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ILLUMINATING THE DARKNESS:
THE NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION OF GOTHICISM IN THE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL AND VISUAL ART

by

Cameron Dodworth

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ILLUMINATING THE DARKNESS:
THE NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION OF GOTHICISM IN THE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL AND VISUAL ART

Cameron Dodworth, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Adviser: Laura White

The British Gothic novel reached a level of very high popularity in the literary market of the late 1700s and the first two decades of the 1800s, but after that point in time the popularity of these types of publications dipped significantly. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the British Gothic novel rebounded in popularity, though not to the level of the early 1800s. This dissertation seeks to address why the publication of truly Gothic novels in Britain decreased during the middle of the century, only to increase once again at the *fin de siècle*. What this dissertation discovers is that the primary focus on Gothicism in the early Gothic novels in the late 1700s and very early 1800s is no longer given a primary role in the Realist novel, as the unreality and supernaturalism of the early Gothic novel is not conducive to the emerging focus on the real. However, the British Realist novel does indeed maintain more realistic aspects of the Gothic, and therefore expresses the Gothic as a mode rather than as a primary focus of expression. This dissertation looks to relevant works of visual art from the European Continent and Britain in order to establish a network of international, interdisciplinary influence in the Realist movement of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly focusing on the element of Gothicism in that network. As Realism evolves into Naturalism, that

international, interdisciplinary network of influence is again revealed in the nineteenth-century novel and visual art of select works from the Continent that had major influence on the novel and visual art of Britain, particularly in terms of the role of Gothicism within that network of Naturalistic evolution. This dissertation establishes that it is as a direct result of Gothicism's role within this Naturalist network of influence that the British Gothic novel rebounds in popularity at the end of the nineteenth century.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	v-vii
Introduction	1-33
Gothic Illumination and Evolution	
Chapter 1	34-90
<i>Frankenstein</i> and the Enlightened Gothic Novel of Ideas	
Chapter 2	91-166
The Descent into Darkness: The Gothic as Subtext to Realism	
Chapter 3	167-204
<i>Wuthering Heights</i> and the Naturalistic Evolution of the Gothic Monster	
Chapter 4	205-286
The Gothic Evolution of Naturalism	
Works Cited	287-300

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1 80
Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, oil on canvas, Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit.
- Figure 2 83
John Martin, *Bridge over Chaos*, 1826, illustration for *Paradise Lost*.
- Figure 3 85
Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
- Figure 4 105
Unknown, 1851, from "Illustrations of Street Art" No. I. Tufts Digital Library:
<http://hdl.handle.net/10427/54589>
- Figure 5 106
Unknown, 1851, from "Illustrations of Street Art" No. II. Tufts Digital Library:
<http://hdl.handle.net/10427/54588>
- Figure 6 107
John Everett Millais, *The Woodman's Daughter*, 1850-1851, oil on canvas, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.
- Figure 7 108
Emily Mary Osborn, *Nameless and Friendless*, 1857, oil on canvas, Royal Academy, London.
- Figure 8 112
Anna Blunden, *'For Only One Short Hour'*, 1854, oil on canvas, Society of British Artists, London.
- Figure 9 119
Jean-François Millet, *The Sower*, 1850, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
- Figure 10 120
Jules Breton, *The Weeders*, 1868, oil on canvas, Joslyn Museum of Art, Omaha, NE.
- Figure 11 121
Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849, oil on canvas, New Masters Gallery, Dresden.
- Figure 12 122
Henry Wallis, *The Stonebreaker*, 1857, oil on canvas, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

Figure 13 124

Honoré Daumier, *The Third-Class Carriage*, 1862, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Figure 14 135

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Limekiln of Coalbrookdale*, c. 1797, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.

Figure 15 136

Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, oil on canvas, Science Museum, London.

Figure 16 146

Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852-1863, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Galleries.

Figure 17 215

Cécile Douard, *Coal Gleaners*, 1891, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mons, Belgium.

Figure 18 220

George Frederic Watts, *The Irish Famine*, c.1850, oil on canvas, Watts Gallery, Compton, Guilford, UK.

Figure 19 221

Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874, oil on canvas, Royal Holloway College, Egham, UK.

Figure 20 224

Vincent van Gogh, *Head of a Peasant Woman with White Cap*, March-April 1885, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, Netherlands.

Figure 21 227

Vincent van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters*, 1885, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Figure 22 243

Hubert von Herkomer, *Hard Times*, 1885, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Gallery.

Figure 23 244

Hubert von Herkomer, *On Strike*, 1891, oil on canvas, Royal Academy of Art, London.

Figure 24 246

George Clausen, *Head of a Peasant Woman*, 1882, oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Figure 25 247

George Clausen, *Winter Work*, 1883, oil on canvas, The Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 26 279

Frank Holl, *The Song of the Shirt*, 1875, oil on canvas, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, UK.

Figure 27 283

Jan Luyken, “Decapitation of Wolfgang Binder, Scharding, Bavaria, 1571” from *Religious Persecutions*, 1685.

Figure 28 286

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 1859, ed. J. W. Burrow (Harmondsworth, England: 1968), 160-161.

INTRODUCTION

GOTHIC ILLUMINATION AND EVOLUTION

In Bram Stoker's classic vampire tale, *Dracula* (1897), the Count turns and threatens his pursuers, claiming "[m]y revenge is just begun! I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side" (263). The myth of the vampire—and particularly Stoker's contributions to the myth—serves as an effective metaphor for the very genre of Gothicism in which that myth frequently appears. Stoker's Count Dracula can change into a bat, a wolf, a pack of rats, or even a cloud of mist. Like the vampire, Gothicism is a shapeshifter, with seemingly eternal life. Gothicism can appear in multiple forms, and it can also span over multiple time periods and disciplines, existing in a constant state of reanimation, much like the undead vampire, zombie, mummy, golem, Frankenstein's monster, or multitude of other characters that populate the pages of Gothic novels, the media of visual art, and the celluloid of Gothic films.

Indeed, Gothicism has appeared in many forms and disciplines, ranging from various iterations in visual art, film, historical representations, and also various literary representations across poem and prose. If anything, Gothicism can be viewed as an example of the evolution of the history of ideas, as expressed by Arthur O. Lovejoy in *The Great Chain of Being* (1936):

Finally, it is a part of the eventual task of the history of ideas to apply its own distinctive analytic method in the attempt to understand how *new* beliefs and intellectual fashions are introduced and diffused, to help to elucidate the psychological character of the processes by which changes in the vogue and influence of ideas have come about; to make clear, if

possible, how conceptions dominant, or extensively prevalent, in one generation lose their hold upon men's minds and give place to others.

(Lovejoy 20)

Gothicism can indeed be understood as an intellectual fashion that has changed in vogue and influence from its conception to its intellectual position in current society, as well as in relation to its many changes and stages of evolution over the centuries. Gothicism is more profound than its flashier, more well-known supernatural signifiers—ghosts, goblins, demons, etc.—as, despite its shapeshifting, interdisciplinary tendencies, it has at least maintained several core principles and ideas that not only connect the various manifestations of the Gothic throughout history and discipline, but that also reveal the Gothic to be far more philosophical than typically thought. At its most basic, the primary and most consistent idea represented by and explored in the Gothic is the concept of fear. Sigmund Freud attempts to explore this idea of fear in his analysis of the uncanny:

[The uncanny] is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; equally certain, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as 'uncanny' certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening.

(Freud 219)

Even more specifically, the Gothic is primarily concerned with the fear of the Other. The Other is most often that which is unknown, as humanity tends to fear the unknown.

Freud further explains this fear of the unknown in relation to the uncanny:

The German word '*unheimlich*' is obviously the opposite of '*heimlich*' ['homely'], '*heimisch*' ['native']—the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny. (Freud 220-221)

This concept of the fear of the Other is also consistently enhanced by the theme of darkness, as the Gothic is almost inconceivable without its connection to darkness and its many connotations such as death, evil, immorality, and the mysterious. The dark, feared Other can also be related to aesthetics, whether it be a recognizable negative aesthetic of ugliness and dirtiness/unclean, or a sometimes even more feared positive aesthetic of beauty that masks an evil, immoral, and therefore ugly and dirty/unclean negative aesthetic. Furthermore, the role of the feared Other often creates a sense of duality or the double in the Gothic. This Other that is discovered and consequently feared is in many ways consistent with Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic discussion of the mirror stage, as Lacan argues that "the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores it, in the universal,

its function as subject” (549). As Dale Townshend points out, “Lacanian conceptualizations of the subconscious seem particularly suited to a reading of the Gothic: if the Other is the lost and censored chapter of history, it is much like the truth of the Gothic manuscript, both truthful and frustratingly incomplete, and long hidden from the light of conscious exposure” (36).¹ Also from a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud’s discussion of the uncanny is again relevant to the Gothic, as he argues that the “‘double’ has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons” (236). Such dualities as good/evil, moral/immoral, God/Satan, angel/demon, creator/monster, master/golem, man/wolf, man/vampire, man/zombie, and various other dualities incorporating dead/living/undead are all highly recognizable binary constructs of the Gothic. Likewise, these Gothic binaries, dualities, and doublings are based on varying positions of power, as power and the way power is perceived is another major idea that is at stake in the Gothic. While, again, the role of the supernatural in the Gothic is typically its most recognizable trait—as Srdjan Smajić points out, “[i]t is difficult [...] to think of the nineteenth-century novel apart from the gothic and the ghostly” (2)—all of these above ideas and themes are by no means limited within the realm of the supernatural. As the Gothic evolves, the idea of the dark, feared Other is extended beyond the supernatural and can be applied to the concepts of race, class, gender and sexuality. And as the Gothic extends beyond the supernatural to more real world applications, not only does the Gothic become more associated with realism, but it also becomes associated with a form of scare tactic, or “modes of ‘social control’”

¹ Townshend also argues that “Foucault is linked to Gothic is linked to Lacan, and so on. And if Lacan had employed the Borromean knot as a means of illustrating the interdependence of the three orders of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary, so this book claims for itself a similar purpose, arguing that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic, the new historicism of Foucault, and aspects of Lacan’s revisionist psychoanalytic schema are best read in relation to one another, knotted or yoked together in a supplementary relation of addition and replacement, extension and substitution” (Townshend 8).

(Miller viii), as D.A. Miller describes in *The Novel and the Police* (1988). Realism uses the Gothic oftentimes as a scare tactic to promote social change, but such a social agenda tends to be positive. Eventually, as the Gothic evolves throughout the nineteenth century, its more divisive ideas and themes of fear, darkness, and fear of the Other—along with the Gothic’s connotations with morality, aesthetics, and power—are ironically used to promote more inclusive ideas and themes of humanity and human fellowship.

The central question of this dissertation asks why and how the Gothic novel changed and evolved during the nineteenth century? Of particular interest will be the role of the natural in this evolution: in terms of nature, the nature of man and man’s social relations, as well as natural science, and particularly Naturalism. These issues will be at stake throughout the discussion of this dissertation, as well as those ideas and themes related to the Gothic, such as fear, darkness, the supernatural, aesthetics, the position of power, the Other, the Gothic double, and other dualities. David Punter observes that “the number of Gothic novels written in the period from the 1790s to the 1820s was colossal” (*The Literature of Terror* 130). This dissertation will initially explore how the Gothic novel evolved from a mainly formulaic form of popular fiction rooted in sensationalism to a form that resists or rejects this formulaic nature. This dissertation further considers other key moments of Gothic transformation, such as Walter Scott’s historicizing of Gothicism, and also the role of Gothic parody as primarily represented by Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818). This transformation towards a historicization and parody of the Gothic signals not only a movement away from the formulaic, but also an emerging sense of disenchantment in the Gothic in terms of more supernatural limitations, preferring rather more realistic arenas of the Gothic. With this transformation in mind,

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) will be considered as a major influence in terms of how the Gothic novel evolved into the Realist novel that merely used the Gothic as a mode of expression, as Shelley's novel reformulated the roles of nature in order to reframe them within a secular scientific imaginary that nonetheless still retained many features of the original Gothic. This dissertation will explore the context of visual art in terms of early artistic expressions of Gothicism contemporary to the rise of the Gothic novel, as well as ways in which Gothicism forms a literary as well as artistic dialogue with Realism and Naturalism throughout nineteenth-century novels and works of art. The development of the decline of the Gothic novel and the emergence of the Realist novel that uses Gothicism as a mode in the mid-nineteenth century will act as the starting point to an exploration of Realism's evolution into Naturalism in relation to Gothicism up to the *fin de siècle*, particularly on the basis of expressions of interiority and exteriority in Naturalist as well as Gothic expressions of visual art and the novel. Ultimately, this dissertation will argue that Gothicism becomes essential to Naturalism, using visual art and the nineteenth-century novel as evidence of that natural evolution of Gothicism.

The original literary and artistic expressions of the Gothic in the Gothic novels and visual art of the late-eighteenth century to the 1820s particularly relied on the concepts of fear and darkness, as well as the supernatural, aesthetics, the position of power, the Other, the Gothic double and Gothic dualities. These themes and ideas still carried on into the Gothic mode expressed by the Realist novel and visual art of the mid-nineteenth century, though the supernatural was more often explained away in the interest of realism and an emerging sense of modernity in Realism. Therefore, while reality was often a point of refuge in the Gothic novels of the late-eighteenth century to the 1820s,

the Realist novels of the mid-nineteenth century that expressed Gothicism as a mode consequently revealed that—perhaps most disconcertingly—the dark and fearful Gothic can exist almost anywhere, such as in nature, human nature, social relations, labor, economics, and even science. While Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* laid the foundation for the Gothicization of many of these realities—especially nature, human nature, and science—Naturalism in the late-nineteenth century reconfigured the Gothic as a primary focus in the, once again, truly Gothic novels at the *fin de siècle*. Even though Naturalism was a movement that, in many respects, sought to present scenes of life in an objective, documentary, and even scientific manner, this dissertation will show how Naturalism became intertwined with the Gothic themes of fear, darkness, an aesthetic of ugliness, the position of power, the Other, the Gothic double and Gothic dualities, and also a reemergence of the supernatural in the *fin de siècle* Gothic novel.

Though Gothicism as a literary genre was certainly at its most popular from the 1790s to the 1810s, the focus of this dissertation will be mainly on the mid- to late-nineteenth century; exploring how Gothicism evolved from a literary fad rooted in the supernatural into a form of expression more concerned with realism. However, consistent with the literary form in which the Gothic reached its highest point of popularity, the main focus of this exploration will be placed on the novel. Of particular importance to this study will be the inquiry into how and why the genre evolved from the quintessentially Gothic “fad novel,” to the “novel of ideas” which merely employed the Gothic as a trope or mode, yet only to return once again to a holistic Gothic novel at the *fin de siècle*. Though the main focus of this dissertation is Gothicism in the nineteenth-century British novel, the evolution of Naturalism in that genre will be explored in terms

of British as well as non-British visual art in order to provide an effective context for that evolution. Much in the same way that the majority of Gothic texts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries used non-British settings for various reasons,² these non-British works of visual art will be discussed as similar examples of the exotic and the mysterious in terms of their fusion of Gothicism with Realism and Naturalism, but also in terms of the international influence of Realism and Naturalism that affected the novels and visual art of nineteenth-century Britain. This exploration of non-British artists is important to this dissertation that seeks to explore the evolution of Gothicism in the nineteenth-century British novel, as non-British artists—especially French artists—were very influential in terms of the development of Realism in visual art and its subsequent influence on British artists. This is particularly the case with the development of Naturalism from Realism in visual art, as the French Naturalist artist, Jules Bastien-Lepage, is shown to have either directly or indirectly influenced all of the Naturalist artists in England that this dissertation discusses. As British Gothic texts after *Frankenstein*, and particularly at the *fin de siècle*, used more local, British settings, it was again the influence of scientific naturalism and the exotic, foreign, Naturalist influence that helped to facilitate this evolution of Naturalism in Gothicism, as the Gothic aesthetic in British and non-British works of Realist and Naturalist art alike was also translated into Realist and Naturalist novels in Britain. Furthermore, this connection between Gothicism and Realism/Naturalism explains the popularity of the Gothic novel that bookended the nineteenth century. The Realist British novel expressed Gothicism as a mode, therefore pushing the Gothic into a subtext, resulting in a lack of British novels in

² Reasons including the emphasis on the exotic and the mystic in relatively unknown lands as setting, while also often using predominantly Catholic countries as settings in order to again play on exotic, mysterious, and superstitious stereotypes.

the mid-nineteenth century that focused primarily on the Gothic. However, at the *fin de siècle*, the Gothic would emerge from this subtextual mode of expression and reappear in popular works that indeed focused primarily on the Gothic, such as *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and *Dracula*.

This evolution of the Gothic in the nineteenth-century novel and visual art is representative of the fact that Gothicism is an interconnected, interdisciplinary, genre of ideas that has been evolving long before its most recognizable manifestation in the Gothic novel of the late-eighteenth century. Robin Sowerby observes that, “[t]hrough history, the word ‘Gothic’ has always been chiefly defined in contrasting juxtaposition to the Roman, and a constant factor in its various uses, perhaps the only constant factor, has continued to be its antithesis to the Roman or the classical” (26). The origin of the term ‘gothic’ is well established as having been associated with the Germanic northerners who threatened the security of the Roman Empire from as early as the 3rd century A.D. Herwig Wolfram states that the term appeared even earlier, as “the Gothic name appears for the first time between A.D. 16 and 18” (20). This term became most recognizable in reference to the divided tribes of the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths that emerged around the 4th century A.D. Wolfram also points out that “the name Goths [...] embraced the most diverse Germanic and even non-Germanic peoples” (19). Sowerby argues that it is “well known that the use of the term ‘Gothic’ to describe the literary phenomenon that began in the later eighteenth century has little, if anything, to do with the people from whom it is derived” (25). However, in light of Wolfram’s observations of the term’s origins, there indeed are more connections between the Gothic people and later manifestations of the Gothic, including and beyond the Gothic literature of the eighteenth

century. Even in its infancy, the word 'gothic' has already managed to become a cultural umbrella term or unifier. It is an all-encompassing term applied to a mass group of people who were a mysterious entity to the dominant culture of the Romans. These Gothic peoples are the unknown Other that inhabit the cold, dark North and are a threat to the dominant culture that perceives them as the Other. These are already ideas that are consistent with many of the core recognizable themes and ideas of the Gothic in its later forms. But of course, it is easy to view the various manifestations of the Gothic, separated by centuries, as isolated from each other. For example, the aforementioned use of 'gothic' as a label applied to a group of people in the early centuries A.D. can easily be viewed as culturally and chronologically isolated from the use of Gothic as a term applied to architecture in the late Middle Ages. In turn, it is also easy to view such a term specifically applied to architecture as isolated from its application to a genre of literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Likewise, the multifaceted use of 'gothic' in our current society as a label applied to literature, film, and even a fashion aesthetic and subculture can easily be viewed as a complicated Postmodern phenomenon with little connection to past applications. All of this leads Edward Jacobs to ask, "is there any properly discursive continuity between literary Gothicism and the historiographical Gothicism that preceded it, or is the fact that they share this word little more than an historical accident surrounding the words by which western peoples have, given local contingencies, named their notions of 'primitive' European peoples?" (183). In the attempt to answer this question, it becomes clear that, with close study, a real theme of connectivity can be found within all of these applications of the term 'gothic'

mentioned above, and therefore Gothicism can truly be viewed as an interconnected, evolving genre, rather than just as a set of isolated occurrences and misnomers.

The manifestation of the Gothic in relation to architecture is typically viewed as isolated not only from the original application of the term to Gothic peoples, but also as isolated from its connection to the literary a few centuries later. Helen Gardner observes in *Art Through the Ages* that “Gothic was first used as a term of derision by Renaissance critics, who condemned the lack of conformity of Gothic art to the standards of Classical Greece and Rome. ‘May he who invented it be cursed,’ wrote one of them. The style, the critics mistakenly thought, had originated with the Goths, who thus were responsible for the destruction of the good and true Classical style” (380). More specifically, Sowerby points out that Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), “the great art critic and former pupil of Michelangelo,” was one Renaissance critic that “associated the architecture of the post-Roman and pre-Renaissance period slightly with the Goths. This style, which he calls German, differs from the ancient and the modern (Renaissance), being monstrous and barbarous” (33). However mistaken Vasari and other Renaissance critics were in terms of the origin of that particular genre of architecture, there was something perceived as archaic, barbaric, and unsuitable in its form that struck them in terms of its connection to the Goths. Consistent with Gardner’s observations, Robert Mighall writes that “the term [Gothic] generally carried derogatory connotations, originally serving as a metonym for the Germanic and, by association, the Medieval” (xv). He continues, observing that “[c]ultures, attitudes, practices, and institutions could thus be labeled ‘Gothic’ if they derived or resembled the perceived characteristics of (a mythical and wholly prejudicial view of) the Middle Ages, or in fact any ‘unenlightened’ epoch” (Mighall xv-xvi).

Again, there was just something about those spiny, pointy, intricately-designed flying buttresses and gargoyle-speckled spires that was in some way reminiscent of the Dark Ages. Maybe the misattribution can be explained by the predominance of all of those sharp angles in the Gothic rib vaulting as opposed to the Romanesque domical vault that had previously existed? Regardless, Gothic architecture was and is tall, dark and ominous in appearance, and for its contemporaries and the Renaissance critics later on that Gardner alludes to, this new style had an unknown sense of mystery. This element of the unknown essentially Othered this new Gothic style, creating a similar sense of fear and metonymous marginalization suffered by the actually quite diverse Germanic and non-Germanic peoples that motivated the coining of the term ‘gothic.’ But of course, if we compare the “Classical” style that came before to the Gothic style, some real inconsistencies in the above modes of criticism can be seen. If we compare the earlier Romanesque style of architecture to the newer Gothic version, describing it as “unenlightened” compared to that of the Romanesque is actually quite opposite to its true effect. If anything, the Gothic style allowed exponentially more light. Due to its structural superiority—relying on the pointed arch rather than the old and rounded Romanesque style—the Gothic style of architecture created much more space for enlightening devices like windows. Rib vaulting opened up the ceilings of those towering Gothic cathedrals, and devices like the buttress and flying buttress aided the literal enlightenment of Gothic interiors even more so. Without these structural advancements, recognizably Gothic architectural devices such as the rose window and cathedral walls, that were far more light and glass than they were structural and supporting material, would have been impossible. Returning to Gardner, “the Gothic

passion for light leads to a most daring and successful attempt to subtract all superfluous material bulk just short of destabilizing the structure and to transform hard substance into insubstantial, luminous color” (397). Therefore, the perception of the term ‘gothic’ as a misnomer, when applied to architecture, reveals a connection to the original use of the term as derogatory in its reference to Gothic peoples. Furthermore, Gothicism is ironically revealed to consist of some rather illuminating and enlightening characteristics, despite its seemingly dark and ominous appearance.

Eventually, though, this Gothic pursuit of illumination and enlightenment in architecture would find its limits. In 1284, the vaults of the Beauvais Cathedral in France collapsed. Aiming for an ambitious height of 157 feet for the choir section of the cathedral, the builders at Beauvais “attempted goals almost beyond limit, pushing with ever-slenderer supports to new heights, aiming always at effects of insubstantial visions floating far beyond human reach” (Gardner 400). Using similar architectural technology, yet constantly attempting to take things further with each new structure, the cathedrals of the High Gothic period—beginning with the rebuilding of Chartres Cathedral after a fire in 1194 mostly destroyed it—could only go so high. The collapse of Beauvais Cathedral would effectively end the High Gothic period of architecture, as “henceforth, the great structural innovations of the High Gothic style and the vast scale in which they were worked out would be things of the past” (Gardner 400). Centuries later, the Gothic novel would suffer a somewhat similar fate, as its formulaic structures that sought to reach ever higher popularity would eventually collapse.

