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“The Horror, the Horror”: The Origins of a Genre in Late Victorian and Edwardian
Britain, 1880–1914

by

Jonathan Maximilian Gilbert

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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By Jonathan Maximilian Gilbert

Dissertation Director:

Carolyn Williams

This dissertation analyzes the origins of the genre of popular fiction known as horror fiction. It traces those origins, in British fiction, to the late Victorian and Edwardian eras when the Gothic genre developed into a number of different genres of popular fiction: mystery, science fiction, and horror. It defines the essential features of the horror genre that differentiate it from other genres, including the Gothic, as being the presence of the monster or monstrous and the supernatural and an aim to produce a response of horror in its readers. In addition to making an historical and theoretical argument in regards to genre in general and this genre specifically, the dissertation looks at the ways in which other discourses (such as advertising, travel literature, sociology) made use of the figures and tropes of horror fiction and, which in turn, informed the development of the themes and tropes of horror fiction. The first chapter argues that while genre is an essential concept for readers, authors, and publishers, there is also no such thing as a “pure” example of any given genre. The first chapter also positions horror fiction within the context of the fictions that present horror without the supernatural (Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*) and the supernatural divorced from horror (Marie Corelli’s *A Romance of Two Worlds*). Chapter Two focuses on the figure of the monster, which becomes over-coded as a representation of multiple and sometimes contrary fears and concerns. The chapter discusses the monster and the feelings

of horror it evokes using both contemporary and current anthropological, psychological, and sociological theories to frame the discussion. Chapter Three focuses on the haunted objects that appear in horror fiction and other discourses, such as advertising and political economy, at this time. The final chapter is concerned with the settings of horror fiction and the ways in which those settings differ from those of the Gothic novel. Horror fiction presupposes a realistic milieu such as the suburban home, which is invaded by a supernatural and horrific element. Horror fiction also has a more complex relation to time than its Gothic predecessor and the final chapter concludes with an examination of that relationship.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Leonard and Jeannette, who saw the beginning of this work but not its completion, and to my wife and daughter, Elizabeth and Sarah, who both entered my life after this work began but where there to see it completed. I would not have been able to do this without all their love and support.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Illustrations	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Defining a Genre: Supernatural Horror	10
Why Genre?	11
Marking a Beginning	15
An Awareness of Genre	21
Horror Without the Supernatural: Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and the Transgressive	29
Horror, Modernism, and the Rejection of Bourgeois Values	37
Supernatural Interests in "Fact" and "Fiction"	42
The Supernatural Without Horror: Marie Corelli's <i>A Romance of Two Worlds</i>	46
Chapter 1: End Notes	54
Chapter 2: Theorizing the Monster, or What's Horrifying Us	59
The Monster Embodied	59
The Monster Appears	68
The Monster with a 1000 Faces	73
The Body as Evidence	80
Making Monsters	90
Monsters and Miscegenation, or How It Shows Distinctly	101
A Race Apart	106
Sexual Predators and Deathly Embraces	110
The Unconscious and the Body of Desire	118
Monsters, Masses and Masters	124
A Monstrous Revolution and the Oppressor as Monster	128
Chapter 2: End Notes	143
Chapter 3: Ghosts and Things, or The Haunted Object	149
The New Meaning of Objects	149
The Mysterious Language of Objects	154
The Commodity That Makes Monsters of Men	157
The Magic of Technology	162
Fetishes, Foreign and Domestic	166
The Antiquarian's Ghosts	173
Collecting the Monstrous	177
Mummies, Dolls, and the Collecting of Women	184
Advertising Monsters and Monstrous Advertisers	188
Chapter 3: End Notes	204
Chapter 4: A Time and Place for Horror	207
In Every Dream Home a Nightmare: From Gothic Castle to Haunted Flat	207
Ghosts of History	211
The Weight of History	215
The Ends of the Empire	220
"A Likely Place Isn't It"	225
London Becomes "Bagdad in an Instant"	231
Discovering the Abyss	243

Suburban Horrors	248
Suburban Space as Modern Hell	257
Chapter 4: End Notes	263
Bibliography	271
<i>Curriculum Vita</i>	297

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

1-1	Punch cartoon on Baron de Book Worms	24
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Chapter 2

2-1	The Irish Frankenstein	130
2-2	The “Spectre of Homerule”	131
2-3	The “Nemesis of Neglect”	132
2-4	Anarchism as monster (#1)	133
2-5	Anarchism as monster (#2)	134
2-6	The Monsters of “Chauvanism, militarism, protectionism”	135
2-7	Vampires of Special Interest	136

Chapter 3

3-1	Advertisement: Technology as magic	164
3-2	Advertisement with Fairy	190
3-3	Eastern magician ad	191
3-4	Lysol Ad (Do You Live in a Haunted House?)	192
3-5	Monkey brand soap ad	193
3-6	Witches soap ad	194
3-7	The Imp of Disease	195
3-8	How We Advertise Now	196
3-9	Horrible London, or the Pandemonium of Poster	197

Chapter 4

4-1	Jack the Ripper, “Mysterious Monster of the East End”	238
4-2	Jack the Ripper as Skull-Faced Monster	239

INTRODUCTION

While my understanding of the genre of supernatural horror fiction has grown considerably over the course of this project's completion, my goals in approaching this subject matter have remained consistent. They are to understand (1) what defines the genre typically referred to today as *horror*, (2) why the genre developed at a given historical moment, and (3) how early texts of the genre were received and reinterpreted in other discourses.

My preliminary research suggested that most of the foundational texts in the genre of "supernatural horror" fiction (the term is borrowed from H. P. Lovecraft) were published between 1818, the year Mary Shelly published *Frankenstein*, and 1914, the beginning of World War One and the end of what Philip Van Doren Stern called the "Golden Age of the Ghost Story" (Sullivan "Golden Age of the Ghost Story," 174). However, while a few early examples of the genre, notably *Frankenstein*, did appear during the first half of the nineteenth century, the genre did not build momentum (and receive critical and public recognition) until the close of that century. Though the genre has had regular periods of popularity since the Edwardian era, there was marked lull in interest by 1914 when the real horrors of the war took precedence over fictional horrors in the public imagination. For these reasons, I've confined my investigation to texts published between 1880 and 1914. In this period, great changes occurred in British society, making it, as Stuart Hall points out, an especially important period for the study of popular culture in general. Hall writes,

...somewhere in this period [between the 1880's and the 1920's] lies the matrix of factors and problems from which our history—and our peculiar dilemmas—arise. Everything changes—not just a shift in the relations of forces but a reconstitution of the terrain of political struggle itself. It isn't just by chance that so many of the characteristic forms of what we now think of as 'traditional' popular culture either emerge from or emerge in their distinctive modern form, in that period (229).

One of those forms to emerge out of the complex and changing social relations of this period was supernatural horror. Also, while horror fiction, like the Gothic from which it derived, was a genre with international appeal, many of the more prominent texts in the genre were written in English.

Thus, in this dissertation I have confined myself to primary texts by British, anglo-colonial, and anglophone authors. In discussing secondary texts, however, I have cast a wider geographical net.

Interestingly, while much of the popular literature of this period has long gone out of print and stays largely unread, some popular works from the horror genre have fared very well. Some of these texts (e.g., Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*) still resonate as powerful cultural myths and are read by academics and non-academics alike. Even lesser known works are still read in reprints and anthologies, thanks in part to a devoted fan base for the genre; and specialty publishers like Ash-Tree Press, Midnight House, Arkham House, Tartarus Press, Sarob Press, and others keep the work of many lesser-known genre authors from this period in press (including M.R. James, Bernard Capes, Vernon Lee, Violet Hunt, Robert Hichens, and even Edgar Jepson's novel *The Garden at 19*). Many of these texts are also available online and are discussed by largely non-academic readers in online forums and at horror conventions.

Genres always preserve their past in present day examples, and this is a central point in the argument of this dissertation. As Mikhail Bakhtin puts it, "A genre lives in the present but always remembers its past, its beginning" (*Problems* 106). In order to trace the historical development of the horror genre, it was necessary to consider how it both built on elements of the Gothic and marked a definite break with that earlier genre. Many of the figures, settings, and plots of the Gothic reappear in horror fiction, but their functions, roles, and meanings often change. The changes that took place in the transformation of the Gothic into horror are discussed in Chapter 1. However, each of the subsequent chapters also takes up some of the differences between the two genres in greater detail.

The Gothic was primarily a literature of *terror* (which I would define as a definite fear of impending events), while the genre under consideration here attempts to inspire another response, *horror* (an indefinite fear that coupled with revulsion). Again obviously, the presence of the

supernatural is an essential part of supernatural horror as I define it, while in the Gothic the role of the supernatural has a different significance and is often explained away as a trick of the senses. The Gothic is a genre that typically questions the existence of the supernatural even as it introduces it into the narrative. In the Gothic, monstrosity may be suggested (often in reference to architectural constructions such as the Gothic castle), but in horror the presence of the monster is essential, for the monster physical embodies the horrific and supernatural.

In addition to discussing the historical development of the horror genre, Chapter 1 also looks at various theories of genre in order to understand the textual and interpretive implications involved in interpreting a text within the context of a genre. Among other points, it addresses the paradox that a text can never be a pure representation of a single genre but, at the same time, readers and critics (as well as writers and publishers) can recognize the existence of genres and identify texts as belonging to one genre or another. While taking into account the insights of genre theorists such as Northrup Frye and Hans Jauss, my own understanding of genre relies on a “foundation” that is anti-foundational (i.e., Derridean). Genres are not stable and unchanging. Genres are ideal concepts, along the lines of Platonic Forms, that guide our identification of texts, but like the Forms they cannot exist outside of discourse. However, the fact there is no such thing as a pure example of a genre does not mean that it is a fictive concept without an effect in the world. So while recognizing the limits of any concept of genre and any definition of a specific genre, I still discuss the ways in which generic definitions influence people’s reading practices and how the tropes associated with this genre are adapted (sometimes knowingly, sometimes not) in other discourses.

Finally Chapter 1 looks at the two most important criteria for defining this particular genre, horror and the supernatural. It does this through a discussion of two literary texts, each addressing one of these elements. Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* is about the feeling of horror (among other things), and at the same time it also attempts to create horror in its readers. The discussion of horror in *The Heart of Darkness* leads to a definition of horror and an

investigation of the ways in which horror fiction models the horror felt by its character(s), even while leading readers to a visceral response of that horror. The chapter also connects the development of this genre with the concurrent development of modernism in literature through their mutual interest in the sublime and their common rejection of realism and bourgeois values (the latter sometimes masked in the case of horror fiction).

While Conrad's novella shares an interest in horror and even makes use of some of the same rhetorical devices and figures as horror fiction, it does not try to attribute that horror to any supernatural cause. In order to interrogate the role of the supernatural in the literature of this period, the chapter looks at Marie Corelli's novel *A Romance of Two Worlds*. Corelli's novel is presented as an example of hermetic or occult fiction, a type of literature that seeks to reveal a "higher truth" through its portrayal of the supernatural rather than to use the supernatural as a means of horrifying readers. I argue that hermetic or religious fictions that present the supernatural have a substantially different politics than supernatural horror fictions because they disrupt one view of reality in order to install a new orthodoxy, while horror calls into question the very possibility of knowing "reality."

The period interest in fictional portrayals of the supernatural (whether horrific or not) can be tied to the increased fascination with the occult, spiritualism, and related beliefs at this time. Both supernatural horror and hermetic/occult fiction found a large audience in late 19th and early 20th century Britain. The chapter uses a discussion of Corelli's novels as a starting place to interrogate this interest in the supernatural and the way in which belief in the supernatural as well as its fictional presentation reflected a need to find new strategies for coping with the complex changes occurring in modern society.

In Chapter 2, I investigate more fully the figure of the monster, whose centrality to the supernatural horror genre is introduced in Chapter 1. The monster as a figure has a long history in world literature, but with the advent of realism had largely disappeared from British literature. Even in the Gothic, where *monstrosity* and *monstrousness* were common (in relation to scenery or

human behavior), actual monsters (i.e., monstrous bodies) are very rare. However, in supernatural horror fiction the monster returns with a vengeance. In focusing on the monster's body as well as its actions, supernatural horror found a more powerful method to convey emotion as well as an emotion more appropriate for this era, horror rather than terror.

Noel Carroll has observed the centrality of the monster to horror (14–17) but left a good deal more to be said about the role of the monster and the reasons its appearance is so important for the genre. I engage Mary Douglas' definition of the taboo as “matter out of place,” a concept also used by Julia Kristeva to define the source of horror, and Georges Bataille's claim that at the root of all revulsion is our need as humans to separate ourselves from other animals. These concepts help me to explain why the monster's body, which appears to be in a transitional or marginal state, neither human nor animal, alive nor dead, serves to communicate horror in the most visceral fashion possible.

While some monsters are more animal (or even plant-like) than human, the majority are humans who are marred or marked in some significant fashion. The monster's body deviates from the “natural order” and, as Mary Douglas argues, the body is a natural symbol for the society as a whole. So it should not be surprising that the monster serves to represent many different types of deviation from the social norm, and that interest in the monster should be greater at times of disruptive social change. I use a number of examples, most notably Richard Marsh's popular novel *The Beetle*, to show how the monster embodies multiple fears, anxieties, and desires, both individual and social in character. I also look at how the body of the monster is related to the body of its intended “victim” and how, in presenting both these bodies, the genre opens up the possibility that the reader will identify with either or even both simultaneously. Thus representations that seem to demonize the Other are complicated by reader identification.

Chapter 2 also looks at the monster as it appears in other biological, psychological, political, and sociological discourses. These discourses influenced the portrayal of monsters in supernatural horror fiction, but the influence worked both ways, and the monsters of horror

fiction appear in the political texts of Marx, political cartoons, and sociological discussions of the poor, among other places. In the process of investigating these other discourses, I interrogate the relation of gender to scientific discussion of monstrous births and the body of the hysteric and the relation of class and race to discussions of degeneration and fears of revolution.

Chapter 3 discusses an aspect of literature that does not get much attention: the presentation of objects. The close of the nineteenth century saw a number of changes in consumer markets, advertising, technology, and the human sciences (particularly those, like archeology, that had a special interest in objects), all of which affected people's understanding of the objects around them. In literature, these new relationships were represented in mystery or detective fiction where the object is presented as a clue to human behavior; in the works of authors like Henry James, who focused new attention on interiors and the objects that populated them; and in supernatural horror fiction, where objects were given the ability to act in the world through the spirits that inhabited them. The animated and haunted objects of horror fiction presented a definite change from the Gothic and Early-Victorian ghost story as well as from the magical objects of folktales and fairytales. Supernatural horror authors recognized that the relationships between human beings and the objects they owned and used had changed and that the world of objects was not as benign as it seemed. As does M. R. James when he states that, "many common objects may be made the vehicles for retribution, and where retribution is not called for, of malice" (*Stories I Have Tried* 646).

With changes in technology and the advent of capitalist consumer culture, people began to look at objects in a new light (in some cases literally in the new light of gas and later electricity). Much has been made of the disenchantment of the world in the modern era. However, with commodity fetishism people's reactions to (and interaction with) the commodity take on the character of a "supernatural" or "magical" relationship. In other words, one that involves the manipulation and control of signs to effect change in the world. In supernatural horror, this usually hidden aspect of commodity culture is made explicit.

One way in which this “magical” manipulation of signs occurs is through advertising, and Chapter 3 looks both at advertisements that use images of the supernatural and horrific to communicate fear and alienation (and in turn sell products) and at the popular discourse that critiqued advertisements and saw them as monstrous and threatening. This era also saw the rise of collecting as a popular hobby, and the chapter considers the act of collecting as well as the presentation of collectors and antiquarians in supernatural horror. Collecting is another way of trying to manipulate signs in order to control objects, and that function of collecting is discussed in relation to fetishism and theories that relate fetishism to collecting. Particular attention is paid to the period fascination with collecting medical oddities and human body parts, which is discussed in relation to the alienation that also accompanies capitalism and commodity culture. Examples of horror stories concerning collectors or collections are used to investigate the role of foreign bodies in the imperial sphere and of women within domestic spaces. The chapter also draws parallels between the European fetishizing of gold and the African’s religious fetish and relates these to capitalist and imperialist interactions between those cultures.

Horror fiction, far from being an attempt to avoid the world, as some critics would argue, is very much connected to contemporary social events and issues. It speaks to people’s sense that the world around them is not rational or sensible, as the discourses of the predominant order would argue. Supernatural horror fiction presents a more complicated view of people, places, and things—the latter through portrayals of haunted and cursed objects that neither solve any problems, nor fulfill any desires (as the commodity promises to do), nor provide an aesthetic escape (as the collectible promises to do). Instead the haunted objects of horror fiction show the dehumanization and alienation that accompany modern capitalism.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the settings of horror further, both in regard to temporal and spatial elements. The Gothic had been a genre concerned with the impact of the feudal and Catholic past on the present, but by the close of the nineteenth century the average reader had other concerns as well as a better sense of history that came with better education. The fate of

fallen empires, the existence of a prehistoric and even pre-human past, and the fear of revenge for Britain's current imperial actions were all topics addressed by supernatural horror stories that dwelt (ostensibly) on the threats of resurrected mummies, ghosts of humanity's prehistoric ancestors, and grudgeful and immortal sorcerers (or sorceresses) who have survived from ancient times. In a few cases, notably two stories by Algernon Blackwood, horror stories could even be used to indict the whole history of Western civilization or the weight of the past itself.

While time is certainly a component in setting, place is even more important in horror fiction. Unlike the Gothic, which generally took place inside a castle or similarly impressive structure, horror fictions take place in a range of spaces: city apartments, suburban villas, country houses, wilderness camps, frontier outposts. While certain of the of the horror stories related to these settings have been labeled as "Urban Gothic" (Spencer) or "Imperial Gothic" (Brantlinger), I argue (once again) that they represent a distinct break from the Gothic and are instead examples of the supernatural horror genre. Horror fiction did investigate the imperial sphere as well as the urban, but it also looked at life in the country and in the suburb.

In discussing horror as it relates to the imperial sphere, I focus on travel literature and the ways in which it borrows from horror fiction. I link both fictional and nonfictional accounts of the colonized spaces through their attempts to portray a "space of death" (borrowing a phrase from Michael Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*). The space of death is a zone of colonization, and as such it is a place where violence and disorder lead to a sense that the surrounding world is hellish and surreal; it is a space where death is literally close, but it is also one in which there is room for transformation and resistance, often through apparently supernatural means (Taussig, *Shamanism* 373–374, 465–467). For the travel writer, entering a space of death (or encountering death) was a way of ensuring that what they wrote was an account of exploration and adventure and not simply of a tourist jaunt. For the horror author, this was the space from which monsters came, and in this way the idea of the space of death links wilderness and slum, or darkest Africa and darkest London. This connection leads to a

consideration of exposes of slum life from this period, which also borrow from accounts of travel, adventure, as well as from horror in describing the urban poor.

As it is probably the best-known example of urban horror fiction from this period, I look closely at Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a tale (I argue) that is as much about a divided city of London as it is about a divided man. I borrow a term from Guy Debord, "psychogeography," to describe the way Stevenson's novella looks at the effects of the city on characters' feelings, actions, and unconscious desires. The chapter also investigates other texts (both fictional and "factual") that look at the horrors of urban life and the fears of the urban-dwelling middle class reader: the anonymity of life in the city, crime (discussed in the context of hooliganism and the Ripper murders), and the poor (who threaten to rise up out of their slums and invade the domains of their social betters).

The final chapter also looks at horror fictions that take place in suburban settings, such as Edgar Jepson's *The Garden at 19* and several works by Arthur Machen, in order to see how this is a space is both middle class domesticity (which fears intrusion by the poor, who dwell in the "abyss" of the slums) and a hellish place in its own right (or as Machen calls it, "an inferno created not by Dante but by the jerry-builder" [*Hill of Dreams*, 143]). Suburbia is the creation of the bourgeoisie, and by presenting suburbia as the epitome of the repetitive and lifeless aspects of modern capitalism—those aspects of the commodity society that Walter Benjamin labeled as "truly modern" (Buck-Morss 96)—authors such as Machen and Algernon Blackwood indict middle class values and beliefs in general. Moreover, they suggest the paradox that is at the heart of horror fiction: boundaries are essential for the genre (because the horrific and supernatural are those things that transgress boundaries), but at the same time, the genre must enact the transgression of those boundaries, sometimes to the delight of the reader. Suburbia became a common setting for horror fiction during this era, because social and physical boundaries were even more important there than in urban or country settings, and so the transgression of those boundaries was all the greater.

Chapter 1: Defining a Genre: Supernatural Horror

Samuel Delany, in his article “The Gestation of Genres: Literature, Fiction, Romance, Science Fiction, Fantasy...,” quotes a letter he received from Joanna Russ that stated, “Worrying about the purity of the genres is like worrying about the purity of races” (64). He continues the metaphor, writing that “none of these genres are pure, even at birth” (66). This point, concerning the impossibility of defining a “pure” genre, seems to be a particularly apt place to start a consideration of the genre commonly labeled “horror fiction,” which I will call “supernatural horror fiction” in order to distinguish it both from fantasy or occult fictions (that may present the supernatural without the horrific) and mysteries and thrillers (that may present horror without the supernatural).¹

The problem of classification (regardless of what is being classified) is always fraught with complications and repercussions, and rarely, if ever, innocent of ulterior motives. Furthermore, discussions of generic purity, like those of racial purity, never seem to lead to anything productive. Just as modern genetics shows that racial purity is a myth (since the gene pool has a much wider distribution than the arbitrary distinction of skin color would suggest), a careful consideration of the inter-relations of texts would show that texts are actually much more complex than a concept of “pure” genre will allow. However, categories of race have a very real impact on the material conditions of people throughout the world, whether or not they refer to any essential reality, and the impossibility of racial purity is not a reason to avoid discussing the effects of race and racism. Likewise, categories of genre have a real impact on the way texts are produced, distributed, and received.

Why Genre?

The concept of *genre* as well as the variety of genres have real functions within a number of different discourses. Obviously literary criticism, from Aristotle to the present, has relied on a demarcation of genres as a fundamental act in the study of literature. The concept of genre has been a basic tool in the practice of literary criticism. It is, as Adena Rosmarin states, “the most powerful explanatory tool available to the literary critic” and therefore, for pragmatic purposes, Rosmarin argues for the continued use of generic labels in the practice of literary criticism (39). The marketplace, too, has learned to use generic labels as an important mark in the promotion and sale of literary commodities. Today it is not difficult to recognize a text that belongs to the horror genre; one need only go to the section of the bookstore designated “Horror” or look for that word printed on the spine of a book. This is not to say that either Aristotle or Barnes & Noble is the undisputed authority on generic conventions or the classification of texts, but a consideration of the question of genre is undeniably influenced by a long history of philosophy, capitalist business practices, and literary criticism.

In the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye stresses that the study of genre needs to be founded on the study of literary conventions (96). If genres are perceived as series of literary conventions, then certainly it is difficult to imagine a literary work produced outside any relation to a genre (or genres)—such a text would have to be entirely unconventional and stand outside literary history entirely. However, even in such a case, the concept of genre would still come into play, if only as something against which the originality of this hypothetical text could be measured. As Hans Robert Jauss notes,

Even where a verbal creation negates or surpasses all expectations, it still presupposes preliminary information and a trajectory of expectations against which to register the originality and novelty. This horizon of the expectable is constituted for the reader from out of a tradition or series of previously known works, and from a specific attitude, mediated by one (or more) genre and dissolved through new works (79).

The concept of genre as a “horizon of expectations” is useful for understanding a reader’s (and, insofar as all writing proceeds from reading, a writer’s) approach to understanding a given text. Any one text in a genre may fail to fulfill one or more expectations that concern it, but the very fact that these expectations exist in the mind of the reader (and of the author) has always already influenced the reading of that text.

If the concept of genre has a definite effect in the world then perhaps the question one should ask is, “To what positive uses can we put concepts of genre?” Rosmarin sees a reciprocal relationship in the way generic labels add to the meaning of the individual text at the same time the specific text alters a person’s understanding of a genre or genres (44). The additional meaning provided by a generic label and the entire discourse of literary criticism that follows from it help readers make “sense” of the literary text and understand its relationship to other types of texts.² The perceived value of a text in relation to its genre depends on both the way it fulfills the expectations of that genre and how it departs from them.

After considering many of the problems of genre criticism, Vincent B. Leitch concludes that “literary discourse cannot escape genres; it experiences genres as insistent (pre)conditions inadequate to its complex textuality” (94). He argues that, while genres have been used “as reductive protocols leading the efforts at exegesis and evaluation to predictable ends” (97), they need not be a limitation but rather a way of “broadening” our understanding of the interaction “of literary, linguistic, and social codes and conventions” (90). Similarly Fredric Jameson has argued that “something like a concept of genre” is necessary for the study of literary history and that “only the history of forms themselves can provide an adequate mediation between the perpetual change of social life on the one hand, and the closure of individual work on the other” (“Magical Narratives” 136).

In “The Law of Genre,” Jacques Derrida presents a different argument for recognizing the existence of genres. He suggests that the problems that arise with a consideration of genre

stem not from the concept itself, but from a failure to recognize that there is a certain madness inherent in believing in a pure or “unmixed” genre. Derrida’s hypothesis is that

...a text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without or less a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging (65).

In other words, while a text might participate in a genre, such as supernatural horror, there is no text that fully *belongs* to that genre, no text that is an absolute model of the genre. Following Derrida, I would suggest that any generic label used in this dissertation should be understood as a category that is fluid and overlaps with an indefinite number of other genres (or possible genres).

Derrida’s essay provides a useful argument for avoiding problems concerning the purity of genres, but it does not address the other major area of argument in genre theory: the question of what criteria should be used to define a genre. Typically genres are defined by “content” or “form” or a combination of those two elements. Tzvetan Todorov also separates formal characteristics into verbal and syntactical elements (20).³ The terms “inner form” and “outer form” proposed by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren roughly correspond to Todorov’s verbal and syntactic elements, with the former term representing things such as “specific meter or structure” and the latter “attitude, tone, purpose—more crudely, subject and audience” (241). Frederic Jameson also characterizes two different approaches, which he calls the “semantic” (or modal) and “syntactic” (or structural), and he opts for a definition of genre “as that literary phenomenon which may be articulated either in terms of a fixed form or in terms of a mode, and which must be susceptible of expression in either of these critical codes optionally” (“Magical Narratives” 136–137). Wellek and Warren, on the other hand, privilege outer over inner form in the definition of genres but accept that both “dimensions” need to be found in order to qualify a group of texts as a genre.

The problem with all of these approaches (and many others like them) is that they seek to synthesize two rather different methods of definition under the rubric of one concept of genre, so that any texts labeled as belonging to the same genre are expected to share both formal and modal

elements. In practice, on the other hand, it is commonplace to assume that a text may be tragedy as well as a play or comedy as well as a novel. Hence, we may have a horror novel, a horror story, or a horror play. No text can be defined by any single genre, and some genres may define aspects of a text's form and others its content. However, the intermingling of genres is even more complex than simply the intermingling of formal and modal elements. When Vincent Leitch proposes that "with literary discourse there is always genre but more than one" (96), he is not simply stating that there are modal and formal elements of a text that may cause it to be defined as belonging to more than one genre. Leitch recognizes, correctly, that a text categorized as within one genre (e.g., supernatural horror) will always already be capable of being categorized within another genre (whether that genre be the novel, the Gothic, or science fiction).

In defining supernatural horror, semantic content is a much more useful category for investigation than syntactic form, which is not to say that formal categories should be forgotten. However, elements of the supernatural horror genre can be found in forms as varied as a painting and poetry. This dissertation will look at "horror" as it is presented in many different discursive forms but always retaining certain semantic elements (discussed below). This approach is not at odds with current conceptions of horror as a genre; today we can talk about a horror novel as well as a horror film.

One of the first problems anyone investigating horror as a genre will encounter is the lack of an accepted critical terminology for these texts. The lack of serious critical attention given to the genre has only added to the multiplication and confusion of terms, as critics keep searching for acceptable ways of discussing the genre within the larger field of literary criticism. The texts that I will investigate in this dissertation have been discussed as romance, Gothic, fantastic, psychomythic tales, weird fiction, and/or ghost stories. While some of these terms may be applicable to some (and, in some cases, perhaps even all) of the texts I will be considering, none of them seems to communicate the particular characteristics of these texts as effectively as "supernatural horror." Some of these generic labels (e.g., "Gothic" and "romance") predate the

period of this study, and while they may mark the genres out of which supernatural horror develops, to use them ignores the changes that occur over time. Other labels (e.g., the ghost story) seem appropriate only for a subsection of the texts I wish to consider here. Finally, there are generic labels (e.g., the fantastic) that are more appropriate for a larger group of texts of which supernatural horror is a subsection, and while they may be used to describe supernatural horror texts they also ignore certain specific elements of the genre.

The term “supernatural horror” comes from H. P. Lovecraft’s *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, and while Lovecraft’s own literary work is outside the scope of this dissertation, his position as a significant horror author who produced a substantial critical reflection on the genre makes his terminology a useful starting point.⁴ I have used Lovecraft’s term “supernatural horror” to label the genre because it encapsulates the two key elements of the genre as it is commonly understood today. The horror narrative is generally one in which a supernatural (or at least unnatural) element intrudes upon the world of everyday reality, and in the process of doing so, intentionally or not, it brings about a response of horror on the part of characters and/or readers. The key elements are present in the name, which are the presence of the supernatural and the attempt to horrify the reader.⁵ While texts that have one but not the other of these elements may be tangentially related to the genre—for example two texts I will examine in the latter part of this chapter, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Marie Corelli’s *A Romance of Two Worlds* would not be generally be thought of as supernatural horror. However, such texts are useful because they enable one to explore the limits of the genre (i.e., how does a text that presents horror without the supernatural or the supernatural without horror fall short of being a part of the horror genre).

Marking a Beginning

Genres are historical concepts that are subject to change over time; Thomas Kent sums up this situation, noting that, “The term genre may be understood to have two dimensions: one

synchronic, the other diachronic. In one sense, a genre is a system of codifiable conventions, and in another sense, it is a continually changing cultural artifact” (15). Or as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it, “A genre lives in the present but always remembers its past, its beginning” (*The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 106). Even if one accepts the existence of a horror genre today, one still faces the problem of dating the origins of that genre, as well as the no-less-tricky problem of defining something that is mutable, and therefore capable of changing definition over the course of time.⁶

It is unlikely that there is a single point of origin for any genre, and the origin or origins any two critics choose to focus on may vary greatly depending on the scope of their historical vision and the degree to which they differentiate overlapping genres. When I state that the horror genre begins in the nineteenth century, I am not denying that is also a development of the basic themes of the Gothic or a continuation of themes that have their origins in oral folklore. Any “new” genre is composed of elements of genres already existing; it may subsume those genres or merely intersect with them, and any point of demarcation is to some extent an arbitrary, however necessary, distinction.

In the case of horror fiction, critics have suggested many different points of origin and most have good reasons to support their claims. For example, H. P. Lovecraft suggests that the genre dates back to pre-literate times and the stories told of monsters and horrors (18), and if we see the genre as merely the expression of horror and fears of the supernatural, then there is some truth to that argument. Other critics, such as Noel Carroll, look to the Gothic as the most likely point of origin (13).

As Carroll also suggests, if one is looking for a single text as a likely point of origin for the horror genre, Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* is a good choice (13). However, to the extent that the novel seeks to explain the creation of the monster in scientific terms (no matter how outdated those terms appear today), it can be considered science fiction as well as horror.⁷ *Frankenstein* is an unusual text in many ways, and while it may be a foundational text in the horror genre (as it

has been considered in the science fiction genre as well), it did not mark an immediate change in the nature of Gothic fiction. If *Frankenstein* belongs to the genre of horror, in other words, it took some time for a genre (i.e., a collection of texts) to develop from this foundation.

Certainly one of the difficulties in, and one of the main reasons for, defining supernatural horror as a genre is to mark its separation from the Gothic. Many genres of fiction recognized today (e.g., science fiction, horror, mystery) developed out of the Gothic, and, while each of these various types of fiction shares some common elements with this earlier genre, their differences, from each other and from the Gothic, enable us to consider them as separate genres today.⁸ The term “Gothic” has developed multiple senses over the years, and the modern Gothic novel, which is a subgenre of the romance novel, does not share all of the conventions of the Gothic novel of the eighteenth century. While many of the texts I am discussing here as supernatural horror have also been labeled and discussed as Gothic fiction, to continue to use that label without qualification, as a number of critics do, is to ignore substantial changes that have occurred both in the application of the term and in the development of popular literary genres.⁹ Horror, mystery, and science fiction all share elements with the Gothic, the genre from which they developed, but to see any one of them as merely a continuation of the Gothic is to ignore the historical specificity of that genre, whose popularity had waned by the middle of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth century were no longer part of a “living” and popular genre and new genres, such as the mystery and horror, whose popularity remains strong today, had developed to fill other functions of the Gothic genre in the popular imagination.¹⁰

Supernatural horror shares a number of elements in common with the Gothic. Perhaps most importantly both genres can be characterized as *affective forms*—that is they are “primarily structured so as to elicit particular [emotional] responses in the reader” (Haggerty 8). They are also both genres that seek to communicate the sublime rather than the beautiful. It is in this respect that supernatural horror most clearly carries on a project begun by the Gothic: the attempt

to instill fear in the reader. The Gothic texts, are, in the words of Michel Foucault “not meant to be read at the level of their writing or in the specific dimensions of their language; they wish[ed] to be read for the things they recount[ed], for this emotion, fear, horror, or pity which words were charged to communicate” (“Language to Infinity” 63).¹¹ Foucault’s observation applies equally as well to the texts of horror fiction.

Horror and Gothic also share more particular plot elements and tropes as well. Because of their attention to the sublime, both genres stress the importance of physical structures and setting; they explore, or at least try to present, places that are dark and murky and events that are uncertain and obscure. Veiled eroticism and violence are typical elements of both genres and both are often charged with excess. The supernatural and irrational appear in both genres, although the Gothic is more likely to rationalize apparently supernatural events in the end. Many of the figures and plots of the Gothic continue to haunt the pages of horror fiction, although many are subtly altered as well.

Supernatural horror alters many of the elements it inherits from the Gothic. It is not difficult to believe that the popularity of the Gothic waned in part because the terrors it propounded were no longer affective. If anything we may have trouble understanding why, when it first appeared, Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* kept Oxford undergraduates up all night with fear (Varma, Walpole 447). Today the novel seems more comic than terrifying, but it was taken quite seriously by contemporary readers. Perhaps it may be that audiences have become jaded, but it would also seem that we have different fears and concerns today, and that fictions have had to change as the objects of our fears have changed. Haggerty notes that, “the devices typical of Gothic fiction” were selected as “the most complex vocabulary for Gothic expression because they [had] the power to objectify subjective states of feeling” (8).¹² This vocabulary, however, needed to be altered and expanded to affect a new audience living in a period with significantly different social relations and material conditions—hence the development of

supernatural horror and the genres of mystery and science fiction, each with their own vocabulary of literary devices and tropes.

In some cases, the differences between the Gothic and supernatural horror are matters of degree. For instance, the supernatural plays a much smaller part in the Gothic (where it is often rationalized as well) than it does in the horror fictions of a later period (where the supernatural is an essential feature). The Gothic also rarely aims at instilling a feeling of horror in its readers, but instead it typically seeks to inspire fear or terror (a different emotion). While the distinction is a subtle one, I would argue that terror involves a definite fear of impending events and horror involves an indefinite fear of unbelievable events that is coupled with revulsion.

Along with this shift from a literature of terror to a literature of horror, there is an accompanying change in the moral judgments of the genres. As Ann Radcliffe, the Gothic novelist, notes there are major differences in the effects of these two emotions; she has a character in her dialogue “The Supernatural in Poetry” explain that,

Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.... And where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil? (qtd. in MacAndrew 125).

Horror, unlike terror, creates uncertainty concerning the source of “evil.” While Radcliffe sees the uncertainty of horror as contracting or annihilating the “higher faculties,” I would suggest that it in fact makes horror an emotional response more appropriate for the ambiguities of the modern world, a world where the source of evil is no longer so easy to define. Radcliffe is correct, however, in her observation that the emotions of horror and terror (and, by extension, the texts that create them) affect readers in quite different ways.

As Elizabeth MacAndrew notes, in the shift from the Gothic to later “tales of the weird and horrid.... The original querying into the origins of evil shifted to ambiguous presentations that questioned the nature of evil itself” (4). MacAndrew relates the presence of the “grotesque” (which, in the form of the monstrous, is an essential part of horror but not the Gothic) with this

moral ambiguity. The grotesque presents a world that is uncertain and morally ambivalent because it shows that the surface of the world is unstable and unpredictable; it therefore makes apparent that humanity's "place in the world is threatened with meaninglessness. The grotesque asserts that life is haphazard, or may be; that man is a fool of chance; and the universe is empty of meaning" (157). Such a perspective naturally leads to some uncertainty about the basis of institutionalized authorities (moral, religious, and/or social) as well. In general, horror fictions are less interested in moral instruction than Gothic tales; they are less likely to provide a moral, and the world they present is more morally ambiguous.

While both horror and Gothic are very concerned with the importance of place and setting, the two genres also tend to take place in different locations. Kate Ellis states that the Gothic novel, "can be distinguished by the presence of houses [and I would add castles and monasteries] in which people are locked in and locked out" (3), or as Chris Baldick notes in the Gothic "a fearful sense of inheritance in time [is combined] with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space" (*Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* xix). The range of settings available to horror fiction is much wider, as I will explain in Chapter 4. Supernatural horror brings elements of terror and disgust into the modern world; it does not distance them in time and space as the Gothic had. Supernatural horror fiction of the late nineteenth century brought many of the elements found in the Gothic into settings very close to home, rather than leaving them in a pseudo-Medieval Europe.

Much Gothic fiction was concerned with the limited circle of family relations, and, while many horror fictions still take place inside a family's homes, a wider range of locations also makes for a wider perspective on social relations. Horror tales may involve people in workplaces, public institutions, or even in the wilderness. Also, as Jack Sullivan notes, there is an "important contrast between the impotence of the largely decorative Gothic ghosts and the more actively loathsome, menacing quality of modern ghosts" (*Elegant Nightmares* 6). This observation would seem to apply to all manner of monsters and supernatural manifestations,

essential elements of supernatural horror. The characters are different too, with horror being less fixated on aristocrats and abbots, and instead investigating the lives of working and middle class men and women, with whom the majority of readers could more closely identify. In horror fiction, characters are also generally more complex, with interior lives and distinguishing traits that mark them as unique.

An Awareness of Genre

Critics have suggested a number of different points of origin for the contemporary horror genre beside the Gothic. Certainly the ghost story of the mid-nineteenth century is an important development in the separation of horror fiction from the Gothic. Critics writing on the ghost story note the importance of the Edgar Allen Poe, Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, and Charles Dickens (especially in his work as editor of *All The Year Round's* Christmas annuals) in establishing a genre of short fiction that had more in common with modern horror than with the Gothic novel.¹³ In many ways, the mid-Victorian ghost story represents a transitional phase between the Gothic and supernatural horror genres in which some of the standard elements of the latter genre are recognizable. (In this way it has a role similar to that played by the sensation novel in the transition between the Gothic and the mystery genres.) Another possible point of origin for the genre is the “penny dreadful” (popular, inexpensive fictions from the Victorian era that often involved Gothic themes). While the penny dreadfuls often used a variety of Gothic conventions and could be classified as late versions of the Gothic, some (e.g., Thomas Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire*) introduced monsters of a rather different sort than typically found in the Gothic. However, there remain some strong connections with the Gothic as well in these texts. Rymer’s 1845 novel, for example, while set in part in England, continues to distance the events by placing them in the past and therefore cannot fully be classified as an example of the supernatural horror genre.¹⁴

While this dissertation places the origins of the modern horror genre in the period of 1880–1914, there are admittedly strong arguments to suggest a later date for the beginning of the genre. S. T. Joshi, for instance, argues that horror could be called “a definite genre only when it went ‘underground,’ an event that appears to have caused the contemptuous dismissal of all weird [horror] work on the part of academic critics” (3). So, according to Joshi, it was only after horror found a specialized, albeit lower class, audience with the publication of *Weird Tales* magazine in March of 1923 (the first serial publication to be devoted to horror and the fantastic) that a genre could be seen as existing in opposition to mainstream fiction (4).¹⁵ With the acquisition of this new audience, he argues, came the disapproval of the critical establishment and hence the recognition of the existence of the genre as something apart from mainstream popular fiction. During the period under discussion here, popular fiction was almost entirely ignored by academic critics. However, this may have more to do with the absence of an academic critical establishment; as I believe the contemporary critical responses presented below demonstrate, supernatural horror fictions were receiving the opprobrium of *popular* critics long before the 1920s.

Critics who argue for a later (post-nineteenth century) date for the beginning of the horror genre claim that without the recognition of a new genre by a critical and editorial establishment, authors and readers would not think of themselves as writing and reading genre fiction. However, otherwise like-minded critics do not always agree on how the critical establishment was able to identify a body of texts as belonging to the supernatural horror genre. For instance, Walter Kendrick argues that before the existence of critical studies and “chronological anthologies... horrid stories formed no real tradition” (194), but rather than seeing (as Joshi does) this separation of the genre as an expulsion from mainstream respectability, Kendrick finds that “the specter of respectability lurked in these developments” (196). This apparent disagreement would seem to be the result of a confusion of two rather different critical “establishments.” Until recently academic critics have either ignored the horror genre or granted it a level of disrespect

perhaps only exceeded by that given to the contemporary romance novel.¹⁶ Popular critics, editors, and reviewers, however, have for some time recognized horror as a genre and in that recognition given the genre a degree of acceptance with a mass audience; this “popular” acceptance is what Kendrick’s claim unwittingly attests to.

While Kendrick’s criterion for dating the beginning of this genre (i.e., its recognition by a critical establishment) is actually well suited for a study of its popular acceptance, he is inaccurate in dating the advent of that recognition. He claims that one of the major steps in the creation of horror as a genre was the horror anthology that “came into being after the First World War” (191). However, anthologies of horror stories, such as the *Weird Tales* series (not to be confused with the American periodical of the same name mentioned earlier), which were not substantially different in content from post-war anthologies, appeared much earlier than he presumes. The *Weird Tales* set of five volumes, published in 1888 by William Patterson, was not unpopular either, judging from its appearance in a cartoon from *Punch* (see Figure 1-1). In this illustration that accompanies a short but positive review by the “Brave Baron de Book Worms,” there are two monstrous skeletal figures standing in front of the Baron’s bed holding a copy of a volume in this series as the Baron hides his head under the covers. The anthology is clearly being presented as a text associated with the monstrous and supernatural and intended to horrify its audience. A number of other anthologies published in the late nineteenth century were explicitly devoted to what I have labeled supernatural horror, such as *The Eerie Book* (1898), the *Terrible Tales* series (1891), *Modern Ghosts* (1890), and *Ghost Stories and Presentiments* (1888). While it may be that not all the stories contained in these volumes fit my definition of “supernatural horror,” the majority of them certainly do.

While it is true that there are no “scholarly” studies of the horror genre dating from this period (1880–1914), there are a number of examples of popular magazine criticism that begin to define horror as a genre.¹⁷ Horror fiction is not typically referred to as a “genre” during this period and when it is it is often bracketed or given emphasis to note that is not a “genre” in any



Figure 1-1: Punch cartoon on Baron de Book Worms' review of *Weird Tales*

official sense. For instance, in a 1905 review of E. F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand*, the reviewer for the *Academy* writes, "...if the tale is to stand or fall by its power to conjure up horror; Mr. Benson must be credited with a considerable success in a difficult *genre*" (711). It seems clear from this quote that critics are already thinking of horror in terms of a genre, even if it is not always labeled with that name, as it is by the *Academy* reviewer. The reviewer for *The Critic*, in a generally negative evaluation of Robert Hichens' novel *The Flames* (1897), suggests that "The evil genius of Mr. Hichens seems to have whispered in his ear that he has a talent for the weird, the fantastic and the unwholesome....," but that he has gone too far in writing a novel because "in this *genre* a short story is the most to which it is ever equal" (421). While the word "horror" is not used, the content of "the weird, the fantastic and the unwholesome" would clearly seem to reflect that of the supernatural horror genre; here, once again, emphasis is given to the word "*genre*" to mark the fact that that it is not an established genre in the same sense as the novel or the short story.

Arthur Machen is an example of what today would be called a "horror author," an author whose fiction is primarily in the horror genre. Machen would not have labeled his literary output as "horror fiction" or even "Gothic" but he intentionally pursues certain themes in his work. In particular, Machen is interested in the way the magic and horror of the past continue to live on underneath the surface of the mundane, modern world (Klein 276), and these themes have become common themes of horror fiction. He also used both monstrous and supernatural figures to communicate these themes, not because they were expected elements of the horror genre, but because they aesthetically appealed to him as powerful ways to communicate the ideas and feelings in which he was interested. Machen was, then, helping to create the genre of supernatural horror fiction as well as an audience for that genre. Contemporary readers, who may have had a "morbid fascination" with the supernatural and the horrific, could count on Machen and similar authors to produce texts they would enjoy, whether or not they thought of those texts as belonging to the horror genre.

An audience's awareness of horror as a genre is likely to precede its labeling by critics. For example, the term "Gothic" was not used to describe a literary genre until the 1820s, but long before that, authors were intent on writing Gothic novels and readers were intent on reading them (Gamer 49). Looking at nineteenth century criticism, one can find many reviews that discuss "horror" as a significant element in a text and many others that recognize the existence of an audience that is specifically interested in the supernatural and horrific. The reviewer of *Mithrazan, A Secret of Nature* (1892) could recommend the novel to "Lovers of the supernatural and weird in fiction," certainly implying the existence of such an audience (221). Critics might complain that an author's "horrors are of a rather cheap sort" (Rev. of *At a Winter's Fire* 76) or praise the "half-a-dozen new kinds of shudders to be enjoyed" in a book "prolific in...ingenious horrors" (Rev. of *Plots* 68). Critics were aware that in some cases there might be "a good deal of piled-up horror—piled up for its own sake, one might say, rather than to aid the development of the complicated plot" (Rev. of *A Bid For Fortune* 83). Many critics realized that this frisson had appeal for an audience; a review of Richard Marsh's *The Spoiler of Men* noted that with the "horror" of that novel:

...details become if possible more sickening in their cold-blooded cruelty with each repetition. But there is undoubtedly a large class of people who like this kind of reading: it amuses and pleasantly shocks them. They will be hard to please if they are not satisfied with the sensational incident here provided (367).

This large class of people showed their interest by purchasing in large numbers books that I would today label supernatural horror fiction.

While records of sales from this period are not easy to come by, the numbers of supernatural horror books published and the success of their authors show that the audience for the genre was not a small one. Other data support this view. A review of "The Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade" in *The Bookman* (London edition) shows that between 1880 and 1914 horror fiction appeared regularly on the wholesaler's list of best sellers. Between 1897 and 1898, for example, The Monthly Report listed Robert Hichens' *Flames*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*,

H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, and Guy Boothby's *The Lust of Hate* at least once, with *The Beetle* appearing most often (for six months). The varied prices of and marketing strategies used for genre titles also suggests that this audience cut across class and gender lines—this literature was being published in all price ranges and in publications aimed at both men and women. However, as is still the case today, the size of the audience did not ensure these texts critical praise and critical reviews often typecast the audience for such fiction in limiting and negative terms.¹⁸

Arthur Machen's *Precious Balms*, which reprints the bad reviews of a lifetime, is an excellent source for evaluating the extent of critical approbation that horror authors received. In review after review reprinted there, critics charge Machen and his readers with "morbidity," a charge frequently leveled against horror fictions.¹⁹ The reviewer for *The Lady's Pictorial*, for example, writes of *The Great God Pan* that "although men and women who are morbid and unhealthy in mind may find something that appeals to them...the majority of readers will turn from it in utter disgust" (Machen, *Precious Balms* 12). Machen's works of horror, like his audience, are often described as "morbidity and unhealthy." The *Birmingham Gazette and Express* made similar claims concerning the author's *The House of Souls*, noting that its "awful stories strongly suggest the half-mad imagings of a degenerate mind steeped in morbidity" (65). Occasionally the audience imagined for Machen's works might be seen not as unhealthy but rather as insensitive; the *East Anglican Daily News* review of *The House of Souls* suggested that "It is probable that there are some whose literary digestion is strong enough to swallow such pabulum with impunity; but we fancy the great majority of readers will rise from the book with a shudder of loathing" (66). By categorizing these works as sickening and unhealthy, these reviewers worked to identify the audience that favored such stories as also somehow unnatural or degenerate, reflecting that audience's taste for a genre that focused on things monstrous and horrific.²⁰ The recognition of the existence of a particular audience that craved, in some

“degenerate” fashion, the productions of horror fiction is informative simply because it suggests the existence of an audience that was aware of and sought out texts in this genre.

Machen is also a good example of someone who today would be labeled a “horror author.” However, Machen certainly never presented his work as horror fiction or even Gothic fiction. For contemporary readers with a “morbid” fascination for the supernatural and the grotesque, Machen’s fiction would have fit an identifiable pattern even if critics had yet to assign a name to it, and, as the popularity of texts of this type shows, this audience would have had no trouble seeking out similar works.

It may seem surprising, given the contemporary perception that horror appeals more to men than women, that the audience for these texts was often categorized as female. In *The Academy* review of Robert Hichens’s horror novella, *The Black Spaniel* (1905), the reviewer remarks that

To tell the truth, we do not want to see any more of the old Mr. Hichens, who wrote for womankind gently tickling their susceptibilities to excitement and horror. It is only the sort of woman whose susceptibilities of that kind are easily reached who will care for “The Black Spaniel.” ... That sort of reader had better go and buy “The Black Spaniel” and wallow in it to her heart’s content (105).

This reviewer associates a “susceptibility” to horror with a feminine (and hence easily excitable) temperament—suggesting that the desire, and perhaps even the capability, to be excited emotionally by texts are female characteristics. However, while supernatural horror did seem to maintain a large female audience throughout this period, its audience was by no means exclusively female.

There are a number of reasons for the association of women with horror fiction, not all of them dependent on the fact that women were indeed reading and writing these texts. For one, women were seen at the time as “the primary agent of supernatural activity” (Auerbach 75) and therefore the likely audience for fictions that concerned the supernatural. Raymond Blathwayt’s 1912 article “England’s Taste in Literature” claimed that “the craving for ‘other-worldism’ ... is never far from a woman’s heart, however frivolous she may appear to be” (161). Another reason

for this gendering of horror fiction's audience is the association that is commonly made between the products of mass culture (as well as the masses themselves) and women, a connection amply explored by Andreas Huyssen. Huyssen gives a number of examples to show that "the political, psychological, and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine" (191). Furthermore, supernatural horror literature seeks to affect its readers on an emotional level rather than appealing to their intellectual faculties, and, of course, the emotional faculties were typically presented as women's province. Finally, it is an old story that things that are undervalued may be associated with one another, and both supernatural horror and the female audience were undervalued by the critical establishment. For all these reasons, whether or not the audience for horror fiction was portrayed as female, that audience was conceived of as female by the critical establishment.

Horror Without the Supernatural: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the Transgressive

In order to better understand the role of "horror" and the "supernatural" as separate but essential elements within the supernatural horror genre, I will consider two texts that show the limits of the genre by featuring one, but not the other, of these components: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds*. These texts may have some tangential relationship to the supernatural horror genre but cannot be claimed to fully "belong" to the genre. If we accept that any given text always belongs to more than one genre, as Derrida and others argue, then it is probable that a text will belong more to some genres than to others—it will display more of the features of some genres than others. It may also happen that a text featuring some, but not all, of the key elements of a genre may "intersect" a genre without fully "belonging" to it or "belong" to it less than a text that features all the key elements. I would argue that that is the case with these two texts.

Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, from which this dissertation borrows its title, though not generally considered a horror novel, has nevertheless been written of in those terms.

For example, it was selected by Douglas E. Winter for inclusion in *Horror: 100 Best Books*, a volume in which contemporary horror authors select their favorite texts from the genre. Winter is not alone in discussing Conrad's novella as "horror," and even as traditional a critic as F. R. Leavis notes the text's "overwhelming sinister and fantastic 'atmosphere'" (173). If horror fiction were simply the literature that confronts readers with feelings of horror, then certainly *Heart of Darkness* would fit within the genre. The text abounds in horrors and nightmares, many of which are left undescribed in a fashion common to the genre. Also, like many other texts in the genre, the novella itself attempts to describe the feeling of horror and model a response to that feeling.

Horror fictions aim at creating a visceral response in their audience, and to do so they need both to construct a feeling of horror and to instruct readers in how to react to that horror. As Noel Carroll, in his study of the genre, *The Philosophy of Horror*, notes, "horror appears to be one of those genres in which the emotive responses of the audience, ideally, run parallel to the emotions of characters" (17). In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, early in the tale, invites his listeners (and the reader) to consider the experience of a man who

has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also the detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate (Conrad 6).

The man he so describes is a Roman ship's captain and the place that is so "incomprehensible" and "detestable" is on the banks of the Thames. There is more than a touch of irony when he claims that "none of us would feel exactly like this" (6). The experience—the feeling—that Marlow describes is, however, not one that is bound to any particular time or place. It is encountered, by different people, in the heart of Africa and the streets of London, in Dracula's castle and Dr. Jekyll's laboratory. It is often, as Marlow recognizes, an ambivalent feeling, involving an attraction as well as a repulsion.

The word “horror” derives from the Latin *horrere*, meaning to bristle or shudder; the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the emotion of horror is “compounded of loathing and fear; a shuddering with terror and repugnance” (397). It is this additional element of repugnance or revulsion that separates horror from other types of fear. When someone feels threatened or empathizes with the threat that another faces, they may be afraid, they may even choose to flee from the situation, but they are not necessarily disgusted or revolted by the object of fear. One may also feel upset or even revolted by something that one has no reason to fear (e.g., a squished bug, a hair in one’s soup), and turn from it in disgust, yet still this is not horror, unless there is something threatening about the object as well as disgusting, whether that fear is rational or not.

The object of horror is not an ordinary or even easily categorizable threat, which is one reason it is so often associated with the supernatural. Mary Douglas, whose work has been used by a number of theorists of horror, suggests that we act with revulsion toward “any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” (*Purity and Danger* 36). Such things are seen as polluting because they cannot easily be classified, and therefore they are “incomprehensible” and “detestable,” and sources of horror and revulsion.²⁰ Douglas also notes that “it is not always an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity” and that such a confrontation can be “stimulating” and the source of “aesthetic pleasure” (37). Her observation is reminiscent of Immanuel Kant’s analysis of the sublime in *The Critique of Judgment*. Kant writes that, “The beautiful in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having [definite] boundaries. The sublime on the other hand, is to be found in a formless object” (82). The formless, the ambiguously formed, and the infinite share a similar attraction. The pleasure a reader takes in horror fiction, then, likely would be connected with the pleasure of the sublime, the pleasure of transgressing/transcending boundaries or at least finding them ambiguous.²¹

Readers are also attracted to horror because of the intensity of the feeling it communicates, a feeling that is, as Edmund Burke states, “the strongest emotion which the mind

is capable of feeling” (39). Burke writes explicitly of “terror,” however his analysis of the sublime is applicable to the sensation of horror as well, which is typically an even more intense feeling than terror. Burke further remarks the connection between the powerful and the sublime when he states that there is “nothing sublime which is not some modification of power” (64)—the power of the sublime is therefore part of its attraction. Nineteenth century critics commented on this aspect of horror fiction as well. In his essay “The Shudder in Literature” (translated in the *North American Review*), French critic Jules Claretie analyzes the pleasure found in literature that dwells on “unwholesome subjects.” He notes that “The fantastic, the *macabre*, the mystery, the shudder, surround us, constrain, master us” (140). Horror fiction is presented as a literature that overpowers its readers.

In *Heart of Darkness*, it is the terrible power of Kurtz, his power to speak and have his words followed, that makes him attractive to Marlow in spite of Marlow’s horror at what Kurtz has done. Marlow says, discoursing upon Kurtz’s final cry, “the horror, the horror”:

Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence.... (Conrad 72).

Marlow imagines that Kurtz’s judgment of the truth is itself a victory, but we can also see that Marlow’s “loyalty” to Kurtz depends in part on the sublime magnificence of his eloquence and the extremity of his actions. Kurtz “had stepped over the edge” (72), and his transgression of that boundary is both horrific and impressive.

There is something like a religious revelation in Kurtz’s final cry. Certainly there is a thin line here between horror as revulsion and horror as religious revelation. Perhaps the only difference is one of perspective. Horror has, at least in the past, meant a “feeling of awe or reverent fear” (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and the word can be used to represent that *mysterium tremendum* that is said to accompany feelings of “religious awe” or “demonic dread.”²² This feeling of “religious awe” also represents at part of the attraction or fascination the horrific has

for Marlow (and for the reader as well), and the ambivalence of Marlow's feelings towards Kurtz and towards horror reflect an ambivalence in Conrad's own attitudes towards religion and the sources of religious feeling. The sensation of horror is similar to the feeling of the "uncanny" or "unheimlich" that Sigmund Freud analyzes in his essay of that name. Both terms carry, as one of their definitions, a meaning that is to some degree antithetical to their more common definition; in both cases, this meaning arises in the specific context of religion.²³ The horrific continues to hold a fascination that was once accorded to things divine—although the nature of that fascination is no longer one of worship, as would be found in a more clearly defined religious context, but rather one of fear and even loathing.²⁴

Julia Kristeva presents a strong argument to explain the connection between religious awe and horror fictions when she writes that, "The various means of purifying the abject—the various catharses—make up the history of religions, and end up with that catharsis par excellence called art" (17).²⁵ Literature, therefore, can be seen as carrying on one of the functions of religion, and "because it occupies its place, because it hence decks itself out in the sacred power of horror, literature may also involve not an ultimate resistance to but an unveiling of the abject..." (Kristeva 208). The irrational and the transgressive, the horrific and the abject, whether presented as religious truth or supernatural fiction have a lasting attraction for people, and those who doubt accepted religious revelation may seek a substitute in the literature of horror.

Kristeva's arguments draw a great deal on the work of Georges Bataille, who notes, "literature only continues the game of religions, of which it is the principal heir" (*Accursed Share* 106). According to Bataille, literature reenacts for the reader, who observes the pain and suffering of the fictional character, what was previously experienced by the observer of a religious sacrifice. Thus, the sacrifice was already "a fictional tale illustrated in a bloody manner" (*Accursed Share* 106). He also notes that the experience of horror represents the limit of the anguish that could be experienced by the observer of the sacrifice, but it is the element of fascination that distinguishes the horror experienced at the sacrifice or in literature from the

mundane experience of horror and elevates both sacrifice and literature to the status of the sacred or divine. While Bataille does not address horror fiction as a literary genre, in many ways horror best demonstrates his arguments concerning literature's links to religious ritual and the sacred. Horror fiction is full of sacrificial moments, both in the sacrifice of victims to the monster and the almost certain sacrifice of the monster itself, topics covered in more depth in Chapter 2. The monster of horror fiction also embodies the sacred more directly than the typical literary hero or heroine—the monster has supernatural origins and superhuman qualities—so the eventual death of the monster reenacts the sacrifice of the divine figure, which, as Bataille notes, is at the root of religious sacrifice.

The transcendent quality of horror is related to its transgressive aspects. Bataille links the desire to transcend, found in humanity's longing for the sacred, with the desire to transgress found in the erotic. He argues that, "what is *sacred* is precisely what is *prohibited*" (*Accursed Share* 92). He states that, "by overcoming a resistance, desire becomes more meaningful" and that therefore that "every horror conceals a possibility of enticement" (95 & 96). Bataille also notes that far from being a simple threat, the horrific bestows great value on an object; "if they horrify us, objects that otherwise would have no meaning take on the highest present value in our eyes" (104). In terms of the horrific in literature, Bataille's theory goes far to explain both the attraction of the object of horror and the connection between that object and the supernatural.

