *demonstrate* a “doctrine of destruction” rather than persuade us of that doctrine’s efficacy

²² And in doing so takes up a position quite different from the kind of argument that, for example, leads Camilla Griggers in *Becoming-Woman* to assert the non-femaleness of the lesbian. If woman, for Craciun, is not a mirror-image of man, nor becomes a man through violence but can remain female and aggressive, it is not as crucial to eliminate lesbian from the male-female construct. Female and lesbian in this case become compatible (this is not a claim of Craciun’s vis a vis Mary Lamb or Charlotte Dacre; I am suggesting though that sexual dissidence takes more than a single form in a given historical and social context and the forms it takes overlap rather than remain pure).

or its evils. For her, Dacre “abandons persuasion for the morally questionable task of describing, in sexually charged terms, irrational, vicious and violent behaviour in women. Dacre in effect demonstrates the identity of passion and destruction, and the pleasures found in both” (“Introduction” 13). Along the way, supposedly natural sex is shown to be a construction of gender, a Butlerian performative, what Craciun reminds us is named, by Terry Castle, a “masquerade” (23) – in effect a kind of drag. A case in point in the novel itself²³ is Victoria’s incapacity for “so pure a sentiment as *real* love” (77, emphasis in original); she studies Berenza’s affect in order the better to act the woman’s part in his idea of romance, successfully manipulating him by being now gloomy, now feigning sleep and proclaiming her love as though dreaming (80). Although her attractiveness is defined as animalistic, masculine, fierce, and a series of negations (76-77), her aping of love, attraction, and gender normativity is successful in shoring up Berenza’s concept of romance, and is thus a form of drag.

There is a sense in which Kathy Justice Gentile’s “Sublime Drag: Supernatural Masculinity in Gothic Fiction” attempts to explicate this kind of becoming-masculine and thus shares affinities with my own project. Unfortunately, she tends to prove the point others make elsewhere in the same issue of the journal²⁴ about mapping our own present

²³ This and other textual references to *Zofloya* cite the Oxford Classics edition edited by Michasiw)

²⁴ See Davison’s critique of Craciun’s assessment of *Zofloya* as a feminist critique of patriarchal marriage relations, and Jones on gothic canniness.

concerns onto older material, all the while freighting a casual flippancy onto the subject in ways that the earlier texts likely will not bear. Consider her possibly defensible, but not defended, claim about sublimity and drag: “While theorists of the sublime... have privileged the sublime experience above all others[,] Walpole and his Gothic descendants have countered this authoritative philosophical discourse with novels that expose literary sublimity as a kind of Gothic male drag show” (17). Though Gentile relies heavily on Judith Butler’s sense of drag, it is unclear whether drag in this case involves parodying the sublime, dressing as the sublime, or doing something else. Another example: “Although Montoni longs to be a warrior and leader of men who is beyond the reach of the law, his tough-guy performance comes to an inglorious end...” (27) and “By undercutting her male characters’ drag pretensions to a fierce or exalted masculinity, Radcliffe lets the hot air out of the masculine sublime...” (27). She designates Walpole’s, Radcliffe’s, and Dacre’s hyperbolic masculinities as this kind of dragged sublime; however, much as hyperbole is necessary for drag, it is not sufficient. By the same token, other forms of representation than drag are surely signalled by hyperbole. My concern here is that a solely presentist definition of drag subsumes the historically contingent versions that, as I claim about other apparently present formations, could be activated and reactivated rhizomatically over time without neglecting their own contemporary forces at play. At the very least, though, we find ourselves, at this point, in

queer territories.

Much more compellingly, Ellis Hanson's work on the gothic has always been playfully aware of its own limitations and its own excesses.²⁵ His essay on queer theory and the gothic in Spooner and McEvoy's *Routledge Companion to the Gothic* adopts the casual and urbane tone of the gay critic who wants to have fun with his topic; in this case it is part of what he suggests, following the later Sedgwick, ought to be a reparative reading (as opposed to the paranoid readings of the past). He credits critic Steven Bruhm with such reparative strategies and ends by suggesting that the gothic can multiply and expand pleasures rather than restrict them. In getting there, he covers familiar ground: the gothic's inability to contain in marriages or punishments its pleasurable transgressions, the moral panic over child sexuality, and the ways in which queer theorists often replicate gothic narratives in their essays about gothic narratives.²⁶

In her essay "Uncanny Recognition: Queer Theory's Debt to the Gothic," Mair Rigby names the early 1990s as the "advent of academic queer theory" (46) and repeats the by-now-commonplace assertion that queer theorists keep "returning to the genre for insights" (46). Similar to George Haggerty's claim that gothic texts actually prefigure

²⁵ See his essays "Undead" and "Lesbians who Bite" for examples of a playful tone reflective of the subject matter; affect, identity, and form coincide in Hanson's rhetoric much more successfully than in Gentile's.

²⁶ Hanson is not alone in noticing the influence of the gothic on the formation of queer scholarship and scholars; besides Mair Rigby's essay, see also Haggerty's *Queer Gothic* and Max Fincher's *Queering Gothic Writing in the Romantic Age*.

sexological discourse in the nineteenth century and are a kind of proto-queer theory in themselves, Rigby suggests that the gothic influences queer theory at least as much as queer theory opens up interpretations of the gothic, and she traces critics' own self-consciousness of this interplay from the early (Fuss, 1991) to the latest (Hughes and Smith, 2009). Her own contribution to the interaction of gothic and queer is through the uncanny, and gothic recognition of queer in Maturin and Radcliffe. Although she gives short shrift to the technical sense of uncanny, situating it (not incorrectly) as the recognition of previously repressed material in a slightly different form, the concept seems almost unnecessary to her readings of the relationship between Stanton and Melmoth (through the gaze and ellipses), Ellena and Olivia in *The Italian* (following Rictor Norton's assertions about lesbian separation and love, even within the family), and Dorothee and the Marchioness in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In the end, it seems that Rigby has simply named a pattern of her own recognitions and identifications. It is not clear that the gothic has caused new queer theory in this case.

Somewhat more convincing are Hughes and Smith in their introduction to *Queering the Gothic*, although they make of queer something perhaps more general than is useful, seeming to divorce it from the specifically sexual in favour of a general theory – or tactic – of difference as such. “To be queer, when taken outside of the sexual connotations of that term, is to be different” (3). For them, it is a “quality which may be

said to inflect a sense of difference not confined simply to sexual behavior but which may equally inform a systematic stylistic deviance from perceived norms in personal style or artistic preference” (3). Elaborating a queer theory that can take account of such specifically nonsexual identities permits them to see “the queer” as that which can “effectively deconstruct the very standards by which its own ‘deviance’ is reckoned and quantified” (4). Their shifts between noun, adjective, and essential attribute (queer, queer x, queerness), together with their deprioritizing of sexuality in favour of difference as such, cause a capacious enough definition of queer that it may end up being of limited use; that is, it may be so general as to be about anything we wish.

My own approach is strongly in sympathy with a pluralism of meanings for queer, in particular for queer’s possibilities as a verb; as such, it is a mobile and active deconstructive force rather than a cipher that deconstructs by its presence alone. However, rather than evacuating it of its embodied and affective sexual or desire elements, I will insist on its genesis in -- and its richest explanatory power with -- bodies, pleasures, and complications of desire, especially in historical context. Rather than unyoke queer from explicitly sexual formations, I see expanding the definition of what counts as sexual (multiplying categories of difference rather than subsuming particular deviances under the despotic sign of a primary heterosexuality, for example). Queer theory for my purposes, then, is aligned with the minor as an activity. It is in this sense

neither an identity-seeking and thematic recuperative project or a set of recognizable theorists in the academy. Consequently, it becomes important to consider agency in the circulation of queer minoritarian deconstruction. What is a *queering*, who *queers*, what is *queered*?

Formations of the Self: What does it matter who is *Gothic*?

Foucault's famous last line in his "What is an Author" – "What difference does it make who is speaking" (120) – connotes, in translation at least, a kind of indifference that might be visualized in the shrug. And yet Foucault here is not the Barthes of the author's death-declaration. Rather, and this is my own reading of the sentence, Foucault presents a challenge to critics. Instead of ascribing final, or really any, authority to a text by way of the person who wrote it, and instead of ignoring that person entirely, we ought to be asking what difference it DOES make who is speaking. The enunciating subject enters, as surely as any subject, into a discursive network of force relations by so enunciating. It isn't immaterial who speaks; it is actually quite material. Gothic authors are among the available subject positions they themselves make available (if that sounds tautological, it is; the system of making of oneself a gothic author is in some ways self-authorizing by way of intertextual referentiality). We can ask of the gothic just as we can of literary work more generally, following Foucault, "What are the modes of existence of this

[gothic] discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?" (120).

The point, in part, is that the voice is not always as intentional or agential as its voicer may think. Given that the literary gothic's inception – normally agreed upon as Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* -- is also the inception of gothic (or gothed) identity, in which author and text are conjoined both by Walpole's own admission,²⁷ it is unsurprising but significant that in later iterations of gothic tropes and trappings, a conflation of author and work is created by critics and publics. Few are as notorious in this regard as Matthew Lewis, whose novel *The Monk* lent him his nickname. Charlotte Dacre, and/or Charlotte King, and/or... also takes on a persona as the author of poetry and political poems in the *Daily Post*: she is the Rosa Matilda cited by Montague Summers in his "Byron's Lovely Rosa" – a name clearly derived from *The Monk*'s Rosario and Matilda in one body, activating the gothic valences of Rosicrucianism as well. She reshapes identity by renaming, just as she and her character Victoria reshape gender, the gothic heroine, and the crossdressing demon of Matthew Lewis' novel all at

²⁷ See the Preface from the Second Edition of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, in which the distancing act of writing a manuscript-discovering narrator into the text, once uncovered by the later preface, lets us know that Walpole himself is gothically inclined. In material ways (including a gothic house, Strawberry Hill), Walpole's legacy is as much goth as gothic, and in literary terms, his legacy is as much gothing as gothic, enlisting as he does that very canonical Englishman, Shakespeare, as his foundational gothic influence.

once.

Such crossdressing, understood as a critical concept, is a key term in queer theory's attempts to destabilize monolithic sex, gender and sexuality norms. Marjorie Garber's pioneering book *Vested Interests* (1992) is one historical example. Well-known early work on transvestism and drag cultures²⁸ demonstrates that performative acts of crossdressing can undermine hegemonic gender and sexuality arrangements, both in life and in art. Similarly, the term transgender can refer not only to people for (some of) whom the body is dissonant or problematic, but also to textual practices – although it is clear that when speaking on the metaphorical level it would be offensive (just as it can be with queer theory more generally when talking academically about identities that have lived-experience corollaries in actual bodies, for example lesbian, bisexual, intersex, homosexual identities) to posit some kind of free play of signifiers when we know that real people's real lives are at stake. Nevertheless, the narrative and metaphorical power of crossdressing and transgender as critical terms should be explored, for it is in narrative and metaphor that real people sometimes are able to find their home or their support.

With regard to authors, certain kinds of crossdressing and transgenering are found in the rhetoric of their works, in the narratives they tell, or in narratives about them. This is no

²⁸ See Judith Butler's oft-cited *Gender Trouble* and her essay "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" for examples, but also the critical tradition around butch, femme, and female identity in works by Lilian Faderman, Teresa de Lauretis, Joan Nestle, Esther Newton, Judith Roof, and Gayle Rubin.

mutually-guaranteeing discourse of truth about texts or bodies; rather, because of the conflation of gothic works with their authors, and because of the proliferation of textual narrativizations that gothicize and sexualize those authors, both literary works and biographical details are equally open to minoritarian readings.

It is tempting, in this light, to see in Charlotte Dacre an invented persona that inhabits female masculinity, a persona that relies on another persona (“Monk” Lewis’s) for its currency. The temptation comes in part from my rejection of the idea that Dacre’s is a uniquely female perspective on the gothic, belonging exclusively to a tradition of women’s fiction set apart from men’s. I would like to avoid tying a woman writer’s entire identity to the whole of women’s literary history, because to do so seems not to take into account gender fluidity, racial, ethnic, and class markers, or differentials other than a falsely dichotomous biology.²⁹ However, one need not choose either “Dacre is part of a women’s tradition” or “Dacre is a gothic crossdresser,” for there are ways in which each is true.

If elements of Dacre's biography are to be trusted, specifically the affair with Nicholas Byrne that leads first to three children and then to their marriage some years

²⁹ For a cogent analysis of the ways in which historical discourses of race and racism enter the novel specifically through the erasure of the servant Zofloya’s racialized subordination via the animating of his dead body by Satan, see Stephanie Burley’s “The Death of Zofloya; or, the Moor as Epistemological Limit.” She sees Dacre’s use of Zofloya’s marked and unfree body as “symptomatic of the double bind that female Gothic authors faced: namely, how can a woman who knows so much about desire, seduction, and murder, be a trustworthy producer of cultural capital” (198).

later, then it is possible that she herself mirrors the sexual dissidents Laurina, Victoria, Zofloya, Ardolph and Megalena in *Zofloya*. In this case, dissidence takes the form of purposeful seduction away from the good (both in the sense of "the opposite of evil" and in the sense of what is good for one) and from the normative (in the sense of legitimate children in the bounds of a marriage, rather than a seduction away from an existing marriage). Laurina is subject to Ardolph's dissident sexuality (his project is always to disrupt a marriage, and the love Laurina stirs in his heart is surprising to him, although it does not lead to anything but an increased need to control). Victoria is (according to the narrator, probably due to Laurina's example) also dissident; her own first erotic desires are roused in order to match her mother's (Berenza seems almost incidental to her own inevitable self-plot).

Whether this puts Dacre herself in an analogous position to Ardolph, to Victoria, or to Zofloya himself is a question for debate. What does become clear, however, is that this novel's portrayal of the sites of desire and evil reposition what has come before (in Radcliffe and Lewis) and make possible similar repositionings thereafter -- in Shelley, Byron, and I am arguing, even though they may never have heard of Dacre, both Stenbock and Brite.

Our knowledge of Charlotte Dacre's life is still foggy, and debates about her age accompany the renewed late twentieth-century critical interest in and republication of her

works.³⁰ She wrote several gothic novels, reprinted or newly edited in the last three decades, and some volumes of verse. Her mining of Milton and Matthew Lewis for material read through her gothicizing lens is of special importance to this dissertation because of the manner in which her work pushes the boundaries of respectability, morality, and stable selfhood. The scene to which I attend presently is one of publication mode in its articulation with “real” life. It is a scene staged by the front of Dacre’s 1805 book of poems, *Hours of Solitude*, and it includes an epigraph and a portrait, which in proximity to one another confuse the literal and the figural in the same manner as do her play with self-naming and her gothic fiction itself.

“Ah! what is mirth but turbulence unholy,

When to the charm compar’d of heav’nly melancholy?”

This couplet begins, as the epigraph on the title page, Dacre’s *Hours of Solitude*. The couplet is attributed to Milton, though in this case it is an example of Dacre’s frequent – according to Michasiw (1997) – misattributions. In fact, and perhaps fittingly, it is the last couplet of James Beattie’s Stanza 55 from Book One (1771) of his *The Minstrel, or the Progress of Genius*. Beattie’s work takes up Gothic and shepherd themes as well as

³⁰ See Jones (1986), Michasiw (1997), Craciun (1997), and Hoeveler (1997). Dacre seems to have a range of birth dates differing by as many as ten years. The tone of criticism changes depending on the critics’ assessment of the works, it seems. For Craciun and Michasiw, for example, it seems to signal part of gothic obscurity and persona-construction. For Hoeveler, it is treated – through sarcasm – as pure deception, part and parcel of Dacre’s own anti-feminist evildoing.

formal construction from Spenser. Given that Dacre seems unaware of the provenance, it seems unlikely that much ought to be made of this connection, but it is not insignificant to readers of gothic heritability that not only can Shakespeare be pressed into service for questionably gothicizing ends (as in Walpole's claims from the second-edition Preface to *Castle of Otranto*), but also, by Beattie at least, Spenser.

In isolating it and cultivating the thought (the turbulence of mirth contrasted to the charm of heavenly melancholy) through two volumes of poetry, however, Dacre's text displays a kind of gothic affect (in this case, the nearly spiritual pleasure of melancholia), but also a gothic effect. Like a graft, but I will argue more like an iris bulb or rhizome, gothic writers and readers multiply gothic effects in nonlinear, sideways, sometimes unintentional tactics. It matters little whether Charlotte Dacre herself chose the epigraph, or whether it inspired the poems or was tacked on later as a foreword: after all, Dacre herself plays with identity in her very naming on the same title page ("Better known by the name of Rosa Matilda"). Indeed, the facing page features a decidedly gothic-inflected portrait of "Rosa Matilda" (reprinted in Kim Michasiw's edition of Dacre's *Zofloya*), which at the very least assists in the gothic semiosis of the production. As Lisa M. Wilson argues, Charlotte King's deployment of "Rosa Matilda" and "Charlotte Dacre" actually invites "connections between her character and her characters" (395). The production of pseudonymous selves will form the basis for further comments in

Chapter 4; the point here is that by placing a portrait of herself as a gothic heroine at the beginning of a book called *Hours of Solitude* with an epigraph that specifically names joyful suffering as such, Dacre forms and performs a gothic assemblage. While deterritorializing her actual, empirical self in this act of naming and literary borrowing, Dacre reterritorializes in the gothic by way of the portrait. As Michasiw notes,

The image, then – roses to one side of the figure, a vista marked by a picturesque tree to the other, lowering skies above; the mounded but dishevelling dark hair, the massive dark eyes; the dark or flushed complexion, set against the impossibly white bosom; the drapery which certainly ends in fabric, but when and how does it begin? ; the cameo between the breasts, picturing lost love, lost parent – represents the author as heroine, and especially as Gothic heroine. (x)

In this way, not only does Dacre situate her writing (and written) self as a gothic heroine, but she also achieves a fluidity of boundaries between self and text, flesh and fabric, and surface and depth. For my purposes, this fluidity is part of a gothicization of self and a queering of text via rhizomatic surfaces, a move that extends, incidentally, to the equivalence of author and text through naming (“Monk” Lewis and “Rosa Matilda,” for example).

In gothic literary endeavors (including romance and horror) – and, as I argue throughout, gothic ways of being – citation and rhizomatic multiplication along surfaces

are central. A study of influence that attempts to make a family tree is bound to be confounded in a mass of roots that turn into branches and vice versa.³¹ Salient repetitions of Dacre's Miltonism are best understood as discontinuous; not every necrotic gothicization of Milton (or even lines attributed to him) operates to make minor this canonical figure.

Obviously the practice of epigraph-choosing and plot-deriving is not limited to the movement of gothicization. Intertextuality is the condition of texts as such, in some sense; it is my contention, however, that the gothic forms itself by being very particular – if imprecise with its particulars -- about the kind and amount of intertextual play, allusion, and derivation it activates (for writers and for readers). It is not simply the case that excerpting Milton, for example, will produce a minor line of flight. The same lines Dacre uses were used previously, also unattributed and in slightly different form, in the mid-eighteenth century to bolster or illustrate that austere, moralistic (but also potentially gothic) religion: Methodism. No less than Methodist spiritual leader John Wesley himself, in his sermon “Spiritual Idolatry,” discusses the mixing of pleasure and “...a kind of pain. So that one need not wonder at the exclamation of a fine poet, -- ‘What is all mirth but turbulence unholy / When compared to the charms of heavenly melancholy?’”

³¹ Which is not to say that we do not attempt to diagram such trees. We do, and often, and convince ourselves of their utility in literary and other discourses. For a useful reminder about the changing function over time of the tree diagram in genealogical work, see Weigel.

(Sermon 78, 1872 edition, I:12).³²

To the degree that gothic writing, especially minoritarian gothic writing, is rhizomatic and contagious rather than arborescent and filiative, representations of Dacre in *Hours of Solitude*'s portraiture and citational practice embody the surfacing of companionate proximities. This movement of side-by-sideness, understood figurally as metonymy, latches virus-like onto depth and family trees, traveling thus into history as if the gothic were filiative rather than the minor -- and minoritarian -- epidemic that it is. Whether cited poetry is used in the service of narrative and poetic effect or in a literal service for persuasion, the different uses to which Beattie's lines have been put affirm the pliability of meaning – not all minor gothicising is liberatory. This is true also of becomings-other.

Sex, gender and leopard skins: *Zofloya*, masculinity, and becoming-animal

Exploring the way in which the dark, increasingly masculinized Victoria becomes obsessed with the innocent and pure Lilla's husband, Henriquez, we find a triangulation between two women and a man. The women could not be more different; through

³² And two centuries later, it would seem that the rhizome erupts again in the service of a goth identification. Singer Gitane Demone composes a song called "Heavenly Melancholy" in the 1990s that catches the attention of an e-zine devoted to goth and alternative music. See my Conclusion for a discussion of Dacre's "kindred" (Michasiw, xxx) and the formation of goth through minoritarian citation over time.

devilry, Victoria is able to appear as Lilla, temporarily, but Henriquez is so horrified at her dark appearance once the spell wears off that he takes his own life, violently (221).

Victoria has nothing but murderous intentions and actions toward Lilla, who seems incapable of raising a finger in her own defense at any point between her abduction and murder.

However, when Victoria rends and throws Lilla over a cliff in the presence of Zofloya, the confusion of pronouns seems to *undifferentiate* the two, though it is not a signal of indifference on the part of the author. Might this be an instance of univocality, in a Deleuzian sense, rather than a misogynistic and aristocratic immolating of purity by its opposite, as Hoeveler would have it? (“Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya*: A Case Study...” 185, 194). Immediately before, Victoria’s first attempt at stabbing Lilla is described thus: “Raising her dagger high, she sought then to plunge it in the fair bosom of the beautiful orphan, but she, suddenly relinquishing her hold, the point of the dagger, wounded only her uplifted hand, and glancing across her alabaster shoulder, the blood that issued thence, slightly tinged her flaxen tresses with a brilliant red” (225). As Michasiw puts it: “While it is not impossible to sort through the profusion of third-person feminine singular pronouns here, the effect, especially when similar barrages await in the following pages, is to erase some of the distinction between the two women” (xxix-xxx). They become “active and passive versions of the same” (xxx). Similarly, Victoria has no difficulty

whatsoever aping affection for Catau in order to bring her into the escape plot. These particular female pairings³³ operate differently from their male counterparts in gothic fiction, but they are nonetheless present and need to be analysed further.

In the case of Dacre's doubles, Adriana Craciun suggests that they exist in order to denaturalize sex and gender. In the pairing Victoria-Lilla, for example, Craciun makes the case (citing Swinburne's similar assertion upon reading *Zofloya*) that Lilla is Sadean virtue to Victoria's vice; in this case, just as in Sade (according to Angela Carter's reading), both are equally unpalatable as subject positions. Craciun even estimates Lilla to be as "repugnant and and inhuman" (28) as Victoria. In this, Craciun argues, the pair are like Juliette and Justine in that dialectical Sadean relationship (28).

The other evident doubling is with Megalena Strozzi, the older rival for Berenza's affections who gazes arrows at Victoria without the latter's understanding why as their barges pass one another in Venice. Ultimately, Megalena beds Leonardo, Victoria's young brother, who in spite of his self-humbling and generous spirit in his interpolated tale, is susceptible to the evils of an aggressively sexual woman. Megalena's name codes her as large, just as Victoria's codes her as a winner; over time, she seems to add mass as well (also noted by Craciun) as she becomes more frequently described (in her own

³³ And, perhaps relevant as another triangulation, as we shall see later in James' "Jolly Corner," Alice Staverton and the maid are doubled as they nurse Spencer Brydon back from unconsciousness.

words and the narrator's) as masculine³⁴.

Concomitantly with her masculinization, Victoria is likened frequently to animals, as we shall see shortly. She herself makes of Lilla a kind of animal. Although Lilla is stripped naked and her clothes replaced with a leopard skin, it barely covers her and she remains the emblem of purity until grammatically and bloodily intermingled with Victoria at the cliff. The scene could be read as becoming EACH other, as Michasiw notes. It could be, as Hoeveler suggests, Victoria's (and thereby Dacre's) final killing off of the victim-woman of Radcliffean romance. And it could signify Victoria's becoming-other, in this case becoming-animal, becoming-demonic through predation, consumption, and utter dissolution of the feminine Other. We must recall that she reterritorializes across the same cliff-face and abyss as Lilla shortly thereafter. Her pact with Zofloya is sealed in deeds and words, all of which are set in motion and carried through using the engine of her own desire. Dacre in some sense deterritorializes the human and the woman simultaneously in the details of Zofloya and Victoria's transformation of Lilla into a captive animal. The leopard skin that forms Lilla's only covering makes most sense, then, as part of Victoria's commitment to animal predation, becoming-other – she makes pure, innocent Lilla into a predator animal via the leopard skin, but it is a mockery of the

³⁴ In which light, we might consider a recasting of Henry Tilney as Catherine Morland's Zofloya-demon figure for his turning her into Valancourt metaphorically as they stroll around Beechen Hill. The section on *Northanger Abbey*, below, makes more of this relationship.

leopard's power and easily controlled³⁵.

At least some readers would likely – I agree with Craciun – have recognized in Victoria a problem of nymphomania (*furor uterinus*). At the same time, her crimes place her firmly in the pre-pathologized queer criminal space of the sodomite³⁶. Aggressiveness sexually and aggressive violence to achieve her passions mark her as dissident nearly a century before the discourses of criminal type and degeneration provide their explanations, categories, and signs. In law, according to Lynda Hart's *Fatal Women*, sodomy was even more ambiguous for women than for men (and as several historians have shown, it was not at all straightforward for men). A villainess in the early 1800s, Victoria's active seeking-out of demonic support for her operations relies on a female Faustianism, and plays into a notion that a woman needs to be under the influence of a man in order to commit heinous crimes; however, she is primed for the intervention before she knows she is seeking the support, making her more like the genetic villainess of late Victorian discourse – although it is passed on by example and indulgence rather than by heritable traits, the path is cleared by the parents. The novel's progress is the

³⁵ By contrast, Victoria's brother Leonardo erupts into a straightforward animal matching his namesake when avenging his mother's seduction and ill-treatment by the evil Ardolph. Though Leonardo seems to stand for the Romantic, lone, robust man whose skills in the garden and whose susceptibility to sublime scenes calm and restore him, when Ardolph enters the cave of the banditti (of whom Leonardo is the masked chief), Leonardo attacks him "with the strength of a raging lion" (250).

³⁶ In addition to the medical and legal definitions noted here, there is a sense in which the gothic genre is in part made possible by obscenity laws. See Michael Gamer's "Genres for the Prosecution" for an account of *Zofloya* as part of a mutually affirming discourse of legal and moral accusation in the construction of pornographic and gothic obscenity.

progress of becoming-demonic, becoming-male, becoming-animal both for Victoria and for Zofloya, twice-marked himself as a Moor and as the Devil. Victoria's gender transivities and animal becomings can be added to her desire for a demonic Other as part of her minoritarian effect.

The problem of claiming transgender (or simply cross-dressed) status for characters in novels or novelists and poems themselves should not be submitted only to a twenty-first-century sensibility of what is correct to speak or not. Gothic authors and Romantic authors themselves were clearly very conscious of gender mutability, and even if one does not affix a new label (such as transgender) to them and to their works, it would be critically unethical to ignore what is in front of us. Dacre has Victoria figured as tall, "symmetrical" (76) and "masculine" (213) in contrast to the tiny, fairy-like blonde innocent, Lilla. Her affective constitution, aggressive and proud, is named specifically with the French "*fierté*" (27) -- a noun coded, according to Michasiw, with masculinizing connotation (273 n.27). And when she considers the "indecorum of summoning" Zofloya and the likely consequences of Inquisitional interrogations once Berenza's body is discovered, "[t]hese reflections, unworthy however the masculine spirit of Victoria, she speedily overcame..." (189).

When she decries her own body, her self-image in relation to Lilla, Victoria wishes that her "unwieldy form could be compressed into the fairy delicacy of hers, these

bold masculine features assume the likeness of her baby face!" (213-214). Although Zofloya contradicts her and suggests otherwise (her form to him is "graceful" and her features "noble and commanding" – it is an "indignity" that she calls them masculine – 214), the text's balance is on the whole in favour of Victoria's increasing masculinization.

Victoria's actions and structures of feeling are figured as animal becomings; as she experiences a misgovernance of conflicting emotions, she becomes, variously, a "lion" (28), a "scorpion" (31 and again on 212), a "hyaena" (49), a "wild bird newly escaped from its wiry tenement" (56), and upon escaping her captor, Signora di Modena, "the firm-minded Victoria decided on passing the night in common with the race of animal nature, beneath no other canopy than the star-sprinkled heavens (61). As the narrator describes Berenza's attempts (in vain) to find in Victoria something of the innocent,³⁷ we hear that hers

was not the countenance of a Madona -- it was not of angelic mould; yet, though there was a fierceness in it, it was not certainly a repelling, but a beautiful fierceness -- dark, noble, strongly expressive, every lineament bespoke the mind which animated it. ... in her large dark eyes, ... you read the traces of a strong and

³⁷ Berenza himself, however figured as good to Victoria's evil, is not so innocent either. Dacre's portrayal of Berenza as having "real passion" (29) in relation to Victoria's merely being "roused and flattered" (29) is belied significantly by his manipulative attempts to "assimilate" (27) Victoria under the guise of investigative curiosity.

resolute mind... . Her figure, though above the middle height, was symmetry
itself; she was as the tall and graceful antelope” (76).³⁸

What starts as a series of negations (which will be an important rhetorical move in Austen and in Stenbock, as we shall see) becomes an affirmation of her animal masculinity. Arguably, the move from identity by negation to an affirmative line of flight from the constraints of expected femininity is a Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming-Other that, in precisely its affirmation, undoes a patriarchal logic of identity.

Later, Victoria's passionate joy in the destruction of others is likened to "the wild and frightful mirth of a tyrant" (143), a masculine figure, but at the same time to "the brilliant glare of the terrible volcano, pregnant even in its beauty with destruction!" (143), which mixes a potentially masculine metaphor (the mountainous, rising volcano always threatening to erupt) with a female one (pregnancy). She has the "eyes of a basilisk" (150) as she gazes at Lilla, whom Henriquez likens to "the snowy dove fondled by the ravenous vulture" (194) when Victoria affects to care for the sweet and pure innocent. When she loses control of her love, it is expressed in Zofloya's presence, causing us to notice that he is rather the most attractive to her in some sense, and her unbridled emotional joy at the thought of achieving her latest object Henriquez has her exclaim to Zofloya in animal terms such as "when my soul pants for ----" as well as "oh, moment

³⁸ A description, of course, that could apply equally well to Zofloya himself.

for which my heart so long has panted!" (215).

Theoretically, these elements of *Zofloya* that could be analysed using Deleuze and Guattari's concepts – becoming-animal, becoming-other – will not only exist in that novel. If the concepts work, they should work in other gothic novels, not only the most extreme. As a test case, a limit case, we might consider nominating a female author who is quite Dacre's opposite, roughly contemporary to *Zofloya*'s publication, who has since become canonical for her control of domestic (rather than wild or adventurous) romance and her textual reserve (rather than excess). Whereas Victoria's becomings (both animal and male) are literalized in *Zofloya*, with its supernatural horrors, in Jane Austen's domestication and parody of the gothic, *Northanger Abbey*, one would not expect to find such blatant and obvious transgressions of gender and human boundaries. However, read in light of the minor, becomings are nevertheless present in *Northanger Abbey*. In Austen's case, the failure of feminine achievement in Catherine's identity and a certain gender ambiguity in Henry Tilney's own relationship to gothic literary scenes of instruction suggest becomings-other in relation to norms of sex and gender. That these becomings occur in places like Bath rather than in distant Italian mountains surrounded by raging storms makes them no less important; rather, this underscores the possibility of gothic rhizomatics even while a text distances itself from the gothic (however lovingly) through ironic metacommentary such as Austen's.

“Dangerous Reading” with Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney

Rosa Matilda (Charlotte Dacre) warns us of the evils of reading in Chapter VII of her *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*. In both *Confessions* and *Zofloya*, the moral ground of an adult subject is influenced for life in childhood and young adulthood. In *Zofloya*, as we have seen, maps for future self-governance are drawn by parental patterns of discipline (or lack thereof)³⁹ and in *Confessions*, by a programme of reading. The narrator’s stance about the parents and their various sins, though, seem not always to ring true: they do not mitigate convincingly the ethical relativism on display in the characters and plot. This may be one way of understanding the minoritarian gothic’s inherent danger to the canon and to its readers. Because of rhetorical imprecision and the feverish pitch of certain narratorial repetitions (that is, the narrator seems to protest too much!), claims to a moral high ground in some gothic works, as we have seen, tend not to convince.

Is this actually a threat to anyone or any canon in particular, however? Tempting as it may be to assert the slipperiness of the demonic signifiers tracked through Lewis and Dacre to other texts, it is possible that their apparent subversions are not, in the end, very

³⁹ Recall that Victoria’s mother sets, according to the narrator, the poorest of examples for her children by falling in love with Ardolph, or at least being susceptible to his seductions. Her father, too, plays a damning role by being overindulgent and permissive with his daughter’s every wish. Both are condemned by the narrator for causing Victoria’s susceptibility to corruption and inability to distinguish evil in her pursuit of her own passions.

subversive outside the pages of the novels in question.⁴⁰

One of the cases against which to test potential threats from the minor to the major is that of Jane Austen's fiction, which is in some sense the polar opposite of gothic. Yet even in her explicit engagement with gothic themes, her text is in full control of itself. Here there is no imprecision; sarcasm on the narrator's and Henry Tilney's part assist in the masterful crafting of Austen's satire on the gothic, *Northanger Abbey*. Already written by the late 1790s and only somewhat updated⁴¹ before its 1818 publication, a satire so brilliantly wrought could be supposed to have taken the wind rather effectively out of the potential for any real danger in extreme, dissident gothic narratives. In the protagonist Catherine Morland's gothic identifications, one might say goth-identifications even, we see the effects of "Dangerous Reading" on fancy, emotion, and action. We also see the diminishment of these effects – to some extent – as the heroine learns of her own self-deception. Yet the attenuation of passion and fear does not mean that their objects – either of that passion or that fear – turn out to be the wrong targets. Catherine's affection for Henry and her mistrust of General Tilney are not as

⁴⁰ The counterargument to my suggestion is, in fact, that such gothic novels are actually quite conservative if we attend to history, seeming subversive only to modern and postmodern eyes. The question of Lewis or Dacre's own politics aside, we have to accept that the circulation of the texts' meanings might happen in the service of a reaction to revolutionary impulses in Europe, for example. Still, the legal troubles and scandals caused by these texts suggest that their meanings tend to need monitoring, and are therefore in some real sense subversive.