According to Frederick S. Frank, between 1780 to 1820, “an educated guess would be that a figure in the area of 4,500 to 5,000 novels of the Gothic variety spewed

from the presses during this four decade reign of terror in English letters” (ix).³ Frank explains that, “[d]ue in part to the ravages of time, taste, and fashion, numerous titles have disappeared forever into bibliographical oblivion while many others must be recorded as lost or extinct Gothics” (ix). Despite these difficulties, Frank’s text seeks to account for those Gothic texts that can be accounted for and that reflect relatively the same traits of the texts that made up the Gothic fad of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. According to Frank’s Appendix Three, “Annual Chronology of First Gothics,” beginning in 1794—the same year Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was published—there were no less than 13 total English Gothic novels published. This increased to 14 the next year, and then to 20 the year after that. The number of English Gothic novels published in 1797 then dipped to 10, but over the next 13 years (1798-1810), 257 English Gothic novels would be published, averaging just under 20 each year, with the highest numbers of 26 published in 1803 and 25 in 1810, and the lowest number of 12 in 1799 and 1809. These numbers clearly reflect nothing short of a fad in terms of the publication of English Gothic novels, feeding a Gothic-hungry reading public. However, the number of English Gothic novels published from 1811 to 1820 would dip to 79, with an average of just under 8 per year, and the numbers would dwindle down much lower after that point. As is consistent with the fad phenomenon, the sheer Gothic saturation of the literary market was followed by an evident lack of interest as a result of that saturation. As the above numbers dictate—and

³ Although Frank’s text was published back in 1987, it is one of very few, if any, published comprehensive studies of the actual numbers of Gothic novels published between 1764 and 1835. Everett F. Bleiler’s *The Guide to Supernatural Fiction* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1983) also seeks to do so, but in a much less focused manner, while Eds. E.J. Clery, Caroline Franklin, and Peter Garside’s *Authorship, Commerce and the Public* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and William St. Clair’s *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) do not focus specifically on the Gothic novel.

presumably as a victim of their own popularity—the numbers of the English Gothic novel severely dwindled in the 1820s, and the fully Gothic novel essentially burned itself out by the 1840s. However, Frank warns against a simple reliance upon such a presumption:

It is certainly a misreading of literary history to conclude that the Gothic died of verbal exhaustion, stylistic monotony, and artistic mediocrity at the end of the 1820's. Instead, the Gothic impulse went underground where it would continue to flourish in submerged ways while energizing the darker dreams of many novelists of first-rank who found in the Gothic tradition the conceptions, if not the explicit models, for their own metaphors of confinement and destruction. The three Brontës, Dickens, Collins, Hardy, Conrad, and Wells, to name only a few post-Gothic writers, were all touched by and responsive to the Gothic spirit, while the redoubtable Sir Walter Scott must be regarded as a major contributing figure to the progress of the Gothic movement. (Frank xxviii)

Frank acknowledges that the Gothic movement, in the genre of the novel at least, “went underground” and “flourish[ed] in submerged ways.” Yet, a less cryptic way to describe the Gothic in the great majority of English novels after the 1820s is to claim that the Gothic became more of a trope or mode, as few novels between the 1820s and the 1880s could be accurately described as truly *Gothic* novels—save texts like *Varney the Vampire* (1847), *Wagner the Werewolf* (1847), and penny dreadfuls of that ilk that certainly would stretch the limit of the definition if they were to be labeled as novels.⁴

⁴ However, many of the Gothic novels of the 1790s to the 1820s contained similar traits to their Victorian cousins: the penny dreadfuls. Frank acknowledges that these early Gothic novels suggest “the shape in which the Gothic impulse would perpetuate and reproduce itself far into the Nineteenth Century” (xiv).

Most scholarship concerning Gothicism has been more of an effort of definition and explanation of the eighteenth-century beginnings of the genre and its different forms and applications that developed throughout the nineteenth century, and oftentimes up to the present. However, there has been a general lack of discussion in terms of *why* those changes took place, particularly in terms of why the truly and fully Gothic fell out of fashion in the mid-nineteenth century, only to rebound at the end of the century. Also, most scholarship concerning Gothicism seems to explore the genre on the basis of a rather disconnected progression, and one of the claims of this dissertation is that the progression of Gothicism throughout the nineteenth century is actually very much interconnected. However, there are existing elements of interconnectivity in the ways in which past critics have conceived of the Gothic novel. In terms of what form from which the Gothic novel itself developed, Frank points out that the genre can “be traced in the numerous specimens of the didactic or sentimental novels veering toward or drawing directly upon the Gothic to make their philosophical point or to intensify their revolutionary message” (xiii). For Frank, the Gothic novel never did “sever its connections with its predecessor, the sentimental novel, as it developed” (xxiv).

The Gothic novel’s connection to sentimentalism is difficult to deny, as the Gothic is obviously very concerned with playing on a reader’s emotions. Punter also claims of sentimentalism that the “Gothic could not have come into being without a style of this kind, for it is in this style that we begin to glimpse the possibility of the balance and reason of the Enlightenment being crushed beneath the weight of feeling and passion” (*The Literature of Terror* 29). Furthermore, Punter argues that, in “sentimentalism, the middle classes are gropingly moving back towards the notion of

psychological depth which the bland superficialities of the Enlightenment had tried to obliterate, towards the important perception that an account of behaviour cannot substitute for an account of motivation” (*The Literature of Terror* 30). This evolution is consistent with Robert F. Geary’s claim that “the early Gothic novels were very much indebted, albeit in an uneasy fashion, to the providentialist literary motifs found in earlier eighteenth-century fiction” (i). Especially stylistically, the roots of the Gothic novel are plain to see in sentimentalism, however, Geary would argue that “the Gothic novel is more than extravagant sentimentalism, a sort of lurid cousin of the novels of sensibility. Similarly, it is more than an exercise in creating the literary sublime, though scenes of grand and gloomy mountains, terrifying underground passageways, and forbidding castles were favorites” (5). Francis R. Hart also includes the criteria of “a preference for the style or affective state called sublimity” as well as “a shift away from the didactic” as two of the five major elements of the Gothic novel (139). However, even though the Gothic was certainly intertwined with the sublime during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, such a connection was mostly due to the influence of Romanticism on the Gothic novel during its initial development. As the Gothic novel moved away from being so restricted to the supernatural, it likewise shed such strong associations with Romanticism and the sublime, though these elements are still very much at stake in a more transitional Gothic novel like *Frankenstein*. Even more so, as the Gothic in the nineteenth-century novel became more associated with Realism, such Romantic and sublime associations were cut off altogether, with very few exceptions.⁵ In terms of didacticism, the Gothic novel by no means shed its association with that element either as

⁵ For example, elements of neo-Romanticism and the sublime can be read in Bram Stoker’s descriptions of the Eastern European countryside in *Dracula*.

it continued into the nineteenth century, as not only can the Gothic parody be read as somewhat didactic, but likewise as the Gothic became more associated with Realism an element of social didacticism became more prominent.

Slipping into a mode of itemization, many past critics have sought to list the major elements or categories of the Gothic, similar to the efforts of Hart. For example, Frank singles out five permanent modes of the Gothic:

[S]upernatural or inscrutable Gothic; natural or explained Gothic; historical Gothic or Gothic mixed with the violent values of a remote and usually imaginary past; equivocal or ambiguous Gothic in which the degree of horror or terror engendered depends upon the perceptions of a narrator; ideological or philosophical Gothic in which Gothic effects are used to revolutionize or to radicalize the moral and political thinking of the reader. These five categories are given in a descending order of Gothic purity and during the 1790's, as the Gothic novel approached its zenith, they are often seen to overlap. (Frank xxiv)

Punter also argues that the Gothic is based on three major tenets: paranoia, the barbaric, and the taboo (*The Literature of Terror* 404-405), while Victoria Nelson claims that “the rapidly proliferating Gothic sensibility divided into separate strands emphasizing either anticlericalism, supernaturalism, or romance (the sentiment, not the genre)” (91). Even slipping into a tone reminiscent of a scientific naturalist, Frank points out that “[e]xperimental alterations of the Gothic after Walpole resulted in some bizarre subspecies such as those Gothics which restrict their action and setting to a single portion of the haunted castle” (xiii). Although this method of categorization and itemization, as

well as Frank's scientifically naturalistic language does well to set up this dissertation's discussion of

Gothic Naturalism later in the nineteenth-century novel, the effect of viewing the Gothic as a collection of listed elements or categories can seem problematic in terms of this dissertation's argument for a more interconnected, evolutionary Gothic. Furthermore, as Mighall argues, the "Gothic is a process, not an essence; a rhetoric rather than a store of universal symbols; and attitude to the past and the present, not a free-floating fantasy world. Epochs, institutions, places, and people are Gothicized, have the Gothic thrust upon them. That which is Gothicized depends on history and the stories it needs to tell itself" (xxv).

More effective critical approaches to defining the Gothic—such as Mighall's approach above—seem to focus more on ideas or themes that are more consistent throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, even though their roots might be found in the earlier, late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Gothic. Stephen C. Behrendt does an effective job of connecting the Gothic novel's use of setting to a more consistent historical and philosophical context, observing that:

The Gothic novel is a playground for postlapsarian mythmaking: broken-down, darkened castles and fortresses stand in for the crumbling institutional structures of post-Enlightenment culture; individuals are stripped of their personhoods by incivility—indeed inhumanity—permeated by violence; virtue is everywhere under attack by the traditional forces of disorder. The two most characteristic preoccupations of Gothic

fiction are anxiety and jeopardy, both of which threaten the reader just as they do the protagonist. (Behrendt 17)

Behrendt never quite uses the word ‘fear’ in this passage, but its shadow is looming over every word. He talks of big fears, societal fears, such as the great changes taking place in the post-Enlightenment era—similar to Frank’s discussion of the “fear of a dissolving society and a fragmenting self that the Gothic expresses at its deepest levels” (xxix)—but Behrendt also talks of small fears, individual fears of anxiety and jeopardy that are experienced not only by the characters in Gothic fiction, but also by the reader. These smaller, more tangible fears constitute a physical, visceral threat to the human body, illustrated by Jack Morgan’s argument that “the familiar, often-expressed perception that Gothic horror reflects basic human fears, while sketchy, is not erroneous, though ‘visceral human dreads’ would perhaps put it more exactly” (64). Morgan continues, arguing that “each [Gothic] tale fundamentally goes to human body aversions. The primeval fear of being preyed upon, the dread of dampness made worse by a cold, the dread of rancidity, and so on; these things arouse, to paraphrase [John] Cheever, our sense of our own physicalness and the ease with which we can be hurt, the essential, chill-provoking, element of Gothic literature” (69). According to Townshend, in “The Scribbler” from her *Poems* (1799), Mary Alcock describes the psychological effect of these physical fears, proclaiming that “the writers of sentimental and Gothic romance as torturers who deliberately inflict calculated, ever-more painful strokes upon the nerves and fibers of the reader’s psyche” (Townshend 271).

Fusing this physical threat with the psychological, while also acknowledging some of the historical, social, philosophical, and political contexts of Gothicism, Michel

Foucault argues that a “fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened places, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented” (“The Eye of Power” 153). Foucault also connects the issue of power to the role of physical fear in the Gothic novel:

Gothic novels develop a whole fantasy-world of stone walls, darkness, hideouts and dungeons which harbor, in significant complicity, brigands and aristocrats, monks and traitors. The landscapes of Ann Radcliffe’s novels are composed of mountains and forests, caves, ruined castles and terrifying dark and silent convents. Now these imaginary spaces are like the negative of the transparency and visibility which it is aimed to establish. This reign of ‘opinion’, so often invoked at this time, represents a mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze. A form of power whose main instance is that of opinion will refuse to tolerate areas of darkness.

(Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” 154)

By invoking the binaries of light and darkness, Foucault’s claims parallel the theme of light illuminating darkness as a result of technological advances in relation to the earlier discussion of Gothic architecture, where the term ‘Gothic’ was applied to an architectural aesthetic that was perceived as reminiscent of archaism, but was in all practicality a more

enlightened form of structure. Extending this metaphor, Townshend observes that the “Gothic employs the negative of darkness only as a means of deploying modern disciplinary light” (260), and also observes of Foucault that he characterizes “the late eighteenth century as an era marked by nascent forms of the modern disciplinary values of visual clarity, visibility, and light. This growing sense of cultural transparency brought with it a corresponding fear of darkness, obscurity, and impaired, curtailed, or thwarted vision” (258). Again paralleling the illuminating advancements in Gothic architecture with Foucault’s metaphor, Townshend observes that, “[t]urning away from the dark, late eighteenth-century culture would be marked by a tendency to embrace the nascent disciplinary technologies of light, establishing its new political orders on the spaces of legibility only recently recovered from the gloom of the *ancien régime*” (259). For Townshend, the dark mystery of the Gothic is inevitably connected with light, as “[d]ark encryption seldom occurs in isolation from the process of illumination. As concerted as the invocation of the dark might be, villainous encryption, in a sudden reversal of the narrative’s direction, is subjected, in Gothic, to lucid exposure” (262). Ironically, “The light of disclosure has vanquished the darkness of Gothic concealment” (262). Townshend also depicts the Gothic as ironically illuminating in its connection to an emerging sense of modernity:

Despite the critical tendency to perceive darkness as the particular provenance of Gothic romance, the Gothic, we might say, is more preoccupied with light than it is with its horrific obverse, for it is through the sense of sublime recoil that it provokes that darkness occasions the light, or serves as the flint that ignites the flame of the narrative’s candle,

lamp, torch, or taper. Darkness to light, sovereignty to modern discipline:
 Gothic writing attests to the epistemic substitution of modernity for
 classicism at the end of the eighteenth century. (Townshend 263)

This binary of light and dark is also representative of Gothicism in terms of a strong theme of duality within the genre. As the conception of the term ‘Gothic’ relied heavily upon the idea of the Other, the very nature of Gothicism is naturally fraught with binaries, as Townshend writes, the “past and the future, the antiquarian and the modern, things Gothic and things enlightened: the subject of Gothic is ordered, split, diffracted across the competing registers of death and life, Thanatos and Eros” (331). This sense of duality in the Gothic extends much further, as it also can be found within the theme of the Gothic double that is recurrent throughout the genre. This dissertation will later discuss duality in relation to monstrosity and the Gothic character doubles in *Frankenstein* and also the *fin de siècle* Gothic novels, as well as the doubling based on social monstrosities in Realist and Naturalist Gothic novels.

The metaphor of duality in relation to light and darkness in the Gothic novel is also consistent with the context of the Enlightenment, as previously mentioned by Punter, Behrendt, and Foucault. Gothicism can easily be read as antithetical to the Enlightenment, in that the Gothic can initially appear quite unreasonable, particularly in contrast to the Enlightenment that relied so heavily upon reason at its very foundation. Furthermore, as Romanticism is traditionally viewed as a reaction against the reason of the Enlightenment, Gothicism’s connection to Romanticism during the early popularity of the Gothic novel has likewise positioned Gothicism as seemingly antithetical to the Enlightenment. After all, the Gothic is connected to ghosts, goblins, werewolves,

vampires, demons, and all of those other things that go bump in the night and strike us with relatively unreasonable fears. Frank provides a reading that is consistent with this mode of thought, arguing that a “craving for the darker emotions, an imaginative attraction to decay, ruin disorder, and death, a fear of the false order imposed upon the mind and society by the fixed value systems of a rigid neoclassicism all contributed to the outbreak of a Gothic impulse” (xix). The very essence of the Gothic is seemingly based on that which might be reasoned away by the sober, non-superstitious, rational thinker. However unreasonable Gothicism’s associations with these creatures and fears might be, there is actually a strong element of reason that exists within the Gothic. Proceeding to then trace Gothicism’s emergence into Romanticism, Frank argues, “[s]ubtle and subdued at first, eighteenth-century Gothicism was one tributary of the general revolt against rational structures that would later coalesce into the mighty stream of Romanticism at the end of the century. Gothic feelings and moods as well as a new enthusiasm not simply for the unknown but for the unknowable precede the Gothic novels and clear the way” (xix). However, despite Frank’s placing of the Gothic in opposition to rational structures, one can already sense a consistency between Gothicism and the Enlightenment in terms of an enthusiasm for the unknown and the unknowable, as even Frank himself would acknowledge in the Gothic of the late-eighteenth century “a loss of faith in traditional value systems and stable notions of the self. Apparently, the more advanced and civilized the society, the greater its need for apocalyptic outlets in the form of horror art. The Gothic became at the close of the Eighteenth Century both a consolidated genre and a new mode of perception, a way of envisioning unwanted psychic realities and social warpings” (xxviii-xxix). Geary would also question a sense of outright opposition

between Gothicism and rationalism, arguing that the “Gothic novel was not so much a reaction against the rationalistic currents of the later eighteenth century as their product in that religious latitudinarianism and Enlightenment skepticism weakened the older theological context of providential belief, releasing the supernatural as numinous terror” (122). Likewise, Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall warn against “mistakenly presenting Gothic literature as a kind of ‘revolt’ against bourgeois rationality, modernity or Enlightenment” (209-210).

Similar to the ways in which Gothicism complicates its Enlightenment context, the relationship between religion and the Gothic is very complicated, especially as the Gothic novel begins to shed its direct associations with the supernatural and focuses on an emerging sense of realism in the mid-nineteenth century. The early Gothic novel consistently relied upon religious themes, especially in relation to Catholicism. However, the representation of Catholicism in the Gothic novel was oftentimes depicted from a Protestant perspective, and was therefore complicated—and perhaps also enhanced—by religious critique and the exposure of perceived religious hypocrisy. Complicating things even further, Nelson argues that, “[d]espite its faux Catholic trappings, the original Gothic is generally regarded by its critics as the first Western literary genre operating implicitly in the vacuum left by the departure of religious belief” (90). But still, the Gothic novel’s persistence in immersing its readers into a world full of religious superstition and supernatural wonders naturally leads one to question to what extent Gothicism is truly able to distance itself from the religious subject matter that it attempts to critique? Geary discusses the precarious nature of religion and the supernatural in the Gothic novel, claiming that “the early Gothic novelists were uneasy with the supernatural

elements which formed part of the cluster of conventions making up the form. Many of the differences from one writer to the next could profitably be understood as a series of experiments in an effort to integrate the supernatural into a believable narrative setting”

(i). Geary also questions the level of separation between Gothicism, religion, and the supernatural, arguing that “the supernaturalism of the Gothic novels was an uncertain, awkward affair, half in and half out of the providential context and vulnerable to charges of superstition alike from the orthodox and the fashionably sophisticated. Unable to achieve any coherent framework of belief or focus for its unearthly terrors, the Gothic soon faltered into overwhelming sensationalism” (122). Such overwhelming sensationalism made the Gothic novel of the early nineteenth century an easy mark for parody and satire, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, and it also again alludes to a general faltering and collapse. Furthering this depiction of a faltering and collapsing Gothic novel, Geary focuses on the supernatural when he argues that the “curious progression of the supernatural in literature since the 1700’s—from traditional providential exempla to gothic novel to ghost story to contemporary full-length novelistic chiller—reveals much concerning, for example, the nature of literary change as well as the relation between popular and high literature and of both to the culture as a whole” (136).

The role of religion and the supernatural in the early Gothic novel, as well as the prevalence of more flashy and recognizable imagery—such as more material devices like haunted castles, convents, and manors, as well as other more sensationalist, visceral devices used to cause fear—not only establishes a strong connection between the Gothic and popular culture (which still continues at present), but also establishes a strong

connection between the Gothic and visuality; and more specifically: visual art. Robert Miles discusses the initial connection between religion and material, visual culture in the early Gothic novel:

[T]hroughout the long eighteenth century there was a steadily deepening opposition to visual culture. In particular, [Barbara] Stafford⁶ identifies a Protestant animus against display, theatricality, show. Stafford argues that “we should think of the Protestant culture of reading and writing as a fundamental indictment levelled against a supposedly Catholic fetishism,” where by fetishism is meant a low, groveling, sensual addiction to things. This anti-Catholic rhetoric further associated Catholic fetishism with “Orientalism,” meaning despotic sensualism, where the chiasmus works both ways: despotism was sensual and sensuality despotic. There is, of course, a straightforward sectarian element here, in that the Protestant case against Catholicism had always stressed imposture: the imposture of the saints themselves, of turning holy relics into idols, of ruling the minds of the common people through deceitful shows. Against this despotic clerisy Protestantism stressed the freedom of the individual to access God directly; the spirit, not the letter—true grace, and not the form—mattered. (Miles 16)

Miles also discusses how the early Gothic novel represented a materialistic, theatrical display, arguing that the “Gothic romance [...] belongs to the commercial world of luxurious commodities, proliferating faster than the means of control. Although the

⁶ Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Artful Science: Enlightenment Entertainment and the Eclipse of Visual Education*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994.

Gothic is something read, and thus privately consumed, its addiction to the spectral—to dubious shows—places the Gothic romance within the category of the ‘dangerously theatrical,’ the category the new, readerly (Romantic) regime was designed to countermand” (11).

As the early Gothic novel was so rich with highly recognizable, materialistic devices, and was also prone to the visual and the theatrical in its emphasis on show and display, it should come as no surprise that Gothicism’s influence and cultural popularity would extend beyond the literary world into the realm of visual art. Martin Myrone argues that artists contemporary to the early popularity of the literary Gothic would “turn to Gothic Romance as a source of heroic and exciting narratives that were more immediately accessible and relevant than the creaking Classics. Then again, the sensationalist aspects of Gothic tales—sex and horror, dungeons and ghouls—reached out to the most immediately gruesome or salacious tastes” (36). According to Myrone, “[w]hat brings the perverse, strange and supernatural art of [Henry] Fuseli, [William] Blake, [James] Gillray and their contemporaries into meaningful association with the Gothic in literature is also that they share the same range of new strategic possibilities regarding audiences, marketing and the power of sensation” (35), and therefore, “while Fuseli, Blake and Gillray have their own, complex (and overlapping) histories, they can productively be considered together and in relation to the phenomenon of the Gothic” (35). But of course, as both the literary and artistic early Gothic embraced sensationalism, popular and material culture, and also the supernatural, both of these disciplinary expressions of the Gothic suffered from the same complications brought on by their popularity. Myrone argues that the Gothic was in many ways “a vast and diffuse

practical exploration into the nature and value of art in an emerging modern, bourgeois and capitalist society whose primary, structuring values were as yet still not quite formed. In particular, the decisive distinctions between high culture and low, between the grand and the simply grandiose, the tacky and the tasteful, were in a decidedly volatile state” (36). As a result, frankly, much of the Gothic of the visual art and the novel in the early nineteenth century is vulnerable to questions of quality and value. Myrone points out that “writers and artists of self-conscious distinction (and Fuseli is the prime case here) exposed themselves to accusations of crassness and stupidity in their pursuit of startling effects” (36), and “Fuseli was a mere fantasist, and in this like the purveyors of cheap literature” (36).

