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Walking Through the Shadows: Ruins, Reflections, and Resistance in the Postcolonial Gothic Novel

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WALKING THROUGH THE SHADOWS:
RUINS, REFLECTIONS, AND RESISTANCE
IN THE POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC NOVEL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2009

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Postcolonial Gothic Novel

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While much has been written on gothic and postcolonial literature respectively, postcolonial gothic as a field of analysis is still relatively new. Thus, literary research would profit from a comprehensive, cross-cultural genre analysis of postcolonial gothic. This dissertation, written from a postcolonial theoretical stance, holds that postcolonial gothic is a literature of resistance, one questioning the boundaries of history, gender, race, and social class. However, while postcolonial gothic resists imperialist ideologies, it frequently leaves crises unresolved. It is this work's thesis that postcolonial gothic can and does interrogate imperial practices, offering hope in the ability to see new worlds and to hear new voices, those extinguished by imperialism, even as it fails to resolve all tensions in the postcolonial world. Beginning with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the dissertation analyzes the foundations of gothic literature. It then traces the development of Imperial Gothic in Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806), Stoker's *Dracula* (1891), and Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). After reviewing gothic encounters with empire, the dissertation moves to the often-despairing landscape of postcolonial

gothic, examining Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966/1969), Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), and Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). Next, it examines postcolonial gothic entrapment through van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999), Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), and Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005). The dissertation then studies dissolution of identity, family, and culture through Salih's *Season*, Kincaid's *Annie John* (1985), and Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). After portraying a postcolonial landscape of despair, the dissertation focuses on possibilities for resistance. It first examines the literature of monsters through Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Rushdie's *Shame* (1983). It next moves to fire as a source of destructive creation in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1990) and Abani's *The Virgin in Flames* (2007). Finally, it ends with the possibility of creating a new political or cultural existence, as seen in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and John's *Unburnable* (2006), while acknowledging the lingering ghost of empire.

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My wonderful colleagues also supported and mentored me, proving to be essential throughout the process of finishing not only the dissertation, but the degree as well. From Anchorage, Dr. Suzanne Forster always asked how the dissertation was proceeding—and spoke glowingly of my writing abilities, which frequently encouraged me when I needed it most. I can easily say the same of many other colleagues, but I believe the most wondrous support came from Matanuska-Susitna College. Dr. Joan O'Leary took valuable time from her own schedule to help me complete my Comprehensive Exams,

and both Dr. Debi Fox and Dr. Maxilynn Voss were always supportive as I worked through the process of completing my dissertation. They all listened to and endured more than one whining session!

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INTRODUCTION

GHOSTS IN THE LAUNDRY BIN OF POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC:

GOTHIC TRANSFORMED

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe was struck by a fierce literary gale: the emergence of gothic. Readers watched, amazed, as vampires, ruined castles, malicious villains, noble heroines, secret identities, and buried histories, usually set against stark and chilling landscapes, mesmerized their attention. However, this form has undergone extensive transformations, ones particularly noticeable in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries' postcolonial gothic. No longer do we have towering, terrifying castles and maniacal villains; instead, we have characters struggling to survive in a wasteland battered by the forces of empire. Identities splinter, fading into nothingness, while fires devastate homes and entire cities. Violence crackles in the air, the agonizing struggles of political independence ripping cultures and people apart.

With the existence of such dynamically different gothic conventions and expectations, it becomes increasingly important to understand the nature of postcolonial gothic itself, to more fully understand its conventions, social relationships, and impact on resistance in the postcolonial world. What, we might ask, is postcolonial gothic, and how does it vary from previous forms of the gothic, particularly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European texts? Even more importantly, perhaps, how do we distinguish postcolonial gothic from postcolonial texts in general? Do all postcolonial texts have gothic elements? If so, how can we see postcolonial gothic as a genre in its own right?

Indeed, how do the critical categories of race, ethnicity, culture, and gender impact the genre? We might even question whether these critical categories are inextricable from postcolonial gothic texts, sites of investigation upon which the genre rests. These are some of the most important questions that postcolonial gothic criticism must address, and they are the questions upon which this dissertation rests. With the firm belief that gothic postcolonial literature should be seen as resistance literature, as a literary form that can and does frequently subvert traditional gothic conventions, this dissertation argues that its tropes provide a means of agency to postcolonial subjects in a frequently nightmarish world of collapsed identities, ambiguous borders, ruined family associations, buried histories, and challenging gendered constructions. It is this work's contention, thus, that postcolonial gothic works are powerful means of reconstructing current political and cultural relationships.

Gothic: The Expectations of Form

Darkness surrounds us as we are pulled into the narrative; terror strikes through our hearts, our minds haunted by the words we read. We are captives to the author:

This time I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty windy, and the driving of the snow; I heard, also, the fir-bough repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause: but it annoyed me so much that I resolved to silence it, if possible; and I thought I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. . . . I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the

importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! (E. Brontë 31-2)

The ice-cold hand grasping against the threshold, the gusty wind, the driving snow—the “intense horror of nightmare” (E. Brontë 32) that threatens to turn nightmare into reality for *Wuthering Heights*’ Lockwood are all familiar signs to us, signs peculiar to gothic fiction. When we read *Wuthering Heights* (1847), we expect to find the unquiet ghosts of a violent past. We expect to see the moors sweeping before us, dark, unconquerable, unforgiving, an unmistakably gothic landscape against which arise cragged ruins:

Wuthering being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather.

Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones. (E. Brontë 4-5)

In this strong home, decked with “grotesque carving” (E. Brontë 5), we are not surprised at all to find the grim Heathcliff or the snarling dogs. We are, perhaps, only surprised that Lockwood is himself surprised by the setting, for Emily Brontë has painted a scene almost formulaic in its use of gothic conventions firmly established in the eighteenth century with such writers as Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe.

If readers of gothic fiction have now become quite accustomed to ghosts, rugged landscapes, desolate ruins, and tormented protagonists—not to mention vampires, monsters animated from the grasp of death, phantom ships, and challenged heroines—we might expect that gothic has written its own doom: the text trapped within its own unchanging conventions. However, gothic has long been seen as a genre that transcends boundaries; we might say that it transcends boundaries in not only its content but in its form as well. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, with such works as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), gothic was quickly escaping the labyrinth and encroaching on the parlor or even the tropical island. The twentieth century has seen it leap from the written page to the movie screen in horror films (Halberstam 31) and science fiction (Botting, "Aftergothic" ch. 14); in the United States, it has taken on the guise of American Gothic, characterized by a fascination with guilt and symbolism (Savoy 169).¹ Thus, gothic is a form that evolves, continuously transforming its protagonists and landscapes to meet the needs of its time. What ways this transformation occurs and why can be seen as two chief concerns of gothic criticism, for understanding gothic's shifting boundaries allows us to understand the genre itself: its focus, its implications, its interconnections with political movements.

While contemporary audiences become familiarized with works like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Event Horizon* (1997) as the latest imports of the gothic,² another mutation of the gothic has emerged, one particularly potent in its political agenda: the postcolonial gothic. Judie Newman's 1995 analysis of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *The Sohhray Case* in *The Ballistic Bard: The Postcolonial Fictions* (ch. 5)

officially launched the term, even if critics had explored many of the novels considered postcolonial gothic well before Newman's work. Its criticism has been furthered by such authors as Andrew Smith, whose focus has heavily explored the relation of European and postcolonial gothic, and William Hughes, who helped, with Smith, to produce *Empire and Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2004), a book solely emphasizing gothic originating from colonization. David Punter, long an expert in gothic, has moved, with his work *Postcolonial Imaginings* (2000), into the territory of loss and postcolonialism, a study fitting well with postcolonial gothic. More isolated critical works have appeared, but postcolonial gothic still remains a fairly new area of scholarship, with this work attempting to help expand the understanding of the genre across several geographic locations. As a genre, postcolonial gothic centers on fictional works penned by authors of formerly colonized areas, many from South Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean—others from the West, mainly the United States and Britain, in the postcolonial diaspora. Even more, postcolonial gothic explores the political issues facing most previously colonized areas: education, government, nationhood, Westernization. It explores the implications of a problematic history, one steeped in the destruction of indigenous heritage as well as the boundaries of personal and social identity. Indeed, it examines issues of family, resistance, and survival. To do so, postcolonial gothic frequently walks through the shadows of a world long past, one now inaccessible.

Yet readers quickly grasp that many of the conventions they expect to see have disappeared, vanished—or changed so ruthlessly as to be almost unrecognizable. Castles transform into pickle factories or family homes complete with verandahs and drawing rooms. Hostile mountainous backdrops fade into packed cities. Ghosts no longer whisper

from paintings or haunt ships. Instead, they are the echoes of past memories, appearing where they cannot exist, as in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1989); they are the ghosts of empire, as in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1998), ethereal moths with "unusually dense dorsal rufts" (Roy 48) fluttering just out of reach. In this new formation of the gothic, ghosts are invisible people, hiding in fear of discovery—and hiding in the most mundane of locations:

There are no mirrors in a washing-chest; rude jokes do not enter it, nor pointing fingers. The rage of fathers is muffled by used sheets and discarded brassières. A washing-chest is a hole in the world, a place which civilization has put outside itself, beyond the pale; this makes it the finest of hiding-places. (Rushdie, *Midnight's* 177)

With its ghosts firmly shoved into the laundry bin, postcolonial gothic undercuts many of the conventions of European gothic. Postcolonial gothic creates a "crypt" world (Punter, *Postcolonial* 21) where the crypts are no longer confined to places gothic heroines face their most lurid fears—instead, they are the crypts of writing conventions of the past reanimated in the present. It is this crypt world that *Walking through the Shadows* investigates, seeking to understand postcolonial gothic as a genre of resistance: resistance against families divided, identities erased, histories lost in the shadow of empire.

Gothic: The Beginning

Since its inception with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and William Beckford's *Vathek* (1782/1786), gothic has produced an extensive array of texts, both primary and critical, that continuously redefine the very nature of gothic. In many

earlier works, such as Ann Radcliffe's 1794 *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, we see a young female heroine pursued by a conniving, aggressive male; the novel's main plot revolves around rescuing the heroine and returning the social structure to its status quo position (Heiland 11). In *The Castle of Otranto*, for example, we find a virginal daughter who must outwit an impatient father, who chases her through the "subterranean passage(s)" so frequently seen in the gothic (Walpole 27). Walpole definitely helped establish the trope of the "fatal castle" (29), complete with an ominous Black Tower, a trap-door, and a "labyrinth of darkness" (27). We see this same castle in Radcliffe, a fortress with its "ancient and dreary" walls and "overhanging turrets" looming over the frightened heroine (*Udolpho* 227). Secrets, hidden identities, and frightful specters—sometimes explained, as in Radcliffe, and sometimes not, as in Beckford and Walpole—create a gothic tapestry that is still recognizable today.

Other novels of the period, such as Charles Maturin's 1820 *Melmoth the Wanderer*, play with hidden knowledge and doppelgängers. Maturin's Melmoth seeks to gain knowledge, even at the expense of making a deal with the devil and damning others who strive to understand who he is (DeLamotte, *Perils* 61). Indeed, in Maturin the reader, too, becomes lured into Melmoth's search for knowledge. Even more, *Melmoth the Wanderer* dissolves its own narrative structure within the confines of a buried narrative: one story within the next story within the next, endlessly repeating itself (Mishra 24; Sedgwick 12). Within the elusive network of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, stories reflect against stories until, eventually, readers begin to lose track of whose story they read. We are lost in the story itself, attempting to discover the knowledge that will allow us to understand the work's complexity. This complex mirroring technique can also be found

in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), where identities dissolve into secret identities that, in turn, collapse into further secret identities until readers are entirely uncertain of who or what anything is. Rosario, for example, becomes Matilda, a beautiful, almost lascivious woman. As Rosario-Matilda eventually changes into Ambrosio's "enchantress" (Lewis 81), readers are, perhaps, unsurprised when Rosario-Matilda becomes a sorceress capable of both raising and controlling demons. Yet Rosario-Matilda-enchantress dissolves once more into a demon, making her a cipher incapable of labeling. The enchanter-becoming-demon is taken up by Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya: Or, the Moor* (1806), where Zofloya transforms from servant to confidante—to master and, eventually, to demon. Gothic, therefore, becomes a form concerned with the boundaries of appearance, of reality and illusion, controlled and controller; it overturns the conventional roles of gender and race, frequently placing females or the racially disempowered in empowering roles. However, even here we find that illusion and reality undercut such a statement, for Matilda and Zofloya are demons: aggressive rule-breakers are, thus, demonized, literally.

Like their predecessors, Charlotte and Emily Brontë—in addition to adopting the secret chambers, hostile landscapes, decayed castles and manors, secret identities, and mysterious appearances and disappearances—both explore the issues of boundary crossing though their focus on boundaries appears to be more social in nature. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, often considered one of the landmark feminist and gothic texts (Gilbert and Gubar 337-8), Jane symbolizes the outcast, the Other even as she perversely represents that very same Victorian society's social and moral codes. Jane strongly foils Victorian society's more prototypical characters, such as John Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst of Lowood. Rochester even attempts to recast Jane as something more

typical to Victorian ideology, crafting her as an “elf” (312) or an “angel” (315). Jane only gains authority over her own image when she confronts the Other locked in Rochester’s attic, Bertha, a “fearful and ghastly” creature with “a savage face” (283). Both Jane and Bertha share alarming similarities, though, for both are orphaned; both are poor; both matured in unstable environments where their identities were consistently challenged (Heiland 126). Thus, they are “distorted image[s]” of one another (Heiland 126), cautionary doppelgängers: Bertha is the image of what Jane might become. Jane needs an escape from the possible Rochesterian trap—that of being created or shaped by another—so that she can enter marriage on her own terms.

In Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, we move into another situation of doppelgängers, yet here the reflections of identity uncover an identity in dissolution. Readers become aware almost immediately of the problem, for names repeat from the first page. As Stevie Davies writes, naming the second Catherine is a difficult chore, for “I do not even know what to call her, and the difficulty I am encountering and recording will be detected in all other books on *Wuthering Heights*” (191). Like her mother, the second Catherine owns several names. She is Catherine Linton, Catherine Heathcliff, and Catherine Earnshaw. Also like her mother, she is one human being with three separate names, each packed with meaning but merely transitory. She is all of these names, yet she is none of them. Grouped together, both Catherines possess six names, each name radiating from the person signified but never completely naming that person. Even more, Catherine is not Catherine, for as she says, “I *am* Heathcliff!” (102). In this way, we have repetitious selves, doubles that make one character blur into the other. Social expectations and confinement—entrapment—may well be one reason behind this dissolution of self,

for Catherine is confined just as Bertha is: she must behave certain ways, dress certain ways, be a certain person, one that she truly cannot survive being. Catherine's entrapment within the roles prescribed by society eventually leads to her death, a fairly strong warning to readers of the dangers of role entrapment. Catherine's entrapment is performed over and over by not only Emily Brontë's characters, but by characters in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, illustrating that confinement within social roles can lead to madness and death for both genders, for all social classes.

The Gothic of Empire: Racial Pollution in the Empire

While the Brontës unquestionably deal with social boundaries and self-identity, they are also forerunners in what has been termed, particularly by Patrick Brantlinger, as Imperial Gothic: the gothic of empire. We can trace the thread of Imperial Gothic as far back as Beckford's 1782/1786 *Vathek*, with its emphasis of Orientalism and gothic, yet the form seems to have gained strength with the publication of *Zofloya* (1806), *Frankenstein* (1818), *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Dracula* (1891), and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). The time period that accompanied these texts, most considered major works of the period, faced its strongest cultural crises yet—sexual, moral, and scientific—even as it began to encode a very strong ideology of race that extended much from Darwin's work. Furthermore, this ideology of race reinforced the colonial project of Europe as it expanded its empire to include the East, an ideology that becomes increasingly coherent in the gothic literature of the era.

H. L. Malchow and Anne McClintock have discussed how the publication of Darwins' *The Origin of the Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1860) helped produce the ideology of racial ranking. According to the racial discourse of the time, man's descent from apes could be traced in indigenous populations, the "savages" of the South where man first formed (McClintock 37-8; see also Spencer 204). Europe, at this time period, was seen as progressive, continuing to march towards a stronger civilization, while the Southern hemisphere was deemed as steeped in backward thought and behavioral patterns. Thus, ethnicity, to Malchow, was conflated with skin color, fixing the ideological boundaries between race/ethnicity/location (172). The racial ideology of the time suggested that the colonized or savage cultures of the Orient, mainly in the southern portions of the globe, were connected through physiognomy to the ape: their jaws were thrust out more, their faces were more simian in nose and eyes, their arms were more hairy, and their skulls more resembled the shape and size of the ape (McClintock 39). The era, as part of the Great Exhibitions from colonial societies, actually "exhibited," according to Malchow (12) and McClintock (56-7), the differences to exaggerate them and justify the need for European "paternal" authority in the East. Europeans, in this patronizing and dehumanizing theory, were the loving, benign parents of the children in the East, who were supposed to be grateful for their intervention (McClintock 45). Out of this ideological nexus of race and social ranking arises Imperial Gothic, a term that has evolved since Patrick Brantlinger initially coined it in 1988. When discussing the field of gothic, naming is itself problematic. Texts focusing on what Janina Nordius has described as "center[ing] on the destabilizing forces at work in the colonial encounter" (673) have been alternately called *colonial gothic* (Nordius 673; Warwick

262) and *Empire Gothic*, a term Hughes links most with travel literature throughout the empire and which he traces to Victor Sage's "Empire Gothic: Explanation and Epiphany in Conan Doyle, Kipling and Chesterton" (Hughes 122).

To further muddy the waters, Brantlinger's use was originally *imperial Gothic* though most critics now capitalize the *Imperial* as well as *Gothic*. Brantlinger's critical work, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, defined the form as works written between 1880 and 1914, where "Western rationality may be subverted by the very superstition it rejects" (227). To Brantlinger, Imperial Gothic blends rational Darwinism with the occult as British Empire was reaching its climax, religious belief was waning, and general anxiety over political viability left readers searching for answers outside of the traditional (227-8). In addition to séances and "psychic research" (Brantlinger 228), audiences turned to romance, "invasion fantasies" (235), and travel writing to inject the exotic into their existence. However, many have extended Brantlinger's original timeline and definition, adding works as early as *Vathek* and *Frankenstein* while at the same time including race as a distinctive feature of the Imperial Gothic form (Smith and Hughes 4-5). As Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert has written, Imperial Gothic originated in the 1790s, when "Gothic writers were quick to realize that Britain's growing empire could prove a vast source of frightening 'others'" (229). Andrew Smith and William Hughes portray these "others" by illuminating the political undercurrents of Imperial Gothic: "how a *Gothic* language of otherness becomes conflated with images of *colonial* otherness" (4). In this way, Smith and Hughes provide an edited collection of essays expanding the ideas of Imperial Gothic, examining the

Orientalist tendencies in *Vathek*, slave abolition in *Zofloya* (1806), and even the invasive force of *Dracula*.

Imperial Gothic, with its anxiety over empire, frequently discusses pollution as a consequence of foreign invasion. Indeed, Tim Fulford has mentioned that fear of the French Revolution's taint played heavily in the literature of the nineteenth century (164), and he is not alone in this assessment; fear of the French Revolution "made the specter of radical Protestantism towards the end of the decade appear an even more menacing scare than the Catholic superstition of earlier literary Gothic" (Nordius 682). The French Revolution led to enormous social changes (Riquelme 586), with many debating the limits of individualism and liberty (Heiland 15).³ To Robert Miles, the "Gothic explosion" of the 1790s was "collateral damage from the French Revolution" (42). This fear of pollution extends beyond the French Revolution. In many ways, Imperial Gothic can be seen as fear of the colonized, produced in the "contact zones of the empire" (Hurley 195): the contact zones of foreign ideas, theories, and influences. We can easily trace this fear of pollution to marriage as well, for fear of miscegenation reflects a fear of an impure bloodline (DeLamotte, "White Terror" 24; LaMothe 63; Spencer 207).

In the texts of Imperial Gothic, then, anxiety over race, social dissolution and pollution, and human rationality form the basis of many plots or characters as they explore the influences of contact with the empire. *Vathek* launches this discourse, set far from the shores of Europe with the Caliph Vathek ruling from his many palaces. Possessing an anger that made "his eyes . . . so terrible that no person could bear to behold" them (par. 1), Vathek indulges in sensuality. The story richly describes his five palaces, his tower with eleven thousand steps, sabers "whose blades emitted a dazzling

radiance” (par. 17), his beautiful wives, his eunuchs, and a magical trickster, the Giaour, in vivid detail that quickly approaches the Orientalism discussed in Edward Said’s work. We may, as Said, see this as a method of control over the Oriental Other (*Orientalism* 60), the Other feared as a source of contamination. When Vathek becomes increasingly ruthless, willing to sacrifice fifty children for his own benefit, to kill a feminized male to obtain his idolized woman, to break the laws of hospitality, he is thoroughly demonized.

We continuously see this fascination with the racialized Other in Imperial Gothic. In *Jane Eyre*, the Other is Bertha, who is dehumanized on our first sighting of her: “What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (C. Brontë 293). Bertha can also be seen, according to Gayatri Spivak’s “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,” as the categorical imperative that insists that conquerors must “*make* the heathen into a human so that he can be treated as an end in himself” (267). *Wuthering Heights*’ Heathcliff can also arguably be seen as the racial Other. Of doubtful heritage and a dark, gypsy-like appearance, Heathcliff is Othered from the first. Heathcliff is a “dirty, ragged, black-haired child,” one who is “dark . . . as . . . the devil” (E. Brontë 45). “It,” according to our narrator Nelly, “repeated over and over again some gibberish” (46); Nelly fears he is “dumb” (46) because he cannot communicate with them. He is, to Hindley, both a “dog” and “imp of Satan” (49). To Isabella, he is an “incarnate goblin” (212)—something inhuman, a reiteration of him as “it”—possessing “sharp cannibal teeth” (219). Even Frankenstein’s monster gets the same descriptions, with his “shriveled complexion and straight black lips” (Shelley 66), his lumbering size, even his dexterity (Malchow 18). Frankenstein has created a

“miserable monster,” one whom he immediately associates with “the hue of death” (67) for humanity and those he loves. Throughout the novel, we repeatedly see Frankenstein—the European master—hurl epithets at his creation: “miserable monster” (67), “demoniacal corpse” (68), “dreaded spectre” (72), “filthy daemon” (94). By the end of the nineteenth century, with the appearance of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1891), we confront a different monster, the vampire of the foreign Transylvania whose apparent desire is to penetrate England with his polluted blood (Spencer 207). In *Dracula*, we find a threat that invades not the wilds, not the remote islands, but the heart of England itself: its parlors, its families, its wives.

It is critical that in most Imperial Gothic, the threat is eventually—often after extensive damage—contained. Vathek’s end is death, a containment eternal and inescapable in the halls of Eblis. Bertha plunges through the fires of Thornfield, silenced forever. Heathcliff, after wreaking revenge against two families, finally joins Catherine in death. Frankenstein disappears into the arctic wastelands, a hulking figure vanishing from the narrator’s sight. Dracula is killed, his castle seemingly becoming peaceful in his death. In Imperial Gothic, though the boundaries between master and servant collapse, though reality and illusion collide, though society has been upset by an invasion it could not hope to understand, the invaders perish so that European society may continue in peace. Thus, like earlier forms of gothic, Imperial Gothic questions the limits of social ideology—but it frequently restores those limits before the final page has been turned.

The Postcolonial Gothic: Empire No More

Emerging most prominently in the 1960s, gothic faced its own invasion: that of the postcolonial. A new form of gothic literature was on the horizon, and its explosion of Imperial Gothic conventions suggests the politically charged nature of postcolonial gothic. Though we must retain a definition that is fairly mutable, postcolonial gothic is a powerful discourse of resistance that challenges Eurocentric and imperial practices enacted even today, practices that dehumanize or disqualify the postcolonial world from equity with the industrialized nations. By focusing on a literature of boundary erosion and interrogation, postcolonial gothic allows authors to confront their own pasts, their own futures, and the struggles for identity and self-autonomy that are even now unresolved. However, while postcolonial gothic focuses on the ability to change the present, to escape the mistakes of the past or to accept that the past cannot be recovered, the genre also offers an ambiguity that does not allow for easy categorization or homogenous description. Because it consistently undermines the resolutions common in European literature and because its characters are so frequently incapable of salvation, postcolonial gothic shows that the impact of the colonizing past remains with us: that it is not easily escaped by simply adding a *post* to *postcolonial*. Indeed, many of its more memorable themes—entrapment, monstrosity, incest—remind readers that we, too, may be incapable of resolving our lives as optimistically as we would like, no matter which culture we exist in, for we are all products of our histories.

Postcolonial gothic does not hold a simple, easily construed definition, and there is ample reason for this: it changes, as does gothic in general, between one text and the next. However, seeking to provide a workable, insightful definition for the term is critical

to understanding the genre. Perhaps starting with a definition of postcolonialism is helpful, though it should not be seen as an essentialist, monolithic definition, for postcolonialism itself consistently shows us that it grows, evolves. At its very simplest, we might want to say, however erroneously, that it is the theory relating to geographic locations that have been colonized and decolonized. As Edward Said has written in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), this is not simply an overly simplified definition, but it is also a false definition. It can even be argued that *postcolonial* is a Western “*alibi*” (Punter, *Postcolonial* 124) for neocolonial practices still very alive today in global strategies of domination; postcolonial theory “ignores the fact of class division” and “stratification” throughout the world (Young 240). This is because the ideology of imperialism continues today, based off Enlightenment Eurocentricism that still posits the human being as a fully whole, contained self that must assure itself of its very existence by comparing itself to an alienated, inferior “Other” (Spivak, *Postcolonial Critique* ch. 2). Western ideology continues to believe that the self must be without fractures; as Trinh Minh-Ha has argued, to have split personalities in the West is to be ““mentally ill”” (95). Such a critique may help us explain why doubled and split selves roam the pages of many postcolonial gothic texts, for the texts resist the European ideology of a contained, homogeneous self. Additionally, the ideology of the West can still be seen, through sinister forms, in the strongly solidified notions of race, which harken back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and connect race to nation and economic viability (McClintock ch. 2).

What this means to postcolonial gothic studies is that the ideology of race, which was used to provide a mission for the process of imperialism, still remains (Spencer 203-

5; Gilroy 32). Understanding the almost rigid construction of racial, gender, class, and sexual borders of postcolonial texts across geographic lines serves as perhaps the most effective way of journeying into postcolonial gothic texts, for these very rigid constructs are the exact boundaries that postcolonial gothic texts attempt to destroy (Anolik and Howard 3). In a way, Eugenia DeLamotte's "White Terror, Black Dreams" (2004) may help us clarify exactly *why* these territories are so intrinsically solidified. DeLamotte writes that Imperial Gothic strives to place the feared racial Other in a rigidly codified position so that, as she calls it, immorality can be conflated with darkness (24). This conflation, an interesting insight into the dynamics of racialization, allows Europeans to assume that, because of race, they are immune to the immorality and degeneration they see as only being a racial characteristic of the "black" (DeLamotte, "White Terror" 24-5). When connected with McClintock's landmark study on the nature of European ideology in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Colonial Contest* (1995), we can readily develop a solid understanding of the foundations of many of the boundaries that postcolonial gothic, especially in its feminine form, attempts to abolish. As can be seen in Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), these categories are part of a Eurocentric, binary system that posits man/woman, white/black, sexual control/sexual deviance, and bourgeois/working class in a system of almost unscalable, uncollapsible oppositions.

That being said, how do we define *postcolonial gothic* given such sweeping problematics in the definition of postcolonialism itself? This is one of the chief concerns of *Walking through the Shadows*. Given that the term *postcolonial gothic* itself was not coined until 1995, in Judie Newman's *The Ballistic Bard: The Postcolonial Fictions* (ch.

5), it is not surprising that defining the term can be frustrating; this becomes particularly true when we consider that the texts typically labeled as *postcolonial gothic* have been discussed well before Newman's work emerged. In an analysis of criticism on the postcolonial gothic, we continuously see a focus on one aspect of the term—postcolonialism *or* gothic—rather than both. Anthony Luengo's "*Wide Sargasso Sea* and the Gothic Mode" (1976) is one perfect example of this difficulty. Luengo explores gothic tropes in Rhys' work, focusing on landscape and villainy as they affect the characters. However, Luengo does not discuss postcolonialism or imperialism, keeping his focus strictly on the gothic nature of the work. Paradoxically, thus, Luengo is a pioneer of the postcolonial gothic genre though he never mentions postcolonialism in any way. Almost the reverse is true of yet another pioneer in the genre: Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985). In this text, Spivak, like Luengo, examines *Wide Sargasso Sea* in relation to *Jane Eyre* (as well as *Frankenstein*), focusing on the imperial tendencies of both texts. Spivak brilliantly incorporates the quest for power with economic disparity and the erasure in her analysis, yet her focus is postcolonial worlding, not gothic. Similarly, Kathleen Renk's *Caribbean Shadows and Victorian Ghosts: Women's Writing and Decolonization* (1999) focuses on the grinding tension between familial traditions and Obeah and the oppression of colonial law, persuasively showing the connection between politics and gender as well as race—but evading the gothic as she does so. To further problematize the issue, other critics have discussed the concept with perhaps too rigid a definition of *gothic* to be helpful. We find such a situation in Peter Morey's *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (2000), which focuses on the supernatural in Indian literature. Morey believes that gothic attempts to

deny its supernatural elements though Indian literature embraces it. While an intriguing contention, Morey's analysis leaves Indian literature, a significant field of postcolonial literature, disassociated from a genre with which it shares numerous connections.

In such a state of paradox and focal disparities, postcolonial gothic may best be defined by traveling back to its roots: the gothic. Many have argued that gothic attacks or otherwise frustrates boundaries (DeLamotte, *Perils* 56; Heiland 6; Renk 23-5), and this is an excellent starting point for a definition of the term. In postcolonial gothic, the boundaries that consistently find themselves crossed are the boundaries that haunt a society previously (and still) colonized, especially those related to the past. Smith and Hughes, in their foundational study *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2004), support such an articulation of postcolonial gothic, where postcolonial gothic becomes a genre of writing used to uncover the terrors of the past, to understand the transformative nature of hybridity in narrative style, and to remove the ideology of objective narrative from discourse. Postcolonial gothic is also the literature of paradox: to Newman it is "Janus-faced," a discourse of the "unspoken and the 'spoken for'" (70). To Mariaconcetta Costantini, gothic can be seen as a hybrid form that "implies that dominant ideologies are tested and weakened by the emergence of otherness in a world in which boundaries are increasingly blurred" (155); in the postcolonial gothic, as in *Heat and Dust* specifically, "the narrator inaugurates a new course of action which is not only anti-paternalistic and anti-patriarchal, but also fully respectful of cultural and racial differences" (164). Postcolonial gothic, thus, as this dissertation will argue, becomes a form that challenges dominant ideological stances of the conqueror, a genre that allows for a hybrid form of literature that admits not one perspective, but many.

One significant facet of postcolonial gothic is reinvention of European conventions. While not specifically addressing gothic, Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) can provide excellent insight here. As Ashcroft argues, discourse must engage in "the adaptation or evolution of metropolitan practices" to lead to "an appropriation of the power invested in writing" (76). Language, textual genres, modes of writing must all, to Ashcroft, be used to redefine culture and the margins of society. Ashcroft is not the only one who believes that post-colonial literature must "write back" to the culture that has oppressed it. Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, claims that a text must engage in "*writing back* to the metropolitan cultures, disrupting the European narratives of the Orient and Africa, replacing them with either a more playful or a more powerful new narrative style" (216). Thus, both authors mention that postcolonial authors must *write back* to the discourses of oppression, such as in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902). *Jane Eyre* and *Heart of Darkness* alone have spawned a scholastic empire of their own, with Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966/1969) serving pivotal critical responses (Newman, ch. 2; Caminero-Santangelo, ch. 3) as well as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Significant research has been done on the postcolonial gothic nature of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. While Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women Writer's" is one of the most well known of these works, Nicola Nixon's "*Wide Sargasso Sea* and Jean Rhys' Interrogation of the 'Nature Wholly Alien' in *Jane Eyre*" presents an excellent analysis of Antoinette as heavily laden with imperialist encoding that marginalizes her; along similar lines, Sylvie Maurel's "Across the 'Wide Sargasso Sea': Jean Rhys's Revision of

Charlotte Brontë's Eurocentric Gothic" explores issues of language, power, and domination. Finally, Trenton Hickman's "The Colonized Woman as Monster in *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Annie John*" explores Obeah as dangerous and subversive to empire.

We can see that postcolonial gothic, in one of its earlier forms, actively seeks to "write back" to previous Imperial Gothic literature. Yet the postcolonial gothic does not restrain itself to the boundaries of writing back; rather, it is also the literature of loss, as David Punter has written (*Postcolonial* 25). Julie Azzam, in her 2007 dissertation, sees postcolonial gothic as a way, among other possibilities, to resolve "political and social tension on both the national and familial levels" (137). For Punter, it is unlikely that we will find a colonized territory that does not suffer its own ghosts of the past, the fear of recolonization or "the potential uprising of its relics and fossils" (*Postcolonial* 60). In the "crypt" world (Punter, *Postcolonial* 21) of the postcolonial, boundaries disappear and reappear, establishing a cycle that at times seems incapable of resolution—a truth we find devastatingly portrayed in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1990) and Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999). Connected heavily to loss is the postcolonial encounter with human economics and gendering as well as sexuality (Minh-Ha 85-6; Spivak, *Can the Subaltern* 76), which postcolonial gothic weaves steadily into its novels. We clearly see this in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Marie-Elena John's *Unburnable* (2006), and Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975). Thus, to expand our definition of postcolonial gothic, we can say that it is a literature of resistance to imperial ideology, both past and present, that focuses on destroying former ideological presentations of the colonized—whether in race, social status, sexuality, or gender—even

as it questions and interrogates present concerns of power and domination, including the examination of representation and human history.

Postcolonial Gothic: Evolution of the Genre

Postcolonial gothic's first appearance in novel form seems, upon examining the texts, to be Mudrooroo Narogin's *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (1938), an Australian text in which British colonizers are fantastically attacked in the tradition of Ghost Dreaming: a spiritual empowerment where the boundaries of earthly life are replaced in the dream sequence. The Master of the Ghost Dreaming, Jangamuttuk, uses the Ghost Dream "[n]ot only . . . to attempt the act of possession, but . . . to bring all of his people in contact with the ghost realm so that they could capture the essence of health and well-being" (Narogin 3-4). In this mystical interweaving of dream and postcolonial discourse, Narogin replaces castles with mountains shaped like fortresses; the quintessential gothic villain finds expression in the form of Fada, whose actions decimate a population with disease. Despite its mystical fabric, the gothic, consequently, is given more prosaic dimensions, a horror all the more profound when its impact touches audiences through its very realism.

However, it is in the 1960s and 1970s that we see much of the genre take shape. Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) in particular should be seen as an explicit counter-discussion to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), for it retains the characters, even some of the settings, used within Brontë's work. If Brontë's *Jane Eyre* represents the typical female gothic heroine, orphaned and facing trials she eventually overcomes even as she wins the love of her heart, Rhys' Antoinette, of mixed blood and heir to a sizable fortune,

is anything but the typical female gothic heroine: in her trials she fails, losing not only her income and self-autonomy but also her name and self-identity (Maurel 108; Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 272). She becomes the imprisoned Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre*, Jane’s chained rival to marriage with Rochester.

Appearing in Arabic in 1966 and English in 1969, Tayeb Salih’s *The Season of Migration to the North* offers another strong descriptor of the genre.⁴ In the heart of Sudan, a murderer appears: vicious, absolutely lacking compassion, sexually motivated, imported straight from London. Salih is careful to show us that this murderer, Mustafa Sa’eed, was born in Sudan in the same year, 1898, as the “bloody defeat of the Mahdist forces by Kitchener’s army . . . signal[ing] the final collapse of Sudanese resistance to British encroachment” (Makdisi 811) and that he disappeared when Sudan gains independence (Makdisi 813). Even more, Sa’eed is educated in European schools, yet instead of serving the Empire, as expected, he attacks London’s female population. Invasive and horrific, Salih’s work forces open the boundaries of European ideology: women attack men, literally castrating them; the safe village becomes the scene of bloodshed and death; the colonized rise against the colonizers. Postcolonial gothic, therefore, is the site of boundary crossing, with many of the boundaries crossed being European.

Two of postcolonial gothic’s most well-known authors—Bessie Head and Ruth Praver Jhabvala—published landmark texts within one year of one another. Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power* (1974) places the gothic in Botswana, a haven Head’s main character Elizabeth escapes to after surviving the horrors of South Africa. Elizabeth sinks into an almost hallucinatory world, and we are never quite sure if she is completely

sane—and this uncertainty is exacerbated in the character of Sello. Much like Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Sello seems a progressive farmer, but he mutates frequently into a demon in Elizabeth's mental landscape.⁵ Thus, Elizabeth is trapped in a world that she does not understand, one that seems dangerous to her and where she is controlled by the poisons of a colonizing past that she cannot easily escape. Orphaned and "mad," she must learn who she is through the labyrinth of madness; she must confront the true nature of who she is. In many ways, Head takes the conventional tropes of gothic—the jail, the madness, the ghost—and completely explodes them by making them both delusional and true, for Elizabeth *is* imprisoned, *is* mad, *is* a ghost of herself, a shade of what she could have been—yet her prison, her madness, her lack of substance comes from the very power that has victimized Africa: its colonizing past and, one suspects, its colonizing present.

Against this scene of madness we may find Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* encouraging. In Jhabvala, the decayed ruins of colonial administration—bungalows now "gloomy, brooding" and filled with dead squirrels (24), the graves "weed-choked, and stripped" (24)—immediately suggest the gothic, and this theme strongly continues as we meet Harry and Olivia. Both characters are outwitted by the Nawab, their lives controlled until they are literally trapped. Harry becomes a child (Costantini 162), a transformation that mimics the patronizing tone of much colonial discourse (cf. Said, *Orientalism* 38-40), even as Olivia falls to the Nawab's sexual advances. Pregnant, unprotected by her husband, Olivia pays the greatest price: she is whisked away, never to be seen or heard from again, firmly within the Nawab's control. Against this despairing situation Jhabvala gives us hope, for the narrator is able not only to reconstruct Olivia's history but to also

make peace with herself and India (Costantini 164; Newman 34). Thus, Jhabvala offers us two possible interpretations of the postcolonial gothic: one where the heroine falls to her pursuer, to the previously colonized, and one where she escapes, learning to embrace herself and the culture in which she finds herself.

Madness, violence, and entrapment continue as themes in the 1980s, one of the most prolific of postcolonial gothic decades with such authors as Anita Desai, J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie, Jamaica Kincaid, and Toni Morrison. Like Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) tells two stories: the memories of things past for a middle-class Hindu family in India and the current time for this same family. Desai's story focuses on the family's loss of parents, connection between siblings, religious and political divisiveness, and financial and social strain as India erupts into violence at its partitioning. Perhaps one of the more obvious themes of gothic is the idea of Old/New: we see New Delhi set against Old Delhi, where Old Delhi decays: "a great cemetery, every house a tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves" (5). New Delhi bustles with activity, for it is "where things happen" (5)—yet Bim and Baba never go there. Bim tells us that "Old Delhi does not change" (5), and perhaps this hints at the crux of the entire novel: that India has changed, the family has changed, and we feel that it was not always a change for the better. However, while the comparative of old and new seems strongly to match gothic conventions, Desai thoroughly retracts that familiarity by undercutting other tropes. The dark, forbidden area of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic becomes a well, where once a cow stumbled, fell in, and decayed. The menacing vampires of John William Polidori and Bram Stoker become vampiric mosquitoes. While this almost farcical touch lightens the text's political discussion, it does not dismiss it, for

it becomes increasingly apparent that the characters are entrapped in roles they have been forced to assume even as these roles suffocate them.

Entrapment continues as a strong theme in the works of Salman Rushdie, especially *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983). Born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the midnight of India's independence, Saleem Sinai of *Midnight's Children* tells us a story of disintegration, families self-destructing, battles, and secrets haunting his family and his nation. Ghosts, witches, telepaths, all vividly walk through the tribulations of independence and partitioning, yet the most important aspect to understand is that Saleem is forcefully connected to India's history: entrapped until he has no identity, a cracking within or splitting. Even as he cracks, so, too, does India, as does the narrative of Rushdie's novel. Rushdie, indeed, forces readers to question whether there is hope for national independence or postcolonial agency; one way of explaining his work might be to suggest that the current generation may not be capable of resolution, but perhaps future generations may begin to work past their broken legacies.

Shame intensifies the entrapment we see in *Midnight's Children*, for in *Shame*, Sufiya Zinobia is entrapped within the madness of her own mind. Beginning with turkeys and then quickly escalating to men, Sufiya mutilates the bodies of her victims, decapitating them. Her entrapment becomes physical when her husband attempts to lock her away in one of the most typical gothic tropes, the "madwoman" locked up by a man. Yet Sufiya's entrapment is not solely through her husband: she is trapped in her family's shame, in the same of the English civilized society's colonial practices penetrating India. Susan Spearey has argued, even more, that *Shame* "addresses the unspeakable monsters and the silenced spectres that overspill the borders of Pakistan" (171), specters residing

within Sufiya. The postcolonial gothic in Rushdie, then, becomes a genre where self-division and madness abound, often created by the roles people force upon others. However, despite the negative ramifications of self-division and madness, Rushdie continuously shows that boundaries can be crossed, even destroyed, by imagining the possibilities of a world without them.

Antiguan author Jamaica Kincaid presents a wonderfully small text packed with some of the strongest postcolonial gothic themes: *Annie John* (1985). Situated in the heart of the Caribbean, Kincaid's work first appears to be a *bildungsroman* about Annie John, our protagonist. As a child, Annie had a very close relationship with her mother. Yet, sadly and very abruptly, the mother no longer practices this habit as Annie reaches maturity with her first menstrual cycle. Annie is now "of age" to become a woman, and her mother seemingly becomes a new person: she is not the same woman who loved Annie, but she becomes the ideological Western Woman, the woman who sees herself as separate from her family, the woman who encourages disciplined behavior. Annie rebels against this sudden departure of the mother she loved, as Renk states (49); even more, she descends into a "zombification" (Renk 51) where her eyes stare blankly at nothing. This can be seen as madness, obviously, but it is a very real fear given form in the novel. "Ripping" or zombification can be seen clearly as a byproduct of colonization, which rips out the community connections and love established between mother and daughter in *Annie John* and leaves nothing but a fragment committed to journeying to the source of her destruction, England (Renk 52). As with Rushdie's *Shame*, the transformation into monstrosity—in this case, the zombie—emerges when characters face entrapment, particularly in their cultural and gender roles.

The turn of the century has produced works heavily focused on recovering history and confronting the ghosts of the past. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997) features one text that definitely seeks to break boundaries. In *The God of Small Things*, readers are thrown into a defamiliarized context where almost everything seems to dissolve. Roy heavily draws upon fragmented construction within the work, including fragmented sentence structure and fragmented narrative construction where past/present/future temporalities are displaced, elusively tangling with one another throughout the work. This is especially reminiscent of the narrative structure of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, where time shifts from scene to scene, fragmenting the overall timeline and removing the linearity of expected European writing techniques. As we read the text, it becomes progressively clear that there truly *is* no decolonization; this is not strictly a postcolonial text, for the forces of neocolonialism are alive and well (Azzam 156). Neocolonialism is played upon with Roy's narrative strategy, where what was past becomes alive once more, hinting quite clearly that the past domination of empire still exists in the present. Even more, the new generation, as represented by Estha and Rahel, cannot access the History House: they cannot access their own history, and, thus, there is no chance of understanding the past. Any attempts to move beyond their present quagmire has also been removed, for Estha and Rahel begin an incestuous relationship that further collapses their self-identities; while Julie Azzam interprets this incest as "the interpenetration of the public into the private sphere" (168), where political problems infiltrate the bedroom, the loss of individualism the twins share seems to suggest more a loss of identity than public/private interpenetration.

Moving from India to the Caribbean, we find in Marie-Elena John's *Unburnable* (2006) many of the same themes. Lillian Baptiste, who lives in Washington, D.C., has escaped her background, a background that haunts her. John begins the story in the past, with the narrative of Lillian's grandmother and mother, completely decentering linear narrative progression and emphasizing, as with Roy, the discontinuity of time and the reoccurrence of the past in the present. In John's work, we find that Lillian is trying to understand her family history, but she is finding it difficult to understand, for the community has misrepresented it entirely. Her grandmother, an Obeah of supposedly fierce and murderous disposition, was hung; her mother, Iris, a prostitute, was supposedly mad. Her father is unknown, likely a customer, while her grandfather was one of the last remaining Caribs on the island. We later learn that many of the facts Lillian has been told were wrong, highlighting the problems of reconstructing any history—or accepting the histories of others. In the literature of resistance, John clearly shows us that recreating our histories is integral to recreating ourselves.

Even as Roy and John significantly focus on historical reconstruction, formerly-Nigerian author Chris Abani's *Virgin in Flames* (2007) devastatingly portrays an apocalyptic world where no histories can be reconstructed, where the protagonist's own works are "[h]ieroglyphs that he had created and whose meanings remained a mystery even to him" (38). Symbolically named Black, Abani's protagonist feels he has no origins, no moorings, no identity; he is black, absolute night. Like Rushdie's Saleem, Black is disintegrating. Ghosts haunt him. The vision of the Virgin Mary appears just out of his reach. The angel Gabriel follows him. In this combination of madness and hallucination, one reminiscent of Head's *A Question of Power*, readers, like Black, are

left wondering what exactly is real, what is illusion. As ash falls upon Los Angeles, brush fires consuming the landscape, Black himself is on fire, flames licking his skin—an image hauntingly reminiscent of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. Black plunges into the river below him as the city burns, leaving no hope at all in a postcolonial gothic novel where collision with reality leads only to death.

While there can never be a simple description of postcolonial gothic, the genre's focus on boundaries remains consistent. Earlier eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic may have focused on the boundaries of gendered behaviors and social class, yet postcolonial gothic widens its discussion to the boundaries of history, the boundaries of reality and illusion, the boundaries of race and culture. Madness, entrapment, self-identity all become vital facets to postcolonial gothic's ability to challenge existing social order, even to challenge existing ideologies. In this genre of shifting boundaries, we may well remember the words of Rushdie's Omar Khayyam Shakil: "I am a translated man. I have been *borne across*. It is generally believed that something is lost in translation; I cling to the notion . . . that something can also be gained" (Rushdie, *Shame* 24).

Walking through the Shadows

A thorough investigation of postcolonial gothic, one following in the footsteps of Smith and Hughes' *Empire and the Gothic*, is critical for understanding the connection between the gothic, boundary exposure and collapse, and resistance literature. Furthering the study of intertextual resonances, Smith and Hughes' *Empire and the Gothic* pursues the discussion of "writing back" seen in Gyan Prakash's "Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985). Their work, anthologizing essays on content ranging

from Beckford to Coetzee, advances a chronological view of the connections between gothic and imperialism. While the first half of their work is instrumental in suggesting that some Imperial Gothic demonizes rather than supports European activities in the empire, it is the section on postcolonial literature that most impacts *Walking through the Shadows*. After stating, like Kathleen Spencer, that *Dracula* can be seen as a text where England is invaded rather than the empire, *Empire and the Gothic* proceeds to show how postcolonial texts directly reverse the invasive conventions of many Imperial Gothic works that serve to support European ideology. Beginning with Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and continuing with Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, Smith and Hughes' text offers us hope in believing that the nightmares of the past can be escaped, yet they do not offer complete resolution. Irony, seen in James Farrell's *Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), dissolves the belief that any history can be narrated with objectivity, while Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* shows that history cannot be escaped. However, although Smith and Hughes' work provides an excellent look at the chronology of the gothic of empire from its earliest stages to its most contemporary, it does not systematically analyze the tropes being used, their differences from European gothic fiction, and their implications, all avenues of rich pursuit for postcolonial gothic. *Walking through the Shadows* will strive to more fully examine the postcolonial gothic in an array of settings and timelines, focusing on the tropes most frequently used as well as their impact on gender and race constructions.

Even more, with the exception of *Empire and the Gothic*, few lengthy works have been written on the topic of postcolonial gothic. Thus, even if much has been written about the tropes of gothic literature in general—particularly in Eve Sedgwick's *The*

Coherence of Gothic Conventions (1980) and in Maggie Kilgour's *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (1995)—and though many authors have thoroughly analyzed gothic history and racial discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, postcolonial gothic remains a fertile landscape for investigation. Many of the works produced on postcolonial gothic have focused more on Imperial Gothic or have been limited to one or two books. Other works focusing on postcolonial gothic have analyzed only one cultural situation or author. It is time, thus, for a fully comprehensive examination of the genre, one that focuses not only on a variety of texts but also on a variety of cultures. This dissertation, with its analysis of texts from the Caribbean as well as India, Malaysia, and Africa, seeks to explore the basic uniting thematic content of postcolonial gothic as a genre, especially concentrating on the ruins of the past, entrapment in cultural and historical identities, identity fracture and incest, gendered and cultural monstrosity, as well as destruction of past and present. It will end by analyzing the voice of resistance as both an optimistic chance for change as well as a despairing opportunity for failure. Given the work present in the field, then, a more comprehensive analysis of differing geographic locations, authors, and texts will allow scholars to more consistently understand the connection between resistance and gothic in the current era.

Walking through the Shadows begins by studying the definitions of gothic, then moves forward to look at gothic in its eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century form in the texts of Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1764), Ann Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*), and Charles Maturin (*Melmoth the Wanderer*). At this period of gothic, the genre typically resolved its boundary conflicts by supporting the existing power structure. However, as the next chapter shows through analysis of Charlotte Dacre (*Zofloya*), Bram

Stoker (*Dracula*), and H. G. Wells (*The Island of Dr. Moreau*), Imperial Gothic begins to question the foreign Other, the threat that cannot be seen. Zofloya's Victoria, a masculine female, becomes the willing accomplice of Zofloya, the Moor; Stoker's *Dracula* ventures into the very parlors of Europe, carrying infection with him, while Wells creates a world where the "Other" overthrows colonial rule. Thus, it is from Imperial Gothic that postcolonial gothic arises: its particular racial discourse and ideology are dramatically confronted by the texts of postcolonial authors.

The remaining portions of the work launch into a complete analysis of the many thematically significant facets of gothic. This is not intended at all to be a formalist study; rather, it is a genre analysis of postcolonial gothic texts through the lens of postcolonial theory and power discourse. Part Two carries readers through the landscape of despair: the eroding world of the previously colonized. By examining such works of Tayeb Salih (*Season of Migration to the North*), Ruth Praver Jhabvala (*Heat and Dust*), Anita Desai (*Clear Light of Day*), and J. M. Coetzee (*Waiting for the Barbarians*, 1980), it first discusses the ruins of gothic, how they have been transformed into the factories and decaying institutions of colonial authority, symbolic of the historical ties of imperialism operating in the postcolonial world. The dissertation then moves to entrapment, focusing not simply on physical entrapment but also on cultural entrapment inspired by one's heritage: the laws of family that postcolonial characters cannot easily escape. For this analysis, Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, and Tash Aw's *The Silk Harmony Factory* (2005) provide ample examples of entrapment, from the chains of incest in Marlene van Niekerk to the shackles of an incomprehensible family history in Tash Aw. The dissertation finally concludes the section with a look at

inner dissolution in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), a thematic strand most seen through doubling and incest; these traits can be seen as indicative of the repetitious, endless cycle of imperialism and the inability to escape history. As readers will find, doubling and incest ultimately end in paralysis.

In its final section, the dissertation begins to show optimism through the resistance possible in postcolonial discourse, but this optimism is by necessity cautious. Postcolonial gothic does not easily offer happy endings; it does not seek to resolve many of its crises, suggesting that absolute resolution is unlikely given the past turmoil of a conquered world—and, perhaps, that complete resolution may not even be desirable. Monsters, frequently seen with heavily negative connotations in earlier gothic works, transform in postcolonial gothic; they become creatures of power, terrifying in their ability to fight for the right to their own voice. Monsters are seen in Salih's work, but they also can be found in Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983), as well as zombies in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*. The dissertation moves from monstrosity to fire, another image frequently weighted with negative connotations in earlier gothic texts. Relics of the imperial past burn; fire consumes entire towns, families, countries as civil unrest erupts through the colonized world, as seen in Anita Desai's *The Clear Light of Day*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, and Chris Abani's *The Virgin in Flames*. Out of the flames a possibility for new worlds arises. Thus, in this destruction, we find hope mixed with despair.

As the postcolonial world begins to empower the disenfranchised, to offer a home to the dispossessed, a new political existence becomes possible, but it is one fraught with

ambiguity. In the works of Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*) and Marie-Elena John (*Unburnable*), powerful images of success and failure, speech and silence arrive. Thus, in *Walking through the Shadows*, postcolonial gothic is found to be a powerful genre for boundary crossing, for it allows authors to explore history, the ruins of the past, the unknown of the future; it is a powerful genre for resistance against oppression and imperialist strategies. However, postcolonial gothic also suggests that identities and history may never be completely recoverable.

Notes

¹ American Gothic is the subject of Savoy's work, and he begins with the lament that America has no history, so what could it possibly have gothic for? In fact, Savoy argues that America has more use of the gothic than Europe, drawing heavily on tropes to look into "dark American obsessions," especially with "the dark nightmare that is the underside of 'the American dream'" (167). American Gothic typically uses personification to allow "the dead to rise" (168), making "objects ... assume a menacing pseudo-life" (168). Most American plots are non-linear or non-coherent, with guilt as chief associations. Because of the multiple interpretations and valences of symbols in American Gothic, the texts are by nature fragmentary, for they are never complete. Even more importantly, Savoy states that American Gothic is probably the first exploration of the postcolonial, focusing on the "ongoing haunting of history's evils and injustices" (176) as well as the complete disbelief in the centered ego. Most of American Gothic tends towards revenants, symbols of ancestral evils returned, and stories of enclosure that invoke "an acute claustrophobia" (181) as in Poe.

² Interestingly, the gothic has invaded many areas of popular culture, especially in the vampires that have become mass market character types for the press today. We see them wandering through the worlds of H. P. Lovecraft, Anne Rice, Laurell Hamilton; we see them making their dread appearances in *Forever Knight* (1989-1996), *Angel* (1999-2004), *Moonlight* (2007), and *Twilight* (2008), even haunting the imaginations of role playing games like *Jyhad: The Eternal Struggle* (1994-2008).

³ In contrast, Maggie Kilgour has written that it was the English Revolution of 1688, not the French Revolution, that inspired gothic fiction. Kilgour's contention is that gothic emerged amidst fears that liberty and England's "unbroken . . . past" (13) were vanishing in a time of social reform.

⁴ While Salih's work is usually not examined as a gothic text, it bears the hallmarks of gothic writing: entrapment, murder, attempted rape, pursuit, ghosts, and splintered identities.

⁵ Actually, Sello mutates into more than simply a demon. He becomes a monk, a deviant linked with Medusa, and Father Time. This clearly reminds us of Minh-Ha's statement that split personalities are typically viewed as signs of the "mentally ill" (95), for while we may immediately read this as psychosis, perhaps Head is showing us an alternate reading of psychology, where multiplicity allows someone to heal. Miki Flockermann, indeed, writes that madness is a form of resistance to overwhelming control (71).

PART ONE

FOUNDATIONS OF GOTHIC UNEASINESS:

QUESTS FOR POWER IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

(C. Brontë 293)

CHAPTER ONE

DISMANTLING THE HALLS OF POWER:
THE LITERATURE OF QUESTIONING, THE LITERATURE OF RESISTANCE

Vampires, blood dripping down castle walls, frozen moors or wastelands of the far arctic, and ghosts are some of the most familiar images haunting gothic literature, whispering through the pages of gothic novels in ways that keep audiences turning pages quickly or, in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, anxiously sitting at the edge of their chairs in theaters or at home. However, what does *gothic* mean? Is it simply a genre of peculiar tropes, one that must always, as in a script, present certain props to be recognized as gothic? Does gothic change through the centuries, evolving with the cultures that produce it and mimicking that culture's social order? There are few simple answers when one considers the gothic, for it is, overall, a hybrid: a genre that gathers the unfamiliar and the familiar, the outcast and the socially accepted, the ruled and the ruler. It can be a genre of boundary reinforcement, where characters who misbehave are quickly removed from sight, imprisoned, or otherwise repelled. However, it can also be a genre of boundary resistance, where characters not only behave outside social restrictions—but also manage to survive, even to thwart their oppressors.

At this point, we are dancing at the edge of what seems to be an unanswerable question: what is gothic? How do we define it, separating it from other genres? Indeed, why do we frequently associate such famous works as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) with gothic? What makes these works

quintessentially *gothic* in nature? These are some of the most important questions to face when considering the nature of gothic, especially since gothic is itself a form of questioning, a genre that frequently changes its shape once we believe we have captured its essence.

Gothic Definitions: Entering the Labyrinth

One reason we find it so difficult to define gothic is that it is not *a* form, but a combination of forms, a hybrid. Because of its wide wealth of material, the gothic stands as a hybrid, a “transhistorical genre” (Hurley 193) of wide-reaching implications and uses. It carries within it the Romantic tradition, particularly the focus on death, subjectivity, love of the past, landscape, and imagination.¹ In addition, we can make strong claims that gothic is heavily connected to travel literature, one of the facets of the genre that is often linked to Imperial Gothic (Brantlinger 238). One strong example of this can be seen in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). As we pass “mountain-tops, tinged with ethereal blue” (43) and gondolas gliding past the “shadowy outlines of towers and porticos” (184), we encounter an almost overwhelming kaleidoscope of settings: St. Aubert’s chateau La Vallée in France; Madame Cheron’s grand chateau in Thoulouse; Montoni’s mansion-villa in Venice; and, at last, Montoni’s dark, isolated castle of Udolpho in northern Italy. We also find within gothic the adventure story, where heroes or heroines must escape almost impossible odds; perhaps one of the favorite adventure tropes within gothic is the late-night flight or the encounter with banditti, all well illustrated in *Udolpho*. We also find one of the quintessential conventions of gothic in the ghost story, one established with Horace Walpole’s larger-

than-life ghost of Alfonso in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and continued with Catherine's frozen fingers in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Romantic novel, travel log, ghost story—all intermingle within the gothic tradition, becoming inseparable, powerful tools for telling stories and illuminating social issues.

Considering the hybridity of the genre, our problems concretely defining gothic with one standard set of conventions or influences expand when we consider the term itself. Paradoxically, *gothic literature* likely has little to do with the period in history for which it was named. Eighteenth-century readers possessed an altogether different understanding of *gothic* than we now possess:

For Walpole's contemporaries, the Gothic age was a long period of barbarism, superstition, and anarchy dimly stretching from the fifth century AD, when Visigoth invaders precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire, to the Renaissance and the revival of classical learning. In a British context it was even considered to extend to the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the definitive break with the Catholic past. (Clery, "The Genesis" 21)

Thus, for the eighteenth century, *gothic literature* would have been deemed barbaric, as all "[a]rtefacts of the Middle Ages" were, "because of their extravagance and irregularity" (Clery, "Introduction" x). If an eighteenth-century reader confronted such an artifact, the work could not help but be seen as grotesque, something far outside the century's tastes. Walpole's first edition of *Otranto* played upon his contemporaries' understanding of the Medieval period. Readers of the first edition encountered a Preface announcing that the text was "found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the

north of England” and printed in 1529 (Walpole 5); the Preface continued to weave an intriguing provenance, stating it was likely written “between 1095, the æra of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last” (5).² With its supposed Medieval provenance, readers would expect what they would ordinarily revile: necromancers, magic, ghosts, the inexplicable, a complete explosion of the period’s novel of sensibility.³ Walpole’s second edition, subtitled *a Gothic Story* (1765), trampled traditional understandings of the term, as E. J. Clery has persuasively argued, by giving the term a modern usage. *Gothic* was no longer barbaric; it was “modern” when compared to the barbarity of the past, a form utilized by a successful member of Parliament, and a mark of taste and distinction. Walpole’s gesture illustrates better than any other the hybrid nature of gothic: it is a combination of the modern and the “ancient,” the civil and the uncivil.

Another interpretation of the term comes from Donna Heiland’s *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction* (2004). Heiland argues that the term has little to do with the literary form, though she does trace one intriguing connection:

The Goths did much to bring about the fall of the Roman empire . . . and while gothic fiction does not literally depict the Goths’ repeated incursions into Roman territory or the sack of Rome in A.D. 410, gothic fiction *does* tell stories of “invasions” of one sort or another. Gothic fiction at its core is about transgressions of all sorts: across national boundaries, social boundaries, sexual boundaries, the boundaries of one’s own identity. (3)

Thus, more than focusing on the barbaric nature of the era, Heiland allows us to see the historic connection with shattered boundaries, though she by no means states that this is the only way of seeing the term. We see a similar definition in Richard Davenport-Hines’

Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin, where he states that the Goths' "love of plunder and revenge ushered in a dark age, and the word 'goth' is still associated with dark powers, the lust for domination and inveterate cruelty" (1).

Davenport-Hines allows us to connect themes of darkness, of barbarity typically associated with the Medieval era with Heiland's discussion of boundaries invaded, edging us ever closer to an understanding of the term's use within literature. Gothic literature specializes in horror, in uncovering the "unspeakable"—the things of the past that have remained to haunt the present. It consistently erodes boundaries between social classes, genders, ethnicities, nationalities, and races, acting as a form of invasion on what is considered socially acceptable. In this way, gothic gains much of its power, its ability to transform, even to dismantle the halls of power.

Yet there is one other element that must be introduced into the mixture of gothic definitions: architecture. It may seem odd for a work focusing on the gothic novel to discuss architecture, but the term is inextricably woven with architecture as gothic cathedrals remain among the most visible signs of the gothic remaining today.

Architecturally, before the seventeenth century, *gothic* was usually considered "something barbarous, because non-classical" (Bond 7) and was likely coined by Italian painter and architect Giorgio Vasari (Thomas 293; Bond 7); it may also have referred to the Goths and Vandals who sacked Rome. To English seventeenth-century writer John Evelyn, the Goths and Vandals created "a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building; congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use, or beauty," a form without "true and just symmetry, regular proportion, union, and disposition" (qtd. in Bond 7). After the Classical world was overrun by the

“barbarous tribes of Goths, Vandals and others,” the conquerors “eventually produced a culture which included the pointed-arch architecture which they called Gothic” (Thomas 293). *Pointiness* has often been advanced, according to Francis Bond, as a definitional characteristic of gothic, but he writes that the best way of defining gothic is by its buttresses, for some gothic buildings did not have flying buttresses or diagonal ribs, pinnacles or pointed arches (7-8). At the same time, however, gothic architecture varies in time and location, especially between northern and southern Europe (Gardner, Kleiner, and Mamiya 518; Moore 1-2). Thus, like the very definition of gothic in literature, we find within architecture a general consensus that it evolved around the time of the Goth and Vandal sacking of Rome—and that it implies barbarity and rudeness—but we find a fairly inconclusive idea of exactly what it entails.

What may be of most interest to us is that the eighteenth century produced a Gothic Revival in England, one that continued well into the nineteenth century—and one that paralleled the explosion of gothic writing at the time. This Revival may have started with Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill, built at Twickenham in the 1740s and complete with gothic fretwork, suits of armor, swords, and vestibules (Davenport-Hines 127). Herbert Moore has summarized Walpole’s Strawberry Hill as “zealous but ignorant” (3), focusing exclusively on pointed style rather than other aspects of the gothic. To Moore, the Gothic Revival “embodied principles beyond those which were apparent to a superficial view nobody yet imagined. The modifications and transformations which pointed architecture had undergone at different periods of its history were but partially recognized and their significance was not understood” (3). While the Reform may have seemed bastardized to Moore, Thomas points out that Strawberry Hill was “aesthetically

light, bright and physically flimsy”—the complete antithesis of *Otranto*’s ghastly, dark, nightmarish castle (296). Whether zealously ignorant or valid in its reinterpretation of gothic forms, the Gothic Revival, in its more mature stages between the 1840s and 1860s, had seen gothic entirely accepted, even seen as the architecture of God (Thomas 294), which may have helped promote its fictional cousin.

Gothic architecture connects most strongly with its more literary form when it is seen as a skeleton of the past. England becomes not just a landscape, but “a country littered with the crumbling, ivy-covered ruins of monastic buildings” (Thomas 294)—a description that could have been removed straight from the pages of Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). In the “darkness of night,” Melmoth and Isidora stare at “the remains of [a] tower and spire, [a] vast Eastern window, and . . . crosses still visible on every ruined pinnacle and pediment” (436). That peculiar *something* in Medieval architecture that John Ruskin described as “Gothicness” (181, 184)—we find it in many of the novels. Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice* describes several features of the gothic, among which are Savageness, the barbaric world long past, and Grotesqueness, the bizarre, the strange that we see in gothic architecture (ch. 6). In gothic novels, we most see the savage in brutal characters like Heathcliff, who seem almost more inhuman than human. Heathcliff’s portrayal as bestial—especially in its emphasis of his dark skin and impish appearance—demonizes his race. We can, thus, see this as a technique privileging the racial ideology of the time, a concept discussed by both Anne McClintock and H. L. Malchow as well as Kathleen Spencer. The savage lingers in the ruins of gothic novels, as in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1796): Ellena, our heroine, gazes in horror at the “tall west window of the

cathedral with the spires that overtopped it; the narrow pointed roofs of the cloisters; angles of the insurmountable walls, which fenced the garden from the precipices below, and the dark portal” she must pass (64). This ancient monastery is, perhaps predictably, removed from civilization, an echo of savage times and suggestive of the crumbling halls of long-dead power.

Wandering the broken halls of these symbols of power may very well be a monster, the female: monstrous in her attempt to thwart male oppression and even more monstrous in her ability to usurp male power. Heiland, in particular, presents a strong analysis of how gothic female roles so frequently invade the boundaries of social custom, with females attempting to challenge their prescribed roles of subordination—even while male characters continue to dominate them, even demonize them (56). The gothic female, in some texts, may be dehumanized as something outside human nature. In Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), for example, Rochester casts Jane as anything but a human female: she is given elfish, inhuman characteristics instead, a dehumanizing gesture that underscores Jane’s ultimate inability to control her own fate. Bertha’s dehumanization is even worse, with her devilish, almost animalistic appearance. Other texts may metaphorically bury the female monster. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), Lady Audley increasingly usurps the power of the male hierarchy, learning to deceive and control others to reach the desired goal of wealth and power. She gradually becomes, thus, not-female, not-male, a bewildering hybrid of both genders. However, Braddon quickly undermines her ability to truly usurp male power by locking her away in an insane asylum. In the gothic, the monstrous female often attempts to escape her confines, but she is unable to do so, for she is restrained by a male authority

that she cannot bypass, no matter how clever she might otherwise be. Resistance, in the gothic novel, is voiced—the margins speak—but the female hybrid is not heard or freed from her patriarchal captivity.

We also find the grotesque, the monstrous in Shelley's undead creature, in Stoker's *Dracula*, in Rushdie's *Sufiya Zinobia*, all politically charged monsters because of their colonial or foreign origin. The gargoyles of gothic architecture depict in stone the monsters of literature:

These fascinating grotesques, these lovable monsters, are not merely the chance imaginings of some disordered fancy. Beneath the outward humor, the queer assemblage of disordered members, there lurks a satiric quality—at times, strange as it may seem, even a grandeur, a tragic power—with which the Gothic sculptor seldom was able—or rather seldom cared—to imbue his more serious compositions. (Porter 287)

These “lovable creatures,” hybrids of man and monster, appear several times in Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831). Hugo's gargoyle immediately comes to life when he writes, “some of the gargoyles you might have fancied yelping; there were salamanders puffing at the air; animal monstrosities sneezing in the smoke” (416). In one scene, gargoyles even take part in a rescue mission: “Outside the balustrade of the tower . . . was one of those fantastically carved stone gargoyles which bristle all over Gothic buildings” (493)—naturally, that gargoyle is about to become pivotal to the scene when the priest tumbles from the cathedral walls. Ironically yelling ““Damnation!”” as he falls, he is saved by the gargoyle spout (494). While most gargoyles were not intended for catching falling humans, the gargoyles of gothic architecture were not merely for

appearances; they were popular solutions for drainage problems (Bond xix; Porter 287). Architectural monsters were not limited to the gargoyle. Though used less frequently after the thirteenth century, griffins, half men/half monsters, devils, even dwarfs and hunchbacks could be found “looking out over the city with . . . malignant hatred” (Porter 293-4). If architecture possesses a large roll call of monsters, we may find more in gothic fiction. Ghosts, devils, imps, vampires, zombies, reanimated corpses all find their spaces within gothic pages. In this we can find a connection with gothic literature, too, for the monsters of gothic are often solutions as well as problems: they are the invaders of social order, the bringers of chaos, the voices of resistance from the margins of society.