⁴¹ This according to Marilyn Butler, editor of the 1995 Penguin Classics edition. Butler finds textual evidence to point to changes but argues convincingly that they are fewer than some have claimed.

misplaced, finally, as she first thinks they have been. Read in the context of *Zofloya*, with a focus on gendered expectations and cues, *Northanger Abbey* contains in fact a potentially gender-transitive minor text within its own major frame.

This section concerns itself with an eclectic reading of an atypical model of male domination by one of the most canonical authors in English literature: one among several scenes of instruction in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, in which Henry Tilney masters Catherine Morland's reading practices in order to show her how wrong she is in assuming that "gentlemen read better books" (82) than novels. I find in this scene an operational complexity that gathers together the various threads of the dissertation, including authorial and textual gender, queer reading (within the text and without), and questions of canonicity. The setting of the scene is a walk round Beechen Cliff, and two extended quotations from it are worth considerable attention:

'I never look at it, said Catherine, as they walked along the side of the river, 'without thinking of the south of France.'

'You have been abroad then?' said Henry, a little surprized.

'Oh! no, I only mean what I have read about. It always puts me in mind of the country that Emily and her father travelled through, in the "Mysteries of Udolpho." But you never read novels, I dare say?'

'Why not?'

'Because they are not clever enough for you -- gentlemen read better books.'

'The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must

be intolerably stupid. I have read all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; -- I remember finishing it in two days -- my hair standing on end the whole time.'

... 'I am very glad to hear it indeed, and now I shall never be ashamed of liking Udolpho myself. But I really thought before, young men despised novels amazingly.'

'It is amazingly; it may well suggest amazement if they do -- for they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Louisas. If we proceed to particulars, and engage in the never-ceasing inquiry of "Have you read this?" and "Have you read that?" I shall soon leave you as far behind me as -- what shall I say? -- I want an appropriate simile; -- as far as your friend Emily herself left poor Valancourt when she went with her aunt into Italy. Consider how many years I have had the start of you. I had entered on my studies at Oxford, while you were a good little girl working your sampler at home!'

With the exaggeration and playful condescension that, in combination with Catherine's interpretation of it as earnestness, typifies Austen's satire, Henry states that men do not despise novels, "for they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds" (83). He goes on to claim that in a contest of who has read what, he would leave Catherine "as far as your friend Emily herself left poor Valancourt when she went with her aunt into Italy," and then boasts that he began his studies earlier than

she “at Oxford, while you were a good little girl working your sampler at home!” (83).

Besides the reader’s knowledge from the first chapter that Catherine was hardly the “good little girl” projected by Henry, this is a complicated set of moves. Henry places himself very carefully (“what shall I say? - I want an appropriate simile” – 83) as the young *woman* to Catherine’s Valancourt, and then immediately invokes his cultural capital by privileging the very masculine institution, Oxford, while simultaneously belittling Catherine’s femininity and sexuality.⁴² He also plugs himself and Catherine into roles which, respectively, complicate typical gender arrangements: as Emily he would be the one to feel emotions heightened or assisted by nature’s sublimity, to have a predilection for banditti-sightings, while Catherine would be engaged, as Valancourt, in dissipating deep play at Paris (with the most selfless of intentions, of course). Henry’s own self-feminization as Emily and foregrounding of the intimacy with which Catherine reads novels (“your friend Emily”) situates him queerly in the role of best friend that Catherine wants to see his sister Eleanor as occupying (and that Isabella Thorpe has occupied so far).

⁴² “...working your sampler” could mean simply that -- practising the embroidery that accomplished young girls must do. However, there are two ways that it could also refer to masturbation: first, by metonymic displacement of the object of manual “working” in the lap, and second, by negation, for working at one’s sampler was one way mothers were taught to keep their daughters from thinking about other uses for the hands. Eve Sedgwick’s notorious “Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl” is pertinent here. There are also entirely plausible readings of the role of samplers that have nothing to do with sexuality, of course. For an excellent analysis of material culture of this latter sort see Ariane Fennetaux, “Female Crafts: Women and *Bricolage*...”.

Henry's tutelary role has not gone unnoticed by critics. Although it is possible to read in Henry's occasionally cruel encouragement the author's frustration with girls who do not see what is immediately before them, preferring instead to relay experience through extreme fictions, Terry Castle notes that Henry's chiding never replaces Catherine's way of knowing with his but rather encourages her to think on her own. As Castle rightly states, "Only by not explaining -- by refusing to treat her as anything other than an intellectual equal -- can he help her to develop, belatedly, an equivalent sense of autonomy" (xxiii). That it is a belated but possible autonomy suggests a relativist feminism on Austen's part, echoing Wollstonecraft's blaming of educational practices for differences between men's and women's epistemes, according to Castle. I would not disagree with this analysis, for it is borne out by Henry's careful rhetoric, above. Consider too the contrast with John Thorpe, or with Henry's brother Captain Tilney, in which Henry clearly refuses the kinds of dominating and dismissive arrogance seemingly typical of young men courting.

Henry, by identifying himself with the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, enunciates his own becoming-other, or becoming-woman. For Marilyn Butler, he is a "mysterious, almost allegorical figure, who stands for androgynous ideas, youthful play, the comic spirit, romance" (xlii). Butler supposes him to be a version of Austen herself, not only the namesake for her brother. What she doesn't add is that he also makes a man

of Catherine. Angela Wright, too, notices that Henry is crossing gender lines in the Beechen Cliff perambulation. For her the “gender inversion” (64) is an index of Austen’s subversion of expectations about the audience for gothic romance, her “relative indifference to the gendered identity of its readership” (64). She does not go so far as to note the chiasmic becomings within the text, preferring to make of Henry (as Butler does) an allegorical figure. He is this, as they argue convincingly; the scene is also, however, a map for reterritorializing gender when read alongside more radical becomings like Dacre’s. Although Catherine decries the study of history and is finding her way to feminine identity – becoming-woman – she is doing so through a man who has already effected his becoming-woman. We must recall her first dozen or more years spent as what we would now identify as a tomboy, playing boys’ games and refusing to learn expected female accomplishments, like music. She is certainly not the sampler-working, “good little girl” Henry projects upon her past. In this context, woman is something she is not naturally, but rather accomplishes because Henry demonstrates the script (literally, during their encounters in Bath, and only a little less literally thereafter as he makes of Radcliffe a metaphor for their relationship to romances, and therefore to their own romance plot).

Up to the point of the walk on Beechen Cliff, Catherine’s tutelage in gothic novel reading has been effected by Isabella Thorpe (23-25), in whom she trusts too quickly and

thoroughly, and who is actually manipulating Catherine's susceptibilities. Upon her perambulations with Eleanor and Henry Tilney, she finds in the former a more honest female friend who nevertheless prefers history, like men (84) and in the latter finds her gothic tutor and object of affection in the same person. Contrast Henry's position to John Thorpe's in a prior scene of (attempted) instruction (31-32). John Thorpe is a miserable companion even for the susceptible Catherine, in part because he refuses to entertain the idea that novel reading could possibly be a manly pursuit. He belittles Catherine's intense study of novels as inconsequential and at best puerile and stupid, not worth bothering about. When he mistakes Radcliffe as **not** the author of *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Catherine is afraid to correct him for fear of "mortifying" (32) him; however, when he simply marches on with another mistaken reading (of Burney, with whom he had confused Radcliffe), her own reading practices are dismissed. Austen has set up this scene, however, to *point out* rather than to *repeat* the ways in which certain kinds of male domination operate, for John Thorpe is quite clearly ridiculed throughout for his bombastic exaggerations. The structure of the narrative leads one to the conclusion that he is betraying a vast ignorance by so vehemently attacking her interests, not the smallest clue being the metafictional narrative intrusion and (possibly ironic) defence of the novel of Vol I, Chpt. 5: "...only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest

delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language” (22).

With the arrival of Henry, a contrast between masculinities is set up in which Henry’s familiarity with *Udolpho* and other gothic and sentimental novels marks him as far more attractive to Catherine⁴³. There is, of course, an obvious contrast between John’s misreadings of novels and Henry’s more charitable and knowledgeable approach. Henry, however, uses his extensive knowledge of the genre to chastise Catherine playfully, sowing and reaping seeds of terror in the well-fertilized fields of her young mind. Teasing, whether meant to instruct or to dismiss, is a way for Henry to consolidate his more worldly knowledge and punish Catherine, however gently, for her relative ignorance. It is his attempt to control her all-too susceptible desires and understandings that prompts an interpretation of Henry (and by extension Austen herself) as patriarchal, phallogocentric pillars of reason and realism.

A different interpretation is, however, possible. Despite her positioning (by Henry and by the text) as naive, it is Catherine’s gothic proclivities that lead her to be more right than anyone else about the General’s manipulative, shallow evils. He is not the monstrous tyrant that she imagines, but he is a tyrant of a more everyday sort, and her

⁴³ And therefore potentially dangerous. Men in Austen’s universe who are adept at what may be considered feminine discourse are not usually favoured. See Whilloughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*, Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, Churchill in *Emma*, and Benwick in *Persuasion*. Henry Tilney stands alone among this type of man in Austen by being redeemed.

mistake is therefore not being so taken with gothic tales, but of taking them literally instead of reading them allegorically.

Castle's sympathetic reading of Henry, then, perhaps leaves something out that is key here: gothic narrative (and not just Austen's metafictional commentary on it) is itself a pedagogy.⁴⁴ Without the instructive function of gothic writing, Henry's encouragement would not lead to any revelatory moments for Catherine. This is true whether we take Henry's encouragement as an expression of patriarchal control or as an expression of Austen's early feminism. For it is by way of *gothic* expectation and identification with *gothic* plots and heroines that Catherine gets closest to the truth about General Tilney. Although Catherine is first awakened to the folly of her visions of the General as a homicidal brute by Henry's chidings (159), Castle notes that Catherine's "second and far more decisive kind of enlightenment" (xv) occurs when she realizes, paradoxically, that she was not so wrong about the General after all. She had exaggerated his faults, to be sure, but upon realizing that his acquisitive, manipulative character and capacity for cruelty were real, one realizes that her mistake is one of degree rather than of kind. It is not Henry's tutelage but the gothic's tutelage that brings her closest to the truth.

⁴⁴ Austen's portrayal of Catherine and Henry corroborates in a more metafictional mode the contemporary suspicion that gothic novels function for adolescent girls and some young men the way fairy tales and folk tales function for children. The question becomes what lessons are being learned by which kinds of interpellated subjectivities, and from which particular good or bad books. Austen's satire targets, on some level, those who would dismiss gothic books on the basis of quality and morality in her own time and I suspect in ours.

To put it differently, gothic novels provide Catherine with allegorical truths that surpass the powers of observation of the realist characters: even the most sympathetic reading of Henry must note that his chastisement of Catherine (159) becomes defensive in its turn to armoured civility. Catherine's problem, to the degree that she might have one, resides in her taking the allegorical truths as literal. She reads General Tilney as identical with a murderous gothic villain rather than as a little bit like one. She reads the General's impolite, self-interested and class-interested cruelties as full-scale, patriarchal, murderous Villainy. Nonetheless, it is a tutelage in gothic novels that brings her closer to the truth about him than any amount of Oxford education and study of history on Henry's part, for example. The study of history, incidentally, is the discipline preferred by Catherine's brothers, her father, Mr. Allen, and significantly, Eleanor (84-5). Eleanor's predilection for history books both prevents her from seeing the truth and demonstrates that it is not an essentially female thing to take the gothic's allegories literally. Eleanor, aligned with men and education in this little aside about history books, is as unwilling as Henry to address directly their father's potential for manipulation.

Terry Castle rightly notes that the introduction of Catherine Morland is an extended series of negations (vii). Although we can claim an affirmation of a tomboy identity, it is true that characterization in the first chapter is achieved largely through no, neither, and not. The enumeration of heroine-defining and Romantic elements she has not

achieved or has not been exposed to is long and comprehensive. While Castle suggests that this is part of Austen's construction of what she will do as a novelist (by explaining what she will not be or do -- see page x), there is one "not" in particular that is particularly relevant to the case I am making about goth and gothing subjectivity.

Amongst the accomplishments of which Catherine Morland is incapable is music. "Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinnet; so, at eight years old she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it... The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life" (2). Eventually she was only slightly more able to learn: "though there seemed no chance of her throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte, of her own composition, she could listen to other people's performance with very little fatigue" (4).

Ultimately, Austen's writing is major for two reasons. She recuperates potentially unsettling terms in *Northanger Abbey* by having recourse to the conventions of the conduct book: if it is read properly, the gothic helps young ladies recognize who is bad and who is good. This collusion with the sentimental tradition makes Austen's message major, her writing canonical. The other reason it is major is rhetorical. Unlike many other gothic novels, whether they be parodic, self-conscious, or pure entertainment, *Northanger Abbey* spends its energy thematizing reading with an ironic distance from its

subject matter in language. Like all Austen's novels, it masters the language with satirical effect, and in so doing, stands above the object of its critique rather than foregrounding its participation in what it is critiquing.

A distinction is helpful here, then, between major in its traditional sense -- canonical, best, dominant -- and major uses of language (strategic mastery). In the conventional sense, ascribing major and its defining other, minor, to texts and authors is a political and cultural act that has assumptions and consequences. A liberal project of opening up the canon might shift the ground slightly along gendered and national lines. The opposition "major-minor" functions to separate canonical and non-canonical works, or high art and popular trash, but it also operates within the canon. There is a sense in which *Northanger Abbey* is a minor work of Austen's when held up next to *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*. A more specific, theoretical version of major and minor, along with a third term, minoritarian, form the basis for my comments about the canon throughout the dissertation, and the Introduction explains them as critical terms. Major, minor and minoritarian as critical categories, for my purposes, have to do with uses of language, shifting the ground more than slightly. Often a major use of language (such as Austen's) will be synchronous with canon-inclusion (in particular historical circumstances which, of course, change). However, there is no necessary relation between a minoritarian language use and exclusion from the canon. Indeed, recall from

Chapter 1, above, that one of the unique aspects of this dissertation involves the proposal that even the most canonical works read in certain ways contain minoritarian moments (or potential becomings-other).

In this case, the minoritarian moment is not the minor use of language by a minority-language writer of English (as in Kafka's writing of German); it is the recasting – as if sex and gender are a language -- of major gender categories by minoritarian gender tactics derived from the gothic in particular. Minoritarian strategies push minor uses of language (or other semiotic elements, like gender codes) further than primarily minor texts do, and they can be found with more or less frequency and intensity in major or minor texts. In turn, a minoritarian “line of flight” from major and minor texts might itself risk major or minor “reterritorializations.” Henry's self-emplacement as an Emily figure and Catherine's rhetorical positioning of Eleanor as male (in the list of people who like studying history, 84-5) are minoritarian potentials (becomings-other) in a text that would prefer to settle major meanings, that would prefer they (the minor ones) stay potential⁴⁵. The two arborescent aspects of Austen's novel (conduct book conventions and rhetorical mastery), then, work to keep her authorial and textual canonicity intact only as long as readers repudiate the concretization of minoritarian gender potentials and,

⁴⁵ A counterpoint, or another way in which minor might be working here, is the sense in which Austen's irony involves (analogously to Kafka's use of German) her “non-native” adoption of a native eighteenth-century male moralism, in spite of her later canonization in literary history. Contrast her articulations of this discourse with Frances Burney's, for example, and Austen's irony becomes a minor articulation of a major language.

along with Henry, tease the gothically-inclined readers. Yet the becoming-woman of Catherine paired with that of Henry leave a residue of gender deterritorialization for those prepared – by the very gothicizations thematized in the text -- to see it.

Between Goths: Percy Shelley and Rhizomatic Desire

I read Novels and romances all day, till in the Evening I fancy myself a Character

--P.B. Shelley, qtd. in Behrendt, "Introduction" (20)

Mr. Swinburne has seen and looked through a copy of *Zofloya*

– W. M. Rosetti, *Memoir of Shelley* (12)

Eve Sedgwick's groundbreaking *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* traces the dynamics of an essentialising function of triadic relations (two men's desire for one another expressed only through the female character). Using goth as though it were a gender, my subtitle invokes Sedgwick's title both to endorse the argument and to question the idea that only a dominant triangulation of desire essentialises itself. By this I (and Sedgwick) mean that male homosocial desire in the service of patriarchal norms sets masculinity up as natural; it is, though, not the only kind of "homosocial" and not the only set of norms that can claim essential or natural status in the sphere of the socio-textual. Etymologically, since "homos" refers to sameness, we could (assuming that the goth in a goth-identification can be a thirdness in gender terms,

a third gender) posit that homosocial can also work from goth to goth no matter what the sex of that goth might be. Here I am being rather loose with history in order to provoke a discontinuous, nonlinear understanding of what a goth is, or might be. A key figure in this proposition is Percy Bysshe Shelley, Romantic and romanticised. Shelley takes Matthew Lewis and Charlotte Dacre and performs their gothicism in his own juvenile novels and in his own lived experience of gender and narrative. It is as though he embodies the abjected matter left behind by Catherine Morland's fancy once she has returned to the rational world.

Victorian and European reception of Shelley is complicated; it is not a straight line from his death to his bust finding its way to Stenbock's apartments. Richard Cronin suggests that Shelley "survived...in two very different guises, as an esoteric poet available to only a privileged minority, and as a poet of the recent past who meant most to the 'sinewy artisan, the weaver lean'" (614). The two Shelleys – a lyric poet for poets, and a representative radical for political movements – are promoted by different critics or groups for different purposes, and the problem of which Shelley is which, for whom, animates aesthetic and political discourse for the decades leading up to the Decadents (and beyond). Indeed, Rossington and Schmid find not two but four strands in his reception throughout Europe and over a century and a half: "biographical, lyrical, radical and titanic" (7). Myth-making by his friends and contemporaries (such as the rituals

around his burial, the relics collected, the memoirs penned, and the publication history overseen by Mary Shelley) all contribute to the transcendent Shelley of the Pre-Raphaelites (counterposed, always, by the famous Arnoldian positioning of him as the “ineffectual angel” of lyricism mentioned invariably by literary historians).

This suggests that received-Shelley is as much about (highly-textualized) biography as about literary output. The mythifying by peers and by later critics and artists is of importance to my case, and so the protracted description of biographical detail that is narrativized as a life (and characterized in fictional accounts) has everything to do with the gothicizing conflation of life and work common in the genre’s constitution, and seen previously in my analysis of Dacre (and in the next chapter, of Stenbock). The historical Shelley, too, is not without agency in this gothicization; my overall point here includes his own activation of gothicizing writing precisely through his recapitulation of the Dacre-refrain. The focus, below, on his construction as a very gothic, wild, and effete boy is not intended to fix him in a single version of (un)masculinity recognizable to a postmodern queer sensibility; rather, it is intended to tease out the filaments of minoritarian identity that then show up again in Stenbock’s life and fictions.

Becoming-other

In 1808, Shelley claims in a letter that he reads “Novels and romances all day, till in the Evening I fancy myself a Character” (Qtd. in Behrendt, “Introduction,” 20.). The

imprint of these novels on his own juvenile writing is obvious enough to have been noted frequently in biographies by Shelley's contemporaries and since, particularly in the case of Dacre's *Zofloya*. What is less attended to, and what this section seeks to redress, is the correlation between such novel-gazing and the performatively self-fashioned Romantic identity.

Friend and biographer Thomas Medwin documents this gothic performativity in two published narratives of his own (*Memoir of Shelley* and *Life of Shelley*), effectively "gothing" Shelley for at least one of the Pre-Raphaelites -- Algernon Charles Swinburne, whose personal copy of *Memoir* is held by York University's archive -- and almost certainly another -- William Michael Rossetti, who undertakes his own biographical research on Shelley in 1869, collecting a skull bone from an aging Trelawney in the process (*Some Reminiscences*, 375). It is not a long stretch to Count Stenbock's altar and shrine devoted to Shelley in the 1880s and 90s given Stenbock's association with the older Simeon Solomon, himself associated with the named Pre-Raphaelites a decade or two earlier.⁴⁶

At Sion House, Shelley's school from age 10 for the years prior to Eton, for example, "the sons of London shopkeepers, of rude habits and coarse manners, ... made game of his girliness, and despised him because he was not 'one of them;,' not disposed

⁴⁶ This association is documented in Adlard, 1969, among other places. See Chapter 3, below, for a fuller discussion of Stenbock's relationship to Solomon.

to enter into their sports, to wrangle, or fight” (Medwin, 15). When tormented, he would retreat and cry (18). Although “tall for his age,” he is “slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow chested... His features... set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of countenance was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence” (18). And, although calm in general, “when he heard of or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible on his countenance” (19). Such descriptions, and those that follow, seem part of a project after the fact by his biographers to mark the young Shelley not only as oddly gendered, but also as predisposed to the Romanticism he was to help to create.

During his classics lessons, he is distracted: “during school-hours he was wont to gaze at the passing clouds – all that could be seen from the lofty windows which his desk fronted – or watch the swallows as they flitted past, with longing for their wings; or would scrawl... rude drawings of pines and cedars, in memory of those on the lawn of his native home” (23). Like the young boys and teens of Stenbock’s stories later, as we shall see, Shelley is intimately connected to the natural world more than to that of books and formal instruction.

Medwin also describes the young Shelley’s predilection for horrific stories. “He was very fond of reading, and greedily devoured all the books which were brought to

school after the holidays; these were mostly *blue books*. ...[These] embodied stories of haunted castles, bandits, murderers, and other grim personages..." (29). His tastes are of a gothic order:

Anne Ratcliffe's [sic] works pleased him most, particularly the Italian, but the Rosa-Matilda school, especially a strange, wild romance, entitled "Zofloya, or the Moor," a Monk-Lewis production, where his Satanic Majesty, as in Faust, plays the chief part, enraptured him. The two novels he afterwards wrote... were modelled after this ghastly production. (30-31)

He "entertained a belief in apparitions, and the power of evoking them" (32). And "After supping on the horrors of the Minerva press, he was subject to strange, and sometimes frightful dreams, and was haunted by apparitions that bore all the semblance of reality" (33), even sleepwalking and having waking dreams (33-34). Upon leaving Sion, he goes to Eton. "The boy, so delicately organized, with so nervous a temperament, under the influence of a chronic melancholy, whose genius was a sort of malady; this child, so strong and yet so feeble, suffered in every way" (43).

And at both Eton and Oxford, Shelley's interest in alchemical and electrical experimentation leads to descriptions of rooms with all manner of stains and disarray (111-113). He becomes a vegetarian, the early signs of which are visible even as a student: "His food was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation at

this time of a vegetable diet, respecting which he afterwards became an enthusiast in theory, and in practice an irregular votary” (124). The connections between creative genius, sympathy for nature’s creatures, and a nervous body are all part of a narrative construction of otherness, all part of gothicization by biographical reconstruction.

On first meeting the adult Shelley, Edward Trelawney describes Percy thus:

“Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face that it could be the Poet, I returned his warm pressure. . . . was it possible that this mild-looking beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?” (25).

Trelawney’s interest in Shelley has been raised through a combination of gossip and a gothic textual *frisson* with a German bookseller; their mutual interest in the profane is clear when the latter explains the outcry of a clergyman upon glancing at *Queen Mab*:

“Infidel, jacobin, leveller: nothing can stop this spread of blasphemy but the stake and the faggot; the world is retrograding into accursed heathenism and universal anarchy!” (14).

This outburst ignites first the bookseller’s, and then in turn Trelawney’s, curiosity.

Trelawney’s biographical recollections of the poet themselves evoke a gothicising desire. Shelley is thought to sleepwalk or become somnambulant at times; though Trelawney claims Shelley is not a somnambulist, there are reported incidents, including one he mentions from Italy in which Shelley holds a candle over Mary and will not

speak. Figuring incidents like Shelley's return from a sea excursion completely naked and walking through a dinner party, Trelawney comments again on his youthful appearance, stating that that "All strangers were astonished at his boyish appearance. The guest could not believe it was the poet whose writings he had read five or six years back" (118). Finally, after a scene in which Trelawney relates to the Shelleys that he has discovered Byron's habit of keeping letters and reading parts of them to friends, Percy asks Mary how it is that Trelawney has been so quick to see what it took them much longer to realize: "'That,' she observed, 'is because he lives with the living, and we with the dead'" (33). Even something as simple as fetching afternoon tea becomes a supernatural event for Trelawney: "The poet vanished, and tea appeared" (27).

Thomas Love Peacock, in his satirical *Nightmare Abbey*, also makes of Shelley a gothic character, Scythrop Glowry.⁴⁷ Peacock places Glowry-Shelley in an Abbey's tower, the foot of which "opened on a terrace, which was called the garden, though nothing grew on it but ivy, and a few amphibious weeds. The south-western tower, which was ruinous and full of owls, might, with equal propriety, have been called the aviary" (43). Later, apparently, Shelley would come to call one of his apartments Scythrop's tower. "Here would Scythrop take his evening seat, on a fallen fragment of mossy stone,

⁴⁷ We might here forecast too what W.B. Yeats does with Count Stenbock, turning him into "Count Sobrinski" in a prose narrative, "The Speckled Bird." Part of my argument about goths and gothing involves a mutually affirming movement between actual and fictional lives – another instance of emergence in discourse and writing of the self in a goth genealogy. Put another way, Count Stenbock becomes a goth and gothic rhizome.

with his back resting against the ruined wall, -- a thick canopy of ivy, with an owl in it, over his head, -- and the Sorrows of Werther in his hand” (46); as Trelawney has it, Shelley’s own drowned body was recognizable in part by the books in his coat pocket. “[Scythrop] began to devour romances and German tragedies, and... to pore over ponderous tomes of transcendental philosophy, which reconciled him to the labour of studying them by their mystical jargon and necromantic imagery” (46). Even philosophy in Shelley’s hands can be gothed.

Percy Shelley, then, is another chiasmic figure (as Henry Tilney was; see above) in relation to the fictional Catherine Morland. While she is unsuccessful at accomplishing *femininity* as a child and young teen, passing through the gothic in order to reterritorialize (only partially) as a heroine, Shelley (at least as a character in biographies and fiction) is unsuccessful at accomplishing a certain kind of normative *masculinity*. His movement through the gothic machinery of Dacre’s influence results in a species of hero (in this case Romantic lyric poet-hero on the one hand and a radical hero on the other), once his juvenile gothic writing is left behind.⁴⁸

These proximities between characters, readers, and writers are, I propose,

⁴⁸ Clearly the masculine hero is a precarious position for Shelley; some Victorian criticism was unkind if Matthew Arnold’s dismissal of the poet as a “beautiful and ineffectual angel” is any indication. It is a Pre-Raphaelite reimagining of Shelley that both restores and restricts his gothed identity: successful masculinity (in the sense of robust, adventuresome Englishness like Trelawney’s self-perception) is as elusive in this project as successful femininity is to Catherine Morland. For an analysis of the condemnation of Pre-Raphaelites for particular constructions of effeminacy, see Morgan.

rhizomatic. In this case, I do not mean that they tell the whole story about either genre or gender, nor even whole stories, plural. Shelley's becoming-other is effected by his own actions (including reading and writing gothically), his own body (in its relation to youth and femininity), and by his contemporaries in their gothicising construction of him.

Noting rhetorical, figural, approximate, gestural affinities between descriptions, reading habits, gender dissidence, and goth recognition will necessarily be partial. My contention is not that this reading of Shelley (by biographers, by later readers) ought to explain all; rather, it is a thread running in the fabric that undoes or unravels the integrity of a whole and total (in this case, canonical and major) reading.

Rhizomatic Gothic

Consider Percy Shelley to be a joint or hinge, articulating counterdiscourses of sex, gender and sexuality between Romantic and Decadent readers and writers of gothic texts. As the ground in which the rhizomes extend themselves from other rhizomes, Shelley supplies the nonlinear, discontinuous historical link in fiction and fictional subjectivity. In an understandable (given the canon of Romantic poetry) temporal shift, critics have come to Dacre through Shelley's early prose works, *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*. A flurry of critical activity promoted these narratives to near-canonical status (or tried to) in the mid-1980s, culminating in their publication as an ill-fated Oxford World's Classics

edition in 1986.⁴⁹ It is with a particularly deconstructive irony that the major, canonical Romantic poet has become the conduit through which students of the gothic rediscovered Charlotte Dacre's novels; Algernon Charles Swinburne being perhaps the first curious seeker to come at *Zofloya* directly through Shelley (Rossetti, 12). It is ironic because Shelley's novels replay Dacre's character names; indeed, Medwin's *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* reports that *Zofloya* "enraptured him" (30). It is deconstructive because the oppositions between inside and outside, cause and effect, before and after, unravel themselves when Shelley's art and his life are put into play with Dacre's and Stenbock's (partly through some Victorians' fascination with Shelley; that Swinburne gets to Dacre through this route does not preclude others from doing the same).

To read Shelley reading Dacre, and to read descriptions of Shelley that connote an ambiguously-gendered, overwrought goth is to germinate the rhizomes running from Walpole through Lewis and Dacre, and ensuring their continued (perhaps unexpected and nonlinear) growth through to the Pre-Raphaelites and on to Stenbock. An identity between author and text is drawn not only by this kind of reading strategy, in Shelley's case, but also by his own self-fashioning. This is the agential element of minoritarian deconstruction, a point to which I will return in later chapters.

⁴⁹ Ill-fated in the sense that it is no longer in print on the OUP list of all World Classics. It was superseded in 2002 by a better edition from Broadview Press edited by Stephen Behrendt, containing more secondary material and all the related prose fragments in addition to the two tales.

As I note in the next chapter, Count Stenbock kept a bust of Shelley in his flat in London until he became ill enough to feel a need for a different sort of intervention, replacing Shelley with the Virgin Mary. The Shelley to whom Stenbock paid homage is certainly the Shelley of the poetry and of *The Cenci*, but it is also the Shelley who wrote his analogue into *St. Irvyne* as Fitzeustace and whose life was satirized in fiction by Thomas Love Peacock, narrativized in biography by Medwin, Trelawney, and Mary Shelley, among others. It is the Shelley who, as half of “Victor and Cazire,” wrote poetry that found its way into his gothic narratives only in order to be insulted and obliterated (within the narrative and within the publishing industry of the time). The complications of these textual accretions are what help to ground my assertions about gothic rhizomaticity, and importantly, explain the interplay of self, imprecision, and extremes that can characterize minor (or minoritarian) literature.

Morally and ethically, Shelley’s revenge plots in *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne* are indebted to Charlotte Dacre’s. The obviousness of the connections between Shelley and Dacre’s character names is a clue that leads us to other elements of the text, including the moral element. At one point, a typically gothic statement about the influence of evil on what might otherwise have remained good is effected by a vegetative metaphor: when Wolfstein longs to try the bandit leader Cavigni’s life a second time, he contemplates murder “sufficiently long...to blast his blooming hopes, and to graft on the stock, which

otherwise might have produced virtue, the fatal seeds of vice” (124). The difficulty of grafting a seed aside, the lateral mobility and non-copulative reproduction inherent in the process suggests, at the very least, an alternative to arborescent genealogies of the self.⁵⁰ Although what motivates the villains of gothic narratives (including Shelley’s) is often a curse brought on by a sinning patriarch -- the sins of the father visited upon the successive generations, as in Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* -- the manner in which it plays itself out can, according to Shelley’s minor iteration through the figure of the graft, be non-Oedipal (if not precisely rhizomatic).

The intertextual importance of names, too, cannot be ignored. It seems clear from the weight accorded to the topic by the editors both of Shelley’s novels and of Dacre’s *Zofloya* that the connections are not arbitrary (Behrendt, 38-39; Michasiw, 269-71). As raised earlier, Charlotte Dacre’s other pen-name, Rosa Matilda, is commonly accepted to be a clear conflation of Rosario and Matilda, the transgendered demon from Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*. One of Dacre’s novels, *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*, is dedicated to Lewis and claims to be influenced by his work. Shelley, in his turn, imports and adapts several of Dacre’s names: Megalena Strozzi is split, multiplied, and rendered

⁵⁰ The relevant example of which, here, is Freudian Oedipality, in which the journey to successful subjecthood is bound under the organizing principle of familialism, a relation of sublimated libidinal investments in self and parents. See Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* for an early critique).

all the larger⁵¹ by Megalena Metastasio, and also split, transgendered, and z-multiplied in Zastrozzi (capitalized also by the Z from Zofloya's name). Laurentini and Ardolph are important names from *Zofloya*, and the Matilda in *Zastrozzi* calls forth both Rosa Matilda and *The Monk's* Matilda. These reconjugations of character names are also complex redeployments of characters in the alphabetical sense. The slippage between character in the moral or affective sense and character in the alphabetical, literal sense is a feature of the gothic that lends it a postmodern preoccupation with surface over depth. A telling analogue is *St. Irvyne's* Ginotti.