Despite its complications—tense and complex binaries, ironies, and enlightening historical, social, philosophical, and political contexts—the oftentimes repetitive subject matter of the Gothic and its sheer popularity seem to have played a major role in the drastic reduction of the publication of Gothic novels by the middle of the nineteenth century, as well as in a general reduction of interest in supernatural, Gothic visual art. And despite Frank’s protestations against an oversimplification of the reasoning behind this decline in interest in the Gothic novel, it is clear that, at least to some extent, Gothicism’s popularity was its undoing, as the formulaic, sensationalistic nature of the English Gothic novel thrived on popular tropes of foreign settings, the supernatural, creepy castles, manors, convents and monasteries, suppressed and questionable/controversial family histories, and endangered female protagonists. These recognizable Gothic tropes were apparently so overused that they became cliché and problematic, and again, these aspects of the faltering and collapsing Gothic novel of the early nineteenth

century became fodder for satire and parody, as will be more specifically discussed in relation to *Northanger Abbey* in the next chapter.

However, as this dissertation will argue in relation to the nineteenth-century British Gothic novel and visual art, there is indeed quality and value in Gothicism beyond its supernatural thrills and focus on fear. In reference to the early Gothic visual art—contemporary to the early Gothic novel—that will be discussed more specifically in the next chapter, Myrone claims that the “deathly qualities which haunt the work of these artists in criticism and commentary registers a sense of distance from an imagined heritage of supremely effective creativity, a lost past of heroic art. Their half-living, tortured figures are the revenants of the ideal figures of classical art, left flailing and purposeless” (38). While Myrone’s critique signals another reference to the early Gothic’s lack of quality in contrast to the revered creativity of the Classics and even Neo-Classicism, perhaps it is precisely the Gothic’s rejection of the old order, revered Antiquity included, that enhances its value as a set of methodologies and ideas rather than just scare tactics. As Myrone himself observes, the late-eighteenth century “saw the emergence of distinctly modern forms of literature” (35), while Townshend likewise observes that the “rise of Gothic writing toward the end of the eighteenth century marks and signals the onset of modernity” (1). Consequently, the Gothic can no longer be viewed as an archaic, inherently medieval, regressive form of expression. As Miles argues, “[v]irtually all critics agree that the Gothic is a genre of transition and, as a consequence, Gothic texts endemically look both ways. To put it differently, there is a critical consensus that the Gothic is an epiphenomenon of modernity, and just as the

picture of emergent modernity is a confused, or at least a complex one, so is the genre which registers it” (12).

As this dissertation will show, the nineteenth-century British novel and visual art, through a coordinated effort and shared discourse, reveal the Gothic as indeed possessing cultural, social, and even philosophical value, beyond the cheap thrills and scare tactics that sullied its reputation in the early nineteenth century. As Myrone observes, “if Gothic literature, even at its most tawdry and perishable, claimed some gloss of cultural value, so visual artists drew close to the Gothic in their treatment of ostensibly noble and ennobling themes” (35). Lovejoy argues that “most philosophical systems are original or distinctive rather in their patterns than in their components” (3), and this might also be argued to be the case with Gothicism, as though its patterns of expression might change—for example, in terms of its full expression in the early Gothic novel, its expression merely as a mode in mid-nineteenth century Realism, and its reemergence as a full expression at the *fin de siècle*—the Gothic maintains its main ideas and components in terms of the roles that fear, fear of the Other, duality/doubleness, aesthetics, morality, and the issue of power play in those patterns of Gothic expression. Likewise, this dissertation will show how the idea of human fellowship and togetherness will, ironically, also become an integral component of the typically dark and frightening nineteenth-century Gothic.

Though much of its subject matter might stigmatize it as a genre that would fall short of the status of philosophical system, the Gothic novel in its transitional stage after the apex of its popularity and its subsequent incorporation into Romanticism, and especially Realism, at least reveals the genre as a legitimate entity in the history of ideas, despite its apparent stagnancy and formulaic nature during its stage as a literary fad. The

Gothic novel can be seen as a parallel to artistic and intellectual expression as a whole during its transition to high Romanticism and Realism, as represented by Lovejoy's commentary on the period:

The early Romanticists did not suffer from that fear which obsessed the young John Stuart Mill, during his phase of somewhat belated adolescent melancholy—itself a fear which derived its poignancy from the same Romantic preconception—the fear lest all the possible modes and combinations in, for example, music had already been realized, that there could be nothing really new in this art to look forward to. (This was, it need hardly be recalled incidentally, a rather comic cause for alarm in the third decade of the nineteenth century.) Nature and man, for the Romanticist, were various enough to afford the artist ever new material; and his task was indefatigably to appropriate and to embody it in equally various and changing aesthetic forms. (Lovejoy 306-307)

As the Gothic novel varied and changed—as represented by Jane Austen, Walter Scott, and Mary Shelley in the next chapter—it would be its relationship to science and social issues, as well as visual art—rather more than self-parody and history—that would transition the Gothic of the Gothic novel into underground submergence—as Frank described it⁷—in the Realist novel, only to emerge above ground once again at the end of the century in what might be described as a renaissance of the truly Gothic novel at the

⁷ The “Gothic impulse went underground where it would continue to flourish in submerged ways while energizing the darker dreams of many novelists of first-rank who found in the Gothic tradition the conceptions, if not the explicit models, for their own metaphors of confinement and destruction. The three Brontës, Dickens, Collins, Hardy, Conrad, and Wells, to name only a few post-Gothic writers, were all touched by and responsive to the Gothic spirit, while the redoubtable Sir Walter Scott must be regarded as a major contributing figure to the progress of the Gothic movement” (Frank xxviii).

end of the nineteenth century with Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker.

CHAPTER 1

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE ENLIGHTENED GOTHIC NOVEL OF IDEAS

Republished as a collection of *The Miscellaneous Writings of John Evelyn, Esq. F.R.S.* in 1825, coincidentally during the initial decline of the English Gothic novel, John Evelyn wrote of Gothic architecture in his “An Account of Architects and Architecture” in 1697 that there is “something of solid, and oddly artificial too, after a sort; but then the universal and unreasonable thickness of the walls, clumsy buttresses, towers, sharp pointed arches, doors, and other apertures without proportion; nonsensical insertions of various marbles impertinently plac’d, turrets and pinnacles thick set with monkies and chimæras (and abundance of buisy work and other incongruities), dissipate and break the angles of the sight and so confound it, that one cannot consider it with any steadiness, where to begin or end” (366-367). Also republished in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld* in 1825, Anna Laetitia Barbauld would write in “On Monastic Institutions” (1773) that, during a “solitary walk amongst the ruins of an old abbey,” she (“like a good protestant”) “began to indulge a secret triumph in the ruin of so many structures which [she] had always considered as the haunts of ignorance and superstition” (195). Barbauld would also write in “Remarks on Mr. Wakefield’s Enquiry” (1772)—likewise republished in the same text—that the “mild spirit of christianity has, no doubt, had its influence in softening the ferocity of the Gothic times” (470).⁸ The timing of this republished commentary from Evelyn and Barbauld is interesting, as Evelyn’s remarks on the artificiality, unreasonableness, clumsiness, nonsense, and impertinence of Gothic architecture also paralleled the status of the Gothic novel in the 1810s to 1820s.

⁸ Interestingly, in the 1825 version of “Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield’s Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship” republished in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, ‘Gothic’ was capitalized while ‘christianity’ was not.

Likewise, Barbauld's reveling in the destruction and ruins of the old and superstitious Gothic paralleled the relatively ruinous collapse of the popularity of the Gothic novel during the same period of time. Again paralleling the commentary of Evelyn and Barbauld, the Gothic novel was derided and negatively stigmatized during and after its initial popularity, as Frederick S. Frank claims that, "with the exception of famous examples of the form such as *The Monk*, *Frankenstein*, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, most of the Gothics were regarded as the embarrassing debris of a mediocre literary tradition and therefore not worth saving or studying" (x). Frank also observes that many unleashed "upon the Gothic novel widespread critical denunciation and ridicule" (xxvii). Interestingly, Evelyn's mocking tone of Gothic architecture is very similar to some of the mocking criticism of the Gothic novel that would appear in the form of Gothic parody, as this chapter will discuss.

Gothic parody, as primarily represented by Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* in this chapter, showed that the Gothic novel was simply getting out of control. Although it might seem odd to consider something like the Gothic novel in relation to the real—as presumably its focus on supernatural subject matter complicates the role of reality in the Gothic novel—but there are indeed limits. The repetitive, formulaic ridiculousness of the Gothic novel during the early nineteenth century had clearly overstepped such limitations of the real into an unacceptable sense of unrealism. Works of Gothic parody and satire checked and made fun of the Gothic in terms of those limitations of the real. Likewise, during this transitional stage of the Gothic in the British novel of the early nineteenth century, the Gothic of Walter Scott lends a sense of historicization that tended to rescue the Gothic from beyond those acceptable limitations of the real. Scott's historicization of

the Gothic is indeed an early attempt to link the Gothic to the movement of Realism that would become more prominent only a couple decades later. Furthermore, it would be Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that would lend a sense of the scientific to the development of the Gothic in the nineteenth-century British novel during this transitional stage.

However, as this chapter will later discuss in reference to the Gothic in visual art, this connection between the Gothic and science was not only inevitable—as a new context in which the Gothic might create fear—but was already somewhat at stake in the Gothic as a result of the scientific revolution during the Early Modern period and the Enlightenment. Yet, even though science was clearly already at the forefront of human thought long before the Gothic novel craze of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, it remained as a subtlety or subtext until Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* would address science as a primary cause for concern in the Gothic novel.

These three major expressions of change during this transitional stage of the Gothic in the British novel of the 1810s and 1820s—Gothic parody, Scott's historicization of the Gothic, and Shelley's scientific Gothic—represent something decidedly different from the early Gothic novel. While all three expressions of change still maintained many of the major ideas and themes of the early Gothic novel, they would facilitate the evolution of the Gothic from the early Gothic novel to the Realist novel of the mid-nineteenth century. Gothic parody would maintain those ideas and themes in order to make fun of them, while Scott would maintain them in an effort to give them more impact by combining them with a sense of the historic. *Frankenstein* would, in its efforts of scientific realism, still maintain a sense of the supernatural—or at least the spiritual—in its expression of the Gothic, despite the inherent element of

secularization that exists within science and realism. While the monster was typically a supernatural being in the early Gothic novel, Shelley would provide a view of the monster through the lens of realism, as rather than depicting her monster as something supernatural or magical, Shelley's monster would be discussed in real, human terms. The monster must deal with real, human, social issues. In *Frankenstein* we read a monster that is not just a symbol of fear, as we see him having to cope with the social implications of his ugliness, his development as a child from birth to some form of adolescence and adulthood, his sexuality, and all of the real human emotions that go along with all of those difficult stages in life. While the monster is indeed a symbol to be feared in the novel, he is also a character with human depth that must deal with his own fears.

Frankenstein is a Gothic novel, but it is also a novel of ideas, steeped in realism, that deals not only with the developmental issues of the monster, but also with other real, human issues such as guilt, morality and ethics, gender issues, issues related to fatherhood, motherhood, childhood and the family as a symbol of domestic interiority, and frankly the novel deals with what it means to be human. All of this is accomplished while maintaining key issues and ideas of the Gothic, such as fear, the fear of the Other, duality and the double, darkness, death, morality, aesthetics, good and evil, and the position of power. However, in contrast to the early Gothic novel, Gothicism in the British novel during this transitional period of the 1810s and 1820s steadily became more interested in representing itself as a more evolved 'novel of ideas' rather than remaining merely a problematic novel of cheap thrills and scare tactics.

In articulating the problematic aspects of Gothicism, works of Gothic parody utilized a tool that previously had not been very often paired with Gothicism, but would

eventually become symbiotic with this oftentimes dark and disturbing genre: humor. Despite the apparently oxymoronic relationship between the Gothic and humor, Jack Morgan argues that the “comic and horror genres are thus rooted in the same bodily principal and the same reintegrative folk aesthetic—hence their constantly renewed popular cultural expressions” (78). Not only are the Gothic and humor forms of popular cultural expressions that are constantly renewed and evolving, but in the case of the Gothic and the humor of Gothic parody, the Gothic novel in many ways was forced to renew itself on the basis of what Gothic parody rendered humorous in the Gothic novel. Written works of Gothic parody like Eaton Stannard Barrett’s *The Heroine* (1813), Ircastrensis’s *Love and Horror: An Imitation for the Present and a Model for All Future Romances* (1815), and Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* would take the Gothic novel to task for many of the reasons that Evelyn focused on in his critique of Gothic architecture, such as their artificiality, unreasonableness, clumsiness, nonsense, and their similarly overused devices and clutter like so many monkeys and “chimæras.” Austen’s text was not the first example of this phenomenon, but it was certainly one of the most well-known and effectively-crafted examples of Gothic parody⁹ that was contemporary to the drastic decline of the English Gothic novel in the 1820s and 1830s.¹⁰

Northanger Abbey does an excellent job of parodying the extremity and ridiculousness of the early Gothic novel. The novel’s heroine, Catherine Morland, lives at the Parsonage with her family in Wiltshire, but early in the novel Catherine ventures into the outside world with Mrs. Allen, the chief property owner in the area around Catherine’s home village of Fullerton. Their trip begins at Bath, but eventually Catherine

⁹ Perhaps also including Thomas Love Peacock’s Gothic satire, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818).

¹⁰ The novel was originally conceived as a manuscript eventually titled *Catherine*, written mostly between 1798 and 1803, but then published posthumously in 1818.

befriends a wealthy family and is invited to their home, Northanger Abbey, which Austen takes care to describe in a similar way as the old, dark, trap-door- and secret-passage-ridden homes of Gothic lore. As Catherine's journey begins, Austen informs us that the Morland family parting "was performed with suitable quietness and uneventful safety. Neither robbers nor tempests befriended them, nor one lucky overturn to introduce them to the hero. Nothing more alarming occurred than a fear on Mrs. Allen's side, of having once left her clogs behind at her inn, and that fortunately proved to be groundless" (13). Already, Austen is obviously making fun of the sensationalist aspects of the Gothic fad.

Catherine is well-read in Gothic novels, and being young, and more than a bit naïve, she often exhibits an inability to separate her perceived reality from her Gothic-novel-corrupted imagination. Austen informs us that "Catherine sometimes started at the boldness of her own surmises, and sometimes hoped or feared that she had gone too far; but they were supported by such appearances as made their dismissal impossible" (177). This is particularly the case in chapters twenty through twenty-two, as Austen provides description of the abbey distorted by Catherine's Gothic-novel-laced imagination. These chapters are filled with common Gothic literary devices, culminating in Catherine's clandestine/fictional/hypothetical discovery of a hidden manuscript that reads "'Oh! thou—whomsoever thou mayest be, into whose hands these memoirs of the wretched Matilda may fall'—when [Catherine's] lamp suddenly expires in the socket, and leaves [her] in total darkness" (Austen 150). For a while, Henry Tilney feigns seriousness in goading Catherine along in her imaginative Gothicizing of reality, but eventually, "Henry was too much amused by the interest he had raised, to be able to carry it farther; he could no longer command solemnity either of subject or voice, and was obliged to entreat her to

use her own fancy in the perusal of Matilda's woes" (Austen 150). Henry's efforts therefore shed an ironically comedic light on the needlessly clandestine proceedings that Catherine experiences when snooping around her bedroom chamber while a guest in his family's abbey, only to come up with a farrier's bill rather than the expected manuscript of intrigue. But the comedic tone evolves into a more tragic tone when Catherine takes things too far by misapplying these same Gothic devices to Henry's family history.

Not only does Austen parody the Gothic novel in a comedic way in *Northanger Abbey*, but she also applies a fair amount of serious criticism. Similar to the humor of a roast, there is a presence of biting truth in the subject matter. For example, in one of the most non-comedic scenes of the novel, Catherine is severely upbraided by her love interest, Henry Tilney, for surmising that Mr. Tilney's father had long ago, in typical Gothic fashion, mysteriously murdered his wife:

"If I understand you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to—Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions that you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you—Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies and where roads and newspapers lay

every thing open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?" (Austen 186)

Austen is obviously roasting her heroine, but it is also the reader and/or citizen of England that seems to deserve the same berating. However, it must be made clear, that Austen is by no means applying a blanket critique to the novel in general, or to its readers. At one point Catherine's Henry argues that "the person, be it a gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid" (Austen 99). Austen is more specifically making fun of the fantastical aspects of the Gothic fad, and also the danger of putting too much stock into those Gothic bells and whistles. After Henry's scolding of her, "the visions of romance were over. Catherine was completely awakened" (Austen 187).

These unrealistic, overly-romanticized notions of Gothicism are the targets of Austen's critique, and implied in *Northanger Abbey* is indeed a need for a greater adherence to the real. George Levine argues that Austen's text is typical of "the story of hero or heroine who must learn to recognize and reject youthful illusions in order to accept a less romantic, a more tediously quotidian reality. In this respect, *Northanger Abbey* is a near if rather slight and girlish cousin of *Madame Bovary*, *Great Expectations*, *Pendennis*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Emma*" ("Translating the Monstrous" 337). Though a bit backhanded, this is certainly high praise in terms of the transcendence of *Northanger Abbey*, beyond mere Gothic parody, to an example of one tributary that would later coalesce into the mighty stream of Realism in the middle of the century, to borrow Frank's metaphor in relation to Gothicism and Romanticism. Levine continues, arguing that the "parody in *Northanger Abbey* sets out for us starkly the

contradictions latent in moving from parody to novel and, consequently, in the sort of realism latent in novels of disenchantment and the main stream of nineteenth-century fiction” (“Translating the Monstrous” 337). Eric Rothstein argues of *Northanger Abbey* that “one is inclined to see the book as a rational exploration of a certain kind of problem” (23-24), even going as far as to liken the text to a “novel of ideas” (28). Mark Loveridge would also agree with such a depiction of Austen’s work of Gothic parody, observing that “*Northanger Abbey* has recently come to be recognized as a transitional work in a much wider sense: as a work highly suggestive of changes in novelistic technique that were taking place between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (2). Again aligning the novel with the Realist tradition, Loveridge would also speculate that *Northanger Abbey* would be “something even a Brontë would admire”¹¹ (2). Even though Austen’s novel was not unique as a work of Gothic parody, it was at least unique among such works, as it more overtly establishes a call for realism.

It would be difficult to sort out whether Gothic parody killed off the Gothic novel, or whether Gothic parody was just symptomatic of emerging changes in readership taste. Regardless, the fully Gothic British, was clearly on the way out by the 1820s. Reminiscent of the great Gothic cathedrals 600 years prior, the Gothic novel could no longer support itself by repeating the same structures and tropes. However, if the Gothic metaphor of Beauvais Cathedral discussed in this dissertation’s Introduction is taken further, then out of the rubble of the Gothic novel arose a Gothicism that took new forms. For, as the Gothic novel declined, Gothic poetry most certainly ascended, as represented by the verse of Byron, Coleridge, and many others. The Gothic short story and penny dreadful also came to the literary forefront as the Gothic novel fell out of fashion,

¹¹ On the basis of its psychological realism, Loveridge argues.

indicating that while the Gothic ascended into the elite realms of poesy, it likewise descended into more plebian entertainments. However, as Levine points out, “In the years just before the publication of *Northanger Abbey*, though actually several years after it was written, two enormously popular novels were published—Scott’s *Waverley* and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Both of these acquired their popularity because they did not confine themselves to Jane Austen’s kind of small canvas” (“Translating the Monstrous” 344).¹²

The Gothicism of Walter Scott is by no means unrecognizable when contrasted with the fad-driven Gothic novels that came before it, and it is his effort to utilize aspects of the Gothic novel that came before him, while also attempting to distance his work from the qualities that exposed Gothicism to parody, that reveal Scott’s relationship with the evolution of the Gothic novel as very complex. Michael C. Gamer discusses and example of Scott’s complicated relationship with the Gothic:

Scott’s participation in “the trade,” as co-owner of Ballantyne booksellers, presents him with a complex problem of positioning himself in relation to those writers of his generic predecessor, the gothic romance. Scott’s primary function in providing forewords to works by Walpole, Reeve, and Radcliffe is, of course, to sell books by reviving interest in a genre that has fallen out of fashion. He consequently sees his task as one of reclaiming gothic romance by addressing his contemporary critics’ consistently derogatory reading of the gothic as popular, feminized, and unnatural. As

¹² Presumably, Levine is not seeking to, once again, take a shot at Austen with his “small canvas” comment, as obviously, the apparent lack of breadth displayed in the *Northanger Abbey* canvas is a symptom of its purpose as a Gothic parody. However, it is indeed limited by the very subject matter that it seeks to mock.

a writer of metrical romances that borrow heavily from the gothic,
however, Scott must distance his own poetry from these same criticisms.

(Gamer 524)

For Gamer, the role of gender in the Gothic romance and early Gothic novel drives Scott towards his rather unique reconfiguration of the Gothic, as:

Scott attempts to reclaim gothic romance by resituating it in the masculine realm of antiquarian history, insisting that such works must possess ‘authenticity’ through a strenuous attention to historical detail. For Scott, the problem most gothic novels pose is not that they threaten to seduce readers away from poetry, history, and other forms of high and ‘useful’ literature, but rather that they are, with rare exceptions, inaccurate or unbelievable to some degree. (Gamer 524)

Gamer also argues that Scott’s reaction against a perceived femininity in the Gothic “is more complicated than his contemporary, predominantly male critics, who have condemned the gothic and the sentimental romance as feminized deprecations of the English novel. The rise of the woman novelist in the second half of the eighteenth century signals for Scott an act of female usurpation of the originally masculine genres of the gothic and the sentimental, embodied for him by Walpole and MacKenzie” (526).

Going beyond any gender issues that Scott may have struggled with in relation to the Gothic, it is the unique role of history and realism in Walter Scott that reveals his expression of Gothicism as more evolved than much of what came before it. Levine argues that “Scott’s formula was perfect. He could place his romance in an unthreatening past and move to a more Austenian moral realism at the point when the rebellious

mistakes of the past are put down by the force leading to modern civilization” (“Translating the Monstrous” 345). This mode of Gothicism, of course, can have its complications, as Yukari Oda points out that “Scott’s use of history is frequently challenged: it is not always clear whether he is attempting to write a romance or a history, and this uncertainty impacts on Scott’s ambiguous identity as a writer” (218). This sense of ambiguity only further complicates Scott’s precarious relationship with the Gothic, as his emphasis on a sense of historical accuracy does not always pair well with the sense of the supernatural that often comes hand-in-hand with the Gothic. Gamer argues that Scott associates a “kind of artificiality with the excessive use of supernatural machinations in most gothic romances deplored by critics of his time. For Scott, most gothic novels are excessive because they have not grounded themselves thoroughly enough in feudal manners. Writing out of the Scottish Enlightenment, Scott argues, in effect, that for a gothic novel to be successful it must make its reader ‘go gothic,’ a feat difficult to accomplish in an age of ‘philosophical scepticism’” (525). Again, Scott’s purpose as a Gothic craftsman might have its complications and challenges, but his is indeed a unique breed of Gothicism, as Scott “positions the aims of the gothic novelist on the same intellectual and cultural level as the historian and playwright, but names Walpole as a master craftsman who can build in fiction what an architect cannot build in reality. [...] For Scott, the art of making the supernatural believable—of eliciting delicate feelings from the massive structure of the gothic—becomes a supernatural, or at least a sublime, feat in itself” (Gamer 525).