The horror found in Conrad's novella is not supernatural but still retains some association with the sacred as well as the erotic. However, the sacred, the horrific, and the erotic all find expression in supernatural horror fiction—embodied most clearly in the essential figure of the monster, which I will explore in more detail in Chapter 2. The monster is the defining figure of the supernatural horror genre. It is the focal point around which feelings of horror and the element of the supernatural both are concentrated.

For horror to be communicated, even when there is not a monster *per se*, there must be something that is monstrous. Conrad's novella, tangentially related to the horror genre as it is,

“makes the monstrous which was so diligently repressed, domesticated, and translated by Victorian realists, into an overt, disruptive, and unnameable presence” (Levine 53). Levine is interested, particularly, in the role of the monster in relation to the practice of realism in literature, the practice in which literature is made to “appear to be describing directly not some other language but reality itself” (9). He introduces a discussion of the figure of the monster in relation to *Frankenstein* because of that novel’s important position in the undermining of the realist tradition, but with reference to Conrad, he notes the return of the monster and a continuation of that process. However, *Frankenstein* is also, according to Levine, a model for the realist tradition that follows it, and the monster or monstrous continues to reappear in that tradition, as it does in Conrad’s novella. As Levine notes, the monster becomes the figure through which the “marvelous” or fantastic continues to exist in a realist world. He states, “Realism was in part a denial that the excesses of the past could survive, except in occasional barbarous bursts of irrationality, in the context of an ordered and more or less rational civilization” (42). In such a civilization, it was hard to find room for a belief in the marvelous or supernatural that was not in some way colored by fear or horror. Levine also notes the relation of the figure of the monster to other discourses (of religion, science and philosophy) when he states that, “Once explicit or implicit metaphysical supports for meaning begin to break down, the possibility of identifying and placing—and hence, in a way controlling—the extraordinary were lost” (43). The only form that remains for the marvelous is the monstrous, which “like Frankenstein’s monster, [is] unnamed and unnameable” (43). Levine, however, is not concerned in this book with “genre fiction” and so does not remark how by entering the realist text the figure of the monster joins with a representation of the supernatural to create a new fictional genre.

For the purposes of my argument, it is important to note that the acceptance of a realist tradition as the primary model for literary expression is essential for the formation of supernatural horror as a genre. Unlike the Gothic, the horror genre is predicated on the acceptance of a realist

fictional world (i.e., one that mirrors reality) into which the supernatural (embodied in the form of the monster) intrudes.

The monster or monstrous acts as a disruptive force, marking concern about such disruptions both within the world and within a literary tradition in which realism had become a standard by which texts were judged. In *The Heart of Darkness*, where the absence of the supernatural element makes the existence of monsters on the order of werewolves and vampires impossible, we are still presented with “monstrous passions” of Kurtz (Conrad 67), the Europeans who invade the land as “mean and greedy phantoms” (69), and the land itself, which is “monstrous and free” and not the “shackled form of a conquered monster” that “we are accustomed to look upon” (36). The Congo itself may be monstrous and horrific in Conrad’s novella, but so are the actions of the European invader and imperialist Kurtz—both may be perceived as something “out of place” depending on one’s perspective.

Even though it has been my contention that *Heart of Darkness* represents the horrific devoid of the supernatural, the text is not so far removed from supernatural horror fiction that it ignores the possibility of the supernatural entirely. There are allusions to the supernatural when the text describes what the Europeans have brought with them to Africa; Kurtz claims to appear to the natives “in the nature of [a] supernatural being[s]” (Conrad 51), and it is the “strange witchcraft” of the boiler that holds the fireman on Marlow’s boat in thrall (37). These are people and things that in another context would not appear supernatural at all. It may be that Conrad is reversing the typical European perception of the supernatural as something that comes from outside the Western, metropolitan community or merely reinstating a discourse that claims that the “primitive” is more natural than the “civilized,” but in either case the supernatural, that which is inconsistent with the laws of nature as understood at a given historical moment, is not being associated with the occult or the immaterial. The existence of the “supernatural” is really a cross-cultural illusion created by unfamiliarity with the object in question. The text alludes to the connection between the supernatural and the horrific found in the popular literature of

supernatural horror, but it does not endorse the existence of any kind of supernatural “reality” within the fictional world that has been created. It is because of this that the text never falls fully within the horror genre and in the end rejects the existence of the supernatural as something that exists outside the natural world.

Horror, Modernism, and the Rejection of Bourgeois Values

Many Modernist texts, like *Heart of Darkness*, share with horror fiction a sense of disgust and revulsion with the world. Horror may be expressed differently in Modernist texts than it is in horror fiction but, as in horror fiction, it is often used to demonstrate opposition to societal values or, in its more conservative iterations, to those things that challenge those same values. No matter what it is directed at, though, horror as an emotional response, because it entails such a complete rejection, is well suited for presenting a strongly oppositional stance. Horror is never a tepid rejection; instead, it lends itself to extreme reactions, both highly radical and highly conservative.

The common interest in “disgust” and the “abject” shared by both high art and supernatural horror during this period points to a similarity in their responses to the problems of the modern in which they arise. David Trotter, in his study of *The English Novel in History: 1895–1920*, finds in “Disgust...a feeling which animates, and is memorably represented in, a wide range of early twentieth-century writing,” a preoccupation of many of the most canonical authors of the period (214). Other critics have noted the similarity of the thematic concerns of Gothic/horror and Decadent and Modernist literature. The case for a mutual influence of Decadent literature and late-Victorian horror fiction is well made by Susan Navarette; in her dissertation, she argues that,

...many fin-de-siècle horror writers who publicly distanced themselves from the Decadent Movement nevertheless covertly experimented with the Decadent style of literature because it allowed them to produce texts which embodied rather than merely emphasized themes of madness, alienation, and decay (vii–viii).

I would add to this that the influence was, to some degree, mutual, and that a number of authors associated with the Decadent Movement appropriated thematic material from Gothic and horror sources, to the point that a number of Decadent texts can clearly be identified as supernatural horror, for example, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The catalog of the "trappings of Decadent literature—the futile quest for beauty, the fascination with mystery, the toying with the supernatural, the examination of perverse and critical deeds" that John R. Reed finds in Wilde's novel can also be found in most horror fiction of the period (37).

Critics also evaluated both supernatural horror and Decadent literature in similar terms; the charges of "morbidly" and "degeneracy" leveled against works of horror fiction were also used for Aesthetic and Decadent works. Even an author who satirized the Decadent movement, like Robert Hichens in *The Green Carnation*, could be labeled as Decadent for writing horror fiction. A reviewer for the *Dial* said of Hichens's *Flames* that, "it represents the most corrupt form of decadent literature" (Rev. of *Flames* 308).

The influence of Decadence and Aestheticism on Modernism has been well documented, and so it should not be surprising that one can also see connections between Modernism and supernatural horror. Both canonical Modernism and popular horror can be seen as reactions to nineteenth-century realism, oppositional but also dependent on the common acceptance of realism as mainstream literary discourse. Jean-Francois Lyotard has defined Modernism as "the art which devotes its 'little technical expertise' ...to present the fact that the unrepresentable exists" (78). He relates this project of Modernism to the Kantian idea of the *sublime* as an attempt to depict "the incommensurability of reality to concept" (79). One could describe supernatural horror fiction in the same terms, although critics would suggest that the amount of "technical expertise" would be less. Jack Sullivan suggests a more extensive thematic connection between supernatural horror and Modernism; he writes that, "the ghost story represents the most concrete (if somewhat vulgarized) manifestations of definitive trends in the major fiction of Lawrence, Joyce, Conrad, Hardy and Woolf: the fascination with darkness and irrationality, the focus on

unorthodox states of consciousness and perception, the projection of apocalypse and chaos, and above all the preoccupation with timeless ‘moments’ and ‘visions’ (*Elegant Nightmares* 2). Modernism and supernatural horror are both trying, in different ways, to “present the unrepresentable.”

As Frederic Jameson has noted, out of the “structural breakdown of the older realisms...emerges not Modernism alone, but rather two literary and cultural structures, dialectically interrelated and necessarily presupposing each other” (*Political Unconscious* 207). Those two structures are “high art” (e.g., Modernism) and popular/mass culture (e.g., horror and other popular genres). A point that Jameson raises—and which I would like to extend—is that these two movements are not so dissimilar in their motivations and intent as we might at first believe. Both horror fiction and Modernism are responding to similar cultural changes and both are trying to solve similar artistic problems.

Writing of the horror film, Tania Modleski states, “Many of these films are engaged in an unprecedented assault on all that bourgeois culture is supposed to cherish—like the ideological apparatuses of the family and the school” (158). In this, she follows critics such as Robin Wood, who see in horror films a certain radical or revolutionary potential in their often violent opposition to the bourgeois establishment and its values. She then relates the oppositional stance of these films to that of Modernist and Post-Modernist high art, but only to argue that both are rather ascetic enterprises that deny popular pleasures. She sees horror films as “apocalyptic and nihilistic, as hostile to meaning, form, pleasure, and the specious good as many types of high art” (162).

However, I would argue that while horror certainly can be nihilistic in its attack on the sensibilities of its audience, it does not necessarily define itself against popular pleasures or popular culture. Indeed, horror is typically defined by the critical establishment as representing the basest elements of popular/mass culture. Edmund Wilson’s remark that “The only real horror in most of these fictions is the horror of bad taste and bad art” (288) is representative of much of

the academic criticism of the genre. These earlier, literary texts take are also rather different from those presented in the contemporary films Modleski discusses, especially in their attitudes toward women and sexuality. For example, the relation of the attack on bourgeois culture and bourgeois pleasures to an attack on women is complicated in these texts by the fact that many of them were written by women, for women, and often overtly expressed women's concerns.²⁷ Many of these texts attack patriarchal structures as well as bourgeois ideology, even if many others are as misogynistic as other popular fiction of the era.

The presentation of sexuality in supernatural horror fiction from this period is also complex. Rather than simply attacking sexual freedom as many contemporary slasher films do, horror fictions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when compared to other forms of popular fiction, often appear rather bold in their presentation of sexuality. For example, openly gay and lesbian authors—Count Eric Stenbock and Vernon Lee, for example—used supernatural horror fiction to discuss their sexuality, at a time when such discussion would never be permissible in realist fiction.

The similarities between Modernism and horror are not limited to their opposition to the values and conventions of bourgeois realism. Rosemary Jackson in her study of *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, which largely draws upon horror texts for its examples, argues that the fantastic can duplicate its thematic subversion of “reality” in formal experiments as well. She notes that “by offering a problematic re-presentation of an empirically ‘real’ world, the fantastic raises questions of the nature of the real and unreal, foregrounding the relationship between them as a central concern” (37). This foregrounding of questions concerning what is “real” can be seen in these fictions’ attempt to subvert or break down the conventions of realism as the primary literary discourse for fiction through the introduction of the monster into a world which otherwise mirrors that of realist fiction (as I have argued about Conrad). Horror, like the fantastic, works by “Un-doing those unifying structures and significations upon which social order depends...to subvert and undermine cultural stability” (69). Horror shows how the irrational is still present in

the modern world, often just below the surface. As Jackson also notes, the fantastic or supernatural horror may present that which appears transgressive, in order to expel it (72). I would add: that which transgresses social norms need not be a positive or productive thing (fascism is an obvious example of a transgression against bourgeois liberal values that is life-denying and limiting rather than expansive and freeing).²⁸ However, in its ability to challenge the social order, supernatural horror can present the promise of change for its readers.

Supernatural horror typically does express a significant dissatisfaction with the world. Horror fiction, like the Gothic from which it developed, is what David Punter has called, “a literature of alienation” (*Literature of Terror*, 1st ed. 417). If anything, horror heightens and broadens the sense of alienation found in the Gothic, because it brings its terrors into the present and moves out of the limited realm of the family home or castle into other areas of social interaction (e.g., the city, the a railway station, the Bank of England). Horror fiction also reflects a newer, more modern, conception of the arbitrariness and uncertainty of the world. In supernatural horror (as opposed to the Gothic), “The victim [of a haunting] is often anonymous, almost never deserving the consequences that befall” (Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares* 130). Rather than trying to explain the world as a reasoned and orderly place in which evil befalls one because of specific events in the past involving oneself or one’s family, horror fiction presents a world that it chaotic and unexplainable.

Supernatural horror is a literary genre that seeks to understand modern, capitalist forms of alienation that did not have the same impact at the time the Gothic flourished. The processes of alienation that accompany capitalism are not rational processes, despite the fact that ideology may try to make them appear so, and horror fiction is perhaps the literature that most clearly embodies the irrationality and unpredictability that lurks below the surface of modern life. The world it depicts is one in which there is not even an agreed upon reality. It is in this way that Modernist authors, such as Conrad and Kafka, can be seen as writing horror, if not supernatural horror, and how writers of supernatural horror, because of their refusal of the conventions of realism and

their denial of an orderly universe, may appear to be working along similar lines as Modernist authors.

In placing the monster within an otherwise realistic narrative, supernatural horror connects the horrors of the supernatural in the reader's mind with more concrete and mundane "horrors" (e.g., of death, illness, alienation, oppression, insanity, and poverty), and thus demonstrates how truly horrifying and illogical the mundane world of "reality" is. While the monster itself is typically eliminated by the end of the horror story, these associated fears continue with no apparent solution. The role of the monster and its use as a focus for this whole constellation of fears will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Supernatural Interests in "Fact" and "Fiction"

The development of the supernatural horror genre coincides with a renewal of interest and belief in the reality of the occult and supernatural. The late Victorian era saw a growth of interest in spiritualism, theosophy, ritual magic, and a variety of other occult and paranormal activities. It has often been argued that this late Victorian interest in the occult and supernatural was a reaction against the scientific materialism of an earlier generation.²⁹ However, the reasons for renewed interest in the occult at this time are complex. People may turn to the occult and supernatural not as "a protest against modern society" but because they "experience the modern world as unsafe, irrational, unpredictable, and they seek magical defenses" (O'Keefe 469). While some turned to the occult as a form of rebellion against convention, many sought in occult beliefs a way of coping with an increasingly chaotic world. Certainly a smaller proportion of the people in late nineteenth century England held beliefs in the efficacy of magic and the occult than did in the seventeenth century, but a significant number of people did and still do hold such beliefs, in spite of the fact that those beliefs have lost their prestige and credibility.³⁰

In a comprehensive study of the social role of magical and occult beliefs entitled *Stolen Lightning*, Daniel Lawrence O' Keefe suggests that "perhaps the occult is the natural expression

of a society in which we live surrounded by machines, bureaucracies, technologies and planning systems made by human rationality but unfathomable to us personally” (458). O’Keefe makes use of Frankfurt School theories concerning the difference between “individual” and “institutional” reason, which argue that people sacrifice the former in order to allow institutions to make “reasoned” decisions for them. He also addresses psychoanalytic ideas about the importance of magical thinking for the schizophrenic, who relies on magical beliefs to try to defend him- or herself against social pressures, in order to understand the relevance of magical beliefs for modern society. From psychology O’Keefe draws the lesson that “when one withdraws interest and activity from objects, they become unfamiliar in time, and may start to appear strange, even uncanny” (462). People in contemporary societies may suffer from a type of alienation that parallels that of the schizophrenic, and the end result might be that “if the world becomes strange to the masses because they have withdrawn from the rational processes of society (or because they have been edged out of active participation in them), they may start to behave magically just to cope” (O’Keefe 463).

O’Keefe’s work concerns people’s belief in the reality of the supernatural and the occult, but an interest in “factual” occult discourses was often connected to an interest in occult fictions. While Walter Kendrick argues that “spiritualism in all its forms [including ‘theosophy, various brands of occultism, and the study of psychic phenomena’] has had remarkably little influence on the tradition of scary entertainment” (187), he does not supply much evidence to support his claim. Besides the fact that supernatural horror fiction has drawn upon a wealth of folkloric material that developed as part of a real belief in magic, many of the authors of horror fictions I examine in this dissertation showed a great deal of interest in occult phenomena. Rosa Praed, Arthur Conan Doyle, Florence Marryat, Algernon Blackwood, and Arthur Machen were all important figures in occult/spiritualist circles. Also, throughout this period both horror fictions and texts that presented a serious belief in the reality of the occult were extremely popular, often with the same audience. Perhaps most importantly, the occult as fiction and the occult as “fact”

were often understood as similar interests by the reviewers and writers of the day, and the two were discussed in similar terms and sometimes in the same reviews. For instance, a reviewer of E. F. Benson's *The Room in the Tower* (a collection of short fiction) could complain that the stories "do not quite convince you; you feel that the author does not believe in them himself" (Rev. of *The Room in the Tower* 37), and in the same issue a review of Elliot O'Donnell's *Byways of Ghostland* (an account of supposedly factual hauntings) could note that the horrors it presents "are a little too much for our sense of proportion" and that "we prefer a book of fictitious ghost stories frankly presented as such" (Rev. of *Byways of Ghostland*, 48).

In supernatural fictions, as Samuel Hynes argues, one can see "expressions of religious instincts detached from the forms and dogma of established religion" (147).³¹ As early as 1912, Raymond Blathwayt noted that both fictional and factual portrayals of the occult demonstrated "the modern rendering of that phase which was represented in the old days by a keen interest in the latest works on theology" (161). In 1919, C. S. Evans would write that "those 'ghost stories' which now and again capable artists give us...are the modern counterpart of the ancient witch-doctor's hymn to his spirits" (110). More recently, T. R. Sullivan has argued that the Victorian ghost story "naturally prepared the way for [the] scientific research" of Psychical Research Society and others (135). Regardless of whether interest in the occult in fiction or a revival of belief in the occult as "fact" came first, there does appear to be a connection between fictional and factual treatments of the occult and supernatural at this time.

Both fictional and non-fictional discourses on the occult were, in part, attempts to confront a crisis in faith without entirely abandoning the older systems of belief. Although they incorporated many beliefs from Eastern religions (both contemporary and ancient), occult discourses also recycled Judeo-Christian beliefs and Western pagan traditions. An interest in the occult may have challenged accepted versions of scientific and religious discourses just as supernatural fiction challenged then current ideas about literary realism, but it also used the language of science and religion to substantiate its "truth." These discursive movements did not

try to eliminate the discourses that they challenged; instead they sought to assimilate it or be assimilated by it in some manner.

While the use of scientific and Christian discourses made the occult more palatable to many, it did not keep occult beliefs from being a threat to others. For the Enlightenment tradition that dominated Western thought from the Eighteenth century on, both occult beliefs and Gothic/horror fictions were objects of ridicule because they presented a threat to the Enlightenment project. As Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno state, “The project of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy” (3). They represent the goal of Enlightenment as the liberation of men from fear (3), which can supposedly be achieved when “there is no longer anything unknown” or anything “outside the realm of the known” (16). The Enlightenment project is, therefore, to eliminate the supernatural as well as the horrific/terrifying.

In the post-Enlightenment Western world, the irrational and (by extension) the supernatural remained sources of fear for society, so much so that it becomes difficult to imagine supernatural events that do not inspire fear. Even authors of factual accounts of travels or anthropological studies had difficulty in seeing a belief in the supernatural that was not motivated by fear. Mary Douglas analyzes this blind spot of earlier anthropologists, writing that,

The nineteenth century saw in primitive religions two peculiarities which separated them as a block from the great religions of the world. One was that they were inspired by fear, the other that they were inextricably confused with defilement and hygiene. Almost any missionary’s or traveller’s account of a primitive religion talks about the fear, terror or dread in which its adherents live.... But anthropologists who have ventured further into these primitive cultures find little trace of fear (*Purity and Danger* 1).

The fear of the supernatural and irrational would not seem to be the “most primitive and basic” response to the supernatural as Glen Cavaliero claims (18), but rather a response of so-called “civilized” modernity that is projected onto another so-called “primitive” culture. It should not be surprising that horror was the most common reaction to the supernatural in fiction at the time.

The Supernatural Without Horror: Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds*

While, at the close of the nineteenth century, horror fiction with its monsters and threats had become the preferred mode of presenting the supernatural or marvelous in fiction, it was not the only mode available. Authors who sought in occult beliefs a positive revelation, which they presented in occult fictions, lay the groundwork for what has since become known as the “New Age” movement.

In *The Supernatural and English Fiction* Glen Cavaliero outlines three basic approaches to the supernatural: (1) “tales of terror” (which includes supernatural horror as I have defined it), (2) “the hermetic tradition” (which draws upon occult or magical beliefs for its sanction, although it also attempts to appear “rational and scientific” as well), and (3) “the sacramental tradition” (which “is essentially religious in outlook”) (20–21). In the horror/terror tale, the supernatural is portrayed as something “contrary” to nature (19). The hermetic tradition presents the supernatural as something that lies “outside the range of ordinary knowledge not as a matter of kind but as a matter of degree” (20). Finally, fiction in the sacramental tradition studies the supernatural rather than trying to explain it and presents it in a manner that “is contemplative and visionary rather than speculative in approach” (21). Of course, these three categories are not mutually exclusive (even if Cavaliero at times seems to suggest they are), and certainly all three approaches may be found in the same text to varying degrees. However, one of the three approaches can generally be seen to predominate in any given text that touches upon supernatural events. In order to best understand the role of the “supernatural” in “supernatural horror,” I will look at a text that presents the supernatural as something other than terrifying or horrific.

Arnold Bennett once joked, “if Joseph Conrad is one Pole, Marie Corelli is surely the other” (qtd. in Elwin, 305), and as bad as the pun may be, there is a certain truth to the claim. It seems appropriate, then, since I used Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as an example of horror divorced from the supernatural, to look at Marie Corelli’s *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) as a text that tries to present the supernatural divorced from the horrific. Corelli’s novel combines

elements of both the sacramental and hermetic varieties of supernatural fiction that Cavaliero outlines. Conrad and Corelli then will serve as the poles somewhere between which is situated the genre of supernatural horror.

Corelli probably requires more of an introduction than Conrad, although in her day she was the vastly more popular author. *A Romance of Two Worlds* was her first novel, and while it did not sell as well as her 1895 best seller *The Sorrows of Satan* (a book that set records for the most copies sold in the first year of publication), it managed respectable sales in spite of negative critical response (Kershner, *Modernism's Mirror* 67). For nearly 30 years, Corelli was the most popular writer in the world (if one judges popularity in terms of sales), and during her career as a writer her books sold on average a 100,000 copies a year (Masters 3–6). Her popularity cut across all social divisions, and she was read by everyone from King Edward to the kitchen staff (Blathwayt 165–167).

A Romance of Two Worlds is fairly typical of Corelli's work. It is, as its title suggests, a romance, but not in an earthly or carnal sense; instead, it seems to suggest that somewhere out near Saturn one can encounter and be thrilled by an angelic or divine lover. The narrator, who is never named, but who in the preface is directly equated with Corelli herself, seeks a cure for a physical ailment that is actually the result of a spiritual lack. Through an Italian painter, she meets Heliobas a Chaldean magician/doctor who shares a Parisian home with his somewhat ethereal sister. The novel and Heliobas both preach a doctrine of Electric Christianity, which incorporates scientific metaphors, New Testament interpretations, and a wide variety of religious, occult, and pseudo-scientific beliefs. Electric Christianity suggests, among other things, that Jesus Christ is like the Trans-Atlantic cable transporting God's electric current to Earth (225) and that the Moon does not really exist (what we see is merely the picture that "Atmospherical electricity has imprinted ...of a long-ago living world...just as Raphael drew his cartoons for the men of today to see") (201). This combination of pseudo-scientific explanation and supernatural events would mark Corelli's work as an example of the *hermetic novel* as Cavaliero describes it,

but the text's interest in reinterpreting religion and the prophetic visions of the narrator also mark it as part of the *sacramental tradition*.

Corelli's novel does not aim to frighten or horrify its audience, although some of her later novels do verge on the horrific. Richard Kowalczyk notes that while in her early works wisdom and beauty were godly attributes that gave "man the means of raising himself in Corelli's scale of spiritual evolution," in later novels such as *The Young Diana* (1918) "knowledge and beauty are instruments of terror" (77). But, as my definition of horror has already suggested, it may often be a thin line separating the supernatural as horror from the supernatural as revelation, and that the difference may be simply a matter of interpretation.

Corelli's novels sought to convert readers to a belief in an occult form of Christianity, not to scare them with the occult or supernatural. However, her work does retain an awareness that the supernatural can appear threatening and horrible and that other texts (namely horror fictions) present it as so. In *The Romance of Two Worlds*, the possibility that the events the narrator sees as wondrous are in fact horrific is suggested although never seriously entertained. On two occasions the narrator encounters those who are afraid of Heliobas and of what occurs in his household. Before she leaves for his home, the narrator is warned by her landlady about that "“terrible man.... who sacrifices everybody...even his own sister, to his medical experiments”" (Corelli, *Romance* 122). As if the threat of a mad doctor was not enough, Madame Denise also warns that she has heard that this sister "“is wedded to a devil!”" (123). Later, after staying some time with Heliobas and his sister, the narrator is approached by Prince Ivan, a Russian nobleman who is a frequent visitor to the house and is in love with Heliobas' sister Zara. He asks, "“Did you ever hear that line of poetry which speaks of “*A woman wailing for her demon-lover?*” That is what Zara does.”" (149). The thought of this possibility temporarily plagues the narrator as a "“black and looming horror; an idea vague and ghastly that froze [her] blood and turned [her] faint and giddy”" (151). Once again readers are presented with a common figure from the pages of supernatural horror fiction, this time a demon by way of Coleridge rather than a mad scientist. Of

course the narrator discovers that this incubus is in fact an angel (though he is Zara's lover) and that Heliobas' experiments have lead to great cures. While in neither case does the narrator end-up believing these suggestions, readers are lead to imagine that in a different context, perhaps a different type of novel, the events portrayed could easily be considered horrific. In Corelli's novel, horror is merely the result of misreading what is a benign, although still a rather strange, situation.

A Romance of Two Worlds presents a very different worldview than one finds in supernatural horror texts, which places it in the tradition of occult or sacramental texts. Rather than imaging a natural world threatened by something coming from outside nature, the occult/hermetic novel presents a way to escape from an existing world that is beyond redemption and the sacramental novel reveals the essential "rightness" of the world. Corelli's novel, however, manages to do both at different times.

The narrator of *A Romance of Two Worlds* is told that she is one of "the rare few with whom the Soul is everything" and therefore she is "a prisoner here on earth" (62-63). At times, the novel endorses a belief in so-called "higher realities" and manages to reject anything pertaining to the body or physical reality as it is. When the narrator's soul is transported through the spheres she looks at her body as a prison, and thinks, apparently parodying *Hamlet*, "How poor a form—how destitute of faculties—how full of infirmities—how limited in capabilities—how narrow in all intelligence—how ignorant—how mean!" (175). While there is no monstrous other to be rejected (as in horror fiction) there is a rejection of the self and of everyday reality, which time and time again is shown to be limited and unfulfilling. Corelli's novel, however, is far from nihilistic; its relation to the world is much more complicated than a simple rejection of "earthly" things.

Despite the dissatisfaction with the world that Corelli's narrator feels, the novel still preaches a message of Christian acceptance and resignation that would seem to be out of place in a text that belonged solely to the occult/hermetic tradition. Early on, the narrator has a vision of

the “wide illimitable Beneficence [that] embraces all creation” (Corelli, *Romance* 41). Later, after further instruction in Electric Christianity, she asks the rhetorical question, “For every golden ray of sunshine, for every flower that blooms, for the harmonies of the wind and the sea, for the singing of the birds and the shadows of the trees, should I not—should we not all give thanks?” (168). Such sentiments, as saccharine as they are, seem at odds with an hermetic tradition that is not concerned with the divine order except as it is open to manipulation by mankind (typically by an elite group with special knowledge) and which views the world with Gnostic disdain. However, Corelli’s narrator manages to reconcile this sacramental vision with the stronger hermetic beliefs propagated in the text by suggesting that God is most concerned with a spiritual elite, those “few souls as thoroughly believe in and love him” and that this “mere handful are worth more than the world to him” (142). By this means, she manages to keep her largely Christian audience from being offended by her occult sensibilities.

Glen Cavaliero notes one major difference between the supernatural as a source of terror and the supernatural as a source of hermetic lore is that “whereas the tale of terror plays on psychic insecurities, the hermetic tradition grows out of dreams of mastery and power” (89). The impulse behind Corelli’s apparent rejection of the world is really a desire to dominate it. Her novel is addressed to and concerns a select spiritual elite (even though a great many readers may have seen themselves in that select group), and it offers that group the opportunity to feel superior to the majority of mankind, by following her narrator in soaring above the mundane world and judging the poor and pitiful masses.

A Romance of Two Worlds, as hermetic/occult fiction, seeks to rise above the realm of fiction and claim the status of a revelation of a “higher truth.” In the introduction, Corelli claims that her novel is based upon her own experience. She writes that she “can only relate what I myself have experienced” (*Romance* 16) and that her “aim throughout is to let facts speak for themselves” (18). Corelli states that she wished to convey “spiritual suggestions” rather than simply entertain readers (3). Supernatural horror is a less dogmatic form of narrative. While

horror fictions sometimes express the actual beliefs of their authors, they also instill a certain doubt about reality both as reader and character experience it, and this doubt opens the possibility for readers to question any message the author might be trying to convey. Horror fiction may produce an uncertainty in its readers concerning the world around them but it also makes them skeptical that the world depicted in its pages presents reality.

Supernatural horror fictions may eventually expel the monstrous and restore normality, but in the process of presenting the monstrous they act “to destabilize social as well as personal assumptions, to invite a reordering of expectations and to alert one to the possibility of alternatives to the routine adherence to regulated custom and clock time” (Cavaliero, 238–239). The monster is not always presented as “evil” and may in fact retain the reader’s sympathy. Since horror fiction does not present clear-cut solutions to the problems it raises (it often denies outright that such solutions are possible), it allows more room for readers to make their own judgments. Like the Gothic before it, supernatural horror attempts “to demonstrate...the relative nature of ethical and behavioral codes and place over against the conventional world a different sphere in which these codes do not operate, or operate only in distorted forms” (Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 1st ed. 405). Horror fiction is perhaps too nihilistic, too transgressive, to endorse any particular view of reality. Cavaliero writes, “on the one hand while the tale of terror and the hermetic and theological traditions deliberately convey a frontal challenge to established certainties, the last two also propound counter-certainties” (240). Hermetic and religious supernatural fictions seek to disrupt one view of reality in order to install a new orthodoxy, but supernatural horror calls into question the very possibility of knowing “reality.”

Novels such as *A Romance of Two Worlds* only challenge the reader’s conception of the world in order to convince the reader to accept the novel’s solutions as well—in the end their principle aim is to instruct their readers. Brian Masters, Corelli’s biographer, is correct in his evaluation that “propaganda was Marie Corelli’s principal aim in writing” (298). The criticism that Corelli’s novel levels against the world is usually rather reactionary and often ridiculous, and

her appeal to religious authority remains essentially conservative. If anything, her social criticism is reminiscent of Carlyle (an author she greatly respected) in its desire to find solutions to present problems in nostalgia and a restored elitism. In the end, horror is more pessimistic, but also, paradoxically, more realistic in its use of the supernatural than fictions like Corelli's novel.

One could say that Corelli does not challenge the world as it is (or as it is conceived in ideology) so much as she ignores it. D. L. Hobman has argued that, "Her stories are melodramatic romances, fairytales having little connection with the world. Marie Corelli's characters move in a realm created by fantasy rather than observations" (69). Her own claims concerning her work do not seem to contradict this view. She was said to have been quite proud of having described Norway without ever visiting it (apparently in the same way she described Saturn). In her speech on "The Vanishing Gift" (imagination), Corelli spoke "for the sovereignty of the truly inspired and imaginative soul" above those who practiced more mundane and material activities (287), and it seems that she did believe whatever her imagination "told" her (Masters, 296). *A Romance of Two Worlds* concludes with Heliobas' injunction that the narrator should "believe in anything or everything miraculous and glorious," which hardly seems a very discerning approach (300). Unlike supernatural horror, where doubt about the nature of the supernatural is essential for creating suspense, novels such as Corelli's seek to affirm without question the existence of the supernatural. In this way, they are as dogmatic as the most dogmatic of religions.

Works of supernatural horror and hermetic fiction both appealed to the rather large audience interested in all things occult and supernatural, but Corelli's popularity was certainly far greater than any other novelist of the period, and her work is marked by its own peculiar qualities. As Leonard Woolf wrote, her work "has a distinct quality" of "passionate conviction" that separates it from the average bestseller (qtd. in Masters, 304). This sincere conviction even enabled her to ignore the abundant contradictions that run through her work, and to produce an occult novel that appeared to resolve the disparate discourses of science and religion. Her work

owes little to the Gothic and much to various occult and religious traditions, and although there is evidence of those traditions in other texts I will discuss in this dissertation, her work stands as something essentially different from the supernatural horror tradition.

While both supernatural horror and hermetic/occult fictions may have shared readers who were interested in narratives that called into question the nature of reality as well as provided an escape from that reality, these two types of fiction also presented very different attitudes towards the supernatural. For instance, the popularity of supernatural horror at the turn of the century seems to stem less from a desire to resolve contradictions than from the audience's desire to allow itself to experience those contradictions for what they are—to experience uncertainty and the *horror* that can accompany it. The audience's interest was often piqued by the ability to experience a transgressive moment, however vicariously; and in their attempt to produce a powerful effect, authors presented monsters engaged in transgressions of all sorts. Finally, I will argue, horror fictions allowed the repressed to return in a monstrous form, and the monsters that these fictions created became the most accessible way for the audience to engage with that which was repressed.

Supernatural horror, like the fantastic, “traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made ‘absent’” (Jackson, *Fantasy* 4). Because it attempts to speak (however obliquely) that which is not to be spoken, the figures that were developed in the genre were (and still are) often adopted by other discourses. These figures (these monsters and their victims) and the horrific encounters that occur between them found their way into discourses ranging from advertising to sociology to biology during the formative years of the genre. The rest of this dissertation shall explore those figures, what they represent, where they appear, and how they are used in both fiction and other discourses.

End Notes

¹ I say it is particularly apt because of the association between fears of racial miscegenation and the horrific, which is found in a number of early horror texts. H. P. Lovecraft, one of the genre's earliest critical interpreters and major practitioners, in fact makes the rather bizarre claim that the genre is *about* the fear of miscegenation. In his essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, he states that, "Much of the power of Western horror-lore was undoubtedly due to the hidden but often suspected presence of a hideous cult of nocturnal worshippers whose strange customs—descended from pre-Aryan and pre-agricultural times when a squat race of Mongoloids roved over Europe with their flocks and herds—were rooted in the most revolting fertility-rites of immemorial antiquity" (18). Lovecraft's assertion owes as much (if not more) to his own complex of fears and psychological problems than it does to anything essential to Western literature, although these fears are apparent in the work of many authors besides Lovecraft.

² I am thinking here especially of supernatural horror fiction's relationship to "factual" texts such as sociological tracts, newspaper reports, and scientific documents, as well as a wide range of cultural artifacts that serve other distinct purposes (e.g., advertising, political cartoons, paintings, etc.). It is the relationship of supernatural horror fiction to these other types of texts that I will explore in the following chapters of this dissertation.

³ Todorov calls the "content" or themes of the literary text the text's "semantic aspect."

⁴ Joshi, in *The Weird Tale*, analyzes a variety of Lovecraft's writings and determines that Lovecraft preferred the term "weird tale" to describe the type of fiction I'm discussing here (2–3). He suggests that supernatural horror be used to describe a subset of the weird tale (7). As Joshi is probably the premier scholar of Lovecraft's work today, I will not argue that the weird tale was Lovecraft's preferred term but merely suggest that his term "supernatural horror" seems to better describe the genre of fiction I have identified here.

⁵ In respect to the central role of the supernatural, it is worth noting that horror texts that involve a potential but highly unusual (and difficult-to-understand) threat such the "psycho killer" often endow that threat with extraordinary or unnatural abilities. One can see in the multiple installments of the contemporary slasher film how a monstrous figure that is originally conceived of as a possible and real threat becomes supernatural over time, by virtue of its ability to continue to return after it ostensibly should have been eliminated.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche presents this problem rather succinctly when he writes, "all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated elude definition; only that which has no history is definable" (80).

⁷ The decision as to whether the text belongs more to the science fiction genre than to supernatural horror depends on whether the monster's origin is supernatural or not (i.e., whether its existence is inconsistent with the laws of nature as understood at a given historical moment). At the time the novel was written, the reanimation of dead bodies by electricity was considered within the realm of scientific possibility, a fact that may be lost to today's reader who is more likely to look for a supernatural explanation for the creature's origin. One author who argues for the novel's place as the first real science fiction text is Brian Aldiss (36–52). Aldiss notes though that after *Frankenstein* there is a "pause" in the development of science fiction as a genre (46), which is in accordance with the pause I see in the development of the horror genre following this text. The fact that *Frankenstein*, a seminal text for both genres, can be (and has been) read as both science fiction and horror suggests the common origin of these genres in the Gothic, as well as the presence of certain shared semantic and syntactic elements.

⁸ While there are also many divergent critical opinions about the origins of the mystery (and its various sub-genres such as the detective story, the crime story, the police procedural, and the modern thriller) and science fiction, the majority of critics agree with that these genres began during the nineteenth century and

gained popular recognition towards the end of that century. Edgar Allen Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* are cited most often as the foundational texts for the mystery and science fiction respectively. Both of these works (and the genres they inspire) draw upon gothic conventions. Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin state that, "most literary historians agree that" *Frankenstein* is "the first work of fiction that has all the characteristics of the science fiction genre" (6). John Ball, in his introductory essay to the volume *The Mystery Story*, is one among many to credit Poe with the creation of the mystery. At this early stage, there is still significant overlap between the genres that develop out of the Gothic. Both Poe's story and Shelly's novel share elements with the supernatural horror genre but, in retrospect at least, it is also possible to see a significant break from earlier Gothic texts.

⁹ Among those who use the word "Gothic" to describe the genre I am calling "supernatural horror" are David Punter, Patrick Brantlinger, and Judith Halberstram. However, these authors are describing a theme in literature that begins with the Gothic and becomes what is generally called today "horror." Judith Halberstram, for example, uses the term Gothic throughout *Skin Shows* "to attempt to identify the moment when interpretation becomes monstrous, spawns monsters, and fixes otherness in highly specific sites" (p. 65). This is in fact the moment, as I will argue, that "supernatural horror" becomes a genre *distinct* from the Gothic fiction that preceded it.

¹⁰ It is generally accepted that the Gothic novel began with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) and remained popular through the first two decades of the nineteenth century. While some Gothic novels have continued to be produced after that date (and some have even been written in recent years), the genre itself no longer has the widespread popularity that enables a genre to be recognized as an active form. What is recognized widely today as a "Gothic" novel (that is that form of popular romance which has Gothic attributes and is called "Gothic") differs substantially from the Eighteenth century Gothic.

¹¹ Foucault claims that the tale of terror (along with the works of De Sade) may mark the beginning of what we understand today as literature, because these texts in their attempts "to produce effects...make themselves as transparent as possible at this limit of language towards which they hurry, erasing themselves in their writing" (60–61). In this attempt to communicate the incommunicable these texts demonstrate the failure of language; they are forced to be "always excessive and deficient" (65).

¹² Peter Penzoldt provides a fairly comprehensive list of the distinguishing features of the Gothic novel; these features make-up the essential vocabulary of the Gothic. According to him (p. 68), the Gothic novel:

1. Demonstrates "a preference for indoor scenes of horror.... (which) include...the whole mechanical apparatus of horror, such as trap doors, catacombs, and so on" [I would note that his use of the term *horror* is incorrect and should be substituted with the term *terror*.]
2. Uses a setting which is "nearly always historical, usually medieval" [I would add that in those few cases where the setting is not historical, it is distanced from England geographically.]
3. "...is not necessarily a tale of the supernatural" [and often explains the apparently supernatural away]
4. Shows "a taste for exaggerated horror" [in contrast to the supernatural horror genre, which generally tries to make its horror "believable"]
5. Features a "Gothic spectre [which is], as opposed to the more active modern ghost...a pallid helpless shade"
6. Features characters "which have no personality of their own" but are there only "to promote the action"—these characters "almost invariably" fall into the same roles of "hero, heroine, and villain"
7. Uses psychology to understand characters only for "the analysis of terror"
8. Makes use of a style that is "dignified, but usually simple"
9. Has a "tendency to moralise."

¹³ Stories of ghosts and apparitions (either presented as fact or fiction) pre-date the Gothic and continue to be told today. However, the ghost story as a form of short, magazine fiction became popular in publications such as *Blackwood's* and various Christmas annuals at the time when the popularity of the

Gothic was waning and reached the height of its popularity during the period we are considering here. This period, spanning the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, is sometimes referred to as “the Golden Age of Ghost Story” (Sullivan, “Golden Age of the Ghost Story” 174–176). I will discuss ghost stories as part of the supernatural horror genre, although some examples of this type clearly precede the period I am discussing. For more on the importance of Poe, LeFanu and Dickens in establishing the “ghost story” and laying the foundations for the supernatural horror genre see Julia Briggs (25–52) and Sullivan (*Elegant Nightmares*, 11–68).

¹⁴ Everett Bleiler, writing on Rymer in the *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, notes that while it is difficult to say when *Varney the Vampire* takes place, since “the author seems to have lost track, every now and then, of what he had written previously. But for the most part it is a historical thriller set around the time of the Napoleonic Wars” (365).

¹⁵ Joshi argues that supernatural horror (or the weird tale, as he labels it) was not a genre at the time but rather “the consequence of a world view” (1). While it is certainly true that authors like Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood (and some other lesser-known authors) shared an interest in the occult and beliefs that were opposed to the common rationalist worldview of their times, that interest only accounts for similarities in their writing, which, as I suggest later, may have accounted for certain developments within the genre. It would be quite a stretch, however, to argue that this worldview was shared by readers of these works. In fact, I would argue that the average reader of their work was not looking for philosophical discourse on the nature of reality or the limits of rationalism. Instead, the readers of these texts, as critics of the time suggest, picked up on the experience of horror and the sublime uncertainty that accompanied supernatural fiction.

¹⁶ Rosmarin observes, correctly I believe, that the “assignation of genre...is invariably a valuative act on the part of the interpreter” (35). Labeling a text “tragedy” is a way of granting it literary value, while labeling it “horror” is, typically, a way of denying its value.

¹⁷ The academic field of literary criticism was still rather new during this period, and, in part, this new field of study developed from the premise that literary “art” and popular literature were two separate things, the former (and not the latter) deserving serious study.

¹⁸ While I do not have sufficient space to develop the argument here, nor is it necessary for the purposes of this dissertation, I would suggest that while it may take literary skill to produce a work of fiction that is lauded by the critical establishment, it also takes skill (albeit of a different kind) to produce a work that is popular with a mass audience.

¹⁹ John Stokes states that in the 1890s the “word ‘morbid’—incorporating anything from the sluggish to the downright deathly—carried a burden of meaning greater than any derogatory adjective” (26). He goes on to note that morbidity represented “an internal threat to the organism whether it were society as a whole or the media through which the society found expression” and that charges of morbidity “linked the artistic minority with those other social outsiders whose insidious activities corrupted the whole—the lunatics, criminals, and sexual deviants of scientific treatise” (Stokes 26–27).

²⁰ The relationship between the degenerate and the monstrous is discussed further in Chapter 2.

²⁰ The supernatural and the horrific may also be associated in peoples’ minds because both transgress boundaries. The supernatural transgresses boundaries of the natural world as the horrific transgresses boundaries of the acceptable and classifiable. Other reasons for this association, relating to modern Western attitudes towards supernatural are discussed in the following section.

²¹ Both the Gothic and horror fiction may be categorized as genres of the sublime (and not the beautiful) as they are both concerned with transgression, with fear, and with attraction that is mixed with repulsion.

²² Rudolf Otto uses the term *mysterium tremendum* in *The Idea of the Holy* to describe the mystical experience of encountering the numinous (12–40). Otto notes that this feeling of “‘Religious dread’ (or awe)’” has as “its antecedent stage...daemonic dread’ (cf. the horror of Pan) with its queer perversion, a sort of abortive offshoot, the ‘dread of ghosts’. It first begins to stir in the feeling of ‘something uncanny’, ‘eerie’ or ‘weird’” (14). Otto writes that this encounter with the “numinous” also has a strong element of fascination. He finds that, “the daemonic-divine object may appear to the mind an object of horror and dread, but at the same time it is no less something that allures with a potent charm, and the creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own” (31).

²³ In Freud’s “The ‘Uncanny,’” one of the definitions of *unheimlich* he quotes is, “‘To veil the divine, to surround it with a certain Umheimlichkeit’” (129).

²⁴ It should be noted that horror fiction often addressed issues of religion in a more overt fashion as well—a function it inherited from the Gothic. The Gothic novel had established a tradition of fictional critique of religious matters with its often virulent anti-Catholicism (Sage, 26–69). Gothic literature sought to demonize England’s own Catholic past as a source of superstition and oppression, but at the same time it feed readers’ desire to experience, however vicariously, the supernatural trappings of an earlier age. Supernatural horror fiction of this later period was less concerned with Catholicism and explored a wider range of religious faiths (whether they were contemporary developments such as theosophy or the ancient religions of colonized peoples). Many horror fictions address the existence (and “power”) of “pagan” religions as well as various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism.

²⁵ For Kristeva, who’s work is largely influenced by that of Mary Douglas (described earlier), the abject is that which is rejected, whether it is in the form of waste, defilement, filth, sin, or the taboo; it is always opposed to the self. She finds abjection “is a universal phenomenon” and that “one encounters it as soon as the symbolic and/or social dimension of man is constituted, and this throughout the course of civilization. But abjection assumes specific shapes and different codings” depending on the “symbolic systems” at play (68). According to Kristeva, the abject is related to both the sublime and to perversion; it is also always ambiguous (2–15). In psychotherapeutic discourse it is “the object of primary repression” (12).

²⁶ Jack Sullivan suggests a more extensive thematic connection between supernatural horror and modernism; he writes that, “the ghost story represents the most concrete (if somewhat vulgarized) manifestations of definitive trends in the major fiction of Lawrence, Joyce, Conrad, Hardy and Woolf: the fascination with darkness and irrationality, the focus on unorthodox states of consciousness and perception, the projection of apocalypse and chaos, and above all the preoccupation with timeless ‘moments’ and ‘visions’ (*Elegant Nightmares* 2).

²⁷ I will return to the issue of gender and its relation to horror and the monstrous in the next chapter, but it is worth noting here the prevalence of women authors in the genre during this period, the decidedly feminist orientation of many of these works, and the female readership noted earlier (see: Rosemary Jackson’s “Introduction” in *What Did Miss Darrington See?*, xv–xx). Jessica Amanda Salmonson (in the same volume) claims that “supernatural fiction written in English in the last 200 years has been predominantly women’s literature and much of it is clearly feminist” (ix–x).

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in “1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity” from *A Thousand Plateaus*, describe fascism as a “line of flight” from the Western, bourgeois political and social order that ends up as an essentially suicidal attack on the social in all its forms (208–231).

²⁹ See Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (134–139) for a representative version of this argument.

³⁰ Bronislaw Malinowski begins his famous essay, “Magic, Science and Religion,” by stating that, “There are no peoples however primitive without religion and magic” (17). I would argue that the converse is also still true and that there are no people however “civilized” that do not have magic and religion either. Keith

Thomas quotes a 1955 study (G. Gorer's *Exploring English Character*) that found that about 25 percent "of the population ...[held] a view of the universe which can most properly be designated as magical" (667).

³¹ Another way of presenting this is to say that supernatural horror fiction *reoccupies* a position vacated by religious beliefs in the supernatural world (i.e., angels, demons, etc.) and the power of magic and the occult. The term "reoccupy" is used by Hans Blumenberg in a somewhat different context to describe how modern ideas such as social, political, and scientific progress reoccupy conceptual positions that had previously been held by religious ideas/beliefs concerning spiritual progress and transcendence. However, these occult beliefs themselves predated the Christian ideology Blumenberg discusses (and were at times already reoccupied by certain Christian beliefs and concepts).

Chapter 2: Theorizing the Monster, or What's Horrifying Us

The presence of the monster or at least the monstrous is essential for a text to be considered part of the supernatural horror genre. The monster embodies horror, presenting its audience (both in and out of the text) with a cause for both fear and revulsion. Though the monster is certainly nothing new in literature—Beowulf and Gilgamesh both encountered monsters, for example. In horror fiction, however, the response to the monster is, horror and revulsion, rather than awe, anger, or acceptance. Other responses, from sympathy to hatred, may attach themselves in a secondary capacity, but the representation of horror must remain central.

Because monsters are nothing new, the question that must concern me here is: what is the specific importance and significance of the monster at the turn of the century? Horror fiction is the most significant discourse about monsters in this period, but it is not the only one. As I hope to show in this chapter, discourses of biology, psychology, sociology, politics, and (as I will show in the next chapter) advertising and commerce all use the figure of the monster. The monster also had a significant role in the critical discourses of Marx and Freud, which were being formulated around this time. These other discourses were all influenced by the presentation of the monster in the horror genre, and, in turn, influenced that presentation.

The Monster Embodied

Even when the monster is a “spiritual” being (such as a ghost) and not a material one, it almost always appears as a body. The word “monster” derives from the Latin *monstrum*, meaning “a monster or something marvelous,” from the root, *monere*, meaning “to remind, warn, advise, instruct.” It shares its origin with the word demonstrate, which is adapted from *monstrare*, meaning “to show, point out, indicate.”¹ Thus, the monster was traditionally interpreted as an omen or warning of a visual nature. More recent definitions of the word

monster include an “imaginary animal,” a “congenital malformation,” something “gigantic,” or “a person of inhuman and horrible cruelty,” but in all these cases it is an object or body that appears, and almost always appears as frightening and horrifying to behold.

That the monster in the supernatural horror genre is first and foremost a monstrous body is perhaps easier to see today in the horror film, where the appearance of the monster as body or embodied within an otherwise human body is always a climactic moment. Because of its emphasis on the visible, supernatural horror as a genre was easily adapted for film and, before that, theater.² However, at the close of the nineteenth century horror fiction was already attempting to represent a more visceral—and visualizable—monster through the medium of words. The monster, in its role as warning or omen, was always already a textual body to be interpreted by those who perceived it, and in these early horror fictions it stood as a body to be analyzed by narrator or character as well as the reader. Even if these attempts at analysis and explanation fail, the failure of words to describe the “indescribable” monster only stressed the uniqueness of the monstrous body and the importance of its visual appearance.

Some of the most insightful work being done today on the horror genre concerns the horror film, but that criticism also can help one understand something about the fictional genre as well. In her essay “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess,” Linda Williams classes the horror film, along with pornography and melodrama, as genres of “bodily excess” or “gross” physicality. Using as a starting point the work of Carol Clover, who labeled horror and pornography as “body genres,” she adds melodrama, or “the Weepie,” to the list because it too focuses on “the spectacle of a body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion” (Linda Williams, “Film Bodies” 4). All three of these genres encourage “an apparent lack of proper esthetic distance, [and] a sense of over-involvement in sensation and emotion,” which is one reason they are often “dismissed by one faction or another as having no logic or reason for existence beyond their power to excite” (5, 3).

This desire to communicate emotion directly, to train the reader's body in how to respond to the monster's body is present at the very origins of the horror genre. Already in the Gothic (as in the pornography of de Sade) there was an attempt to speak directly to the body; these were texts that, according to Michel Foucault, were "calculated with the greatest economy and precision to produce effects" ("Language to Infinity" 60). These texts were not concerned with language qua language but rather "wished to be read for the things they recounted...which words were charged to communicate, but only through their pure and simple transparency" (63). The desire, at least, is there, at the very beginnings of horror fiction, to speak directly through the medium of the body rather than through the medium of language—a language that was increasingly defined, since the Enlightenment, as a medium for rational discourse. In focusing on the body of the monster, however, horror writers found an even more direct method, than was found in the Gothic, by which to communicate sensation.

Not only the body of the monster but bodies in general are important to the genre; horror as a genre speaks to the body and of the body. This intensive involvement with bodies is seen in a fascination and association with the body of the (usually female) victim as well as with that of the monster (Linda Williams, "Film Bodies" 5). As Williams has argued elsewhere, these two figures are often identified with one another because they retain a "similar status within patriarchal structures of seeing" ("When the Woman Looks" 85). Both the body of the monster and that of the monster's victim become objects to be gazed upon. The viewer is encouraged to reproduce the emotions seen on the body of the victim, and horror texts, whether cinematic or not, often serve to teach their audience how to respond to horror by focusing on the horrified body.

Noel Carroll has rightly observed that "horror appears to be one of those genres in which the emotive responses of the audience, ideally, run parallel to the emotions of characters. Indeed, in works of horror the responses of characters often seem to cue the emotional responses of the audience" (17). The audience learns from these characters the "correct" way to respond to a

horrific experience by miming these characters' responses. A comparative look at the bodies of those who have been confronted by monsters reveals certain similarities between them. These characters are often depicted as paralyzed with fear, staggering (losing control of their bodies), or fainting (and losing control of their senses). Their faces are contorted as they scream or grimace, and they stare with open mouths and wide-open eyes. In many ways, these responses mirror those of the monsters who also stagger through these pages with gaping orifices and contorted features.

Of course the genre cannot control which of the two figures—monster or victim—will be chosen for imitation.³ In fact, it is not uncommon for the reader or viewer to identify with both victim and monster simultaneously or even to see the monster as victim, which is a common reading for monsters in contemporary horror fiction. At the same time the reader is experiencing the victim's horror, he or she may also associate with the monster as sympathetic figure or one who acts the reader's fantasies.

I believe the work of Deleuze and Guattari can help complicate this process of association or identification, by helping us to see the presence of the monster as the instigator of a process of "flight" from the everyday.⁴ This "line-of-flight," embodied in the monster, can be recaptured in a potential victim's body, as the victim survives the threat of the monster and returns to the mundane world. However, the genre opens another possibility as well, the possibility that the audience will engage in a process of "becoming-monster."⁵ This process enables a break with the stable, highly-coded, subjective position (a socially constructed "normal" identity), and frees up an often unexpressed desire for change, for mutation, for transgression.⁶ The monster is an expression of the desire to transgress both the current, historically specific normative body and the very category of the human, a process in which all other categories are transgressed as well.

Horror fiction's grotesque parade of monstrous bodies and its repetition of particular monstrous forms never seems to obscure the unique nature of such bodies, even when they are

part of group or mass, even if they are little more than pulsating balls of flesh contained in large glass vessels as in William Somerset Maugham's *The Magician*. The monstrous body is always unique and different; it is defined by its difference from an idealized human or animal body, but that difference cannot itself be regularly defined in terms of a particular attribute. If it could, the monster would simply be a member of another species.

The monstrous body is a unique sign, not a part of an existing system of signs. It is a sign that is not meant to be deciphered—instead of being an object for reasoned analysis the figure of the monster is aimed at producing a purely emotional response. At the same time it invites interpretation, the body of the monster undermines every attempt to interpret it. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, the significance of the monster is radically multiple and proliferative; it cannot be taken as a sign for any one specific threat. The monster's body is always already the site for multiple fears and for multiple desires. While I will present some common fears that can be seen embodied in the figure of the monster during this period, I will also argue that the monster refuses definite interpretation. The same monster may simultaneously represent two diametrically opposed fears—both the threat of feminine sexuality and the threat of an oppressive patriarchy, or both the predatory capitalist and the rebellious working classes, for example.

The monster's body disgusts, frightens, and deceives through its appearance. Words often fail those who try to describe the monster—since the monster is beyond language, ineffable, and horrible through its very ability to transgress language. But when language is used to describe the monstrous body it is presented as irregular, swollen, scarred, deformed, unwholesome, and/or loathsome. It is difficult to contain and hard to categorize, often a body with multiple protuberances and gaping orifices; it is often unclean, dripping with slime and oozing liquids; it may contain elements of other diverse and incongruous bodies, including elements of animal, vegetable, or mineral origin. Bodies in horror fiction, however, are rarely inactive and so this body will often be found clinging, crawling, grasping, consuming, and transgressing all sorts of human and natural laws. Sometimes, however, the monster's body has

no features at all; sometimes what is not visible is as monstrous as what is, such as Wells' Invisible Man and the many unsubstantial spirits that haunt these fictions. The apparent incorporeality of such bodies also draws attention to its difference from the normal body as well as the failure of the visible to reveal some underlying truth. Whether gross physicality or the indefiniteness of a physical being is stressed, the monster is an extraordinary body that evades understanding.

Monsters actively defy categorization. It is often impossible to determine whether the monster is male or female, human or animal, alive or dead. This inability to categorize the monster is itself horrifying. In Bertram Mitford's *The Sign of the Spider*, the narrator asks aloud, when confronted by the monstrous Spider God, "vampire—insect—devil—what was the thing?" (301). It has "two enormous tentacles—black [and] wavy as serpents," is covered with hair (like a mammal), has claws (like a crustacean) and "a head, as large as that of a man, black, hairy, bearing a strange resemblance to the most awful and cruel human face" (299); because it can not be identified as any one of these things it is perceived as all of them at once and is all the more horrifying for it. This "quivering, hairy, intertwined mass" has a physical body yet its outlines are indefinite (302).

Horror fiction is filled with monsters who mutate, transform, and change. In some cases the transformation is simply from one bodily state to another (as in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*); in other cases (such as *Dracula*), the monster is capable of multiple transformations. The mutability of the monstrous body may be its most horrifying characteristic, because in mutating the monster demonstrates its ability to transgress all boundaries.

In "The Great God Pan" by Arthur Machen, the climatic moment of the text comes when a manuscript by a Dr. Matteson is found and read by the principle narrator. In this moment of horror, Matteson describes a body that, in mutating, collapses all categories. He sees the body, "...waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then [he sees]...the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go

down to the depths” (Machen, *House of Souls* 237). This monstrous body dissolves into all of its elements (its particles of identity) from which it was originally composed, parts that are male and female, animal and human, organic and inorganic. This reminder of what makes up a human being may itself be the ultimate horror felt when faced with the monster, the monster whose parts are so similar to but which cannot claim to be human.

When the body of the monster horrifies, it is because it is “matter out of place,” to use Mary Douglas’ words. Like blood, pus, urine, or excrement, it disgusts because it crosses a boundary, and it threatens because, unlike inanimate matter, it is an active body, often actively seeking to consume if not to kill. By definition, the monster is something anomalous. As I previously discussed, Mary Douglas theorizes that we experience the revulsion of horror because the object of our horror “confuse[s] or contradict[s] cherished classifications” (*Purity* 36). She concludes that transitional or marginal states are therefore perceived as dangerous “because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable” (96). The body of the monster exists in such a transitional or marginal state. The monster exists somewhere between categories. It may be human and animal, alive and dead, not present but not absent either.

According to Georges Bataille, at the root of all human horrors, revulsions, taboos, and prohibitions, is our need to separate ourselves from other animal species. Our fear and revulsion is directed against acknowledging that we too are animals. As Bataille puts it, “man essentially denies his animal needs, and this is the point on which his basic prohibitions are brought to bear” (*Accursed Share, II & III* 53). Bataille point outs that this “horror of being animalistic operates unevenly among human....It is not a question of more civilization or less, but rather of individual choice and social classification” (69). This “*irreducible* horror” at our “repugnant animality” goes beyond a simple taboo; it is an even more fundamental prohibition (70, 118).⁷

Following Bataille, we can see how the body of the monster, because it appears as much animal as human and because it highlights its animal functions, transgresses this most basic of prohibitions. The monstrous body is one that confuses animal and human forms and functions,

just as it confuses all other categorization. This body, at least in a culture that condemns its animal nature, would therefore be a significant site for the inscription of horror.