Ginotti, the mysterious masked bandit and liberator of Wolfstein, whose brethren fear and respect him to ridiculous degree, veils himself to avoid transparency of "character" in one passage: "Never had he once thrown off the mysterious mask, beneath which his character was veiled, since he had become an associate of the band" (121).

The veiling of character (as moral) and character (as inscribed letter) is an interpenetrative dynamic that Sedgwick identifies as a gothic trope of surfaces and the movement between them (*Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, 142).

Just as Ginotti's interventions both forestall and enable the progression of the plot

⁵¹ The "mega" in Megalena derived from the Greek for "great" or large, and the Metastasio using "meta" as beyond or above; Metastasio may also have intertextual resonance with the Italian poet and librettist of the same name from generations prior, and Strozzi marks anyone bearing the name either as related to the Florentine bankers and Medici rivals, or perhaps a "strangler" (from the Italian verb *strozzare*). This practice of stylized and almost theatrical naming calls attention to the artifice of gothicization.

-- at one point he stops Wolfstein from poisoning leader and rival lover Cavigni, while at the next point he allows Wolfstein to escape the vengeful banditti upon the successful second poisoning attempt -- the calling forth of characters, their masking, and their metonymic displacements of moral character both forestall and enable the progression of a minor gothic rhizomaticity. That is to say, these moves block certain paths while sending the rhizomes in other directions. Not the main plot in common (that which distinguishes) between particular subsets of gothic narrative, generically, minor gothic rhizomaticity is rather the grafting, budding, tuberous growth of stories and desires by major and minor writers who interpret and reconjugate in unpredictable and non-unified ways. It may be in sub-plots, minor characters, or protagonists with unusually intense attributes (as in *Dacre*).

Nor is degree of earnestness in these recapitulations of theme, character, structure of desire, normative closure, and so on, necessarily related to major and minor. Just as Jane Austen sets out to parody and ends by reinscribing gothic reading as a pedagogy, Shelley's homage to *Dacre* can in itself be read as earnest or as parody. Ascribed to his immaturity as a writer, the language acts in *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne* actually draw attention to the rhetoric of gothicization. Excessive and clumsy repetition and alliteration limit Shelley's representational weight, to be sure, but they also evince a satirical tone with regard to the emotional pitch to which the gothic tends. For example, souls and

brains in both novels “pant” or are “panting” in order to signify desire. This becoming-animal is strictly held within a structure, but by repetition its surface is foregrounded and put into play with other elements within the structure.

Alliterative sensory states also forge a link between the novels. “Odoriferous orangeries” (55) appear in *Zastrozzi*, and “Odoriferous orange-groves” (132) in *St. Irvyne*. The prefix “en” reaches back to Dacre for its logic, using such constructions as “enhorrored” (118, 127, 130) as well as the more standard entombed, enraptured, and entranced.

Often considered merely juvenile, Shelley’s prose in these novels reads as ironic in its excess and repetition. Gothic writing in general is a prose form that does not aim for clarity. Its style is its content, reproduces it as an *it*, as knowable. It pays attention to its audience even as it engages its author in play with certain kinds⁵² of imagery, metonymy, language games. Quite possibly, one cannot teach gothic composition – at least beyond the machinic programming of the scene-trappings. Gothic teaches its own methods and styles (although sometimes things appear -- or become -- gothic without meaning to). They become gothic inadvertently through audience camp recognition or by

⁵² I refer here to the “laundry list” of images in play since the genre’s inception and criticized as such almost since then: dreary castles, sublime vistas, hidden passageways, veils and curtains, stains, locked cabinets, endangered young women, tyrannical older men, and the rest. Such gothic-by-numbers imagery is the subject not only of critics’ disparagements but also the subject of interest for studies of surface as trope, like Sedgwick’s *Coherence of Gothic Conventions*.

ascribing “gothicness” to them, but also through their very structure. We do not have to decide once and for all which came first; this is not a classic chicken-or-egg argument. Sometimes one happens, sometimes the other, sometimes a mixture. Shelley’s reliance on repeated sounds, words, phrases and metaphors asks to be read as a kind of opacity, but also as a kind of play with gothic tropes as such. His gothic style is a species of camp⁵³ that declares itself as having learnt codes well enough to seem to trip over them constantly. The undecideability in the novels is about earnestness versus irony, and combined with the narrative of Shelley’s own short life, this kind of story itself provides the gothic material for later admirers such as Stenbock.

Every page of Shelley’s novels is replete with particularly gothic euphuism. Characters always have “paroxysms of passion” (137...). Wolfstein, asserting his continuing love for Megalena Metastasio (whose very name deliberately signals redoubled excess), “enthusiastically exclaimed:”

What can break the bond joined by congeniality of sentiment, cemented by an union of soul which must endure till the intellectual particles which compose it become annihilated? Oh! never shall it end; for when, convulsed by nature’s latest ruin, sinks the fabric of this perishable globe; when the earth is dissolved

⁵³ Note that one way Hughes and Smith co-situate queer and gothic is through camp (3); my suggestion is that the dynamic Sedgwick identifies in twentieth-century identity formation – opposing “camp recognition” to “kitsch-attribution” (*Epistemology of the Closet*, 156) is exactly the dynamic existing in early gothic/ goth/ queer identification from Dacre and Austen to Shelley, and of course beyond.

away, and the face of heaven is rolled from before our eyes like a scroll; then will we seek each other, and in eternal, indivisible, although immaterial union, shall we exist to all eternity. (136)

Here Shelley appears to have lost all sense of propriety with regard to metaphor, simile, and sound pattern. With sentiment, cemented, with the repetition of eternal... eternity, and union... union, and with the mixed metaphors of particles, fabric, and scroll to talk about souls, globe, and sky (is heaven a face, then, and like a scroll? Is a gothic face also a scroll?), Shelley's prose style could indeed be considered juvenile. However, it is more probable that Shelley's style is meant here to be Wolfstein's style, for in the paragraph immediately following, Wolfstein's professions of undying love are thrown into question by the narrator, who uses a more conventional simile: "it was like the blaze of the meteor at midnight, which glares amid the darkness for awhile, and then expires" (136).

Then again, if my thesis is even partly correct, Shelley's own goth becomings have a good deal to do with both the characters and the plots of his juvenile prose, as well as with his metaphorical imprecision. In fact, if Jerrold Hogle's assertions about Shelley's poetics are correct, we might see here an early instance of the mobile, shifting, and even liminal (at the intervals between transpositions) proliferation of metaphors that differ and defer throughout his writing. In *Shelley's Process*, Hogle presents a (rather gothic) theory of transference – the moves by which Shelley handles his own mistrust of religious

metanarratives through multiple metaphors and multiple veilings without a centre – that explains the role “inspiration” plays in his work (10-12). What I am calling gothic rhizomes, then, may simply be initial workings-through of Shelleyan attempts to organize an origin as an origin, a centre as a centre, and, as in Deleuzo-Guattarian framings, a creative eruption of affirmative forces that make minor the apparently major. Therefore, Shelley’s early gothicizations of self and text are indeed the appropriate hinge between Dacre and Stenbock, but also important prefigurations of the deconstructive turn in the poststructural theory I am deploying herein.

One would be forgiven, at this point, for having at least passing curiosity about the difference between intertextuality, citation, and rhizome. In the texts discussed, intertextual citation (both as homage and as meaningful signification) is a feature of names, style, situation, and geography. Rhizomatic relations, on the other hand, are as much reader-discovered as writer-implanted. Rhizomes take on the appearance of intertextual arborescence when we start enumerating them, but rhizomes always have the possibility of unexpectedly appearing, rather than being planned. The goth-predilection among readers assists this, and some of them go on to create new territories/ intertexts, as the appearance of Shelley in late Victorian discourses of Decadence will show.

That Percy Shelley was as unhealthy in some Victorians’ eyes as he was an iconic hero in others’ is a well-established account of his reception in the latter half of the

nineteenth century. Shelley was, famously, for Matthew Arnold a “beautiful and ineffectual angel” (204), but also the object of Pre-Raphaelite idolatry, as we shall see presently. So how is it that a bust of Shelley comes to rest on Count Stenbock’s mantle? What kinds of semiotic readings result from the bust’s arrangement within a group of other signs in the apartment, from the textual traces of Shelley in Stenbock stories, and from the retelling of this particular detail in biographical material? The next chapter proposes that through dedication to such details, the otherness that is becoming-goth occurs precisely by way of such reading, recasting, and revising activity.

Chapter 3: Dissident Sexualities and Becoming-other in Late Victorian Fiction

Count Stenbock and minor Victorianism

Existing at the intersections of sexological and psychological redefinitions of bodies and identities, Victorian recapitulations of gothic tropes, and class-inflected national discourses, British-born Estonian Count Eric Stenbock embodies what is both “belated and proleptic”⁵⁴ in a queer minor study of goth-identification. Intentionally activating the gothic elements of Romantic and Catholic cultural forms, and somehow conjugating it all in a way – I will suggest rhizomatically -- that seems to forecast goth subculture a century later, Stenbock's indirect ancestors include Charlotte Dacre through Percy Shelley, as we have seen in the previous chapter, and his surprising offspring includes Poppy Z. Brite, as we shall see in the next.

In this chapter, the midpoint of the dissertation, Count Stenbock plays a central role for several reasons. First, the critical response to his work is almost nonexistent even though his connections to other writers, to the Decadent movement generally, and to late Victorian sexual identities are fairly easy to establish. This might be a signal that his work is simply not very good; my interest in not-very-good work is to a great extent justifiable in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature, of course, but I would like to propose that Stenbock in fact is less studied in part because his identity is less stable, less monolithic than that *ascribed to* some of his literary peers. In

⁵⁴ Patrick O'Malley talks about *Melmoth the Wanderer* in these terms, referring to an 1892 review of a new edition of Maturin's tale. The review identifies anachronism in its working over of material quite tired by 1820, but also proleptic in its proto-modernity. It is also worth remembering that in 1897, Wilde took on the pseudonym, upon leaving prison, of Sebastian Melmoth. See pages 10-12 in O'Malley's *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*.

demonstrating this, I hope to call into question the occasional claims to monolithic identity on behalf of other writers, such as the logic of homosexuality as expressed in Wilde or James criticism. Minority sexuality may in fact transgress the hetero-homo definition of nineteenth-century sexological and other discourses just as they are consolidating themselves in more readily amenable figures.

Second, Count Stenbock's parlaying of Pre-Raphaelite, Catholicized, and ruling-class identities into an eclectic gothic way of being makes his a crucial narrative in connecting early goth-identified subjects (such as Charlotte Dacre and Percy Shelley, as we have seen) to Poppy Z. Brite (as we shall see). Although one might expect literary history to have traced this history for us, it is strikingly absent from the secondary literature as a set of moves between gothicized identities. So far as I know, there is no one who has connected Dacre to Brite previously, and my sense is that Stenbock's particular transgendering of biography in narrative forges just such a link, rhizomatic as it may turn out to be rather than properly filiative.

Finally, Count Stenbock's status as a border-crossing figure in many senses -- geographical, class, political, familial, sexual and gender -- makes his an especially interesting test case for recent theories in queer studies, transgender studies, and gothic studies. If Oscar Wilde is the clever, unapologetic spokesperson for the wit and irony that has come to characterize gay camp, for example, Stenbock is its court jester. As such, he embodies what Judith Halberstam now calls "the queer art of failure" with "undisciplined" and "pirate" production of "low theory" (*The Queer Art of Failure*, 1-25) -- a counterintuitive but novel method that opens out possibilities for further study of literary and cultural history's minor and minorized figures.

Often at the wrong place at the wrong time, Stenbock's writings and his short life seem a series of misadventures and failures, tragic when not comical.⁵⁵ His works and his life are rarely of interest to scholars except as a footnote within larger contexts of literary history or gay male sexual identity; only one of his tales is frequently republished or cited, and this usually as a contribution to the vampire subgenre. "A True Story of a Vampire" – first published in 1894 -- finds its way to recent literary criticism thus.⁵⁶

What we know today of Stenbock comes largely through the efforts of a very few scholars who became aware of his early notoriety in his day among important circles in late Victorian decadence. Brian Reade in *Sexual Heretics* follows up on the only biography (by John Adlard) with a psychological and homosexualizing interpretation of a story and a poem in the late 1960s. Bibliophile and author of *Love in Earnest* (1970; on the Uranian poets) Timothy d'Arch Smith takes an avid interest as well in the same decade, contributing a preliminary bibliography of Stenbock's works to the Adlard biography. Clearly this is an example of the emergence of gay genealogical identity work, and formed the basis for recuperative historical understandings of the period in question. Later, d'Arch Smith will be consulted by musician, artist and poet David Tibet, who brings out a limited edition, high-quality set of previously unpublished materials in

⁵⁵ The comedy seems quite deliberate in scenes from Stenbock's own life, including performances by his "Idiot's Club" in both Estonia and London (Adlard, Stenbock,), though at other times it is quite accidental, including the apocryphal Wilde encounter described by Rhys (39) and further glossed below in this chapter. His writing style, too, seems to have a distinctly bathetic quality that he shares, perhaps, with Charlotte Dacre. See Chapter 2, above.

⁵⁶ Notably, Joe Law treats it in terms of musicality as a sign of sexuality alongside other texts from the era; Diane Mason reads it alongside *Teleny* for its similar tropes of degeneracy in Eastern origins, musicality, sensualism, and wasting of vitality. See below for more detailed accounts of these analyses.

the early 2000s.⁵⁷

Yet Stenbock, before he died in 1895, was a frequent visitor and friend to Ernest Rhys, the editor of *Everyman's Library*, and to the earliest Yeats circle. W.B. Yeats recalls him in autobiographical texts and also fictionalizes him as “Count Sobrinski” in his story “The Speckled Bird.” Stenbock also befriended and supported an aging Simeon Solomon, the notorious painter and outcast from the Pre-Raphaelite circle on whose sigil Stenbock's own is based. He was known to Robert Ross, Wilde's friend and executor as well as to More Adey, to whom Stenbock left his papers. His literary output was neither copious nor much noticed; rejections were as frequent as acceptances and his legacy remains generally one of minor note in vampire literature alone, even though his work spans several gothic, romantic, and decadent themes. In part, this chapter is meant to correct what I see as a literary historical wrong done to Stenbock, and yet it is perversely and precisely this wrong that makes him exemplary in a study of minoritarian and queer gothic. Like Poppy Z. Brite after him and Charlotte Dacre before, Stenbock exhibits the extremes and the intensity of (often failed) dissident voices. It is in the complicated transformations and transpositions he effects in otherwise typical gothic plots, settings, and devices as well as in his navigation of late Victorian gender and sexuality discourses that we find evidence of a troublesome subject.

Through the dogged efforts of John Adlard and the bibliographic expertise of Timothy d'Arch Smith, the stage in 1969 seemed set to open up this eccentric and notorious author's works to a critical practice interested in recuperating lost or misunderstood figures. Yet for three and a half decades thereafter, only Brian Reade's

⁵⁷Tibet, the mainstay of British band Current93, has announced plans to publish Stenbock's collected works; see below for a description of his work so far with the texts, including original musical accompaniment.

anthology takes notice, and then only a little. It is possible of course that his authoritative dismissal of all but two of Stenbock's writings had something to do with future reception. In very recent years, other than my own work in the 1990s, only two critics have taken account of Stenbock in a serious way, and then only as a second to *Teleny's* dominance in their arguments. It is worth considering why Stenbock plays either second fiddle or none.

Reade's project is to bring thematic coherence to a particular grouping of poetry and prose, presenting to readers at the dawn of a new era of liberation and freedoms an account of masculine friendship, eros, romance, and desire that covers the latter half of the nineteenth century, the formative decades for the development of a language with which to speak that new (then) category of identity. In general Reade intends this account to be provided by the primary texts themselves: "An all-embracing study of nineteenth-century homosexuality was not what I projected, nor was there scope for it in the introduction. This introduction is a guide to the anthology; and while some of the material included here is of merit, some of it may be considered merely amusing" (ii). Of course, any introduction cannot help but also be one kind of study, or at least a particular preparatory set of moves both literary and political.

He begins by acknowledging the slipperiness of any labeling exercise, noting the diversity of the sexual histories of several different figures, among them Aubrey Beardsley, Lord Alfred Douglas, and Oscar Wilde. He suggests that the physical, or "sexual element in a homosexual condition is less important than it is in a heterosexual condition, which offers wider and longer developments -- as in family life for example" (1) and in so doing, reifies heterosexuality. Nevertheless, he states that friendship alone will not suffice descriptively since psychology "evolved the idea of sex underlying many

other springs of emotion" (1). He rests his case on the "erotic forces of physical attraction" (2), which, when they motivate or accompany a friendship, add a charge (sometimes emotional, sometimes juridical) to the relationship, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Claiming difficulty in finding English examples of female homosexuality (a problem of his own blinders, one assumes, as recuperative work of this kind has since been done successfully), Reade satisfies himself with his own assertion that as regards England from 1850 - 1900, "homosexual literature for all practical purposes is male homosexual literature" (2). He also differentiates homosexual from his definition of sodomy as a mere act of anal penetration⁵⁸ and reminds us that male homosexuality "includes pederasty" -- perhaps to caution the reader about the contents upcoming.

He traces the history of pederastic content and ideas in Greece and England, and differentiates between this and pornography, explaining the anonymous and notorious tale *Teleny* as an admixture of both (2). He explains by way of space issues his exclusion of the American writers who otherwise might have fit, especially the influential Whitman (3-4) and moves on to set out his sense of the conditions under which homosexuality began to flourish more overtly than covertly in the second half of the nineteenth century. These conditions included, for Reade, the influence of the Roman church, the Oxford Movement (4), the notion of chivalry among men, and a set of "forces" from the new "presence of the sexually inhibitive matriarch as she prompted and controlled the behaviour of her young in a jealous world of unplanned family" (7) to a growing upper-middle-class population that wanted its children educated like gentry (7). The confluence

⁵⁸ Of course this latter act was only one among many transgressive acts under the law, and the term sodomy was actually discursively quite vague and flexible, as Dale Townshend notes (23).

of forces together with the "aesthetic values inherited from eighteenth-century Neo-Classicism" (7) in the grammar and public schools and the tensions between High Anglicanism and a "psychosomatic" Roman Catholicism led to the burgeoning of homosexual visibility. Reade also employs some of the language of an admittedly outdated psychiatry to talk about sublimated feelings.

Fundamentally, his position is that "the physical orientation counts, not the degree of its expression" (9). That is to say, affective attachments are important whether or not their objects are achieved in a sexual sense, but the direction must be sexual.

Interestingly, Reade's approach permits a good deal of flexibility in representational object choice, such that some of the poets anthologized here had orientations "not fixed but in transit" (15), citing Swinburne and Gautier's focus on lesbian and/or hermaphroditic figures along with Swinburne's masochism (an instance of Reade's subjection of his material to psychological theories of his day). Much is made of Simeon Solomon's relationship to Swinburne, and the latter's to Pater. Reade moves along to an examination of the cult of pederasty, the significant figure in which is John Addington Symonds. He places Symonds, along with Edward Carpenter, William Cory, Swinburne, Solomon and the others up to 1879 as the first phase of his longer period.

In the second phase (post-1880) he places Wilde and his circle, Richard Burton, Marc-Andre Raffalovich, John Gray, and a number of others. Count Stenbock makes an appearance at this point in a letter from Simeon Solomon to photographer Frederick Hollyer, dated 1886. Solomon thanks Hollyer for introducing them, and describes Stenbock in his "magnificent blood red silk robe embroidered in gold and silver" as he swings "a silver censer before an altar covered with lilies, myrtles, lighted candles and a

sanctuary lamp burning with scented oil" (qtd. in Reade, 37). Stenbock's "appearance was that of a tall, graceful intellectual looking girl and although he is not exactly good-looking, his eyes and expression are very beautiful" (qtd. in Reade, 37).

Solomon then tells Hollyer that Stenbock "has adopted my old monogram but I have made him a new one" (qtd. in Reade, 38) -- this is the vertical double-S around the staff (for Stanislaus Stenbock). As to Stenbock's poems, Reade suggests "that apart from Stenbock's sense of parental deprivation, his guilt in being homosexual and his profound desire to escape any responsibility for it were probably represented in this [death wish] symbolism" (38). His stories display too much of an "Oedipal morbidity" (38) for Reade to consider them recuperable, though "Narcissus" he deems "worthy of salvage" (38). As Reade puts it, "Another of Stenbock's tales in the same book is of vampirism in a homosexual form. The practice of Black Mass, which he boasted, as well as a description of it here, are evidence more of traumata in the author than of a wish to shock" (38).

Stenbock, then, suffers more than most of the other authors at the psychoanalytical hands of Reade, who refuses to connect the horror stories to any kind of gothic tradition or to accord them much space in his countercanon of homosexual or pederastic influence, ascribing instead an individual explanation of trauma and loss to Stenbock's output. Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo) and John Francis Bloxam, journals *The Spirit Lamp* and *The Chameleon*, A.E. Housman, Aleister Crowley, and the anonymous *Teleny* round out the rest of the introduction.

Perhaps Reade's consignment of Stenbock to such a minor role in the history of decadence, pederasty, and homosexuality in late Victorian literary circles explains in part the lack of further critical interest until the 2000s. Although "The True Story of a

Vampire” is reprinted in a number of anthologies (including Haining, and now widely available as an eBook), and Garland Publishing binds facsimiles of *Shadows of Death* and *Studies in Death* as part of their 29-volume Degeneration and Regeneration series in 1984, Stenbock remains generally unstudied until David Tibet, musician, artist, and poet, takes an interest both in the man and in his unpublished work in particular.

Perhaps because of his affinities with Stenbock's own obsessions with spiritualism, music, the occult, and dark themes, some time in the 1990s Tibet arranges to visit I Tatti, the Bernard Berenson archive now owned by Harvard and the location of Stenbock's letters and manuscripts. Through the archivist there, he is able to arrange permission⁵⁹ to publish the many stories found only in manuscript form. The first, “Faust,” is formatted as a cd insert and accompanied by a musical score by Current93.⁶⁰ The covers superimpose an image of what seems to be a dog's head onto a closeup of Stenbock from a photograph that is reproduced on the inside cover. The title page reproduces in colour the two serpents entwined around the staff topped by a crown (Stenbock's logo, borrowed from Simeon Solomon).

A Catholic supernatural tale inspired, according to the author, by Durer's “Melancholia,” Stenbock's “Faust”(2000) is the first of four publications by Tibet's now-

⁵⁹ From the late Barbara Strachey Halpern, daughter of Ray Strachey, daughter of Mary Berenson – who, as Mary Costelloe was a dear friend of Stenbock's. It is not insignificant that Stenbock's literary legacy is authorized almost exclusively through his women friends and family.

⁶⁰ Tibet began as a young musician in Throbbing Gristle in the late 1970s, and since the 1980s has been making his own dark, post-punk -- some would say gothic in the electronic industrial and now “neo-folk” category -- music under the name Current93, with many collaborators including Steven Stapleton (Nurse with Wound), Douglas P. (Death in June), and Michael Cashmore. As a casual fan of this subgenre in the 1980s, I was both surprised and excited to witness Tibet's growing interest in Count Stenbock. Given themes in common, it ought really not to have been surprising. Cashmore himself has since collaborated on two Stenbock poems -- “Gabriel” and “The Lunatic Lover” set to music on Marc Almond's (formerly of Soft Cell) album *Feasting with Panthers* (2011).

defunct label, Durtro. The other three are the drama “La Mazurka des Revenants”(2002), “A Secret Kept”(2002), and “The King's Bastard”(2004), each on fine paper in numbered copies. Tibet continues to be drawn to the beauty and sadness in all Stenbock's works (including the light play). Unlike Reade, and more in keeping with Adlard's original impulse to find out more about the Count, Tibet has delivered the gift of more works on high-quality paper for critics to study, though the limitedness of the editions, the incomplete republication, and his own eccentricity as a career musician experimenting with coptic religiosity may end up, like Reade’s notice before him, working against a popularization of Stenbock's stories.

Deviant, Heretical, or Dissident: Sex and Gender Trouble in Late Victorian Culture

The details of Stenbock's life and writings seem clearly to indicate aesthetic decadence. His admiration for and representation of effete and languorous male youth, along with his commitments to beasts, music, Orientalist costume, and an admixture of occultism and Catholicism, position him squarely in the Late Victorian discourses of sexuality well-documented by his contemporaries and our own. I include in this documentation commentary by Stenbock's contemporaries both in the moment and upon reflection later, such as may be found in essays or autobiographies by Arthur Symons, John Addington Symonds, W.B. Yeats, among others. In the latter day, critical accounts of the era are only increasing. Some landmark texts important for the present study include Dellamora (ed. 1999), Hanson (1997) and O'Malley (2006). The simultaneous recuperation and repudiation of gay male desire in identitarian and psychologically-based criticism of the mid-twentieth century, perhaps most avidly argued back and forth in

Henry James criticism so well explained by Shoshana Felman in the mid-1970s, is exemplified in Brian Reade's *Sexual Heretics* (1970), discussed above.

To engage questions of homosexual definition in nineteenth-century English literature must necessarily acknowledge both Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* and Eve Sedgwick's two important pieces, *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet*. For the purposes of this project, we can consider the former's assertions that the repressive hypothesis is wrong, and that an increasingly medicalizing and psychologizing discourse constitutes a shift from categories of sexual acts to a specifically homosexual *identity* in the latter third of the nineteenth century. This can be linked to Sedgwick's formulation of the homosocial as a triangulation of desire between men through a woman as a frequent trope in nineteenth-century English literature. Sedgwick's identification of the bachelor figure as the subject of discourse, and of the relations between men as enunciated through their romantic commerce with women is the kind of discursive production of subjects (in literary discourse, which informs and is informed by the other institutional discourses of its day) that Foucault describes.

What is more challenging, perhaps, is to understand the relationship between the discursive construction of a writer's identity and that writer's works when there are far more overt (rather than veiled, triangulated, or disavowed) themes, situations, and characters in those works.⁶¹ Such is the case with Stenbock, a figure well-known in the London scenes through which travelled Oscar Wilde, Ernest Rhys, Robert Ross, Alfred

⁶¹ Foucault's focus in *The History of Sexuality* on the proliferation of discourses (rather than accepting the common wisdom that repression was the order of the Victorian day) is germane here, and may show up one of the fault lines between his framework and Sedgwick's. She has far less antipathy towards psychoanalytical models played out through literature than do Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari.

Douglas, Simeon Solomon, and other notable literary or cultural figures. To take account of Stenbock's poems, stories, and other writings, we need not only to rely on post-Foucault and post-Sedgwick theorizations of literary identities, but also to return to literary critical eras past, when other kinds of discursive constructions of gender, sex, sexuality and literature emerged or dominated.

With the 1960s we see the arrival of a recuperative project, fueled by the latest (at the time) trends in psychological and psychoanalytical explanations of self. Brian Reade, as we have seen, identifies many stories by figures associated with the *fin-de-siècle* Urning or homosexual moment. Stenbock, as we have seen, holds a minor place in the group, for Reade. However, the selected story – “Narcissus” – may in fact repay more attentive study. In it, the formerly-beautiful protagonist narrator's disfigurement at the hands of a spurned fiancée causes him to perambulate nightly in the park in order to avoid being seen, where he comes upon a young blind boy playing a pennywhistle for money, having been abandoned by (the suggestion goes) his prostitute mother. The tale's imagery and content satisfies, for Reade's particular project, the criteria for a clearly homosexual representation. Other texts in his alternate canon include poems, stories and excerpts by the authors already listed above. Yet the Stenbock story may in fact fit less well in the 1960s version of nineteenth-century identity than it does now, given intervening explanations of Victorian sexualities.

The context for any discussion of sexuality at the close of the nineteenth century must be formed, at least in part, by the contested assertion of Foucault's that the category “homosexual” as an identity category, an interiority discursively produced as a “psychological, psychiatric, medical” category rather than acts and behaviours was born

with the 1870 publication by Carl Westphal (*History of Sexuality I*, 43). He refers, of course, to the moment when legal, medical, and social discourses centre around the production of subjects rather than merely describing sex acts among a range of transgressions. 1870 marks the publication of a particular linking-up of these discourses in a text by Westphal; rather than permitting this year to overtake all historical complexity and specificity, I will suggest that Foucault's more general point is especially useful to conceptualising otherness in narrative: in arguing that the production and proliferation rather than the repression of discourses on sex characterised nineteenth-century thought and writing (17-35), Foucault shifts radically the approach critics can take to works of fiction. Alongside medical, juridical, educational and familial discourses on sex I would place literary discourse. By literary discourse I mean the whole field of production, circulation, and reception of textual material that is in some way self-consciously fictional, together with its felt presences in realms of intentionality, reason or unreason, morality, and influence in a broad sense.

When the subjects of writing are subjected to particular scrutiny about interior androgyny, exterior signs (visible semiotics of bodies and fashion), and we are encouraged to read in their works an expression of that interiority as well, it is all too easy to follow the logic of identity in reproducing texts and authors as speaking particular sexualities. Such seems to be the case with Stenbock, though by the end of the chapter it should be clear that he fits neither the broader "species" (Foucault, *The History*, 43) homosexual nor the proliferated subspecies brought into discourse in the 1880s and 1890s.

Annemarie Jagose raises a key question about the logic of identification in the

discursive field of hetero and homosexual definition. In her *Inconsequence: Lesbian Representation and the Logic of Sexual Sequence*, Jagose contests the notion, found in many assertions about homosexual identity after Foucault (and founded on a misreading of Foucault), that the sequence or logic of identification begins with heterosexuality. Giving primacy to an imagined straight identity before considering the mechanisms of lesbian visibility, for example, merely serves to support heteronormativity, reifying it as not itself needing constitution in discourse. This is why Jagose rejects the arguments from those who posit lesbian invisibility, and I think the same could be said for male-male desire. For Jagose, “the cultural weighting of heterosexuality as first-order and homosexuality as second-order is secured through the self-licensing logic of sequence. These cultural narrativizations of sexual sequence produce the very hierarchies they are taken to describe”(ix). Ultimately, her argument is that “sexual identity, retrospectively assembled from the behaviors and affects it touts as its natural expression, is always imitative and belated”(x). Ultimately, she is asserting for sexual identity a similar basis as Butler’s for sex and gender (in *Gender Trouble*).

In the case of Stenbock, Adlard's biography makes clear the ways in which style, affect, and action were in fact very visible rather than submerged in codes; even at the height of his marriageability, for example, as the landowner of vast estates in Estonia, he was apparently -- in his “green flannel coat, his moroccan slippers and a yellow silk shirt, and in his arms wrapped snugly in a scarlet shawl, ...his beloved monkey Troscha” - quite readable as not a marrying type (“not an ‘épouseur’”) to the father of nine neighbouring daughters at dinner (42). To Adlard, to Reade, and to others in the 1960s and 1970s (and probably today), Stenbock's presentation of self through orientalised

clothing, the caring for and carrying of monkeys, snakes and the like, and poetry about young boys and epebes register as obviously gay. I would like to revisit that assessment and permit the possibility of gender-transitive self-understandings in addition to (not instead of) gay definition. To do so requires the kind of disruption of sequence proposed by Jagose together with the expansion of what counts as desire proposed by Richard Dellamora.

Dellamora's work on nineteenth-century patterns of male bonding in this literary field provides a more nuanced context for discussions of late Victorian male-male desire and identification than the important but psychologizing earlier work of the 1960s and 70s. The 1980s and 1990s brought new ways of conceptualizing literary encoding, specifically through Eve Sedgwick's work on British literature and the figure of the bachelor and the triangulated or deferred rhetorics of male homosocial desire (*Between Men, Epistemology of the Closet*).

Dellamora's *Masculine Desire* marks an opening up of Sedgwick's positional, triadic relation of women between men. His method is to take literary and experiential discursivity and trace the varieties of practices and consciousnesses about them through economic-political histories. Although he mentions "micropolitics" and "becoming-woman" on the first page, Deleuze and Guattari are absent as a controlling pair (although Guattari finds his way into the bibliography). Hoping to encourage questions of subject position in critique, Dellamora's finessing of Sedgwick's original insight takes into account (in part through the work of Teresa de Lauretis) the experiential ground of interactions with people and with semiotic sign systems. My work on the late nineteenth century takes up Dellamora's challenge.

Building on the Foucauldian postulate that modern homosexuality arises when same sex relations move from a set of acts to a discursively formed identity, Dellamora extends the possibilities of discourse formation -- in particular male androgynous subjective desire -- into its “long, complex development in the rhetoric of nineteenth-century poetry” (*Masculine Desire*, 1). Aware of the totalizing dangers of teleological trajectory, Dellamora does not assume the inevitability of the late-nineteenth-century Foucauldian homosexual identity and then find in earlier poetry precursor tendencies. Rather, his assertion is that varieties of being-masculine and becoming-other can be found throughout the nineteenth century, and that some of these varieties constitute aesthetico-moral discourses and their concomitant “strategies of resistance” (2). In this sense, indeed, Dellamora follows Foucault in thinking of power as a field of multiplicitous forces, shifting and re-forming into hegemonies but fundamentally unstable. Instead of mining for ever-more-truthful hidden accounts of practices and then mapping modern identity markers onto them, Dellamora pays attention to “distinctions among practices and the consciousness that attends them...” (3). In this way, the practices and their attending consciousness (expressed in semiotics of one type or another) can be thought together but with a complexity of nuance heretofore unexamined.