In a passage taken from his “Translating the Monstrous: *Northanger Abbey*” earlier in this chapter, Levine saw fit to group *Northanger Abbey*, *Waverley*, and

Frankenstein together. While Austen sought to make fun of the excessive and formulaic nature of the Gothic novel in *Northanger Abbey*, Scott sought to counteract these less admirable qualities of the Gothic novel with an enhanced sense of the historic and the real, while Shelley likewise sought to counteract the problematic nature of the Gothic with an enhanced sense of the scientific and the real. Actually, Scott displays an agenda similar to Shelley's approach to the Gothic novel in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*—perhaps the most illuminating example of Scott's complicated relationship with the Gothic, and particularly of the complex relationship between Scott's realism based on historical/empirical accuracy and the supernatural. In this text, Scott seeks to explain away a series of supernatural phenomena, but, one could argue, he ironically lends a greater sense of legitimacy to those phenomena in the process. Early in the text, Scott identifies his purpose: "As, however, my information is only miscellaneous, and I make no pretensions, either to combat the systems of those by whom I am anticipated in consideration of the subject, or to erect any new one of my own, my purpose is, after a general account of Demonology and Witchcraft, to confine myself to narratives of remarkable cases, and to the observations which naturally and easily arise out of them (Scott 14). While Scott seeks to historicize Gothicism in his poetry and fiction, he also sets out an agenda to explore Gothic phenomena in an almost scientific manner in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*.

In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the role of science within the text, and also within many of the moral messages that might be gathered from it, is plain to see. As Frank argues, the "non-traditional Gothic of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* [...] pointed ominously ahead to the terrors of the scientific future rather

than back to the horrors of an imaginary middle ages” (xxviii). Consistent with the role of science in *Frankenstein*, Levine observes that the “old myths enter nineteenth-century fiction, but they do so in the mode of realism” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 7). Kim Hammond also argues that, as “the first novel in the genre of science fiction stories, *Frankenstein* marked a departure from traditional ghost stories or tales of the supernatural to stories about the potential horrors of science and technological development” (184). Likewise, David Ketterer argues that “*Frankenstein* is unlike the gothic romance in that the supernatural is apparently excluded as a causal factor. The pseudo-scientific explanation for the monster’s existence goes beyond the ‘explained gothic’” (9). The Sentimentalism of the Gothic romance and early Gothic novels is evident in *Frankenstein*, but as Mary K. Patterson Thornburg argues, that Sentimentalism is used mainly as a form of self-critique:

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is in one sense an antisentimental novel; that is, it is a novel in which the sentimental tradition is consciously invoked so that its flaws may be ironically revealed. The values espoused by characters in *Frankenstein* are those imposed by the sentimental tradition, the characters themselves are drawn according to that convention, and the settings and situations are in great part typical of the sentimental novel. Yet by the values, characters, and situations, ironically revealing the sentimental tradition’s basically flawed, irrational, incomplete, and untenable nature. (Thornburg 63)

Levine views *Frankenstein* as a bridge extending not only between the Sentimentalism of the Gothic novel and science fiction, but also reaching into the realm of the Realist novel.

He argues that although “it takes the shape of traditional myths of the over-reacher, *Frankenstein* reverses them in ways that suggest its modernity and its kinship to the realist impulse. In intruding secular science into a traditional Gothic framework that normally depends on supernatural machinery, Mary Shelley changes the source of the horror and mystery, and increases their credibility. They come not from evil spirits beyond the visible world, but through secular knowledge” (Levine, “The Pattern,” 16).

Though works of Gothic satire—like Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*—and the work of Walter Scott certainly had an effect on the evolution of Gothicism in the British novel during the early part of the nineteenth century, it was Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and its “non-traditional Gothic” that signaled a new direction in the way Gothicism would be developed in the British novel throughout the nineteenth century. Like many of the Gothic characters that would become synonymous with the genre throughout the nineteenth-century and beyond—like the vampire, the werewolf, and even Victor’s monstrous creation that longed to be human but was constantly rejected by the species despite his composition of human parts—Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* would exhibit its own duality. The duality of Shelley’s novel exists in its reliance on both the sensationalism of previous iterations of the Gothic romance and novel, as well as on an emerging theme of realism and the modern that would continue in the novelistic form of Gothicism throughout the century. In addition, *Frankenstein* would further solidify the quintessentially Gothic theme of the Other with its exploration of duality and monstrosity—themes that would continue to be at stake in later Gothic novels like *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Dracula*. As Levine argues in reference to the reading of Victor Frankenstein and his monster as

personality fragmentations of Victor himself,¹³ the “quite valid cliché, that Frankenstein and his monster are one, can be taken as a symbolic statement of the duality I have been imposing on *Northanger Abbey*—a book that simultaneously celebrates and rejects Gothic and sentimental fiction” (“Translating the Monstrous” 345). Furthermore, *Frankenstein* can also be read as a book that simultaneously celebrates and rejects the spiritual/supernatural and also what has often been seen as an emerging sense of secularization in the Gothic novel. This fluctuating duality of the spiritual/supernatural and the secular in the novel is a consequence of its focus on realism.

While duality is by no means a new concept in the Gothic, as this dissertation has already made clear, *Frankenstein* does indeed change the idea of Gothic duality into something new and more focused on the real. Rather than focusing on Victor’s monster as a hideously evil or supernatural double of himself, Frankenstein acts as an example of what Andrew Smith terms as “a predominantly secularized version of ‘monstrosity’” (87). Victor’s own monstrosities are made very clear in the novel, as are the monster’s very human qualities. Michel Foucault would argue in *Abnormal*—a text that aims to analyze “the domain of abnormality as it functions in the nineteenth century” (Foucault, *Abnormal*, 55)—that, generally speaking, a “monster is said to be a being in which the mixture of two kingdoms can be seen” (64). This is certainly the case for Victor’s creation in *Frankenstein*. Victor’s monster can be read as a projection or representation of Victor’s self, as alluded to in Levine above. The monster in *Frankenstein* is also a paradoxical representation of humanity, in general. Being human, or at least being accepted by humanity, is the one thing that the monster desires most, and it is also the

¹³ It must also be pointed out that, while such a reading can certainly be applied to *Frankenstein*, it would not be until *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that a Gothic novel would specifically focus on a scientific, psychological study of personality fragmentation.

one thing that his creator—who is obviously the one being who has the most intimate knowledge of the monster’s make-up—most consistently refuses. Although Victor’s initial motivation for creating the monster reflects his ambition for fame, if not fortune, it is at least selflessly motivated to an extent, as he claims that “[w]ealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (Shelley 42). However, Victor reveals the Faustian extent of his ambitions soon after, proclaiming that a “new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs” (Shelley 55). Of course, Victor’s aspirations as a father are laughable in retrospect, considering his abandonment and neglect of his “son.” As a presumably god-like creator, Victor is also a failure, as the monster later scolds him, ““God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance”” (Shelley 133). Yet it is Victor’s reference to his proposed creation as a “new species” that seems to most accurately reflect Victor’s evaluation of the humanity of the monster. Despite the fact that Victor used human body parts to construct the monster, in his mind those human parts are assembled in a manner that renders that assembly inhuman.

However, Victor’s creation is physically composed of human parts, and he also appears to be very human in terms of his psychological make-up. As Foucault argues, monsters “are not of a different ‘nature’ from the species themselves: ‘We should believe that the most apparently bizarre forms...belong necessarily and essentially to the universal plan of being; that they are metamorphoses of the prototype just as natural as

the others, even though they present us with different phenomena''' (Robinet quoted in Foucault, *Order of Things*, 155).¹⁴ But still, the monster's actual method of creation is decidedly unnatural, and therefore he is excluded from the natural order of things or "'the universal plan of being.'" Yet, what are the limitations of this universal plan of being? Like the Ancient Greek concept of fate, might the actions of Victor, as well as the product of Victor's actions—regardless of whether those actions be deemed as moral or immoral—be considered still a part of fate or the universal plan of being if only just because they indeed did take place?¹⁵ Consistent with the Gothic, Victor's monster is the Gothic Other not just because of its monstrosity, its unnaturalness, its hideousness, and its other questionable qualities that render it an object to be feared, but also because it is very much one of us in physicality and psychology. To an extent, Shelley enacts Ernst Jentsch's storytelling device related to the uncanny in regards to the monster in the novel:

In storytelling, one of the most reliable artistic devices for producing uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has a human person or rather an automaton before him in the case of a particular character. This is done in such a way that the uncertainty does not appear directly at the focal point of his attention, so that he is not given the occasion to investigate and clarify the matter straight away; for the particular emotional effect, as we said, would hereby be quickly dissipated. (Jentsch 12)

In order to achieve this optimal emotional effect, Shelley distracts us from the murderous, automaton-like aspects of the monster with his ability as a rhetorician in his first

¹⁴ J-B. Robinet, *Considérations Philosophiques sur la Gradation Naturelle des Formes de l'Être* (Paris, 1768, p.4), quoted in Foucault.

¹⁵ Within a work of fiction, of course.

conversation with his creator in Volume II, Chapter 2, and also in his narrative contained in Volume II, Chapters 3 through 8. The effect of the monster's rhetoric on Victor—who seems hardheartedly obsessed with denying the monster any semblance of humanity at all costs—is significant, as Victor “weighed the various arguments that he had used, and determined to at least listen to his tale” (Shelley 104). Victor even admits that, “[f]or the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness” (Shelley 104). With Victor's biases in mind, the effect on the reader is intended to be exponentially more emotional. Shelley makes it clear to us as readers that, if we are to deny the monster his humanity in the same manner as Victor, then we are likewise rendered monstrous.

Victor—the natural human, in contrast to the monster's unnatural creation—reveals himself as monstrous, and in a stroke of realism, Victor's monstrosity is established on a moral and also legal basis. Foucault discusses monstrosity in a natural and legal sense, and both applications can be seen as parallels to Victor and his monstrous creation:

The notion of the monster is essentially a legal notion, in a broad sense, of course, since what defines the monster is the fact that its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature. Its very existence is a breach of the law at both levels. The field in which the monster appears can thus be called a “juridico-biological” domain. However, the monster emerges within this space as both an extreme and an extremely rare phenomenon. The monster is the limit, both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is

found only in extreme cases. The monster combines the impossible and the forbidden. (Foucault, *Abnormal*, 55)

Continuing with a legal discussion of the monster, Foucault argues that “the breach of natural law is not enough to constitute monstrosity. Monstrosity requires a transgression of the natural limit, of the law-table, to fall under, or at any rate challenge, an interdiction of civil and religious or divine law. There is monstrosity only when the confusion comes up against, overturns, or disturbs civil, canon, or religious law” (Foucault, *Abnormal*, 63). Obviously, Victor’s creation violates these forms of the law, but likewise, so does Victor. Victor’s realization of his own violations is what keeps him silent as Justine is wrongfully accused and executed for the murder of Victor’s brother, William, as Victor admits that “my purposed avowal died away on my lips. Thus I might proclaim myself a madman, but not revoke the sentence passed upon my wretched victim” (Shelley 90).

Victor—despite his insistent and continual failure, throughout the novel, to come to terms with the wrongfulness of his actions—indeed does betray occasional signs of guilt and remorse. As Justine is wrongfully executed, Victor absurdly claims that she “felt not, as I did, such deep and bitter agony” (Shelley 89), and long after hearing the monster’s own heartbreaking narrative, Victor has the audacity to claim that “no creature had ever been so miserable as I was” (Shelley 201). Furthermore, after the martyrlike deaths of Justine and Elizabeth, Victor imagines himself a martyr. After making his appeal to a magistrate, but to no avail, he claims that “there was a frenzy in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed” (Shelley 204). Even before his creation functions, Victor realizes the immorality of his pursuit, as he asks “Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as

I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?” (Shelley 55), and also admits that “often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation” (Shelley 55). Later in the novel, Victor gives a backhanded admission of wrongdoing, admitting that “I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. I was guiltless, but I had indeed drawn down a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime” (Shelley 167). A more thorough realization of the horror of his actions occurs after he destroys the female monster, creating a vision of his laboratory as being far less of a space of science and much more of a scene of a murder, as the “remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being” (Shelley 175). As a result, Victor proceeds in the same manner as a murderer seeking to cover his tracks, as he explains that “I reflected that I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants; and I accordingly put them into a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and, laying them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night; and in the mean time I sat upon the beach, employed in cleaning and arranging my chemical apparatus” (Shelley 175). In sinking these incriminating items in the sea, Victor admits that “I felt as if I was about the commission of a dreadful crime, and avoided with shuddering anxiety any encounter with my fellow-creatures” (Shelley 175).

While the legal aspects of *Frankenstein* lend a sense of legitimacy and even documentation to the role of realism in the Gothic of Shelley’s novel, likewise do the issues of gender, sexuality, and the familial roles of fatherhood, motherhood, and childhood render the Gothic in *Frankenstein* more realistically human. As Levine

observes, in “*Frankenstein* we are confronted immediately by the displacement of God and woman from the acts of conception and birth” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 8). At least on the surface, femininity in a novel about the creation of life—particularly in a novel written by a woman—appears to be strangely absent in *Frankenstein*, as Victor’s mother, Justine, and especially Elizabeth are flat representations, existing more as symbols of martyrdom than as characters, and they are also rather quickly dispatched from the novel without much participation. Safie likewise only plays a very minor role in the monster’s narrative, and the female monster is not even allowed breath in the novel. As Johanna M. Smith observes, at “first blush, the Frankenstein home seems a model of gender relations under domestic ideology” (317). However, Thornburg argues that Victor’s mother plays a much stronger role in the text than what might be initially assumed, as Thornburg depicts Caroline Frankenstein as something akin to a manipulative shrew who dominates the Frankenstein household, and particularly dominates her husband. Thornburg claims in her analysis of Victor’s depiction of his mother that the “picture that emerges is not the one Victor thinks he is conveying, but rather one of domestic bliss obtained by the expedient of everyone’s ‘yielding’ to Caroline Frankenstein’s ‘wishes and her convenience.’ It is the picture of a stern, rather stiff-necked man in upper middle age manipulated by a clever young woman through a combination of strong-mindedness and affected martyrdom” (81-82). Thornburg presents a similar re-reading of Elizabeth in the novel, arguing that she “subtly taunts Victor Frankenstein, insisting upon a marriage he is apparently reluctant to celebrate” (43). Thornburg even goes as far as to argue that, in reference to Elizabeth, “extreme passivity of the Gothic heroine is itself monstrous, for the Gothic reveals this aspect of sentimental femininity as a deliberate pursuit of the

passive enjoyment of pain. And from the points of view of both the passive and active participants, the ultimate attraction of passive femininity is the beauty of death” (43).

Consistent with a perceived female passivity in *Frankenstein*, Shelley’s novel appears to be overwhelmingly masculine in its focus. However, Shelley does indeed seem to be compensating for this. Despite this evident masculinity, Berthold Schoene-Harwood—while citing several critics, such as Gilbert and Gubar, Ellen Moers, Johanna M. Smith, and others—argues that *Frankenstein* is very much a female text. For Schoene-Harwood, “[l]ike traditional femininity, masculinity represents an imperative ideal of systemic perfection that obstructs rather than facilitates the liberation of the self” (4). Therefore, like the monster—who is presumably constructed of body parts without regards to gender¹⁶—the novel itself is likewise a confusion of dualities and amalgamations in regards to gender. Johanna M. Smith observes how the novel’s characters, in general, create an effect of gender confusion, regardless of their assigned gender in the text as, for example, “Elizabeth’s femininity is a complement to the boys’ masculinity, Henry is a model of internalized complementarity, of conjoined masculine and feminine traits” (318), as Henry Clerval is “so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit” (Shelley 40). Appropriately, Schoene-Harwood asks, “Is it not ‘monstrous’, too—that is, does it not also deform the self—to give in to normative gender imperatives in denial of the intrinsically multi-gendered complexity of one’s *human* disposition?” (3). The connection between Victor and his monster responds to this question, and also responds to the issues of gender/sexual confusion in the novel.

¹⁶ Victor explains of his creature that his “limbs were in proportion, and [he] had selected his features as beautiful” (Shelley 58). No other criteria in regards to race, gender, or otherwise are mentioned.

While Shelley clearly means for the relationship between Victor and the monster in *Frankenstein* to be read as that between creator and creation, she also continually affixes the construct of father and son to that relationship in the novel. However, as the monster's creation is an unnatural one, Victor's role as parent is likewise gender-confused, as he must stand in as both father and mother as a result of his unnatural "birthing" of the monster. Johanna M. Smith argues of *Frankenstein* that "fathers have important functions in the feminine domestic sphere" (317), as even Victor's father "is feminized. His nurturant qualities were commonly coded as feminine" (317). The monster—though he is obviously trying to supplicate Victor into creating a female creature for himself—acknowledges to Victor before relating his own narrative of his early existence that "I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king" (Shelley 102-103). Despite his own father as a model, Victor's "parental" conduct towards his creation is nothing close to nurturant, but rather results from the monster's effective use of rhetoric in his arguments. After hearing the monster's own narrative, Victor admits that "his words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him" (Shelley 149). Victor's impulse is to "mother" the monster in consolation for the rough life he had led—a rough life because of the fact that Victor, like a "deadbeat dad," abandoned his "son" at birth and cast him out into the world with no emotional, moral, or didactic support. This marks the first time in the novel that Victor experiences these paternal/maternal feelings since the monster's conception and subsequent creation. Victor describes his feelings of anticipation *before* the creation of the monster with a sense of fatherly pride, as a "new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures

would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.” The religious, godlike overtones are very much evident in the passage, but the specific use of ‘father’ and ‘child’ displays not just a reference to two-thirds of the Holy Trinity, but also reveals a sense of parental pride and excitement. But the reader must question the wholesome, parental nature of this excitement and anticipation.

What might be read as the thrill of a father in anticipation of his newborn, might also be read as a no less than obsessive, pre-orgasmic desire. While remembering to Walton his pre-creation drive towards his experiment’s completion, Victor argues that “no one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success” (Shelley 55). He then continues, soon after, in an even more excited and no less than obsessive manner, as he admits to Walton that “my limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic, impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits” (Shelley 55). This language goes well beyond that of the excitement of scientific discovery, or even of parental anticipation. Victor’s creation of the monster might be understood as a form of sexual act, either of asexual reproduction or of deviant self-gratification/masturbation—deviant in that there are implications of necrophilia and incest. Victor is utterly engrossed by this “sexual” act, only distracted by occasional moments of escape from his sexual deviance. While Victor admits, as referenced above, that “often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation,” he continues to

say that, “whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion” (Shelley 55-56). He also confesses that “sometimes I grew alarmed at the wreck I perceived that I had become; the energy of my purpose alone sustained me: my labors would soon end, and I believed that exercise and amusement would then drive away incipient disease; and I promised myself both of these when my creation should be complete” (Shelley 57). We see that Victor denies himself all that is necessary to maintain his health. He is so consumed that he cannot even allow himself the distractions necessary for survival. During the process of creating the monster, Victor’s only constant thought is his gratification in the completion of his task. Strangely enough, similar to the drive of many species of the animal kingdom to procreate, even at the cost of their own well-being (and even life), Victor displays a similar drive. But once gratification is achieved, it is no less than a male orgasmic climax, as Victor recounts of the monster’s creation that, “my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs” (Shelley 58). Paul Sherwin even goes as far as to argue that the

convulsive agitation of the aroused Creature suggests ejaculation; yet although this “filthy mass” represents a monstrously oversized phallus, its dread-provoking *corps morcelé* bears the stigma of castration, calling to mind the Lacanian castrated phallus. This difficulty can be resolved if the Creature is viewed as Frankenstein’s renounced phallic self, the self he yields to the father, perhaps detached in the very achievement of orgasm,

at once the moment of the organ's autonomy and a repetition of the father's act of begetting. (Sherwin 31-32)

Therefore, according to Sherwin, "the Creature is alternatively or simultaneously the accusatory phallic father, the rephallicized mother, and (in view of the multiplication of genital symbols in the dream) the castrated self" (35). And as a result of his release from pre-orgasmic sexual obsession, Victor is left to discover the result of his efforts, and naturally, he is utterly repulsed: "now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (Shelley 58). Victor, after gratifying himself with the climax of his task, is now left to fully realize the feelings of disgust, guilt, and paranoia that properly follow such a horrific act. Victor can now see with a more clear mind the sexual, moral, and aesthetic repercussions of his actions. Again, Victor claims that he had ironically selected the monster's physical features on the basis of aesthetics, as he admits that the monster's "limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! —Great God!" (Shelley 58). It is the repulsiveness that Victor experiences as a result of the monster's hideousness that, above all, leads him to fully realize the awfulness of his actions, as, "unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (Shelley 58). In a paternal/maternal simultaneous act of copulation, climax, conception, creation, and then birth, it is the very spark of life that Victor bestows to the creature that shocks him out of his dream and desire.

Although Victor's creation of the monster is, at the very least, a confusion of gender in its sexuality, it is by no means a natural birth and therefore does reflect, as Levine argues, a "displacement of God and woman from the acts of conception and

birth,” consistent with a theme of secularization in the novel. While even the early Gothic novel was by no means devoid of the secular, Shelley’s more secular, scientific rendering of the Gothic reveals an evolving sense of realism in the post-fad Gothic novel. Levine also argues that, “though it would be absurd to claim Mary Shelley as a direct ‘influence’ on the dominant literary and scientific forms of the century, we can see that in her secularization of the creation myth she invented a metaphor that was irresistible to the culture as a whole” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 7). This theme in *Frankenstein* was consistent with the trend of secularization in the Gothic as a whole, as Ellen Moers points out that “[a]t the time when literary Gothic was born, religious fears were on the wane, giving way to that vague paranoia of the modern spirit for which Gothic mechanisms seem to have provided welcome therapy” (78). Focusing more specifically on *Frankenstein*, Levine explains some of the secularizing mechanisms in the novel: “[the] transposition of the creator from God to man, the secularization of the means of creation from miracle into science, entail a transposition of the standard of moral judgment from the external world which ought to be reflecting a divine order, to the mind which is somehow forced to establish its own terms” (“The Pattern” 18). However, despite apparent themes of secularization related to scientific inquiry and even atheism in the novel, Judith Wilt argues that things are far more complicated, as “God seems dead in the Gothic, and priestcraft even eliminated as an enemy. / Still, for an atheist, the palimpsest of Bible stories¹⁷ contrived for *Frankenstein* is suspiciously thick” (31).

¹⁷ Although technically John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1674) is indeed based on the Old Testament, it is more accurately through the lens of Milton’s text that the Bible stories of *Frankenstein* are viewed. While Victor and Walton certainly would be characters that would have knowledge of the Bible, the monster makes no mention of having read it, but he did read *Paradise Lost*.

Likely an acknowledgement of her father and well-known atheist, William Godwin, Mary Shelley makes it clear that Victor Frankenstein was raised as an atheist—or at least as an agnostic—by his own father.