Bataille also gives an explanation for the attraction we feel for that which horrifies us. He argues that “every horror conceals a possibility of enticement” because we wish to transgress this prohibition against showing our animal nature (*Accursed Share, II & III* 96). In fact, the existence of the prohibition creates the possibility of temptation. Even our horror at death is accompanied by the possibility of desire for the corpse—what Bataille calls the Phaedra complex—this is an attraction that relates to our sometimes forgotten knowledge that death is a precondition of life and renewal.⁸

Bataille is not alone in recognizing this connection between the object of desire and the object of horror. In relation to the monstrous, Leslie Fiedler makes a similar claim when he writes that “all Freaks [or monsters] are perceived to one degree or another as erotic” (137). Throughout the horror fictions I discuss in this dissertation, one repeatedly sees instances of monsters that have a strange and often erotically charged fascination for their “victims”—a topic I discuss at greater length later in this chapter.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*, argues that attitudes toward the body, specifically the monstrous or grotesque body, are determined by historical processes and class divisions. He notes that a joyful laughter at the monstrous body marks the genre of grotesque realism as well as “medieval and romantic folk culture [which] was familiar with the element of terror only as represented by the cosmic monsters who were defeated by laughter” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 39). Bakhtin opposes this carnivalesque version of the grotesque that was common in the medieval and Renaissance eras to a “Romantic grotesque,” which is still at play in “various modernist movements” (51). Bakhtin also argues that this popular culture was opposed to all that was gloomy, intimidating and fearful in the official (i.e., church) culture during the medieval period, which further complicates any view of the medieval grotesque. The monstrous body in the popular literature of horror fiction is not generally a figure of laughter, although the

possibility exists that a reader's response will be one of laughter, but neither is it gloomy and intimidating in the same way that the gargoyle of medieval church culture might be.⁹ The monster in popular discourse at the close of the nineteenth century, I hope to show, had a different and perhaps more complex role.

In using anthropological theories such as those of Douglas and Bataille, based on cross-cultural readings, I do not wish to ignore the important role that historical and class configurations can also play in determining a society's perceptions of the body (and of the grotesque or monstrous body in particular). However, in making his claims concerning the popular culture of the medieval and Renaissance eras, Bakhtin seemingly ignores another folk tradition of threatening monsters such as the goblins of folk tales or Grendel in *Beowulf*. Likewise monsters as figures of humor in cartoons, children's books, and sometimes even in horror fiction have become commonplace today. While examples are fewer in the late Victorian era, some can certainly be found in the pages of *Punch* or the poetry of Edward Lear. Generic conventions as well as audience responses can be historically defined, but such historical developments are rarely unidirectional, and Bakhtin's conception of carnivalesque and popular attitudes towards the body and all that seeks to oppress it belongs as much to a utopian ideal as they do to any given historical moment.

The Monster Appears

The focus on the monster—its central position in the text—separates the horror genre from the Gothic.¹⁰ While in the Gothic there were ghosts and even the occasional devil or vampire, the individual attributes of these figures were not very important. They existed less as characters than as aspects of the scenery (with a few exceptions, most notably *Frankenstein*). Gothic fiction features monsters that are little more than props, with limited ability to act and no voice of their own, nor does it give much attention to physical monstrosity. Leslie Fiedler, in his book *Freaks*, observes that “everywhere in the [Gothic] genre, psychological abnormalities like

sado-masochism, incest, fratricide, and parricide were exploited to titillate the reader. But physiological abnormalities appear nowhere except in the underground pornography of de Sade” (263). The Gothic, I have shown, was more concerned with terror than horror, and that terror depended on the interaction of villain and victim. With the addition of the monstrous body, a focus for horror rather than terror was found; and the body, rather than the act or the scene, took center stage. In other words, in its development from the Gothic, supernatural horror underwent a fundamental shift in its focus. Focusing on the monster’s body as well as its actions gave supernatural horror a more powerful method to convey emotion as well as an emotion more appropriate for its later historical moment.¹¹ Psychological abnormalities and setting were still important in establishing the mood of horror fiction, but the fear of the monstrous figure or anomalous body became a more pressing concern than the aristocrat’s castle or the Catholic monastery.

In making its focus a figure and not a setting, horror fiction was able to make use of a wider range of settings, not just those that were associated with historical fears, such as the castle. The fear of place no longer focused on the secret or mysterious mechanics of places that were, at least to most readers, secret and seldom seen, such as castles, monasteries, and catacombs, and hence mysterious by definition. Such places were also associated with the aristocracy, the Catholic Church, or death, further mystifying them. In horror, however, scenery itself might become monstrous by becoming embodied. For example, Edith Nesbit’s “Man-Size in Marble” changes scene into figure as the altarpieces of a church are shown to be not only evil but also alive. This story adopts Gothic scenic conventions—a gloomy ancient church by a woods where even the “tree trunks stood up like Gothic columns” (74)—but the scenery itself is not perceived as threatening. It is the *absence* of a part of the scenery that eventually inspires fear in the narrator. Instead, the emotions of fear and horror that may have attached themselves to the environment in a Gothic tale are focused instead on monstrous (in this case, animate marble)

bodies.¹² I will consider setting in more detail in Chapter 4, and for now will look at an example of the inanimate body becoming animated.

Nesbit's story concerns a newlywed couple who are living in the country and supporting themselves with their creative work. The husband is a painter and the wife writes for magazines. They are happy with their new home and with their servant, Mrs. Dorman, whose quaint folkloric tales they appropriate for their "little magazine stories which brought in the jingling guinea" (67). But their life is disrupted by that same servant's intention of leaving them for a week in order to avoid the house during All Saints' Eve. She is afraid because their property was once the site of the manor house where two knights of ill repute resided. These knights from the Gothic past are said to still haunt the town one night each year. To be more specific, their statues, which stand on either side of the church altar, are believed to walk from their places on Halloween night.

The husband, who narrates the story, is quite impressed by the language Mrs. Dorman uses to describe these figures; he thinks "'them two bodies, drawed out man-size in marble'" is a phrase with "weird force and uncanniness" (perhaps one to be used in a magazine story) (71). However, his wife, who is an author, seems disturbed by the language and fearful of the approach of Halloween. In an ironic twist, the text stresses how the language can be used to create horror in fiction, only to undermine that idea by then showing how this apparent fiction in fact represents a horrific "reality."

When Halloween night comes the narrator is walking by the church and decides to enter in order to give thanks for his happiness with his wife and home. He realizes the statues that stand beside the altar are missing and is "seized...[by] a horror indefinable and indescribable" (75). In this case, the unexpected absence of a figure is as horrifying as its presence—both are examples of "matter out of place." When the narrator returns a short time later with the local doctor, the statues are back in their places, but one of them is missing a finger, a marble finger the narrator finds, soon after, clenched in his dead wife's hand.

The lost, marble finger is really merely a trace, albeit an appropriately phallic one, of the monster. It is, however, in and of itself, not monstrous. Its inanimate presence is merely a reminder of the monstrous body that has come and gone—just as the absence of the statues from the church is a horrific reminder that they are no longer part of the setting but have instead become animate monsters. The monsters, which are never seen by the narrator, are man-sized bodies of animated marble that have a will and purpose all their own. They are not simply scenery with a message like the giant, falling, stone head encountered in *The Castle of Otranto*.

A number of fears are apparent here, including a fear of the church as an institution with a past far from ideal and a fear of the rigidity of male sexuality and a patriarchal order that continues its existence from a more “primitive” time. There even seems to be fear and guilt concerning the adaptation of folklore for fiction, or perhaps one should say the theft of another’s language and traditions. Since in considering the usefulness of Mrs. Dorman’s weird and uncanny language in the creation of a magazine story, the narrator is really proposing the appropriation of a British, rural, working-class discourse from which he hopes to profit. In doing so, he ironically ignores the “truth” that exists behind such language—a truth that is effaced in the creation of the horror story. At the same time, supernatural horror fiction often tries to pretend it is “truthful” by claiming, as this story does that “every word of this story is as true as despair” (Nesbit 66).

Even the ghosts of horror fiction assume a physicality that one does not find in the Gothic ghost. The character Alastair Colvin in Perceval Landon’s “Thurnley Abbey” is spending the night at a country estate allegedly haunted by the ghost of a nun. Believing, however, that he is faced with a practical joker and not a real ghost, he attacks the apparition that appears in his room. He describes the scene in quite gruesome detail:

I tore the robed skeleton...I broke the skull against the floor, and stamped upon its dry bones. I flung the head away under the bed, and rent the brittle bones of the trunk in pieces. I snapped the thigh-bones across my knee and flung them in different directions. The shin-bones I set against a stool and broke with my heel. I...stripped the ribs from the backbone and slung the breastbone against the cupboard....I tore the frail rotten veil into

twenty pieces and dust went over everything....At last my work was done. There was but a raffle of broken bones and strips of parchment and crumbling wool. Then, picking up a piece of the skull...I opened the door and went down the passage (Landon 84).

Colvin confronts his hosts with this piece of skull and they are quite terrified, as is Colvin himself when the reassembled ghost returns for that piece of its skull. The ghost of Thurnley Abbey is more real—that is to say, more material—than the ghostly monks and nuns of Gothic fiction. Not only does it have a physical body, but that body can be touched and even broken. The “spirits” of horror fiction often assume such an elaborate material form; they return from the dead as physical bodies capable of acting upon the world and being acted upon, not just as silent specters.

As I will show in the remaining pages of this chapter, a number of concerns at the close of the nineteenth century might have caused attention to be focused on the threat of monstrous bodies, concerns which were not prevalent at the close of the eighteenth century. The monsters of horror fiction were not the comic grotesques of an earlier popular culture nor were they merely the dark and frightening aspects of scenery one encountered in the Gothic. Instead they were physical bodies invested with a will and desire of their own.

Beginning with *Frankenstein* and continuing with the ghost stories of Victorian authors like Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, the Gothic began a transformation into supernatural horror fiction.¹³ In these earlier texts, the monster had already assumed a central role as the element alien to the “real” (or realist) world—a central premise of George Levine’s *The Realistic Imagination*. For this reason alone, *Frankenstein* may well be the first horror text, but the progress of the genre did not catch up to it for some time. Even though *Frankenstein* was named after the monster’s creator, the fact that the title is so often mistaken for the name of the monster himself suggests the centrality of that nameless creature to the text. By the end of the nineteenth century, Mr. Hyde would share equal billing with Dr. Jekyll, and Dracula, although he may have fewer lines than Van Helsing, would lend his name to the title of that narrative.

One of the things monsters do in many supernatural horror tales (again, beginning with *Frankenstein*) is to talk. The Gothic ghost was typically a mute spectre, and if it did voice anything, it would merely repeat a message in the manner of a supernatural tape recording, not engage in any dialogue with other voices in the novel. In horror fiction, however, the monster speaks as an individual, even when it is merely another aspect of a character such as Mr. Hyde who speaks “as well,” if not as much, as Dr. Jekyll. This is not to say that all monsters in horror fiction have a voice; many, such as the monstrous objects I discuss in the next chapter, remain mute. However because the monster in general becomes capable of speech or even, in some cases, writing, it becomes possible for monsters to appear in horror fiction as real characters.¹⁴ The ability to speak also enables a level of reader identification and sympathy not possible with the ghosts of the Gothic, as its voice can humanize the monster at the same time its appearance shows it to be far from human. Again, *Frankenstein* provides a template for the horror genre that would flourish later in the century.

In the modern world, the monster is something unnatural and unexpected, something that does not belong. This attitude towards the monster also distinguishes the supernatural horror genre from the related genre of fantasy and from older generic forms such as fairy tales. In the traditional fairy tale or the more contemporary fantasy novel, the monster may be important for the progress of the narrative and may be individualized as a character, but it does not invade the narrative as a presence from outside the world of the normal or realistic. As Noel Carroll observes,

In works of horror, the humans regard the monsters they meet as abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order. In fairy tales, on the other hand, monsters are part of the everyday furniture of the universe (16).

In the supernatural horror narrative, the monster comes to occupy the center of the text but does so only by invading from the outside. The parameters that are set up at the beginning of a horror narrative are those of realism, but the monster’s existence is antithetical to the conventions of

realism, and its appearance marks, as I noted in the last chapter, the breakdown of realist narrative.

The Monster with a 1000 Faces

The monsters of horror fiction are often mutable and capable of astounding transformations. The monster can have two or more separate identities. It can cross boundaries of gender, race, class, and even species. In spite of its unique nature, it may be a part of a pack or group, which diffuses its identity even further. Is the monster this particular vampire or the whole tribe of vampires? Is it Count Dracula the aristocrat, the foreigner, the seducer, the exploiter of others' bodies? Is he also represented by his female minions or the victimized Lucy? Is he a bat, a wolf, or the mist? Perhaps the monster in *Dracula* is a condition, a disease, an infection that takes various shapes (as has been proposed by more than one contemporary vampire novel). It is hard to pin down the monster in Stoker's novel to a single form even if it has a single name, Dracula. It is equally difficult to equate that form with a single fear, and various critics have found in *Dracula* a representation of fears of the foreigner, the homosexual, the new woman, the Jew, the capitalist, the degenerate, the syphilitic, the colonizer, and the colonized. While Count Dracula is an excellent example of the problems involved in identifying the monster, he is not unique in this matter—all monsters share in this confusion of identities and meanings.

The centrality of the monster in horror fiction is related to its ability to embody a whole constellation of fears, anxieties, and desires that have been repressed by individual consciousness and/or mainstream cultural politics. It may at first appear that the figure of the monster, like the elements of a nightmare, represents an individual's subconscious fears and fantasies, and I would not deny that these figures resonate with individual psyches. However, I would suggest that there is something resembling a "political unconscious" at work that enables the individual's fears to relate directly to those of his or her class, nation, and/or society. Neither the individual's psychic past nor society's historical past are ever fully present and accessible, since they are both

mediated through a linguistic system that determines not only writing but thought itself. The only way to approach, but not reach, “the Real,” to use Jacques Lacan’s terminology, is through “the Symbolic.” However, as Frederic Jameson observes the Real *as history* consists of social as well as individual experience (“Imaginary & Symbolic” 384).

To understand the fears of late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain it is necessary to consider the monsters that appear so often in fiction at this time. The monster is the ultimate “other” and, as Rosemary Jackson observes, taking a cue from Frederic Jameson, “it is the identification, the naming of otherness, which is a telling index of society’s religious and political beliefs” (*Fantasy* 52). Those who are threatening and different (for whatever reason) are often depicted as monsters, and monsters are often described with the attributes of the Other (whether defined by difference of race, class, gender, sexual preference, or nationality). It is commonly accepted that the self is defined in relation to others, just as society or social norms are defined by the exclusion of their supposed opposites, whether they be classed as criminal, insane, or monstrous. However, like the repressed in the individual’s unconscious, in the “political unconscious” the Other that is excluded has a way of returning. With the monster, the repressed or oppressed—the two are related, as I shall argue—returns with a vengeance, and that is perhaps its greatest attraction.

Horror fiction attempts to express the inexpressible, the unconscious before is mediated by language. Such a project is bound to fail, but it is in the figure of the monster that the genre comes closest to fulfilling this goal. The pleasure that we might take in the existence of the monster, which accompanies the more readily apparent horror, is the pleasure of pre-Symbolic play. Slavoj Žižek’s observation concerning the shark from the film *Jaws* is applicable to the monsters of horror fiction as well. He writes that

what remains outside this formal symbolic moment, what resists absorption into meaning, is the horrifying power of fascination that pertains to the presence of the shark [monster] itself—its enjoyment, to use the Lacanian term for it....The analysis that focuses on the ‘ideological meaning’ of monsters overlooks the fact that, before signifying something,

before serving as a vessel of meaning, monsters embody enjoyment qua the limit of interpretation, that is to say, nonmeaning as such (64).

As I understand it, this statement does not mean that one cannot find an ideological meaning as such in the figure of the monster but an experience of the horror of “nonmeaning” comes first. The construction of meaning, then, would not be inherent in the monster but dependent on the context in which it is perceived. Since that context can vary so greatly from reader to reader, it is not that there is no meaning in the body of the monster, but rather that there is both too little and too much meaning. The deficit and excess of meaning causes the reader to focus on his or her emotional response to the text (whether one of pleasure or discomfort), but meaning can follow, should the reader wish to explore it.

It is because it lacks any inherent meaning that the monster can serve so well as a figure for so many different things, or as Žižek describes it “as a kind of fantasy screen where the multiplicity of meanings can appear and fight for hegemony” (63). Judith Halberstam notes, in respect to the Gothic—although it applies more specifically to horror fiction—that it

...makes monsters out of bits and pieces of science and literature: the reason Gothic monsters are over-determined, which is to say open to numerous interpretations, is precisely that monsters transform the fragments of otherness into one body. The body is not female, not Jewish, not homosexual but it bears the marks of the constructions of femininity, ‘race’ and sexuality” (“Technologies of Monstrosity” 252).

Horror’s monsters are also useful screens for multiple meanings because the affect they produce becomes more important to the reader than any of the many reasons the monster inspired horror in the first place. This both intensifies the experience of horror and extends the range of its meaning.

It is easiest to see the multiplicity of representations contained in one monstrous figure by looking at an example: the character of the Beetle from Richard Marsh’s novel of the same name. *The Beetle*, written in 1897 (the same year as *Dracula*) was an extremely popular novel that contained all the elements which mark supernatural horror as a genre.¹⁵ The story is similar in a number of ways to *Dracula* and concerns the invasion of London by a supernatural being, the

Beetle of the title. In this case the monster is not a vampire seeking new prey but rather a cultist of Isis seeking revenge on a particular man, Paul Lessingham (now a liberal member of parliament), who had spurned her love and then attempted to murder her in order to facilitate his escape from her cult's secret temple and the unhallowed orgies and human sacrifices that occurred there.¹⁶

Like *Dracula*, *The Beetle* has multiple narrators, all of whom have some difficulty identifying exactly who or what the Beetle is. These narrators have the greatest difficulty in determining the Beetle's gender; it seems most likely that the Beetle is a woman, because Sydney Atherton, one of the narrators and the scientific expert of the novel, seeing her without her clothes relates:

One startling fact nudity revealed—that I had been egregiously mistaken on the question of sex. My visitor was not a man, but a woman, and judging from the brief glimpse which I had of her body, by no means old or ill-shaped either (Marsh, *Beetle* 547).

Yet before (and even after) this episode most of the characters assume she is a man “for this reason, if for no other, that it was impossible such a character could be feminine” (453). The impossibility of this transgression of gender categories emphasizes its horror. Robert Holt, the novel's first narrator, later revises this previous judgment to suggest that she may have been “some ghoulish examples of her sex, who had so yielded to her depraved instincts as to become nothing but a ghastly reminiscence of womanhood” (462). The categorical confusion suggest hermaphroditism and makes it difficult to position her as entirely male or female. As Atherton notes in conversation with Lessingham, ““the face is a man's—of an uncommonly disagreeable type...and the voice is a man's—also of a kind—but the body, as, last night, I chanced to discover, is a woman's.”” Lessingham simply replies, as might the reader, ““That sounds very odd”” (577).

Although she claims to be a native of Egypt and a worshiper of an ancient Egyptian religion, the Beetle's racial type, like her gender, remains a matter of speculation and confusion throughout the novel. Atherton, comments that she “was Oriental to the finger-tips—that much

was certain; yet in spite of a pretty wide personal knowledge of Oriental people I could not make up my mind as to the exact part of the east from which [s]he came” (537). If, as Edward Said suggests, the ability to classify (and thus contain and represent) the Oriental was essential for the West’s belief in its own superiority, then the inability to determine the specifics of this Oriental’s identity reflects a somewhat pervasive fear in the novel of the monstrous Oriental’s supernatural ability to escape symbolic representation, and thus, a fear of the British self’s inferiority.

Physically the Beetle is seen as a composite of various stereotypical, racial characteristics. Robert Holt notices a hairless face and “saffron yellow” skin that would seem to suggest Asian descent, yet her “nose, on the other hand, was abnormally large...and...resembled the beak of some bird of prey” marking her as a Semite, and her “blubber lips” would, as Atherton later notes, “suggest that, in [her] veins there ran more than a streak of negro blood” (454, 537). To complicate matters further, her appearance is by no means stable. The second time he sees her, Holt recognizes “that some astonishing alteration had taken place in [her] appearance;” her wrinkles have largely disappeared, her nose has lost something of “its beak-like quality” and she “had even come into possession of a modest allowance of a chin” (462). Her ability to change herself into a beetle (probable genus *lamellicornia copridae*) further highlights these associations of inconstancy and mutability that attach themselves to her as both woman and “Oriental.”

Even the Beetle’s costume is ambiguous, resembling as it does “the ‘Algerians’ whom one finds all over France,” though “less gaudy and a good deal dingier” with a “burnoose—the yellow grimy-looking article of the Arab of the Soudan, not the spick and span Arab of the boulevard” (Marsh, *Beetle* 500). The clothes combine elements of the relatively innocuous Parisian Arab and the dangerous dervish of the Sudan. Thus, its multiplicity of attributes marks the Beetle not just as a foreigner but rather as every foreigner (or at least every type of foreigner) at once. It is as if Marsh could not decide which racial group or foreign nationality was the most

threatening and so decided to use them all interchangeably. The Beetle is all the more horrible for being a composite or generalization of the very idea of foreignness.

The threat of the Beetle is increased by her “overactive” sexuality—in a novel with numerous romantic entanglements, she expresses her desires more strongly than any of the other characters. In rather effusive language, she tells Robert Holt of her feelings for Lessingham; he relates that

there came into his [the Beetle’s] tone a note of tenderness—a note of which I had not deemed him capable.

‘He is good to look at, Paul Lessingham—is he not good to look at?’

I was aware that, physically, Mr. Lessingham was a fine specimen of manhood, but I was not prepared for the assertion of the fact in such a quarter—nor for the manner in which the temporary master of my fate continued to harp and enlarge upon the theme.

‘He is straight—straight as a mast of a ship—he is tall—his skin is white; he is strong—do I not know he is strong—how strong!—oh yes! Is there a better thing than to be his wife? his well beloved? the light of his eyes? Is there for a woman a happier chance? Oh no, not one! His wife—Paul Lessingham!’

As, with soft cadences, he gave vent to these unlooked for sentiments, the fashion of his countenance was changed. A look of longing came into his face—of savage, frantic longing—which unalluring though it was, for the moment transfigured him (Marsh, *Beetle* 464–465).

In the Beetle’s description of Lessingham as a sort of giant, white phallus that is good to look upon, she usurps the look of desire that at the time was generally perceived as a male privilege. In this (her free expression of desire) and in her ability to take a dominant role in relation to men (enabled by her hypnotic abilities), the Beetle also represents the threat of the “New Woman.” A number of critics have related the “monstrous others” of *fin de siècle* horror fiction to the perceived problem of the New Woman and the suffragette, and a number of fictions from the era make a direct comparison between the two.¹⁷ Sandra Gilbert seems correct in her claim that “the very idea of the New Woman was so threatening that her aspirations would tend to evoke all other subversive aspirations that were...being voiced throughout the British Empire” (133), but those other subversive aspirations could evoke the threat of the New Woman as well.

The ambiguity of the Beetle’s gender also suggests a homosexual desire that is equally threatening. The fear that there is a homosexual or homosocial economy of desire at work in

society runs throughout the novel.¹⁸ At times, it seems that the only thing that keeps the male characters from expressing their feelings for one another or crossing gender boundaries themselves is the presence of a woman who can act as a love object. When Marjorie Linton, Lessingham's fiancée, is kidnapped by the Beetle, Lessingham's demeanor changes from solidly masculine to one that "was rapidly approximating...the condition of a hysterical woman" (Marsh, *Beetle* 685). Without the assurance of Marjorie's continued presence, Lessingham becomes himself "feminine" in the face of the ambiguously gendered Beetle.

The rivalry that exists between Lessingham and Atherton results from their mutual desire for Marjorie Linton, but if it were not for that "object" of contention their relationship would be rather different. Atherton confides to the reader that in his opinion Lessingham

possesses physical qualities which please my eye....I like the suggestion conveyed by his every pose, his every movement, of a tenacious hold on life—of reserve force, of a repository of bone and gristle on which he can fall back at pleasure. The fellow's lithe and active; not hasty, yet agile; clean built, well hung (Marsh, *Beetle* 505).

Atherton admits that he admires Lessingham "so long as he does not presume to thrust himself into a certain position" (505). Yet, oddly enough, the position in which Atherton most admires his rival is one in which he is actively asserting his masculine prerogative and fighting for possession of Marjorie. Augustus Champnell (the fourth narrator) relates how when Lessingham "thrust [Atherton] vigorously aside" and took from him Marjorie's ring, "Ravished of his treasure, Sydney turned and surveyed the ravisher with something like a glance of admiration" (649–650). Atherton, in the absence of Marjorie, is ravished by Lessingham and likes it, suggesting that a homosexual desire exists just below the surface of their homosocial competition for her. However, it is the Beetle's actions which cause this apparent threat to the heterosexual norm and hence the Beetle herself who can be demonized for representing homosexual desire.

It is easy to see that this monster cannot be limited to representing a single fear or concern (although, depending on the audience, one attribute of the monster may certainly be more fearful than another). In the case of *The Beetle*, the monster as signifier stands for an entire chain

of signifieds, all of which become interchangeable to the extent that a confrontation with one (on a conscious or unconscious level) produces the same affect as a confrontation with another.

As a monster that confuses categories of gender, race, nationality, sexual preference and even species, the Beetle is certainly a fine example of the interchangeability of the various forms of “otherness” as conceived by the dominant discourses of a society, but she is by no means an exceptional case. A number of critics have remarked how this same process is at work in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. For example, Judith Halberstam, in a piece entitled “Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” links the multiplicity of representations embodied by the monster to the method by which the monstrous body is constructed. She finds that:

...the reason Gothic [or horror] monsters are over-determined, which is to say open to numerous interpretations, is precisely that monsters transform the fragments of otherness into one body. The body is not female, not Jewish, not homosexual but it bears the marks of the constructions of femininity, ‘race’ and sexuality (Halberstam 252).

The body presents a composite of attributes that mark it as different from any “normal” body, but in the monstrous body all these traits are scrambled and fragmented. On the body of the monster, all forms of alienation are inscribed. As Jean-Paul Sartre has noted, “In an alienated society, all the alienations, no matter what their structural level, symbolize one another” (qtd. in Cixious & Clement 7).

The Body as Evidence

The figurative association of the human body with the ambient social organization is widely known and well accepted; it is also, as Mary Douglas demonstrates in *Natural Symbols*, one of the strongest of cross-cultural metaphors. Douglas follows Marcel Mauss in arguing “that the human body is always treated as an image of society and that there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension” (*Natural Symbols* 70). As Douglas explains, the symbolic association of social body and physical body is directly connected to the fact that “the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived”

(65).¹⁹ Thus, ideas about the physical body can be seen as directly related to ideas about the organization and functioning of the social whole even of the natural order. Douglas concludes that, “the symbolism of the body, which gets its power from the social life, governs the fundamental attitudes to spirit and matter” (xiii).

Working from this supposition that attitudes towards the body reflect social organization, Douglas maps out different types of social organization along two axes, one that rates the strength of members’ identification with the group and the other their identification with a particular role or roles. For example, the members of a society can strongly associate with the group without having clearly defined social roles, or they can have a highly developed and prescribed system of roles without calling for strong ties to the group as a whole. Of course, other combinations of these two criteria are possible. Douglas then relates these types of social organization to attitudes towards the body as well as to cosmology and religion.

Douglas concludes that in a culture (or an era) when the organization of social roles is weak but the sense of group identification is strong, “we would expect to find the body an object of anxiety, [and] fear of poisoning and debilitation would be dominant” (*Natural Symbols* 160).

In such a society, a person would use the human body

to express both the exclusive nature of the allegiance [to the social group] and the confused social experience. The group is likened to the human body; the orifices are to be carefully guarded to prevent unlawful intrusions, dangers from poisoning and loss of physical strength express the lack of articulated roles within it (viii).

This is also a society that will be likely to believe in the powers of witchcraft and magic. On the other hand, societies that have clearly defined roles but lack a strong group identity will be much less likely to “use the essentially bounded character of the human body to express...social concerns” (*Natural Symbols* ix). They will also be less likely to feel that their own bodies are being threatened by outside forces, whether witches or degenerates.

Douglas draws examples from a wide range of different cultures to support her conclusions, but what I find most useful is how well her argument applies to the late Victorian

historical moment, when fears of degeneration and monstrous bodies were rampant. In turn-of-the-century England, long-standing gender and class roles were being challenged and were changing; however, nationalism and chauvinism remained high. Douglas' work explains why such a society would be concerned with degeneration, monsters, and other bodily threats. Her work here also helps to explain the resurgence of interest in magic and the occult that I discussed in Chapter One. As a culture with strong group identity but a weakened "grid" of social roles—a strong outer boundary, but a confused internal state—turn-of-the-century British society was prime territory for discourses that were obsessed with maintaining the purity and safety of the body.

The weakening of social roles may help explain why the body becomes an object of fear, horror, or anxiety at a particular historical moment, but one needs to look at other trends to see why particular types of bodies are singled out. By the close of the nineteenth century, the idea of "science" suggested intellectual rigor and proven legitimacy; therefore social theorists, psychologists, and philosophers seeking to claim that legitimacy for their own work would position that work as the culmination of a process of scientific development. People working in most every discipline were ready to claim a scientific grounding for their work, and many looked to the hard sciences for a model. Of all the sciences, biology was, for complex reasons I will discuss, the one to which appeals were most often made. Benjamin Kidd, for instance, interviewed in 1894 claimed that "history and politics are merely the last chapters of biology—the last and greatest—up to which all that has gone before leads in an orderly sequence" (qtd. in G. Jones 1).²⁰

In some ways, faith in science stepped in to fill a gap left by doubts about received religion. Before the Victorian era, religion may have been sufficient to explain the world as it was, but at the close of that era biology was the discourse from which answers were often sought, a reflection of the considerable success biology enjoyed during the nineteenth century.²¹ As Greta Jones, in *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, observes "Biology helped...to create [a]

kind of moral universe in which nature reflected society and vice versa” (147). Biology, because it concerned itself with the organic and, by extension, with all human activity, was the science most fit to fill the role of religion in an increasingly secular society. With respect to monsters, biological explanations differed from those of religious discourse in recognizing the essential reality of the monster rather than viewing it as a mediation between “the natural and cosmic world” (Russo 80). Of course, the biological theories of Charles Darwin and his followers had also been very important in challenging accepted religious dogma, and the fight between these discourses is both ongoing and beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the rise of biological thinking is an important context for understanding the development of horror fiction.

The concern with bodies in horror fiction was, in some ways, the result of a growing belief in biology as the major determining factor in the history of humanity. Biological definitions of normalcy (based on the observation of bodies) were extended to other fields of inquiry. David Trotter is not alone in suggesting that, “the biologizing of social theory had become by the turn of the century an intense and widespread preoccupation” (114). With the wider acceptance of Darwin’s theories came a new set of fears and concerns relating to the survival and development of the species and the “race.”²²

Old fears were recast in biological terms; worries about national rivalries, imperialism, and class divisions were presented as biological in origin. This confusion of social and biological causes, combined with the fact that the body has always had strong symbolic resonance, led to a preoccupation with and a persistent fear of the anomalous (or monstrous) body. The monstrous body was presented as a sign of degeneration in the organism and in the society, and while the monster may have certain “special” powers, those powers were only used to hasten the deterioration of the race or species.

Bruce Haley argues that the Victorians “used physical health as the model for a higher human excellence, a way of envisioning it” (253). Ill health and disability, especially when encountered amongst the poor, the idle rich, or the foreigner, became a moral failing: disease and

disfigurement and unfitness for military service were read as signs of an unhealthy and hence immoral lifestyle. As noted, the body has often served as a metaphor for the society. However, horror fiction, like many of the discourses of the human sciences at this period, did not just claim a metaphorical relation between the human body and society or the human body and the individual psyche. Rather, it began to look at actual bodies and their physical attributes, reading in them the source of social, psychological, and moral problems.

Together, changes in the social structure—for example the weakening of hereditary roles and strengthening of nationalist ties—and the increased importance of biological theories in explaining the social milieu led to a dramatic increase in fears of physical decline and degeneration during the *fin de siècle*. As Daniel Pick observes, it was, of course, nothing new for societies to be concerned with their potential social, political, or moral decline; however, at the end of the nineteenth century, concerns about decline became “the centre of a scientific and medical investigation” (20). Pick adds that “the potential degeneration of European society was thus not discussed as though it constituted primarily a religious, philosophical or ethical problem, but as an empirically demonstrable medical, biological or physical anthropological fact” (20).

Erin O’Connor argues that monstrous bodies and the bodies discussed in discourses on degeneration “belonged to...entirely different symbolic structure[s]” (187). She notes that degeneration was posited as condition of the masses, while monstrosity, as exemplified by the sideshow “freak,” was a “means of affirming individuality” (O’Connor 189). However, O’Connor focuses on the monsters of the sideshow and circus rather than those found in horror fiction. I would argue her claim that “monsters were never not a show; they had no anonymity; they were eye-catching, outstanding, absolutely public all the time” applies to fictional monsters as well (187). The mere fact that O’Connor needs to argue for a separation of the monstrous and the degenerate reflects the fact that the two were often conflated or at least linked in some people’s minds. As I have noted, the individual body is a natural symbol for the society as a whole (*Natural Symbols* 70), so the monstrous body is easily seen as the representation of a

degenerate society. Additionally, the monster is always potentially a member of a pack.²³ I would argue that the discourse on degeneration “democratizes” monstrosity, making it a condition of the masses. This is an easily achieved discursive gesture at a time when fear of the masses was strong. The monster had always been considered a unique spectacle, but with theories of the degenerate body, it became possible to see monsters everywhere, and the threat of the monster became linked with the threat of the degenerate masses. The monster became more threatening because it could blend in among others and, like the degenerate, appear normal until more closely inspected.

The connection between the monster and the degenerate is made quite explicitly in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, when Mina Harker recognizes that Dracula ““is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him”” (361). Count Dracula, the monster of the novel, fits into a recognizable classification of degenerate criminal—his monstrosity, which on the one hand shows his difference from the norm, also demonstrates him to be an abnormal type that can be classified. His abilities are not beneficial but rather threatening to society, and his physical difference as well as his actions makes him an object of horror. Degeneration theory is a pseudo-scientific discourse that makes claims for the importance of being able to read physical qualities *because* they reflect less apparent but more important moral and mental ones; in this respect, the discourse on degeneration is heir to the discourses around physiognomy and phrenology earlier in the century. All are pseudo-scientific ways of evaluating the visible. The same process can be seen in horror fiction. The physical form becomes important because it can be easily evaluated, whereas the actual threat it represents is invisible, complex, and changing. In the horror tale, the monster presents the anxieties of the society, as well as of the individual, in an easily recognizable form.

In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter examines what he calls the “decadent Gothic” of this period, which he equates with horror tales such as *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula*.²⁴ He concludes that all these texts are “concerned in one way or another with

the problem of degeneration, and thus the essence of the human” (1st ed. 239). Degeneration, as the popularity of Max Nordau’s book of that title suggests, was a major concern at the turn of the century.²⁵ This concern, however, was really the culmination of a shift in social thought that had begun earlier in the nineteenth century. As Nancy Stepan notes, “a change from an emphasis on the fundamental physical and moral homogeneity of man, despite superficial differences, to an emphasis on the essential heterogeneity of mankind, despite superficial similarities” went hand-in-hand with a “shift from a sense of man as primarily social being...to a sense of man primarily as a biological being” (4). Social differences became definable as biological in origin and nowhere could this perspective be better seen than in the rather numerous attempts to equate social inferiority with biological degeneracy.

In sociological texts from the period, the poor were often depicted as a breed, if not a race, apart. C. F. G. Masterman was far from alone in claiming “that a new race...is entering the sphere of practical importance—the ‘City type’...the ‘street-bred’ people of the twentieth century” (qtd. in Read 23). Greta Jones notes that “typifications of race and class were interchangeable in much of the writing on the subject” and “attempts were made to depict the classes in Britain as physically as well as psychologically distinct” (144, 148). These classifications were attempts to come to terms with real and noticeable changes in the composition of society at this time. R. B. Kershner explains that “the industrial city produced a class perceived as radically different by the bourgeoisie and Degeneration theory provided a scientific model for that difference” (Degeneration 432). As Daniel Pick observes,

The language of degeneration in the 1880’s also involved the perception of structural contradictions between progress and poverty. It conceded that there was a deep crisis in the existing social order, but sought to offer a de-politicized theory, which deflected the terms of the discussion into concepts of nature, biology and race (219).

In other words, the biologizing of social theory enabled the translation of class differences into racial differences, which were set along more definite lines and allowed for less possibility of change. A primary cause of the lack of social cohesion could then be ignored, and an imaginary

and monstrous “degenerate” other could be blamed for the problem instead. The popularity of monsters in fiction, while not a cause for this demonizing of the degenerate, was certainly a sign of its influence. In many different discourses, these monsters came to provide the imagery through which the demonized social other could be portrayed.

Of course, the poor and working classes were not the only people to be singled out as degenerate. Some authors link the problems of degeneracy to the actions of criminals, vagrants, young people, and immigrants. The accusation of degeneracy against a group seems to have been grounds for denying their humanity (or at least their inclusion among “civilized” people). Hence Havelock Ellis could compare the mind of the criminal to that of “savages and...the lower animals” (155), and W. H. Wilkins, in *The Alien Invasion*, could attempt to persuade his audience that

just as the lower organisms of animal life are capable of living under circumstances which are intolerable to higher organisms, so can these people [immigrants] exist—and even to a certain extent thrive—in an atmosphere and amid surroundings which to a more highly-developed Englishman and Englishwoman mean disease and death (95).

According to Wilkins, these immigrants, because of their degenerate and inferior nature, were able to provide unfair competition and thus cause the “more highly-developed Englishman and Englishwoman” to degenerate and even disappear.

Wilkins quotes Rev. H. A. Mason to the effect that Jews in the East End had increased their numbers ““at the sacrifice of the British population,”” invoking old fears of Jewish ritual murder (qtd. in Wilkins 18). These immigrant Jews were presented as monsters who propagate at the expense of the superior English worker. Paradoxically, the degenerate, like the monster, is seen as having qualities that give him or her an unfair advantage. Degeneracy was portrayed as a “problem” which many believed could only be rectified through “eugenic reform” that would stop the degenerate group, whatever it might be, from breeding.²⁶

What many eugenicists seemed to be calling for at the turn of the century was the destruction of those “monsters” whose presence in society sapped the strength of the healthy

classes. Arnold White, for example, in *Efficiency and Empire* warned about the poor and their “spectacled school-children hungry, strumous and epileptic, [who] grow into consumptive bridegrooms and scrofulous brides” and whose marriage is an “unhealthy perversion” (101–102). Such deformed creatures, like the monsters to which they are compared, “prey upon the healthy citizens” (116). Similar comparisons were made and similar concerns were voiced in relation to immigrants, city dwellers, and even boys who do not get enough sport and hence become “a canker at the heart of the people which will surely destroy it” (Anon. qtd. in Pearson 70). The degenerate was presented as a parasitic monster who preyed upon the stronger members of society to the detriment of all.

This fear of the diseased and monstrous other who will destroy the healthy and normal social body becomes, at this same time, a central concern in the horror genre. This fear can be seen in the form of the degenerate Mr. Hyde whose sickly and sickening appearance—his “unexpressed deformity”—finally overcomes the healthier and more developed Dr. Jekyll (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 355). It is also there in the threat posed by Dracula who, in London, Jonathan Harker imagines, will “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” (Stoker, *Dracula* 54). The language used by these horror stories to describe the parasitic and bloodthirsty monsters that threaten the whole of society is remarkably similar to that used in popular condemnations of “degenerate” members of the populace, although which discourse was borrowing from which was not always clear. The monster was a degenerate and the degenerate a monster who sought, according to Cesare Lombroso, “not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh and drink its blood” (qtd. in Pick 172).

Lombroso developed his theories of the criminal as an “atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals” through studying the phrenology and physiognomy of criminals and the insane (Lombroso qtd. in Pick 122). He read in their countenance and in the deformities of their bodies the key to their behavior

and the innate qualities of their inner life. Havelock Ellis, who translated and interpreted Lombroso for an English audience, may have differed with him as to the extent of hereditary determinism but still accepted the physical body as a reflection of “inner qualities.” In his book *The Criminal*, Ellis writes that “beautiful faces, it is well known, are rarely found among criminals. The prejudice against the ugly and also against the deformed is not without sound foundation” (86–87). Further he argues that “unfavorable impressions” based on first sight “are part of the organized experiences of the race, and, subject to intellectual control, they are legitimate guides to conduct” (85). One might add they are also legitimating supports for racism, classism, and other institutionalized prejudices.

Theorists of degeneration saw physical bodies as objects to be read, but unlike writers of horror fiction they seemed to believe that these monstrous bodies *could* be read, interpreted, and categorized in some rational manner. In *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Utterson, after dreaming about Hyde, wants to “behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll away altogether, as was the habit of mysterious things when examined” (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 343). However, when he finally has the opportunity to look upon and study Mr. Hyde, he can only say that Hyde “gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation” and nothing in particular “could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him” (346). Utterson is not alone in that feeling; Mr. Enfield too says that Hyde ““must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point”” (339).

The text subverts the belief that through “reading,” bodies can be made to reveal their inner secrets; at best, all that is available is an impression, an emotional response that may provide an intuitive understanding but no classifiable knowledge. As Utterson tries to analyze what it is that makes Hyde repellent (makes him seem “hardly human” and “troglodytic”), the narrative notes that “the problem he was thus debating as he walked, was one of a class that is rarely solved” (Stevenson 346). In this particular case, it is a problem that is *not* solved, except in

the sense that Hyde's *actions* finally reveal him as the monster he is and corroborate Utterson's initial impression. In horror fiction, at least, rational systems for understanding the monster fail, and one must depend on a purely emotional or intuitive judgment, because it is at this most basic level that the monster's body "speaks." In this, the history of the novel, always both credulous and skeptical about appearances, infuses horror fiction with a more complex view of appearances than found in the classifying discourses of physiognomy, phrenology, or degeneration.

The monster's body does communicate something, but it is not something that can be put into words. The feeling of revulsion that Utterson experiences in the presence of the monster Hyde does reflect Hyde's moral qualities. In horror, the monster is physically revolting and there is always a component of revulsion or disgust in the horror it inspires, but the monster is also almost always "evil," and so the equation develops that the ugly and revolting is also morally corrupt and dangerous. It is not, however, an easy or accurate equation.

Making Monsters

If the monster does not already exist, it seems it may be necessary for a society to create him (or her). The creation of the fictional monsters, such as I have been describing here, is one way in which this can be done. Fears of the monstrous (as well as a whole constellation of related fears) can be projected onto a fictional body. Another possibility, however, is to use the laboratory to produce new and monstrous forms of life. This latter process was, in fact, the dream of scientists in the late nineteenth century who were looking for a method of male parthenogenesis—a dream inspired by misogyny and the envy of female reproductive power. The desire to produce monsters in the laboratory—the "manufacture" of them, to use Dr. Moreau's word—coexisted at this time with a contrary desire and belief that the monstrous could be forever eliminated through the application of scientific methods of eugenics. A third possibility, to make an existing individual or group monstrous through discourse, I have already suggested and will discuss at greater length later in this chapter.

In horror fiction, the laboratory became a place where monsters were created. Sometimes (as in the case of Dr. Jekyll) the scientist could even re-create himself in the form of a monster. Monsters spawned using scientific methods were still excluded from the realm of civilized society. Even though the monster was being categorized and studied in the laboratory, it was still an object of fear and revulsion. If anything, scientific discourse only increased the horror that was felt for the monstrous body, because it made the possibility of the monster more real, more present, and more dangerous. However, science also erased the supernatural origins of the monster and created texts that belong to both the science fiction and horror genres.²⁷

As science applied normative judgments to bodies, the fear of the abnormal body increased—if some bodies were proper, healthy, and a benefit to society, then others must certainly be improper, dangerous, and detrimental to the good of all. Such abnormal and monstrous bodies were either destined to roam outside the community or to be put on display where they could be observed, analyzed, and contained.

H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* presents one contemporary view of the scientist as creator of monsters. Wells' novel takes place on a nameless island ruled by a mysterious doctor; it is narrated by Edward Prendick who has been abandoned there by a drunken and temperamental ship's captain. There is a mystery surrounding some of the island's inhabitants, and gradually Prendick uncovers the truth about these people, the island, and what occurs there.

Wells' novel is a somewhat Gothic story concerning a mystery, apparently inexplicable events, and the penetration of a space and the uncovering of its secrets, in the "male" Gothic mode. However the story also has elements that would mark it as science fiction: a mad scientist, the use of advanced scientific techniques to create something not yet possible, and a consideration of the impact of such technology on society. Still again, there are elements of horror in this text: monsters and events that horrify characters and audience as well.

The novel probably fits best in the category of scientific romance, an earlier version of science fiction that still shares much in common with the Gothic. However, like many of Wells'

early scientific romances, it belongs partly to the horror genre as well. As I argued in the previous chapter, texts never belong purely to one genre. In this text, we can see elements that belong to the supernatural horror genre in a number of places—in, for instance, the trouble Prendick faces trying to convince others of the reality of his experiences (after his escape from the island) and in the language he uses to describe the “unnatural” and “diabolical” monsters he encounters there (Wells, *Island* 39).

One of the major complaints leveled by critics against Wells’ novel when it first appeared concerned his decision to include elements of horror. The reviewer for *The London Times* complained about the novel’s “ghostly fancies [that] are likely to haunt and cling” (qtd. in Haining 46), suggesting a need to equate those horrors with a supernatural element (i.e., the ghost). Basil Williams in *The Athenaeum* criticized the use of horror for horror’s sake, finding (as is often the case in the horror genre) that “without the actual form of horror described the book would have no purpose (qtd. in Parrinder 51–52). Other critics seem to have been more concerned about the mixing of genres. For instance, Chalmers Mitchell, after praising Wells’ ability to write speculative fiction based on science, decried his attempt to seek “out revolting details with the zeal of a sanitary inspector probing a crowded graveyard.” He also found that “Mr. Wells [had] spoiled a fine conception by greed of cheap horrors” (qtd. in Parrinder 44, 45). All of which suggests that Mitchell was bothered by the fact that Wells had “muddied” his scientific romance with elements of horror in order to appeal to a wider audience.

Dr. Moreau is the model of a mad scientist and is described as a sort of monster himself. He claims that he has ““manufactured”” the monsters that inhabit his island, that they are animals ““carven and wrought into new shapes”” made to approximate the human form (Wells, *Island* 69). He compares his actions to the ““operations of mediaeval practitioners who make dwarfs and beggar cripples and show monsters”” and to what (allegedly) occurred ““in the vaults of the Inquisition”” (70). “The abominations beyond the wall,” the “foul creatures” that inhabit this island are close enough to human beings to pass for them on first inspection, but only as

“deformed” specimens of “grotesque ugliness” (Wells, *Island* 51, 69, 17). These “brown” and “black-faced” monsters are contrasted with the “awful white face of Moreau” their creator—the adjective most used to describe Dr. Moreau is “white”—suggesting a racial and imperialist domination at work that parallels the scientist’s domination of the object of study. Dr. Moreau also presents a view of colonial ruler as monstrous “god” or godlike monster in his imposition of a “divine” law and the threat of a “divine” wrath.²⁸

If Moreau is a monster, he is so not physically but morally. Prendick first recalls his name in the context of an old headline decrying the “Moreau Horrors” on a pamphlet that, when read, “made one shiver and creep” much like a horror tale (Wells, *Island* 36). As Prendick recalls, Moreau had been drummed out of England because of the horrific nature of his experiments. If we are to use the number of times an adjective is used as any indication of its appropriateness, Moreau is not only extremely white (perhaps even albino) but also “terrible” and “awful” in his visage (51, 61)—all of which suggests that Moreau’s appearance is far from ordinary and, at least, somewhat monstrous. However, there is also something both arbitrary and divine about Moreau as well (suggesting the closeness of the horrific and the sacred). Moreau has created a race of monsters in his own image without reason or purpose beyond simple curiosity, in this, like Faust, he is the model of overweening scientific curiosity.

However, Moreau’s scientific knowledge is bent in the service of showing the animalistic inferiority of humanity in general. In creating his monsters, Moreau demonstrates the monstrosity already inherent in every human being. He claims that the physical forms of human and beast are not significantly different. What creates that difference is that humans are socially constructed (through pain and fear) to behave in a particular manner. In suggesting the closeness of animal and human, Moreau is transgressing the fundamental belief that humans are inherently different from animals. This is itself a monstrous act and a cause, as Bataille notes (see above) of “irreducible horror.”

Like Kurtz's vision in *Heart of Darkness*, Moreau's vision infects that of the narrator. The similarity of man, and beast, and monster, once seen, is impossible to forget, as Prendick realizes after he returns to England and sees a monster in every person he meets. He states that he "could not persuade [himself] that the men and women [he] met were not also another, still passably human, Beast People; and that they would presently revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that" (Wells, *Island* 126). The novel ends with an ironic awareness that Prendick's horror is based on a reality that is involved in all of our feelings of horror, the closeness of human and beast. On returning to London, Prendick finds "the horror [is] well-nigh insupportable" because the masses of people appear as so many monsters.

Scientific attempts to create life in the laboratory were not found only in the pages of horror fiction. Wells adds in a postscript to this novel that "the manufacture of monsters—and perhaps even quasi-human monsters—is within the possibilities of vivisection" (Wells, *Island* 127). That this claim was, for Wells, no mere continuation of his fiction is supported by his subsequent correspondence to the editors of *The Saturday Review* supporting the validity of this note with a citation from *The British Medical Journal* (Haining 49).

In fiction, at least since *Frankenstein*, those who successfully created life in the laboratory usually created monsters. In real laboratories as well, scientists tried to create monsters. The nineteenth century saw the development of the science of *teratology*, or the study of monsters (the word was coined by Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire in 1830), and also saw the high point of that science.²⁹ Later in the century, the sciences of *teratogenesis* (the creation of monsters by scientists in the lab) and *teratogeny* (the study of monstrous embryology) were developed, the latter following the former because specimens for study often had to be created (Huet 108–13). Camille Dareste, the founder of this field, concluded that teratogeny was a science that "must create its own object of study" (qtd. in Huet 113), using a logic as strange as anything that might come from a mad scientist in a horror novel. Marie-Hélène Huet observes, in *Monstrous Imagination*, that these activities were carried out by male scientists who were trying to fulfill a

fantasy that men might produce children without the need for women (107–116). She concludes that “Dareste’s goal of reproducing in his laboratory all recognized categories of monstrosities betrays another purpose: the creation of new families” (117). Like the ménage on Moreau’s island, these would-be families without mothers were made up entirely of monsters.

The science of biology has always had to contend with the existence of monsters. It was in order to explain their existence that Linnaeus separated *homo monstrous* from *homo sapiens*, creating, as Leslie Fiedler argues, “a taxonomic system [that] may have served...to demythologize ‘monsters,’ but did so at the price of creating an invidious mythology of ‘race’” (240). Still, the claim that monsters were a separate species was not sufficient for explaining their origins and their connection to humanity. It was necessary to postulate, as Jean-Baptiste Robinet did in 1768, that monsters are an essential step in the development of a species and that it was only “by dint of producing monstrous beings that nature succeeds in producing beings of greater regularity” (qtd. in Foucault, *Order of Things* 155). In other words, as Foucault interprets this theory, “the monster ensures the emergence of difference” (*Order of Things* 156) as well as providing a model for a theory of mutation and evolution.

With the “emergence of difference,” almost always comes a hierarchy of values and the definition of a norm. In fact, the recognition of the monstrous body is essential in order to define the “normal” body. Historically, as Hayden White has noted, the boundaries of the normal, healthy body have always been defined in reference to the abnormal body; the normal then only exists as “a negation of whatever is construed to incarnate negativity” (233).³⁰ White concludes by noting the need to look at monsters in order to understand how a culture relates to the body at a given historical moment. He states that

The monstrous body or, rather, monstrous bodies alone can serve as the subject of any conceivable history of the body. For it is the monstrous that is the norm of all real bodies; the normal representative of a species can have no history since it serves as the ground against which the kind of changes we call ‘historical’ can be measured (233).

According to this view, the history of the body is a history of monsters.

It is incorrect to conclude, as Thomas Richards does in *The Imperial Archive*, that because teratology finally classified all types of monsters, it brought an end to the existence of monsters. Richards observes fairly accurately that “until Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, there are few monsters in Victorian fiction” (*Imperial Archive* 45). I would place the date of this late century onslaught of fictional monsters at least a dozen years earlier, and I would include within the category of monsters the ghosts that Richards labels “projections of human psychology” rather than “independent beings” because the difference between the two is really a matter of reader interpretation (46).³¹ Richards postulates that it was because Victorian morphology thought itself capable of classifying all living beings within a evolutionary continuum that the concept of the monster temporarily lost its validity and hence its currency in fictional as well as factual discourses. However, as Marie-Hélène Huet observes, this belief, also held by nineteenth-century scientists like Camille Dareste, that “the monster’s integration into scientific categories was another example of its normalization” is incorrect; the monster had long been an object of scientific study without eliminating the monstrous as a category (108).

It would be more accurate to say that an Enlightenment belief in science’s ability to explain away the existence of monsters may have temporarily halted the fictional production of them, but towards the end of the century they returned with a vengeance. The existence of the monstrous body was seen as emblematic of the failure of the Enlightenment to normalize the world and the problems associated with any attempt to do so. As Erin O’Connor notes, “monsters incorporated a fantasy of individuality” and appeared to exist “totally outside the automated logic of efficiency that molded the bodies of ‘normals’ into standardized patterns of behavior” (151–152). Rather than believing that science could explain away monsters, people began to believe that monsters could be created by the scientist. The mad scientist who produced monsters and was himself a monster became the popular image of the scientist, replacing the rational observer who could scientifically explain and classify the anomalous.

The arrival of so many monsters in the popular literature of the late nineteenth century marks the beginning of supernatural horror as a genre separate from the Gothic. Yet, the monster would probably not have had the same power to fill an audience with fear and loathing if there had not also been a scientific discourse at work that called for the elimination of all that was abnormal or monstrous. Nor would there have been as much interest in reading about fictional monsters if there was not already, amongst the scientific community and the public at large, “an insatiable interest in the spectacle of abnormal states, deviant types and their characteristics” (Greenslade 99). Even the fact that horror and not laughter or sympathy is the usual response evoked by the monster is in some ways dependent on the disenchantment of the world that results from the spread of a rationalizing, scientific worldview. As I have shown, the horror genre depends on its dialectical absorption of narrative realism.

G. K. Chesterton, in a 1908 essay entitled “Modern and Medieval Monsters,” already recognized that modernity had created the conditions that caused people to respond to the monstrous with horror. He states that

We are going to find all the gods and fairies all over again, all the spiritual hybrids, and all the jests of eternity. But we are not going to find them, as the pagans found them, in our youth, in an atmosphere in which the gods can be jested with or giants slapped on the back. We are going to find them, in the old age of our society, in a mood dangerously morbid...(176).

Chesterton argues that in a world where the irrational is an accepted part of day-to-day life the monstrous need not be horrifying, but in a world such as ours, which has excluded the irrational, the monster always appears horrifying or at least “morbid.” The return of the repressed is horrifying *because* it has been repressed.

Considering the “career” of people with dwarfism, it is easy to see changes in the popular imagination over time. As Leslie Fiedler points out, it was “not until the invention in the nineteenth century of teratology proper...[that] Dwarfs come to be lumped with monstrosities: creatures to be shuddered at and treated rather than, however ambivalently, adored” (47). It was not until dwarfs were medically classified as *abnormal* births that they became a threat to

normalcy and therefore an object of horror. Likewise Carole Silver shows, in *Strange and Secret Peoples*, that all sorts of birth defects were both explained away and made more horrible by association with goblins, faeries, and changelings (58–87).

With the “medicalization” of monsters, horror at their appearance did not decrease; rather, it became more wide spread. Arnold Davidson in his essay, “The Horror of Monsters,” notes that with the acceptance of monsters as objects of medical study,

horror came to be enmeshed in the framework of natural law and natural reason, prodigies and the wrath of God could be described in a way that was intended to represent the experience of every human being, not simply the experience of a culturally specific group. Objects of horror could now directly appear to be naturally horrifying (56–57).

It became expected that “every human being ought to experience horror at that which he knows, as a rational being, to be contrary to nature” (56). In the past, monsters may have been warnings or omens, and therefore causes of fear, but as such they were aimed at a particular audience (either an individual or group) for whom the omen had meaning. By claiming that the monster was a product of nature, it became a universal source of horror.

Far from eliminating the monstrous, science provided new possibilities for explaining the origins and abilities of the monster, and, in some cases, even suggested new forms which the monster could take. Stephen Prickett, for example, argues in *Victorian Fantasy* that the discovery of dinosaurs led to monsters in art and fiction appearing more “reptilian” than they had previously (83). The man-eating and blood-sucking plants of stories such as *The Devil Tree of El Dorado* by Frank Aubrey and H. G. Wells’ “The Strange Orchid” (30 *Strange*) did not appear in fiction until botanists speculated on the possibility of such things. The pig-faced monsters that apparently come from a future when the sun is dying to attack a secluded home in William Hope Hodgson’s *The House on the Borderland* owe their origins to scientific speculation on the oddities of evolutionary adaptation and the consequences of the laws of thermodynamics.

After Darwin, the mutant as monster became a powerful source of horror and fear. In horror fictions such as Barry Pain’s “The Undying Thing,” from his collection *Stories in the Dark*

(1901), the abnormal or mutant child became a threat to its entire race. The story opens on a scene of Sir Edric Vanquerest as he awaits the birth of his second child, a birth that results in the death of his wife. The child is born a monster, a genetic “mistake,” or mutation. It is never gendered male or female, a sure sign of monstrosity, but instead is referred to as “it” or as “something moving under cover of a blanket” or the “thing that lies upstairs” (Pain 116, 119). The attending physician attempts to comfort the father by telling him that the child’s monstrous condition is not his fault but rather nature’s, yet he also argues that the child should be destroyed, because ““people might think that this shame was [his]”” (120). As with Mr. Hyde, no specific description of this monstrous child is provided, but we can see its effects on the bodies of those that observe it, and their actions suggest how horrifying it must appear. The doctor’s advice is to smother the child in the bed, but the father finally decides to leave it to die in a cave in an inaccessible area of his estate called Hal’s Planting. Four generations later (towards the end of the nineteenth century), the Vanquerests are believed to be a cursed race who die untimely and mysterious deaths, and local legend speaks of the “Undying Thing” of Hal’s Planting that will one day destroy the last of the family.

The current baronet, also called Sir Edric, is in the process of preparing for his wedding, and his friend, Andrew Guerdon, also the brother of his fiancée, is visiting. Guerdon, a doctor, is a man of science and their conversation turns to freaks of nature and nature’s way of compensating for mistakes. Sir Edric says that he has heard of human monstrosities ““stories of their superhuman strength and cunning, and of the extraordinary prolongation of life”” (Pain 147). This pseudo-scientific theory provides one explanation for the continued existence of the monstrous child, although the “science” of such a theory is undercut by the supernatural suggestion of a family curse. The story itself, however, seems to support Sir Edric’s suggestion that the monster as mutation may indeed be stronger than its more “human” cousins. This creature combines “the wild hardness of the beast [with] a cunning that was human—or more than human” (156), again suggesting how that which is most horrifying is that which denies our

separation from the animal world. On the one hand, this monster horrifies by being subhuman and, on the other, by being superhuman; its superhuman qualities suggest the inferiority of humans and its subhuman qualities suggest how close to the animal the human remains. Once again, the horrific nature of the monster is over-determined.

At the end of the story, Sir Edric is confronted by his monstrous relative while his friend listens from another room. Guerdon hears Sir Edric question, ““Who are you? What are you?”” and then hears “a heavy snorting breathing, a low, vibrating growl, an awful cry, a scuffle” (Pain 163–164). When he finally manages to break into the room, Sir Edric is gone; intuitively he runs to Hal’s Planting, where the ground collapses beneath him, and he falls into the caves below. The story ends with Guerdon fainting in horror, and the reader is left to decide whether he has found the body of Sir Edric or the body of his monstrous relation. In either case, the monster that was excluded from the family has become the cause of its downfall. The mutation, instead of being seen as a means for improving the race, is feared as the potential cause of its degeneration and destruction.