If gothic is a hybrid genre, it is a literature where hybridity—what some may label the *grotesque*, the *monstrous*, the *unspeakable*—can lead to a space for empowerment. In *The Location of Culture*, theorist Homi Bhabha argues that postcolonial writers are able to gain most power in “a place of hybridity” (37), where politics are alienated, dissolving binaries of opposition, the place where binaries become hybrids of one another: “translations” of ideas (37). The sites of contradiction and displacement, to Bhabha, become sites for negotiation, and it seems possible that gothic follows this same strategy. People are “almost the same, but not quite” (123): Frankenstein’s monster is human but not, Stoker’s Dracula is alive but dead, Rushdie’s Sufiya Zinobia is innocent but murderous. What has led them to these conditions? What is it to be human, to be a monster? What is to be innocent, to be criminal? What is it to be powerful, to be ruled? These are the very questions that gothic asks us to consider, questions that may have emerged in the nineteenth century’s confrontation with yet another hybrid it could not explain away: Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* (1859). Perhaps it is not surprising that

Frankenstein and Dracula drew literary breath at a time when the rejected elements of society were returning from the margins to haunt a society that refused to acknowledge them (McClintock 72).

Gothic Resistance: Empire at the Dusk of the Nations

The disposition of the times is curiously confused, a compound of feverish restlessness and blunted discouragement, of fearful presage and hang-dog renunciation. The prevalent feeling is that of imminent perdition and extinction. . . . In our days there have arisen in more highly-developed minds vague qualms of a Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world. (Nordau 2)

1892 marked the appearance of a landmark German text: *Degeneration* by Max Nordau, translated into English in 1895. The hefty volume's author became a "household name" for Nordau's contemporaries, especially the middle and lower classes (Aschheim 3), though he was also greeted with a respectable amount of cynicism.⁴ While Nordau's theory of degeneration may seem outlandish to modern audiences, it allows us important insight into the late nineteenth-century mindset. Nordau felt certain that the human race was not simply at the *fin-de-siècle*—rather, he believed that the nineteenth century confronted a *fin-de-race*, a death of the entire race. Nordau's ideas should be carefully understood, however, to refer most to the aristocracy and the "rich inhabitants of great cities and the leading classes" (2), not peasants, some of the working classes (though he

never specifies exactly which ones), and the bourgeois. Even more, Nordau defined *degeneration* as the hereditary creation of a “sub-species”:

The clearest notion we can form of degeneracy is to regard it as *a morbid deviation from an original type*. This deviation . . . contained transmissible elements of such a nature that anyone bearing in him the germs becomes more and more incapable of fulfilling his functions in the world; and mental progress, already checked in his own person, finds itself menaced also in his descendants. (16)

The terrifying mental landscape presented in Nordau may help us to understand the fears of the late Victorian period, with its crisis in religious, social, and political faith.

Yet the portrayal of *fin-de-siècle* England darkens when we consider that modern critics have persuasively argued that Victorians feared the lower classes and social undesirables as the source of decadence. Upper-class Victorians did their best to expel the repulsing elements of their society, starting at home and working towards the outer reaches of the empire. Notably, however, this *upper-class* did not include aristocrats, who were seen as degenerates (McClintock 55). This would appear to fit with Nordau’s analysis of the upper-class as being degenerate, especially as his focus is on the metropolitan rich and aristocrats. Kathleen Spencer also distinguishes between the “bourgeois aristocrat” and the “much older, more feudal sort of aristocracy” (213); Victorian England preferred the former and disfavored the latter. Her work on *Dracula* places Arthur as a bourgeois aristocrat contending against the feudal Dracula, who must be expelled. Expelled individuals included women, slaves, prostitutes, the working class, the colonized, Jews, the Irish, and servants (McClintock 56, 72), who were caricatured as

anything from cannibals to vampires (Malchow ch. 2 and ch. 3; McClintock 52-3). Irish peasants were transformed, pictorially, into Frankenstein (Malchow 36) or “Celtic Cannibals” (McClintock 53), their images removing them of their humanity in a permanent, socially visible manner. Early English imperialists of the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including Edmund Spenser, saw the Irish as savages. Spenser described one unsettling scene: “At the execution of a notable traitor at Limerick . . . I saw an old woman which was his foster mother [who] took up his head whilst he was quartered, and [she] sucked up all the blood” (qtd. in Smart and Hutcheson 108). Thus, the Irish were not simply demonized as cannibals, but they were also transformed into blood-sucking vampires. Smart and Hutcheson, however, express vampirism as a mode of resistance against England, for Irish writers applied the blood-sucking metaphors to their landlords and English rulers (110).

Out of this came a literature richly centered on themes of invasion, corruption, and degeneration, themes strikingly central in Imperial Gothic and postcolonial gothic novels. As the colonized shakily attempted to fight against European control, increasingly more texts focused on the oppressed invading European borders. *Dracula* and H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) both speak strikingly of nineteenth-century fears that the imperial world was crumbling. Indeed, *Dracula* infects Lucy and Mina as they are just marrying, thus questioning possibilities of extending the English race—and even hinting at the possibility of a hidden germ in Mina, who fell to the “inferior” foreigner’s advances.⁵ This is much reminiscent of Nordau’s claim that “anyone bearing in him the germs becomes more and more incapable of fulfilling his functions in the world” (16); with a symbol burned into her head, Mina represents, in no uncertain terms, the germ of

sexual deviance.⁶ Similarly, in *Dr. Moreau*, animals usurp human language, and the boundaries between men and animals collapse. The Beast Men attack, forcing our hero to become like them, living in the caves and rummaging for food—ignoring his own moral code in exchange for survival. As David Punter has wondered in *The Literature of Terror*, “how much . . . can one lose—individually, socially, nationally—and still remain a [hu]man?” (240). Undoubtedly, in *Dracula* and *Dr. Moreau*, we see loss: loss of life, loss of moral codes, loss of purity, and even, in *Dr. Moreau*, loss of rationality as humans become the monsters they fear.

It is perhaps not surprising that at this same time, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) appeared only five years before Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde*, hiding serves as the fundamental axis of the novella’s action. The title itself fully suggests the thematic import of the social mask, for Mr. Hyde can be seen as hiding—or, from alternate but similar interpretations—as the animal hide that covers inner workings from the eye. Indeed, the title suggests a similar animalistic component for Dr. Jekyll. Jekyll obviously rings with similarity to jackal, showing that even in his more civilized demeanor, Jekyll cannot help but hold the nature of the brute. Thus, while Hyde is the more obvious representation of primitive nature, the nature before civilization, Jekyll holds the taint within his own persona. Dr. Jekyll, through his scientific discoveries that deride empiricism, discovers the key to transforming himself. It is probably quite important that Jekyll sets himself in stark opposition to empiricism, what Jekyll describes as the “narrow and material views” (101) of scientific enquiry that has “denied the virtue of transcendental medicine” (101); empiricism can be seen as a construct of a civilized

society lacking the late-Victorian crisis, oppressing Jekyll until he develops his dual persona into a physical manifestation. As Jekyll tells Lanyon, he has discovered “a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power,” but that knowledge will “stagger the unbelief of Satan” (101). Jekyll has split the civilized and animal side of human nature, which he states exists in all mankind, into two. Neither would be torn by the internal conflict of having two selves, of the “primitive duality of man” (104).

Relieving the pressure of existing solely in civilized society as the man of social prestige, wealth, and generosity, Jekyll could escape to his more submerged persona, Hyde, to glory in the depravity so insufferable to Nordau. The deformed horror, the wicked menace, would all be contained in a body unassociated with Jekyll, who would never be forced to confront his inner depravity. The play with disguises here links well with former gothic novels, including Godwin’s *Things as They Are or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and Braddon’s 1862 *Lady Audley’s Secret* (though her disguise is more in name). The trope also, quite obviously, works into *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. His refined self becomes his alibi, the “cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit” (114), from the social eye. However, Jekyll quickly learns that his inner self wishes to be uncaged at all times; he cannot lock it away. The poison from within, the animal nature that no human can deny, seeks to escape; it eventually overrides who he once was (Punter, *The Literature* 242). Jekyll fights, without doubt, as most gothic characters do, yet he fights the horror of himself, a horror from within that cannot be exorcised.

Dorian Gray shows a similar transformation. Dorian comes to us as a beautiful young man, one wealthy and socially respected. Lord Henry describes him as “young Adonis,” as “a Narcissus,” as a “real beauty” who is “some brainless, beautiful creature,

who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at” (3). Even more, his beauty renders him “unspotted from the world,” pure of its compromises (18); as we learn, Dorian is rarely judged by his actions. Instead, society judges him by his beauty and his youth. Through Lord Henry’s subtle influence, Dorian is sculpted, no less than his image on the canvas, into a man who places pleasure and self over others, who becomes careless of his cruelty. Yet his own face shows no signs of the change in feeling, no depravity. Only his portrait shows the change, gaining a degree of cruelty about the mouth. Seeing that the picture will represent his “corruption” (134), carrying upon it rather than his own flesh the stamp of his sins, Dorian locks the picture away, just as Jekyll tries to lock away Hyde. When Dorian falls, surrendering to his base instincts, he spends money carelessly, holds virtue in “utter contempt” (170), and dons disguises, “creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens” (171): all almost verbatim for the degeneration described in Nordau (cf. 7-15).

Constructing an alibi of appearances, Dorian eventually finds that even appearances do not disguise the “poisonous germ” lurking within (161). Even when he speaks of the “poisonous germ,” we must remember that a germ is planted by something else—not by Dorian himself; thus, his admission of guilt is only partial, for he still blames something other than himself for its inception. Indeed, Dorian frequently blames his actions on fate, destiny, Basil’s portrait, Lord Henry’s influence, and even on the portrait itself, but rarely does he focus the attention where it should be: on himself. In such a case, destiny and his own picture become masks or alibis for his actions, alibis that conveniently allow him to distance himself from his crimes. His cruelty has led to his destruction, symptomatic of the degeneration of Victorian society itself.

What can we say about gothic based upon the fear of invasion seen in *Dracula* and *Dr. Moreau*, upon the fear of inner degeneration seen in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Dorian Gray*? Perhaps we may suitably argue that gothic allows readers and writers to question what we are, outside the strictures of social order, to view the familiar we see around us through the eyes of the unfamiliar. That gothic incorporates the familiar-unfamiliar should not surprise us, for gothic, above all else, is a genre that explores the uncanny. According to Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," *unheimlich* refers to the uncanny, the unfamiliar, the unhomely while *heimlich* refers to the known, the familiar, the homely (947). The uncanny can also be seen as something that is "secretly familiar" or *heimlich-heimisch* (947). Even doppelgängers are part of the uncanny, for we continuously see repetitions of self, echoes of something we cannot escape, and our fears of inescapability leave us powerless (Horner 287-8); because of this, doppelgängers are "thing[s] of terror" (941). *Jekyll and Hyde* is perhaps the strongest example of this idea, for the doppelgänger within Jekyll is part of him: it is by nature inescapable, but the fear of always facing that unfamiliar creature within what should be familiar—the self—leads to mental schism. Similarly, *Wuthering Heights*' Catherine I and Catherine II dissolve into one another, matching Freud's description of the doppelgänger as "a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self . . . [seen in] the repetition of the same features or characteristics or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations" (940). The terror, then, would be in the doubling of self that indicates identities splintering, fragmenting without end.

In gothic, what is unfamiliar (*unheimlich*) frequently becomes familiar (*heimlich*)—and what should be unfamiliar becomes familiar. The boundaries between

self and Other collapse, as do the boundaries between oppressor and oppressed, man and beast, real and unreal, acceptable and taboo. Gothic mixes up the binary oppositions, turning them into hybrids of one another. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, portrays unhomeliness as being the “logic of reversal, that turns on a disavowal” and creates “profound revelations and reinscriptions” (15). What was public becomes private, unraveling the ideological tendency to generalize (Bhabha 15). The rich patrician becomes the animal wearing someone else’s clothes; the beautiful male becomes what is ugly, demonizing beauty, vice, and privilege by uncovering the alibi of social appearances. Literature—and the gothic by extension—may be seen as “a subterranean rebellion against the social order,” according to Herbert Marcuse; it unearths “tabooed and repressed dimensions of reality” (qtd. in Parry 75). As Imperial Gothic slowly transforms into postcolonial gothic in the twentieth century—as the empire comes knocking at England’s doors, demanding that the forces of neocolonialism remain dead—this “subterranean rebellion” unearths every possible taboo. The monsters, frequently turned into monsters by the very forces that had oppressed them, strike against imperial authority. To the empire the “Orient [once] was silent” (Said, *Orientalism* 94), but that empire in the twentieth century gains its own voice—and the postcolonial gothic is born.

At one time, the colonized had few choices when the forces of empire occupied their land. Historian Denis Judd writes of these choices: “Faced with the onward march of British imperialism and European civilization, local peoples had to make a choice between acceptance and defiance, collaboration and resistance” (7). As the empire began to crumble, though—especially after the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, which refuted beliefs that administrative efficiency would produce an established, content empire (Judd 66)—

beliefs in the ideology of Empire began to collapse, too (Brantlinger 233). Oddly, this was despite the very obvious fact that in the Edwardian period, 1901-1910, the Empire was as far-flung and inclusive as it had ever been, stretching over 294 million subjects in India, 6 million subjects in other areas of Asia, 43 million subjects in Africa, and 5.25 million subjects in Australasia, essentially covering a quarter of the world (Hyam 48). Wars in South Africa and India, as well as concerns with Ireland, fractured the complacency of empire, heralding the later fall of imperial territories (Hyam 48-9; Judd 67). As one colonized territory after the other gained its freedom, the twentieth century's last vestiges of visible empire became increasingly chaotic. Amidst riots in Egypt and South Africa, irresolution in Algeria, and severe anxiety in Pakistan (Louis 331-40), the previously colonized found themselves frequently left with the structures of empire—not to mention the ideologies of empire, including a patriarchal structure that trapped the female behind oppressive bars—even as the imperial forces vanished from their lands (Fanon ch. 4; Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 9).

It is in the atmosphere of decolonization and neocolonialist residue that postcolonial gothic exists. Like its predecessors, postcolonial gothic frequently employs layered narrative techniques, ghosts, monsters, reflected identities, hidden identities, secrets, temporal schisms, fire, and dissolution, yet it most often utilizes these devices and tropes to uncover the familiar world of colonization remaining in the unfamiliar world of decolonization. Its message can be bleak, offering little hope—similar to Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and Wilde's *Dorian Gray*—or it can offer paths of resistance. Postcolonial gothic, thus, refuses to be resolved, and in that irresolution is the

power of the genre. It allows boundaries once rigid to fall; it allows for the unfamiliar to become familiar, for the imagination to offer ways of restructuring a torn world.

Betty Crocker's Gothic: Add Vampire, Sprinkle with Crypts, Stir in Eternal Night

Despite Eve Sedgwick's early work (1980) establishing the conventions of gothic as coherent, despite Donna Heiland's understandable statement that gothic can be "highly formulaic and therefore highly predictable" (2), despite even Maggie Kilgour's sympathetic statement that gothic may have degenerated "into conventionality . . . into merely mechanical formulae" because the very features that once made it revolutionary have been replicated too often (42), there is very real evidence that the genre remains innovative. Consider, for example, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter: The Chamber of Secrets* (1999), where readers and viewers alike confront a fantastic world of wizards, witches, magic creatures, and, to top that off, a castle imported straight from the world of medieval Europe. House elves, "a troupe of dancing skeletons" (131), spells, Deathday Parties, and ghosts haunting toilets—not to mention Nearly Headless Nick—jaunt through most pages, intermixed liberally with frozen children, enormous spiders, a monster lurking in the walls of the castle, and a hero stalked by a basilisk in the subterranean passages well below the castle. Rowling's work holds many of the common conventions of gothic: the "unspeakable" horror of things unburied (Sedgwick 9), "subterranean spaces and live burials" (Sedgwick 9), pursuit (Kilgour 56-7), monsters (Botting, "Monstrosity" 163), ghosts (Dickerson introd.), confusion and disarray. Even Harry Potter's connection to the twisted Lord Voldemort through their shared magic and magic wand tantalizingly suggests a doubling common in gothic (Sedgwick 9; Kilgour

63-5). Is Rowling's work, then, gothic? Faye Ringel would likely say *yes*, but *no*, based off the wizards alone. To Ringel, wizards in gothic are "scholarly, amoral, power-hungry" beings who possess power given them from "Satan and from Science" (256). Unlike the wizards in Ringel, Rowling's wizards can be amoral or power-hungry, but they can also be heroic. Additionally, monsters abound, but is there the sense of guilt and shame commonly seen in gothic (Sedgwick 9)? Even more, do we feel that the characters are entrapped, searching for escape in a world where the boundaries between reality and illusion, male and female, have suddenly collapsed? How, then, do we distinguish between the fantasy creations of such authors as Rowling and J. R. R. Tolkien and the supernatural worlds of gothic? Should we even attempt to do so, or is fantasy inherently gothic in nature?

Answers become even more difficult to find—as they so frequently do in the study of gothic—when we realize that modern gothic may well be thriving, but it is rarely known as *gothic*. Vampires serve as pivotal images in gothic, straight from Lord Byron's *The Giaour* (1813) and John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819).⁷ This does not even mention, of course, the one book associated most with vampires: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). In the theater fairly recently, *Blade: Trinity* (2004) viewers could easily find the vampire gothic, though they likely would not call it that. Instead, according to the movie's classification, it is "Action, Fantasy, Horror, Thriller" (National Bureau of Classification par. 1), despite the almost formulaic gothic elements of vampires, seductive vampiresses, vampire royalty (including Dracula himself), vampire hunters, double-crossing, pursuits—all set amidst the rather unusual backdrop of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and bioweapons. This is not the only modern work

possessing gothic tendencies but missing the *gothic* label. Drawing once more from a publication classified as *fantasy*, we find Jim Butcher's *Storm Front* (2000), the first in the *Dresden Files* series, another excellent candidate for the gothic novel. It has good wizards, evil wizards, White Magic, Black Magic, vampires, seductive vampiresses, fairies, and Bob the Skull, "a spirit of air" with great knowledge and "a cocky attitude" (Butcher 90), and, like *Blade*, it also sets its supernatural world amidst the more mundane; in this case, Harry Dresden is a Private Investigator who works with the Chicago police. Even more, in later books of the series, Harry Dresden discovers the secret identity of his brother, a vampire, leading into one of the most famous of gothic tropes, the discovery of secrets and hidden identities (cf. Walpole). Vampires, ghosts, pursuits, hidden identities, magic, hunters and hunted all seem to suggest gothic, yet its lack of the unspeakable, of shame, leaves one to wonder if perhaps fantasy is more a mutation of gothic than gothic itself.⁸

Can a form with such numerous manifestations truly be considered formulaic? Marie Mulvey-Roberts' *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* (1998) reinforces the difficulty we find in easily delineating the gothic, for it lists, among other gothic forms, American Gothic, English-Canadian Gothic, female Gothic, German Gothic, Gothic Romance, Gothic drama, Gothic film, Irish Gothic, contemporary Gothic, Russian Gothic, Scottish Gothic, Southern Gothic, Welsh Gothic—and as if that were not enough, Gothic fairy-tale, Gothic parody, Gothic science fiction, urban Gothic, and, of course, postcolonial Gothic (vii-xi). While it is perhaps humorous to imagine a formula for gothic that is as simple as adding one (or more) vampire(s), sprinkling with numerous crypts and subterranean passages, and mixing in the landscape of eternal darkness, to believe such a

formula leaves the complexity, the very uneasiness of gothic's definition buried. Gothic does not always have vampires; even more, perhaps not every work having vampires *is* gothic. Is *Blade: Trinity* necessarily a gothic text because its main character is a vampire-slaying, half-human, half-vampire hybrid—and, even more interestingly, because its main villain is the reawakened Dracula? Are Harry Potter and Harry Dresden gothic heroes because they routinely fight evil in a supernatural world of magic, wizardry, and ghosts? A thorough examination of gothic often leaves us, thus, with more questions than answers—even as it opens up a world of possibilities where the familiar gothic conventions become estranged and where social resistance is tantalizingly possible because the boundaries, at least for a time, have shifted.

Notes

¹ One of the most interesting debates on the nature of gothic began in the 1970s in the *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. Robert Platzner contended that Robert Hume's ideas on the nature of gothic and Romance were fallacious, based off incorrect ideas of Romanticism (Platzner and Hume 266). Platzner maintained that Gothic Romance was a hybrid genre focusing primarily on the "*mystery* of evil" (267). In response, Hume stated that his main focus had been to separate "serious Gothic writing" from "market-Gothics" (268) and to highlight the significance of horror in the gothic work. Platzner responded that Hume did not understand his methodology (where Hume examines material from a psychological stance, Platzner was more interested in the structure) and that much of gothic's power can be found in the "transvaluation of values" (271), especially between good and evil. After dismissing Platzner's methodology, Hume ended the battle by stating that there was little cohesion in gothic and that the search for "the Platonic Form of the Gothic novel" was as likely as finding the Holy Grail (274).

² Even more humorously, some contemporaries believed him. In the *Monthly Review*, Reverend William Mason wrote that he mocked a friend who doubted the "originality" of *Otranto*, for how "could [he] be so absurd as to think that anybody nowadays had imagination enough to invent such a story" (qtd. in Clery, "Introduction" xi). It is unlikely, of course, that the Reverend could have imagined a member of Parliament had penned the work—until the second edition appeared to announce such a devious unlikelihood.

³ Although Walpole is undoubtedly innovative in his use of a fraudulent framework, he is not the only gothic author to employ this device. More recently, some editions of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) possess a cover that is distinctly Medieval in appearance, supporting the introduction's claims to authentic Medieval authorship and clearly indicating that this gothic tradition still lives.

⁴ Scanning newspapers from the time reveals contemporary reactions to Nordau's work. At a meeting of the Nineteenth Century Club, Dr. Charles L. Dana claimed that "the problems of degeneration are known and belong to the accepted data of science," but that the "crime, . . . idiocy, and insanity" seen now has been seen in the past ("Are We Degenerating?" 5). Reverend Joseph Silverman agreed that the world was degenerating and immorality was rising, but to him it was "only a temporary retrogression. We must find a cure for it" ("Nordau too Pessimistic" 9). However, Dr. Spitzka charged Nordau's work with being "the most abominable book printed in modern times," stating that "Nordau's metaphysics are a century behind the age" (qtd. in "Dr. Spitzka's Views of Nordau" 3).

⁵ As part of a racial ideology that established the white (read *English*) upper class male's superiority over others—women, the working and lower classes, the foreign, and the colonized, for instance—Dracula's inferiority justifies his expulsion as he is a menace to established society.

⁶ Sexual deviance is also explored in many critical works on Stoker's *Dracula*. Outside of Lucy's contention that she should be able to marry more than one man and Jonathon's momentary fall to seductive vampires, one of the most heatedly discussed

issues is homosexuality, seen most in Dracula and Jonathon's relationship. Jonathon, writes Spencer, is "plunged into the horrors of homosexual passions," with Dracula's speech laden with "erotic desire and feeding" (216). The homoerotic resonances here obviously erase the boundaries between genders, but they also reflect on Victorian concerns of morality, the home, and generational infection.

⁷ There are several antecedents to Polidori's work. *The Giaour* presents a typically Byronic hero-vampire, one who suffers through life and wishes to end his punishment, which is an everlasting life fed by the lives of those he loves. Another antecedent may be Byron's "Augustus Darvell" (1819), where Darvell seems "prey to some cureless disquiet" (247). We later learn that this "disquiet" is his own undead existence, an existence fed by the blood of those he loves.

⁸ Definitions on the nature of *gothic fantasy* have been somewhat inconclusive. Most works concentrating solely on gothic do not even mention the term while Neil Cornwell distinguishes "the fantastic"—or the supernatural—completely from fantasy as a genre (264). *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* entirely conflates the term with gothic in general, focusing most on the supernatural (Clute and Grant 424). William Patrick Day seems to locate it "as a place where there exists one self; everything else in that world is Other, an enemy to the desires and integrity of the self. . . . Everything and everyone else conspire against the protagonist" (qtd. in Tigges 249).

CHAPTER TWO
GOTHIC, RUINS, AND THE MONSTROUS USURPER:
INCURSIONS AGAINST SOCIAL ORDER

Set amidst gloomy castles and terrifying cliffs, its villains powerful entities seemingly impossible to thwart, gothic novels invite readers to question the foundations upon which society bases its relationships of power and subservience. This is particularly true of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English novels, most of them appearing to challenge the very hierarchies society deems normative: the male oppression of the female, the predominance of wealth and landed property ownership, even the haunting legacy of class tyranny. Castles fall, crumbling into nothingness, and rightful owners of property redeem their ownership by thwarting villains who have usurped their lands. Even females resolutely demand their rights, suggesting a new era of female empowerment. Traps are escaped with the help of servants, whose voices resonate within the texts. Indeed, readers are warmly invited to believe that a remarkable ideological swing has occurred before their eyes as the traces of the past have collapsed, as a new order ascends into a power tempered with wisdom. However, readers should tread carefully as they read gothic novels of the period, for—like the characters themselves, who often are not what they seem—the subversion of social norms we believe we are seeing quickly evaporates into a mere seeming. In Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Rudolph* (1794), and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), landmark gothic masterpieces of the era,

resistance often ghosts into counter-resistance as the subversive forces we thought we saw simply vanish.

Gothic Questions: Subversive or Not?

“Judging as I do,” resumed Montoni, “I cannot believe you will oppose, where you know you cannot conquer, or, indeed, that you would wish to conquer, or be avaricious of any property, when you have not justice on your side. . . . If you have a just opinion of the subject in question, you shall be allowed a safe conveyance to France, within a short period; but, if you are so unhappy as to be misled by the late assertion of the Signora, you shall remain my prisoner, till you are convinced of your error.”

(Radcliffe, *Udolpho* 380)

Opposition leads to nothing but destruction, resistance betrays unjust and avaricious morality, freedom exists only for those who obey—thus speaks the voice of patriarchy in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), one of the most often-cited gothic novels of the eighteenth century. In this passage, one of many similar passages in *Udolpho*, Montoni, the dark, mysteriously handsome but villainous controller of Emily St. Aubert’s life and fortunes, tyrannizes the dependent female who is settled helplessly in his grasp and who is imprisoned within the ponderous rock of his castle’s heavily fortified walls.

Emily’s response rings with power, with a resistance against patriarchal oppression that seemingly indicates a decisive departure from the male-dominant ideology of the time (Torrijos 259-61). Defiantly, she declares, “I am not so ignorant,

Signor, of the laws on this subject, as to be misled by the assertion of any person. The law, in the present instance, gives me the estates in question, and my own hand shall never betray my right” (381). Here, Emily not only shows independence and wisdom—for she remains undeceived by the language of her educated opponent—but she also calls upon the law itself to defend her position. In doing so, she exploits one of the most important instruments of power, the law, to back her right to self-governance and resistance against tainted authority.¹ Paradoxically, she utilizes the authoritarian power—which Radcliffe seems to have seen as “monstrous” even if heroines could utilize it in a “self-affirming” manner (Chaplin, “Romance and Sedition” 186)—to strip the authority from a usurping male. Perhaps scenes like this illuminate why gothic has often been called the genre of resistance (see Kilgour 8-9), an “Edenic familial space headed by the heroine and/or an imaginary utopia . . . that escapes the tyranny of patriarchy” (Kurtz and Womer 57); here, the boundaries between authority and dependency collapse, with those who would often reside outside the realm of authority drawing on its power. Even such visible signs of patriarchal power as the castle itself are interrogated in the world of gothic literature. In Radcliffe, the imposing Castle Udolpho, with its “extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice” (226), does not in reality belong to Montoni; rather, it belongs to the Marchioness de Villeroi—and through de Villeroi and the lady Laurentini, it eventually belongs to Emily. Thus, with the transfer of power from male to female hands, readers of gothic fiction frequently believe that they are reading a subversive genre.² This becomes even more believable when we consider the ruins so prominent in gothic literature, implying the death of a ruling class based in feudalism and suggesting a new order of social hierarchy.

However, we may wish to tread carefully when making such bold statements, for a significant question must be addressed: do the gothic novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries truly dismantle social ideologies? Indeed, do they actually support the very ideologies they purportedly subvert? As we examine the incursions against social order found in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820),³ we begin to understand that the resistance we wish to see as incisive may, in fact, be insidious counter-resistance.

Resistance in the Gothic Manor: Patriarchy in Ruins

The Gothic of cruelty is obsessed with filiation and patrimonial inheritance and it is inhabited by powerful, easily enraged, lascivious aristocrats whose perverted desires bring them into mortal conflict with men and women of lesser class origins. In its representation of perverts in power and fair maidens in distress, the Gothic of cruelty is motivated by a potent and revolutionary image of the end of aristocracy and the termination of a whole class structure . . . [that] was already in its death throes or in a state of rigor mortis . . . (Dougherty 7)

In gothic literature, one image persistently domineering the text is the castle—or, even more, the castle in ruins—possessed by the ruthless, cruel gothic villains: the “Gothic of cruelty” monsters who seize what they want as guaranteed rights. The “Gothic of cruelty,” according to Stephen Dougherty, is a form popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, usually bearing titles like “The Vindictive Monk” or “The Parricide

Punished” and harkening back to a time when feudal power ruled the land (7). Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) can also be seen as “Gothic of cruelty,” with “[l]ust, murder, incest, and every atrocity that can disgrace human nature, brought together, without apology” (McEvoy vi). Because of its powerful walls, built in almost unbreakable stone, and its turrets stabbing into the sky, the castle signifies dominance, one that is present and very real. Towers, for example, become “superb symbols of power, visible over the country side, impressing outsiders rather than fortifying the inmates of the great houses” (Davenport-Hines 64); they assert power by giving “an owner a view from his power house over his domain” (64), symbols of their wealth and control over their less-advantaged neighbors.⁴ Furthermore, architecture becomes “a symbol of the power and wealth of the landowner and more broadly the social, cultural and political hegemony” of the landed aristocracy (Arnold 69). Notably, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landowners spurred a Gothic revival, bringing new life to their ancestral domains, most of which had decayed, or even erecting completely new castles.⁵ According to Davenport-Hines, aristocrats were almost desperate to contradict the “commercialism, [and] social fluidity” of the time (66) and to reaffirm the power of “patrician culture over the manners, habits and ambitions of the burgeoning middle class” (67). It allowed them, overall, to demonstrate their rule’s “stability and self-confidence” despite apparent chaos (Arnold 70).⁶ Given such a statement, castles become more than prisons that trap struggling heroines; instead, they become objects of control over insurgent social classes.

That the castle dominates Gothic texts is unquestionable.⁷ However, what may be of even more significance is the ruined state so apparent in most Gothic castles or houses of power. As the prototype gothic novel, Walpole’s *Otranto* does not disappoint us in

richly painting images of ruin. Its very context begins with the idea of ruin, of things past, with the castle as a trope for a dark, frightening legacy that the rational Enlightenment wants to disappear (Mishra 53). Supposedly a manuscript produced in the dark times of Medieval Europe, a ruined social order long decayed for contemporary readers of Walpole's work, *Otranto*'s very textual framework—with its use of necromancers, giant helmets plummeting from the sky, and curses—suggests the savagery and moral chaos of the Medieval era. *Otranto* emphasizes the dread of the patriarchal past (Heiland 13), with the ruins that later become the hallmark of gothic novels. In one of the more memorable scenes, the villainous Manfred stalks the lovely Isabella in a network of subterranean passages beneath Castle Otranto: “At last, as softly as was possible, she felt for the door, and, having found it, entered trembling into the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building” (29). Even at this early stage of the novel, Otranto is crumbling; however, by the end of the novel, it literally breaks apart:

—A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. . . . [T]he walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins. Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso! said the vision: and having pronounced these words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven . . . (113)⁸

With thunder roaring in the background, Otranto tumbles into ruins while Alfonso, the wronged spirit that has tormented Manfred, disappears in triumph. Most interestingly of

all, a new generation, a new ruling power is signaled with the death of Manfred's line and the restoration of Theodore's. It suggests a complete overturning of the past, heralded by Alfonso's ascension. Without doubt, this overturn can all too easily be interpreted as a reconstruction of social ideology: a cleansing of the old to emphasize new ways of examining power and inheritance.

Most gothic writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed in Walpole's literary footsteps by including the almost-mandatory ruined castle. Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, while not the first castle to loom over its heroine, is one of the more well-known of gothic images:

While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice: but the gloom, that overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know, that it was vast, ancient and dreary. . . . The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where, instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past over the desolation around them. (227)

The castle here can be seen as "a place of tyrannical power where the heroine is trapped and exposed to imprisonment" (Torrijos 260), one that metaphorically represents the house, an enclosed female space in a world controlled by men (Torrijos 261; Dickerson 4). Equally daunting are the towers and ramparts harkening back to an era of brutal war,

an era where the primary means of expansion of power came through a power structure based on fealty to the male noble:

The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of a huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam, that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war. (227)

In Radcliffe's fallen castle, we feel the echoes of a time long gone, one quite different from the economics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, removed from capitalism and the rise of the middle class bourgeoisie (K. Ellis 100).⁹ By placing the scene of horror within a ruined castle, Radcliffe suggests that the past traps the development, social and economic, moral and individual, of a world needing to move beyond its confines. She seems to suggest, even, that the halls of power must be re-examined, for they are crumbling, falling into disrepair, and part of a past that must be escaped.

Castles are not the only symbols of failing power in gothic literature.

Watchtowers, broken and crumbling, appear in several portions of *Udolpho*. They are "ancient fortresses," with "shattered battlements and half-demolished walls" and "huge masses of ruin" (Radcliffe, *Udolpho* 606). Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* likewise shows us relics of the past, this time in the lodge owned by Melmoth's "rich, unmarried, and old" (9) uncle. Maturin's *Melmoth* may not begin in a battered castle, but its lodge instills the same feeling of dying patriarchy, of a faded past:

As John [Melmoth] slowly trod the miry road which had once been the approach, he could discover, by the dim light of an autumnal evening,

signs of increasing desolation since he had last visited the spot,—signs that penury had been aggravated and sharpened into downright misery. There was not a fence or a hedge round the domain: an uncemented wall of loose stones, whose numerous gaps were filled with furze or thorns, supplied their place. There was not a tree or shrub on the lawn; the lawn itself was turned into pasture-ground, and a few sheep were picking their scanty food amid the pebblestones, thistles, and hard mould, through which a few blades of grass made their rare and squalid appearance. (11)

We see, through these images, clear indications of a once-grand power that has faded, like the banners of the past. Even the land has deteriorated, no longer tamed by man's authoritative hand. Importantly, both edifices are first seen at night, with Maturin emphasizing the transitional time by placing his scene in autumn: the end of the day, the end of the year, the end of the manor and the castle. "Gloom" and "desolation" linger in both images, a ruin that will not be reconstructed. In *Udolpho* the ruin comes from the ravages of both time and war, the ultimate chaos and destruction, while *Melmoth* portrays a ruin brought on by time and poverty. War and poverty both stand as stark occasions of boundary crossing: war in the crossing of national and ethnic boundaries and poverty in the crossing of landed gentry into the realm of the poor, the realm of the peasant, once the wealth built upon feudal ties has disappeared. The boundaries that once reinforced patriarchal control have seemingly faded, leaving possibilities open for the future.

The lodge, however, does not stand as Maturin's only symbol of a dead patriarchy, a decayed order of power, control, and hierarchy that was steadily being replaced with capitalism. Ruins span the novel's pages, ranging from a "Moorish fortress,

. . . the image of power, dark, isolated, impenetrable” (34)¹⁰ to a Roman palace, “shatter[ed] to atoms” by the force of lightening (34). The ruins, then, seem to stand as one of many “perishable monuments” (34) to the human need for power, perhaps even immortality, as they are emblems of prior regimes that last well beyond the deaths of their authors. Furthermore, as temporal power crumbles, so, too, does the symbol of spiritual power on earth, the Catholic Church.¹¹ In his blast against Catholicism, Maturin’s *Melmoth* portrays a religious wasteland. Alonzo di Monçada, illegitimate son of an aristocratic family, is thrown into a convent¹²; he is cast into the darkness of convent life to hide the family’s disgrace from public view. Tricked into accepting his vows, harassed by his fellow “brothers,” and hauled to the Inquisition, Monçada almost falls to Melmoth’s temptation. However, if Monçada does not fall, the Inquisition does: its walls—potent symbols of the Holy office that cannot be escaped, of the all-seeing eye from which nothing can be hidden¹³—burn. In this ironic *auto da fe*, “flames rose and roared in triumph above the towers of the Inquisition. The heavens were all on fire” (267). The Church symbolically perishes: “The towers of the Inquisition shrunk into cinders—that tremendous monument of the power, and crime, and gloom of the human mind, was wasting like a scroll in the fire” (268). In this conflagration, a seemingly unending power almost collapses.

Yet there is a strong feeling of *seemingness* when examining gothic literature and the ruins of previous powers. If we wish to interpret the ruins of gothic literature as clear indications of a past that has been denied, that cannot resurrect itself—indeed, as clear indications of subversion against social order and the ideology of the master of the manor—we must ignore key elements in gothic itself. We would have to ignore, for

example, that the Medieval era's power structures may very well be destroyed architecturally, but the idea of power—of hierarchy in social arrangements, of financial privilege, of class differentiation—does not disappear. Furthermore, gothic, as a genre, significantly deals with issues of appearance, of concerns with reality twisted by the disguise. Radcliffe's Marchioness de Villeroi at first seems to be a lover of Emily's father, perhaps Emily's illegitimate mother; however, Emily eventually discovers that she is Emily's aunt. The mysteriously veiled picture that Emily believes to be bones is, in fact, a waxen image. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams: Or, Things as they Are* (1794), in a tale set amidst spies, secret trunks, manors riddled with secret passages, and thieves, features a protagonist who disguises himself in his efforts to evade capture by the work's antagonist Ferdinando Falkland.¹⁴ Among those disguises Caleb is a beggar, a Jew, and a farmer, though he is slowly losing his mind and identity as he disguises himself. Similarly adopting disguises to evade detection, this time as a fraud, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's protagonist in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) gains power through her great beauty. With this mask of beauty, Lady Audley gains power, enthralls her husband, maintains her image as a generous woman, marries one husband while married to another, tosses the first husband down a well, and attempts to burn alive the observer and recorder of her actions, Mr. Audley. We may see here a technology of discipline in the gothic novel, where members of authority inscribe the characteristics of infection in the social organism surrounding them. In *Lady Audley*, it is Mr. Audley who watches and records the behaviors of Lady Audley. We see this same behavior in *Dracula*, where everything about Dracula is recorded for posterity. Because of this, we can see knowledge as one of the most powerful or monstrous tools of patriarchal control in gothic

literature. Gothic appearances, thus, are not only likely to be unrelated with reality, but they are also likely to be damaging if accepted as realistic. Because of this tendency to substitute appearances and reality, we should feel subtle alarms when we feel that there is a conveniently obvious destruction of the past in a gothic novel—for in gothic, almost nothing is as it appears. In gothic, appearances usurp reality, becoming metaphors that carry three of the more significant themes of gothic literature: that of origin, legitimacy, and usurpation.

The Gothic Curse of Usurpation: Origin and Legitimacy

His tenants and subjects . . . attributed this hasty wedding to the prince's dread of seeing accomplished an ancient prophecy, which was said to have pronounced, *That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it.* (Walpole 17)

Castles may loom in a majority of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novels, yet they are frequently connected to questions of authority. Who has the right to rule? To whom does the castle truly belong: the present owner or some unknown, mysterious “real owner” to be revealed by the author’s careful manipulation of plot and character? Even more, on what grounds do we distinguish the usurper from the true heir to the castle—and, symbolically, to all the powers that castle represents? Gothic so repeatedly emphasizes appearances and disguises in its plots, in its thematic content, for these elements act as metaphors to the larger social issue at play: legitimacy in authority and rule, in power, in a time when capitalist markets replaced—usurped—the feudal ties

of the Medieval era (K. Ellis, ch. 6; see Azim 26-7). In an imaginative world where the typically male tyrant most often holds power through duplicity or illegitimacy, gothic authors frequently resolve their tales by ousting the evil usurper and replacing him (or even her) with the morally superior and, not-too-coincidentally, rightful heir, inserting the legitimate heirs back in their positions of power to restore social harmony.

Closely connected with the idea of usurpation are the themes of appearances and disguises, for an illegitimate ruler masquerades behind the socially legitimized mask of authority. One of the strongest developments of this idea comes in Walpole's *Otranto*, where the possibility that all is not quite as it seems begins with the first page—indeed, in the first edition, the discrepancy between appearance and reality begins *before* the first page, on the very title page, which drolly declares itself a translation by “William Marshall, Gent. From the Original Italian of / Onuphorio Muralto, / Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas / at Otranto” (Walpole xxxvix). Perhaps the only “truth” to be found on the title page of the first edition is the publication information (London, published by Tho. Lownds in Fleet-Street, in the year MDCCLXV [1765]). To further muddy the waters, the first edition's Preface claimed that the work was written sometime between 1095 and 1243 and subsequently found in the hands of a Catholic family. Of course, as was exposed in the second edition, this provenance was untrue, for Walpole had written the work and had used the textual framework so that he could explore an “imaginative freedom [that] was forbidden, or simply impossible, for writers of the enlightened present” (Clery, “Introduction” xi). Thus, with his slightly shady tactics, Walpole was, like his character Manfred, constructing a disguise—in this case, one that usurped the

very power of the author, Walpole himself, to offer him the power to defy contemporary writing styles.

Walpole's play on things *seeming* what they are not, then, begins from the first pages, even the covers of his original text. That appearances are central to the work clearly can be suggested in the sheer repetition of the word: *seem* and its variant forms appear 34 times within a novel containing only five chapters. *Seem*, then, hints at the unreliability of the story and its characters' interpretations, a feature of gothic (Hume 284); indeed, it hints at the deceptiveness of legitimate power, a theme with broad social implications for a time confronting its own crises of faith in governance and economic stability. As Benjamin Bird has written, the late eighteenth century faced the "suspicion of monarchy" but also the fear that "greater liberty is inherently treasonous and illegitimate" (189); given such dueling forces, it is not surprising at all that Walpole's work finds itself torn between appearances and legitimacy, for the time period itself struggled to understand the rights of governance.¹⁵

In *Otranto*'s characters, appearances steadily unravel. Manfred, apparently the prince, is truly the grandson to the chamberlain of Otranto's rightful bloodline; the plot centers on his "fear of public exposure . . . [for his] not embodying the nobility and honour he gives the appearance of possessing in his false claim to the castle" (Fincher 234). Theodore, seemingly a peasant-necromancer, is no peasant; however, he is disturbingly similar to the portrait of Alfonso—as Matilda declares, "the exact resemblance" (54)—because he is Alfonso's grandson, the true ruler of Otranto. This blurring of the boundaries of appearance/reality can be seen in Matilda, who, thinking Theodore is to be executed, faints; Bianca, her sassy maid, declares her dead. Appearance

does become reality when Matilda dies, executed by her own father, who mistook her for someone else. In yet another explosion of appearance/reality, Theodore's father, ironically Father Jerome, is by appearance a simple priest. In reality, he was once the count of Falconara. No one, then, represents what s/he appears to be in *Otranto* unless ironically. With hidden and mistaken identities highlighting the blur between appearance and reality, characters in Walpole's gothic text maintain their stock characterization as virgins, peasants-turned-nobles, aggrieved fathers even as they become something else: characters with no escape, characters who metaphorically find that their lamp has been extinguished and they stand in "total darkness" (28) despite everything they do. Thus, the "total darkness" of gothic may, in part, lurk in the unveiling of self-discovery, one chillingly similar to the horrors of self-discovery that we see in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, as capitalism gained momentum, and explored brutally in the works of Charles Dickens. While the horror of the city can be seen in Radcliffe—particularly in Valancourt's debauchery in Paris—and other works of the eighteenth century, Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852-1853) reworks the typical handling of gothic terror. Instead of the chilling monster unleashed upon society, as in *Frankenstein*, *Bleak House*'s monster becomes "the great modern city and its horrors" (Pritchard 433). Slums, disease, and pollution darken the landscape; the ruined castles are now replaced with the "slums and dilapidation of the great city, where the desperate need for rehabilitation and reform now lies" (Pritchard 437). We may see here a connection with postcolonial gothic, which frequently replaces gothic castles with factories, incendiary cities, and decaying bungalows.

This brings us to the paradigmatic symbol of gothic: the fallen castle, a symbol of the numerous falls within *Otranto*. The castle, once standing proudly as a symbol of social Order, the symbol of lordship and wealth, has by the end of *Otranto* crumbled. Nature announces the fall of the House of Manfred: “A clap of thunder . . . shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked” (112). Conrad and Matilda, the future generation, are dead. Manfred himself has been revealed as a fraud. Hippolita, the sterile and wronged wife, has convinced Manfred to retreat into solitude. Yet the audience has been prepared for this fall, for the line of Manfred has itself been poisoned, symbolically replicating the poison that killed Alfonso. The castle’s stable appearance is just that: appearance. Manfred’s bloodline, whose “house was so great, so flourishing” (51) before the helmet’s catastrophic appearance, has been deteriorating. Conrad, even before his untimely and gruesome end, is “a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition” (17). Manfred himself appears increasingly deranged, a man representing “the disorder of his mind” (23): a fragment of himself. He symbolizes the riddles of genealogy and order unsolvable in a world where patriarchal control remains suspect (Mishra 60). When the castle falls, readers are not surprised, for it has been falling since the first page of the text.

The fall of the House of Manfred leaves readers with what appears to be a solid resolution. Order has been restored, for the miraculous omens that pivoted around Manfred’s usurpation have disappeared. Manfred has been punished for his crimes. Alfonso’s true bloodline has been replaced in its rightful seat. The castle has fallen even as the Church remains. However, the restoration of order leaves readers feeling that it is only an illusion. How can Matilda’s death and Theodore’s resulting despair be the apparent “good ending”? How can the Church still stand, apparently “so great, so

flourishing,” when it has been undermined by Jerome’s deception, his sacrifice of ethics to save his son? How can any resolution be found when the dominant image, the castle, has been partly destroyed? If we can see the castle as representative of social order, a patriarchal construction that symbolizes power and hegemony, it has crumbled. What will replace that order but the horror of a future that no one, not even the heroes, can escape? We, like the characters of *Otranto*, are left roaming labyrinthine interpretive possibilities in the dark.

Yet it is important to remember one critical fact: Theodore regains his inheritance. In the notorious ambivalence of the gothic novel, it is easy to believe that we have found a story that resists the period’s social ideology, its power structures, for the castle—the symbol of power, of authority—has tumbled, blasted apart in the final pages of the work. However, Donna Heiland has persuasively written that women hold no power in the novel, the beginning or the end of the work. Manfred needs women to legitimize his reign, but he will give them no power. As the castle tumbles into disarray, it is Alfonso, not Isabella, who has managed to save the rightful heirs; thus, “to set things to rights, one understands that the patriarchal order will be perpetuated not by living women, but by dead men” (Heiland 14). In such a situation, can we say that the patriarchal horrors of the past will continue, eternally, no matter who holds possession of Otranto? We may also feel that *Otranto* supports the reading that the old aristocracy, as represented by Manfred and the faltering Conrad, has been replaced, this time by a dynamic partnership between Theodore and Isabella—a new social order, one resistant to the social ideologies of the time. However, before we are quick to make such a judgment, it might be wise to consider what Theodore and Isabella represent. While it is true that neither Theodore nor

Isabella seem to possess the same moral code of Manfred, it is hard to say that they, too, might not become tyrants in their own rights. Theodore is the rightful heir to the power of Otranto, even if that visible power rests in ruins by the end of the work. Does that mean that he will represent a stark break from the past tyrannies—or does it mean that he will simply continue the power relationships of the past, relationships that insist on a master and servant, on everyone holding his or her correct place?

If *Otranto* is, indeed, resistant, what does it resist? Who, even more importantly, is the usurper: is it Manfred alone, or is it also the populace, who gain their own power through the discourse of gossip, through their roles as the witnesses of (in)justice?¹⁶ In a capitalist world, does *Otranto* cast the lower classes as potential monstrous usurpers, too?

As we move further into the eighteenth century, we find that Radcliffe's *Udolpho* possesses many of the same characteristics of usurped authority as *Otranto*. Radcliffe's novel clearly handles the topic of ownership. For example, Blanche, as she escapes the convent, states, "*Every peasant girl, on my father's domain, has viewed from her infancy the face of nature*" (472 emphasis added). What may at first seem inconsequential becomes highly telling, for Blanche's statement shows ownership of people, not just places. The Count De Villefort's ownership of his domain asserts itself as he "surveyed [his land] with the pride of conscious property" (481). Even more, subordinates often survive on the "benevolence" of their patriarchs,¹⁷ for, as we see in Chateau-le-Blanc, the "antic gestures" of peasants living on the Count's domain are supported by the Count's "bounty" (500). One thematic strand noteworthy in Radcliffe, as well as many writers of her time, is the corruption of the city versus the purity of the country. The topic is brought up repeatedly in the novel, with one notable example being the Countess De

Villefort (who represents the city) and her peasant subjects (who represent the country). However, there is a fairly ominous strand to this, for the simple peasants are often depicted as superstitious while the more educated (and powerful) Count, assured of his own knowledge, surveys them with benevolence. While the effect may not be intended, Radcliffe's portrayal of simple peasants versus corrupted city dwellers leaves one feeling that the peasants are patronized, underscoring the right to power of the ruling class. Radcliffe depicts benevolence as a necessary part of the social order, but benevolence can force people to depend on the goodwill of others. Indeed, benevolence can strengthen a ruler's tyranny, for many will not attempt to change the power structure when their needs are met by that all-so-charitable *noblesse oblige*.

Against such a backdrop of rightful ownership and authority, Montoni's actions become increasingly shocking. He has removed both Emily and her aunt, the Madame Cheron, from their positions of wealth and, in the case of Madame Cheron, influence; he increasingly pressures both to sign their wealth to him, attempting to usurp what is not his. Yet even before Montoni's appearance, the question of ownership and power arises in Emily's sudden orphaning. After her father's death, Emily is continually reminded of her social status, not only as an orphan but as the dependent daughter of a foolish man who was "always more generous than provident" (110). Madame Cheron, on first taking Emily as her ward, states that though she has no time to do so, she will "overlook" Emily's "conduct" (98), showing quite clearly her power over her niece. Emily understands that she must unwillingly "submit to" Cheron's idea of guidance (112) even when she notices the impropriety and false pride of her actions. As with Madame Cheron, Montoni forces Emily to understand the power of others over herself—and how that

power can be usurped by those society deems not only capable but legitimate in their rights to overpower her decisions. While much of Radcliffe's focus is on Montoni's desire for her lands, the very framework of the novel—the inescapable confinement by a man who has threatened her life and her freedom—emphasizes the insecurity of Emily, and through Emily women in general, in the existing social relations of the time.

When we at long last reach the end of our novel, our concerns for Emily's future happiness are cheerfully resolved. Order has been re-established¹⁸; those who should own ancestral houses have been restored their possessions, and those whose ambitions caused them to act monstrosly against the innocent have been repaid for their crimes. Indeed, with the ruined castle and the death of the older generation—for example, Emily's father and aunt, Montoni—we may begin to think that a highly charged, resistant order is being suggested: a new system of power relations, for the powerless have become the powerful, and the powerful have lost everything, their lives included. This may seem suggested when Radcliffe's heroine undermines the power of her oppressor Montoni and gains access not only to her own lands, but to her aunt's as well.

Again, though, we must tread with caution. Our heroine still remains part of the ruling class, as will, most likely, her children; unfortunately, Annette and Ludovico, who have literally saved Emily's life, do not suddenly become self-governing bodies with their own domains. Despite their actions, they remain servants: subjects of the system in power at the time. We might even want to say that Emily, by refusing to sign over her lands, by learning the value of independence, has in some ways destroyed the patriarchal system that has entrapped her. She has penetrated locked chambers, crossing the boundaries she should not; she has censored the powerful, gaining wealth and a loving

husband as she has done so. However, as with *Otranto*, the truly important questions remain unanswered. Montoni has been replaced, but Emily—and Valancourt, Saint Foix, and Blanche, the next generation of landed aristocrats—will resume that power, continuing to survey their domains from the gaze of authority.¹⁹ What, if anything, has truly been resisted? Is Radcliffe’s novel resisting the power structures of her society—or is she embracing them by having Emily assume a position within that power structure? In other words, to gain a voice of resistance from *Udolpho*, must one be well-placed in society to begin with—and if this is true, is this really resistance at all?

Like *Otranto* and *Udolpho*, Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth* ambivalently addresses questions of legitimacy and control in what seems to be a subversive portrayal of a decaying social order. Maturin’s early nineteenth-century novel presents a whirlwind of narratives within narratives within narratives, of fragments within fragments that intrigue readers with an almost elusive network of characters and places, all of them linked to the central “mysterious stranger” (22) of the novel: Melmoth.²⁰ However, we begin to learn that these stories are the stories of humanity itself, its “history” (441) as it strives to find its path through the perpetual horrors before it. Reaching back to the story of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel—even before the advent of humanity, to the fall of Satan—Maturin’s work travels to the Inquisition, to unexplored isles in the Indies, to insane asylums in London, and to a decaying manor in Ireland. Couched amongst this allusive and elusive tapestry of human existence can be found an intriguingly paradoxical attack on the patriarchal power, one perhaps more obvious than in *Otranto* or even *Udolpho*—even as it declares, through its narrative structure, the timelessness of the very social order it attempts to dismantle.

In *Melmoth*, we encounter, as with most gothic novels, an array of ruins—but we also encounter the ruins of decaying families, hauntingly reminiscent of Conrad in *Otranto*. The ruins of power can be painfully clear towards the novel’s conclusion, where we confront the decayed House of Mortimer. ““From these towers . . . my grandfather led forth his vassals and tenants in aid of his king . . . when the royal cause seemed lost forever”” (503), Mrs. Ann Mortimer tells us as she describes her ancestral home. What is most interesting about the Mortimer narrative, though, is not that the castle itself is in ruins, for it is not. Its arms are “gloriously emblazoned” over “ancient casement[s]” (503), its halls richly carved, its woods beautifully landscaped and maintained. Yet something is missing in this noble household. The family has been accustomed to “ancestral habits of stately regularity, and decorous grandeur” (503) within the walls of its home; it has told stories of its past glories, of battles and kingly favor even as they themselves seem to fade, living in the past while unable to aspire to glory in the present. As John Sandle, cousin to the family, arrives, the “high ancestry” (507) of Mortimer seems almost to reappear; hope burns in the family, but it is a short-lived hope. After a tale of intrigue and betrayal, the House of Mortimer finds itself with its heiress dead, its matriarchs dead, and John Sandle descended into madness.²¹ While the blood remains, while the castle stands, it is a spectral sign, for the authority once existing within has perished.

An even more sinister story of the retained social dynamics occurs towards the end of the novel. In it, we find that Immalee/Isidora,²² the perfect “noble savage” so frequently included in nineteenth-century literature,²³ escapes to a rotting monastery to marry her intended: Melmoth. “From the remains of the tower and spire” come the

“crosses still visible on every ruined pinnacle and pediment” (436), perfectly representing the fallen Church. It is within this convent that Immalee/Isidora marries Melmoth in the “unholy and unnatural bond” (588) that eventually leads to the creation of an “infant demon” (586) and Immalee/Isidora’s death in the halls of the Inquisition. Thus, the convent has been appropriated by another power, its empty shell becoming the scene for a ritual subverting its very essence. Even more importantly, however, we find here the beginning of a story that will eventually take us once more to the Inquisition—this time, an Inquisition no longer burned, no longer destroyed even as it destroys the innocent. Despite the appearance of death, the Church, like Melmoth himself, continues to exist, a power that has been humbled but not destroyed. From this system there is no escape, and Immalee/Isidora, as all humanity, has simply escaped from one confinement to the next.

We may be tempted at this point to argue that Maturin’s tale of subversion is not subversive at all, for it leaves the central icons of power—the Church, the aristocracy—within power, even if the holders of power have changed. A regime of control remains, no matter who actually leads that regime, an eternal, inescapable power structure that will not change. Yet even as we feel tempted to do just that, Maturin provides us an escape. One image, almost buried by its apparent insignificance, undermines this interpretation of eternal order, eternal control. In it, we see Immalee/Isidora’s mother Donna Clara “*overcasting* a piece of tapestry wrought by her grandmother” in a work that “made fearful havock among the old” (419, Maturin’s italics). In it, like the progressive linearity of conventional writing obliterated by Maturin’s disjunctive style, the patriarchal past is fragmented, its story ruined by Donna Clara’s embroidery—a his-story that becomes a her-story. Indeed, it is a story retold by a woman, recast with new players who may have

very different roles. This “*overcasting*” of the tapestry of history destroys the old, but even in this final image of destruction, we are left wondering with what she replaces it. Paradoxically, then, although possession of power has changed, although the very look of power has changed, the dominant regime has not: the aristocracy still rules its less fortunate subordinates, maintaining a power that seems—through the sheer repetition of ruined symbols—almost eternal. One power dies, but it is always replaced by another, which is then replaced by another, caught in an endless cycle recaptured by the very narrative structure of Maturin’s novel.

The Ideology of the Decline: Counter-Resistance

“And you dreamt,” he [the monk] cried, “in your temerity, you dreamt of setting the vigilance of a convent at defiance? Two boys, one the fool of fear, and the other of temerity, were fit antagonists for that stupendous system, whose roots are in the bowels of the earth, and whose head is among the stars, —*you* escape from a convent! *you* defy a power that has defied sovereigns! A power whose influence is unlimited, indefinable, and unknown, even to those who exercise it . . . a power whose operation is like its motto, —one and indivisible. The soul of the Vatican breathes in the humblest convent in Spain, —and you, an insect perched on a wheel of this vast machine, imagined you were able to arrest its progress, while its rotation was hurrying on to crush you to atoms.” (Maturin 244)

Hissing these accusatory words deep in the tunnels of the convent, the patricide monk delivers one of Maturin’s strongest charges against the Roman Catholic Church,

stating that it is arrogant, impossible to believe one “insect” of a person can defeat a system that has crushed countless others in “a vast system for subjugation” (Haslam 51) that is inescapable. We earlier saw the same character facing the father Superior, who cruelly told him that he was foolish to believe any disconnection between power and right existed: “Do you, then, make a question between right and power? You shall soon feel, within these walls, they are the same” (150). Maturin interweaves, amidst the arguments on knowledge and its pursuit, ethics and morality, a potent question: *is* there a difference between who holds power and the right to use that power? Indeed, does possessing a power make one its rightful owner, no matter its origin? While he disturbingly asks these questions, he also shows, in detail, the devastating machine of discipline behind power, for those attempting to resist its force are most commonly “crush[ed] . . . to atoms” by its spokes. Alonzo di Monçada the Spaniard may escape the powers that haunted him at the convent, he may escape being buried alive within the walls of a crushing power because of his own illegitimate birth—he may even see the towers of the Inquisition collapse:

In the burning light, the steeple of the Dominican church was as visible as at noon-day. It was close to the prison of the Inquisition. The night was intensely dark, but so strong was the light of the conflagration, that I could see the spire blazing, from the reflected luster, like a meteor. (269)

Cast in the purifying light of the Inquisition’s destruction, his eyes drawn to the building’s clock in the continued spirit of hope, Alonzo di Monçada may gaze at its hands “visible as if a torch was held between them,” ticking onwards in “a calm and silent progress of time” despite “the tumultuous confusion of midnight horrors” (270). Filled with the prospect of hope as time seems to march forth, to move beyond the monstrosities

of the past, Alonzo may offer the reader hope that the present will overcome the past, that the ruins of a dead world will remain there, ruined, no longer capable of interfering.

However, as with much of Maturin's ambivalent text, such a message of hope does not arrive unchallenged, for arising out of the smoke, like a wraith, Alonzo glimpses a chilling horror:

. . . [M]y whole attention had been riveted to a human figure placed on a pinnacle of the spire, and surveying the scene in perfect tranquility. It was a figure not to be mistaken—it was the figure of him who had visited me in the cells of the Inquisition. (270)

This tranquil figure is, of course, Melmoth, who has appeared seemingly out of nowhere—as he appears countless times to others, as he continues to appear endlessly, eternally in the text, a recurring nightmare that cannot be escaped. Maturin's genius is to always question, to always undercut the feelings of resolution we may gain, for there is always the hint that the past will continue, that the system will continue, that the power structures will continue without ceasing. When we once again find ourselves facing the halls of the Inquisition towards the end of the novel, we feel, indeed, that there is no escaping a power that radiates throughout the text and throughout society. Whether that power is called the Inquisition, the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, that same crushing power rolls throughout time, simply changing its guise as the eras change.

Decaying castles, deceit, hidden identities, and illegitimate power serve as some of the most provocative themes of gothic literature—they are the themes that construct plots, the themes that haunt audience's minds as they turn the last page of a novel. So frequently, they seem to suggest a strong resistance to the social structures of their time:

to power itself, to ancient regimes, to female dispossession. In many ways, these works *do* resist, for they are not silent on issues of oppression and powerlessness when they so easily could be. By drawing characters who must regain their inherited rights, who must stand against tyranny, who must, indeed, face evil in its human forms—Manfred, the villainous usurper and would-be husband of his son's betrothed, Montoni, the greedy tyrant who would stop at nothing to gain lands belonging to those he should most protect, and Melmoth, who wishes to tempt others to his own fate to escape eternal damnation—Walpole, Radcliffe, and Maturin force readers to wonder why some are able to govern others or even why women do not hold the same rights as men. They offer possibilities for interrogating the boundaries of civil society, a powerful influence. This leads us to an important question, one that whispers through many of the chapters to follow in this work: once a boundary is crossed, does that necessarily mean it has been resisted? Does boundary crossing mean that the boundaries have, indeed, been changed at all—or are they merely excursions into the feared unknown, with routes of return readily marked?

One wonders if, perhaps, there is an ideology of resistance in gothic works of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, one born of the times: the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Bloodless Revolution. *Revolution* was yet a powerful force in the minds of readers and writers of the era, and it may not surprise us that questioning the very order of society, given such a political background, could become a strategic foothold for gothic writers seeking an audience interested in the position of women, the ties of property ownership, the ethical standards of the time. What is most noteworthy, though, is not just that they questioned these critical issues, which can freely be admitted; rather, it is that they resolved their works with endings that supported the dominant

power structures of the time. They questioned, they interrogated the relations of men and women, of landowner and lower class, of master and servant—but they did not write novels that completely upturned the power system in which they wrote. Thus, gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be seen as questioning the boundaries of power even as it legitimizes that power through a narrative strategy that most frequently resolves tension through marriage or triumph over transgressive social forces. Gothic of the period seems to suggest, indeed, a timeless, overwhelming social system that cannot be defeated, despite the desperate efforts of its heroes and heroines.

Notes

¹ While there are obviously differing arguments on this, according to Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*, law can be seen as a symbolic order that strives "to separate this or that social, sexual or age group from one another, by means of prohibiting a filthy, defiling element" and, furthermore, it provides "dividing lines . . . between society and a certain nature, as well as within the social aggregate, on the basis of the simple logic of *excluding filth*" (qtd. in Chaplin, "Spectres of Law" 180). If law, then, is something used to create and enforce dividing lines between (un)desirable elements ("filth"), Emily's act of stealing that power becomes inscriptive; the disempowered female suddenly holds the privilege of redrawing the dividing lines. However, as Kate Ellis points out in her work, this power to deny access to her lands exists only in Radcliffian romance, not in real society, for her aunt's lands would have been owned by her husband *before* her death; it is not until the Married Woman's Property Act of 1837 that the wife's estates would no longer belong to the husband on the date of marriage. Gothic, then, transgresses the norms of society, but it does so in a way that is not real (Mishra 53).

² Additionally, the disruptive narrative technique used in many gothic novels, such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, also implies a significant subversion of conventional writing techniques. This disjunctive narrative technique may well originate from the very nature of gothic itself, for gothic cannot echo "the certainties of the epic narrators" (Mishra 24); it is, above all else, a presentation of the uncertainties of life. It "blasts open" progressive history analyses,

making it more of a postmodern discourse that undercuts reality as something “real” (Mishra 25).

³ Although this chapter focuses on the gothic novels of Walpole, Radcliffe, and Maturin, there are many gothic novels that could be examined with the same theoretical framework. For example, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) all portray characters who resist social order—Frankenstein’s monster by demanding a wife from his master, Jane by existing as social equals with Rochester, and Lady Audley by deceit and conniving—yet social change disappears almost as quickly as it is suggested. Frankenstein’s monster becomes prey, hunted into the arctic, while Jane must inherit wealth to become Rochester’s equal, making her no different than the elite she supposedly displaces. Lady Audley, even more, is not only uncovered in her incursions against a male-dominated world, but the very men she attempted to deceive also lock her in an insane asylum without hopes of ever escaping.

⁴ Even the country house, represented in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*’s vast chateaus, could represent the seat of authority. Harkening back to the Classical era instead of the more Medieval castle, they “embod[ied] political, economic, cultural and philosophical beliefs of the dominant ruling class” (Arnold 64). While the architecture differs, both the castle and the country house functioned as visible symbols of a ruler’s domain. Subordinates could see them but could never access their inner sanctums; thus, the exclusionary nature of both architectural styles reinforced the system’s rule.

⁵ Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill is notorious as an example of the Gothic Revival of the eighteenth century, particularly since some have claimed that *Otranto*'s castle was but "an immoderate inflation of his own villa, Strawberry Hill" (Davenport-Hines 117). However, Strawberry Hill was not the only castle reproduced in England during the period. "Sham ruin[s]" such as Lord Lyttelton's feudal castle at Hagley, designed to look like the remains of "broken power" (Davenport-Hines 74) and nostalgically depicting a time of political purity in England, were common for the era.

⁶ See also E. P. Thompson's "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," considered one of the more foundational works in architectural analysis in its relation to social status.

⁷ Hume, in his landmark "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel," lists "haunted castles, supernatural occurrences . . . secret panels and stairways, time-yellowed manuscripts, and poorly lighted midnight scenes" as typical "'Gothic trappings'" (282). Contemporaries of the eighteenth century, such as Richard Hurd in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), even considered "the ruin of a tower, which the neighbourhood has gazed at for ages with admiration," as essential to the gothic aesthetic (qtd. in Miles, "The Gothic Aesthetic" 44).

⁸ This may remind readers of "The Fall of the House of Usher," by Edgar Allan Poe (1839-1840). One of the most significant connections is the death of the decaying aristocratic family, through the weak Roderick, the neuroses, the pale and wraith-like (and then undead) Madeline, not to mention the suits of armor, tapestries, and dungeon. Roderick is described as holding a "cadaverousness of complexion," an almost "ghastly pallor of the skin" (Poe 1537). His doppelgänger, Madeline, drifts by our narrator's eyes.

She is very much like a ghost, completely identical to Roderick, and suffering from “[a] settled apathy” and “a gradual wasting-away” (1539). Even more memorable, though, is the manor itself. We first see it, discolored and ancient, its gray stones arising from a dark and gloomy tarn, with a “barely perceptible fissure” (1536) cracking through the building. Amidst “wild light” and the “shadows [of the] red moon,” the House of Usher falls: the “fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind— . . . my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently” (1547), burying the House of Usher at last and its sickened line of descent. While we have no evidence that the House of Usher was filled with obvious usurpers, perhaps one can claim that their power base, built off a feudal world’s remains, was usurped in a world with a new system of power distribution, the market.