In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. (Shelley 52)

This form of education would certainly prepare Victor well for a profession in the sciences, and especially in medicine, and it would also help to prepare him to view the creation of human life as having nothing to do with something like the soul. Despite this theme of atheism/agnosticism that is established early in the novel—and early in Victor's life as a character—biblical references, and particularly the language of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, play a strong role in *Frankenstein*. Milton's text—along with *Plutarch's Lives* (or Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*), the *Sorrows of Werter* (or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*), and Victor's journal narrating his creation—was one of the first that the monster is able to decipher, read, and understand. Also, though it would be a stretch to claim that Victor experiences a religious epiphany in the novel, he at least gains a sense of spirituality that is contradictory to his decidedly anti-supernatural belief system in the early sections of the novel. The beginnings of this transition to a sense of spirituality can be seen when Victor

is traversing the Alps near his home, as he joyfully exclaims ““Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life”” (Shelley 101). This growing sense of spirituality becomes even more apparent towards the end of the novel when Victor visits the graveyard containing the remains of William, Elizabeth, and his father. While witnessing a fellow visitor in the graveyard, Victor claims that the “spirits of the departed seemed to flit around, and to cast a shadow, which was felt but not seen, around the head of the mourner” (Shelley 206). The scene even prompts Victor to make an emotional appeal to these unseen spirits: “I call on you, spirits of the dead; and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me” (Shelley 206). Furthermore, while in pursuit of the monster at the end of the novel, Victor claims that “I was cursed by some devil, and carried about with me my eternal hell; yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps and, when I most murmured, would suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties” (Shelley 207). Also during the pursuit, Victor claims that sometimes, “when nature, overcome by hunger, sunk under the exhaustion, a repast was prepared for me in the desert, that restored and inspirited me. The fare was, indeed, coarse, such as the peasants of the country ate; but I will not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me” (Shelley 207). Although, if those provisions were set there by anyone, it most likely would have been the monster, seeking to string Victor along even further in his hopeless pursuit of the monster’s destruction. Even at the moment of his death, Victor

expresses his sense of spirituality to Robert Walton, as “[t]he forms of the beloved dead flit before me, and I hasten to their arms” (Shelley 220).

While the scientific plays a role in the secularization of the Gothic in Shelley’s novel, it is also Shelley’s scientific rendering of morality that puts a new spin on the role of morality within the Gothic novel. Morality is no longer merely determined by the binary of good and evil—a determination that was far simpler in the more exclusively supernatural Gothic of the early Gothic novel. The evolving scientific realism and humanism of *Frankenstein* are more concerned with the conundrum between the positives and negatives of emerging technology and human advancement. Rather than determining strictly good and evil in this conundrum, the Gothic in *Frankenstein* must determine to what extent science and technology might benefit or destroy the reality of human existence. However, as these changes in the Gothic that exist in *Frankenstein* are evolutionary traits rather than wholesale paradigm shifts, the role of morality in the text—as with the issue of the supernatural/religious and the secular—is still reminiscent of the earlier Gothic. However, the traits of humanism and scientific realism *enhance* this emerging form of the Gothic novel. As a man with a scientific mind “impressed with no supernatural horrors,” Victor also spends a lot of time in the novel in a passionate state of emotion, hurling epithets like “devil” at the monster, and also referring to his creation as a “daemon” and “demon.” Such language not only constitutes a severe violation of a supposedly objective and scientific mindset, but it also reveals an evaluation of good and evil on the basis of morality. Victor’s sense of morality, like his growing sense of spirituality, is a significant development in his character. Even though a sense of morality seemed to occasionally trouble him as he spent “days and nights in vaults and

charnel-houses” (Shelley 53) and “dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay” (Shelley 55), his concept of the potential immorality in regards to his reanimation of dead human body parts does not seem to affect him until *after* the monster begins to function on its own. Levine asks, “Where did his decision to create the monster come from? Mere chance. Evil is a deadly and fascinating mystery whose source is in men’s minds, an inexplicable but inescapable aspect of human goodness” (“The Pattern” 18). Levine also argues, while linking *Frankenstein* to the tradition of Realism—which will be discussed later in this chapter—that, as “in much realist fiction, there is no wholly evil character in *Frankenstein*, but, at the same time, there is evil in the world. Frankenstein locates it in the monster; the monster locates it in Frankenstein and, more abstractly, in man” (“Tradition of Realism” 23). Indeed, both characters possess glaring moral deficiencies, but both also possess very redeemable qualities. As Hammond argues:

[N]either Victor nor his “being” are characterized as *innately* bad or evil: though both are guilty of inhumane crimes, they are driven by social circumstance. Victor is driven by a desire for social gain and glory; he *becomes* a monster in his obsessive alienated drive for success—and he can hardly be blamed for seeking to attain goals valued by his society—and in his abandonment and subsequent treatment of the “being”. The “being” is driven to wretchedness; he *becomes* a murderous monster.

(Hammond 193)

Hammond also argues that “Shelley ensures that we appreciate the ‘being’ as a rational and sensitive creature; that his viciousness is learnt when he is denied the humanity that

Victor owes him” (192). Hammond’s arguments are at odds with Victor’s representation of the monster in the narrative, as Victor is a disciple of Paracelsus who writes that every “field is ordered by its seed, and no seed by its field. For the seed is the master of the field” (204), and if “a good seed falls into the field and is received, it grows to be bad. Therefore it is not the soil of the field that decides the matter; it is neither good nor bad” (204). Victor’s application of Paracelsus’s deterministic seed metaphor to vertebrate life might explain why Victor refers to the monster as his “enemy” (Shelley 62) very early in his narrative, when his only interaction with the monster, at this point in the novel, includes the monster’s assembly and his rather innocent act of holding up the curtain of his “father’s”/creator’s bed while his “jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks” (Shelley 59)—hardly the actions of one that would merit the epithet of ‘enemy.’¹⁸ While the monster might be read as something akin to an innocent newborn in this first interaction with Victor, he by no means retains that innocence throughout the novel. As Johanna M. Smith observes: “*Frankenstein*, I think, does show the importance of parental nurture, but it does not thereby absolve the child of agency in, and responsibility for, what we might call self-creation or self-nurture” (320). Even if the monster is read as a child during some or most of the novel—after all, the monster is never older than a toddler in terms of how many years he survives in the narrative—he still must bear at least some responsibility for his actions. As the monster recounts his role in the death of Victor’s brother, William, he admits that it is the utterance of William’s relation to the family of Frankenstein that causes him to take the child’s life, as the monster responds to William, “‘Frankenstein! you belong to my

¹⁸ Of course, the fact that Victor is narrating the story in retrospect might also explain the epithet of ‘enemy.’

enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim”” (Shelley 144). Afterwards, the monster admits feelings of empowerment rather than remorse: ““I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph; clapping my hands, I exclaimed, “I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him””” (Shelley 144). Even if the monster were to be accepted into the human legal system that Foucault discusses earlier in this chapter, his actions appear to be that of a being cognizant of his actions, as well as their moral implications.

The role of family in *Frankenstein* furthers the agenda of humanistic realism in the novel, and its role also serves to further enhance the evolution of the Gothic in its relation to morality. The early Gothic novel oftentimes used family and the domestic sphere as a space of refuge from the threat of the Gothic, but even as the early Gothic novel looked for new ways to cause fear, that domestic fear was infiltrated by those threats. Shelley enhances this Gothic threat of the family and domestic sphere even further, as not only does the monster threaten the Frankenstein family, establishing himself as the feared Other in relation to Victor’s domestic sphere, but Victor himself is also perceived as a threat. After all, it was Victor’s initial immoral act of playing God in his creation of the monster that gave birth to such a threat in the first place. Victor therefore shows a lack of moral responsibility to his family and to humanity in general. However, Victor’s immorality and role as a threat from the inside is exacerbated as he continues to ignore and mistreat the monster that represents the moral mistake that he made. Victor, as that inside threat, becomes a very early expression of the more modern “the call is coming from inside the house!” cliché of later works of the Gothic and horror.

Such a threat is not only physical, but psychological, as that presumed safe space of domesticity is no longer. Therefore, Shelley's use of the Gothic in relation to this threat to family and domesticity is also a precursor to the Gothicization of the psychological interior that this dissertation will later discuss in relation to Realism.

As the creator and also the "father" of the monster, Victor has a moral responsibility to his creation/son. Applying this concept of child responsibility to a more modern understanding, Judith Rich Harris discusses what she terms the "child-to-parent effects":

Child-to-parent effects are another reason why the parents are held responsible for the way the child turns out. People notice that children who are treated nicely by their parents tend to turn out better than children who are treated harshly, and they jump to the conclusion that the good treatment caused the good outcome. But it could be the other way around. An amiable, cooperative child is likely to receive affectionate parenting—it's easy to be nice to a child like this. A surly or defiant child, on the other hand, is likely to be treated harshly. The parents find that reasoning with this child doesn't work and end up losing their tempers.

(Harris 216)

Although Victor's initial mistreatment and abandonment of the monster does away with the 'chicken or the egg' conundrum that Harris's theory presents, the "child-to-parent effects" at least question how Victor might have treated the monster had his creation not murdered William and framed Justine for the murder in between that abandonment and their first confrontation and conversation in Volume II, Chapter 2. However, leaving

aside the monster's murderous actions, Victor, from the start, seems intent on viewing the monster as one of Paracelcus's bad seeds. That intention seems not just a rash evaluation on the basis of morality, but also on the basis of aesthetics. In his new role as creator and father, Victor's first act towards his creation and son is to look upon him with utter disgust, admitting that, "[u]nable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (Shelley 58), essentially abandoning it at birth. His conscience is so decidedly untroubled by this heartless act that he soon even has the audacity to fall asleep without any knowledge of the well-being or exact whereabouts of his newborn creation. Startled from his sleep by the monster innocently and literally attempting to reach out to him, Victor soon quits his apartment altogether, claiming that "no mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (Shelley 59), and returning a few hours later with no sense of worry as to the fate of his creation. Quite the opposite, he is no less than overjoyed when he discovers that his apartment is empty of the creature, admitting that "I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy" (Shelley 62). Victor shuns the father and child construct with the same manner of aversion and disgust that the rest of human society exhibits towards the monster in the novel. Victor admits of his monstrous creation that "When I thought of him I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed" (Shelley 95), whereas the monster repeatedly acknowledges their relationship to each other as creator and creation and also father and son, calling Victor "creator" three times and "my creator" nine times in the text, and referring to

himself as “thy creature” four times, and even once referring to Victor as “my father” (Shelley 141).

Although the monster is indeed superhuman in its physicality and cognitive development, it is still in many ways a child when it is first given life in the text. At the beginning of Volume II, Chapter 3, the monster begins his narration to Victor, admitting that “It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses” (Shelley 105). This part of his narrative is significant, because he is essentially describing his birth. This is, of course, an experience that none of us can recount, even with the jumbled difficulty of the monster. The monster can at least remember that “strange multiplicity of sensations,” even though they were almost impossible to sort out. This passage in the text causes us to question what type of “birth” the monster is really experiencing. Is it a re-birth? Or is it an original birth, as the monster, again, describes the experience as “the original era of my being”? Since the brain is obviously the device in which the monster’s memories are stored, we must also question exactly what is the nature of his brain? Is this the brain of another person that Victor inserted into the monster’s skull, or was the monster’s brain a compilation from multiple donors, consistent with the rest of his body? Or did Victor, with his immense talents, actually build a brain from scratch like the god that he attempted to become? All of these scenarios are at least debatable, as Shelley never reveals to us how exactly the monster was formed and given life. Regardless, the monster is able not only to partially describe

his birth, but he is also able to feed, hydrate, and clothe himself soon after his birth, as he tells Victor that, “‘Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes’” (Shelley 105). This is one very talented and industrious newborn, but he is a newborn all the same. Even though the monster is indeed able instinctively to cover himself and to crudely satisfy his hunger and thirst, he is still unable to communicate, and is so physically hideousness that his looks pose a threat a threat to his own well-being. Fed and clothed, the monster is still extremely vulnerable in the early days of his existence.

Victor’s moral irresponsibility as a creator and father extends to his role as a scientist, revealing a humanistic realism, in combination with a scientific realism, in relation to the role of morality in the novel. On the basis of a very human, monstrous morality—rather than a strictly religious/supernatural morality—Hammond argues that “Shelley presents us with a ‘being’ made monstrous,¹⁹ but not by his ‘unnaturalness’ nor because Victor somehow transgresses natural or God-given boundaries, but rather because Victor abandons the creature, unequipped, to a hostile world, taking no responsibility for his work” (186). For, it is not only Victor’s responsibility as a creator and father that must be questioned, but also his responsibility as a scientist. Hammond claims that “Shelley presents us with an arrogant and egocentric scientist—revelling in his own powers and achievements” (189). One might also add that Victor is prone to extreme self-centeredness and is very much lacking in foresight. All of these negative character traits reveal Victor as a character almost completely bereft of scientific ethics. Fred Botting argues that Victor’s mishandling of scientific responsibility is, in one sense,

¹⁹ Monstrous on the basis of morality rather than on the basis of aesthetics.

counter to the way science was viewed by much of society at the time of *Frankenstein's* publication:

Working for rather than against humanism at the start of the nineteenth century, science is constructed within humanist frameworks with the aim of improving human conditions of existence. The technological advances produced and promised by scientific methods place humankind at the threshold of confirming the power and authority that humanism assumes and dreams of. [...] The improvement of technology also indicated the progress of human reason. (Botting 169-170)

However, as Hammond observes of Victor, “Frankenstein is not a pillar of reason; detached, objective, rational, measured and cautious, working only for the benefit of advancing humanity. His intended experiment is potentially dangerous and ethically flawed. His rush to develop the technology is motivated by the anticipation of his own reward over and above due care and caution” (190). Furthermore, for Hammond, both “Victor Frankenstein’s characterization and the narrative are not focused on the unintended consequences of well-intentioned science, but rather on the entangling of science with ego, power and status” (190). While Victor is depicted as a character that is clearly a talented and brilliant scientist, those positive qualities are undercut by his lack of moral responsibility and foresight, similar to the fact that, while Victor is established early on in the novel as a loving and dedicated member of the interior domestic sphere of the Frankenstein family, such a positive status within the family is undercut by his isolation and lack of communication with his family as he performs his fateful experiment.

Victor is isolated from the rest of the scientific community as a result of his brilliance, but he is also self-isolated from that community, as well as the interior domestic sphere of the Frankenstein family, as a result of his obsession. Furthermore, Victor's flaws in character, combined with his youthful exuberance, have the effect of creating a sense of extreme impulsiveness in terms of his motivation for creating the monster, as has already been discussed earlier in this chapter in reference to his desire for glory and godlike gratitude. These feelings and aspirations are then exacerbated by Victor's mental and also physical solipsism during his time at university. Hammond observes some of the negative implications of his isolation during his creation of the monster:

Victor Frankenstein's work lacks democracy and transparency. The seclusion necessary to carry out his secret experiments, coupled with his obsession with his work, renders him socially isolated. Thus Victor discusses with no one his research plans or their implications; no debates serve to warn of the dangers or ethical implications of his intended experiments; he lacks a community whose presence may have served to guide him. (Hammond 190)

Aside from his initial consultations with M. Krempe who, according to Victor, "did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuits" (Shelley 47), and with M. Waldman who "smoothed for me the path of knowledge, and made the most abstruse enquiries clear and facile to my apprehension" (Shelley 51), Victor soon isolates himself in his Ingolstadt apartment during his obsessive concentration on his experiment of reanimation, receiving no visitors and answering no correspondence. As a precursor to Joseph Conrad's Kurtz

in *Heart of Darkness*, Victor loses touch with a more objective sense of human morality as a result of his self-imposed isolation. Victor—in his moral and ethical isolation, and also with his character defects that Hammond points out—acts as an example of how science and technology can indeed also be a threat to humankind if such entities fall into the wrong hands, in spite of Botting’s observations on the ways that science and technology were viewed in a more positive light at the start of the nineteenth century. Quite clearly, Shelley’s novel reveals science as a potential symbol of a Gothic sense of fear, much in the same way that earlier Gothic novelists used the supernatural. In effect, the immoral and unethical Victor represents the Gothic double of the brilliant Victor that was a dedicated family man and initially sought to “banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (Shelley 42) so that others might not experience the pain of loss that he endured after the death of his mother. Distracted by delusions of glory and grandeur, isolated from the positive moral influence of his friends and family and ethical influence of the scientific community, Victor is Othered; a thing to be feared, particularly in light of the fact that, at Ingolstadt under the permission of M. Waldman, all of the most current scientific technology and theory—as well as the encouragement to combine those tools with the more grandiose and controversial Ancient natural philosophies—is at his disposal. As Hammond observes, “Shelley’s novel itself is characterized and punctuated by a subtle and sophisticated appreciation of the vital role of ‘social relations’ in determining the nature, direction, products and consequences of science and technology” (186).

Shelley’s preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* refers to the work of Erasmus Darwin and Luigi Galvani, which makes it clear to the reader that her story

intends to take into account the work of relatively contemporary scientific advancement and theory. And particularly to the reader contemporary to the novel's publication, the true-to-life references to Erasmus Darwin's piece of vermicelli that "began to move with voluntary motion" (Shelley 8) and Galvani's work with dead animal tissue—"[p]erhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things" (Shelley 8)—would also have had the effect of raising legitimate questions as to whether her story might indeed be possible. After all, Levine points out that, "beyond the fatal *donnée*—that it was possible to induce life into dead matter—*Frankenstein* fairly severely confines itself to the possible, if not always to the probable" ("Tradition of Realism" 17). For a more modern reader, such questions and fears concerning possible reanimation would be far less likely, but as a metaphor for the potential dangers of current science and technology—such as nuclear physics, experiments with "dark" matter, and cloning—the message of Shelley's text still rings true, as Hammond observes of *Frankenstein* that, "as a tale about a scientist who creates life, selecting 'traits' as it were, stitching together body parts from various human corpses, resonates strongly with the pursuits and achievements of contemporary 'life' sciences, including the promise of human cloning and germline genetic engineering. In such arenas, *Frankenstein* had become perhaps the most important symbol of concerns over the risks and dangers of these new technologies" (182).

Along with these scientific concerns and fears, *Frankenstein* is a text that also plays on deep-rooted, psychological, human fears, within the context of the Gothic. While psychology as an experimental, scientific field of study did not emerge until much later in the century—and therefore did not emerge in the Gothic novel until later in the

century, as well—there are indeed psychological elements of the scientific realism at stake in the novel, particularly when analyzed on the basis of Sigmund Freud’s concept of the uncanny. As Freud discusses in his essay, “The Uncanny” (1919), “[a]pparent death and the re-animation of the dead have been represented as most uncanny themes” (246). Also rather appropriate to a discussion of *Frankenstein*, Freud observes that “[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist [...] all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when [...] they prove capable of independent activity in addition” (244). The fear of reanimated corpses and human parts is an ancient and cross-cultural fear, providing the foundation for the oral and then written tradition of the vampire and other representations of the undead in human folklore. As Freud argues, since “almost all of us think as savages do on this topic, it is no matter for surprise that the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface on any provocation. Most likely our fear still implied the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him” (242). This latest passage from Freud eerily echoes Victor’s spiritual appeal during his walk in the Alps discussed earlier in the chapter: “‘Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life’” (Shelley 101). Freud also provides a link between the human fear of death and reanimation, and the role of science, again evoking visions of Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in terms of her discussion of the possibility of reanimation in her preface:

There is scarcely any other matter, however, upon which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which

discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as our relation to death. Two things account for our conservatism: the strength of our emotional reaction to death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it. Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living thing or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life. (Freud 241-242)

Like Victor Frankenstein, Faust, and Prometheus, Freud wonders at the possibility of such knowledge and power without acknowledging the consequences.

The role of humanistic and scientific realism in the Gothic of *Frankenstein* transforms not only the role of morality within the nineteenth-century British Gothic novel, but it also conflates science and technological human advances with other forms of human expression and achievements. Shelley's use of Prometheus in the extended title of her novel signals an obvious reference to the potential dangers and repercussions of gaining the divine power and knowledge that enables Victor to bestow life on dead human tissue in the novel, but the power and knowledge that humanity gained as a result of the fire metaphor in the Prometheus myth in many ways outshines the negative connotations of the punishment that Prometheus receives from Zeus. Louis Awad acknowledges the role of human creation and creativity in the myth by observing that "Prometheus is the symbol of Creative Genius in man" (93). This creative aspect of the myth encompasses science and technology, as well as all other more artistic forms of human expression, such as literature, music, and art. Botting acknowledges this creative link between science and art, observing that "art represents eternal human values to humanity. A source of the universal meanings and morals, art indicates the values

missing from science” (167). Beyond the coincidental connection between art (represented by the novel, *Frankenstein*, as a creative text) and science (represented by the subject matter of that text), Peter K. Walhout discusses more extensively the reality of a far more intricate intertwining of art and science within the realm of creativity, beginning with the “pervasive impulse on the part of scientists to invoke aesthetic language when reflecting on their work” (758). More specifically, Walhout points out that many “Nobel laureates have extolled the beauty found in scientific theories, including chemist Rudolph Marcus who remarked that ‘the beauty which a scientist can experience after deriving a simple equation or executing an incisive experiment is just as real as that which the artist may experience in creating a work of art’”²⁰ (Marcus quoted in Walhout 757-758). For Walhout, the connection between science and art is indeed based on a more general sense of creativity, as “[s]cience definitely can be construed as art because a scientist creates an artifact (a specific theory or experiment) using skill and craft” (762).²¹ Therefore, while science and art are linked as creative pursuits, there also exists a link on the basis of aesthetics, as “[b]eauty often is used as a methodological tool in scientific research. Aesthetic pleasure is not just a concomitant by-product of finding the correct solution; seeking out aesthetic pleasure often is an important means of finding that correct solution” (Walhout 764). For Walhout, “[i]n the end, we must ask if the intense aesthetic pleasures a scientist experiences in doing science are purely subjective

²⁰ Rudolph Marcus, “Banquet Speech,” *Les Prix Nobels: The Nobel Prizes*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr, Stockholm: Nobel Foundation, 1993. <http://nobelprize.org/chemistry/laureates/1992>.

²¹ Thomas S. Kuhn also notes that, “particularly during the Renaissance [...] little cleavage was felt between the sciences and the arts. Leonardo [da Vinci] was only one of many men who passed freely back and forth between fields that only later became categorically distinct. Furthermore, even after that steady exchange had ceased, the term ‘art’ continued to apply as much to technology and the crafts, which were also seen as progressive, as to painting and sculpture. Only when the latter unequivocally renounced representation as their goal and began to learn again from primitive models did the cleavage that we not take for granted assume anything like its present depth” (Kuhn 161).

responses, or if there is always an element of the transcendent involved, a bridging of the phenomenal-noumenal gap that is like an act of grace mediated by something other than the object” (774). Walhout’s arguments also seem to shed light not only on Victor’s enlightened, beautiful vision that coincided with epiphany concerning the secrets of creation when “a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous” (Shelley 53), but also on his gross aesthetic misjudgment of his creation. It was not only Victor’s obsession with the task of orgasmically completing his experiment that blinded Victor from the true ugliness of his creation during its assembly, ironically selecting the hideous monster’s “features as beautiful” (Shelley 58), but he was perhaps also blinded by the beauty of the scientifically creative act in itself which, when completed, “the beauty of the dream vanished” (Shelley 58), and Victor was left rather with a horrible nightmare; one that first reveals itself as a literal nightmare in which Victor embraces Elizabeth in a dream, only to have her transform into what Victor thought was “the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of flannel” (Shelley 59). This nightmarish dream is followed by the living nightmare of the monster peering in on him as Victor slept, as “his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me” (Shelley 59). This scene, of course, is meant to remind the reader of Mary Shelley’s own half-waking vision of her “pale student of unhallowed arts” sleeping, “but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold, the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes” (Shelley 9) in her preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. These visions are also reminiscent of a painting that Mary Shelley was very familiar with; a painting that Christopher Frayling argues Mary Shelley “may well have based the

chilling scene of the creature fulfilling his prophecy ‘I shall be with you on your wedding-night’ directly on the design of [Henry] Fuseli’s most famous painting” (19),

The Nightmare (fig. 1).