Leslie Fiedler observes that “it was theoretically possible that a new tolerance for mutants might have been created by Darwin’s conviction that without deviance, adaptation and the ‘survival of the fittest’ evolution would never have occurred, but such was not the case” (240). Instead, the mutant and the monster are consistently seen “as threats to what we cannot help feeling is, or ought to be, the end of the evolutionary line: a final adjustment so effective and elegant that any change would be regression” (203). In spite of what Darwin said to the contrary, the mutation seems almost always to be something monstrous, horrific, and threatening. The mechanism of evolution was popularly received as a mechanism of degeneration. The imagination of British authors and readers would not accept any challenge to the hierarchical position of human beings at the top of the evolutionary ladder anymore than it could accept that the white, European male was not superior to all other human beings.

Both in biology and the human sciences, the observation of bodies is an essential task, and the anomalous body is particularly worthy of study. Supernatural horror fiction focuses on that anomalous body (whether it be the supernatural body, the distorted body, or even the disembodied)—suggesting that the relationship between horror and scientific discourses is more complicated than one might first assume. Far from being simply a reaction to a world in which science and scientific method are of increased importance (as some critics suggest), the development of the horror genre was influenced by the scientific discourse of the day (just as those scientific discourses used and were influenced by the language of the Gothic and horror). Both late Victorian horror fiction and the biology of the period found the monster essential. For horror fiction, the monster was the locus for its affective content and the figure most capable of representing a nearly infinite range of fears. For biology, the monster was a necessary anomaly for defining normal bodies and for explaining how those bodies might evolve over time.

Monsters and Miscegenation, or How It Shows Distinctly

Many social theorists at the turn of the century took an explicitly racist view of the “problem” of degeneracy. Eugenics and concerns over the health of the nation (brought on in part by the realization that many Englishmen were unfit for military service) played upon fears of physical difference or deformity which, for many, made the debate about “national identity” overlap with that concerning “human identity.” For those individuals the question became, as Punter puts it, “to what extent can one be ‘infected’ and still remain British?” (*Literature of Terror*, 1st ed. 240). Insecurity about British imperial might, civic health, and Britain’s own past (as a multi-ethnic nation) increased fears concerning immigration, emigration, “going native” and, worst of all, miscegenation (at home and abroad).

The fear of miscegenation was a common theme in horror literature from this period. In these stories, any suggestion of “impure” blood could betoken monstrosity. Miscegenation was far worse than racial “otherness,” because it could hide an otherwise fatal tint beneath an

appearance of English wholesomeness. However, like many other monsters, the individual of mixed breed holds an odd attraction for the purebred English man or woman. Horror fiction is filled with monstrous women and occasionally men who are of mixed or “impure” breed, and who successfully seduce unwitting Englishmen and occasionally women, which marks a distinction from other genres, such as melodrama, where such unions might appear desirable only to be prohibited in the end.

Both Robert Young (*Colonial Desire*) and H. L. Machow (*Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*) have analyzed the horror that arose over miscegenation in nineteenth-century discourses, both fiction and non-fiction. Young finds that at the same time miscegenation was being cast as a horror by social and racial theorists like the Count de Gobineau, whose theories gained great popularity toward the end of the century, it was also essential in defining a theory of social and cultural development (109–117). In Young’s reading “Gobineau’s thesis...is that the generation and degeneration of nations, their historical movement of homogenization and dissipation, of totalization and detotalization, are produced by a crossing of ‘blood’ which must result from sexual attraction” even at the same time they may be “secretly” repulsed by the outcome of such unions (107). Gobineau admits his feelings of horror at the thought of miscegenation when he claims that “‘no limits, except the horror excited by the possibility of infinite intermixture, can be assigned to the number of these hybrid and chequered races’” (Gobineau qtd. in Young 113). However, there is something sublime in this suggestion of the unrestrainable and infinite repercussions of racial intermarriage. Nor would so strong a reaction against miscegenation have been necessary, if an equally strong desire for inter-racial sex had not also been present.

Along similar lines, H. L. Malchow argues for the importance of a horror of miscegenation in defining nineteenth-century attitudes towards race and culture, but he also argues that the form these fears took was as much a product of Gothic and horror fiction as it was

an influence on the creation of the monstrous others found in those genres. Malchow finds that throughout the nineteenth century:

a gothic imagination itself shaped the language, images, and rhetoric of imperial narration and anthropological, scientific, and popular discourse from the beginning. It shaped the understanding of the ‘reality’ of the abstraction of race (231).

It was at the close of the nineteenth century however, with the advent of horror fiction, that the Gothic images that had informed social, cultural, and biological theories came full circle as these other discourses inspired the fictional portrayals of supernatural horror’s monsters.

The common mythology of the day was that “half breeds” often had the worst moral and emotional qualities of both races; they were also perceived as less healthy and less fertile.³² However, along with this view came a common belief that women of “mixed-blood” were more attractive than those who belonged entirely to one race (men were rarely, openly discussed as sexual objects). By combining the alluring with the degenerate, special powers with significant failings, and a desirable appearance with a frightening instability, the “mixed breed” presented contradictory sets of traits that could also be found in the body of the monster. The social production of monstrosity and of miscegenation was a mutual process, each informing the other to a large degree.

In addition to crossing racial boundaries, the racially-mixed individual was also perceived as confusing gender categories, a quality that was already inherently monstrous in this society. As H. L. Malchow shows, “mixed breeds” were often described as feminine men and masculine women. I have already noted that a monstrous body was able to embody all forms of minority identity by embodying one.³³ As a type of monstrous body, the “miscegenated body” was likely to transgress more than one boundary at a time, and once it transgressed one of those boundaries it would be presumed to transgress others as well.

Concerns about race and imperial power were always already connected to issues of sexual desire and domination.³⁴ Robert Young notes that “nineteenth-century theories of race...were also about a fascination with people having sex—interminable, adulterating, aleatory,

illicit, interracial sex” (181). This obsession can be seen in public codes of conduct, in ethnographical descriptions of the results of interracial mating, in fearful tales of colonial rebellion, and in evocative reports of foreign travel. Everywhere sexual fears and desires can be seen underlying discussions of race; in horror fiction, though, this connection is especially clear. As a transgressive relationship, interracial sex for the male imperial subject (and the imperial subject was almost always gendered male) involved the desire to possess the other and the fear that the other might reciprocate (i.e., the desire for the native as sexualized object and the fear of the native’s sexual potency). While common in the eighteenth century empire, the practice of colonizers mating outside their race by the end of the nineteenth century had been thoroughly demonized.³⁵ Part of the process of marking interracial relationships socially unacceptable was to claim the products of such unions as monstrous.

The connection between monstrosity and racial otherness was so strong that merely a suggestion of one could evoke the other. In Margaret Strickland’s story “The Case of Sir Alister Moeran,” the title character turns out to be a werewolf of sorts, but even before his lycanthropy is revealed, others recognize that there is something “odd” about him. The narrator of the story finds that “In all [his] life [he] had never seen a handsomer man...and yet, even as [he] stared at him in admiration, the word ‘Black!’ flashed into [his] mind” (144). Moeran is not “black” and, in fact, he comes from an old English family, but he is a werewolf with, he says, “the strangest hankering for the East” and a “gnawing desire” for the jungle (Strickland 145, 147). There is no narrated miscegenation in Moeran’s past to explain this odd affliction, but his inherent lycanthropy is still perceived as a racial difference. As the narrator notes, no one can really explain “the mysterious vagaries of atavism” (160).

Harriet Brandt, in Florence Marryat’s *Blood of the Vampire*, for instance, is a quadroon. According to Dr. Phillips, who has observed her,

“she shows it distinctly in her long-shaped eyes with their blue whites and her wide mouth and blood red lips. Also in her supple figure and apparently boneless hands and

feet....[He can tell] by the way she eats her food, and the way in which she uses her eyes, that she has inherited her half-caste mother's greedy and sensual disposition" (130).

Of course she has also inherited "'the fatal attributes of the Vampire,'" which had affected her mother (132). Harriet Brandt herself recognizes that the "'curse of heredity'" has "'made her unfit to live'" (Marryat, *Blood* 318), but in the novel it is unclear whether the real curse is her African blood or her vampirism, perhaps because the two are so closely related. Horror fiction from this period continually connects miscegenation with monstrosity and the supernatural. H. G. Wells ironically comments on this trope of the genre when he opens the horror story "Pollock and the Porroh Man" by suggesting that it is the "faint Caucasian taint in his composition" that causes the African Porroh Man to stab a woman "to the heart as though he had been a mere low-class Italian" (Wells, *Thirty Strange* 116).

In a number of discourses, horror fiction included, the miscegenated child, like the mutant, became a threat and a monster because of its difference from its "pure-blooded" parent. This difference may be difficult for the casual observer to perceive, but there is bound to be some telltale sign of it in behavior if not in body. The miscegenated offspring may be unnaturally attractive and "magnificently repellant" at the same time, as in the case of C sarine Vivian, the monstrous femme fatale in Grant Allen's "The Beckoning Hand," who exercises a sublime power of fascination like that "which is often possessed by some horrible sight that you would give worlds to avoid" (23, 25). The miscegenated individual's powers of attraction are not natural but rather supernatural in origin; in C sarine's case, these powers seem to come from "Vaudoux" (Voodoo), described in the story as "the hideous African cannibalistic witchcraft of the relapsing half-heathen Haitian negroes" (42). As with other monsters, the miscegenated individual's origins may also be impossible to classify; C sarine Vivian, for example, is described as Negro, Moorish, Spanish, Italian, Provencal, Jewish, and Gypsy at various times, but it is impossible to ignore the "foreign taint" that is there. Finally, the miscegenated individual horrifies because he or she shows how easily the boundaries that define race and "civilized" behavior may be

transgressed. The narrator of Allen's story realizes this when he sees C sarine (now his wife) embrace her grandmother: "I reeled in horror as I saw the wrinkled and haggard African kissing once more my beautiful C sarine....I had always known...C sarine was a quadroon...but I had never yet suspected the reality could be so hideous, so terrible as this" (39).

A Race Apart

One of the greatest debates running through eighteenth and nineteenth century anthropology and ethnology concerned whether or not different races were, in fact, different species. As one voice in that debate, Frederic William Farrar, addressing the Ethnological Society in 1867, could use such seemingly divergent sources as the *Book of Job*, which he alleged showed the existence of "race of primeval troglodytes," and Charles Darwin to argue that the "squalid, primeval allophylian races" were fundamentally inferior and destined, through their own failings, to extinction (148). The extinction of such peoples would seem to be no great loss, for according to Farrar, "They have no history. They have not originated a single discovery; they have not promulgated a single thought," and, in fact, mentally they are already dead, "their minds characterized by a dead and blank uniformity" (148). They are "doomed...to a rapid, an entire, and, perhaps for the highest destinies of mankind, an inevitable extinction" (148). Such racist ideology can only lead to the conclusion that extermination is the best solution for the problem of "inferior" races who can never hope to adapt—the same conclusion that arises in many fictions in response to the existence of the monster.

Farrar's argument appears to be based largely on the physical revulsion he and others experienced when looking upon these other, seemingly monstrous, races, who eat vermin when they're not eating children, "have gutturals and grimaces instead of language," and are generally "depraved, hideous, and sanguinary [with bodies] equally disgusting to the eye and to the nose" (Farrar 148–149). In some cases, these claims seemed to be based purely on the observation of the other race's bodies, with no apparent contact with their actual society. Farrar quotes a Dr.

Mouatt who has seen the dead bodies of some Adamaners. His language could easily belong in the pages of a horror story:

Their expression as it had been settled by the hand of death was truly repulsive and frightful. Their features distorted by the most violent passions were too horrible for anything of human mold, and I could regard them only as the types of the most ferocious and relentless fiends. Their aspect was really that of demons (qtd. in Farrar 147).

After which, Farrar claims that “to read one such description of savage life is to read all,” ignoring the fact this is not a description of life at all, and that these figures even lack the animation one finds in the monstrous, undead bodies of ghosts and vampires (147).

For a racist ethnologist such as Farrar, these “inferior” races are monstrous, and like monsters they are seen as a threat to the civilized world. With more irony than Farrar, Grant Allen, in his story “Pallinghurst Barrow,” which tells of a modern man held captive underground by the ghosts of a primitive, pre-human race, has his narrator observe that the creatures that confronted him “were savages, yet they were ghosts. The two most terrible and dreaded foes of civilized experience seemed combined at once in them” (Allen, “Pallinghurst” 303), suggesting that these two “others” were both closely related and equally threatening to the social order.

The belief that there were entire races of monsters had been suggested in ancient times, but this idea was resurrected in the nineteenth century, in both fiction and non-fictional prose. While ancient and medieval stories of monstrous races depicted them as a race apart, with their own social and physical structure, the more modern versions of the story often claimed that such “creatures” were throwbacks to an earlier stage of human evolution, an inferior physical specimen entirely lacking in civilization and culture. In many instances, these pre-human monstrous races were thought of as dwarfish peoples who, as Carole Silver points out, were often associated, in horror stories as well as non-fictional discourses, with the goblin monsters of folklore (117–147). Indeed, the monstrous races of horror fiction were influenced by an image of the “primitive” other drawn from allegedly scientific discourses, which, while closer to reality than ancient myths, were no less misconceived. As in Allen’s story, these monstrous races usually managed to

survive by living underground, segregated from the mass of humanity. For example, in Arthur Machen's "The Novel of the Black Seal" and John Buchan's "No Man's Land," the reader is presented with races of monstrous survivals that are described in language quite reminiscent of that used by Farrar and others to describe the monstrous practices of the non-Caucasian "savage."

Machen's tale, originally part of the 1895 volume of connected stories *The Three Impostors*, concerns the discovery of a pre-human race that inspired the legends of goblins and faeries and continues to live on in secluded parts of the Welsh countryside. These monsters are "survivals from the depth of being" who still "haunt the wild places and barren hills" (121–122). The stories' protagonist is a scholar, Professor Gregg, who discovers that these creatures are responsible for kidnapping and raping human women who are afterwards driven mad by the experience.

While Machen's story never describes this monstrous race directly, it does present their horrifying, miscegenated offspring. The children that come from these unions are born insane or idiotic but retain the supernatural powers of their fathers. They have the power to transmute human flesh and can reduce a man "to the slime from which he came" or force him "to put on the flesh of the reptile and the snake" (Machen, *3 Impostors* 132). In other words, they have the power to cause people to devolve and degenerate, which in Machen's stories seems to be the greatest horror imaginable. These monstrous survivals, themselves examples of the primitive and pre-human, can "infect" others with the seed of monstrous degeneration.

Professor Gregg disappeared mysteriously while searching for this "race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution" in Machen's story (*3 Impostors* 121). However, the initial narrator of John Buchan's "No Man's Land," who is also an academic (a professor of Northern Antiquities at Oxford), finds a similar race of pre-human monsters but lives to tell of them. While on a trip through Scotland, he also discovers that legends of the "brownies" actually reflect a more hideous truth. The narrator of Buchan's story, Professor Graves, literally stumbles upon these creatures who are "little and squat and dark; naked, apparently, but...rough with hair" and in

whose faces “lurk[s] an elder world of mystery and barbarism, a troll-like life which was too horrible for words” (“No Man’s Land” 236).

Graves is captured and held in an underground lair where his only comfort amongst these “nameless folk...[whom] history knew not” is “a map of the countryside...with the name of a London printer stamped on the back and lines of railway and highroad running through every shire” (Buchan, “No Man’s Land” 238). The knowledge that there exists elsewhere a “decent and comfortable civilization,” combined with a realization of the importance of his discovery, helps to abate the “horror” he experiences and to change these “mere shapeless things of terror” into “objects of research and experiment” (238–240). Like the primitive races Farrar describes, these “nameless things” speak “in a tongue which sounded all gutturals;” have only the “remnants” of a culture and religion; and the very sight of them causes “sickened disgust” (238–239, 261). This race of troglodytes cannot “be maintained within itself,” and so these monsters must abduct “little girls from the lowlands” in order to propagate (Buchan, “No Man’s Land” 240). As in Machen’s story, the threat of miscegenation is closely related to the very existence of the racially other. Both of these monstrous races are miscegenated races; they would not exist except through miscegenation. There is also, however, in both stories, a human protagonist who pursues these monstrous races and desires an encounter with them.

The body of the monster, whether it be a unique creature or a part of a monstrous race, is potentially an object of desire as well as of horror. As great a challenge as these monsters are to all things rational, they are also uniquely important for the cause of scientific progress. Buchan’s narrator Graves manages to enjoy “the highest of earthly pleasures” in the company of these monsters because he sees in them “the greatest find that scholarship had ever made” (“No Man’s Land” 240). When Graves returns to Scotland after escaping these creatures, he feels compelled to find them again because “the cause of scholarship demand[ed] it as well as the cause of humanity” (the later being the need to exterminate these same creatures he feels compelled to study) (Buchan 257). Just as the body of the monster can serve as the locus for a whole range of

fears, it can also serve as the site for multiple types of desire. As an object for scientific study, the body of the monster satisfied an intellectual curiosity. However, the monster's body could also serve as the object of sexual desire.

Sexual Predators and Deathly Embraces

Sigmund Freud suggests, in *Totem and Taboo*, that the fear of the dead is the result of guilt over a subconscious desire for another's death (originally for the death of the father) and that this guilt accounts for beliefs in the existence of vampires and other undead (57–61).³⁶ Ernest Jones, Freud's principle British disciple, further links these fears with repressed desires by suggesting that they originate in dreams, or more properly nightmares. In *On the Nightmare*, Jones supports the Freudian view "that morbid dread always signifies repressed sexual wishes" (106). The horrifying object, he notes, that is "seen in a Nightmare is frightful or hideous" because "the representation of the underlying wish is not permitted in its naked form, so that the dream is a compromise of the wish on the one hand, and on the other of the intense fear belonging to the inhibition"(78).

I will extrapolate from Jones' claim concerning nightmares to suggest that in fictional accounts of the monstrous and horrifying, the monster has a dual role within the economy of desire. On the one hand, the monster may be seen as a figure that enacts desire, desire which may be so horrifying that it is only allowed to exist at the level of the unconscious. At the same time, the figure of the monster can represent those forces of inhibition—in Freudian terms, the Superego—that would punish the individual for having such desires. The monster may be associated both with the self's, often secret desires and with that which threatens the self; it may be associated with both fear and desire simultaneously.³⁷

The sexual nature of vampires, for example, has been commented on at length. It is hard to read a story such as "A Mystery of the Campagna" by Von Degen (a pen name for Ann Crawford), which concerns a man who frees a female vampire from a tomb, stops leaving his

home in order to spend all of his time there with her, and ends up dead and drained of blood, as anything but a narrative of sexual indulgence and its consequences. At the same time that the story seems to warn those who would dally with vampiric women, it also titillates with suggestions of erotic adventure. Even in stories where the erotic component is not so readily apparent, however, horror can encourage an engagement with unconscious desires.

In Robert Hichens' story, "How Love Came to Professor Guildea," a man who disdains the affection of others is hounded to the point of heart failure by an amorous ghost. In spite of the "spiritual" nature of one of the participants in this affair, this love is expressed in a rather physical manner. Professor Guildea feels this ghost "nestling up to [him], fawning upon [him], touching [his] hands" and feels it press "with loathsome, sickening tenderness against [his] side" (510, 507). For a hyper-rational scientist who denies the value of all kinds of affection, the love of this ghost is particularly horrifying. Guildea calls the creature "persistent, sickly, [and] horribly physical" (510). In an ironic reversal, it is certainly more "physical," more desirous of physical contact, than he. While not visible, this ghostly body makes itself felt and will not leave Guildea alone. The Professor comments that this haunting is "distinctly horrible" for him precisely because he is "conscious... that [he is] admired, loved, desired" by this ghost (502).

A couple of times in Hichens' story we read that it is impossible to determine whether the ghost is "man, woman or child" ("How Love Came" 502); the only thing Guildea is sure of is that it is the spirit of an "idiot." Another character remarks, when hearing the ghost's voice mimicked by the professor's parrot, that "it seemed to be a human voice, and yet oddly sexless" (502). This acquaintance of Guildea, Father Murchison, cannot decide the gender of the voice, but he does say more than once that it is "peculiarly loathsome" (502). All of this confusion over the gender of this spirit suggests that professor's fear may mask a repressed desire that is as likely to be homosexual or even pedophilic as it is heterosexual. Certainly we can read in this physical yet invisible body a projected desire that is otherwise repressed. Father Murchison considers that perhaps Guildea's haunting is a supernatural punishment for his "deficiency in affection," but in a

post-Freudian age it would seem impossible not to read it as the consequence of a repressed desire. The story seems to comment on the ineffectiveness of repression as a strategy and the ability of the repressed desire to return from a “supernatural” realm after it has supposedly been exiled by the individual. This ghost story is a morality tale but one that preaches the need for physical affection and the negative consequences of repressing such desires, rather than the ascetic morality commonly associated with Christianity.

Monsters, as creatures who perform transgressive actions, are often found pursuing various types of sexual desire (although such activities could not be explicitly described at the time). Ghosts in particular seem to seek amorous relations, while monsters that travel in packs (such as those in Machen’s “The Novel of the Black Seal” and Buchan’s “No Man’s Land”) seek mates to reproduce their miscegenated race. Other monsters may themselves be perceived as objects of desire, but at the same time will be condemned for their monstrous powers of attraction.

Feminine sexuality, in particular, is often condemned as monstrous in horror fiction of the period—however not always, as there are also stories that present a more subtle view of women, their desire, and their place in society. In stories such as Dick Donovan’s “The Woman with the ‘Oily Eyes,’” monstrous femme fatales attract men against their better judgment and lead them on to their doom (a common theme during this period amply explored by Bram Djikstra in *Idols of Perversity*). These female monsters are generally opposed to helpless (and often sexless) victimized women. Other stories, such as Violet Hunt’s “The Prayer” and Vernon Lee’s “The Phantom Lover,” present a more complicated view of the relation of desire to horror as encoded in the body of the monster.

Dick Donovan’s “The Woman with the ‘Oily Eyes’” concerns a stereotypical monstrous female who is the object of both male attraction and repulsion. The narrator of the story, Dr. Haslar had been the best man at his friend Jack Redcar’s wedding in India before his ill health forced him to leave the colony (going first to England and then America). Years later, on

returning to England, he receives a letter from Mrs. Redcar begging for his assistance. It seems that her husband has deserted her and gone off to the continent with an “unnatural woman” (9). The woman, whom in Mrs. Redcar arouses feelings of horror at first sight, holds a powerful attraction for her husband.

This monstrous woman, Annette (like many monsters she only has one name), is apparently ugly, with a face that is “strong, hard-featured, almost masculine,” but that does not keep her from exerting a seemingly supernatural influence over men (Donovan 10). To the narrator, Dr. Haslar, she is “absolutely repellent” and he sees “not a single line of beauty nor a trace of womanliness in her face,” which is instead “hard, coarse, cruel, with thin lips drawn tightly over even white teeth” (22). She is unnatural in her masculinity and in her beastly demeanor.

Annette has the face of a monster, but like many monsters she possesses unnatural abilities as well. Her “most wonderful eyes” shine “with a strange, greasy lustre, and were capable of such marvellous expression that [Haslar feels himself] falling under their peculiar fascination” (Donovan 22). It is with these powerful eyes—this “weird gaze” which involves an assumption of the “male gaze” and thus represents a crossing of gender boundaries—that Annette bewitches Jack Redcar and threatens to control the narrator as well (24). Her ability to cross gender boundaries makes her both attractive (in an apparently homoerotic way) and monstrous.

Annette’s lack of physical beauty and feminine features represents an even more monstrous and evil “interior.” As Dr. Haslar notes:

Annette was not a natural being. In the ordinary way she might be described as a woman of perverted moral character, or as a physiological freak, but that would have been rather a misleading way of putting it. She was, in short, a human monstrosity. By that I do not mean to say her body was contorted, twisted, or deformed. But into her human composition had entered a strain of the fiend; and I might go even further than this and say she was more animal than human (Donovan 26).

Annette crosses those boundaries that separate the monstrous from the normal, the male from the female, and the human from the animal; however, as in the case of Mr. Hyde, there is no

particular physical attribute to which the narrator can point and say, “That is monstrous.” As in the case of Hyde’s, however, Annette’s actions finally reveal her for the monster she is. After she has drugged Haslar, he feels her face pressed against his and her “hot breath in [his] neck” (Donovan 32). “In” may seem like an odd choice of prepositions, but when, in the morning, he feels an “absolutely indescribable sensation at the side of [his] neck” and makes a “hideous,” albeit unnamed, discovery, after examining his neck in the mirror, we discover that she has in fact committed an “unspeakable crime” and penetrated him (32–33). Later when Haslar discovers her “sucking away [the] life blood” of his friend, his “worst fears [are] confirmed” (37). In this moment of horrific discovery, he is still “perversely attracted” to her. Even though she is “repulsive, revolting, horrible beyond words,” Haslar is “fascinated by the weird, ghastly sight” of her (38). At that moment, he tries to reassert his masculine dominance by shooting her; he justifies his attempt by claiming “the world would be well rid of such a hideous monster” (38). The shot fails to hit her, but she, in response, grabs Redcar, and they both conveniently fall to their deaths.

Perhaps what is most “monstrous” about Annette is her determination not to be an object but rather an active agent, or, in terms the late nineteenth century reader would understand, a “New Woman.” When confronted with the fact that Mrs. Redcar has been hurt by her husband’s actions, she responds “for the first time” with “something like passion” (Donovan 28). She is contemptuous of Redcar’s wife, whom she calls “a poor fool, a fleshy doll....[the] type of woman who make the world common-place and reduce all men to a common level” (28). In chapter 3, I will discuss the doll as monster, but here it is the label of inanimate doll that represents a feminine role rejected by the monstrous Annette. Instead, she subdues “the will of her victim, Redcar, [so] that he was a mere wooden puppet in her hand” (29). She turns the tables on this man who married “a fleshy doll” and makes a “wooden puppet” of him; in doing so she asserts a feminine sexuality and a feminine power that in this story are clearly portrayed as a monstrous threat.

Violet Hunt's "The Prayer" is a good example of a story that complicates the relation of monster and victim in a number of ways, while also commenting on feminine desire. It is a tale of an undead husband and his haunted wife. In some ways, the story is very similar to Gothic tales in which the female protagonist feels threatened by her male husband/lover, with the husband cast as a monster of supernatural rather than natural origin. In Hunt's story, however, the wife, Alice Arne, is not terrorized by her husband's evil plans or plots against her life, but rather is horrified by his very body, which she senses has become unnatural. It may appear that this is simply a story of a female victim threatened by a male monster, but the actual situation is more complicated. In Hunt's story, no ghost or monster disrupts domestic life; instead domestic life itself becomes monstrous.

Hunt's story was originally titled "The Story of a Ghost," and her decision to change the title to "The Prayer" suggests the importance of that act of prayer in the story, specifically of Alice Arne's impassioned prayer that her husband be returned to her, spoken over his recently deceased body. She is not satisfied to know that his spirit will live on; she desires his body. As she says (in a very risqué speech by 1895 standards), "I don't want your spirit—I can't see it—or feel it—I want you, you, your eyes that looked at me, your mouth that kissed me—" (Hunt 265). Her prayer is seemingly answered when her husband, Edward Arne, comes back to life from a death that only she has witnessed. However, Edward's return to life is incomplete. His body is alive but his soul seems to be absent.

In his return to life, Edward has become a monster, which is apparent to anyone who meets him. Alice's friends are afraid of him, and his daughter apparently loathes him. Alice's friend Miss Graham says of Edward, "I cannot stand him! I cannot bear the touch of his cold froggy hands, and the sight of his fishy eyes! That inane smile of his simply makes me shrivel up" (Hunt 271). He is described as having characteristics of "lower" animals, a clear sign of monstrosity in horror narratives, and later as someone who seems not quite alive, like "a house with someone dead in it, and all the blinds down" (271). The more disinterested Dr. Graham also

notices something wrong; he comments that Edward “really is extraordinarily good-looking....yet one feels one’s vitality ebbing out at the finger-ends as one talks to him” (275). Like Annette in Donovan’s “The Woman with the ‘Oily Eyes,’” Edward is undead, a vampire of the psychic variety and he preys particularly upon his wife:

His nearness had the effect of making [Alice] look at once several years older. Where she was pale he was well-coloured, the network of little filmy wrinkles that, on a close inspection, covered her face, had no parallel on his smooth skin. He was handsome....The deep lines of permanent discontent furrowed her brow... (273).

In addition to providing a subtle critique of the ways in which social standards evaluate men and women differently in terms of appearance and age, the passage shows how male vitality might benefit at the expense of female. Because of her desire for physical love, Alice becomes trapped in a marriage with someone who is essentially undead. She describes the situation, to Dr.

Graham, as being buried alive:

At first before I guessed when I used to put my arms round him, and he merely submitted—and then it dawned on me what I was kissing! It is enough to turn a living woman into stone—for I am a living, though I sometimes forget it. Yes I am a live woman, though I live in a grave. Think what it is!—to wonder every night if you will be alive in the morning, to lie down every night in an open grave—to smell death in every corner—every room—to breathe death—to touch it.... (Hunt 279).

The physical presence she once desired has become precisely the most oppressive feature of her husband. Alice notes that she used to be “afraid of ghosts—of spirits—things unseen” but now thinks “there are worse things than ghosts” (277), such as “a body—senseless—lonely—without a spirit” (278). In making such a claim, she reminds us again of the essential “bodiliness” of the monster, the fact that the horror of the monster is primarily physical and not spiritual.

Edward “submits” to his wife’s embraces but does not return them. He comments to Dr. Graham that he is no longer “excited” or “wild” about his wife (Hunt 280), but to his wife he admits that the problem is that he should be dead. He says that “the earth seems a barrier between me and my own place....It’s a horrible sensation like a vampire reversed” (284). Edward has reversed the natural order in a number of ways, perhaps most notably by becoming the object (rather than the subject) of desire. Edward and Alice’s mutual failure to live according to

accepted gender norms results in a “monstrous,” if all too real, relationship in which both parties are imprisoned—she feels buried alive with a dead man, while he can not reach the grave for which he longs.

Donovan’s and Hunt’s stories register a clear difference in the attitudes towards female characters that relates in part to the genders of the authors. In Hunt’s story the male/husband is clearly a monster, but even here the threat of female sexuality is not completely removed, as Alice’s desire for physical love (expressed through a prayer) is implicated in the creation of that monster or, more accurately, this monstrous relationship, in which active female desire is clearly horrible. In addition to stories such as Donovan’s, which portrays a demoniac female sexuality, and Hunt’s, which shows a female sexuality that is complicit in the creation of a “male” monster, there are also a number of stories from the period, typically written by women, also portray more sympathetic monsters that share an affinity with their female “victims.” Vernon Lee’s novella “The Phantom Lover” is a good example of this latter type of story.

In Lee’s story, an artist-observer narrates the events leading to the seemingly accidental death of Mrs. Alice Oke at the hands of her husband Mr. William Oke. Both husband and wife, who are also first cousins, seem at times to be haunted by the ghost of a seventeenth-century poet named Lovelock, whom their ancestors had killed, and throughout the story it is never really clear whether one or both of them is the intended victim of this ghost. What does seem certain, however, is that Mrs. Oke (the two are rarely called by their first names) is in love with this ghost and that Mr. Oke is jealous of it. She talks openly about her obsession with the dead Lovelock, teases her husband constantly about his murder and his ghostly return, and is seen by her husband walking with a figure that she identifies as Lovelock’s ghost. Mrs. Oke’s sympathies are clearly with the apparent monster, the ghost of Lovelock, and not with her husband; and, in the end, Mr. Oke kills his wife while trying to shoot the ghost of Lovelock.

Mr. and Mrs. Oke seem to relive the conflicts of their ancestors who had killed Lovelock. Mrs. Oke’s love for this ghostly figure mirrors that of her ancestor (also called Alice Oke), who

killed the poet whom she loved. However, Mrs. Oke's desire for the ghost of Lovelock also shows an affinity between woman and monster that underlies a number of horror fictions from this period. This story and others like it present a view of the monster as desirable because of what it shares with its supposed "victim" (usually a woman). This is the same connection between woman and monster that Linda Williams comments on in her discussion of the horror film, when she notes the "surprising (and at times subversive) affinity between monster and woman, the sense in which her look at the monster recognizes their similar status within patriarchal structures of seeing" ("When the Woman Looks" 85). At the same time there is an affinity, there is also a desire (perhaps unconscious) to become the transgressive agent who will disrupt that patriarchal structure.

The Unconscious and the Body of Desire

As Frank Cawson states, "The monster is the reification, the embodiment in a symbol of an unconscious content in the mind" (1). In many of these early supernatural horror tales, this connection between the monstrous and the unconscious is made explicit, related, of course, to the connection between the monster and repressed desire. It is no accident that the origins of psychoanalysis are concurrent with the beginnings of the horror genre; at the same time these stories were being written, first Charcot and then Freud were involved in the "discovery" and explanation of the unconscious. In horror fiction, a similar discovery was being made in a different language with a different intent. The monsters of the "Id" were making an appearance in supernatural horror, materializing in monstrous form.

In stories like Algernon Blackwood's "The Camp of the Dog," from his popular 1908 volume *John Silence*, and Margaret Strickland's "The Case of Sir Alister Moeran," discussed earlier, unconscious desires manifest themselves in the bodies of unsuspecting subjects in a manner resembling the changes that were being observed on the body of the hysteric. The body of the hysteric had also served as the text upon which Charcot and Freud had first read the

existence of the unconscious. In the visceral symptoms of hysteria—convulsions, paralysis, contortions—they saw signs of a diseased mind reflected in a distorted body, as well as a “body language” that called for interpretation.

Hysteria had traditionally been seen as a disease of the uterus and at the time Charcot began his investigations it was still being treated by hysterectomy. However, the symptoms of the disease appeared mainly on the surface of the body, in the form of bodily contortions, contractions, and paralysis. Hysteria was a form of display that Charcot perceived as the representation of inner, psychological problems. A diagnosis of hysteria marked a body as monstrous, but not in any overt way, rather it labeled a body as having some inner monstrosity that could occasionally be seen surfacing. Hysteria was considered largely a “female problem,” although Charcot recognized the existence of male hysteria. With the body of the hysteric, the female body, like the monster’s body, was made into a spectacle, both for scientific observation as well as entertainment. As Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement observe, the body of the hysteric is always potentially on display as a spectacle for “the circle of doctors with their fascinated eyes” and “tensed” bodies (10). These doctors, in their observation of the spectacle of the hysteric, mirror the “tensed body of the possessed woman” (10), much as the body of the monster’s tensed victim mirrors that of the monster, but with a very different power dynamic.

The texts of horror fiction may have borrowed from the discourse of psychology, but the borrowing was not unidirectional. Themes, tropes, and even characters from literature found their way into the texts of Freud and his contemporaries. While Freud himself mostly borrowed from classical literature and myth, some elements of the Gothic may also be seen reflected in his work. For example, the unconscious as Freud conceived it resembles a gothic dungeon—desires are found in the depths of the unconscious, and out of those depths “arise” wishes that “could not be perceived during the day” (*Interpretation of Dreams* 590). This is the realm of the irrational and fantastic that must be penetrated and interpreted by the rational psychologist. The unconscious wishes that are held captive there are likened to “ghosts in the underworld of the Odyssey—

ghosts which awoke to new life as soon as they tasted blood” or like “the legendary Titans, weighed down since primaeval ages” (Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* 592n and 592). Freud prefers to use the monsters of Greek mythology to those of the more modern horror genre, but the vision of the unconscious he presents is still a rather horrifying space populated with blood-drinking ghosts and imprisoned giants. In the work of Freud and other psychoanalysts, the figure of the monster appears frequently as both something to be explained (as in “The ‘Uncanny’”) and as a figure to help explain the operation of the newly discovered unconscious (as in *The Interpretation of Dreams*).

Algernon Blackwood’s “The Camp of the Dog” tells of a camping trip a wilderness island in the north of Sweden during which a party of five British and Canadian travelers are terrorized by a mysterious dog-like creature. It is a creature with “a rough and shaggy body” the sight of which causes the narrator’s “soul” to turn “sick and coward with a horror that rose from the very dregs and depth of life” (Blackwood, *John Silence* 344–345).

Blackwood’s psychic detective, John Silence, is called in to investigate and concludes that the primitive landscape has caused one of the members of this party to become a werewolf.

Dr. Silence explains

“A werewolf...is a true psychical fact of profound significance, however absurdly it may have been exaggerated by the imaginations of a superstitious peasantry in the days of unenlightenment, for a werewolf is nothing but the savage, and possibly sanguinary, instincts of a passionate man scouring the world in his fluidic body, his passion body, his body of desire” (Blackwood, *John Silence* 364).

The werewolf is a physical projection emerging from the body of a young, male member of the camping party, Peter Sangree, who turns out to have “an admixture of savage blood—of Red Indian ancestry” (365).³⁸

The unconscious presented in this story is a survival from some “primitive” mental past of the human race and the source of forces that are antithetical to “civilized” man. Sangree’s “taint” of alien blood is, however, only partially the explanation for his lycanthropy; the environment and, most importantly, an unadmitted desire for a female member of the party, are

major contributing factors. As Silence observes, the emergence of this werewolf is the result of “The lover’s desire for union run wild, run savage, tearing its way out in primitive, untamed fashion” (Blackwood, *John Silence* 366). The “intense force of his desire” is the real reason that Sangree’s “fluidic body [i.e., his body of desire] might issue forth in monstrous or animal shape and become actually visible to others” (364). Even though the werewolf is a physical creature capable of leaving a print or tearing a tent, the narrator perceives it as a “psychic calamity” about whose existence Sangree is “unconscious” and unaware (Blackwood, *John Silence* 378). The narrator finds this a particularly startling case (in a book full of fantastic, supernatural investigations) because “no other psychic affliction [had] ever, before or since, impressed [him] so convincingly with the pathetic impermanence of the human personality” (378). John Silence’s explanation, like the body he seeks to describe, owes much to the language of the occult and supernatural. He sees Sangree’s transformation into a werewolf as the manifestation of the ““etheric Body of Desire or astral body...in which the emotions, passions and desires reside”” (353) in a monstrous physical form.

It would seem that this “Body of Desire” is a representation of the unconscious in another, differently and more fantastically worded discourse. A word repeated often in this story to explain the phenomena of lycanthropy is “desire”—suggesting how closely, in some ways, Dr. Silence’s theory of the unconscious parallels that of Dr. Freud, the formulator of a “talking cure.” In some ways, this fantastic theory of the unconscious presented in horror fiction is more accurate—from a Freudian perspective—than some of the competing psychological theories of the day. As Ernest Jones observes, relating “primitive” theories of nightmares to more contemporary ones, while psychology may have made “an advance...[in] discard[ing] the belief in spirits and demons” it was also “a retrogression to discard the psychical and erotic, for the supernatural beings at least possessed these attributes” (345). In horror fiction, actual belief in “spirits and demons” is a suspended or, at least, optional choice, but the key roles of sexual desire and the psychic processes remain foregrounded.

Contemporary psychological theories can be found in a number of horror stories during this period. In E. F. Benson's "The Thing in the Hall," for example, the realm of the supernatural is presented directly as an alternate explanation for what might otherwise be classed as psychological phenomena. To make clear this connection, the narrator of Benson's story begins by telling how he "had studied in Paris under Charcot" (Benson, *Collected* 155). Shortly after returning to England, he finds that his friend, Louis, has been studying spiritualism, and he agrees to try his hand at "table-turning" in spite of his strong disbelief. As he notes, "if there is one thing that the hypnotist, the believer in unexplained influences, detests and despises, it is the whole root-notion of spiritualism" (156).

During the séance, the narrator, Dr. Assheton, hears strange noises and sees spots of light. At first, he tries to account for these strange phenomena by claiming that he has been involved in "an exhibition of thought-transference which in all [his] experience in the Charcot-schools [he] had never seen surpassed, if indeed rivalled" (Benson, *Collected* 156). Assheton believes that the phenomena he experiences are projections from his friend's "unconscious self, of which we know so little, but which, more and more we see to play so enormous a part in the life of man" (159). For a while, he continues to believe that the odd experiences he and his friend have experienced have a purely psychological explanation.

Even when he begins seeing a "shadow of some enormous slug, legless and fat...[with] a head shaped like the head of a seal with open mouth and panting tongue," Assheton at first doubts its reality. He suggests that it must be a case of through transference from his friend, who has seen this image in one of "his spiritualistic trash-books" (Benson, *Collected* 161). Soon after, however, he touches this creature and sees its effects on the body of another medium, and he is no longer able to claim it is merely a psychic projection from the depths of the unconscious. He sees this sluglike "elemental" attach itself to the medium's throat. When he and Louis go to the medium's aid, his hand touches "something cold and slimy," but it was impossible to get a firm grip upon it; "it was as if one tried to grasp slimy fur, and the touch of it was horrible, unclean

like a leper” (162). The medium has apparently been bitten on the neck and a week later dies of blood poisoning.

It is only after he has felt this creature’s monstrous (and phallic) body and seen the effect of its actions in the death of the medium, that Assheton abandons his psychological explanation for this phenomena. His friend Louis dies soon after, with his throat torn out, and at the end of the story we learn how Dr. Assheton has met a similar fate. Psychic phenomena, rather than being simple projections of unconscious forces and drives, are shown to be very real glimpses of a monstrous “otherworld” that exists all around us. Benson’s story, and similar horror tales from the era, may engage with the discourse of psychology and make use of some of its concepts, but the goals of this fictional discourse are something quite different. Horror fiction does not seek to rationalize the unconscious, as psychologists of the period were attempting to do, but instead seeks to project the irrationality of the unconscious onto the everyday world as something both horrific and supernatural, yet empirically real.

In many horror stories, the monstrous becomes an outward projection of an inward impulse. In some cases, this impulse is recognized as unconscious in origin and therefore not an object of moral condemnation; in other cases, such as Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the appearance of these desires in material form is much more of a moral issue. In still other cases, such as *The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs* by Florence Marryat and Robert Hichens’ *Flames*, the emergence of another self is not the fault of the individual at all but rather of manipulative people who would open others up the influence of spirits. Stories of physical transformation and possession (by spirits of the dead or the daemonic) are very common during this period, suggesting that many authors were trying to understand the nature of the unconscious and the mutability of human personality.³⁹ These stories also document the influence of nineteenth-century spiritualism on both psychological theory and horror fiction.

However, the acceptance (by a general public) of the clearer, more scientific explanations of the unconscious proposed by Freud and his followers would coincide, as Julia Briggs observes,

with a “decline in this type of story” (159). The entrance of these new ideas from psychology into mainstream fiction was perhaps one reason for a temporary decline in the popularity of horror fiction around the time of the First World War. Due to a more permissive climate and decreased censorship, ideas about sexuality and desire could be discussed more openly in fiction than they had in the past, and there was consequently less need to couch such discussions in terms of the fantastic. At this point in time, however, horror fiction provided a medium through which ideas about the unconscious and the nature of desire could be discussed however covertly.

Monsters, Masses and Masters

Horror fiction may deal with the rising up of unconscious desires, but it could also present rebellions of a different sort. Horror, like the Gothic as David Punter describes it, “demonstrates the potential of revolution by daring to speak the socially unspeakable, but the very act of speaking it is an ambiguous gesture” (1st ed. 417).⁴⁰ The body of the monster is the form in which the “socially unspeakable” is given voice. The monster is certainly a disruptive force, but the fact that it is a force that is usually defeated and almost always demonized suggests that the purpose of its appearance is ambiguous at best. However, no matter how much the monster is demonized, there remains a possibility that a reader will sympathize or even identify with it. The monster may also serve to direct the reader’s feelings of horror toward the problems of the mundane world, showing how the horrors of the “real” world outweigh the relatively innocuous horror of the supernatural realm. Many horror texts also can be read in such a way as to raise uncertainty about the world and what is in fact monstrous in it. A reader may question whether Mr. Hyde is really more horrible than Dr. Jekyll (and the bourgeois moral hypocrisy that drives him to alter himself), and the degree to which that uncertainty is not resolved suggests the “revolutionary” potential in the genre.⁴¹

There is often a political subtext in horror tales of monsters rising from the dead or returning from wherever they’ve been condemned to hide. Horror stories may have as much to

do with the uprising of the oppressed as they do with the return of the repressed. As Gillian Beer notes, “Ghost stories are to do with the insurrection, not the resurrection of the dead. The element of the insurrectionary, the uncontrollable has long linked the idea of the apparition with suppressed and guilty areas of consciousness” (260). Jameson’s notion of the political unconscious enables a clearer exploration of oppression and repression together. In horror fiction, historical memory may be shown to mask guilt in the same way that individual memory seeks to repress guilty desires and the return of both may find representation in the ghosts and monsters of horror fiction.

The plight of the ghost is similar in many ways to the plight of the poor and oppressed. Like many an oppressed group at the close of the nineteenth century, the ghost found it necessary to act up for the “reality” of its existence even to be noticed. Olivia Dunbar, an American writer of ghost stories from this period, saw a connection between ghosts and the poor and the ways in which people reacted to them. In her essay “The Decay of Ghost Fiction” published in *The Dial* in 1905, she writes that “we believe in ghosts as sincerely as we believe in the very poor; and in similar fashion we endeavor to live among them, establish a cordial understanding and write about them in our notebooks” (Dunbar 378). Both ghosts and the poor could be colorful subjects for journalism and fiction; both were also problematic creatures that could be used to educate or entertain but would always remain distant and distinct from the middle-class reader.

At the same time the Gothic was changing into the supernatural horror genre, the form and nature of ghosts and ghostly bodies were also changing. L.P. Hartley, who began writing ghost stories during the Edwardian era, commented that ghosts in the past had been

confined to one spot. Now their liberties have been greatly extended; they can go anywhere, they can manifest themselves in scores of ways. Like women and other depressed classes, they have emancipated themselves from their disabilities, and besides being able to do a great many things that human beings can’t do, they now can do a great many things that human beings can do. Immaterial as they are or should be, they have been able to avail themselves of the benefits of our materialistic civilization (qtd. in Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares* 1).

The ghost was only one type of monster to appear in horror fiction around the turn of the century, but it was a popular type, and like its monstrous brethren, the ghost enjoyed an increased freedom resulting from the more central role given to the monster in horror fiction and the more visible public role assumed by the “depressed classes.”

However, a more active role does not necessarily lead to improved conditions, and freedom of movement may not be real freedom at all. The ghost that is free of its serfdom might find itself homeless, and the ghost of the worker might find that even death does not bring freedom from toil. Stories such as Robert Hichens’ “The Lady and the Beggar” and Richard Middleton’s “On the Brighton Road” depict the (un)life of the homeless ghost; in other stories, like Arthur Quiller-Couch’s “A Pair of Hands” or Middleton’s “Shepard’s Boy,” we are presented with the ghosts of unskilled laborers who must continue working even after death. In none of these stories is death a release from bondage, perhaps suggesting that the itinerant or unemployed worker is already living in conditions much like that of the ghost.

“On the Brighton Road” is an unsettling story that, like many fantastic stories (the *pure fantastic* as Todorov defines it), does not resolve the uncertainty it raises. The story concerns a “tramp” who has spent a winter’s night asleep beside the road to Brighton and has awoken somewhat surprised and not a little disappointed to find himself alive and unfrozen. As he continues his walk toward Brighton, he encounters a boy who is also “on the road,” and as they walk together he expresses his surprise that he did not die during the night. “How do you know you didn’t?” the boy asks him, and then goes on to say that he is “dead” (Middleton 83). He relates, “I was drowned bathing at Margate, and...killed by a gypsy with a spike...twice I was froze like you last night; and a motor cut me down on this very road, and yet I’m walking along here now, walking to London to walk away from it again, because I can’t help it” (83–84). He comments, perhaps philosophically, that “we’re all dead, all of us who’re on it [the road], and we’re all tired, yet somehow we can’t leave it” (84).

As they walk, the nameless “tramp” realizes the boy is ill, and a doctor who happens by diagnoses him with severe pneumonia. The boy goes with the doctor to the local infirmary, but his companion prefers to remain on the road rather than go with him and risk being put into the workhouse. However, the next day on the road the boy steps “out of the darkness” and greets the tramp, who is surprised to see him there on the road given his illness. The boy simply replies, “‘I died at Crawley this morning’” (Middleton 86). The story strongly suggests that he has literally died and died once again. Some uncertainty must remain concerning the protagonist as well, who, in fact, may have frozen to death there on the Brighton Road and not yet realized that he’s dead. The ghost that seemingly haunts the road upon which it died is hardly distinguishable from the tramp who is or, at least, may be alive; both seem destined for the same degree of suffering and wandering. However, the realization that one is dead becomes a sort of class-consciousness leading to a recognition of solidarity with the other wandering dead.

Middleton’s story is unusual because the ghost it presents is hardly distinguishable from a living being. Instead of following the typical pattern of the ghost story, where the crimes of the past force themselves to consciousness in the present, this story demonstrates how the failures of the present repeat those of the past. Here the poor who died of neglect yesterday will die of neglect again tomorrow, and so it seems there is no point in haunting those who are responsible. The only positive change Middleton’s story suggests is that ghosts may become aware of their own ghostly status.

Robert Hichens’ “The Lady and the Beggar,” from his collection *Tongues of Conscience*, on the other hand, presents a more purposeful and hence optimistic haunting.⁴² In Hichens’ story, a beggar, who in life had already been described as a “spectre”, starves after a miserly woman refuses his final request for food. She believes that “there’s bread enough for those who deserve to live” (Hichens, *Tongues* 354). He returns as a ghost to haunt the woman, until she changes that opinion and upon her deathbed leaves her money to the poor. Her abhorrence for “the beggars who make the streets and parks their hunting-grounds” instead becomes an obsession to help the

man who continually appears to her (347). This obsession makes “sick with horror” her son, who knows the truth she does not, that the man she keeps seeing has already died (361).

In these stories and many others, the ghosts that appear are sympathetic creatures more worthy of pity than fear. The reader can feel for their plight perhaps because they are allowed to speak on their own behalf, either before or after their death. Giving a voice to the monster is certainly one way of humanizing it, and the increased sympathy many readers have for Frankenstein’s monster, as opposed to a monster such as Dracula, might be accounted for by the greater degree of control the former has over its narrative. In a similar way to the poor who appear in social tracts of the period, the conditions of these ghosts’ hellish existence are what horrify the reader—conditions that some monsters apparently accept but against which others rebel.

A Monstrous Revolution and the Oppressor as Monster

Haunting as a figure for the rising of the oppressed is not only found in horror fiction. When C. F. G. Masterman tries to explain how demonstrations by the masses (the poor and working class from the East End of London) have affected the middle and upper classes, he uses a metaphor drawn from the spirit world. In *From the Abyss*, Masterman writes of his class: “We have seen a ghost; we are striving to readjust our stable ideas” (“Weird and Uncanny” 242). The ghost that he and others have seen represents a “force hitherto unreckoned; the creeping into conscious existence of the quaint and innumerable populations bred in the Abyss” (242). These impoverished masses are a “weird and uncanny people” whose very existence is a surprise to many; they are potentially frightening creatures risen from a place associated with the hellish and otherworldly (241). Despite the fact Masterman has a sympathetic interest in the masses, he is also aware that to many these people are monstrous, horrific, and threatening. In a later work, *The Condition of England*, he would note that perceived “from a distance” the masses always look monstrous, like “little white blobs of faces borne upon little black twisted or misshapen

bodies” (96). Depending on one’s perspective, then, the masses might easily appear as a pack of monsters.

The monster presents a powerful image, visually striking and charged with a great deal of affect, and it is not surprising that it was adapted for a variety of political purposes. In political posters and cartoons, from the “Irish Frankenstein” and the spectre of home rule (figures 2-1 and 2-2), to the “Nemesis of Neglect” (figure 2-3), and including representations of anarchism, socialism, chauvinism, militarism, protectionism, and even the “vampires” of special interest (figures 2-4, 2-5, 2-6, and 2-7), the monster was a common figure. These cartoons draw on the traditional monsters of horror fiction to connect fear and disgust with the objects they sought to demonize, but, at the same time, they use humor to deflate the actual power of the threat depicted. The supernatural aspect of these monsters could be used to suggest the supposed irrationality of whatever was being demonized as well as its otherwise inexplicable power. The looks of terror on the faces of their victims betokened the helplessness of those faced with these problems.

The monstrous, even when combined with humor, is still unsettling, if not horrific. Monsters are uncompromising and unreasonable according to a long tradition that stretches from folklore through the Gothic to horror fiction, and while, since *Frankenstein* at least, they had become worthy of pity, they never became worthy of equality. The monster as a figure for a political threat (whether it comes from the right or the left) is a useful icon because it can be used to present “the enemy” as irrational, dangerous, and distorted and hence unable to be dealt with in a rational manner.

Perhaps the best known use of supernatural images in political discourse is the opening of the *Manifesto of The Communist Party*, “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this



Figure 15. John Tenniel, "The Irish Frankenstein," *Punch* (20 May 1882).

Figure 2-1: The Irish Frankenstein

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—MARCH 1, 1905.



THE SPECTRE THAT WASN'T LAID.

ARTHUR B. "WH-WH-AT A H-H-HORRID THING! I SHALL R-R-RUN AWAY!"
 C.B. "I-I-I ONLY W-W-WISH I C-C-COULD!"

Figure 2-2: The "Spectre of Homerule"

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—SEPTEMBER 29, 1888.



THE NEMESIS OF NEGLECT.

"THERE FLOATS A PHANTOM ON THE SLUM'S FOUL AIR,
 SHAPING, TO EYES WHICH HAVE THE GIFT OF SEEING,
 INTO THE SPECTRE OF THAT LOATHLY LAIR.
 FACE IT—FOR VAIN IS FLEEING!
 RED-HANDED, RUTHLESS, FURTIVE, UNERECT,
 'TIS MURDEROUS CRIME—THE NEMESIS OF NEGLECT!"

Figure 2-3: The "Nemesis of Neglect"



A HAND AGAINST EVERY MAN.

From London Judy, April 13, 1892.

Figure 2-4: Anarchism as monster (#1)



Figure 2-5: Anarchism as monster (#2)



ON THE BRINK.

Figure 2-6: The Monsters of “Chauvanism, militarism, protectionism”



THE PERSECUTED M.P.

Chorus of Vampires. "GIVE! GIVE!"

Figure 2-7: Vampires of Special Interest

spectre” (335). Here the spectre Marx and Engels invoke is not real communism, but rather the ghostly image of communism that haunts those in power—they remark how this “nursery tale of the Spectre of Communism” is told in order to demonize the communist and avoid addressing the realities of the social/political situation (335). At the same time, they open their manifesto in a manner that marks its debt to horror fiction and the Gothic. This false spectre in the manifesto is only one of many instances in which Marx uses the image of the ghost or monster, and the monsters that appear in his work form a complex group entailing a range of different representations, not only of the monster as distorted revolutionary. There are also, for instance, the “real” monsters that capitalism creates, such as the worker who is changed into “a crippled monstrosity” and the “stunted monsters produced by overwork in the mechanical monotony of the factories” (*Capital* 396; Marx qtd. in Baldick 138).

The body of the worker is made monstrous by the machinery of capitalist methods of production (a machinery that entails much more than the mechanical devices of the factory). It is this body, tortured and made monstrous, that Marx studies to see the effects of capitalism. The “crippled” and “stunted” worker may be described in terms of physical changes, because these changes are readily apparent to the text’s audience and therefore harder to deny than the more powerful, internal process of monstrous transformation that Marx labels “alienation.” The monster, like the poor and the oppressed, is an alienated being—alienated in every way imaginable.

In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx discusses four ways in which human beings are alienated under capitalism—from nature, from themselves, from their species, and from each other. Capitalist methods of production make monsters out of human beings by blurring (and perhaps transgressing) the boundaries of what defines them as human. Marx writes that when “labour is *external* to the worker” the worker feels “himself to be freely active” only in “his animal function—eating, drinking, procreating...and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and

what is human becomes animal” (Marx, *Economic* 60). The worker is *made* into a monster because his or her human functions are taken away. Much like the monster, the worker, in thought if not in body, transgresses the human–animal boundary.

While the bourgeoisie may indeed be haunted by ghosts of its own making, Marx also points out that the bourgeoisie is itself a monster, perhaps even another form of the undead. The capitalist is, like capital itself (since, for Marx, the capitalist is “as capitalist...only capital personified”), “dead labour, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour” with a “thirst for the living blood of labour” (*Capital* 257, 282). This metaphor appears many times in Marx’s texts and, as Chris Baldick points out, it is Marx’s “most vivid representation of the bourgeoisie’s doomed state of possession by irresistible forces” (128). The vampire isn’t the only monster that merits comparison with the ruling classes; the bourgeoisie also have a “werewolf-like hunger for surplus value” and the French National Assembly is likened to “ghouls...eager to feed upon the carcass of the nation” (*Capital* 291; Marx qtd. in Baldick 125). So it would seem that those in power are not only haunted by monsters but are also themselves monsters of a somewhat different breed—both, though, are made monstrous by a system of capitalism.

To the worker, the capitalist is “someone who is alien, hostile, powerful and independent”; the capitalist (as monster) appears to the worker as an “*alien* being” who controls the worker’s labor and takes the products of that labor (Marx, *Economic* 64). Both worker and capitalist are affected by alienation; the major difference is that the capitalist class “feels satisfied and affirmed in this self-alienation, experiences the alienation as a sign of *its own power*, and possesses in it the *appearance* of a human existence” (Marx and Engels, “Alienation and Social Classes” 104). Although both classes may live alienated and inhuman lives, and both may appear as monsters, the capitalist can hide his or her monstrosity behind a human appearance and can secretly revel in that monstrosity. The vampire and the werewolf (before its transformation) are monsters that appear human, at least most of the time. Such monsters are common in supernatural horror from this period, but it is almost always the case that no matter how deceptive

the monster's appearance, its actions will give it away. The vampire, werewolf, and ghoul—all of which Marx uses to describe the ruling classes—can all be recognized as monsters because they feed upon the human bodies or the working class.

The monster also appears as a figure for the capitalist oppressor in the pages of horror fiction; there are a number of stories of possession and haunting from this period in which common men and women become the prey of the wealthy and powerful. H. G. Wells' "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvisham," for instance, tells of a young and somewhat impoverished medical student, the son of a gardener, who loses his body (rather than his soul) to an old but wealthy man. Edward Eden, the narrator of the tale, agrees to accept the enormous wealth of Mr. Egbert Elvisham, philosopher, as well as taking his name and "position," believing Mr. Elvisham does not have long to live and lacks an heir. After taking a drug Mr. Elvisham gives him, Eden awakes surprised to find himself in another body. In the mirror he sees the "desolate decrepitude...the hollow cheeks, the rheumy bleared eyes, the quivering shrivelled lips" of Mr. Elvisham and is horrified to possess a body already nearly dead (Wells, *Thirty Strange* 105–106).⁴³

The wealthy Mr. Elvisham has purchased a new body in which to contain "the whole of his memories, the accumulation that makes up his personality," ironically reversing the Faustian contract in which the soul is given away but the body is claimed to be of no importance (Wells, *Thirty Strange* 111). Instead of being concerned with the consumption of souls, the modern Mephistopheles is the capitalist who seeks to consume the bodies of living labour. Of course there is also an element of the "double" in this tale of traded bodies (the characters initials, for instance, mirror each other), but the tale of the double, which became so popular at the close of the nineteenth century, itself marks a perceived division in society. It is commonly the case that the monstrous double is demonized as being of working or lower class origins, as in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, but as Wells' story suggests it need not be so.⁴⁴

Possession often seems to be a metaphor for exploitation. In Firth Scott's novel *Possessed*, the spirit of a wealthy (and rather criminal) capitalist, Alvo Whetstone, returns from the dead to possess the body of a mild-mannered and unimportant clerk at an insurance agency. After the suicide of Mr. Whetstone, this clerk, Mr. Mordant, changes drastically, leaving his austere religious sect to pursue worldly pleasures, but also demonstrating his superiority as a manager of money and rising to the top of his company. To those who realize the truth of this strange transformation, the failure of death to stop the capitalist's relentless pursuit of money and pleasure at the expense of others is just as horrifying (if not more so) than the failure of death to bring an end to the toil of the worker.