It is this kind of approach that befits the overdeterminations of Stenbock’s identity scripts, some of which are self-authored and many of which are inherited from precisely the web of power relations traced by Dellamora and extended well into the twentieth century. Stenbock’s participation in Oxford masculinities, aesthetic androgyny, and after-the-fact perversity (in the rhetoric of later critics) renders his a uniquely transecting identity between homosexuality and tutelary gothic subjectivation. In turn, understanding

Stenbock's unique position assists in mapping the technologies of sexual difference that allow for -- or rather insist on -- critical indeterminacy in attempts to fix in any distinct category more familiar authors (for example Stoker, Wilde, James, Gilman), no matter what claims may be undertaken on their behalf for major totalisations or minor subversions. Such multiplication or diversity of positions is promoted by Dale Townshend, who enumerates gothic scenes of perversity such as incest, male-male desire, and bestiality from present popular culture back to the earlier narratives, including *Vathek*, *The Monk*, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*. His point, following Foucault and Weeks, is not to graft homosexual identity anachronistically onto early texts or authors; rather, Townshend links sodomitical discourse to queer (as opposed to homosexual) definition.

For Townshend, the perverse gothic father (and early gothic narrative), then, is queer as the result of his (and its) "historical provenance" (22), just as the modern homosexual (post-1870) exists as a function of discursive procedures. As he puts it:

much like the dynamic in which the spectre of the queer father in Gothic sustains the fantasies of heteronormative romance, the homosexual identities that appear in their more modern but by no means less horrific forms in the later Gothic productions of Stoker, Wilde, Stevenson and others encode more the encroachment of modern bio-power than any revolutionary sexual politics. (22)

Queer, for Townshend, seems structurally analogous to the wider and more flexible "sodomy" that preexists and predetermines the rise of the modern homosexual as well as a growing taxonomy of specific perversities under bio-power. It is worth reminding ourselves that just as Count Stenbock participates in the latter specific perversities and

can thereby be named under their increasingly rigid rubrics, his self-fashioning and his writings are also conditioned by the less monotheistic, less scientific discourses around sodomitical practices prior, and are thereby potentially queer disruptions of said rigidity. It is exactly, as Townshend suggests, the impermanence of homo-hetero definition in the nineteenth century that permits queer desires more play in gothic texts.

The following three sections work this idea through three themes that situate Stenbock in what turns out to be a more polymorphous perversity than we might otherwise assume: music, bestiality, and transformations of gender. I analyse these themes under the sign of minor literature, through Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the refrain (and improvisational reiterations), becoming-animal, and becoming-woman. The latter two concepts having been introduced in the previous chapter, their implications in *fin-de-siècle* decadence will be explored. The former and more musical concept provides a new context for these implications, and so begins the discussion of Stenbock.

Part 1: The minor gothic refrain... Music and mesmerism in art and life

In a general sense, *we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes* (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains). In the narrow sense, we speak of a refrain when an assemblage is sonorous or 'dominated' by sound. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 323, emphasis in original)

In an essay on the elements of musical mesmerism as a means of predation in late Victorian literature, Joe Law traces musical connections between Wilde, Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, and the artist Raffalovich, specifically connecting music to the sexual category of inversion through examples that include the notorious *Teleny* and the often-republished story by Count Stenbock, "A True Story of a Vampire."

Indeed, as Reade notes of *Teleny* in 1970,

A significant point is made, however, in the Foreword, where there is mention of 'the subtle influence of music and the musician in connection with perverted sexuality'. This was one of the superstitions⁶² referred to by Raffalovich in his *Uranisme et Unisexualite*, and a part of the total superstition that homosexuals were somehow more gifted than other persons, especially in the arts. (50).

Much of the text is deemed too pornographic, too "lurid" (50) for Reade to reproduce.

In "The 'perniciously homosexual art': Music and homoerotic desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and other fin-de-siecle fiction," Law situates music as one of the means by which homosexuality is named in Wilde's novel by not naming it directly; music is but one of many such preteritive tactics in *Dorian Gray*. On the other hand, the anonymously-authored *Teleny's* handling of the connection between music and perversity is more direct and adds an element of foreign exoticism to its scenes of musical seduction (184). Law reminds us that René Teleny is Hungarian, and the narrator Camille Des Grieux is completely overtaken by his "gypsy music" whose "melodies begin by

⁶² Superstition with the force of a science, at the time; Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man* linked music to sexuality as well, in this case female sex drive, according to Laura Vorachek in "Female Performances" (109). Vorachek's point is that emergent Victorian discourses on why we find pleasure in music suggested a sexual, rather than only spiritual, determinant.

shocking us, then by degrees subdue, until at last they enthrall us”(184). Having traced connections drawn first by sexologists and others between music and homosexuality, Law convincingly follows them through *Dorian Gray*, *Teleny*, *The Dancing Faun* (Florence Farr), *The Green Carnation* (Robert Hichens), and finally Stenbock's “True Story of a Vampire.” In the latter, he notes the intimate connection between the young Gabriel and animals, as well as music in an intuitive, natural manner. Gabriel is in this way preselected to fall prey to Vardalek's influence; Vardalek's piano playing mesmerizes the boy, who joins in to play the “wild, rhapsodic, wonderful” Hungarian tunes (188). Chopin's nocturnes complete the control over Gabriel exerted by Vardalek, who replenishes his wasted energies from the boy's soul or body.

Although it isn't clear precisely how (and this may be an essential element of its queerness), Gabriel's wasting seems brought on, accompanied by, and hastened by music of a particular type that reappears frequently in late Victorian fiction and discourses on difference. Law notes that the choice of Chopin together with Gabriel's predilection for musicality encode a kind of feminine or androgynous disposition, recognized (not without agonized regret as well as excitement) by Vardalek, who shares it (189). As Law puts it, “the seductive lure of music, particularly music with exotic associations (here, as in other instances, of Hungarian origins); the use of Chopin's music, particularly the nocturnes, to evoke the hidden sorrows or secret sins of the player; the ability of seemingly inarticulate music to communicate some message; the sexually inflected response to music” (189) all form part of the coded message readers would have appreciated (not to mention the conventional associations between Eastern Europe and vampires).

In Count Stenbock's own oeuvre and in his biographical details, music is strongly linked to feeling and transformation; so much so, in fact, that it signifies seduction, mesmerism, and power rather than simply reflecting affect. Whether it is in the vampire tale, a gypsy tale, the skills Tobit in "Narcissus," the magical effects of the "Viol D'Amor," the Prince's annual ghost music in *Mazurka des Revenants*, a Black Mass in "Faust," or indeed the power Stenbock himself wields over others with his piano-playing, musical refrains generate effects on listeners that go beyond sympathetic appreciation.

Combining Deleuze and Guattari's notions of minor literature with their sense of Refrain, a way of understanding Stenbock's fiction and self-fashioning in a deconstructive framework emerges. Deleuze and Guattari explicate Kafka's sense that he was writing (in the first quarter of the twentieth century) in an impossible situation by way of a set of rules or guidelines for the minority position within a dominant culture. In Chapter 2, I used this concept in relation to Dacre's *Zofloya* and Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Here, I add to it the idea of the Refrain, or rather transpose minor literature onto the register of the Refrain. Recall, then, that a minor literature is "that which a minority constructs within a major language" (*Kafka*, 16). Second, in minor literatures, "everything in them is political" (*Kafka*, 17). Third, in a minor literature, "everything takes on a collective value" (*Kafka*, 17).

In Chapter 11 of their *Thousand Plateaus*, "1837: Of the Refrain," Deleuze and Guattari explain music, in particular the "refrain," as having three related functions in a nonlinear sequence of ordering and activating tactics:

1. home- or place-making
2. organizing internally and establishing boundaries

3. opening, moving, drifting (311-312)

For them, music is territorial assemblage, de- and re-territorializing along lines of tune and rhythm. In fact rhythm and milieu are different from territory; territory territorializes both.⁶³

As Deleuze and Guattari put it: "In a general sense, we call a refrain *any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes* (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains). In the narrow sense, we speak of a refrain when an assemblage is sonorous or 'dominated' by sound" (323; emphasis in original). In late Victorian terms, the territory in which we find ourselves through the sonorous refrain is queer; not only the homosexual encoding noted by Law, but the identity as assemblage or aggregate (sodomitical and therefore general or increasingly named perversities).

In Deleuze and Guattari's sense of refrain, and I will show how this maps onto Stenbock's fictions and biography,

...there is no beginning from which a linear sequence would derive, but rather densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, showerings, like so many intercalary events... . Second, ... there must be an arrangement of intervals, a distribution of inequalities, such that it is sometimes necessary to make a hole in order to consolidate. Third, there is/ a superposition of disparate rhythms, an articulation from within of an interrhythmicity, with no imposition of meter or

⁶³ In the next chapter, thus, the coded milieu of the gothic is the nightclub, but also wherever the rhythm is, whether it be through earphones on a bus, from a van as it passes a sympathetic ear, through the open doors of a club, or in the confines of a sportscar. The relationship between goth music and identity is, I shall argue at that point, very much along the lines of the Refrain as an organizing principle.

cadence. (328-329)

To unpack this: considering the variety of instruments that appear in Stenbock's stories (and in stories about him), who plays them, and with what level of proficiency and effect, it would seem that we are not simply in a universe of individual appreciation, individual virtuosity, individual obsession. Piano (Stenbock himself), pennywhistle and piano ("Narcissus" - Tobit), fiddle and xylophone ("Worm of Luck"), violin and piano and any other instrument ("True Story of a Vampire"-Gabriel and Vardalek), viol d'amor ("Viol d'Amor"), harpsichord (*La Mazurka des Revenants*), violins and flutes conveying "the tone of an Aeolian harp" ("Faust," 17): these instruments are played in such a way as to enchant, mesmerize, signify something about their players as well. The music they play is often Eastern European and minor, with variations and recapitulations of otherness within the dominant frame.

Stenbock himself was notoriously seductive as a musician. Simeon Solomon confirms this, noting in the letter to Hollyer (cited above in Reade's *Sexual Heretics*) that he plays "religious music on the piano and harmonium" so well that Solomon "should like to work with him playing..." (37). And upon interrupting a reading at Ernest Rhys' apartments in London, Stenbock

spoke of an Ukraine lullaby, wild and sweet, that ended with a minor lalinna-lo!
and, going to the piano, played it over, and fell to improvising with a light touch
variations on the theme.

While he played, the first callers went and others arrived -- but he held the room.
We sat entranced, and amused at his flying hands and swaying curls. He made the
instrument his own. The keys grew liquid under his supple fingers; the piano was

bewitched. The steppes of Russia appeared through the darkening window-panes.

(Rhys, 15)

Stenbock entrances with music, just as his characters entrance and are entranced in the stories (Vardalek, the vampire antagonist, entrances Gabriel; young Tobit is entranced in "Narcissus" and so on). Putting an author in the place of his fictional characters is, as we see in other periods as well, a particularly gothic and gothicising refrain. Victorian literature has other examples of musical mesmerizing by characters; what I am interested in here is the grafting of author to work, or the replacement of character with author in biographical narratives and the implications for goth and precursor identities. Showing that author and work are conflated does not, of course, guarantee particular meanings about either; rather, gothicization of both functions here much like it does with Shelley's and Dacre's sets of minor meanings. Individual trait becomes political and collective, and the fact that Vardalek "commiserates" rather than "congratulates" Gabriel upon finding out his musical predilection is significant to Carmela, the narrator ("True Story" 138).

Diane Mason notes links similar to those identified by Joe Law, between musicality, Eastern origins, and degenerate perversities (in this case male-male desire as well as onanism). She compares *Teleny's* treatment of exotic, foreign music both to "True Story of a Vampire" and to *Trilby* (77). Although she reads Vardalek's eventual ownership over Gabriel (83) and his commiseration over their shared musicality (77-78) as coded desire, even a parody of heteronormative conjugality, it also seems to be a deterritorialization of lament and agony --perhaps foreshadowing Louis from Rice's vampire universe -- onto the body of the ephebe.

In another Stenbock story, "Viol d'Amor," the connection between music and

bodies is even more literalized. The stringed instrument works best with human-sourced gut for the strings, according to legend. The father being an orchestra musician and a luthier, his eldest sons procure from their own bodies the necessary tissues -- successfully, as the eldest son is a surgeon. Unbeknownst to the family, Guido, the young and fragile ephebe in this particular story, also supplies his own body to the project, but in this case has gone to a back alley doctor and ends up infected. However, as Anastasia⁶⁴ plays to Guido, the sympathy between the instrument and Guido himself causes the strings to break just as he expires (having been kissed, or soul-sucked, by a shadow creature that enters and disappears through the door).

“Viol D'Amor” is, like most of Stenbock’s stories, a tale with an absent mother, this time set in Freiburg. The narrator meets a family with three brothers and two sisters, and a father who is building a Viol D'Amor requiring the skin of those who love him in order to make the finishing touches. The father is a gifted musician at the Cathedral where the narrator attends High Mass and hears “Beethoven's glorious Mass in C ... rendered by a string quartette” -- he is first violinist, and accompanying the strings is his youngest son, who unites “the most exquisite timbre with the most complete possible expression” (Rhys, 33). According to the narrator, this is unusual for a boy.

Although his two elder sons successfully donate parts of themselves, the youngest, Guido, who is consumptive and languorous, secretly goes and gets a botched

⁶⁴ Anastasia is a “tall, stately girl, with dark hair and grey eyes, but pale face: very much like the type we are familiar with from the pictures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti” (*Studies of Death*, 73; though the comparison is not in Rhys’s manuscript, this is an interesting situating of the work of the Pre-Raphaelites as semiotic code). The “glorious red-gold” hair of her sister Liberata (Rhys, 34) is striking in its similarity to descriptions of Stenbock’s own hair. References are to the Rhys MS copy, reproduced in his book, due to its inclusion’s relevance to goth and gothic identity fashioning.

surgery to supply the skin he wants to donate. He becomes more ill in his already weakened state, and dies, with the viol itself seemingly reflecting his soul (the strings break and it lets out a moan as Guido dies). The father destroys the viol, the family members disperse, and the question of magic is left as a real possibility. The family itself, like the Stenbock family in Estonia, simply takes for granted magic. Although the second son, Giovanni, is a surgeon, the eldest son, Andrea, is mystical and drawn to the occult, and the family is known to be superstitious generally (35). Anastasia and Liberata, the sisters, are described strictly in terms of looks.

Guido is "a boy of about fourteen" who is fairer than his brothers, ... thin and fragile. His complexion was more delicate than a rose-petal: he had those long, sensitive hands which indicate the born musician. His somewhat long hair, of a shade of brown, had a shadow of gold on it, as if it had been golden once. But in his strange-coloured eyes, which were gray-blue, streaked with yellow bars, there was a far-off look, like a light not of this world. (34-35).

He seems to have a connection with a significant hawthorn tree outside his Gothic window, and it is specifically the "old Etruscan ballad" (38) sung by his sister who accompanies the song on the Viol d'Amor that either causes or accompanies his expiry. As Anastasia continues to sing, "a shadow crept through the doorway, came up to the bed, and bent over it. Then suddenly all the strings of the Viol d'Amor snapped, and a wail seemed to come out of the sounding-board" (38).

This and other Stenbock stories' matter may reflect a minor trend of the era (Harris, 1968): "Artistic geniuses possessed by a divine madness were rather in vogue

among the minor storytellers (e.g. Claud Nicholson's *Ugly Idol* [Vol. XXX in the Keynotes Series], Eric Stenbock's 'Viol D'Amour,' and Ella D'Arcy's 'The Elegie') as were various aspects of synaesthesia" (1409). Such possession and cross-sensory themes may denote a Romantic, Shelleyan inheritance, and are certainly more than a fashion if indeed they name unnameable identifications. They reappear throughout Stenbock's tales.

In "Narcissus," first described above, the narrator (the formerly beautiful man disfigured by the chemical burns of a spurned fiancée) discovers the talents of a blind bastard boy, Tobit, abandoned by his mother after hearing the news of his biological father's death. His pennywhistle earns him a great deal of money, but the narrator takes him under his wing and teaches him piano, to which he takes easily and proficiently. Upon regaining sight, Tobit's first impression of the scarred and disfigured narrator is as the "most beautiful person in all the world" (*The Shadow of Death / Studies of Death*, 50).

In "The Worm of Luck," bastard Sandor is tolerated until his stepfather has a natural child with Sandor's mother, a gipsy. And "like all gypsies" he is highly proficient at the violin, though his music is considered to uncivilized to play around the new baby. Consequently, he runs away to the woods, where he meets his own kind and becomes a singularly talented performer, Gruner Georg, after having accepted a Stradivarius from a professor taken by his natural skill with an old, cracked instrument.

Youthful becomings-consumptive, or wasting away, then, are not only coded ways of talking about male-male desire in these late Victorian fictions; in Stenbock's stories, such degenerative death is often accompanied by the sympathetic vibration of music. This is true in his unpublished drama "La Mazurka des Revenants" as it is in his

short stories, such as “A True Story of a Vampire,” “Viol d'Amor,” “The Worm of Luck,” and “The Other Side.” The parallels between his stories and his own complicated relationship to music, poetry, desire, and self-presentation are striking. He can hold an audience with his own piano playing (Rhys, 15, quoted above), and he dedicates a volume of poetry to the unfortunate, consumptive teen who died not long after Stenbock was sent down from Oxford, Charles Bertram Fowler (Adlard, 16, 23; Stenbock, *Myrtle, Rue and Cypress*, 3). Cousin Gabriele, too, was both young and of weaker constitution, dying of pulmonary pneumonia four years after Stenbock, nursed by her sister Elsa (Adlard, 11) .

La Mazurka des Revenants: A Serio-Extravaganza in Six Parts is a drama rejected by *The Yellow Book*.⁶⁵ Its opening scene is almost uncanny in its proleptic campiness (one can almost visualize it as lifted directly from Sofia Coppola's 2006 film *Marie Antoinette*). The scene is a prologue predating the rest of the narrative by a century; a Prince plots to burn down his own house and its visitors (including himself), and gives all his money to the object of his love, Antoine the page boy (whom he exhorts to flee the country after lighting the fire on the cue of the Mazurka). The scene is a decadent's vision of the past, in which the late eighteenth century is a godless nihilist's world of meaningless action, ennui, and anomie. Women vie -- cynically -- for the attentions of the cynical Prince, and all die as the flames close in on their dance.

The prologue is notable for its expressions of love between men, not only in the words but in the descriptions of characters and the stage-directed actions. Prince Ferdinand von Moldenberg, for example, is described as looking "young: of effeminate

⁶⁵ A rejection letter from the journal is archived at i Tatti.

appearance, with refined features, and long white hands covered with rings. He is dressed in the dress of the time, but rather over-gorgeously, with a multitude of fine lace ruffles. He wears a long powdered wig, and is rouged and darkened about the eyes."

As he plays his clavichord -- a "very melancholy mazurka" (5) he speaks about the worn-out ideas and "sham" (5) aesthetics and philosophy of his century's end. Proclaiming his love for Antoine as he plays, he simultaneously criticizes his social circle (6). Antoine, as he departs to torch the house, exits "with a long, lingering look at the Prince who does not look at him" (7)-- the stage direction confirming the mutuality of their affections. Previously Prince Ferdinand had "kissed him passionately" (7) before coldly asking him to show the ladies in.

Scene one has a pair of students at a crossroads, looking for a private dance at a landowner's house where they will meet up with their sweethearts. They, of course, take the wrong road, and in scene two, we realize that Antoine never did flee but rather died with the rest of the Mazurka-dancers, for the students enter what is clearly the old estate of the Prince, where the ghosts continue to have their fancy ball (and they've added three unsuspecting travelers to their midst over the century).

Carl and Max, the students, struggle with the morality of dancing with other women, and are warned against any dancing by one of the newer ghosts. Ultimately they realize their mistake and the Prince, uncharacteristically, decides to let Antoine guide them back toward their original goal (scene three narrates briefly this journey back out, and upon reaching the crossroads, Antoine promptly disappears). Scenes four and five find our students relating the story to an unbelieving host whose daughter convinces all to return to the scene, where they find of course the ruins of the old estate and hear the tale

of the burnt court and servant boy. They dance happily ever after, though not to Mazurkas. As Carl and Max aver, "we prefer dancing with Irena and Charlotta to dancing with phantoms!" (28)

Clearly, Stenbock is enamoured of courtly decadence and powdered wigs; perhaps in the Prince's tale he represents his own predicament as a *fin-de-siècle* Count at Kolk in Estonia, faced with loving young men but being pressured to entertain ladies, all of whom he entrances with his own music playing.⁶⁶ The reconsolidation of normative sexuality in Carl and Max's final statement, rather like Dacre's narrator's moral tone, is suspect.

Part 2: Becoming-animal, becoming-other

He has also a number of pet snakes & lizards & toads & salamanders in his room, and --worse still --a collection of Simeon Solomon's morbid & pessimistic pictures of the Rossetti school. In the garden, besides all sorts of fowls & strange birds, he has a 'zoo' containing three reindeer, a bear and a fox, and in another place he has doves and a monkey

-- from *Christmas with Count Stenbock* (Adlard, 19)

The vampire does not filiate, it infects.

⁶⁶ David Tibet suggests something similar in his editorial comment on the play; we may both be doing a disservice, though, to Stenbock's enjoyment of his female relatives and companions. He was, reportedly, an unequivocally devoted friend and cousin to women and girls when he was not debilitated by illnesses related to opium and alcohol consumption. See Adlard's biography, which is based in part on family stories handed down by those who were children in Stenbock's households.

-- (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 242)

In the early 1890s, the last two issues of an Oxford undergraduate journal of aesthetic and political homosexuality were published under the editorship of Alfred Douglas. Wilde contributed poetry and Count Stenbock, a remarkable story. Regenia Gagnier discusses *The Spirit Lamp* in the context of art journals of the day, calling it an “undergraduate” imitation of “grown-up journals” *The Studio and The Artist* and *Journal of Home Culture* (Idylls, 147). These latter publications, says Gagnier, “were the vehicles of polemical and research articles on homosexuality as well as a good deal of homosexual poetry and fiction”(147). “Under the editorship of Alfred Douglas,” she continues, “the *Spirit Lamp* was advertised as for ‘all who are interested in modern life and the new culture’ -- the new culture being one coterie’s term for homosexuality”(147). Douglas’s support of “homosexual rights and penal reform” can be found in a commemorative editorial for John Addington Symonds in Volume 4, number 1 of the journal (162). The second number of the same Volume, published a month later (June 1893), is that in which is found Count Stenbock’s story “The Other Side: A Breton Legend.” To position it under the umbrella “homosexual fiction,” however, is to paper over the complex identities permitted by the story’s fantastic/horrific genre and constructed by its content.

Narrative, character, and setting partake of familiar gothic tropes, and equally familiar (in Stenbock stories) elements of ambiguous gender and sexuality that do not necessarily all line up under the male-male configuration one might initially surmise. Just as Reade’s inclusion of “Narcissus” fixes its homoerotic and homosexual definition

too firmly, so too does “The Other Side: A Breton Legend” appearing in *The Spirit Lamp* tend to foster the assumption of a fixed identity both for the author and for available interpretations of the tale.

The “other side” and its implied opposite, this side, refer to the two sides of a small brook dividing a clean pure town and mysterious wild lands. The story tells of a young, “dark haired, gazelle-eyed boy’ teased and bullied by peers; described as “pas come les autres gamins”(not like the other boys); and whose only friends are the Catholic priest and “a little girl called Carmelle, who loved him, no one could make out why”(54).

His name is Gabriel.⁶⁷ As a boy predisposed to the supernatural by way of his wild nature, he would like nothing better than to cross the brook, even though tales about its inhabitants have frightened him. A werewolf story that seems to multiply species combinations, the text names its supernatural beings with imprecision: there are man-wolves, wolf-men, were-wolves, and “those very wicked men who for nine days every year are turned into wolves”-- partial or occasional crossings -- as well as a seductive woman/wolf.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Clearly we find ourselves firmly in Stenbock's universe with the naming and description of Gabriel. A very similar boy is described in “A True Story of a Vampire” -- by his sister named Carmela -- and treated more fully elsewhere in this chapter, but it is worth noting here that again, besides the potential angelic connection, we have a potential transgenering of cousin Gabriele mixed with the wild, sensitive, and therefore susceptible boy of late Victorian Uranian imagination. For an account of the cult of the boy in this period, see Vicinus (1999).

⁶⁸ This multiplicity could be a sign of imprecision characteristic of Stenbock's writing, or it could be a deliberate attempt to expand the boundaries of the supernatural in transformation tales. Stenbock was known for inventing his own religion, according to Adlard (1969) and others; certainly there are other examples in his oeuvre of peculiarly detailed mythologies and black mass descriptions. See his “Worm of Luck”for an example of the former and his “Faust”for the latter. Additionally, in his papers at i Tatti I have seen a notebook tying seasons, colours, and myths together in a spiritual system apparently of his own invention.

Altar boy Gabriel, disturbed by stories of black Masses and hairy men, is drawn across the brook by a blue flower that becomes charred and black whenever he lets it get too far from his breast --note that the young male breast nourishes the flower (54, 56). He is loved by a girl his own age named Carmeille. Both Carmeille and Gabriel's mother see the blue flower in a very different light, appearing scared or concerned for his safety (56/57). Gabriel eventually crosses the brook and a reversal occurs in the tale, in which he believes his previous life to have been a dream but is all the same tempted to cross over to the now-other side. The end is a triumph of the pure side in transforming Gabriel from his wolf-self to his "normal"human self (abnormal though) and seeing the "Other side" (the wolf side) destroyed -- except for nine days of the year, when a strange madness comes over him.

Clearly he has effected a kind of dispersal of his human identity, positioned analogously to those "very wicked men"transformed for nine days each year.

Most strikingly appropriate to the confusion of wolves and sides here is Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal as a line of flight from rational, patriarchal humanity. Any becoming-other is a process of proliferation, a swarm or pack logic running or flowing away from the norm but not necessarily settling on the norm's strictly binary Other. The relation is key, and in the confusion of roles, signs and being represented in "The Other Side,"we see just such an affirmative relation.

That is to say, the protagonist, once on the other side, looks back to his original home as the new other side. Although typically in lycanthropy tales (both folklore and Victorian literary) the villagers are good and the supernatural beings bad, traffic between the sides and the sides themselves, through Gabriel, become neutral rather than

negatively or positively charged. Although Gabriel is, as Chantal du Coudray notes in her essay on werewolves in Victorian fiction, saved from fully crossing over to the supernatural, it is significant that he is only partially cured of the blending of identities signified by his time spent as a wolf. The story, then, is an excellent example of what du Coudray considers to be, following Kristeva, along with Stallybrass and White, a liminal abject otherness, a hybrid and transgressive form of the grotesque that is perpetually disruptive of the embodied self.

This deterritorializing liminality, or in-between space, is not limited to transformations of the body through lycanthropy or vampirism; it is also figured generally as wildness, opposed to cultural norms, and finds its home equally in Stenbock's treatment of Gypsy⁶⁹ as race and ethnicity. Gypsy mothers in particular seem to produce offspring with supernatural predilections, attracting some kind of predatory monster (typically a werewolf or vampire) -- or being in some way gifted with unnatural musical ability. Stenbock's representations of gothic Others, and representations of him as a kind of gothic Other, rely on the wild, Easternized Gypsy Other, as we shall see in the next section.

Of Gypsies, Animals, and Wild Identities

We have seen, in both "The Worm of Luck" and "A True Story of a Vampire," that Stenbock traces wildness through the mother and situates in particular the Gypsy people as having a special relationship to nature, to music, and to magic. In the former

⁶⁹ Although it is more correct to use the term Roma for the people involved here, I will preserve Stenbock's use to avoid changing his texts and to reflect the norms of his era, knowing of course that this is part of the colonial project of his native England and his Swedish-Estonian roots. "Gypsy" then is used under advisement.

story, Sandor seems naturally to know how to entrance through his music. In the latter, Gabriel and his sister share a wildness because their mother had been “of gipsy race”(126). This matrilineal and determining factor spreads throughout Stenbock's tales. In “The King's Bastard,”the King of Nicosia takes a mistress whose ethnic origins are understood to be in some way exotic, linking them to other women in the Stenbock canon. Ilma is fiercely proud, unwilling to accept money, title or gifts, but keeping all flowers and notes from the King in a box as though perhaps, we may surmise, to use them in some kind of ceremony. She produces for the King a quick-witted and generous boy who is preferred both by his father and by the whole of Nicosia (in contrast to Crown Prince Baldwin, who is careless, mean, and rather stupid).

In “The Worm of Luck,” the mother is a displaced Gypsy whose eldest son Sandor escapes the confines of his stable home and takes to the forest, meeting his uncle and the Roma community where he finds his musical talents worthy and lucrative. Supernatural forces are taken for granted in this story. And as to Stenbock’s own views, if his actions are any indication, it was not surprising to anyone but guests at Kolk that a family of gypsies might be found living in the entry hall to the estates, at the Count's invitation (Adlard, *Stenbock*, 42).

As Stenbock’s most widely reprinted tale, “A True Story of a Vampire” is of special note and warrants extended attention not only for its thematization of wildness through ethnicity and music, but also for its curious connections to Romantic extremes (written gesturally and rhizomatically through Percy Shelley) and its display of gender performance in a Decadent mode. A drawn-out and imprecise scene of description performs the impossibility of representation while managing material in a way that

elucidates connections between biography, gothic readings of gender possibilities, and otherness as becoming. The aged, eccentric narrator Carmela, perhaps so named in homage to the 1872 vampire novella “Carmilla” by Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, proclaims the difficulty of describing her young brother. As she puts it, “I find it difficult to describe my brother Gabriel; there was something about him strange and superhuman, or perhaps I should rather say praeterhuman, something between the animal and the divine”(119). It is significant that prior to this, the narrator has taken pains to highlight the ordinariness of the vampire to which the title refers.

Vardalek is introduced at the beginning of the story as one who does not follow the usual vampire script: rather than arriving by night in a carriage “drawn by two black horses,” Vardalek arrives in the afternoon “by the commonplace means of the railway train”(118). Rather than being “dark, sinister-looking, and singularly handsome,” Vardalek is described as “on the contrary, rather fair, and certainly was not at first sight sinister looking, and though decidedly attractive in appearance, not what one would call singularly handsome”(118). Calling to mind Austen’s narrator’s initial series of “nots” in *Northanger Abbey*, used to describe Catherine Moreland’s underqualifications as a heroine while mapping readerly expectations, this trajectory seems to set up a parody of the vampire genre (or at least its modernization). However, the figure of Gabriel confounds this initial goal. The full version of the paragraph describing Gabriel sets in motion a particular series of grammatical and intertextual imprecisions:

I find it difficult to describe my brother Gabriel; there was something about him strange and superhuman, or perhaps I should rather say praeterhuman, something between the animal and the divine. Perhaps the Greek idea of the Faun might

illustrate what I mean; but that will not do either. He had large, wild, gazelle-like eyes: his hair, like mine, was in a perpetual tangle -- that point he had in common with me, and indeed, as I afterwards heard, our mother having been of gipsy race, it will account for much of the innate wildness there was in our natures. I was wild enough, but Gabriel was much wilder. Nothing would induce him to put on shoes and stockings, except on Sundays -- when he also allowed his hair to be combed, but only by me. How shall I describe the grace of that lovely mouth, shaped verily 'en arc d'amour'. I always think of the text in the Psalm, 'Grace is shed forth on thy lips, therefore has God blessed thee eternally' -- lips that seemed to exhale the very breath of life. Then that beautiful, lithe, living, elastic form! (119-120).

Far from balking at the difficulty of describing Gabriel, or stalling, the narrator proliferates descriptions of the young brother, lending him a certain kind of indeterminacy (of gender, of ethnicity, of being) that recalls Romanticism in its likeness to descriptions of Percy Shelley⁷⁰ and looks ahead to discourses of identity in the later twentieth century. First of all, in naming, Gabriel has several layers. He is not fixed by filial or national boundaries: his father's "whole heart went out to Gabriel -- Gabryel as we spelt it in Polish. He was always called by the Russian abbreviation -- Gavril -- I

⁷⁰ Thomas Love Peacock's caricature of Percy Shelley in *Nightmare Abbey* (Scythrop Glowry) is an obvious connection here -- Scythrop shuts himself in a turret not unlike the one Gabriel inhabits -- but the descriptions of Shelley by less satirically inclined individuals are germane as well (for example Medwin's as noted in the previous chapter, Matthew Arnold's, Mary Shelley's). It is worth remembering, also, that Stenbock kept a bust of Shelley on a kind of altar in his apartment in London, replacing it only in his last illness with a bust of the Virgin Mary. In a dizzying turn that justifies my instincts about gothic influence and gothicization, W. B. Yeats embeds this episode in *The Speckled Bird*, in which Stenbock has become Count Sobrinski (77ff).

mean, of course, my brother, who had a resemblance to the only portrait of my mother, a slight chalk sketch which hung in my father's study"(119).

Calling attention to the fact that this is a tale told in English in London about a Polish family in Styria using a Russian vernacular and speaking German to the French-speaking governess from Belgium, Mlle Vonnaert, Carmela situates her brother in between linguistic states. The other concatenated aspect first flagged in this passage is the figure of the absent mother, whose resemblance in Gabriel lures the father's love, his "whole heart." This also has the effect of gothically doubling the mother and son in a pre-oedipal territory. The whole is further complicated by the biographical detail that keeps returning with some persistence in Stenbock's tales: his young cousin Gabriele back in Estonia was especially favoured by him (Adlard, 11), and she seems to find her way into many of his stories as an androgynous young boy who is both beautiful and doesn't fit cultural norms.⁷¹

Carmela herself draws attention to the status of her lengthy descriptions of Gabriel as a detour that brings the audience no nearer to the vampire of the title: "Thus far, I have not been speaking about the Vampire. However, let me begin with my narrative at last"(121). This is a full twelve paragraphs into a thirty-one-paragraph story, most of which are between one and three sentences long. By contrast, the three paragraphs spent on Gabriel are between six and fourteen sentences; many of these are themselves long and complex, with many colons, semicolons and dashes. As one of the paradoxes of the story (spending so long describing one who is at once a detour, a lure, a

⁷¹ The theme of radically other difference in young boys is played out interestingly in the 1998 film "Velvet Goldmine," which traces the glam movement (a precursor to goth) in London in the early nineteen-seventies back to a green jewel left by aliens along with a baby at a couple's door in that city. The couple's last name: Wilde.

pretext, a doubled mother, and difficult to describe), it is worth dwelling on these three paragraphs in more detail.