Figure 1: Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1871, oil on canvas, Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit.

Although Fuseli’s painting was composed several decades before *Frankenstein*, and on the surface appears to be exclusively concerned with the supernatural, when read as a context for Shelley’s later novel, a subtext of humanistic and scientific realism—that is, however, far more overtly addressed in *Frankenstein*—is revealed in the painting,

combined with a strong element of the Gothic. Frayling's observations and arguments establish a strong connection between *The Nightmare* and *Frankenstein*:

Perhaps its most enduring legacy within *popular* culture—one which has been experienced by more people than can possibly have seen a reproduction of *The Nightmare*, even if they do not realise it—was in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, first published in 1818. And progeny. There were many biographical and literary connections between Fuseli and Mary Shelley (1791-1851), and she was certainly familiar with *The Nightmare*. In 1810 Percy Shelley (1792-1822) had written a horror tale (now lost) called *The Nightmare* which he said he would have liked Fuseli to illustrate. At the same time he wrote a barnstorming Gothic ballad called *Ghastly; or the Avenging Demon*, which ends with:

At last came night, ah! horrid hour,
 Ah! chilling time that wakes the dead
 When demons ride the clouds that lower
 The phantom sat upon my bed. (Frayling 18)

As—to some extent—one could also say about Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein*, Frayling argues that “Fuseli was fascinated by visions and dreams, play-acting and orating, larger-than-life superheroes and curvaceous heroines, and painterly gloom, but in a quieter, more private way he was almost equally fascinated by aspects of applied science and medicine” (15). Reminiscent of Shelley's character, Victor Frankenstein, Fuseli's knowledge of physical science was extensive, as he “knew a great deal about the Linnaean system of classifying plants, insects and animals, and how ‘his divisions and

subdivisions are crumbling every hour to dust,’ especially when viewed through the latest microscopes” (Frayling 15). Frayling argues that, like Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, a contemporary scientific context can also be read in Fuseli’s *The Nightmare*, claiming that it “is possible that the *mara* figure in *The Nightmare* was intended to be an ‘Orang-outan’ or a reference to one, and that the *real* sexual nightmare was about cross-breeding, the idea that the human species was not specially created, and the union of a woman and a beast” (17). Frayling also remarks that, when “*The Nightmare* was first exhibited, some commentators—including Fuseli’s friend Erasmus Darwin, who himself was beginning to speculate on evolution and epigenesis—referred to the *mara* as a ‘Demon-Ape’ with leathern ears: ‘On her fair bosom sits the Demon-Ape/Erect, and balances his bloated shape’” (18). Also exploring links between the painting and contemporary inquiry beyond the physical sciences, Marina Warner argues of Fuseli that “this supreme artist of haunting and dream states was a declared and ferocious votary of Reason, and proclaimed unwavering allegiance to skepticism. He has become a supreme painter of the turn to the uncanny, which has now come to seem involved with magic and the supernatural. But at the end of the eighteenth century, the territory was mapped onto the study of the psyche, and dark subterranean realms metamorphosed into the realm of the unconscious” (24). Frayling also focuses on some of the contemporary psychological aspects of the painting in his analysis, claiming that “the painting refers in many detailed ways to the contemporary debate about the causes of nightmares (today the technical term would be ‘sleep paralysis’), and—in parallel—includes most of the folkloric explanations as well. The victim is sleeping on her back, turned to her left side, with her head below her legs and with a pressure on her stomach. On the bedside table is a jar of liquid, maybe a



Figure 2: John Martin, *Bridge over Chaos*, 1826, illustration for *Paradise Lost*.

‘nervous medicine’” (16). Interestingly, Frayling also discusses the issue of the nightmare in Fuseli’s painting in a similar way that Scott’s *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*²² is discussed earlier in this chapter, and also in a way that is reminiscent of Ketterer’s concept of the “explained gothic” above, observing that the “contemporary debate about nightmares was part of a wider project in the mid to late eighteenth century to reduce popular superstitions to ‘natural causes’—classifying the medical symptoms and then hoping to explain them away” (Frayling 16). John Martin’s illustration, *Bridge Over Chaos* (fig. 2) can also be read as a later—and even more contemporary to *Frankenstein*—example of a work of visual art that appears on the surface to be primarily

²² In this text, Scott seeks to explain away a series of supernatural phenomena, but, one could argue, he ironically lends a greater sense of legitimacy to those phenomena in the process.

concerned with the supernatural or religious, but that also contains a subtext of science and technological advancement. Francis D. Klingender that “[a]lthough Martin’s visions of Hell, his illustrations of the Old Testament, and his tortured, storm-wracked landscapes reflect the elements of doubt and terror in the complex mood of romanticism before 1830, they display at the same time a kind of exultation in the ever-increasing power of science” (123). With Klingender’s commentary in mind, the viewer could certainly read Martin’s illustration as the application of religious/supernatural characters to a crudely constructed yet still arched and architecturally sound bridge and tunnel for a train. However, like Fuseli’s painting, the subject matter of the piece is clearly meant to be limited to the supernatural/religious.

Admittedly, on the surface, Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* at first appears to be nothing more than a static representation of phantasmagoria; an eighteenth-century depiction of the surreal, leading Martin Myrone to label Fuseli in the previous chapter as “a mere fantasist” (36) with a tendency to expose himself “to accusations of crassness and stupidity in [his] pursuit of startling effects” (36). The somewhat incongruous figures of the mara and the demonic-looking horse in contrast to the sleeping woman and other more realistic subject matter in the painting seems a precursor to the cartoonish and seemingly out-of-place cat at the foot of the bed of Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* (fig. 3). However, the analyses of Frayling and Warner above reveal *The Nightmare* as a work that is thoroughly linked to *Frankenstein* on biographical, historical, scientific, psychological, philosophical, and methodological levels, and also as a work that possesses its own scientific, psychological, and philosophical contexts. As discussed earlier in this chapter, *Frankenstein* is also viewed as a work that, in many ways, is still a

holdover from the Sentimentalist tradition, sometimes prone to the same criticisms that Myrone applies to *The Nightmare* above. But despite these more superficial qualities, both the novel and the painting represent a Gothicism that aims for something higher than just cheap thrills and scare tactics.



Figure 3: Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Frankenstein, in particular, is very much a ‘novel of ideas’ in spite of its more traditional Gothic elements—traditional in the sense of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic novel. Such a representation of *Frankenstein* as a novel of ideas is consistent with Northrop Frye’s discussion of the fusion between the anatomy and the novel. Frye discusses the anatomy in terms of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759), as though it might be classified as a novel, “the digressing narrative, the

catalogues, the stylizing of character along ‘humor’ lines, the marvelous journey of the great nose, the symposium discussions and the constant ridicule of philosophers and pedantic critics are all features that belong to the anatomy” (Frye 592-593). According to Frye, the “anatomy of course eventually begins to merge with the novel, producing various hybrids including the *roman à thèse* and novels in which the characters are symbols of social or other ideas” (592). *Frankenstein* displays symbolic characters that are consistent with Frye’s point, and the Gothic in Shelley’s novel facilitates, rather than inhibits, such symbolism of larger ideas.

While *Frankenstein* is certainly not a Realist novel in itself, it indeed signals an evolution in the Gothic novel that would continue a few years later in the Victorian Realist novel. As has already been touched upon earlier in this chapter, Levine argues consistently that *Frankenstein* is a precursor to the Realist novel later in the nineteenth century, claiming that “*Frankenstein* does not look back to the sensation novel but forward to realistic books like Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* or Conrad’s *The Secret Sharer* which [...] explore the psychology of unorthodox aspirations and complicate traditional pieties with metaphysical mystery” (“Tradition of Realism” 16). In addition, Levine argues that *Frankenstein* is “representative of certain attitudes and techniques that become central to the realist tradition itself” (“Tradition of Realism” 14), and therefore “provides both a pattern and a metaphor for the very different realist literature that followed” (“The Pattern” 13). Ketterer agrees, claiming of *Frankenstein* that in “its psychological and epistemological probing, it points forward to the sophisticated fulfilment of *Wuthering Heights*” (9). Ketterer aligns himself with Levine, observing that, “as George Levine argues, there is much in the book that relates it to the

tradition of realism, in particular its moral ideals of ‘compromise, moderation, commitment to family and community’”²³ (Levine quoted in Ketterer 10). Levine also points more specifically to the role of the monster in this link to later Realism in *Frankenstein*, as “the monster is also kin to the oppressed women and children of Victorian fiction: like *Oliver Twist*, Pip, Florence Dombey, and Little Nell, like Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, like *Daniel Deronda*, *Henry Esmond*, and *Jude Fawley*, the monster is an orphan, rejected by his father, uncertain of who he is or where he belongs. Naïve, well-intentioned, in danger of being led astray” (“The Pattern” 20-21). According to Levine, the “monster represents a kind of Dickensian reading (almost Carlylean, but that Carlyle could not believe in man’s natural goodness) of the French Revolution. Abused, abandoned, maltreated, deprived, he turns, unlike good Victorian children, in vengeance on his master and his master’s world” (“The Pattern” 21).

Within the context of the humanistic and scientific realism of *Frankenstein*, it is Victor’s irresponsibility concerning his failure to fully consider the implications of his actions in his creation of the monster, as well as his failure to communicate with those around him as a result of his self-isolation, that stands as the moral to the story. Such transgressions on humanity and human fellowship will become consistent themes in the social concerns of the Realist novel later in the century. As Hammond observes of Shelley’s novel, “Frankenstein’s ‘being’ is produced under and into particular socio-natural relations. Surely it is those relations, mixed, weaved, messy, that should catch our attention in *Frankenstein*, and prompt us to ask questions about what kind of socio-nature we want produced by whom, for what purposes and under what conditions” (195). Victor is punished for his transgression of creating the monster, but he is also punished

²³ George Levine, “Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism,” *Novel* 7.1 (Fall 1973): 14-30, 24.

for his self-isolation. Like Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times* (1854)—characters from Realist novels that will be more specifically discussed later in this dissertation—Victor is forced to endure great pain and loss as a result of that self-isolation. However, Scrooge and Gradgrind are allowed to redeem themselves as a result of changing their ways and forming more effective relationships with humankind, while Victor is forced to suffer and then expire. But of course, Scrooge and Gradgrind actually experience a change of character, whereas in *Frankenstein*, it is not clear whether Victor ever truly comes to terms with a moral epiphany of his culpability. Walton informs the reader that “[s]ometimes I endeavoured to gain from Frankenstein the particulars of his creature’s formation: but on this point he was impenetrable” (Shelley 213). Victor responds to Walton’s inquiries on this topic with incredulity: “‘Are you mad, my friend?’ said he; ‘or whither does your senseless curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a demoniacal enemy? Peace, peace! learn my miseries and do not seek to increase your own’” (Shelley 213). However, such strong evidence in support of Victor acting as a positive example of a character who represents the moral of Shelley’s story at the end of the novel is complicated in his mortal passing, as he exclaims, “[f]arewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed” (Shelley 220). Levine appears to have these last lines from Victor in mind when he points out that “this moral—particularly appropriate to the realistic novel—is argued very ambivalently” (“Tradition of Realism” 26). Therefore, despite Victor’s failure to exist as a positive example like

the Dickensian characters of Scrooge and Gradgrind at the end of their respective stories, this reality does not detract from the early signs of Realism in *Frankenstein*, as his complicated ambivalence as a moral character only strengthens Victor's position as a character consistent with later works of Realism.

However, despite Victor's tragic fate and lack of character change in *Frankenstein*, the moral message of promoting human fellowship over social isolation is a lesson that will not only be consistently taught in later Realist novels, but *Frankenstein* also represents an early articulation of how such a lesson will likewise be positioned in direct relation to the Gothic in those later Realist novels. While *Frankenstein* is a Gothic novel with a Faustian moral warning of the dangers of godlike intentions exacerbated by social, moral, and scientific isolation, Levine argues that the "Realist novel rejects earlier fantasies of power for the limits of the probable, hoping to touch the real" ("The Pattern" 17). *Frankenstein*, then, signals a movement towards more human, social moralities in the Gothic of the mid- to late-nineteenth century, rather than restricting itself to more supernatural scare tactics. Like the towering structure of the Beauvais Cathedral discussed in the previous chapter, the lofty aspirations of Gothicism and of Victor himself seem to come crashing down in *Frankenstein*, as not only did the British novel in the 1830s and 1840s experience an evolution into Realism, but Gothicism became more of a trait or mode in many Realist novels rather than appearing in texts that one would consider to be full-fledged Gothic novels. Likewise, the role of morality would undergo an evolution in these Realist novels with Gothic traits as, rather than focusing on a grandiose moral message like *Frankenstein*, morality in these later novels, at least in its

connection to Gothicism, would appear quite often in the form of a social morality linked to representations of the poor and working class.

Though, in general, the settings of these Realist novels with Gothic traits would remain very secular in contrast to the Gothic novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century that were often set in foreign convents, monasteries, abbeys, etc., the emerging secularization of later Gothic texts of the early nineteenth century would be complicated in the Realist novel. As Robert F. Geary argues, “the Victorian tale of supernatural terror found just such a coherent context and corresponding narrative strategies in its determined reaction against the rationalism, the scientism, and materialism which, now oppressively powerful, a minority found deeply threatening. The very cultural secularization which had first freed the Gothic’s rather aimless numinous terrors became itself the focus of attack” (122-123). While *Frankenstein* is a novel that seems to move towards the secular in relation to its Gothic elements, the non-secular still plays a significant role within the text, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The role of morality in the Victorian Realist novel with Gothic traits likewise retained a strong association with Christian principles, but again, the Gothic morality in the Realist novel would evolve into an expression of a social agenda appealing for a greater sense of social consciousness in relation to the poor and working class. This focus on the lower class would echo the sense of conflicting dualities evident in *Frankenstein* and earlier Gothic texts, as not only would the lower class be represented as the feared Gothic Other in the Victorian Realist novel with Gothic traits, but a sense of morality focused on a social agenda would likewise render the upper class a Gothic Other to be feared.

CHAPTER 2

THE DESCENT INTO DARKNESS: THE GOTHIC AS SUBTEXT TO REALISM

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* very clearly signals a change in the evolution of the British Gothic novel. It becomes apparent that, after *Frankenstein*, very few novels exhibit the traits of Gothicism to an extent that would merit the label of Gothic novel, in stark contrast to the Gothic novel fad of the decades prior. As Robert F. Geary observes, "[o]nly after 1820, the year of Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, does the Gothic disappear from the view of standard literary histories, though Gothic elements are noted in the romantic novel and the subgenre's descendants have proven extremely durable on the popular or 'sub-literary' level" (1). On a more "literary" level, the Gothicism of the British novel in the mid-nineteenth century is subjugated in favor of a more overt and typically Victorian focus on social issues, as illustrated by Andrew Griffin's metaphorical reading of the end of *Frankenstein*: "The Monster's last act realizes Walton's visionary goal, but in such a way as to parody and protest against the contradictions of existence. With mixed feelings, Walton sails for home, away from the world of Romantic poetry, toward the native regions of the Victorian novel, a temperate zone where one can tell hot from cold and where, for better or for worse, human relations flourish" (51). As Geary argues, by "the third decade of the nineteenth century, the life of the Gothic novel, as a significant literary subgenre attracting writers of talent, had ended" (101). But for Geary, even when Gothicism was at its most significant, it was oftentimes successful as a result of its apprehension at engaging too thoroughly in hard-hitting social or doctrinal issues, as "the numinous may break free of an inherited doctrinal context, returning now as a pleasing shiver, now as primitive dread. It is precisely the weakening, the suspension, or

the absence of such a context that enables the novels to appeal to readers who were not invited by the formal devices of the novels to endorse a belief in the reality of the otherworldly in order to experience numinous awe or demonic dread” (21). However, such a lack of social or doctrinal depth has its drawbacks, as “the price of such a free-floating sense of the numinous was an awkwardness and confusion that kept the Gothic a subgenre, one whose supernatural elements seemed clumsy ‘trappings’ because not grounded in any coherent belief and hence a mode easily absorbed into a new paradigm” (Geary 21). Geary, therefore, views the mode of Gothicism in the British novel during the middle of the nineteenth century as one that moves away from one of the main Gothic tenets during much of its popularity: the supernatural.

Gothic fiction, especially after The Monk, can be better understood less as a steady advance to greater psychological realism than as a movement away from the supernatural in a variety of directions—some psychological, some not. In most of the significant works usually classed as Gothic, the elimination of the supernatural involves the lessening of the medieval or otherwise distanced setting. The results, in many cases, are works which move away from romance and only tenuously can be called Gothic, sharing its sense of numinous wrath but few of its formal features. (Geary 90)

As a result, the formerly overt supernaturalism of Gothicism becomes subverted in the mid-nineteenth century, far more often explained away and secondary than as an accepted and primary focus, as Geary argues that in “major fiction the Gothic persisted not as a subgenre but chiefly as a mood, a sense of doom, a hint of demonic forces lying

beneath the modern surface. On a more purely popular level, in chapbooks and cheap novels, it would endure for a time as well, usually in conventionalized stories of the supernatural or the weird requiring but a routine suspension of disbelief in return for purely formulaic thrills” (99). As discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation, the more formulaic or “conventionalized” Gothic did indeed continue during the middle of the nineteenth century in the form of texts like *Varney the Vampire* (1847), *Wagner the Werewolf* (1847), the penny dreadful, and also in the form of short stories, but the Gothic mode in the Victorian novel more clearly aligned itself with the growing sense of social consciousness apparent in Realism, as well as with the Victorian tendency to intertwine a sense of Christian morality into this combination of the Gothic and Realist social consciousness. David Punter acknowledges the more social brand of the Gothic mode that emerges in the British novel during this period, arguing that “an art-form or a genre derives its overall vitality, the ground on which specific excellence may be achieved, from its attempt to come to grips with and to probe matters of concern to the society in which that art-form or genre exists. According to this criterion, Gothic is not a mode of escapism, nor is it given to meaningless exaggeration or stridency” (*Literature of Terror* 402). Geary acknowledges the emergence of the doctrinal aspects of the Gothic mode during this period, arguing that only “after the demise of the Gothic novel proper would a new approach emerge that would achieve the elusive goal Walpole had set of uniting the supernatural and the probable. Ironically but perhaps appropriately in a form so filled with generational rivalry, the offspring of the Gothic novel, the Victorian supernatural tale, would offer resistance to the secular rationality which had helped, first, to beget and, later, to undo classic Gothic fiction” (99).

In reference to the Gothic fad novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, Punter remarks, “[w]e have to ask whether it is an accident that an age marked by the breakdown of accepted class structure, and also by increasing consciousness of this phenomenon, should produce a literature which harks back obsessively to a time of rigid social hierarchisation” (*Literature of Terror* 416). Punter’s question is an interesting one, and it also acknowledges the changing social construct of the period contemporary to the emergence of the true and original form of the Gothic novel. While the Enlightenment questioned social entitlement—or at least began the line of questioning—the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of the middle class pushed such questioning even further.

The most likely hypothesis is an extension of Freud’s comments on the ambiguity of the civilising process: that, as far as the development of capitalism is concerned, the Industrial Revolution constituted some kind of birth trauma, and that it remains necessary for those who rule a world based on industry to come to terms with their antecedents. The bourgeoisie itself is a child of a curious miscegenation of class, and can be seen as still engaged in a series of events to come to grips with the problems of its conception and its emergence into the world. It is only natural that this emergence should seem a mysterious matter; it is only natural that the class relations of the pre-bourgeoisie social world, like parental sexual activity, should acquire a certain patina of distortion. It is only natural that one should derive excitement from the attempt to uncover the secrets of one’s birth.

Seen from this angle, Gothic fiction becomes a process of cultural self-analysis, and the images which it throws up become the dream-figures of a troubled social group. (Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 424-425)

Gothicism's complicated relationship with Realism seems to stem from this "birth trauma" and "cultural self-analysis." In its attempts to explore, question, expose, and promote change in relation to modern social issues, Realism in the Victorian novel and visual art oftentimes employed a Gothic methodology.

Relying on typically Gothic elements such as fear, the fear of the Other, darkness, duality and the double, morality, ugliness, and particularly the role of power, Realism kept the Gothic tradition very much alive, but in an exertion of its own power, kept Gothicism in a secondary role as Realism's own Gothic double. As the previous chapter discusses, all of these developments are rooted in a changing of the Gothic that is evident in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, although the Gothic in Realism illustrates that, in the interest of finding new and more interesting places to cause fear—rather than relying on the examples of cliché and formulaic *ennui* that doomed the early Gothic novel—it becomes clear that the Gothic can exist anywhere, and is therefore all the more frightening in its unpredictability. One of the primary Gothic elements established in *Frankenstein* that extends to the Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode is the very humanist take on the Gothic double that Shelley's novel explores. Victor is questioned in terms of his monstrosity, while the monster is questioned in terms of his humanity. Likewise, Victor, as the creator, enjoys an implied level of control and power in that doubled relationship, while the monster soon wrests much of that power away from him. However, the monster cannot bring himself to actively destroy his creator, for

which he still harbors some reverence as evidenced by his eulogy of Victor at the end of the novel,²⁴ and Victor was always the monster's only potential link to humanity, despite the dysfunctionality of their relationship. Victor, too, could not ever destroy his monster, as he had made him too powerful and therefore uncontrollable. Such a construct of a mutual Gothicization, dysfunctionality, struggle for power, yet inherently symbiotic relationship will be reiterated time after time in the Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode, as such a Gothic doubling of a relationship will be revealed between the wealthy employers and their employees in the Realist industrial novel.

Within the environment of the Gothic darkness of industry, the Gothic Other becomes the social Other, as Realism will connect social and class issues directly to the Gothic. Such a social exploration in Gothic terms will again change the role of morality within the Gothic into a Gothic social morality, based on a social agenda within Realism that is expressed in dark, Gothic terms. Essentially, the more humanized Gothic of *Frankenstein* develops into the social Gothic of Realism. Furthermore, in relation to the role of aesthetics in the Gothic novel, the Realist novel will continually express its dark mode of Gothicism, combined with a social agenda, through a negative aesthetic of ugliness. The use of ugliness in Gothic Realism will create an emotional appeal on the basis of that social agenda, and it will also confront society's inherent fear of that which is ugly. The ugliness of Gothic Realism will call on the upper classes to confront their fears related to a perceived ugliness in the poor and working class, using the Gothic not just as cheap thrills and scare tactics, but as a way to essentially scare society into one that privileges human fellowship over social—and economic—isolation. Again,

²⁴ ““Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me?”” (Shelley 221).

Gothicism will be revealed as, ironically, a call for human fellowship rather than merely as a symbol of fear and divisiveness. All of these issues will be explored in the British Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode, as well as in works of visual art. Realism, as an interdisciplinary movement, can more effectively be understood as a movement that began in the visual art of France, but then had a profound effect on the literature and visual art of Britain. The following chapters of this dissertation will explore how Gothic elements are expressed in Realist visual art in France, and also how those elements are translated into the Gothic Realism of visual art in Britain, and then ultimately in the Gothic Realism of the British novel. This translation of Realism from French art to British literature in Realism will later be repeated as Realism evolves into Naturalism, again relying on elements of the Gothic during that translation. Essentially, a network of Realism, and then Naturalism, between France and the Continent, and Britain, is established in the nineteenth century, and the Gothic plays a major role in that network of Realism.