⁹ Kate Ellis, in *The Contested Castle*, connects Radcliffe’s gothic works with the marketplace and capitalism rather than feudalism. The marketplace interest of *Udolpho*, for example, can best be seen in Radcliffe’s decision to contextualize the work in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century settings venues rather than much earlier periods, such as in Walpole’s work. Additionally, her emphasis of money—through Montoni in particular—as the nexus of power rather than the ancestral home shows an intriguing movement of the gothic from feudal to contemporary times, making the gothic terrors seem more relevant to the eighteenth century than it otherwise might (K. Ellis 100-1).

¹⁰ “Moorish” and “dark” reflect period concerns with race and immortality. For example, Eugenia DeLamotte explores the connection between darkness, black veils, and non-Caucasian villains and the audience’s probable fear that, in the age of empire, whiteness was on the verge of extinction (“White Terror” 20-1)

¹¹ As an Anglican minister stationed in Dublin, it seems natural that Maturin’s work would hold fierce sentiments on Catholicism. *Melmoth*, “portraying a continent disfigured by the Inquisition, Jesuitical conspiracy, and mob violence” (Miles, “Europhobia” 89), might be easily targeted as anti-Catholic or Europhobic, yet Miles cautions that such an interpretation might ignore the author’s frequently “eccentric” religious views (89). Despite this caution, it seems fairly safe to say that English gothic of the period frequently targets Catholic belief systems as outmoded and, more specifically, Europe as “a degenerate Catholic Continent, sunk back in priest-ridden Medievalism” (Miles, “Europhobia” 85)

¹² It is critical that Alonzo di Monçada is illegitimate; as an illegitimate son, he threatens patrimonial heredity and the authority of bloodlines. Because of this, he, like Lady Audley and Manfred, must be expelled from legitimate society, cloistered—or, as in the attempted escape from the convent, buried alive. Paradoxically, however, Monçada ruins the family he was shunned to protect, for his brother, the legitimate heir, is killed by the patricide monk who is supposed to free Monçada but, in turn, hands him to the Inquisition. Significantly, the patricide is ground to a pulp, for his original crime of patricide shows that he has violated the rules of the patriarchy (Heiland 52).

¹³ The Inquisition's officials are most concerned with Melmoth's ability to escape detection, to penetrate the walls of their fortress. This is a telling concern, for knowledge (of eternal life, for example) is the Church's main power. Coupled with his ability to escape control, Melmoth stands as the perfect threat to the establishment, an overseer who cannot be detected, captured, or recorded.

¹⁴ *Caleb Williams* is a politically charged work that focuses, among other things, on the power of knowledge as well as the class structure of the late eighteenth century. In particular, it pits the "squirearchy"—composed of men "whose power went hand in hand with inherited property"—against the laboring class (Heiland 84), though it is difficult to ascertain the eventual victor in the novel.

¹⁵ Indeed, Bird's contention that the gothic novel arose amidst this tension (190) helps explain the interest in legitimacy and authority throughout much of the genre, especially Walpole's own *Otranto*. Origins, legitimate power, usurpation all form key themes in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Caleb Williams*, and *Frankenstein*, to name a few. What may be of most interest is that many twentieth-century postcolonial gothic novels also explore issues of legitimacy: who has the right to control a country? Can a country develop its political systems to mirror the empire that conquered it—or is doing so merely replicating the oppression of the past?

¹⁶ The peasant or servant class frequently finds itself fulfilling roles as gossips/witnesses of stories, though they often seem to only hold a portion of the story's knowledge. In *Otranto*, the tenants observe not only the curse—in fact, they are the ones to spread the rumor of the curse's relationship to Conrad's hasty marriage—but also

Manfred's "great appearance of justice" in dealing with Theodore (Walpole 22). In *Udolpho*, much of the story of Emily's aunt comes through servants, though distorted and misinterpreted, and in *Melmoth*, John Melmoth's apprehension of his ancient kin, the mysterious stranger, comes from the gossip of his uncle's servants. Thus, gossip serves an important function within the gothic novel: as a vessel of knowledge, though that knowledge may be faulty. Perhaps even more importantly, since most gossip within gothic novels possesses errors in fact, we can say that one method of control used by gothic villains is knowledge itself, expressed against an encroaching social class.

¹⁷ The Count is described as looking upon his family and domains with "benevolent satisfaction" (481). Thus, the connection between benevolence and patriarchy seems anything but subtle.

¹⁸ Worthy of note is the novel's subtitle, one rarely mentioned: *A Romance*. Thus, Radcliffe is consciously working within the boundaries of romance, which insists on restoring order and, even more importantly, reinstating the social hierarchy. Romance, then, becomes an ideological instrument: "In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy" (Frye 186). In this literary version of wish-fulfillment, the idealized society continues after overcoming its obstacles, and we can see much of this in Radcliffe's work, where Emily and Valancourt create their own society of bliss at the end of the work, having confronted their demons and earned one another's companionship.

¹⁹ As yet another twist on whether *The Mysteries of Udolpho* can be seen as destroying the gaze of power, the ultimate surveyor and controller on any narrative is actually the author, who establishes our narrative framework: our story. By taking possession of its reins, Radcliffe can be seen as inserting herself into the position of authority or authorship, a usurpation of male privilege.

²⁰ Even the name “Melmoth” leaves a good deal of uncertainty, for there are several Melmoths: the dying uncle; John Melmoth, the inheritor of Melmoth’s fortune; and J. Melmoth, the Melmoth of 1646 and the Wanderer of the novel’s title. Additionally, while J. Melmoth and the uncle do not appear to share distinct similarities, J. Melmoth and John Melmoth do. They are both particularly inquisitive, full of curiosity—a dark warning to John Melmoth, since, as the Wanderer tells him, for “the same stake [curiosity] I risked more than life” and “lost it” (605). Between J. and John Melmoth, then, we can see doppelgängers, a reflection of the possible ends that John Melmoth could meet should he follow his ancestral heritage. Such a warning undercuts the legitimacy of patriarchal rule.

²¹ Madness, as with many gothic tales, heavily intertwines through the pages of *Melmoth*. In fact, in each tale, almost every major hero/ine descends into madness or is trapped by society’s diagnosis of madness. There are, of course, many ways of interpreting this madness, but madness could be read as symptomatic of the unnatural decay of social order—or, conversely, as the unnatural preservation of an order that enslaves its own people.

²² Immalee represents her uncolonized self while Isidora represents her colonized, Europeanized self. It is most interesting, perhaps, that when Melmoth meets her in Europe, he normally refers to her as Immalee; however, when he dies and hopes to see her in the eternal, she is Isidora. Can we then interpret that only the colonized self remains, one controlled and reshaped until Immalee no longer exists? This may be the case, but even more, it implies that salvation may only be for those with European values—a theme reflected heavily in colonial texts.

²³ Orientalism can be seen in Maturin's work, which would have been "unexpected but highly conventional" for contemporaries of the era (Lew 176). We see this Orientalism most in the description of Immalee, a character who is "islanded," progressively driven into smaller and smaller spaces as she takes each step into European life (Lew 180). Indeed, given the tragic fate of Immalee at the hands of the Inquisition, we may see the Immalee story, one central to the novel, as anti-colonialist sentiment roaming in Maturin's novel. This can be viewed as Maturin's subversive attack on the patriarchal system, one that extends to its power overseas and its use of religion to excuse barbarous activities well outside the view (thus, the scrutiny) of European eyes.

CHAPTER THREE
THE EMPIRE KNOCKS AT OUR DOOR:
FOREIGN INVASION

While many of the gothic novels of the eighteenth century focused on crossing and restoring the boundaries of gender and social class, the nineteenth century ushered in a new form of the genre: the *Imperial Gothic*, laden with themes of empire, race, imperialism, dominance, and invasion. Sometimes called *colonial gothic* (Nordius 673) and other times called *Empire Gothic* (Hughes 122), Imperial Gothic is complex in definition. The Imperial Gothic, a term first coined by Patrick Bratlinger in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988), can best be seen as a genre of fear, this one a specifically targeted fear associated with empire and conquest. Imperial Gothic focuses on the supernatural and the rational, frequently blending the two forms of thought as readers, seeing little hope at the waning of Empire, searched for meaning in areas not traditionally considered rational (Brantlinger 227). Travel literature was one of the most important elements of Imperial Gothic, for it allowed Europeans to explore the Empire and to record what they had seen (Hughes 122).

At this point, we can start to see Imperial Gothic as a genre springing from the “contact zones of the empire” (Hurley 195), a contact zone of the unknown and, because of this, the often feared (Paravisini-Gebert 229). In Imperial Gothic, the indigenous Other of empire, rather than remaining silent and oppressed well beyond the view of its rulers, became suddenly visible, even threatening (Paravisini-Gebert 229; DeLamotte, “White

Terror” 24; Spencer 207). Thus, the Other of empire would not remain home, safely removed from English society; rather, it wished to invade the English parlor, the London home, the imperial seat of power in the English family. We can see this no better than in Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya: or, the Moor* (1806), Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1891), and H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), the subjects of this chapter. Here, boundary crossing became almost literal, with fiends of darkness, soulless creatures from beyond England’s shores crossing the polite boundaries of civil society to corrupt the heart of the Empire. The fictional Dracula embodied a horrifying fiend of darkness invading England:

It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply engorged with blood. He lay like a filthy leach, exhausted with his repletion. . . . This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. A terrible desire came upon me to rid the world of such a monster. (Stoker 51)

Once safely stowed out of sight in the far, far away Transylvania, Dracula becomes something quite different when he arrives in London, “[e]ngorged with blood” and seeking to feed in England itself. He must be stopped, purged, a key theme in many Imperial Gothic texts.

Given such an uncanny invasion, the gothic response to the Empire arriving at its doors was to eradicate the “filthy leach” trespassing its borders; its response, indeed, was to “rid the world of such a monster” by demonizing, attacking, and utterly annihilating its monstrosity. Although the acts of monstrosity varied widely—from suggested

cannibalism in William Beckford's *Vathek* (1782/1786) and Bertha's demented gaze in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) to Heathcliff's darkness in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)—the violent interrogation and expulsion of the monster did not. Behind these monstrous transformations lurked a very genuine horror: that of the indigenous subject, colonized and stripped of its self-autonomy, invading Europe and resisting the master's rule.

We can trace back the form's emergence as early as Beckford's *Vathek*, a text haunted with Oriental images even as it punishes the Oriental Caliph Vathek because of his lustful and deviant behavior. However, Imperial Gothic seems to have gained momentum with the publication of *Zofloya: or, the Moor*, *Dracula*, and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The time period that accompanied these texts, many of them considered "major works" of the period, faced its strongest cultural crises yet—sexual, moral, and scientific—even as it began to encode a very strong ideology of race. Furthermore, this ideology of race, with its stereotypical emphasis on the "exotic" and "the mysterious" (Said, *Orientalism* 51), reinforced the imperial project of Europe as it expanded its empire to include the Orient, an ideology that became increasingly coherent in the gothic literature of the era. Perhaps even more intriguingly, however, Imperial Gothic might have expanded its gaze to the furthest reaches of the empire—but it began its racial profiling at home, with Europe itself.

The Discourse of Devilry: Demonizing the Other with Dacre's Fiends

While it would be in error to state that Imperial Gothic relished only one tool of discourse, it is possible to state that it did have its favorite tool: demonization of the

Other. This should not, of course, be seen as a split from previous gothic literature, for demonizing the Other was one of its favorite tools. Manfred, the villain of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), consistently appears as a "tyrant" (73) given to "exquisite villainy" (38). Ann Radcliffe's Montoni from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is frequently described as fiendish, with his "malignant smile" (218) and "the severity of his temper and the gloominess of his pride" (143). And we cannot forget the infamous Melmoth of Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), who is not only described as possessing "demon eyes" (50) that shone with a "fiend-like brilliancy" (61)—but who also made a Faustian pact with the devil himself in pursuit of knowledge.¹ However, despite its use of similar tools as earlier gothic forms, Imperial Gothic tended to link race with social deviancy and immorality, and it did so by literally demonizing its conquered or otherwise undesirable characters.

In Imperial Gothic, demonization can be quickly linked to the technologies of discipline elaborated in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1977), particularly in his description of the panopticon. Undesirable, tainted elements of the social body are shunned, placed in an "enclosed, segmented space, [where they can be] observed at every point" and in which "all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and the periphery" (197). The panopticon allows subjects who are contaminated to be removed from the general populace—to avoid further contamination—and to be watched by an authoritative eye. It, thus, essentially operates as a mechanism of control. While Imperial Gothic cannot be seen as a fixed space, as Foucault describes, it possesses many of the same traits, particularly its control of a population by shunning it and observing it as a corrective measure. This technology of

terror is a discourse strategy transforming the conquered into one's worst nightmare, the devil himself determined to corrupt the civilized world, and categorically removing that devil from society's graces.

Such a technology of terror resonates throughout Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* and Imperial Gothic in general. However, it may be surprising that the Moor, Henriquez' supposed slave from Grenada, is not the only character Dacre demonizes within her novel. Dacre describes Victoria with a darkness that leaves little to the imagination: we see in Victoria the villainess of the novel. From the novel's first pages, Victoria comes to us as exotically beautiful but tragically wild:

. . . Victoria, though at the age of fifteen, beautiful and accomplished as an angel, was proud, haughty, and self-sufficient—of a wild, ardent, and irrepressible spirit, indifferent to reproof, careless of censure—of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining the ascendancy in whatever she engaged. (4)

This “proud, haughty” member of the Venetian aristocracy, fully pampered to expect her own desires to be met almost instantly and shunned not just because of her mother's indiscretion but also because of her own “violent and overbearing disposition” (15), falls into rages almost instantaneously. Exemplary to this is her reaction to being confined in Treviso, a remote estate outside Venice, with Signora di Modena. Upon reaching the estate at her mother and Ardolph's instigation, Victoria is confined without hope of escaping her prison anytime soon.² The remoteness of the location, the confinement without revelry, and, even more, the despicably dull presence of Signora di Modena inspire Victoria to escape. It is noteworthy that this quintessential gothic trope, the

confinement of the heroine, defies expectations, for Victoria is not confined by a villain attempting to rape her or steal property; rather, she is confined by a relative who owns a strict, taciturn nature and who we quickly see as “proud, fastidious, and possessed of a mercenary soul” (39). Signora di Modena’s domestic tyranny sets Victoria, almost immediately, into manipulating Catau, her servant, in her wish for escape.

As we read the novel, we increasingly see Victoria as a boundary crosser, one feared by much of Victorian society. Victoria’s rage, her manipulation of Catau, her desire for autonomy as she searches for power to control her own destiny rapidly leave readers to see Victoria as a woman who is not a woman—indeed, as a woman behaving as a man. That Victoria is too proud, too intelligent, too manipulative quickly corresponds to her appearance: “No, hers was not the countenance of a Madonna—it was not of angelic mould; yet, though there was fierceness in it, it was certainly a repelling, but a beautiful fierceness—*dark*, noble, strongly expressive” (76 emphasis added) demeanor. To Berenza, the dupe who will eventually marry her, Victoria possesses “no mild, no gentle, no endearing virtues” (76). She does not possess the qualities one hopes to find in a woman of the day:

Pure, innocent, free even from the smallest taint of a corrupt thought, was her mind; delicate, symmetrical, and of fairy-like beauty, her person so small, yet of so just proportion; sweet, expressing a seraphic serenity of soul, seemed her angelic countenance, slightly suffused with the palest hue of the virgin rose. Long flaxen hair floated over her shoulders: she might have personified . . . innocence in the days of her childhood. (133)

Rash and violent, given to scheming, full with dark thoughts and erotic dreams, Victoria could not be any more different from the “aërial spirit” (168) and “blooming fairy” Lilla (158),³ an orphan with little protection and Victoria’s obstacle to a love affair with Henriquez, her husband’s brother. Lilla is childlike, innocent, and incapable of defending herself, requiring a man to do so for her; Victoria is sly, devious, violent in her actions—poisoning her husband and Lilla’s guardian, seducing Henriquez, imprisoning and murdering Lilla—making her a perfect villain except for the tiny fact that she is female.

As Victoria becomes continuously ruthless in her pursuit of her own desires, Dacre engages in the discourse of the devil. Victoria becomes not a woman, but a monster, a fiend:

With unshrinking soul, and eye unabashed by the consciousness of guilt, Victoria joined at supper the innocent family circle. The high blush of animation flushed her *dark cheek* with more than usual *fire*; her eyes sparkled, but it was with a *fiend-like* exultation, and her nerves seemed new strung for the execution of her dreadful purpose. (157 emphasis added)

Her darkness—the Venetian dark skin, the vibrancy, the eroticism and violence of Victoria’s personality—become associated with fiendishness and devilry. This fear of darkness can be linked to nationalism, as Eugenia DeLamotte has argued. Focusing on Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797), DeLamotte shows how Schedoni is automatically racialized as the “national type” with moral imperfections because of the color of his skin, which is “metonymically [linked] with shade, shadows, darkness, and blackness” (“White Terror” 21). Radcliffe furthers the “biological racism” by giving her characters

of the Black Penitents “[b]lack hair, eyes, and eyebrows, black cowls, black veils, and ‘swarthy’ complexions [that] signify something frightening, suspect, evil, and distinctively other than the implied reader” (21). In *Zofloya*, the “Moor’s darkness” becomes “an index of evil” (23), producing an unquestioned line of color between white/black that support white claims to moral superiority. She begins to represent to Henriquez, the representative of polite society and decorum, a form of corruption from which he must save his wilting damsel in distress. He exclaims, “‘by heaven my Lilla is a gem too bright to shed her pure rays beneath this contaminated roof’” (196). When Dacre later describes her as possessing “demoniac sparkling eyes” (199), we have been led, one careful step at a time, to see Victoria as a demon; furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, Dacre’s discourse of devilry almost forces us to connect peril and deviance, fiendishness and wickedness with the “dark” skin Victoria possesses. It is from this “tainted” source (201) that Henriquez believes he must remove Lilla, to protect her at all cost.

However, he is too late to rescue his distressed fiancée. Victoria’s taint drives her to imprison Lilla in a cavern, where she will never be discovered. Most interestingly, Victoria actually succeeds in not only capturing Lilla, but also in reducing her to an almost animal nakedness and murdering her. As Diane Hoeveler writes, *Zofloya* remains one of the “most eccentric female gothic[s] ever penned” (188), for “[a]ccording to the code of the ideology, Lilla should live and triumph over Victoria” (188)—but she most certainly does not. This may be interpreted as a genre shift where women are “inveterate enemies of each other” (Hoeveler 194), yet it may also reveal a nascent questioning of racial and moral boundaries. Even if Victoria is ultimately destroyed, she has destroyed

the ideology of the beautiful golden female while doing so. This corresponds with the “female demon” seen in *Wuthering Heights*, where the oppressed female rages against a “feminized” male’s control and destroys those around her, but is ultimately disempowered to valorize the ideological female (Beauvais par. 5). Indeed, the violent Victoria “is fascinating” before the “violent climax,” but she becomes “flat and conventional as Dacre hastens to her generic concluding scene” (Dunn 313); Dacre has released her character’s desires to “destroy this [Lilla’s] false feminine ideal” (Dunn 314), but she silences any alternate gendered possibilities by negating Victoria. Dacre again links race and violence, darkness and contamination as she compares Victoria to the virtuous Lilla:

Sleep still overpowered her senses, unconscious of the horror she inspired—those *black* fringed eyelids, reposing upon a cheek of *dark* and animated hue—those *raven* tresses hanging unconfined—oh sad! oh *damning* proofs!—Where was the fair enameled cheek—the flaxen ringlets of the delicate Lilla? . . . (221 emphasis added)

Her skin, her darkness, connects her to “damning proofs”; indeed, her “unconfined” tresses suggest a wantonness and sexual proclivity that could never be suggested by the flaxen-haired, “enameled cheek” Lilla. Victoria has been converted into the ultimate horror, the woman who behaves outside the confines of rigid social expectations. However, Dacre moves one step further by describing her as possessing “hellish strength” (222), once more firmly aligning her with a masculinity she should not demonstrate. That Victoria is repeatedly labeled as “masculine” (see 189 and 213) only

increases her supposed shame (Hoeveler 186); it is a taint, a contamination, for a woman to behave as the gender to which she must remain dependent.

While Victoria combines an ambiguous degree of gendered, racial, and temperamental Otherness, Zofloya himself, as Satan, possesses very little ambiguity in character. He appears to us as the “noble and majestic” (136) Moor of Victoria’s dreams:

He was clad in a habit of white and gold; on his head he wore a white turban, which sparkled with emeralds, and was surmounted by a waving feather of green; his arms and legs, which were bare, were encircled with the finest of oriental pearl; he wore a collar of gold round his throat, and his ears were decorated with gold rings of an enormous size. (136)

Here we find the quintessential Oriental Other of Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), one presented with the almost stereotypical white turban, gold jewelry, bare arms, and oriental pearl. He is, indeed, a member of Said’s troop of “characters,” costumed images that “represent or stand for a very large entity, otherwise impossibly diffuse, which they enable one to grasp or see” (*Orientalism* 66). Zofloya’s stock portrayal, then, makes him manageable, “graspable” to audiences, even as his deeds horrify readers. To Said, such images or Oriental “tropes” are “eternal” (*Orientalism* 71-2) and repetitious, aligned with but inferior to European tropes of similar idea. Among the list of tropes would be the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Mohamet, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, and devils, monsters, demons (Said, *Orientalism* 63). Establishing such a consistent repertoire of Oriental tropes, to Said, allowed the Orientalist to own or possess the Orient. In Victoria’s dream, for example, “he bent his knee, and extended his arms towards her” (136), an action that suggests, in a move likely to agree with readers, servitude to the European Victoria.

Frequently, readers glimpse Victoria's feelings of superiority over the Moor as she is startled that "an inferior" could approach her (146), that "an inferior and an infidel" (149) could entice her to spill her secrets. His skin she sees as "dark," and she wonders if that matches his personality (151). If that were not enough for readers to firmly connect race with the foreign Other, the oppressed and colonized, Zofloya tells Victoria that he was once the "property" of a Spaniard who treated him as a "friend and equal," rather than an inferior (153). With him Zofloya undertook to learn everything he could, especially of chemistry, a skill he uses to entice Victoria into his schemes. Even Dacre's repetition of *slave* suggests that Zofloya's servitude is of critical focus in the novel, especially if one considers that Zofloya's goal from the start has been to "bind" Victoria to him "for ever" (148), enacting the victor's conquest by binding Victoria like she is his slave.

What, though, *is* Zofloya? When we at last find Zofloya's identity, we are perhaps not surprised at the discovery. Dacre has dropped copious hints for our understanding. The "real" Zofloya disappears, never to be seen again. Victoria continuously finds him where he should not be. He appears haughty and arrogant one day, then servile the next. Even more, he seems to know exactly when Victoria needs his specialized help. He appears as if out of nowhere, then disappears in the very same way. By the novel's conclusion, most readers have a fair idea that something is not quite right with the Moor:

As he retreated into the thick gloom of the forest, a vivid flash now and then revealed his swift moving figure to her view—now emerging through the trees—now scaling the pointed rock, and now appearing a *figure of fire* upon its lofty summits. (216 emphasis added)

Victoria, of course, returns to the castle, finding “no traces” of him on her way (216); he has, as on previous occasions, managed to disappear into the air itself. The almost inhuman speed, the fire swirling around him, the gloominess of the forest, and even the haunting music that he plays stress his uncanniness. He is not a creature of this world; rather, he is a force of “destruction” (242), a creature who “is not what he seems” (247), something quite “monstrous and deformed” (242). He is Satan, a “figure, fierce, gigantic, and hideous to behold” (267). Thus, the Moor has been literally demonized, transformed into Satan himself, who has inspired Victoria’s evil acts though the seed for them had already formed in her “loose and evil thoughts” (267). Victoria has fallen into sin, but she has gained nothing from it but her eternal damnation. Whether she could have escaped that fall remains unclear, for while Dacre seems to blame her education, her repeated use of “dark” suggests a discourse of terror where darkness and race are associated with one’s likelihood to become a monster. While interpretations of the ending may vary, it seems clear that Victoria has faded into darkness, trapped by her own actions—and also the restrictions placed upon females during the time.

Recording the Other: A Technology of Terror

Written as they are in the name of the father and the author, . . . [t]he discovery of the book installs the sign of appropriate representation: the word of God, truth, art creates the conditions for a beginning, a practice of history and narrative. But the institution of the Word in the wilds is also an *Enstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition—

the dazzling light of literature sheds only areas of darkness. (Bhabha, *Location* 149)

The discourse of devilry seen in Dacre's gendered and racial inscriptions continues in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, truly producing a technology of terror: the "practice of history and narrative" engendered through the pen, one always controlled by the surveyor, the person in power. Journals, newspaper articles, and memorandums form the text of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—combinations of voices, all narrating the events occurring in the fantastic/horrific appearance of Count Dracula. These "papers" expressing "a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief" become "simple fact" (1) in Stoker's novel, part of a labyrinth filled with differing interpretations of events far from the normal realm of English urban experiences. In many ways, this technique clearly positions readers in the same framework as in *Melmoth* or *Wuthering Heights* (1847), where narration occurs through multiple perspectives, told and retold until the narrative lines blur. *Dracula*, then, is a tale of tellers as much as it is a tale of vampiric transgression; it is a story of intrigue and observation, a power struggle for dominance in the records of history. Censorship of the real event, the ability to structure history to one's own intentions, gives a power that George Orwell, in 1984, expressed brilliantly as "Who controls the past, . . . controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (35). Even more, he who controls the language controls the mind. Thus, we must remember historical representation at this time, for it is not everyone's history, as Bhabha so profoundly states in *The Location of Culture* (1994), that is fairly represented; for instance, the Count never gets the chance to speak except through someone else's perspective. Thus, in the "practice of history and narrative," *Dracula*

represents a conqueror's history where representation is disfigured, changed by the authority of the father—in this case, the English patriarch.

Though certainly not discussing gothic literature, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* has been phenomenal in illustrating the disciplinary measure of power since its first appearance and can be profoundly helpful in understanding the technology of terror used within *Dracula*, one constructed through observation and control of any members who fall outside the patriarchal order or racial preferences. This technology of terror includes not only observation, but also recording of all observations to make the analyses more permanent. In Foucault's work, we find the disciplinary measures of social control oriented in the supervision, containment, and policing of undesirable elements. A dominant regime controls "a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising, and correcting" its subjects (199); it makes subjects visible as they follow rules or break them. Such a system allows subjects to be watched and verified, surveyed, frequently in the cell or the institution. In this new equation of political power, the viewer remains invisible while the object stands in stark relief. The System's invisibility, according to Foucault, maintains order, for the populace is never certain when someone watches. Thus, the supervising eye records the behaviors of its citizens and eliminates contaminating strands. Its power establishes "normalization [and] imposes homogeneity" (184), creating and regulating its own code of conduct through the technology of detailed recording. We see this abundantly in *Dracula*, in its journals and newspapers, in its presentation of what happened as from multiple perspectives. In this conqueror's history of boundary invasion, gender and race are problematized—then resolved by the conqueror, leaving little room for true resistance.

Probably the most obvious form of invasion comes through gender. In *Dracula*, we find clearly delineated gender roles, ones where no boundaries (or thresholds) are to be crossed. Our first encounter with gendered roles comes not through English females, but through foreign specters: the three “ghosts” of Jonathon Harker’s journal. Jonathon tells us, “I was not alone,” for “three young women, ladies by their dress and manner” have entered an abandoned, dusty room (37); they “threw no shadow on the floor” (37), and, despite their great beauty—which Jonathon desires greatly—they are primal. One even “licked her lips like an animal” (38), belying the almost musical note of her voice and the great beauty of her face. Importantly, these females, possessing “deliberate voluptuousness” (38), are our first real look at the female in *Dracula*; it is significant that this desirable woman is not from tame England, but from within the wilds of Transylvania. Even if Stoker has cast these women as “ladies by their dress and manner,” he has assigned conventionally un-ladylike behaviors to them; he has, thus, perverted the traditional English idea of the feminine by transforming it into foreign carnality.

We find, however, that the social taint of unrestricted femininity has bled from Transylvania to England. It is noteworthy that this strategy of infection replicates many colonizing texts, perhaps most obviously in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902), where the madness or taint of the colonized world spreads into European civilization. We may see some of this in Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), too, for Hyde is described as animalistic, brutal and primitive, and tainting of the more civilized character of Jekyll. Additionally, we may see some of the colonizing theme in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, where Heathcliff, the “dirty, ragged, black-haired child,” who is “dark . . . as . . . the devil” (45), serves as the novel’s “whip” (44): he destroys society’s conventional

arrangements of power. In *Dracula*, its first victim is Lucy. Though she seems to lack high social status or friends, observations describe her as having “the noblest heart that God has made” (60) and rare beauty. Unfortunately for Lucy, her “character is ‘flawed’ in a way that makes her fatally vulnerable to the vampire” (Spencer 209), for she has actively encouraged simultaneous suits for her hand. When Lucy tells Mina, her long time friend, that “I know . . . you will think me a horrid flirt” (57) for encouraging three love interests, she is truly reveling in her power over three men, her power to control their happiness. Lucy writes, “THREE proposals in one day! Isn’t it awful! I feel sorry, really and truly sorry, for two of the poor fellows” (55)—right before stating “I am so happy that I don’t know what to do” (55).

This form of revelry in her own power to choose one suitor over the other two, especially as she is a woman of very few connections and even fewer claims to the fortune that has landed at her door, leaves her acting slightly outside the boundaries of conventional “angel in the house” female humility. Indeed, Lucy’s commitment to “number Three” (future Lord Godalming) seems almost cavalier when she writes, “I know I would [marry number Two] if I were free—only I don’t want to be free” (58); she begins to emerge as a New Woman, the women who “argued that they were entitled to the same freedom of sexual expression as men” (Spencer 206). Such a view obviously challenges the almost doctrinaire role of the nurturing wife and mother who stays inside the home and, one imagines by extension, within the preordained boundaries of her home/cell. Thus, through her possible sensuality, through her desire to possess more than one man, Lucy already connects to the three women of Transylvania; even more, as men control her body through violent medical procedures—ones that Tabitha Sparks has

linked to the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864—Stoker supports a “male-centered regulation of the female body” that destroys any autonomy to which New Women aspire (Sparks 91). The Contagious Diseases Acts primarily focused, according to Tabitha Sparks, on prostitution and venereal diseases, most targeted in the British armed forces. In this case, a reading of *Dracula*’s taint would not support the degeneration suggested in Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1892) where “mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world” (2)—the “fear of a slide back down the evolutionary chain” (Glover 65) represented by sexual perversion (Glover 93)—but, instead, in a sexual proclivity of women alone. Since one view of *Dracula* is that its main focus is on sexuality, repressed tendencies of the “heterosexual, homosexual or even bisexual” (Miller 77), we can easily connect the ideas of prostitution and disease with repressed sexuality and Lucy’s violent, maiming death. In such a view, Stoker’s main emphasis is not race as a biological sign of purity, but gender as a symptom of degeneration. Indeed, our tale’s narrator records Lucy’s aberrant behavior for us, providing her thoughts in a manner that automatically condemns her.

As Lucy ails after being penetrated by the infection of Dracula’s blood, an obviously sexual rape or seduction, Van Helsing is called in to diagnose and cure her. He watches her, concerned and recording all evidence on her case, studying her as objectively as he can through the tools of empirical science. Lucy is observed by all, written about and inscribed upon: to Lucy herself, she is “horribly weak” and “ghastly pale” (106); to Dr. Seward, she is “bloodless” and possibly affected by “something mental” (108), even later as “ghastly, chalkily pale” with “the bones of here face” standing out “prominently” (117); to Van Helsing, she is a poor dear who must be

“properly watched” (147) since more than her body is at stake. Even as garlic and crucifixes enter the scene, Lucy looks healthier while sleeping; her teeth become “longer and sharper than usual” (148). Her transformation, as documented by Dr. Seward and Van Helsing, has begun, the infection of vampiric blood turning her into the cursed vampire. At her death, the transformation is almost complete: “In a sort of sleepwalking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once” before she speaks in “a soft, voluptuous voice” (155). Eyes that are hard and dull, a voice that is soft and voluptuous, clearly places her in the boundary-crossing world of the vampire, where she shifts between life and death. Yet Van Helsing, kind old gentleman that he seems, will not allow her to kiss her fiancé; he fears her sickness will contaminate him as well. In this way, Van Helsing ensures that Lucy’s threatening disruption of typical Victorian ideals will not contaminate her would-be husband, a member of the ruling class. Godalming’s safety is assured when he sees her undead self: “Her lips were crimson with fresh blood,” we find, and her eyes were “unclean and full of hell-fire” (203). Most importantly, this antagonistic Lucy—not the beautiful, obedient woman, but the almost animalistic vampire with her “voluptuous smile” and “unholy light”—fills the men with “hate and loathing” (203). She is something that must be destroyed, a monster outside the fringes of civilized society: a woman uncontrollable.

Mina, representing the married and obedient female, fares far differently despite the initial similarities. Like Lucy, Mina first arrives on the scene unmarried; however, she is already engaged to Jonathon, having formed a commitment to one man and, always the dutiful woman, having applied herself to helping his endeavors. She is the perfect helpmate, the perfect Victorian wife: calm, capable, obedient, and nurturing. However,

hauntingly similar to Victoria in *Zofloya*, Mina holds a brain that Van Helsing repeatedly refers to as her “man’s brain” (226) even when he (un)consciously denigrates her by calling her “Little girl” (222). Van Helsing, indeed, can be seen as the quintessential male patriarch, the recorder of histories:

He is a seemingly arbitrary man, but this is because he knows what he is talking about better than any one else. He is a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day. . . . This, with an iron nerve, a temper of the ice-brook, and indomitable resolution, self-command, and toleration exalted from virtues to blessings, and the kindest and truest heart that beats—these form his equipment for the noble work that he is doing for mankind . . . (109)

Able to “tolerate” and command others with his scientific mind, Van Helsing, the authority consulted throughout the book, clearly represents the ideal male. It is this ideal male who commands Mina first to tell, in full, her experience; commends her for her intuition and self-direction in compiling the journals; expels her from the council of men, explaining that “destroy[ing] this monster” is “no part for a woman” (226)—only to find that his own commands have almost led to her destruction at the hands of the Count. Thus, Stoker creates a woman able to be self-commanding, like her male counterpart, but harmed only when she is removed from male protection and society. Mina is part male, producing a threat to social order, but part female, demanding protection from the very society she threatens. She is Victoria, but she is not; her grace of obedience allows her to live without being thoroughly demonized.

Predictably, Mina is branded for her boundary trespass, not by “fiendish” (Dacre 157) eyes or “hellish strength” (Dacre 222), but by a burn on her forehead. Like Lucy, she, too, becomes pale, withdrawn, and lethargic. Eventually, the men stumble into her chambers to find her “ghastly, with a pallor which was accentuated by the blood which smeared her lips and cheeks and chin; from her throat trickled a thin stream of blood; her eyes were mad with terror” (271). In this compromised position, Mina is discovered with her white gown “smeared with blood,” her face forced onto Count Dracula’s chest through a “torn-open dress” (270); her guilt in her actions is ambiguous. Has she willingly succumbed to the “devilish passion” in the Count’s eyes (271), or has she been symbolically raped? Perhaps the scene is made all the more ominous by the fact that all of the men see her fall from grace: she is observed, categorized, and filed away as a possible vampire, one who must be watched by male surveillance. Though she has been the victim of Transylvania’s taint, Mina repeatedly cries that she is “Unclean! Unclean!” (272, 284); even worse, Mina reports that Dracula has threatened to make her “flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin” (276), making her complicit in her own victimization and penetration. Her supposed complicity becomes obvious to all when the Host burns her forehead. In horror, Mina cries, “Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead” (284).

We may wonder if it is important, beyond obvious reasons, that Mina is seared on the forehead rather than the arm or the neck. The mark clearly connects her with biblical tradition, but we must remember that, according to Van Helsing’s own words, Mina has a “man’s brain” (226)—she has something that she should not. Even more, the mark does not disappear until Count Dracula, the current threat to civilized Europe, has been

neutralized by the hands of Mina's male protectors. Though Mina does survive the events leading to Dracula's death, though Mina does live happily after the events of the novel's description, she only does so since the "brave" (364) men have protected her with their lives. Because they have fully enacted the chivalrous roles society has assigned them by performing a "service" for their cherished Lady (362), she has escaped her "curse" (363). She has not been allowed to perform that service for herself, despite the apparent freedom of movement she had in roaming across Transylvania. Indeed, the last pages of the book are written not by her, but by her husband; this omission of her words linguistically silences her, placing Mina—and women in general—back in her assigned social role of quiet, supportive mother and wife. By the end of the novel, Mina has been observed, recorded, and inscribed upon, by Dracula's fangs and by male society.

Yet should Mina feel left alone in this inscription, she has company: her peace joins the supposed peace of Lucy, who has very little voice in the novel, and Dracula, who has none (Clougherty 142). At the end of her un-life, Lucy is described as finding peace in death. Her body is mutilated, the head sawed off, a stake driven through her heart; despite this desecration, we are told that she seemed to smile "with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity" (208). However, readers must be extremely cautious, for these words come from Dr. Seward's mouth—not Lucy's, not Mina's. We are not told of her despair, her fear, her hatred at what has been done to her, for her voice has been utterly silenced; a corpse without its head cannot speak. We see much the same description given to Dracula in his last moments. Mina describes his death as being "like a miracle," for not only did the body dissolve, but "there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there" (362). This is the same

missionary-zeal that Mina exposes earlier in the novel: “That poor soul [Dracula] . . . is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he, too, is destroyed in his worser part that his better part may have spiritual immortality” (295-6). We have seen Mina’s “pity” for the Count before. Earlier in the novel, Mina writes, “I suppose one ought to pity any thing so hunted as the count” (220); even more, she tells us, “this Thing is not human—not even a beast” (220). By pitying the Count, Mina expresses a distinct superiority over him, one that culminates in her failing to treat him as anything but an object, a Thing.⁴ In fact, by removing his humanity, Mina does exactly what Dracula attempts to do to her: he dehumanizes her to assert his power. Finally, by explaining that his soul will be freed by their actions, Mina justifies murder in the name of Christian charity, echoing the sentiment that has fed a wealth of colonization and the Inquisition.⁵

In death, Dracula is owned by his English conquerors, yet he is recorded upon and inscribed throughout the novel. From the very beginning, his interest in England—in its civilization, its behaviors, even its estates—emphasizes the superiority of England over Transylvania, Dracula’s home. Dracula honors his blood, the warlike tendencies of the past, yet he realizes that this is of the past, not the future. Indeed, when reviewing Dracula’s character, it becomes apparent quite quickly that he portrays the Orientalism suggested by Said: a past that is now gone, leaving the colonized with its only contributions being in the lost days of history, not the modern and scientific, civilized world of the conquerors (*Orientalism* 62). As a last remnant of nobility, Dracula also represents the sort of power unfavorable in nineteenth-century England, one supplanted by the middle class entrepreneur (Smith, “Demonising” 21). Geographically, his remote location, far removed from the centers of metropolitan power—France, England—

discredits him even more, marginalizing him in a way that Jonathon's description of his red lips, red eyes, and "soft, smooth, diabolical smile" (48) cannot do. Yet Jonathon's description of him as possessing soft and smooth lips suggests an almost childlike quality to him, one that we have seen more often than not in the Oriental archives. Jonathon may also call him "the devil . . . [who] still walk[s] with earthly feet" (52), but Stoker is careful to discredit this foreign devil's intellectual acumen. Accepted only by madmen, this creature with his "child-like brain" (307) and his great persistence, moves from his "ruin[ed] tomb in a forgotten land" (308) to a world where everything is once more open to him. Van Helsing's description of him as child-like fits perfectly with Said's critique of the Orientalist description of the Oriental image, where Said unmask[s] the stereotype that the Oriental is "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike" (*Orientalism* 40) and given to "intrigue" and "cunning" (*Orientalism* 38). Describing Dracula as childlike and fallen Orientalizes the Other, demonizing him. Stoker's *Dracula* shows readers a world of recorded behaviors and infection (as well as its control), where a privileged male system of discipline penalize women and the so-called racially inferior.

H. G. Wells continues the gothic discourse of terror with his *Dr. Moreau*. Told in the story-within-a-story framework that readers have come to associate with gothic, Wells' novel begins with Edward Prendick, whose narrative is, as the story goes, published by his nephew without his permission. Prendick was rescued in a boat whose name was ironically "illegible" (5). As with many gothic novels, the pursuit of knowledge—either locked away by powerful agents or denied because of ethical standards—serves as a key theme of *Dr. Moreau*. Prendick's attempt at understanding what he sees, the "illegible" nature of that environment, hint at the same displaced

understanding in *Melmoth*, where Melmoth's character is glimpsed only in short scenes, and in Dacre's *Zofloya*, where Victoria only truly understands with whom she has been bartering her life when it is too late to change. That we cannot understand the environments we negotiate—that everything is fractured, knowledge broken and either misinterpreted or inaccessible—has a modernist texture, one that goes beyond the madness and delusion John Riquelme has suggested as typical of gothic modernism (599). Michael Fried expands discussion of uncertainty in Wells' work to a question of the unreliability of print itself (110). The man was “supposed demented” (5) after being rescued from the ill-fated *Lady Vain*. His wild tale was investigated by a “party of sailors [who] then landed [on the island], but found nothing living thereon except certain curious white moths, some hogs and rabbits, and some peculiar rats” (6). Thus unsubstantiated, the story must be believed as truth only on the word of Prendick, undercutting the work's legitimacy in a move similar to Stoker's in *Dracula*. Prendick is rescued just when he believes himself dead—but he has fallen into the stuff of pure terror. His last “disconnected impression” as he arrives onboard is of “a dark face, with extraordinary eyes, close to mine,” a face so grisly that he “thought [it] was a nightmare” (14). The nightmare continues when he is surrounded by “the growling of some large animal” that reverberates near him (15), its voice displaying “savage anger” and suggesting that he is near a “beast” (20). Even so soon in the narrative, thus, Wells has introduced many of the key images of his work: beastliness, anger, savagery, fear, and incomprehensibility of the surroundings.

Prendick's impressions become increasingly surreal as he describes the beast traveling with him. “He was, I could see, a misshapen man, short, broad, and clumsy,

with a crooked back, a hairy neck, and a head sunk between his shoulders” (22), writes Wells, before carefully progressing to the disturbing description of the creature in detail:

In some indefinable way the black face thus flashed upon me shocked me profoundly. It was a singularly deformed one. The facial part projected, forming something dimly suggestive of a muzzle, and the huge half-open mouth showed as big white teeth as I had ever seen in a human mouth.

His eyes were blood-shot at the edges, with scarcely a rim of white round the hazel pupils. There was a curious glow of excitement in his face. (22-3)

The distorted, muzzled face is anything but human; with the snarling and anger associated with the creature—as well as the appellation “beast,” a name frequently used to refer not only to animals but to The Beast or Satan as well—the poor, “black-faced man” (23) has been thoroughly demonized. When he is referred to as the “poor devil” (30), then “ugly devil” (30), the creature has been given its full demonic naming. The demonization of the creature is strengthened when the beast—still unnamed at this point in the story—is described at midnight:

The only light near us was a lantern at the wheel. The creature's face was turned for one brief instant out of the dimness of the stern towards this illumination, and I saw that the eyes that glanced at me shone with a pale-green light. I did not know then that a reddish luminosity, at least, is not uncommon in human eyes. The thing came to me as stark inhumanity.

That black figure with its eyes of fire struck down through all my adult

thoughts and feelings, and for a moment the forgotten horrors of childhood came back to my mind. (38)

Dark, inhuman, its eyes glinting in “a reddish luminosity,” this creature—unnamed, unnameable, illegible to us as readers and viewers of the recorded narrative—has become thoroughly uncanny: human, inhuman, animal, monster, a “forgotten horror” from a past long vanished. Victorian discourse reiterated how the “non-European native [was] . . . uncivilized and animal-like” (Hendershot 3), and in Wells we readily see this discourse. We are now treading the paths of Orientalism and Othering. We see many of the Oriental features critiqued by Said applied to *Dr. Moreau*, for the (un)natural population of “Beasts”—who continually cry, “Are we not Men?” (121)—are anything but human. They walk strangely, they are large and unwieldy, they are irrational and dumb, they are sexually promiscuous if unconfined within the clothing of society, and, even more, they are frequently black or dark, features described in Said’s *Orientalism*. *Dr. Moreau* spends a good deal of time looking at the skin of its inhabitants—brown, red, black—but we find that never are they seen as white. In this gothic environment of (un)natural monstrosity, one very similar to *Frankenstein*, we find that the perverse binaries of European Enlightenment are well in existence, a perversion we notice throughout the work.

Degeneration and evolution has been one of the most thoroughly researched facets of Wells’ work, perhaps not surprising given his focus on perversion. Moreau yearns to “transcend human limitations,” but instead his creatures revert (Haynes 15). On the other hand, because both man and animal share language abilities, very little distinction between both can be posited: the book, thus, could be interpreted as showing that “the superiority of human evolution is a false achievement” (McLean 49). This

contributes to the horror that Prendick feels upon seeing the creatures, who are so similar to himself, and to the pessimistic ending of the novel, where Prendick loathes humans as much as he once loathed the animals of Moreau's experiment (Redfern 41; McLean 49). Prendick himself can also be viewed as degenerate in his inability to practice science and in his almost feminine reaction to pain, a move which Cyndy Hendershot has connected to fear of homosexuality and its degeneracy (8-9). Others have discussed the sadism in *Dr. Moreau*, focusing on how it possesses the same ideology of "power over life and death . . . a symbolic authority that integrates violence into a comprehensive worldview" (Gomel 412) that authorizes mutilation to support the laws of nature and science (Gomel 413); a perhaps more targeted interpretation might be, however, that the sadism Gomel discusses originates more from racial ideology than the ideology of nature, for it is the dark beast, not the white, who is continuously experimented on and maimed. This would make Moreau a eugenicist, one striving to reform humanity into what it should be rather than what it is (Kirby 97).

We continue to see Wells' focus on degradation as the novel continues. As Prendick at last reaches the island, he discovers that the creature is no anomaly; the island teems with creatures distorted, disfigured, pained, "grotesque" and "ugly" (51-2). Prendick steps into the locked world of Dr. Moreau's island to find life transfigured, beasts mutated into humans, given the Law of Dr. Moreau and forced to live as humans in civil society. He has descended into "an infernally rum place" (56), a hell of human and animal misery created by the hands of Dr. Moreau, a doctor notorious for being "wantonly cruel" (66) in the perpetuation of his "Moreau Horrors!" (64). The beasts themselves are painfully reminiscent of Dr. Frankenstein (Haynes 15). Walking with

backs curved, arms dragging to the ground, the animals frequently die before they mutate into Moreau's desired form. Violence and aggression burn throughout much of the beastly population, usually in territorial displays. Women are outnumbered, and most offspring die, showing no human attributes. Even worse, though, are the shrieks. Vivisection's screams of agony ripple throughout the island as Moreau's creations serve as his unwilling servants. Are they beasts or men? What separates the human from the monstrosities created in Moreau's surgical massacres? Indeed, Prendick asks an astute question well into the story, as the Thing stalks him: "What on earth was he,—man or beast?" (84). However, we are uncomfortable as readers, for we, too, cannot answer this question. They are truly hybrids that cannot easily be categorized (Hamilton 29). Even more, we are implicated in the story's actions by having read the accounts of brutality offered within; we become, like Moreau, surveyors of the tainted humanity seen on the Island, unwilling in our participation, perhaps, but part of the reading body exploring Moreau's archive of bestial behavior.

This brings us to one of the most significant differences between *Dracula* and *Dr. Moreau*. For *Dracula*, the technology of terror arises in documented surveillance of a creature deemed monster by those penning the archives. However, in *Dr. Moreau*, a technology of law and its ruthless enforcement on a contaminated, mutated population becomes increasingly clear. On the Island of Moreau, law reigns, a fierce, cruel, almost inhuman law enforced by human agency. Prendick's first hint of the law comes when, in fact, the Thing stalks him, and it is an illuminating glimpse:

Suddenly, as I watched their grotesque and unaccountable gestures, I perceived clearly for the first time what it was that had offended me, what

had given me the two inconsistent and conflicting impressions of utter strangeness and yet of the strangest familiarity. The three creatures engaged in this mysterious rite were human in shape, and yet human beings with the strangest air about them of some familiar animal. Each of these creatures, despite its human form, its rag of clothing, and the rough humanity of its bodily form, had woven into it—into its movements, into the expression of its countenance, into its whole presence—some now irresistible suggestion of a hog, a swinish taint, the unmistakable mark of the beast. (81-2)

Human, animal, dressed in clothing but “taint[ed]” or “mark[ed]” with beastliness, speaking excitedly in gibberish, the animals participate in a “rite” that strikes Prendick with its uncanny human quality. They are conversing, huddled together in an attempt to reach a decision. The use, indeed, of *rite* suggests what Prendick will soon discover: that the Beast People must follow a strict code of conduct upon which they have no say. Failing to obey the mandates of Dr. Moreau often leads to death.

Prendick is running, attempting to escape a horror he cannot escape, when he is taken to the huts, where he encounters the Law. Yet again unbalanced with the uncanniness surrounding him, Prendick hears a voice that “struck me as peculiar” but with an English accent that was “strangely good” (115), hidden in the dark. By this “strangely good” voice he is catechized in the Law of Moreau: ““Say the words,”” speaks the Beast, ““Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law”” (115-6). To be allowed passage into the huts, Prendick must “repeat this idiotic formula” (116), one passed down by the

beasts but perhaps not truly understood in its ritualistic form. The ceremony rings before him, a litany of prohibitions that are “most quite incomprehensible” (118) to Prendick:

“Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

“Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

“Not to eat Fish or Flesh; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

“Not to claw the Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not Men?

“Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not Men?” (116-7)

Timothy Christensen, in “The ‘Bestial Mark’ of Race in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*” (2004), states that the recitation crucially establishes a performative nature to the Law, where the speaker “must first be recognized as a man in order to enter the community of the beast folk, but at the same time cannot be recognized as a member of the community of men, and therefore as fully human, until he has been indoctrinated into the community through the process of recitation” (580). However, even this indoctrination is ambivalent, for Wells’ use of “racial science” and vocabulary (Christensen 583) denies the humanity of the Beast Men even as they conform to the Law, leaving Moreau to the “horrific physical violence of his reiterative attempts to literally cut his creatures open” and to “remove some offending object” (Christensen 587)—their race—that cannot be removed from evolution.

Following the ordinances is a list of punishments: “*His* is the house of pain,” we are told, the “Hand that wounds” and the giver of the “lightning flash” of pain (117-8). Moreau is, thus, deified by the Beast Men, forcing “these grotesque caricatures of humanity” (119) to abide by a Law that the creatures can repeat in formulaic perfection, in sing-song voices, but cannot naturally follow; they are hampered continuously with

regression, with minds attempting to follow the nature buried within by Moreau's surgeries. Failing to obey the Law leads to being "branded in the hand" (121)—a marking distinctively similar to Mina's in *Dracula*—or returned to Moreau for vivisection. And there is no escape from Moreau's dread Law. It is a Law that has been imposed upon the subjected beastly population, one enforced even as the good doctor records their trespasses and transformations. Prendick, trapped in this incomprehensible situation of beasts that look like men, understandably misinterprets the origins of this new species: "Who are these creatures? . . . They were men like yourselves, whom you have infected with some bestial taint,—men whom you have enslaved" (133). Like many thinkers of the nineteenth century, who believed mankind was devolving—faith undermined with *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) and *Degeneration* quaking the beliefs once firmly unquestioned—Prendick believes he witnesses a situation where man has been tainted, devolved. He does not, of course, understand that Moreau has actually created this hellish situation, this "humanising process" (135)—a phrasing ironically inserted by the "vivisection" (135)—by his own evolutionary practices. Moreau has created his "monsters manufactured" (142), his "abomination" (151) to satisfy an intellectual curiosity: "to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape" (151).

Over his creations Moreau practices the limits of his art, enforcing an unnatural Law and bringing his own language to their compulsory civilization; Wells' descriptions of legal and linguistic terrorism hints darkly at the practices of empire, where one's language is ripped from usage and replaced with the master's own. His Law governs the ruled; his language replaces the "gibbering" (155) of his creatures with the "rudiments of English . . . [and] the alphabet" (153). While this may, at first, seem helpful to his

““monsters manufactured”” (142), Moreau’s actions are no better than the missionary zeal that enforced Bibles on subject populations or the educational institutions that ideologically reinforced imperial rule in conquered territories. We can, however, push this one step further and state that the Law is not just a secular law, but a religious law as well (Christensen 578). In this way, *Dr. Moreau* repeats the missionary mission that we see in colonial discourse.⁶ *Dr. Moreau* replicates imperial discourse in its handling of the Good Book, which is replaced by a Law that cannot be evaded without pain and punishment: both a secular and a religious play. Indeed, the repeating of the Law—the calling of the Law in an oral fashion—looks distinctly like a catechism. Thus, the colonial power of Moreau seems to be answering the Beasts’ question of “Are we not men?” with a distinct “yes, but no.” Moreau’s regime suggests that the answer would be that they behave like men, they worship the higher power of God as represented in Moreau (Hendershot 5), but they are inherently not permitted to trespass into Moreau’s territory or to obtain the reins of power. In this case, the reins of power are revolvers and whips, the emblems of power that we can see as symbolizing the guns and weaponry of the imperial forces. Barri Gold emphasizes the reproduction of empire (176), which he sees as the most intrinsic element of empire building, as the significant message to take from *Dr. Moreau*. To Gold, reproduction, not production or commercialization, stands as the main intent behind empire building. His argument is based off the needs of an empire continuously expanding and finding itself overwhelmed with the need for increased provisions, especially food. Rather than “buying” food from other European nations, England, he says, colonized, finding a ready body of people able and forced to provide English foodstuffs and other goods. Thus, most people do not learn the theories of

commercialization, for that would be against the intent of imperial powers; this would make the colonized want more of their own products. Instead, imperial powers focus more on reproduction, for they need bodies capable of sustaining their productive capacities. In this way, Gold states that Wells' *Dr. Moreau* pursues reproductive technologies—creating people out of animals—that give the empire (in this case, the empire of Moreau) a colony but also retain that colony's inferiority by literally creating it out of animals.

In addition to critiquing a rigorous regime, *Dr. Moreau* holds what could only be described as Bhabhian mimicry. To trace the idea, we can see *mimicry* as the indigenous attempting to act like their colonizers but never quite attaining their status. Bhabha's phrase is "almost the same but not quite" (*Location* 123)—and we find ourselves readily saying this of *Dr. Moreau*'s presentation of mimicry. The Beast Men mimic white organizational structures because they are forced to do so. They attempt to dress like them, eat like them, talk like them, and behave like them. Probably most importantly, as Barri Gold suggests, the Beasts are given the Law (183); they are educated in the social systems of their conqueror, mimicking it to please the master and, thus, to avoid pain. They are forced to adopt the language of the conquerors, too, but they are frequently silenced, as most gothic and colonial "subjects" are, in this colonizing process. Moreau and Montgomery—and, later, our narrator Prendick—rarely listen to them, considering their words to be "gibberish" (118) unworthy of their attention. Proceeding with typical Oriental behaviors of superiority, Montgomery and Moreau patronize the beasts:

Sometimes he would notice it, pat it, call it half-mocking, half-jocular names, and so make it caper with extraordinary delight; sometimes he

would ill-treat it, especially after he had been at the whiskey, kicking it, beating it, pelting it with stones or lighted fusees. But whether he treated it well or ill, it loved nothing so much as to be near him. (170-1)

While patronization may be used to pacify an unruly population, it may also be used to silence. It forces a listener to mimic the desires of others rather than pursuing his or her own thoughts or interests; it belittles the auditor, consistently implying a deficit in the listener's intelligence or behavior. Indeed, it reinforces a norm in the speaker's eyes, reifying the standards of the speaker, the person in authority, at the disadvantage of the receptor.⁷ Thus, the presence of the Law, the use of English, and the patronization of the Beast Men act as tools of terrorism, subtle in their efficiency and lethal in their subtlety.

Fear of Invasion: The Empire Subdued No More

In its essence, Imperial Gothic explores dislocations between the colonial authorities and the dispossessed colonized. To do so, it allows the colonized to menace English or European society: to suggest an invasion, even a conquest, of the conqueror. In Dacre, Victoria's dark skin, violent actions, rage, aggression, and manipulation threaten social norms: she is not the golden-haired, supportive English lady whose only domain is the home. She kills, murdering anyone from an ancient protector of an orphan to her husband and his brother. Such a force released upon Britain would be chaotic, perhaps disastrous, to British ideology. Even worse would be the menace of the Moor, a slave transformed into the master, one intelligent enough to understand chemistry and to entrap the conqueror. Dacre is not the only one to suggest race as a threat to British rule. Stoker's *Dracula* leaves readers with a dark monster, member of an "inferior" race, who

attacks in the heart of England itself, invading its parlors and its women, the source of offspring and continued inheritance. Dracula literally intermixes his own blood with those of his victims, drawing on one of the greatest fears of the time: miscegenation and unpure bloodlines (DeLamotte, “White Terror” 27). As if the almost cannibalistic Dracula is not frightening enough, Stoker’s Mina, with her intelligence and abilities, her insight, offers yet another threat, this time to patriarchal ascendancy. If a woman can possess the same mastery as a man, in what ways can the patriarchy justify its rule? Even more, if the empire can strike at the heart of English and European rule, how can the empire continue when the colonized subject has become the instrument of subjugation?

Perhaps no text exemplifies the ambivalence of Imperial Gothic as much as *Dr. Moreau*. If the Beasts, the “unhumans,” are not allowed to become part of the society they have been supposedly educated to join, menace brims under the supposed servility of the conquered. Barri Gold has rightly theorized that Moreau willed to fail in his experiment on the Beasts (181). Continuously, we hear Moreau or Montgomery cry that the Beasts will “revert” back to their natural dispositions, becoming the natural animals they once were. They will lose their social understanding, their linguistic behaviors—their imperialist education, in other words—to devolve into the dumbness of their previous existence. Gold suggests that Moreau sabotaged his great experiment because he did not *want* his “children” to become him (181) in what could be seen as an Oedipal fear.⁸ However, we must push this interpretation one step further. The menace comes from creatures who have been forbidden their rightful place in society, for they have *done* what they were required to do: they have followed the principles of education forced upon them. Like Frankenstein’s monster, who has read Plutarch and Milton, who has

learned to speak eloquently, who has been denied the basic elements of human recognition, rage is the only recourse when the imperial forces refuse to extend autonomous control, to restore the authority of the subject, when the subject has embraced its ruler's ideology.

In *Dr. Moreau*, we see menace in the essential chase between man/monster, one symbolic of the chase after the escaped slave in the African-American diasporic postcolonial texts like Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Montgomery and Moreau chase, armed with weapons, their rebelling Beasts, who have all regressed after tasting blood.⁹ Out of this chase arises a dead Moreau and a frantically drunk and soon dead Montgomery. In this way, Wells has provided for us a temporary release of the borders between master/slave and hunter/hunted, for the master/hunter has turned into the slave/hunted. The same collapsing of boundaries occurs in *Frankenstein* when the monster drives Frankenstein to the ends of the very earth. The real menace of colonial power, the danger that Britain fears, has occurred: the colonized have become, even for a brief moment, the colonizer. They have "ungratefully" revolted against their kind, loving "father" figure—and we can get no closer to a father figure than through Moreau, the creator of his creatures. Even more, though Wells couches this message well by placing the story on a supposedly untraceable island rather than in England or Europe, the conquered have driven Moreau's regime from its seat of power. All manifestations of Moreau's experiment disappear after the conqueror has disappeared, with the conquered reverting to their nature. Whether this can be interpreted as a suggestion that the colonized can and will return to their origins after European rule has passed, overcoming European ideology in the process, or that the traces of civilization are only possible

through European influence contributes to an ambivalence that leaves many readers searching for answers.

While the texts can be notoriously ambivalent, as all gothic texts, Imperial Gothic seems to reinforce most of the ideological standing of the empire rather than challenging it—though it may interrogate the discourse of imperialism as it does so. Even as it questions the actions of European or, more specifically, English characters—their moral codes, their actions, their conventional responses to situations that are almost always unconventional—Imperial Gothic often finds itself killing the force that has dared to stand against empire. The Moor has not been vanquished in Dacre, but he has been completely demonized. Victoria has been slain, her soul ripped out of her body and possessed by evil, suggesting that any woman—or any person of darker skin—attempting to act like her will meet her fully justified fate. Dracula's shadow of evil is purged from the land, most notably by men of good Christian background. Mina, though recognized for her intelligence and efficiency, is shoved into her natural social position—the margins—when she is marked as one touched by evil. The forces that threatened European and English ideology have, thus, been repressed once more, with the bitter idea of imperial conquest from the backwaters of Transylvania removed forever. Chillingly, then, women and those of darker heritages also find themselves buried by a social mandate that requires obedience for women and purity of race for all. Anne McClintock has asserted that imperial ideology rejected multiple races and social classes, including hybrids, women, the colonized, the working class, Jews, and prostitutes (54-6). Kate Malchow has also argued persuasively that women and the working class were frequently portrayed as cannibals, even vampires, to penalize their deviancy (ch. 2). A firm

“policing of social hierarchies” cleansed boundary issues as Europeans “traveled back and forth across the thresholds of their known world” (33), allowing empire to maintain its own boundaries in the face of conflicting ideologies.

Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse: Invasion, Empire, and the Monstrous

As we read Imperial Gothic, we find that the empire has been invaded—and that the invaders are inevitably described as monstrous. They are demonized, as with the Moor or Victoria, as with Dracula or the Beast Men. They are turned into the grotesque, into abominations: Victoria becoming masculine, Dracula flying or climbing the walls, the Beast Men attempting to speak in English despite lengthy muzzles and spines inevitably curved by gravity. They are images of horror, shocking to a public that believes itself pure, that believes itself superior to those they have conquered; by demonizing and reducing to the monstrous, Imperial Gothic simultaneously slaughters the problematic forces challenging empire and justifies the need for empire, for civilization to embrace its less-fortunate and monstrous brethren.

However, while it is easy to say that Imperial Gothic completely supports European ideology despite the temporary removal of boundaries, its very presentation of the menace, the threat of the colonized lends power to the colonized. A particularly potent image can be found towards the end of *Dr. Moreau*:

And suddenly in a trampled space I came upon a ghastly group. My Saint-Bernard-creature lay on the ground, dead; and near his body crouched the Hyena-swine, gripping the quivering flesh with its misshapen claws, gnawing at it, and snarling with delight. As I approached, the monster

lifted its glaring eyes to mine, its lips went trembling back from its red-stained teeth, and it growled menacingly. It was not afraid and not ashamed; the last vestige of the human taint had vanished. I advanced a step farther, stopped, and pulled out my revolver. At last I had him face to face. (262-3)

Our narrator, of course, has come upon the last vestiges of Moreau's influence, fading, reverting into the original animal behaviors that Moreau attempted to educate, through his gospel of Moreau catechism, into facsimiles of civilized beings (Hendershot 15). Most importantly, though, the "taint" here is not actually the colonized tainting the colonizer, but the colonizer tainting the colonized—a theme we find frequently in postcolonial and postcolonial gothic novels. This is startlingly different from Wells' predecessors. Dacre's Moor threatens society, spreading his taint like a poison, literally and figuratively, that destroys the society infected with his touch. Stoker's Dracula is just as invasive, just as tainting, changing the beautiful Lucy into a monster that must be killed. Dracula's taint menaces all, for it threatens to unleash unholy forces: women who are lustful, women who are intelligent and insightful, madmen who have power, the inferior races conquering their betters. Set against such a backdrop of Imperial Gothic texts reinforcing the colonial discourse of the time, Wells becomes even more provocative as he shows the conquered actually attacking the conqueror:

The brute made no sign of retreat; but its ears went back, its hair bristled, and its body crouched together. I aimed between the eyes and fired. As I did so, the Thing rose straight at me in a leap, and I was knocked over like a ninepin. It clutched at me with its crippled hand, and struck me in the

face. Its spring carried it over me. I fell under the hind part of its body; but luckily I had hit as I meant, and it had died even as it leapt. I crawled out from under its unclean weight and stood up trembling, staring at its quivering body. That danger at least was over; but this, I knew was only the first of the series of relapses that must come. (263-4)

While we can easily rationalize this attack as a reversion to brute behavior, perhaps another interpretation might be of more interest. Perhaps Wells is actually portraying the rage, the pain, the anguish that Frantz Fanon addresses in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/1963) in a time where “[t]here are no limits” to the aggressive passions, once “hampered,” that will rage “in a volcanic eruption” (57) of violence from the colonized. Perhaps, despite its use of Oriental archival caricatures, Wells can be said to portray the rage, the menace, of a horrifically treated, colonized people ready to fight their monstrous oppressors—by not only overthrowing their conquerors but also dismantling the very ideologies and norms their education attempted to enforce. In such a view, the colonized are not the monstrous, not the demonic; they are the victims of a subjugation that must end.

Notes

¹ While *Melmoth* may be viewed separately from Imperial Gothic, it does tantalize readers with its Imperial Gothic overtones. We can find evidence of Imperial Gothic in the ruins of empires long fallen. Very early in the novel, we find the “Moorish fortress” (34), a brooding building caught in both darkness and lightening contrasted almost ruthlessly to the ruins of a Roman palace, with its “arched and gigantic colonnades now admitting a gleam of light” (33). However, most of the Imperial Gothic in Maturin’s novel can be traced in the Immalee/Isidora arc. Immalee, the character’s name when she is uncolonized, free in nature, lives in an almost innocent manner, unknowing of the political situation surrounding her, even innocent in the ways of the Church. In this way, Maturin presents her sympathetically even as he draws upon one of the most damaging of stereotypes, that of the Innocent Native, the Noble Savage who with European guidance can become something different, something more in line with European ideas. Starkly contrasted with Immalee is Isidora, Immalee’s colonized or Europeanized self. Returned to civil society and the loving arms of her parents, Immalee’s innocence rapidly deteriorates, as does her ability to control her own life, even to live. Her father attempts to marry her to a wealthy person she does not love; in a dramatic and unfortuitous act to escape this marriage, Isidora marries Melmoth in a dark ceremony, only to later fall into the loving hands of the Inquisition. Maturin’s pivotal story, therefore, paints an almost sinister picture of empire and its “civilizing” procedures.

² Undoubtedly, Marchesa Laurina di Loredani, mother to our novel's protagonist Victoria, also becomes quickly repulsive in her inability to teach her children much of anything, for she "idolized" them despite the "wayward" tendencies of her offspring (4); Laurina's character rapidly declines as we see her fall in love with the seductive Count Ardolph, who eventually claims Laurina's hand in marriage and runs away with her, sinking her husband and children deeply in the mire of scandal.

³ We see Jane described similarly in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rochester consistently describes Jane in terms of the fantastic. Rochester not only devalues and masters Jane, but he also names her, frames her, in his own language. Naming, in essence, controls language: it is an authoritative connection between the sign and the signified. In his first formal introduction to her, Rochester's description of Jane as fairy removes her humanity and individuality; it attempts to push her into a cage of Rochester-constructed meaning. She is not Jane, the Governess, but the fantastical creature who may have "bewitched his horse" (122). He tells her that at first sight, he "thought unaccountably of fairy tales" (122). Indeed, this pattern of Rochester-driven Jane-as-fairy continues throughout the novel. Over a hundred pages after the initial meeting, Rochester is *still* assigning fantastic labels to Jane. On page 278 she is "a mermaid" (278). She is later "you witch" (281). Still later, she is an "elf" (312), then an "angel" (315), then a "savage, beautiful creature" (318). At the novel's conclusion, she is, again, "my fairy" (436), "beneficent spirit" (437), and "a changeling" (438). Similarly, Dacre dehumanizes her Lilla even as she is suggested, at least by Henriquez and Berenza, as the height of

womanly perfection; this can be directly read as an attack on the Angel in the House mythology, particularly when one considers Lilla's fate.

⁴ It is perhaps important to note that Mina is not the only one who engages in the hunting metaphor. Her brave men also dehumanize Dracula, asserting his cunning but relating him to a child. Furthermore, we can connect some of the language employed here with Emily Brontë and H. G. Wells, who draw upon the same language to describe Heathcliff or the Beast People. The Thing, It, all create the "unperson" who does not nor ever did exist (Orwell 47).