Violet Temple, who had successfully avoided Whetstone's lecherous advances, falls prey to Mordant's blackmail of her father and to his extraordinary powers of will; she is the first to realize that Whetstone's "spirit" lives on in the body of Mordant. She writes to her beloved and the hero of the novel, Dr. Herbert Swabie, that when she realized the spirit of Whetstone had possessed the body of Mordant, she cowered before him, "covering [her] face with [her] hands to shut out the horror of his eyes," and called him "a fiend, a demon, a vampire" (Scott 215–216). Her reaction to this case of supernatural possession is certainly one of horror. Thankfully the Reverend Bosking, the leader of the strange and rather conservative sect to which Mordant had belonged, is able to exorcise the evil spirit of the capitalist. So, in fiction at least, the forces of religion seem opposed to the undead capitalist, subjugating the bodies of the poor to his monstrous will.

Marx sees the possibility of both sympathetic and predatory monsters resulting from the conditions of capitalism. He depicts a world where the "stunted monsters" produced by factory work exist side-by-side with the "werewolf-like" capitalist. While some monsters are illusory—like the "Spectre of Communism," which the bourgeoisie fears—others commit very real outrages against their fellow human beings. Chris Baldick finds that "in the world Marx describes, which is above all a humanly produced world, the monster is not a stable or

unchangeable figure, since the category of the ‘alien’ can be produced only as a relation” (139). Baldick’s argument suggests, rightly, that the monster in Marx (as elsewhere) serves as an appropriate figure for alienation and that alienation is not something affecting only the poor and oppressed.

In looking at two of the better known figures from horror fiction, Dracula and Frankenstein’s monster, Franco Moretti shows how the monster can represent “the two horrible faces of a single society, its extremes: the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor. The worker and capital” (83). According to Moretti, the monster as figure “serves to displace the antagonism and horrors evidenced within society outside society itself,” as the non-human monster becomes the antagonist of all “humanity,” uniting different classes against a common enemy (84). However, as Marx and others’ use of the monster shows, the politics of the monster’s appearance may be more complicated when the monster becomes the sympathetic outsider.

Moretti sees horror fiction as the product of “the terror of a split society” (83)—a terror that was particularly prevalent in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.⁴⁵ Whether the monster is Frankenstein’s creature (the proletariat) or Dracula (the capitalist with aristocratic connections), it embodies alienation and difference. The monsters of horror fiction, in addition to being bodies that are themselves dismembered, divided, and disfigured, also represent a profound division between the human and that which is “not quite human,” which is a division that can stand for all those other divisions—of class, race, gender, sexuality, and nationality—that arise in human society.

In the end, I would argue that the monstrous as a category is itself politically neutral, capable of being taken up and employed in innumerable specific ways. It is useful for demonizing the opposition between them, but can be used to describe the condition of both worker and capitalist. However, I would argue that the politics of the genre, like the politics of the monster, is “extremist,” because of the power of the monster as image, but does not

necessarily inhabit either end of the political spectrum. Different critics have labeled horror as both a “conservative” and highly “subversive” genre.⁴⁶ In fact, either claim can be true, depending on which texts are taken as examples. Because it presents the most extreme forms of the abject in opposition to the “normal,” the supernatural horror genre simply makes existing divisions more extreme. As a political tool, the tropes of the horror genre would seem to have no inherent politics; it is only in specific uses that they acquire a politics and can become instruments in the service of oppression or liberation.

End Notes

¹ Definitions and etymological information, here and elsewhere, are taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed.) and from Ernest Klein's *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*.

² It should not be forgotten that during the same period I am considering here (roughly 1880 to 1914) the technologies of the cinema were being developed. Some of these early films, such as Selig Polyscope's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1910), the Nordisk Company's *The Necklace of the Dead* (1910) and *Ghosts of the Dark* (1911) and Edison's 1910 version of *Frankenstein*, were horror movies (See Forry, 80).

³ One need only look at contemporary children's reactions to horror movies—where the desire to dress up and act like the monster is nearly as common as a reaction of fear and horror at the monster's appearance. Children's imitation of monsters may (largely) be gendered male, but the choice to imitate the monster (rather than be frightened by it) need not be so gendered. Take, for example, the interest in vampires among young women in the Goth music scene—an interest that involves using costume and makeup to imitate the appearance of the vampire/monster.

⁴ I bracket the word "identification" because Deleuze and Guattari (whose theory I wish to introduce here) are careful to note that the term fails to capture the complexity of the process of becoming—the "becoming-monster" that takes place in this encounter of reader/author and text is always a process and not a state of being. This becoming is also not a process of imitation, but rather one of approximation or, to be more exact, a movement toward proximity. Many of the terms I introduce here (e.g., line of flight, becoming monster) are taken from Deleuze and Guattari's work. See *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, as well as Brian Massumi's useful introduction, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, for more information on how these terms are used throughout Deleuze and Guattari's work.

⁵ Deleuze claims that "writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible" ("Literature and Life," 1). I would agree with this but point out that all these becomings also involve becoming a monster. Also, since the "meaning" of a text is created when the work of the writer is interpreted by the reader this is a process open to the reader as well and that in reading the reader can become something other than he or she was, if only during the course of the reading. Another way of saying this is that reading is always already a process of writing, and vice versa.

⁶ The norms of a society are themselves inscribed on an individual's body. Michel Foucault presents a relevant argument about the body as a social construct when he discusses how the "docile body" is "formed" by discourse into a soldier or a prisoner (*Discipline and Punish* 135–169). Techniques of power, those that use both physical and discursive control, create a body and an individual subject. However, the "knowledge" of this body remains internalized, unlike earlier societies where punishment physically marked the body. The physical punishment of the body for a crime can be linked to so-called "primitive" rituals of torture and body modification. Pierre Clastres notes that in these older cultures the society "inscribes the text of the law on the surface of [its members'] bodies. No one is supposed to forget the law on which the social life of the tribe is based" (186). This process does not end in our modern society; it merely takes a much more subtle form, as the body becomes "the target for new mechanisms of power" (155). By the same token the monstrous body, in breaking the rules of what constitutes a "proper" human body, represents a break from social norms and mores. To identify with such a body is to identify with the dissolution of all a society's norms and rules.

⁷ Bataille finds that this division of animal from human qualities also lies at the root of our concept of the sacred, and that "what is *sacred* is precisely what is *prohibited*" (*Accursed Share*, II & III 92). He also argues that the desire to transgress this animal-human division is the source of our erotic life because eroticism gives us the opportunity to demonstrate those parts of ourselves that we normally hide from the world because of their animal nature.

⁸ It is worthwhile to compare Bakhtin's perceptions about death as a positive symbol and precondition for life in the carnivalesque. See *Rabelais and His World*, pages 26–51. Freud, of course, takes a different approach in theorizing the death-wish as the opposite of eros.

⁹ There is often a thin line between humor and horror in many of the stories I discuss in this dissertation. In some cases, humor is intended, while in others it can be found despite the author's intentions. In both situations, however, the laughter that ensues is likely to be tinged with a certain nervousness and a knowledge that the object of laughter really is not a "laughing matter."

¹⁰ David Punter's claim, in his book *Gothic Pathologies*, that a "dialectic of monstrosity...has been within Gothic from the beginning, and it focuses on the body" (46) projects concerns of more contemporary texts back onto the earlier Gothic genre. Certainly he does not give any supporting evidence from earlier Gothic texts (with the exception of *Frankenstein*, which I have argued is something of an anomaly and "ahead of its time"). Punter bases his claim about monstrous bodies in the Gothic on an assumption that if the Gothic is concerned with laws, it must be concerned with monsters, because monsters break laws. However, not all lawbreakers are monsters, nor do all lawbreakers break "natural" laws.

¹¹ I would suggest that in the Gothic the sense of fear was much more diffuse—the secret passages, mysterious lights, odd sounds, etc. seemed at least to suggest supernatural phenomena that were all around and not located in a single, or group of, figures. The monsters (ghosts, witches, etc.) that did appear in the Gothic did so as only one more element intended to build the mood of mystery and fear, not as a singular locus for such feelings.

¹² While the Gothic often employed devices like animate painting and talking statues, these objects would be hard to class as monsters. They may assume some human qualities (like the ability to sigh) but they are never individualized or given a will of their own. Nor do they ever take "center stage" in the way the monsters of horror fiction do—no one would ever think of calling Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, "The Portrait of [Manfred's] Grandfather's" (the only name given to that significant specter).

¹³ Which is not to say that the Gothic ceased to exist as a genre—the process is more like the birth of a new genre from an older one. The older genre may be supplanted in popularity by the newer, and may even become somewhat decrepit in its old age but it does not "die."

¹⁴ For a monster or, to be more specific, a ghost who writes, see Florence Marryat's "The Ghost of Charlotte Cray" who, after death, sends letters to the man who spurned her.

¹⁵ In fact, Marsh's novel was even more popular (at the time) than Stoker's. *The Bookman*, a magazine for the book trade, in 1897 and 1898 (I include both years because *The Beetle* was published rather late in the year) included *The Beetle* five times and *Dracula* only twice in its monthly list of the best-selling books at the wholesale level. There is an apocryphal story to the effect that Marsh and Stoker had had a competition between them as to who could produce the more horrific potboiler. E. F. Bleiler relates the story that "each man [agreed] to produce a supernatural novel by a given time" but does not provide his source for the claim (*Guide to Supernatural Fiction* 344).

¹⁶ There is a strong suggestion of sexual misconduct and "perversion" related to the events at the temple. There Lessingham is a kept man who, due to the cultists' powers of hypnosis, is forced to endure the loathsome kisses and horrifying embraces of the woman who has "trick[ed] [him] of [his] manhood" (Marsh, *The Beetle* 635). Lessingham relates his forced participation in "orgies of nameless horrors" but does not elaborate further. The human sacrifice he witnesses involves "a young and lovely Englishwoman" who is subjected to "every variety of outrage" before being put to death. Outrages and orgies are probably the strongest language an author at this time could use and still be published by a reputable press, and even then the book seems to border on pornography at times. There is clearly an element of excitement and unadmitted desire in Lessingham's narrative of the "horrors" of his imprisonment that I expect Marsh intended his reader to respond to as well. On Lessingham's part, it seems that he protests too much his

forced involvement in these events, and the strength of his desire to kill his captor seems more the product of self-revulsion at desiring such a woman in the first place than of the horror he claims to experience because of her kisses.

¹⁷ Take for example Bram Stoker's *The Lair of the White Worm*, in which the monstrous Lady Arabella (monstrous because of her connection with the white worm as well as her own qualities) is described as having the "heartlessness of the *cocotte* and want of principle of a suffragette" as well as "the reserved strength and the impregnability of the diplodocus" (140).

¹⁸ The term homosocial comes from Eve Sedgwick who, in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, uses it to describe relationships between men in which, as depicted in the Beetle, women may serve as objects of exchange or apparent sources of rivalry. However, the woman's role in such a relationship masks an actual alliance to further the interests of men or often a homoerotic desire between those men.

¹⁹ Mary Poovey, in *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864*, examines the role of this figurative relationship in an earlier period. The importance of this metaphor remained for British culture in the somewhat later period with which I am concerned.

²⁰ This was a social Darwinist argument, based on a common misinterpretation of Darwin that saw humanity as the endpoint of physical evolution and concluded that thereafter evolution took place on the "social and cultural plane" (Fiedler, 240-241).

²¹ Ernst Mayr, in *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance*, provides a detailed history of the development of biological thinking during the nineteenth century, explaining how and why its importance as a scientific discipline grew to such a great extent.

²² Darwin as author and scientist was probably not as important for British society as "Darwin the symbol." According to Owen Chadwick, "Darwin was not so much cause [of a revolution in people's beliefs] as occasion. He coincided with the years when the full implications of new knowledge, in crude form and apprehended simply, reached the middle classes of Western Europe and America" (174, 170). With regard to theories about the degeneration of the race, Darwin's actual work was of peripheral importance. R. B. Kershner finds that "Although the myth of Degeneration took on a Darwinian coloration in England to a much greater extent than it ever did across the Channel, even in England it relied on non-Darwinian, and even pre-scientific paradigms for its appeal" (*Degeneration*. 426).

²³ Deleuze and Guattari would call a mass of monsters a "pack." They argue that at the level of the unconscious everything is multiple (*1000 Plateaus* 26-38). Regarding horror fiction, one can say that there is never a fear of *a monster* that is not also a fear of *all monsters* or *the monstrous*. The monster as anomalous body is "neither an individual nor a species....It is a phenomenon, but a phenomenon of bordering" (245). Deleuze and Guattari find that in "becoming-wolf"—and this would apply to the general process of "becoming-monstrous"—"...the important thing is the position of the masses, and above all the position of the subject itself in relation to the pack or wolf-multiplicity: how the subject joins or does not join the pack, how far away it stays, how it does or does not hold to the multiplicity" (29). In reading about the monster there is always a potential association between reader and monster that implies this process of becoming.

²⁴ While, as I have argued, horror fiction develops from the Gothic and borrows certain tropes from it, Punter attempt to label these texts as a distinct form of the Gothic rather than as a new genre ignores the basic differences from the Gothic, which I have already observed.

²⁵ *Degeneration* was the topic of considerable public debate when it first appeared in 1883, and, along with Nordau's other works, it remained popular up until World War I. According to George L. Mosse, "A list of the editions of his books [before WWI] would fill several pages" (xv). And while Nordau's book was

written in reaction to decadent art, it used the theories of Cesare Lombroso and others to link artistic decadence with physical degeneracy, immorality and morbidity.

²⁶ The interest in eugenics was extremely widespread during this period and people from both ends of the political spectrum wrote in support of “eugenic science.” Even George Bernard Shaw, who had written a rather scathing review of Nordau’s *Degeneration*, supported eugenic reform (Rose 137). The desire for better breeding, sterilization, or extermination was almost always simply a cover for classist or racist biases—the true fear concerning the declining birth rate among Anglo-Saxons was the proportional rise of non-Anglo British births. For example, Sydney Webb (like Shaw a committed socialist and leader of the Fabian Society) believed that the statistics on birth rates demonstrated that [then] current trends could “hardly result in anything but national deterioration; or, as an alternative, in this country gradually falling to the Irish or the Jews” (qtd. in Greenslade, 199).

²⁷ Again one can look back to *Frankenstein* to see how the two genres share a common origin and can easily overlap. A similar transformation in the horror genre occurred after World War II in horror films, when the atomic bomb raised new possibilities for the threat of mutation, and many horror films were made using elements of science fiction.

²⁸ On this point one can compare Dr. Moreau and Mr. Kurtz to see how close the roles of mad imperialist and mad scientist are.

²⁹ Even doctors of the later half of the twentieth century look back to this period as the high point of research in monstrosity. As Dr. Josep Warkany, in his 1971 textbook *Congenital Malformation*, noted: “In systematic and taxonomic teratology the masters of the nineteenth century have not been equaled by their successors and much known to these scientists has been forgotten (qtd. in Fiedler, 243).

³⁰ This idea is not new; a similar argument is made by Georges Canguilhem in his 1943 volume *The Normal and the Pathological*. Using the work of the French surgeon Rene Leriche as his starting point, Canguilhem argues that “the biologically normal...is revealed only through the infractions of the norm and...concrete or scientific awareness of life exists only through disease” (118). Hayden White makes this same basic argument in relation to monstrosity rather than disease.

³¹ As I noted earlier in the chapter, the ghosts of horror fiction often had a level of individuality lacking in earlier ghosts. They had a physical presence and were capable of voicing specific goals and desires they, and therefore could certainly be considered independent beings.

³² These beliefs about mixed-race individuals are amply explored in H. L. Malchow’s *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* and Robert Young’s *Colonial Desire*. However, it should be noted that there were divergent voices who sought to encourage miscegenation for the greater good of the empire. People as different as Anthony Trollope and Charles Brooke (Rajah of Sarawak) voiced the idea that the “mixed breed” would be better suited for foreign climes and would serve the Empire well in maintaining British control of the colonies (Young, 142–143).

³³ I am using the term “minority” in the sense that Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari propose in *A Thousand Plateaus* (469–471). For them minorities are not defined numerically, but rather as a deviation from a socially constructed “norm” or ideal standard (e.g., the heterosexual, White, bourgeois male). This is not a quantitative factor but rather a qualitative one. Numerically the minority may certainly outnumber the majority (as women outnumber men), but in terms of power within a society (even in a democracy) numbers may not be the most important factor in determining a group’s power.

³⁴ Ronald Hyam has argued quite persuasively, in his book *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* that

sexual dynamics crucially underpinned the whole operation of British empire and Victorian expansion. Without the easy range of sexual opportunities which imperial systems provided, the

long-term administration and exploitation of tropical territories, in nineteenth-century conditions, might well have been impossible (1).

While “sex cannot explain the fundamental motives behind expansion [except perhaps in some abstract, Freudian sense], it may nevertheless explain how such enterprises were sustained” (2). Sexual adventure was certainly one sort of “adventure” promised in the game of empire.

³⁵ In the eighteenth century, marriage between British men and Indian women had been the norm; Ronald Hyam estimates “that ninety per cent of the British in India by the mid-Eighteenth century made such marriages” (116). However, Hyam notes, “intermarriage was virtually at an end by the beginning of the nineteenth century” (117), the result of official sanctions, missionary zeal, fears of rebellion, new technologies of governing the colonies, and improved transportation that enabled British women and children to travel back and forth between England and the colonies (see Hyam 116–121). However, as he notes, sexual relations between races continued in different forms. Without marriage to give even the pretense of equality between partners, however, sexual relations often became purely matters of economic exchange and imperial domination.

³⁶ I do not wish to argue that this is the only available reading or even the best reading (as a strict Freudian might) for our fears concerning the undead or any other monster from horror fiction. While the Freudian reading may be insightful and applicable, in this instance it is hardly thorough enough to explain the complexity of human desires and fears. For example, in this case, it is apparent that there is a very real fear of death, which is not simply a fear of castration or a guilty desire for the death of another. As Hélène Cixous, in “Fiction and Its Phantoms,” observes, death, as the loss of all meaning, is the ultimate cause of our experience of the uncanny and

The direct figure of the uncanny is the Ghost. The Ghost is the fiction of our relationship to death, concretized by the specter in literature. The relationship to death reveals the highest degree of the Unheimliche [uncanny]. There is nothing more notorious and uncanny to our thought than mortality (Cixous 542).

³⁷ Freud supports the premise that one figure might be an object of both fear and desire at the same time. He observed in 1915 “that these objects to which men give their preferences, that is their ideals, originate in the same perceptions and experiences as those objects of which they have the most abhorrence, and...the two [may have] differed from one another only by slight modifications” (Repression 108). However, unlike Freud I do not want to suggest that there is simply a “death instinct” or desire for oblivion that is attached to desires concerning the monster. Instead I would suggest, again, that Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “becoming” is involved in the desire for the monster (i.e., the desire to become the monster) and that this is fundamentally opposed to the Freudian concept of the death instinct as a conservative drive that involves a desire to return to an inanimate state.

³⁸ The tale of supernatural investigation or detection was, at the time, a popular sub-genre that combined elements of horror and mystery fiction. Detectives (psychic or otherwise) such as William Hope Hodgson’s Carnacki the Ghost Finder, E. and H. Heron’s Flaxman Low, Blackwood’s Dr. Silence, Alice and Claude Askew’s Aylmer Vance, and others, who combined the skills of the investigator with a special knowledge of the occult and supernatural, investigated sorcerers, ghosts, demons, vampires, werewolves, and the occasional mundane menace.

³⁹ Others have, of course, observed this connection before—perhaps Freud first of all, when he stated that “the poets were there before me.” Jean Bellemin-Noel in a critique of Todorov’s theory of the fantastic, proposed that “One could define fantastic literature as that in which the question of the unconscious emerges” (qtd. in Jackson, *Fantasy*, 62). David Punter, in concluding a discussion of three horror texts from the 1890’s (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*), finds that

all three of these works are concerned with the problem of the liberation of repressed desires. The discoveries of Darwin combined with psychological developments to produce, firstly, a revelation that the personality contains depths which do not appear on the surface of everyday intercourse, and secondly, a fear of that the Other thus postulated may relate to the bestial level which evidences human continuity with the animal world....Thus the 'double self' which had been hypothesized by Hogg and others received a basis in scientific speculation, and the whole question of man's relations to the beasts came to be examined—and mythologized anew (1st ed. 255).

⁴⁰ What Punter labels "Gothic" more closely resembles a mode than a genre and includes the texts of supernatural horror fiction as I am defining it here. It is also the case that some of the arguments I make concerning horror fiction are also applicable to earlier Gothic texts, but that is to be expected considering the horror genre's roots in the Gothic.

⁴¹ Todorov's concept of the fantastic as "that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25) was developed using many of these early horror texts as examples. It would seem that the fantastic (although Todorov does not recognize that this is the case) can be a political gesture because it complicates notions of reality and suggests that reality is in part (or possibly) an ideological construct. The fantastic can make the reader question the extent of ideology's influence in constructing the world.

⁴² However, the optimism of the story makes it less effective as a social critique. Certainly it is less horrific because of its hopeful ending, and a reader will not generally be left with a feeling of horror directed at present social conditions.

⁴³ In this variation of the horror story, it is the protagonist's own body that has become monstrous. The sudden transformation of his healthy, young body into one that is old and diseased heightens the horror that body holds for Eden as well as the reader. As in many of Wells' horror stories, this tale can be classed as science fiction as well as horror, depending on whether one believes Eden's transformation has been accomplished through scientific or supernatural means.

⁴⁴ Paul Coates sees in the *fin-de-siecle* interest in the plot of the double a definite change from earlier versions of the story. He finds that the double in the tales of the later part of the nineteenth century "displays the features of a criminal self that has denied the other his humanity and exploited him instead of identifying with him" (Coates 34). In spite of the fact that Elvisham and Eden mirror each other in many ways (most notably in their names and initials), their relationship is such that one is clearly exploiting the other.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Rose notes, "When we read Edwardian literature for its clichés, we discover that divided, divorced, split, shattered, disintegration, dissolution, and in separate compartments are the overworked pejoratives. Unity, oneness, wholeness, bonds, synthesis, relation and connection are the cardinal virtues" (3). This suggests that a fear of dissolution, on both a societal and individual level, had particular resonance at this historic moment, as I have noted earlier in my discussion of Mary Douglas.

⁴⁶ For an example of a critique of "the fantastic" as a reactionary genre see Monleón's *A Specter Is Haunting Europe*. Monleón's argument, in its most basic terms, is that the genre acts for "the defense of the status quo and the preservation of the economic order" (14). Rosemary Jackson presents a more complicated view of the fantastic (as a mode) when she considers its subversive potential; she quotes Hélène Cixous that the fantastic offers "'a subtle invitation to transgression'" and that it can act against "'logocentrism, idealism, theologism, the scaffolding of political and subjective economy'" (qtd. in Jackson 180, 176). As always there is a problem of how to label the genre, but in both cases "the fantastic" under discussion relates closely to those texts that I am labeling "supernatural horror."

Chapter 3: Ghosts and Things, or The Haunted Object

Unlike the monster, objects in horror fiction appear to be inanimate, but sometimes prove to be monstrous too, as I will argue in this chapter. They do not remain set in one place; they circulate, sometimes through the efforts of people and sometimes through their own powers. These monstrous horrifying objects appear in horror fiction in a number of different roles—as commodities, as collectibles, as depicted in advertisements—but beyond their stated function, they also act to surprise, horrify, and haunt those who handle them.

The New Meaning of Objects

Sometime in the late 1870's, British ghosts began to leave their homes and creep into the lives of unsuspecting consumers and collectors. In some ways their journeys, from ancestral homes to urban and suburban shops and newly-formed bourgeois households, paralleled the migrations of farm workers and the rural poor to urban centers. These migrations of people occurred throughout the nineteenth century, but were particularly pronounced in the last three decades.¹ The ghost, in fiction at least, had generally been of more genteel origins, but it shared with agricultural workers a bond to a particular place, a connection explored in my previous chapter. The ghosts of ancestral homes were as much a part of the estate as a servant or tenant farmer, and they were often given more respect. Many of the ghosts found in supernatural horror lacked apparent ties to specific families and consequently lacked a tie to land or household.

Now, at the end of the century, the ghost seemed more mobile; ghosts, in fiction, were often associated with specific objects rather than places. In the horror fictions under consideration here, all sorts of objects, however common, can become potentially supernatural and threatening. In discussing the sort of ghost story that he and others at the time wrote, M. R. James noted that “many common objects may be made the vehicles for retribution, and where

retribution is not called for, of malice” (Stories I Have Tried 646). Such has not always been the case in stories that introduced the supernatural.²

In more intentionally factual discourses of the occult and supernatural, attitudes towards objects were also changing. The spiritualist practice of “table-turning” seems to have made an impression on many people, even those who were not believers in spiritualism, such as Karl Marx, who refers to the practice when discussing the table as commodity in *Capital*. Spiritualism, by suggesting that spirits could act and talk through common items like tables, strengthened and expanded the links between spirits (or ghosts) and objects, and made a wider and more common variety of objects available for hauntings. Daniel Cottom notes that with spiritualism, “tables took on a new and controversial life” and that “whatever one might think about reports of spiritual communications, the conception of tables had changed....the table had become a moral object” (22, 23). He argues that this use of common, household furniture as a method of spirit communication reiterated the importance of the everyday at the same time it showed that the “ordinary world...might actually be unreliable and disoriented” (29). “By making the most trivial objects resound with portentous significance spiritualism made common experience the measure and limit of every cultural pretension. Everyday things became the ultimate texts, texts of the ultimate” (Cottom 28). A similar process was occurring in the horror fiction of the period.

Certain kinds of objects have traditionally been susceptible to ghostly influence. Methods of transport, for instance, were prone to haunting in folklore and earlier fiction. The famous Flying Dutchman or the ghostly d’Urberville Coach from Thomas Hardy’s *Tess* (which appears to members of that family in times of trouble) are representative. A carriage or boat, though, can be seen as a sort of portable house; it is an enclosed space that conveys an individual or family and not an object found in the interior of a home. Thus, it is an understandable exception.

Another group of exceptions are objects that appear to imitate or represent the human form. The three most common examples of these sorts of magical or haunted objects are examined by Theodore Ziolkowski in *Disenchanted Images*. Ziolkowski devotes chapters of his book to the statue, the portrait, and the mirror—three “magic images representing the human body and, by extension, the human soul.” He traces the history of their appearances in literature in order to define “the process whereby these magic images become ‘disenchanted’” (17). Ziolkowski’s is one of the few studies devoted to the iconography of the magic object in literature, and he presents a detailed history of the portrayal of these three items in Western literature. However, I would suggest that there is good reason to amend his conclusion that the history of these objects presents a steady process of “disenchantment,” by which he means the loss of belief in the supernatural and a rationalization of supposedly supernatural attributes (17).

As Ziolkowski admits, this disenchantment is not always straightforward; he writes that “the fourth [and final] stage in the process of disenchantment...often involves a reanimation of the disenchanted images by transportation into a literary form where the marvelous can still be taken literally: parody...horror fiction...or fantasy” (233). Perhaps his relative lack of attention to genre fiction, in deference to works of a more canonical nature, or to other, non-literary forms, such as advertising, where enchantment continues to play a pivotal role, accounts for his general conclusion that objects have tended to become disenchanted over the course of the past 200 years. While there has been disenchantment in some quarters, there is a concurrent process of reenchancement that accompanies the growth of capitalism and commodity culture. The quality of being supernatural (i.e., being superior to the natural world in some way) may detach from one object only to be found again in another.

Ziolkowski is aware that enchantment returns to objects in those later literary forms “where the marvelous can still be taken literally,” but he does not attempt to explain how this process of reenchancement works or how the existence of genres like supernatural horror attest to a returned desire for the enchanted object. As I suggested in Chapter 1, the growth of supernatural

horror as a genre is itself evidence of a desire for enchantment or the magical that is still with us, even though this desire is also tied to fear and horror. That the objects that retain their supernatural aura in our era can be objects of both horror and humor, as Ziolkowski notes, suggests the complex and somewhat problematic nature of the supernatural for modern writers and readers. The haunted and cursed objects of horror fiction, which I will explore in this chapter, seem to reflect an inability to completely accept the changes that accompany the reign of the commodity. With the development of the supernatural horror genre, objects themselves or how they are acquired and how they circulate become threatening in a way they never were before.

Western folklore offers many stories of magic objects, but the majority of these objects are beneficial in some way, not cursed or haunted.³ Even when potentially harmful magical objects appear in folk tales, there is always an apparent reason for their presence, and those who receive them do so because of some failing on their part. There is a logic and a moral purpose for the existence of these objects, and every cursed object exists for a reason, generally to teach a lesson or bring retribution for past misdeeds. A fair amount of work has been done cataloging folklore motifs, and the most comprehensive of these catalogues, Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, lists many types of magic objects and many methods of acquiring them, but there seems to be no record in the folk tales he explores of a cursed or haunted object accidentally acquired, whether purchased or found. Yet by the 1870's such stories frequently appear in popular literature.

Victorian ghost stories and Gothic tales might carry on these folklore traditions, but the supernatural horror stories of the later part of the century contain objects acquired purely by accident, and these objects bring with them horrifying consequences. In Mrs. Mary Louisa Molesworth's "The Shadow in the Moonlight," the narrator can play upon expectations concerning the renting of an "ancient and, in a modest way, historical" home by announcing in the opening line that "We never thought of Finster St. Maby's being haunted" (1). This is a

common opening in ghost stories, but unlike in most stories that begin with such a statement, this family's perception turns out to be correct. While they may later think the house is haunted, in fact the haunting is the result of an object, a haunted tapestry that has been made into a portiere. As a result, the ghost follows them when they leave for another house. The object they purchased has undesired and unexpected attributes, and, in this case, the transformation of the object from tapestry to curtain and from valued, ancestral possession to commodity object has made the actions of this ghost inexplicable. As a commodity, the object has lost its history. It is only by intentionally investigating the object that the family finally discovers the meaning of the ghost, who eternally appears to be trying to look behind their portiere no matter where it has been hung.

The many late Victorian horror stories concerning objects seem to be at least in part a reaction to developments in late nineteenth century capitalism and consumer culture.⁴ The process of commodification clearly predates the 1870's, but there were changes at work in the later part of the century that can account for a different response to objects in horror fiction.⁵ Both Thomas Richards and Rachel Bowlby have drawn on the work of Guy Debord to point out the increased importance of "spectacle" in the creation of a late-nineteenth century form of commodity culture. Citing the growth of advertising, brand name recognition, the rise of the department store and trade exhibition, and the explosion of new products available for purchase, Rachel Bowlby concludes that the Victorian *fin-de-siecle* saw a shift in the "concerns of industry...from production to selling and from the satisfaction of stable needs to the invention of new desires" (3). At such a point in history, one can see the beginnings of Guy Debord's "society of the spectacle," in which "the spectacle is [the] affirmation of appearance and affirmation of all human life, namely social life, as mere appearance" (Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* I:10).⁶

A quick review of the fiction of the period will show that supernatural horror is not alone in the attention it pays to material objects and domestic interiors. Critics have pointed out, for instance, that the mystery made the presence and absence of objects particularly important for the development of its narratives.⁷ However, the mystery is usually concerned with objects that are

out of place, left behind, or missing entirely, whereas horror is more concerned with the object that has been acquired, inherited, or purchased.

As Walter De La Mare points out, while both the mystery and the ghost story find objects significant, the significance they attribute to those objects differs. He writes that:

Enthusiasts from the C.I.D [Central Intelligence Division of Scotland Yard]...hardly augment the human or spiritual significance of the objects they fix their stoat-like glance on. They make of them 'exhibits' dignified or poisoned by the company they have been in. But when ghosts are about, objects become symbols. They too, like revenants themselves, waver in being, between two worlds ("Introduction" 26).

The presence of the supernatural gives objects a particular significance for the readers of these stories. Unlike the readers of the detective story who, like the detectives themselves, "read" objects only to decipher their relation to an event, readers of the ghost story are able to see objects as pregnant with a specific meaning all their own. The ghost or horror story can reveal objects' roles as conceptual markers with "human or spiritual significance." Thus, the object in supernatural horror may actually have a role of its own and not be important merely because it has come in contact with a certain character, and thereby contributes a clue to the resolution of the plot.

The Mysterious Language of Objects

The value of an object has probably never been simply a matter of its physical properties or its "use value".⁸ Even in pre-capitalist societies material objects have a symbolic value; they represent certain social values and concepts. In *The World of Goods*, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood propose the theory that material goods are "more or less transitory markers of rational categories," and, by embodying certain abstract concepts, they enable people to shape an "intelligible universe" for themselves and others (5). They write that "goods assembled together in ownership make physical, visible statements about the hierarchy of values to which their chooser subscribes" (5). This use of goods would not seem to be a recent phenomena or simply a product of capitalism, although perhaps the importance of goods becomes more noticeable in a

society that give exchange value priority over use value. As Jean Baudrillard points out, “objects have always constituted a system of recognition, but in conjunction with, and often in addition to other systems. What is specific to our society is that the other systems of recognition are progressively withdrawing” (*System of Objects* 19).

Douglas and Isherwood’s theory seems correct in its attempt to unite material and abstract values, but others have done more to define the specific differences in the relations between people and things that develop under capitalism. In *Capital* (part I, section 4) Karl Marx tried to explain the complex nature of the commodity object in a capitalist system. His attempts to describe the commodity continually fall back on metaphors drawn from the world of religion and the occult; it is only through terms such as *mystery*, *mystical*, and *magic* that he can find ways to describe the significance of the commodity object. Only in the vocabulary of the supernatural can Marx find words to describe the “metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (*Capital* 81) of the commodity, just as he found the vocabulary of the “monstrous” necessary to describe human activities under capitalism (as I showed in Chapter 2).

Jacques Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*, provides an extended analysis of Marx’s use of supernatural metaphors. He concludes, rightly, that such metaphors are essential for Marx’s project and not merely an affectation or accident because of the “irreducibility of the religious model in the construction of the concept of ideology” (148). The “methods” of ideology, as well as many of the ideas used to critique it, can be said to have originated in religion, and the process of secularization entails the transformation of religious concepts and functions into a new key.⁹ For our purposes, it is important to note that in the popular imagination, stories and metaphors of the supernatural become a major way in which people try to understand the ideological workings of a capitalist society.

One of Marx’s most important and most commented upon metaphors is his description of the commodity as “fetish.” Marx argues that, like a fetish, the commodity object is endowed with certain properties by virtue of its connection to some abstraction, in this case its exchange value

and that the real origins of its use value, the social relation of human labour, are obfuscated. The “value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities” has “absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom,” but also these commodities “appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and with the human race” (Marx, *Capital* 83). Or, as Michael Taussig phrases it, “[Commodity] fetishism denotes the attribution of life, autonomy, power, and even dominance to otherwise inanimate objects and presupposes the draining of these qualities from the human actors who bestow the attribution” (*Devil and Commodity Fetishism* 31). Marx emphasizes the fact that any real power we attribute to objects is given to them through human labour and then only in the context of the “social life” of a given historical moment. In the capitalist commodity system, people are treated as objects, and objects are “endowed with life.” As I noted in the Chapter 2, supernatural horror often makes people into “things” by making them monstrous and hence inhuman, but these stories also anthropomorphize objects, giving things the qualities of living beings.

There is also another parallel to be drawn between the supernatural and the condition of the commodity in the modern world. Like the magician, the consumer is involved in the manipulation and control of signs. Susan Stewart finds that “the proper labor of the consumer....is a labor of total magic, a fantastic labor which operates through the manipulation of abstraction rather than through concrete or material means” (164). The consumer, in selecting the objects of his or her environment, is presenting a message by manipulating signs, signs that are materially embodied in commodities. In this ordering of signs, and not in the actual production of objects, the consumer’s “work” is done. As the realm of appearance becomes increasingly more important for the economy, the work of experts in the manipulation of images also becomes more significant; the work of advertisers, product designers, and the producers of mass media complement and encourage the manipulation of signs that becomes the consumer’s social responsibility.

It is not surprising that the commodity, to which all sorts of signification is attached, becomes a magical object in the eyes of the consumer. Advertising makes claims that the commodity can bestow all sorts of powers and attributes on its possessor, and in fact the commodity does act to change the status of a purchaser, but never to the extent it promises. In every society, objects, as Douglas and Isherwood note, serve as physical markers for concepts and values. Modern capitalism simply makes the manipulation of commodity objects the only socially acceptable way for an individual to make what Douglas and Isherwood label “an intelligible universe” (*The World of Goods* 65).

The commodity, through advertising, promises to fulfill all desires and to give a magical solution to the constraints imposed by society. In this way, it reproduces the promise of magic to “defend[s] the individual against society, against the superego,” the internalization of society’s constraints (O’Keefe 263). For as O’Keefe also points out,

Magic works with symbols, as does almost all human action, but magic puts a special accent on them. It appears sometimes to be a celebration of them, a half-exuberant, half-terrified flexing of their dangerous powers, or a dawning discovery and exploration of their remarkable uses. Above all, magic frequently appears to be the use of these symbolic powers to counter the terrors of the symbolic world that man has created and to get some control over it (39).

The commodity object, then, can be seen as a magical way of trying to control and order the environment, a man-made environment in which symbols and signs have very real and important effects. Such at least is the promise of the commodity, even if it continually fails to deliver on that promise.

The Commodity That Makes Monsters of Men

The commodity can also be dangerous and its contents uncertain, especially in the days before regulatory agencies. This potential threat inherent in the commodity is another way in which the forces at work on consumers prove to be beyond their understanding. Arthur Machen’s “Novel of the White Powder” concerns one such encounter with a dangerous commodity. The

story originally appeared in the volume *The Three Impostors*, a series of stories linked together by a narrative that explains the stories away as a series of lies told to the two protagonists (Dyson and Russell) in order to gain their confidence, but it was reprinted a number of times (with the approval of Machen) as a separate story without that framing device. Taken apart from the framing narrative, the “Novel of the White Powder” is clearly a story of supernatural horror.

Machen’s story is told to Dyson, who is of a mystical bent and seems to be looking for something supernatural in which to believe. The tale is told by a Miss Leicester and concerns her brother Francis, who had spent all of his time studying law and “seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure” (Machen, *Three Impostors* 163), until overwork and the urgings of his sister cause him to seek a doctor’s advice. The doctor’s prescription is “an innocent-looking white powder” (166) to be taken once a day dissolved in water. After consuming the medicine a sudden transformation occurs in Francis’ character and physique. His sister notices “that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless and merry idler...a hunter of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before [her] eyes....” and one day she “looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger” (168). Francis is soon spending his nights out carousing and gives up his studies entirely.

However, this is only the beginning of his transformation; soon she notices a mark on his hand that looks like a “brand,” and then he begins covering the hand entirely (170–171). The doctor (Haberden) tells her not to worry, but she, who has seen “a look in [her brother’s] eyes...that is scarcely human” finally convinces him to show an interest in his patient. They find that the white powder the pharmacist has given Francis is not what was prescribed. Dr. Haberden visits Francis’ bedroom, and when he comes away “There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, his lower lip trembled like a horse’s, and he gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke” (176). He is completely horrified by what he has encountered (and perhaps inadvertently created) and confesses that there is nothing he can do for Francis.

The last days of Francis are particularly hideous and written with every intent to horrify, which they did, if we are to believe the reviews of the book. The final stage in Francis' bizarre decline is his complete physical transformation or degeneration back to a state of primordial ooze.

Our last view of Francis is as

a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and...a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm" (183).

The explanation for this strange transformation comes by way of letter from a chemist friend of the doctor's; it seems that the white powder, through some purely accidental process, had been altered while on the druggist's shelf from a mild nerve tonic to "the powder from which the wine of the [witch's] Sabbath, the *Vinum Sabbati*, was prepared" (189). While the explanation tries to make use of some scientific terminology, it is clear that the chemist sees this as a supernatural event.

A number of critics have written on Machen's work, but none seems to have connected it to the developing consumer culture of late Victorian England. Peter Penzoldt has argued that the story is really about the guilt involved in masturbation, represented by the white powder, the mark on the hand, the seclusion, and the confession of Francis to his sister that he has "felt what it is to be young and a man" (Machen, 168). In Penzoldt's eyes, the story adds up to a sordid tale of self abuse, which he finds "as revolting as the symbol employed" (Penzoldt 159–160). Glen Cavaliero notes that "an adolescent fear of, and curiosity concerning, sex" is a common theme in a number of Machen's works (73). S.T. Joshi likewise calls it a "horror over illicit sex" (21). There is some merit in these interpretations, but they do not explain what I see as a key element in the story, the way in which the white powder of the title is acquired and the reason it is given. While the physical and moral deterioration of Francis Leicester may reflect some process of sexual dissolution, the first cause, so to speak, of this process is a doctor's prescription, and the nexus through which this supernatural element reaches Francis is a chemist shop somewhere in

London. Just as sex is used to sell commodities, so too does the commodity itself promise a pleasure and gratification that is sexual in nature, but that does not stop the individual's relationship to the commodity from being an essentially economic one.

The white powder is first of all a commodity. In a period when recreational drugs were growing rapidly in popularity in the metropolitan centers of the West, we might even suggest it is a perfect commodity because of its addictive qualities. Francis' problem is that he does not seek pleasure and so is not a very good consumer. This story takes place at a time when the importance of leisure (for mental and physical health) was being propagated as a counter-balance to the Protestant work ethic, which had had such a large impact on the development of bourgeois capitalism. Not coincidentally, this was also a period when people's roles as consumers gained importance in the development of the economy. The first effect that the white powder has upon Francis is to make him a better consumer. His chief pleasures begin to involve restaurants and public entertainment and he grows "fat." It is able to effect this change, apparently, through a form of witchcraft. However, consumerism, like witchcraft, is shown to be a horrifying threat to identity, at least to a particular conception of a conservative, Western, masculine identity.

Machen's own politics were very conservative and so one might read his implied criticism of consumerism as a reaction to capitalism and consumer culture as materialistic forces that level the stable hierarchies of the past. The way dissolution is depicted in the story makes clear what the real fears related to capitalism and the commodity are. At the end of the story, Francis literally dissolves into a fluid substance without form or boundaries; it—for Francis is no longer referred to as "he"—is "seething...melting...changing" (183). In his study of the cultural origins of fascism, *Male Fantasies*, Klaus Theweleit traces the development of metaphors of floods, flows, and streams, and finds that the fear and desire to repress such things represents a fear of the unconscious, of desire, and of femininity and female sexuality (Vol. I 249–288). In his loss of solidity, Francis leaves, metaphorically, the condition of masculine rectitude behind. His brush with the commodity has feminized him, but has made him "other" in other ways as well;

for example, he has also become “dark...like boiling pitch” (183). In fact, he seems to have crossed all boundaries of identity simultaneously. This should not be surprising, considering how often supernatural horror fiction is concerned with fears of difference in gender, race, sexuality, and class and how often, as I have shown, it makes these differences overlap. Consumerism and the dangerous commodity pose a threat to white, male privilege and identity, which is certainly a reason mass culture has so often been gendered female (Huyssen 188–196).

It is also a concern for Machen that consumerism alters or obscures the “real” meaning of objects in the world. Machen held a neo-Platonic view of the material world, believing that it exists as a reflection of a higher spiritual order. He wrote that “we live in a world of symbols; of sensible perishable things which both veil and reveal spiritual and living and eternal realities” (qtd. in Joshi 16). He claimed that the aim of art was to create an ecstatic condition, and personally supported art or anything else that could help reveal a higher reality. As Wesley Sweester writes, he stood against, “the enemies of the spirit...big business, industrialization, science, naturalism, democracy, Puritanism, Protestantism [of the dissenting kind], atheism and Communism” (qtd. in Joshi 14). It may be that Francis initially suffers because of his inability to function as a good consumer, but the cure for his malaise, which makes him a good consumer, brings with it a far greater punishment. Within the consumer culture of capitalism, the only identifier that retains importance is monetary exchange, which can bring anything into its orbit. Spiritual values or traditional, conservative values are lost when monetary value takes precedence, and for the individual, as Machen would see it, that also means a loss of identity.

There is also an element of randomness and uncertainty that accompanies the acquisition of the white powder; the processes that created it on the druggist’s shelf are not ones that could be recreated even with “modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision” (Machen 189). Thus, that the existence of the powder defies any scientific explanation and requires a supernatural one: it is a powder used by witches in their Sabbath rites. The threat of the commodity is that it may appear innocuous and therefore may affect anyone; it does not act with

any moral purpose. The commodity is not bound by rational or scientific rules—it appears, instead, to have supernatural power.

The Magic of Technology

Given that people's lives are continually influenced by the objects around them, we should expect that new types of objects can change people's relations with one another and with the object world in general. The “essence of modern technology” is, according to Heidegger, its “enframing” of the world (302), which I take to mean that technologies frame our experience of and our approach to the world and that therefore new technology creates a new frame. Late nineteenth century changes in attitudes towards material objects and consumer goods were at least partially the result of rapid technological change. New technologies that relied on the seemingly magical power of electricity and were capable of tasks, like seeing through matter, that the average person would never have thought possible together with a more widespread availability of mass produced devices such as cameras and sewing machines changed peoples interactions with others and their perceptions of the world at large.¹⁰

Because the workings of these new technologies were difficult to understand, many chose to consider their actions as supernatural, or, correlatively to see the alleged magic of past ages and distant lands as merely another form of advanced technology. Horror and occult fiction of the period is filled with references to “ancient science” and eastern adepts who “possess what we should call supernatural powers; [though] of course they are not supernatural at all, as we know” (F. J. Armour 85). The narrator of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Mystery of Cloomber* adds an appendix to his tale in order to explain that what separates the Eastern adept from the Western scientist is the lengthier tradition of the former; he writes that “our own scientific results are the results of a few hundred years, whereas the occult philosophy has been the work of the very cream of humanity, extending over an unbroken period of at least twenty thousand years” (242–243).

Francis Armour's *Brotherhood of Wisdom* draws an even closer connection between magical and scientific practices. It presents the existence of a secret and mystical brotherhood, originating in the ancient East, but including among its ranks "many of our science men," just as "In the old days...most of the so-called necromancers, wizards, alchemists, astrologers and other men who knew more than their neighbours, belonged to the society" (85). The suspicion people of earlier times felt towards the wizard and the alchemist was transferred over time to the scientist. During the Renaissance the two groups overlapped to a good extent, but in the modern era magicians transferred many of their functions to the scientists, at least as far as the public was concerned. Certainly science separated itself from other disciplines of knowledge more in the nineteenth century than ever before.¹¹ By the late Victorian period, the general public saw scientists as a secretive group whose knowledge was beyond the common person's comprehension and whose activities were comparable to those of Eastern religious cults and magical societies, which were also becoming an object of public interest at this time. The discoveries of scientific research and technological development were often presented as magical objects that might have come from *The Arabian Nights*, and they were sometimes portrayed as such in the advertisements of the day (see Figure 3-1).

For some, such as the spiritualist and journalist W. T. Stead, new technologies were clearly magical. He wrote of "the spirit mysteries" of modern technology that enabled "the very sound and accent of the living words of the dead whose bodies are in the dust [to] become the common inheritance of mankind" and made the "possibility of seeing through things, which our forefathers used to believe was only possessed by supernatural beings...now in possession of everyone who is capable of using the Röntgen rays" (qtd. in A. Briggs, *Victorian Things* 395). However, not all were so optimistic about these new discoveries. Stopford Brooke, for instance, describing the gramophone, noted that "the voice that came out of it was like the voice of a skeleton—a weird, vile, uncanny, monstrous thing!" Rather than producing a "living voice," he said, it let one hear "the voice of a thin ghost, squeaking like a rat behind the arras. To hear it is

**When the Eastern King
heard it sing, he cried out.
"IT IS MAGIC."**

You will enjoy its magic through all the year
if you provide your home with a

**COLUMBIA
GRAPHOPHONE**

(Cylinder and Disc Styles),
£1 1s. to £15 15s.

The kind that won the
Grand Prix at Paris in 1900.

*'Price Book F' is full of
information. Send for a copy.*

**COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH
Company, Gen'l,**

89, Great Eastern St., E.C.,
200, Oxford St., W., London.
Glasgow: 50, Union Street.
Cardiff: 96, St. Mary Street.

COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE



Figure 3-1: Advertisement: Technology as magic

to violate the sacred silence of the dead” (qtd. in Read, 74). While for some, communicating with the dead (through séance or gramophone) may have been an uplifting activity, for others it was a ghostly and uncanny experience. These newly created “magical” objects certainly had the potential of being objects of horror.

The fact that these new technologies could so often be linked with the dead or undead suggests how easily they could be seen as supernatural or uncanny and potentially threatening and horrific as well. The telephone appears in a number of horror stories as the means by which the dead communicate with and beckon to the living. So the photograph might be used to show unnatural things not apparent to the eye. In E. G. Swain’s “The Man with the Roller,” for example, the narrator sees a ghost in a developing photograph and concludes that “there is more in our photography than we yet know of” and that “Those who turn the instruments of science upon nature will always be in danger of seeing more than they looked for” (15–16).¹²

Allen Upward devotes an entire novel, *The Discovery of the Dead*, to the premise that Röntgen rays (X-Rays) could be used to reveal the unseen world of spirits and demons. Upward’s novel uses technological advances to establish the validity of mythic beliefs in an underworld hell and a heaven somewhere above the earth. The novel’s narrator postulates that scientists form a new priesthood and a new orthodoxy, which is really a continuation of an older tradition (14). He too suggests “that the celebrated magic of the ancients...embraced the knowledge of scientific processes we are about to rediscover” (33). Novels such as *The Discovery of the Dead* certainly have an element of science fiction in their use of science and technology, but these elements are used to support a supernatural (and “ancient”) conception of the world. The culmination of many of these narratives is a moment of horror in which both reader and narrator realize the implications and consequences of such a worldview. In Upward’s novel, it is the scientist’s destruction by the “Arch-Dynamorph” (the Devil) that provides the climax of the tale as well as the revelation of the horror which results from scientific meddling.

Fetishes, Foreign and Domestic

In addition to technological and scientific advances, the nineteenth century saw the origination and growth of what Foucault has called the “human sciences.” Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology sought to understand the importance of objects for “primitive” and colonized peoples or “degenerates” and “neurotics,” respectively. The term “fetishism” was widely used at the turn of the century in both of these disciplines and had a fair amount of currency among the general populace as well.¹³ By mid-century, as I have shown, Karl Marx was already aware of the term’s usefulness in describing the abstract relations of modern capitalism; anthropologists such as E. B. Tylor found it an essential concept for understanding cultural development (see Tylor, Vol. II 143–160); and psychologists such as Alfred Binet (and later Freud) would consider it a key concept in the exploration of the psyche.

Even though the term fetish was generally used to describe the activities of the “other”—whether they may be non-Christian, colonized, or simply insane—its derivation, from the Portuguese *fetisso*, links it to a word used by Portuguese traders to refer both to African goods imbued with a spiritual significance (often things, such as gold, that the European trader wanted) and to the European’s own trade goods, which the traders would have to treat as spiritually significant (by swearing oaths upon them, for example) in order to trade (Pietz, Pt. II 45). The European traders who defined the word were already complicit in the use of fetishes, a use which, according to their own religious and economic beliefs, they condemned. William Pietz argues that the idea of the fetish could only originate in a “contact zone” where three radically different social systems—“Christian feudal, African lineage, and merchant capitalist”—encountered one another (Pietz, Pt. I 6–7).¹⁴ In this encounter, which proved so essential for the growth of European capitalism, a term from religious discourse—“feitico,” meaning an object used in witchcraft—was borrowed by capitalist traders to express their disdain for “material objects...[that] could embody any sort of religious, aesthetic, sexual, or social value at all (i.e.,

any value not expressing the material objects ‘real’ instrumental and market values)” (Pietz, Pt. II 24).

The fetish was conceived by anthropologists as a specific type of religious object, one in which a spirit or god resided. According to the anthropological theory of the time, what was important in a fetish was not the object per se but “an intangible power or spirit incorporated” in the object, so that “the fetish is merely the link between the worshipper and the object of his worship” (Haddon 70). Any object could be a fetish as long as it was something that attracted attention; E. B. Tylor concluded that in this respect the fetish-worshiper was not that different than the modern European. He writes that

The turn of mind which in the Gold-Coast negro would manifest itself in a museum of monstrous and most potent fetishes, might impel an Englishman to collect scarce postage-stamps or queer walking-sticks. In the love of abnormal curiosities there shows itself a craving for the marvelous, an endeavor to get free from the tedious sense of law and uniformity in nature (145).

Even though there is a value judgment in this comparison—the African fetish is labeled as monstrous and having magical potency, while the European collection is merely rare and unusual—there is a significant similarity noted as well. Perhaps the process of collecting is an attempt to gain power through the possession of objects, as it often is presented in the horror fictions of this period.

The commodity object promises that it will be something new and different, although it always proves to be the same. The collector, though, works to resist this trend. As Walter Benjamin notes, the collector’s task is “obliterating the commodity-like character of things through ownership of them,” but he merely confers connoisseur value on them, instead of intrinsic value (*Reflections* 155). In an attempt to reach the sublime and escape from the “law and uniformity” of nature (or culture), the European collector is even more likely to fail than the African fetishist, because there is only one “god”—money and the power it lends—that can speak through the commodity object. The collector’s fantasy is that the encounter with the unique object will enable one to escape the ordinary and experience the sublime. Even in the haunted

and horrific objects of horror fiction there is the possibility of such an experience of the sublime, but in the real world of the collector that hope is bound to fail.

In novels such as H. Rider Haggard's *The Yellow God* and Harris Burland's *The Gold Worshippers* a rather perceptive parallel is drawn between foreign and domestic fetishes. In Haggard's novel an African fetish (so named) is introduced at the beginning of the story as the "protector" of a business enterprise set up to defraud the British public. The idol, which stands in the office of the financier Sir Robert Aylward, is described as

a terrible object, a monstrosity of indeterminate sex and nature, but surmounted by a woman's head....Whatever there is cruel, whatever there is devilish, whatever there is inhuman in the dark places of the world, shone out of the jeweled eyes which were set in that yellow female face, yellow because its substance was of gold...(10).

This fetish, worshipped by the "Asiki" tribe, has found a new home with Sir Robert, a crooked London capitalist, who believes that it protects his scheme of irrigating and colonizing the Sahara desert. The African native who brought the idol (known as the Yellow God) to England also claims that it is responsible for the success of this imperialist enterprise, and the failure of the enterprise once the idol is removed suggests he is correct. This irrigation project is clearly a fraud that will swindle the British public and also have grave effects for African people, and this African fetish's role in its successful promotion suggests that the Africans are being held in part responsible for their own exploitation.

However, Haggard's novel does not simply cast blame upon the Africans for creating this monstrous fetish, it also presents a critique of financial speculation and the capitalist's fetishization of money/gold. Early in the novel it becomes clear that both Europeans and Africans worship fetishes and at times the same fetish. At one point Aylward, meaning to say he is a worshipper of Mammon, lets slip that he "worship[s] at the shrine of...the Yellow God" (Haggard, *Yellow God* 53). Perhaps the fetish's greatest threat is that it may effect such a conversion. Aylward worships this idol because he has fetishized gold, from which it is made and which it seemingly produces for him. The Asiki, on the other hand, "care nothing about all

[their] gold” and generally use it “to make basin, stool, table, and pot to cook with” (88); they only see its use value and do not fall prey to the same type of fetishizing that the English financier does.

The European’s worship of gold is brought out even more directly in Burland’s horrific variation on the King Midas myth, *The Gold Worshippers*. The novel concerns a magical fetish that has been taken from an evil Chinese cult, who cut off their forefingers and use giant, yellow snakes to do their bidding. It is worth noting Freud’s reading of the sexual fetish as a substitute for the lost female phallus that a man, supposedly, expects to see. Here it would seem as though the Chinese man is both feminized, by his own act of decapitation/castration, and also evil or perverse, on account of his reliance on a horrific substitute for that loss. It is somewhat unclear whether the item in question is in fact an actual fetish for “Kiao Lung...the Black Prophet of the East” (Burland 202) or simply a magical item given to his cult that grants its possessor the power to transform base metals into gold and curses him or her with an overpowering greed and megalomania as well.

Gold, in nineteenth century England, was the most important of natural resources, as the gold standard was the major support for the stability of the economy.¹⁵ As Harry Drew, the narrator of Burland’s novel, was told at the bank of England, “gold was the life blood of the nation, and...the latter’s power and prosperity depended on the amount it possessed,” which makes Drew “a king among men, a patriot, and a bulwark of the national credit and prosperity” (137). England’s gold reserves were dependent on foreign possessions, and the need for gold was one justification for empire. It is meaningful, then, that a golden idol or a fetish that grants the power to make gold can become an object of contention between British imperialists and agents of an alien religion and culture. Once again, in *The Gold Worshippers* there is a clear critique of capitalism’s worship of money and the fetishization of commodities that follows from it, but the real blame for Western capitalism’s excesses is placed firmly on the shoulders of the foreign and

subjugated other who has allowed his property to be taken and then has the audacity to want it back.

Horror fiction of this period is full of stories of foreign idols and fetishes, and the problems they cause when taken out of their original context. Fetishes may not be the same as idols, but in the popular imagination these nuances of definition are often forgotten and because of the currency of the term the idol is often called a fetish. The theft of fetishes is often a cause for revenge, bringing foreign cultists into the European sphere in a type of reverse colonization. Certainly such fantasies must represent at least some guilt on the part of British imperialists over their exploitation of colonized peoples—both material exploitation and cultural imperialism—and a consequent fear that they would be held accountable for their crimes. In such cases, the fetish can serve, appropriately, both as a material object forcibly removed from another's possession and also as a symbol of a foreign culture/religion which is also being stolen or destroyed.

The fetish or idol may represent the foreign culture which produced it, but it may also stand in the place of a member of that culture, the colonized and “primitive” other. In William F. Harvey's offensively titled story, “Sambo,” an African fetish invades perhaps the most innocent place imaginable, a young girl's doll family. A relative sends a doll to a little girl, Janey, “from a place in Africa where he had been helping to put down a native rising” (79). The place remains nameless, possibly because all places in Africa are pretty much the same, and we do not get much detail about this relative's activities there, except that he “discovered [the doll] in a deserted hut” (79)—discovery supposedly distinguishable from theft.

The doll is called “Sambo” by her mother, but Janey “would have called the doll IT” (Harvey 81). Janey finds the doll disappointing because he lacks proper attire and has a “hideous” appearance: “His nose was a shapeless protruding lump; his lips were thick, and his hair was represented by a collection of knobs” (80). Therefore, she places him last in the ranks of her dolls. The uncle who narrates the story soon finds that Sambo's position in the doll family is improving, although not because of Janey's appreciation of him. She keeps reiterating that she

hates Sambo. Sambo acquires clothing from the other dolls and takes position as chief among them. The climax of Sambo's rapid rise to the head of the doll clan comes when the narrator spies Janey behind the raspberry canes. He recalls seeing her, while Sambo looks on, as she "placed [one] doll on the ground, cried over it and kissed it. Then before [he] realized what she was doing she had sawn off its legs and arms, and placed its dismembered trunk upon the wooden pyre" (87). She proceeds to immolate the rest of the collection, after which the narrator feels it best to remove Sambo.

The doll is stolen as the narrator is on his way to consult a friend at the British Museum, but he later sees Sambo mysteriously appearing as part of an exhibition entitled "Orient in London," where he is on display as "genuine African idol" and an "example of the gods that were worshipped in the childhood of our race" (Harvey 89–90). Sambo's final position, in a museum display, leaves him tamed, subject to a system of "scientific" classification and labeling, which can counter his apparent supernatural abilities. The idol has been "put in its place," as it were, and used for its proper purpose, to educate the British public concerning the child-like nature of this foreign race.