As the previous chapter has discussed in relation to *Frankenstein* and an emerging sense of realism in the Gothic, this connection becomes even more developed in the Realist movement of the mid-nineteenth century. As Virginia Woolf observes of the supernatural—and by extension, the Gothic—in fiction, “[s]ome degree of reality is necessary in order to produce fear, and reality is best conveyed in prose” (62). Although the extent to which Realism is restricted by what is *real* can be challenged—as well as the concept of the real, in itself—and will be challenged in this chapter, reality is naturally a major factor in Realism. Without quibbling too much in terms of how reality

is perceived, and therefore how “real” reality actually is,²⁵ Realism’s sense of realism can at least be defined in its contrast to fantasy and the fantastic. However, such a definition, even as a starting point, could be read as something irretrievably antithetical to Gothicism and its supernatural tendencies, as Srdjan Smajić points out that “supernaturalism’s relation to realism has traditionally been theorized as oppositional, subversive, parasitic” (2), and that “realism is understood to be a kind of radical anti-supernaturalism” (1-2). However, Smajić challenges such a theory and understanding:

I wish to argue that supernaturalism, as far as the nineteenth-century British novel is concerned, is not disruptive but consistently and overtly constitutive of its realism. Literary realism, I will maintain, is not haunted by supernaturalism as the parasitic or saboteurial harbinger of ideological, epistemological, and ontological disruption but instead openly collaborates with it, everywhere weaving it into its formal properties, thematic concerns, and critical self-reflections. *Supernatural realism* is not an anomalous offshoot of realism, nor an atavistic remainder of earlier literary traditions, but one of realism’s most conspicuous manifestations, and perhaps not just in the nineteenth century or just in the British novel. (Smajić 3)

Naturally, though, the supernatural and the Gothic would seem, on a surface level, irreconcilable with Realism, as Smajić observes:

When a ghost, say, makes an appearance in what is generally regarded as a realist novel, the predominant assumption is that the text is momentarily

²⁵ See: Bloom, Howard. “Reality is a Shared Hallucination.” *You Are Still Being Lied To*. Ed. Russ Kick. New York: Disinformation, 2009.

deviating from its guiding principles, bending or breaking its own rules of verisimilitude and plausibility: it is now doing *something else*, something contrary to its “nature.” Alternatively, and in a formulation that conceptualizes the literary text as a conduit for channeling both dominant and dissenting cultural discourses, the supernatural element is said to have infiltrated the realist novel, subverting its narrative procedures, destabilizing its ideological programs, making havoc of its epistemological and ontological coordinates. In either case the figure of the ghost—a popular synecdoche for the supernatural as a whole—is regarded as that which does not belong in realism as it imagines and projects itself. (Smajić 2)

However, as George Levine observes, in reference to Charles Dickens, such a moment is not necessarily an interruption or contrariety to Realism:

Dickens saw that the ordinary world was full of the extraordinary; he saw, too, that the extraordinary was the inevitable consequence of what seemed merely trivial, as an earthquake is caused by minute, almost undetectable movements over long periods of time. The argument between uniformitarians and catastrophists was, thus, double-edged, and we can feel analogous ambivalence in Dickens. If all extremes are merely accumulations of the ordinary, all the ordinary is potentially extreme.

The ordinary, then, is latent with possibilities of the extraordinary. It is a trick of contemporary horror movies, whose fundamental strategy is to focus on recognizable people in recognizable situations and then intrude

something monstrous upon them. In Dickens, it is not only such gothic strategies (the talking chair in the *Pickwick Papers*, for example). But it is also Mrs. Copperfield bringing home a second husband who becomes, in his Puritanical austerity, a monster to the child. (Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists*, 135)

Therefore, the supernatural and the Gothic can indeed be read as compatible with Realism, despite their more fantastical elements, as Smajić argues that “virtually all major novelists of the period (Walter Scott, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Dickens, Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, James, the list goes on) wrote supernatural fiction—works that, when not dismissively treated as recreational diversions, are often approached as ventures into a foreign (i.e., nonrealist) territory—but that there may be no obvious, unproblematic distinction between their ‘realist’ and ‘supernaturalist’ projects” (4). Audrey Murfin’s discussion of the Gothic and Realism is consistent with Smajić, as she argues that the “extent to which the Gothic does get incorporated into realist literature of the nineteenth century challenges the notion of a realist tradition and a Gothic counter-tradition. The nineteenth century shows a tendency towards a unification of the realist viewpoint and its Gothic subversion” (par. 4).

Another point of compatibility between Realism and the Gothic relies on the extent to which Realism is particularly *real*, as the appearance of the real in Realism is often manipulated or enhanced by the artist/author in the interest of incorporating a social agenda. Glen Cavaliero refers to just such an enhancement:

For if physical experience is the basic material of fiction it is characteristic of the most satisfying English novelists that they describe and celebrate

the visible and tactile so graphically that they can engender a feeling of enhanced significance in familiar subject-matter, and to that degree exhibit the presence of the mysterium latent in material things and in the ordinary exchanges and individual experience of human life. It is what all the major writers in these various traditional approaches and literary methodologies have in common—the power in their several degrees to effect an imaginative transfiguration. (Cavaliero 242)

This enhancement, or manipulation, is therefore a trait common to Gothicism as well as Realism. While Gothicism can be used to enhance “the ordinary exchanges and individual experience of human life” according to Cavaliero, and might also “focus on recognizable people in recognizable situations and then intrude something monstrous upon them” according to Levine, Realism typically enhances or manipulates its depiction of reality with a social agenda in mind, as discussed in the previous chapter. Such an agenda, of course, prompts the questioning of the “truth” of Realism, as Pierre Bourdieu argues that the “legitimation of the social world is not, as some believe, the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda or symbolic imposition; it results, rather, from the fact that agents apply to the objective structures of the social world structures of perception and appreciation which are issued out of these very structures and which tend to picture the world as evident” (21). For Bourdieu, designation of the class system itself is a representation of the “power to impose and to inculcate a vision of divisions, that is, the power to make visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is political power par excellence. It is the power to make groups, to manipulate the objective structure of society” (23). Therefore, when Realism uses Gothicism as a mode to enhance or promote

an awareness of social issues based on a class-divided social structure, “all of the inward and outward trappings of the standard Gothic novel of the 1790’s are present as if to assert that there really is no difference between the irrational violence of Gothic fantasy and the gruesome social realities of the age or ‘Things As They Are’” (Frank xxv). As Nancy Armstrong argues, there was “a change in the novel form that occurred during the Victorian period and fostered great expectations. This body of fiction invites us to imagine better worlds, however, only to turn those wishes so sour that we come to prefer the present world, fraught as it is with social inequities” (2). According to Armstrong, “Victorian fiction is out to convince us that partial gratification is preferable to a social alternative that indulges what is presumed to be man’s unlimited appetite for more” (2). Considering Bourdieu’s views on the manipulation of social structure, as well as Frank’s and Armstrong’s vision of the role of a social agenda in the Gothic and Victorian novel, one would presume that there is something artful, if not outright sinister, going on here.

Armstrong’s arguments, in particular, reveal that what appears to be at stake in Realism is a sense of ethics and/or morality, but what Armstrong does not point out is the fact that Gothicism is consistently used to express that sense of ethics and/or morality in Realism. As Friedrich Nietzsche argues in *Twilight of the Idols*, “the ‘true being’ of things are the criteria of not-being, of *naught*; the ‘true world’ has been constructed out of contradiction to the actual world: indeed an apparent world, insofar as it is merely a moral-optical illusion” (484). According to Levine and his discussion of Dickens’s preface to *Oliver Twist* (1838), Dickens, like Nietzsche, focuses on the “true,” and he does so in an active and acknowledged pursuit of Realism:

For however much Dickens is to be regarded as a great entertainer or as a metaphysical novelist, he *claimed* that he was a realist. Perhaps the earliest claim is in the preface to *Oliver Twist*, in which he attacks those who cannot stand the unhappy truths he has revealed. ‘There are people of so refined and delicate a nature, that they cannot bear the contemplations of such horrors,’ he says contemptuously. But he would not for those readers ‘abate one hole in the Dodger’s coat, or one scrap of curl-paper in the girl’s dishevelled hair.’ And as for the character of Nancy, ‘it is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girls seems natural or unnatural, probably or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE.’ He bases this claim on his own experience of watching ‘these melancholy shades of life.’ Notice that here, in the defense of the reality of his fiction, Dickens rejects romance literature, which ignores surface details, and that this rejection entails mimetic particularity, attention to the minutiae of ordinary life. Have these sordid facts he has revealed ‘no lesson,’ Dickens asks, ‘do they not whisper something beyond the little-regarded warning of an abstract moral precept?’ The ordinary—the hole in the Dodger’s coat, Nancy’s disheveled hair—is given in Dickens some of the quality of allegory. (Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists*, 133)

Dickens’s focus on detail is not just symptomatic of his pursuit of Realism, but also of his pursuit of moralism, as the role of morality in Dickens’s Realism is likewise symptomatic of a social agenda that might actively confront those “that cannot bear the contemplations of such horrors.” Dickens’s social agenda can therefore be read as a social enhancement,

and even manipulation, of the realistic details that he chooses to focus on, essentially creating a moral-optical illusion of, and allusion to, the “true.” As Dickens claims, in “The Author’s Preface to the Third Edition” (1841) that Levine discusses above, he is attempting to depict in *Oliver Twist* “the best and worst shades of our common nature; much of its ugliest hues, and something of its most beautiful; it is a contradiction, an anomaly, an apparent impossibility, but it is a truth” (*Oliver Twist* 7). Dale Townshend’s argument that “the truth in Gothic ‘will always out’” (36) is particularly appropriate here, because it is mostly through the dark Gothic “shades” and the “ugliest hues” of human nature that Dickens seeks to express his “truth.” However, Dickens also claims that, in *Oliver Twist*, “there is not one word exaggerated or over-wrought” (*Oliver Twist* 7). However much they might not be exaggerated, in Dickens’s perception and presentation of them in his novels, they indeed are details that denote poverty, crime, and many of the dark and Gothic aspects of human/common nature, and by focusing on details such as these, it is indeed that focus that is a manipulation, if not an exaggeration, of “truth.” However, even though such an exaggeration indeed sounds deceptive and artful, it is not necessarily sinister. As Geary argues, “a central motif in much Victorian supernatural fiction is that the enlightened world of science, despite its contrary claims, offers an incomplete picture of reality: there is another realm—perhaps higher, certainly more encompassing, maybe more terrifying, but not restricted to the prevailing confines of what passes for truth” (105). This higher truth was quite often a religious one, but was also typically an ethical one, or more accurately: an exaggerated truth for the purpose of a social agenda. Such a social agenda is observable in Realism, in general, and also in Realism that expresses Gothicism as a mode.

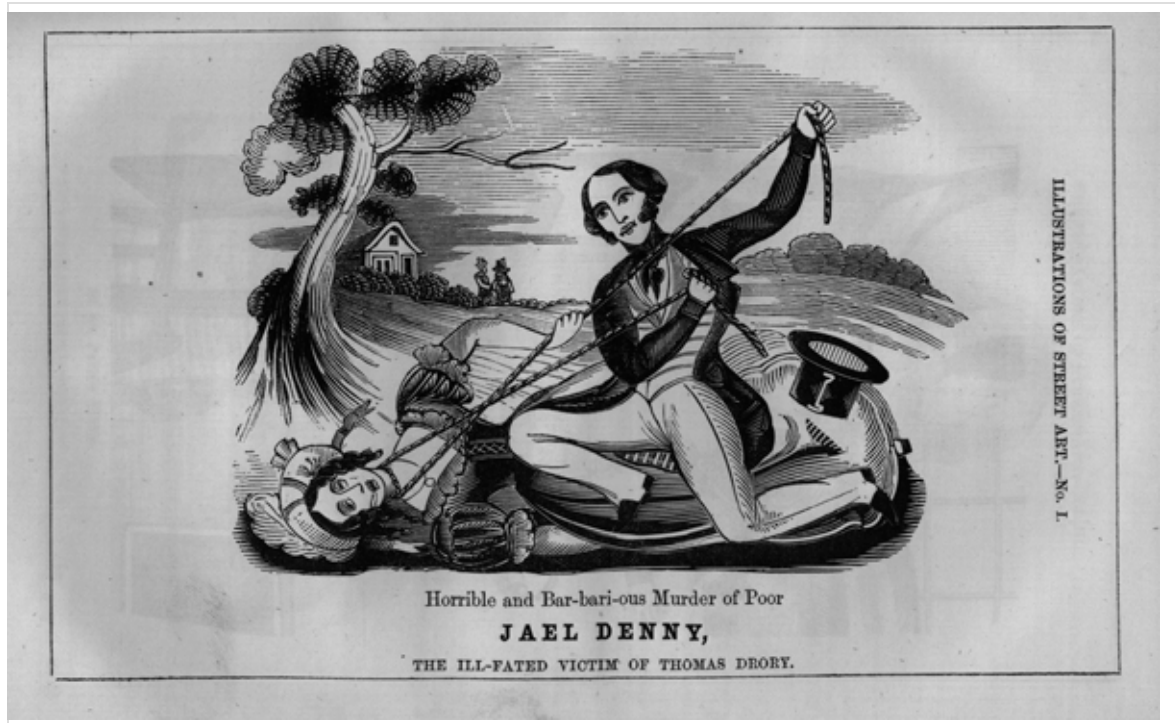


Figure 4: Unknown, 1851, from “Illustrations of Street Art” No. I. Tufts Digital Library: <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/54589>

An enhancement of the visual on the basis of a socio-ethical agenda is at stake in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), in its study and exposition of the oftentimes dark and Gothic nature of the lives of the London poor and working class. Mayhew observes of street art, specifically composed for purchase on the street and often depicting rather sensationalized subject matter (figs. 4 and 5), that “it is not often that illustrations are prepared expressly for anything but what I have described as ‘Gallows literature’” (301). Mayhew also observes that the “artist who works especially for the street trade—as in the case of the man who paints the patterers’ boards—must address his art plainly to the eye of the spectator. He must use the most striking colors, be profuse in the application of scarlet, light blue, orange—not yellow I was told, it ain’t a good candlelight colour—and must leave nothing to the imagination. Perspective and back-grounds are things of but minor consideration. Everything must be

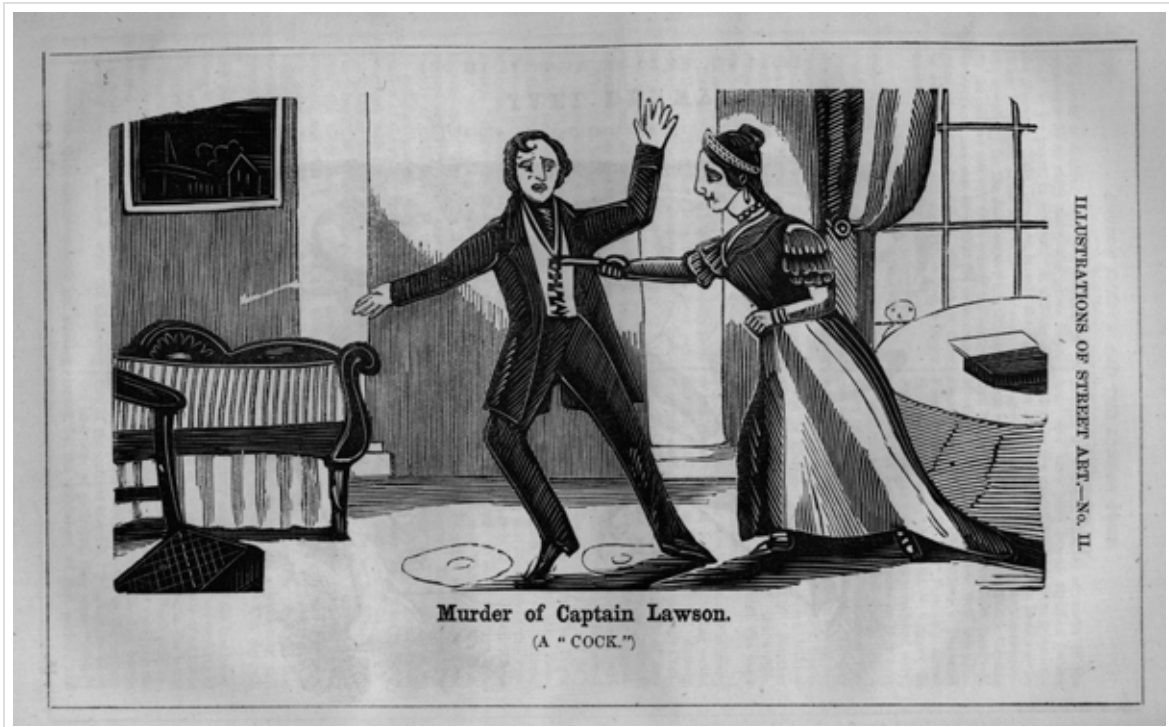


Figure 5: Unknown, 1851, from “Illustrations of Street Art” No. II. Tufts Digital Library: <http://hdl.handle.net/10427/54588>

sacrificed for effect” (301). As the street artist must cater to the aesthetic taste of potential customers, as well as to a sufficient level of functionality in relation to how the purchased pieces might be viewed, such street art geared more towards the language and program for perception of the poor and working-class was as manipulated by the sensational as many Realist novels and works of art were manipulated by the sentimental.

The sentimental is clearly at stake in John Everett Millais’s *The Woodman’s Daughter* (fig. 6), as well as a Dickensian sense of detail, but despite the predominance of bright colors, blue sky, and a forest well-lit by the sun, the painting contains a Gothic subtext related to a social agenda and an allusion to the Gothic double. Even on the surface, a sense of duality is at stake, as the painting provides a detailed contrast of two figures of obvious social disparity. Tim Barringer focuses specifically on the element of detail in some of his discussion of the painting:



Figure 6: John Everett Millais, *The Woodman's Daughter*, 1850-1851, oil on canvas, Guildhall Art Gallery, London.

Every inch of the canvas was carefully worked, every object precisely delineated. Each leaf, each crease of the boy's stocking, the sharp edges of the woodman's axe-blade, recorded and evident for all to see, denoted not only what Ruskin called "actual facts," but also—and just as important—hours upon hours of Millais's painstaking labour. Millais himself insisted on this point by contrasting the worthy, labouring forester with the petulant aristocratic boy in the foreground. Representations of

labour and the labour of representation met in a single image. (Barringer 19)



Figure 7: Emily Mary Osborn, *Nameless and Friendless*, 1857, oil on canvas, Royal Academy, London.

In their detail, the woodman's daughter is no less than a Gothic double of the aristocratic boy, as she seems to appear as a monochromatic, Gothic specter in contrast to the lush greenery of the woods and the bright red of the aristocratic boy's tunic. The contrast indeed renders her otherworldly, as if she does not belong, since her dingy and monochromatic representation not only appeals to the viewer on a sentimental level—as she is obviously poor in contrast to the aristocratic boy—but it also reveals that she and her father are very likely working the land owned by the boy's father, and she is therefore completely under the boy's power in this situation. Her act of supplication in receiving the boy's offering might appear innocent enough, but she knows full well the dark look of

power and condescension that appears on the boy's face. Likewise, the boy knows that her father is wielding an axe, so his position of power is by no means limitless. But his world is bright, cheery, and colorful, while hers is dark, dingy, and monochromatic.

Emily Mary Osborn's *Nameless and Friendless* (fig. 7) also relies upon a social theme of not belonging, but the painting also alludes to a Gothic subtext, even beyond its use of a darker and more Gothic palette. Part of this Gothic subtext relates to the theme of the "distressed gentlewoman," as Deborah Cherry argues that "Women artists' claims for public recognition collided with hegemonic definitions of bourgeois femininity as dependent and domestic, while their bids for professional status contested emergent codes of masculine professionalism. *Nameless and Friendless* engages with these contradictions, resolving them by portraying the woman artist in the guise of the 'distressed gentlewoman', a well-known character in fiction and paintings in the 1840s" (78). Distress is a very observable element in the painting, as observed in the facial expression of the female artist, as well as her fidgeting with the packing string that secured her painting in its covering. As Cherry observes, the socio-ethical implications of the painting's subject matter exacerbate a sense of distress, as such "representations of women managed one of the central constructions of feminine sexuality in which the polarity of pure/fallen was mapped on an axis of class: the respectable bourgeois woman was positioned against and visually differentiated from the working-class prostitute" (78-79). The "distressed gentlewoman" is therefore a long way from the working-class prostitute on a social, as well as on a moral level, but the image of a woman, artist or otherwise, supplicating herself to the speculative power of the male gaze—granted, the male gaze is more appropriately focused on the painting rather than on the woman artist

herself, but it is a speculative gaze on an object of femininity all-the-same—at least alludes to the social, economic, and moral implications of prostitution; if not also sexual implications, as Cherry suggests:

Nameless and Friendless was produced in and referred to these debates.

The depiction of a woman acting as a trader rather than a customer contravened predominant definitions of a “lady”: women’s economic independence was often considered a sign of impropriety, or even sexual deviancy. On the borderlines of class and at the margins of feminine respectability this image of a woman artist selling her work tested the limits of pictorial propriety and it could only be accommodated within the discursive category of the distressed gentlewoman, already widely circulated in paintings, magazine illustrations, novels, investigative journalism and philanthropic reports on indigent governesses. (Cherry 79)

Lurking beneath the surface of Osborn’s painting is not only the dark, Gothic specter of poverty and economic ruin, but also a Gothic fear of the threat of that social situation and the negative sexual and social stigmas that might result. Like the woodman’s daughter, the artist in Osborn’s painting feels her powerless situation in contrast to the dark and Gothic power that the man behind the counter now wields over her. He, too, is a fearful, Gothic threat.

Osborn’s commentary on the “distressed gentlewoman” in *Nameless and Friendless* indeed pushes the boundaries of class and sexuality, but it was more often the image of the seamstress that acted as a dark, Gothic symbol of a sense of socio-ethical and economic precariousness that was typical of the Realist intent to—returning to

Levine's commentary on Dickens's preface to *Oliver Twist*—attack “those who cannot stand the unhappy truths” (*Darwin and the Novelists* 133). As Cherry observes, the image of the seamstress was very recognizable and was often repeated as an image representing the Realist social agenda:

Across all the diversities of production—from outwork to workroom, the making of whole garments to piecework, adult to children's wear, clothes to accessories—the discursive category of the seamstress was formed and incessantly repeated. In novels, short stories, poems, parliamentary commissions, investigative journalism, newspaper articles, magistrates' and police reports as much as cartoons, magazine illustrations and oil paintings, the seamstress was persistently imaged as young, pale, haggard and gaunt. (Cherry 153-154)

Such specific imagery, as Cherry observes, was a result of the seamstress typically working “long hours with few breaks for rest or meals in a crowded workroom or miserable attic. She was physically ill and mentally exhausted” (154). However, such harsh conditions for the seamstress also extended beyond her agonizing occupation.