⁵ Thus, we can see a definite link between postcolonial and nineteenth-century gothic, where both genres attempt to expel the evil taint that has corrupted their society.

⁶ This may remind readers of *Dracula*, where Dracula is killed, that "poor soul," in pity for his lack of enlightenment . . . in full Christian Charity, of course. Whether this can be read as exposing the colonial enterprise and its missionary rationale can be arguable, however, for Dracula is a silenced party throughout the novel; we never see his views on the English wish to save his soul by killing him.

⁷ A similar patronization, though not direct, emerges in Van Helsing's description of Dracula as childlike and immature in his thinking. Of course, the question that emerges in Imperial Gothic—and it is a significant question—is whether this supports colonial practices or interrogates colonial practices. Such an ambivalence fills both texts, but can be profoundly and suggestively answered by stating that in both texts, it is the conqueror who narrates the tale, not the conquered. Perhaps it is only when Dracula takes pen to

write, to tell his own story—or when the subjugated Beast Men emerge from their subaltern silence—that we truly can see a story interrogating the violence of empire.

⁸ Again, we confront Orientalism in Wells' descriptions of the Beast People, for suggesting that the loss of civilization means the reversion to brute strength and savagery of a colonized people is, obviously, a form of Orientalism. It legitimizes the colonial enterprise, providing yet another area of ambivalence in *Dr. Moreau*.

⁹ The tasting of blood, naturally, reminds one of *Dracula*. One important aspect of blood exchange, as discussed by Kathleen Spencer, is that it is a form of miscegenation: blood losing purity as white intermingles with non-white (207). This fear of miscegenation could hold no better symbol than the vampire, whose blood-drawing was violent, feared, and forced upon an unwilling English body (Hoeveler 192). We can draw from this the English fear of invasion, the mixing of bloodlines in a counter-invasion to English imperialist strategies that works from within rather than from without: the subtle “taint” of mixed marriages and hybrid children.

PART TWO

THE LANDSCAPE OF DESPAIR:

LOSS OF SELF IN THE IMPERIAL WASTELAND

I struck a match. The light exploded on my eyes and out of the darkness there emerged a frowning face with pursed lips that I knew but could not place. I moved towards it with hate in my heart. It was my adversary Mustafa Sa'eed. The face grew a neck, the neck two shoulders and a chest, then a trunk and two legs, and I found myself standing face to face with myself. (Salih 135)

CHAPTER FOUR

GHOSTS WANDER THE STREETS IN THE POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC:
THE RUINS OF THE PAST, THE DECAY OF THE PRESENT

Many readers expect to find decayed castles, broken towers, and graveyards when they read gothic literature, especially if they have read the works of Charlotte Brontë or Ann Radcliffe. However, as we move to the twentieth century and, even more specifically, the postcolonial gothic novel, we find that the ruins seem to have transformed. No longer do we see the proud castle or the lordly manor; instead, we find factories falling into disarray and fallen civilizations buried under the rubble. As we examine such works as Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), both written in India, we frequently find characters striving to find who and what they are amongst the ruins of empire; they search for paths into the future, but the lingering echo of imperial ruins all too often suggests that such a path, if not impossible, may be fraught with dangerous struggles. South-African author J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) undercuts any possibility of a future free of the ruins of the past, for in the world of his novel, empire cycles continuously, inescapably. Thus, in the postcolonial gothic novel, ruins suggest the haunting relics of an imperial past that should no longer haunt the postcolonial world—even though these relics remain quite alive, insidious in their power over the future.

Ghostly Ancestors: The European Ruin

Set amidst the decay and fallen walls of a past now dead, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1891) paints for us a crumbling world. Count Dracula himself, symbolic of patriarchal heritage, of noble blood and aristocracy, blurs into the relics of Transylvania's history. He seems outdated, especially when compared to Van Helsing and Jonathon Harker, Lord Godalming and Mina Harker, with their journals, newspaper cuttings, and telegraphs. As outdated as Dracula himself is his castle, one tumbling into ruins. Dust lingers on its moldy furniture; the great doors rattle with disuse, their locks ancient, and roots shoot through the castle's cold stone walls. Even more decayed is the outside of the castle, which Jonathon Harker first describes as "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky" (Stoker 15). As he ventures further into Dracula's lair, Jonathon's description increasingly reminds us of Radcliffe's *Udolpho*: "I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone" (16). Of the doorway he writes, "I could see even in the dim light that the stone was massively carved, but that the carving had been much worn by time and weather" (16). The huge great door, the iron nails, the carved stone all create the typical gothic backdrop, a trapping that became popular in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth (Hume 282). That the castle lurks "on the very edge of a terrible precipice" (27) also surprises few readers, for gothicists like Ann Radcliffe have conditioned us to expect an isolated, difficult to access castle, preferably standing raggedly against the night. As readers of gothic novels, we have become accustomed to the settings of decay and darkness, ruination and collapse seen in *Dracula*. We are almost

surprised, indeed, when any work is entitled *gothic* without the broken battlements or ragged ramparts so common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novels.

Yet as we move from the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century and beyond, we find changes, dramatic changes even, in the genre, especially in the postcolonial gothic. We tread from Imperial Gothic, with its extensive fear of the Other, to the gothic literature of the Third World countries, the postcolonial gothic. As I have discussed in the Introduction, it is a literature filled with hauntingly familiar themes: the entrapped subject, the collapsed family, the splintered identity, the monster unleashed, even the crumbled ruins of past civilizations. However, while postcolonial gothic can certainly be said to tease readers with traditional gothic tropes, it draws upon these tropes not to reinforce imperial ideologies, as we have so frequently seen in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1891) and H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), but to resist them. Thus, the postcolonial gothic novel is a literature of resistance, one where the past, the present, and the future are interrogated, where the boundaries between *what was* and *what is* and *what shall be* collapse.

In many ways, postcolonial gothic is a form of “writing back” to the metropolis, a subversive revision of imperial discourse. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin forcefully declare in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), it is impossible to “import form and concept without radical alteration” when one moves the “location and culture” in which that form is centered (15); extrapolating from this, then, we can see that a gothic novel would significantly transform when moved from the shores of Great Britain to the previously conquered subcontinent of India or the islands of the Caribbean—from the metropolis heart of imperialism to the newly emerged postcolonial world. Texts emerging

in the latter half of the twentieth century, including Gayatri Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985) and Judie Newman's *The Ballistic Bard: The Postcolonial Fictions* (1995), fiercely started linking gothic and postcolonial literature, focusing on the revision or reconstruction of imperial ideology in postcolonial texts. While Spivak's foundational study of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) did not truly explore the gothic elements of both texts, instead focusing on a more postcolonial critique of British ideology, Newman's work literally introduced the term *postcolonial gothic* (69-70) and explored its traces in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's writing. To Newman, postcolonial gothic is "Janus-faced," for "[a]t its heart lies the unresolved conflict between the imperial power and the former colony" and "between the unspoken and the 'spoken for'" (70). Postcolonial gothic becomes, with the insight of Spivak and Newman, a discourse of revision; it subverts, even owns Imperial Gothic, which presented the Orient as possessing an "insinuating danger" and irrationality of "Eastern excesses" (Said, *Orientalism* 57), a land of loss, with "suggestive ruins, forgotten secrets, hidden correspondences" (Said, *Orientalism* 170).

In particular, postcolonial gothic seeks to undermine the racial discourse encoded in Imperial Gothic. As we have seen in Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988), Imperial Gothic can be seen as the encounter between rigid rationalism and the irrationality of the exotic (235), an irrationality that sounds suspiciously like Said's definition of Orientalism. Others, such as Andrew Smith and William Hughes in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2004), advance that it is a form of literature that focuses on the political agenda of imperial fiction that attempts to Other its colonies (4). In Imperial Gothic, that Other was

most commonly a racial Other, one dehumanized by the imperial ideology of progressive history, an ideology that sought to connect the colonized Orient with savagery (McClintock 39; see also Malchow 172). Racial discourse continued the theory by suggesting that Europe was acting benevolently in its attempt to redirect their savage brethren towards Enlightenment (McClintock 45). In Imperial Gothic, this racialized figure, removed of his or her humanity, frequently became the monsters of society: Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, Charlotte Brontë's Bertha, Bram Stoker's Count Dracula. Against this monstrous depiction of the indigenous subject, postcolonial gothic rewrites the monster. Jean Rhys, in her *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), humanizes Bertha, reinserting her voice into the narrative and renaming her as Antoinette. The invaders of society become not Heathcliff, not Dracula, but the British Empire itself. In particular, Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999), with its grim focus on South Africa and apartheid, brutally portrays that invader as incestuous and violent, monstrous in the extreme: deformed, almost undead in its continued will to survive on the pain of others in a political structure that should never have existed. By recasting the monster, among other gothic tropes, postcolonial gothic allows us to hear the voices once silenced by conquest.

However, as with the postcolonial world itself, resolution is often tenuous, if offered at all. We may see the monster, but how do we completely remove its traces from the postcolonial world? How do we remove the skeleton, the ghost that haunts history? Colonial history is itself laden with nightmares. The sheer size of the colonial project overwhelms, especially as conquest so frequently ruined human lives:

In the late nineteenth century the world imperialism, which had formerly been used to mean dictatorial government, was extended to include

political sovereignty of a nation over alien peoples and territories. . . .

After 1870, a new era of empire building began in earnest in which the European powers partitioned virtually all the Eastern Hemisphere amongst themselves—between 1870 and 1900 the European states added 10 million square miles of territory and 150 million people to their area of control, one-fifth of the earth's land surface and one-tenth of its people.

(Peet 133)

Ruthlessly carving up ten percent of earth's population, Europe found itself, fortunately for itself and unfortunately for everyone else, landed with an incredibly potent potential capital market (see also Keay 428). As Richard Peet writes in his Marxist analysis of global capitalism, "Because of the limited purchasing power of workers, capitalist societies have a tendency to economic stagnation *unless a place can be found to invest unneeded capital*" (134 emphasis added). This "place" became the conquered lands of Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia. In his discussion of H. G. Wells' *Dr. Moreau*, Barri Gold sees the "reproduction of empire" as the most intrinsic element of empire building. To Gold, reproduction, not production or commercialization (as in Marx or Peet), stands as the main intent behind empire building. His argument is based off the needs of an empire continuously expanding and finding itself overwhelmed with the need for increased provisions, especially food (176). Rather than "buying" food from other European nations, England, he says, colonized, finding a ready body of people able and forced to provide English foodstuffs and other goods (176). This sounds hauntingly reminiscent of Richard Peet's argument that "[t]he main goal of the colonial administration was to make the conquered pay for their [own] oppression," a goal

realized by “a series of petty dictatorships, aimed at producing taxes, labour, products and resources for the Europeans” (139) where the indigenous were forced to earn money because they could possess no usable land. With their lands taken from them, with their people forced into a servitude they could not escape, a servitude often legitimized in the discourse of imperialism through Christian ideology (Said, *Orientalism* 100), the colonized world found itself sliding further and further into poverty.

And if we assume that the moment British forces left the colonized world, the postcolonial thrived, we are summarily incorrect. Singapore is just one country where we may see the complications of imperialism. In Singapore, the country faced a new nightmare as the battles of World War II struck its shores—with a new conqueror, Japan, overcoming Allied forces on February 15, 1942, and evicting the previous British imperial landlords. Vyvyane Loh’s *Breaking the Tongue* (2004) graphically shows the invasion through the eyes of Claude Lim, who had been part of Singapore’s more wealthy and educated indigenous class, as he is being tortured by Japanese forces. The invaders tell him that his people had been “slaves of Western pigs, why you’ve [even] accepted their language” while the Japanese came as “liberators, but first we must liberate your minds and the sick attitudes you’ve imbibed from your former rulers” (128). Singapore has moved from one conquest to the next—from British soldiers to Japanese soldiers—in a seemingly endless dispossession. Much the same happened in other nations, for hope deteriorated in the midst of economic recessions or political turbulence. On the 1930 eve of independence in Malay, “recession so reduced the demand for rubber that indentured Tamil labourers were said to be begging their passage money home,” a trend also seen in India (Keay 485). Civil Disobedience marches stormed across India,

with protesters “beaten back by police and arrested” (Keay 487). After years of strife against colonial power, 1947 saw the independence of India and Pakistan—at the same time that famine struck Bengal, religious fires swept the nation, and, in April 1946, “[d]uring three days of unchecked mayhem some four thousand Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus died in what has become known as the Calcutta Killings” (Keay 505). Violence similarly exploded in Africa. In today’s Sudan, for example, the war between North and South Sudan has “raged intermittently since 1955, making it possibly the longest civil conflict in the world” (Deng 13). Horrifically, “[o]ver two million people have died as a result of the war and related causes, such as war-induced famine” while “[a]bout five million people have been displaced” and “[t]ens of thousands of women and children have been abducted and subjected to slavery” (Deng 13). Caught in the middle of a bloody civil war, one pivoting on the axes of Islam and Christianity (Deng 13; see also Makris 161), how is postcolonial Sudan to overcome its colonized history, even its pre-colonial history? How, truly, is any postcolonial society to emerge from the ruins of its violent past?

Because of the painful violence of the past, postcolonial gothic ruins are frequently sites of excavation or vacancy, symbolic of the process of postcolonial recovery. Here, the typical gothic trope of the fallen castle can no longer be found: it has seemingly vanished, as have the watchtowers, the citadels of power, and the halls of the Inquisition. Instead, we find Old Delhi and New Delhi, factories, crumbling palaces, and bungalows left empty by the vanishing conquerors:

She [Mol Benade] picks up Gerty [Mol’s dog] and looks across the length of the bare yard. The yellow lawn stretches all the way up to the wire

fence in front. Lambert says it's just rubble wherever you dig, where they live. Under the streets too, from Toby [Street] right through to Annandale [Street] on the other side. Rubble, just rubble. (van Niekerk 1)

Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* describes not ramparts, not battlements, not long winding staircases that descend into darkness, but rubble. Yellow lawns and wired fences replace the sublime landscape, modernizing the gothic setting. Dog bones thrown haphazardly in pits replace the human skeletons and tombs, later to be unearthed and paired with "tins and things, even faded old marbles and knobkieries [sticks used for sparring or walking] with carved heads" in bedrooms (van Niekerk 5). Van Niekerk is not alone in her stark presentation of the postcolonial gothic world. In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), juxtaposed to the Ayemenem "house on the hill . . . [with] its steep, gabled roof" and its "walls, streaked with moss" (Roy 4)—an image that hints teasingly at the European gothic tropes of its predecessors—can be found the Paradise Pickles & Preserves factory, with its "rusted tin roof" (30) and empty vats. Rubble, wired fences, dog bones, and rusting pickle factories all create a sense of decay, of loss, but they do so by strongly refuting the gothic castle. In postcolonial gothic, thus, we must ask an important question: where have all the castles gone? Where have the citadels, the battlements, the dark graveyards disappeared?

As with all genres, postcolonial gothic varies between writers, but an intriguing shift does occur in the twentieth century, one motivated by a firm political agenda. The typical crumbled castle becomes something new, something entirely reworked, something to be replaced—not by the conqueror of Imperial Gothic, where empire often

triumphed against the feared Other of its subjects, but by a conquered people supposedly free from the specters of empire even as the colonized past still haunts the land.

Spectral Reminders of the Past: Empire's Remains

In the postcolonial gothic, we find the past glimmering from almost every page, a devastating history in ruins, a world of despair translated into the search for a path into the future. Unsettlingly, though, this path is frequently impossible to find with the relics of conquest remaining in the land, staring vacantly at those who would attempt to transform the future. Thus, ruins do not always represent, in the postcolonial gothic, a time that has passed; they do not always represent a vanquished past or a free future. Instead, they serve as signs of conquest, signs of a future that may return, even as warnings of what may still linger in the mindset of a previously conquered people: the sinister remains of imperial ideology, so difficult to dispel once the forces of empire have receded. For this reason, ruins cannot always be taken as hopeful symbols; they are ambiguous, sometimes capable of interpretation, sometimes not, ciphers that often stare blankly at the reader and refuse to be easily read.

While castles may not frequent the language of most postcolonial gothic works, we do find the ancestral home, one that hauntingly reminds us of Maturin's manors. This connection with the gothic past may lead us to question their purpose: are they there to symbolize the old order or usurped power, as we might find in earlier gothic fiction (Davenport-Hines 66; see also K. Ellis 37), or do they have a completely different intent? If they do have a different intent, what, then, would that intent be: to symbolize the postcolonial family, whose house can be seen as an extension of the family? To

symbolize family connections that remain strong despite the presence of empire?

Conversely, to symbolize family connections that have weakened because of empire? Is it even possible for postcolonial gothic to “[un]bind” itself from European traditions, as Judie Newman has asked in *The Ballistic Bard* (70), or by its very nature is postcolonial gothic forced to retain hints of the past—as, indeed, the postcolonial world must retain hints of its colonized past? Audre Lorde has argued unsettlingly that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (qtd. in Minh-ha 80), yet postcolonial gothic allows us to see that this may not always be true. By claiming ownership of gothic’s stereotypes as well as its tropes, postcolonial gothic may, indeed, transform the gothic form it borrows; indeed, it may transform the ideologies upon which gothic originally stood. Along similar lines, Cixous states, “If woman has always functioned ‘within’ the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier . . . it is time for her to dislocate this ‘within,’ to explode it, turn around, and seize it; to make it hers” (343). Lorde insists that no writing performed within the auspices of an oppressive power can be used. However, in this project, Lorde’s position may suggest that postcolonial gothic cannot remain within the European gothic tradition without being subsumed by the ideology of the West—and, by extension, we could consider the novel itself to fit this description—Cixous urges the possibility of writing *within* the dominant framework, exploding the discourse patterns, to resist. In such an interpretation, postcolonial gothic can resist and shape the transformation of its readers. As with most tropes in postcolonial gothic, it seems that many of the previous conventions invert or shift, which leads to much of the ambiguity in the form. It is this very crossing of boundaries, this shifting of definitions and tropes, that gives postcolonial gothic—indeed,

the reinvention of the gothic form in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' Anglophone postcolonial literature—its power as well as its ambivalence.

To complicate the matter, most postcolonial gothic manors vary heavily in their appearance as well as their significance to the text. The History House of Arundhati Roy's Indian *The God of Small Things*, once owned by the conqueror, has crumbled into the quintessential haunted house—and is even described as inhabited by the ghost of its previous owner, Kari Saipu, who has been “pinned” against a rubber tree (189). We can easily see the History House as the land of ghosts: “With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows” (51) as well as “waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers” (52). Within the shadowy land of the History House, even the ancestors are falling apart, dissolving under the onslaught of a history to which the Ayemenem family is “trapped outside” (51). Ghosts haunt many postcolonial texts: the ghosts of the past. In Roy, ghosts lurk in toys, in the History House, in human beings, in a moth with “unusually dense dorsal tufts” (48) beloved of an Imperial Entomologist. While it is obviously dangerous to state that all ghosts can be interpreted in one way, within Roy—and within many postcolonial gothic novels—the ghosts represent the colonized past or, sometimes, the pre-colonial era, haunting a torn world that cannot seem to forget the past. We may see similar themes in Calcutta-born author Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1990), a book reaching from Calcutta to England and spanning several decades, including World War II and the political unrest of the 1960s. The book begins with a description of the rich family's “vast old family house” (6) where Tridib resides most. Importantly, this vast old family house is only inhabited by Tridib and his “ageing

grandmother” (6), especially since it is Tridib who is killed by the end of the work. In the “ageing grandmother,” in Tridib’s death, in the “crumbling ancestors,” readers of postcolonial gothic confront the deterioration of ancestral lineage, a theme captured from gothic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and reinforced in postcolonial gothic. History, in such an interpretation, is foreclosed; it disappears, vanishing in a postcolonial world searching earnestly for its roots.

While the crumbled manor may represent the end of a family line, like many gothic works, others can represent resistance to change and owner neglect. They can be decayed, stripped of previous care, as we see in Indian novelist Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* (1980), a novel set in the 1940s as India achieves independence. We primarily view the confusing and often-incendiary times of independence through the eyes of a middle class Hindu family. This family’s house is “still faded and shabby” (24) and the paint peels from burned wood. Gardens are “overgrown and neglected and teeming with wild, uncontrollable life” (24). Desai is not the only author to present the garden as an ominous setting; we see the decayed, overgrown garden in Arundhati Roy’s *Small Things*: “after enduring more than half a century of relentless, pernickety attention, the ornamental garden had been abandoned. Left to its own devices, it had grown knotted and wild, like a circus whose animals had forgotten their tricks” (27). While wild gardens are not unusual for European gothic fiction, particularly Radcliffe, we may see a different meaning in a postcolonial world that, after colonial invasion, has fallen from its natural underpinnings of familial connection. If we accept the metonymical correspondence of family and state (Mohan 48)—the Bhabhian collapse of public and private spheres that leads to the uncanny (Azzam 10)—we can interpret this further by stating that the

postcolonial state has slumped into an unnatural divisiveness. Within the gardens everything wilts, browning in the “hot, sulphur-yellow wind” and the “blank white glare of afternoon” that “slanted in and slashed” at those below (21). Sites of innocent happiness erode into decayed memories:

The rose walk was a strip of grass, still streaked green and grey . . . everything else, even the papaya and lemon trees, the bushes of hibiscus and oleander, the beds of canna lilies, seemed abandoned to dust and neglect, to struggle as they could against the heat and sun of summer. (1)

What may be most significant about this image is that the house is not the only thing falling into disrepair—nature itself collapses in the postcolonial world. We may argue that the family, represented by the home, has fallen into disrepair, fragmented, and in *Clear Light of Day*, this interpretation seems solid.

Yet another gothic overtone that we find in Desai’s novel is the idea of the well, a dark, forbidden area where once a cow stumbled into the well, fell in, decayed, and turned the well putrid. Humorously, Desai places the forbidden well in the back yard, once again leaving readers with a feeling of anti-climax or almost anti-gothic. This well has been forbidden for years, symbolizing the blackness of spirit that the family has often felt towards itself and others, the almost smothering sensation of family responsibilities. Bim, the older sister, must maintain her family with one sister married and disconnected from her, one brother estranged, and one brother disabled. Financial strain, best seen in the house that has not been repaired and likely never will be, in the presence of old linens and older furnishings, has strengthened the disconnection between siblings, as have religious and political divisiveness. India has been partitioned, like *Clear Light’s* family,

scarring the country and the family in a clear mirror between public and private misfortune and pain. Amidst battles between families and rival political parties, nature has decayed, showing the unnatural state of the battle: family, which should remain cohesive and without internal discord, has become the source of pain—and so has the partitioning of India itself.

Moreover, through Bim's character and family connections, Desai explodes the Western discourse of linear, progressive time. *Clear Light* visibly depicts a world where India attempts to endure the strife unscathed—and fails. This is the very same familial, religious, and political division that we see in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. India erupts into violence as family turns on family, as Muslim turns on Hindu, as Pakistan breaks from India. Furthermore, familial strain symbolizes national strains confronted in the explosion of neocolonialist contamination (LaCom 142; Thaggert 91). We can see the splitting of family roles, which have been westernized (LaCom 142); the brother has become the landlord to his sister, who is the tenant. Bakul has become an ambassador, following the strategies of the west, and he initiates Tara into the modern world: engagement books, planners, and parties, into a “neat, sanitary, disinfected land . . . with its rules and regulations” (28). Even Bim refuses the role of mother scripted into her gender (Chakravarty 82), instead becoming educated and attempting to enter the postcolonial market by earning her own wages (Mohan 48). Only Baba, except through his music, remains outside the modernizing influences. He is also differentiated through his disability: he is unable to enter the world of speech and rationality, but his disability allows him to remain outside established role behaviors (LaCom 143).

Amidst the processes of modernization, Bim attempts to keep the spirit of her family alive, to keep the house as it once was, even as she refuses, in a move hauntingly gothic, to yield to the oppression of marriage (Odin 68). However, Bim must remain in her home to protect her family (Mohan 49; Panigrahi 73), thus trapping her in a role she despises: in the old. What is old, what once was, has been preserved, as if the house “were the storeroom of some dull, uninviting provincial museum” (21). These are Tara’s disparaging words, but Tara eventually learns that this past, the family ties of place and context, offers a path of escape from the conflict that faces her family—and by extension, India. Tara tells Bim that “the *atmosphere* has changed” (156) since Bim became mistress of their home, since the parents have died, yet she can almost feel them there: “The kind of atmosphere that used to fill it when father and mother were alive, always ill or playing cards or at the club, always *away*, always leaving” (156). Indeed, the parents, with their easy acceptance of colonial rule and its products, can be seen as enormously dangerous precedents (Valjento 212), ones diseased—for the mother was always ill and the father insisted on living in his glorified past spent reveling at the Roshanara Club—and needing to be changed. Though they have left, their presence remains, a presence-in-absence; their presence connects with the present when Bim reconstructs the family home without entirely destroying its roots. The ancestral home is, then, the-same-but-different since her parents breathed life into it.¹ This may offer us a glimmer of hope, for Bim’s family—and India itself, indeed, the previously colonized world—may be the-same-but-different than they once were after the forces of empire have left.

On the other hand, however, we may see that Bim, by being trapped within her family home, has had her attempts at self-identity erased (Parekh 275) in a coercion of

the national allegory, where woman represents nation (Ray 97). Given this interpretation, Bim struggles between the desire for independence and education, one especially strong at the time of the Hindu Code's passage, while at the same time confronting the common idea that women symbolized all that is "Indian," an "unchanging" quality that obviously conflicted with the quest for independent self-identity (Ray 107). Desai's telling of the story through female perspective gives a voice to those usually silenced, the female, and offers a space for the female in history (Thaggert 92). In Desai's work, gender boundary issues and role behaviors, commonly addressed in gothic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, connect with a political ideology that is manifest and vibrant. Thus, the decayed ancestral home carries many of the same connotations as its European equivalent, indicative of entrapment by a patriarchal ideology that aggressively scripts female roles even though the forces of empire have left India's shores.

While the castle may be the prominent image in previous European novels, postcolonial gothic draws upon the palace as a clear replacement of its European predecessor. Here again, however, despite the similarity, there are distinct, even radical differences, seen almost immediately in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), a novel situated in two timelines. We first follow the footsteps of Olivia, an English woman, who arrives in Bombay during British control of India; we continue to follow her story up until she dies in the 1950s. Interspersed with Olivia's narrative is the story of our narrator, who appears in Bombay approximately a quarter of a century later, well after India's independence. In the initial timeline, set during British rule, we see splendor juxtaposed against poverty:

Like many Indian rulers, the Nawab was fond of entertaining Europeans. He was at a disadvantage in not having much to entertain them with, for his state had neither interesting ruins nor was it hunting country. All it had was dry soil and impoverished villages. But his palace, which had been built in the 1820s, was rather grand.² Olivia's eyes lit up as she . . . saw beneath the chandeliers the long, long table laid with a Sèvres dinner service, silver, crystal, flowers, candelabras, pomegranates, pineapples, and little golden bowls of cysallised fruits. (15)

Crouching innocently in the beautiful descriptions of chandeliers and candelabras breathes a monster, one central to Jhabvala's work. The Nawab, a colonial agent—one bent on “entertaining Europeans”—lives in splendor while his people live in poverty. Jhabvala ruthlessly exposes the nature of empire itself, which forces the indigenous into serving colonial authorities, even through entertainment, while the people starve; more ominously, the crystal, chandeliers, and candelabras may be European imports, a hint of the economic arrangements of empire that allowed imperial forces to flourish while indigenous populations scraped for meager rations. Hunting, though lacking in the Nawab's territory of Khatm, can be easily interpreted as poaching on the scarce natural resources of the people—all for “entertainment” of the conqueror. There are no “interesting ruins,” sadly, making entertainment of imperial forces strictly at the expense of an already impoverished territory. Corruption of the indigenous population's ruling bodies—who live in “grand” style, a bounty of food surrounding them while their people suffer—highlights the implicit participation of indigenous bourgeoisie in their own colonization, a Bhabhian mimicry that remains throughout the work (Breto 213).

If readers had not already deciphered the harsh lesson to be learned in *Heat and Dust*'s first description of the Nawab's Palace, they are sure to understand later:

Satipur also had its slummy lanes, but Khatm had nothing else. The town huddled in the shadow of the Palace, walls in a tight knot of dirty alleys with ramshackle houses leaning over them. There were open gutters flowing through the streets. They often overflowed, especially during the rains, and were probably the cause, or one of them, of the frequent epidemics that broke out in Khatm. (165)

Against the sparkling of the palace, the almost insulting splendor and grandiosity, Khatm sinks in despair. We do not frequently see the homes of anyone but the ruling class, whether Medieval or later, described in gothic fiction, but Jhabvala has brutally, unerringly shown us the poverty riddling India in the grasp of empire. Open gutters, dirty alleys, houses toppling and overflowing with filth, an open environment for disease and death, can even be seen as the taint of empire itself—the disease of malnutrition and poverty that allows an empire to rape natural resources from its conquered territories at the expense of its subjects. It is a disease that can “bury the people” (166) of empire under unreasonable, unending demands for more and more from a people who have no more to offer. This is certainly not the castle of Ann Radcliffe or the manor of Charles Maturin, entrapping a hero(ine) of noble or privileged birth until he or she has escaped and obtained the rightful seat of power once denied. While Judie Newman has described Jhabvala's work as characterized by “demon lovers, mysterious Indian palaces with intricately concealed secrets, ruined forts, poison, willing victims, plus the eroticism of spirituality” (71), Mariaconcetta Costantini adds that “[t]hese motifs are closely

intertwined with postcolonial conflicts—domination versus submission, hegemony versus diversity, language versus silence” (157). Thus, Jhabvala uses gothic tropes to destroy the “imperialistic clichés” of gothic works (Costantini 157). Among these tropes would be the villain/victim of the Nawab/Olivia and the use of a frame for the gothic novel, one reminiscent of the framing used in Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796). The frame allows us to understand historical perspectives from two different interpretations (Costantini 158) in what can be seen as a dangerous “story of constructing Olivia’s story” through the eyes of someone who coercively understands her—by forcefully interpreting what has happened and beginning to share Olivia’s original path (Abel 425; see also Crew 113). Indeed, use of journals and other archival materials to interpret the story of one silenced is a typical feature of the gothic, particularly well-developed in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1891). Olivia’s story is retold in the unnamed English narrator’s story, which shows “a will to redeem in . . . retelling” (Breto 209). However, less optimistically, it can remind us that history repeats itself, unerringly (Dudt 163), or that history is written by those in power. We may view Jhabvala’s use of the framework as redemptive rather than a textual feature used to bury knowledge, as we frequently see in European gothic.

This is the palace shining grandly amidst poverty and despair; this is the palace, indeed, of empire and the native informant, a place of wealth obtained from the backs of the populace. However, the palace takes on yet one more shade of complexity, for the Nawab—far from simply representing the native informant who will do everything the imperial power wishes—actually schemes against weaker, more vulnerable members of the empire. The Nawab orchestrates Olivia and Harry’s entrapment in his palace, taking on the taint of Radcliffian villainy—in a role crafted by European ideology—while

victimizing his own oppressors. The Nawab may be interpreted as an “Oriental villain” (Costantini 161) who submerges Olivia behind the living death or “unnameable horrors” of the purdah (Rai 86), for the veil frequently appears in gothic fiction. It obscures unknown horrors later revealed as mundane objects, as in Radcliffe, or used to illuminate the eroticism of a character’s form, as in Lewis. Sudha Rai suggests that Jhabvala, by using the veil image of the purdah, shows the cruelty and oppression of Indian society and its treatment of females (85-6), for it erases the female presence. However, it is important to realize that he holds the characteristics of the Radcliffian villain: he has transgressed the boundaries of colonial discourse by assuming European characteristics and holding power, usurped power, over the supposedly powerful imperial representatives. The Nawab can certainly be interpreted as a paternal villain, one similar to the paternal villain of Manfred, with Olivia as the frightened heroine (Costantini 164). However, focusing exclusively on the villain/victim nature of the Nawab and Olivia ignores a critical moment in the work, for it ignores the Nawab’s transformation from the typical Oriental child to a person capable of destroying the imperial forces. There are obviously negative implications to the Nawab; he is cast as a villain, whether Oriental or Radcliffian, and he is refuted by the narrator’s ability to integrate with Indian culture while he himself seems to impoverish his own people. However, the fact that he overcomes Olivia and Harry suggests that he can fight the forces of empire. Such an interpretive complexity obviously contributes to the ambiguity of Jhabvala’s work, for it explodes the gothic tropes of villain and victim even as it also deconstructs the idea of resistance to empire as an inherently positive trait. Is the postcolonial reader to respect the Nawab for his ability to victimize and control his own controller—and, even more, is

the postcolonial reader to understand that resolution can only be undertaken by the “modern-Gothic traveling heroine” (Costantini 164) who is, incidentally, *white*? The Nawab’s palace, then, as site of the Nawab’s transgression, becomes both a symbol of imperial control and a symbol of resistance, two mutually exclusive interpretations that contribute heavily to the ambiguity of *Heat*.

Clarity of gothic tropes further dissolves in Jhabvala’s work when we encounter the decayed bungalow—definitely not a castle or manor—of the Medical Superintendent, Mr. Saunders. The building is decrepit, “musty and dark” and smelling “dead”—a fact likely coming from the “dead squirrel on the floor of what must have been a dining room” (24). Across from the verandah of this “gloomy, brooding house” stands a “Christian graveyard” (24). Even more, “All of the graves are in very bad condition—weed-choked, and stripped of whatever marble and railings could be removed” (24). The graveyard is itself a grave, empire entombed, left to rot in disrepair in a country now free from the forces of conquest. Elsewhere in the novel, Jhabvala describes a British bungalow that has not been “converted, like the others, into municipal offices but into a travellers’ rest-house” (20). Converting the infrastructure of empire into something useful for the new nation—municipal offices, a traveler’s rest-house—suggests once more that the postcolonial world is moving forward.

However, building upon the relics of the past forces the past to remain in the present. Moreover, Jhabvala again muddies such an interpretation when she places English travelers within the bungalow. They are not the forces of empire, surely, but they still travel, gazing upon the Other as something exotic. Indeed, William Hughes, a prominent postcolonial gothic critic, has discussed what he refers to as “Gothic Tourism”

or “Gothic Social Reporting,” a common discourse during Victorian and Edwardian periods. As Smith argues, the traveler’s gaze is always Othering, for it shows that “the Empire has come home, or been brought back, to Britain, that the Gothic Otherness of India or Africa has been transplanted into the English countryside” (“An Angel Satyr” 122). Travel literature or gothic novels mimicking the form strongly contribute to the creation of racial ideology, where the traveler gazes on the Other as distinctly different from the English national self (DeLamotte, “White Terror” 20-1; Caballero 143). Considered against such a theoretical framework, then, Jhabvala clearly does not allow for easy interpretations, ones that happily declare that empire is gone, even if it has been severely crippled, for the English traveler remains in India, objectifying the indigenous population. This could be interpreted as an end to empire, for everything is dead (Costantini 167). Yet the fact that there *is* a visible graveyard, despite its decayed presence, implies that empire is not gone: it remains to haunt the present, buried but visible, a skeleton no longer seen but there nonetheless. That the graveyard stands almost immediately beside the crumbling bungalow supports this interpretation. We might be tempted to believe that the fallen state of the bungalow indicates that empire has passed, leaving only a sign of its one-time vital presence, but the fact that it remains standing, despite the weeds, despite the cracks, despite the smell of death, suggests that its presence continues. It is part of the setting, part of the horizon of a postcolonial world. It hints eerily that the postcolonial cannot be ripped from its colonial moorings.

Similarly, graveyards are ambiguous in Desai’s *Clear Light*. Perhaps one of the more obvious themes of the gothic is the idea of old and new, which we have previously seen as Bim preserves her family’s past. Radha Chakravarty argues that Bim is

disillusioned in her belief that she is independent, for she lives in Old Delhi, the world that scripts her as oppressed by a rigid patriarchal system (82). This seems to deny the ambivalence of the text, which shows that Old and New contain important elements and must exist together. However, Bim also sees a stark difference between New Delhi and Old Delhi, where Old Delhi decays: “a great cemetery, every house a tomb. Nothing but sleeping graves” (5). New Delhi bustles with activity, for it is “where things happen . . . a jumping place” (5)—yet Bim and Baba never go there. Bim tells us that “Old Delhi does not change” (5), and perhaps this hints at the crux of the entire novel: India has changed, the family has changed, and we feel that it is not always an optimistic change. The past still lingers in Old Delhi while the neocolonial present glares brightly in New Delhi. Changes forced by empire, New Delhi itself, continue as India attempts to join the modern world, but Old Delhi offers a sanctuary from this modernization. However, can Old Delhi, with its crumbling walls, exist without New Delhi—and can New Delhi completely subsume the Old? Are there parts of the Old Delhi in the New, especially in the gendered roles Bim wishes to reinscribe? Because Desai juxtaposes both cities and times, old and new must remain connected; the graves of long ago cannot be excised from the future even as the future must be pursued to understand the past.

While handling a disturbing topic, Desai helps us understand the interplay of past and present symbolism by laughing at its tombs. She has transformed the fearsome well of gothic fiction—the terrible site of a supposed murder in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862)—into a well in the backyard inhabited, supposedly, by the corpse of a cow. Similarly, Jane Austen employs a vigorous satiric strategy in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), which uses satire as a “cover up” to discuss real, terrifying

threats English women face within the drawing rooms of society (Johnson 34). This play with European gothic conventions plucks the terror from the image, transferring it, instead, to the collapse of family and state. Desai uses gothic satire to unpack the vampire's horror. So frequently seen as a racially inferior Other in Stoker, the vampire, in Desai, becomes nothing more terrible than a mosquito. Vampiric mosquitoes ludicrously lead to laughter, not fear, as young Tara finds herself in the conventional tomb. Desai teasingly writes, "The mosquitoes that night were like the thoughts of the day embodied in monster form, invisible in the dark but present everywhere . . . piercingly audible" (152). She continues, describing these "apprehensions" (152) as attempting to "torment her and, mosquito-like, sip her blood" (153). Vampiric blood exchanges should produce corpses, but this is not the case in Desai: "All of them fed on her blood . . . [and] at some time or the other had fed—it must have been good blood, sweet and nourishing" (153). Thus, amidst the tombs of what should have produced vampire myth, we find mosquitoes instead, defanged; the Imperial Gothic vampire—who has been racially stereotyped, impure, and always destroyed by the story's end (Hoeveler 192)—have risen, full of blood and "humming" (153). They are not destroyed, not destroying, but a part of nature.

In postcolonial gothic, perhaps one important lesson to understand is that symbols of the past—the locked room, the gothic castle, the graveyard haunted by ghosts, the vampire who invades England and pollutes the pure English bloodlines—cannot be completely removed from writing of the present. Along the same lines, the present's use of symbols may be heavily imbued with past conventions, resisting or supporting those interpretations, but needing them to exist in some form to understand current discourse. If we come to *Clear Light* without understanding the conventions of gothic castles,

graveyards, wells, and vampires, we will miss much of what Desai attempts to do: we will miss her revision of European conventions, and we will miss the implicit understanding that the master's history must also be rewritten in the same manner. As with history itself, we cannot completely ignore what has happened; we cannot ignore the traces of empire that, visible or not, linger to affect the present. The postcolonial gothic landscape remains achingly haunted by hidden wells, hidden skeletons, collapsing ruins that the indigenous subject must interrogate to begin building a path into any future.

Gothic Dreams of Empire: Repetition and the Endless History

In Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), ruins of previous civilizations stagger readers with their massive columns and dark heritage—scenes of horror in a present supposedly far removed from the barbarity of the past. Postcolonial gothic plays with this same theme. South African born author J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), in addition to imprisonment and control over others, focuses on temporal shifting of past and present, on the ruins of past civilizations that eventually blur with the ruins of the novel's present. To emphasize the importance of temporal incohesion, a dream sequence opens the novel, one that haunts the entire work. As Margaret Doody has mentioned, dreams are particularly common in gothic literature. In the eighteenth-century non-gothic, men could not have dreams, for they were associated with madness, while women could; however, in gothic, both genders dream, but that dream enters the world of the nightmare (529-30). In this nightmare world, as with Coetzee's work, characters are allowed to explore madness, self, and human rationality. Yet Coetzee pushes this further, collapsing the borders between dream and reality. In this

first dream sequence, the horizon is entirely white; light is “diffuse . . . and everywhere . . . dissolved into mist” (9). In this dissolution, “walls, trees, houses have dwindled, lost their solidity, retired over the rim of the world” (9). Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983) begins with an ancestral home located at the edge of the world, on its margins. Roy also plays off the same idea, focusing on “Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits [that] have appeared like a team of trolls on their separate horizons” (5). We find here a definite theme of the gothic: its interrogation of borders, indeed, its ultimate collapse of borders. In postcolonial gothic literature, however, these borders can also indicate real geographical boundaries, particularly those established to partition India, borders that separate a people who share blood ties despite differing religions. In Coetzee, dream children play with snowcastles: they build ramparts, but the castle itself remains half finished. Always, the dream stops, the castle never quite complete. Indeed, the past itself seems incomplete, for the castle that should represent the past remains but a partial image, forbidding in its cryptic incompleteness. More themes of incomprehensibility permeate the dream sequence. As the Magistrate—forever unnamed—advances on the indistinguishable white children, he attempts to understand them, but he can never quite approach them, hear their speech, or grasp who and what they are. Indeed, he can “make out nothing” (10), a statement that encapsulates much of the novel’s content.

Gothic frequently depicts the Other, particularly the monstrous Other of empire, as incomprehensible, speaking in “gibberish” (Brontë 46). However, what is perhaps most significant here is that it is the white children who speak in gibberish, who are incapable of comprehension. We may interpret this as the colonized silencing the conquerors, describing colonial rulers, even their offspring, as speaking the very same

gibberish European writers so frequently attributed to the colonized. We may wish to push interpretation even further and state that Coetzee is, in fact, depicting the incomprehensibility of a past filled with conquest and tyranny, of a discourse filled with dehumanization and fear—a world where residents of the present can “make out nothing” (10) of what exists around them. He attempts to approach the children, but they “melt away” from his “shadowiness” (10), leaving only a girl hooded from his sight. In this we see the decay of the past merging with the present, what should be normal and solid disappearing; even the children’s snowcastles cannot be built in this frozen wasteland of missed possibilities, of ciphers without interpretation, “gaps” and “absence[s]” (Olsen 49) that point to the “erasure” of “civilization, authority, humanism and truth” at the heart of Coetzee’s novel (Olsen 47). This erasure, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, comes from empire and its “civilizing ethic” (Rich 367).³ The past, incapable of being understood, incapable of being completed, threatens the present and the future because it is eternal, signaled by the use of present tense throughout the novel (Neumann 67). In the postcolonial context, such a statement should alarm readers: it suggests the neocolonial present remains as a haunting legacy. Colonization remains in the present, a haunting vestige of what should be gone but never is.

As Coetzee’s novel continues, the dream sequence intensifies; past and present intermingle—indeed, dream and reality collide. We are told that “[t]he dream has taken root” (53), for “[n]ight after night I return to the waste of the snowswept square” only to find it “empty of life” (53). The dream has rooted itself in reality (Martin 5), becoming inescapable, inexorable: a hint of what has come before, what will come again. In the fortress of the present, the Magistrate dreams of a girl who “is building a fortress of

snow, a walled town which I recognize in every detail: the battlements with the four watchtowers, the gate with the porter's hut beside it, the streets and houses, the great square with the barracks compound" (53). This dream city represents the present fortress at the edges of empire, now windswept and empty, barren.⁴ Even more, all is barren in this land of past-in-present. In the dream sequence itself, everything is empty, lifeless, its children possessing "grave shining faces" (52) while the narrator screams to speak, but finds he cannot utter a word through his "frozen [mouth], . . . [where] there seems to be a sheet of ice" (52). Death fills the dreamscape no more obviously than at the end of the novel, where our narrator unearths bones from a pit. The dream narrator holds a parrot "by the tail, its bedraggled feathers hang down, its soggy wings droop, its eye sockets are empty" (149). In this land hauntingly reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, we find that the water has been poisoned; even more, with symbols of death and waste, we can say that the present and, indeed, the future are also poisoned. Outside the world of the dreamscape, our narrator himself is barren, incapable of excitation at the most intimate of experiences, sexuality. Human connections, humanity itself remains "blank" to him (44). As he gazes at the girl of his reality, he can understand her no better than he can understand the girl of his dreams. He cannot even see her, for in true gothic "horror" he begins to understand that instead of her image he sees "the image of a face masked by two black glassy insect eyes from which there comes no reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me" (44). As with past and present, as with dream and reality, he has collapsed with others, steeped in an incomprehensibility that will remain indecipherable: barren and lost in the wasteland from which there can be no escape.

It is here that we see the ruins of past civilizations, a connection with the narrator's dream sequence. Throughout the book, our narrator has attempted to excavate the ruins of a previous civilization of "barbarians" (15), ruins buried under dunes of sand.⁵ The "timber skeletons" of a previous civilization are buried, for "the dunes cover the ruins of houses that date back to times long before the western provinces" (14). Very little is known or understood of this past civilization:

The timbers we uncover are dry and powdery. Many have been held together only by the surrounding sand and, once exposed, crumble. Others snap off at the lightest pressure. How old the wood is I do not know. The barbarians, who are pastoralists, nomads, tent-dwellers, make no reference in their legends to a permanent settlement near the lake. There are no human remains among the ruins. If there is a cemetery we have not found it. . . . Perhaps in my digging I have only scratched the surface. Perhaps ten feet below the floor lie the ruins of another fort, razed by the barbarians, peopled with the bones of folk who thought they would find safety behind high walls. (15)

From this crumbling ruin very little can be known. Knowledge, as with many earlier gothic works, remains buried. "I do not know" or "I have only scratched the surface" hint at the indecipherability of the past, emphasized by the uncertainty of "[p]erhaps." Coetzee's language here is primarily descriptive rather than interpretive, for while something can be seen, measured, even recorded in the colonial archives, that something may not always be understood. Furthermore, use of repetition in the description—particularly of *perhaps*—hints at the very nature of cyclical history: linguistic repetition

indicating a temporal repetition that is intrinsic to Coetzee's novel. In the Magistrate's description of himself/previous Magistrates, we see this repetition of not only time but also people, each performing the same actions: "Perhaps when I stand on the floor of the courthouse, if that is what it is, I stand over the head of a magistrate like myself, another grey-haired servant of Empire who fell in the arena of his authority, face to face at last with the barbarian" (15-6). A chilling lesson may be taken from the repetition in Coetzee's novel: empire may fall, but it will be supplanted by another empire, to be supplanted by another and another and another. These endless empires are unnamed, powers that ruthlessly grind the colonized in different centuries, in different geographic locations, in different regimes. The cycle of conquest and destruction, invasion and abuse continues eternally, inescapable and horrifying in its very inescapability.

Finally, language and individual identity collapse into ruins in *Barbarians*, secrets incapable of disclosure. In his archeological endeavors, the Magistrate has found "slips" with indecipherable script on them, things he cannot understand; he has collected them in hopes of eventually comprehending their importance. Yet all speech, all language decomposes, with no one able to reach beyond the blank faces and blank speech surrounding them (Gallagher 279; Martin 4).⁶ Additionally, as the Magistrate finds himself increasingly distanced from normal civilization—represented by the people he has protected as a Magistrate—we find that he is becoming a metaphorical ghost of himself, an almost-not-there presence. Beside him, where his barbarian woman should be, is only a "blankness" (47): he cannot read her and she cannot read him, for they are blanks. His own subjectivity is doubtful, even as the indigenous subjectivity is doubtful, too, a condition we see in many postcolonial narratives where the indigenous subject is

absent. While Anne Chantot reads this blankness as a breakdown in the Magistrate's ability to support the Manichean "code" of colonialism (30), we can also see this as a dual lack of subjectivity, one caused by the ruins of a past that refuses to end. It is not merely the barbarian woman who is unreadable, for he, too, is unreadable. He is gazed upon, though rarely understood, just as he gazes in what may be termed a double-edged scopophilia (Fick 30)—one that is most "uncanny" (Fick 31) since the barbarian woman is blind. Despite the attempt to gaze upon the other, invisibility steadily undermines any search for meaning, above all for the racial Other or the subaltern who may gaze but not speak in imperial discourse (Fick 32). Unseen, the Magistrate's barbarian woman and her tortured kin become marked bodies open to the gaze of the conqueror but never grasped: people become ciphers, social nonentities, ghosts living amongst the living, human craters of existence. While scars or marks from torture and interrogation may be seen as "'sites of memory' . . . borders that separate the visible from the repressed" (Martins 266), these memories serve only to haunt, to stare uneasily at us. As the Magistrate is imprisoned and tortured, he himself recedes into invisibility.⁷ He, like the relics of the past, becomes a cipher, a nonentity of blankness. Conquered and conqueror vanish, though always present, in an infinite cycle of imperial, Westernized disease.

Looking Forward, Looking Back: Postcolonial Ambiguity

How do we interpret the laughing satire of Desai's vampiric mosquitoes or the blank gaze of Coetzee's landscape? How, indeed, do we interpret Jhabvala's ruined bungalows set side-by-side with traveler's houses and British tourists, of Nawabs living in luxury while the populace starves or, paradoxically, orchestrating the fall of weaker

English colonists? We are left with no easy answers, for hope seems to mingle with despair in the postcolonial gothic novel; this, perhaps, should not surprise us, for gothic itself has held within its very conventions—the crossing of boundaries, the beleaguered heroes and heroines—the strong potential for ambiguity. Resolution may be reached in gothic novels, but it is often a contrived resolution, one that leaves readers feeling the tensions within the novel still somehow live despite the apparent happy ending.

Postcolonial gothic is no different in its use of ambiguity, with one possible exception: postcolonial gothic thrives on ambiguity, making it part of its very content. The postcolonial world is ambiguous, with resolutions tenuous, particularly as the postcolonial walks steadily into an increasingly global and modernized world, where the World Bank and global corporations overshadow the freedom previously colonized territories have gained. If the postcolonial world itself exists in shades of contention, shades of despair, it is not surprising that postcolonial gothic does, too.

Hope springs as a complex web of changes and consistency with the past in *Clear Light*. Desai's work promises a changed atmosphere of the home in her very title, *Clear Light of Day*, tauntingly hinting that dawn is on the horizon, not night. Bim's family seems less haunted by the presence of family spirits towards the end of the novel, as they learn to "face the truth [of the past] in order to live with it" (Riemenschneider 200). This offers us hope that the family can move beyond the predicament they faced: the broken family with no connections and no sense of identity. Conversely, however, Tara also feels she can almost feel their parents still there. Though they have left, their presence remains, and the effects of the past remain as well. In this way, perhaps a path can be created between two seemingly mutually exclusive responses to the postcolonial world:

forgetting the past and continuing into a future without empire or remembering the past and all it has meant, the horrors as well as the possibilities of a world before empire. Desai's work allows us to understand that empire cannot be forgotten, that the voices of our pasts cannot be forgotten, but that there is a path—one set, like the garden path beside Bim and Tara's family home, amidst the wilting and wrecked world—that may lead to understanding and future growth.

Ambiguity continues in Jhabvala's *Heat*, with its very title suggesting a problematic irresolution or “decay” (Dudt 162), heat metaphorically representing “a state of cultural claustrophobia” (Rai 83). By the end of the novel, the white Olivia and Harry have been defeated, the empire has deteriorated—but the Nawab has also fattened, becoming almost dull. He has lost the vigor that attracted Harry and Olivia, instead seeming to become increasingly westernized and stricken with financial woe; the menace that seemed vital in Olivia's narrative has disappeared by the end of the novel (Breto 213). Olivia's fate resembles that of the gothic heroine, but with no end in sight. She has been entrapped within a palace that no one can easily scale, disappearing from our eyes high into the mountains of the Himalayas: “Just above the small town of X, there is a handful of houses scattered along the steepest side of the mountain. Even at the best of times they are difficult to get to except by the sturdiest climbers; and now during the rains they are almost inaccessible” (173-4). The white settler disappears, symbolically, as Olivia disappears: “There are no glimpses of Olivia in later years. The Nawab did not speak about her very much: she had become as private a topic to him as the Begum. He never said anything about the way she was and lived up there in X” (178). The Nawab has trapped her; more importantly, however, when Jhabvala casts the Nawab as a

Radcliffian Montoni—a villain—she undercuts much of the hope we might take from the novel. Our hope is only salvaged by our narrator’s presence in India, for she not only travels throughout India, but she also attempts to gain an understanding of the culture around her, to become part of it. Yet even this positive has a darker undercurrent, for our narrator gazes upon India, making herself part of the very ideological stance that Others the Orient in its travels throughout the land. Jhabvala, thus, suggests that India can survive, that a sort of peace can be reached with other cultures who attempt to understand it, but questions that hope as being, perhaps, overly optimistic and capable of abuse.

At last we reach Coetzee’s *Barbarians*, with its blank gaze staring out at readers, a haunting, uneasy image at best. In Coetzee’s novel, the empire has fallen: both sides of empire, the “indulgent pleasure-loving” side of “easy times” seen in the Magistrate and the “cold rigid” side “when harsh winds blow” (135) seen in the Colonel. Even the “indulgent” side has been unable to view the indigenous subject as anything but an incomprehensible Other, leaving the racial tensions quite alive by the book’s last page. We are not even sure if he has truly become a resistor—for a “benevolent despot is still and always a despot” (Massé 170)—and if he has, it was not by intention (Massé 169). Both forms of empire are expelled, yet we know from reading Coetzee’s work that empire continues, unendingly, ceaselessly. Empire and time are intrinsically connected:

Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe.

Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One

thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end,
how not to die, how to prolong its era. (133)

If empire *is* time, if it strives never to die, we are chillingly left with only one conclusion: that it will come again, that it will seek to reach its fingers into the rest of civilization and time forever. The past empires may be incomprehensible—the past itself may be unreadable—but that will not change the fact that empire will exist continuously. Coetzee, thus, tells us that the postcolonial is a dream, a desire, not a reality, for the *post* of *postcolonial* deceives us. It becomes the Western “*alibi*” for its neocolonial practices (Punter, *Postcolonial* 124). The neocolonial world, like the Magistrate, acts as an accomplice in the subjugation of others (Kehinde 81). Far from possessing a “privileged” or partial “interest in continuity [of empire] rather than transformation or change” (Knippling 250), Coetzee brutally shows readers a nightmare world where empire continues relentlessly, where the postcolonial is yet another way of ignoring what has happened, what is happening now, and what can happen again.

In the postcolonial gothic, very little is what it appears to be. The tropes we have grown accustomed to seeing have shifted, changed—transformed even as they remain the same. However, their transformation cannot be completely interpreted positively, for they carry nuances of despair. As David Punter has written in *Postcolonial Imaginings*, we are “far too late” (104) to create a postcolonial text free of the master’s house:

The texts of the “postcolonial” are, in a partial but crucial sense, *not there*; they are texts written instead of other texts, they are texts unwillingly written under the sign of an “other” language, they are continuing evidences of the impossibility of visualising the dislocated, they are

emblems of all that is unwritten, of all that must now remain unwritten
because the very materials for writing are already co-opted, already
displayed in the markets of those who sell power, of those who charge
unaffordable prices for that which is not theirs to sell. (105)

The voices of the postcolonial are, thus, “texts . . . composed of silences” (105), voices that the West cannot hear. These voices are silent because they have already been “emptied out”: they are ghosts, hauntings (105). Theirs is the blank gaze we find so disquieting in Coetzee. The vacant buildings, the palaces once echoing with the power of local rule, these become the ruins of a society searching for itself—the ruins of a past now beyond recapture, the vacancy of a world no longer existing within the present, of a world silenced by empire and its ideologies. The ruin of the past has simply changed its appearance. It may no longer be the castle, but it remains with us, clearly visible in the relics of a world postcolonial authors strive to recover. Most frequently, that past stares back with a haunting, blank gaze, a ruin that is indecipherable yet still locked with meaning. In the fallen world of the postcolonial gothic, despite the hope offered in glimmers of possibility, this indecipherability often leads to shackles difficult to remove.

Notes

¹ Another common gothic theme that Desai disrupts is the idea of the absent mother. Bim has had to become the mother for her family, even if she does not wish to be one. Thus, Bim herself becomes the mother of the novel despite her wishes to avoid the position, exploding the concern over feminism and oppression in Indian society, where motherhood would be expected (Chakravarty 77). Bim creates for herself a choice, denying the almost rigid conventions of patriarchy still very much alive in postcolonial India.

² Most notably, the 1820s launched an era known as *Pax Britannica* (1820-1880) that corresponded to a relatively—but only relatively—peaceful British rule in India (Keay 414). Of most interest to Jhabvala's passage might be the increased taxation of the period (which some scholars call "*Tax Britannica*"): revenues brought in from "indemnities, tribute and subventions from Indian states and . . . tax yields from directly administered territories" became the principal source of funding for imperial India, which was to be, in a cruel irony, "self-financing" (Keay 414). Many rural areas were particularly affected as tax zones expanded, and the increased taxation often led to increased resistance to imperial power (Keay 414-5).

³ An intriguing discussion of the ideology behind civilization can be found in Paul Rich's "Apartheid and the Decline of the Civilization Idea" (1984). Rich traces the term to its origins in Hellenic culture and its intersections with race (see 368), especially in South Africa with its focus on "'white rule'" against the "'tribal' structures" of Africa (374). While Rich argues that Coetzee's novel supports the "defensiveness of Western

civilization against external invasion” (387) and presents race in only “the most oblique manner” (387), Coetzee does undercut his descriptions of the “barbarians” by forcing his Magistrate to question the rumors he hears; indeed, Coetzee illustrates, vividly, the “defensiveness of Western civilization” against its invasion by “barbarians,” showing brutally the cruelty, the inhumanity of imperialism.

⁴ Importantly, the empire is unnamed, geographically unknown, temporally undetermined (Behdad 201). Thus, it does not exclusively focus on British Empire; it could be any empire, any time, anywhere. Even more, it is situated at the borders of the empire, the “fringes of Empire” (Jolly 71), the frontier: that disputed ground between empire and conquered, where, as Rosemary Jolly argues, the Magistrate strives to understand who he is as he is situated on this shaky nexus (71). Even more, it is a territory of “(tres)pass” between the civilized and the uncivilized, the accepted and the ““forbidden”” (Jolly 72), a terrain “marked” by privileged imperial discourse that differentiates the civil from the uncivil (Moses 117). In this territory of trespass, Coetzee has alienated the reader, dislocating his story in a “familiar unfamiliar” (Kehinde 74; see also Martin 4, 7). This territory allows readers to associate his work with South Africa—or any empire.

⁵ Coetzee’s description of the indigenous population of his nameless Empire as “barbarians” obviously leads to an uneasy belief that Coetzee is engaging in primitivism or Orientalism. They wear simple clothing, mainly wool and animal hides, and they ride horses, eating simple fare (see 72-3). Yet Coetzee seems to sympathize with their plight, for he describes, in detail, their torture as well as their combat against colonial forces,

even if the sympathy may be more of a Conradian sympathy that turns the indigenous into objects rather than subjects of their own narratives. They attack travelers, clash with border patrols, shoot at and bury officials—even as our narrator, the Magistrate of an imperial installation, tells us that these are mere rumors inspired by white “dreams” (8) of torture. One wonders if the dreams are manifestations of the imperial psyche—its own use of torture being projected upon the indigenous population—or discursal conventions that legitimize the need for conquest. Again, Coetzee’s narrator interrogates rumors of barbarian cruelty when he writes, “[a]ll night, it is said, the barbarians prowl about bent on murder and rapine” (122) and “[t]he barbarians have dug a tunnel under the walls, people say” (122). Notably, both descriptions questioningly add “it is said” or “people say,” undercutting the veracity of the rumors. Thus, while Coetzee’s Magistrate certainly employs the typical descriptors of empire—believing the barbarians to be “ignorant, undisciplined and fundamentally Other” (Harding 212)—he explodes those descriptors by using his own narrator, a “humanist” (Behdad 202) tool of empire, to question the descriptions he provides. Dutifully recording the barbarians as Other than himself (Kossew 221), the Magistrate paradoxically reworks the very descriptions he records (Maltz 22). The Magistrate’s descriptions, then, can be seen as “hypocracies [sic] and paradoxes of power, but also (inevitably) the site of cultural crisis and anxiety, the possibility of action and change” (Goh par. 27). He questions what he sees, he struggles against it, but in the end, empire has still “‘infected’” him (Wood 136).

⁶ Many postcolonial gothic novels focus on the incomprehensibility of language, the sheer futility of communication in a postcolonial world. Roy’s *Small Things*, for

instance, shows a world where speech is “jagged” (29), where subaltern characters attempt to speak but cannot. Even the jagged discontinuity of Roy’s plot and the fragmented nature of her sentences create the feeling that language cannot be accessed, that somehow we have lost our way in the paths of communication.

⁷ Torture is one common motif of gothic literature, for it “unleash[es] repressed violence into the fictional world . . . examining the hidden corners of the rational bourgeois psyche” (D. Head 230). It is a mode of oppression that removes the voice of its victim while emphasizing the powerlessness of the body, and, when considered temporally, may be seen as creating “an eternal present” where the torture will continue ceaselessly (Bruce 122). However, as Dominic Head claims, torture is part of life in apartheid South Africa (see also Kehinde 74-76), making the torture we see in *Barbarians* much more likely and much more disturbing than in European gothic novels, where torture is typically removed to isolated areas and frequently fantastic plot lines. Violence itself, connected intrinsically to torture, can be seen as irrational; however, as Ali Behdad argues, it is legitimized by a colonial power to “rationalize an otherwise treacherous . . . ‘civilizing mission’” (203). Yet Ayobami Kehinde argues that torture is only a secondary concern in *Barbarians*, for the true concern is how thirst for empire overrides the conscience (76).

CHAPTER FIVE
SHACKLES, DUNGEONS NO MORE:
THE VIOLENCE OF POSTCOLONIAL ENTRAPMENT

In postcolonial gothic, it may not be surprising that if we lack castles, we also usually lack the shackles and dungeons that accompanied them. Rather than exploring entrapment through the more obvious fetters clanking through many texts, postcolonial gothic novels explore entrapment through a possibly more menacing source, through the trappings of gender, family, and colonial history. Remarkably, the trappings—while they may take different forms—remain fairly consistent in their implications throughout many colonized territories and times. We see entrapment in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) from India, Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999) from South Africa, and Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005) from Malaysia. They create crises of self-understanding and self-identity, ones rarely resolved by the end of the text. In the postcolonial gothic world, the world of the crypt or graveyard, the kind ghosts do not intervene to save thwarted heroes or heroines. Indeed, readers of postcolonial gothic often feel that nothing is capable of intervening—not the actions of government, not the actions of family, and most certainly not the actions of the Third World potential self—to end the cycle of imprisonment, the cycle of the past bleeding into the future. This may very well be because the ghosts of the past are not capable of exorcism; they are alive, breathing right beside the fragmented specters of the present.

The Shackles of Gender: Pickled Lives, Pickled Beings

One of the most beloved of all Christmas tales, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), resonates with many audiences. This "Ghostly little book"—self described as such in Dickens' Preface—is unsubtly gothic in many ways. Its characters sound suspiciously gothic. There is Tiny Tim, the sympathetic victim facing death at an early age. His father Bob Cratchit, the poor drudge, slaving for hours at the hands of an uncaring boss—and, of course, Ebenezer Scrooge, the pitiless, ruthless villain-hero who, in a somewhat un-gothic twist, repents of his errors by the end of the story. This does not even broach the ghosts who haunt the novel, or the personification of death seen in the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Although its characters read like the rank and file of a Radcliffian novel, complete with deep and dastardly acts, the setting of Dickens' story is even more intensely gothic. Scrooge's home, a "gloomy suite of rooms" once inhabited by Scrooge's now dead partner (11), is dank, dark, surrounded by fog. Within his home, Scrooge must sit near his old fireplace, for it gives little in the way of light. And then there is the graveyard, a quintessential trope of the gothic. Stricken to silence by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, we, like Scrooge, follow the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come to a graveyard, dark and dreary, only to find Scrooge's "neglected grave" (90).

Even as the characters and setting of *A Christmas Tale* match almost every scorecard for gothic conventions, its picture of entrapment, imprisonment, make the Christmas tale even more expressively gothic. Entrapment, as discussed in Chapter Two and Three, has long been a gothic theme, from Emily's imprisonment within Montoni's grasp in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Alonzo di Monçada's

entrapment within a convent in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)—to Jonathon Harker's abrupt confinement within Count Dracula's deteriorating castle in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1891). Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806) even allowed a female villain, Victoria, to shackle a female victim, Lilla, to the floor of a cavern, the “massy” and “galling” chain cruelly snapped around Lilla's “delicate wrist” (204-5) in an unusually direct female demonization. While we find no dungeons in Dickens' *A Christmas Tale*, we do find chains, “clanking . . . dragging” (15) from Jacob Marley's ghostly frame. Marley is “fettered” by what he “forged in life” (18), his shackles made “link by link, yard by yard” by his actions in life. Dickens' chains are also metaphorical, for even if Scrooge does not himself don a heavy chain and haunt the halls of his successors—he is rescued by the ghosts of Christmas—his previous life of cruel avarice has chained him, binding his eyes until he is blind to the life around him. Since *A Christmas Tale* may be viewed as, above all, a tale of rejuvenation and rebirth, Scrooge is able to escape his self-inflicted prison, his shackles of the mind. Scrooge has, thus, escaped the gothic trap that many gothic villains and victims cannot avoid.

Who, however, wears the shackles in postcolonial gothic literature? This is an intriguing question, but it is also one with ambiguous answers. In European gothic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were the most common characters to be helplessly locked away, usually at the hands of their villainous male counterparts. Radcliffe's *Udolpho* is perhaps most exemplary of this concept, for Emily, snatched from the relative safety of chateau La Vallée, finds herself trapped first by Madame Cheron, her aunt, and then by Montoni, her aunt's husband. Her situation increasingly deteriorates when she is installed in a remote castle, the walls trapping her as

forcefully as if she had been shackled to a wall. Montoni's power to control her, not only in residence but also in financial and marriage contracts, shows, too, that power is not only physical—a castle with bulwarks—but also social. Indeed, perhaps this is what frightens readers most about Montoni, his implacable control over another human being. However, while Montoni may resonate with power, European gothic literature of the time also portrayed a different world. In this world, men could be trapped, disempowered—even by women, as we see in Charlotte Dacre's *Victoria*. Yet it may be of interest that even as men are trapped in the traditional gothic novel from Europe, they are frequently trapped not by women, unlike with Dacre, but by men, and frequently by themselves. One such example is Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which unveils the hidden nature of humanity, disguised in the genteel civility of society's behavioral expectations. Trapped, screaming to break from the placid surface of Jekyll's supposed goodness, Hyde escapes his confinement to utterly destroy Jekyll and to confound the authorities of civil obedience, the police. Thus, in many European gothic novels, even those marking the turn of the century, both men and women were trapped, frequently in a trap they themselves have forged. The postcolonial gothic novel continues this discussion of entrapment; although the female may at times seem more entrapped by her gendered roles, postcolonial gothic authors show us in startlingly clear, disturbing manners that gender can trap anyone, any time, in any culture or social class. Natives of both genders, then, are ruthlessly colonized in a world supposedly moving beyond the colonial ties of the past.

Perhaps one of the strongest portrayals of gender in the postcolonial world arrives through the haunting words of Indian author Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

(1997), a text that can best be seen as a “chronicle of a society, a nation” (Fox 42) as well as a text that is distinctly “about the *place* of the Other” (Nayar, “The Place” 15). In a text entitled *The God of Small Things*, it is critical to understand the idea of smallness, of the powerless—the “small” figures in history—who are entrapped by social conventions and written out of the discourses of history. We obtain a strong hint of Roy’s meaning when we find that all human sorrows can be described in “The God of Loss. The God of Small Things” (274). Even more importantly, however, the God of Small Things is quickly connected with the Untouchable Velutha, where he (though unnamed, making him more representative of the mass of humanity) “left no ripples in the water” or “[n]o footprints on the shore” (274) as he walked towards History House. History, therefore, locks itself against the smaller people, those with no voice or name, society’s margins; instead, it features the “Great Stories” (218), an “amputated” (121) history silencing, entrapping, all but the powerful (Ng, “A Tale” 46). History, ideologically a concept located in colonial discourse, allows the “small voices” to be “drowned in the noise of statist commands” (Needham 372)—“ghosted” (Punter, “Arundhati Roy” 195)—whether the State is British empire, Marxist historiography, or nationalism (Needham 372). Roy attempts to write about “a *different sort of historical memory*” (Azzam 131), set within the family house. History itself entraps the postcolonial world in its silencing of the subaltern voice, and as David Punter claims, Roy writes the anti-master narrative by focusing on the “intimate . . . exchanges” so frequently ignored (“Arundhati Roy” 202). She unshackles history, allowing a world of betrayals between social elite and Untouchable, between mother and child, between husband and wife to be seen, and by being seen, to perhaps be exorcised.