Harvey's story draws a familiar parallel between the activities of children and so-called "primitives," but in the process of doing so, it also suggests how susceptible the innocent European may be to the supernatural influence of the African object or person, since in this case there seems to be little difference between the two. Coming from a "primitive" society, and hence one more in touch with supernatural forces, Sambo has powers that his "fourteen brothers and sisters of different nationalities," all seemingly European, lack (Harvey 81). The story of "reverse colonization" can be found in many horror fictions from this period (*The Beetle* and *Dracula*, for example), but the situation involving Sambo is different, because here it is apparently an object—the product of a colonized African society—that has power over both other objects (the European dolls) and people (specifically Janey). However, it becomes clear as the story progresses that Sambo is not *just* an object, not just an idol or a doll, he also represents

African peoples. Early on he is referred to as “the little African” (79) and at the end of the story he is displayed as “superintending operations in an African village” (89). What originally bothers Janey about her new doll is not his unreasonable demands for power and prestige but rather his African appearance and his nudity, from which she concludes that “he was not a nice doll” (80). His rebellion is that of an oppressed subject or slave and represents the very real fear that the colonized other will revolt against his British masters.

In Burland’s *The Gold Worshippers*, this anthropomorphism is reversed; there a Chinese cultist reminds the narrator “of some great heathen idol” (243), a common comparison in the literature of the period. The word idol, which is used in the King James Bible, emphasizes the non-Christian primitivism of the alien other. These stories suggest that the world of objects is not that far removed from that of people. Objects stand in the place of people, as in the anthropological exhibition where objects from around the world are displayed to represent the societies from which they were taken. The British imperialist put great stock in such measures of a society. Michael Adas provides lengthy support for his thesis that beginning at the close of the eighteenth century, “European observers came to view science and especially technology as the most objective and unassailable measures of their own civilization’s past achievement and present worth” (*Machines* 134). Objects were the primary means by which the Europeans perceived and evaluated these technological advances and, by extension, the cultures from which they came. Of course there is an element of evaluation in the selection of the objects, and European societies could be evaluated by their locomotives while African societies were evaluated by their fetishes. However, in both cases, the object is imbued with attributes and powers beyond its particular physical uses. While the Europeans’ objects might have power because of their modern technology, the fear remained that the “primitive” peoples were advanced in other ways and that their objects were no less (and perhaps even more) powerful.

The Antiquarian's Ghosts

Nineteenth century anthropologists, as I've already noted, were aware that the gap separating the African fetishist from the European collector was not so great. Like the fetishist, collectors had a passion for objects and that passion became increasingly a subject of public interest at the close of the nineteenth century. Collectors and their collections, museums and their exhibits, bibelots and bric-a-brac were all popular topics in the periodical press. In the literature of the day, the reader often finds a fascination with objects d'art and collections of various sorts; in works ranging from realist novels to popular mysteries we can find painstaking descriptions of collections, room interiors, and the objects that inhabit them. In one respect, this fascination with the world of objects is a facet of realism; but in horror fiction, as I've suggested, objects take on a greater significance than they have in realism. It is in respect that the figure of the collector assumes a important role in many horror fictions from this period. The collector, like his or contemporary the detective, is, as Nicholas Daly points out, experienced in "managing the object world" (34–35). In a world in which objects had become increasingly more difficult to manage and their meaning more difficult to decipher, the collector became a prominent figure in and outside the pages of literature.

The growth of archaeology and anthropology and the rise of public museums surely contributed to this interest in collecting and to a new understanding of objects. These new fields looked at history, for instance, as something tied to objects, not only to places or peoples, and thus the figure of the antiquarian became closely related to that of the collector. So too, the scientist who collects specimens and the bureaucrat who collects information, occupations whose importance grew during this period, were both collectors of a sort.

Horror fiction from the turn of the century contains numerous examples of private collections and museums and a few public ones as well. M. R. James, beginning with his 1904 *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* began an entire sub-sub-genre of ghost story devoted to the unexpected consequences of antiquarian investigation and collecting.¹⁶ Much of the fiction that is

explicitly concerned with the fancies and foibles of collectors, such as Richard Marsh's generally humorous volume *Curios*, touches upon the supernatural and the horrific. Both of these books contain stories that I will investigate in more detail here, but they should be noted first as representatives of a whole body of work that takes archaeological pursuits and collecting as its subject.

James' antiquarian ghost stories generally centered on the activities of amateur historians and archaeologists and the things they unearthed, whether stories or objects. These characters were interested in, if not obsessed with, uncovering the past, but what they uncover is not what they expected. Often there seems to be no reason for their fate, that is to say, no moral failing on their part. As Jack Sullivan notes, James' protagonist is often "a pure victim, having done nothing amiss other than reading the wrong book and looking at the wrong picture" (*Elegant Nightmares* 70). It is the world of objects that is the source of the horror, not the actions of immoral individuals as in the Gothic. Perhaps they are not as discerning as they should be in selecting that book or picture, when the world they inhabit is so full of dangerous and deceptive objects, but, as this sub-genre makes clear, that is a problem faced by every modern collector or consumer.

In "'Oh, Whistle, And I'll Come to You, My Lad'," James presents one of his typical encounters between an antiquarian and an object, an encounter filled with horror and, in the Jamesian fashion, humor.¹⁷ Professor Parkins, a "Professor of Ontography" at St. James College, is planning a vacation to the coast; he is asked by fellow professor to take a look at "the site of the Templars' preceptory" near where he will be staying (120). After his arrival, Parkins literally stumbles upon these ruins, catching his foot on one of the partially buried stones that made up the medieval building, and finds an object, "a metal tube of some four inches long, and evidently of some considerable age" (128). He recognizes it as a whistle and notes a Latin inscription upon it that asks, "'Who is this who is coming?'" (131–132). Parkins concludes that "the best way to find out is evidently to whistle for him" and does so, finding himself "startled and yet pleased at

the note he had elicited” (132). So far his actions have been simple enough, and certainly he seems to have done nothing worse than wishing “to try a little amateur research in a department quite outside [his] own” (127).

As a direct result of blowing that whistle, however, the professor is soon visited by a spectre that ironically assumes the most timeworn of ghostly forms, appearing as “a horrible, an intensely horrible, face of crumbled linen” (148). The moment of the encounter would be humorous if it were not so horrific. The ghost or spirit that appears seems to have “nothing material about it save the bed-clothes of which it had made itself a body,” and it does not seem able to cause any physical damage, but its appearance has the power to permanently disrupt Professor Parkins’ peace of mind, even after his neighbor rescues him from the apparition and disposes of the whistle by throwing it into the sea.

The professor’s encounter with this monster from the past is typical of James’ stories; it seems unmotivated and uncalled for, but it does effect a change in its protagonist, making him—James’ main characters are always men, always bachelors, and often academics—feel more uncertain about the world he inhabits. Jack Sullivan has noted that James’ characters

...surround themselves with the rarefied paraphernalia from the past—engravings, rare books, altars, tombs, and even such things as doll’s houses and ancient whistles—seemingly because they cannot connect with anything in the present. The endless process of collecting and arranging gives the characters an illusory sense of order and stability, illusory because it is precisely this process which evokes the demon or the vampire (*Elegant Nightmares* 75).

James’ protagonists seem to be very complacent (at least at the start of their stories) but also somewhat removed from the modern world. Sullivan correctly suggests that they turn to the past and objects from the past in order to create a world more to their liking and achieve mastery over the world through their collection. However, such a project is always shown to fail, perhaps because their pursuit of objects from the past does not really take them away from the values of the modern, capitalist world where relations to objects are substitutes for relations to people.

Yet there is more to James' interest in these monsters from the past than a simple desire to show how fruitless antiquarian activities are, especially when we consider his own position as an academic and one of the foremost antiquarians of his day. In addition to the horror he conjures around these encounters, there seems to be a positive delight on James' part concerning the fate of his characters. Glen Cavaliero finds that "James's imagination is somehow in sympathy with the spectres it evokes. There is a faintly suicidal relish about the way he conjures up these images of decay and menace" (54). Perhaps "suicidal" is too strong a word, as there is an element of humor and self-mocking in James' depictions of antiquarian horrors, but his stories do present encounters with objects that run counter to the interests of the antiquarian scholar. Cavaliero notes that the works of James and those who followed him in writing antiquarian ghost stories show an awareness that the world they depict will not last for ever and that "so long as there is a reasonably secure bourgeoisie domesticated in private property...there will continue to be a market for allegorical enactments of its undermining" (55). The author of the horror story may find both pleasure, perverse though it may seem, and fear in such a possibility.

The antiquarian scholar seeks to build a new world out of the objects from the past, but in doing so antiquarian pursuit often becomes a substitute for a real involvement with the present. There is certainly more than a touch of displaced sexuality in the claim of the protagonist of Sir Thomas Graham Jackson's antiquarian tale, "The Ring," that he "can imagine nothing more delightful...than to penetrate into an untouched Etruscan tomb" (36). In Walter De La Mare's early story, "A.B.O.," the narrator is summoned by a friend with a note announcing "Antiquities." He relates that "'Antiquities' was the peak of the climax of this summons—the golden word. All else might be meaningless..." (*Eight Tales* 89). The object from the past has become the most desirable of all possible things, and the most dangerous. In this story, the antique object unearthed in the yard can turn out to be a monster or a "wretched abortion...which lies hid, festering, weaving snares, befouling the wholesome air, but which, some day, creeps out and goes stalking midst healthy men" (De La Mare 106).

The antiquarian ghost or horror story undermines our faith in disciplines that seek knowledge in the past; it presents the conservative desire to resurrect the past as fraught with peril. The past, it shows, may well be a nightmare, primitive, barbaric, and better left buried. However, it also suggests that digging in the ground for antiquities is motivated by a powerful desire, whether a displaced sexual desire or the desire of the individual to find an object that still manages to exist outside capitalist relations.

Collecting the Monstrous

Very much like the antiquarian, the collector is one who works at restructuring and reordering the world, at the very least the closed, private world of the bourgeois interior. This is, perhaps, the only acceptable way for men at the time—the bachelors of Marsh’s stories, for example—to show an interest in domestic activities. Susan Stewart has noted that the collector is always already involved in arranging and classifying as part of his or, sometimes, her activity (153–159). It is important to recognize though that the collector is not a unique type and that an essential part of the bourgeois identity as it developed in the nineteenth century involved the collection of objects and their arrangement in the private space of the home.¹⁸ According to Stewart, collecting became “a matter of ornamentation and presentation in which the interior is both a model and a projection of self-fashioning” (157) through which the bourgeoisie can “generate a fantasy in which it becomes producer of [the collected] objects, a producer by arrangement and manipulation” (158). In this desire to escape to the interior space of the home, Christoph Asendorf sees an attempt “to flee reification, which makes social relations into relations between things, [by seeking] refuge in the *interieur*, where objects offer...consolation,” thus creating a perpetual cycle between reification and fetishism (137).

There is something inherently conservative (in the most literal sense of the word) about the activity of the collector. The collector is almost always trying to collect pieces of/from the past or saving objects from the present for the time when they will no longer be current. For

some, such as the author of the *Blackwood's* article "The Collector on the Prowl," the acquisition of new objects for one's collection could be equated with an "increase of knowledge" (678).

Walter Benjamin has noted that the collector's desire is "to renew the old world," but this is not so much a real as an imagined and Utopian past (*Illuminations* 61). "The collector dreams that he is not only in a distant or past world but also, at the same time, in a better one..." (Benjamin, *Reflections* 155).

The collection can be seen as a way of acquiring knowledge and creating a history that is agreeable to the collector. In the collection, the collector can present the past to him- or herself and others as he or she imagines it was, but the collector also seeks to ensure his or her own future. As Werner Muensterberger observes, in his psychological study *Collecting*, the collection of objects from the past is "a guarantee of perpetuity" (56). He notes that "the objects are regarded as testimony that death is not final and the end of all existence; that one does not have to face abandonment, the dread of being left alone and, ultimately, demise and nothingness" (56). One imagines one can continue living through one's collection, just as the original producers of the objects seemingly continue to assert their presence through the objects they've made. In this way, the collection enables the collector to forget as well as to remember. As the narrator of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* notes, concerning the title character who is a collector, his "treasures and everything that he collected in his lovely house, were to him means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape, for a season, from the fear" (200).

An excellent example of the fiction of collecting is Richard Marsh's *Curios: Some Strange Adventures of Two Bachelors*. This volume of stories relates the activities of two rival collectors, Mr. Tress and Mr. Pugh, who are both omnivorous and voracious in their desire to acquire anything rare or unusual. All of the stories center around collectible objects, ranging from the modern (phonograph) to the extinct (an auk's egg), although only two stories involve supernatural or apparently supernatural elements. The first of these, "The Adventure of the Pipe," concerns a horrific looking pipe that is given by Joseph Tress to Mr. Pugh, which,

considering their rivalry, is itself a bizarre occurrence. Mr. Pugh, who narrates the story, makes a point of noting that the pipe “could not be described as beautiful” and “was rather too large for ordinary smoking. But then one doesn’t smoke a pipe like that” (8). It is clear that the value of the pipe lies in its peculiarity, not in its aesthetics or its usefulness, and therefore it is valued purely as a collectible.

The real oddity of the pipe is that it contains a powerful narcotic and has, as an attachment, a monstrous lizard-octopus hybrid encased in amber, which is only able to move when the heat of fire is added to the pipe. These two unusual and hardly believable attributes are what first lead Tress and then Pugh to believe the pipe is in fact haunted. At first Pugh doubts his rival’s conclusion; he claims, “Because I am not yet so far gone as to suppose that a pipe, a thing of meerschaum and of amber, in the sense in which I understand the word, could be haunted—a pipe, a mere pipe!” (Marsh, *Curios* 19). The very triviality and commonness of a pipe (on the one hand) seem to be evidence against its being haunted, even as (on the other hand) it shows itself to have a unique and seemingly haunting nature. As Pugh later admits, “Quite apart from the question as to whether that pipe was or was not haunted, I know it haunted me. It was with me, in a figurative—which was worse than an actual—sense, all the day” (21).

The object is both haunting and too trivial to be haunted, and the same uniqueness that makes it collectible makes Tress desire to be rid of it. In fact, there is something almost hopeful in this connection between the collectible item and the ghostly; like the spirit that supposedly invests the religious fetish with power, the ghost in the object ensures both the uniqueness and the power of the thing. The collectible object is both bound by the constraints of the commodity and, at the same time, it actively tries to resist those constraints. Susan Stewart has argued that “the collection represents the total aestheticization of use value” (151), but what this claim ignores is perhaps as important as what it states. The value of the collectible like the value of the commodity does not rely on its use value, but rather on an exchange value that does not bear a direct relation to its usefulness (Marx, *Capital* 41–48). However, the collectible object is also

distinct from the common commodity; its very uniqueness increases its exchange value. These two types of objects actually operate according to two different economies, neither of which holds use value as important. The collector values an object according to its aesthetic value or its uniqueness, but after it has thus been valued it acquires a market (exchange) value. There is a dialectical tension at work here in which the collectible or aesthetic value is always competing with the object's value as a commodity. The collector may claim an object is "priceless" or "beyond compare" but that object cannot escape the economic system that will place still place a value upon it. The collectible object "appreciates" as it is appreciated by connoisseurs.

The collector is someone who seeks an object that is uncommodified and unique. As Walter Benjamin has shown, it is the "authority" of the object that is put into question by the techniques of mass production (*Illuminations* 221), but horror stories, like the antiquarians and collectors who may appear in them, often attempt to give authority back to the object by giving it an "aura" that marks it as both powerful and purposeful. The haunted or horrific object has a will of its own that distances it from its supposed owner, and keeps the owner from understanding and perhaps even controlling it. This "unique phenomenon of distance" is what Benjamin defines as "aura" (222).¹⁹

In horror fiction, the object uses its authority to bring about an unpleasant, if not downright dangerous, result. The object that has an aura becomes threatening because it is beyond the control of its supposed owner. I have suggested that the collector appeared, at the close of the nineteenth century, as the model of someone who could manage and interpret the world of objects, but in these stories of haunted collectibles, we see the failure of that management more clearly than we do the fantasy of its success. The action of the collector in these stories is perhaps reactionary but also rather revealing in its demonstration of a desire to avoid commodification at all cost, as well as its warning of the dangers and futility of such an enterprise.

In an earlier, somewhat comical story, Richard Marsh presents a character who takes a different attitude to the question of haunted objects. The narrator of this story, “A Set of Chessman,” is not so much fearful as angry that the ghost of the previous owner of his chess set seems to move the pieces according to his own plan. He yells at the ghost he believes is haunting the board, ““You see those chessmen; they are mine, bought and paid for with my money—you dare to try and prevent me from doing with them exactly as I please”” (269). Having purchased a commodity, he believes that he should be in possession of it, and not that it should be “possessed” by some outside spirit.

Eventually, however, Marsh’s narrator realizes that this haunting may be a profitable thing. He considers that “Curiosities nowadays do fetch such fancy sums...[then] what price for a ghost?” (“Set of Chessmen” 262). His plans to resell the chess set are upset, though, when his friend has the local parish priest (the story is set in France) exorcise the ghost and destroy its value. In this story, the ghost—that is to say, the spirit that inhabits and animates this object—has become something of value in-and-of-itself. It is the natural progression of capitalism to turn everything, sooner or later, into a potential commodity, and certainly ghosts are no exception.

The pipe in Marsh’s story, “The Adventure of the Pipe,” turns out not to be haunted, but the very fact that the expectation of haunting can be raised and then explained away demonstrates that, by 1899 at least, the haunted object had become something of a convention in horror fiction. Even Pugh’s doubt can be explained away as a convention of the genre in which the existence of any ghost is doubted before being proven true. The preposterousness of the “true” explanation—that the pipe’s decorative bowl is, in fact, a strange and hideous reptile coated in a shellac that keeps it immobile except when the heat of a lit pipe loosens the coating—only highlights that the existence of the supernatural was always a real possibility in the story.

In the final story of *Curios*, “The Adventure of Lady Wishaw’s Hand,” Mr. Pugh does confront a real “haunted curio,” the hand of the title. Once again it is sent to him as a bequest by an old acquaintance (David Wishaw) who knew he “was a great collector of curiosities” (214).

Pugh says that he was not happy with this new acquisition, since “the curiosities which [he] collected did not include portions of the human frame” (214–215). However, he finds that his friend Brasher is looking for the hand, because he wants “a genuine ghost” for “the Psychological Research Society” (220, 223).

Brasher tells him that the hand originally belonged to a member of the Scottish Wishaw family who was executed for thievery and vowed revenge on the clan that killed her. Since that date members of her family have had to kill members of Macfie clan or else be killed by the hand, and the family has been unable to rid itself of the hand and its curse. Pugh does not tell Brasher that he possesses the hand and the hand escapes to kill again. Later Pugh discovers that Wishaw had sent him the hand because he presumed that as a “great collector” Pugh would be able to control it, but he proves unable to manage this object. In this type of horror story, more often than not, it is the failure of the collector to control his collection that is investigated.

Mr. Pugh is only one of many collectors, it would seem, who counts dismembered body parts among the objects of their collections. One can find a number of stories from the period dealing specifically with severed hands. Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Brown Hand,” for instance, concerns the ghost of an Afghan native who returns from the dead looking for his amputated hand. The doctor, Sir Dominick Holden, who amputated the diseased hand is a famous Indian surgeon who took no longer useful appendage in payment for the operation he performed so that he could “add it to [his] pathological collection” (Doyle, *Best Supernatural* 53). The hand was to be kept in the doctor’s collection, but it, along with “examples of many rare conditions, and [a] splenic collection [that] was probably unique,” were unfortunately lost in a fire (49). So the ghost returns every night looking for a hand that was supposed to be returned to him upon his death so that his body could be buried intact. The narrator solves Sir Holden’s problem and puts to rest the ghost by a simple act of substitution. He adds a severed brown hand, once belonging to a lascar, to the doctor’s collection. The ghost, who seems to operate on the same assumption as the narrator—that all brown hands are basically the same—takes this substitute for his own missing

appendage and, satisfied, departs for good. Thus, perhaps, the story uses its characterization of the ghost to argue the premise that all brown hand *are* interchangeable.

Even after the fire, Dr. Holden's collection is still impressive to the narrator who notes that some of the specimens "were of a very great value and rarity from a pathological point of view: bloated organs, gaping cysts, distorted bones, odious parasites—a singular exhibition of the products of India" (Doyle, *Best Supernatural* 49). A collection, as I noted, creates an historical narrative not just for the objects it contains but also for the culture from which they come. Here the products of India are diseased objects valuable only because of their monstrosity. In selecting these objects, the collector also presents the "East" and its cultures as monstrous. However, Holden is implicated in creating the ghost (another monster) that haunts his collection. If this collector had not taken the hand for his collection of medical oddities, this ghost would never have returned to look for it. The collector-colonizer is implicated in the creation of the monstrous.

The link between the collector and the monstrous was not a new development in the nineteenth century. As Phillip Blom points out, the Western interest in collecting natural curiosities, especially monstrosities, originated in Renaissance Italy and was tied to the growth of science, which brought a new type of interest in the world and its prodigies, and capitalism, which enabled private individuals to amass the wealth to develop their own collections (19–21). Because the collector values the unique specimen above all others, the monster is the perfect find. However, it is in the very act of collecting that some things are made monstrous; by separating and classifying the collector can make an object into a sort of monster. Thus, the collector must also value deviation from the norm.

The collector can make the object monstrous, but also, in collecting and displaying monsters, he can make the monster into a thing and not a living being. As Erin O'Connor notes, also in the presentation of "freaks" or human monsters in sideshows and penny-gaffs:

Monsters were inextricably linked to things in the Victorian imagination.... Displaying monsters alongside things and frequently displaying them *as* things, the freak show framed an utterly literal form of objectification, a visual pattern in which the act of distantiating looking explicitly made the object of the gaze—a human being—into a metaphorical thing (169–170).

However, the monstrous *things* of horror fiction, are able to enact some form of revenge for this objectification. The monstrous objects of horror fiction are objects that refuse to stay objects.

Mummies, Dolls, and the Collecting of Women

The other side of the fetishization of commodities that Marx describes is the objectification of people. If the “definite social relation[s] between men” assume “in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx 83), then obviously there is a change in the way people perceive one another, and this change results in the dehumanizing and objectification of the other. Sir Holden’s objectification of this Afghan native occurs because he feels it necessary to receive payment for his services, and, admittedly, also because he fears to offend his patient, and that action has returned to haunt him. Just as a capitalist system can instill human qualities in inanimate objects, it can also turn people into objects, even in the most literal form, making their bodies into commodities. In *Images of Fear*, Martin Tropp looks at popular narratives surrounding late nineteenth-century anti-vivisectionist movements, grave robbing, Jack the Ripper, and pornography and concludes that “Victorians were...fascinated and horrified by the way bodies—whether human corpses, living animals, or female victims of male cruelty or fantasy—could become things” (125). This fascination is definitely present in the horror fiction of the period, where bodies or parts of bodies that have become objects to be purchased and traded rebel against such objectification and resist commodification.

Perhaps the most commonly objectified body in horror fiction is that of the mummy. The British interest in Egypt amounted to an obsession with a once great kingdom which, the British believed, had fallen so low.²⁰ The British acquisition of the dead bodies of this fallen Empire reflects both a concern for the longevity of their own civilization and a desire to obtain the power

and prestige of these dead and ancient people. (It should be noted that, in the colonial context, this attitude toward Egyptian mummies did not differ much from the “primitive” custom of head hunting [Muensterberger 57–61]). H. Rider Haggard, writing against “The Trade in the Dead,” asked, “Should not we English shudder if some seer told us that within a given number of years...those who rest in Westminster Abbey were destined to be treated in just this fashion?” (Trade 145). Yet, paradoxically, this very fear—of being superseded one day—might compound the need to seek some permanence (and understanding) in collecting dead bodies and the pieces of a “dead” civilization.

Mummies, though, were also objects to be bought and sold and objects of desire. In his study of the period’s mummy fiction, Nicholas Daly finds that

The majority of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century mummy stories deal not with the vengeful mummies popularized by Hollywood, but with the male collectors and Egyptologists who fall in love with revitalized female mummies (42).

I would add that in some cases (for example, Bram Stoker’s *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*) these love objects could be rather dangerous, if not downright vengeful, but Daly’s point is well taken, for it does seem that the objectification and commodification of the other that occurs in these fictions is often framed in terms of sexual/romantic relations. Daly sees in “mummy fiction” an attempt “to manage the relations of consumers to commodities by rewriting them in terms of gender,” and, of course, like many commodity objects, the mummy is gendered female (45). The connection between women and commodities has been made before. In one of the best known analyses of how women are turned into commodities, Luce Irigaray’s “Women on the Market,” women are presented as the *fundamental* commodity, as the first object of exchange among men (170–183).²¹ It is the case that most of the human bodies or parts of bodies collected in the pages of horror fiction belong to women or foreigners, who are often feminized in relation to the English, male collector.

Some horror fictions clearly draw the connection between the objectified body and the commodity object. However, the mummy stories Daly discusses hardly seem cognizant of the

implications of this connection. However, one story by Vernon Lee, originally titled “The Image” (1896) and republished as “The Doll” (1927), appears very much aware of the connection. The story begins with a statement from Mme. Louis Ormond:

that’s the last bit of bric-a-brac I shall ever buy in my life...that and the Chinese desert set we have just been using. The passion seems to have left me utterly. And I think I can guess why. At the same time as the plates and the little coffer I bought a thing—I scarcely know whether I ought to call it a thing—which put me out of conceit with ferreting about among dead people’s effects (*For Maurice* 209).

The “thing,” which perhaps should not be called a thing, is a life-sized doll, a replica of a woman dressed in “the real clothes of [the] poor dead original” and fitted with a wig “made of the poor lady’s real hair” (215–216). Unlike the other examples I have already mentioned, the doll in question is not the physical remnant of a human body (with the exception of its hair), but it does seem equally haunted and is probably more humanized, at least by Mme. Ormond.

Mme. Ormond encounters the doll while investigating a Count’s old Italian villa in search of collectibles and, from the beginning, she feels a strange connection with it. She thinks of the doll as “a new acquaintance,” and it seems to speak to her. She doubts whether it really is an inanimate object and not rather the continuation of the person on which it was modeled and notes that she “made no distinction between the portrait and the original” (Lee, *For Maurice* 217). The doll originally belonged to the current Count’s grandfather, who created it as a replacement for his wife, who had died in childbirth. Mme. Ormond seems to know in detail the problems that had attended the marriage, the inability of the wife to express her feelings, and the lack of care on the husband’s part to discern them. To this Count, she imagines, the wife was “an idol” before her death and “an image” after. So it is not surprising that he continued to treat the doll in much the same manner as he had treated his wife, lavishing attention upon it but equally unconcerned with its feelings.

From the outset of the story, it is clear that Mme. Ormond is a great collector who spends much of her time searching for curiosities. She does so alone, or with a friend, because her “husband is too busy for [her] bric-a-brac journeys” (Lee, *For Maurice* 209). We can perceive

that her marriage is perhaps not all that she could wish. She asks the narrator “Do you suppose I could have ever told all this about the Doll to my husband?” (218). Even though she adds that she tells her husband “everything” about herself, we are left to consider whether or not the connection she feels with the Doll is not based on some degree of shared experience (218). The story strongly implies that the marriage market itself is a market for the sale and purchase of a commodity object, a wife who is like a doll.

After a couple of visits, Mme. Ormond decides to purchase the doll; she then takes it outside and cremates it upon a pyre of myrtle, bay wood, and chrysanthemums. Her purchasing agent, a local antiques dealer named Orestes, accompanies her in this project, and when they are finished he says to her “‘You have put an end to her sorrows’,” suggesting that Mme. Ormond is not the only one who had perceived the Doll as somehow still alive (Lee, *For Maurice* 223). Throughout the story Lee’s collector implies, without ever directly stating it, that even though it has been cremated the Count’s wife continues to live on in the form of the doll.

While it is never explained why this woman’s “spirit” should live on in the form of a doll, we can surmise that her fate after death relates to her situation in life. The Doll had always been an object in a collection, even when alive, and her marriage (like many others) was merely a way of ensuring her acquisition. Like the Count in Browning’s “My Last Duchess,” this Count needed to own his wife in the form of a simulacrum, since controlling a living being proved to be difficult. This appears to be the realization that makes Mme. Ormond question the activity of collecting that she has pursued so diligently. By the end of the story, she has lost her “passion” for collecting, because she has seen how it could affect one like herself who had been collected. Perhaps Mme. Ormond realized that her position, as a wife in a patriarchal society, may not be very different than that of this collectible. In the commodity culture of turn-of-the-century Europe, objects can become images and people can become objects or dolls, as the case may be. However, some writers, like Lee, set themselves to analyze the horror of this situation.

Advertising Monsters and Monstrous Advertisers

Vernon Lee's story suggests the growing importance of the "image" in defining the value of the commodity (the story's original title was "The Image"). However, it was in the discourse of advertising that the image of the commodity object became more impressive than the object it supposedly represented. As Thomas Richards has pointed out, the existence of the "spectacle" preceded the explosion of advertising at the end of the nineteenth century, but "through the medium of advertising, the immense powers of signification embodied in the spectacle [became] separated from their institutional origins, harnessed to commodities, and displayed on a larger scale than ever before" (*Commodity Culture* 168). In the past, other significant discourses had concerned themselves with objects, but at the close of the nineteenth century advertising became the predominant way of ascribing significance to objects. As Christoph Asendorf notes, this was an era in which "Things [were] instilled with significance only artificially, by advertising" (112).

At the close of the nineteenth century, advertising was ubiquitous on city streets and in many publications. The lifting of the final stamp act in 1861, along with new printing techniques that allowed a better quality picture to be produced for less, made advertising much more common in the press during the latter decades of the century. One need only look at pictures of London from the period to see how common posters and billboards were. It seemed as if everywhere there were words and pictures concerning new products with new brand names.²² As Susan Buck-Morss, among others, has claimed, advertising created a "new reality," or "new nature" (70), more significant and more important than the common reality of everyday lived experience. Walter Benjamin found that "the most real, the mercantile gaze into the heart of things is the advertisement. It abolishes the space where contemplation moved and all but hits us between the eyes" (*Reflections* 85). The advertisement sought to make the most direct impression possible, not leaving any room in the viewer's mind for critical reflection, and so it seemed more pressing on individual consciousness than many "more substantial" elements of everyday life.

The figures on city billboards were (literally) larger than life and rather imposing; they could easily appear monstrous, or perhaps godlike. It is understandable that the presumably mad narrator of Barry Pain's "The Diary of a God" can say of the gods, into whose realm his new inheritance seems to have lifted him, that

some of [them] were rather like the big pictures that I have seen on the hoardings, advertising plays at the theatre, or some food which is supposed to give great strength and muscular development. They were handsome in face, and without any expression. They never seemed to be angry or pleased, or hurt. They sat there in great long rows, resting, with the storm raging in between them and the earth (23).

Pain's narrator ends up starving himself to death in an effort to imitate these billboard gods. He falls prey to the belief like that these monstrous beings, the creations of the advertiser's art, he too "was a god...and that lightning did not hurt [him], and that [he] would live for ever" (24). Pain's story is definitely horrific in its outcome, although the element of the supernatural is, at best, in doubt given the narrator's apparent insanity. However, advertising itself could have an almost magical purpose and effect.

This "new nature" created by the advertiser did not share the same limitations of the natural world that preceded it. Advertising encouraged fantasy and often tried to present the world as a potentially magical and supernatural place (dependent, of course, on the purchase of a particular commodity). Fairies and Eastern magicians were not uncommon figures in the advertisements of the era (see Figures 3-2 & 3-3).²³ This phantasmagoria did not borrow all of its imagery from pleasant fairy tales. By 1918, at least, advertising had adapted elements of supernatural horror for its own purposes. "Do You Live in a Haunted House?" asks a Lysol ad from the *Ladies Home Journal* (see Figure 3-4), depicting a suitably gothic yet still middle-class dwelling (rpt. in Forty 158). Even earlier (c. 1897) monstrous figures, such as the ubiquitous monkey-headed man in evening dress of the Monkey Brand soap ads, the evil witches of a competitor's ad, or the Imp of Disease, which was fought by Calvert's Carbolic, were quite common in periodical advertisements for a time (see Figures 3-5, 3-6 & 3-7). The monster, as I argued in Chapter 2, was the representative figure of alienation at the turn of the century, and the

HOGARTH'S MALT KETCHUP

Combines all the digestive properties of the malt, with a flavour fully equal to that of the most delicious Home-made Mushroom Ketchup.


*A Free Sample
Bottle of all Grocers
or Oilmen, or sent
post free for 1d.
stamp from the
Manufactory,*




77-83, HIGH STREET, STRATFORD, E.

Figure 3-2: Advertisement with Fairy

**THE FLIGHT OF TIME ON A "CHEAPSIDE" WATCH
IS ACCURATELY RECORDED
WHY?**



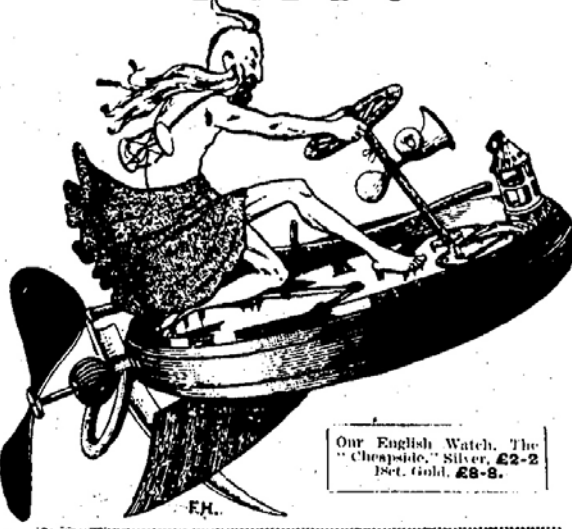
Solid 18ct. Gold, set with four real Diamonds and three Cape Rubies. **£2 2s.**
Hall Marked.



Solid 18ct. Gold, set with two fine Diamonds and two Rubies or Sapphires. **£5 5s.**
Hall Marked.

**WRITE
FOR
FREE
CATALOGUE**

ANYTHING SENT
BY POST.



Our English Watch. The "Cheapside." Silver, **£2-2**
18ct. Gold, **£8-8.**

**TEN
DAYS'
FREE
TRIAL.**

ANYTHING SENT
BY POST.

Our Catalogue contains much useful advice as to the care of Jewellery, Watches, and Clocks. Sent post free on receipt of a postcard.

HYLANDS Ltd

Our Catalogue is so arranged that it is a complete guide to the purchase of Watches, Chains, Jewellery, Clocks, &c. Sent free on receipt of postcard.

32 CHEAPSIDE LONDON ESTABLISHED OVER 100 YEARS

Figure 3-3: Eastern magician ad



Do you live in a haunted house?

There is a haunted house in almost every community. Its spooky character awes and frightens the children, grown-ups shun it on dark nights.

There is another kind of haunted house, the germ-haunted house, that shelters a menace which is far from imaginary, which is dangerously real.

Is your home germ-haunted? It is, and so is every home that is not regularly disinfected.

Germ-breeding places exist in buildings of all kinds, large and small. Civilization has a long way to go before it can eliminate these sources of disease, but science has shown the way to eradicate their dangers.

Disinfection has changed Panama from a pest hole to a health resort. The terrible ravages of yellow fever in Havana were once regarded as beyond remedy. Disinfection has made the scourge only a memory.

In armies, disease no longer kills more men than bullets, thanks to rigorous disinfection.

The safest refuge from disease is in a hospital where, surrounded by disease, you are safe—again thanks to disinfection.

If it is possible to perfectly disinfect great areas and immense buildings, it is both possible and easy to perfectly disinfect the germ-breeding places in the home.

Army disinfection is compulsory. In our cities it is optional, hence neglected, by those who refuse to believe in germs—and their danger—because they cannot see them.

Epidemics are born of dirt and ignorance. Do your share to offset the baleful effects of this ignorance. Don't let the neglect of others endanger the health of your family. Disinfect your home regularly and thoroughly with Lysol.

How to Banish the Ghost

Lysol Disinfectant annihilates all germ-life at the instant of application. Great hospitals rely upon its powerful disinfecting qualities. Boards of health and physicians urge its use.

Get a bottle today, mix a little of it with water, and use the solution regularly in garbage cans, toilets, sinks, and drains. Use it in scrubbing water, in dark, sunless corners, and in summer, wherever flies gather. Germ-life is impossible where Lysol is used regularly.

Lysol is economical; a 50c bottle makes 5 gallons of powerful disinfectant—a 25c bottle makes 2 gallons. Sold in 25c, 50c, and \$1.00 bottles. Lysol is invaluable for personal hygiene.

Lysol Shaving Cream
Contains Lysol, and kills germs on razor and shaving brush, guards the user's face from infection, and gives the shaver a cool, comfortable shave. You won't get a rash here or under a scratch for a year. Price 25c.

Samples Free
Send your name and address for free samples of Lysol Shaving Cream, Lysol Toilet Soap, Lysol Toilet Brush, Lysol Toilet Bowl, Lysol Toilet Seat, and Lysol Toilet Paper.

Lysol Toilet Soap
Contains Lysol, and thoroughly protects the user from germs in toilet. It is refreshing, soothing, and keeps the skin soft and healthy. Price 25c.

LEHN & FINK, INC. 103 William Street, New York

Lysol

Disinfectant

OUR SIGN IS OUR BOND

Lehn & Fink

Figure 3-4: Lysol Ad (Do You Live in a Haunted House?)



WON'T WASH CLOTHES.

BROOKE'S

WON'T WASH CLOTHES.

MONKEY BRAND

SOAP

FOR KITCHEN TABLES AND FLOORS, LINOLEUM AND OILCLOTHS.

For Polishing Metals, Marble, Paint, Cutlery, Crockery, Machinery, Baths, Stair-Rods.

FOR STEEL, IRON, BRASS AND COPPER VESSELS, FIRE-IRONS, MANTELS, &c.

REMOVES RUST, DIRT, STAINS, TARNISH, &c.

Figure 3-5: Monkey brand soap ad

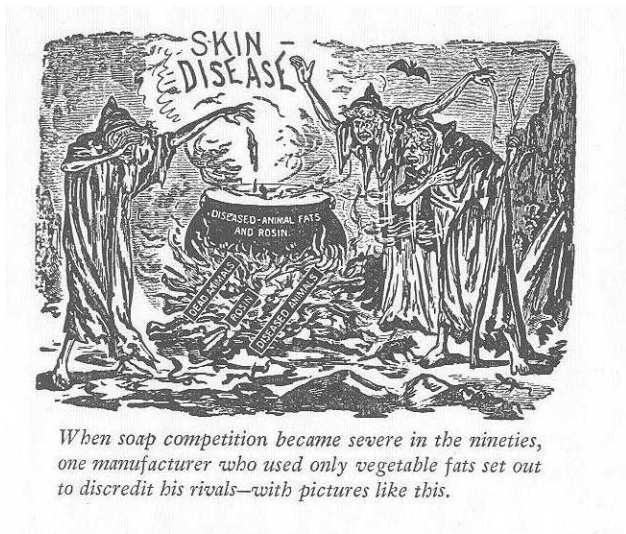


Figure 3-6: Witches soap ad



Figure 3-7: The Imp of Disease



Figure 3-8: How We Advertise Now

HORRIBLE LONDON: OR. THE PANDEMONIUM OF POSTERS.



THE Demon set forth in a novel disguise
(All methods of mischief the master-fiend tries)
Quoth he, "There's much ill to be wrought through
the eyes.
I think, without being a boaster,
I can give their most 'cute Advertisers a start,

And beat them all round at the Bill-sticker's art.
I will set up in business in Babylon's mart,
As the new Pandemonium Poster!"
So he roved the huge city with wallet at waist,
With a brush, and a stick, and a pot full of paste,
And there wasn't a wall or a hoarding,

A space in a slum, or a blank
on a fence,
A spare square of brick in a
neighbourhood dense,
Or a bit of unoccupied
boarding,
But there the new poster, who
didn't much care
For the menacing legend,
"Bill-stickers beware!"
Right soon was tremen-
dously busy
With placards portentous in
purple and blue, [hue,
Of horrible subject and hideous
Enough to bemuddle an aëro-
naut's view,
And turn the best steeple-
Jack dizzy.
Oh, the flamboyant flare of
those fiendish designs,
With their sanguine paint-
splashes and sinister lines!
Gehenna seemed visibly
glaring
In paint from those villainous
daubs. There were men
At murderous work in mal-
odorous den,
And ghoul-woman grue-
somenly staring.
The whole sordid drama of
murder and guilt,
The steel that strikes home, and
the blood that is spilt,
Was pictured in realist
colours,
With emphasis strong on the
black and the red,
The fear of the stricken, the
glare of the dead;
All dreads and disasters and
dolors
That haunt poor Humanity's
dismallest state,
The horrors of crime and the
terrors of fate,
As conceived by the crudest
of fancies,
Were limned on these posters
in terrible tints,
In the style of the vilest sen-
sational prints
Or the vulgar 'penny
romances.

That Bill-sticker paused in his
work with a look
Which betrayed the black de-
mon, and gleefully shook
His sides in a spasm of
laughter.
Quoth he, with a sinister wag
of his head,
"By my horns, the good artist
has lavished the red!
This home of coarse horror—
this house of the dead
Looks crimson from base-
ment to rafter.
How strange that a civilised
City—ho! ho!
Tis their fatuous dream to
consider it so!
Which is nothing too lovely at
best, should bestow
Such a liberal licence on
spoilers!
These mural monstrosities,
reeking of crime,
Flaring horribly forth amidst
squalor and grime,
Must have an effect which will
tell in good time
Upon legions of dull-witted
foilers.

vol 95

Figure 3-9: Horrible London, or the Pandemonium of Poster

advertising spectacle, as Guy Debord points out, aimed at the “concrete manufacture of alienation” (I 32). The monster was a useful figure for advertisers who wished to suggest what might happen if one chose not to use the product advertised.

The theatrical advertisements of the era barraged the public with the most graphic images of horror, and led finally to some attempts at censorship by the bill-posters themselves (Nevett 122–123). An 1887 *Punch* cartoon, entitled “How We Advertise Now,” perhaps makes this point better than any other document with its posters of monsters and violence announcing theatrical performances of a “Theatre of Horrors” and “The Headless Horsemen” (see Figure 3-8). In a soap ad depicted in the cartoon, a baby is transformed into a grotesque giant and a skeleton-headed sandwich-board man is apparently selling “Bogus water.” However, it may have simply been the case that the theater had a “natural” affinity for the graphic advertisement because it already understood the use of the spectacle and was therefore more innovative in its ads. T. R. Nevett states that the “first English poster in the modern sense is generally regarded as...Fredrick Walker’s *Woman in White* (1871),” a theatrical poster (87) that bears the image of the character created by Wilkie Collins. In other areas, such as the use of horror imagery, advertisers for other products followed the lead of the theatrical posters.

By the time of his 1890 article on advertising, “The Age of Disfigurement,” Richardson Evans was already arguing that, “The whole practice of advertisement rests on the assumption that the only way to interest the passer in the wares of the trader is to worry him unrelentingly and incessantly” (167). Evans describes effective advertising as “cruelty” and suggests that those who produce it “rely on the recurrence of nervous shocks” in order to influence their audience (167, 169). He finds in advertising a potential “abomination” (166), one that proves threatening. Because of advertisements, he states that he goes “in fear of [his] spirit’s life at railway stations,” and on “the steps of an omnibus” he finds that “the enemy grins horribly in [his] face” (170). For Evans, at least, advertising appears to be something monstrous and horrific, something that works by upsetting its audience rather than pleasing them. In some ways, advertising seems much like

horror and related genre fictions of the period, communicating as it does through shock, disgust, and terror. However, fiction or theater, unlike advertising, has its audience's permission to act (or "attack") in such a way. In fact, the audience for horror fiction or theater selects its bill of fare in order to anticipate and enjoy the shock and disgust.

The national Society for Controlling the Abuses of Public Advertising was founded by Evans in 1893 after *The Times* published a series of correspondence decrying the "horrors on the walls" (Elliott 165). Alfred Austin wrote a sonnet for the society, speaking out against the "unclean huckster" who would defile the "primrose brake and babbling brook" with the "sordid joys of meretricious mart" (qtd. in Turner 158). Austin, like many other members of the society, seems to equate advertising with a monstrous and immoral destruction of the social fabric. Critics of advertising, who spoke of it as "foul" and "loathsome and shameful" (*Pall Mall Gazette* qtd. in Nevett 113), used adjectives not much different from those applied in horror fictions to the threatening figure of the monster. *Punch* cartoons would make the comparison even more apparent; in "Horrible London: Or the Pandemonium of the Posters" from October 13, 1888 (Figure 3-9), a devil figure with horns and fangs posts ads for the penny dreadful and the Grand Guignol (in its British version). The poem that accompanies this cartoon suggests that monstrous bill posters have transformed the city walls into "This home of coarse horror—this house of dread" (170). For this cartoonist at least, advertising had the ability to transform the city into a horrible and threatening place because of its connection to forces both supernatural and demonic.

In a story such as Richard Middleton's "The Coffin Merchant," advertising also becomes the means by which someone can be introduced to the world of the supernatural. In this story, an unsuspecting Eustace Reynolds is "thrust a handbill" as he walks through London. He tries to decline it but is told by the man who handed it to him that it "contains exactly what [he]...wants" and that these bills are only given to "suitable persons" (Middleton 168–169). The paper he is handed turns out to be an advertisement for a "coffin merchant" that begins with the threatening claim, "You will soon be wanting a coffin!" (169). Eustace recognizes that this

“gruesomely bizarre handbill” could be “an elaborate threat,” and he shows it to his neighbor, a doctor, “who had experienced the queer magics that are practiced [sic] to this day on the West Coast of Africa, and...[is] delighted with so striking an example of British commercial enterprise” (171–172). This friend’s apparent delight is the result of his realization that the British advertiser has been able to adapt the practices of West African magic, and as the story progresses it seems, indeed, that there is some magic at work in this strange advertisement.

Eustace’s curiosity compels him to investigate further, so he visits the undertaker’s shop. He complains about the threatening nature of the ad, which, as I have shown, merely highlights the inherent threat that exists in all advertisement. The proprietor tells him that they know he is going to die and hands him an order for “a hundred guinea funeral” to sign; he tries to resist with “his whole will intent on fighting the eyes of the coffin merchant,” but his will isn’t strong enough, and he signs (Middleton 178). Within 24 hours he is dead. As with many horror stories, there is a degree of uncertainty concerning the supernatural nature of the events—hypnosis and poison and the planned persecution of this “customer” are equally possible explanations for what happens. Still, the proprietor of the store and his odd advertisements appear to have an effect similar to that of West African magic, which, the story implies, may also act through the power of suggestion, just as advertising does. The parallels drawn between magic and advertising are not far from the reality of the situations, as advertisements may be the first step in a process of seeming sorcery that creates a demand where there is none and then forces compliance through methods of suggestion.

Other horror stories from the period comment directly on the magical and potentially threatening function of advertising. M. R. James’ story, “Casting the Runes,” draws an insightful parallel between the methods of modern advertising and those of ancient, Teutonic rune magic. Runic magic, as practiced by Germanic peoples, made literacy itself a form of magic; runes might operate on anyone, but only those who could decipher their meaning were capable of using this

magical writing for their own purposes (Spence 409). James' story proposes that advertising operates on a principle similar to that through which rune magic supposedly worked.

"Casting the Runes" concerns the sorcerous persecution of a publisher's reader (Edward Dunning) who has rejected a manuscript by a black magician (Karswell). We find that this is not the first time that Karswell has used magic to attack an enemy; a reviewer, John Harrington, died from a mysterious accident after having given a bad review to Karswell's book. Karswell uses his previous success to advertise, literally, his plans for Mr. Dunning. Dunning first sees the name Harrington on an odd window advertisement in an electric tram. He is intrigued by this unfamiliar ad and moves to get a closer look: "the advertisement was not of the usual type. It ran thus: 'In memory of John Harrington, F.S.A. of the Laurels, Ashbrooke. Died Sept. 18th, 1889. Three months were allowed'" (James 244). The conductor of the bus is unable to tell him the meaning of the ad and, by the time he gets his superior to look at it, the advertisement has disappeared.

This haunted bus advertisement, the real meaning of which is indecipherable for Dunning and others, is merely the first installment in a series of mysterious messages that aim at causing Dunning's death. What seems most remarkable is that the majority of these messages appear to Dunning in the form of advertisements. After the incident on the bus, Mr. Dunning is walking home from his club when

he noticed some way ahead a man with a handful of leaflets such as are distributed to passers-by by agents of enterprising firms. This agent had not chosen a very crowded street for his operations: in fact, Mr. Dunning did not see him get rid of a single leaflet before he himself reached the spot. One was thrust into his hand as he passed....The name of Harrington in large capitals caught his eye. He stopped, startled, and felt for his glasses. The next instant the leaflet was twitched out of his hand by a man who hurried past, and was irrecoverably gone (James 248-249).

It is not important whether Dunning reads and comprehends the message presented to him (in fact it seems best that he not comprehend it), only that his attention be drawn to it, and so it would seem that advertising is the perfect medium for such a message. Later we find that the previous victim, Harrington, had received a third type of advertisement, "a calendar, such as tradesmen

often send,” shortly before he died (261–262). Although the third attack on Dunning occurs in the form of a piece of scrap paper slipped into his notes and not in an advertisement, the preponderance of advertisements suggests more than a casual relation between this runic magic and the modern methods of advertising.

Like the magic of the runes, advertising seeks to affect people whether or not they understand the real meaning of the discourse—in fact, it may work better if they do not understand. The aim of the advertisement is to grab the individual’s attention, not to promote understanding of what is advertised. In this regard, the imperative demand of the ad (to buy) is more significant than its function as a way of giving an order to the world of commodities (that is, to buy this particular product because of these particular qualities). In horror fictions such as these stories by James and Middleton, one can see an awareness of advertising’s threatening potential and its undercurrent of seemingly magical effectiveness. However, one can also see in advertising an understanding of the usefulness of horror and supernatural imagery to communicate fear and alienation, which may in turn help to sell a product.

By the end of the nineteenth century, advertising had become the predominant discourse concerning objects, but objects were a concern of many other discourses as well, including supernatural horror fiction. Far from being an attempt to avoid the world, as some critics would argue, horror fiction is very much connected to contemporary social events and issues. However it speaks to people’s sense that the world around them is not rational or sensible, as the predominant discourses of the existing order would argue. In drawing connections between fetishism and collecting, gold and foreign idols, commodities and witchcraft, and advertising and sorcery, supernatural horror fiction presented a counter-discourse concerning the place of the object in a capitalist/consumer society. The haunted and cursed objects of horror fiction do not solve any problems or fulfill any desires, as the commodity promises to do, nor do they provide the aesthetic escape that the collectible makes a claim to do. Instead, objects in horror fiction show the failure of these other discourses to satisfy desire, as well as the dehumanization and

alienation that are the real by-products of modern capitalism. Horror reveals the promise of innovation and perfection that accompanies the commodity object to be not only deceptive, but, in the words Walter Benjamin would later use, not only “the always the same” but also “hellish” (Buck-Morss 95–109).

End Notes

¹ According to Ronald Pearsall, “Throughout the nineteenth century agriculture had slowly been losing ground, and in the last thirty years acreage set aside for wheat had fallen by half....Between 1891 and 1913, about 45,000 acres per annum went out of cultivation in Great Britain...” (120–121). Needless to say these changes in agricultural industry led to a decrease in farm population and an increase in the urban population.

² The objects that did appear as objects of retribution in the Gothic, such as the giant, black helmet that crushes the Prince of Otranto in the opening scene of *The Castle of Otranto*, do not apparently act of their own volition but are rather animated by outside entities. These are also not household or familiar objects (at least not for the average reader). They are more like the types of magical objects found in fairy tales, which are discussed later in this chapter, than the monstrous objects of horror fiction.

³ Valdimir Propp, in *Morphology of the Folktale*, identifies the acquisition of the magical object as one of the most important plots in folk tales.

⁴ Christoph Asendorf, for instance, sees the “seemingly animated things that suddenly appear in the literature and art of the 1880’s...[as] an attempt, by way of exaggerated symbolic investments, to reintegrate the now abstract world of things into subjective experience” (112).

⁵ Marx writes that the commodity form comes into existence “at the epoch when the labour spent on the production of a useful article becomes expressed as one of the objective qualities of that article, i.e., as its value” (*Capital* 71). However, such a point in history would seem to coincide with the first trading of man-made articles, certainly pre-dating what is typically defined as the era of capitalism. Guy Debord tries to present an understanding of the changes that occur to the commodity under the conditions of modern capitalism. Debord notes that:

In a primitive economy, the commodity sector represented a surplus of survival. The production of commodities, which implies the exchange of varied products among independent producers, could for a long time remain craft production, contained within a marginal economic function where its quantitative truth was still masked. However, where commodity production met the social conditions of large scale commerce and of the accumulation of capitals, it seized total domination over the economy (I 40).

Debord’s analysis is one of a number of attempts to understand the particular form of contemporary (late 20th century) capitalism, but the trends he analyzes can clearly be seen to have their roots in late nineteenth century developments in commercialism and consumer culture.

⁶ Because this edition is unpaginated paranthetical references refer to the chapter and aphorism numbers.

⁷ For example, Walter Benjamin remarks that “The furniture style of the second half of the nineteenth century has received its only adequate description, and analysis, in a certain type of detective novel at the dynamic center of which stands the horror of apartments” (*Reflections* 64). Benjamin’s observation applies equally well to the horror genre, and, in fact, his primary example (the “apotheosis” of this trend) is Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera*, a French novel published in 1911 that combines elements from both the horror and mystery genres.

⁸ Marx contrasts the “use value” of an object, which is inherent in the material object’s ability to fulfill human needs, and its “exchange value,” which is determined by what the object can be exchanged for in the market (typically determined by its monetary value). For Marx, use value is the product of the material characteristics of an object and its ability to meet the needs of a society and not just an individual. Exchange value, on the other hand, need not be tied to the usefulness of the object for society or to the material or labor used to produce the object.

⁹ Owen Chadwick in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* outlines the origins of Marx's critique of religion. He notes that secular Marxism depended on Judeo-Christian precedents in a number of ways, most notably in its concepts of alienation, historical determinism, and an apocalyptic redemption of society (66–69).

¹⁰ As I showed in Chapter 1, authors like Marie Corelli often used "electricity" as both a literal force and a metaphor to represent spiritual "power." Corelli's own brand of "Electric Christianity" was probably the most well known speculation on the spiritual or magical powers of electricity, but it was far from the only one. Christoph Asendorf, in *Batteries of Life*, writes, concerning public's infatuation with electricity, "The notion of invisible but still very effective energies that in some way have an effect on individuals is probably the phantasm of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century" (167). For further information on public opinion concerning and increased availability of new technology see also Asa Briggs' *Victorian Things*, especially Chapter 10, "New Things and Old" (369–425).

¹¹ George Levine, in *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England*, discusses the development of scientific narratives in the nineteenth century and the ways in which science tried to separate itself from other discourses.

¹² Spirit photography, in fact, was a field of occult investigation. Photographs were manipulated (in some cases) to make "ghosts" appear, thereby using this new technology to establish the truth of supernatural visitations.

¹³ William Pietz finds the concept of "fetishism" of central importance in the creation of these disciplines. He writes, "The human sciences that constituted themselves during this period (sociology, anthropology, psychology) did so in part by taking a position in the ongoing debate over the explanation of history and the nature of religion proposed by the theory of fetishism" (II, 23). Jean Baudrillard, in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, warns that "The term fetishism is dangerous not only because it shortcircuits analysis, but because since the 18th century it has conducted the whole repertoire of occidental Christian and humanist ideology as orchestrated by colonists, ethnologists and missionaries" (88). However, it is precisely because of the term's origination in the discourses of imperialism that the term is so useful for a critique of Western cultural practices. The use of such a term, here at least, is part of what Michael Taussig has called "the project...of re juxtaposing the terms of colonial inquiry, recycling and thus transforming the anthropology developed in Europe and North America through the study of colonized peoples back into and onto the societies in which it was instituted" ("Maleficium" 224). It is reasonable to assume that the use of this term was always already a projection onto the cultural other of qualities incipient in emerging capitalism, and that, as Christoph Asendorf notes "The projection of this desire [for myth, magic and animism] onto foreign cultures amounts to an indirect critique of modern civilization" (193).

¹⁴ The term "contact zone" is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*.

¹⁵ The "gold standard" (which tied the value of British currency to the value of gold) remained in effect, with temporary suspensions from 1821 to 1914. It was resumed in 1925 but only lasted until 1931 (Hobsbawm 236).

¹⁶ This type of story is commonly referred to as the "antiquarian" ghost story. While M. R. James may be the most prominent writer of this type of tale, many of his contemporaries tried their hands at similar work, and even today there are writers who specialize in this sub-genre. The journal of M. R. James scholarship, *Ghost and Scholars*, published both scholarly and fictional work concerning, as the title suggests, the antiquarian and the ghost.

¹⁷ See Note 4, above.

¹⁸ This interest in home interiors and the objects that decorate them is especially apparent in the literature of the Decadent writers like Oscar Wilde, who's fascination with and influence on the decoration of bourgeois

homes is chronicled in volumes such as Charlotte Gere and Lesley Hoskins' *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* and Neil Bartlett's *Who Was That Man?: A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*.

¹⁹ It is through this creation of distance that the fetishism of commodities can itself be seen as a way of creating an "aura" for an object. Commodification does distance an object from its owner rather than bringing it closer and making it easier to comprehend. According to Marx, the fetishized object (or commodity) is accepted as "something transcendent" (*Capital* 82) and is invested with qualities that make it appear to act on its own accord. Like the haunted object the commodity seems to have qualities or capabilities that exist regardless of its use by an owner or possessor. These active qualities, which the object seemingly possesses on its own, keep the object distanced from its owner and beyond its owner's control.

²⁰ John Barrell has written (concerning a somewhat earlier period) that the "admiration of the Ancient Egyptians seems to grow at the expense of any respect for the civilization of modern Egypt" (98). But even this admiration, as Martin Bernal points out, was dependent on a belief that the Ancient Egyptians were of Caucasian descent as well as on a willful ignorance concerning the state of their present civilization (240–246).

²¹ Other theoretical works in this tradition, which can help illuminate the commodification and exchange of women, include Irigaray's "Commodities among Themselves," Gayle Rabin's "The Traffic in Women," and Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.

²² One measurable gauge of the increased presence and importance of advertising during this period is the growth of professional advertising agents. In 1886 there were 76 advertisement contractors and agents operating in London. By 1906, that number had increased to 339 (Nevett 100).

²³ Fairies from a newspaper ad for a brand of nightlight would later apparently inspire images that found their way into photographs taken by two girls at Cottingley Glen, Yorkshire. These photographs were accepted by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and others as proof of the existence of fairies—suggesting one way in which advertising and consumer culture helped to reenchant the world, more directly in this instance perhaps than others (Cox 224–225).

Chapter 4: A Time and Place for Horror

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the supernatural horror genre builds upon elements of the Gothic genre but transforms them in such a way that both in meaning and form they comprise a new genre. This transformation can also be seen in the horror genre's presentation of setting, considered both in terms of time and place.¹ In the Gothic genre, setting was extremely important—sometimes even more important than plot or character. Even the word “Gothic,” as a time period and a form of architecture, highlights the central role played by the specifics of time and place in defining the genre. However, in horror fiction, the importance of setting (i.e., ground) diminishes proportionately as the importance of the monster and objects (i.e., figures against the ground) increases, and, as I will argue in this chapter, the range of permissible settings increases greatly beyond the narrow confines of conventional Gothic settings.

In Every Dream Home a Nightmare: From Gothic Castle to Haunted Flat

It is impossible to imagine the Gothic without a castle, or a similar structure (such as the monastery). Horace Walpole's naming of this new literary genre after an architectural style was not an arbitrary decision on his part.² More than elements of plot or character, it is the settings of Gothic fiction that marks the genre—settings that are, in many ways, more important than characters, and often just as lively. Since Walpole, as Devendra Varma notes, “buildings [in the Gothic romance] seem to acquire a personality and an empery [i.e., empire] all their own” (*Gothic Flame* 57). Buildings in the Gothic, such as the castle of Ortranto are not merely buildings. They act like characters, and important characters at that.