The first main paragraph describing Gabriel is the one in which he is “strange and superhuman,” or rather “praeterhuman, something between the animal and the divine”(120). The narrator’s hesitancy, first announced in “I find it difficult to describe my brother...” and confirmed by the “perhaps” and still another “Perhaps”(120), allows her to range over possibilities without fixing on any particular one. In so doing, she aligns her brother with nature, with Classical Greek ideals, with angels -- all suggestive of queer narrative but none in itself sufficient to their descriptive task. “Perhaps the Greek idea of the Faun might illustrate what I mean; but that will not do either”(120). The previous ethnic and linguistic freedom is then fixed or prefigured through the absent mother: “...as I afterward heard, our mother having been of gipsy race, it will account for much of the innate wildness there was in our natures” (120). While the narrator does mention points they have in common, including an innate wildness and an untamable coiffure of curls, she insists that he is an extreme version quite outside the pale of society. This is played out in the final lines of the paragraph, in which a Biblical Psalm is cited to describe Gabriel’s lips, but then the rest of his person is uncontainable, leading to a sentence fragment punctuated by an exclamation mark: “Then that beautiful, lithe, living, elastic form!”(120). It is as though he resides outside culture's attempts to constrain his nature in description.

The next paragraph compares him again to animals as well as to life energy, and goes on to explain his rather contradictory relationship to music as a natural inclination and quickness together with a reluctance to take lessons:

He could run faster than any deer: spring like a squirrel to the topmost branch of a tree: he might have stood for the sign and symbol of vitality itself. But seldom could he be induced by Mlle Vonnaert to learn lessons; but when he did so, he learnt with extraordinary quickness. He would play upon every conceivable instrument, holding a violin here, there, and everywhere except the right place: manufacturing instruments for himself out of reeds -- even sticks. Mlle Vonnaert made futile efforts to induce him to learn to play the piano. I suppose he was what was called spoilt, though merely in the superficial sense of the word. Our father allowed him to indulge in every caprice. (120)

The punctuation of the first line is jarring, for it evokes simultaneously a parallelism in completely unbalanced ways and a logical progression that hasn't the grammatical logic it should. "He could run faster than any deer: spring like a squirrel to the topmost branch of a tree: he might have stood for the sign and symbol of vitality itself" (120). This odd arrangement of colons indicates a serialization of description rather than its grammatically and conventionally proper mode, and I would argue that this is another instance of the narrator's ranging over terrain rather than getting things right, so to speak. The very next sentence bears this out, structured as it is as a pair (short series) of buts: "But seldom could he be induced by Mlle Vonnaert to learn lessons; but when he did so, he learnt with extraordinary quickness"(120). These are by far not the only examples of wrenching grammar, and rather than asking for the reader's forgiveness on this point, Stenbock might indeed be performing the difficulty his narrator ascribes to the act of description being undertaken, precisely because Gabriel, in his species-difference, is indescribable and utterly other.

This could be a function of language's inadequacy to the task of showing a "becoming" in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, and it is also an example of a deployment of a language against its dominant descriptive norms. As such a deployment, it is an example of a minor literature, a literature that engages minor uses of a language within that language's major modes. As an Estonian estate owner with a Swedish aristocratic lineage born in England, Stenbock's class and linguistic background are complicated; at the very least, however, they can be used to explain literary acts that share some of the same material (i.e. gothic and vampire tales) in ways that have gone unexplained.

The final grammatical eccentricity of the middle (shorter) paragraph involves a dichotomy between crafted and found musical instruments, or perhaps more properly between highly crafted and Gabriel-crafted natural instruments, punctuated by both a colon and a dash -- exceeding the dichotomization effected by either one or the other. "He would play upon every conceivable instrument, holding a violin here, there, and everywhere except the right place: manufacturing instruments for himself out of reeds -- even sticks"(120). Although when he concedes to lessons he learns very well, it is upon the self-made instruments from nature that he prefers to play ("efforts to induce" piano lessons were "futile" -- 120).

The final paragraph of the descriptive triptych further explores the connection to nature and the contradiction within Gabriel, ending on a note of divine ecstasy (perhaps signified materially by the double negation of two consecutive "buts"):

One of his peculiarities, when quite a little child, was horror at the sight of meat. Nothing on earth would induce him to taste it. Another thing which was particularly remarkable about him was his extraordinary power over animals.

Everything seemed to come tame to his hand. Birds would sit on his shoulder. Then sometimes Mlle Vonnaert and I would lose him in the woods -- he would suddenly dart away. Then we would find him singing softly or whistling to himself, with all manner of woodland creatures around him -- hedgehogs, little foxes, wild rabbits, marmots, squirrels, and such like. He would frequently bring these things home with him and insist on keeping them. This strange menagerie was the terror of poor Mlle Vonnaert's heart. He chose to live in a little room at the top of a turret; but which, instead of going upstairs, he chose to reach by means of a very tall chestnut-tree, through the window. But in contradiction of all this, it was his custom to serve every Sunday Mass in the parish church, with hair nicely combed and with white surplice and red cassock. He looked as demure and tamed as possible. Then came the element of the divine. What an expression of ecstasy there was in those glorious eyes! (120-121)

This description finds Gabriel horrified at "the sight of meat. Nothing on earth would induce him to taste it." He also had "extraordinary power over animals." Animals would come to him, tamed, including birds on his shoulder, prefiguring his first meeting with Count Vardalek, in which he appears to the Count with a "yellow butterfly...clinging to his hair" and "carrying in his arms a little squirrel"(121). He terrorized Mlle Vonnaert by keeping a "menagerie" in his "little room at the top of a turret; but which, instead of going upstairs, he chose to reach by means of a very tall chestnut-tree, through the window." Then, another immediate but: "But in contradiction of all this, it was his custom to serve every Sunday Mass in the parish church, with hair nicely combed..."(120). The strikingly similar portrait of Stenbock's own menagerie at his estate

in Estonia is relevant here; apparently he kept all manner of beasts in his room, including a monkey. Possible connections between sympathies with animals and degeneracy would not have been lost on the contemporary readership.⁷²

Carmela is the only one whom he will allow to comb that mass of wild hair, incidentally, as we have learned in the first paragraph. The dichotomy of this transition, the shoeless, stockingless nature lover exchanging his birds for church raiments and solemnly serving Mass, elicits another exclamatory uncontainability in the narration: “What an expression of ecstasy there was in those glorious eyes!”(121). Thus ends Carmela’s digression or detour through Gabriel’s wild, uncontainable, serial range of territories.

What is important to my larger argument is the manner in which such apparently digressive detours are in fact central displacements (and emplacements) of conventional certainties (generic and gendered) that open up different readings (or difference-generating readings) of other texts as well. This deterritorializing and minorizing tendency of some parts of some works is, I contend, a useful but overlooked feature of the gothic. It is an example of minoritarian gothic, and its mode of movement and deconstruction is precisely gothicization. After an analysis of some other writings by Stenbock, the rest of this chapter will explore a variation of the gothic in which, as in my reading of Austen in light of Dacre, a story by Henry James is an instance of becoming-other as well.

⁷² As I explore elsewhere in this chapter, discourses of homoerotic attachment and degeneracy are by the fin-de-siecle coextensive with other discourses in the popular imaginary. Music-loving and bestiality are each signs of particular sodomitical leanings. Sexological literature aside, there are precursor moments in the literary gothic that rely on cultural connections like this: Dale Townshend notes in his essay “Love in a Convent”, for example, Maturin’s reference to baboons and Hottentot women (19).

Part 3: Becoming-other and minor gothic genders

I know I was made to be a mother

-- Count Stenbock, in *Christmas with Count Stenbock* (25)

His appearance was that of a tall, graceful intellectual looking girl and although he is not exactly good-looking, his eyes and expression are very beautiful

-- Simeon Solomon in a letter to Frederick Hollyer, (qtd. in Reade, 37)

In his version of the late Victorian medical gothic tale⁷³, “A Secret Kept,” Stenbock describes the noble orphans (and second cousins) Vivian Vandrake and Viola Vargas as specifically having “become” remarkably similar as they grew up together – similar enough in fact that “people would rather take them for brother and sister than for a betrothed pair” (7). In this becoming-similar, though, they retain gender-chiastic “points of difference” (8). Stenbock is clear to define Vivian not as “effeminate” but as “feminine” (8) and Viola as masculine:

His face might be called feminine rather than effeminate. I say feminine because of the somewhat indeterminate outline, and marvellous delicate skin and bloom of complexion. But there was none of the flacidity and simper of the so-called effeminate face. The expression indeed was profoundly intellectual. The eyes denoted a considerable amount of will-power, but in general he looked delicate and fragile: but without any trace of sickliness.

⁷³ So-named for its handling of science and the supernatural through a combination of narrator and newspaper reporting, and the doubling or secret life of a nobleman-murderer.

No-one would call him *handsome*: everyone would say he was very nice-looking, and some people would call his face beautiful. His real age was twenty-five, but he did not look a day older than nineteen.

Her face, by way of contrast had a more clear-cut definite masculine outline than his, and if he showed greater will power in the eyes, there was much more determination about her mouth. Her eyes were very sweet and tender, of a vague lilac colour, veritably dove's eyes; whereas his eyes in certain lights were vivid green, almost startlingly so." (8)

To describe Vivian – who incidentally turns out to be an insane but lucid murderer with supernatural powers -- in this way reflects the ways in which others have described Stenbock himself (Solomon, cited above in Reade, and Rhys, for example, in *Everyman Remembers*). Stenbock's characters generally do tend to be fairly transparent indices of his own looks and identity, as well as those of some of his family members. Between sickly children, tyrannical stepfathers, absent parents, and feminine men, Stenbock's stories suggest that he, like Oscar Wilde (often considered a paragon of homosexual definition even though his actual history complicates such easy claims), is not only one thing, does not only write one monosexual identity. In terms of the sexual and gender alterity involved in becoming-other, becoming-(m)other, and becoming-woman, though, we must not lose sight of the fact that women too in Stenbock's universe are part of a similar queering of identities.

It seems to me especially in Stenbock's case, as we have seen above, that music can underwrite an idea of transport and transformation that opens up spaces for multiple genders, multiple sexualities, and crossings between them. This is why Deleuze and

Guattari's focus on the operations of difference become important: the deterritorializing tendency of identity in Stenbock preserves something of the sedimented gender and sexuality norms AND subversions of his day, but reterritorializes on something else quite different (possibly quite accidentally too) that connects rhizomatically to Brite in the future and Dacre in the past. In the queer gothic families of Stenbock's stories, we find non-arborescent genealogies and relationship alterities that call to mind Dacre's own and her characters' as well as Brite's in the form of youth and vampire reconfigurations of the filial. Unconscriptable by heteronormative gender and sexuality, the short stories seem to be more than a Uranian, Decadent poet's attempts to express a "hermaphroditism of the soul" (Foucault, *The History*, 43). At times a woman, a mother, a bachelor, a family Fool (note his "Idiot's Club" in Estonia and later in London), Stenbock's gender performance is far from univocal. Add to this his re-figuring of his cousins and friends throughout his fiction, and no easy binary sex-gender system emerges.

The non- or anti-genealogical arrangements of surrogacy in his tales are consistently deterritorializing. From a magical tomboy girl apparently born in the ocean and adopted by lighthouse keepers in the West Indies ("The Egg of the Albatross") to the King of Nicosia's bastard boy, schooled only by the King himself ("The King's Bastard" with analogous formations in "Hylas" – with the teen who has only been schooled by his Professor father), from the bastard Gipsy-blooded boy fleeing his tyrannical stepfather in "Worm of Luck" to the fatherless Gabriels in both "The True Story of a Vampire" and "The Other Side," figures from Stenbock's own gender rearrangements and family relationships recur with gothic and supernatural differences.

Stenbock is, then, a rhizomatic goth-identified subject. Descriptions and

biographical details circumnavigate rather than address directly his sexual identity (for such a thing -- an identity -- was clearly becoming possible in the 1880s and 1890s), not stating but yet stating the obvious. Descriptions that make use of preterition in biographies are, in Stenbock's stories, metaphorized in particular ways instead. It is my contention that his privileging of androgyny, hermaphroditism, and angelic youth *along with* mothering (in its absence or in his claims to it) suggest imaginative transgenderings of himself and his female cousin, Gabriele in terms that do not necessarily match the received wisdom about male homosexual definition in late nineteenth-century Decadent circles.

Indeed, it is exactly Stenbock's failure to enact successfully either the landowning heterosexual project of his noble family (at the level of the German and Estonian expectations of marriage) or the consistently male-identified homosexual role that is of key importance at this juncture in my argument. In tracking the history of sexual dissidence and goth-identification from Dacre to Brite, Stenbock's anomalous position remains crucial. He is neither a logical step between Percy Shelley and, say, Aleister Crowley nor an obvious inheritor of the Matthew Lewis school of gothic horror. Instead, I am proposing that he is a trans-historical (not transhistorical, but transgendering of literary historical tropes) figure whose play with names, family romance, and obsessive friendships makes him crucial in the development of low gothic culture, if we can transpose Halberstam's "low theory" (*Queer Art of Failure*, 1-25) onto a mode of writing and identifying.

In this light, then, Stenbock's names in the stories and poetry are evidently significant. In the case of "The Other Side" and Carmeille, there is an intertext with

LeFanu's vampiress Carmilla von Karnstein, but also with the similarly-derived Carmela of "A True Story of a Vampire" who may make an incestuous analogue to Carmeille as Gabriel's sister in that story; I am arguing that Stenbock may not, or may not always, occupy the predator position in these stories, as anyone invested in telling an ephebophilic or paedophilic story about him in our contemporary context of moral panic around child sexuality may assume.⁷⁴ That is to say, rather than being metaphorized in Vardalek or a werewolf, he may as easily be casting himself in the role of the sister or chaste female lover of Gabriel. There is a sense in which his affections for his cousin bespeak a longing to be protective, and female. It is even possible that he is placing Carmeille or himself as Karin, his young cousin at Kolk in Estonia, who purportedly was deeply in love with Eric, hoping in fact someday to marry him (Adlard, *Stenbock*, 31-32). A similar impulse (to become woman) is clear when he takes over the care of the infant Rachel Costelloe⁷⁵ and proclaims himself a mother (See Adlard, *Christmas*, 25).

More salient than Carmela and Carmeille are the repetitions of Gabriels across Stenbock's works. They are many, and without exception are in familial or romantic relationships that are in some way queer. Besides Gabriel in "A True Story of a Vampire" who, raised by his father and a governess and closer to his sister than to anyone else,

⁷⁴ In several ways, existing older accounts do attempt to place him, at least by implication, in the predatory role of his own fictional predators. For better accounts of childhood sexuality and its gothic valences, see Bruhm and Hurley's collection *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, and James R. Kincaid's classic *Child Loving*.

⁷⁵ Part of the complicated and nonlinear family resemblances in Stenbock's own history, the Costelloe family had ties to Stenbock's circle through the Pearsall Smiths, some of whom, including Mary (later Costelloe) show up in his London branch of "The Idiots' Club" – and Rachel, who was later to become the novelist and feminist Ray Strachey, was the daughter of this same Mary – later Berenson – whose papers in the Berenson collection include Stenbock's. It is significant that the Pearsall Smiths, Costelloes, and Berensons all took a nontraditional approach to parenting that now we might consider more queer than correct.

wastes away under the influence of Vardalek and who seems to have had a predilection for nature and supernatural forces, there is the very similar Gabriel in “The Other Side.” This Gabriel is surrounded by female relatives, is loved by a girl his own age, and susceptible to an older female werewolf; he returns from his transformation, but with an impermanence that causes an annual relapse. The Gabriel addressed in the eponymous poem from *Shadow of Death* appears to be a young angelic – or hallucinated -- boy nurturing a dying man whose heart seems irreparably broken with or without him (15-16). And although he is a Guido rather than a Gabriel, the repetition of “G” names seems significant in “Viol d’Amor” – yet another young boy susceptible to supernatural forces who wastes away and perishes. The only clearly adult Gabriel is Gabriel Glynde, the art mentor to Lionel Langton in “Hylas,” who marries Julia for no other reason than to solve the problem of teen Lionel having fallen in love with the older woman, an oddly protective strategy that has, in the end, tragic effects.

Biographer John Adlard considers these instances to be direct references to the name of Stenbock’s cousin on his mother’s side, Gabriele, five years his junior and with whose family he spent considerable time as a boy and teen. Given that Karin Stenbock, one of the cousins at his Estonian estate, had hoped to marry him and reported that he “had the greatest influence on my life... and set the direction of my development” (qtd. in Adlard, *Stenbock*, 32), and that Adlard found evidence of Eric’s “influence...felt by the children of those children he know at Kolk” (Adlard, 32), it is not unreasonable to agree that attachments between him and the children from another branch of the family were also strong, especially in light of the fact that he “gave a copy of his second book of poems” to Gabriele. What to Adlard was a cousin’s name “significantly transformed into

a boy's" (*Stenbock*, 11) remains significant to the present study, though in a potentially more plural way. That is, Gabriele becoming Gabriel may not only be a gendering that brings potentially incestuous desire into line with a same-sex identity. It may also – considering the content of the different texts in which it happens – be a function of minor gothic gender transitivity or gender performativity that speaks more generally to the cult of youth, young girls, and young boys in *fin-de-siècle* representation.

The dark romanticism conjured up by the title of Stenbock's 1894 short story collection *Studies in Death* (and by *Shadow of Death*, one of his poetry collections) is immediately recognizable as gothic. The full title page reads "Studies in Death: Romantic Tales, by Eric, Count Stenbock." The facing page is illustrated, having stylized rune-like lettering reading *Studies in Death* Stories by S.E. Stenbock. The background features two bats flanking a cross under a roof-like structure that marks a grave, and the path to the grave splits off in two directions, forming another cross with a snake around the base making the double-S that Stenbock had adopted as his symbol (from Simeon Solomon, cited above in Reade, 1970). Strange trees flank the whole and in the immediate foreground are two owls perched on a mass of intertwined brambles, one facing forward and one with its back to us.⁷⁶

The stories themselves are a strange mixture of confounded love, tragic sibling affection, unusual family arrangements, and supernatural influence. Of horror there is a healthy dose (this is the first text in which "The True Story of a Vampire" was printed), but my focus in this part of the chapter is on the potential for specifically becoming-other-gendered.

⁷⁶ The illustrator is not credited, although Stenbock himself did draw, and I have verified directly that his hand-drawn symbol is found on many of the manuscripts held at the Harvard Berenson archives at i Tatti.

The first story, "Hylas," is perhaps best thought of beside Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Both tales begin with an artist who feels possessive of a young man -- a boy for Stenbock -- and both tales involve particular triangulations of desire between men. *Dorian Gray* makes of the ego a more "complex, multiform" thing than those who conceive of it "as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence" (119). Prefiguring Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of Freud by some 80 years, and before Freud had a chance to put them forth, Wilde has Dorian exercise insincerity as a "method by which we can multiply our personalities" (119). These provocative assertions about multiple selves go beyond dichotomy or doubling, and it is in language carefully deployed that Wilde achieves this fluid gothicism. The story of the young man who buys eternal youth at the expense of his moral soul, the effects of which are traced in his hidden portrait, monstrously, is by now a standard source for critics who, following Eve Sedgwick, see in it an example of homosociality (the triangulation of desire between men through a third female character) and homosexuality more specifically.

The Picture of Dorian Gray does more than double an individual self. It presents a narrative of triangulation in which an innocent, tender youth is positioned between a gazer (artist Basil Hallward) and a dandy (Lord Henry Wotton). Wotton's linguistic play and grounding in an aesthete's privileging of surface has long been conflated with Wilde's own self-positioning with regard to art and life. The language games that, again, multiply personalities by way of insincerity are a species of infection that, once introduced, cannot be halted even by the purely loving gaze of the older artist Hallward. The first family arrangement for Dorian is the experience of being transfixed either by an artist trying to protect him from an outside world (i.e. keep him for himself) or by an

aesthete whose purpose seems to be to confound all certainties in language. Rather than seeking in Dorian's failed relationships with women proof of his, or Wilde's, homosexuality, we ought to remain, as Judith Halberstam asserts, "at the surface" (*Skin Shows*, 55).⁷⁷

A similar anti-Oedipal arrangement typifies Count Stenbock's "Hylas." The myth of Hylas had some currency in late nineteenth-century sexual dissident circles. Stenbock's story gothicizes this myth in particularly late-Victorian ways. Like Wilde's Dorian, Lionel Langton, fifteen, typifies for an older artist exactly the form and figure of perfection in young males. The artist, Gabriel Glynde, finds in Lionel "the very face I had been seeking for so long"(1). Later, Gabriel asserts that he has "always maintained that artists gave models for faces, as much as faces give models for artists"(12-13) and this chiasmus operates throughout the narrative as well.

The classical themes of the story signal to contemporary audiences in the know that there is a queer matter afoot; an older artist (named, like several of Stenbock's characters, Gabriel), becomes the mentor to a promising teen artist, Lionel, who becomes the model for his painted Hylas, but who falls hopelessly in love with an older predatory woman, Julia. Gabriel feels he must marry her to keep Lionel from turning away from his art, but the plan backfires and leads to Lionel's suicide. The tragic tale of thwarted love (on many levels) is typical of Stenbock's plots and settings.

⁷⁷ Although Deleuze and Guattari's theories of surfaces, becomings-other, and anti-Freudian conceptions of subjectivity are in play throughout Halberstam's work, they remain gestural here; Halberstam is most explicitly engaged with Sedgwick's work on surfaces in the gothic at this stage in the argument (though I think we would both argue that there is a connection to be made between Sedgwick's surfaces and those of Deleuze and Guattari). See *Skin Shows*, 66 for more on surface and identity in relation to Sedgwick.

But “Hylas” also partakes of a common thread in decadent, late Victorian culture. While it connects laterally to other stories in the text along the lines of art and aestheticized self-surfacing, it also connects to the uncanny, gothic frisson of recognition, for at the end Gabriel realizes that Lionel has painted his own face in death with absolute accuracy.

The single story deemed worthy of anthologizing by Brian Reade, as described above, Stenbock’s “Narcissus” also appears in *Studies in Death*. The story relates the happy surprise of a severely disfigured very rich older man’s young, blind charge finding him beautiful upon being cured of blindness. The reference to myth’s Narcissus becomes clear from the start, as the older man narrates the circumstances of his birth, estate, and all-round perfection until a spurned fiancée burns off half his face with some kind of acid. Ever after this event the man refuses to be seen in public without a veil, breaks all the mirrors in his house, and takes his repast alone in a park nocturnally, a park that is locked from without the entire night. The boy -- it is not without significance that his mother has left him in the park while possibly going to prostitute herself -- is discovered and turns out to be an excellent musician and redemptive force for the narrator. Young Tobit plays his pennywhistle so well that with his increasing skill comes increasing wealth. With an uncanny virtuosity, he picks up the narrator’s tunes very quickly once he makes the move from pennywhistle to the (less phallic) piano. Given Stenbock’s embedding of music in his texts and others’ descriptions of him as a hauntingly seductive musician in his own right, it is quite possible to read in this move a move from phallocentrism (the pennywhistle) to a more diffuse identity of multiple pleasures (the piano). Despite his fears of being thought ugly and horrid, the narrator facilitates the ocular operation for the

boy and the result is a final sentence that could be read in more than one way: “And you are the most beautiful person in all the world!” (*Shadow of Death / Studies of Death*, 50). On the one hand, Tobit is free from the socializing norms of beauty and when he can suddenly see, he knows no other beauty against which to compare his benefactor’s disfigurement. On the other, Tobit could be voicing for Stenbock the beauty of alterity itself, the beauty of a benevolent older man taking in a helpless orphan. This calls to mind biographical material about Stenbock insisting on carrying around a wooden doll child and calling it his son. At the very least, the complicated nature of “Narcissus” makes it not only a tale that, like “Hylas,” calls forth Greek myth (and therefore in the context of Late Victorian discourse, dissident sexuality). It is also a tale of familial and relationship alterity, anti-genealogical becoming-other.

Of all the stories in the collection, “The Death of a Vocation” appears to be the most normative, and even this tale of chaste heterosexual attraction is far from normal, considering its deceptions of heteronormative expectation, its thematization of incest, and its queering of Catholic chastity. In it, a man and a woman who would rather be a monk and a nun resist family and societal expectations by going through “a nominal form of marriage” (61) until finally, after a year of living “as brother and sister” (61), they kiss passionately and suddenly find themselves with a baby, a foundling left on their doorstep. In the final scene, Seraphine places the infant on her husband Celestin’s lap and dons her wedding dress. Presumably this heterosexual, conjugal, reproductive ending is one of the reasons the story was left out of Brian Reade’s book on gay male fiction. The content of the story is, however, not without resonance for both gay and lesbian readings; the problem seems to be with the ending. Briefly, I will argue that the ending actually forms

part of a queer story, one whose various parts are not as commensurable with a heterosexual romance plot as one might initially think.

First of all, the title itself includes a clue that the ending is not of the happiest order. The vocation that dies in this story is that of devotion to God (whether in a convent or in a monastery). Both protagonists have taken vows to devote themselves entirely to the celibate life of a nun and a monk after being “married” for some time in order to allay fears on the girl’s parents’ behalf.

Second, the text is full of references to the “type” of man who doesn’t marry, and the kind of woman who likes neither men nor other women. Not only does this resonate with the “open secret” codification of gay and lesbian activity; it also effectively queers a heterosexual romance plot. In addition to the narrative assertions about their connection through what they do *not* enjoy,⁷⁸ they also seem unable to avoid a consummation of their passion through one kiss -- initiated by Seraphine, but only after Celestin’s assertions of his missing her and tears welling up in his eyes upon seeing her in her Nun’s habit (65).

Finally, the scene of passion is instigated by the fetishistic performance of monasticism in the woman’s wearing of the nun habit. That it also brings with it an infant is surely a fantastic parody of the usual manner of proceeding, and makes us reconsider whether adoptive parents are not themselves somehow queer. The infant’s cries stop immediately upon Seraphine’s picking it up from the doorstep, and stays stopped on Celestin’s lap while Seraphine performs the role of wife by returning to the room

⁷⁸ Calling to mind the disnarrations and negations in Austen, and, interestingly, James, the pair do not like dances, courting, or marriage. They reject – by merely performing – all the formal rituals of romance expected by their families, rituals made all the more pressing by the suggestion that Seraphine is of a formerly Jewish middle-class family that has only recently taken on their noble name by buying it through marriage (52).

“arrayed in her bridal dress” (*Studies in Death*, 66) a full year after their wedding day (to them, a mock wedding day, but officially, the real thing). The doorstep foundling is no stranger to Victorian literature, of course, but “The Death of a Vocation” may sit alone in its evocation of a queerly-constituted adoptive family for that child.⁷⁹

Taken together, the short stories are instances of minor gothic tactics of the self. Stenbock’s complicated relationship to family, sexual identity, and gender are best thought of in a pluralistic, queer frame. Arguably, the multiplication of what might otherwise be read as a univocal, monolithic sense of gay male identity in aesthetic decadence is best rethought as deterritorialization, becoming-other, becoming-intense. For Stenbock, this appears most often as becoming-woman (becoming-m-other), and for his characters, becoming-Gabriel (short form for a radically disgendered, Shelleyan character perhaps deterritorialized from a real-life female cousin but certainly not fitting the norm of child or teen masculinity). For Deleuze and Guattari, such becomings are exactly not imitative. They do not simply resemble “the woman or the child as clearly distinct molar entities” but rather they emit “particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity, of a microfemininity, in other words, that... create the molecular woman” (*Thousand Plateaus*, 274). Stenbock’s stories avoid posing a norm against which his characters – and his own identity – are alterities; rather, his mechanisms of representing children and genealogies expose – intentionally or not -- the contingency of what otherwise might be called norm, stable, simple, and molar. His tales and those about him suggest that what seems arborescent as against his rhizomaticity may only be “arborifications of multiplicities” (*Thousand Plateaus*, 506). Such tactics are

⁷⁹ A formation that may not arise again with such queer effects until, as we shall see, Poppy Z. Brite’s alternate family relations in *Lost Souls*, a hundred years later.

those not only of the Victorian dissident, sexual subaltern, or minoritarian: they can also be thought of as belonging to the nomad. And read in this gothic, minorizing light (or shadow?), the much more controlled mastery of (arguably) the most canonical figure contemporary with Stenbock becomes less evidently major. The next section addresses a Henry James whose own disnarration of half a lifetime in “Europe” enacts, potentially, a different kind of queer becoming-other than has heretofore been recounted.

Part 4: Henry James and Jolly Nomadism

At any rate, odd though it may sound to pretend that one feels on safer ground in tracing such an adventure as that of the hero of “The Jolly Corner” than in pursuing a bright career among pirates or detectives, I allow that composition to pass as the measure or limit, on my own part, of any achievable comfort in the “adventure story”; and this not because I may “render” – well, what my poor gentleman attempted and suffered in the New York house – better than I may render detectives or pirates or other splendid desperadoes, though even here too there would be something to say; but because the spirit engaged with the forces of violence interests me most when I can think of it as engaged most deeply, most finely and most “subtly” (precious term!) For then it is that, as with the longest and firmest prongs of consciousness, I grasp and hold the throbbing subject; *there* it is above all that I find the steady light of the picture.

– Henry James, “Preface” to *Novels and Tales, Volume XVII* (xx-xxi, emphasis in original).

I was moved to adopt as my motive an analysis of some one of the conceivably rarest and intensest grounds for an “unnatural” anxiety, a *malaise* so incongruous and discordant, in the given prosaic prosperous conditions, as almost to be compromising.

-- Henry James, “Preface” (xxiv).

Few American authors from the turn of the twentieth century can be said to be as canonical across continents as Henry James.⁸⁰ His carefully controlled syntax and masterful rhetoric seat him firmly in the camp of the major author, both in the everyday canonical sense and in the more specific sense of Deleuze and Guattari’s majoritarian category. Although his *The Turn of the Screw* and “The Beast in the Jungle” have proven elastic in terms of queer readings, James’ short story “The Jolly Corner” (1909)⁸¹ has had rather more limited critical attention in spite of its protagonist’s implied knowledge of continental decadent aestheticism (code for homosexuality); this section sets out to suggest that one possible rereading of the story is opened up by the gender transitivity and nomadic gothic signification theorized thus far in Chapters 2 and 3. Reading Henry James against Count Stenbock might seem an odd choice until we recall the James family

⁸⁰ The main reasons outlined here to use this story as exemplary -- connections to an ambiguous Continental experience, the presence of a gothicized biography and fiction simultaneously, and a particular revisiting of existing readings -- should not prevent future considerations of other tales by James or by other major or minor American authors and their works under the minoritarian rubric. Elements of gothicizing becomings-other and refrains could also be assessed in Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, even in relation to Stenbock. Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” is of immediate relevance as well. My isolation of a single story has as much to do with its positioning of England and Europe as absent presence as it has to do with the minor method with which I am experimenting.

⁸¹ “Jolly Corner” was first published in Ford Maddox Ford’s *English Review* (Dec 1908) and subsequently revised for the New York Edition collection, appearing in Vol XVII of *Novels and Tales*. Citations are from the latter.

history (like Stenbock's family in its own right) with supernatural or occult experiences. Experiences such as his father's "vastation" and his own interaction with some kind of spirit world (his oblique "vast visitation" connected to a childhood injury – of which multiple accounts exist in biographies – see for example Leon Edel's introduction to James, *Stories of the Supernatural*, v-ix), together with his narratives' co-located trajectory alongside the rise of psychoanalysis, have made James and his fiction very fertile ground for the rise of queer and gothic theorising.⁸² Indeed, some of the most important work to date in creating the field of queer theory – namely, Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet* – rests exactly on readings of James' rhetoric in particular as both gothic and queer. My own assertion here is that in "The Jolly Corner" James performs a particularly gothic and queer formation through multiple doublings, and in this I am indebted to the deft arguments of Eric Savoy's landmark article in the same vein. However, based on the pattern of re-reading established previously in the present work, I also correct what I think is a misreading of Alice Staverton by Savoy. In essence, where Savoy sees in Staverton an "agent of compulsory heterosexuality" and a lure for an unfinished "marriage and middle-class domesticity" (14) still perhaps achievable, I contend that James ironizes the characters' relationship and thereby creates a male character who is more Catherine Morland (in her simultaneously failed and successful heroinism) than not. Rather than accepting Savoy's

⁸² Sedgwick, as the reigning example of such growth, takes seriously the idea that formalist, rhetorical analysis can make legible a certain queerness in Jamesian mastery of language. Her trajectory through his Prefaces, his autobiographical materials, and his fiction has not been created in a vacuum, though. See Shoshana Felman's famous "Turning the Screw of Interpretation" on *The Turn of the Screw*, its reception, and its structures for a thorough account of psychoanalytical errors to that point and a ground-preparing reading for newer interpretations of James.

assessment of Alice as a sign of James' "gynophobia" (15) or (citing Louis Gross) a vampire figure, however feasible both are, she might also be read as a Jamesian attempt to make major the nomadic minor of Brydon's imaginative transivities.