Situated in the postcolonial Indian state of Kerala, *Small Things* quickly portrays a gothic crypt that must be interrogated: the decaying ancestral home, the mysterious and hidden secret, the entrapped and splintered family, the threat of madness. Perhaps the best symbol of the crypt world in *Small Things* is the History House, an estate geographically excised from the characters of the novel by the presence of a river. Filled with ancestors who are aging or “crumbling” (52), the History House is locked against the indigenous subjects of Kerala. It has been owned by the colonial powers, then transformed into a tourist trap, bought by a “five-star hotel chain” (119) and “renovated and painted” (120). The locked history of Kerala has now been changed into a glorified play-land, where “Toy Histories for rich tourists . . . play” (120). In this postcolonial gothic world, the past relentlessly merges with the present, with boundaries between white and Indian, middle class and untouchable collapsing. Importantly, Roy’s postcolonial gothic centers on the shackles of family relationships and expectations. Familial shackles become increasingly clear as we see how Rahel and Esthappen, twins, are alienated from their Grandfather Pappachi, Grandmother Mammachi, Uncle Chacko, Grandaunt Baby Kochamma, and mother Ammu. We quickly grasp, for example, the generational gender divide as we understand why Mammachi no longer plays violin, and it is a chilling realization. “The [violin] lessons were abruptly discontinued,” we are told, “when Mammachi’s teacher . . . made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and in his opinion, potentially concert class” (49).

Set against this stark portrayal of gendered roles—a female excelling in a public art, excelling in a way that Pappachi has not and could not—we understand the apparent juxtaposition of violin lessons and Mammachi’s actions at Pappachi’s funeral. She cries,

it seems, “because she was used to him,” not because she loved him (49). She is used to his presence in the pickle factory, used to “being beaten from time to time” (49). Here, we grasp the tensions simmering beneath the surface of this novel, the tensions between patriarchal authority—an authority based not only in Indian culture itself, but also in a colonial authority that demeans women by portraying them as powerless, helpless, fragile creatures—and the defiance of women (see Azzam 132). Julie Azzam interprets Pappachi’s anger as a direct result of his alienation from the colonial process, where patriarchal roles “are deployed as the salve for egos bruised by a lifetime’s work that has gone unrecognized by the proper British authorities” (145). Azzam suggests that the unhomely in *Small Things* resides in the “secretive, ambiguous, strange, and alienating” nature of what should be most open, clear, and welcoming, the family (134). In this unhomely home, children, women, and servants are “locked out” of “the private narratives” (Azzam 140) when they are a significant part of the cultural memories of India. That Pappachi was an Imperial Entomologist underscores this tension between Indian patriarchy and colonial patriarchy, two sinister paths to power over the indigenous female subject who, except in bursts of ingenuity or music, remains silent—where silence often marks one of the truest expressions of “the trauma of the colonized” (Tejero and Pino 230). If we did not already fear Pappachi’s patriarchy, Roy describes him, only moments after stating that he beat his wife “from time to time” (49), in a photograph from Vienna. Despite his light eyes and double chin, his apparent civility, he looks like he is “plotting to murder his wife” (50). The dimple on his chin, normally seen as charming, instead seems “to underline the threat of a lurking manic violence. A sort of contained cruelty” (50). Whether his “lurking . . . cruelty” stems more from Indian

culture or colonial authority is unknown, an ambiguity that continues to haunt the novel as Roy's narrative progresses.¹

We might be able to dismiss Pappachi as a trace of the old guard, of a vanished past of patriarchal oppression, if he did not live on, symbolically, in Uncle Chacko. Chacko, like most of the characters of *Small Things*, presents a distinctly ambiguous façade. Early in our introduction to Chacko, we see him describing his family as “like the English” (51). Chacko tells Estha and Rahel that “though he hated to admit it, they [the family] were all Anglophiles. . . . Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps” (51). Of course, Chacko is right; European civilization lurks in Pappachi's Imperial Entomologist position, his desire to draw the admiration of his colonial conquerors. Yet it also lurks quite handily in Chacko himself, for he had married an English woman and fathered a hybrid daughter, Sophie Mol. Sophie Mol can, as with the latent forms of imperialism found within *Small Things*, be seen as a significant impact on postcolonial thought: the hybrid. L. Chris Fox has stated that its impact on the postcolonial is as important as the “lingering effects of British Imperialism” (41), and such a point seems to be exact. More than Rahel or Estha, Sophie is treated with deference, her every whim played to *because* she is half-British rather than despite her hybrid nature. This suggests a social trap that is likely to be difficult to overcome; however, Andrew Ng has argued that Roy attempts to show that “contamination”—through such agents as Velutha—“ruptures the idea” of purity (“A Tale” 48). In many ways, the twins themselves exist outside the margins of social conventions, having no father present in their lives. They are marginalized because of this unconventional nature (Needham 373), making them hybrids in their own right: they

exist both within the family and outside it. Thus, the twins, coming from an unconventional union, can never be the conventional characters that their family expects in a family that valorizes its colonial traces (see Punter, “Arundhati Roy” 199). As Ammu says, he has “[m]arr[ied] our conquerors” (52).

Furthermore, Chacko has bought into the colonial education, attending Oxford—the quintessential elite school of the British Empire—and without challenging its ideologies into his own life. He, like his father, allows the empire to infuse his being, despite his own warning that his family is “[p]ointed in the wrong direction” by its imperial leanings. What this means on a practical level is that Chacko, like his father, attempts to control his female relatives, including his own mother. Perhaps no other example can more clearly demonstrate Chacko’s patriarchal leanings than his takeover of the pickle factory. Laughingly stating that “[w]hat’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine” when his sister Ammu declares him a “chauvinist” (56), Chacko’s easy-going attitude readily loses appeal as he renames his mother’s pickle factory Paradise Pickles & Preserves, hires additional labor, orders new equipment, and begins to call his mother’s people his own, despite his mother’s continued work in the factory. He pays for the additional labor and new equipment purchases by mortgaging the family fields, thus hiding the “financial slide” (56) his actions create. What rights does the mother, the creator of the factory and the maker of the pickle recipes, have to divert this hostile takeover by her own son? In a culture still steeped in patriarchal power, *none*. She resides “at the site of silence and the unspeakable” (Ng, “A Tale” 46), the margins of political and social power. She has no ability to counteract Chacko’s monstrous power (Punter, “Arundhati Roy” 197), even when Chacko apparently “need[s] his mother’s adoration . . .

demand[s] it” (236); because he hates this power she holds over him, Chacko actively seeks to embarrass her in front of company, “mortifying her” in ways that she cannot fight (236).

Mammachi, thus, original owner of the pickle factory, talented musician, worthy businesswoman, defies patriarchal expectations. Men punish her because of her defiance, and she begins to remain silent in the presence of her family’s men. It is only towards the end of the novel that she acts, this time out of fear, by crushing her daughter’s love affair with an Untouchable. However, she is not the only member of the family punished. Ammu, Mammachi’s daughter, also confronts gender imprisonment. Memories from her childhood plague Ammu, as when her father beat her mother and stared “at her with cold, flat eyes” (172), indicative of a “cold, calculating cruelty” that she must learn to accept (172) since Chacko, too, has inherited the patriarchal violence bequeathed him by his father and his place in the existing social structure. She “rage[s] against” the world surrounding her, the “smug, ordered world” (167) in which she has no control or voice; she can only hope her son will be able to fight this world in a way that she never could. We can see her romantic affair with Velutha, the Untouchable, as a cry against her entrapment within gendered social restrictions she cannot escape, an act of rage she is finally allowed to voice. Society tells her she must act honorably, that she must follow its edicts, but she loves and holds physical relations with a banished or “polluted” (71) member of society. Through Velutha she finds her voice, as her mother does with the violin.

Unfortunately, this voice leads to her own possible madness, confinement and, in some ways, even her own death, a stark statement on dissenters of gender coding.

Smelling the “vinegary fumes” (214) of the factory, Ammu feels trapped in the “wrinkled youth and pickled futures” (214), the narrowing gap of possibility and change. A common trope in gothic literature, madness threatens to overpower her mind, a “wisp” (212) that hints at the darker possibilities of insanity inherent in her family (213). According to Mammachi, madness in their family does not come slowly, but, instead, strikes quickly. Even more intriguingly, the madness does not seem confined to women; it hit Thampi Chachen, who “searched his shit every morning . . . for a gold tooth he swallowed years ago” (213), and Dr. Muthachen, who “had to be removed from his own wedding in a sack” (213). For Pathil Ammai, it forced her to “take her clothes off and run naked along the river” (213) as she serenaded the fish. Yet Ammu’s madness is no more sinister than laughing out loud, “happily support[ing] a toothbrush” (212), leaving us to wonder if madness for a woman is, really, happiness—or even the desire to hear her own voice through her laughter or, as with Pathil Ammai, her own singing. In a house whose ownership Chacko has denied her by roaring, ““Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body!”” (214), in a house whose ownership society has denied her since she “as a daughter, had no claim to the property” (56), if a defiant woman’s destination is a locked bedroom—it may make her desire for a voice to call her own seem, indeed, like madness. Ammu, we are told, “was incoherent with rage and disbelief . . . at being locked away like the family lunatic in a medieval household” (239).

By the end of her life at thirty-one, “a viable, die-able age” (154), Ammu’s voice has been silenced one more time. Dread of being shorn as a prostitute, her long locks removed, finds her on the eve of a job interview for a secretarial position. This dread stems from society’s rigorous codes of morality expected of women; to be long-haired is

to be “morally upright” (154), and her experience with Velutha has led her to defy the expectations of her society for moral female behavior. Ammu rages against entrapping female roles, but she is silenced by her own fear of reprisal. Society’s reinforcement of gender codes reaches even further, for the “church refused to bury” her (154) in an unpitying gesture of contempt, a gesture of patriarchal control over its infected inferiors. Society has at last disempowered the “Unsafe Edge” Baby Kochamma sees in Ammu, the “Unmixable Mix . . . [of] infinite tenderness of motherhood, [and] the reckless rage of a suicide bomber” (304). Like Bertha in *Jane Eyre* (C. Brontë, 1847), like Lady Audley in *Lady Audley’s Secret* (Braddon, 1862), Ammu has paid for her madness in what should have been a colonial plot long buried. The fact that the postcolonial world still faces gender entrapment and madness reinforces the traces of empire *and* pre-colonial gender oppression still very much alive today.

At the very end, we find the current generation represented in Estha and Rahel, both sacrificial objects in the workings. Estha, in particular, has been traumatized by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, introduced to an aberrant sexuality early in his life; this “sexual abuse” makes him almost seem “complicit” in his molesting since he is too polite to mention the man to Ammu, thus continuing the molestation (Fox 38-9). Even more, the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man entraps Estha as no other can, forcibly entering his imagination and literally leading to his planned escape from Ayemenem House. The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man leads Estha to plan an escape from Ayemenem House in fear of his reappearance, for he “could walk in any minute” (185) and be welcomed by Ammu. His planned escape leads Estha and Rahel to be prepared, dragging a boat, “Provisions. Matches. Clothes. Pots and Pans” (187) to their escape at History House.

Even more of interest to us, however, Estha's imaginative rendering of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's reappearance can be seen as a collapse between reality and the dream (or nightmare) world, which "symboliz[es] the withdrawal of the generic borders inherent to the literatures of the colonized cultures" and defuses empiricism (Tejero and Pino 235). We might argue that the postcolonial gothic is a particularly potent force for dissolving the borders of reality and illusion, making it a positive weapon in the hands of postcolonial authors, as seen here in Roy's description of Estha.

Of course, this escape from Ayemenem House leads to a risky trip across the river and, eventually, to Sophia Mol's death by drowning; in many ways, Rahel is right when she states that Sophia "still wasn't dead" (8), that "[i]nside the earth Sophie Mol screamed, and shredded satin with her teeth" in a nightmarishly gothic image of undead entrapment. She is right because Sophia's ghost lingers throughout not only the novel, but also throughout the main characters' lives. Velutha becomes the innocent scapegoat for her death²; Ammu nearly loses sanity; Estha and Rahel shatter as they are forced to perjure themselves to protect their family's name. Thus, while Sophie's spirit may be unquiet, her death traps everyone. Already outcasts, the "[t]wins were not allowed" to be saved (187), their experience at the shores of a doomed river leading to a complete unraveling of their souls. Estha "stopped talking" (12), the "Unspeakable" (13) locked, even "entombed" (13) in a silence he cannot escape, while Rahel's identity collapses with his, her eyes hollowed out, spectral (Ng, "A Tale" 52). The "Unspeakable" secret hints at one of gothic's most commonly utilized tropes, which we will see in van Niekerk's *Triomf* and which we certainly see in *Small Things*. "A secret," Pramod Nayar writes, "is entombed, concealed and, like the crypt, does not present itself" ("Cryptosecrets" par. 2).

In *Small Things* we find what Nayar refers to as *cryptosecrets* throughout, secrets that interlock with death: Sophia Mol's death, Velutha's transgressions, Baby Kochamma's love of a priest, History House as the scene of a murder, and silences that whisper with unspoken words. We can see cryptosecrets as traps, too, for they hide what must be unearthed, forcing people to live in a path of frequently lethal secrets they cannot understand, for these secrets often become the ghosts of a silent, unspeakable history (Punter, "Arundhati Roy" 196; Azzam 149). At the end of the story, they, like Ammu, are "[n]ot old. Not young. But a viable die-able age" (310), trapped in a gothic undeath that smothers their spirits within them. They, writes David Punter, are trapped in "The Terror" of "redoubled incomprehension; the terror of being inside a situation where the very means for getting our bearings have been whittled away" and "where they have been partly supplanted by the superimposition of an uncompleted project" ("Arundhati Roy" 201). The current generation, therefore, like the previous, cannot escape the cycle of violence lingering in the postcolonial world.

The Shackles of Family in South Africa: Hollow Shells and Monstrosity

"This was the trouble with families," Roy writes in *Small Things*, "[l]ike invidious doctors, they knew just where it hurts" (68). Sisters, brothers, cousins, mothers, fathers all interweave throughout the postcolonial gothic novel, often working against one another, sometimes complete ciphers to later generations. While gender and family interweave, even blur to the point of *indiscernibility*, family creates its own shackles, distinctly different from those of gender. Perhaps more noticeably than in European gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, postcolonial gothic almost

ruthlessly portrays the centrality of family in society. We may view this centralization, in part, through the metaphor of public and private lives (Azzam 18; Tejero and Pino 231). Thus, what happens at the familial level can be viewed as happening at the social or national level. Such a statement, apparently simple on first consideration, becomes alarming when we consider just how cataclysmic family life is in many postcolonial texts. Lives are thwarted, uprooted, even destroyed by the pressures of family: the expectations, the generational history, the hidden pasts that haunt the present. If history is a house the postcolonial world “couldn’t enter, full of whispers they couldn’t understand” (Roy 53), family history, so frequently ignored in Western master narratives, is also difficult to enter and full of whispers from an incomprehensible past.

One of the most ruthlessly graphic of postcolonial texts for its portrayal of apartheid, South African author Marlene van Niekerk’s five-hundred-page novel *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999) twists with despair, incest, and an almost unshatterable bondage to the past.³ In *Triomf*, the year is 1994, and South Africa’s first free elections steadily draw near. As we see in van Niekerk’s novel, South Africa is a mess of clamoring political parties, including the National Party that controlled white Afrikaner politics from 1948 to 1994 (527); the NG Church (*Nederduits-Gereformeerde kerk*) that “gave legitimacy on religious grounds to all aspects of state ideology regarding race, gender, nationhood and political authority” (527); the Afrikaner Resistance Movement or AWB (*Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*) that violently supported “territorial autonomy for the right-wing sector of the Afrikaners” (525); the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), a Zulu “cultural and political organisation” (526) that sought black African rights; and the African National Congress that influentially worked towards the end of apartheid even as it undermined

the IFP. Violence runs uncontrolled, as we see in an almost blasé description offered of politically motivated torture: “So when Treppie reads something from the papers, like the Inkatha woman who put a tyre round an ANC woman’s neck and set her alight, and then put another tyre around her waist because she didn’t want to burn so nicely, then Pop says: Really” (199 sic). Burning a person alive garners no more attention for residents of Johannesburg than any other news story; violence has become almost expected.

Central to the hatred blazing through South Africa and *Triomf* is Afrikaner ideology. Afrikaners were Dutch colonists who originally settled in the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Shear sec. 2), carrying an ideology at least partially founded on the Association of True Afrikaners (*Gennotskap van Regte Afrikaners*) Manifesto of 1876: “Our beloved God placed us in Africa and gave us the Afrikaans language,” it stated, emphasizing divine providence as well as linguistic superiority (qtd. in Devarenne 106). A portion of the Afrikaner population later migrated to South Africa, mainly in the 1830s and 1840s, in what has since been named the Great Trek (Shear sec. 2); the migrants themselves were called the *Voortrekkers*, who “in their characteristic ox-wagons, [left the Cape] purportedly to escape from the unfair and interfering practices of the British government” (van Niekerk 528). Of most import to *Triomf* is the belief that the *Voortrekkers* were “the chosen elect” and the holders of “cultural myths that constructed the Afrikaner national identity” (Shear sec. 2) as well as its sense of entitlement to rule (Samin 87). Against this background of supposedly divine destiny and inherited rights to supremacy, the Benade family appears before readers as parodies of the *Voortrekker* myth and apartheid itself. Indeed, as the “butt of Van

Niekerk's satire" (Samin 87), they become grotesque caricatures of an ideology based off empty stereotypes of racial purity and gendered inequality.

Family, in *Triomf*, terrifies us with its unending power over the lives of its characters, its hidden and horrifying secrets, and its inescapability. Treppie, Pop, Mol, and Lambert Benade—with Mol's heart-breaking dog Gerty⁴—stumble through the wreckage of their past, yet there is no future in sight for any of the characters, for their lives inextricably intertwine with a past they cannot recover. As emblems of Afrikaner nationalism (Brophy 98), they are "peculiarly haunted by the spectral mythology that sustains apartheid" (Shear sec. 1), and we glimpse this in every relationship they build. Symbolically, we can see this best in their home (Shear sec. 1), located within the Johannesburg suburb of Triomf. Triomf ("triumph") was built on Sophiatown, which was seen as a polyglot or "hybrid" community (Devarenne 113; Lewis 74); Triomf's destruction of Sophiatown was represented as "an Afrikaner nationalist victory over linguistic as well as racial 'impurity'" (Devarenne 113). However, the impurity within the Benades' speech shows a resurgence of the hybrid language, offering optimism where none exists (Devarenne 113; Lewis 75)—as is the use of the "demotic Afrikaans in the narration and dialogue" of *Triomf* (Devarenne 114).⁵ Even further, Simon Lewis argues that this demotic Afrikaans, re-emerging with vitality, "shows that in many ways the bulldozing of Kofifi [Sophiatown] . . . and its replacement by the white suburb of Triomf could not finally overcome the entropic force of Sophiatown" (77). Shockingly, van Niekerk has the very archetypes of white South African nationalism, the Benades, speaking in demotic Afrikaans: though they claim to be pure, to be superior to those around them, their very language deteriorates into the demotic hybrid.

Even more significantly than its language borrowings, perhaps, *Triomf* has been built on the “graves” of streets of the past: a past where white supremacy was unquestioned, where white skin equated with divinity (1). More importantly, however, those “graves” were the homes of blacks who once resided in Sophiatown.⁶ *Triomf* has been built over a town obliterated to provide homes for middle class whites. Of the original residents of Sophiatown we hear nothing, for they have been “displaced to racially segregated districts elsewhere in the same city, and attempts were made to erase their sites from memory” (Stotesbury 20). Furthermore, Sophiatown’s 60,000 residents were forcibly removed to Soweto, a town far from the city and, thus, economically ruinous for employment opportunities (Shear sec. 2). Thus, the Benades, even from the first page of the novel, walk amidst the “bare” bones and “rubble” (1) of a past they cannot hope to eradicate; it surrounds them, lingering in the “heaps of rubble” (5) seen everywhere, buried beneath the dirt and yellowed grass. “Ghosts” (5) of South Africa’s racist past haunt this settlement, and those ghosts live, breathe, within the Benade family, who, like the rubble underlying the foundations of their world, stand on the rubble of their own familial relationships. Van Niekerk powerfully shows us that this foundation cannot continue, for it totters at the brink of collapse into madness. The Benade’s family home “[l]eaks,” grows “grass . . . like straw” (10); its paint peels away as the wood has been “rotted through completely” (11). Indeed, van Niekerk does not hesitate to link the home to the Benade family: ““Looks like it’s falling to pieces,”” one policeman staring at the house declares while another states, ““Just look at all the rubbish under that roof”” (123). “All that rubbish,” of course, could indicate furniture or other items, but we can easily read it, too, as the Benade family itself. Just as Lambert always digs the bones of

the past from their yard, the Benade family—through the presence of a damning family secret—must dig out the bones of their own pasts, too, though they desperately attempt to ignore that their *Voortrekker* past has long since deteriorated into monstrosity.

In *Triomf*, Treppie seems the only Benade likely to escape a the mistakes of the past.⁷ He is resourceful, repairing refrigerators and generally having a solid understanding of mechanics. Even if most of his words are laced with satire and derision, Treppie possesses a firm understanding of most things: politics, history, society. Treppie also seems to understand the appalling truth that the Benades are incapable of being salvaged; they are, instead, broken. In a chapter blatantly entitled “Pest Control,” where readers wonder if, truly, the Benades are the pests to be destroyed, Treppie says that there is “no ointment in the world [that] could make the Benades look or feel any better” (141). No clothing, no change in diet, no attempts at beautifying their home will work. They may escape their misery for moments, as they do when Pop Benade treats the family to a surprise dinner at a fancy restaurant, but the time will not last. They will return to their misery. Yet Treppie is no character to emulate. Harkening back to the language describing Heathcliff from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Treppie’s family continuously states that he is a devil. To Mol, “Treppie’s a fucken devil, but not a straight one; he’s a devil with a twist, a twisted devil with a twitch in the shoulder” (59). Again he is the ““devil”” later in the novel, right before his character is further assassinated by the description that he is ““Satan’s child”” (131). The harsh descriptions and interspersed cursing further emphasize Treppie’s almost demonic characteristics: his ability to lie, his ability to trap Lambert, his ability to sexually dehumanize members of his family.⁸

Treppie may seem to be marginally adjusted—superbly, for a Benade—but the adjustment is only fabricated. Treppie “had been dying ever since his eighth year” (422), his soul ruined when his father—who took part in the *Voortrekker* expedition from Cape Hope to South Africa—beat him mercilessly. In the present, things are no better, for Treppie abhors the new South Africa rising from the bones of the National Party:

So he told Pop he hoped to heaven that he, Treppie, would be six feet under when the New South Africa started to see its arse, ‘cause he’d been forced to watch the old South Africa go down the drain and he couldn’t bear to see the new one dying on a life-support system while it handed out golden handshakes, left, right and center. (491)

While we could certainly interpret Treppie’s despair about the future as a byproduct of his political cynicism, we could also interpret it as a firm belief that nothing built upon an already-dying past can survive. He sees little difference between old and new South Africa, calling them “[t]wo nationalistic fuck-ups” (491) despite the enormous differences in racial politics and segregation that both regimes represent. As with Triomf, magisterially built upon the wreckage of an unrecoverable past, South Africa itself cannot continue when it is founded on the hatred, bitterness, and prejudices of its apartheid past. We may question Treppie’s reliability as a member of the minority white race about to be pulled from its position of power, but van Niekerk has clearly painted an image where no one survives in this power discrepancy and ruin. To survive, van Niekerk suggests, we must work beyond the traps of the past, not found our present upon its wreckage—its mythological constructs of supremacy. Although Treppie may see the cyclical,

destructive nature of history repeating itself, he does not truly seem to glimpse a path out of this devastation: for himself or for South Africa.

Treppie's devilry and cynicism contrast distinctly with Pop's mild, soft-spoken passivity. He is Mol's confidante, Lambert's aged parent whom he can subdue, Treppie's frequent target of attack. He is the head of the Benade household, and this is a striking statement when we consider the shape in which we find that household. His patriarchal authority almost immediately appears to be imaginary, with Lambert and Treppie dangerously usurping Pop's position. Pop "hides in the bathroom" when Lambert becomes unmanageable, no matter how Mol screams (73). Already skeletal at the beginning of the book, Pop suggests the past, a decaying corpse continuing into the present, one representing the undead state of South African apartheid on the eve of its ousting. "Knobbly bones [are] running down the middle of his back" (294), a body worn to its skeleton, while, at his death, he sits "with his knees pointed together in front like a Parktown Prawn's" (518), a description distinctly dehumanizing. It laughs at the 'shell' of a man who has been a shell all of his life. Of the characters in *Triomf*, we may feel the most sympathy for Pop though that sympathy is tried by his participation in the Great Trek. Trying to find hope in an entirely hopeless world, Pop regularly "count[s] his blessings" (293), yet—as with one scene in the novel—even as he attempts to do so, he breaks into tears. "[H]e's crying about everything," Mol tells us, "About everything that is just more of the same in their lives" (294). As a living skeleton, one long past its death stages yet still managing to walk the earth, Pop has no strength to continue; he is ineffective. He must yield to Treppie and Lambert's natures, for he no longer has the strength to fight them. This surprising lack of vitality, this death-in-life, may well stem

from the familial secret, the deep, dark secret that must never be shared, but it is also symbolic of white supremacy and the *Voortrekker* mythology itself.

Fairly early in the novel, van Niekerk warns us, “family secrets aren’t things you go around announcing from the rooftops,” not “that kind of secret” (35)—and for the remainder of the work, we attempt, like Lambert, to discover the nature of that secret, one buried within the hostility and cruelty of the family. This secret revolves most around Mol and Lambert though Treppie and Pop are certainly implicated as well. Mol, another character that readers may sympathize with if even from a great distance, has been shown “her place” (73) in the family in completely unsubtle, invasive means.⁹ Almost innocuously, readers confront a sentence that at first glance, may not alarm: “She went and lay herself down” (46). Horror enters the mind when the next two sentence slink before us, sinisterly declaring, “Housecoat and all. This was the way she’d kept them all together, Pop and Treppie and Lambert and herself” (46). Wrapped in what should have protected her from sexual penetration—her clothing, her family—Mol sacrifices herself to the family’s cohesion, for as she asks, “What would happen if something made them split up and they lost each other?” (46) or, even worse, “What could she do?” (46). Trapped in a nightmare world where her brothers sexually use her, where her son joins in her invasion, she can only sing “to forget how Treppie began stuffing her the moment Pop turned his back, and how he fucked her while Lambert screamed his head off” (50). Disempowered within the shelter of her own home, Mol bears a striking similarity to blacks under apartheid. She is dominated, her subjugation expected as a natural course of Calvinist doctrine (Brophy 100).

From such a situation, what escape does she have, what hope does she have? In politics she can see no hope, for the supposedly new South Africa that blazes hope through the hearts of many leaves her with nothing but ash, for she is losing whatever power she had as a white *Voortrekker* woman in South Africa. Though rarely as brutal in her comments on black South Africans as Lambert, Mol does nothing to support black rights nor does she seem to look beyond her own scope of suffering to see the suffering in others surrounding her. Apartheid is to her only an abstract concept, only considered in how it impacts her own status. To her, “[t]he National Party has never been able to stop three men from getting the better of her in one morning” (47); they could only help, she believes, by hiring prostitutes that would “stop women like her from getting stabbed with knives and shut up in fridges with Peking Ducks” (47). Horrifically, the stabbing and entrapment within a refrigerator echo actual events, ones that have haunted her since her own son, Lambert, instigated them. Lambert actually stabs her for tossing his spanner into the lawn—for failing to do as she was told and obeying his male authority (40). Additionally, the night he prepares to throw a neighborhood party, Lambert loses a spanner in their long grass. Lambert then pours petrol over the grass and his prized refrigerators, “drag[s] her into the den and stuff[s] the pockets of her housecoat with Peking Duck” (176) before “[h]e shove[s] her arms and her legs and her feet into the old fridge, and he slam[s] the old fridge closed” (176). Violence, then, is her only conclusion.

We acquire an especially grim picture of Lambert’s relationship with his mother when he speaks of getting “busy” (73). Lambert swears that his mother “had better keep her mouth shut,” for “[n]owadays she screams like someone’s slitting her throat or something” (73). If this silencing gesture has not thoroughly chilled readers, Lambert

continues, arguing that “she’d better watch out or he’ll squash her fucken voicebox” (73). Mol, while white, has been gendered—and the gendering force has been her brothers and her son. They have removed from her many things, but perhaps the most insidious of their betrayals is her silencing. Mol does not argue for her own rights, her body’s rights to protection and autonomy; instead, she accepts “her place” within the family dynamics, gaining comfort only through her dog Gerty and Pop. Additionally, we eventually learn the family secret, and it is a story of abuse: how Treppie protected Mol from abuse, how it eventually disformed him, how the three siblings—Mol, Pop, and Treppie—sought comfort in one another, with Mol acting as the physical bridge between them. Lambert came from this union, with Mol uncertain on the father, trapped within a family that consistently dominates her even as apartheid allows whites to consistently dominate blacks. Thus, Lambert has matured with “two fathers,” with Pop representing the “good father who tried to keep him on the straight and narrow all his life” and with Treppie representing the “bad father who fucked up every inch of that road, as far as he went” (492). Created in the incestuous triangle of brothers and sister, Lambert is, indeed, a monster (see also Shear sec. 2), as is the myth of racial superiority the Benades represent.

That Lambert harbors monstrous tendencies is almost immediately clear within van Niekerk’s novel, a development distinctly drawing upon gothic conventions. We may easily recognize Frankenstein in his description:

It looks like his face was assembled from many different pieces, as if it’s not one face but many faces. . . . Pop looks like he wants to scream. He looks the way he looked that time when Lambert put on the video of Frankenstein’s monster, when that terrible creature got up from its bed

with its past face and then walked through the door, killing live electric wires with its big paws. That was a horror. Pop doesn't like horrors. (296)

With his face “assembled from many different pieces,” it takes little imagination to connect Lambert with his monstrous predecessor, Frankenstein—especially when van Niekerk so carefully helps us draw such a connection. Why does Pop fear horror movies, ones with monsters lumbering out of control? Perhaps a significant answer to this would be because he fears his/Treppie's own son, the “horror” that they have unleashed in his form bred from racially pure bloodlines. This interpretation becomes more likely when we consider that we see Lambert walking back and forth, “like a big, wild thing was busy waking up in his cage” (367), for here Lambert, like Pop at death, takes on animalistic characteristics. Additionally, Lambert has acquired animal traits earlier in the novel with the repeated reference to his tailbone or “tail-end” (40, 509) hurting him. With this extensive reference to a tail, van Niekerk has subtly reinforced the image of Lambert-as-animal well before we see him walking back and forth like a caged animal, an image that suggests that the myth of pure bloodlines and white supremacy is anything but divine. We can easily see him devouring the rest of the Benade family when Mol describes his restlessness, stating, “if something didn't happen fast he was going to break out of his cage and come and get them all”—and if this is not enough to demonize Lambert fully, Mol continues, declaring he would be “tearing them up piece by piece” (367).

With “red” (368), “mad eyes” (369), Lambert clearly becomes a figure to fear. As in many gothic novels, Lambert covertly discovers the family's deep, dark secret when he unlocks a drawer to which he has never had access. On that day he tells us, “now he's going to find out what goes for what in this house, and whose father is whose father”

(505). After finding a Viewmaster, he “scratches deeper in the drawer”—“scratches” once more implicitly connecting Lambert with the animal world—until he eventually unearths the truth, a letter. The final monstrous flourish comes at the end of the novel, when Lambert has learned, at last, the dread secret, that he is the product of incest:

He looks down at his hands. Skew, full of knobs. He looks down at his legs and his feet. . . . Now he sees his large knees, his hollow shins, his knobbly, swollen, monster-ankles, his skew, monster-feet, and his monster-toes. Ten of them! All different shapes and sizes. Dog toenails!

He feels his face. A monster. A devil-monster. (513)

Until this point, we have rarely felt sympathy for this creature, despite his fits and seeming intellectual problems. His actions towards his mother and Pop have demonized him, hardening our interpretations against his plight. However, he has finally realized the cause of his deformities, a relationship he could not have hazarded since Pop had been deceptively described as a “distant Benade” (510). Now, with his Moreausque features—the “knobbly” knees, the “dog toenails,” the “monster-ankles,” and even his mimicking of Treppie throughout the novel—we feel a sudden sympathy for a person whose body has been mangled.¹⁰ However, if we can see Lambert as a symbol of the deformity inherent in the *Voortrekker* myth and in white supremacy itself, we may find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of attempting to sympathize with a monstrosity that we must condemn.

Does the sympathy continue, though, when Lambert’s anger unleashes to breaking Treppie’s fingers, stabbing Mol, and killing Pop? Perhaps it does, for in true gothic fashion, we sympathize with the Frankenstein/Lambert as he wreaks destruction

on those who have created him. Like Mol, who has been trapped by “her place” of sexual and emotional servitude within the Benade family, Lambert, too, has been trapped, by the incestuous relationship that produced him, by the family relationships he never understood until the very end, by the very fact that, like Frankenstein, he will never be accepted as anything but the monster in the Benade story. Yet perhaps a more significant question to consider is in what ways we are to interpret Lambert. If he is monstrous, if he paradoxically resembles something “assembled from many different pieces” (296) despite the incestuous taint that infects his blood—if, indeed, he is a being built upon the rubble of the past, the “many different pieces” that construct his body—how are we to read him in relation to the Benade’s ability to overcome the trap of their destructive apartheid ideology? Is there no hope for escape if the past must haunt the present until it creates the ultimately grotesque Lambert? Is there, then, no hope of working past the monstrous racial hatred of apartheid in a postcolonial society?

These questions become all the more alarming when van Niekerk has painstakingly not only crafted a monster, but a monster that seems to equate with the very nation of white South Africa. This “spectre of apartheid” that we see in *Triomf* is “Gothic in character, gesturing to the barbarity of a bygone time” that “infiltrates the ideological, the political, the social” present (Shear sec. 1). Lambert creates a “never ending painting” (179), one of South Africa, spray painted upon his bedroom walls. The Cape Mountains, Drakensberg, the Vaal River, and the Orange River serve as backdrops for large arrows. The “big thick arrows in black show how the kaffirs swooped down on the country from above” while the “big yellow arrows [were] for the Voortrekkers, who occupied the country outwards from the Cape” (179-80).¹¹ Lambert does not stop there, but, rather, he

paints their home on 127 Martha Street “[o]n top of everything. And across the whole of South Africa” (180). Significantly, a mythological South Africa, one based on the *Voortrekker* ideology, glimmers through the canvas of his home like a relic of the past, a palimpsest of a past that intertwines mercilessly with the present and, one assumes, the future. As van Niekerk writes, “things kept happening and he [Lambert] started painting new stuff over the old stuff” (181), just as his family and his country attempt to paint new stuff over the old stuff: Lambert, created from the ruins of the Benade family; Triomf, built atop the ruins of Sophiatown; new South Africa built on the hatred of the old. In South Africa, prejudice has not disappeared. It has simply submerged itself in the hearts of its people. Constructed on such channels of hatred, channels seeping from the buried past to the present, past and present collapse.

In such a gothic landscape, it is not surprising that Pop “feels like he’s slowly melting back in to the place he came from, a place he doesn’t know any more” (98). Out of this futureless wasteland, we can find nothing but “sinkholes” and hollow humans (214), cities that are “hollow on the inside” and riddled with “dead mines with empty passageways and old tunnels” (214), all sinking. It is a land of ash, indeed, a land where ash—typically associated with destruction and death—takes on positive connotations because it “won’t sink” (214) into the mire. In “this furnace pit” (420) of emptiness, where the past traps the present, where does South Africa go to escape itself? While progress seems to have been made, van Niekerk seems to say that this progress is merely illusory, that “[f]or the ‘old bricks’ of Triomf—drained and depleted families like the Benades—there is nothing to be done” (Shear sec. 3). With the family destroyed, with little possibilities for a future, we are left wondering if the horror of the past will, indeed,

overcome the present. In the postcolonial gothic of *Triomf*, we are left with nothing but shattered lives, relics of hatred and monstrosity that continue to seethe even as South Africa moves towards what should be a better future.

The Shackles of Knowledge: Fragmentation of History

In a novel masterfully crafted around the perspectives of three contradictory narratives, Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005), rather than exploring the inextricability of past and present, focuses more on the indeterminacy of history itself. History, to Tash Aw—who was born in Taipei and raised in Malaysia—exists not as a knowable, concrete concept, but as a narrative we can never completely approach, for it is mediated by our own understandings and cultural underpinnings. We particularly see this in *Harmony*, a novel beginning in World War II Malaya and offering us powerful glimpses into a nightmare past: the lingering traces of British colonization, particularly in colonial education and language, and the brutal beginnings of Japanese occupation. Varied and quite contradictory narratives revise the history of official conquest, hiding past events behind a shroud of indecipherability that envelops not only official histories, but familial histories as well. In this way, the past, whether national or familial, is a mystery, one fragmented by multiple narratives, and our roots become unknown, unknowable, against this fragmented backdrop. Family, culture, heritage, even nation all become shadow-concepts, ones that disintegrate even as we think we have approached their realities. With the insidious silencing and dehumanization that we see in postcolonial writings, we also find that historical foundations have been rocked by the colonial process. Postcolonial discourse forces us to recognize that the past recedes

behind a narrative strand that hopes to reconnect to the past, even as it knows it cannot.

Harmony constructs a narrative of open endings, of conflicting interpretations, where we never truly know what happened, for the accounts do not entirely reconcile; even more, we hear from those who are typically silent, the subaltern, the marginalized. History, as one ‘harmonious’ master narrative, is a lie, a dangerous trap:

[W]e need to be wary of replicating the practice of the . . . [colonial] regime, which marginalized or altogether excluded the poor and oppressed from the dominant historical narratives. Because the state manipulated public memory and subverted the peoples’ past for political ends, the marginalized had to construct their identities in counter-memories, which existed outside the authority of “official” history. (Baines 258)

Although Baines specifically refers to South Africa, not Malay, the theory is the same: master narratives, those sponsored by the State to support their own ideologies, crush the memories of the marginalized. History, if it is to be considered at all, must be considered as a representation of multiple voices. By examining multiple narratives, Aw undercuts the very determinacy of history that has ideologically supported imperial discourse.¹²

Aw’s first section of the novel comes through the perspective of the knowledge-seeking son, Jasper, who is attempting to understand a family he does not know despite his having lived with his father for years. Jasper begins with a description of the book’s namesake, the Harmony Silk Factory, stating that it “is the name of the shop house my father bought in 1942 as a front for his illegal businesses” (3). More importantly, perhaps, Jasper also describes it in relation to his father:

For nearly forty years the Harmony Silk Factory was the most notorious establishment in the country, but now it stands empty and silent and dusty. Death erases all traces, all memories of lives that once existed, completely and forever. This is what Father sometimes told me. I think it was the only true thing he ever said. (4)

An apparently innocuous statement, Jasper's description of the factory establishes an almost immediate gothic connection, one of emptiness, silence from the past. We see the sweeping ramparts of Udolpho in this image, the fallen castle of Otranto, the broken walls of Usher, all silent, all indecipherable to the present, for "death erases all traces . . . completely and forever." These traces, however, haunt us in the present, for they are the foundations upon which we have built our own lives, despite their "empty and silent and dusty" forms. Jasper, in his quest to understand his parents, will find that his quest is impossible, for he can no longer speak to that silenced past, that time when his parents lived as World War II struck Malaya—or even earlier, when his father was reportedly born in 1920. As with Faust, as with Melmoth, knowledge remains buried, locked away forever in the minds of those who once lived. To Aw, knowledge and history are both illusory, phantom concepts, particularly in the graveyard of postcolonial society, where the past can never be found.

In his attempt to find his familial roots, Jasper begins with his father, the "Infamous Chinaman . . . Johnny" (7). His attempt is wrought almost immediately with failures. He cannot even determine his father's birth, for "[s]ome say Johnny was born in 1920, the year of the riots in Taiping" (8), but this is notoriously lacking in a definitive year, much less date and time. While some say he was born in 1920, we can imagine that

others do not. Jasper also cannot trace his grandparents, for “[w]e do not know who” they were, only that they were “likely” to be from Southern China and “transported to Malaya by the British . . . to work the mines in the Valley” (8). Ambiguity, thus, springs from every word, an ambiguity continued in Aw’s description of the Southern Chinese (popularly “coolies”) as “[f]leeing floods, famine, and crushing poverty” and viewed by Northern Chinese as “semi-civilised peasants” (8-9). Yet Jasmine does not look like Southern Chinese, even undercutting this possibility. When added to the fact that Jasmine truly did not know why his father changed his name from Lim Seng Chin—he only based his understanding of Johnny’s choice on a collection of pictures and magazine cut-outs he found after his father’s death—it becomes increasingly clear that nothing is certain in Aw’s novel, that any fact we are told may likely be overturned by another narrator.

Interwoven with the warp of Jasper’s history is a profound sense of racism and social elitism. Jasper’s father probably matured in a rural area as a “small-village peasant” (12) where schools were “reserved for the children of royalty and rich people like civil servants” (15)—and even more notoriously, these schools were constructed by British colonials. Jasper describes them as “flat lawns and playing fields [that] stretch before the white colonnaded verandahs like bright green oceans in the middle of the grey olive of the jungle” (15). Johnny does not know these children, only those of families like his own. “Johnny,” Jasper informs us, “would never even speak to rich Chinese—the kind of people who live in big houses with their own servants and tablecloths and electricity” (16). In the view of his conquerors, he, like Velutha in Roy’s *Small Things*, advanced to positions he should never hold because “[h]e is a freak of nature” (16). Both Velutha and Johnny are mechanically inclined; because of this, they take positions they

culturally do not fit—and their superiors punish them for their behavior even if they were themselves the ones to promote them. The Darby Tin Mine does this for Johnny, asking him to fix its “monstrous, angry machine” (32), the Dredger. Despite his abilities, the British taskmasters still call him “[w]retched” (33), “[t]hat damned Chinaman” (35), and “this monkey” (36), obviously all dehumanizing; one suspects that they dehumanize him not only because he is the colonized Other, but also because he is capable of doing what they cannot, fixing a difficult machine. Even more monstrously, the “dirty Chinaman” whose only “place is *in* the mines” (38) strikes at an antagonizing British manager: he injures the man, who later dies of gangrene.

To Jasper, this “incident . . . set him on the path to becoming the monster he ultimately turned into” (40), the beginning of one of the greatest distinctions in the book. Jasper seems to create an almost demonic picture of his father. Chinaman Johnny is one of those individuals “born with a streak of malice” (64), according to Jasper, “born with an illness, something that had eaten to the core of him” (65). He bases this conclusion upon several interpretations of what he has heard. Tiger Tan, Johnny’s employer after the Darby Tin Mine debacle, welcomes him into his business and promotes him rapidly, even including him in the Communist meetings he holds; however, Jasper describes his death with strong suggestions that his father had masterminded it, for Tiger—“shot twice, in the face and in the heart” (70)—has been killed at close range, probably by someone he knew and trusted. Jasper obviously insinuates that his like-a-son Johnny had killed him. Johnny then heads the Tiger Brand Trading Company, therefore benefitting from his supposed murder of Tiger. After this, Johnny sets his sights on marriage, and Jasper is clear in his message that the marriage was to Johnny’s advantage. He marries Snow Soong, “the

most beautiful woman in the Valley . . . capable of outshining anyone in Singapore” (75), a wealthy descendant of Imperial Chinese Court scholars. Of his grandparents, T.K. and Patti Soong, Jasper knows nothing, for they “exist as ghosts, shapeless, shadowy imprints” (79)—yet Jasper is quick to speculate on their thoughts and their motives even though they are but “ghosts” to him. According to Jasper, these ghosts introduce Johnny to their daughter, and the two youths cringe; however, Jasper tells us that despite his supposed dislike of his bride-to-be, Johnny accepts the union because it has “gained . . . entry into a world he had always dreamed of” (85), the world of the rich. Again basing his tale upon what he has heard, Jasper informs us that Johnny marries Snow, moves into the Soong home, and quickly seems to take over its parties, to be the rich benefactor.

Perhaps expecting more clever schemes for power, readers are not at all surprised when Jasper implicates his father in T.K.’s death. According to Jasper, not much before Japan’s conquest of Malay in 1941, Johnny invites T.K. to the textile shop to give young Johnny his advice. At this time, after subtly asking who will inherit T.K.’s tin mines on his death, a fire mysteriously starts, and Johnny tells T.K. to stay in the money room; even more, though, Johnny locks the door “from the outside” (114), trapping his father-in-law. In Jasper’s account, Johnny rushes into the fire to save his father-in-law, but the damage has already been done. T.K. would “spend the remainder of his days frail and infirm and in gratitude to Johnny” (117). Implicit here, of course, is that Johnny actually created the fire in the first place, then locked T.K. in a burning building to seize his holdings. We, like Jasper himself, can only take Jasper’s word as we try to uncover the truth behind Johnny’s character and deeds. Did he truly kill Tiger? Did he plot to kill his

father-in-law? We never know, for knowledge remains buried; we cannot build “any unified body of knowledge” in this fragmented world (Barta, “Knowledge” 105).

Not much longer after the fire incident, according to Jasper, Johnny “committed his most terrible deed . . . on 1 September 1942, the day my mother died and I was born” (119).¹³ In January of that year Japanese Mamoru Kunichika arrives “to put things in order” in the Valley (119), and Jasper tells readers that he finds the perfect person to do so in Johnny. Advising villagers—who view him as almost god-like—that “[t]hey had to accept that the British were gone and the Japanese were their new masters” (121), Johnny implores his fellow citizens to pay taxes to the Japanese. Johnny and a banker give the money to Kunichika monthly, and the villagers pay the taxes because “Johnny said they had to” (123), asking the people to “trust” and “believe” him (123). The villagers sincerely believe he is mounting an oppositional force against Kunichika and the Japanese. This belief continues as Johnny calls a meeting of the Communists in the area, one supposedly to prepare to fight. All of the leaders come to the meeting, held in a cave, save one: Johnny. According to Jasper, Japanese soldiers slaughter them all, apparently using Johnny’s information. “Only I . . . know the truth” (128), Jasper claims, stating that his father, the “traitor” (129), becomes enormously wealthy in a time when millions of dollars flowed into Japanese coffers; he is even able to build the expensive Silk Harmony Factory on the ruins of his previous textile shop. Yet we wonder, how does Jasper know this when he was not there? How could he know that the very man people love, the very man hundreds have come to mourn at his death, was a traitor when his own evidence is filled with narrative gaps and speculations? How, indeed, can Jasper know anything when the past is buried with the body of his father?

These questions aggressively remain in readers' minds as the mother's narrative reveals yet another side to the tale Jasper has told—and after that Peter's narrative reconfigures our impressions of Snow's narratives. Of the three, which is closest to the truth? According to Snow, her first meeting with Johnny was accidental, with Johnny pedaling his bicycle in a way that was almost like “a young animal flexing its limbs” (143). Rather than reacting positively to him, as Jasper insists T.K. and Patti did, Snow fears that they will treat Johnny as a “leper” (146). The comfortable, high-rolling image of Johnny living with the Soongs that we see in Jasper's account becomes quite uncomfortable, “like a mouse caught in a box” (148). Indeed, instead of a plotting, scheming villain, Johnny seems more passive, more of a man trapped in a role he does not understand. Snow marries him, thinking that they can overcome “[t]he boundaries” between their classes and backgrounds, but she eventually realizes they are “insurmountable” (150). She learns to despise her choice even if he seems never to understand her unhappiness, for to her he seems “thrilled . . . to be married to me” (155). From Snow, thus, we do not see Johnny as manipulative, but, instead, as duped, ignorant, perhaps naïve. Unfortunately, as Johnny remains silent/silenced throughout, we are left with nothing but speculation (Khaleeli 22), for the marginalized remains thoroughly in the margins despite his centrality to the story itself.

Other differences quickly emerge, too. Kunichika seems more a professor than a colonial administrator, speaking “old-fashioned courtly Malay” (138) and possessing a handsome figure that “even looked slightly European” (140). Yet Snow, who is attracted to him, describes an intriguing quality to Kunichika's face, an “elusive[ness]” that suggests “the dark, delicate features of the foxes that emerge from the jungle to prey on

our chickens” (140). Peter, who appears only as the “old Englishman in the wheelchair” at his father’s funeral (133) in Jasper’s tale, enters the story as Johnny’s British friend and close confidante who Kunichika describes by saying, ““I think they mean a lot to each other”” (223). Peter, according to Snow, encourages Johnny to rebuild his textile business; Johnny excitedly speaks of leaving Snow’s parents, touching her hand softly in “the only way he has ever touched” Snow (161). This, of course, leads readers to wonder at the sexual relationship between Snow and Johnny; if he only touches her “lightly” on the hand, is he truly Jasper’s father? Since Johnny repeatedly shuns Snow’s touch and disappears with Peter, readers may wonder if there is an illicit relationship between the two that even Snow does not realize. The possibilities seem especially ripe when we remember that Jasper has more of a Northern appearance than his father—if he even looks Chinese at all (9). Thus, Jasper’s description of himself tantalizingly hints at a mystery behind Jasper’s birth that even Jasper, the historian of his family, does not know.

At the end of Snow’s section, we find Kunichika’s fox self emerges to prey upon Snow when he admits that he has ““seen evil inflicted on men . . . [and women] too, things that would make you wish the whole world could be destroyed” (259). Immediately after stating this, Kunichika presses against her and forces his mouth to hers. She flees, running into Peter as she does so. As we read Snow’s final words, we may wonder if the rape was attempted only, for she is bruised and scratched, her body perhaps invaded by one of the very men who invaded Malay. Perhaps, indeed, Kunichika *is* Jasper’s father, making him, paradoxically, the malicious father Jasper believed Johnny to be. Maybe Peter is his father, as he insinuates at the end of the novel (Barta, “Knowledge” 106). Unfortunately, we will never know.¹⁴

The British voice, Peter, offers yet another picture of events, one coming from a paradoxically “marginalized” Englishman “in an Asian setting” (Barta, “Post-Colonial Novel” 120). Peter increasingly portrays Kunichika as the villain while Peter himself betrays his own friend, his “only friend in the world” (328), Johnny. In Peter’s words, Johnny is inscribed with the typical Oriental qualities of innocence: his smile is “that of a child—radiant, innocent, happy” (273), and he is a “poor innocent child embroiled in a brutal war” (301), one Peter must teach in a colonizing mission. However, this “poor innocent child” keeps things hidden from his wife and is an active participant of the Communist party, fighting against the Japanese invasion; in Snow’s account, we never expect that Johnny has enough cleverness to hide anything from his wife. Additionally, though Snow ridicules Johnny’s accent, Johnny seems to excel in understanding English and its literature, “as if [the knowledge was] quenching an ancient thirst” (288). While Snow does not seem to love Peter, Peter definitely tries to seduce her in one of his first betrayals of Johnny. Yet Peter spends more of his memoirs writing of Snow’s attraction to Kunichika than his own anticipated liaison with her; they are the “perfect lascivious pair” (343) whose “sleeves [were] touching and fluttering in the wind” (342). Peter furthers this description, stating that Kunichika has tossed his arm around Snow and that “there existed an ugly complicity between them” (345). Near the gothic ruins on Seven Maidens, Johnny tells Peter that he fears Kunichika will force him into collaborating, and he asks for his help. Peter promises his help—“I’m serious, Johnny. I shall take you with me, wherever I go,” he claims (374)—but not much longer he offers information to Kunichika that only he would know, stating, “I know things about him” (391). In this way, Peter obscures truth, for his words rarely match his actions.

Accepting Peter's word for truth is a difficult process, just as it is with Jasper and Snow. Perhaps this is clearest when he describes Snow's rape in blazingly satiric terms:

Why, why, why? She wonders. What have I done, what has come between us? O cruel and vengeful gods, why have you taken my love away from me? (The chorus is silent and only the strings remain in the orchestra, *dolcissimo*, as our hearts sink. Tears in the audience, for she does not know what we silent voyeurs do: that he hides something from her.) . . . And then he is upon her, forcing his hard lips on her face and neck, pinning her body to the beautiful cold stone as he manoeuvres himself onto her. (392)

In what should be a horrific passage—Snow's rape—we, instead, find a farcical representation, where Kunichika, the rapist, has become a "tortured hero" (392) and where she has become the betrayed victim. Perhaps Peter is "shroud[ing] his genuine emotions" here, as Peter Barta maintains ("Knowledge" 106), or perhaps he is distancing himself from the scene; however, Barta seems entirely correct when he states that "the vindictiveness of his tone betrays Peter's bitterness and anger towards Snow" (106), further questioning his reliability as a witness.¹⁵ The horror/not-horror continues as Peter writes, "He pushes her legs apart. . . . The hero is not the hero, but the villain" (392). This, indeed, could account for much of *Harmony*, for we never truly understand who *is* the villain, who *is* the hero, if these terms even apply. That Snow is raped by a Japanese colonizer in the ruins of the past may show that the same colonizing forces are destructively at work here, endlessly repeating the same cycle—no matter the race or the nation. The colonizing ideology remains the same, despite apparent differences in time

and geography. However, even more importantly, the past can never be reconstructed from the archives, for each word can lie, even if the chronicler is being absolutely honest.

In the end, readers of *Harmony* never know quite what happened. We do not even know if the son will read the mother's journal and recover her locked history. We do not know if Jasper will discover that his interpretations of his father may be incorrect, or that, truly, he will learn that no one can truly understand the past. Because of the conflicting nature of the histories—some inspired by gendered differences, some by class differences, some by national and ideological differences—Tash Aw shows us clearly that history is nonrecoverable. It is not an artifact, not a relic that can be captured and examined, analyzed by the disciplines of science and history (see also Barta, “Knowledge” 114). It is, instead, an organic, changing, interpretive process, one where there can never be a simple answer. In a world where history cannot be uncovered, we only forge our own manacles by believing that history is unchanging, knowable, and concretely relegated to the past.

Postcolonial gothic literature, overall, helps us to understand the devastating impact of loss in the postcolonial world. In *Small Things*, *Triomf*, and *Harmony*, family both shelters the characters and narrows the choices allowed or even available, creating a new manacle of oppression, one perhaps more destructive than the forces of imperialism that trampled the land. The authors undermine cultural heritage as salvation for the postcolonial world, for that heritage—preserved to the point of mimicry, to the point of unquestioned belief—can kill or mummify the present in the past. Indeed, if Roy, van Niekerk, and Aw are correct, attempting to recover history leads to a spiraling condition of uncertainty, where what was said and what was done continuously recede from the

characters' grasp, making it difficult for characters to participate in a modern world when they are themselves "dark and hollow" (Aw 388). At the end of *Harmony*, we find a "torn fragment of a photograph" (401); we might argue that history itself becomes that fragment, a portion or whole of events that can never be recaptured despite our fervent attempts to do so. In that fragment we glimpse things that could have been, potentialities that will never be, and that is the shackle portrayed in postcolonial gothic literature: that fragment of history is but a ghost, a glimmering, a shadow that we can never own.

Notes

¹ Indeed, Pramod Nayar writes, “Roy’s novel is essentially a novel about revenants: ghosts who begin by coming back, of foreigners who begin by returning, and of foreigners-as-Others and of Others-as foreigners” (“The Place” 23). Such an idea is reiterated by David Punter, who suggests that “the specters return and multiply” (“Arundhati Roy” 195). This is important in postcolonial gothic, where what has left—the Empire—insidiously returns, ghostly, in ways that haunt the present. Sophie Mol, for instance, can be seen as a revenant.

² L. Chris Fox argues that Velutha’s death, as it is a “State-sanctioned murder,” incorporates almost every level of Keralanian society, including the Communist Party, the police, and the family. Keralanian society is not Communist in general, yet it has produced an offshoot. Comrade Lenin Pillai, leader of the Ayemenem Communist Party, had for some time disapproved of an Untouchable—Velutha—joining the Party. When Velutha was taken before the police and beaten, he had not supported Velutha, thus contributing to his death. The Communist Party, the police, and the institute of family, Fox rightly claims, represent both the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) discussed in Althusser’s work, with the ISA in particular revolving around empire and familial relationships. Communism, even more, by ignoring “other forms of oppression, such as caste and gender” (Azzam 132), aligns itself with political systems that violate “the intimate sphere” (132) of the home.

³ *Triomf*, according to Richard Samin, is “jubilantly subversive in the sense that her characters happily and deliberately transgress all norms” (86), from religious norms

and political norms to sexual norms. It even transgresses “the norms of political correctness” (87) and, one might add, narrative politeness. Why? According to Samin, it “re-appropriates the past” then “savagely turn[s] the tenets of Afrikaner supremacy upside down” (87). Van Niekerk’s satire shows, with no doubt, the hollow nature of that supremacy.

⁴ Dogs serve as important characters in *Triomf*—and many South African novels—often acting as companions or mediators of violence (Woodward 99). In addition, they represent racial borders, for the dogs were residents of Sophiatown before its destruction; they are also frequently accorded more respect than black South Africans (Woodward 98-9).

⁵ *Demotic* should not be confused with *demonic*. Nicole Devarenne and Simon Lewis are both referring to a language that Lewis describes as “highly impure Afrikaans . . . that slips between languages and registers with dazzling effect” (74). One problem, according to Lewis, in translating van Niekerk’s work was that the demotic Afrikaans simply did not translate well for non-South African readers (76).

⁶ A specter continuously returning, the “remains of black lives that were destroyed and buried” as part of the Group Areas Act continuously “rise to the surface as rubble and debris” that cannot be ignored (Shear sec. 1), a reminder of what has been destroyed.

⁷ In fact, Nicole Devarenne states that Treppie “is the mouthpiece for much of the novel’s critique of nationalist pure-race and pure-language ideals”—though she is quick to mention that “he is by no means a heroic figure” (112). He seemingly rebels against

patriarchal control, but he wears a mask to do so, a harsh language that is used to “impress” and to “conceal” (Brophy 99). Contrarily, he also refuses to question his right to live in Triomf (Shear sec. 2). Thus, Treppie emerges as a bundle of contradictions, like apartheid itself.

⁸ Treppie lies continuously, but his most deceptive scheme might be what Lambert calls the Great North Plan. In the event of an “emergency”—one caused by political upheaval—Lambert is to “dig a cellar under his den to store up petrol, ‘cause petrol couldn’t be stored above ground” (65). He is then to collect the silver bags in wine boxes to contain the petrol; he would need to “go scratching around rubbish dumps” (65) to find the wine boxes. They would then take the family’s aging station wagon and drive north, with a girl—or, as the story progresses, a prostitute—as Lambert’s companion. Of course, Treppie and the family do not plan on doing so, nor would they have been able to make such an escape when their car could not easily go more than a few miles. Treppie is also the mastermind behind lying about Lambert’s birth, a deception that ultimately ends in the family’s disintegration.

⁹ Mol’s “place” is dictated by the enormously patriarchal Afrikaner culture, founded upon Calvinism; Afrikaner culture insisted upon dominating females to establish male authority (Brophy 100). In this culture Mol holds a “limited role” set against Pop’s “providential and patriarchal world view” (Brophy 101). It results in her sexual and physical abuse as well as her identification with her dog Gerty. The most horrific aspect of her sexual and physical abuse is that it originates from within her own family: Treppie, Pop, and Lambert all victimize Mol.

¹⁰ Mimicking in H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) revolves around the Law, Moreau's Law that no animal, for instance, is to take human blood or to walk on all fours. We can see an intriguing connection here with Lambert's mimicry, which has essentially been of Treppie's political statements and schemes. Thus, while Treppie has never dared to give Lambert a Law, he has presented him with statements of how cultures should behave and how Lambert himself should behave given the current political climate; of more interest, perhaps, these are deceptive, for Treppie lied to him in most instances. Whether Moreau also deceived his Beast Men is also of interest, for his Law seemed to imply that beasts would become autonomous creatures by following his legal code. Another interesting connection between Moreau and Treppie is that the Law, when broken, was enforced with physical punishments, often with a whip. Lambert has inexplicable "burns" (50) on his body, and given what we know of his three co-inhabitants, it seems most likely that Treppie would be the origin of these burns. Finally, a whip is itself seen in *Triomf*, one almost inconspicuously described in an old picture: "The little boy's holding a little toy whip" (509). The "little boy" most likely refers to Treppie, the youngest of the three Benade siblings, and it seems critical that even so early in his life, Treppie holds a whip.

¹¹ Jack Shear explores the specter of the *Voortrekkers* as a nationalist mythology that focuses on the "journey of the Boer farmers from the British-controlled Cape to black occupied lands along the Orange River" in the Great Trek; even more, apartheid draws on the "mythologised . . . Voortrekkers as a spiritually chosen people" (sec. 2) to ideologically support separation of races, a move we have seen in other cultures, where

religion is used to justify empire and racial inferiority is used to explain conquest. While these ideologies are rigorously deconstructed in postcolonial literature and theory, van Niekerk shows a family that monstrosly wants to believe in the comforting lies of white supremacy. It is this myth—which is in reality the brutal racialism of apartheid—the Benade family embraces, with Pop even participating in the Great Trek as a child (see also Samin 86). Additionally, the Benades represent the myth of the Great Trek (Brophy 98). They have become a parody of the *Voortrekker* family, for they have inbred to the point of monstrosity (Shear sec. 2; Samin 86). Even more hideously, their family is a “*fulfillment* of Afrikaner destiny” (Brophy 104), with Lambert as “the ultimate *fulfillment* of Afrikaner purity” (104). However, while they may be emblems of Afrikaner nationalism, they are also shunned by white South Afrikaners (Gräbe 107), who themselves do not believe their own mythology, and white members of the political left, who denied the racial discourse segregation was founded upon.

¹² Tash Aw, in an interview with Peter Barta, stated that he hoped to provide a form of “unity” at the end of the novel, but decided that the reader must, instead, “live with pockets of emptiness” (“Post-Colonial Novel” 118). One might suggest that this is the postcolonial experience beautifully summarized.

¹³ Importantly, Jasper’s father was born amidst riots in Taiping while Jasper himself was born in the middle of conquest. Because so much is uncertain in the characters’ lives—even their births—we may say that their private uncertainty of history hints at the public uncertainty of history; no events, neither the riots nor the conquest, can be absolutely recovered or understood, even by those who lived and breathed at that time.

¹⁴ With his essay “In Search of Knowledge,” Peter Barta reminds us that Peter was the very person to explain the origins of the word *jasper*, which Johnny later uses to name Snow’s son, as connected with New Jerusalem (110). This echoes the appearance of “Jasper. Clear as crystal, the foundation of a new Jerusalem” (413-4) that we see at the end of the novel, as Jasper recedes from Peter’s sight. Peter continues, “Only I was marooned outside the city walls” (404). Given his fascination with Jasper and the direct connection between Jasper’s name and his own outcast status, one could make a good argument for Peter as his father. However, Jasper will never even know, most likely, that his father is not Johnny.

¹⁵ Even more, Barta states that Peter cannot be trusted because his assumptions are “ill-founded,” about everything from Johnny’s character to Snow’s interest in him (“Knowledge” 112). By undercutting the validity of Peter, Aw is, indeed, “resist[ing] the intentions of British colonial discourse” (112) by representing that discourse in the character of a coward, liar, and seducer.

CHAPTER SIX

GHOSTS HAUNTING THE PRESENT IN POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC FICTION:

REPETITIONS OF SELF, ANNIHILATIONS OF SELF

At this point of our sojourn into the postcolonial gothic, we confront a rather unsettling question: what, exactly, is the postcolonial? Or, even more precisely, what texts can be seen as postcolonial? On first impression, these may seem simple questions, but they are not when we consider a quintessential ghostly novel, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Our first reaction might be that there is no rationale for considering African-American work postcolonial, for we cannot easily draw parallels between black enslavement and, for example, the conquest of India or Malaya. Our problem in classifying *Beloved* as postcolonial may, indeed, partially arise from an oversimplification of colonization. For example, in 1965 D. E. S. Maxwell proposed two systems of colonial oppression: the settler colony and the invaded colony. He proposed that the settler colony could be seen in areas like the United States and Canada, where settlers "dispossessed and overwhelmed" the indigenous inhabitants from their own lands and established their own civilizations (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 24). Invaded colonies, on the other hand, could be found in such areas as India; the indigenous were "colonized on their own territories," marginalizing cultural values that had previously existed when colonizers forced their own values upon their subjects (24). As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin rightfully state in their work *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), this distinction, while perhaps interesting, oversimplifies the exceedingly complex issue of

colonization and fails to account for areas, including South Africa and the West Indies, that do not conveniently fit the model. By extension, many postcolonial readings that hesitate to incorporate African-American literature may be falling into the same trap as Maxwell. American slaves were ripped from their homes and forced across the Middle Passage, their names stricken, their families torn asunder. Is this not one of the most brutal forms of colonization we can imagine? Even though African-American slavery in the United States does not easily fit into many definitions of colonization, particularly due to the uprooting of African-American slaves, it is and it must be read as a particularly inhumane form of colonization: one that unmoors the physical body by moving it from a beloved home to a land of suffering and, perhaps worse, one that unmoors the social roots once joining communities together.

Postcolonial theory has as one of its primary missions a significant desire: to interrogate and resist Eurocentric thinking, indeed, to challenge the ideology of the margins and the metropolis. Gayatri Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) challenges the European tendency to transform power relationships into binaries: male/female, slave/slave-owner, white/black, normative/deviant (ch. 1). These same binaries are attacked in Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993). To Gilroy, the transnationalism exemplified in the Middle Passage—the intersection of confusing, often contradictory backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities that he labels the *black Atlantic*—can offer the postcolonial world new identities, ones based off hybridity and diaspora, ones that cross borders and people. The black Atlantic is a “chaotic,” decentered multiplicity of persons, a “fractal” in “ceaseless motion” (122) where the discourse of empire can be thwarted. Thus, rather than positing that the postcolonial world must be a specific

location, a specific geography where one country invaded another, Gilroy allows us to see the postcolonial as a uniquely Bhabhian dissemination of peoples across multiple times and locations in a world where the national narrative is a construct.

Given such an extended view of colonization and the postcolonial, we can find few better landscapes for understanding the vestiges of colonization than in the United States and in African-American slavery. As Gilroy powerfully suggests, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a "moral critique that anchors black antipathy to the forms of rationality and civilized conduct which made racial slavery and its brutality legitimate" (65). In other words, *Beloved* analyzes the very same racialization that underpins imperial discourse in other parts of the world and against which postcolonial theory fights. *Beloved*, to Gilroy, "should not be exclusively assimilated to the project of building an ethnically particular or nationalist cultural canon," for the themes within surpass such "national boundaries" (218). Thus, *Beloved*, with its diasporic collection of narratives, with its focus on oppression and cultural resistance, is very postcolonial, especially in a world where the postcolonial has been expanded beyond the frontiers of national borders.

In the postcolonial gothic, we often encounter collapsed boundaries between selves, empty shells of people who have had their underpinnings blasted until characters become what they most feared: people searching for identities because they have been ripped from their cultural underpinnings. Others find they cannot speak their stories, their histories, for the past has traumatized them to the point that they have become ghosts, specters of a past that should be gone but is not. As a voice of resistance, postcolonial gothic voices the fears of annihilative self-disavowal; it gives the fractured voice of the colonized a possible means of expression. This can be no truer than in Jamaica Kincaid's

Antiguan *Annie John* (1985), Tayeb Salih's Sudanese *Season of Migration to the North* (1966/1969),¹ and Toni Morrison's American *Beloved*. From across a wide span of countries, we find within these texts events of the past resurrected in the present, characters sliding into ciphers, and forgotten histories voiced once more. While this may provide a light of optimism, postcolonial gothic continuously reminds us that the past cannot always be buried and that self-recovery may not be as simple as we wish.