Whenever critics of the period described the Gothic they began, as the author of “The Spirit of the Public Journals” (1797) did, with “an old castle, half of it ruinous” (qtd. in Caveliero, 27). C. J. Pitt, in 1810, would go so far as to claim that one could make the Gothic romance into

the sentimental novel simply by exchanging one group of settings and props for another (qtd. in Summers, *Gothic Quest*, 35). According to Pitt, “a castle” can be transformed into “a house” in order to change one genre into another, suggesting that props and setting are more important in defining these separate genres than plot.

More recent critics may not agree on the meaning of Gothic structures, whether castle, crypt, or convent, but they all admit their importance in the story. For instance, Devendra Varma finds “the castle itself is the focal point of Gothic romance” (*Gothic Flame* 18). In listing the key elements of the Gothic genre, Frederick S. Frank puts first “claustrophobic confinement and threatening architecture” (Frank 8). He writes that “Gothic characters must feel enclosed by menacing buildings and by other circumstances of enclosure within the Gothic structure” (Frank 8). According to Chris Baldick, Gothic fiction “can work with other kinds of enclosed space, if these are sufficiently isolated and introverted—convents, prisons, schools, madhouses, even small villages—[but] it is still the dark mansion that occupies its central ground” (*Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* xx). Philip P. Hallie finds that the “full force” of the Gothic tale is not found in its villain, but is instead “embodied in the *ambiente*, the time and place in which those villains prey on their victims. The place is often a castle whose lord is the villain” (2).

As I argued in the last chapter, in supernatural horror much of the significance the Gothic gave to the setting attaches to the figure of the monster, but place is never emptied of meaning or the power to convey affect. There is a continuity as well as salient differences in the relation between Gothic and supernatural horror. The setting continues to play an important role both in creating a mood and in defining an arena of action for the monster and others. Horror fiction, though, uses an expanded range of settings, reflecting perhaps the expanded knowledge of its audience concerning historical and geographical time and place. In tracing the development of supernatural horror as a genre distinct from the Gothic, it is necessary to account for changes, in time and in place, of the setting of these fictions.

Considering the importance of the castle in the Gothic, it is surprising how few castles appear in the supernatural horror genre. They do not disappear—Dracula’s castle can still be found by those who are willing to travel abroad to the “darker” corners of the earth—but far more common settings are the colonial bungalow, the newly-rented manor home, the semi-detached villa, and the attic flat where the rent is extraordinarily low. These new settings may take on some of the importance and some of the characteristics of the Gothic castle, but they feature important differences as well. These are no longer the homes of aristocrats with a long history of ownership, but urban, suburban, and colonial habitats, and, for the most part, they do not feature secret chambers, underground crypts, talking portraits, and the other accoutrements of the Gothic castle.

The Gothic setting never varied much. The action occurred in Europe or the Near East (generally in lands that were *not* colonial possessions) and rarely in England. Nor were these stories set in the present. Almost always they took place in some mythical, medieval past. Distant in time and place but fixed within certain limitations, the Gothic castle was never too close nor too far from the homes of its stories intended (bourgeois) audience.

Of course, as a product of its time, the Gothic tale may metaphorically represent the present as much as it did any imagined past and the situation in England as much as any place abroad, but it never literally addresses the here and now. Critics, like Kate Ellis, are correct to argue that the Gothic castle itself stands in place of the bourgeois home and what occurs there represents, in some sense, the domestic life of the middle classes. Ellis shows how the popularity of the Gothic coincides with the growth of bourgeois ideas of female, domestic space as a blissful refuge from the male world of commerce, and how the Gothic novel presents the underside of that domestic mythology, the home as a place of imprisonment and violence from which women may need to escape. However, the fact that the separation of male and female spheres and the fears of domestic imprisonment are projected back into a pseudo-medieval past suggests a desire to demonize the ruling classes of the past for the injustices of the present. If the Gothic

approached the domestic life of the present, it did so only obliquely. However, horror fiction, surely due to the influence of Victorian realism, was able to deal more directly with the everyday experiences of its readers. It could occur in the present in the homes of the middle class.³

Supernatural horror came closer to readers' everyday lives by making the settings more realistic, but in other ways it ranged further from them. The readership of the late nineteenth century had a broader range of experience to draw upon and a different conception of the world and its history. They knew more about the world of the British Empire than the British public had a 100 years earlier; journals, books, theater, music hall, and even advertising were filled with references to distant places. Because the far corners of the world were part of *their* Empire and because they knew people who were involved in conquering and administering that Empire, they also felt more closely connected to this wider world than previous generations had. In addition, new technologies of communication and transportation made the world seem a smaller place. A new understanding of the world allowed for greater variety in setting. However, more importantly, the genre of supernatural horror shows its readers' willingness not to displace horror, but to imagine it "at home," where they are.

Kathleen Spencer has referred to the horror stories that began to appear at the close of the nineteenth century as "Urban Gothic," and there are certainly a number of stories set within the city (usually London). But far more stories are set in the country or the suburbs, a scene I will return to later in this chapter. Other critics, such as Patrick Brantlinger, remark how closely tied these tales are to the Empire and colonial lands. Brantlinger, in *The Rule of Darkness*, characterizes many of the stories dealt with here as "Imperial Gothic," and, indeed, there are many tales of supernatural horror that are either set in the far corners of the Empire or concerned with the denizens of that Empire and their attempts to invade England.⁴ Still, many are *not* explicitly concerned with "foreign matters," but deal with English men and women in English homes haunted by English monsters. What becomes clear in looking at the range of settings found in supernatural horror fictions from this period is that there is no common setting for horror

fiction as there was for the Gothic. Horror could invade any corner of the world and come from most any place or time. This potential ubiquity makes the source of horror even more horrifying.

Ghosts of History

In addition to expanding the range of places where fearful encounters could occur, horror fiction was not bound to a medieval past as the Gothic had been. Perhaps the greatest change was that supernatural horror stories were typically set in the present, but they continued to make use of the past as a source of fear and horror as the Gothic had done. The past supernatural horror drew upon, however, ranged over the entire history of humanity and prehistory as well.⁵ Horror fiction was able to involve a wider range of historical events in part because the common reader's understanding of the history of the world was different in the late nineteenth century than it had been at the beginning of that century. It encompassed a greater period of time and, whether they believed in Darwin or not, readers were aware of the possibility of pre-human events and an evolutionary process at work in the world. Archaeology had made the influence of previous civilizations more understandable, and anthropology had begun to suggest there was truth in cultural relativism.

The Gothic had always been a genre concerned with history—it was a genre which enabled the emerging middle class to demonize a past (with its aristocratic and Catholic associations) that it was attempting to overcome.⁶ David Punter describes the Gothic as “a mode—perhaps the mode—of unofficial history,” because it challenges the neat and presentable view of history found in the standard, official histories (*Literature of Terror*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 187). He goes on to argue, quite accurately, that the history presented in what he calls the Gothic (which, in his framework, would include supernatural horror, the mystery, and the other descendents of the eighteenth century genre) is never “a simple one in which past is encoded in present or visa versa, but dialectical, past and present intertwined and distorting” (198). The specters of history that the Gothic and horror genres raise are fantastic and distorted, but they

capture much of the affect and unconscious repercussions of historical events, while still, like all literature, reflecting the time in which they were created.

Supernatural horror fictions generally had a more complicated relation to the past than Gothic texts. By the time the horror genre developed, the bourgeoisie, who had been in ascension during the era of the Gothic, had solidified their power. While the middle class remained the dominant consumer of these texts, the genre of supernatural horror, as it developed, retained from the Gothic some of the attitude of suspicion (if not downright paranoia) toward the past that had been an essential part of the earlier genre.⁷ However, having solidified its power, the middle class no longer felt so keenly that the recent past was a major threat; so a change was needed to resolve this apparent contradiction between the attitude of the Gothic genre and the attitude of the new ruling class(es).

One way of resolving this contradiction was to project these fears into an even more distant past; in some cases, these fears were projected onto a pre-historical (and pre-human) past. In other texts, fears were projected into the future—the method used by science fiction and related texts. Still other texts focused on the “dangers” that might develop in the future, while still portraying events in the present. This latter method is used by those horror texts that focus on fears concerning the poor, women, colonized peoples, and others who threaten the current order.⁸

In the Gothic, the middle class found expression for its fears of the aristocracy and the past in which church and nobility had ruled. At the same time, though, the Gothic also expressed the middle class reader’s desire to live as his or her social betters had in the past. So too in supernatural horror is the past often a source of both desire and fear. The protagonists of these stories are often motivated, as the Gothic protagonists before them were, by a desire to uncover the past and a fear of what they might find there. However, instead of noble men and women the protagonists of horror fiction were likely to be people with a professional interest in the past. Horror fiction from this period is filled with characters who are antiquarians, archaeologists,

historians, and even biologists or geologists, who are interested in uncovering the past of the race or the planet, which is one way in which the importance of the past as a source for both fear and desire is made manifest. In their attempts to uncover the past, these antiquarians are confronted with a horrible reality in the form of monsters that represent some part of that past that has been literally buried and covered over. These monsters rise up again, refusing to die.

Unlike the Gothic ghost, the ghosts and monsters of horror fiction often come from a discontinuous past, from another age entirely. Gothic tales were typically set in a medieval past or a foreign (generally European) country, and the ghosts found in those tales were from the same time and place as that presented in the narrative. For instance, I am unaware of any Gothic tales involving a creature or spirit from ancient Rome or Egypt, and yet in the horror fiction of this later period there are many examples of ancient monsters from those eras that have survived into the present.⁹ Authors of horror fiction were aware that the Gothic tradition did not allow for ghosts from a distant past, a fact remarked upon in stories such as Grant Allen's "Pallinghurst Barrow." In Allen's story, Dr. Porter (a "materialist") reminds the reader "that the only ghosts people ever see are the ghosts of a generation very very close to them" (298). Porter attributes the apparent absence of more ancient ghosts to a lack of knowledge concerning the peoples of older eras, but that lack of knowledge may not be as important as a lack of desire to imagine such ghosts, as Allen's story demonstrates.

The ghosts that haunt "Pallinghurst Barrow" are presented as doubly terrible because they are "savages" as well as ghosts. These are ghosts from "remote antiquity," the ghosts of the people who inhabited England before the "Aryan invaders" came (Allen, "Pallinghurst" 302, 297). They are described as "grinning and hateful barbarian shadows, neither black nor white, but tawny-skinned and low-browed...their whole mien inexpressibly repulsive and bloodthirsty" (302). Before them the protagonist, Rudolph, cowers, thinking "what fear would any Christian ghost have inspired by the side of these incorporeal pagan savages" (306). Yet these pagan savages also have an attraction for Rudolph. Their "speechless voices seemed to whisper

unknown tongues encouragingly in his ear; [and] horrible shapes of elder creeds appeared to crowd round him and tempt him with beckoning fingers to follow them” (Allen, “Pallinghurst” 301). Thus they draw him out of the house in the middle of the night to come to their barrow and perform a ceremony to gain entrance. He complies, acting as if in a trance, and nearly becomes a sacrifice to their king, though he is saved by another ghost, this one apparently Elizabethan. Rudolph is horrified by the savageness of these ghosts as much as by their supernatural nature, but he is also attracted by them and the mysterious and savage past they represent.

The horror story often includes this ambivalence, presenting a mixture of fascination with the past and fear of it. The humor in Sabine Baring-Gould’s portrayal of an encounter with the ghost of a prehistoric man in his story “H.P.” does not make it a less applicable example or any less revealing of this highly ambivalent attitude towards the past. A parody often displays the conventions of a genre more directly than a representative text of the genre does. In parodying a genre, there is more of a need to display its conventions than in a standard text of the genre where the conventions often operate on a more unconscious level. The narrator, an archaeologist, while on a dig in Southern France is trapped in a cave with the remains of a Paleolithic man whose spirit has risen to vent his anger at “modern man.” He rails against injustices of birth and wealth, asking the archaeologist,

Why are you nursed in the lap of luxury? Why do you enjoy comforts, a civilization that we knew nothing of? It is not just....We had nothing, nothing, literally nothing, not even lucifer matches! (152).

Ghosts, as in Baring-Gould’s story, are always recriminating figures, no matter from whence they come, but this story also suggests that the basis for their recrimination may be material in origin, grounded in a Victorian belief in progress. As suggested in Chapter 2, the ghost or monster easily served to embody the guilt people felt towards the disadvantaged or the disenfranchised. Here, though, the ghost embodies guilt felt over historical wrongs.¹⁰

The Weight of History

If ghosts represent a society's feelings of guilt, then the wide range of ghosts present in horror fiction from this period suggests that people had much to feel guilty about—especially about a past history of oppression and the current state of imperialism. There was the guilt of those who lived in luxury while others had “nothing.” There was also guilt over the fact that Western civilization was itself built upon “savagery.” Also there was a guilt that such savagery was still present—as Walter Benjamin noted, “if the ‘civilized races’ have in fact gained the upper hand, they are for this very reason more savage than the savages” (qtd. in Buck-Morss 59).

In “The Damned” by Algernon Blackwood, a country mansion is haunted by the whole history of Western religion, from the unrestrained cruelty of Druidic sacrifices to the unnatural repression of fundamentalist Protestantism. The narrator and his sister are visiting a friend whose zealot husband has recently passed away, and they are bothered by an odd feeling that permeates the place. It is, however, only a feeling, and the narrator repeatedly states that really “as usual, nothing ever happened” (122). Instead, an endless “boredom” of natural impulses that are always “blocked” and “crippled” is the source of horror in the story (117, 105).

This haunted estate, it turns out, had been, at one time or another, a Druidic grove, a Roman Temple, a Catholic monastery, and home to an orthodox and repressive Catholic, Jew, and Protestant, each in succession. The narrator concludes that “the results of thinking never die,” and here, in this microcosm of Western civilization, the remnants of these successive creeds (each believing that the rest of the world was damned or deserved to be) keep anything *real* from ever occurring (Blackwood, “Damned” 161). The failure of society to really progress, in spite of claims to the contrary, is reflected in this stagnation. These competing creeds, each repressive in its own right, form the basis for all contemporary civilization, a fact the narrator recognizes as making the “common world...ominous now for ever” (Blackwood, “Damned” 121). This experience of haunting gives him the

knowledge of what the past had built upon. In street, in theatre, in the festivities of friends, in music-room or playing field, even indeed in church—how could the memory of what [he] had seen and felt [not] leave its hideous trace? The very structure of [his] Thought...was stained (121).¹¹

Blackwood manages to evoke horror for all Western civilization by focusing on the “evils” upon which it is built, the ideology which structures all of its thinking. No matter how apparently pleasant and joyous the products of this civilization are (music, sport, theater, for example), they are still colored by a repressive structure of beliefs. Haunting here becomes a metaphor for the continued existence of previous ideologies, each repressive, though otherwise mutually contradictory.¹²

In Blackwood’s other works, he often looks to a geographical space that is itself somehow monstrous because of what had transpired there in the past, but the “past” he envisions is often one that recedes back in time long before the beginnings of human civilization, in other words, unlike his purpose in “The Damned.” Blackwood also seeks to convey what Julia Briggs calls an “almost gnostic sense of the forces immanent in nature” (61). Jack Sullivan finds his view of “nature” similar to D. H. Lawrence’s in that in both their works “nature is a distinctly ‘other’ form of life to which humanity is profoundly irrelevant” (*Elegant Nightmares* 123). However, to human eyes, nature may appear downright sinister in Blackwood’s fiction.

Blackwood’s horror tales often occur outdoors (even in “The Damned” more is made of the haunting of the gardens than of the house itself). His horror focuses not on the claustrophobic castle but on the expansive outdoors—in his fiction it is often a natural world that is limitless and boundless that creates a sense of horror. In stories such as “The Wendigo” (*The Lost Valley*) and “The Willows” (*The Listener*), hunters and campers fall prey to monsters that seem to be forces of nature incarnated, and in “The Camp of the Dog,” described in Chapter 2, a wild place brings out the monster that lies dormant inside an apparently “civilized” man.

However, in Blackwood’s stories the enormous power and vast size of the natural world often make that world itself appear horrifying. These stories present cosmic forces that threaten

because human agency becomes insignificant in comparison. This vision is not focused on a pagan revival; it relies upon a conception of the world as a place older than its human inhabitants, and one that will outlive them. Blackwood adapts Gothic historicism to a time far older than humans and a place not created by them. The haunting in “The Damned” is a haunting of the present by the past or of the modern world by its own history. Haunting, in that story, serves as a good metaphor for the impact of the past on the present and the way that the deeds of those who are dead and gone continue to affect the living. In the story “A Descent Into Egypt,” published in the same volume as “The Damned,” Blackwood makes this notion of history as a haunting even more explicit. The narrator of this story, who remains nameless, observes early in his stay in Egypt that the country seemed like “a living entity of enormous power,” and one might think at first that this is a story in which a monstrous place haunts an individual (451). However, the narrator is quick to clarify that this power he has observed resides not in present-day Egypt (which is repeatedly dismissed as insignificant) but rather in “the real, invisible Egypt...[The] Dead Egypt [that] is marvelously alive” (448).¹³

Egypt’s past, with its 8000 years of history, is clearly the monster of this story; it is repeatedly described as monstrous and, at one point as, “always watching, waiting, listening. Almost like a monster of the fables” (Blackwood, “Descent” 459). Unlike in other horror stories of the day, the monster here is not a figure from Egypt’s ancient past that has survived as a spirit or mummy; this monster is described as a “mysterious Third [party]...bigger than either of us separately; it might be called the spirit of ancient Egypt, or it might be called with equal generalization, the Past” (462). This Past (always with a capital “P”) is summoned through supernatural means using a resurrected, ancient, religious chant; the narrator’s friend George Isley and his companion “imaged forth the power of the everlasting Past through the little structures of two human worshippers” (500).

While an entity as abstract as the past is not likely to have a body itself, it does act on its victims’ bodies like other monstrous “spirits” (see Chapter 2). At one point, when the narrator is

participating in the same ceremony that originally called forth the Past, he notes that the bodies of the three participants

stiffened into postures that expressed forgotten ancient minds. The physical conformation of all three was monstrous; and yet the reverence and truth dictated even the uncouthness of the gestures. Something in all three of us inspired the forms our bodies had assumed. Our attitudes expressed buried yearnings, emotions, tendencies—whatever they may be termed—that the spirit of the Past evoked (Blackwood, “Descent” 513).

Their bodies, inspired by the spirit of the Past, assume “stiffened postures” like those seen in Ancient Egyptian art. At the same time, they are temporarily transformed, a deeper change takes place below the surface. The narrator repeatedly observes of his friend Isley that while physically present, “He is nothing. He is a human shell” (442). He notes that this “decline...was terrible to watch. His character went with it,” and he saw Isley’s “talents fade, his personality dwindle, his very soul dissolve before the insidious and invading influence” (470).

This monstrous Past steals human souls or personalities from the present, apparently as form of revenge. At least, that is the narrator’s speculation—that because of the pilfering of its dead (i.e., mummies), this ancient Egypt “in revenge, preys at her leisure on the living” (Blackwood, “Descent” 471). It is able to do this by taking from people their interest in the present so “that the deepest, most satisfying knowledge the Present could offer seemed insignificant beside some stalwart majesty of the Past that utterly usurped it” (496). The present is described by those who have become possessed by this spirit of the Past as “vulgar,” “superficial,” and “tawdry” in comparison to the “splendour” and “glory” of the past (511). But the narrator manages to resist this allure, recognizing that when his friend (now lost to him) speaks of the past he “speaks the lies of madness, and the Past [he] seek[s] is the House of Death...the kingdom of the underworld” (519).

The past, then, is a place where the dead reside in a world underneath, in a metaphysical as well as archeological sense, our own. The image of the underworld, the land of the dead, and abyss return time and again in discussing the places from whence horror (and monsters) come.

What Blackwood's tale makes clear, though, is that the "place" need not be a distinct, foreign place, although it is that as well. It can also be a setting in a different time. Those who lust after a different time (the antiquarians who populate so many horror tales from this period) are like imperialists who try to consume foreign places. In many horror fictions this lust for the past is the character's undoing, and the fatal flaw that enables the monstrous to enter the relatively safe and secure (and perhaps vulgar) world that the reader inhabits.

Many people in late Victorian and Edwardian England were interested in (if not obsessed with) interrogating the place of death, and they usually conceived of it as a distinct "place." Spiritualists, theosophists, psychical researchers, and others spoke of the Astral World, the Borderland, the Other Side, or the Summerland. For some, the existence of another "world" that bordered on our own was a matter of belief, while for other (such as the Society of Psychical Research) it was a matter for investigation. In many ways, as I discuss below, it resembled other "unknown" lands such as imperial territories and inner-city slums. Patrick Brantlinger seems correct in his claim that the interest in spiritualism and Theosophy at this time came about, in part, as a result of "the disappearance of earthly frontiers" and that occultists too were "seeking adventure" (*Rule of Darkness* 240). However, his claim that occultism was simply "imperialist" in nature needs to be complicated. Occult beliefs were also the impetus behind many anti-colonial efforts; native peoples used such beliefs to garner support for rebellions as well as to protest cultural imperialism (see Michael Adas' *Prophets of Rebellion*). Westerners who embraced such beliefs were often in the forefront of anti-imperialist efforts (for example, Annie Besant, Theosophist and early president of the Indian National Congress). The desire to enter into a supernatural region, even if it is a place of death, is fundamentally different from the desire to create a place of death on earth, either literally through killing, or figuratively through imagining that "death" is what characterizes a particular region. By projecting imperialist desires onto an imaginary world, desires to cross boundaries that might otherwise be vetted in imperial

conquest could be diffused in a relatively harmless manner. However, in horror fiction the place of death and the place of imperialism were often conflated.

The Ends of the Empire

In most horror fiction, monsters are initially located in enclosed places—they are buried, entombed, locked in the attic, and so forth, or they are excluded or exiled to the “blank spaces on the earth” to use a phrase from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, or, as I’ve just argued, they are placed somewhere in the past. The monster, typically, must cross some type of border, either physical or metaphysical, if it is to enter the sort of space the typical reader inhabits. Horror is not “naturally” found in one’s own backyard. Hence, its appearance there, when it occurs, is supernatural.

Death is a boundary that should not be crossed. At the same time, people fervently believe or wish that it will or can be, and the crossing of that boundary is often a source of horror. Horror fiction is filled with the dead and undead to the point that death is a common element in horror fiction no matter what its setting, but in fiction (as in factual accounts) death seems especially prevalent in the far corners of the empire. In H. Rider Haggard’s *She*, for example, the bodies of the dead are so common that they are used in place of firewood for torches and bonfires. Writers of travel and exploration literature also understood that what made readers interested in such texts was the presence of death and horror, and thus, so many of these texts seem to borrow, knowingly or not, from the tropes of supernatural horror fiction.

In *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, Michael Tausig interrogates the relation of “the space of death” to an imperialist project; he reminds readers that the “space of death has a long and rich culture. It is where the social imagination has populated its metamorphizing images of evil and the underworld” (5). The close proximity of death then, in certain regions, also aligns those areas with the realm of evil or a demon-populated hell, as well as with the supernatural entities that inhabit the pages of horror fiction.¹⁴ Tausig argues that the act of locating a “space

of death” in a real place is tied to the creation of a “culture of terror.” He writes that “With European conquest and colonization, these spaces of death blend into a common pool of key signifiers binding the transforming culture of the conqueror with that of the conquered” (*Shamanism* 5). In imperialism, “the space of death is of necessity a zone of colonization and also a colonizing zone” (373). As an example to support this claim, Taussig points to

the way that ‘ancient people,’ the *infieles* or pagans of that other (preconquest, pre-European) time, have been enfolded or iconicized into the bowels of the Christian cosmos as Antichrist figures—so they live on forever rustling the leaves of memory in the colonially constructed space of death. It was here where the great signifiers of death and the underworld, drawn from Spanish, indigenous New World, and West African sources, blended in harmony and in conflict in the process of conquest and formation of the culture of conquest (373).

Taussig draws his examples from Spanish imperialism in South America, but his arguments are applicable to the British Empire as well. This process can be seen in the number of reanimated or reincarnated Ancient Egyptians and Indian immortals who inhabit the pages of horror fiction as well as in the literature of the occult. In many cases, these reanimated beings return from the dead in order to terrorize the British at home and abroad.

According to Taussig, the labeling of a colonized land as “deadly” or “a space of death” creates a myth that is then enacted by the colonizer in an attempt to subdue a population through terrorism; the threat of death that the colonizer fears is recreated in colonizer’s terrorizing of the indigenous population. Paraphrasing the Peruvian judge Rómulo Paredes, Taussig notes how employees of the rubber companies in the Putumayo saw “death everywhere” and could think

solely of the fact that they live surrounded by vipers, tigers and cannibals. Their imaginations [were] constantly struck by the idea of death as figured in these images of the wild and the only way they could live in such a world...was by themselves inspiring terror (*Shamanism* 128).

The fear of a place as deadly becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy, when those who are afraid respond to that fear by killing.

The “space of death,” however, is a contested ground and one where resistance to a dominant order can also be enacted (often through means that appear supernatural). According to

Taussig, it is “preeminently a space of transformation: through the experience of coming close to death there may well be a more vivid sense of life” (*Shamanism* 7). Methods of resistance, such as the use of shamanism and magic, also become connected to this space of death.¹⁵ Taussig finds “that shamanic healing in the upper reaches of the Putumayo, like the culture of terror, also develops its force from the colonially generated wildness of the epistemic murk of the space of death” (127).

In her Preface to *Travels in West Africa*, Mary Kingsley describes the advice she received from friends and books when contemplating a trip to West Africa. The information she got fell into six categories:

The dangers of West Africa.
The disagreeables of West Africa.
The diseases of West Africa.
The things you must take to West Africa.
The things you find most handy in West Africa.
The worst possible things you can do in West Africa (11).

Leaving aside the things to be taken or that may be found handy (important categories but ones more fitting for the previous chapter) the list consists largely of warnings. To all and sundry, West Africa is a dangerous, disagreeable, and disease-ridden place. Kingsley’s friends warn her that West Africa is a place where people go and die—“the white man’s grave, you know”—or, if they return, do so with their health permanently wrecked (12). The doctors she consults say it is the “deadliest spot on earth” and show her “maps of the geographical distribution of disease” in order to prove it (12). Missionaries are somewhat better, but they only write of how the area ought to be and not how it is. Other literature is no more encouraging; a West African phrase book tells one how to say “Help. I am drowning” and “Why has not this man been buried?” which are hardly common phrases back in Britain (14). The sum total of this advice seems to be that West Africa is a place where disease and death are far too common.

Kingsley’s observations concerning the advice she received portrays accurately (if somewhat sarcastically) a common feature of the late-Victorian discourse concerning travel and

exploration in the “uncivilized” regions of the world. Throughout a variety of texts, discussing a variety of places, one can find a concentration on death and disease that, were it to appear in the fiction of the day, would surely be classed as “morbid.” Travel writers from this period seem obsessed with disease, death, poisonous plants, funeral customs, deadly animals, and other cheerful topics. Whether the trip is to India (as in Mrs. H. A. Hadley’s *Roughing It in Southern India*) or West Africa (in Louis P. Bowler’s *Gold Coast Palaver*) there is an interest in death.¹⁶ Mrs. Hadley discourses at length on the effects and extent of leprosy, elephantiasis, and other “repulsive disease[s]”(136–147), and Bowler finds it necessary to discuss all varieties of deadly plants and animals (as well as disease- and witchcraft-related deaths).¹⁷ Neither of these authors is unusual in giving attention to these issues. Even Mary Kingsley, who seems to aware of how ridiculous and unrealistic a focus on death and disease can be, is not above discussing such topics as funeral rites and the killing of witches on occasion.

Eric J. Reed, in *The Mind of the Traveler*, finds that the association of death and travel goes back to ancient times, when facing death—and the figuration of the place of death as an underworld—was part of the heroic/epic journey. At one time, travel was only undertaken as a necessity and enforced travel was a punishment. Reed, however, sees this “ancient conception of travel as a penance and a purification” changing over time to a modern idea of travel “as an experience of freedom and the gaining of autonomy” (10, 12). Travel, however, can still stand as a form of what Reed calls a “fictional death” where there is “a stripping and wasting away of the self which reveals the irreducible core of the self” (224). In the mind of the modern traveler, there is still a sense that with a journey away from the familiar, there is loss “of all that is not the essence of the passenger, the removal of defining associations, of bonds to the world of place” (11).

The possibility of death may increase the sense of travel as a “transformative” experience; certainly, it is a necessary component in establishing a sense of adventure. However, the threat of death is not a component in every form of modern travel. One need only compare

period literature concerning trips to Western Europe or through the English countryside to tales of travel in Africa or the East End of London in order to see a very different perspective. The threat of death legitimates some travel writing as accounts of “real” exploration and not simple “tourist jaunts.” As Patrick Brantlinger notes, much of the travel literature of this period was concerned with the loss of real opportunities for exploration. He finds that “Numerous travel writers from about 1870 onward lament the decline of exploration into mere tourism” (*Rule of Darkness* 238). The world that is tamed and conquered—and by the 1870s this accounted for most of the world—held out fewer possibilities for adventure and fewer opportunities for imperial expansion.¹⁸ As a result, there was an increased need to focus on the few possibilities for “real” adventure that remained.

In some ways, the dichotomy between the true (and dangerous) lands of adventure and the settled, safe sites available for tourism reproduces the dichotomy between dangerous slum and settled suburb (both discussed below), between places where adventures occur and those where it is safe to live. However, in horror fiction this dichotomy is always already called into question even as it is presented as a given truth. While “spaces of death” may be inhabited by monsters that threaten those who venture into such places, the greater threat is that those monsters will leave their places of origin and invade the supposedly safe places of the world (such as the suburban home). Horror fiction, in fact, can be seen to disrupt the idea found in many non-fictional accounts that the colonial land is the “place of death.” Instead, this genre suggests that death and the supernatural threaten everywhere.

Thus, the images of death and disease that one finds in travel literature are reminiscent of and related to those seen in horror fiction. These are images of human monsters such as the lepers in Mrs. Handley’s account of an Indian village:

The leprosy from which we were all rescued that day was the kind which eats the flesh and corrodes the bones; creeping gradually, not to be arrested till the poor body becomes one running sore from head to foot, drying off, and sloughing away till no flesh remains but what hangs in shreds. Hair, teeth, nails, and every feature gone, with no semblance of face left, the victim lives on, often for years (137).

However, the dead and monstrous bodies of horror fiction also differ significantly from those that appear in factual accounts of travel and adventure. Horror fiction tells of death, disease and danger in foreign places (and familiar places too), but the death it presents is not absolute. In horror fiction, the dead return in the undead forms of vampires, mummies and ghosts. In such fictional accounts, death becomes both a “space of transformation” and a space of contestation.

“A Likely Place Isn’t It”

Their focus on death and disease links writings about London slums with those on African jungles and enables both to use images and tropes drawn from supernatural horror fiction. Stallybrass and White point to the fear of dirt and the discourses that tried to map “the city in terms of dirt and cleanliness” repeating “the discourse of colonial anthropology” (130). However, maps of death rates and life expectancies and “the geographical distribution of diseases” were also quite common (Kingsley 12), and the division of those places that were deadly from those that were safe may have been even more significant than the division of clean places from unclean ones. Death marks the ultimate boundary between the known and the unknowable, the canny and the uncanny, and the idea of death also carries with it a long history of associations with the supernatural.

Unlike the Gothic, horror fiction often explored urban and, as I shall show, suburban settings. Many tales of urban horror were published at the close of the nineteenth century. Probably the best known of these is Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This text still draws upon Gothic conceptions of the importance of place but it uses them to express a new set of fears and concerns—ones that look forward to the dangers of working class revolt and not backward to the oppression of the aristocracy. Stevenson’s novella, originally published as a “shilling shocker” (a cheap form of paperback literature aimed at a mass market), was, according to Martin Tropp, “a publishing phenomenon...[that] quickly became the most widely read, discussed, and quoted work in English” (99).¹⁹

In the exchange that opens Stevenson's novella, between the lawyer, Mr. Utterson, and his cousin, Mr. Enfield, Enfield dismisses the possibility that Dr. Jekyll resides at the house he has previously seen Mr. Hyde enter. "'A likely place isn't it?' returned Mr. Enfield. 'But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other'" (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 338). The fact that Jekyll's address, on the square, is really the same residence as the "sinister" building Enfield had observed, duplicates the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde themselves. The two (men and buildings) may look very different and be addressed differently, but in reality they are the same. Stevenson's novella may focus on the monstrous double figure of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but it is also about a geographical separation of two buildings that are really one home.

The building that Enfield has seen Hyde enter is a rather dilapidated affair. Unlike the businesses that surround it, nothing is bought or sold or produced in this building; it attracts an unseemly element and most likely lowers the property values of the neighborhood. Around the corner, on the square where one finds Jekyll's address, what were once stately town-homes are "now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises" (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 346). This is a street that would be on the way to becoming a slum if it were residential and not commercial in character.²⁰ As it is, the street houses a disreputable set of tradespeople and professionals.

Like the sinister building around the corner, Dr. Jekyll's home stands in contrast to its surrounding neighborhood, but it wears "a great air of wealth and comfort" (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 346). Its entranceway is a "large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags, warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak" (346–347). For Utterson, it is "the pleasantest room in London" (347). This building is far cry from the "dingy windowless structure" that Enfield associates with Hyde (which is, in fact, the laboratory of Dr. Jekyll). It has elements of the country home of a gentleman or aristocrat that

make it stand out amidst all the homes of London, but it is not a country home. Perhaps it has aspirations above its station or, like Jekyll, seeks to appear better than it really is. Dr. Jekyll's home stands out because it is better kept and more appealing than its neighbors. It does not attract tramps and juvenile delinquents (as the laboratory building around the corner does), but, like that other building, it is a place where no business is conducted (in spite of the fact that its owner is a professional man).

These two buildings, one far superior to those that surround it and one far inferior, metaphorically represent Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in their relationships to the greater society. Like these buildings, Jekyll and Hyde stand out from their neighbors, one because of his great wealth and pleasant nature and the other because of his seedy and neglected air, but both also because they are removed from the commerce that occurs throughout the rest of this neighborhood. It is worth noting that by encompassing a wider range of potential settings for horror, the supernatural horror genre also presented a wider range of human relations than the Gothic had presented. Different types of space are regulated to different human activities. Even though Jekyll and Hyde inhabit buildings that do not house commercial enterprises, they are still connected to the commercial/professional activities that occur around them. It is not accidental that Stevenson's novella never mentions Jekyll's family but instead has a professional representative, his lawyer (presumably the person with the greatest interest in his welfare) investigate what has happened to him.

Stevenson's London is a city in transition, a city of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, and one where appearances may be deceiving.²¹ In telling this tale, Stevenson transfers the Gothic's critical approach to history to the life of the city. This is a city in decline, with once lavish neighborhoods being broken up into offices for shady and "obscure" trades and solid middle class neighborhoods being corrupted by the presence of "sinister" and neglected buildings. More than mapping out a divided city, Stevenson's text shows how intimately connected and interdependent the wealth and poverty of London are.

Mr. Hyde may be linked with the laboratory behind Jekyll's home, but he also has his own chambers in a "dismal quarter of Soho" (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 353). The area of Soho where he resides is a slum; "with its muddy ways and slatternly passengers," it seems to Utterson "like a district of some city in a nightmare" (353). Hyde's street contains "a gin palace, a low French eating house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in doorways, and many women of many different nationalities" (353). It is an immigrant community with impoverished children and few cultural pursuits beyond the penny dreadful.²²

Hyde's presence in this Soho neighborhood associates him even more closely with the lower-class slum dweller. Soho, however, lies outside the East End (the area where the majority of London's poor resided); an impoverished neighborhood that intrudes upon its betters, it borders on more fashionable districts, and is itself a neighborhood in transition, in this case toward gentrification. Like Hyde, it does not know its proper place. However, just as Hyde is created by Jekyll and is dependent on Jekyll's actions and Jekyll's "undignified" desires, so too the one run-down building dependent on the overly-wealthy one, and so too is the slum dependent on its wealthy neighbors.

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White find that "in the nineteenth century that fear of differences that 'have no law, no meaning, and no end' was articulated above all through the 'body' of the city: through the separations and interpenetrations of the suburb and the slum, of grand buildings and the sewer, of the respectable classes and the lumpenproletariat" (125). They go on to argue that "one cannot analyze the psychic domain without examining the processes of transcoding between the body, typography, and the social formation" (144). Hence one can see, in many different texts, "the axis of the body...transcoded through the axis of the city" so that "whilst the bodily low is 'forgotten,' the city's low becomes a site of obsessive preoccupation which is itself intimately conceptualized in terms of discourses of the body" (145). However, this process works in both directions, so that in a text like Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and*

Mr. Hyde the preoccupation with the body of Jekyll/Hyde also becomes a way of presenting concerns about the nature of the city.

Judith Walkowitz sees, both in popular fiction like the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and journalistic accounts of urban exploration, “a growing skepticism among men of letters about their capacity to read the city and sustain a coherent vision of a structured public landscape” (39). The size of the city contributed to this confusion, as did the fragmented nature of its communities. H. J. Dyos and D. A. Reeder argue that “London was too vast, and the consciousness of the crowd too immanent, to admit the intimacy of a single community for the whole. There was instead the beginning of a fragmentation that has never been reversed” (360). A fragmentation that they see as only “partly geographical” and they suggest that it was also internalized in each individual. “The characteristic tensions being produced were not so much...between class and class as between the individual and the mass, and between the individual’s inner life and his outward behaviour” (360). In short, the confusion concerning the identity of Jekyll and Hyde reconceives a geographical and social division in terms of a monstrous body. Stevenson shows that the physical layout of the city is as “unreadable” as the confusion of individual “gender and class identity” Walkowitz recognizes in *Jekyll and Hyde*.²³

Stevenson’s novella mentions the names of some real London streets and places, but the image of the city it presents does not come from any sort of traditional “realism.” Instead he presents the city as it appears in the minds of its inhabitants, in their dreams, nightmares, fears, and desires. Stevenson’s text presents what I would call, following Guy Debord, a monstrous psychogeography, a mapping of the effects of a geographical space on “the emotions and behavior of individuals” (“Introduction” 5). Instead of focusing solely on the city and determining from its physical nature how it will affect the individual, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* lets us read the “nature” of this city through the actions of its characters.

The city in the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, takes over the role of the Gothic castle. It is sublime in its vastness and emptiness, but not claustrophobic, although buildings or

rooms in it, like Jekyll's laboratory, may be. It is a city that often appears to characters to possess a dreamlike (or nightmarish) quality; for example, Enfield, as he walks home one night passes

through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last [he] got into that state of mind when a man listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 336).

“Empty as a church” suggests a secularized society where religion no longer holds much power, or why would a church be emblematic of emptiness. The vast number of streets devoid of anyone or anything except “lamps”—including the policeman, representative of law and order—presents a rather hellish picture of a world where everything human has been effaced. In this nocturnal London, people are replaced with lamps that burn where no one can see them, in a city that lacks any sort of moral or social center. The individual walks through the silent streets in complete isolation.

London also occupies Utterson's dreams or nightmares. In one dream, it appears to him as “the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city” where a faceless Hyde “glide[s]...stealthily through sleeping houses, or move[s]...swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush[es] a child and leave[s] her screaming” or else stands by the side of Jekyll's bed in “a room in a rich house” (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 343).²⁴ London creates an impression that fills characters' conscious and unconscious minds. It is this city of dream and nightmare that the characters inhabit as much as the “real” London, but, living in this psychogeographical space, these characters are no different from the reader who also inhabits a world that shapes and is shaped by his or her dreams and nightmares.

The London Stevenson depicts is also a city where inexplicable and horrific violence can occur, carried out by seemingly supernatural entities (supernatural because, even with vague gestures towards a scientific explanation, their existence remains inexplicable). It is a city divided between the very wealthy and the very poor, where the very wealthy live in fear of the proximity of the very poor. It is a city sublime and incomprehensible in its vastness, and also

incredibly isolating (as one walks through its empty streets). It is a city in economic decline and cultural confusion. It is a city that in its varied and often confusing structure is also a monster in its own right.

London Becomes “Bagdad in an Instant”

In Robert Louis Stevenson’s first published volume, *The New Arabian Nights*, he recast the streets of London as a modern day “Baghdad” (modeled not on the realistic Baghdad of his time but the fantastic city of *1001 Arabian Nights*) where adventures awaited in the most unlikely of places. Arthur Machen, in *The Three Imposters*, a connected series of stories, most of which belong to the supernatural horror genre, adapted this “Arabian Nights” atmosphere, arguing that in some ways it better presented the reality of his life in London than did any realist fiction. In his Introduction to that volume, Machen states that, “London will turn into Bagdad in an instant: if you have the true wand of transmutation” (xvii–xviii). He reiterated his view of London as a place where the fantastic could become a reality in the Introduction to the British edition of *The House of Souls*, where he writes that, “he who adventures in London has a foretaste of infinity” (xi).

Other horror fictions from the period also drew attention to London as a magical place, comparable to any exotic, Eastern location. For example, Robert Hichens’ 1897 horror novel, *Flames: A London Phantasy*, observes that

Many Europeans who go to India return to their own continent with a belief in miracles, modern miracles, which no argument, no sarcasm can shake. But there are miracles in Europe, too. The magicians of the East work wonders in the strange atmosphere of that strange country whose very air is heavy with magic. Yet England, too, has her magicians. London holds in the arms of its yellow fogs and dust-laden clouds miracles (310).

Though the East is almost always invoked in late-Victorian discussions of magic, it seems that the English did not want to be outdone by the East even when it came to magic. In relation to the “rational” West, the East is cast as irrational, magical, and supernatural. However, this

dichotomy, rather than being absolute, seems to exist on a circular continuum where the most developed places in the West can recreate the magic of the “undeveloped” East. Just as magic can appear as science, so can science recreate a world of magic. London can even become “Baghdad.” Not only scientific discoveries but also the increased social awareness of diversity that accompanied urban living made life there seem magical, so that for Machen, as for many horror writers from this period, London became a place of magical and infinite possibilities (many of them horrifying).

While Machen’s conception of London as Baghdad may depend on the phallic “wand of transmutation,” the possibilities of modern London were not open only to the male, middle-class *flâneur*. The modern city was able to present a wider range of possibilities to a wider range of people than had ever been imagined before. As Susan Buck-Morss notes, the increased size of the audience for the pleasures of the city was even more significant than the increase in possibilities. She comments that “urban brilliance and luxury were not new in history, but secular, public access to them was” (81). Nor was the development of a new urban culture limited to the lives of the middle classes. This same period saw the development of a working class culture centered around football, the music hall, Bank Holidays, seaside excursions, and even fish-and-chip shops—all of which were created or expanded during this period (Pearson 62). As Eric Hobsbawm notes, “between 1870 and 1900 the pattern of British working-class life which...[is] thought of as ‘traditional’ came into being” (164). But if new pleasures awaited people in London, so did new dangers; new urban situations brought new fears that were considered in the horror fiction of the period.

The experience of alienation and isolation that Raymond Williams sees as so important in the connection between the development of modernism and the growth of the metropolis is just as important in the development of supernatural horror as a genre (37–47). Williams notes that the expanding city with its immigrant populations and large, anonymous crowds lead (first in the Romantic era) to “the now characteristic interpretation of strangeness as mystery” and a vision of

people “seen as if in ‘second sight’ or, crucially, as in dreams; a major point of reference for many subsequent modern artistic techniques” (40). Mystery and the uncanny or dreamlike perception of reality are as much a part of supernatural horror as they are of modernist high art. The sense of the alienated self is expressed quite readily in horror’s tales of paranoia and fragmented personalities.

Even authors who made use of wilderness settings in their horror stories (like Algernon Blackwood, whose wilderness story, “The Camp of the Dog,” is discussed in Chapter 2) were greatly influenced by the horrifying experiences of modern urban life. Blackwood claimed that the city, in this case New York, was the impetus for all of his horror fiction. He drew upon his experiences living in poverty in a foreign city when he first began to write horror; he writes of his first efforts in the genre, “I guess that the accumulated horror of the years in New York was seeking expression” (qtd. in Ashley, “Introduction” 10). Poverty, disease, and despair marked Blackwood’s years in New York, and for him they marked the city as a place of horror. In horror fiction, the city could be as claustrophobic and oppressive as any Gothic castle. However, the fact that the city is a source of horror does not mean that the natural world is reassuring in Blackwood’s fiction (or in the works of other authors of the genre). The dilemma that exists in Blackwood’s fiction is that if the natural world is threatening because it is alien and unpredictable, the world that humanity has constructed in its cities and suburbs is equally dangerous and horrifying because of its monotony and oppression. The city and suburb, in Blackwood, are places of horror even more than the wilderness.

In Blackwood’s story, “The Listener,” all of the common annoyances of modern, urban life combine to create a mood of horror. The narrator begins the story with the bad luck, very common in horror stories, of having found an incredibly affordable apartment “in an eminently respectable street” (247). There is nothing wrong with his neighborhood—except, perhaps, that it is a little drab and perhaps a little lifeless. The apartment he has found is off an alley that “is well

paved and clean, and lined chiefly with the backs of sedate and institutional-looking buildings” (247).

However, early in the story the narrator, who is never named, notices some minor problems with his new lodging and landlady. There is a bad egg in his breakfast and then his landlady’s servant takes the lone good egg and leaves the bad. A storm causes an “awful” draft in the apartment, and he suspects there may be people outside staring up at his windows. A few days later he begins to notice how noisy the neighborhood cats are. There is dust and fog and soot to contend with. He thinks there may be rats in his walls, and then believes his landlady has a child visiting her, a particularly noisy one. Soon the “roar of London’s traffic” begins to affect him more; he finds it “holds an ominous note sometimes, like that of an approaching army, or an immense tidal-wave very far away” (Blackwood, “Listener” 253). His landlady “exasperates him,” and he finds that “her very silence and meekness are irritating” (254). “The utter stillness of the house” begins “to oppress” him and he starts to feel “lonely...and isolated, swept into a deserted corner of the world and forgotten” (255). He complains that his new home “is lonely and deserted in the very heart of London” (262). There is a bad but “indescribable odour,” and his room seems cold. He worries about his neighbors and the history of the house. One night he wakes up and feels that there is someone “standing outside [his] bedroom door *listening*” (264).

All these small annoyances build upon one another until the reader is left, like the narrator, feeling oppressed beyond measure and horrified by the awful drabness of it all. None of the narrator’s experiences is, in and of itself, particularly unusual, but together they begin to weigh him down. In spite of the awareness of a vast city outside his room, no one seems to exist besides the narrator, his landlady, the maid, and one friend who has sent a letter saying he will visit. Isolated from any kind of community, bombarded with sensory data, and afraid of what others are thinking and doing, the narrator becomes a classic study in urban paranoia.

The apartment, of course, is haunted. The narrator begins to sense the presence of this shadowy figure he calls *the Listener*—an ironic name considering that he too spends much of the

story listening (as well as smelling, seeing, and feeling) the excessive and disturbing stimuli that surround him. At first he only senses the presence of this ghost, then he hears it, and finally he sees it:

the head and shoulders were seemingly enormous, and stood sharply silhouetted against the skylight in the roof immediately above....[he is] looking into the visage of something monstrous. The huge skull, the mane-like hair, the wide-humped shoulders, suggested...that which was scarcely human; and for some seconds, fascinated by the horror, [he] returned the gaze and stared into the dark, inscrutable countenance (Blackwood, "Listener" 265–266).

This monstrous figure speaks to him, saying, "I want your body; I want its covering. I'm waiting for it, and listening always" (267).

This ghostly presence begins to directly affect the narrator's mind. "New strange conceptions, wholly foreign to [his] temperament, are for ever cropping up in [his] head" (Blackwood, "Listener" 269). In general, he avoids saying what these strange thoughts are, except at one point when he confesses to an alien desire to commit violence upon his landlady and her maid. The final stage in this haunting manifests itself in a "consciousness of the propinquity of some deadly and loathsome disease" (270). The air seems "tainted"; he feels dizzy and ill. "The Listener," he feels, must be "the actual essence of this invisible and malignant disease" (270). In a way, this perception is accurate, for the Listener turns out to be the ghost of a man, Blount, who had leprosy, and committed suicide in the narrator's rooms, according to the narrator's friend, Chapter, who once knew Blount.²⁵

Chapter informs the narrator about the horrible physical deterioration that led to Blount's suicide—how the "extremities of both [Blount's] lower limbs were gone, dropped off, and he moved about on the ground on all fours with a sort of crawling motion" (Blackwood, "Listener" 274). Outside crowds would wait to see him or try to catch a glimpse of his face through the window. Chapter has no difficulty believing that the chambers are still haunted because of what passed within them. In fact, he wonders that his friend never noticed that the rooms were "too

cheap” nor asked “what made ‘em so cheap” (274). As his metanarratively allegorical name suggests, Chapter is aware of the conventions of the genre even if the narrator is not.

The anonymity of the city has enabled the narrator accidentally to stumble upon the rooms of a leper, and become prey to his ghost. The city, however, haunts the narrator as much as the ghost itself does. In fact, the city haunts him just as it haunted the previous tenant. The fears that drive him to the brink of suicide are the same fears—that someone is looking and listening and that, at the same time, no one is there; one is completely isolated from humanity. These are not uncommon feelings for the modern urban dweller. In the end, it is only the presence of his friend Chapter who rescues the narrator from following Blount and killing himself.

Life in the city at the close of the nineteenth century held many fears, both new and old, for its inhabitants. Perhaps even more than the specter of revolution, crime haunted the consciousness of Londoners at the close of the century. While much of this fear was directed towards the lower classes, it was not simply a class fear. People were also concerned with middle-class murderers and the inability to determine who was a criminal and who was not. Crime represented a general disruption of society that could be perpetrated by any class. Though the use of Gothic and horror tropes to describe crime was not new, the discourses surrounding crimes like the hooligan outrages and the Ripper slayings made use of new developments in the horror genre, so much so that some believed the “Art of Murder” was imitating the art of fiction.

In August through November of 1888, Jack the Ripper seemed to many to be a monster come to life. Newspaper accounts were filled with references to the monsters of horror fiction in an attempt to understand both the monstrosity of the crimes and the killer’s ability to escape undetected. *The Illustrated Police News* referred to the “horrors” perpetuated by this “monster of the East End” (see Figure 4-1) and *The Illustrated London News* depicted him with a skull face (see Figure 4-2). Papers called him “half beast, half-man...a ghoulish creature who is drunk with blood and will have more” (*The Globe* qtd. in West 34) and compared him to the “were

wolf” of “Gothic fiction” (*Daily Chronicle* qtd. in Walkowitz 197). *The Daily Telegraph* referred to “the grim spectre” who “haunted” the East End, and who might remind people of the “monstres, or ogres” of their nightmares (qtd. in Walkowitz 197). *The East London Advertiser* proposed that when thinking of these crimes, “the mind turns as it were instinctively to some theory of occult force, and the myths of the Dark Ages arise before the imagination. Ghouls, vampires, blood-suckers...take form and seize the excited fancy” (qtd. in Tropp 114). Direct comparisons to Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* were also made. In *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* the murderer was said to be like “the shadowy and willful figures in Poe’s and Stevenson’s novels” (qtd. in Walkowitz 196). *The Pall Mall Gazette* called the killer “a tolerably realistic personification of Mr. Hyde” (qtd. in West 34) and a “Mr. Hyde of humanity” (qtd. in Walkowitz 206).²⁶ Nor was it simply the newspapers that had taken up fictional tropes to describe these factual events, everyday people did as well; *Lloyd’s Weekly News* commented that what people said of one of the suspects made him seem “so much like the intention of a storywriter that the accounts of him given by all the streetwalkers of Whitechapel district seem like romances” (qtd. in Walkowitz 203).

Many people proposed supernatural explanations for the killings. However, a more influential suggestion was that the killer was not (as the *Pall Mall Gazette* originally suggested) “a plebian Marquis De Sade” (qtd. in West 35) but rather someone who, like the Marquis De Sade, “was an amiable-looking gentleman,” someone like a “local preacher[s], [a] member[s] of Parliament, or [a] monthly nurse[s]” (qtd. in West 67). The idea that a monster could hide under the guise of a gentleman had already been presented in fictions like Stevenson’s, and so it seems appropriate, as Judith Walkowitz argues, that those fictional accounts helped to create an image for this real life killer.²⁷



Figure 4-1: Jack the Ripper, "Mysterious Monster of the East End"



Figure 4-2: Jack the Ripper as Skull-Faced Monster

Horror fiction was able to influence the discourse that was created around this crime (and crime in general) because it had developed a popular language to express powerful emotions of horror and fear. Walkowitz notes that the media coverage of the Jack the Ripper murders “[drew] on cultural fantasies—about the grotesque female body, about the labyrinthine city, about the mad doctor—that had long circulated among different strata of Victorian culture” (191). Nowhere did these various fantasies relating to monster, victim, and setting converge so neatly as they did in supernatural horror. Tropp finds that Jekyll and Hyde “became a blueprint for speculation about the murders because both events—fictional and factual—conveyed, graphically and undeniably, a sense of the precariousness of a culture caught between outward respectability and secret violence” (110). He goes on to note that in some ways Stevenson’s fiction and the Ripper’s crimes gave form to the same “fears hiding in the late Victorian urban darkness” (110).

While both the fictions of horror and the public discourse surrounding crime represented the same deep-set fears, they were also involved in a dialectical relationship. Horror fictions were shaped by fears concerning the criminal and helped to provide a vocabulary of words and images to express those fears in public discussions of crime. In the case of Jack the Ripper, it became difficult to even separate the discourse of horror fiction from the discourse of crime. Jack the Ripper was presented as a monster from the pages of horror fiction, and the pages of horror fiction (in stories such as Hume Nisbet’s “The Demon Spell” from the volume *The Haunted Station*) made use of the Ripper murders to form the basis of supernatural tales. In other cases, figures from horror fiction were used to present the real “horror” of urban crime. The “Nemesis of Neglect” (see Figure 2-3) haunted readers because of the violence it threatened; they felt horror not so much at the violence done to the poor as at the violence the poor might do in turn. Such too were the fears that surrounded the “hooligan” attacks that occupied the press in the summer of 1898.

After the August Bank Holiday of 1898, when working class celebrations resulted in a large number of criminal charges brought against young people, the terms “hooligan” and

“hooliganism” were taken up by the media to describe a new, perceived threat from working class youth. Assaults, brawls, robberies, gang fights, and other disorderly behaviors were reported in the newspapers and ascribed to hooligan boys. Often these were assaults on immigrants or the police. In many ways, the newspaper reports resembled those that, years later, would follow the exploits of the teddy boys, mods, and similar youth subcultures. The hooligans had their own style of dress and belonged to their own gangs such as “the Velvet Cap Gang” (who were mentioned in the *Daily Graphic* for their habits of swearing and pushing people off the sidewalk), and there was even talk of “Hooligan Girls” (Pearson 83, 90). These young people, who were also known as “street arabs,” happily appropriated the name hooligan for themselves.

Pearson argues that the panic concerning the figure of the hooligan, which continued up to the First World War, reflected a “sense of moral crisis and social discontinuity...[that] was deeply characteristic of late Victorian and Edwardian society” (55). While concerns about gender, race, and class disruptions had been present for quite some time, fear of young people and their animosity towards their elders was relatively new. In part, this new fear was the result of changes in consumer capitalism that saw in young people an easy market and a workforce that was not overly demanding; one of the charges leveled against the “hooligan” was that he had too much money for his own good, and, as Pearson notes, such charges were incongruous with the perception of the poor as living lives of urban squalor. Yet such incongruity did not stop even an ardent socialist like Sidney Webb from arguing for a cut in pay for working-class youth; because the youth “who now has ...too much pocket money, and gets, therefore, too soon independent from home, and too easily led into evil courses” needed to be brought under control (qtd. in Pearson 58).

As a source of fear for the middle classes, the hooligans were also characterized as monsters out of the pages of horror fiction. A 1904 volume by E. J. Urwick claimed that “it is a common experience to find a boy a Jekyll in the classroom, and a Hyde in the street,” arguing that outside the confines of disciplinary structures like the schoolroom, young people became

monsters (qtd. in Pearson 107). Jekyll and Hyde, who began as representations of bourgeois hypocrisy, come to stand for any divergence in character, even one that varies from the enforced discipline of the classroom to the relative freedom of the street. Inside the classroom, the hooligan is contained and not troublesome, but if he ventures outside, especially into areas where he is unwanted, he becomes a monster like Hyde.

The hooligan was also compared to the werewolf. C. F. G. Masterman voices the concerns of a fearful bourgeoisie when he writes that “our streets are the haunts of the ‘man-wolf’, ‘the creature that prowls,’ the hooligan” (*From the Abyss* 63). However, Masterman points out, that while the hooligan may be a creature “bred in the Abyss, yet in the Abyss we never hear of the hooligan” (64). Instead, he is only a threat to those who live outside the slums: the “broad, inner ring that almost encircles the city of wealth and of pleasures is the haunt of the hooligan” (66). It was only when the hooligan brings his riotous behavior to the more fashionable districts of London that he becomes a monster fit to haunt or prowl.

I present the panic surrounding the hooligans here because these youths seem so far from the monsters that haunt the pages of horror fiction and yet they were demonized in exactly those terms. The hooligan incidents were another moment when the fears of bourgeois London were enacted in the streets and not just on the pages of horror fictions. As *The Echo*, a progressive London paper, wrote, Londoners “steadily shut [their] eyes to the submerged lawlessness of less fortunate districts until a series of Whitechapel outrages, or Hooligan exploits, make us not only aware of what’s going on, but actually afraid of our lives” (qtd. in Pearson 79). The investigation of the city, with all its horrors and complexities, lent impetus to the use of urban settings in horror fiction; at the same time images and tropes drawn from that fiction became the easiest and, in some senses, the most direct way of presenting the objects of urban fear to a middle class readership.

Discovering the Abyss

When Mr. Utterson says that the Soho slum where Hyde ostensibly resides is like a “city in a nightmare” (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 353), he makes a comparison that would not have been out of place in journalism of the day. Jack London, in describing *The People of the Abyss*, wrote that much of what he had seen in his trip through the slums of London was indescribable. “But in a general way,” London goes on to say, “I may say that I saw a nightmare, a fearful slime that quickened the pavement with life, a mess of unmentionable obscenity” (284). The people he sees have “strange, weird faces and forms and [are] twisted monstrosities” (286). This is a place of horror, and, like all true horror, indescribable, populated by monsters, including monstrous slime, an image of the very ineffability of category-refusing horror. The work of the “social explorers,” who, from the 1880s through the 1900s, focused popular attention on the plight of the impoverished classes, is filled with similar metaphors, seemingly drawn from the pages of horror fiction.

For George R. Sims the slum was a “Chamber of Horrors” into which “almost every form of disease, almost every form of deformity, seems crowded” (17). In *Dismal England*, Robert Blatchford uses Hell as a metaphor to describe the traffic in the East End; he writes that it suggests “the passing of a myriad doleful spirits into the river haze of the awful Styx” (27). William Booth uses the same metaphor, even as he denies its ability to convey horror as well as an actual walk through the slums; he writes,

Talk about Dante’s Hell, and all the horrors and cruelties of the torture-chamber of the lost! The man who walks with open eyes and with bleeding heart through the shambles of our civilization needs no such fantastic images of the poet to teach him horror (146–147).

The realities of life in the slums may be far more horrible than any creation of poetry or fiction, but that does not stop Booth and others from drawing on those same literary sources to make their point.