The matter of "The Jolly Corner" involves protagonist Spencer Brydon's return from Europe to his childhood home after an absence of thirty-three years. Having left at twenty-three, Brydon finds a very different New York and reflects on what might have been his life. His main interlocutor is Alice Staverton, who appears to know him better than he knows himself, while his main antagonist is a ghost, real or imagined, who seems involved in a psychic battle over interior space (of Brydon's ego, of Brydon's former home). The only other character is the maid, Mrs. Muldoon, who forms an interesting and unacknowledged double with Staverton by the end. There is no doubt that, with its themes of confinement, doubling, interiority, veils, passageways, and paranoia, the story partakes of the gothic for its motive force.

James himself, in retrospect, saw the tale as a table-turning narrative... an adventure tale, but an adventure tale within the self:

The most intimate idea of *that* is that my hero's adventure there takes the form so to speak of his turning the tables, as I think I called it, on a 'ghost' or whatever, a visiting or haunting apparition otherwise qualified to appal *him*; and thereby winning a sort of victory by the appearance, and the evidence, that this personage or presence was most overwhelmingly affected by him than he by *it*. (James, *The Complete Notebooks*, 507; qtd. in Wegelin, ed. *Tales of Henry James*, 368; emphases in original).

Like Catherine Morland, Spencer Brydon is an unlikely gothic protagonist, in spite of

James's assertions of victory over a mysterious Other. At the same time, James's absolute control over gothic material by way of language and narrative mastery mirrors Jane Austen's a hundred years prior. Brydon is as defined as Catherine by what he is not – in this case, what he might have become had he stayed – unlike Catherine, who is hopeful about what might occur. Although both are expressing possibility differently (Brydon in the nostalgic and conditional rearward glance, Morland in the anticipatory), gothic structures of self-definition are equally in play. They are chiasmic between the texts; Catherine's domesticity she hopes will be exchanged soon for wild terrors (and in this she is of course mostly disappointed), whereas Spencer's wild terrors might have been made more domestic had he remained in New York. Yet the prospect of so doing becomes itself the wild terror he continues to chase, while he is the wild terror the being he chases is seeking to evade.

The grammatical formation used by James to express this most complicated relationship to time and self is pertinent to the rhetoric of non-sequential identity⁸³ proposed earlier (in relation to Stenbock). Savoy identifies the interplay between the pluperfect and conditional past as the grammatical expression of the story's theme, and the tropes of preterition and prosopopoeia as their rhetoric. His focus on tropism is one queer way out of the typical readings of the tale up to the point he considers it, readings that wish to make of it an American and heterosexual reclaiming of a dissipated (homosexual) bachelor (1). Savoy's intriguing approach to the mutual involvement of

⁸³ This may, too, be a logic of temporality that has as much to do with the writer's modernism as with the narrative's gender and sexuality significations. For a powerful reading of the haunting as a particularly capitalist / value-related trope in its historical context and the Jamesian prose as part of the genesis of modernism in literary history, see Geoffrey Gilbert's "The origins of modernism in the haunted properties of literature."

author and work – he calls it a kind of “lamination” of the one on the other (3) – resists coherence in a monolithic gay identity by permitting queer delaminations in rhetorical “turns” (5).

Where Sedgwick situates “Beast in the Jungle” in similar ways using rhetorical tropes, “The Jolly Corner” functions differently than the earlier tale. In general, Eve Sedgwick’s compelling reading of the male paranoid gothic across several texts follows her insight about male homosocial desire being triangulated between men through women. In the case of the “The Beast in the Jungle,” John Marcher relays his attraction to and fear of a fantasized other through May Bartram. Figuring his fate as a stalking beast, Marcher spends a lifetime waiting for, as it turns out, nothing. May Bartram identifies this emptiness early on and nevertheless accompanies him on the endless journey. Applying the same logic to the “The Jolly Corner,” we see Spencer Brydon relaying hope, desire, fear, loathing for an unknown male Other – who is a version of himself -- through Alice Staverton. She knows him before he knows himself. Realizing that desire for her and for the doppelganger are equally impossible, the hero never reaches any goal other than shocked fainting followed by mild ennui. This reaction reflects a Freudian sense of narcissistic attachment (which ends up being directed toward the self as an object⁸⁴); instead, a consideration of “The Jolly Corner” to be an activation of a Jamesian

⁸⁴ For a fascinating reading of Freud’s account of narcissistic desire as actually anaclitic, or opposing (like heterosexual object choice), Havelock Ellis’ disagreement, and the possibility that auto-eroticism could be something *other* than love directed toward a

desiring machine – both James the man with a family that believed in a spirit world and James the author whose control of narrative and language is despotic and arborescent – that helps us to find the gothic rhizomes in play to deconstruct the totalitarian, monolithic representation of self (a self that is conclusively either heterosexual or homosexual).

Arguing for the flexibility of the “queer” in queer theory and in James, Eric Haralson suggests that it is far more than the equivalent of “homosexuality;” the “queerness of [several authors’] texts always opens on to a larger field of difference(s)” (in this case ethnicity, embodiment, or just plain not fitting in) (3). If it is possible to think of James’s “valorizing the character of the disaffiliated aesthete” (ibid) as a kind of queering of heroism, the gothic as rhizome begins to emerge.

The rhetorical mastery James demonstrates throughout his oeuvre, particularized in “The Jolly Corner” for my purposes because of its ghostly and gothic content, places him in the major role to Stenbock's minor. Analogous to the last chapter's contrast between Dacre and Austen, the point of this juxtaposition is (like that one) to destabilize the major. In the context of major and minor, Henry James permits, courts, allows in the minor fully confident that he can control it. There is a sense in which he is dragging the major; his performance of majoritarian rhetorical virtuosity is belied on some level by his

current or former or hoped-for self, namely self-propelling love, see Gregory Bredbeck, “Narcissus in the Wilde: textual cathexis and the historical origins of queer Camp,” especially pages 58-64.

reliance on an intermediary (the attendant anxiety explored by Hilary Grimes, below). And the oblique references to the Continent, Spencer Brydon's space of shameful difference, surely activate what is minor in James's own identity formations as adduced through his letters and his own circumlocutions regarding such notorious figures as John Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde.

In his "Talking Horrors: James, Euphemism, and the Specter of Wilde," Neill Matheson connects perversion and secretiveness in *The Turn of the Screw*, Henry James's letters, and Oscar Wilde's figures of speech to the emergent homosexual identity in law and aesthetics in the 1890s. Wilde's "linguistic playfulness and obliquity came to be coded as evasiveness and seen as the very sign of concealed transgression" and, at the same time, "gave rise to a great proliferation of euphemism, circumlocutions, and significant ellipses used to signify what could not be named directly" (712). Although Matheson makes perhaps more of the Jamesian catachresis as a mode of encoding queer performatives (some of the conclusions Matheson draws seem much more contemporary to our understanding of identities than to those available in the 1890s), his claims about the James "Preface" to the tale and about his letters are more convincing.

Following Sedgwick's readings of the Prefaces, Matheson shows here how James employs figurative language as intensely and frequently as one might expect of the virtuoso. Matheson demonstrates the rhetoric that simultaneously conceals and advertises

itself with reference to James's use of metaphors of control, "freedom of hand" (720) and kneading subject matter until it is "thick" (720), and metaphors of floods bursting forth (721), all of which for Matheson suggest masturbatory fantasy. Comparing the narrative to its description in the Preface, he sees James performing the very content of the former in the latter. Such an interpretation hinges, clearly, on the likeliness of the double meaning of content accessible only vaguely, through "preterition" (723) -- such unspeakable or unnameable content is both dangerous articulation (vulgar talk) and dangerous sexuality (vulgar acts and desires) (724).

In his reading of "The Jolly Corner," Eric Savoy supports the fundamental thesis that figuration in James is a queering of subjects often understood to be heterosexually resolved; in doing so he refuses assertions of many critics who would have us see in Spencer Brydon's return to America and to Alice Staverton a heterosexual redemption⁸⁵. Certainly, the geography of crossing the Atlantic has its metaphorical power. Brydon scares the ghost, or presence, as much as he is scared by it; to the extent that the presence represents what he could have become had he stayed in America and done business, unbesmirched by the reputational downfall of Europe, his conquering of it and subsequent comfort in Alice's lap could mean a new sort of heteronormative contract, a

⁸⁵ While some mid-century critics have reflected in their readings the prevailing critical trends of their day, seeing phalluses and wombs in every figure, for example, others have insisted on a redemptive message about heterosexual love. See Rosenzweig, Rogers, and Vaid for examples up to the 1960s. A more recent version of this is found in the homosexual agency Hugh Stevens finds in "The Jolly Corner" partly through figures of phallicism and anality and partly, like Savoy, by using Alice Staverton as a figure of compulsory heterosexuality. Interestingly both Stevens and Savoy elide the second female (Mrs. Muldoon, the cleaning woman) supporting Brydon materially throughout the story and also when he regains consciousness after fainting.

saving of his heterosexual destiny. But keeping in mind Jagose's contestation of sexual sequence, the logic of primary heterosexuality needs to be unpacked. As Stenbock's "The Other Side" is a tale of crossings and re-crossings with an ambiguous centre, so is Jagose's queering of the binary divide between hetero and homo-territories. Stenbock's stories, in fact, help us to revise the monolithic identitarianism that subtends criticism of the James story. It need not be either heterosexual-redemptive or homo-expressive (the Sedgwick/Savoy axis of reading).

Alice Staverton is the protagonist's guarantor, psychologically. As he tells things to himself, so too does he tell things to her in almost ritualized locutions, as though to a confessor or in prayer.⁸⁶ When he keeps secrets from her, like the frequency of his visits to the Jolly Corner, and the details of his time in Europe -- shorthanded by scare quotes around the entire time and place, hence "Europe" (437, 440) -- she still seems to *know* what he's been doing. Partly this comes to her in dreams; the third dream of his former self is in fact what rescues his own self from possible psychosis in that she independently verifies (hence guarantor) the elements of the vision he's had that cause his swooning -- the "poor ruined sight" and "poor right hand" (485) -- though to be fair she doesn't name the reason for the latter being specifically two fingers missing. The other possibility is that she is pure invention on the part of the protagonist, confronted as he is with the novelty of New York modernity and the loss of the old ways (old ways that caused him to

⁸⁶ For example, "he repeatedly said to himself, and said also to Alice Staverton" (436) mimics the construction of a mass-like call-response (in Catholic parlance, for example, "Peace be with you" and its response "and also with you"). From the beginning, Brydon's sharing with Staverton at "every possible occasion" (435) seems a compulsive confessional mode of discourse. He needs her to hear his otherwise interior deliberations and imaginings, in an almost expiatory manner, to make them real.

leave in the first place, but which he expected still to obtain one suspects), for Alice is the only person left who can, without judgment, remember with him.

At the same time, she often chides him ironically and sarcastically and he takes these chidings at face value, inflating his sense of himself as capable in the face of things about which he has never learnt. His supposed knack both for business and construction is meant to be questioned in the narrative, as we are given clues that he hears from Alice principally what he wishes to hear, missing her tongue-in-cheek humouring of his desires to be powerful (440). In typical Jamesian understatement, the narrator refers to her speech as having "slightly more irony" than the protagonist ascribes to it. This is what is, I think, missed by Savoy. The preterition and prosopopoeia⁸⁷ he identifies (among other tropes) leave little space for the possibility that Brydon's self-assessment is unreliable. The third-person narrator highlights his naivete in the incident reported about Brydon's prowess in "standing up to" a builder. Where his confidence – even arrogance – leads him to recognize Alice's blushes and commentary as praise and straightforward worshipful enthusiasm, it is clear (to me at least) that the "slightly more irony" flagged by the narrator is litotic. In fact, Brydon imagines that she really means her hyperbolic affirmation of what might have been had he remained in New York: inventing the skyscraper and a new kind of "architectural hare" that would surely end at a goldmine (440-441). He reads it straight; she intends it as chiding. It is as though she, patient for decades for her returning hero, turns the tables on the story's potential heteronormative

⁸⁷ In his focus on prosopopeia, Savoy is on some level clearly paying homage to the groundbreaking essay on the story by Deborah Esch. Esch ends differently, though, in that she shows that for the reader and for the characters, the interplay between the possibility and impossibility of reading as such is what is at stake (602-603).

promise and becomes the Henry Tilney to Spencer Brydon's hopeful (if belated) Catherine Morland.

Significant moments in their communication besides misattributions of this ilk include aporia on both sides and internal versus external perception. Both Brydon and Staverton falter when attempting to speak of their own relationship. Neither can finish the sentence about one another and the situation in which they finally find themselves ... it is inexpressible (and ironic -- "it hasn't spoiled your speaking -- " 451). It is, in its incoherence and inachievability, rather than a kind of preterition suggested by Savoy, a kind of domestic sublime.

James maintains in his fiction tight control over diction, syntax and rhetoric, techniques we could associate with major literature⁸⁸. "The Jolly Corner" is no exception. For example, the surfeit of words beginning with "g" along with the dashes and exclamation marks that turn out to be merely elliptical and preteritive slow down the narrative, rendering it the more gothic. The surface set pieces of the gothic (recesses, cabinets, and so on) are treated by James as part of a gothic interiority. Dialect, generally only belonging to the housekeeper, signals a kind of class slippage that disqualifies her from acknowledgement as one of the two women able to revive Spencer Brydon on the floor (or be there when he does revive). Each of these elements contributes to the viral undoing of the self: control remains in the hand of James, but the story opens out from the oppositions that have structured it.

⁸⁸ Even constitutive, in fact, of major literature's majority status; the New Critical orientation toward textual explication in poetry requires this level of mastery on the part of authors, for example. That canon formation favours technique in the designation of major authors – a sense of major related to but not the same as what we are deriving here – is not surprising.

Having said that, however, I am using James and “The Jolly Corner” to make meaning of a different cultural narrative than that to which his works are normally put. Thus the queering may not in this case be the apparently obvious queering of the sort perhaps too insistently argued by Matheson *vis-à-vis* *The Turn of the Screw*; instead, it connects to the gothic in its minor mode rather than its major mode (to which the story would normally belong).

As a text, then, embodying a mastery of both language and identity, “The Jolly Corner” acts as the majoritarian example in this chapter. Yet its workings of identity through haunting and its status as (arguably) a minor work within the canonical author’s oeuvre throws into relief the relationships I propose between major and minor. Crossing the Atlantic is a figure in the story as well as a figure in this section of my own argument, in the sense that James marks the straddling of old world and new world territories, acting as a hinge (articulation point) between the English gothic of several of my authors and the American gothic of the later era (Chapter 4, below). By revisiting the tale with becomings-other, nomadism, and the gothic(izing) rhizome in mind, however, we see a narrative doubling between Alice Staverton and Henry Tilney, Spencer Brydon and Catherine Moreland.

Add to this doubling the doubling of authorial voice: James by this point had begun to write by dictating. In *The Late Victorian Gothic*, Hilary Grimes traces his particular obsession with language once it is complicated first by typewriters, then by oral

transcription (24-28). The thirdness of the transcriber – a kind of spirit medium channeling his creative efforts -- always risks infecting (through interpretation or addition) his own rendering. This makes of him a subject at a remove from the writing subject assumed when we connect author to text. His ghost is as Brydon's ghost; his interlocutor is as to Brydon's. That is to say, the chance of unintended meanings makes of the actual author a ghost, slipping away just as he is glimpsed. And the need to continue to tell, to intend a meaning, involves the transcriber in a Staverton-like role. It is as though the impossibility of writing masterfully in gothic, the impossibility of not writing, and the impossibility of writing otherwise (to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka*) come to a crisis of Brydon-like anxiety in James's later practice. The rhetorical complexity of the tale is matched, then, by the gothic tropism of autobiography, connecting yet again rhizomatically – and as minor literature -- through literary history.

Where James has his narrator share with Alice absolute mastery over the known (about which Brydon and the reader only glimpse partially), we find epistemological gender transitivity rather than gynophobia. Henry James becomes the Alice Staverton (who is also, on some level, Henry Tilney) to Spencer Brydon's nomadic inachievement of heroism. Both like and unlike the Catherine Moreland he might be in this relation, Brydon remains more or less deluded about his agency in the matter of the past, present, and future. The alternating current between control (Alice's patient mastery and

Spencer's obsessive attempts at it) and loss of control (fainting) is also reflected in the diction, syntax, and thematics gothicized in James' prose in this tale.

James, whose circumlocutions, extended sentences, and complex grammatical constructions are well-established as his particular virtuosity, is in the latter part of his career (as Grimes notes) increasingly reliant on an intermediary. The shared set of possibilities inherent in such a relationship mirrors Brydon's reliance on Staverton for meaning-making. What makes the major prose more minor, paradoxically, is its controlled gothicization, which slips out from under Jamesian mastery as a loss of confidence in life (because of dictation, according to Grimes, as cited above) and in prose (Brydon at last faints and requires nurturing by not one, but two women).

Chapter 4

Queering goth, gothicizing queer: two contemporary authors

As a gothic trope, the contemporary figure of the vampire necessarily responds to literary historical conventions and to popular culture iterations across the arts, including twentieth-century forms like film and comics. In responding to gothic literature, the tendency to collapse the gap between author and text, present since the earliest days of the genre, is perhaps most resurgent in the the massification of goth subculture, roughly from the late 1970s to the present day. Describing (the existence of) and also prescribing (giving templates for further engagement) certain kinds of affect, fashion, music, and sexualities, Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* and Poppy Z. Brite's novels, stories, and biographical nonfiction demonstrate two quite different approaches to the same phenomenon. Where Rice (arguably) partakes of a major tradition of aesthetic and colonial homosociality, Brite uses transgressive bodies and sex to make minor both gothic textuality and goth identities. Rice's trajectory suits well a narrative of liberal relativism, whereas Brite invokes transitivity in a more radical sense, though perhaps not as consciously connected to the history of literary and philosophical transgression one finds in, for example, the Marquis de Sade, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, or Kathy Acker. Brite, in the end, forms (and performs) a minor variation on the gothic that

connects his work to the other minor gothic writers in literary history treated in this dissertation – Count Eric Stenbock and Charlotte Dacre.

Before proceeding, however, it is worth pausing over the changing definitions of major and minor represented in this contemporary chapter. Clearly, major here no longer signifies the tightly-controlled discourse of mastery in which an Austen and a James work. Nor is it clearly an argument about canonicity. There are three distinctions, though, that do hold for the nomination of Anne Rice to a major category in relation to Brite's minor. First, Rice's concerns thematically are major. Large questions of eschatological, ontological, and fundamental humanism animate *The Vampire Chronicles* (and other Ricean historical novels). Rice's scale is global, and her concerns include first principles. Second, Rice's mass audience as a bestselling author in popular presses is exponentially greater than Brite's⁸⁹. Both, I suggest, are positionable in the manner discussed so far – as gothicized and gothicizing – but Brite's extreme examples of embodied and sexualized violence tend more toward the minoritarian deconstruction of polarities while at the same time making it less possible for the work to be “major” even in a popular, mass market sense. Brite represents the most popular author of a minor imprint⁹⁰, and Brite's website biography explaining the difficulties publishing *Exquisite Corpse* (in spite of its status as

⁸⁹ Sales figures are notoriously inaccurate to trace, but even a cursory look at Amazon.com ratings show a tenfold difference.

⁹⁰ For a cogent analysis of the decline of horror imprints, including *Abyss*, see Hantke.

the third book in a three-book contract) is revelatory: Rice does not face this kind of publisher trouble. Third and finally, Brite however briefly belonged to the goth subculture that is the subject (and subjectivating operation) of the minoritarian revisiting of texts in the present and previous chapters. Rice eschews what Brite fully inhabited. On the level of textualized identity, both have their gothicizations, but the subcultural status of Brite is of a different order than the negotiations of identity in major markets (with some subcultural cachet) by Rice.

Through the textual traces of music and music-inflected identities (in this case, goth), I will explore the elision of the gap between author and novel so typical of gothic reception since its beginnings in the 1760s and its flourishing in the 1790s.⁹¹ Secondly, through a focus on the musical, fashion, and geographic trappings of identity and a focus on skin and other bodily surfaces and the displacement (or deterritorialization) of sexual fluids onto blood, sometimes with organs radically excised or refigured, I hope to show that contemporary gothic narratives – both recuperative heteronormative and dissident non-heteronormative -- can reaffirm a postmodern gothic reading practice that crosses gothic literary history.

With these tactics in mind, the first part of the chapter explores the affect and

⁹¹ Chapter 2 explored this elision in more detail in relation to Charlotte Dacre and Percy Shelley, as it forms the basis for much of the dissertation's work on the proliferation of goth-identified subjectivities.

identity work done in Rice and Brite's vampire novels by goth musical styles, fashions, and spaces. This links back to the nineteenth-century gothic through Count Stenbock, but is treated in this chapter strictly as it pertains to late twentieth-century recapitulations, or refrains, of goth-identified subjectivity in texts and contexts. The place of goth in Rice's and Brite's own autobiographical statements, and in Brite's biography of alternative rock icon Courtney Love, will help to address the tendency to connect gothic author to gothic works. Using the idea of goth/ic gender and sexuality codes both fictional and nonfictional, the second part of the chapter reads Anne Rice's vampire protagonist, Lestat, and Poppy Brite's violently sexual gothic fiction as dephallicized dissidence,⁹² though with varying effects.

Identity politics, political identities

Those who write and represent for themselves an identity that could be called "gothic" or "goth" foreground the performative in gendered embodiment. It is through the figure of the goth that Poppy Brite's narratives plug themselves into a cultural desiring machine, and it is by looking backward from late twentieth-century goths at historical figures like Count Stenbock and Charlotte Dacre that the dissertation grounds

⁹² Dissidence in this case refers to the "sexual dissidence" identified in Chapter 3 as a line running through some gothic writing and writers. I use it in Jonathan Dollimore's broad sense applied to "literatures, histories, and subcultures" as "one kind of resistance, operating in terms of gender, [that] repeatedly unsettles the very opposition between the dominant and the subordinate" (21).

its claims about rhizomic subjectivity and textuality. Goths exercise a style of reading and writing self and other, taking in forms of socio-cultural Otherness (anxiety, monstrosity, abjection, darkness, blasphemy and the like), deliberately recasting them with a critical, playful, or ironic difference. Part of a reflexive construction of selfhood and textuality that may or may not be symptomatic of a deeper alienation or affect, a goth self draws attention to itself by way of makeup, hairstyle, clothing, and ornament. The ornamentation of goth is directly associated with, or comes from, a mixture of Decadent, Romantic, and Gothic iconicities and themes. The point of this chapter is to demonstrate that this hybridity, this mixing, whether it happens in 1981, 1891, or 1805, is not rooted in any one cause but works rhizomatically. The rhizome permits a nonlinear, discontinuous path over, under, around and through literary influence and filiation, a kind of “folding” of time’s fabric⁹³. Just as historical continuity is a kind of dominant fiction (Silverman) or discursive hegemony (Foucault), a logic of sequence⁹⁴ and causal continuity is inadequate to the task of accounting for gothic resurgences over time or uses of the gothic to which it would not have been put in previous eras. These could be thought in genealogical terms as particular moments of emergence, which is not

⁹³ In this I am guided by a recent, unpublished paper about the grammatical logic of transgender time in the constitution and maintenance of identity, and its application in areas other than contemporary trans identity. Julian Carter’s sense of folded time reflects a deconstruction of chronological territory not unlike Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome applied to history.

⁹⁴ For a cogent argument about sequence and the constitution of lesbian sexuality, see Annemarie Jagose, *Inconsequence*, of which a fuller discussion appears above, Chapter 3.

incompatible with the present attempt to reconsider arborified continuities through the play of surfaces that is goth style.

While sociological or cultural studies approaches to subculture abound in the latter decades of the twentieth century, including work on punk as style and politics by Dick Hebdige, Jon Savage, Dave Laing, and Greil Marcus for example, little serious criticism has been written specifically on the playful tropism of goth punk. Analysis by Catherine Spooner (2004) situates 1990s goth fashion in a longer cultural and literary history of gothic fashion, while Paul Hodkinson's *Goth* (2002) is more empirically sociological and ethnographic than literary-critical and philosophically aesthetic. A variety of essays in Goodlad and Bibby's edited collection *Goth: Undead Subculture* (2007) explore sex, gender and sexuality in goth selves and gothic aesthetics, demonstrating that as a self-reflexive and intentional production through musical, visual, plastic and literary arts, goth actively embodies the ornament that once formed the basis for dismissals of eighteenth-century Gothic novels. Taken together, such new interpretations suggest that to dismiss goth, peacock punk, dark wave, or doom rock as so much ornament, as surface over depth, as style over content, is to make the same mistake in the sphere of cultural textuality (and sexuality) as was made in the sphere of literary

criticism of the Gothic until the twentieth century⁹⁵. Indeed, we might say that it took postmodernism's challenge to the privileging of center, unity, coherence, and depth to change the ways we look both at literature and at lives.

Goth's importance, then, lies in its rendering-visible the mechanics by which selves are performative. To dismiss goth style because it is obsessed with surface and (conventional) anti-conventions is to dismiss gothic writing's similar obsessions; both would be doing a disservice to the capacity of either to foreground the performativity of gender and sexuality.

Anne Rice's Lestat, for example, came to signify for some goths the brat, prodigal vampire son of the necessarily campy Lugosi Dracula of a prior generation (always already spoofed intertextually after such cultural objects as television's *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*, even *Sesame Street*'s The Count). Lestat's dandified excess (tonal and sartorial), wedded to his androgynous figure and bisexuality⁹⁶, helped him to emblemize a generation of goths' longing through the 1980s (and prior to goths, an

⁹⁵ Generally the latter third of the twentieth century, although it could be said that with Birkhead in the 1920s, Summers in the 1930s, and Varma in the 1950s came the first serious looks at gothic as more than stage trappings.

⁹⁶ Initially I had put "ambiguous sexuality," but it is pretty unambiguous how attracted Lestat finds himself to most other vampire males and several vampire females. How this relates to his sexuality while still human, or whether indeed vampires must follow the same gender configurations as mortals, is a more open question. Taken somewhat under erasure, bisexuality is a direct and shorthand way to name his desires, at least for now. An alternative would be polymorphous perversity, yet I am reluctant to launch wholesale into an account of desire that relies too much on the Freudianism against which my main theorists rally so strongly. The bisexuality I name here is a commonsense, unreconstructed or deconstructed version.

affirmation of gay liberation in 1970s discourse, according to some fan accounts). Poppy Z. Brite's approach is, instead, to take the goth subjectivities thus constructed and relay them disenchantedly, excessively, or obsessively through his fictions and non-fictions. Brite has claimed not to have known anything about Rice or her work when he wrote *Lost Souls* (published in 1990, a decade and a half after Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*); nonetheless, the cultural discourses that produced goth find their way into Brite's self-narrations and horror narratives, which in turn themselves influence the subculture.

Part 1: Goth

Encountering and disavowing goth

Anne Rice remains iconic among horror fans; thanks to marketing that links her old erotica to the new *50 Shades of Grey* phenomenon, her pseudonymous (A.N. Rocquelaire) works are seeing the light of day again as well. Her name is synonymous with the neo-romantic vampire, the seductive, attractive vampire who is anything but monstrous. Although her *Interview with the Vampire* was first penned in the 1970s, its filmic adaptation and one of Rice's more thematically radical novels (*The Tale of the Body Thief*) are products of the 90s. Inevitably inviting comparisons to Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* because of its similar loving representation of New Orleans and its subject matter, Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* almost seems to be the minor, transgressive rebel

cousin. Like the peculiarly gothic mix of audience, writer, and work that is constituted by Rice's post-*Interview* oeuvre and by her public persona or marketing strategies, we can see in Brite's official statements in the 1990s a simultaneous history with goth and its repudiation.

Rice's oeuvre includes the *Vampire Chronicles*, the *Mayfair Chronicles* (about witches), other supernatural histories, historical fiction and erotica. *Interview with the Vampire* is a layered narrative in typically gothic fashion, with the tale of Lestat told by Louis to a young reporter, who then provides us with the text. *The Vampire Lestat* has Lestat taking up his own point of view with a first person narrative, and all the following contributions to the series use (sometimes as a framing device) a first person point of view. This is important mainly because, as noted in my Introduction, with the gothic there is such a tendency to identify authors with their works. In a sense, Rice's most notorious character, Lestat, symbolizes Rice's own narrative self-transcending⁹⁷. One small clarifying example in which Rice's gothicizing mode of self-presentation was taken a transitive step further occurred in an interview on Toronto's MuchMusic many years ago. Video jockey and local recording artist Sook Yin Lee, who is Chinese Canadian and presented clearly female in the rest of her appearances, sported a goatee and Lestat-

⁹⁷ And even idiosyncratic sorts of transgender identity, as Rice's own comments suggest as reported to biographer Katherine Ramsland. Louis, Lestat, Claudia, and Lestat's mother Gabrielle are all elements of the author's own male and female sides. See *Prism of the Night*, pages 148 on androgyny, 154 on Claudia as embodying Rice's failure of femininity, 245 on Lestat as her internal male, 269 on Louis as equivalent to her.

inspired clothes to interview the very (like Lestat) Caucasian Rice, who often shows up in gothically-inflected clothing herself (many of her media images portray her in high-necked Victorian brocade or lace paired with necklaces, resulting in a pronounced gothic style). Lee outgothed Rice in transgenering herself as Lestat, who himself could be taken to be a transgenering of Rice. Lee's challenge was also ethnic: one need not be a white European male to take on his traits, and goth is not the preserve of white, exceedingly white, masculinity. These doublings, in themselves rather gothic, are doublings with a postmodern difference. If anything, this interview foregrounded the flexibility with which audiences can take up a text and find lines of flight from major readings.

For Deleuze and Guattari, lines of flight, or *fuite* in French, name a kind of fugitive movement, an escape that presumes agency; however, at the same time, non-agential matter or forces like water or electricity can rush out, escape under the signifier "*fuite*" under the right conditions. In certain cases a "becoming-other" is effected by a subject, but it is not necessarily the case that the subject intends this to happen (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 277). Lee and Rice, in the event described above, each occupy a space or movement of becoming-other, and it is in Rice's vampire fiction (and in a goth punk's self-stylings) that this movement can be – in certain texts -- minoritarian and queer.

Now, however, Rice disavows some of her goth and queer history⁹⁸ while attempting to honour the longevity of this readership. The double move of acknowledgment and disavowal is made in an essay published online, some time after her conversion (back) to Catholicism. Although *Interview with the Vampire* did not become a bestseller until a paperback version was made into an event, complete with “a book tour, unique television commercials, radio spots, coffin-shaped book displays, plastic book bags, matchbooks, posters, and T-shirts” (Ramsland, 170), Rice suggests in her essay that it was a mistake to name her figures – meant to be transformative metaphors for the alienated and outcast “in all of us” -- vampires:

If I had to do it over again, I would not use the word ‘vampire’ in my novels. In 1976... there was no ‘vampire literature’ ...in America. There was no ‘Goth culture.’ ...As I look back on it, I have to say that the use of this word did indeed bring me popular attention, but ... at a dreadful price. (“Essay”).

She goes on then to explain to her Christian readership that her former and still-loyal readership is important. “The existence of my Goth audience continues to create misunderstanding. Yet I remain convinced that many of the young ‘Goth’ readers who write to me are hungering for transcendence” as they “gravitate to” and “‘identify’ with”

⁹⁸ Perhaps this distancing is what permits both George Haggerty and William Hughes to find a primarily conservative thrust to Rice’s vampirical rearrangements of family. Haggerty’s *Queer Gothic*, for example, traces Rice’s pro-family, finally, position and seems to hold her to blame while simultaneously positing the writer as societal/cultural mouthpiece, unable to escape historical/cultural bounds.

the heroes. She claims to “cherish their response” (“Essay”), while also keeping them at safe distance in scare quotes, as though goth is a phase through which they will pass if they take seriously the metaphysical themes in her work.

Poppy Z. Brite’s relationship to goth in his own biographical statements is not dissimilar in dynamic. The paperback novels and edited collections each show a pose and style that is distinctly both gothic and goth. For example, the photo from my edition of *Lost Souls* has a teased-hair Poppy glaring directly at the viewer but framed by older, possibly dried roses. *Wormwood* has Poppy gazing at us with more Cleopatra-like bangs, a silver necklace gesturing to slight décolletage framed by dark patterned dress and black sweater. *Love in Vein*’s photo is angled slightly with one hand near the shoulder with fingers curled, Dracula-like, sporting two heavy rings. On the official website, Brite’s own biography includes a similar picture of himself as a younger female “gothling” from 1988 as an example of this narrative trajectory.⁹⁹ It is not as clear then that the impression management at least is as goth-free after 1991 as narrative statements like the following suggest. As he puts it in the introduction to the edited collection of vampire erotica, *Love in Vein*,

I had never been especially fascinated with vampires before [Lost Souls]. I

⁹⁹ See midway down the page at <http://www.poppyzbrite.com/bio.html> for the image, captioned “Gothling-me standing in front of the desk where I wrote *Lost Souls*...” in which a remarkable resemblance to Robert Smith, lead singer of the goth-identified band The Cure, is portrayed.

chose to write about them because it was 1987 and I was interested in and involved with the Gothic subculture -- the beliefs distilled from dark music and darker emotion, the black lace and torn velvet, the affinity for graveyards, the bloodletting. That was what I wanted to write about, and vampires are an essential icon of that culture... . By the time the novel was published, my outlook had changed somewhat, mostly because the eighties were over and I was still alive. You can only maintain an intensely Gothic frame of mind for so long before either killing yourself or starting to feel like a bit of a poser, and neither alternative appealed to me. (VI - VII)

Again, goth has become a stage to pass through on the way to full adult development; although a clarifying footnote follows the statement, Brite's position seems not to change so much as acknowledge that many would find a more positive valence to goth identification. And, as we shall see both in Rice's fictional vampire universe and in Brite's fiction and nonfiction, it is particularly *goth* music, fashion, and spaces that underwrite many of the narrative possibilities for meaning. My contention is that this underwriting is part of the same dynamic of which Dacre, Austen, Shelley, and Stenbock partake – goth rewritings of gothic writing, or gothicization of self and text.