Nothing-ness, the Cipher, and the Postcolonial Doubled Identity

As one of the most startling novels of its day—blasted for its blasphemy as well as its immorality—Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) easily reminds readers of Marlene van Niekerk's violent, frequently horrific *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999). In *The Monk*'s first publication, contemporaries furiously declared that Lewis had joined "[l]ust, murder, incest, and every atrocity that can disgrace human nature . . . without apology" (McEvoy vi). Today, as with *Triomf*, postcolonial gothic retains much of Lewis' darker overtones, a powerful glimpse at the horror of human conduct. Amidst this horror roam doppelgängers crucial to understanding many gothic texts. As with Catherine's famous "I am Heathcliff!" (120) from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), characters collapse into each other, the signs that should differentiate each person sliding, slipping into one another in a startling nihilism of personal identity. Doppelgängers, thus, suggest that there really is nothing present behind the human skin: that the doppelgänger represents a mere cipher, a nothing-ness, that is dangerous, both to conceal and to reveal. In the postcolonial gothic, we often see indigenous characters collapse under the competing pressures of European values and their own cultural imperatives.

This blending or annihilation of identities and indigenous voices can be seen as part of gothic's quest—and perhaps its most blatant form—of collapsing boundaries. In postcolonial gothic, the collapsing of boundaries frequently hints at the cipher, the lack of origin and voice existing within the indigenous subject, immediately contradicting the Western ideology of the cohesive self. We have seen the annihilation of identity most through the lens of incest. In *Triomf*, Pop, Mol, Treppie, and Lambert Benade use the brutality of their sexual encounters to bind their family and to retain their blood purity against the invasive Other no longer held in check by a crumbling government. Arundhati Roy, in *The God of Small Things* (1997), presents a persuasively different view of incest, though one still haunted with the trauma of postcolonial ruins. Estha and Rahel merge together, each filling the craters that family coercion, prejudice, and cruelty have left in their lives. We feel little hope emerging from the twins, as we feel little hope emerging for the Benades. However, the collapse of boundaries does not necessarily bleed into incest or complete despair. Instead, it can lead to hope, to unexplored paths of self-discovery and hesitant redemptions—even as it suggests these possibilities are illusive.

Empty Shells: Annihilative Impulses and the Path to Self-Discovery

We have seen ruins and shackles in the postcolonial gothic novel, all traces of a colonization process that has left the postcolonial world in turmoil; we have seen gender and family as well as cultural identity entrap the mind, leaving an almost inescapable nest of closed doors against which the postcolonial subject must struggle to move forward. However, in this maze of trap doors, we may catch ourselves looking for glimpses of ghosts, specters haunting postcolonial society with an echo of the past that cannot be

escaped. Where is the ghost of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, battering at the threshold? Where is our doomed spectral father, forever lurking in the pages of Frederick Marryat's *The Phantom Ship* (1839)? Indeed, as we read postcolonial gothic novels, we may listen for a whisper of the supernatural, the ghostly world that we so frequently associate with European gothic. While the traces of the phantasm may not be as consistently blatant in postcolonial gothic novels as their predecessors, they are there, subtly ghosting through the texts; they are frequently doubles, ghosts created from the annihilative impulse of identity collapse. They exist when one character collapses into another, as in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and Tayeb Salih's *Season*.

In *Annie John* Antiguan author Jamaica Kincaid produces a wonderfully small text packed with some of the strongest postcolonial gothic themes: mothers and daughters, oral traditions, zombies. A novel situated in the heart of the Caribbean—which Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert intriguingly claims is the most gothic of postcolonial settings due to its “many Obeah men, ‘voodoo’ priests, zombies, and sorcerers” (233) as well as “the islands’ threatening realities, . . . brutality, bizarre sacrifices, [and] cannibalism” (234)—*Annie John* first appears to be a *Bildungsroman* about the title character Annie John, our protagonist.² As a child, Annie has a close relationship with her mother, one common in Antiguan society (Byrne 278). Annie's relationship with her mother borders on love, helping to create her sense of self and also burying that self (Natov 4). The father's character is submerged (Strongman 29), as are all male characters, to highlight the dominance of female relations.³ It is this relationship with her mother that Annie must navigate to reach self-identity, though it will be a relationship fraught with “struggle . . . the will to master or be mastered” (Ismond 339), hinting at the colonial hierarchies

lingering in Antiguan society. It can also be interpreted as a “Mother Country” struggle, H. Adlai Murdoch argues, where a character struggles against ties to her mother as well as the colonized Motherland in a battle focusing on “gender and culture” (141).

In a time of closeness, of mother-daughter bonding, Annie’s mother tells her the story of her life, pulling out a trunk of her past—filled with booties, photographs, report cards, among other items—to orally communicate her present. The trunk is a common gothic trope, and here it bears the stamp of secrets unearthed: Annie’s history, the pre-colonial history submerged in a postcolonial world. “Sometimes I knew the story first hand,” asserts Annie, “for I could remember the incident quite well; sometimes what she told me had happened when I was too young to know anything; and sometimes it happened before I was even born” (21). Annie learns her history not through the textbook, not through colonial education, but through the traditions of her people, her family.⁴ One of the most significant facets of this oral exercise is that it *is* oral rather than written; as Kathleen Renk has reminded us, the oral traditions of the West Indies were extensive, part of the very cultural fabric existing well before colonization (16-7).⁵ Annie learns who she is through her mother’s teachings and through her friendships, developing a strong sense of community that remains well outside the individualistic ideology of the West. Within this oral tradition, within this community building process, Annie glimpses a place for herself within the history of her people. Thus, Annie’s connection to her mother paradoxically allows her to build her own identity in relation to her mother’s identity, to bridge her own self with that of the community at large.

Yet, sadly and very abruptly, the mother no longer practices this habit as Annie reaches maturity with her first menstrual cycle. Annie is now “of age” to become a

woman, and her mother seemingly becomes a new person: she is not the same woman who teaches Annie of her heritage, but she becomes the ideological Western Woman, the woman who sees herself as separate from her family, the woman who encourages disciplined behavior. We see this profound shift best represented, strangely enough, in her mother's hand. In the midst of her rebellion, Annie disturbingly notices the skin of her mother's hand, as if comparing it to her own: "But her hand! It was white and bony, as if it had long been dead and had been left out in the elements" (30). We can see the ghost of colonization, the (colonial) white hand, in the image. Of course, the image also haunts one with hints of death—white, bony, dead—and seems suggestively connected to Catherine's "little, ice-cold hand" (E. Brontë 32) in *Wuthering Heights*. Annie stares at that hand as if she "would never see anything else" (31) again, as if something loved has transformed into the grotesque, into the dead, a clear indication that her past—filled with love and community sharing—has passed, overcome by a scheme of modernization. First sacrificed to this modernization is the similarity between mother and daughter, for Annie's mother declares, "'You just cannot go around the rest of your life looking like a little me'" (26)—or perhaps even worse, "'Of course, in your own house you might choose another way'" (29), terrifying Annie with the knowledge that one day, she will no longer live with her mother. The connection has disappeared. No longer does Annie have the ability to roam freely, but, like Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*, she must now control her personality; she must adopt Western values. She must become a "young lady" (26). Even more startlingly, Annie is no longer permitted to access the trunk, the vessel of community knowledge and personal history that has founded her life. She is sent to "someone who knew all about manners" (27), followed rapidly by failed piano

lessons, her mother's disapproval, a new school, and "a new set of airs" (29). Her mother, then, symbolizes rebellion against Western ideology through her Obeah ceremonies at the same time as she symbolizes capitulation to Western ideology in a move that represents the postcolonial ambivalence of resistance and collusion (Sicherman 181).

Annie rebels against this sudden departure of the mother she loved, enacting a state of colonial resistance. She begins to talk back to her, arguing until her mother walks away from her; she drifts from her father, befriends people her mother dislikes, keeps secrets, and begins to indulge in "forbidden things" (49). We can see the talking back as colonial resistance to oppression, a verbalization of anger and rage. Annie becomes an "expert [at] stealing" (54) and especially good at lying, a device used to protect colonial subjects from oppression (Sicherman 187). Knowing what her mother's reaction will be, Annie befriends Red Girl, named such because "in my mind's eye I could see her surrounded by flames, the house she lived in on fire, and she could not escape" (57). In Red Girl we find a dirty, tattered girl who seems the perfect symbol of rebellion to Annie (Sicherman 183)⁶; we can read her name, her description as surrounded by flames in a burning home, as Annie's understanding that flames surround her, too, for she cannot escape the trappings of etiquette her mother is now forcing upon her. Under her mother's "watchful gaze" (62), Annie feels she is a "prisoner" (62) of her "prescribed relationships" (Renk 51), and at this point, she is as far as she can be from the small child who followed her mother around consistently. She, like many gothic heroines, has been trapped. Her vaunted "betrayals" (59) against her mother can, thus, be seen as cries for escape from a confinement that is antithetical to her previous freedoms in a world composed of strong familial relationships. Even her theft of her parents, a theft she

performs to purchase beautiful clothing for Red Girl, can be seen as much more than rebellion against the family. The very fact that she steals from a “safe” (64)—linked with the gothic trunk of story-telling—directly connects her actions to the trunk from which she once learned of her family’s traditions, a desperate act coming not from an internalized rotten core but from the lack of cultural and community moorings.

At this point, Annie begins to lose more than her relationship with her mother: she begins to lose her history, her self. Slave and master collide, as do past and present. Annie tells us that “it was hard for us [Antiguans] to tell on which side we really now belonged—with the masters or the slaves—for it was all history, it was all in the past” (76). Though Annie clearly states that “everybody behaved differently now” (76), readers may not be entirely convinced. Annie matured in a community-oriented family, where history was told orally, where history, indeed, was pulled from a trunk, a collection of memories to be discussed again and again. Yet this history has been replaced by something entirely different, a formalized history told in the text (Tapping 55), in the printed word: through the works of *Roman Britain* and *A History of the West Indies* (73). Violently overturning the histories of her people, these “imperialist works” (Byrne 286; see also Paravisini-Gebert 251) offer a definitive history incapable of erasure, but also incapable of transformation or reinterpretation. Annie fights this history, rejoicing in the picture of ““Columbus in Chains”” (78) found within her history book and gaining her “alternative” history “outside the classroom” (Tapping 56; see also Herndon 164-5). She even brings in her mother’s letters, juxtaposing that personal history against the more fortified history of formal education; however, these actions are not without consequences, for her attempts to personalize the stories of history brings down the

“bellowing dragon” of her teacher upon her (78). In alarm, readers begin to wonder how much longer Annie, immersed in a school where she is being taught proper etiquette and proper history, can fight the modernized curriculum “bearing down on” her (78). She may flagrantly laugh amidst the graveyard of the past, “sit[ting] on the tombstones of people who had been buried . . . before slavery was abolished” (80), but we wonder if the specters of slavery are dead when we find traces of the West poisoning Antiguan society.

Unfortunately, we find that our fears are justified, for Annie cannot fight the West forever. She cannot fight the competing forces of Western ideology and Antiguan cultural history, creating “two faces: one for my father and the rest of the world, and one for us when we found ourselves alone” (87). The doubled identities, *doppelgängers* slowly imploding, eventually collapse. Annie tells us, “I saw myself . . . but I didn’t know that it was I” (94). More chillingly, we learn that Annie now sees herself as something Other, “for I had got so strange” (94). This uncanny or “strange” doubling—the image to the world, the image to the self—has produced nothing but emptiness. Annie’s sense of strangeness continues as her mother increasingly distances herself: “it was as if I were not only a stranger but a stranger that she not wish to know” (101). In the uncanny or strange world where the familiar becomes the unfamiliar, Annie confusedly searches for sustainable ground. She hates her mother, but she loves her. She wishes to live with her, but she also wants “to see her lying dead, all withered and in a coffin at my feet” (106). Through the mirror of her mother, Annie is beginning to see herself, and it is not the strong, loving connection we saw in her early years, where her mother helped draw Annie into a community she could not even understand at the time. The connectedness we see

between daughter and mother has deteriorated into a doppelgänger, where the “tired and old and broken” (102) mother mirrors Annie’s own future.

At last, Annie descends into madness, a “zombification” where her eyes stare blankly at nothing. In this Annie’s competing roles and identities have produced not only a nervous tension that borders on madness—similar to that seen in Bertha—but also a deadness of the soul. The scene strikes readers as one of the worst forms of entrapment, for it is within her own mind that Annie lingers, unable to move:

In my small room. I lay on my pitch-pine bed, which, since I was sick, was made up with my Sunday sheets. I lay on my back and stared at the ceiling. I could hear the rain as it came down on the galvanized roof. The sound the rain made as it landed on the roof pressed me down in my bed, bolted me down, and I couldn’t even so much as lift my head if my life depended on it. (109 sic)

Trapped within this “small room,” Annie feels the roof weighing upon her, the ceiling pressing her down—a mere sound holding her captive. The person who has rebelliously lied to her mother, stolen from her family, re-crafted history in a fight against formal education, and disrespectfully sat on tombstones exchanging marbles can no longer move, trapped between the past of her culture, of the Obeah practices her mother taught her, and the present of her culture’s ruins. Annie worsens, however, her skull feeling “as if it would split open and spew out huge red flames” (112)—a destruction of everything she has ever been—as she splinters apart. Her collapse is both memorable and telling:

I dreamed then that I was walking through warm air filled with soot, heading toward the sea. . . . But then little cracks began to appear in me

and the water started to leak out—first in just little seeps and trickles coming out of my seams, then with a loud roar as I burst open. (112)

The sea, which has allowed her culture to be invaded, is overwhelming her, splitting her apart; the pressure of attempting to unite the sea of the conquest and the beauty of her culture's past has at last destroyed her (Karafilis 73). While not reacting as a Hollywood zombie might, Annie is, nonetheless, a zombie at this point: an empty shell.

Crucially, we must understand that zombification holds different connotations than most readers may understand. In the Caribbean, zombification is horrifying *not* because Caribbeans fear zombies, but because they fear having their own souls ripped from their bodies (Renk 51; Paravisini-Gebert 239). This “ripping” or zombification can be seen clearly as a byproduct of colonization, which rips out the community connections and love established in Caribbean culture and replaces it with the ideology of the colonized (Hickman 196). As with Estha and Rahel's experience with the colonizing forces of imperialism, self-identity becomes a crater, with the true self emptied, displaced, by a foreign entity in the most uncanny moment of all: when the self becomes the Other and when the Other becomes the self. In *Annie John* we see Annie's family “erased” (120) from her mind; they have disappeared, “completely ruined” (120), part of an erasure that Annie cannot negotiate (Karafilis 73). Annie becomes a shell, a crater, one treated by Dr. Stephens, the British or civilized man, and Ma Jolie, the Antiguan ancient; pulled apart by both ideologies, Annie continues to slip away from any cohesion. Yet it is telling that it is Ma Chess, a prominent Obeah woman and Annie's grandmother, who settles into Annie's life and stays until Annie becomes herself once more, “whatever that had come to be by then” (125). Indeed, we may feel that Annie's act of washing her

family photographs and erasing them “from the waist down” (120), including school uniforms and Western clothing, is an act of anti-colonialism (Hickman 195). Annie’s apparent salvation at the hands of Ma Chess and her erasure of colonial clothing suggest that Annie will find her people’s ways a foundation for the rest of her life (Renk 52).

Readers may hear an evil cackle when they reach such a realization, for only pages later we discover that the struggle between Western and Antiguan cultures continues: Annie leaves Antigua. Perhaps even more, Annie sails to England, crossing the very seas that brought slavery to her people. Her identity seems reaffirmed when she states, ““My name is Annie John”” (130), but we must wonder. Is Annie truly healed? Has leaving for England helped her in some way that we cannot understand, allowing her an escape from her own culture? Does she invade English society by crossing the ocean, cracking England’s sealed identity by her penetration of its seams—or does she simply move into a future where being English, living in the land of the invaders, offers the best potentials for escape from the ruined past? Readers are not entirely certain, but we suspect, most certainly, that Annie has fragmented into bits of emptiness.

Tayeb Salih’s novella *Season* recasts a similar ambivalence, one that relies upon the well-established postcolonial technique of “writing back” against literature that has colonized a nation just as powerfully as the forces of imperialism (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin ch. 3). Some of the most well-known literary texts reinscribed by the postcolonial pen include William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1610-1611), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Postcolonial gothic stands as one of these endeavors to “write back” against European models that portrayed the colonized negatively, as monsters or crude creatures incapable of complex

thought. These texts subvert social environment to create something absolutely new, to transform both the literary genre itself and the culture in which the literature thrives. Furthermore, we may say that by using the postcolonial gothic as well as the technique of “writing back,” Salih increasingly undermines the assumption that any text can use the master’s tools without collapsing on itself; writing back against the texts of imperialism by using its own structures, its own genres, can, like human beings, like cultures, create a displacement where textual identities collapse. Such a text is not European, but neither is it Sudanese. Thus, Salih seems to imply that the very act of writing back, a method of counter-resistance, carries ideological problems, for it must always carry within it the vestiges, the ghosts of a supposedly inert colonial text.

Tayeb Salih’s *Season* can best be understood as such an explosion, as a subversive text that seeks to fragment not only Western identities but Arabic identities as well; in Salih’s response to Conrad’s *Heart*, fragmented identity uncovers the very stark realization that a colonized world can neither return to its past nor ignore its past-in-present. In Salih, we find that the nostalgic past is an illusion—but so, too, is the decolonized present. To understand Salih’s text, we must first begin at the beginning: Conrad’s *Heart*.⁷ Indeed, it is difficult to ignore the intertextual echoes resonating between Salih and Conrad.⁸ Both works are positioned around a central river (one identified with the snake); Conrad’s *Heart* begins in the Congo, following the “immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea” (22) while Salih’s work traces the Nile river, “that snake god” (32). Both novellas draw upon a frame fiction form, which features a story-within-a-story. The narrative in both works describes a journey that can be

interpreted literally and symbolically. Even the narrators bear strong, unmistakable resemblances:

Conrad's Marlow and Tayeb's Muheimid⁹ [Effendi] . . . are disposed to the art of narration. Marlow is meditative and has a strong desire to reflect on the past. Muheimid has always been fascinated by the stories his grandfather told him, and this affection for story-telling survives with him in adulthood; when he gets the chance to tell a story, he grabs it as if it is the only ambition he entertains. (Shaheen 157)

These are some of the more obvious similarities between the works, allowing readers to easily link the two texts in not only setting but also in writing style. The similarities may even invite readers to believe that Salih is following in Conrad's path, indeed imitating him as he explores a colonized nation through the eyes of the colonizer.

However, Salih's "imitation" of Conrad is not so much imitation as demonization, an explosion of Conrad's valorizations. *Season* transvaluates many of the traditional valences of Conrad's work—and, by extension, European civilization—through a complete explosion of binaries (Makdisi 805). For example, Salih thoroughly violates Conradian binaries as he develops one of the more interesting gothic threads throughout both novels, madness. *Heart* shows madness or the fall into irrationality several times. In typical Conradian fashion, madness is assigned to many of the "natives": "Mad terror had scattered them, men, women, and children" (24). While it is no surprise that Conrad links Africa with madness, it may be something of a surprise that he emphasizes the madness in Europeans. Conrad, for example, writes that "There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding" when speaking of imperialism (*Heart* 29). This understated "touch of

insanity” is glaringly juxtaposed with the very essence of madness itself. Skulls sit atop staves; Europeans dance and howl at midnight, ending “with unspeakable rites” (66); the “monstrous passions” and “brutal instincts” are awakened (83) in a whirlwind of lust and greed. Readers are left very little choice in understanding that the madness has come from this “heart of darkness” in colonized territory, where the colonizer has been tainted.

Salih slams into this relationship with no ambiguity. Madness and disease, in *Season*, originate in Europe, not Africa. The “heart of darkness” in Salih prowls the streets of London, and it has been imported—like so many other colonial ideas—straight into the heart of Sudan, its villages: the world that should be most unaffected by European and metropolitan madness from afar. Although the village fails to recognize the threat, madness arrives in the figure of one Mustafa Sa‘eed: a man civilized by Europe and migrating South once more. With him he brings the disease of European ideology that will shake the village’s very foundations well after his death. Most importantly, he brings with him his new wife, Hosna, who is, to Sudanese perspectives, monstrously tainted by his European modernity. She will not bow to tradition; she refuses, after Mustafa’s supposed death, to marry the symbol of tradition and patriarchy, Wad Rayyes. When she is forced to marry Rayyes, Hosna both castrates and murders the man. Rayyes screams like a “madman” (122) during his castration/murder. Things progressively fall apart when “mad” or “crazy” appears a total of nine times in two pages (132-33), when there is no longer “rhyme or reason” (129) to life. It seems that madness is spreading because Mustafa has come to the village, bringing (white) contagion.

Contagion haunts almost every page of Salih’s novella (Azzam 64). It invades Europe, for Mustafa tells European ladies they are “infected with a deadly disease . . .

which will bring about your destruction” (39). Women, in fact, carry “the germs of self-destruction within” (34) as breeders of European civilization. And if Salih was too subtle in his linkage of European (women) with disease, we have the words “plague,” “epidemic,” “fatal disease,” “infection,” and—lest we miss the point—“disease,” again, all lurking on one page (33). Mustafa, our gothic villain born in the year of Sudan’s colonization (Caminero-Santangelo 74) and thus serving as a perfect national allegory for Sudan (Azzam 59),¹⁰ views his role simply; he must murder this disease by murdering its representatives and (re)producers. He kills one woman after the other: Sheila Greenwood, Isabella Seymour, Ann Hampstead, Jean Morris. It is the death/murder of Jean Morris that is most disturbing to so many readers because of its brutality. The knife is pressed in the heart of civilization: he has destroyed one of its breeders, one of its reproducers, by destroying her. Mustafa destroys the “heart of darkness” of the North, but he finds that its contamination is within him, too, locked away and inoperable. When he flees to the village, he brings that contamination with him—and it will destroy the village as surely as it has destroyed Sheila, Isabella, Ann, Jean, and Mustafa himself.¹¹ He brings with him the darkness of the North, a darkness shattering the identities of all whom he encounters.

In Salih darkness can best be understood in terms of *grays*; importantly, these grays, like Annie’s struggle to navigate her Antigua and Western surroundings, represent the search for a path between the forces ripping Sudan apart. Both Effendi and Mustafa, our narrators, “are neither black nor white, but grey; neither wholly Eastern nor wholly Western; neither completely European nor completely Arab” (Makdisi 814). Darkness becomes not a site for gothic menace, but a site for healing: in the darkness, Hosna is able to speak—darkness “wip[es] out the sadness and shyness” (89). However,

in yet another twist, while dark is positive in Hosna, Mustafa is described as an ambivalent “dark twilight like a false dawn” (30), a collection of light and dark, night and morning: or, in simple terms, grays. In a particularly gothic moment, Mustafa’s ambivalent darkness also lingers in Effendi, particularly when he enters Mustafa’s secret room. Light illuminates the darkness of Mustafa’s Western tomb, his inner sanctum:

I struck a match. The light exploded on my eyes and out of the darkness there emerged a frowning face with pursed lips that I knew but could not place. I moved towards it with hate in my heart. It was my adversary Mustafa Sa‘eed. The face grew a neck, the neck two shoulders and a chest, then a trunk and two legs, and I found myself standing face to face with myself. (135)

Though the light does illuminate, it summons a frightening image. The narrator peers at the mirror, but at first he does not see himself. Instead, he sees Mustafa Sa‘eed: his eternal enemy. That image is himself. He has transformed into Mustafa Sa‘eed, his identity collapsing into that of his nemesis—a cracked whole like Annie John. Darkness, then, becomes the nexus of violent transformation, a transformation planted, like a disease, in the colonial past and harvested in what should be the decolonized present.

Ghost images and inner transformation whisper through Salih’s text, incessantly, the manifestations of fragmented identities. Shattered identities torment Effendi in *Season*, the ghostly remains of a past he must escape but cannot. Our first encounter with our narrator describes a man who has been absent from Sudan for seven years, wandering Europe. On his first day back in his village, after having “longed” for his people, Effendi tells us, “something rather like fog rose up between them and me” (1). Importantly, this

passage shows that Effendi has been alienated from his own people, leaving him disconnected and disoriented. In a search for self, origins are the foundations of our lives, the places we call “home.” He has no such underpinnings, and even his relation with his mother(land)—the quintessential “origin”—is “mask[ed]” (19); he tells us, “I used to have . . . a warm feeling of being free, that there was not a human being . . . to tie me down” (19). Lacking an anchor, his predicament intensifies when he must view the village through a fog, for fog can be interpreted several ways. It can be seen as a white illusion separating him from his people, residue from Europe’s colonization. It can also be seen as an inner fog, a sign of fragmentation—that he is a ghost, a “fog” of self.

As we journey into the pathways of Salih’s novel, the narrator continues to splinter, to mystify self. This can be no more obvious than when Effendi confronts Mustafa, the “civilized,” highly learned, brilliant stranger in the village.¹² He is the embodiment of the Europeanized man, the symbol of the colonized. Though our narrator does not actually understand why, Mustafa entices Effendi. However, it is likely safe to assume that their backgrounds—both educated in European ways, in the cornerstones of Western civilization—bridge the distances between them. They share something the village cannot understand, an intellectual, spiritual colonization. While Mustafa has confronted his Northern self by metamorphosing into the predator, Effendi still faces his Northern self with ambivalence. He does not deny it, but he feels himself alienated by it. The uncanny Other lives within him, increasingly difficult to distinguish from himself.

Effendi’s difficulty in maneuvering between selves becomes even more manifest when we see “phantom[s]” dominate the text. They materialize on pages 10, 17, 50 (two times), and 55. These phantoms patently show how Effendi is, after Mustafa’s “death”

(real or otherwise), haunted by an incomprehensible and imperialized past. He has been “gifted” (or burdened) with Mustafa’s legacy, but he is unable to penetrate that legacy, to enter the sealed room—a gothic convention—and Mustafa’s secret self. Mustafa is a phantom that will not die, a man who Effendi constantly expects to “find . . . seated on a chair alone in the darkness . . . strung up by the neck on a rope dangling from the ceiling” (65). Effendi is a self increasingly reflecting the Other; he sees Mustafa’s ghost everywhere because he *is himself* becoming Mustafa. He has been contaminated with the Northern contagion of colonialism, but, even more, he cannot escape it. The colonial past, as represented in Mustafa, reverberates with the supposedly decolonized present, himself.

His ultimate transformation is most notable when he becomes Sa‘eed, the Other: Effendi’s splintered personality has resolved (dissolved) into his nightmare Mustafa. He becomes a diseased North and South, Europe and Sudan, colonizer and colonized. Yet, as with Kincaid’s *Annie John*, there are no clear resolutions. Effendi appears in the dark room of European artifacts with a light; he brings possible illumination to the darkness within. The ambivalence of this scene, though, strengthens when one considers what the light illuminates: himself as Mustafa. Though the symbolic light does offer hope for Effendi, particularly since that light is held within his own hands, it illuminates a stark darkness that he connects with self. Indeed, when he thinks to burn the works of the past, to burn the relics of the colonizer, he cannot do so. He must leave them standing, for they are part of him. He cannot destroy them without also destroying himself. Effendi, thus, is stuck between both identities, both fragments of self: he is Mustafa, historically attached to the past colonial period, and he is Effendi, unconvinced of his relation to the past and searching for an identity in the present. He is Mustafa. He is Effendi. He is neither.

In his fragmentation of Effendi's identity, Salih breaks with tradition. He breaks with Conrad's fragmented identities, casting the fragmentation not simply in terms of Europe/Africa and light/dark, but in terms of light/dark, North/South, Europe/Africa, day/night, past/present, reality/illusion. He explodes the past by deconstructing the very binaries it rests upon. Light does not represent the North; it represents the South, but not always. Europe does not represent civilization, but neither does Africa; they are both diseased even if the disease can be traced to Europe's shores. Light illuminates, but night, in its concealment, can ease pain. There can be no better example of this than Effendi's discovery of himself as Mustafa. Reality falls into madness, displaced by an illusion that comforts; this illusion—that we are whole selves, that we are not what we despise, that our traditions still exist, that modern existence does not infect the village's heart, that we are civilized despite what has been done to us—shatters in the same moment that Effendi's self conceptions shatters. Effendi is everything and nothing at once. He is a cipher. He is, finally, Sudan: a ghost caught between forces rending it apart.

The truth, indeed the brilliance, of Salih's vision is that the past will not remain there: in the past. His very title clearly indicates the cyclical nature of time, for a *season* will return; winter will blend into winter once more. Salih confronts us with the naïve belief that the past remains locked away:

They [Europeans] used to behave like gods. They would employ us, the junior government officials who were natives of the country, to bring in the taxes. The people would grumble . . . to the English Commissioner who was . . . showed mercy. And in this way they sowed hatred in the hearts of the people for us, their kinsmen, and love for the colonizers, the

intruders. Mark these words of mine, my son. Has not the country become independent? Have we not become free men in our own country? Be sure, though, that they will direct our affairs from afar. This is because they have left behind them people who think as they do. (53)

Ominously, these words glare against the country's naïveté in believing that it has escaped European influence. The lie, the phantom, the empty shell, the gothic ghost—these are all the selves of Effendi, who believes himself whole, and Sudan, which believes itself whole, free of its master. One cannot use the railways, ships, hospitals, factories, and schools left by the colonizer, for, according to Audre Lorde, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (qtd. in Minh-Ha 80). The master’s infrastructure, when employed by the colonized, becomes the colonizer. It transforms the free into the enslaved. Effendi, a product of that infrastructure, returns to the village with his Western knowledge—his master’s tools (Caminero-Santangelo 69). Yet the contamination has already struck before he set foot in the village: it came through Mustafa, it came through Hosna, it came through the very patriarchal and traditional rules of Sudan that enslaved the village (Azzam 69)—the heart of Sudan—with the ideological framework of the master. Eurocentric ideology demands women obey man’s will, and, horrifically, Sudan holds this ideology, too, in its own pre-colonial traditions (Hassan 115). Thus, even by slipping into traditional ways, Sudan cannot escape the horrors of European ideology, for that ideology permeates Sudanese history (Parry 76). With the borders of ideology inverting, shatteringly, North becomes South, Sudan becomes Europe, Effendi becomes Mustafa. Self splinters into refracting pieces, each a lie of wholeness and unity.¹³

Our last look at Effendi-as-Mustafa-as-Sudan-as-Europe echoes this uncertainty of identity and, indeed, survival. Effendi has entered the Nile, the source of death and rebirth, but he is stuck between shores; he is caught between reality and illusion, between North and South, between past and present, between self and Other. “Help! Help!” (169) he cries, echoing the Kurtzian “The horror! The horror!” (94), but we see him crying into an existential emptiness. There is no one to save him, no one to pull him out. Will he save himself from the emptiness? Will he shape an identity for himself—and, by extension, for his own people? Or will he, like Mustafa, sink into the river? His splintered identity has reached its crisis, facing “itselfes”—the plural *selves* of broken identity—in a final scene that, like the *Annie John* and colonialism itself, refuses to be resolved. If Annie John has decided to cross the river of slavery, Effendi cannot even decide, in his ambivalence, which direction to turn.

Family Ghosts: A Hesitant Redemption

We at last reach the quintessential postcolonial gothic masterpiece on fragmented or spectral identity, the “ghost story” (Schmudde 409): Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Because the novel focuses on a family enslaved within America, the text routinely discusses the historical backgrounds of its characters: the pain, the intense self-hatred that the characters possess of themselves and, sometimes, of others. In this environment, the traces of colonization and slavery have not faded. Rather, they have become the very ghosts that haunt the text, literally and figuratively. We see this haunting in Kincaid’s Caribbean novel and in Salih’s Sudanese novella, yet in America, in the country of the Middle Passage and the slave plantation, we find a different haunting. The very people

who enslaved African Americans still remain in the country, and people such as Sethe and Paul D must carve out some way of living with a past that, all too frequently, they cannot even acknowledge. In *Beloved*, Sethe and Paul D do begin to carve out that path of self-recovery, offering a light of hope into a possible future where the ghosts of the past will no longer linger in the minds of the colonized. However, we must remember the sharp warning found in Salih's *Season*. Glimmering ominously from the light of hope, there remains the threat of finding something else, some unknown specter of an unforgiving past, illuminated in the light.

Significantly, *Beloved* shows us the unspeakable given voice as “past crime[s]” are slowly unearthed before our eyes (Booher 122). We see through the Middle Passage the horror of being uprooted in the African diaspora, of being left without a home in a country that has violently removed its slaves from everything they knew: their religion, their family, their history. We are told from the beginning that our haunted house—a symbol of property, symbol of what should be “secure” but is not (Kawash 75)—on “124 was spiteful. Full of a baby’s venom” (3). Its spiritual center, Baby Suggs, the grandmother, has died. The family has shattered, with two of its members, Howard and Buglar, fleeing home to escape “the lively spite the house felt for them” (3). In this home where “turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air are common” (4), a haunted domain if ever there were one, an angry ghost rages. Sethe tells us that she and Denver, her only living daughter, “understood the source of the outrage” (4), for that outrage stems from Sethe’s actions years ago: to protect her child from a lifetime of slavery, she murdered her. The outrage, readers quickly understand, comes from slavery itself, a cruel oppression of spirit, a racialized form of dehumanization legitimized by

civil society (Gilroy 65), that has blocked any forward momentum the characters in *Beloved* can make. Its ghost has haunted Sethe's family, fragmenting it.

Rage against slavery and specters of the past have created a threshold where the path into the future is blocked, impossible to pass; it is a threshold depicted as "a pool of red and undulating light" that "lock[s]" out all who would attempt to pass (8), a pool of blood, of rage. It effectively traps the residents within, yet it must be faced to escape the traumatic heritage of slavery (Durrant 80; Zheng 155). Thus, in the haunted house on 124 Bluestone Road, the specter does not need to cross the threshold to invade its residents; rather, it has always-already existed within the apparently innocent home, for it already breathes within the home's confines. The specter is part of the remnants of slavery that must be remembered, accepted, and laid to rest (Mohanty 56). As Sethe tells Paul D, "'Come on. Just step through'" (8) and enter the haunted house of slavery. Only then will those trapped inside the house, those once enslaved, be truly free and capable of passing the threshold from inside the house to outside the house without fear.

The most obvious symbol of past enslavement is Beloved. As Sethe's third child—the silent '3' missing in the address, 124, skipped in traumatic loss—Beloved cannot only be seen as a character, but also as a metaphor. She is the daughter born in 1855, one year after the signing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act that allowed settlers to possess slaves. We slowly learn what happened, finding the scene luridly described:

Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels with the other. She did not look at them; she simply swung the baby toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time,

when out of nowhere—in the ticking time the men spent staring at what there was to stare at—the old nigger boy, still mewling, ran through the door behind them and snatched the baby from the arch of its mother’s swing. (149)

Is she a monster for having killed her daughter, as Denver suggests when she tells us that she had “monstrous and unmanageable dreams about Sethe” (103), dreams that made her walk “in a silence too solid for penetration” (103)? Is her ““love too thick”” (164), too animalistic (Mohanty 60), as Paul D thinks? Have the twins, indeed, left out of fear of Beloved, the ghost wreaking vengeance on 124 Bluestone, or out of fear of their mother?

Morrison directly challenges Sethe’s monstrosity, showing us that the monster is not Sethe. It is, instead, slavery itself, a monstrous system that dehumanizes everyone involved. We learn, for example, that Sethe’s slave owner, schoolteacher, saw Sethe murder her daughter, but—in a move that further dehumanizes Sethe, for it removes her responsibility for her own actions—he immediately blames his nephew for the death. The events transpired because nephew had “mishandl[ed]” his charge; as he tells nephew, “now she’d gone wild, due to the mishandling of the nephew who’d overbeat her” just like a “horse” or “hounds” would do (149). Reverted to the “animal” (150), to the “cannibal” that needs “every care and guidance in the world” (151)—white care and guidance, naturally—Sethe has been dehumanized completely, yet she has been dehumanized by the very powers who wished to claim her family, the very family she wished to preserve from a similar dehumanization. This is, of course, the event that has traumatized Sethe’s family, the event that has traumatized Sethe herself into a silence

most deafening, and the event from which the ghostly Beloved as well as the home's haunting emerges: an event coming from the most traumatic experience of all, slavery.

Beloved first appears to us in corporeal form in the most surreal circumstances. She appears out of the river without a drop of water shimmering upon her:

A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat. Everything hurt but her lungs most of all. Sopping wet and breathing shallow she spent those hours trying to negotiate the weight of her eyelids. . . . Nobody saw her emerge or came accidentally by. (50)

With skin "lineless and smooth" (50), she appears before Sethe and Paul D, sunlight blanking her face and highlighting only her black dress and shoes. This faceless/defaced creature, a revenant of slavery made all the more obvious by her unmarked appearance (Zheng 159), readily passes the threshold. In a subtle connection that becomes anything but subtle, Sethe finds she must "void" water in an almost "endless" stream—while the ghostly Beloved must "drink cup after cup of water" (51): she, like a Stoker vampire, drains the blood of her victim to feed herself, her identity collapsing with Sethe's until Sethe is almost herself a ghost (Durrant 91). She is the ghost of the past, the raging specter of slavery, "endless[ly]" draining the life from Sethe and, advanced on a larger scale, the community of African Americans who have survived slavery (Booher 125).¹⁴

Thus, Beloved represents not just Sethe's ghosts as she searches for self in a land where her race is denied—the ghost of her daughter, the ghost of lovers past, the ghost of

slavery, the ghost of ““God tak[ing] what He would” (23) and continuously doing so—but the community’s ghosts as well. Though the lady of the river identifies herself as “Beloved” (52), her face is first hidden¹⁵; we do not see her features, for they have been obscured by daylight. Daylight, illuminating the specter of the past, shows us that Beloved is the face of slavery: her face cannot be seen because she is every slave forced into bondage in America. Even more, Morrison links Beloved with the Middle Passage through the use of water, a device emphasized with the “endless” water exchange in Sethe and Beloved’s first encounter. Beloved’s “memories,” so difficult to capture at times, indicate to us a possible collective memory of the Middle Passage. Beloved was born in America; she did not actually endure the horror of rape, crowding, disease, and cruelty that was the Middle Passage. However, intriguingly, many of the images attached to her are of the Middle Passage. Denver, for example, asks her to describe “over there, where you were before” (75), and Beloved offers a chilling reply, telling us that her name is Beloved ““In the dark,”” that the world she emerged from was “Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in”” (75). Even more, there are ““Heaps”” of people, for ““A lot of people is down there”” (75 sic). We could imagine this as a description of the afterlife or a graveyard, where dead bodies “heap” against one another, but it seems a much stronger description of the Middle Passage itself (Mohanty 63; Durrant 89).

Morrison here suggests an almost group memory, a racial memory, as if she is drawing off the collective thoughts and experiences of Sethe’s people. Importantly, Beloved first emerges as a full-grown body—from a river. She, like Effendi and Annie, is surrounded with water, and this can be easily related to the idea of the Middle Passage itself, the seas carrying the forces of empire. Interpreting it as such clarifies why she

would be appearing from the river, for her death was not by drowning. Rather, she died because her throat was cut, her cries silenced. She is a re-inscribed Lady of the Lake, emerging as a Lady of the River whose Excalibur is her offer of traumatic exposure, where all things buried, all things hidden in the crypt of the mind, are exposed and, through the process of communal sharing, recovered. She is a first gasp of healing in a community long silenced by specters—by “circle[s] of iron” (101) strangling the throat—they cannot even discuss, much less banish. An idea silenced in fear lingers, becomes alive, as it has with Beloved, as it has with slavery. Telling stories of the past to Beloved slowly exorcises the traumatic events Sethe has lived, but it is through great pain:

It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe . . . because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost.
(58)

Lost, buried because it is too painful, the past resurfaces, a history reemerging, as with Annie John’s history, through oral tradition: through story-telling (Bowers 21; Blair 58). In the past, the spiritual center, Baby Suggs, had instituted a space of healing in a place aptly called the Clearing, a “wide-open place cut deep in the woods” (87), where people cried of their losses and learned to accept themselves, to love their flesh, their bodies (Blair 57): “the dark, dark liver—love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that too” (88). Baby Suggs teaches her community to love the flesh that was once “commodified” (Redding par. 13) and to love the people who were once torn away from one another and collectively dismembered. Self-love after the dehumanization of slavery—after people

were chained in mire, “broken” (53), left “[l]ike the unshriven dead, zombies on the loose” (110)—is part of that history, the “holy” (89) history of recovering self-identity after it has been torn into shreds. Voices, many voices, are lifted in a blending of cultures and identities that Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* describes in the Middle Passage (120), a borderless diaspora where a new identity emerges (12-3; see also Bowers 19).

As the novel progresses, Beloved is a healing force, though she is, paradoxically, also a leeching force. Left to simmer in the psyche, left to haunt Sethe and the African American community at large, the memories of slavery will continue to leech Sethe if she does not find the “Word,” the language within her, the story of her own life—and claim it as her own (178). The language silenced in slavery, the “code . . . no longer understood” (62), the language of her ancestors and the stories of herself, must be voiced (Davis 155; Puri 30). It is the “miraculous resurrection” of Beloved (105), indeed, though painful, that has allowed Sethe to lock the door to 124 Bluestone, and to be “free at last,” free to express the “undecipherable” and “unspeakable thoughts, unspoken” (199) thoughts of slavery. At this time, we encounter the monologues of previously silenced female ex-slaves. We hear from Sethe, who writes, “Beloved, she my daughter. She mine” (200), thus claiming ownership as well as selfhood in the use of “my” and “mine.” From Denver we hear that “I’m afraid the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again” (205), an actual statement that she is afraid of the past to the point that she will not leave her home. Beloved herself tells us that “I would bite the circle around her neck,” for “I know she does not like it” (211). The image of an enslaved past, Beloved wants to end Sethe’s suffering, to help her reclaim herself, by removing slavery itself: not merely the physical slavery, but the mental slavery she has

trapped herself within. Yet, like a succubus, she feeds upon Sethe: “Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it” (250). Thus, in postcolonial gothic, a traumatic memory drains its host if it is not faced—but facing that memory opens the possibilities for finding one’s voice, and in that voice, to once more find one’s self.

It is the community that helps Sethe find herself at last. Beloved’s vampiric actions force Denver to flee 124 Bluestone and ask for help. Once shunning Sethe, about thirty women from the neighborhood arrive and cleanse 124 of its ghostly specter:

Sethe opened the door and reached for Beloved’s hand. Together they stood in the doorway. For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash. (261)

In the Clearing, transformed from the forest to the home, the community at large faces the past—and comes together (Durrant 91; Blair 58). Women come together once more, redefining who and what they are, redefining their cultural power (Puri 29). As they sing, their voices lifted up, past merges into present. Sinisterly, in what should have been a healing moment, Sethe looks up to see her past given new life in “him,” his “black hat wide-brimmed enough to hide his face but not his purpose” (262): the white slave owner, faceless, like Beloved was first faceless, an entity of colonial power coming to destroy her. She runs—though she has vowed never to run again—reaching for an ice-pick to

attack the white, not her daughter (Blair 58). With this occasion, where she has had to face an eventual return of the past, Sethe's Beloved "[d]isappeared, some say, exploded right before their eyes" (263). The traumatic past, symbolized by Beloved, has returned to life, bled into Sethe's existence until she is locked inside 124 Bluestone, and evaporated; however, to be completely buried, Sethe's traumatic memories force her to face the ghosts of previous owners. Seeing her run to meet her ghosts as "she runs towards the perceived threat" (Durrant 106), we believe she has at last recovered (Davis 155).

However, in *Beloved* we are in the realm of postcolonial gothic, the realm of ambivalence and specters; easy endings are not to be found. When we reach the end of the novel, we discover healing, but, as with Kincaid, as with Salih, we find a warning offered: the shattered identities that have sent children running, that have left Denver unable to speak, that have chased Sethe into near madness may not completely heal. Though the turbulence has disappeared, it has been replaced with "nothing"—a nothingness that alarmingly resonates with Salih's text. This can be no more profoundly seen than in Paul D's account of the house. Paul D looks at the house and "surprisingly, it does not look back at him" (264). It is now "Unloaded" (264), a simple house, "Quiet" (264) and "needing repair" (264). 124 no longer possesses ghosts, for "It" (267) has left. Paul D can even pass the threshold, which once barred him, but now "is nothing. A bleak and minus nothing" (270). Encouragingly, Paul D "wants to put his story" beside Sethe's (273), to create their own shared history, but Beloved's history ominously fades from memory, becoming a nothingness that should alarm all readers. Is this burying of history really "putting it [the story of slavery] to rest," as Wolstenholme (155) claims, or is it burying the bones of a skeleton likely to arise once more? The last chapter in the novel

reads that Beloved's tale "was not a story to pass on" (274-5), and even more ominously, "[s]o they forgot her" (275). As time passes, "all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the water too" (275). If we forget the histories, if the past becomes "disremembered and unaccounted for" (275), we run the very real risk of allowing it to reoccur, to come again. While 124 Bluestone may have healed, while the community at large may have healed by facing its history—while the ghost of the past may have been put to rest at last—forgetting the past allows a terrifying return in a racism that refuses to disappear from American society (Durrant 83).

When we consider colonization in the Caribbean, in Sudan, in America, we find ourselves facing texts that share similarities—even though they are sprinkled with differences. Identities split because humans can no longer find a safe path between the past and the present and, indeed, the future. The ghost of the colonized past lingers, whispering just beyond the sight, an unspeakable time that threatens to recur even as it seems it has faded away. Is the quiet in 124 true, is Paul D right in assuming that there is "nothing" there any more, that it has been "Unloaded"? Or, as with *Wuthering Heights*, do we suspect that Paul, like Nelly, cannot glimpse the truth of the story he has told: that the ghost of slavery has not disappeared, but that he simply cannot see it? If, indeed, the ghost of colonization remains—unseen, "unaccounted for"—does that mean the previously colonized world is living a lie in its belief that it is truly a *post*-colonial world and that the shackles have been removed?

Notes

¹ Salih published his work in Arabic in 1966 (entitled *Mawsim al-Hijrah ilâ al-Shamâl*) and in English in 1969. This dissertation utilized the English version.

² Writing of the *Bildungsroman*, Maria Karafilis has suggested that *Annie John* transvaluates the genre, which is typically focused on the development of a male centered consciousness (64), by not completely destroying it, but, instead, showing the slippage from self-integration into fragmentation caused by colonialism (74). In it, rather than seeking to embrace “multiple and often conflicting cultures and value systems” (73), Annie seeks “systems of mastery” and “hierarchy” (72) that lead to her ultimate self-disintegration. Kincaid’s treatment of the *Bildungsroman*—its transvaluation—may, indeed, account for some of the uncanniness Chinmoy Banerjee sees in the work (33), for Annie seems to possess the story of many adolescents—a relationship with her mother, problems with friends, rebellion against the family—but hers is a story riddled with taboos and colonial pressures not found in most *Bildungsromans* (Banerjee 37). Indeed, one can make a strong argument that the novel attacks many of the themes in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), for the novel is mentioned as one of Annie’s favorite texts (Hickman 187). Others have mentioned that *Annie John* is, instead, an anti-*Tempest*, a revision of Caliban (Yeoh 103) by recasting fantasy as a positive force against colonization (104).

³ The predominance of female relationships leads Roberto Strongman to write that *Annie John* focuses on the pre-adult period where, in Caribbean society, homosexual

relationships are explored but later rejected because of social pressures (32). While Strongman does not link this rejection with colonialism, it seems likely that such a link could be explored, for Western ideologies encourage heterosexual relationships; such an occurrence in Annie John's life can be seen as a trace of colonial power.

⁴ K. B. Byrne interprets the trunk from a distinctly different perspective, seeing it as a symbol of the mother's ability to control her daughter's knowledge (280). However, while such an interpretation may be of interest, it undercuts the very powerful role of historical knowledge developed through the communal bond of mother-daughter that Kincaid portrays in Annie's early years, a community that Annie later rejects. If the mother represents imperial power, as Byrne later asserts (285), then it is not the community that Annie rejects, but imperial ties; such a reading does not account for Annie's ultimate decision to cross to England and, in fact, denies the very real self-denial Annie imparts at the end of the text.

⁵ Renk argues that oral storytelling of women was traditionally the "'witch' healer who transforms the people physically and spiritually through magic and story" (17-8), but contemporary storytelling both "destroys and rebuilds" (18), often rewriting the lessons of written stories by uniting oppositions rather than polarizing them.

⁶ Power relationships between Red Girl and Annie are also of interest, for Annie's replication of colonial "dominance and submission" isolates her from the community (Karafilis 72) and perpetuates colonial hierarchies. Because she is trapped between her own culture and the colonial ideologies her mother and the educational system foster, Annie's identity fractures.

⁷ Focusing instead on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1891) and *Season*, Julie Azzam has also persuasively shown the history of invasions and violence against the oppressed, frequently perpetuated by men (60), that both texts show, with Salih's focusing on the colonial nature of this invasion. Imagery of "disease, contagion, and contamination," as with *Dracula*, are shown in *Season* to "engage with notions of purity" (64) as cultural and physical boundaries are breached.

⁸ Several authors have discussed the intertextual resonance between Conrad and Salih, including Byron Caminero-Santangelo, Saree Makdisi, R. S. Krishnan, and Mohammad Shaheen. While Shaheen concentrates more on the similarities of the texts, most authors stress the postcolonial appropriation of Conrad's "colonizing tale" (Krishnan 7).

⁹ There is some controversy on the name of our narrator in Tayeb Salih's *Season*. Mohammad Shaheen (170, note 3) and Wail Hassan (115) both identify the narrator as Muheimid (spelled as *Meheimeed* in Hassan), a name used in Salih's later novel, *Bandarshah*. Denys Johnson-Davies, Salih's translator, identifies the narrator as Effendi (M. Salih and Athamneh 85). Other critics—such as Saree Makdisi (809), Byron Caminero-Santangelo (85), and Abu-Deeb (457)—state that the narrator is unnamed. In the spirit of simplifying this chaos, I will use either Effendi or "the narrator."

¹⁰ In addition to Azzam, Makdisi has pointed out how Mustafa's life story is framed historically. He is born in the same year, 1898, as the "bloody defeat of the Mahdist forces by Kitchener's army . . . signal[ing] the final collapse of Sudanese resistance to British encroachment" (811). Furthermore, though Makdisi does not verify

the information, he mentions that Mustafa disappears when he is fifty-eight, when Sudan gains independence (813).

¹¹ Though a seemingly innocuous detail, readers of gothic may wonder at the names Salih has selected, for Ann and Isabella are names straight from gothic literature. While Ann can be linked to Ann Radcliffe, Isabella or its variants has been seen in Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, both victims of male machinations. That a male from a previously colonized world destroys these women suggests an ominous reading: that the male patriarchal system infecting Europe has also infected Sudan or that it always existed in Sudan, producing a collapse of identities where one acts just as the other.

¹² Mustafa is educated, an economist who should have succeeded, indeed excelled, by taking power in his own country. In fact, Mustafa has told our narrator that schools were seen "as being a great evil that had come . . . with the armies of occupation" (20). The uniformed man who recruits the young Mustafa tells him that "'When you grow up . . . [you will] become an official in the government, you'll wear a hat like this'" (20). The "hat," like the uniform, represents complicity in the very power ruling Sudan. Mustafa's recruitment is an excellent illustration of the imperial "divide-and-conquer" techniques presented in Richard Peet's *Global Capitalism*, which argues that the "main concern of the colonial administration was to make the conquered pay for their oppression, given the tiny budget allocated by European governments. This led to various systems of indirect rule mainly through 'traditional chiefs' advised by colonial officers"

(139). Instead of the “traditional chiefs,” in Salih’s work intelligent young men are recruited to eventually become the puppet leaders of their nation.

Ironically, Mustafa does get his education and he does go to London to further his studies, but he does not use his education to take control in his own country; instead, he uses it to establish control of his own destiny by destroying the European civilization that has destroyed him. Instead of “civilizing” him, European education has transformed him into the predator Europe fears, into the savage. His stereotypical qualities, then, are not a result of some essential (read “stereotypical”) African nature, but his exposure to the disease of the West.

¹³ The lie of unity may be traced to discussions of nationalism. Frantz Fanon, in his landmark *The Wretched of the Earth*, states

There can be no such thing as rigorously identical cultures. To believe one can create a black culture is to forget oddly enough that “Negroes” are in the process of disappearing, since those who created them are witnessing the demise of their economic and cultural supremacy. . . . The problem is knowing what role these men [politicians] have in store for their people, the type of social relations they will establish and their idea of the future of humanity. (169)

Thus, while Fanon certainly stresses the importance of nationalism, he does not seem to think a complete unity of Africa is possible. In the aftermath of colonialism, it is doubtful that such a unity could even be created within one nation (Sudan), particularly since self-identity is perceived so heavily in relation to the colonial power.

¹⁴ Morrison's deployment of the ghost trope is itself an intriguing concept, for as Maggie Ann Bowers writes, ghosts have the power to be everywhere; a slave owner, drawing from African American ghost stories, would employ the trope to imply that he, too, was everywhere, seeing everything, a Maturin Melmoth capable of crossing all boundaries. Morrison's *Beloved*, then, "can be seen as a creative act of resistance . . . appropriating the very power associated with ghosts for subversive purposes" (22).

¹⁵ To Ru-yu Zheng, the river can be seen as metaphorically linked with the African myth that "the dead ancestors have to cross the river to another world" (154): *Beloved* emerges from the water unmarked, then disappears once more into the water at the end of the novel, symbolic of "embodied memory" (155). She could, thus, serve as a link between the Middle Passage itself—an embodiment of ancestral memory from that period as well as from Africa—and the displaced racial memory of the African-American.

PART THREE

LIGHT FILTERS INTO THE SHADOWS:

RESISTANCE IN THE POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC

I waited a long time after I heard her snore, then I got up, took the keys and unlocked the door. I was outside holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage. (Rhys 190)

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INDIGENOUS MONSTER, LOOSED AT LAST

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European Imperial Gothic, the monster often crawls out of tombs or, depending on one's definition of *monster*, haunts the beautiful heroine as she prowls the castle battlements. However, in the postcolonial gothic world, the monster has changed. Though the texts of the postcolonial gothic may be peppered with zombies and other terrifying beings, their most powerful monsters, their most haunting resisters of colonial oppression, are the female monsters who refuse to bow to imperialism—the humans who fight patriarchy with chilling results. We can see this profoundly in Jean Rhys' Caribbean *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Salman Rushdie's British-Indian *Shame* (1983). Postcolonial gothic monsters are powerful, sympathetic, and entirely uncontrollable, monsters that represent the previously colonized self freed at last. As such, they are agents of resistance in a postcolonial world that asserts it will no longer be dominated. They are agents of destruction, of the past, as well as agents of construction, of a future free from empire.

Bertha a Monster No More: Fear of the Female Nightmare

Just exactly who is the monster in postcolonial gothic fiction? This seems a fairly simple question, but the answers may be surprising. Is the monster truly the woman, chained to a possessive male, chained, even more, to an oppressive, imperial ruler who refuses to acknowledge her humanity—who, indeed, can see nothing but her alien-ness?

Or, conversely, is the monster really the possessor, the oppressor, the imperial ruler? The postcolonial gothic novel, long from endorsing a dehumanizing description of monstrosity, long from, even more, endorsing a colonizing description of monstrosity, transforms the ruler, the oppressor, the possessor into the monster. Furthermore, postcolonial gothic transforms the feared Other, the indigenous person steeped in power well outside European purview, into a dominant, influential force that can undermine the very foundations of imperialism. Postcolonial gothic de-centers the typically Eurocentric mythos, allowing the “silenced colonial subject” to finally develop his or her own speech (Newman 70), as we can see through the brilliantly intertextual dialogue between Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Jane Eyre, much like Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, has long been associated with a strange contradiction of fiery passion and submissive refinement—a kinetic, violent energy placed jarringly amongst the domestic. In *Jane Eyre*, we begin with Jane, a penniless orphan forced to live with a family (the Reeds) that does not want her. The first quarter of the novel shows Jane trapped in gothic cages that predict her later experiences in Thornfield. We are first introduced to our heroine with this resounding statement, the very first words in the book: “There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering . . . in the morning; but since dinner . . . the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question” (7). This is Jane’s first sign of “marginalization and privation” (Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 265)—our first clue that Jane is thrust to the fringes of her own story. She is trapped, this time by the thing she loves most: nature. “There was no possibility” of escaping the house, for she is trapped by nature’s storms,

by its vicious power. Thus, gloom surrounds her, both externally and internally. Even more importantly, however, Jane is penetrated by the storm, clearly signaling the gothic theme of boundaries violated, penetrated. Her violation is furthered when she is pushed from the nucleus of the Reed household into the breakfast-room, where she “‘slipped in’—into the margin” (Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 265), completing her exodus from the Victorian prototypical family.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane symbolizes the outcast, the Other—even as she perversely represents that very same Victorian society’s social and moral codes. This strange perversity develops when Victorian society’s “prototypical” characters are contrasted unfavorably with the novel’s heroine. One excellent example of this pattern is seen in John Reed, the son of Jane’s “benefactress” (12). John Reed, presumably given everything he needs and wants with a family at his beckoning, rapidly repels readers with his nasty need to be called “Master Reed”; Brontë describes him as having “dingy and unwholesome skin” (9). He gorges himself at the table, has “large extremities” and “bleared eye and flabby cheeks” (10).¹ He is spoiled; he teases Jane mercilessly, dragging her out of her hiding spots; he throws things at Jane, drawing blood and laughing as he does so. Thus, while Reed should represent typical Victorian values—as the son of a typical Victorian family—Brontë cleverly contrasts him to Jane, who is anything but cruel or vindictive. She hides in her books; when hiding does not suffice, she inwardly *and* outwardly convicts Reed as a “murderer” (11) but does not deteriorate into the terrorizing anger of Reed. While Reed calls Jane a “‘rat,’” there is no doubt in our minds that the real rat is Reed. Even when Jane is “‘unjust[ly]” thrust into the Red Room—another gothic “jail” (14) for our heroine, complete with red carpet, red drapes, red

furniture, Jane's own red blood—we know that she represents reason (in fact, her “reason” is directly juxtaposed with Reed's “unjust” actions). With Reed as foil, Jane increasingly symbolizes the Victorian ideals of reason and morality—and the representation strengthens with Mr. Brocklehurst and his vapid daughters at Lowood.²

As match to Jane's quiet moral authority, we are presented the Byronic hero so common to gothic novels: Mr. Rochester, a wealthy man driven by passions, a man filled with a mysterious and attractive darkness. Rochester, described as ““changeful and abrupt”” (127) by Mrs. Fairfax (our voice of social reason in this journey), is first fully revealed to us in firelight; his “broad and jetty eyebrows,” “square forehead, made squarer by the horizontal sweep of his black hair,” and “grim mouth, chin, and jaw” (119) fully position him in the realm of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff. He but needs a castle to flesh out the skeleton of this gothic novel, and Thornfield, the huge mansion suggestive of both pain (Thorn) and openness (Field), seems to fit the role perfectly, complete with “battlements” (114). We first see it in darkness, with only one light “kindling in a window” (116); as we approach it, lingering—like Jane—before we pass its threshold into those “shutters of the glass door [that] were closed” to us, we eerily feel that the “gloomy” house is a “grey hollow filled with rayless cells” (116), certainly not a place we wish to enter. Like Jane, though, we must—and we enter the story's most central gothic nature. Here, we see the pious Jane, symbolic of Victorian Christianity and morality, enter the Lion's Den.

In the Lion's Den³ (the library, in fact) of Thornfield, Rochester quickly, ruthlessly, transforms Jane from subject to object. He begins almost rudely by ordering her to sit, seeming to think, according to Jane, that he wanted nothing to do with her:

““What the deuce is it to me whether Miss Eyre be there or not? At this moment I am not disposed to accost her”” (120). Though these are Jane’s interpretations, they quite pointedly show that she is no more important to Rochester than any other object—such as his chair, his dog, his fire—removing her human importance in relation to him. Indeed, his reaction even suggests a violent castigation, for he is “not disposed to accost her”; “accost,” of course, can mean to aggressively approach someone, but it can also mean to attack or brutalize. He is unwilling to attack her, but he does not see her as important to him. Thus, within minutes of formally meeting her, Rochester has already reduced Jane to a cipher, a Ø. He is the patriarchal master, the man of wealth, equipped with a whip—which, significantly, she had earlier placed within his hands (115)—while she is the object in his control.

Rochester not only devalues and masters Jane, but he also names her, frames her, in his own language. Naming, in essence, controls language: it is an authoritative connection between the sign and the signified. In his first formal introduction to her, Rochester’s description of Jane as fairy removes her humanity and individuality: it attempts to push her into a cage of Rochester-constructed meaning. She is not Jane, the Governess, but the fantastical creature who may have “bewitched his horse” (122). He tells her that at first sight, he “thought unaccountably of fairy tales” (122). Even her artwork is “elfish,” inspired by a “dream” (126). Indeed, this pattern of Rochester-driven Jane-as-fairy continues throughout the novel. Over a hundred pages after the initial meeting, Rochester is *still* assigning fantastic labels to Jane. On page 278 she is “a mermaid” (278). She is later “you witch” (281). Still later, she is an “elf” (312), then an “angel” (315), then a “savage, beautiful creature” (318). At the novel’s conclusion, she is,

again, “my fairy” (436), “beneficent spirit” (437), and “a changeling” (438). Firmly ensnared within Rochester’s “clutches,” Jane—though able to speak—is dispossessed of her own name. The novel, then, seeks to reclaim her power of speech and self-identity, even of independent decisions: to create a fully realized Jane independent of Rochester.

Central to this escape is Jane’s confrontation with the Other who has been locked in Rochester’s attic, for only her true understanding of Rochester’s past and present can free her from a potentially illegal marriage and its consummation. This Other, of course, exists in the form of Bertha Mason/Rochester, a haunting figure who Jane sees at night:

On waking, a gleam dazzled my eyes: I thought—oh, it is daylight! But I was mistaken: it was only candle-light. . . . There was a light on the dressing-table, and the door of the closet, where, before going to bed, I had hung my wedding dress and veil, stood open: I heard a rustling there. . . . [A] form emerged from the closet: it took the light, held it aloft and surveyed the garments. . . . [S]till it was silent. I had risen up in bed, I bent forward: first, surprise, then bewilderment, came over me; and then my blood crept cold through my veins. (283)

The “form” watching Jane and examining her wedding garments is none other than our gothic monster, Bertha. Jane goes on to describe her visitor as “fearful and ghastly,” possessing of “a discoloured face . . . a savage face” (283). This grotesque creature is portrayed as somewhere between dream and reality, a “foul German spectre—the Vampyre” (284). However, this “spectre” is very realistic, for she tears Jane’s veil apart and stomps on it; as light approaches, she looks up and with “fiery gaze glare[s]” at Jane until Jane loses consciousness out of “terror” (284).

Thus, we have encountered Brontë's "Other," a female who is not human but spectral, the substance of nightmares. Her swollen lips, purple color, and black eyebrows lead Jane to conclude that the undead (the Vampyre) has visited her room. The "Vampyre" is several pages later given a name: this is Rochester's wife. Rushing straight from the bedeviled marriage to the demonic wife locked in the attic, we follow the wedding party to the attic cell, where the beast itself lingers. This entry into the beast's cell is, as Nixon has argued, an "unnatural . . . penetration of Rochester, Jane, and the three men into the 'secret inner cabinet' . . . and the depraved Bertha's 'den'" (par. 14). Nixon writes that Rochester's "master key," operating as one of the oldest gothic conventions, violates the inner sanctity of Bertha's chambers. When she is described, we see her not as a human, but as an animal:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.
(293)

Like Jane herself, though without doubt more harshly, Bertha is dehumanized. She is turned not into the fairy, but the bestial. Only one page later, Rochester converts her from the bestial to the demonic, saying that her room is "the mouth of hell" and that she is its resident "demon" (294).

That Rochester transforms both Jane and Bertha from the human to the inhuman leads to one of the more disturbing doppelgangers in Brontë's works. There are

frightening similarities between the two characters. Both are orphaned; both are poor; both matured in unstable environments where their identities were consistently challenged (Heiland 126). Thus, they are “distorted image[s]” of one another (126): Bertha is the image of what Jane might become. Jane needs an escape from the possible Rochesterian trap that Bertha could not escape, and, according to Heiland, Brontë provides her that escape by allowing her “to see the realities of her life in Rochester’s house, and . . . [to] act autonomously and walk away” (127). It is only through Jane’s escape from Thornfield that Jane is saved from the unrealistic expectations that Rochester holds for both her and their marriage; she will return to him, but on her own terms.

Sadly, Brontë never offers Bertha this escape. Our last view of Bertha comes through the eyes of a witness to Bertha’s plunge from the battlements of Thornsfield as fire licks her skin:

“[Rochester] went up to the attics when all was burning above and below, and got the servants out of their beds and helped them down himself, and went back to get his mad wife out of her cell. . . . [S]he was on the roof, . . . waving her arms, above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off. . . . She was a big woman, and had long black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood. I witnessed, and several more witnessed, Mr. Rochester ascend through the sky-light on to the roof; we heard him call 'Bertha!' We saw him approach her; and then, ma'am, she yelled and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.” (428)

It takes more than a century for the monstrous madwoman in Rochester's attic to escape. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* finally gives Bertha a voice, a history, a tongue, and an escape route. We can also see *Wide Sargasso Sea* as staggeringly important to postcolonial studies, for it is one of the texts that author Gayatri Spivak analyzes in her landmark work of feminist writing back strategies, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985). This "slim novel" (Spivak 268) carries with it the "explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering" (Cixous 342) emergence of the female/indigenous voice: the voice of the Other, who has been made the Other not only because she is female, but also because she is the object of imperialism. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Bertha does not mutate into the beast; instead, as Spivak writes, Rhys "keeps Bertha's humanity, indeed her sanity as critic of imperialism, intact" ("Three Women's Texts" 268). Thus, the heart of Rhys's novel is Bertha, not Jane or Rochester. The heart of the gothic entrapment is imperialism, not a re-establishment of English propriety and moral codes.

To create a new gothic for Bertha, Rhys must first start with the landscape. We are moved from Brontë's English countryside to the sensuous world of the West Indies:

Our garden was large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible—the tree of life grew there. But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell. Underneath the tree ferns, tall as forest tree ferns, the light was green. Orchids flourished out of reach or for some reason not to be touched. One was snaky looking, another like an octopus with long thin brown tentacles bare of leaves hanging from a twisted root. (19)

The Garden of Eden quickly suggests itself to the reader's mind. Yet it is important, indeed crucial, to note that the Garden of Eden is past tense: "our garden *was* large and beautiful" (19 emphasis added). The Garden of Eden is no more, and it has descended into wildness; "snaky" and "twisted" represent the Serpent and humanity's subsequent Fall from grace. Left to their own devices, readers might interpret this fall in many ways—as simple aging, perhaps—but Rhys decisively excises any such interpretations only a few lines later: "No more slavery—why should *anybody* work?" (19). Thus, Rhys, from the very beginning of her novel, makes slavery a haunting echo in the landscape. The land, like its people, has been damaged by years of English imperialism.

In this damaged landscape we meet Antoinette Mason. The narrator of our story, Antoinette finds herself ignored by her mother and called the "white cockroach" (23) by Creole natives. Her younger brother, who rarely moves or seems to think, resembles all too closely a gothic zombie. As the daughter of a plantation owner, Antoinette is paradoxically quite poor; the family has lost their money with the abolition of slavery, and the father has died. Like ghosts, they inhabit their deteriorating plantation home, Coulibri, scorned by the blacks they once enslaved. In a scene hauntingly reminiscent of Thornfield's destruction, these one-time slaves raze Coulibri:

The house was burning, the yellow-red sky was like sunset and I knew that I would never see Coulibri again. Nothing would be left, the golden ferns and the silver ferns, the orchids, the ginger lilies and the roses, the rocking-chairs and the blue sofa, the jasmine and the honeysuckle, and the picture of the Miller's Daughter. When they had finished, there would be nothing left but blackened walls and the mounting stone. (44-45)

Burned alongside the beautiful greens and whites and yellows are the “picture of Miller’s Daughter” and the rocking-chair and blue sofa: nature and imperialism’s relics surrendering to flame. The perversion of slavery has been destroyed, taking with it the land that supported slavery.