Besides the use of literary allusions (often drawn from Gothic and horror fiction), these “social explorers” used the language of colonial expansion and exploration to describe their journeys into what William Booth suggestively calls “Darkest England.” Booth begins his book on the life of the poor, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, with an analysis of Sir Henry Stanley’s description of “Darkest Africa.” He dwells on Stanley’s images of the “horror of that awful gloom” where “humans beings dwarfed into pygmies and brutalised into cannibals lurk and live and die” (qtd. in W. Booth 142). Stanley’s jungle is a Gothic space with “dark mazes of...woods” where one can “be carved for the cannibal feast” (Stanley qtd. in W. Booth 144). The jungle has “ghastly” light, and during stormy nights, when “the horror is intensified,” it is filled with the sounds of “howling [winds]...grinding and groaning...storm-tost trees and the dread sounds of the falling giants” (Stanley qtd. in W. Booth 143). To Booth this is “a terrible picture,” but he finds that one can “discover within a stone’s throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors” (145). In borrowing the metaphors of African explorers, Booth and other authors actually end up turning again to the imagery of horror fiction. In other words, if the language Stanley uses to describe Africa is drawn from the pages of Gothic and horror fiction, so too will be the language Booth and others use in describing “Darkest England.”²⁸

Peter Keating, in his introduction to the collection *Into Unknown England: 1866-1913*, notes that “the language of exploration in this specific context” was not new and had been in use for at least 50 years (20). However, he goes on to note

The one image which...is used in a new way at the turn of the century, is of the working classes and the poor as inhabiting an ‘abyss’ at the edge of society. An element of class fear, whether from contagious diseases or revolution, is never entirely absent from the work of earlier social explorers, but the repeated use of the word ‘abyss’ marks a real change of attitude. It reflects a feeling of despair at worsening social conditions and at the inability of existing institutions to deal with the problem; it reflects a corresponding concern at the growing militancy of the working-class movement....An abyss still conveys enough sense of distance to be attractive to the social explorer, but it carries with it an eeriness which replaces the more exotic associations of travel. You don’t journey into an abyss: you descend or fall into it ...And what may walk out of an African rain forest is one thing, what *climbs* out of an abyss is quite another (20–21).

Thus, as Keating explains, the newer literature of social exploration in its borrowings from horror differentiates itself from the older literature of travel and exploration, whether far-flung or close to home. The metaphor of the slum as abyss enabled writers to make a relationship of horizontal proximity into one of vertical hierarchy, with the inferior slum firmly positioned below the better neighborhoods that surrounded it. It also implied that the slum-dweller was a monster or demon of sorts, and that the “abyss” was associated with the supernatural. In occult writings from the period, the Abyss is the name given to the supernatural realm or to Hell, and it is in this sense that the word often appears in the horror fiction of the period. However, in a novel like *The Garden at 19* by Edgar Jepson (discussed below) one abyss easily becomes a metaphor for the other. As I have argued, supernatural horror specializes in this form of over-determination.

William Booth was perhaps the first to make use of the “abyss” as a metaphor for the world that the poorest of the poor inhabit, the “submerged tenth” as he called them. Booth wrote of those who had some meager home and occasional employment as “on the verge of the abyss” (167). This metaphor was taken up by a number of other commentators concerned with the plight of London’s poor, most notably C. F. G. Masterman in *From the Abyss* and Jack London in *People of the Abyss*. According to Keating, Jack London did not get the idea for his title from Booth but rather found it as a line in the H. G. Wells story “In the Abyss.” Keating notes that London’s conception also owed something to Wells’ *The Time Machine* (“Introduction” 21). Wells’ vision of the monstrous Morlocks who prey upon the Eloi who were once their masters reproduces these same late Victorian fears of class warfare in horrific terms.

“In the Abyss,” like many of Wells’ works from the period, combines elements of science fiction and horror. It is a story of deep sea exploration and an encounter with a monstrous race of fish-men who live in an underwater city, the walls of which are, in part, made of the “bones and skulls of dead men” (*Thirty Strange* 178). The “abyss” in Wells’ story refers to this other world found at the bottom of the sea; it suggests a distance between worlds that is unbroachable by common human means. In this abyss, a species of humanoids look up to humans as divine

beings, with awe and perhaps envy. But below the surface of the story—suggested in details like the skull walls—is an awareness of the violence that may erupt at any time from these fish-men below. It is this violence which must account for the human protagonist’s eventual disappearance and death.

In Chapter 2, I considered the fact that the poor were often depicted as monsters in sociological studies of the period, and earlier in this chapter I showed how the environment in which the poor lived was often presented as a supernatural and horrific place. Since the monster typically enters the rational world from the realm of the supernatural, which is also the realm of “the dead,” the genre’s logic would suggest that more than anything else what causes these slums of London to be associated with the world of supernatural horror is the close proximity of death. Both social investigators’ and horror writers’ accounts of slum-life and urban exploration are filled with references to death in all its myriad forms. Disease, for example, is ever present in these texts—disease as the agent of death. Even as instances of death from contagious diseases were decreasing, the fear of disease in the city (expressed in these texts) continued unabated. For the urban explorer, as George Rosen notes,

Death and disease seemed to lurk in the house and haunts of the poor, ready to emerge as epidemics to threaten the health and life of their betters. Thus exploration of the dark alleys of poverty in the Victorian city went hand in hand with horrified and fascinated investigation of disease (659).

The Abyss, in accounts like this one, becomes a master-trope of displacement, blaming the disease of the whole society on its most abject and hidden areas, but also continuing and reinscribing the displacement relegating the poor to an abyss of the almost already dead.

Jack London writes, “the Abyss is literally a huge man-killing machine” (47) and the monstrous creatures it breeds—“creatures” who appear as “a welter of rags and filth, of all manner of loathsome skin diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities and bestial faces”—are made that way by poverty and disease (62). His text is filled with such references to this “new species” of “city savages,” but the point he keeps

returning to is that they are already half-dead—they are “the perambulating carcasses, the living deaths...dying with every step they took and every breath they drew” (286–287). For George Sims, the Abyss is a world where the atmosphere is “charged with infection and poisoned with indescribable effluvia,” where hunger, crime, disease, unsafe buildings and oppressive working conditions all combine to shorten people’s lives (1). Such an environment, where death is always close, is well-suited for ghosts and other supernatural entities.

The bodies of the poor in these texts, as noted in Chapter 2, are often described in terms of disease, degeneration, and monstrosity. However, unlike most (but not all) monsters from horror fiction, the poor congregate in masses. They cover the streets like a “fearful slime;” in one who does not belong to their numbers, they instill a fear “like the fear of the sea; and the miserable multitudes, street upon street, seem[ed] like so many waves of a vast and malodorous sea...threatening to well up and over [one]” (London 8).²⁹ Their apparently “liquid” nature, comparable to slime or to the waves of the sea, highlights the ability of the monstrous masses to transgress boundaries and the most basic ideas of order, differentiation, and cohesion.³⁰

The silence of the crowds can be as disturbing as their potential for riotous noise. Robert Blatchford finds in the East End; “something creepy and terrible in [the] awful silence of the hurrying crowd” (28). This “unending, undiminishing, dim procession of human shadow-shapes hurrying on and on—in ghostly silence” is “more impressive and eerie than all” the rest of the East End scene (28). These crowds are so disturbing that Blatchford draws on supernatural metaphors as a way of explaining this horror; he asks, “By what vile and thrice-accursed art of black magic or insidious subtlety has the Devil brought us to this pass?” (30). Masterman, too, comments on the “weird and uncanny” silence of the masses who “swarm over the...land, like a locust cloud in restless movement” (*From the Abyss* 18, 9). He compares these quiet crowds to a “phantasmagoria,” (used here not as a term for the “magic lantern” show but rather as a form of hypnagogic hallucination that seems to have affected many people at the close of the nineteenth century) (9).³¹ These masses would seem to haunt even the dreams of the middle classes. Their

horror comes not from the loudness of their voices but simply from their number; the very existence of such a multitude is both sublime and threatening.

The monstrous masses were not only an obvious threat to the middle class reader at this time, but also an object of curiosity. Even as the intrepid urban explorers carried on their investigations of the horrors of slum life and of the monstrous race that resided there, the middle class urban dwellers were trying to increase their physical distance from these horrors by moving further out of the city into suburban garden communities.

Suburban Horrors

In Dr. Jekyll's final confession, he puts forth the notion that "man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll* 385). He sees the solution to the problem of the individual's contradictory impulses and desires in the physical separation of these "denizens." Jekyll concludes that

If each...could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of his extraneous evil (385–386).

The upright middle-class man—and Jekyll seems only concerned with the fate of *men*—can only be secure in his "goodness" if he is separated from his criminal, lower-class brother. In other words, what Jekyll seems to be suggesting as a solution for late Victorian bourgeois individuals is also working on the level of the city; and, indeed, the late Victorian bourgeoisie responded to crime and poverty in the city by creating a greater physical separation of the classes. They sought security in communities of their peers (and perhaps their upper-bourgeois betters, as well), as far away from the dangerous masses as possible, while still staying connected to the economic life of the city, in the newly developed suburbs.³²

If Dr. Jekyll's experiment is read as a solution for the body politic, rather than the individual body, it loses its fantastic or supernatural aura and becomes merely a reflection of the

realities of late-Victorian London. The trek to the suburbs and the abandonment of parts of the inner city was well under way in 1886, when Stevenson wrote his tale. As Harold Perkin notes,

Leaving aside the West End with its elegant squares and terraces for the rich and a few similar areas in Edinburgh, Newcastle and Bristol, the middle classes lived as far from the madding crowd as they could afford, and sorted themselves out according to the rents or house prices and travel costs they could pay (20).

The rise in the population of “Greater London” and the slowing of the growth of (and finally decrease in) the population of the inner city attests to the success of the suburban “dream.”³³ This migration move to the suburbs helped further to shape middle-class culture in England, but it is important to see that the migration was fostered by a deep-seated need on the part of this class to define a unique (and safe) place for itself. Robert Fishman, in *Bourgeois Utopias*, argues that suburbia was the collective creation of the middle classes, and it represented a utopian space built on a “vision of the modern family freed from the corruption of the city, restored to harmony with nature, endowed with wealth and independence yet protected by a close-knit, stable community” (x). The creation of this new community was closely tied to the separation of the spheres of (male) work and (female) home, and the creation of a new middle-class culture.³⁴ The suburb also served as a border between city and country, and further alienated the suburban dweller from both.

Suburbia began as a conscious attempt to escape from the immorality of the city. Even in the eighteenth century, the bourgeois elite began purchasing villas on the outside of London in order to have a weekend retreat; Evangelical Christian members of that class, who were seeking to reform the family and escape the immorality of the city, made their permanent homes there shortly thereafter. In creating suburbia, these eighteenth century bourgeois not only “bequeathed to their successors their positive ideal of family life in union with nature, they also passed on their deepest fears of living in an inhumane and immoral metropolis” (Fishman 27).

However, the fears of the bourgeois suburban dweller at the close of the nineteenth century were not just fears of immorality—there was a fear of revolution as well. As Gareth

Stedman Jones points out, the 1880s were a time when the fear of the working classes was on the rise (290–291). One aspect of this fear was that the degenerate, criminal elements (the “residuum”) who shared space in the slums with the working poor, would corrupt this latter group. The “dangerous” poor were depicted as a disease that might infect the respectable working classes and, through them, the middle classes. Stedman Jones finds this particular fear particularly pronounced in the decade up to the dock strike of 1889, when orderly workers demonstrated “a clear distinction between the respectable working class and the residuum” (319). For the suburban dweller, this fear manifested itself in the desire to strengthen the boundaries between the “safe” suburb and the dangerous, deadly, and disease-ridden slum.

Middle-class attitudes to the slums were certainly colored by the popular journalism of the day; crusading journalists were not above using threats and fear to make their readers more interested in the plight of the poor. C. F. G. Masterman presents one such horrific view to the public in *From the Abyss* when he conjures a vision of hordes of the poor “invad[ing] the homes of the respectable, and assail[ing] the houses of the rich and good,” occupying “suburban terraces” as the middle classes flee “panic-stricken away” (*From the Abyss* 11).³⁵ At the same time, he reminds readers that “south of the Abyss stretches a tangled maze of suburbs” where there lives “a population for the most part parasitic on the city of London” (39). Masterman depicts a suburban landscape that exists on the brink of “hell,” with “little tennis-courts, little croquet lawns, [and] little garden parties” but in the distance a glare in the sky reminds one of “the nearness of the hot troubled life in the Abyss” (40). For Masterman, who tries to write in the voice of the “Abyss Dweller,” the middle classes are both “parasitic” and, at the same time, fearful of an invasion by the monstrous poor.

Because of this fear of invasion, the lines between the slums and the suburbs are carefully drawn, and an “armed neutrality” is enforced between the two (Masterman, *From the Abyss* 40). “The suburban race is hurried through [the slums] high on embankments or buried deep in tubes” (40). But already the process of invasion has begun. In a neighborhood, one might see “a child

of the Abyss, trailing behind it a line of youthful companions, [which] inflames with disordered visions of smallpox and virulent fevers the respectabilities of some quiet suburban avenue” (41).

Soon after new tenants may move into the neighborhood, and before long:

Curtains have disappeared from the front window: the open doors disclose passages with blackened walls and staircases gaping with holes; unkempt children swarm in the streets; rubbish and waste paper line the gutters. The gin palace alone exhibits thriving vitality....The entrenchments have broken down with sudden collapse: the defenders have fled away; through the gap has poured the ever-increasing multitude of the Abyss (46–47).

Masterman’s book reproduces a fear held by many middle class readers, but it does so in an attempt to motivate some improvement in living conditions. The only other alternative, and the one he suggests may be inevitable, is that “the whole line of the suburbs will [be]...vanished as the fabled Atlantis or the oak forests of the Sussex coast beneath the restless, unquiet sea” (*From the Abyss* 48). Similarly, Dyos and Reeder would later stress, that the existence of slums is relative, and “what it felt like to live in a slum depended in some degree...on what it felt like to live in a suburb” (363). Hence slum and suburb were more intimately connected than even their close proximity might at first suggest.³⁶

The suburbanite’s fear of the slums also found expression in fiction. In Edgar Jepson’s *The Garden at 19*, the owner of a semi-detached, suburban villa is threatened by creatures from “the Abyss.” The narrator of the novel, John Plowden, a young lawyer, “had always desired to live in Hertford Park, for it is the prettiest and greenest of the inner suburbs, and for [him] an outer suburb [was] too far from the office” (1).³⁷ He gets his wish after a canny investment in the markets provides him with an unexpected windfall. After some searching, he manages to find affordable home, “a really well built semi-detached ten-room house in Hertford Park” that “had been empty for six years” (7–8). As I have already suggested in my examination of haunted flats, these are ominous signs.

Many of the houses on Walden Road (nine out of twenty to be exact) are empty, which is one reason Plowden gets such a bargain in purchasing the place. For him the lack of neighbors is

not a concern; in fact it is a virtue, which probably contributes to making “Walden Road...the quietest place in London” and one that enjoys “the stillness of the country” (Jepson 11, 12). The suburbs of London were developed with the idea that the best of the city and country could be combined, and certainly the suburban dweller valued middle class privacy and quiet.³⁸ As F. M. L. Thompson notes, the design of the London suburbs, with “detached and semi-detached houses,” each with its “own garden fence and privet hedge,” helped insure privacy for the occupant (Introduction 8). This spatial separation was

highly likely to foster the further development of and refinement of attitudes that emphasized the attractions and virtues of privacy, withdrawal of the family on to its own social resources, avoidance of embarrassing chance encounters with strangers, and peaceful recuperation from the worries of business (F. M. L. Thompson, “Introduction” 14).

However, it is not long before the narrator of Jepson’s novel begins to think that perhaps his neighborhood is “oddly quiet” (15).

Still, Plowden’s suburban life seems fairly ideal. He joins the “Hertford Park Lawn Tennis Club” and spends his time reading in the privacy of his garden, with its “thick privet hedge over seven feet tall” (Jepson 17). He notices that an attractive young woman, who has the “air of a shy creature of the woodland,” lives in the attached house next door, and he also sees an old man who lives there (17). Then he begins to notice other things about their house.

One afternoon, while reading in his garden, he is disturbed by rats fleeing from his neighbor’s garden. Then he hears “the grunt of some animal to which [he] could not put a name,” but it is a very “nasty sound.” He is afflicted with a feeling that he has encountered before after reading horror fiction, “the cold chill that sometimes runs down your back late at night when you go upstairs in the dark after reading a gruesome tale,” and he senses something large, “a hideous, shapeless, sluggish beast” moving next door (21). Then there is a cry from the young woman next door, ““Uncle! Uncle! There’s something horrible in the garden!”” (22). Her cry is followed by chanting in what sounds “like a barbarous Latin jargon” repeating the word

“abyssum”; when the chanting ceases, “the air [that] had been full of unspeakable horror...[is] clear again” (22).

Plowden yells to his neighbor, asking him what beast he had in his garden; the neighbor replies that there was no beast. Plowden then gets angry at his neighbor, saying

“Damn you!... You’ve sent it back to the Abyss. See that it stops there, will you!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” said the man.

“Oh, yes, you do. Do you think I couldn’t follow any of your bastard Latin? Keep the damned thing in the Abyss!”

“Bastard Latin, eh? You know a good deal for Hertford Park. But I don’t think you’d better talk about it” (Jepson 23).

The neighbor tells him that it was 12th Century Latin he was speaking, but refuses to admit the presence of a monster in his back yard. Plowden, however, is convinced of its existence and suspects that his neighbor summons creatures from the Abyss.

Perhaps this is the same Abyss that London and Masterman had written about, since in 1910, when Jepson wrote his novel, their books were still being read, and the metaphor they had coined was still prominent. On the other hand, the Abyss that lets loose its denizens in *The Garden at 19* may be the Abyss of hell or the netherworld, but even so it also carries with it associations to the slums of London—slums that threatened to encroach upon garden suburbs like Hertford Park. The term “abyss” always functions doubly in these texts. Creatures from either Abyss are unwanted in suburban neighborhoods, and it is a bad neighbor who would let such things cavort in his yard.

For a while things are quiet at 19 Walden Road, but the very quietness that previously had been prized now becomes disquieting. Plowden worries and thinks that he “would rather it had not been so peaceful,” because he hopes the disturbance was not really caused by “an actual creature from the Abyss, needing a liturgical exorcism to drive it away” (Jepson 28). In time, he comes to be on speaking terms with his neighbor, Woodfell, mainly because of his interest in his shy niece, Pamela. He also learns that his neighbor is leading a cult that practices pagan sorcery and mystery rites in an attempt to summon the god Pan.³⁹

This suburban neighborhood begins to change as a result of these intrusions from the Abyss. A feeling—simply referred to as “the horror”—spreads out from the house at 19 and begins to make quiet Walden Road “unbearable” (Jepson 215). This feeling of horror is unattached to any definite object, but it suggests that something alien has invaded the neighborhood. The very quietness of the street only increases the feeling of unease. As Plowden notices one morning,

There was no sound....The sparrows had gone. No flutter of wings, no twitter, no chirp came to [his] ears from all the length of the gardens. The brooding hush which so often hung over Walden road at night, had fallen on the gardens in the daylight....[He] stood waiting, very still, expectant...and as [he] waited the silent garden grew more and more oppressive with a vague sense of horror (209–210).

The silence of suburbia has itself become horrifying—too much silence, like too much noise, is unnatural. Here the suburb, designed as a place of safety and quiet, has become threatening by becoming too quiet, and thus too far removed from both the natural world and the noise and bustle of the city. Suburban horror tales may ostensibly deal with the threats to the peaceful world of the suburb but they also cannot seem to help but highlight the horror inherent in the sterile environment of the suburb.

Plowden and his friend Marks, who is a student of the occult, discuss the Abyss and the nature of the horror that has invaded his suburban home. Marks believes that the Abyss is not a literal place but rather something “in each of us” (Jepson 216). In the city, Plowden finds it “incredible enough that under the vaults of the Bank was a seething Abyss, full of malefic powers and principalities” (221), but back at Walden Road, in “a heavy air charged with horror and menace,” he has no difficulty believing in its literal existence. Plowden tells Marks that he believes ““the Abyss is surging behind a very frail barrier—surging to get at us. And the barrier is getting frailer” (219).

Woodfell manages to banish the horror from his house for a time, but Plowden wishes that ““he’d purify the garden and the road—[and] drive the shadows right back into the Abyss”” (Jepson 237). The attempts at banishment are not successful, and at last Pan himself appears. On

that day, Plowden and Marks find that Woodfell has gone mad and is repeating the words “‘Pan is not dead.’” Nearby lies the body of one of his female initiates (Helen Ranger, the Priestess of Ashtaroth) who has been crushed beneath a horribly lifelike statue of Pan. Another initiate dies of a heart attack. The doctor who comes to sign the death certificates says that he died of fear, and complains that “This damned occult is cropping up constantly, ruining [his] patients’ nerves but [he’d] never had a case as bad as this” (Jepson 268). Plowden concludes that “‘There will be no more rites of the Abyss’” (258) and is thankful that “The gates of the Abyss were again barred” (274).

Plowden marries Pamela Woodfell, who has inherited her uncle’s considerable fortune, and after a brief honeymoon they settle down to domestic bliss at number 20 Walden Road and spend weekends at a country home. He goes on commuting to work each day, and we can presume that they also take up their activities at the Hertford Park Lawn Tennis Club. The threat of creatures from the Abyss has passed, and has been resolved in middle-class marriage. However, nothing is ever said to suggest that under the “vaults of the Bank” the Abyss has disappeared. The story leaves us knowing that the Abyss threatening suburbia continues to exist, even if the Bank of England may hold it in check temporarily.

In other words, suburbia, as a Utopian space, is easily threatened. If the supernatural horror genre is concerned with the threat to the world of everyday (usually bourgeois) life by forces that are supernatural or unnatural in origin, then suburbia logically would be the perfect ground of contestation. The suburbs were the enclave of bourgeois prestige, the center of domestic safety set apart from the world of business, and a place where homeowners could lead a private life without unwanted intrusion from their neighbors. On suburban streets, bourgeois culture was dominant, without competition from aristocrats in their town homes or workers in their slums. Because of the hegemony of bourgeois culture in the suburban space, this was also the place where a threat to middle class values could most easily be demonstrated.

More so than the city, suburbia was a place governed by strict norms and rules of behavior.⁴⁰ Victorian suburbia was founded with the idea of having “architecturally and socially homogeneous neighborhoods” where

Social tone, status, and morality, as well as property values were seen to depend on one-class occupation and the vigilant manning of barriers—sometimes literally physical ones, gates guarding private residential roads and housing estates, more often legal and financial defences of restrictive covenants and house price levels—to keep at bay undesirables whose occupations or habits might destroy the tranquility or the morals of the residents (F.M.L. Thompson, *Rise of Respectable Society* 173).

Perhaps because, at the close of the century, these demarcations were already breaking down, there was a frantic attempt on the part of the middle classes to uphold them.⁴¹ As the poor moved into the suburbs, the bourgeoisie moved further out, and the sense of horror in suburbia deepened the spread.

It may not seem surprising that many of the horror tales from the turn of the century are set in the city but it is surprising how many are set in various London suburbs.⁴² Suburbia, with its newly built homes and newly established traditions would not immediately seem to be the place to find ghosts or other monsters. Certainly, it would seem to be an unlikely setting in which to explore history, since it appears so consciously ahistorical (in its valuing of the “brand new”). Yet it is this very newness and this attempt to recreate a community outside the realm of older (aristocratic) associations that makes suburbia serve so well as a site of horror and haunting. The Gothic castle may have been impressive and frightening in its sublimity, but the suburban villa was frightening in an entirely different way because of its flimsy structure, the monotony of row upon row of houses built upon the same pattern, and its eerie quiet. Suburban horrors work against the convention of family ghosts from generations past; instead, in suburbia new types of ghosts and horrors arise.

Suburban Space as Modern Hell

Suburban horror is eminently modern, like the horror Arthur Machen describes in his novel *The Hill of Dreams*.⁴³ Machen, who set a number of his stories in suburban London, gives his protagonist's view on the suburban neighborhood he inhabits:

It seemed as if in those dull rows of dwellings, in the prim new villas, red and white and staring, there must be a leaven working which transformed all to base vulgarity. Beneath the dull sad slates, behind the blistered doors, love turned to squalid intrigue, mirth to drunken clamour, and the mystery of life became a common thing; religion was sought for in the greasy piety and flatulent oratory of the Independent chapel, the stuccoed nightmare of the Doric columns. Nothing fine, nothing rare, nothing exquisite, it seemed could exist in the weltering suburban sea. In the habitations which had risen from the stench and slime of the brickfields. It was as if the sickening fumes that steamed from the burning bricks had been sublimed into the shape of houses, and those who lived in these grey places could also claim kinship with the putrid mud (*Hill of Dreams* 142).

This is a different site of horror than the East End of the urban explorers, but in many ways it resembles it, and the people who live there may be equally detested. As this passage makes clear, suburbia, in Machen's eyes as well as his character's, is built not only on the labor of the working class but also on the primeval ooze. In this character's view "this was the only hell that a vulgar age could conceive or make, an inferno created not by Dante but by the jerry-builder" (143).

In other texts, Machen reiterates this attitude toward suburbia (and the modern bourgeois world of which it is a product). What is remarkable in his critique is that, at the same time he recognizes suburbia as a place of stagnation and dullness, he still presents it as containing the possibility of fantastic, albeit horrific, adventures. The suburb of Harlesden for example, in the story "The Inmost Light," "'is a place of no character'"—all it has to offer, according to Dyson, who is one Machen's regular characters, "'are the rows of red houses and the rows of white houses and the bright green Venetians, and the blistering doorways, and the little backyards they call gardens, and a few feeble shops'" (*House of Souls* 251).⁴⁴ However, in this suburban spot, a man may chance to look through a window and see a face that is "'not human'" and know that he "'had looked into another world—looked through the window of a commonplace brand-new house, and seen hell open up before [him]'" (254). The degree of contrast between the dull,

repetitive material world of the suburb and the supernatural and horrific material of this scene inside heightens the horror of the moment.

Dyson, who is something of a detective, investigates the woman with the non-human face, but it is some time before he really begins to understand what has happened to her. He hears about her death, and interviews the physician who performed the autopsy, who informs Dyson that her brain had “undergone a most extraordinary series of changes” and hardly seemed like “that of a human being at all” (Machen, *House of Souls* 256). Dyson finds that her husband, a doctor and student of the occult, had experimented upon her, removing her soul and allowing to enter in its place “what the lips can hardly utter, what the mind cannot conceive without a horror more awful than the horror of death itself” (285). With her soul gone, she became possessed of some sort of demonic being, so that her brain even resembled “the brain of a devil” (269), and all this behind the closed doors of a suburban home. In the suburb, the domestic sphere is severed from all other types of social intercourse. The suburban wife is even further removed from the social sphere than the urban woman and her abuse, when it occurs as in this case, can be more easily hidden. The text revises Gothic themes about the entrapment and abuse of women, but moves them out of the castle and into the most modern of spaces, the suburban home.

Significantly, what makes the suburb of Harlesden most remarkable is that it hardly exists at all—Dyson, who makes “the physiology of London” the object of his particular study, says that “just as you think you’re going to grasp the physiognomy of the settlement it all melts away” (Machen, *House of Souls* 251). He finds that ““It is like a city of the dead; the streets are glaring and desolate, and as you pass it suddenly strikes you that this too is part of London”” (252). Here too, as in the East End of London and the distant corners of the Empire, is death, but death of a different sort. There is a hellish tedium and insubstantiality to the suburb. The horrors that exist there are hidden underneath a flimsy veneer of civilization—for at least in the slum or the country, one can see horrors for what they are.

For Machen, what is truly horrifying is the lack of difference—between buildings, between Venetian blinds, and, by implication, between people—and the lack of history (the fact that at any moment the “idea” of Harlesden can just “melt away”) in this suburban landscape. This is a quintessentially modern “hell,” a place of hellish banality, imaged in the hell Dyson sees in the face of a monstrous woman. In this story, the monstrous intrudes as something different, as a way of glimpsing another world, but this monstrous woman is also immediately (and literally) demonized in the name of the very civilization that produced this banal suburb.

The indictment of suburbia, as a place of horror and disgust, is also an indictment of modern bourgeois civilization. Although Machen was not a progressive thinker in political terms, he is still very much aware of the shortcomings of modernity. Suburbia is, as Fishman argues, the model of a bourgeois utopia, and a critique of it as “horrifying” becomes a critique of all the middle classes have produced, perhaps even of all Western civilization has produced. The suburbia Machen and other horror writers present as a hell is reminiscent of the hell of modernity as Walter Benjamin conceives it; Susan Buck-Morss points out that for Benjamin “the deadly repetitiveness of time that is part of the archaic, mythic imagery of Hell describes what is truly modern and novel about commodity society” (96).

Suburbia had its share of critics, like the contributor to the *Architect* who wrote in 1876 that it “has neither the advantage of the town nor the open freedom of the country, but manages to combine in nice equality of proportion the disadvantages of both” (qtd. in F. M. L. Thompson, “Introduction” 3). For some, suburbia itself was a monster, as it was for the anonymous writer in the June 24, 1887 edition of the *Building News*, who hoped that “the unhallowed jerry-building system” had destroyed itself “like some monster form, suffocating in its own filth” (qtd. in Olsen 199). For others, the society that was being created in these new suburbs was a threat to the culture and stability of the nation. L. T. Hobhouse in his 1904 text, *Democracy and Reaction*, noted that “suburban villadom is a political and social portent the meaning of which has never yet been analyzed....[but] is a greater burden [to society] than the slums” (qtd. in Pearsall 85).

In the Algernon Blackwood story “The Damned” (discussed above), the country estate that is haunted by the entire history of Western religious tradition is characterized, again and again, as “suburban” in style, even though it is clearly the country estate of a wealthy bourgeois. From the narrator’s first approach to the estate, he sees this connection: “the long drive, lined with hostile monkey trees and formal wellingtonias that were solemn and sedate, was mere extension of the miniature approach to a thousand semi-detached suburban ‘residences’” (91). The house itself looked like “a villa had escaped from the shadow of the Crystal Palace, thumped its way down by night, grown suddenly monstrous in a shower of rich rain, and settled itself insolently to stay” (91).⁴⁵ It appears as a “pretentious country mansion with the soul of a villa” (103). Its “window-sills, thick with potted flowers” remind the narrator “of the desolate suburbs of Brighton or Bexhill” (91), and its rather extensive gardens merely remind the narrator of “an overgrown suburban garden” (116).

In spite of the wealth associated with it, in other words, this house can only be seen as a monstrously large suburban dwelling. It also, however, stirs up another type of association. Even as the narrator comments on its suburban, bourgeois character he also connects the house and grounds with various institutional buildings. The “ivy that climbed about [its] red-brick walls...[is as] sham as on a prison, or...an orphan asylum,” and its “numerous towers...seemed made to hold school bells” (Blackwood, “Damned” 91). In some strange, inexplicable way the building reminds him of “the interior of a prison with two rows of occupied condemned cells, seen years ago in New York” (101). When he walks out of the front hall, he feels like he, “had just left the Incurable Ward of some great hospital” (131). These institutional structures— orphanage, school, prison, hospital—are all also products of a bourgeois civilization that is the culmination of a Western tradition founded, as Blackwood points out in this story, on repression.

In linking the suburban home to these various carceral institution, Blackwood shows how the various architectural creations of a society also serve to reproduce its ideology. In this case, it is an ideology that stands as the culmination of a whole Western tradition built on repression and

intolerance. The idea of architecture as an agent of repression has been explored from at least two different perspectives—as the spectacular expression of authority (Bataille) and as an element in the technology of discipline (Foucault).⁴⁶ In Blackwood’s story, this mansion and its grounds serve both functions. This estate is a carceral institution that acts to subjugate those reside within it, but it also creates a feeling of paranoia that makes its occupants ultra-observant, waiting for something to happen when nothing ever does

In the end, the only thing this “mansion with the soul of a villa” can accomplish is actively to inhibit action. The thing that is most haunting about the place is the sense of stagnation one feels there—this is a place, as the narrator frequently reminds us, “where nothing ever happened” (Blackwood, “Damned” 133). Like Machen’s suburbia, this place is horrifying because of its banality and, at the same time, because of a repressive structure that seems to enforce docility on the part of its inhabitants. This docility, in turn, keeps any real change from occurring. Blackwood’s text traces an important connection between different architectural structures—official and institutional, but also domestic—that are all products of bourgeois civilization. He connects them all within a history whose effects are stagnant, repressive, and intolerant. Associating this place “haunted” by Western tradition with the structures of suburban villas and institutional buildings not only makes a point about architectural structures and the physical geography of the modern, Western world, but it also links that material structure to an ideological (and Blackwood might say “spiritual”) tradition. Here suburbia stands as the creation of the middle classes and the end point of a long, and, for Blackwood, not very admirable Western tradition.⁴⁷

Blackwood’s story may be unusual in the way it directly addresses the concept of repression, but in another sense it merely reveals a paradox that exists in all supernatural horror fiction. The existence of boundaries and the often repressive policing of them are necessary preconditions for supernatural horror fiction. Such boundaries must be in place before they can ever be transgressed by the monsters of horror fiction. The more aggressively the boundaries are

posited and maintained, the more likely the return of the repressed in the form of over-determined and overlapping boundary crossing. Horror fiction stresses the importance of boundaries by showing the horrible results that follow when those boundaries are transgressed. At the same time, these stories enact again and again the transgression of those boundaries by the monsters who breach them through word, deed, appearance, and even through their very existence. Moreover, horror authors rely on the reader's desire to transgress in order to draw him or her in, making the reader interested in (and sometimes even identifying with) those monsters. Readers' pleasure depends both on the repulsion from and attraction to transgression and impurity, to matter and spirit "out of place." Horror fiction presents and often even endorses the existence of boundaries (whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual) that oppress one group at the benefit of another, but at the same time it shows how impossible it is to secure those boundaries. In the end, no place is safe. The safer a place appears, the more likely its transgression, and the more horrible and horrifying the transgression when it occurs. Horror fiction's focus on the supernatural and monstrous are products of the modern wish to be safely segregated and the rising awareness that such a wish produces will prove impossible.

End Notes

¹ M. H. Abrams defines setting in narrative fiction as, “the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which the action occurs” (172).

² Wapole called his novel, the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764), and the association of this new form of fiction with both a castle and with the name “Gothic” has remained ever since. Walpole, who was a great enthusiast for medieval architecture, knew that the appellation referred to the architecture of Western Europe from the 12th through 15th century (he did not seem to realize, however, that it described a type of construction and not simply a type of ornament). However, in setting his tale within the confines of a Gothic structure and, in some ways, duplicating that structure with the twistings and turnings and claustrophobic developments of his plot, he solidified a relationship between and architectural and literary style.

³ Michael Cox sees the use of the contemporary setting as a defining feature of the Victorian ghost story (which, as I’ve argued, is an important intermediary stage in the creation of the supernatural horror genre). Cox writes that “Where Gothic fiction had been romantically remote in its settings and often flamboyantly atemporal, ghost stories anchored themselves firmly in the contemporary, or near contemporary, here and now. Domestication, of both settings and incidents, was the crucial distinction between the Victorian ghost story and its Gothic relations” (xi).

⁴ Brantlinger’s “imperial Gothic” does encompass more than tales of horror; what I would call primarily “adventure” stories are also discussed under this rubric (although, at the time, those two genres were very closely allied). When Brantlinger separates the type of imperial Gothic where “white men...rise to the top” from those fictions where “they sink into savagedom, cowardice, or exotic torpor,” he is really making a distinction between related forms of the adventure and horror genres (*Rule of Darkness* 239).

⁵ Some stories that began appearing during this period presented monstrous threats in a future setting (e.g., H. G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*) but these typically fall more into the science fiction than the horror genre. However, a few works describe monsters from the future that invade the present day using means that could be considered supernatural as much as scientific—the most notable example being William Hope Hodgson’s *The House on the Borderland*, where the borderland in question is both the border between natural and supernatural and the border between present and future.

⁶ Chris Baldick, in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, sees two key ingredients in defining the Gothic: “a fearful sense of inheritance in time [combined] with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space” (xix). The typical Gothic tale, according to Baldick, “will invoke the tyranny of the past (a family curse, the survival of archaic forms of despotism and of superstition) with such weight as to stifle the hopes of the present” (xix). In doing so the Gothic tells a tale of a history that is always weighing down and stifling the present.

⁷ This is not to say that there were no working class readers for supernatural horror texts. The “shilling shocker” and “penny dreadful,” which presented works of mystery and horror, were available within the budget of many working class families. Public education had increased the size of the reading public, and even those who were not functionally literate could still attend readings by professional readers who for a small price would read the latest popular novel to an audience. What little information is available on the reading habits of the working classes, such as Lady Florence Bell’s “Reading Habits in Middlesbrough,” suggest that besides the newspapers (which published horror fiction on occasion) readers often looked to novels, especially ones of the “thrilling” sort. See also, Jonathan Rose’s *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*.

⁸ Judith Wilt’s argument, in “The Imperial Mouth,” that, “In or around December, 1897...Victorian gothic changed—into Victorian science fiction” (618) is really an observation of the shift that produced the horror genre as well as science fiction. I would argue that this shift precedes Wilt’s date (for both science fiction and horror) by about fifteen years, and that the texts she classifies as borderline science fiction, such as

Dracula, are really examples of horror. But her claim that Stoker's novels reflect a fear for the future, for the "future consequences of present actions," still seems correct, especially in relation to imperialism (620).

⁹ Although many Gothic stories were set in a medieval past, the ghosts who inhabit those tales are usually from that same period and hence would appear far older to the reader and writer than they do to the characters in the text. This is not the case in supernatural horror, where ghosts and other monsters could originate in a time period quite distant from the narrative's present.

For example, mummies and sorcerers from ancient Egypt can be found in a number of stories from this period, including: Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth," Guy Boothby's *Pharos, the Egyptian*, Bram Stoker's *Jewel of the Seven Stars*, Theo Douglass' *Iras, A Mystery*, and Algernon Blackwood's John Silence story "The Nemesis of Fire." Roman ghosts and monsters are also rather plentiful and can be found in Von Degen's "A Mystery of Campagna," Walter De La Mare's "A.B.O.," John Buchan's "Watcher By the Threshold," Sir Thomas Graham Jackson's "The Ring" (which technically involves an Etruscan spirit), and A. C. Benson's "The Red Camp," among others. There are a number of stories written at this time involving Pan the Goat God (and centaurs and satyrs as well) or other mythological figures that draw on an ancient Greco-Roman mythical past. There are even a number of examples of pre-historic survivals and ghosts, some of which were discussed in the last chapter (e.g., John Buchan's "No Man's Land" and Arthur Machen's "The White People").

¹⁰ Many societies have feared their dead. Freud quotes Westermarck to the effect that in so-called "primitive" societies the dead were always perceived as malicious beings who would seek revenge on those who remain alive (*Totem* 58). He attributes this fear to a displaced guilt that one was somehow to blame for another's death. Bataille, similarly, finds that the horror of the dead is connected with a (repressed) desire to kill the other (*Accursed Share* 2 & 3 95–110). It is not remarkable that this "primitive" fear of the dead did not disappear but only took on a new form, inscribed in literature rather than religious rite. It does seem particularly unusual, though, how pervasive this fear was in the popular fiction of this period. Brian Stableford finds that, "If there is one dominant theme in the post-Gothic weird fiction of the nineteenth century, it is the theme of the dead returning to pester the living" (58). This was true in spite of the concurrent popularity of spiritualism which presented the dead as apparently pleasant enough, if somewhat boring. Stableford, however, sees spiritualism too, with its attempts by the living to reassure themselves of the happiness of the dead, as "proof that guilty consciences ran riot in the late nineteenth century" (60).

¹¹ The word "not" is missing from this quote in this edition, but appears in others including the first edition, nor is it removed in Blackwood's own corrected copy of that volume (Ashley, email to author).

¹² Regrettably, Blackwood dilutes the strong critique of the story in his attempt to find a solution. The ending of this novella has a new occupant moving into the estate—another religious group, but a "theosophical" one that preaches tolerance for all religions. Their leader, a saintly mystic, will exorcise the evil influences through acceptance and love.

¹³ As noted in Chapter 2, during the nineteenth century the British were obsessed with the Ancient Egyptians but at the expense of their modern descendents. This fascination was often accompanied by a peculiar fear. Nowhere is this more apparent than in horror stories of this period, which are filled with evil, ancient Egyptians or their spirits who return to threaten the British (usually helpless British women). Examples include E. F. Benson's *Image in the Sand*, Bram Stoker's *Jewel of the Seven Stars*, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian*, and Sax Rohmer's *Brood of the Witch Queen*. In all of these novels, and many other texts as well, the fear of the dead, of the supernatural, and of the colonized other are all conflated together. These novels vary in the degree to which they demonize the racially other and the foreigner while creating a scenario in which the colonizer proves to be a victim. For example, in E. F. Benson's *Image in the Sand* the agent who has summoned the evil spirit that attempts to take over the helpless young English girl, Ida Jervis, is also English, and the agent who thwarts him, is a good Egyptian (possessed of occult powers). But more often it is the case that an evil Egyptian tries to return to possess an English body (e.g., *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*) or wreck havoc upon English men and women in revenge for their actions in Egypt (e.g., *Pharos the Egyptian*).

These works also present both fear and fascination for the magical and occult knowledge of the ancient Egyptians. The contemporary British reader looked back to Ancient Egyptian civilization as perhaps the world's oldest "civilization" and the greatest of its day, and worried that if that civilization could fall, so too could that of the British Empire. However, if that civilization had not really died, then it might return to take revenge upon the upstart English who presumed to occupy its land, excavate its tombs, and even possess its women (as the British feared their own women would be "taken" by these resuscitated Egyptian spirits). The fears engendered by a newfound perspective on history and the rise and fall of civilizations created a double-bind for the citizen of late Victorian and Edwardian England that was difficult if not impossible to escape.

¹⁴ Taussig's argument is complex and does not always proceed along traditional, Western, logical lines of argumentation—because facts are not able to explain the horrific and mythic or supernatural qualities of the history of colonialism. Instead he attempts to recreate the feelings, in particular the fears that accompany the mythical/magical thinking of the colonizer and the colonized. He notes that "Naturalism and realism as in the aesthetic form of much political as well as social science writing cannot engage the great mythologies of politics in [a] nonreductive way, and yet it is the great mythologies that count precisely because they work best when not dressed up as such but in their guise and in the interstices of the real and the natural. To see the myth in the natural and the real in magic, to demythologize history and reenchant its reified representation; that is the first step [to understand the terror of colonialism]" (*Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man* 10). Taussig's work, however, points to an intimate connection between this perception observed in travel writers that the land they are traveling through is a deadly and disease-ridden place and that colonialism is terrorizing. In fact, each helps to inspire the other.

¹⁵ In *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order*, Michael Adas describes a number of different anti-colonial uprisings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of which utilized a belief in the supernatural to galvanize and organize resistance against colonial powers. James Webb's *The Occult Underground* traces how occult beliefs often found expression in anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements in Europe as well (e.g., in Irish and Polish nationalism). Diane Basham's *The Trial of Woman* looks at links between the late Victorian women's movement and occult beliefs. Logie Barrow, in *Independent Spirits*, and Alex Owen, in *The Darkened Room*, consider, respectively, how the working class and women found a voice and some degree of social power in the spiritualist movement.

¹⁶ Neither of these texts is particularly well known. Both are written in 1911, one by a woman who was something of a tourist and the other by a man who made imperial "adventure" his life's work.

¹⁷ Witchcraft and the supernatural were another favorite topic in travel literature concerned with foreign lands of Africa, Asia, and South America. Many writers on the subject believed quite literally Kipling's injunction that "east of the Suez...the direct control of Providence ceases; Man being handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia" (*Life's Handicap* 290).

¹⁸ I would argue that an empire must expand if it is to continue to survive as an empire. When expansion ceases, the logic on which the empire is built on no longer works and contraction becomes inevitable. The period I am discussing here, from the 1880s through the First World War, saw the last gasp of British colonial expansion; this was the period of what is often referred to as "New Imperialism." As Chris Bongie notes, it was "a new awareness of the world's finitude [that] partially accounts for the intensity of what, in New Imperialist parlance, had become a territorial steeplechase. Those lands not yet under the control of a Great Power had nonetheless been identified and transformed into objects of a colonial desire" (18).

¹⁹ Tropp probably exaggerates somewhat but Stevenson's "bogey tale" was extremely well-received by the reading public. The book sold 40,000 copies in a few months and brought Stevenson a large sum of money (100).

²⁰ H. J. Dyos and D. A. Reeder note that "the worst slums were generally found in places where large houses were vacated by the middle classes in their trek to the further suburbs. Such property could only be

occupied economically by lower classes by being turned into tenements, but the rent for a whole floor or even a whole room was often too much for those eventually in possession, and the sub-divisions of space that followed usually meant the maximum deterioration in living conditions” (361). The connection between the suburbs and the slums will be explored later in the chapter, but it is worth noting here that, as Dyos and Reeder point out, wealthy, urban neighborhoods could deteriorate rather rapidly into slums in late Victorian London.

²¹ I am indebted to Martin Tropp here who makes the observation that “Stevenson examines the city itself and the contrast between the poverty and plenty that exist side by side” (105). He also points to John Fowles comment (in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*) that Stevenson’s novella is “very possibly the best guidebook to the age” in order to suggest how like a guidebook Stevenson’s text is in mapping out the extremes of “wealth and squalor, respectability and vice, safety and danger” that existed in late-Victorian London (qtd. 105 & 105). However, Tropp does not develop a reading of the details of Stevenson’s text nor does he do much to consider how the text reflects the social relationship of wealth and poverty as interdependent.

²² *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was itself originally published as a “shilling shocker,” a fact that caused Stevenson no small discomfort according to Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle. Brantlinger and Boyle see Stevenson’s tale “as an unconscious ‘allegory’ about the commercialization of literature and the emergence of mass consumer society in the late-Victorian period” (266). However, while Brantlinger and Boyle’s reading is insightful, the greater concern of the text would seem to be life in a city where the classes are thrown so closely together and it is often difficult to see the order amongst all the chaos.

²³ A number of changes in the social order, as Walkowitz notes, made a greater range of “social actors” visible and active in the 1880s. Demonstrations by the poor and unemployed, riots in the West End of London, campaigns by women to gain the vote, and bombings by Irish Republicans and anarchists made new groups (and new issues) more visible in the social sphere. Seemingly less dangerous activities also contributed to this increased awareness of others—people of different classes were thrown together on public transportation, and women and men began to work in the same offices and shop at the same stores. For Jerome K. Jerome it was the introduction of the typewriter in the workplace that led to “the discovery of women. Before then, a woman in the City was a rare and pleasing sight” (qtd. in Hudson 123). The changes in working conditions also enabled more upward mobility in the working classes, and a greater number of young working class men and women were able to get “white collar” jobs as clerks and salespeople. These “marginalized groups—working men and women of all classes—repeatedly spilled over and out of their ascribed, bounded roles, and locales, into the public streets and wrong parts of town, engaged upon missions of their own” (Walkowitz 41).

²⁴ Again, in Utterson’s nightmare, as in Enfield’s account, there is mention of the lamp-lit streets. Under gaslight, a new vision of the city was created, one that was illuminated at night with an entirely different type of light. Gaslight extended vision at the same time it blurred boundaries with its incessant flickering (Schivelbusch 44). As Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes, comparing gaslight to the electrical arc-light, “In arc-light, the eye saw as it did during the day, that is with the retinal cones, while in gaslight, it saw as it did at night, with retinal rods” (118). Almost this entire novella takes place at night, under gaslight, or, as in Soho, in places where the lamps “have been kindled afresh to combat [the] mournful re-invasion of darkness” brought on by the fog (353). London becomes a nocturnal world, even in the daytime, under gaslight.

²⁵ Even though leprosy was not much of a threat in England at the time, it appears in a number of horror fictions as a disease that strikes down those who have traveled in foreign parts. Leprosy, which acts to make the body appear “monstrous,” fits well with the more visceral, monstrous ghosts of this period. It also, however, seems to represent one version of the curse the colonial land can bestow upon the colonizer.

²⁶ The American actor Richard Mansfield, who was performing as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde at the time of the killings, was accused of inspiring the murderer with his performance in that role (Sharp, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Saucy Jacky").

²⁷ Walkowitz argues that beliefs that the killer was a homicidal maniac from the upper classes or a maniacal doctor were at least influenced (whether consciously or not) by Stevenson's tale (206–212). She certainly seems correct in suggesting that his novella became a text that helped people comprehend the Ripper slayings and violence against women. The text became so closely associated with those murders that today people often associate Mr. Hyde with the murder of women (even though no such event occurs in the book).

²⁸ The connection between the exploration of the slums and the jungle can be seen to depend upon the belief that a close proximity to death and disease exists in both places. Of course, the stories about danger and death need not be true, but these are the stories told about these places, and in both the cases of the inner-city slum and the far-off jungle these stories of danger and death contribute to the decision (conscious or not) to use metaphors and tropes drawn from Gothic and horror fiction.

²⁹ This is a fear that, according to London, disappears when one is part of this impoverished crowd. After he has dressed himself in cast-off clothing and prepared his mind to enter the East End as one of its inhabitants, Jack London finds that "the fear of the crowd no longer haunted [him]....The vast and malodorous sea had welled up and over [him], or [he] had slipped gently into it, and there was nothing fearsome about it" (15).

³⁰ This fear of "mud" and "slime" and its linkage to the crowd and the masses represents a fear of ego dissolution; it is often tied to a fear of women, the body, and pleasure (a connection Klaus Theweleit explores at some length in the first volume of his remarkable *Male Fantasies*). Compare also W. M. Torrens' description (in note 39, below) of the invasion of the suburbs "by the ooze of overcrowding" from the slums.

³¹ In his *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (1883), Francis Galton described this condition. He writes, "A common form of vision is a phantasmagoria, or the appearance of a crowd of phantoms, sometimes hurrying past like men in a street. It is occasionally seen in broad daylight, much more often in the dark; it may be at the instant of putting out the candle, but it generally comes on when the person is in bed preparing to sleep, but by no means yet asleep" (qtd. in Jennings 349). Masterman describes the phenomenon as a silent crowd in which "the terror of the situation is somehow interwoven with [the] silence; it weighs down as with a sense of physical oppression" (*From the Abyss* 18).

³² Of course, England as a whole underwent a process of urbanization during the nineteenth century; by the end of the century, three quarters of the population lived in cities (Raymond Williams 261). London's population grew the fastest, but, from 1881 on, the population of the outlying areas of "Greater London" grew faster than the city proper. Toward the beginning of the twentieth century the population of the inner-city actually began to drop although the population of Greater London continued to rise (Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* 312).

³³ The London suburbs of the late nineteenth century gave, as Walter Besant, notes, "white collars and artisans the chance to escape from the often intrusive gregariousness of the inner suburban terraces and more than a suggestion of the detached privacy so long the prerogative of the middle class" (qtd. in Olsen 214). In doing so, the suburb broadened the base of the middle classes and of what constituted middle class life and enabled a more thorough rejection of working class life/culture.

³⁴ F. M. L. Thompson likewise finds that, "The clear separation of work and home, the insistence on social distancing, the treatment of the home as a feminine domain, the importance attached to domestic privacy and the exclusion of the vulgar prying multitude, can all be seen as parts of a code of individual responsibility, male economic dominance, and family-nurtured morality which served to give the bourgeoisie a social identity and mark them off from the upper and lower classes" ("Introduction" 13).

³⁵ A similar tale is told in W. M. Torrens' 1879 article, "What is to be Done with the Slums?" from *Macmillan's Magazine*. Torrens tells the story of "Islington, till recently a suburban parish" that had "become gradually overflowed by the ooze of overcrowding from the town parishes lower down the hill." He goes on to say that, "Cleanly, healthful, and cheerful districts have one by one been swamped by the silent but inexorable tide." He implies that the "ooze" from the slums brings its dirt and disease into the suburb.

³⁶ While the trend when Masterman was writing was for the slum to replace the suburb, at an earlier point in time the process worked the other way. George Rose Emerson recorded how the fashionable suburb of Victoria Park "'sprung up where before were open fields, waste lands, or miserable rookeries tenanted by a squalid, criminal population'" (qtd. in Olsen 193). However, "as each class moved from an inner suburb to one further out, it was replaced by a somewhat lower class of tenant also engaged in the process of outward migration" (Olsen 245). Given this process neighborhoods could change rather rapidly from slum to suburb and visa-versa.

³⁷ Hertford Park is a fictitious suburb, but from internal evidence it would seem to represent either "Holland Park" or "Bedford Park," because like them it is an inner suburb to the West of London not far from a park. Bedford Park is the more likely candidate as it had a reputation for a certain bohemian element and, somewhat earlier, had even been dubbed "The Home of the Aesthetes" for its members' interest in the Aesthetic movement (Bolsterli 63).

³⁸ Donald Olsen writes of the late-Victorian suburb that, "the most satisfactory suburb was that which gave [the homeowner] the maximum of privacy and the minimum of outside distractions" (214).

³⁹ Pan often appears as a monstrous figure in the horror fiction of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. While traditionally Pan had been a pastoral figure, "who charmed or delighted all the gods," he did sometimes have a frightening aspect (Merivale 1). However, as Wilfred Stone notes, "late Victorian paganism usually saw [Pan] as horrific, the suppressed part of the mind breaking out in revenge" (qtd. in Julia Briggs 80). In the literature of this period, Pan seems to have been transformed from a benevolent deity to a sinister one; Patricia Merivale, in *Pan the Goat God*, her study of the representation of Pan in the modern world, tracks an "upsurge of the terrifying Pan in fiction between 1890 and 1930, but especially from 1904 to 1912" (154).

Pan appears (or his appearance is suspected) in many late Victorian and Edwardian horror stories, often as an alluring as well as a frightening figure. It should also be recognized that Pan appears as a monster as well as a god. His body, joining goat and human elements, is singular and crosses the boundaries that separate human from animal, and his mere appearance inspires fear ("panic") in those who see him. In Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan," Pan's appearance is presented as so horrifying that it defies language; in that story Pan is a horror so great that he cannot be described and in fact makes those who see him mute with madness. One of the characters in Machen's story states that the events described there present an "old story, an old mystery played in our day, and in dim London streets instead of amidst the vineyards and olive gardens" (*The House of Souls* 232). It was not uncommon for period tales of Pan to remove him from the pastoral or rural settings that he ruled over in Greek myth. Thus it ironic (but not uncommon) for Pan to appear in a suburban setting in Jepson's novel or even to appear out of the Abyss that in an other sense is a metaphor for London's slums.

⁴⁰ Given the distrust and fear of the city that helped to create suburbia, it is not surprising than suburban society would try to rein in the immorality of the metropolis. If, as Guy Debord notes with some reservations, "the history of the city is the history of freedom," then the history of suburbia is the history of the attempt to limit and discipline that freedom (*Society* 176).

⁴¹ There was often a conscious and planned attempt to keep neighborhoods restricted to a particular class of occupant. For instance, after laws were passed in the 1860s requiring that railroads provide a low cost "workman's fare" for working class commuters, one of the major railways in the London area (the Great Eastern Railway) chose certain areas from which it would provide discount fares. As Alan Jackson notes,

“It is clear from the Company’s evidence to various parliamentary and official committees and royal commissions that its generosity in this matter arose from a concern to concentrate the cheaper traffic in one part of their suburban territory, thus discouraging a wider spread which would have damaged other districts capable of yielding the much more lucrative normal traffic” (24).

Residents of a suburban neighborhood could also exercise an effort to exclude an “undesirable” class—as they did in the suburb of Wanstead Flats, where residents pooled their money to buy up property that was going to be sold as small lots and instead sold it as larger lots, thus ensuring that poorer people would not be able to buy into the neighborhood (Olsen, 245). In other areas, builders would refuse to leave lots for schools and shops, knowing that such things would attract more of a working-class population (Olsen 242).

⁴² As an example, take the collection, *The Mammoth Book of Victorian and Edwardian Ghost Stories* edited by Richard Dalby. Of the British stories from the period I am considering (1880 through 1914), seven occur abroad, nine are set in country towns or estates, three take place in suburban London, one is set in a “rural district” that was later to become part of suburban London, and one takes place at an unnamed location somewhere within twenty miles of London (which would place it in suburbia or somewhat further out). None of the stories Dalby has collected takes place in London proper; the closest one comes to an “urban” rather than a “suburban” setting is a story that begins in Melbourne and ends on a ship at sea. Of course there are urban horror stories from this period (some of which I’ve already discussed), but the sample from Dalby’s anthology is not anomalous either. More stories continued to be set in the country than the city, but many that are that set within greater London actually take place in suburban areas.

The stories from this volume that I’ve labeled as definitely set in suburban London are: (1) Edith Nesbit’s “The Shadow,” where the haunting takes place in one of the “new villa house” in Lee (a southeastern suburb); (2) “The House that was Lost” by Tom Gallon, which takes place in an unnamed neighborhood where the houses are all rather similar and the main character commutes to work in the City; and (3) Nesbit’s “The Mystery of the Semi-Detached,” the title of which alone places it in a neighborhood of semi-detached (i.e., suburban) houses and which also names its location as a “dusty suburban lane.” Admittedly two of these stories are by the same author, one of two authors in the book who has more than one story (the other is Henry James), and the stories are limited to the those involving ghosts (and not horror stories that involve other sorts of monsters), but there are certainly a number of other ghost and horror stories from the period that have suburban settings. Even *Dracula* has Lucy’s vampire-self preying on the children of Hampstead, which was at the time a garden suburb.

⁴³ Machen is a writer who’s literary output was predominantly supernatural horror, and it is for that horror fiction that he is best remembered. *The Hill of Dreams*, however, is only marginally supernatural. The novel concerns the mental and physical breakdown of a Welsh writer with a metaphysical bent. There are some moments in the text when this character seems to be in touch with some mysterious forces, and there are other moments when he is horrified by the world around him. One can say, that it partly participates in the genre I am considering here because it still works to create a sense of horror in its readers.

⁴⁴ As Donald Olsen notes, standardization was an essential prerequisite for the creation of this new suburban landscape. He states that “Only through standardization of its component parts could suburban living be made available to any sizable portion of the population” (222).

⁴⁵ The villa was the common form of the suburban home; critics of suburbia railed most against the “semi-detached villa.” “Villa” became the word of choice for a suburban dwelling, and to critique “Villadom” was to critique suburbia.

⁴⁶ In his book on Bataille, *Against Architecture*, Denis Hollier explains these two approaches quite well; he fails, however, to resolve the apparent differences between the two theorists (ix–xii). Foucault’s ideas on the subject are found in *Discipline and Punish*. Bataille’s, which are not as well known, are found in an early essay entitled “Architecture” that is translated in its entirety in Hollier’s text. The main point of Bataille’s argument is that “architecture is the expression of the very soul of societies” but that “it is only the ideal soul of society, that which has the authority to command and prohibit, that is expressed in architectural compositions” (qtd. in Hollier 46, 47). Architecture serves as the form through which

“Church or State speaks to the multitudes and imposes silence upon them” (qtd. in Hollier 47). In fact, the “society of the spectacle” and the society of the “panopticon” are not necessarily opposed, although Foucault, among others, believes they are; he writes “our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance” (*Discipline* 217). I would argue that the spectacle is a necessary counterpart to surveillance, because it both covers up the surveillance that is occurring and accustoms each individual to gain pleasure from observing. To those on the inside of the prison (or other institutional building) the architecture serves to contain and discipline; to those on the outside it still serves the function of a spectacle (albeit a mute and static one) as it reminds those who see it of the power of the state and the threat within its walls.

⁴⁷ Because the story ostracizes suburbia through the vehicle of the country estate owned by a wealthy bourgeois, Blackwood’s text also considers the country house in an era when the aristocracy was in the process of being supplanted by the bourgeois elite. Many ghost and horror stories of this period do take place on country estates, but most often the protagonists are guests or have newly purchased a country-house.

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Curriculum Vita

Jonathan Maximilian Gilbert

Education

1991–2008. Ph.D., Literatures in English, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

1990–1991. M.A., English Literature, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1987–1991. B.A., English and Creative Writing, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (*Summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa, Ronald J. Caridi Award).

1984–1986. No degree, Liberal Arts, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Employment

2004–Present. Senior Writer/Editor. The CDM Group, Inc. Bethesda, Maryland

2000–2004. Freelance Writer/Editor. Silver Spring, Maryland.

2000. Writer/Editor. ROW Sciences/Northrup-Grummon Health Solutions. Rockville, Maryland.

1998–2000. Managing Editor. The CDM Group, Inc. Friendship Heights, Maryland.

1997–1998. Writer/Editor. The CDM Group, Inc. Friendship Heights, Maryland.

1992–1997. Instructor. Rutgers University, Department of English. New Brunswick, New Jersey.