Riffing on the goth refrain: Music and Transformation in Rice and Brite

In her second vampire novel, *The Vampire Lestat*, Anne Rice has the titular protagonist awaken from a fifty-year sleep in which he has half-glimpsed, as if in a dream

but with increasing attentiveness and reflectivity, all the changes wrought by twentieth-century technologies. He had seen considerable change between his vampire “birth” in the late eighteenth century and his going underground in the 1920s, of course, but then noticed very little during his self-imposed slumber through the mid-twentieth. It is a useful trick because it allows Lestat to compare and contrast the early 1980s to other eras with which he is more familiar as he wakes from his semi-aware state and attempts to acclimate, and as he does, readers glimpse some of the overarching themes of the series (aesthetics as salvatory, music as transporting and transformational, the human family, spirituality within enlightenment rationality). One of the signal differences between *Interview with the Vampire* and *The Vampire Lestat* is the latter’s truly contemporary ethos, and one of the signature elements of that ethos is Lestat’s obsession with rock music. We’re never exactly certain what constitutes the more specific genre of the band he hears as he sleeps under his house, but we can guess that it is a kind of proto dark metal, gothic new wave based on the descriptions of the band members and the kinds of instruments they use. By the end of the novel, this is ultimately confirmed by accounts of the music videos, the lyrics playing on radio, and the climactic concert itself.

According to the glimpses he could glean while still buried, the band members of Satan’s Night Out were “slender, sinewy, . . . beguilingly androgynous and even a little savage in their dress and movements – two male and one female” (5). Later, when he meets them in their rehearsal space unannounced, they “were all lying about in their rainbow-colored silk shirts and skintight dungarees smoking hashish cigarettes and complaining about their rotten luck getting ‘gigs’ in the South (11). Clearly they were not a heartland rock outfit, nor fully metal, because metal would have played better in the

population of the South. “They looked like biblical angels, with their long clean shaggy hair and feline movements; their jewelry was Egyptian. Even to rehearse they painted their faces and their eyes” (11). Though the hair suggests metal, the dress and jewelry and makeup lean more toward a dark and harder postpunk new romantic look, perhaps more akin to The Birthday Party and The Damned than to Ozzy Osbourne or the clownish KISS. Importantly, the band’s “look” presages, rather than is concurrent with or after, Lestat’s carefully-crafted “second coming” style after he publishes his autobiography.

Lestat had described their music while still coming to consciousness, hearing “their whining electric guitars” in the attic of a neighbouring house with his preternatural senses. “It was as good as the radio and stereo songs I heard, and it was more melodic than most. There was a romance to it in spite of its pounding drums. The electric piano sounded like a harpsichord” (5). Furthermore, when he joins them and accompanies his singing with their keyboard, he describes the passionate abandon with which he retools “old melodies and lyrics” into “brutal rhythms” by “pounding the slick white keys” (12). We hear that the listeners become “jubilant” and “loved the eerie and disjointed music” (12). Like Lestat, Satan’s Night Out members become enchanted by the right sort of rock music, by the way (as Lestat describes it)

the singers could scream of good and evil, proclaim themselves angels or devils, and mortals would stand up and cheer. Sometimes they seemed the pure embodiment of madness. And yet it was technologically dazzling, the intricacy of their performance. It was barbaric and cerebral in a way that I don’t think the world of ages past had ever seen. (5)

At the same time that he recognizes its status as metaphor, the device Rice uses (a decades-long sleep by someone who came of age in the late 1700s) permits comparison and contrast, historically situating or at least specifying the context in which rock can be novel. As he puts it, “the players of the old Italian commedia had been as shocking, as inventive, as lewd” (6). What is new is the “extremes to which they took it, and the way they were embraced by the world from the very rich to the very poor” (6). And musically, technology permits the supernatural to enter the natural world, giving everyone an almost vampirical sense experience... “the way the electricity could stretch a single note forever; the way harmony could be layered upon harmony until you felt yourself dissolving in the sound. So eloquent of dread it was, this music. The world just didn’t have it in any form before” (6).

For Lestat, as for others who could afford it in the 1980s, technology also permitted music to become private and portable rather than only shared communally at an event; connection to others is still present and potent, but only rhizomatically rather than visibly en masse. That is to say, one feels connection to others who share the same musical taste but one doesn’t know where they may pop up, because they are privately enjoying their possessed consumer goods using headphones. One has to read the signs of their fashions, hair, makeup, and so on and interpret them correctly to know the subgenres they might be into. I say might because (and this makes a good deal of sense but isn’t necessarily expected) as Lestat roars around New Orleans on his Harley, he plays Bach on his Walkman (“Art of the Fugue” and then later the “Goldberg Variations”). This is significantly different than the Rolling Stones’ “Sympathy for the

Devil” that plays him out at the bridging end of the film version of *Interview with a Vampire*.

Although the term is never mentioned, then, there seems to be a strong possibility based on the instruments named, the musical styles described, and the fashion worn, that the rock to which Lestat refers is more goth-related than not. The 2002 adaptation of *Queen of the Damned* (which includes the concert elements of *The Vampire Lestat*) updates it generically as Nu Metal (a hybrid, alternative metal genre combining elements of hardcore, hip hop, funk, grunge, and industrial music); the extent to which this is part of a soundtrack tie-in to increase sales figures, or the particular availability of artists like Jonathan Davis of Korn is unknown, but I think likely a major factor. Anne Rice, in an essay published on her website, distances herself from goth as any kind of influence and contains it in a kind of general discourse of alienation, as explained above. Certainly, however, and whether acknowledged by Rice or not, there are affinities, filiations, and rhizomic connections between goth music, Industrial, Nu Metal, Darkwave and so on, and it is this end of the popular music spectrum in which Lestat and his audience are imaginable.

Five years after this novel, Poppy Z. Brite treats the function of and generic shape of the music accompanying *Lost Souls* in much the same way, also without naming goth as such, although certainly talking around its edges by naming bands like Bauhaus (86, 321), The Cure (189), and The Cocteau Twins (253), while connecting audiences to other audiences through clubs and descriptions of their “black-smudged” faces (86). Punk and goth, then, as well as the more general trajectories of “alt rock” or alternative, are inextricably connected to the post-1970s gothic and vampire narratives under

consideration here. Goth identifications, significantly, form part of Brite's nonfiction, both in his autobiographical material and his biography of Courtney Love.

A curious and unexpected longer work, the biography of Courtney Love, notorious former lead singer of the alternative band Hole¹⁰⁰, is both a gothic narrative and goth-infused. Functioning as a self-proclaimed corrective to rumors and scandalous biographies, Brite's treatment of the tortured singer's history is notable for the position goth holds in its rhetorical and causal logics. Goth in this tale is a cool way to look, an object of derision, and a mythifying guarantor of meaning in the history of Seattle grunge. The striking thing about the book is not only how goth functions in it, which I will outline presently, but how gothic the narrative itself is; in its deployment both of goth and of gothic tropes, the Courtney Love biography makes clear the mechanisms of a gothicising writing practice.

Courtney Love: The Official Story begins by describing Brite and Love's first meeting, the provenance of the biography. Brite sets it up, cleverly, as an almost supernatural event (note the capital letter on the last word): "Courtney Love calls me one night. I don't question how she got my unlisted number; people like her have Ways" (15). They spend the evening at Brite's living room and at a restaurant, during which Brite's mapping of Love's goth potential onto the narrative is clear: with a "black vintage dress,

¹⁰⁰ Also of course, the widow of ill-fated grunge icon Kurt Cobain and the subject of too many entertainment tabloid stories to mention.

black hose, strappy high-heeled asskicker shoes” she fills the room with “crackling energy” and relates that she “liked my novel *Lost Souls*;” (15) at the restaurant Love programs the jukebox with “Some gloomy old British stuff: Siouxsie, Echo and the Bunnymen.” (15-16) And in her purse she carries a “Poppy eyeshadow” to which Brite writes “There are no coincidences” (16). Having established both the gothic underpinnings of the meeting and the somewhat goth-inflected identity of the subject herself, Brite goes on to the biography proper.

The first instance of goth presence in the body of the text is a caption under a picture of Courtney Love staring defiantly at the camera as it interrupts a phone call she is making. It reads: “Gothed out at fifteen” (fig. 6 in original) To be “gothed out” is to be decked out in goth makeup and clothing, and with dark eyeliner, jet black hair and ruby lips, as well as possibly a powdered face. It is an accurate enough (if debatable -- she also looks a lot like non-goth pop musician Pat Benatar) description of this picture. The implication seems to be that goth affect and goth self-fashioning is one stop on Love’s path of disaffection and alienation, a path that leads directly to expressions of anger in alternative rock. Seeing goth as a stop along the way is supported by other statements of Brite’s as well, as we have seen. Here and elsewhere, Brite figures goth as something that alienated kids might go through but must get over and move on -- a double move of attraction and repudiation, for if one remains a goth as a grown up one is

not really grown up.

Two instances of goth in the Courtney Love biography that disturb the book's apparently pro-woman, recuperative stance explicit and implicit throughout the text fall on pages 200 and 208. Rumors abound on the internet and throughout the popular media that Courtney Love arranged for the murder of her husband, Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain. One of the most vitriolic attacks came from a woman making frequent use of internet chat sites, and Brite's description of "Sasha" reveals yet again the disdain with which Brite disavows goth as abject: a fat goth living in her parents' basement is a serious threat to Love's newfound creativity. Fat female goths are twice cast as the villains here.

In the first instance, Courtney Love's online activity around a purported affair with Trent Reznor, founder of the neo-industrial band Nine Inch Nails, draws internet newsgroup fire from "Sasha" and several of her aliases (199). Brite reports that America OnLine member "Sasha" was

a sad character. A fat goth in her mid-thirties, she lived with her parents in a dismal suburb of San Francisco. She bragged on-line about trips she was going to take to Prague, Rome, and Japan, but an arthritic condition in her legs and feet prevented her from walking long distances. She appeared to live completely through her Internet persona. (200)

This mix of traits is fascinating to the scholar of gothic literature: it would seem that the

antagonist here is a crippled, excessively large creature of questionable heritage and mysterious identity. Here the “fat goth” lends a gothic valence to the narrative in addition to standing for a kind of arrested development (recalling that Courtney got over her goth stage after returning from Teardrop Explodes singer Julian Cope’s English flat as a teenager).

The other instance of a mature, postgoth repudiation of immature goth subjectivity occurs at a concert in Amsterdam. When an audience member heckles Love, accusing her of killing husband Kurt Cobain, Love calls her a “fat ugly goth” (208). In this case, goth again holds the position of villainy and excess. The goth ideal is an impossibly thin, delicate beauty that smacks of consumptive, romantically decayed youth. Apparently to portray oneself as a goth and be fat is to transgress the ideal and become a figure for monstrosity in this narrative.

In contrast to the place goth -- at least fat and adult goth -- holds in Brite’s imaginary comes the paragraph-long parenthesis that, surprisingly, situates Kurt Cobain as a goth. According to Love, in spite of his very non-goth reputation as a decidedly alternative grunge pioneer, Cobain was... “a closet deathrocker... . Some of the art he bought is so goth it’s unbelievable. If you actually listen to Nirvana, some of it’s almost kind of like [goth progenitors] Bauhaus.” She goes on to expose his list of obscure alternative acts that was to appear in his biography as a lure for kids, a myth in itself,

adding that “you can’t even play his fuckin’ Bauhaus records anymore, they’re so scratched up (122).” The suggestion here is that in fact Cobain’s list of favourite records should have been honest, and to have been honest, it would have been goth. Brite’s inclusion of this paragraph, coming as it does in a brief narrativization of Cobain’s life, specifically between getting into “rock and then punk” and “drugs enter[ing] his life” (122), is revelatory. It occupies a place in the biography of an aside, but this seems not to be its function: set off in parentheses, it is a piece of information that does not fit the trajectory Brite is trying to trace, but it allows for a certain kind of mythifying of its own, and clearly both Brite and Love very much want to include it. The parentheses draw attention to, rather than away from, this bit of goth punk inheritance.

The “real life” scene narrated by Brite about the genesis of the Love biography constructs, then, a gothic mystery itself, complete with a mysterious phone call, a possible telepathic connection, and a late-night surprise visit that seems almost supernatural. The resulting text is a gothic and gothicizing biography. Both the initial meeting between the two and the book that emerged from it are oddly gothic and are demonstrations of precisely the kind of interoperability I am claiming occurs between pop culture, gothic narrative, and gothic writers’ and readers’ textualized subjectivity throughout the history of gothic writing.

Brite’s own fiction can be counted on to shock, to transgress, to do some of the

“old épater la bourgeoisie,” as Greil Marcus might put it.¹⁰¹ Brite’s early fiction is certainly postpunk rather than post-anything else, and it is perhaps for this reason that he found himself sitting across from Courtney Love, being asked to write the biography of the much-maligned singer. The curious thing about this meeting (relative to the present work) is the resulting gothic narrative and its positioning of goth punk. Brite has admitted to having been a goth but has also repudiated it (See *Love in Vein*). In the several years after *Lost Souls* was published, his cult status was more along lines of sex radical than goth goddess, although there are significant overlaps between goth iconography and sadomasochistic style, for example. And of course, significantly, Brite’s transition to Billy Martin cannot help but to revise yet again the complicated set of meanings of goth and embodiment in his fiction and in his life.¹⁰²

Courtney Love, on the other hand, has become more notorious and debased. Simultaneously loathed by some as a murderer and adored by others as a strong female voice in alternative rock, Love’s narrative has had (and continues to have) a gothic valence exploited by Brite. Activate the narrative machine by starting with an old

¹⁰¹ In *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*.

¹⁰² I do not wish to misuse Martin’s story here; it would seem opportunistic in the worst way to take advantage of body transitions to make a point about postmodern goth discourse. According to his website, chronic pain is as much a part of material identity for him as gender transitivity is. Having said that, anyone can read on the site that the rumoured transgressive sex parties and polyamorous relationships of the 1990s are confirmed in Martin’s own historical narrative, and form the backdrop of specific trajectories of body change / identity work.

manuscript recently found, containing absent or abusive fathers, weak mothers, confined heroines, attractive villains, and out comes a gothic plot accompanied by a rhizomatic chain of goth-inflected musical history. The following table sketches the relationships:

Gothic Tropes/ Conventions	Courtney Love Biography	Musical accompaniment as presented in the text
Found Manuscript	Surprise visit	Hole; Teenage Whore lyric
Frame Narrative	Restaurant visit, presenting facts	Jukebox with “Gloomy old British music” and REM
Ineffectual parents	Deadhead dad, naïve young Mom	Grateful Dead/Hippie
Attractive Villain	Julian Cope	Teardrop Explodes, Gothic New Wave, New Romantic
Confinement of Heroine	Cope’s London Flat	New Romantic, U.S. alt rock, Punk, goth
Doomed love	Doomed love (Cobain)	Punk, Grunge, disavowed Goth
Mysterious death	Who killed Cobain?	Grunge

Figure 1: Relations between gothic conventions, biographical details, and musical styles

The narrative, then, is replete with gothic-Romantic conventions: an individual alone in a meaningless, cruel world cultivates transgression as heroism and privileges youthful death as the site of beautiful tragedy. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, it would seem that Brite has become a writing machine plugged into Love’s story, causing it to trace its line of flight from pop culture boundaries into a goth refrain, a gothic milieu.

The movement of gothic writing (which, recalling Chapter 1, is also the performance of a reading) can be at once conservative and liberatory, major and minor,

personal and political; it can in fact highlight the difficulties in making workable any binary oppositions that attempt to contain them. One of the dualisms problematized in contemporary gothic, and problematized in such a way as to recast the entire history of gothic writing, is that of text vs. audience. When the readers of these texts become icons and figures in the texts themselves, their own textuality in the apparently unmediated real world is foregrounded. A becoming-goth is effected, and it figures in much the same way as did the identity and textuality becomings between Charlotte Dacre, Percy Shelley, and Eric Stenbock in Chapters 2 and 3.

Goth milieus: placing identification at concerts, clubs (and earphones)

Goth is a politics and a style of the local, connected to other local instances of itself via fashion, music, and visual cues of disaffection. In some ways, it functions like the difference between recognition and attribution in Sedgwick's formulation about camp versus kitsch (*Epistemology of the Closet*, 156). The image of the lonely young gay boy in a rural environment who recognizes in a certain style or object an affinity-subject, someone like himself, and thereby connects with a community even absent the actual people, is a lot like the movement of goth recognition. This in fact is how Brite's characters recognize like identities – oppositions between human-vampire, social classes, and to some extent genders are less salient in his rural, Southern gothic setting than the

affirmation of likeness between goths both in Missing Mile, North Carolina and in New Orleans¹⁰³.

In Rice's fictional vampire universe such geographical and historical settings play out rather differently than in Brite's, but both engage the local *and* transglobal nature of goth spaces. For later twentieth-century vampires in Rice's *The Queen of the Damned*, urban centres around the developed world have clubs named after literary vampires; actual vampires and the mortal hangers-on or wannabes know that these are the safe places to be. For the vampires, there is a code understood about not killing in the clubs. They have a room in the back of each one where they congregate, unknown to the mortals, who dress in goth attire and dance to related music. Although Rice (as we have seen, above) disavows goths (and vampires) on some level, it is clear to anyone who visited similar clubs in the 1980s and 1990s that there is a type of clientele and a type of club common around the world in real life too¹⁰⁴.

In comparison, Brite's clubs function as a safe zone for alienated and troubled young people, often underage, and they might appear in rural or urban zones. In either case they have the same cast of characters – a sympathetic bartender who probably serves

¹⁰³ Jason K. Friedman, in “ ‘Ah am witness to its authenticity’: Gothic Style in Postmodern Southern Writing” makes a compelling case for a reading of Rice, Brite, and Nick Cave's fictions in the context of southern gothic writing, calling it goth writing that literalizes what in southern fiction is normally metaphorized.

¹⁰⁴ For a description of “Dracula's Daughter” in San Francisco, one such fictional club, see *The Queen of the Damned*, 14-17 and Marius' amused reaction to the décor's recapitulation of vampire norms.

minors, a band playing gothy music that manages to entrance even the disaffected audience, and kohl-smudged children who range in affect from boredom to arch-gay sarcasm to self- and world-loathing.

The Sacred Yew, or the Yew for short, is home to all the troubled teens, creatures of the night in Missing Mile, the setting for much of *Lost Souls*. Christian, the older vampire who witnesses the prologue's impregnation of Jessy by Zillah (leading to the birth of protagonist Nothing) recognizes it for its similarity to other places he's bartended, knowing that he'll be able to work here for a while: "Gradually and gratefully he came to realize that this was no redneck bar. He saw children in black, which he had not expected in a small southern town..." (128).

Freshly arrived from Missing Mile, the other protagonist Ghost finds that the nightclub Pasko's in New Orleans strikes him as more familiar than he would have anticipated:

As soon as they entered the club, Ghost was struck by the likeness of this place to the Sacred Yew back home in Missing Mile. It surprised him. The Yew was only a little hole-in-the-wall, more progressive than most of its kind. But this was a nightclub in the big city, in the heart of the French Quarter. Ghost had vaguely expected more glitter, more jazz. Revellers in spangled cat's-eye masks, maybe, shaking confetti from their hair. But here were only the same sorts of kids that haunted the Sacred Yew. More of them, sure, but with the same dark-rimmed eyes, the studded ears, the pale jewelled throats. (321).

Although there were also differences ("Pasko's served mixed drinks, ... and they had a decent PA..." 319), the suggestion here is that the Yew is of a breed, a kind of portal for a

rhizomic connection between goths. Affinity and recognition are achieved semiotically as Nothing gazes around at the kids in the Sacred Yew, after his arrival with Zillah, Twig and Molochai in search of Christian: “They were all so beautiful. He loved their choppy hairstyles, their costume jewelry, their ragged black or multicoloured clothes. He loved the way they all somehow looked like *him*, and he wished he could make friends with every one of them” (208). Surveying the same scene slightly earlier in the night, Ghost observes that they “were so young, and they wore their thrift-shop jewelry, their ragged jeans, and their black clothes like badges of membership to some arcane club... that required love of obscure bands...” (193).

Goth and goth-related music, style, and space function as a kind of recognition between characters (and readers) in both Rice and Brite’s narratives. As such, they are part of a structuring refrain: as Deleuze and Guattari put it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, a recapitulation like this creates a milieu, organizes it, and then causes (when the conditions are right) a kind of drift or deterritorialization to another milieu. For goth writers and readers, goth identification is possible because the writers themselves read gothic and goth structures, and create new lines of “gothicity” that cut across texts, genres, generations, and bodies. So, the coded milieu of the gothic is, as we have seen, the nightclub, but also wherever the rhythm is: Ann on the bus on the way to New Orleans, Zillah's van as it blares Bauhaus driving past neighbourhoods, the Sacred Yew and Pasko's, Lestat on his motorbike or in his sports car. The next section considers the role of embodiment in creating a similar milieu through its own organizing principles, especially through the concept of a “Body without Organs,” racialization, and becoming-other.

Part 2: Otherness and Embodiment

Becoming-human, becoming-male: *The Tale of the Body Thief* and Race

Critics Daniel Pick and Judith Halberstam have each established separately that the *Dracula* moment in vampire fiction draws on a criminal, racialized, sexualized “type” emerging in late-nineteenth-century European discourses of degeneration. Pick notes Stoker’s reference to Lombroso, author of *Criminal Man* (110); Halberstam notes a strong connection between degeneration, Jewish identity, and physiognomy in the novel (*Skin Shows*, 93). Whereas in Stoker’s work, Count Dracula is a kind of Baudelairean “flâneur” of global proportions whose travels bring with them the risk of infection, Anne Rice’s response in an era of acquisitiveness and liberal desire is to create Lestat, whose travels form part of a general erasure of cultural and racial specificity while relying precisely on these to ground the eroticism for which she is known. For example, while Lestat’s favorite urban spaces are ethnically diverse melting pots, it is his blue-eyed, blond whiteness that guarantees his attractiveness, and it is formerly older white David Talbot’s new, young, darker body that functions as raw, animal desire stamped by his cultural coinage (British, upper class, rational). As a potential critique of dominant masculinities and heteronormativity, *The Tale of the Body Thief* is perhaps the most effective of the vampire chronicles. There is, however, a sense in which it seeks to have it both ways with race and ethnicity. Where gender and sexual difference is deterritorialized in and by vampire embodiment, difference reterritorializes onto race through desire.

That Anne Rice’s vampire universe has shaped a genre whose filiation descends from Byronic poses and Baudelairean flâneurism is clear enough; this chapter does not seek to take account of her entire oeuvre so much as it seeks to explore what happens to

the vampire mythos when the hero of her chronicles and his human friend are each given the opportunity to move into new bodies. For Lestat, the move into a human body is a way for us to question the stability of the (racially unmarked) category male (masculinity and the male body are made strange by Lestat and especially by his experience in a different body). For David Talbot, leader of the occult-studying Talamasca society, the move from an old body to a young body (and subsequent transformation into a vampire body) is wrapped up in a discourse on race, ethnicity, and gay male desire. What often seems to be a study of gender and sexuality (*The Vampire Chronicles* in general) finally confronts its tendency to erase race when Talbot is granted an opportunity to re-embodiment.

Lestat's "Savage Garden" is the godless yet Gnostic world in which he finds meaning. It is figured as undifferentiated id, desire, body, strength as opposed to cultured cerebral intelligence, wit, charm. This problem is worked out on the level of the body and the supernatural thievery of the body. A particularly eighteenth-century opposition between the rational and the natural is to be expected in any of the chronicles narrated by Lestat. His own working through the racist and sexist material is meant to be forgivable, or at least anticipated, by readers who are familiar with his contradictory, impulsive search for intensities. In following the trajectory of David Talbot's particularly English desire, however, one finds a colonization at work that becomes complete only when he has attained the marriage of the cerebral and the darkly embodied. This trajectory is the one that is most troubling in Rice's novel, in part because the homosexual desire endorsed by the text is endorsed exactly at the expense of ethnic and racialized tropes, metaphorized in the vampire figure of difference but literally a granting of British cultural plenitude to an empty, Indian object of desire.

The vampire-human binary in Rice's chronicles, though apparently the result of spirit-human commingling causing radical species difference, is structured like a racial split. To be made into a vampire is to share in an essence, a shared material difference that is not something humans can come close to understanding. Not only is this difference given what is essentially a genetic explanation (*The Queen of the Damned* 403-04), but the exchange of human and vampire blood in the granting of the "Dark Gift" makes human skin tone differences disappear, replaced by an infinitely lightening pallor, a whiteness that must be somehow veiled or cosmetically covered in order to "pass" in the world of humans. In the process of erasing what we might call lived or experienced racial differences, however, Rice relies on embodiments of ethnicity and racial specificity in her management of gay male desire (a major factor in her popularity). The complexity of the relationships that shift and multiply between gender, desire, race, sexuality and otherness is figured most promisingly in Lestat's re-entry into the embodied human species via body switching.

In the case of Lestat's body-switching, Rice represents what a "becoming-man" would look like from the perspective of a male vampire, who had previously become-other (from the position of man to the "line of flight" of the vampire). In so doing, one wonders whether a line of flight has been produced or simply an introduction of deviance into the program of sameness that is white male masculinity¹⁰⁵. By virtue of the vampire's inversion of gendered norms – that is, a focus away from the generative organicity of sex

¹⁰⁵ The need to become-female as a woman is different, for Deleuze and Guattari, from the need to become-male for a man. However, both movements could be said to form part of their deconstructive approach to sex and gender.

and on the becoming-surface of the skin and the becoming-molecular of the blood -- it is possible to read the figure of the white, straight male *vampire* queerly.

One of the main reasons that queer works well as a term in sexuality and gender studies is that it flags an indeterminacy not possible in identifiers like gay or bisexual. As such, it contributes a critique of identity. Lestat bends gender. It is not so much that his effete but robust masculinity is without precedent in dandified figures of eras past; rather, his bending of gender is linked to his embodiment as a vampire-become, a formerly human being whose current ontology is marked by heightened senses, an impermeable skin (the play of surfaces in the constitution of the vampire body is key here), and a marked redundancy in genital pleasure or organicity of any kind. Concomitant with the bending or hybridity of gender is a hybridity of gothic trope: Lestat is neither hero nor villain but both. Rice elevates the predatory, lascivious gothic villain to the status of romantic hero. Lestat is, in a sense, wildly attractive in his “brat prince” persona: a perfectly desirable, heroic gothic villain. Although aspects of his narrative tend toward a majoritarian recuperation of maleness and linearity, it is in a delicious piece of gothic *comedy* around Lestat’s male body that Rice’s minoritarian potential is momentarily actualized. The comic gothic,¹⁰⁶ perhaps in this case lent some of its humour through an appeal to camp sensibility, aligns itself with an alternate story of embodied masculinity. Gothicization includes the playful, humorous subversion and transgression of norms that queering (in its mobile, fluid sense) performs. Rice’s vampires are “bodies without organs” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 124), and Lestat’s movement back

¹⁰⁶ See Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik on comedy in the gothic tradition; see also Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* on the role of camp recognition as well as Moe Meyer’s edited collection *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*.

into a body with organs defamiliarizes the structuring principle of organicity against which his vampire body (and by extension, all bodies-without-organs) has previously defined itself.¹⁰⁷

The scene in question occurs in *The Tale of the Body Thief*, the fourth novel in Rice's series. In the first novel, *Interview with the Vampire*, narrator Louis tells the young reporter all about Lestat's excesses and amorality; the second novel, *The Vampire Lestat*, is a response to the first from the perspective of Lestat. Both of these texts portray a Lestat whose body is whole, armored by its new vampiric powers, its human functions completely unimportant or changed entirely into vampiric versions of desire and their differently-organised economies of fluids. *The Queen of the Damned* is the third book, and it offers a response to the first two from multiple narrative perspectives, telling the tale of the ancient female vampire Akasha. It is in the fourth book's supernatural premise, however, that the possibilities for a troubling of the vampire-human opposition are explored.

The Tale of the Body Thief involves a being who can switch bodies with other beings. Some of the most potent homoeroticism of Rice's vampire universe occurs because of this premise: it allows David Talbot of the Talamasca, a kind of supernatural monitoring agency, to lust after and finally become a younger man. The integrity of the vampire body and its otherness, however, taken as given in previous novels, is here inverted by way of the body thief's exchange with Lestat himself. In effect, Lestat's re-

¹⁰⁷ There is the – perhaps inadvertently funny – image of statue-like Lestat complete with “marble” erection in *The Queen of the Damned* when Akasha tries to set up the third of the matriarchies on her quest to take over the world, and has the local women wash him (357)

turning to a human body reverses the strangeness of vampirism, making masculinity and male bodies strange in his discomfort and revulsion.

Lestat loves his vampire body, with its preternatural senses (a phrase so oft-repeated in Rice that it is hard to imagine where to begin to cite it) and superior strength. The likelihood that he will exchange it for a human body is therefore slim, but the premise works because of a well-established tendency on Lestat's part to do precisely the bratty thing, to do that which he absolutely should know better than to do. His curiosity combines with the romanticisation of his formerly human self to make the decision for him. When he successfully leaves his vampire body and squeezes into the body occupied by the body thief, who then enters Lestat's vampire body, he is at a loss about how to operate it. There is an obvious disjunction here between the mind or soul and the body, raising philosophical, ontological questions typical of the Ricean genre. What is atypical is the manner in which the male, human body is no longer taken for granted as a norm.

In terms of the vampire's experience of the fleshly body, Lestat sounds almost transsexual in his description of being "trapped in this strange body" (*The Tale of the Body Thief* 166): a vampire trapped in a man's body suggests, by analogy with the familiar trope of "a woman trapped in a man's body," a feminization of the vampire. This makes sense in that the becoming-venal of vampire desire can be seen as a de-phallicization of masculinity in a different economy of fluids (penetrating teeth notwithstanding). The split between mind and body is invoked as soon as Lestat realizes he has been successful in switching:

Slowly I climbed to my feet, at once aware of the increase in height and feeling very top-heavy and unsteady [. . .]. Panic seized me, but I managed to grab hold

of the moist wood with these large trembling fingers, and keep myself from going down the steps. Again I strained to see through the darkness, and couldn't make out anything clearly at all. (167)

In effect, the switch has also switched Lestat from the position of heroic gothic villain to confined gothic victim. He can no longer see clearly, control his environment, or navigate gravity. Panicked now and later, when the body thief predictably fails to return at the appointed hour, Lestat here inhabits an anxious body, a body that is inadequate because mortal. Nearly dying because he cannot negotiate the physicality of the very strange human body he is in, Lestat is nursed back to health by a nun, providing Rice with the opportunity to represent both the religio-philosophical debates she often has Lestat perform and the soft-porn erotic sensibility for which she is also known.

The comedy, however, that troubles majoritarian human gender, lies in Lestat's fascinated yet repelled sense of his newly rediscovered organicity: unlike in his vampire body, he has a bladder and a penis through which it desperately wants to be voided.

I had to piss, I simply had to, and I had not done this in over two hundred years. I unzipped these modern pants, and removed my organ, which immediately astonished me by its limpness and size. The size was fine, of course. Who doesn't want these organs to be large? And it was circumcised, which was a nice touch. But this limpness, it felt remarkably repulsive to me, and I didn't want to touch the thing. I had to remind myself, this organ happens to be mine. Jolly!

And what about the smell coming from it, and the smell rising from the hair around it? Ah, that's yours too, baby! Now make it work.

I closed my eyes, exerted pressure very inexactly and perhaps too forcefully, and a great arc of stinking urine shot out of the thing, missing the toilet bowl altogether and splashing on the white seat. (171)

For several more paragraphs Lestat expresses his nausea and revulsion at all aspects of urination, including the flaccidity of the penis, the smell of the urine, the inability of soap to make the hands feel clean, and the wet spot on the front of his pants afterward. Like countless self-affirmation books and advice manuals for young women and men, Lestat tries to remind himself that this is all a normal human function and nothing to become obsessed about (173). Most nauseating of all, however, is his anticipation of excrement upon eating, which makes him, therefore, not want to eat (172). This scene captures a scatological, carnivalesque humor that makes strange – abjected in Kristevan terms -- the most basic human bodily functions and marks their absurdity as particularly male. As such it participates in, or even materializes, a rhizome that can be followed back and forth through the texts whenever vampire bodies are mentioned in order to point out the absurdity of masculinity that may in fact be there.

The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of discourses on eurocentrism and Anglo-Saxon superiority. Although Rice is keenly aware that Lestat is playing with his identity when he claims to be a “perfect imitation” (*Memnoch*, 3) of an attractive-because-white human male, it is in the character of David Talbot that we fail to find a deconstruction of racialized identity that might correspond to the gender trouble outlined above.

More than in any other novel, *The Tale of the Body Thief* portrays the aging David Talbot of the Talamasca group repeatedly as the colonial, British gentleman hunter with no more colonies in which to hunt. His prey, initially a young Brazilian man, is instead

eroticized—because, no less, of Brazilian specificity. Whereas Lestat’s vampire kin are of a kind because of their acquired traits that erase specific ethnicities, human British gentlemen and Brazilian youth seem to maintain ineradicable differences: “The people in Brazil are like no people I’ve ever seen,” says Talbot (65), musing that their great beauty might be “the blending of Portuguese and African, and then toss in the Indian blood” (65). These molar differences, or at least their type, however, are combined at the molecular level when David Talbot successfully hybridizes his British, cultured self with a youthful, exoticized dark body.