However, Rhys is careful to warn us that imperialism is not destroyed with one fateful fire. Antoinette—whose new step-father is wealthy—is soon sold into a slavery of her very own, a gothic cage from which she cannot escape. She is worth 30,000 pounds: a fortune. Hearing of her “fortune” to be married for such a price, Antoinette sees herself as “‘in Hell’” (60). Thus ends Part I, 61 pages filled with Antoinette’s voice. She is silenced for the next 112 pages, her voice of reason and love of beauty replaced by Rochester’s voice of imperialism and domination.

Rochester enters the scene not as the mysterious and dark stranger, who attracts Jane Eyre’s attention and imagination, but as the English younger-son-of-a-lord who will not inherit the Garden of Eden (Thornfield Hall). As readers, we are never privy to the courtship or wedding ceremony; when we once more see Antoinette, we find that she has married. Rochester describes her for us:

She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. (67)

At first, we see Antoinette as pleasant: the hat “became her.” However, that brief thought of possible appeal immediately erodes when Rochester states that the hat was, apparently, “becoming” because it shadowed her eyes. He expands his underhanded attack,

describing her eyes as “alien” and “dark” and then progresses to attack her very breeding. She is not “pure” enough for his imperial tastes, for she is “not English or European” in his eyes. Rochester’s harsh, colonizing gaze reduces her to an object, and, importantly, an object that is displeasing. It also predicts many of the events that will soon unfold.

The events start rather symbolically. Rochester and Antoinette are taking their “sweet honeymoon” (66) at a quaintly named estate, Massacre; its real name is Granbois. As part of Antoinette’s inheritance, it once belonged to her. It no longer does, for her marriage to Rochester handed all of her worldly goods to her husband. The estate is isolated, strange: “Perched up on wooden stilts the house seemed to shrink from the forest behind it and crane eagerly out to the distant sea. It was more awkward than ugly, a little sad as if it knew it could not last” (71-72). In Rochester’s eyes, the furnishings are “shabby,” making the place seem “neglected and deserted” (73). As Rochester examines his new possession, Antoinette tells Rochester that ““This is my place and everything is on our side”” (74). We soon find that Antoinette’s claim to ownership has been repossessed. Rochester reveals to readers a paradoxical indifference/desire for her land: “It was a beautiful place—wild, untouched, above all untouched, with an alien, disturbing, secret loveliness. And it keeps its secrets. I’d find myself thinking, ‘What I see is nothing—I want what it *hides*—that is not nothing’” (87).

Noticeably, there are similarities between Rochester’s descriptions of both Antoinette, *his* wife, and Grambois, *his* property. Repeatedly we are shown that Antoinette, though beautiful in a strange way, means nothing to Rochester. Even as he is courting her, Rochester finds that she “meant nothing to me” (76). After the marriage, he states that “she is a stranger” and that she “annoys” him (70). She truly means nothing to

him but acquisition. Her strange, “alien” being is like the “wild” and “alien” Grambois: interesting only for his ability to unlock it with his master’s key. One assumes that once he has unlocked the “secrets,” he will find both possessions unnecessary. This stark commentary on imperialism and slavery cannot be mistaken, for Antoinette is a slave: she has lost her name, her family, her language, her right to ownership, and, eventually, her ability to control her own fate.

Rochester manages to completely enslave Antoinette by first starting with her name. Like Jane, Rochester systematically refuses to use her name. Instead of calling her “fairy” or “elf,” however, Rochester devises a completely new name for her: he calls her Bertha. He has violently replaced one identity with another (Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 269). His reasons for doing so trace back to Antoinette’s mother, who was also christened the same name. Yet Rochester has discovered that Antoinette-the-mother was insane. His informant, Antoinette-the-daughter’s disgruntled half-brother, spitefully tells him that “There is madness” (96) in the family; further, the half-brother contends that “I hear too that the girl is beautiful like her mother was beautiful, and you bewitch with her” (98 sic). Thus, Rochester purportedly fears a doppelganger of mother/daughter Antoinette-the-mad. He begins to reshape his wife by reshaping her name. Antoinette is no longer Antoinette; she is Bertha. In his supposed fear, Rochester indulges in the act of slave owner. One need only look at Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) to see a connection between naming and slave ownership; the parade of Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, and Paul A Garner—all named after Master Garner—vividly illustrates the connection between slave and slave owner/namer. The pattern of masters naming slaves highlights

why it is so critical for Sethe to name her own child as Beloved. With his naming, Rochester acknowledges that Bertha is exclusively his.

With the excuse of madness, a historically repeated excuse (Maurel 113), Rochester can increasingly distance himself from his wife. This distancing is absolutely crucial, for Rochester cannot accept his wife if he sees her as inferior. If she is the Other, if she is the alien, then he cannot find her attractive; he cannot permit her wildness. He must tame it. One way of taming “it” is to reduce Antoinette to the “it”: by removing her humanity. Rochester is very good at this art of taming, of reducing to nothing:

The cold light was on her and I looked at the sad droop of her lips, the frown between her thick eyebrows, deep as if it had been cut with a knife. As I looked she moved and flung her arm out. I thought coldly, yes, very beautiful, the thin wrist, the sweet swell of the forearm, the rounded elbow, the curve of her shoulder into her upper arm. All present, all correct. As I watched, hating, her face grew smooth and very young again, she even seemed to smile. A trick of the light perhaps. (138)

Here, Rochester studies her—like a scientist might study an object, a bug on his/her slide. These hateful words are followed with an even more chilling scene: “She may wake at any moment, I told myself. I must be quick. . . . I drew the sheet over her gently as if I covered a dead girl” (138). He is burying her alive, the most brutal form of entrapment possible. She is made into a zombie “to suit the man’s own financial, social, and sexual needs” (Hickman 191), never her own.

Antoinette is now dead to him—something loathsome, disgusting, monstrous. Her exotic beauty and wild spirit are now banished into the Other, safely removed so that he

will not be tempted to submit to the animal desire he has felt since seeing her. She is the “native ‘subject’ [who] is not almost an animal but rather the object of what might be termed the terrorism of the categorical imperative,” writes Spivak (“Three Women’s Texts” 267). Kant’s categorical imperative states that “In all creation every thing one chooses and over which one has any power, may be used *merely as means*” (qtd. in Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 267). As the colonized are always seen as inferior, they can be used for any purpose—leaving room for a sort of imperial *carte blanche*.

Rochester’s reduction of Bertha to a cipher allows him to do what he wishes with her. Without offering her any choice, Rochester has Bertha pronounced mad, hauls her to England, and locks her in Thornfield Hall. To add insult to injury, Rochester tells no one that he is married. He indulges his sexual appetite with a string of foreign women who, one assumes, he sees as “alien” and thus capable of seducing, controlling, then leaving. He conveniently forgets his wife still lives, even to the point of proposing marriage. When confronted with his attempted bigamy, he defames his wife, showing her in what he knows must be the worst possible light: as she acts like an animal, condemned to a cell and attempting to escape. In all things, Rochester, not Bertha, seems to have the last word.

Then, one might ask, how can *Wide Sargasso Sea* possibly write back to the imperialist attitudes so dominant in *Jane Eyre* and, more generally, English imperialism?

The trick to understanding Jean Rhys’s rewriting of colonization is in Bertha herself. Bertha, though certainly victimized, though clearly transformed into the imperial monster, escapes. She escapes the prison forged for her by her master. As she creeps through the darkened halls, Bertha watches as scenes from her childhood slide into life.

Aunt Cora's room suddenly reappears; the picture of the Miller's Daughter, once reduced to ash, breathes into existence once more. The ghosts of the past no longer remain there: they are no longer relics, but existing objects in a past-that-has-become-present. Here, Rhys cleverly recasts Thornfield Hall, turning it into an English version of Coulibri—a mirror image of Coulibri, which was a Creole version of an English manor. The parrot's call hauntingly echoes through the halls, following her with "*Qui est là? Qui est là?*" (189). And that is the question: Who is there? Who is there? In a world where the colonized is now reconstructing Thornsfield Hall into its own image, in a world where the dead are now arisen, what monsters walk the halls of Thornsfield/Coulibri?

As Bertha/Antoinette stalks the battlements, fire curling around her, she hears, as if through a dream world, a man's voice shouting "Bertha! Bertha!" But the words are unheeded; she does not listen to them. Gayatri Spivak writes that Rhys "makes Antoinette see her *self* as Other, Bronte's Bertha" (269), that "she must play out her role, act out the transformation of her 'self' into that fictive Other, set fire to the house and kill herself" ("Three Women's Texts" 270) in an allegory that shows imperialism's violation of self-identity. However, we may read this scene differently than Spivak. Perhaps, instead, Antoinette has realized that she is *not* Bertha. Perhaps she is once more who she was, Antoinette.⁴ In such a vision, Antoinette has become something new, something monstrously fearsome to empire: a symbol that the Other may arise against captivity, a nightmare of power collapsed. As reality and illusion blur in a typical gothic release of boundaries—occurring, in *Jane Eyre*'s depiction of the scene, as she hurtles from the battlements—Antoinette escapes:

I waited a long time after I heard her snore, then I got up, took the keys and unlocked the door. I was outside holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage. (190)

In Rhys's depiction of the scene, Antoinette is now free—she has commandeered the master's own keys and unlocked herself. She is no longer bound, and, more significantly, she understands her purpose for being where she is. She is to escape, to show that the slave can free herself. She is to destroy the property of imperialism, the foundation that makes slavery possible. She continues to roam free, a figure of rebellion to colonial rule.

Most important, however, is this: Rhys's use of ambiguity allows us to imaginatively insist that Antoinette survives, that Brontë's version of events is incorrect, a text written by the colonizer and, thus, suspect. Here, within the ambiguity of an unexpected, non-canonical escape, we find that Antoinette survives to create her own world. Rhys appropriates the text of imperialism and subverts it: she makes it her own, reclaims the textual authority of origins. Yet within the very tension of ambiguity that frees Antoinette, Rhys suggests another possible ending. She does not allow us to feel comfortable in our own conclusions, for there is always the imperial text, the text that insists on Antoinette's death—the death of all that is alien, wild, and subversive—and that imperial text can return in a “haunting [that] comes both from the past and from the future” (Maurel 112).

Gothic Nightmares Loosed: The Monster Wields a Knife

Bertha/Antoinette dances at the edges of our imagination, an elusive night terror to empire, a monster who may have escaped imperial control. This is an overwhelming, terrifying image to the forces of conquest, a postcolonial refutation of all that has been taken, of all that has been forced upon colonized territories. However, an even more terrifying image than the monster who has escaped may very well be the monster who stalks the land, wielding a knife and striking at the heart of colonial power and ideology. We see this monster unleashed in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966). Hosna, the murderer Mustafa Sa'eed's wife, finds herself married against her will to Wad Rayyes, a patriarch of the village. Her reaction is to act like a "mad woman" (132), stabbing her husband "more than ten times" (131); it is, to the villagers, "a world gone crazy" (132), one spinning out of control. *Season* spawns a once-repressed woman who will stop at nothing to claim her power to choose the man she marries. Symbolically, she castrates authority, clearly breaking from tradition. Taking much the same role is the female protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1999): Jyoti, Light, or Jasmine, a woman who "shuttled between identities" (77), "between worlds" (76). Jasmine evolves into the "madwoman in the motel" (Newman 144), at last learning the nature of evil after she is raped in her first night in America—creating one of the most memorable female killers of postcolonial literature. After the rape, Jasmine purifies herself, then proceeds to cut her tongue, "[h]ot blood dripp[ing]" from her mouth (118). Her rapist, Half-Face, sleeps, completely naked, ignorant that "Death incarnate" (119) nears: "I wanted that extra hundredth of a second when the blade bit deeper than any insect, when I jumped back as he jerked forward, slapping at his neck while blood, ribbons of bright blood,

rushed between his fingers” (118). This Jasmine, suddenly powerful in her terrifying violence, strikes against those who seek to control her, to rape her. She symbolizes the women who have been overpowered, the women who have been symbolically and truly raped by those who control the racialized and gendered Other; even more, she symbolizes victory against oppression, a terrifying, monstrous image to any who attempt to reassert imperial control in a postcolonial world.

Similarly, Salman Rushdie’s *Shame* (1983), a novel resonating with gothic horror, unfetters a terror that refuses to be chained in “a world turned upside-down” (14).⁵ Indeed, there are few postcolonial novels with quite the gothic overcasts as *Shame* (Spearey 172).⁶ We feel the idea of gothic decay from the first chapter in Omar’s home, where Omar is found, after nightmares that make him roam the mansion at night, falling “deeper and deeper into the seemingly bottomless depths of that decaying realm” (24), a decayed Third World (Afzal-Han 83). He “stumbled down corridors so long untrodden that his sandalled feet sank into the dust right up to his ankles; he discovered ruined staircases made impassable by the longago earthquakes” (24-5), earthquakes that caused staircases, like the mountains surrounding his ancestral home, to “heave up into tooth-sharp mountains and also to fall away to reveal dark abysses of fear” (25). This “colossal palace which had been abandoned long ago” (25) is crammed with antiques of the past, relics, dusty and packed together until it is almost impossible to walk—dead objects amidst which Omar is yet another object (Afzal-Khan 83). In this world, this “maze of his childhood where the minotaur of forbidden sunlight lived” (25), Omar finds skeletons, metaphorical ghosts of the past: “disembodied feelings, the choking fumes of ancient hopes, fears, loves,” a world that is “ancestor-heavy” (26). He takes to destroying these

ancestral chains, the “corpses of his useless, massacred history” (26) as it oppresses him. Fetters, bolts, chains are used to lock the outside world out and the inside world in: to keep the boundaries permanently reinforced. As in William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” (1930), the house is locked to outsiders. A dumbwaiter forbids outside access. The inner residents only communicate with the outside world by notes and use of the dumbwaiter; the outer world is only able to penetrate the ancestral home when the family is dead.⁷

Madness and monstrosity are perhaps the strongest themes in the work, embodied in the figure of Sufiya Zinobia, “born into shame for being a girl instead of a boy” (Ben-Yishai 202).⁸ *Shame* breeds a female character—one “burden[ed]” with shame “by a patriarchal society obsessed with the pursuit of honor and status” (Cook, “Methods” 410)—who teems with the shame of Pakistan until she, too, must strike against those who disempowered her; she literally disembowels, castrates, and decapitates her victims. Her first real showing of monstrosity/madness is with turkeys who simply will not silence: “Sufiya Zinobia had torn off their heads and then reached down into their bodies to draw their guts up through their necks with her tiny and weaponless hands” (143). It is a horrific image. The girl, twelve years old, sits amidst a field of “decapitated creatures with intestines instead of heads” in this “carnage” (143). Blood drips from her lips, reminding readers of the vampire. How, we may wonder, could a twelve year-old girl do this? The narrator suggests that she, like Lucy in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1891), was sleep walking “because when they found her she looked rested, as if she’d had a good deep sleep” (142). While it seems unlikely that a girl could “sleep walk” through killing 218 turkeys, the descriptions of her as sleep walking definitively link her to the vampire

tradition, particularly as she is seen with “bloodied lips” (143). We may see this as a pollution of blood, yet, unlike the European vampire myths, the pollution is not the Other penetrating English civilized society, as we saw in Rochester’s stereotyped Bertha; instead, it is the shame of the English civilized society’s colonial practices penetrating India. Is she well-rested because she allowed her repressed desires to escape? We may see such an interpretation in E. Coundouriotis’ statement that Zinobia’s “unconscious is the location of the other side of history, the repressed” (210), making her an agent of change. Is she, thus, “snoring gently amidst the corpses of the birds” (143) because she at last “discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links *sharam* [shame]⁹ to violence” (144)? Is, thus, violence the only recourse to shame, to repression? Is becoming the vampire, the monster walking amidst the shadows, the creature of terror stalking outside the fringes of society and civilization, the only escape from oppression? *Shame* seems to suggest this is the case.

As we view Sufiya Zinobia’s struggles, it seems that the only escape from the conflicting forces raging through the not-quite-Pakistan is in the figure of the monster. On the evening of her murderous rampage, Sufiya is hit with what seems the plague. Her mother, enraged with her actions, shears her hair to tiny pinpricks that make her head look on fire. On her body, “huge blotchy rashes, red and purple with small hard pimples in the middle” and “boils were forming between her toes and her back was bubbling up into extraordinary vermilion lumps” (145). If the plague were not enough to suggest the horrific monster, we also see Zinobia is “over-salivating” with “great jets of spittle” flying from her mouth (145); our narrator explains that it was as if “the dark violence which had been engendered within that small physique had turned inwards, had forsaken

turkeys and gone for the girl herself” (145). In this horrific image, we can see ghosts of Bertha from *Jane Eyre*. Her monstrosity is turning against her body even as it transforms her so that others can see it, too. Like Pakistan itself, created with violence and continuing to exist in violence (Raza 56), she is plagued by the violence she has turned against others and which must eventually turn on herself.

Zinobia’s monstrous, vengeful strike against those who have shamed her, those who have shamed Pakistan, continues. She next attacks Police Captain Ulhaq Talvar, the fiancé of her sister Good News, a fitting member of the patriarchy and, thus, a representative of power and oppression.¹⁰ With “A glazing-over of her eyes,” a glazing that again suggests sleep walking, we see her burn with shame (178). It burns within her, “a golden blaze that dimmed the rouge on her cheeks and the paint on her fingers and toes” (178) as, once more, the spirit of monstrosity descends upon her:

Omar Khayyam Shakil spotted what was going on, but too late, so that by the time he shouted ‘Look out!’ across that catatonic gathering the demon had already hurled Sufiya Zinobia across the party, and before anyone moved she had grabbed Captain Talvar Ulhaq by the head and begun to twist, to twist so hard that he screamed at the top of his voice, because his neck was on the point of snapping like straw.

Good News Hyder grabbed her sister by the hair and pulled with all her might, feeling the burning heat of that supernatural passion scorch her fingers. . . . but then she buried her teeth in his neck . . . sending his blood spurting long distances across the gathering, so that all her family

and many of the camouflaged guests began to resemble workers in a slaughterhouse. (178)

At this point, society's voice calls her a "monster" who should have been "drowned at birth" (179); we see here a tantalizing image of what she will later become as repressed desires explode from her being in gestures of violence and monstrosity (Fletcher 107). Biting, tearing, attacking males—not females—Zinobia has transformed into the Black Widow, the Gorgon, the nightmare image haunting society: a nightmare of a woman whose only weapon is her teeth, knifing through the flesh of her oppressors. She has become the "monstrous feminine—the extreme other of the cultured, rational male self, who must be resisted and ultimately annihilated" (Ng, "Nationalism" 58).

Or has she?

This is a critical question to keep in mind as we consider Zinobia's monstrosity. Time progresses, and Zinobia seemingly steps further into the character of the monster, the Beast. She marries Omar Khayyam, but Omar refuses to have sexual intercourse with her.¹¹ "She was his wife," thus, "but she was not his wife" (222); this "gives her a feeling" of "burn[ing]" (227), of shame.¹² As our narrator tells us, "[l]urking inside Sufiya Zinobia Shakil there was a Beast. We have already seen something of the growth of this unspeakable monster; we have seen how, feeding on certain emotions, it took possession of the girl" (208). The Beast, according to the narrator, slumbers, but it is not dead. Following in the behavior of most gothic villains, Omar locks up his wife:

In the following years [after Omar married her] he persuaded himself that by locking up his wife, by veiling her in walls and shuttered windows, he could save his family from the malign legacy of her blood, from its

passions and its torments (for if Sufiya Zinobia's soul was in agony, she was also the child of a frenzied woman . . .) (210)

Here we see one of the most common occurrences of madness: a woman is locked up by a man because she is "frenzied," because her blood is "malign." Patriarchal authority has been "exercised on" the female "bodies" (Grewal 126) in the most obvious manner, her isolation from society. The events that lead to Zinobia's confinement show the patriarchal power still present in Pakistan (Standberg 147), the power that remains for men to control women in the most emphatic form of control, imprisonment. Her husband imagines that he sees "flickers in her eyes . . . little pricks of yellow light" (248) representing "two beings" (248) struggling within her. His wife's "unearthly glow" and the "smouldering fire of the Beast" (249) lead him to bring her to their rooms, where he commands her to lie down. As with Jasmine, Zinobia interprets this command as a prelude to her rape; the Beast unfurls within her, her eyes burning. We are told that "[t]here was an attic room"—and we can easily see the attic as a site of gothic entrapment—where "Raza Hyder [Zinobia's father and soon to be President of Pakistan]¹³ and Omar Khaayyam carried the drugged form of Sufiya Zinobia up attic stairs" (250). Omar refuses to kill her, but he also refuses to release her:

She was to enter a state of suspended animation; Hyder brought long chains and they padlocked her to the attic beams; in the nights that followed they bricked up the attic window and fastened huge bolts to the door; and twice in every twenty-four hours, Omar Khayyam would go unobserved into that darkened room, that echo of other death-cells, to inject into the tiny body lying on its thin carpet the fluids of nourishment

and of unconsciousness, to administer the drugs that turned her . . . into sleeping-beauty instead of beauty-and-beast. (250)

Sleeping a sleep more like death than life, a “secret” (250) guiltily buried by all members of the family, Zinobia becomes the undead, a vampire who will eventually strike against those who have buried her alive. In Zinobia we find the image of many women of the past. Here we seem to find Braddon’s Lady Audley, conveniently shoved into a sanitarium and forgotten. Here we apparently find Jane’s Bertha, locked behind bars and raging against her imprisonment—unable to escape the confines of a cultural coding that rigidly locks her in place.

Or do we, instead, find Rochester’s Antoinette, escaping her lethal bars amidst the flames of captivity?

Intriguingly, in *Shame*, we are reminded that boundaries can be crossed. We feel that, perhaps, the Beast has not entirely been imprisoned, locked away in its cage. “The Beast had nodded off again,” writes Rushdie, “but the bars of its cage had been broken” (208): the boundaries have been crossed, and the monster has escaped its confines (Spearey 171). The monster now prowls the streets of the metropolitan city:

When Omar Khayyam Shakil saw the Sufiya-Zinobia-shaped hole in a bricked-up window, the idea came to him that his wife was dead. Which is not to say that he expected to find her lifeless body on the lawn below the window, but that he guessed that the creature inside her, the hot thing, the yellow fire, had by now consumed her utterly, like a house-gutting blaze. . . . What had escaped, what now roamed free in the unsuspecting air, was not Sufiya Zinobia Shakil at all, but something more like a principle, the

embodiment of violence, the pure malevolent strength of the Beast. (256-7)

The “Beast is born” (210), and it has rocked the foundations of Pakistan. It is anger, rage, repression, blowing through the streets of an “unsuspecting” city. It is a fire that will destroy what once was, a monstrosity that society fears, desires to cage, but cannot hold, an irrationality that contradicts our belief in a stable reality (Cook, “Methods” 410): a madness, an upturning of norms that throws the world on its axes. Rather than a mindless creature “barely allowed to be a human subject,” as Andrew Enda Duffy (102) describes Zinobia, we find a woman who can no longer be contained—a woman deemed *monstrous* by society simply *because she cannot be contained*.

Monsters, we are told, have “no place . . . in civilized society”; moreover, “if such creatures roam the earth, they do so out on its uttermost rim, consigned to the peripheries” (210). Towards the end of *Shame* a monster walks the uttermost rims. Rumors of a beast with a “[b]lack head, pale hairless body, awkward gait” (268) spread throughout all of Pakistan. The monster decapitates men, slaughters animals, kills farmers, and dismembers victims, gradually circling closer and closer to those who have imprisoned her. However, Zinobia does not remain on the peripheries, an outcast who is “oppressed even by the oppressed” (Standberg 148); instead, she strikes at the heart of the metropolitan center, carrying her rage with her as Pakistan crumbles into political upheaval. She penetrates and destroys the male patriarchy that retains power over the lives of women (Deszcz 37). She is the monster of suppressed anger at corrupt practices, “the principle of punishment” (Mathur 88), yet she is so much more. She is the angry postcolonial female subject regaining power to overthrow those who would oppress her.

Zinobia, Rushdie shows us, is the container of all the shame that India feels for its colonization, its continued ideological violence; Zinobia is the contained shame of colonization exploding. Whether this explosion is ultimately destructive remains ambiguous. Andrew Ng persuasively argues that the ruling forces of nationalism transfer their violence from the colonizing other to the female other (“Nationalism” 64); in such a situation, the female has no escape route from her current entrapment. She may continue to resist oppression, but she will be violently expelled (Ng, “Nationalism” 64), pushed to the outer boundaries until she once more returns. Yet within this system of return lingers a possibility of empowerment, for she will always threaten the stability of male patriarchy.

Monsters, as we can see in *Shame*, continue to roam in postcolonial gothic, uncontained, uncontainable, terrifying images walking along the fringes of society. They are symbols of power against the oppressions of tradition and gender, against the ideological system of neocolonialism that insists on inserting its fingers into the postcolonial world. Monsters, thus, in postcolonial literature are beings of terror not to the postcolonial subject, but to those who would wish to enslave or perpetuate the hegemony of the past. Monsters, once meant to linger on the peripheries of society, the margins—silenced and contained within rigid boundaries—have been released into the metropolitan center, turning that center upside-down until the boundaries continue to collapse.

Notes

¹ The descriptions given to John Reed are remarkably close to those given to Antoinette, particularly by Brontë. She is given a “discoloured face” (283), most likely associated with syphilis. Her eyes, rather than “bleared,” are “red” while her body has “blackened lineaments” (283) and her lips are swollen. Additionally, she is described as “corpulent” (293), which matches the large size attributed to Reed.

² Brocklehurst’s daughters and wife are described quite exquisitely: they appear “in velvet, silk, and furs,” with “grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim . . . fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled” (64). This is all the more humorous since they enter the scene directly after Brocklehurst’s lecture on vanity.

³ One of the more amusing connections that can be developed here is the Lion’s Den, for Rochester is repeatedly described (in *Jane Eyre*, at least) as possessing leonine attributes. On page 112, we see a more indirect reference: “It was exactly one mask of Bessie’s Gytrash,—a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head.” Rochester’s dog is being described as the “lion-like creature.” Next, on page 316, we see a much stronger description: “‘Jane!’ recommenced he, with a gentleness that broke me down with grief, and turned me stone-cold with ominous terror—for this still voice was the pant of a lion rising.” Thus, when I write that Jane is entering the Lion’s Den, I am only partially facetious.

⁴ In another intriguing reading, Kathleen Renk interprets the scene as an unconscious form of magic where Antoinette has seen herself, trapped within the guilt

mirror as an “English lady” (115), and she must summon Christophine to save herself through the connections available in female community.

⁵ M. D. Fletcher argues that *Shame* is actually an apologue using satiric devices. It harshly mocks the political structure of Pakistan while defusing a sense of the fable or fairy tale through allusions to Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty, and the Forty Thieves (99; see also Mathur 86-7). Indeed, Justyna Deszcz writes that *Shame* exposes and re-inscribes many of the traditionally male-dominated fairy tales of Western tradition, especially as Zinobia transforms into the Beast (32). Overall, though, it shows the danger of “sexual, cultural, and political repression and humiliation,” a “seamless web with shame as its centre” that “blows up in your face” in violence (107). It has also been seen as a vicious parody of Pakistan—an “exposé of a corrupt and inequitable politics and culture” (Hussain 6)—with “Pakistan’s internal life . . . portrayed in the discrete parameters of a family squabble” (Brennan 110; see also Bader 30). We can expand this, however, to state, too, that Rushdie engages on a project of historical re-presentation in *Shame*, one where the margins are re-injected into the historical construct (Grewal 124).

⁶ One of the key gothic elements in *Shame* is the male and female plot. Both plots tended to see the opposite sex as the threatening Other; however, in Rushdie, the plot lines collapse into one another (Ng, “Nationalism” 57).

⁷ Even the family’s death is suspect, an ambiguity peculiarly gothic in nature. The three sisters (Chhunni, Munnee, and Bunny Shakil) merely vanish, leaving no traces

behind. Do they continue to exist, perpetuating their connections with a dead past, their pride in high bloodlines and previous wealth? Do they die? Readers never truly know.

⁸ Sufiya Zinobia's name can be traced to the *Sufis*, identified by Timothy Brennan as a "Muslim mystical sect" that embraces love over fear. However, the mystical sect of love, as represented in her, "degenerates into the blind savagery of her arbitrary beheadings, and the sect of love becomes just another version of . . . demagogic order" (Brennan 111; see also Grewal 131). As a potent parody of a "political and cultural dream . . . turned into a nightmare" (Chandra 82), then, *Shame* shows us that all of the different rulers hold as their foundations similar principles: oppression. Even more, Rufus Cook writes that the "alien idea" of Pakistan "has been imposed by outsiders on an indigenous local culture" ("Place and Displacement" par. 7); thus, the very ideologies of those in power are corrupted by colonial impulses. These principles lead to explosions of violence from the oppressed, particularly in a patriarchal society (Dayal 44), and even to questioning notions of gendered, cultural, and national identities (Dayal 49).

⁹ However, as Rushdie tells us, *sharam* is only partly translatable, for it means much more than *shame*. It is also "embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts" (33). That Rushdie entitles his novel *Shame* knowing that *sharam* is so untranslatable underscores the untranslatability of all experience and histories, the lack of a fixed, stable human subject or object. As Nasser Hussain states, "Rushdie's narratives do not simply chronicle history," but, instead, they "seek to relate a history and a past, and yet find that such an ostensibly simple project is

fraught with anxiety and contradiction” (8). Even more, *Shame* is written, ironically, in the ““Master’s language”” of English (Raza 59), with the understanding that readers of English will feel themselves culturally displaced, too, within Rushdie’s work (Raza 59).

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, Good News was originally supposed to marry Haroun Harappa, but, scandalously, she refuses to do so and marries Talvar Ulhaq instead. As “her mother’s favourite daughter” (172), Good News risks throwing her family into disarray. The father insists that there “must be a wedding, the girl must be handed over to a husband, any husband,” for doing so will “cause less of a stir than kicking her out” (174). Thus, even Good News, the supposed favorite, must yield to the father’s dictums of marriage—though she is able to at least control who she marries.

¹¹ Born into shame as a girl who is retarded, Zinobia represents the essence of shame—and she is married to the essence of shamelessness, Omar, who has been “forbidden by his three shameful mothers to feel shame” (Ben-Yishai 202). Caught in the dialectic, shame and shamelessness “are no longer as threatening since they are contained by their very dependency” (Ben-Yishai 203), yet the balance does eventually explode. Is the explosion—Zinobia’s monstrosity—a form of power, a means of speech for the subaltern? We may see it is as such, perhaps, as the female (silenced, trapped) has escaped her confines and her marriage.

¹² Her marriage, thus, becomes another convention or fairy tale exposed by Rushdie’s pen, for it “does not bring about any of the significant changes that could be expected from a fairytale scenario” (Deszcz 34). She has no power in choosing her own

birth, sexual experience, or identity, fading into the cultural stereotypes until she explodes in violence (Standberg 147).

¹³ Raza, Brennan has explained, is modeled after Pakistan's ruler Zia ul-Haq. Even more of interest to us, though, is his obvious link with British patriarchy, as *Raza* and *raja* are distinctly linked (Brennan 110). He, like his predecessors, shows no real change from previous British practices, a neocolonialist in power. Thus, the political system reveals itself to be a palimpsest, an overlapping of colonial ideas and patriarchal fundamentalism and dictatorships. Looking at its multi-genre nature, spreading across everything from “postmodern oral tale” to “the Grotesque,” Jung Su intriguingly states that Pakistan is itself a palimpsest, a “fictional world, in which the Iskander-Raza legend is superimposed upon the Bhutto-ul-Haq antagonism” (77). We can see, then, the political agenda behind Rushdie's work, one that creates “ruptures” and allows “the author to intervene into the farcical, violent ‘fairyland’” (Su 79); such an intervention allows histories to be reinvented—and the silenced to move from the margins.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE STREETS AFLAME IN THE POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC NOVEL:
TONGUES OF FIRE

Readers of postcolonial gothic will notice a common trope connecting many novels: fire. To some audiences, this may seem to mimic the fire in Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), where tongues of fire reduce the Inquisition to ruins. Postcolonial gothic novels abound with heat and flames, frequently walking the line between despair, madness, destruction, and hope. Even more intriguingly, the trope stretches across decades and across vast distances, from the shores of Southern Asia to the coasts of California. Some of the more exemplary occurrences of fire and heat can be found in Anita Desai's *The Clear Light of Day* (1980), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1990), and Chris Abani's *The Virgin in Flames* (2007). For these novels, fire creates an opportunity for a new future—even if that future may be mingled with despair.

Flame in the Empire: "Civil Insurrection and Fires"

Flames have long dominated the gothic tradition, breathing right beside the "apparitions from the past" and the "charnel house and the madhouse" (Sedgwick 10). Flames flicker in the halls of *Jane Eyre*'s (1847) Thornsfield, "burning above and below" as Bertha plunges from the battlements, her black hair "streaming against the flames" (C. Brontë 428). The "mass of flame" (426) leaves Thornsfield "quite a ruin . . . [a] dreadful calamity!" (426), and in this fire we can see the destruction of patriarchal control over the

white female—even as the demonized Bertha, symbol of the indigenous subject, plunges to her death. Similar flames can be seen in H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). On an island unknown, undetermined, fire spreads through Dr. Moreau’s edifice: “Against the warm dawn great tumultuous masses of black smoke were boiling up out of the enclosure, and through their stormy darkness shot flickering threads of blood-red flame” (Wells 142). These fires are, in some novels, the flames writhing through patriarchal institutions that must be destroyed or, horrifyingly, the flames destroying those who would fight the Catholic Church; they are not, unfortunately, the flames incinerating class divisions or imperial domination. Buildings of monstrosity, castles, and homes perish amidst the searing heat. In other works they serve as the flickering fires of madness glinting eerily within character’s eyes, that frequently lead to more substantial flames as edifices crumble into ruins.

Many European gothic novels use flames to destroy hated powers, patriarchal systems of control that have existed well beyond their time. Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth* presents readers with a dismantled Inquisition, where spiritual power, as represented in the Catholic Church, falls in its own *auto da fé*. In Maturin the “flames rose and roared in triumph above the towers of the Inquisition,” with even the heavens aflame (267). Maturin is not the only European gothic writer to destroy the Inquisition through flames. Frederick Marryat, writing *The Phantom Ship* in 1839, presents a similar image of the Catholic Church, yet his is more disturbing. In Marryat’s novel, Amine, who is not Catholic and is of “Arab blood” (45), attempts to follow Catholic traditions. She asks the right questions and says the right things, but she does not truly believe the Catholic creed forced upon her; as she learns more of its traditions, well after having

married the protagonist Philip, Amine returns to the ways of her mother, practicing what the Catholic Church claims is sorcery and asking insightful questions that unnerve the Church. The Inquisition eventually catches Amine. For Marryat's Amine, there is no escape. She refuses to renounce her heritage as sorcery; she refuses to embrace Catholic Christianity, for to her the Church has proven "how well they acted up to the mild doctrines of the Saviour—those of charity, good-will, forbearing one another, forgiving one another" (363) by its "celebration" (363) of the *auto da fé*. Eventually, flames encompass her as she is burned alive.

Indeed, colonization and the Church have long been linked together, an idea hinted at in Marryat's Amine. Tim Fulford, following in the footsteps of Edward Said, has written that colonization focuses on finding "impurities" in its colonial converts, for Europe viewed "immorality as a colonial import" (168). If authorities "subordinated the colonized . . . to their authority" and purified immorality in colonies, they could do so at home while at the same time justifying their rule through racial discourse (Fulford 168).¹ Finding "impurities" was apparently not a problem because of the very nature of conversion, and Marryat's novel uncovers much of this thought process. In colonized Goa, for example, Marryat writes that "accusations of sorcery and magic were much more frequent than at the Inquisitions at other places, arising from the customs and ceremonies of the Hindoos being very mixed up with absurd superstitions" (321). Additionally, "These people, and the slaves from other parts, very often embraced Christianity to please their masters" (321), only to be seared by the flames of an *auto da fé* when they practiced the religious callings of their hearts. Trapped within the religious

creed of their conquerors, the colonized face a Gothic horror straight from Europe: a vindictive, tyrannizing Church.²

Yet another horrifying use of fire can be seen in the male-oriented descriptions of women found in many European novels of the nineteenth century. Viewing the madness suggested in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, we can almost see this madness as an oppression of the female subject. Fairly early in the novel, a portrait shows Lady Audley's wickedness. The portrait shows a "strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes" (70), exposing the "monstrosities" within the "beautiful fiend" (71). Dressed in "crimson," the fabric spreading "like flames, her fair head peeping out the lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace" (71), Lady Audley's flame-ridden description easily suggests madness and moral decay. Braddon seemingly tries to convince readers that Lady Audley is mad, describing her as "unnatural": "An *unnatural* crimson spot burned in the centre of each rounded cheek, and an *unnatural* luster gleamed in her great blue eyes. She spoke with an *unnatural* clearness, and an *unnatural* rapidity" (313 emphasis added). She displays all the classic signs of madness, according to the wise Dr. Mosgrave, who reports that "she has the hereditary taint in her blood" and "She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence. . . . She is dangerous!" (379). Indeed, she is the very one to set fire to her servant Phoebe's home in merciless retaliation for Phoebe's betrayal and to attempt to murder her husband's nephew, Mr. Audley. In a later work, the unnatural fire and heated blood associated with Lady Audley transforms into the undead in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Lucy, rather than innocence, suddenly shows uncleanness: "Her lips were crimson with fresh blood," and her eyes, like Lady Audley's, are "unclean and full of

hell-fire” (203). Men realize they must destroy her, and when they do they congratulate themselves on finally bringing her peace. Fire, then, becomes a sign of madness, yet madness can be seen as dissent against social convention, especially in the hands of the oppressed, who all too frequently remain in silence.

It is this dissent, this use of fire to burn the institutions of power that we frequently encounter in both Imperial Gothic and postcolonial gothic novels, linking them definitively with their European predecessors. However, the “civil insurrections and fires” (Sedgwick 10) of the past become, in postcolonial gothic literature, the nightmarish apocalypse of a world facing its beginning and ending as the forces of colonization disappear from the land. One system of political structure is removed—a powerful victory that must not be ignored—but what replaces it? Has it even truly vanished, or has it remained in disguise, an echo of imperial ideology lingering in the current political environment? Is there, indeed, a path to be created, a path of hope, in this wasteland of disrepair, where all burns?

Fires of Dissent: The City Ablaze

European gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frequently arose out of a climate that was cold, filled with rains and frequent fog. As we see in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a typical gothic landscape moaned with the rush of the wind or remained crusted with ice and snow: “Yesterday afternoon set in misty and cold. I [Lockwood] had half a mind to spend it by my study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights” (11). *Wuthering Heights* itself presents an even more inhospitable picture, with its “bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost”

and “air [that] made me shiver through every limb” (11). Tall mountains, stunted trees, cliffs that plummet to depths far, far below the eye’s sight all haunt gothic texts of the period, as recognizable a gothic trope as the vampire or the crypt.

Against this stark landscape we find postcolonial gothic, a suffocating environment of heat and flame, the air almost impossible to breathe: the home to millions of Third World residents. It is a “daemonic double” of “heat and dust” to Europe’s cold environment, one that, to imperial forces, invokes fear and legitimizes conquest (Bhabha, *Location* 243). To Arundhati Roy, the “daemonic double” is the heat that melts ice, sweltering, where “the air smell[s] of Something Burning” (11). To others, it is a “flat, baked, violent land” (Mukherjee 44), where the soil is “so dry it grays and crumbles like ash” (Mukherjee 62). Burning, smoke, desolation become central images in postcolonial gothic, transformed into “the hot firewind of apocalypse” (Rushdie, *Shame* 59) that contains within it not only the rape of a land conquered by foreign forces but also the rage of a resistant people searching for ways to deal with the legacy of oppression they face as well as the partitioning of their land and people.

Violence, in postcolonial gothic, is inextricable from heat. In the Caribbean, Coulibri plantation erupts in flames, “burning” against “the yellow-red sky [that] was like sunset,” blazing until “[n]othing would be left” (Rhys 44). Burned by those once enslaved, Coulibri stands as a symbol of the collapse of an oppressive regime. Moving to India, the violence is also forcefully portrayed as the world explodes:

The walls of her [Bilquis’] father’s Empire puffed outwards like a hot puri while that wind like the cough of a sick giant burned away her eyebrows . . . and tore the clothes off her body until she stood infant-naked in the

street; but she failed to notice her nudity because the universe was ending,
and in the echoing alienness of the deadly wind her burning eyes saw
everything come flying out, seats, ticket books, fans, and then pieces of
her father's shattered corpse and the charred shards of the future.

(Rushdie, *Shame* 59)

Anger, resentment, rage all hurl from the “moth-eaten partition[ing] that chopped up the old country and handed Al-Lah a few insect-nibbled slices” (57), the “improbable” (57) knives that struck through a once-united land and dissected it, erecting invisible barbed wire between two peoples who had been one. This is not the rage called for in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961/1963 trans.). Rather, it is the rage of people turned, through the drawing of artificial borders, against one another rather than against those who have enslaved them.

Anita Desai provides us with a comparable blast of rage. In *Heat and Dust* we open to a scene of wilting heat, the “blank white glare of the summer sun” (1) pounding the earth below in the garden “abandoned to dust and neglect” (1). Desai's landscape chokes with heat; here, “there was no breeze: the heat dropped out of the sky and stood before them like a sheet of foil” (10). Knife-like, a foil of heat stabbing into its residents, the air can almost be grasped; what is weightless slips into heaviness. This world is, to a European audience, hell; its “hot, sulphur-yellow wind” (21) blowing across a “scorching earth” (113), with its “acrid smoke” and “dust seething in the air” (113), stands distinctly apart from the moors of England.

The “sulphur-yellow” land erupts into hostility at Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Bim, who walks unaware through the streets of Delhi, notices that the

“main street of Darya Ganj did look strangely empty and rather menacing,” with shopkeepers slamming shutters dawn and people “unnaturally engrossed” (92). Raja hears the news and predicts ““there’ll be more riots—killing—they’ll slaughter every Muslim they can find—anywhere”” (93-4). Amidst this chaos, Raja, his body “boil[ing] with impatience” (95) and his fever rising, prepares to leave for Hyderabad. In this, the family, like India, splinters, fragmenting into incohesive bits that seem impossible to bring back together:

. . . [A] distraught Aunt Mira crawled out of her room and watched Raja pack with appalled eyes, pressing her trembling fingers to her lips. Bim tried to persuade her to go back to her room. She wept. In exasperation, Raja gave up packing and flung himself down onto his bed. To tell the truth, he was exhausted and could feel his temperature rising. It was heavy as lead but it rose, as inexorably as the mercury in a thermometer. The heat enclosed the house and all of them in it, sulphur-yellow in colour and tinged, like an egg-yolk, with blood. (96)

Bim feels “a rumbling and shaking of danger” as he prepares to leave (96), despair roiling through her as she sees the family shattering beneath the fires of dissent. Sulfur, blood, and violence all become part of a landscape divided. India detonates as religion turns on religion, as neighbor turns on neighbor.

However, out of this sulfurous backdrop, we may find, by the end of the novel, a path of hope; this path of hope can best be represented in the family rose walk that “had been maintained almost as it was” (1) with its fragrant petals set amidst a bleak landscape. Here, where Tara and Bim once walked, where “Tara had danced and

skipped” (1), we feel a sense of healing. Bim, hoping to escape the “bright light of day [that] cut into her temples” (172), treads through the “arid yellow dust” of the garden to the rose walk. There, amidst the “crimson roses, all edged with black now in this scorching heat” (173), once-estranged Tara joins her—and holds her hand, which they never did, “even as children” (173). This connection, the possibility of a healing even stronger than what existed as children, suggests to us that they can find a new path through their misunderstandings (Thaggert 100). Later, we find something even more promising:

They sat in silence then, the three of them [Baba, Bim, Tara], for now there seemed no need to say another word. Everything had been said at last, cleared out of the way finally. There was nothing left in the way of a barrier or a shadow, only the clear light pouring down from the sun. They might be floating in the light—it was as vast as the ocean, but clear, without colour or substance or form. It was the lightest and most pervasive of all elements and they floated in it. They found the courage, after all, to float in it and bathe in it and allow it to pour onto them, illuminating them wholly, without allowing them a single shadow to shelter in. (177)

“After all” they have been through, after the divisions that have tried to tear their family apart, they now bathe in light. Desai has, through this passage, transvaluated fire and heat into something wonderful, something healing, a lightness that allows no shadows: a peace that may not be perfect, for there is pain in the light of understanding, in the clearness of unhindered sight, but there, they may “float.” There, they can shed the heaviness, the choking, cloying heat and dust that has divided their family and their country.

Creating a New Language: History Reconstructed in the Ashes

While Anita Desai offers us a path of peace, the postcolonial gothic “daemonic double” often smolders with violence instead, bombs devastating everything: people, homes, nations. This theater of violence can be seen in Vyvyane Loh’s *Breaking the Tongue* (2004), set in World War II during the fall of Singapore. The novel brutally depicts the battle Japan and Great Britain waged for war-devoured Singapore, which smells of “burning sulphur and singed flesh” (299):

The fire has been raging for six hours already. The central fire-fighting unit has been at work since the early hours of dawn. . . . Almost nobody lives at home these days; most have evacuated their districts and headed to the city, staying with whatever relatives and friends can be found, in shelters, churches, temples and even in frail makeshift tents in the smaller alleys. (299)

Bombs drop, destroying homes and people alike. Fires rage through the city, burning buildings with ease, creating a hell of sulfur and flame. As the forces of conquest tighten control, Singapore is no longer allowed a voice. Its history is removed, controlled, its tongue broken. “There is no further use for the tongue,” we are told as we, too, are placed in the role of victim, “and it will soon rot” (488).³ In this world of destruction, speech and history are co-opted into “muteness” (488), but there is one possible hope: “[w]ords, history, narrative can all be manipulated” (489). To “out-write death,” thus, “[y]ou will require a new language” (489), a new speech. The apocalypse is death, but the story can be re-narrated, recreated. In this, we find the slight possibility of hope through the destruction of all that exists in the postcolonial world, the postcolonial “crypt” (Punter,

Postcolonial 21), to be replaced by a new narrative, a new story of imaginative possibilities.

Similarly, Calcutta-born author Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* plunges readers into a shadow-world of imaginative histories: reconstructed histories where the shades of the past live and breathe in the present. *The Shadow Lines* follows the stories of a Calcutta-born young man (who is unnamed) and his often-divisive family. Ghosh carefully develops the connections between our narrator's family and the Prices of London: British descendants of a colonial administrator who befriended the narrator's patriarch in India. We gradually see how intricately the families are connected when Ghosh begins to unravel the family secret that has haunted our narrator for years. As Ghosh unravels this family secret, boundaries slowly dissolve on multiple levels. Calcutta and Dhaka, London and India—lands impossibly removed from one another—become one another, maps imaginatively overlaying one another in what can only be seen as a palimpsest of the geographical past, of political identities, and of histories. Calcutta becomes Dhaka, London becomes India, and the dead become alive. World War Two's Nazi bombing in England intersects with the fires of riots, the violence of civil unrest in Bengal's partitioning. In this shadow-world, violence erupts, families tear apart, and lives burn in the flame of rebellion, all told in a story that reaches from the shores of Great Britain during World War II to the turbulent streets of twentieth-century Bengal. Whether this shadow-world brims with hope or with despair remains questionable.

Central to Ghosh's shadow-world are memories of the subaltern, memories once silenced and buried within the national discourses of history. These stories suddenly spring alive as our narrator attempts to understand his own background as well as the

tragedy that has silenced his family. Among the subaltern narratives we find Ila, a wealthy indigenous woman who cannot accept her heritage or her culture. Ila even sarcastically tells the narrator that she abhors “the pettiness of lives like [his], lived out in the silence of voiceless events in a backward world” (102): she calls her own world backwards, true neocolonialism at its strongest and representative of the destruction that all too often occurs between postcolonial indigenous subjects. For her, the only salvation is to marry Nick Price, yet Nick descends from a British colonial administrator ruling in the very regime that colonized Ila’s people. Added to the silenced memories of Ila, Ghosh tells us of the violence that tore through Bengal at its partitioning. In this narrative lurks the central tragedy that haunts our narrator, an unexplained death in Dhaka. To unravel this mysterious death, Ghosh introduces us to Tha’mma, the narrator’s grandmother.

Importantly, Tha’mma’s own family in Dhaka stands divided, the house literally sundered between different generations and sides of the family—just as, of course, India itself is divided by cartographical lines. Quite literally, “a wooden partition wall” (121) has been added to the family home, which had once “like a honeycomb” (119) contained every “branch” of the family (119). During the turbulent partitioning of Bengal, the narrator’s family journeys from Calcutta to Tha’mma’s home in Dhaka to save Tha’mma’s uncle Jethamoshai. Unfortunately, their journey ends in tragedy: in the death of Tridib, an intelligent, politically knowledgeable man. Tridib died saving both Jethamoshai and May Price, who had also tried to save Jethamoshai against a mob. One of the greatest tragedies in this story, other than Tridib’s death itself, is that it is never an official narrative. Instead, it is concealed, never added to the official story of the partitioning; we see this same trend of concealment replicated in the narrator’s family, for

they refuse to discuss the tragedy. It is only through piecing together the often confusing narratives of varying sources that the narrator can at all understand what truly happened to Tridib, who he had been told died in some “sort of accident” involving “hooligans” and “ordinary ruffians” (234). The narrator does not understand the truth of what happened—that Tridib died due to the riots that erupted in 1964, that he died trying to save Jethamoshai and May—until much later in his life.

It is perhaps unsurprising that in this world, as with Salman Rushdie’s work, we focus on boundaries: how the artificially added walls between people and places are useless, for, as we see in the riots of 1964, the fire of religious ideology spreads before the governments can even begin to stop it. We are told, “But if there aren’t any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where’s the difference then? And if there’s no difference, both sides will be the same; it’ll be just like it used to be before” (148-9). Even more, “The border isn’t on the frontier; it’s right inside the airport” (149), making the border meaningless and ambivalent. A country once embracing its differences now refuses them, partitioning its people into controlling lines that divide a nation (Gabriel 44)—lines that Ghosh removes, if only for a short time. The shadow lines between countries and times vanish. World War Two sets our stage:

The realities of the bombs and torpedoes and the dying was easy enough to imagine—mere events, after all, recorded in thousands of films and photographs and comic books. But not that other infinitely important reality: the fact that they *knew*; that even walking down that street, that evening, they [Tresawsen and his friends] knew what was coming—not the details, nor the timing perhaps, but they knew . . . that their world, and

in all probability they themselves, would not survive the war. (Ghosh 66-7)

Bombs, torpedoes, and battles of the past lead us to poison and fire in the partitioning of India. Caught in the middle of a situation he cannot hope to understand, on the day the riots begin, our narrator—who is unnamed, someone who “has not fully recognized or understood himself” (Sircar 144) and who could represent both no one and all postcolonial subjects—is first unsure why things seem different. He climbs on his school bus and abruptly notices that “only a dozen other boys [were] in it, and they were sitting on a bench at the back, huddled together against the emptiness of the bus” (195). He finds that it is because Calcutta’s water has been poisoned. His day, unfortunately, worsens. The students arrive at school only to find rioting; here they hear the “uniquely frightening note in the sound of those voices—not elemental, not powerful, like the roar of an angry crowd—rather, a torn, ragged quality; a crescendo of discords which you know . . . to be the authentic sound of chaos” (197). Sirens echo of fire trucks, and through the windows the students glimpse “a column of grey smoke rising into the sky” (198).

Forced into an impromptu holiday as the land erupts into flames, the students flee school. They confront a scene similar to the scene Bim confronted in *Clear Light*:

The pavements, usually thronged with vendors and passers-by, were eerily empty now—except for squads of patrolling policemen. All the shops were shut, even the paan-stalls at the corners: none of us had ever seen *those* shut before. . . . The pavements were not quite as empty now; we could see knots of men hanging around at corners. They were quiet, watchful; they seemed to be waiting for something. (Desai 198)

That “something” breaks, menacingly, as stones hurl through the streets and at the bus. A “mob mill[s]” towards them, and our narrator stares in fear. “The streets had turned themselves inside out,” we find, for “our city had turned against us” (199). This violence, though not filled with bombs and torpedoes, has the same effect. It produces fear; it kills. It divides one person from another and serves as a replay of a history far removed, both geographically and chronologically: the violence of one war merging with that of the next.

India’s buried history of violence, undiscovered by our narrator until he can ignore it no longer, exists as part of a shadow-reality the government prefers to forget since it possesses “no use” (226). The truth of the riots is quickly forgotten by the very people who experienced but did not understand them. “TWENTY-NINE KILLED IN RIOTS” (218), our narrator discovers, a number to be superseded by more: “CURFEW IN CALCUTTA, POLICE OPEN FIRE, 10 DEAD, 15 WOUNDED” (219) and “FOURTEEN DIE IN FRENZY OFF KHULNA” (223).⁴ Couched in these numbers are real deaths, real families impersonally excised from their loved ones, real victims struck by the “carnage” (223) they could not foresee. Chillingly, we are told that the statistics of deaths are impossible to obtain: “There are no reliable estimates of how many people were killed in the riots of 1964. The number could stretch from several hundred to several thousand” (225). Caught in this conflagration of human tempers, people on both sides of the partition try to save each other: “there were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives, and equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims” (225). These “ordinary people” (225) remain silent and frequently silenced heroes, both by death and by the buried history of a devastating

split in the nation, writes Anjali Roy (45). One of the “ordinary people” silenced by the riots, Tridib is murdered, his throat cut and symbolically silenced. Tridib, though, is silenced, for he has attempted to subvert the government’s official discourse through the process of oral story telling, the process of reinventing the history his country’s government has buried (Bagchi 189).⁵ In *The Shadow Lines*, thus, Ghosh shows us a possibility where the master narrative confronts an alternative narrative (Mondal 20).

From this nightmare world of riots and bloodshed, of violence and flame destroying everything, Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* brings back the dead; his work crosses the borders of life and death to “[put] together” the “dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha, “Foreword” xxiii). In its reconstruction of the “dismembered past,” *The Shadow-Lines* is in many ways uniquely gothic:

The underground room, the bombed cinema, the Victoria Memorial—the novel is full of such “haunted sites” and ultimately they seem to be a metaphor for the Gothic traces that inform the contemporary Indo-British relationship and the middle-class Indian experience—haunted by Empire and nowhere more so than in Calcutta—more generally. (Thieme 69)

However, perhaps the most dramatically gothic element of Ghosh’s novel comes not from the “haunted sites” in his work, but, instead, through the utter collapse of boundaries between times and places. Gothic frequently attempts to frustrate or collapse boundaries of race, gender, and class (DeLamotte, *Perils* 56; Heiland 6), and the postcolonial gothic is no different. In *The Shadow Lines*, towards the end—as our narrator is finally uncovering the fragments of what happened to his cousin Tridib—we find him in England, experiencing a geographical boundary explosion that fuses India

with London. A past experience from his childhood, where he was hunkering in a bunker with his cousin Ila, returns to him, alive, as if the characters are really standing before him; of course, this happened in India, not London, and Tridib did not exist in the original scene. This is more than a static world where empire exists, unchanging and unchanged by the migration of the previously colonized (Sen 50); rather, this is a complete reconstruction of geopolitical ideology. In Ghosh's representation, people and nations collapse into ambivalent identities (Mongia, "Between Men" 96), their differences disappearing into similarities (Gabriel 44). Fire and the destruction of war, thus, have destroyed the boundaries that normally exist between geographies, between times, between past and present, creating a hybrid world where it seems that anything is possible.

It is important to realize, however, that Ghosh's novel focuses more on the "specificity of individual experience" rather than a "universal" experience, where people must define self against the image of self in the mirror (Mongia, "Postcolonial Identity" par. 4); in the case of Ghosh, that mirror reflects London, Calcutta, and Dhaka. Padmini Mongia's "Postcolonial Identity and Gender Boundaries in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*" helps us understand this distinction by contrasting Ghosh's novel with Joseph Conrad's novella *The Shadow Line*, where the edges of youth and maturity universally become a "shadow-line warning one that the region of early youth . . . must be left behind" (para. 3). Because of its obvious connection to Conrad's novella, *The Shadow Lines* "is a haunted site, a palimpsest offering shadow lines of other Western texts" (Thieme 69). Ghosh, however, undermines this by "challenging received notions of normalcy and nationhood at work in writers such as Kipling and Conrad" (Mongia,

“Postcolonial Identity” par. 5). Even more importantly, perhaps, “Ghosh's narrator traverses borders with ease and reinvents himself with all the liberating energy implied by the postcolonial—a condition that allows for and acknowledges dissonance rather than coherence” (Mongia, “Postcolonial Identity” par. 5). Thus, Ghosh’s imaginative reconstruction of cartography would not, to Mongia, be a universalizing principle, but a statement that similarity can be found in difference. Ghosh’s shadow lines are “far more than just the borders constructed by politicians. They are also the lines of demarcation that separate colonized and colonizer, present and past, self and image” (Thieme 65). They are the lines of human “partition[ing]” that painfully break society (Thieme 66).

If colonial forces emphasized “conquest through division” (Sen 50), Ghosh is showing us unification through collapsed identities and boundaries. Tridib is impossibly present (though absent, as he is a ghost, as are all of the images the narrator sees) in a time and place that he should not contain. For the diasporic exile, home is both familiar and unknown (Barat 219), creating an unhomeliness that readers of gothic have come to easily recognize. Thus, Ghosh is creating, in this impossible space and time, a lost space, an “other space” where people torn from their pasts and their native lands can again recover them (Barat 219). We find that the past and present are seen not as synchronous, but as fused realities, circular, diachronic possibilities. Even more, it seems that this slipping possibility can only be achieved when history is untrapped from the Eurocentric prison of linear and geographic possibilities, a burning of the past that allows new paths to be struck. If maps are, indeed, tools of power and control that “tell single stories, [where] alternative versions of a past are either ignored or erased” (Mallot 261), then Ghosh has allowed us to see, within the shadow lines of his story, the breaking

boundaries of geographies and times in the alternative landscapes where people are not divided by artificial national borders (Gabriel 47). In such a world, the lines between people function more as “mirrors” that highlight not the differences between nationalities, but the similarities: a notion emphasized by diaspora and migration, where the geopolitical lines of maps collapse as people move across national borders (Mallot 273). This is the hope that springs from Ghosh’s text, where all partitions are not permanent.

Ghosh definitely offers us possible paths to hope, like Desai. However, we must remember that in this combination of past and present as well as geographical mixtures, not all people survive. Tridib, obviously, arises as a victim of the anger firing through India. Ila, Tridib’s niece, refuses to embrace her heritage. She travels to England, the land of her people’s conquerors, because “she’s greedy” (77). Perhaps more sadly, Ila yells that she wishes to be “Free of *you!*” to the narrator, “Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you” (87).⁶ Running from her culture, she marries a womanizing, likely money-squandering, and probably racist British man, Nick, who holds many jobs and none. Nick may well represent the malaise of Great Britain after colonization—and Ila may well represent the problematic diasporic postcolonial subject who cannot confront or accept her past, who cannot live in the present though she strives to do so by abandoning her history. Memory, in Ghosh’s novel, is “enormously productive and enabling, but also traumatic and disabling; it liberates, and stunts, both the individual imagination and social possibilities” (Kaul 125-6). It is both savior and destroyer. Caught in the flames of dissent, in the fire of a world falling apart, Ila, Tridib, and the narrator both create and destroy the possibilities for a future.

Burning towards Apocalypse: "Life's Outsiders" Crying in the Ashes

Lost, but for the flames we drag
through dark streets; smoke and dust
Aho je la, aho je la, aho jengeje, aho jengeje
.....
And this— The crackle
of burning firewood, a train of palm fronds
like hungry tongues licking the street,
parched from the intensity. (Abani, "Fire" 1-11)⁷

As with much of Chris Abani's work, in "Fire" (2004/2005) we find flames, smoke, and dust darkening the scenery, creating a perversely nightmarish realm where readers are "lost," "drag[ging]" through the wasted landscape.⁸ The only hope we find, if we find hope at all, emerges in the poem's final line: "This is how we write love" (14). In this "parched" land, we find love amidst the destruction; however, we are never quite certain that this love is positive, for it, like the scenery surrounding it, seems to smolder. Into such an interpretive framework leaps Chris Abani's *The Virgin in Flames*, an apocalyptic novel set in the nightmare world of not New Delhi or Calcutta, not London, but Los Angeles. In Abani's novel we encounter the rigorous forces of postcolonial diaspora in a truly multicultural America. Evoking the forces of postcolonial diaspora, Abani brings to us the blood-drenched fields of Rwanda and the cultural void of missing Igbo family histories, yet he also vividly portrays other forms of cultural conflict and loss, including the nightmares of the Jewish Holocaust. Perhaps more than any other novel discussed in this dissertation, thus, Abani's *Virgin* illustrates in graphic detail the cultural synthesis

Paul Gilroy describes in *The Black Atlantic* (1993). Abani's Los Angeles is the black Atlantic, the mixture of "ethnicities and political cultures" that radiate across the world and possess a significant impact "for the peoples of the Caribbean . . . [and] for Europe, for Africa, . . . and, of course, for black America" (Gilroy 15). Unfortunately, it is a diasporic landscape erupting into violence.

Abani's Los Angeles flickers with flames that will not die, filtering down in a cloud of ash that coats everything. "The novel is framed in part by fires that are flaring up around L.A.," writes Tiphonie Yanique; the flames start "a rain of ashes" where the ashes "are mistaken for actual rain and even for snow—the latter being a miracle in L.A." (29). Indeed, the "[b]urning brush fires and ash raining from the sky provide a fittingly unsettling backdrop for Chris Abani's story of life's outsiders" (Cape 59). "Life's outsiders" include Black, a struggling artist; Iggy, a Jewish "tattoo artist with steel hooks threaded through . . . her back" (Cape 59); Ray-Ray, a dwarf addicted to drugs; Sweet Girl, a broken cross-dresser; and Bombay, a Rwandan immigrant who runs an illegal slaughter house and aggressively pursues money. These are, unmistakably, "[p]eople so broken by their world" (Yanique 29) that we can rarely see hope for them; we wish we could, for in them we see ourselves (Yanique 29), broken by a world of madness.

Virgin first confronts us with an image pulled straight from the postcolonial gothic repertoire of ruins. Abani's depiction of Los Angeles and "[t]he religion of cities"—their rites, we might say, a religion replacing the faith of old—shows us a terrifyingly broken city:

The sacraments: iridescent in its concrete sleeve, the Los Angeles River
losing faith with every inch traveled. A child riding a bicycle against the

backdrop of desolate lots and leaning chain-link fences, while in the distance, a cluster of high-rises, like the spires of old Cathedrals, trace a jagged line against the sky, ever the uneven heart of prayer. (3)

Readers of postcolonial gothic immediately recognize the fallen landscape, the jagged teeth of a decaying city. However, amidst the despairing streets, we find light, luminous water that stands as “iridescent.” Water, as we have seen in other postcolonial gothic works, can be seen as a fluid connection between past and present, between the homeland and the diasporic metropolis. Here, with the snaking Los Angeles River, we are offered a similar resonance. Dismayingly, though, even as he offers readers the possibility of hope, Abani questions it, undercuts it, for this “ancient” landscape (3) has lost faith.

In many ways, *Virgin* stands as one of the more gothic of postcolonial texts, with its gothic tropes all leading back to the central nexus of fire and flames, devastation and loss. Ghosts parade through the pages of Abani’s novel, almost from cover to cover. Black, preparing to transform himself into an artistic version of the Virgin Mary, decides to create his transformation by donning a wedding dress. It haunts him, “hanging from a hook on the door like a ghost” (5). Clothing is not the only spectral image lurking in Abani’s *Virgin*. Ghosts represent the past, remaining “around the old parts of Los Angeles, same as in any city” (10); however, these ghosts are not passive, for they are “crowding in, singing, begging, crying and dying all over again, every night” (10), unable to escape just as the residents of Los Angeles are incapable of escaping their broken pasts: their nightmares from Rwanda, their lack of family ties, their hidden despair over the monstrosity of human nature. In this shattered landscape, “everyone is attended by ghosts” (35). They are “visible, brooding dark clouds that we drag around with us like

reluctant sulky children. We feed them . . . and their haunting dominates our lives” (35). As readers, we begin to see that no escape is possible when the past clings to the present, a “visible” reminder of what no one can escape. While Abani’s novel focuses on the outcasts of society—the diasporic outsider, the dwarf—we strongly believe that the ghosts are not limited to them alone. This especially becomes true when we see that the emptiness falls on everyone: no one escapes it. Like Black, Abani’s characters try to “exorcize this ghost” (108), this trace of a past that should be dead, but they cannot find the tools to silence the voices of history. In this apocalyptic world, where the “undead” (8) seem to outnumber the living, all humans search for meaning; all humans are lost, attempting to read the “hieroglyphs” (38) of an incomprehensible present.

Out of the apocalypse emerge monsters, the undead. Slowly, we see the monsters within Abani’s characters, all emerging from mere survival in apocalyptic Los Angeles. There is the bat-like imagery applied to the “lapsed white Jew” Iggy (31). We, like Black, wince as we see Iggy’s body “suspended . . . in midair from meat hooks,” the hooks attached to “metal rings hanging from her back” (31). Her scarring, thus, is visible, inscribed on her body; her head is “shaved” (31), as were the Jews who endured German Concentration Camps in the Jewish Holocaust: a haunting echo of the past in the present. Menacingly, there is Bombay’s earlier career of violence, where he slaughtered and “cut up” women and children at a Tutsi refugee camp in Kigali (105). The first part of his name represents his actions, for bombs so frequently not only kill but also dismember victims. Bombay tells Black, “I cut. I was afraid [for my life] so I cut. Hands. Legs. Heads. Chests” (105). Abani, however, allows us to feel sympathy, though removed, as this man cries over his actions. Black himself becomes the monster, too, “a hider, a poser,

a coward” who is “mean and spiteful” (Yanique 29) and seemingly plagued by gender and control issues. Black’s artwork, which Bombay calls ““monstrosity”” (39), is the only way Black is able to show his soul, “[t]he nearest thing he could” create to show “that he didn’t want to be himself” (39). It is his soul seeking escape from who and what he has become.

In many ways, Black is the ““walking dead”” (268), a man who repeats the past because he can find no path in the present. Perhaps the clearest representation of this is in his treatment of Sweet Girl. Raped once himself, with his memories long repressed, Black beats and rapes the cross-dresser stripper Sweet Girl. His attack of a cross-dresser essentially represents an attack on his male persona, an interpretation supported by his art. Readers must remember that he attempts to transform himself into the Virgin Mary: a clean, untainted image of purity. He, however, is not untainted or pure, but “scarred” (31). The scars have created in him a monster similar to the monster released in Salman Rushdie’s *Shame*, but this monster typically unleashes his anger and pain on himself rather than on others. His rape of Sweet Girl clearly demonstrates the rupture he repeatedly feels in himself, the “unraveling at the seams” (68) and dissolution of self that he fears. Black realizes his nature, stating that he could not look at himself, “the hideousness” of his face, of his actions; “I’m a monster,” he tells us (286-7), for he has done the very same thing that dehumanized him when he was raped. History repeats itself, with different players but, essentially, with the same results: a broken person once more shattered by those who held power over the body. Sweet Girl, apologizing for her actions even though she has just been raped, chases Black with “scissors like a vampire stake” (287), an action that removes all humanity, at last, from Black.