David Talbot is among the privileged classes in England. With the resources to have “restored from his own pocket” the quaint village with “sixteenth-century buildings” near his “ancestral manor” (40), Talbot wants for nothing material. Lestat observes him sitting in his archetypal British library, full of leather and the warmth of fire and single-malt scotch. What renders the manor house “unusual,” though, are the “relics of a life lived in another clime” (42). The relics evince an Orientalism mixed with a New World otherness that prefigures the transformation to take place later in the novel; Lestat inventories them thus:

The mounted head of a spotted leopard was perched above the glowing fireplace. And the great black head of a buffalo was fixed to the far right wall. There were many small Hindu statues of bronze here and there on shelves and on tables. Small jewel-like Indian rugs lay on the brown carpet, before hearth and doorway and windows.

And the long flaming skin of his Bengal tiger lay sprawled in the very center of the room, its head carefully preserved . (42)

Perfectly at home in his mansion, David is and has always been the perfect English gentleman traveler. His narration of his trip to Brazil in his younger days satisfies at least one of Rice's niche markets (gay male readers for whom the British gentleman's "world tour" may resonate as an "open secret" trope):

I was so eager for it, for the sheer alien quality of it! That's what sends us Englishmen into the tropics. We have to get away from all this propriety, this tradition—and immerse ourselves in some seemingly savage culture which we can never tame or really understand. [. . . T]he city itself surpassed all expectations [. . .]. Yet it was nothing as entrancing as the people. (65)

Readers attuned to formations of identity that privilege mind over body, reason over passion, will recognize this pedestalization of the Brazilian people for a reification of the privilege that led to it: Talbot goes so far as to describe bossa nova music as the language of the Brazilian people, and it is this with which one falls in love, in essence denying the people a voice of their own—music and magic are the opposite of the British master tongue and rational study (represented nicely in the Talamasca and its archives). Talbot's attempt to "go Brazilian" by learning the Candomble magic ultimately fails, just as his initial association with the Talamasca failed to yield the full picture of vampirism that he so craved. Remarkably, it is with an image of penetration that Talbot describes this inability to find full answers: "I only penetrated so far" (67). His metaphor for knowledge is both sexualized and grounded in geography, not unlike Lestat's own sense of the "savage garden" throughout *The Vampire Chronicles* and its situated nature in *The Tale of the Body Thief*'s actual jungle. Images of penetration and concealment are a mainstay of Rice's vampire universe; throughout, the bite and the "dark gift" are eroticized, and in

an analogy to an incest taboo, a vampire “parent’s” mind is concealed from his or her “children” and vice versa. This particular concealment is in fact doubled in *The Tale of the Body Thief*: not only can David and Lestat not read each other’s thoughts any longer after the former is turned by the latter, but Lestat finds in Talbot’s new body another kind of inscrutability.

As Lestat admires Talbot’s comfort in the new body in which he was never able to get comfortable—he felt “monstrous” in the young, fit body (220)—the usual mode of impenetrability between vampire “offspring” and “parents” is replaced by an inscrutability based on race: “The dark tone of his skin concealed too much” (427). Not purely bestial, the brown-skinned body is saved by the supplement of British propriety, wisdom and dignity here and elsewhere: “He crossed his legs and fell into an easy posture of relaxation, but with David’s dignity intact” (427).

The pronominal, referential difficulties here are difficulties of identity. It is as though the signifier “David” still refers for Lestat to the aging, very British homosexual hunter, and the he refers to the body in which David has lodged himself. Finally David penetrates the secrets of the young, exotic male body fully, at the same time as he penetrates the secrets of vampirism that he never could attain (“only penetrated so far” 67). Yet the “he” ultimately refers to a new formation of identity: not the old David grafted onto the young male body whose will was removed by drugs and/or by the original Raglan James (effectively of course this body has been doubly done in by two members of the Talamasca and also by two vampires, Lestat and then David as a vampire-become)—not even the old David filling the empty shell of a body and investing the Other with meaning. Rather, David and he slip into one being through vampiric rape,

producing an Other that rather than being strictly Other is a new way of organizing desire, a new way of organizing a Deleuze and Guattarian “Body Without Organs.”¹⁰⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, speak of otherness as degrees of deviance from a despotic norm rather than as an opposite (178). This is what makes David so commodious for Rice: he can become-other without losing that which makes him cerebrally attractive. He becomes a bit deviant, but not fully other. Note how he appears to Pandora in her eponymous novel: first we read, “And so it was David the Reborn, David with the high-gloss India beauty, and raw well-nourished strength of British lineage [. . .]” (9); then, “There was your same boldness and decorum. And then the warmest smile from you, a smile in which I think your former physiology must have dominated because you looked far too wise for one so young and strong of build” (20). He becomes part of the pandemonium, or the pantheon, depending on your point of view: a tapestry approach to racial harmony that in effect conceals the rapacious trajectory of this particular line of flight—a deterritorialization of vampire embodiment and British embodiment to be sure, but a reterritorialization on the colonized body of India as well.

The trope that differentiates most clearly the difference between what I would assess as a critical reading of gender and an uncritical reading of race is that of colonization as rape. David’s need to become-other is fixed around several nodal points: other as magical, other as young, other as exotic and racialized. In fact, his desire to become-other is expressed as a desire that is not fully self-present, that requires rape by the vampire after consciously switching bodies. The desire is fulfilled only after this

¹⁰⁸ See *A Thousand Plateaus*, 149-166. In many ways Ricean vampires effect a BwO by dying, purging their bodies of all that is inside them, and becoming fixated on the rhizomatic surface of the veined and arteried skin; Talbot re-fills the human body with British intellect and, I am arguing, a despotic sort of class figured by Lestat as race.

second, forced stage, and it reads suspiciously like a cipher for British colonization of the India that provided the young male body's mother. Note David's conversation with Lestat after he is turned. Lestat clearly wishes to hear that David detests him for making him a vampire, insistently asking "How can you not hate me?" (427). David replies,

"I'd be making the same mistake you made if I hated you" he said, eyebrows raised. "Don't you see what you've done? You've given me the gift, but you spared me the capitulation. You've brought me over with all your skill and all your strength, but you didn't require of me the moral defeat. You took the decision from me, and gave me what I could not help but want." (427)

Talbot, in seeking to penetrate secrets, and in seeking to become the raped and feminized male body of India, holds a particularly dubious status in Rice's liberal, assimilative vampire universe. Where Lestat troubles gender more obviously here than in any other novel, Talbot reifies (through embodiment) a kind of "race trouble" that intersects sexuality, gender, colonization and knowledge at the crossroads of desire. Vampires may no longer be characterized by pallor and alabaster whiteness, but it is not necessarily positive and liberatory that "brown is beautiful" in *The Tale of the Body Thief*. David Talbot's switch into a young male body, as well as his own becoming-other and becoming-vampire thereafter, is an instance of both general and specific racialized embodiment. Lestat's experience of the human flesh is different from Talbot's and in fact does more to constitute identity as gender and sexuality than as race. Talbot's assimilation into Lestat's identity formation (erasing ethnicity by way of becoming an other) still produces a specificity, one that privileges dark, exotic youth.

Where *The Tale of the Body Thief* succeeds in the troubling of male normativity, it fails to activate the same level of ironic becoming-other for the ethno-racial identities about which Rice consistently seeks to speak progressively. David Talbot's new "figure" (face in French, physique in English; here I mean to enact both senses) is figured (metaphorized) as a successful hybrid of British intellectual and class superiority with the bodily attraction of the exoticized Other. Inadvertently perhaps, given her attention to urban melting-pots such as New Orleans and Miami and her focus on the commonalities between faiths and peoples, Rice reifies in Talbot the final colonization of occident over orient: his wisdom, intellect, and propriety rushes in to fill the empty cipher that is the desired body of (in this instance) India. The body, the "it" into which British robustness, intelligence, and "well-nourished" organicity is poured, becomes the exotic companion, sidekick, or foil to add to the mix of characters in the novel series in ways that an aging, white, gentleman scholar would not have done. David Talbot, ultimately, thus becomes the popular literary equivalent of the difference-erasing "United Colors of Benetton" advertising campaign.

Brite's doubled becomings

Poppy Z. Brite's first novel stages a different set of problems from those played out in the more established New Orleans vampire scene created by Anne Rice. Brite's vampires take road trips and drug trips. The trio Zillah, Twig, and Molochai embody a neo-decadent "Generation X" sensibility. Born into the cynical amorality of a Gatsby-like early twentieth-century America and partying their way to the historical present, they

have none of the ethical compulsions or moments of self-reflection of the older vampire Christian, who harbors young vampire-wannabe Jessy after her one-night stand with Zillah, until she dies giving birth to Nothing, Zillah's child. If Christian is aptly named, Nothing is even more so. The narrative is about Nothing, which in this case is not a postmodern trope but quite literally about Nothing's quest for self-discovery. The self-discovery in question is in part tempered by 1980s discourses of self improvement, but is equally formed by adoption or orphan discourses that reach back to the gothic for their weight and texture.

Christian brings Nothing to Missing Mile, North Carolina, depositing him on the doorstep of a nice, middle-class family. As a self-consciously minor critique of middle-class majoritarian values, Nothing's insertion into this family is effective. Interestingly, what works against the minor line of flight in its own reterritorializing way is a kind of biological determinism at work in the plot. The story in effect argues that you can take the boy away from the vampires but you can't take the vampire out of the boy. No matter what social circumstances end up belonging to the half-vampire child, his difference will remain visible and foregrounded. Analogues are, of course, rampant: black kids or natives or mixed race people or gays and lesbians, tomboys and sissies could all be plugged into the same argument, and not always with progressive effects. This is why biological determinism can be risky as a tactic.

At the age of fifteen, Nothing sets out to discover his birthright after living in the context of a bisexual goth peer group. Brite uses doubling with great success in all of his novels, and this is no exception: there are two plot lines here that converge at the site of supernaturalism. The second plot revolves around the growing and complicated friendship of musicians Steve and the appropriately named Ghost.

What catapulted Brite's initial novelistic endeavor to a certain level of subcultural notoriety in both goth and gay circles is partly the ease with which his vampires range over same-sex terrain. That women in the novel serve either as the inevitably destroyed vehicles for the propagation of male vampires (i.e. Jessy) or as titillating side-dishes for mostly male-male sex is a problem¹⁰⁹. There is a sense in which Brite is describing, analyzing, and critiquing patriarchal social values here. Zillah has a good deal in common with the rapacious gothic villain as he is presented as both repulsive and attractive at the same time. His sidekicks are anything but attractively represented, although riding with them all in their black van listening to Bauhaus and getting drunk or high seems to be the dream of every goth and vampire wannabe, if Nothing is meant to be an example.

¹⁰⁹ Although Brite has self-defined as a "slightly misogynistic queen" online (see www.poppyzbrite.com/rope.html, originally in Tuttle, *Crossing the Border*), not all his female characters are shrinking violets desperate to die. Ghost's dead mother – a good witch -- remains a powerful and renowned influence in *Lost Souls*. Miz Catlin, her best friend and in a sense proxy or double, has the last word on Ann's fatal back-alley vampire abortion.

Most successful in a critical sense is Brite's taking of sexuality and gender definitions to extremes. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, he develops intensives (they may see this as a function of language on language, but surely gender figured as itself a language can have the same effect on the dominant gender "language"). Engaging in a seemingly boundless amorality, Brite's characters' transgressions are of a singular order: at one point Nothing muses to himself about drinking his father's semen, imagines himself as his mother having sex with Christian, and then imagines himself as a fetus being bathed in Christian's sperm (227). There is the intriguing suggestion here that a vampire fetus might have a sort of agency in the scene of seduction and erotic pleasure. One can't get much younger than pre-birth, which is one way in which Brite takes further than most other writers in the genre the erotics of childhood and pedophilia, forcing the hand, so to speak, of those who would condemn NAMBLA, Pat Califia, Gayle Rubin and others in the sex radical movement. By taking codes to extremes, Brite is following a minoritarian line of flight and writing a minor gothic literature in the specific sense outlined in my introduction.

To see his work as an unapologetic display of the most politicized forms of queer sex-radicalism is to remind oneself of one of the strategies (or in some cases, the effects) of fantastic, gothic, and vampire fiction in general: the displacement of real social relations onto the fantastic in order to foreground the fault lines in what is taken as

natural in any particular social sphere.

In similar ways to *Lost Souls*, Brite's *Lazarus Heart* deterritorializes desire through goth (dis)embodiment. An old fashioned revenge tale with several twists, this novel is based on the comic book (and subsequent films of) *The Crow*. The premise of the original series is both romantic and gothic, in the supernatural sense. A young man and his girlfriend die untimely deaths (murdered) and the man is brought back through the agency of some kind of timeless being (the crow of the series title) in order to avenge the woman's death. The heterosexual lover's discourse is circumscribed by gothic moods and tones evoked by the pictorial aesthetics and by allusions to goth musical culture (which includes music itself and fashion).

Brite's rewriting of the same myth includes the goth, the love, and the revenge, but takes as its primary pairing a gay couple, one of whom has an identical twin transexual sister. Benny and Lucrece (formerly Lucas) are typical of Brite's goth characters in their transgressive sexualities (including S/M and incest) and their interest in the supernatural. Jared Poe, the undead hero of the novel, is conflicted about precisely where to place his vengeful ire: should he take revenge on the judge, lawyer, police officers who put him in jail for the murder of Benny (a jail term cut short by his own murder by another inmate), or should he find Benny's actual killer who is still stalking transgender/transexual people?

By bringing an underground comic and its popular filmic adaptation into the realm of sex radicalism and extreme trans-panic, Brite throws into sharp relief the topoi of gothic horror, demonstrating in the process how deeply submerged in popular romance narratives these topoi often are. Not unlike *Exquisite Corpse* – perhaps the most sexually sadistic of Brite’s novels -- in its violent externalization of internal organs, pleasure in bodily immolation is in evidence here. More clearly a moral tale than *Exquisite Corpse* is, *Lazarus Heart* condemns the schizoid serial killer from the beginning, never situating his paranoid delusions about a conspiracy of transexuals from another planet as sexy or desirable in any way. Jordan (who also goes by many other river names, significantly taking on identities that flow, wash, are never the same twice) almost never gratifies a specifically sexual desire by disembowelling and severing transexual bodies: his desire is for knowledge, which is never attained, because he believes that there will be an implant in one of the bodies that will prove his alien invasion theory. Obviously the knowledge never attained could be a figure for sexual desire, a fetish on his part. But the narrative sets him up as the enemy in ways that are unequivocal in contrast to Jay and Andrew in *Exquisite Corpse*. Jordan’s bodies without organs are of a different order: despotic, reterritorialized, objects for a test of “determination of degrees of deviance” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 178). The hero Jared, upon awakening from his death through the agency of the cryptic bird, has another kind of body without organs fashioned for him, one which might

be the absolute deterritorialization that serves as an antidote to Jordan's cruel
butcherings.

Jared's connection to the crow is of a libidinal nature, and it is a line of flight from the grounded Cartesian self. His heart is somehow connected to the bird by a "wire" (22) now loose, now taut, that guides his physical path and his will/resolve. That this wire-drive is libidinal is clarified by analogy: in a flashback memory to the night on which he met Benny and Lucrece, Jared's erection is described as being connected to them by a wire which is pulled taut (61). There is an equivocal reading of this possible: the erection and the doubled object of Jared's desire could signify that the heart and the crow/revenge quest are eroticized, or it could be the other direction, in which case the erection is de-phallicized in direct relation to the heart and other organic symbols of love. This would make sense with the doubling of the desired object (and its triple sexed subjectivity: male/female/transgoth), and be the more radical reading suggested by Jared's thought, "*There are strings everywhere, ... not just on the end of my dick*" (62).

Jared's photographs of Benny adorn the walls of their former bedroom, a space that along with their crypt has become a shrine for Lucrece in which to worship memory. Situating the photographs in an economy of aestheticism and class-based decadence is not unimportant: Jared's "first big gallery show...snagged him a write-up in the *Village Voice*...[and] caught the attention of collectors as far away as Amsterdam and Berlin:

people with money to spend on art” (19). Calling to mind Mapplethorpe or Attila Lukacs, Brite positions transgressive art in a representational space of cultural desire. But Jared’s portraits are gender-transitive rather than homoerotic. The ones Lucrece keeps on the wall are “of Benny in his latex and lace wedding gown, the corset underneath pulled so tight that Benny looks like an insect, so fragile, so easy to break” (18), a phrase pregnant with echoes of how he did get bound and broken by the serial killer Jordan.

There are also pictures of Lucrece “in that show too, of her and Benny together, but she couldn’t look at those anymore” (19). One assumes that in the melancholia of loss -- more powerful than the typically goth melancholia of individuated cultural loss -- Lucrece cannot bear to see her brother’s form now that he is dead. Or is the problem also of another kind, rather than only of a degree, of mourning? For “Jared had posed them together, the twins as inverted mirrors, dressed in restraining costumes that recklessly, elegantly swapped their genders back and forth, that rendered them even more interchangeable than the work of their genes” (19). After this particular shoot Lucrece “was nauseous, dizzy, and less certain of her tenuous identity than she’d been in years. ...Benny held her until the world bled slowly into focus again” (19). In the novel’s present, Lucrece wants to destroy this past by burning it and herself along with it. She “knows she doesn’t have the nerve, the strength to make that final gesture” (19), a phrase

that works by analogy with her early accusation that Benny “never had the balls” (63) to go all the way and have a sex change too to produce an uneasy assertion that sex change is like suicide. Yet this analogy is not to be trusted, for as Jared plainly sees during the scene of his initial seduction by the pair, the accusation and all the business surrounding it are carefully rehearsed plottings “perfected in privacy and practice” (62). Brite calls attention to their performative intentionality -- a goth trait shared by Charlotte Dacre and Count Stenbock -- in his allusive yokings of literary, pop cultural, and sexually radical figures: initially in their “impeccably tailored leather and latex Victorian costumes, their skin as white as chalk and their hair like black satin” (52-3), Benny and Lucrece look to Jared “like some fetish freak’s vision of Jonathan and Mina Harker, an unlikely juxtaposition of the prim and perverse” (53), and “dressed up like some William Gibson version of 1890s London” (56). Dracula, cyberpunk, s/m, and decadence are brought into playful relation with one another: it is in this pastiche of literature, pop culture and dangerous sex that Brite situates goth subjectivity as creative reading and predatory desire. This is the same gothicizing mode of reading and rewriting outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Typically in early gothics, one finds promoted a cautionary moral message. In some cases, as we have seen with Dacre, this message may be at odds with the resulting narrative -- for example if one is being cautioned but the immorality's attractiveness outweighs the correct path. The element of the morality tale, however, seems missing

from late twentieth-century gothic narratives... but only in the strictest sense of upholding established, conservative values around personhood, relationships, and social boundaries.

Instead, in what may be a more liberatory moral project, one finds gothic tropes used to point out the failings of white, capitalist, male-dominant culture. Whether it is the transvaluation of homosexual culture in Lestat, the extreme sexualization of childhood (including fetuses) in Brite, or Brite's foregrounding of gendered violence, a queer feminism can be deduced in the end-of-millennium gothic fiction.

Although William Hughes ascribes to the *Vampire Chronicles*, ultimately, an anti-gay message, treating as it does the analogy with monsters and the impossibility of family (through, partly, the unsuccess of the Lestat-Louis-Claudia arrangement), I would contend rather that the rhetoric of family and love so parodied needs to be read in the context of carnival and theatrics. The contexts of New Orleans and the Parisian *Théâtre des Vampires* give us a blueprint for a playful critique of the heteronormative nuclear family that does not resolve itself between *Interview With the Vampire* and *The Tale of the Body Thief*.

If Lestat and Louis fail to create a family with Claudia, certainly Poppy Brite's version of family takes things another step in the direction of transgression. In this case, Brite's target seems to be those who would deny young people their sexuality and those who would deny girls and women control over their own pregnancies. Families and parents in Brite are typically absent or abusive; the locus of morality on the surface appears to be his insistence that the kids are at base all right, that wherever teens are, there will be a significant number of them working out their angst and we should let go of our judgments (the adult, straight world). This is seen in the typical club scenes narrated

throughout *Lost Souls*, with the children clearly posing at trying to establish identity but not, in the end, truly harming anyone.

However, the focus in the novel on a few very specific arrangements of filiation and control may lead us toward another conclusion. When Nothing joins the decades-old family unit led by Zillah, he is treated as a potential companion needing to be apprenticed into the norms by Twig and Molochai. Nothing, by falling in love with Zillah and in a sense completing the leader, leaves Twig and Molochai more like brother lovers, in tune with one another implicitly (almost like twins) and happy to follow their more charismatic, more canny "father" figure. Yet Nothing is in fact Zillah's son, unbeknownst to either but in full view of the reader. As the incestuous sex and bloodletting continue and eventually Nothing becomes aware of the relationship (through a surrogate father figure, the aptly-named Christian), though he knows he ought to be mortified, he is not¹¹⁰.

In this, Nothing seems akin to demons in earlier gothics, such as Rosario/Matilda in *The Monk* and Zofloya in Dacre's novel, and also to later amoral figures in, for example, Stenbock. The difference here is in his agency, successfully supplanting Zillah (his task to adulthood seems to be to rid the family of the scourge of killing women through implanting them with vampire babies). Thus, Nothing lives happily ever after as the head of the sterile nuclear family comprised of himself, Twig, and Molochai. In some sense, then, the late twentieth-century gothic thereby queered here does in fact have a higher moral purpose (or, at least, an effective critique) and a didacticism of extremes.

¹¹⁰ The incestuous relationship between father and minority-aged son is clear to the reader, and might, in addition to marking transgressiveness in extreme goth narrative, also be part of the novel's general southernized stereotypes.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In his expansive work *The Gothic Text*, Marshall Brown connects philosophical traditions, politics, and the arts across Europe through the gothic. He proposes, provocatively, as his first chapter (after showing the limits of thinking that gothic is particularly British) three theses: that Romantic gothic fiction is not exciting (3-5); that Gothic Novels are not ghost stories (5-6); and that “Gothic novels are not women’s writing” -- nor are they, as a corollary, feminized and about sexuality (6-7). I seem, unfortunately, to have broken to bits all three of his theses by asking readers to read works that are arguably exciting, definitely supernatural, and always already about gender and sexuality. In fact, I have argued that the material in minor narratives by minor authors Dacre, Stenbock, and Brite, as well as the inevitable conflation of their prose with their lives, can unmoor major gothic literary texts and lives from their own coherences in literary history. Reading Percy Shelley between the others, and then re-reading Austen, James, and Rice, I have explored in the preceding chapters the function of rhizomatics, becomings-other, and minor gothic literature (with some genealogical work) in the emergence of gothic writing and goth subjectivities.

While I do not deny the importance of historical, cultural, and philosophical context in understandings of the gothic tradition (the point here has never been to claim a single approach is better than many approaches), I will not side with Brown in his assertions about, in particular, the gendering of and by gothic. Nor am I at all sympathetic to the practically tyrannical gestures of Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall when they chastise much of gothic studies as we know it today for basting a politics (and psychoanalytics) of the present onto what ought to be a much more historicized field

(they agree with Brown, it seems to me, that the gothic is more pedestrian and unexciting than most of us would have it. Sometimes, presumably, a veil really is just a veil). I have attempted in every instance, in fact, to avoid mapping my own contemporary theoretical and identity interests onto the literary and biographical texts under scrutiny (literary and biographical texts that, in fact, form and organise and produce those very theoretical and identitarian positions in some cases).

My explorations have followed several fundamental principles. First, to organise the history of gothic writing and being into a logic of lineage is to miss some of the randomness that animates textual and subjective difference as such. Second, to display a few rhizomatic eruptions across surfaces over time is an important genealogical step to a larger argument about rhizomaticity being the general state of things rather than the exception. And third, that sex, gender, and sexuality have been instantiating elements of gothic and goth discursive emergence rather than afterthoughts or effects of an already fixed historical ‘gothicity.’

Overall, this has been only a limited interrogation of the major (as a category) through a more extensive interrogation of the minor. By taking careful account of Dacre’s *Zofloya*, Stenbock’s short stories, and Brite’s novels, as well as to each of their biographical details in circulation contextually, I have shown some of the ways that Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts can be relays through which to understand sexual and textual dynamics. In different historical eras (diachronically) and between works in a given era (synchronically), we can see the importance of becomings-Other, the refrain, and the Body without Organs without organizing any of these into a grid-like scheme of classificatory despotism.

I have not been content, though, to leave it at that, since the result of minoritarian interrogations needs to be the possibility of a becoming-minor of the major (the major being that organizing machine that makes arboreality of rhizomaticity). Hence the surprising – at times – connective tissue springing up between these minor authors and works by more major ones. First, Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* takes on gender difference of a different order than previously in light of the theory and practice of minor gothic textuality. Second, Henry James’ “The Jolly Corner” is read more nomadically than symptomatically as a result of a slightly askew look at its well-documented rhetorics. Finally, Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, with her character Lestat re-sutures gendered sexuality in a way that shows fundamental categorical instability. Hanging between all the texts is the haunting of Percy Shelley’s role both textually and biographically as the articulation point between early gothic and its later functions.

Perhaps the best analogy to remind us how minor gothic literature can activate meanings obscured by the workings of major canons is with minor literature as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari. As they put it, Kafka’s writing is what it is because it involves writing in the way that a “minority constructs in a major language” (*Kafka*, 16). If we think of gender, sex, and sexuality as a kind of signifying system, dissident transgressive minor authors (transgressive because of what they write and what people write about them) are also writing as minorities in a major language. Keeping in mind that minor is a quality rather than (necessarily) an actual quantity of real people, the same three points about minor literature apply to minor gothic literature: its “language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization” (16), “everything in them is political” (17), and “everything takes on a collective value (17). In gothic terms, the analogy between minor

literature and minor gothic writing (of self and story) works through becoming-Other or through music (each in its own way a deterritorialization), through political immediacies of biographical exigencies (and quite likely, less direct historical embedding within narratives, though this is not explored here), and through the collective assemblage of goth subjectivation.

Hence, connections from Dacre to Stenbock through Shelley on the ground of animal becomings are possible, but not inevitable historically. Connections from Stenbock to Brite through goth musical refrains are possible, but again, not inevitable historically. And in each author's own (rough) synchronic timeframe, the textual intensities (extreme positions of desire, radical transformations of monolithic gender or sexuality categories, and so on) provoke reader interventions into other texts that can no longer be read 'straight' (if they ever could). So minor gothic literature becomes a reading practice, and to borrow Martin Saar's notion about the "we" constructed by genealogical address, the gothic rhizomatizing critic, like the genealogist, is "successful when his readers take over the writing and start off projecting their own versions of the present" (240). Although I have chosen deliberately not to experiment with form and rhetoric in the dissertation itself, I have attempted to trace diachrony and synchrony in non-arboreal ways instead of fixing them in a gridlike inevitability.

There are, in addition to theoretical resonances with postmodern accounts of literary and subjective history, implications of my study for queer theory. Perhaps it needs stating that the dissertation is as much a product of my training in cultural studies as it is a product of my training in a literature department. In part, I am practising a history of sexual and gender alterity, a kind of shadow literary history appropriate in

many ways to gothic themes. For me, queer has always worked best as a verb (as I state in my introduction). Queering history, queering texts, queering selves... these active uses of the term imply not seeking a static identity or even a set of inheritances in any direct line, because lineage and its self-guaranteeing system of domination is an unlikely candidate for a queering look back through time. Many possible and real identities would necessarily be excluded by a monolithic march through apparently gay male time, for example. Queering, then, in the case of gothic, involves both genre and gender. And once again, I return to Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure*.

My minor author examples are more infamous than famous. Neither Dacre nor Stenbock could be said to be masterful writers; in fact they are often quite bad: "...talent isn't abundant in minor literature..." (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 17). While Brite is gifted with plot, character, description, language, and just spinning a great yarn, his subject matter means that his texts – to date at least – are destined to remain in non-privileged places, culturally (note the difficulty placing *Exquisite Corpse* in spite of a contract. Brite, "Biography"). However, reading these apparent "failures" one finds in common some possible reconjugations of normative, hegemonic identity, and in this I find hope.

In turn, having read minor gothic writing and learning about minor gothic authors, some readers may find suspect the rhetorical precision in such major works as Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, James's "Jolly Corner," and even Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. In a postmodern sense, then, patterns of genre and gender dissonance in the gothic rely on a shifting set of available stories that get reconjugated by readers, writers, and other

signifiers.¹¹¹ One of these patterns posits the gothic as a triple movement (major, minor, minoritarian) that refuses to fix itself on any one point, and is only recognizable as such in the deployment of the third term (minoritarian). The dissertation as a whole performs this thirdness by retelling the story of gothic inheritance and conjugating it with postmodern and queer activity. It is not a close reading of masterful texts, but a display of minor texts' close readings of gender and sexual divergence. These minor texts perform sex and gender dissidence without generalising a transhistorical or ahistorical subject.

One struggle that remains with this approach by me, a privileged white male for whom queer identity is easily papered over (for both partners) by assumptions of a heteronormative marriage in our small city, is the cooptation of otherness and transitivity to prove some theoretical point. Certainly, intersectionality suggests that my historical status as culturally Irish Catholic could be taken as non-white; my queer histories in goth and gay subcultures are part of my qualification to speak from an ontological and epistemological ground. Yet it remains troubling for me how easily I pass in the world for a white, straight, upper middle class male without any body polymorphia. Therefore it seems most appropriate to address questions of my role and my dissertation's role in

¹¹¹ I do not mean by "other signifiers" to suggest that writers and readers are signifiers – or at least not only. I mean that stories are also reconjugated by other stories, and I use the term signifiers because not all the other stories are actually stories in the structural or traditional sense -- snippets of songs, films, pictures, a mode of dress, a gesture: these are the kinds of signifiers that can reconjugate the stories and their constitutive singularities.

cultural appropriation of queer and trans* identities.

Sexually minoritized identities are differently minoritized over time. What is a constant, and for this they may in fact be critiqued, but let us allow it for the time being, is the way in which minoritization (in the Sedgwick sense) articulates with minorization (in the Deleuze and Guattari sense) to predetermine what can be universalized (in the Sedgwick sense) and what can become-minor (in the Deleuze and Guattari sense). My case for gothic literary minoritarians (authors and their works) relies on a sense of the canon that is more always-already unstable than we would often like it to be. It is not always the minoritarians that destabilize. Canon formation is neither obvious nor automatic, but rather a set of relations that vary over time. Austen, for example, is not instantly canonical. Percy Shelley's own critical reception ebbed before it flowed. Part of my work relies on a retrospective sense of canonical stability, and that is what I have shown needs rethinking. The same is true for the logic of identity, the subjectivating fiction of a self present to itself.

However, the mobility and fluidity of identity in theory is not always in itself liberatory. Difference is not in itself autoliberating. To use real people's narratives and embodied differences (however textual the record is in terms of access to identities) is potentially abusive, akin to cultural appropriations in anthropological and ethnographic research. Given that much of the third sex/ third gender scholarship emerges from anthropology, with all its attendant controversies about voice, the "field" in fieldwork, colonisations, ethical abuses, and so forth, I am deeply ambivalent about using histories of embodied difference to prove points about literary or cultural theory. This is why I have not used the current project to delve very deeply into the implications of Billy

Martin's reflections on lived transgender experiences. To do so would be to do him a disservice, although I look forward to hearing further thoughts from him on the work of maintaining a complicated artistic and authorial identity in cyberspace and bookstore shelves.

What perhaps mitigates the probable harm of appropriation, for me, is the potential for good (in a social justice sense) that queer theory can bring to analysis. When people -- writers and readers -- are using available identity vectors to effect their own self-fashioning, and those vectors are gothic and goth, the ethics of the critical endeavour look a little different from typical literary analysis. For me, the foregoing project is deeply personal. By understanding dissident identities over time and what their implications might be for the norms against which they have defined themselves, I am claiming that future forms of dissidence will be all the better off, better able to situate themselves. It is empowering. That is the final message of this dissertation work.

Navigating the politics of recuperation will always be a delicate balance between fidelity to the self-defined historical identities involved and the insights afforded by theoretical schema, structures, and ideologies of the present. To the extent that the foregrounding of usually backgrounded writers and texts (Dacre's, Stenbock's, Brite's) is recuperative, it is so for optimistic, liberatory reasons. The overall point is not that authors and their works ought to be held up as "look! Transgressive rhizomes!" in the service of an opportunistic application of Deleuzo-Guattarian theory; rather, I seek to show what is affirming, politically, about proliferative and rhizomatic experimentation with decentred goth genealogies.

At the close of a dissertation process that has itself been a series of starts, stops, and restarts while simultaneously working in a university role that is meant to help professors and graduate students in their daily teaching lives, I find myself wondering about the possible uses in the world for this rather abstract and rarefied writing project. A social and cultural study of gothic writing and goth subjectivities can certainly expand beyond prose narratives. Future work of this nature could, without being entirely outside the pale of what is happening either in postmodern theory or in gothic studies as an interdisciplinary field, explore with similar principles other arts – visual, musical, plastic, poetic – seeking similar rhetorics of difference that themselves disrupt the normative story. The grammar of self-narrations, too, in identity terms deserves further attention. Moving beyond the simple empiricism of limited sociological work to date (Hodkinson's is the main example), it would be fascinating to understand narratives of body or sexuality transformations that trace some of their emergent moments to goth, not as a static identity nor as a juvenile phase, but as a refracting difference machine, perhaps.

I suggest these possibilities without attempting answers not only for reasons of space and time (after two decades of thinking about my PhD work, it's probably both geographically and temporally appropriate to move along); there is also the strong possibility that no single scholar could do justice to the collective assemblage of enunciation that (I have proposed) characterizes minor gothic literature. I for one am glad that over the twenty years since I began my graduate degrees, both gothic studies and

queer studies have formed themselves as legitimate fields¹¹² in which to welcome unanticipated guests like Dacre, Stenbock, and Brite.

¹¹² In some ways, my dissertation indexes the emergence of at least these two fields when I consider how it began and where it has ended up.

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