The jagged world of Los Angeles, a home away from home, has long forced Black to struggle with both his race and his origin, not just a confused sexuality. One of the most chilling images of Black is his attempt to become white by removing his own biracial skin color, even if temporarily; Black's attempted self-erasure can be seen as a diasporic search for an identity other than himself. Even more horrifically, indeed, Black's self-erasure can be seen as an Othering of himself, one mirroring the Othering of the indigenous subject in so many gothic novels of the nineteenth century. We first meet him "applying paste to his face" to "get the right shade of white" (4). He is, of course, attempting to match the white face of the Virgin Mary, which the Catholic Church typically shows as European and, thus, white. To become the Virgin, he dons a white wedding dress, a blonde wig, and the face paint like "thick . . . wallpaper paste" (4). Black is literally painting himself white. Against the white of his wedding dress, he is "too dark" (77), and he must paint his room in "at least two coats of white" (110). Los Angeles reinforces his hatred of his own skin, its people forcing him to "reassure white people that he wasn't out to mug them, wasn't the criminal they expected he would be, should be" (195). With such self-hatred of his skin, such social fear and contempt, it is no surprise that Black begins to see his skin color as shaded somewhere in between. His skin color is ambiguous, marked with differences: "Black was dark enough to be black, yet light enough to be something else" (30). If we translate this with his name, Black is not himself, for Black is not black, making him a true cipher of himself. The descendant of an Igbo father named Frank (though his Igbo name is never given) and a Salvadoran mother named María, Black cannot locate his own identity. Both parents have long vanished by the time of the story, his father not returning from service in Vietnam and his

mother, a Catholic woman who beat her son frequently, dying of “something they wouldn’t have a name for until much later” (107) when he was fifteen. To his mother, he is “living sin” (107), sin that she slipped into when marrying his father against her family’s wishes. Thus, there can be little wonder that he finds himself transforming into what he hates, the monster, when he can find no trace of himself in his own image.

Black jokingly calls himself a “shape-shifter” (37), but there is nothing laughable about the statement. He is, indeed, a “shape-shifter,” but not in any science-fiction sense of the term; rather, he is a shape-shifter of color, of skin, of sex, attempting to become white, to become the Virgin Mary and to leave his broken heritage behind him.

Descended from an Igbo father, Black has lost his Igbo name Obinna: “*his* name, the one he’d had in another life” (45)—to become b/Black, the “emptiness of . . . internal night” (107). Perhaps even more painfully, his own mother has given him his new name in a move hauntingly reminiscent of Rochester’s violent renaming of Antoinette as Bertha in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Like Antoinette, Black has been “violently rename[d],” Othered (Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts” 269)—but his re-naming has not been done by the forces of imperialism, as in Rhys’ text, but by the parent of origin, his mother (Abani 107). We can even see his mother’s un-naming of Black as a mother/land withdrawal, for he has been detached from his roots, the land of his father, by his mother’s actions. Iggy tells him that ““Origins aren’t important”” (123), but she does not face the emptiness of blank identity. Black, however, does face this emptiness, daily and irreparably:

The fact of the matter was that he was obsessed with origins, and he believed that in his case, origins held the key to self-discovery. It seemed,

though, that those with a clear sense of the past, of identity, were always so eager to bury it and move on, to reinvent themselves. . . . Him, he was trying to reinvent an origin to bury so he could finally come into this thing he wanted to be, and he knew that if he didn't find it soon, it would destroy him, burn him up. (123-4)

Facing a diasporic blankness, a life without origin, Black cannot move forward. He, like his art, becomes a "cipher" (240), a person "uproot[ed]" (241) by a past he cannot recover in a landscape that continuously "recycles itself" (153) in what he has jokingly called "*American Gothic: The Remix*" (29).⁹ Los Angeles, thus, "constantly digest[s] its past," creating "something new" (153), but he cannot find a past, a "lineage" (255), to help him reinvent himself. Like Ila, Black is trapped, almost paradoxically, by his lack of roots, by his lack of moorings—and it is a trap that he cannot escape.

As Black continues to mirror his name's emptiness, Los Angeles reflects his state of inner decay, becoming "incendiary" (21). Flames fall as he remembers his father lighting an arc-welder and "the metal melt[ing] into a liquid like hot butterscotch, [Black] feeling the sting of the sparks as their brilliance, like an exploding nova, burned" (48). This seemingly simple image reflects flames seen at other times: votives flickering behind the Virgin Mary and creating a Virgin of Flames (134), frankincense burning in stores (129), and a "Saffron sky" (255). Acting as the symbol of Black's collapsed African-American diasporic identity, even the collapsed identity of an entire culture, fire rages through much of the book. News stations report, droningly, that "brush fires were threatening the suburbs and there was a real fear it could spread to LA" (83). As with *Clear Light*, the land itself is parched: "dry brown scrub, dry and on fire" (83). Ash rains

down, covering the entire city. People's faces become "ghostly white" as ash coats their skins (156). The fires are "insatiable . . . ravaging hillsides" (233), a suiting backdrop to the ravaged characters who plod through the city's streets. Destruction leads to a sky that "swirl[s]" with ash, almost as if "the sky was alive with ghosts" (288) while the city "burn[s] with the red of flames held in a sky black with love and ash, and the wind, the wind" (290). Having read *Clear Light* and *The Shadow Lines*, readers of postcolonial gothic likely have a very strong feeling about what is to come next: violence, catastrophe, death. They would not be mistaken.

A man who cannot own his race, his gender, his identity, a man continuously sliding further and further into despair, Black at last does what we expect he will do. He plunges into the river cutting through Los Angeles:

He smelled the burning and looking down realized that he'd dropped the still lit cigarette and it had caught on an edge of the turpentine-soaked dress. He stamped his feet trying to extinguish the fire, but the turpentine was an accelerant, and the flames enveloped him.

A woman on fire.

And the wind tore at the train of the wedding dress until it became a billowing sheet of flame trailing away behind Black, until it ripped the burning cloth free. . . . Another updraft caught the train of lace and it sailed away, still burning. Set free it floated over the crowd, heading for the River. It sank from view. (290)

In his own self-immolation, Black throws himself into the pyre of the city, disappearing from its view—a miracle to onlookers, who believe they have seen the Virgin Mary—and

finally freeing himself. People dance in the streets below, believing the destructive ash is, indeed, snow, a miracle in Los Angeles; they dance “together, alone” (265), people of all ages “laughing, leering” (265) in this celebratory moment of communal enjoyment. However, while they come together, squealing in delight, Black has descended into an abyss from which he cannot return. Black has nothing; according to Bombay, he has “no shame” because he has “no people,” no connections or roots to his father’s Igbo culture, and without people he can have “no lineage”—and without lineage he can have “no ancestors,” making it impossible for him to “know anything about life” since he has no dead (255). Staring into a void of nothingness, Black cannot survive. His only freedom comes through his death, his ultimate acceptance of the nothingness within him.

Readers of *Virgin*, like Iggy and Bombay, are left with the unsettling understanding that Black’s actions may never be capable of interpretation. Has he committed suicide? Was his death an artistic statement? Was his plunge into the “river of fire” (273) a religious martyrdom, where he purifies himself in the fashion of ancient purifications, the *auto da fé*? We honestly do not know. In Black’s death, we are left with a cipher, an emptiness we can never completely interpret or recover—just as Black himself faced a cipher, an emptiness he could never completely interpret or recover in life. When we consider the novel’s postcolonial gothic apocalypse, we must understand that meaning will never be completely recovered. Black has possessed that meaning as the only thing he could possess. If there is hope to be found in these scenes, perhaps it is in the possibility that something may be built in the ruins. Perhaps hope, finally, can be found in the belief that this city of “rusty dinosaur skeletons of disused cranes” and “empty warehouses” (60), this city of secrets, of “rambling maze[s]” (177), is not one thing, but

many:

Nearly everything now native to Los Angeles came from somewhere else.
That was perhaps its beauty . . . [t]hat it never tired of reinventing itself,
producing as many shades and nuances of being as a bougainvillea: pink,
magenta, purple, red, orange, white and yellow. (177)

In this “city [that] wasn’t a city” (177), there is the hope, the possibility of reinvention: an imaginative historical reconstruction similar to Ghosh’s. This hope may not save everyone, just as Ila and Tridib are not capable of being salvaged in *The Shadow-Lines*. However, it is a path—one painfully treading through a withered landscape—where light may be found, some time, in some future, for some people. Fire in postcolonial gothic, thus, offers us a tentative hope, for we can imagine the imperial institutions burnt to cinders, replaced with something new, even as it suggests that this hope may be painfully unfounded.

Notes

¹ In “Romanticizing the Empire: The Naval Heroes of Southey, Coleridge, Austen, and Marryat,” Fulford states that Marryat tries to make his heroes seem truly chivalrous to make the Empire look chivalrous, too. However, Fulford focuses most on *The King’s Own* (1830), with no mention of Marryat’s attack on many of Europe’s colonial practices in *The Phantom Ship*. The apparent discrepancy may lie in focus, for *The King’s Own* portrayed English sailors while *The Phantom Ship* portrayed primarily Dutch and Portuguese sailors. Marryat’s own nationalist tendencies may have made it difficult for him to more honestly critique English habits than Dutch.

² In Marryat’s novel, flames are found elsewhere. On the high seas we find flames destroying ships when the *Flying Dutchman* appears in superbly unnatural conditions, its spectral form gliding through harsh winds. Not long after, the *Vrouw Katerina*, on which Philip stays, catches fire and sinks. Even more important, though, is our first encounter with Amine. However, it is important to realize that he first sees her when trying to burn down her house, for she is leaning out of a window “as the flames wreathed and the smoke burst out in columns” around her (28). Philip, alarmed that he was about to kill her (rather than just her father), immediately dashes out the fire, thus saving her. Therefore, we can see her fate foreshadowed early in the novel.

³ Loh’s description hauntingly resonates with another work, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), particularly its fifth chapter, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” Within this chapter, we immediately confront a dentist saying, “‘We’re going to have to control your tongue’” (75); however, Anzaldúa tells us that

“[w]ild tongues can’t be tamed, they can only be cut out” (76). Even more, “[e]thnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (81). Without any ambiguity, Vyvyane Loh shows us that by taking the protagonist’s native language and requiring him to speak English, his conquerors—first the British, then the Japanese—have linguistically violated his self-identity. It amounts to “linguistic terrorism” (Anzaldúa 80), a thought even more disturbing when we realize that most of the texts read in Western literature courses on the postcolonial are written not in the native tongues of their authors, but in English.

⁴ According to Sujala Singh, writer of “The Routes of National Identity: Amitav Ghosh,” the riots began “in response to the disappearance of the hair of the Prophet from the Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir” (162), a remote location in India. As Singh writes, the riots can be seen as a “parable” of the partitioning itself (162), for divisiveness in 1964 produced riots reflected in the partitioning itself, with its divided relations between people who should be united. He later writes, “The signs and effects of religious and national identity are shown to spill over the constraints imposed by the agencies of power that endeavour to cordon off a space as its own” (170).

⁵ Even more disconcerting, however, may be our perception of legitimacy in story telling. We may find ourselves questioning whether Tridib’s stories are valid, but, as with the narrator, we may find ourselves believing the printed news—the media, the “printed word” (Bagchi 193)—more than Tridib’s lived experiences. As Nivedita Bagchi intriguingly argues in “The Process of Validation in Relation to Materiality and Historical Reconstruction in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*,” Tridib is an archeologist while

the narrator is a historian. Given their backgrounds, “The importance of material objects to the archaeologist-historian for validation of oral narratives, for dating and establishing chronology in the reconstruction of history, cannot be overstated” (Bagchi 192).

However, perhaps we may push the interpretation further and state that it is not simply the material that drives historical reconstruction, but also the dominant discourses of a nation. The riots had appeared in the “printed word,” but they had still been suppressed by government discourses that could not acknowledge them.

⁶ Ania Spyra, in her “Is Cosmopolitanism not for Women,” states that “[t]he ability to escape containment is of primary significance” to understanding cosmopolitanism (7), which she sees as much more than simply traveling across the national boundaries; instead, it is “active belonging” (4). To Spyra, Ila is unable to escape the trap of marriage and cultural identity confusion because, unlike men, Ghosh’s women are incapable of imagining or remembering the past (17). As imagination is an alternative historical reconstruction that escapes “hegemonic official representations” (Huttunen 33), if Spyra’s interpretation is in any way correct, Ghosh offers us very little escape for women who have been traumatized by their pasts. This provides an intriguing framework for understanding Ila’s eventual deterioration within the novel, for unlike the narrator, Ila does not seem to offer hope of escape from the past. Instead, she becomes a “narrative scapegoat” of any “sexual and cultural anxieties” (Kaul 130), a character who can be expelled even as the male characters learn to escape their cultural and historical confinements. Thus, patriarchal discourse—the master narrative, in all of its

connotations—becomes a powerful force still very much alive within postcolonial writing.

⁷ The full version of Chris Abani's poem "Fire" (2004/2005) brims with flames:

Lost, but for the flames we drag
through dark streets; smoke and dust
Aho je la, aho je la, aho jengeje, aho jengeje
This chant is sky orotund with sun
and the mirage: a pot smoldering
against night's face, startling last year's
spirits gathering in corners, holding on.
And this— The crackle
of burning firewood, a train of palm fronds
like hungry tongues licking the street,
parched from the intensity. Distant,
beyond the brood of dark hills the sea;
salt and stone. This is not superstition.
This is how we write love. (Abani, "Fire" 1-14)

⁸ A virtually unknown author to many postcolonial critics, Chris Abani possesses an intriguing history of political conflict. Born in Nigeria, Abani was imprisoned at the age of eighteen for writing *Masters of the Board*, which Nigerian officials claimed was a "blueprint for the failed coup of General Vatsa" (S. Ellis 22). He was later arrested a second time for performing in plays and criticizing the government. He was then arrested

a third time for treason when he performed his own play, *Song of a Broken Flute*. Thus, Abani can easily be seen as a writer of strong political views.

⁹ We later discover the full details of Black's mural, which he has entitled *American Gothic: The Remix*. Housed in Iggy's shop, The Ugly Store—a name suggestive of the ugliness Black finds himself treading through—the mural is a “collage of LA images” (88), measuring eleven feet high and thirty feet long. The “collage” presents sayings, mostly “racist and sexist” jokes (88), that he initially considered calling “*Heart of Darkness*” or “*Apocalypse Now*” (90). Everything from “Kill the Klu Klux Klan” to “Condoms are for Sissies” (95) can be found on the mural, which Abani presents for readers in a detailed fragment—much like the detailed fragment that is Los Angeles itself.

CHAPTER NINE
MIDNIGHT IN THE POSTCOLONIAL LAND:
THE INDIGENOUS VOICES SPEAK

To this point postcolonial gothic novels have provided us a shadow world of interpretation: ruins are no longer ruins, history is often unrecoverable, identity is capable of shattering, fire can create opportunities or destroy all hope of recovery. We may feel tempted to declare that postcolonial gothic cannot offer any escape from its own despair. Against this gloom, though, we hear the voices of cautious optimism, the voices of Salman Rushdie's Indian *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Marie-Elena John's Caribbean *Unburnable* (2006). Despite division, despite the overwhelming forces of partition sweeping through India, Rushdie offers us the chance to hear the voices we have rarely heard: the narrative voices of the indigenous diasporic postcolonial subjects of decolonization. He underscores the imperfection of any political system, suggesting—as many have—that there may never be a complete answer, but that the struggle to resist our pasts may create a future. In Rushdie, we are at midnight's hour: at that time between times, that time when change can be made. John steps into the same fertile ground as Rushdie, for while the postcolonial subject may exist in contradictory and hybrid states, John suggests that they can move forward by interrogating the lies of the past. Thus, postcolonial gothic, because it attempts to understand the past, to dismantle the deceptions of colonial rule, to disrupt the rhetoric of imperial discourse, is a literature of resistance. It is a literature where the loss of the past begins to be filled with the mingled

voices of the present. As such, it is a literature created in the midnight of the empire: that time between times, when the new may arise from the old.

Giving Voice to the Unseen: Twilight

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* breathes with gothic imagery almost from the first page. There are "forbidden trunks" (29), coated with "dust and spiders" (28) and filled with horrors our narrator Saleem Sinai is not quite sure how to interpret: a sheet with a hole, one with an entire story of conquest and love. There are veils and fire: "Aziz, finding his temper slipping from him, drags all his wife's purdah-veils from her suitcase, flings them into a wastepaper basket . . . and sets fire to them" (32), a scene startlingly resonant with *Jane Eyre* as the flames begin "licking at curtains" (32). We later see flames, burning through warehouses and incited by riots as India dissolves into mass confusion. Blood drips through many pages, symbolic of birth and death, of violence both at the individual and the national level; the appearance of blood starts with the blood-though-not-blood found in the rusty color of Mercurochrome and later becoming real blood, the blood of wounds, until the "blood congeals like a red hand in the dust of the streets and points accusingly at the retreating power of the Raj" (44). Naseem is described as "sucking out the life of her hapless husband," and she appears frequently as "witch, vampire and demon" (Weikgennant 72). Ghosts whisper through the novel, with the servant Mary Pereira routinely being visited by the ghost of Joseph D'Costa and the hideous family secret his haunting symbolizes, that of changelings and mistaken identities. The son is thrown into "exile" (276), driven from his mother and father and essentially orphaned, as so many gothic heroes and heroines are, because, in his mind, he

is “no longer worth the investment of their love and protection” (275). Amidst this strong gothic imagery, we find trap doors and hidden cellars in Aziz’ home “because concealment has always been a crucial architectural consideration in India” (55). In the underground otherland of Aziz’ cellars, Nadir and Mumtaz fade into marriage, surrounded by “vaults” at their wedding (61). Even more than underground lairs, we have ruins: “There have been many, many cities of Delhi, and the Old Fort, that blackened ruin, is a Delhi so ancient that beside it our own Old City is merely a babe in arms” (88). The Old City is “deserted,” now inhabited by “monkeys [that] scream among ramparts” (93), an image of monstrosity amongst what once was the symbol of power, the ramparts of the past. Out of this wasteland, we spot the gothic monster, “a creature with heads and heads and heads” (89), a “monster” roaring “in the streets” (129)—an image of the poor who are no longer “decayed” in spirit, but “[a] power of some sort” (89). This is India before its partitioning, before “the transfer of power”: before the “tick, tock” (100) of a bomb about to explode. Time continues to tick, “swelling now, deafening, insistent; the sound of seconds passing, of an approaching, inevitable midnight” (117) in the midnight of empire, the midnight of India’s Independence.

For Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, gothic, in many ways, holds incendiary purposes. It destroys the old, reducing it to ruins, much like the gothic seen in eighteenth-century works like Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). However, most interestingly, Rushdie also uses it to represent a shifting present, a present of nihilism and inconceivably violent actions. It becomes embroiled in the land, part of the very people who riot in the streets, part of the flames touching warehouses, part of the people running for their lives to escape the

conflagration of everything they know. It is an intensely connected gothic landscape, where the gothic does not necessarily emerge only at night or in the underground pathways; instead, it glares at full day, against the brightness of an Indian sun that refuses to let shadows hide the violence screaming through its streets. Drought enters the “mêlée” (256), “crack[ing]” (256) the roads, the people.

In this present, neocolonialism stretches insidious hooks into people unaware of its possible implications. Themes repeat throughout *Midnight’s Children*—including garden imagery, holes, and snakes—and they can be interpreted as optimistic, as traditions that show “something will survive the life of the individual” (Matuska 120), yet these very repetitions suggest that the past continues to haunt India. Perhaps the strongest current of this we see is in the Methwold Estate, only days before Independence:

But now there are twenty days to go [before Independence], things are settling down, the sharp edges of things are getting blurred, so they have all failed to notice what is happening: the Estate, Methwold’s Estate, is changing them. Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning, about ceiling-fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars, and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath. Listen carefully: what’s he saying? Yes, that’s it.

“Sabkuch ticktock hai,” mumbles William Methwold. All is well. (109)

Why is this passage so troubling? Perhaps a trip back in pages might clarify Methwold’s “All is well.” Methwold, descendant of “the chap who had the idea of building this

whole city” (107), feels he must “play my part” (107)—and in this, his role involves “transferring power” from his own hands to that of his tenants.¹ Most interestingly, perhaps, Methwold refers to this “transfer” as a “game” (105, 106). And, indeed, what is he selling, what is he “transferring”? Nothing less than the keys to the conqueror’s home:

Methwold’s Estate: four identical houses built in a style befitting their original residents (conquerors’ houses! Roman mansions; three-storey homes of gods standing on a two-storey Olympus, a stunted Kailasa!)—large, durable mansions with red gabled roofs and turret towers in each corner; ivory-white corner towers wearing pointy red-tiled hats (towers fit to lock princesses in!)—houses with verandahs, with servants’ quarters reached by spiral iron staircases hidden at the back—houses which their owner, William Methwold, had named majestically after the palaces of Europe . . . (104)

This may, at first reading, seem to be an uplifting description. The conquerors are fleeing, “transferring” their properties to those they once colonized. However, the very gothic nature of this scene should caution us against such an interpretation. Spiral staircases, turrets, gabled roofs, devices of entrapment—“towers fit to lock princesses in!”—are all icons of the gothic tradition. However, these icons are not in decay, not in ruins; rather, they are “palaces” (104) and, perhaps more so, they are “FOR SALE” (104). Does this mean that the descendant of a “patrician French grandmother” (105) has simply decided to cut his losses and go, no longer concerned over his rights of conquest in a land controlled by his ancestors? We should feel uneasy over reaching such a conclusion,

especially when we understand that Methwold possesses “blood [that] ran aquamarinely in his veins and darkened his courtly charm with something crueller, some sweet murderous shade of absinthe” (105). The aquamarine Blue Blood of aristocracy has not faded in Methwold; it has simply transformed into something more callous, something raging against its submission to loss in India, something that seems like capitalism.

This is no ruined fortress of the past, where history has advanced a new order to usurp the old, the dying. This is, instead, an order of aristocracy that remains very much alive, for instead of conquering the land, Methwold indulges in the most crippling form of suppression: he removes the culture of his victims, those who are supposedly marching into the Empire-free future of India, and supplants it with his own (Price 95; Syed 101). Horrifyingly, he indulges in this transformation of his previous subjects, this supposed “transferring of power” as a mere game, not the life-and-death consequences it will truly invoke. As part of his neocolonialist game, Methwold attaches two conditions to the sale of his Estate: “that the houses be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15th” (105). Of course, a central question most likely burns through the minds of most readers who see this contract: why would *anyone* agree to such conditions when purchasing property? Does the family truly believe they own the estate at this point, or are they behaving as servants, who would have, at one point in history, cared for a property until the masters returned? Under such an interpretation, the family would be agreeing to such conditions because, perhaps subconsciously, they still believed themselves to be the servants of the master, not free owners of their own home. We could also imagine a circumstance quite similar, where the family simply did not

know whether the colonization of India was over—whether they had the right to take possession of the master’s home.

We can, through analogy, state that this confused possession is emblematic of India itself: “every last thing” must remain in the nation, every last building constructed under European rule, every last educational advancement provided graciously in the schools must not be removed if the transfer of power is to be complete. Saleem’s family has just purchased a gothic horror—and, even more, they have no idea of what they have purchased. They have purchased an entire ideology, reaching back hundreds of years to the rearing of the first castle and the construction of the first aristocratic government in Europe. They have, smiling, purchased what Europe had forced upon them from the first day of European conquest, and they have purchased it through the most subtle, mundane means: Oxford drawls, budgerigars and gas cookers, rulers and servants. Even more, they have, unknowingly, brought home their English former master’s child rather than their own, something readers do not discover until much later in the novel.² The birth of a new nation is the birth of the old, both in the family and in the nation.

Indeed, “[a]ll is well” for the British conquerors who still remain in power. Though the Empire seems to be gasping its last breath, it has simply taken on a different form of conquest, that of the mind. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1981), Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o writes that language and social structure are inextricably linked:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social

production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (16)

The Oxford drawl, the budgerigars, the gas cookers are all “inseparable,” as is Saleem himself as a “bastard[ization]” of Indian origin (Brigg 179), and they link right back to the very idea of the Estate being “FOR SALE” (104). By selling his Estate rather than simply divesting himself of the property by leaving it vacant, Methwold forces Saleem’s family to interact with his system of wealth, capitalism. He forces them to acknowledge his contract, his conditions, his furniture from Europe rather than India. Thus, he deprives the family of their own character, their own history, their own relationship to the world. That this happens on the night of the transfer is itself critical, for while India erupts into flames—similar to what we have seen in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1990) and Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* (1980)—in what should have been its greatest moment of unity, the Empire builds inroads into the subcontinent, ones difficult to see and almost impossible to overthrow.

From this elusive moment of colonial conquest/colonial departure comes a fragmented, one might even declare *partitioned* identity, one we have encountered in several postcolonial gothic novels. Within Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), we have seen Ammu lose herself to her family restrictions. More chillingly, we have seen Estha and Rahel splinter, one silenced while the other rarely acknowledges what has happened; they eventually fade into one another, merging sexually to fill what might be seen as hollow cores. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* has shown us a world

of collapsed times and geographies, where one person shades into another, where one time becomes another. Moving from the subcontinent to South Africa, we can easily find a similar horror of incest and fragmentation in Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999), where its central characters, the Benade family, eventually collapse into one another to create a monster. It comes as no surprise to many readers that this monster symbolizes Apartheid and White African supremacy or that the monster attacks itself, destroying everything in its grasp. Colonization forces subjects to view themselves as the Other, tearing any sense of self into shreds, and in the postcolonial world—where forces of change rend the country, where forces of the past remain entrenched—this self reflects the nation.

Our narrator himself has been partitioned by the forces tearing India apart. There is little doubt that when we read Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, we are reading a national allegory—making *Midnight's Children* one of the “central text[s] in Indian literature written in English” (Kortenaar 41)—even as it seems to undermine many of the assumptions of nationalism (Kortenaar 41; see also Watson 220). National allegory can be seen as a linguistic tool of social creation, for such genres as the novel help construct national consciousness; while national allegory can be seen as possessing only one voice or harmonizing the voices of many into one coherent view (Plotz 28-9), an alternate interpretation focuses on the belief that national allegories possess the voices of many in expressing the national consciousness (Bennett 182-4; Schultheis 108).³ *Midnight's Children* in particular seems to fit this latter definition of national allegory. Saleem Sinai is born on an almost mythical date, one Rushdie momentarily couches in the language of fairy tale before denying readers that comfortable story:

I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact . . . at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence[.] . . . I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. (3)

Born at the exact chime of midnight on the day of India's independence, Saleem Sinai symbolizes how India's postcolonial experience, is, in fact, "handcuffed" to its triumphs, its agonies, its ambiguity.

However, Saleem's frequent focus on his construction of the narrative as well as his common displacement of major historical events subvert the apparent effort to present one unified national allegory (Bennett 187), if there is such a thing. This displacement of major historical events has perhaps been no better summarized than by David Price:

As we read Saleem's account, we are expected to believe, among other things, that Saleem was responsible for the language riots that occurred in the 1950s, that he played a pivotal role in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and that in 1975, Indira Gandhi imprisoned political opponents and suspended democratic rights during her self-proclaimed "Emergency" in direct response to the activities of Saleem and his Conference of Midnight's Children . . . (91)

From Saleem we find ourselves facing a divided narrative, one portraying an equally divided India: a hybrid text. If Ágnes Györke is correct in her belief that there are two

allegories in *Midnight's Children*—that of Saleem the body and that of the Midnight's Children's Conference (171)—then we begin to see, within the very structure of the novel, multiple voices being used to construct the image of Indian national identity. Even more, though, Györke posits that the nation, in its relationship with Saleem's destiny, writes upon him, allowing multiple voices, multiple perspectives, to be incorporated into the narrative of Saleem while at the same time treating him (and the nation itself) as a passive object (173-4). Like Saleem, India is a land divided not by nature, but by a superficial topography, a map of tongues; "India," Rushdie writes, "had been divided anew, into fourteen states and six central-administered 'territories'" (216) in October 1955. However, "the boundaries of these states were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain; they were, instead, walls of words. Language divided us" (216). As Ngugi has written, along with language is interwoven the concepts of culture, of history; to be divided in language is to be divided in culture and history, in national identity. It is a division that leads to fragmentation beyond the lines of maps.

As part of his heritage, Saleem, like India itself, is shattering until his own life, "its meanings, its structures," exists in "fragments" (119). Early in the novel, Saleem tells us that "[c]onsumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside of me" (4). The cause of this "jostling and shoving" becomes clearer many pages later. Sitting in a pile of "dirty laundry" (182), trapped in it, Saleem is visited by a nightmare reality: "noise, deafening manytongued [voices] terrifying *inside his head!*" (184). Saleem describes this as a sort of "[t]elepathy," where he hears "the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostled for space within my head" (192). According to Imtiaz Habib, the telepathy represents a power that is essentially without voice, for he

does not speak the words aloud; he only hears those of others, speaking mentally (38). While there may be truth in this statement, there is still a power to be found in his ability. He hears everything, sees everything within the thoughts of others, becoming a symbolic Vishnu or preserver (Syed 99); through his telepathy, Saleem mirrors the historian's attempt to "enter various characters' thoughts" to chronicle an event, yet he does more than this by becoming part of the story (Kortenaar 46). Doing so allows Rushdie to subvert the "voice of 'authority'" in history (Lipscomb 165) and to emphasize the political construction of history (Srivastava 66). His play with Vishnu allows him to subvert the conventional Western history by invoking a force from India's religious texts. In his challenge to historical narrative, Rushdie also undermines the attempt at singular, unified identity, both personal and national; Saleem's mind is a whirlwind of mental rumbling (194-5), part of the Conference of Midnight's Children: those children born on the same night as he. Witch-girls, transgender morphists, water diviners, werewolves, and telepaths all join the roster of Midnight's Children. Midnight's Children will later stand as a Conference of the Unreal in the Unreal lands of partition, a national allegory to India in itself (Györke 171): those lands divided by illusory lines, boundaries that eventually deteriorate.⁴

Rushdie, of course, is fairly well known for the magical quality of many of his works: its *magic realism*. For our purposes, magic realism may be seen not as a substitute for the gothic itself, but as an especially compatible ally in destabilizing the foundations of rigid notions, of rigid histories and concepts of reality. Magic realism may be seen as an extensive collection of work that began with art critic Franz Roh (Littlewood 187) and which can be seen as a "migratory concept," one that translates the norms of conventional

novel writing (Littlewood 192) by adding the imagination (Polak 406).⁵ Others have seen the term as more of a “defamiliarization or ‘estrangement’ of reality” (Sánchez-Vizcaíno 170). For Derek Littlewood, magic realism merges East and West in ways that “compensate for overly positivistic world views and . . . revitalise the European novel . . . with traditional storytelling” (189), a view shared by Iva Polak as well (401). Rushdie’s work particularly falls well within the auspices of magic realism (González 41). In *Shame* (1983), for example, Khayyam Shakil’s three mothers mimic the witches of Macbeth and magically disappear, never to be seen again, at the end of the novel. They leave their home filled with precious relics of the past, a world of magic in its own way. Their magic itself may not be particularly gothic, but their environment, the decaying castle, is, a clear demonstration of magic realism allying with gothic. While *Shame*’s magic may sprinkle throughout the page, perhaps the most obvious form—other than in the magic realism classic, *Midnight’s Children* itself—is *East, West* (1994). A beautiful collection of short stories, *East West* treats readers to crystal slippers, thieves and Moneylenders, broken Hamlets, and schizophrenics who believe *Star Trek* is, indeed, reality. *Midnight’s Children* can certainly be seen as a precursor of *East, West*’s play with magical realism. It is essential to understand, however, that *neither* realism nor fantasy is privileged in Rushdie, for both are juxtaposed until they slowly blend (Lipscomb 169).

Midnight’s Children follows this same pattern of merging realism and fantasy together. Interwoven with his realistic details of Emergency Rules and violence—indeed, with his “numerous historical data and events” as well as specific locations in the once colonized land (Polak 407)—Rushdie’s works entice readers with “mythical and grotesque characters, vampires, demons and witches, magic and miracles, murders and

suicides, physical fights and bloodshed” (Amanuddin 42; see also Polak 406). There are very real riots in the streets, enormous family secrets, treacherous servants, even beautiful gothic estates and the Oxford accents—and there is “once upon a time” (244, 248). The mythical becomes part of the main characters, too, in Rushdie. For Syed Amanuddin, Saleem represents much more than a character; instead, he represents a “mythical figure embodying the mythology of free India, an allegory of Indian consciousness with its sociopolitical struggles” (43). Indeed, through Saleem, readers watch as Rushdie continuously re-builds and re-imagines India (Sánchez-Vizcaíno 172) so that it can be removed from the overly authoritative constructions of European ideology.

In his deconstruction of European rationalism and order, Rushdie introduces the language of the fairy tale. David Lipscomb has called this fairy tale the “nonmimetic playtime” (165)—the language of magic. To Peter Brigg, fantasy, which can easily be linked to magic, can be seen as “a mode of artistic creation which offers an escape from the chaos of reality to an ideal world of order” (173; see also Lipscomb 168-9), and in Rushdie, we may find a desire for order against the splintering chaos striking India. Rushdie’s narrative, however, shows that no such order is possible. Once upon a time, there were 1001 nights, “the number of . . . magic, of alternative realities” (248), and in these alternative realities, these “once upon a time[s],” we can almost imagine a world of limitless possibilities. Indeed, as Andrew Teverson has argued, the 1001 nights can also be seen as the un-ending story, where a unified nation is replaced with unlimited possibilities and stories (218).⁶ We can see the “once upon a time[s]” as an attempt to problematize the relations between history and the past and, even more, narration of the past (Hussain 8) or its recording “in the construction of historical narrative” (Kortenaar

44) as “what really happened in the past” (Riemenschneider 196). These possibilities are best represented, most likely, by the Congress of Midnight’s Children, where time travelers look into the future and young girls “bewitch young and old” (291). It is probably not surprising that the Conference of Midnight’s Children, like the rest of India, like Saleem Sinai himself, falls apart, spinning out of control. Rushdie writes, “Children, however magical, are not immune to their parents; and as the prejudices and world-views of adults began to take over their minds, I found children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian ‘blackies’” (292). Midnight’s Children spin hectically, with issues of gender, religion, race, and caste further splintering the group. Saleem screams some of the most prophetic words in the book: ““only by being other, by being new, can we fulfill the promise of our birth”” (293). Only by resisting the past, resisting hatred and prejudice, can they form a path towards a real future, yet the children of midnight—those born at the formative moment of past and present colliding, the last teetering moment of the Empire—cannot do so. They simply re-enact the fights that have plagued their ancestors.⁷

How do we find hope when what is supposed to be magical, a fairy tale cast in “once upon a time” language, self-destructs? Is there no possible resolution to the past’s mistakes, to the gothic horror still very much alive in Rushdie’s novel? Are there, finally, no paths of resistance against a past that continues to control the present?

Rushdie does not offer us a perfect, fairy tale ending. As Ágnes Matuska has written, “Saleem’s text will not let itself be labelled”; however, it also “will not let itself be colonized” (118). Instead, he offers us a world of possibilities (Teverson 224), a narrator who is cracking, falling apart, dissolving, and a land of the undead. Our narrator

is not the only one to crack. His grandfather “had begun to crack,” and Saleem “saw the cracks in his eyes—a delicate tracery of colorless lines against the blue . . . a network of fissures spreading beneath his leathery skin” (315). This cracking, according to our narrator, is because Aadam Aziz does not believe; he possesses a “hole at the center” (315). Slipping straight into the land of the gothic, Aziz becomes what we could describe as the undead, with “the cracks continu[ing] to spread; the disease munch[ing] steadily on his bones” (317) even when he would not die. At the same time, “the horror of the truth” behind Saleem’s parentage unearths (perhaps predictably, at midnight). Excommunicated from the Conference, Saleem still manages to think, on the eve of his telepathic connection’s disappearance, that “what-we-had-in-common retained the possibility of over-powering what-forced-us-apart” (348), the very language of hyphens forcing together what had been single, individual, apart. In Karachi, a new home for Saleem’s beleaguered family, “something grotesque” shows the ruined foundation of their new city:

The city of Karachi proved my point [that some foundations are better than others]; clearly constructed on top of entirely unsuitable cords, it was full of deformed houses, the stunted hunchback children of deficient life-lines, houses growing mysteriously blind, with no visible windows, houses which looked like radios or air-conditioners or jail-cells, crazy top-heavy edifices while fell over with monotonous regularity, like drunks; a wild proliferation of mad houses, whose inadequacies as living quarters were exceeding only by their exceptional ugliness. (354)

Broken, even their new home in Karachi is no better than the home they have left. Its

decay reminds us easily of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) or William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1930), works filled with dilapidated homes and equally dilapidated families. Instead of castles and beautiful homes, we are given a world collapsing even further until, in "an instant of destruction . . . things which had been buried deep in forgotten trunks flew upward into the air" (392). The past, buried, forgotten, blasts through the fissures haunting this falling-apart-land; Saleem is "stripped of past present memory time shame and knowing" (392), his body, his mind "partially eras[ed] . . . wiped clean" (397), disassociated from not only himself, but also his history.

Throughout the novel we watch Saleem shatter. Saleem begins to refer to himself as "'not I. He'" (414). While Satish Aikant may be correct that the postcolonial world inspires a love of fragmentation, with its "multicentred perspective of exile/self-exile" (213), perhaps the level of fragmentation, at least in our narrator, becomes something more daunting than celebratory. His schizophrenia, then, mirrors that of the subcontinent itself, where the "schizophrenia . . . in every Pakistani heart" centers on the "unbridgeable land-mass of India" and the "past and present . . . divided by an unbridgeable gulf" (404). This gulf is caused by the disappearance of belief, any belief: "Religion was the glue of Pakistan, holding the halves together; just as consciousness, the awareness of oneself as a homogeneous entity in time, a blend of past and present, is the glue of personality, holding together our then and our now" (404). We could even interpret this loss of identity as the gap existing between the individual and capitalism, where individual desires rule the market and overpower everything else (Flanagan 39), an ever-widening gap as belief itself dwindles. Belief in religion, belief in history, belief in identity have disappeared.

However, in this identity collapse, there may be an almost terrifying hope. There can be no “absolute forms of knowledge” (Aikant 214) in *Midnight’s Children*, not in a book that “fictionaliz[es] facts” (Habib 37) and presents history as “a mocking fraud” (Habib 38). As Saleem loses himself in battle, wounded until he is a wraith without a name or a history, his only path back is through anger. His invisibility disappears when, “in the grip of that awful disembodied loneliness, whose smell was the smell of graveyards, I discovered anger” (439): the rage of a human soul waking and, eventually, fighting. Interestingly, as with *Shame*, anger becomes the release. Saleem tells us that he finally asks himself one significant question, “why?” (440). This question spurs him to “choose [his] own, undestined future” (440), to go from invisibility to “I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine” (440). Even more, “I repeat fro the last time: to understand me, you’ll have to swallow a world” (441). What has been unseen, unheard, now equals the world, holds the world in himself.

These are, undoubtedly, words of liberation, words of freedom and resistance; however, as always, Rushdie does not allow us to rush away with the feeling of closure. Saleem refuses to acknowledge the past, as best shown in his repudiation of Parvati, who “remind[s] me of things I had tried to put out of my mind” (448). His family is in “fragments” (448). Our hero, setting out to rework history, is no hero; he learns that his “dream of saving the country was a thing of mirrors and smoke; insubstantial, the maunderings of a fool” (475) and that “destiny, inevitability, the antithesis of choice” (477) had come to control him. Significantly, it is the arrival of his son at crisis that begins to suggest possibilities of change, even hope, though all couched in darkness:

Parvati gave a final pitiable little yelp and out he popped, while all over

India policemen were arresting people, all opposition leaders except members of the pro-Moscow Communists, and also anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during the Madam's speeches . . . at exactly the same moment, the word Emergency was being heard for the first time, and suspension-of-civil-rights, and censorship-of-the-press, and armored-units-on-special-alert, and arrest-of-subversive-elements: something was ending, something was being born, and at the precise instant of the birth of the new India and the beginning of a continuous midnight . . . my son, the child of the renewed ticktock, came out into the world. (482)

The new Emergency, the new unrest-rebellion-hatred-prejudice has, at last, struck, as did Saleem's new son, on June 25th, 1975. His son, like Saleem himself, has been "handcuffed to history" (482). Chillingly, we learn that he is "the child of a time which damaged reality so badly that nobody ever managed to put it together" (482), a child of a land that has been sterilized even though the country, the political arm, has replicated itself again and again with each newly emerged Emergency. Rushdie's work does more than simply mix fantasy and the "authoritative voice of history" (Aikant 219) to destabilize traditional readings of history; he also destabilizes the idea of any possible future. We see in children the possibility for a new future, but Saleem tantalizingly withholds that possibility, telling us that the "numbers marching one two three"—conformists numbering "four hundred million"—will "reduc[e] me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, in good time, they will trample my son" (533). Saleem's son's first words are the magical "Abracadabra" (529), but as Rushdie writes, Abracadabra is "not an Indian word at all" (529). Even what should be magical, even what should be his own—

language itself—cannot be so in this postcolonial nightmare (Polak 409). The magic of the Conference has been ripped away, and, for all those who march ahead, unthinking, the magic will always remain dead. Indeed, the magic in *Midnight's Children* is its *world of possibilities*, for the true magic emerges when the children of the new nation learn to think, to interrogate the past, the present, and the future, to create something new from the ashes surrounding them. These new possibilities are the shaky paths of hope that Rushdie's novel leaves us. In the world of 1001 nights, a new story, a new possibility, may always emerge: whatever that new story may be.

Reconstructing History: Dawn

While Salman Rushdie suggests the possibility of a perhaps never-to-be-seen newly restructured society, Marie-Elena John's *Unburnable* moves beyond possibility into actual reconstruction. Our narrator is hauntingly similar to Saleem Sinai. Lillian Baptiste, who lives in Washington, D.C., has seemingly escaped her Caribbean background, but it continues to linger in her mind, in her thoughts, until she cannot function unless she returns to the past. John begins the story in the past, with the narrative of Lillian's grandmother and mother, completely de-centering linear narrative progression and emphasizing the discontinuity of time and the reoccurrence of the past in the present. In John's work, we learn that Lillian is trying to understand her family history, but she is finding it difficult to understand, for the community has misrepresented it entirely. Her grandmother, an Obeah of supposedly fierce and murderous disposition, was hung; her mother, Iris, a prostitute, was supposedly mad. Her father is unknown, likely a customer, while her grandfather was one of the last remaining Caribs, who were

virtually annihilated by the British (Ashcrof, Griffiths, and Tiffin 144). The story revolves around two primary events: Iris's sexually provocative dance in front of her lover John Baptiste and her eventual punishment for that act as well as Matilda's murder of John Baptiste and several supposed others.⁸

As with Rushdie's work, we need not look far to discover gothic elements within John's novel; these gothic elements rapidly become the strongest thematic currents in *Unburnable*. The very names of the central characters, Lillian and Matilda, are starkly reminiscent of those names we have seen in gothic fiction of much earlier periods. Lilla we have seen in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya: The Moor* (1806) as the feminine, beautiful, and quite fragile heroine trapped and murdered by the novel's protagonist, Victoria. In Matilda we find a name linking back to Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), the namesake of a man-turned-sorceress and, later, like the Moor in Dacre's novel, into the very devil. With such significant names given to her central characters—granddaughter and grandmother, seeker of her history and creator of her history—John has very carefully orchestrated the backdrop of gothic that will continue throughout her work, particularly in the novel's engagement with ghosts, graveyards, and skeletons.

One can arguably have a gothic without ghosts, but doing so may be seen as somewhat unconventional; *Unburnable*, while very unconventional in many senses, does draw heavily from the spectral stereotypes of many previous gothic novels. We may remember the Bleeding Nun from Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) when we read in John that, yes, there *is* a spectral nun—yet that nun is very much alive. As we are told, the nuns are “strange, stern beings, ostensibly female, with faces but no heads, hands but no bodies; who did not walk but who glided around their mysterious house full of

statuaries in grottoes and candles and repetitive chanting whispers that never seemed to end” (56). These creatures without face or head, cloaked from sight with their habits, become more like the undead, with one of them an “old shriveled white woman who looked like nobody’s mother at all, not even like a human being, but rather like a specter, something that was already dead to the world” (56). Whiteness, thus, metamorphoses in John’s novel into the strange, the unreal: the undead. We see the same connection later when Lillian is to be baptized after an earlier attempt at baptism had failed:

A grinning apparition was slowly moving down the center aisle of his cathedral toward him. Something that could only have been called up from hell. A ghost in the guise of a nun—and this could not be something good, it could not be the spirit of a peacefully departed sister come to spend time in her favorite earthly place, because the nun—the ghost—a white woman with a nest of snakes for hair, well past child-bearing age from the wrinkles on her face as she bared her teeth in an evil smile—was big with child. (214)

Death, life, hell, the spiritual representative of God on earth . . . all combine in this uncomfortable, twisted image, transvaluating a host of valences until the Manichean dualism itself crumbles. The scene becomes even more intriguing when we realize that present at the ceremony, in addition to Mary-Alice, the sinning sister, is an Obeahman, a representative of a power structure well outside colonial power and Catholicism. Even more, the child to be baptized, Lillian, is the grandchild of Matilda, once herself an Obeah and a convicted murderer: a powerful leader, a powerful woman who worked far, far beyond the male hierarchy imposed on Caribbean society by its European conquerors.

Skillfully, carefully mixing elements of European and Caribbean culture, John has crafted a hybrid that shatters the hold of cultural norms passed down by generations of rulers. For John, the ghost, the apparition, is a site of the undead—but the undead transformed, a site where history itself can be transformed.

In John's gothic landscape, the Obeah stands as a central metaphor of power, not in the traditional hierarchy of colonial society, not in the color-based hierarchy of Roseau town—where whiter skin inched one up higher within the ranks—but in the power of the female who controlled spiritual forces and in the power of memory. According to Kathleen Renk, the Obeah tradition is linked with power, frequently driven by anger; the female Obeahs “often act as spiritual guides who remember the past while they magically transform the present” (18), for they act as vessels of culture (Nordius 674). We can see Matilda the Obeah as a reworking of tropes commonly found in nineteenth-century gothic works, which Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explores as the witches, Obeah, and zombies found within such works as *Jane Eyre* (233). European Imperial Gothic strived to Other these qualities (Paravisini-Gebert 233), yet John celebrates them. This power expands in Matilda, who guides an entire village, one hidden from the sight of most Dominicans, even as she functions as its magistrate. Matilda's power is etched into the very stories of Dominica and, more specifically, Roseau. Lillian understands that “Matilda had made a man's heart beat loud like a drum,” that “the other implications of Obeah and evil” (97)⁹—even that Matilda had arranged Lillian's birth from the grave—represent a reality quite separate from her own life in Washington, D.C. Is Matilda evil, though, because she was once powerful enough to command an entire village? Is Obeah, even more, *evil* from a European perspective because it thwarts the known rules and conventions of the

Catholic church and, in general, European ideology? Does this association of the Obeah with evil simply come from fear? John is fairly clear in her answers. As Alfred Drummond, former colonial officer, writes in a letter to the British Anthropological Society, ““unlike in Africa, women [in Dominica] also perform masquerades, even the masks imbued with the most authority and power”” (143). As an Obeah who wears the mask to destroy her enemies, Matilda is “imbued with authority and power” in a way that can never be completely exorcised. Dominicans may tell horror stories of her, they may state that she is evil, but there is something within the image of Matilda, striking at her enemies within the Masquerade tradition, wearing a mask of power, that cannot be completely submerged. She, thus, is a ghost, a whispering, almost a rumor, of an indigenous woman with power usurped from the male right to possess, a spirit who haunts from the grave—is literally believed to perform actions though she is dead—and cannot be easily destroyed.

With apparitions wandering the pages, creating havoc for the characters as they reach beyond their graves, it is probably unsurprising that skeletons emerge: terrifying images of what has been untold, covered for too long in a story that must be reawakened. These skeletons are the wordless ciphers that Lillian must eventually interpret to understand who and what she is, to understand her past and her future. The skeletons are at the center of a mystery: who did Matilda kill? Why did she kill them? It is known, according to custom, that Matilda killed John Baptiste, Lillian’s mother’s lover, in a Masquerade as she was dressed in full mask; this act was in revenge, for John Baptiste had allowed his mother, Mrs. Richard, to beat and permanently maim Matilda’s daughter Iris, Lillian’s eventual mother. However, there are other skeletons attributed to the “evil”

Matilda. We are told, for example, that according to local tradition, Matilda had “‘confessed to killing a dozen or so men and women. Bodies were found—skeletons, actually” (160). The speaker, Reggie Liverpool, mentions that there was never an exact cause, though poisoning was suspected. The case becomes even more intriguing, though, when we learn that Reggie Liverpool and the local tradition are, indeed, wrong in their interpretation of what happened. Mary-Alice, the pregnant nun, tells Lillian that nothing is left of the original massacre: “Ashes, that’s all that was left. Ashes and the skeletons in the forest. Now the regrowth will make it impenetrable” (243). Were the people not poisoned, then, but burnt, in another well-loved gothic convention? Did the poisoning actually *precede* the burning? Local legend does not know, holding interpretations that cannot easily co-exist. As with Tash Aw’s *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005), readers, like Lillian herself, must wade through the evidence to reach an interpretation of what may have happened, one un-weighted by the prejudices of the area yet still cognizant of the fact that we may never know the truth.

Why would Matilda have killed those people, readers might ask? Did the “evil” Matilda possess a spark of the insanity that the locals of Roseau claim Iris and even Lillian possess? Madness is, indeed, a conventional trope of the gothic tradition, as perhaps best exemplified in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. *Unburnable* possesses a similar story of madness, where strong emotions or unconventional behavior almost always are tagged to the word *lunacy* or *madness* and, because of their darker skins, to black madness as well. Iris’s behavior in assaulting John Baptiste’s wife is seen as the act of “a bona fide lunatic” (113), thus linking female sexuality and insanity, and for the conventional town of Roseau, it can be

interpreted no other way—not as an act of revenge or desperation. Eventually, Iris is thrown in jail, which at that time “also served as the crazy house” (161) and in which Iris dies. Lillian herself is not allowed to escape her mother’s contagion, just as she is not allowed to escape associations with Matilda, her grandmother. “Lillian had inherited some part of Iris’s madness,” we are told—by Lillian’s own step-mother Icilma (199). This belief comes from Lillian’s desperate act of attempting to kill herself as she was “sleeping in her mother’s grave” (186). Icilma and Mary-Alice both believe “it was inherited madness that had sent her to dig up Iris’s grave that night, and madness that made her cut her wrist open. Madness, and Matilda’s hand from hell, intervening in her conception” (255). As one of the most convenient excuses for that which cannot be explained, madness allows society to ignore what it cannot accept, for it is merely an illness of the brain, of the psyche, that must be shuttered away from others. It allows, for example, Roseau to believe that John Baptiste had nothing to do with his own death: that he was innocent. It allows people, even more, to believe that social outcasts like Matilda, Iris, and Lillian deserve their own fate, for they are tainted members of society, members that can only result in destruction.¹⁰ It allows, finally, a multitude of sins to be explained and forgotten, including physical assault and near-murder.

In a place where crossing the boundaries can be seen as an “abomination” (117), Matilda, Iris, and Lillian cross all boundaries; this, most likely, is why they are most feared. They defy the “gods of social order and the gods of class distinction” (117), with Matilda becoming powerful, taking the reins of what is frequently male power, and Iris attempting to wedge herself in between her outcast status and the nigh-unobtainable John Baptiste, inheritor of a light skin and the marks of social power. Matilda acts as an un-

subjugated black (276), which strikes fear into the hearts of many: she has crossed the boundaries of what society deems appropriate behavior for both a female and a black. Life and death, sanity and insanity—these borders mean nothing to the family, for they seem best at defying what has been clearly delineated as the impossible or the unreachable. Perhaps the strongest boundary they cross, though, is between histories, between what is told and what has happened. The hi/story is told through orature, one passed from one generation to the next in the *chanté mas*. “It was history now,” readers learn, “but not forgotten: well documented, remembered and passed on through the *chanté mas* songs that had chronicled the scandals, the upheavals” (169). Yet the *chanté mas* is wrong; it has erred. It states that Matilda killed her lover (36). It states that the magistrate was actually a *magie* (287). It states that Matilda confessed to killing many people because she was guilty of the crime (99). It states that only a few skeletons were found at the top of Matilda’s home (160, 243). However, that history does not realize the most significant facet that it has entirely missed, that it has silenced from the narrative: the existence of a Maroon community of over a thousand people, all of whom died one terrible night. We are reminded forcefully that knowledge and history can never be completely constructed, that it must never be confined; history is “a field of diverse human and cultural possibility” (Aikant 214), and possibilities abound for its reinterpretation.

The last piece of John’s puzzle slides into place, and we begin to understand that our entire novel has been a quest for that missing piece, that buried knowledge. Matilda was magistrate for an entire people, who lived “Up There” (3) where Matilda practiced her Obeah art, where “[s]he treated her patients with medicine and she treated them with

prayer and sacrifice and ritual” (11). On top of this mountain, in a secluded sanctuary, the “people who lived Up There” were “every last one of [them of] unadulterated African descent” (3), uncovered for ““two hundred years”” (266). The town was Noir, and it was ““founded by the women who escaped from another Maroon camp—a place called Jacko’s Flats”” (281). Not only was it founded by a woman, but it also allowed women to have power. In Noir, Matilda was the ““out-and-out Boss Man”” (281), the leader of a community of runaway slaves who had existed outside of everyone’s knowledge. Matilda, thus, took a man’s power, and it was her voice that told the people to run when the police “raided” (281) the village to seize her for her supposed murder of John Baptiste. As the police invaded a territory that was not theirs, they realized that there were more than the few skeletons that they had told everyone they found. Instead, there were about one thousand dead, for what “really” happened was far more shocking than Roseau could admit. The village had been found due to Matilda’s actions. As Bird, the narrator of the final tale tells us, “a handful of people in a small island might be able to appear at the same time, full grown, with no explanation, but not a thousand of them” (288). There were one thousand people living, hidden, in the Maroon town of Noir; how could they simply reappear in civilized society without anyone noticing? Chillingly, the answer is simple; they cannot. The scene becomes horrific as we realize what “really happened to the villagers after they burned down Noir”:

He would tell his wife how they had all jumped, all except the few who remained behind to prevent an abomination, because, according to their customs, an unburied body was the punishment for a shameful death.

A few of the people of Noir had voluntarily postponed their

homegoing to give the thousand bodies down in the still-uncharted forest a proper interment befitting their noble lives and glorious deaths, and then they had quietly waited out their time . . . (288)

A thousand dead instead of the five or so reported—the figure unknown to all but the authority figures who could not acknowledge the depth of what happened—and not by poison. They had flung themselves to their deaths, creating an “‘impenetrable’” (243) story, one hidden by “overgrown bramble” (246) despite the horror of what happened. The few who knew of it interpreted it as mass human sacrifice (288), but was it more an escape from what could have happened: being trapped, forced to live in a society one does not wish to join, forced away from a home that has served as a place of safety for two hundred years, as a place of power for those who would not otherwise possess it?

We at last begin to feel some resolution to the novel, to the mystery that John has presented us. The fire that burned Noir to ashes has no known starter, for we are simply told that “they burned down Noir” (288). The village has crumbled, choked by weeds and brambles—a ruin so similar to the ruins we see in the haunted castles of so many gothic novels. However, our book is entitled *Unburnable*, not *Burnable*, and we may wonder exactly what *is* unburnable. The village itself, this tantalizing symbol of boundaries crossed, of escape, of safety in the hills, no longer lives. Its people are dead. Lillian herself *apparently* (though we are never completely certain) plunges from the top of Up There, now possessing her own *chanté mas* to be sung by generations to come. She of the “wide-brimmed hat hiding her devil-eyes” (292), an image strikingly familiar to readers of Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), will plunge to the bottom as did her ancestors:

But Lillian had decided that it would be best to be the worst of the lot, a

soucouyant: a woman who takes off her skin at night and flies around in search of victims whose blood she sucks. . . . [S]he would fly through the air for her country people—and at the bottom there were enough trees and branches to tear off her skin, so that when they found her she would be exactly what they wanted her to be: their nightmare come true, a *soucouyant*. (292)

She, like her mother, like Matilda, has reached, at last, “[t]he possibility of peace” (208), even if that peace is to be found in death. Her family has always been feared, boundary crossers that defy every norm Roseau and, in large, Dominica can offer. They are its monsters, its worst nightmares, harbingers of what would be seen as madness by the community. They are, perhaps frighteningly, eternal, unburnable: they are the *Hye won Hye*, the unburnable, the “symbol of the permanence of the human soul” (7). In this way, we learn that Lillian’s plunge, like the villagers of Noir, has not truly destroyed her spirit; the spirit itself is unburnable, something that, no matter how ruined the village, no matter how seemingly decimated, will rise again. This is also the nightmare that society faces, the re-emergence of that which it does not wish to acknowledge exists: that which can seep between boundaries, that which can usurp the power of others, that which can destroy what is conventional to the community.

Mapping the Future: Paths of Discovery

Gothic has as its strongest feature its resilience, its ability to come again, like a ghost that whispers from the past, and few permutations of the gothic allow us to see this whisper as clearly as we do in the postcolonial gothic. The postcolonial gothic has the

ability to question, to interrogate boundaries, to defy the conventions we so frequently do not question; it has the ability to create unburnable possibilities, potentialities for the present and the future. These possibilities are not guaranteed, nor are they always optimistic. Nations may collapse, people turning on each other as the ruins of the past become the ruins of the present and the future; these ruins become the worlds of Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). Families may deny each other, waging war on those they should protect. This we saw clearly in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994, trans. 1999), and Tash Aw's *The Silk Harmony Factory* (2005). People may shatter, a central theme in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1985) and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966/1969), while others reclaim their identities and voices, as in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Monsters may arise, angry and incapable of appeasement; we have seen this in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (1983). Finally, hope may disappear under tongues of fire, as we have seen in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1990) and Chris Abani's *The Virgin in Flames* (2007). As we have seen throughout this work, postcolonial gothic novels are frequently written in the dark of midnight, with images of suffering, fragmentation, and loss engraved into their words. They are often ciphers, vessels of communication that we must strive to understand, to decode. Indeed, they are tools of resistance, for they allow writers and readers to tear away the blinders that may obscure how race, gender, class, and ethnicity are all still inextricably bound with the ideologies of the past, how the past has itself thwarted the future. What should be buried, what should be dead, continues to live in the postcolonial gothic, an undead of political, ideological, and economic

subjugation.

Where do studies in the postcolonial gothic tread from this point? Smith and Hughes have called for works analyzing postcolonial gothic texts that are not situated in Africa or the subcontinent, and that seems a worthy endeavor, to more systematically map the differing handling of gothic between cultures and time periods, as this work has not attempted to do. In particular, works from the Caribbean need to be explored, with a strong focus on the gothic variations between the supernatural and the Obeah traditions. How, for example, do we understand the gothic nature of Obeah? Do we place Obeah as a convenient analog for the supernatural in such works as *Wuthering Heights*, with its wild-roaming Catherine, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, with its ever-living Melmoth? Instead, do we consider Obeah to be a significantly different feature of the gothic, one tied to religion more than the spectral? How would such a distinction affect interpretations of gothic in general and Caribbean gothic in particular?

We must also address to what extent postcolonial gothic redefines gothic and the postcolonial. Can a thorough postcolonial gothic definition and exploration help reinvent our understanding of what it means to be *gothic*? One understanding of this issue might be to reinvent what we understand to be a ruin or a villain by acknowledging the contributions to gothic that the postcolonial world has provided in such works as *Midnight's Children* and *Unburnable*. Indeed, can postcolonial gothic help us create a stronger understanding of how Magic Realism interacts with the gothic tradition, particularly when considering the works of Salman Rushdie? Similarly, a significant question arises when we consider the postcolonial, one that may lead to some discomfort. Is the postcolonial imbued by its very nature with gothic overtones? Indeed, is all

postcolonial narrative in some ways gothic, particularly as it seeks to reach a future from the paths of despair and ruin seen in the postcolonial world?

Finally, one key area of concern for many postcolonial authors and readers may be whether drawing upon such a tradition, one established in Europe during the height of Empire, effectively colonizes the postcolonial gothic. Audre Lorde has said, in a much-quoted passage, that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (as qtd. in Minh-ha 80). Is she, indeed, correct? This is a question of enormous import not only to postcolonial gothic studies, but also to postcolonial studies in general. If one writes in the novel form rather than an indigenously culturally derived form, does one damage the possibilities for reworking and reshaping the boundaries of postcolonial society? While a complete resolution to these questions may never be possible, perhaps we should, instead, invert the questions. Can it be possible, then, that the postcolonial gothic itself decolonizes the very tradition of the gothic? Can a text writing back against colonial oppression decolonize the very tradition it attempts to resist? In the postcolonial gothic, I believe it is possible to answer *yes*. With its monsters freely roaming the streets, with its fires creating hope from ashes, postcolonial gothic offers a unique opportunity to re-inscribe gothic traditions. It becomes a revision of gothic as a whole—a revision that offers a solid voice for indigenous subjects who have been consistently chained or silenced in nineteenth-century gothic texts.

However, we must caution ourselves by remembering that not all stories are known, nor are all questions capable of resolution. Many possibilities await us, ones that make complete resolution both impossible and undesirable. Instead, these possibilities should remain open, awakened within us as paths of discovery into many futures.

Notes

¹ Methwold's name is critical, as David Price explores in his work "Salman Rushdie's 'Use and Abuse of History' in *Midnight's Children*." As he discusses, *Methwold* can be seen as originating from *myth*, Europe's mythological "projected desire" of Empire (95). Additionally, Price emphasizes that his name incorporates *method*, in this case a method of power. By imbuing objects and property with value, by essentially revering them, he is teaching his Indian converts to do so, too: to revere the British objects and property and, by extension, Great Britain itself (95).

² Indeed, the fact that Saleem keeps the truth buried from us—and from Padma, to whom he relates much of his tale—for a good portion of the novel shows the horror he feels for his hybrid race. Loretta Mijares argues correctly that Padma seems more horrified that he is Anglo-Indian, "unconsciously rewrit[ing] the paternity he recounts," than the pain he must have experienced in finding his secret paternity (133). As Mijares claims, Padma seems to think it would be better for Saleem to be born a pauper, Wee Willie Winkie's child, than it would be to be born the son of a wealthy white man. However, Saleem's own focus on origin—Methwold, Ahmed Sinai, Wee Willie Winkie, Nadir Khan, Hanif Aziz, General Zulfikar, and Picture Singh—shows, to Mijares, a concern more with economics and positions of power than with race (133-4). Even more, Mijares argues that the only determining factor for these characters is power (135).

³ Robert Bennett's analysis of the national allegory rests upon Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, for narratives reflect diversity, not a unified voice of narration. As Bennett writes, such an approach saves the national allegory from being bound by one

purpose and agenda, allowing it to “bring diverse languages—both between and within nations—into an unending creative conversation with each other” (185). The process allows national identity to undermine a single, unified national identity, forcing national identity to be seen, instead, as the “diversity that irreparably fragments national languages and identities” (185). Bennett particularly resists Fredric Jameson’s interpretation of national allegory, which stages the Third World allegory in “‘primitive or tribal’ societies” (178) in direct contrast to the industrialized world’s postmodern, fractured national identity. Part of the problem with definition here, of course, is the very concept of *nation*, which tends to blur (Hussain 4), particularly when we consider Benedict Anderson’s statement that the nation is an “imagined community” (qtd. in Györke 169), suggesting that the boundaries of nation are merely part of our communal heritage rather than rigid concepts and boundaries. Finally, Alexandra Schultheis, writer of *Regenerative Fictions: Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis, and the Nation as Family*, posits that the metaphor is attached more with family and the nation than the individual and the nation; however, she believes strongly that in the postcolonial world, the metaphor has to be reworked—as it is in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*—by showing how the link common in European literature between public and private collapses into other dynamics, including gender, race, and class (108).

⁴ Most interestingly, this boundary between cities and countries, between people, mirrors the boundaries between death and life seen in the ghost image of Joseph D’Costa, who has, “in fact, managed to cross the blurred frontier, and now appeared in Buckingham Villa not as a nightmare, but as a full-fledged ghost. Visible . . . only to

Mary Periera, he began haunting her in all the rooms of our home” (235). Ghosts haunt the boundaries, ghosts of what once was—India, before its conquest—and what is. Postcolonial gothic, thus, blurs the boundaries between many categories, collapsing them but also resisting those specters that endanger the future.

⁵ Derek Littlewood traces Magic Realism to German art critic Franz Roh, whom Maria Jesús López Sánchez-Vizcaíno discusses as having criticized a post-expressionist painting that possessed not only the realist world, but the mystery behind it as well (170); Littlewood particularly mentions Gabriel García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970) as the exemplary form. According to Littlewood, Magic Realism can now also be used to refer to the works of Umberto Eco, Christopher Ransmayr, and Sylvie Germain (187)—and Sánchez-Vizcaíno adds Anglean Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and Toni Morrison to the list (171)—even if its initial definition, provided by Alejo Carpentier in 1949, seems to have insisted that the form was especially centered on Latin America and its “mythic, primitive and hybrid culture, in opposition to the European subversion of reality in order to find the supernatural” (Sánchez-Vizcaíno 170). Because of its alienating qualities, it can be seen as a strong tool for postcolonial authors, who strive in some way to differentiate their own perspectives from those of their colonizers.

⁶ Teverson argues that Rushdie uses the 1001 nights in a uniquely resistant manner. The *Arabian Nights* can be seen as the epitome of the Oriental Other, that “locus of the unknown” (221), which, intriguingly, “threatens the reader with incarceration in tales upon tales” (222). By alluding to the 1001 nights, Teverson brilliantly contends that Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* can resist the ideologies of wholeness and nation present

in Enlightenment fiction, which had cast the *Arabian Nights* as its threatening Other. Such an interpretation explains the open texture of Rushdie's novel and also allows for a particularly gothic reading, where knowledge remains buried, unending, a secret . . . even after all has been read.

⁷ Even more, if we listen to the warning Mita Banerjee sounds in her ““Hold down the Furniture,”” the postcolonial itself—with its emphasis on fragmentation, hybridity, and rootlessness, all seen in Rushdie's novel (González 45)—risks lapsing into the very universalism it denies by transvaluating fragmentation as desirable, hybridity as celebratory, rootlessness as normative (269). By doing so, the postcolonial world risks slipping into the mistakes of the past.

⁸ Iris is beautiful, sexual, wild, much more so than the “whiter” residents of Roseau. John makes it very clear from the start that Iris's beauty is seen as alien, a wildness associated with her skin and supposed large eyes. Because of this beauty, Iris is sought; she stays with a family as she attends school, only to become Lillian's father's mistress. As she is attending school, Iris sees John Baptiste, well off and quite handsome; she stands outside as he is getting married to Cecile Baptiste, and she stands *provocatively*. No woman is supposed to stand in such a confident, sexually-charged manner without “wanting it.”

Thus, Iris becomes Baptiste's mistress. She is expelled by the community, though she does find friendship in a set of others like herself. Yet Iris transgresses even more when, on the Carnival, she practically sexually assaults John and Cecile—in public. In doing so, she has made herself a victim of a very dangerous action, for Cecile's mother

swears revenge . . . and receives it. She is literally violated by the mother (with a broken bottle), and she falls into near-death and madness. That this girl of no class, no wealth, no racial distinction could stand so strongly against social mores leads to her downfall.

Continuing the story, Matilda, Iris's mother and Lillian's grandmother, pays John Baptiste's family back by killing him in the Carnival. She is later hung for her actions, though there are also several others supposedly killed by her hand. It is this story that Lillian attempts to uncover.

⁹ Again, we find that Obeah is described in terms of *evil* when we find that Teddy, an African-American writer of fame from the United States, sees Matilda as possessing "something *dark* about her, something—he hesitated at the word, it was not one he ever used seriously—something evil" (147). Teddy comes as Lillian's companion, yet we readily find that he does not seem to understand what happens around him, despite his erudite treatises. "His urban parents' stories," for example, "did not speak of spirit representations and men dropping dead because of some voodoo, Obeah, some magical kind of African religion" (147). Throughout the novel, in fact, Teddy seems to bear a startlingly close resemblance to Lockwood in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), unaware of the story he himself is telling and completely incapable of interpreting it.

¹⁰ Lillian is even seen as a bastard, for she is married out of wedlock, and, thus, she cannot be given the full ceremonies of baptism that others born in wedlock deserve (189). We see this in *Jane Eyre* to a degree; though Jane is not a bastard, she is an orphan, one outcast from society through no actions of her own.

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