According to Cherry:

[M]ost reports on the seamstress pale and haggard features connoted bodily disorder. The consequences were individual and social: premature death, prostitution, unfit mothers “of unhealthy and miserable offspring”. For the reformers and social investigators of the 1840s and 1850s—a loose alliance of medical practitioners, philanthropists, journalists, public health experts and politicians—working women contradicted domestic femininity

and disrupted social order. Disorder was written on to and read off the feminine body, represented as persistently and chronically ill. (Cherry 154)



Figure 8: Anna Blunden, '*For Only One Short Hour*', 1854, oil on canvas, Society of British Artists, London.

The seamstress represented an image of socio-ethical precariousness precisely because she essentially filled an occupational role that required long hours with very little monetary reward, and therefore a final sacrifice of any remaining sense of respectability with a move to prostitution could be seen as a constant temptation. The health risks of prostitution were certainly no small matter, as the imagery of the seamstress often

emphasized those characteristics of female bodily disorder that Cherry mentions, as evident in Anna Blunden's *'For Only One Short Hour'* (fig. 8), in which the seamstress appears to be not much more than a reanimated corpse, living such a socially and economically tortured existence that her very appearance alludes to a Gothic characterization of the undead. According to Cherry, imagery depicting the seamstress "presented a wide range of complaints and disorders, most of which specified dysfunction in terms of unregulated sexuality and gynaecological failure. The distorted feminine body was perceived as a sign of social disorder manifested in widespread prostitution or race degeneration. The haggard appearance of Anna Blunden's shirtmaker conforms to this discursive categorisation but her painting contains no direct clues to sickness" (154-155). Therefore, as Blunden's painting not only points to no direct cause of the sickly and gaunt image of the seamstress, and as it is also a representation of the seamstress that is typical of the other "diversities of production" depicted in the multiple media of depiction that Cherry lists above (154), Blunden's seamstress can be seen as typical of the homogenized image of the seamstress that, in its pathos—in image and in title: *'For Only One Short Hour'*—it is a symbol of the Realist social agenda; an agenda that is Gothic in its expression of the darker social, economic, and health-related implications of the seamstress image. Furthermore, this homogenized, even propagandized Realist social agenda is reminiscent of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Gothic novels that incessantly repeated formulaic tropes of fear—catacombs, haunted abbeys, manor houses, etc—as the repeated and homogenized Gothic symbol of the seamstress becomes just as formulaic and recognizable. The parallel of such a repetitive discourse can be seen in Cherry's claim that, in terms of the image of the

seamstress, “[n]o one text originated or was the source for this discourse which circulated across a wide range of social institutions from the state to medicine, the police and philanthropy, from high culture to popular culture. While claiming veracity and objectivity, written and visual texts repeated and echoed each other, producing a closed regime of ‘truth’ on the seamstress” (154).

Such a claim of objectivity will become more of a factor as Realism evolves into Naturalism, but the formulaic homogeneity of social-agenda-laden Realist imagery—like that of the seamstress—as well as the reality that such imagery is expressed through the mode of Gothicism, further complicates the veracity and “truth” in the representation of that imagery. Furthermore, such a social agenda expressed through the Gothic mode in Realism reflects the manner in which Gothicism is affected by an emerging sense of modernity in Realism. Even though Gothicism is positioned as inherently anti-modern in terms of its relation to barbaric tribal culture in its inception, seemingly archaic and medieval form in architecture, and also dark and supernatural superstition in the early Gothic novels, the Gothic in Realism is subjugated into a mode of expression but that mode’s connection to the Realist social agenda signals a more modernized Gothic. As the light of modernity initially sends the Gothic scurrying for the cover of darkness in its subservient role in Realism, it becomes a mode of commentary on social power. As Townshend observes of the role of modernization and power in Gothicism, “[l]ight replaces darkness and painlessness replaces pain in the same movement that Gothic convents, castles, and labyrinths are penetrated by the light of the modern disciplinary gaze. Through these and other gestures, the Gothic forges modernity by making certain strategic interventions in the cultural representation of power” (264-265). For Bourdieu,

such a discussion of the cultural or social representation of power is based on a “relational mode of thinking” (16) that creates “an ensemble of invisible relations, those very relations which constitute a space of positions external to each other and defined by their proximity to, neighborhood with, or distance from each other, and also by their relative position, above or below or yet in between, in the middle” (16). This rather elementary way of conceiving of the middle class is reminiscent of the Gothic double, or a spiritual apparition, as, like the Gothic double, social classification of the middle class is symptomatic of its relative position as other in relation to what it is opposite, and that position and classification, like a spiritual apparition, is neither physically clear nor positively perceived. Reminiscent of Nietzsche, it is class opposition that creates class existence, as “in opposition alone does it *feel* itself necessary, in opposition alone does it *become* necessary” (488). Bourdieu observes that “objectivist physicalism often goes hand in hand with the positivist proclivity to conceive classifications are mere ‘operational’ partitions, or as the mechanical recording of breaks or ‘objective’ discontinuities (as in statistical distributions for instance)” (15). Bourdieu reveals the complications of such an attempt at objective classification even further, arguing that “the means one has to use to construct social space and to exhibit its structure risk concealing the results they enable one to reach. The groups that must be constructed in order to objectivize the positions they occupy hide those positions” (16). Essentially, objective classification is inevitably complicated by subjective class position, as “the invisible, that which is immediately given, hides the invisible which determines it. One thus forgets that the truth of any interaction is never entirely to be found within the interaction as it avails itself for observation” (Bourdieu 16). For Bourdieu, “just as subjectivism inclines

one to reduce structures to visible interactions, objectivism tends to deduce actions and interactions from the structure” (17).

Again consistent with Gothicism, Bourdieu’s discussion of the subjective and objective mess of class perception reflects the mutual relationship of Gothic othering and doubling that occurs amongst the social classes in Realism, regardless of relational position or point of view. Bourdieu argues that “Sociology must include a sociology of the perception of the social world, that is, a sociology of the construction of visions of the world which themselves contribute to the construction of this world. But, having constructed social space, we know that these points of view, as the word itself suggests, are views taken from a certain point, that is, from a determinate position within social space” (18). Such a view of class relations is reminiscent of David Ketterer’s discussion of the doppelgänger relationship between Victor and the monster in *Frankenstein*, as the “monster is both a psychological double and an independent character leading a realistic existence” (56). For Ketterer, the “dilemma exists in the context of the relationship between egotistic perversion and communal affection. From one point of view, the monster is different from Frankenstein, from another, he is the same person. From one point of view, egotistic perversion is very different from communal affection, from another, it amounts to the same thing” (56-57).

As with Bourdieu and also Ketterer’s reading of Victor and the monster, class relations in the middle of the nineteenth century, in particular, are dependent upon point of view, as the Gothic othering between the classes is rooted in a subjective, egotistical perversion of the perceived opposing class, but is also simultaneously complicated by an objective, human, communal affection (or at least connection), oftentimes facilitated by a

sense of social conscience. As the monster in *Frankenstein* is simultaneously human and inhuman, and also natural and unnatural (as addressed in the discussion of Foucault's *Abnormal* in relation to the monster from *Frankenstein* in Chapter 1 of this dissertation), the poor and the working class are often viewed in a similar manner in the Realist novel and Realist works of visual art. The poor and working class are often feared in a monstrous, Gothic sense in these works, but are also oftentimes depicted as very human, which, as a result of the social agenda in Realism, causes one to be forced to come to terms with one's own monstrosity as a result of the plight of the poor and working class. Again, this tendency is indeed consistent amongst the British Realist novel and also Realist works of visual art from the Continent and Britain alike.

As it was translated from the Continent in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, Realism had a profound effect on British art, and consequently British literature. Julian Treuherz argues that the "single most important factor in the development of Victorian art was a change in the pattern of patronage, leading to the emergence of a new and enlarged market for painting. This change had its origins in the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th century, which created a new class of wealthy middle-class merchants and manufacturers" ("A Brief Survey of Victorian Painting" 12-13). Treuherz makes it clear that this emerging middle class in Britain maintained a strong interest and even collected works from the Continent as well as Britain because collectors "saw links between English and French realism" (Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 11). As a result, "middle-class collectors also had a taste for recognisable subject matter rather than obscure allegory, and bought narrative paintings and scenes of everyday life in large numbers, especially in the first decades of the reign [of Queen Victoria]" (Treuherz, "A Brief Survey of

Victorian Painting,” 13). Works of Realism depicted this recognizable subject matter of everyday life, but such representations also expressed a subtext of the Gothic mode of expression in Realism, as Treuherz explains that the “industrial expansion of the 1840s led to poverty, disease, unemployment and hardship, subjects that received striking expression in the novels” of the period (“A Brief Survey of Victorian Painting” 15).

While Realism in visual art and the novel might, on the surface, aim for recognizable representations of everyday life, it is this subtext of the Gothic that expresses not only an agenda of social awareness of society’s darker side, but also seeks to promote change by forcing a confrontation with those darker social problems and fears. Wallace Martin argues that “[r]ather than simply reflecting social changes that other disciplines explain, the novel may contain a more revealing record of how they came about and might even be a cause of social effects, insofar as its ways of constructing life stories become for us ways of projecting meaning on our own lives” (40). As these expressions of the Gothic in Realist visual art and the Realist novel, on the Continent and in Britain, were inevitably based on Gothic representations of the poor and working class, the implication is that this message of social awareness and even active change is meant for the middle and upper classes.

However, it also must be pointed out that many representations of the poor and working class in Realist works of visual art and in the Realist novel in the mid-nineteenth century were more romanticized than Gothicized—with some exceptions that will be discussed in this chapter—but a sentimental, emotional appeal can consistently be found in most works of Realism. Examples of a romanticization rather than a Gothicization of the working class can be seen in Jean-François Millet’s *The Sower* (fig.

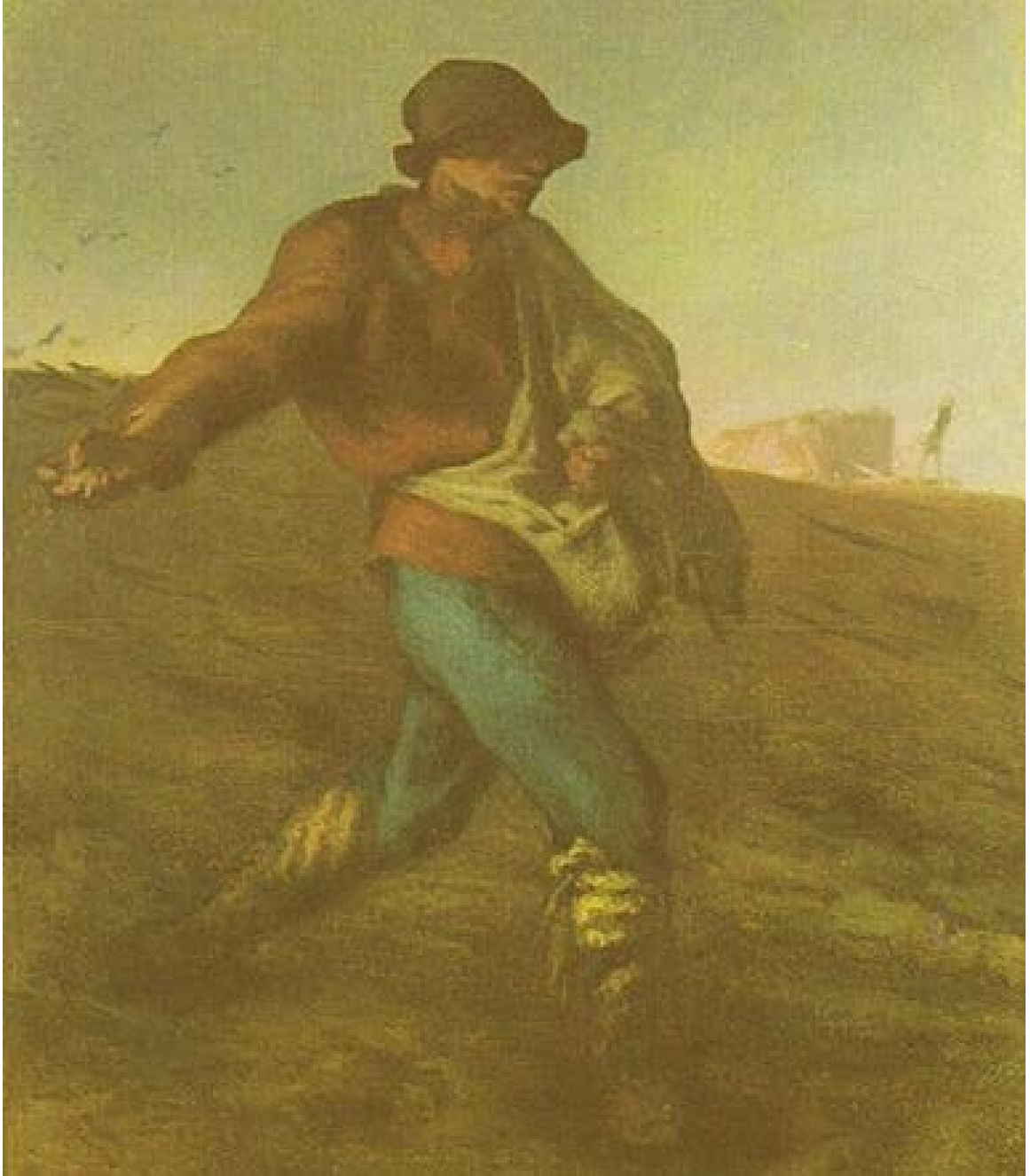


Figure 9: Jean-François Millet, *The Sower*, 1850, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

9) and Jules Breton's *The Weeders* (fig. 10). Both of these paintings are examples of depictions of the rural working class engaged in laborious tasks that were hard on the human body, but the focus is more on the romantic, rural elements in the paintings rather



Figure 10: Jules Breton, *The Weeders*, 1868, oil on canvas, Joslyn Museum of Art, Omaha, NE.

than the difficulty of the tasks. Particularly in *The Weeders*, the woman on the left of the canvas might be standing up to stretch out the pain in her back from having been hunched over for hours while pulling weeds from the earth, but her pose in such a profile gives her more of a thoughtful, pensive sense of pondering the beauty of the sun on the horizon. However, such a thoughtful, pensive pose is inconsistent with Margaret Hale's representation of field laborers of the South of England in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855):

“Those that have lived there all their lives are used to soaking in the stagnant waters. They labour on, from day to day, in the great solitude of steaming fields—never speaking or lifting up their poor, bent, downcast heads. The hard spadework robs their brain of life, the sameness of their toil deadens their imagination; they don't care to meet or talk over thoughts and speculations, even of the weakest, wildest kind, after their

work is done; they go home brutishly tired, poor creatures! caring for nothing but food and rest.” (*North and South* 300)



Figure 11: Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849, oil on canvas, New Masters Gallery, Dresden.

Margaret represents the field workers in *North and South* as having to endure an ugly, deadening, brutish task that indeed still makes a sentimental appeal, but it is also expressed in a manner that is more consistent with the Gothic than with a romanticized representation of labor.

A working-class depiction that likewise shows a less romanticized, dirtier, and darker representation of labor that at least begins to hint more towards a sense of the Gothic is Gustave Courbet's *The Stone Breakers* (fig. 11). While the face of Millet's sower is darkened and mostly obscured by his low hat brim, Courbet seeks to achieve the same darkened, anonymous effect with the man on the right of the composition and his own low-lying, wide-brimmed hat, and particularly with the man on the left who fails to



Figure 12: Henry Wallis, *The Stonebreaker*, 1857, oil on canvas, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

show his face at all. Although the stonebreakers fail to reflect the laboriousness of their task with their faces, the shabby dustiness of their worn shoes and clothing tells the tale, as well as the implied time required for the man on the right to break such large stones into such small pieces and the strain in the legs and back of the man on the left in his attempt to support what would be an extremely heavy basket of stones. Courbet uses details in the shoes, clothing, and the depiction of the intensity and laboriousness of the work in *The Stone Breakers* (fig. 11) in a manner similar to Dickens's Realist details that he discusses in his preface to *Oliver Twist*, but such details are given a sense of focus in Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker* (fig. 12) that relies even more on an element of the sentimental as well as the Gothic in order to enhance the socio-ethical impact of the painting. Barringer observes that Wallis's painting was accompanied in the Royal

Academy catalogue by a long quotation from “Helotage,” a chapter in [Thomas] Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* extolling the virtues of “the toilworn Craftsman” whose “hard Hand; crooked, coarse” is “indefeasibly royal”: “Hardly-entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a God-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour; and thy body like thy soul was not to know freedom” (Barringer 95).

The sentimentality in the painting is plain to see, but we must look closer to perceive the Gothic subtext of pain, tragedy, and death in the painting. Barringer argues that “Wallis’s painting is elegiac and melancholy; it appears at first glance as a tranquil sunset landscape, in which a strange luminosity heightens the rich, natural colours. Only gradually does the viewer realise that the figure in the foreground is not sleeping but (as in Carlyle’s awful prophecy) dead, his body so still and cold that a stoat dares to climb onto his foot. His back is indeed bent, his clothing encrusted with ‘adhesions and defacements of labour’” (95). With this in mind, one might even term Dickens’s details of the Dodger’s coat and Nancy’s hair in *Oliver Twist* as “adhesions and defacements” of street life.

To be less euphemistic, such “adhesions and defacements” are not only Realistic details, they are also ugly details. Honoré Daumier’s *The Third-Class Carriage* (fig. 13) represents not only an active attempt to insist upon a social agenda, but also to allude to an aesthetic of ugliness that is consistent with the Gothic. The title of the painting already forces the viewer into a class dialogue, and the viewer is likewise forced into an



Figure 13: Honoré Daumier, *The Third-Class Carriage*, 1862, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

interaction based on the painting's social agenda of class empathy. Mary-Catherine Harrison observes that "[s]ince the term empathy was coined in the early twentieth century, it has been used to describe not only how a person relates to another person, but also how a person relates to art. In fact, empathy is a concept born of the union between psychology and aesthetics; early accounts of *empathie* in German and empathy in English were psychological accounts of how a person relates to an art object.²⁶ Only later was the definition expanded to describe interactions between people" (256).

²⁶ "Philosopher Robert Vischer's *Über das optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik* (1873) was the first significant treatment of *empathie*, which was the critical term in his psychological theory of art. In *Ästhetik* (1903-1906), psychologist Theodor Lipps drew further connections between how a person relates to an art object and to other people. Edward Titchener, who translated *empathie* into English in 1909, was a psychologist who applied the concept of empathy to a theory of aesthetics, and Vernon Lee, who defined *empathie* and later empathy as a key feature of aesthetic perception was an author, art critic, and amateur psychologist" (Harrison 272).

Though, according to Harrison's argument, Daumier's painting, as well as the paintings discussed above, predate the term 'empathy,' these painting at least appear to be a textbook example of "how a person relates to an art object."

An attempt to evoke an empathetic response is very much apparent in *The Third-Class Carriage*. With the dour, anonymous faces, the muted color scheme, and particularly the cramped and close quarters of the carriage itself, it is quite clear that the viewer is supposed to feel some sort of empathy for the subjects in the painting. Of course, what the painting cannot convey—but, perhaps, what the muted, dingy, and dirty color scheme alludes to—is the likely rather ripe smell of a third-class carriage in Paris, regardless of the time of year. As the viewer, we are forced to stare in our own blank fashion at the woman across the seat from us, likely worn-down and weary from a life of hard work. And where else are we supposed to look? Uncomfortably at the mother that very well might be nursing her infant out in the open? Or should we stare at the sleeping young boy, which might feel inappropriate? Daumier wants us to feel just as uncomfortable as those on the carriage, and he wants that feeling to stick with us so that we know that life is tough and that some people are much less well off than we are, as they scratch out a stuffy, smelly, dirty, ugly, hard-earned, uncomfortable existence somewhere where we wouldn't normally have to look them plain in the face. However, even more than a sense of empathy, Julian Treuherz argues that "seeing social problems represented in art evoked in the wealthy classes similar reactions to those associated with charitable giving; a mixture of horror, guilt and sometimes ostentatious self-satisfaction at being able to help and being seen to help" (Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 12). Treuherz's use of the term "horror" also reveals that this call to action is indeed a result of the Gothic.

With a similar agenda in the Realist novel, Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) seeks to evoke an empathetic response, if not also a call to action. When we are told that Bob Cratchit's wife is "dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence" (*A Christmas Carol* 37) on Christmas Day no less, we feel sorry for her and are moved by the ability of the Cratchits to make the best of what they've got. But when we are also told that, amidst all of this poverty,—caused by the stingy wages from Ebenezer Scrooge—Tiny Tim—the hobbling epitome of pathos—"bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!" (*A Christmas Carol* 37), we are just as moved as Scrooge and want Tiny Tim to pull through at the end of the story just like that changed old man wanted as well. But what about when we close the book back up and go about our lives? Does that image of Tiny Tim and the changing of his negative fate due to the positive actions of the improved Ebenezer Scrooge motivate us to go out and improve the life or lives of our own Tiny Tim or Tiny Tims? Do we scratch off a huge check to a charity or volunteer to help in an orphanage as a direct result of reading Dickens's text? Harrison would argue that "[r]eaders' emotions can be engaged for fictional suffering, but not their subsequent behaviors" (257). Jerrold Levinson also explains that "[s]ince fictional characters do not exist, and we know this, it seems we cannot, despite appearances, literally have towards them bona fide emotions—ones such as pity, love, or fear—since these presuppose the belief in the existence of the appropriate objects" (79). Harrison counters this hard-line approach by Levinson by paraphrasing from Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "we might know that suffering is fictional, and yet we nonetheless respond emotionally—and physiologically—as if it were real" (257). For Realist authors and

artists, the opinion of Adam Smith not only predates, but would also outweigh, the opinion of Levinson. For those authors and artists, the initial and lasting emotional, empathetic, and ethical engagement of their audience was paramount. Harrison reiterates this point by observing that “Social problem literature, in particular, was predicated on the assumption that readerly emotion would lead to ethical behaviors. If readers cried for fictional suffering, Dickens and many of his contemporaries believed, then they would try to ameliorate the actual suffering they encountered around them” (262). Again focusing on Dickens, Harrison observes that “his vivid portraits of fictional suffering were coupled with epistemological claims of their accurate and faithful relationship to modern society. Together with modern psychological research on reading, these ‘metaphors of realism’ offer a solution to the non-interventionism inherent to the paradox of fiction: readers might not be able to intervene in characters’ lives, but they can intervene on behalf of someone ‘like’ them” (262). Essentially, “if middle- and upper-class readers could vividly imagine the suffering they did not themselves experience, he believed, then they would be moved enough to intervene” (Harrison 263).

But of course, even though Dickens’s use of spirits in *A Christmas Carol* to scare Scrooge back into his former self is consistent with Gothicism in terms of the use of the supernatural, and also—as this dissertation argues—the use of a dark and Gothic sense of fear to promote a social agenda, this text is consistent with other mid-nineteenth century works of Realism that only use Gothicism as a mode rather than presenting themselves as thorough expressions of Gothicism. However, Scrooge, in the early sections of the story, is as Gothicized as any spirit in *A Christmas Carol*. He answers to the name of both Scrooge and Marley, essentially existing as his own doppelgänger or Gothic double, as

sometimes “people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him” (*A Christmas Carol* 2).

Dickens takes great care to Gothicize Scrooge in the opening of *A Christmas Carol*, cloaking him in the pall of death in relation to his former partner, Marley, and also making clear that “he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!” (*A Christmas Carol* 2). Scrooge is as cold as death, carrying the physiognomy of a corpse, not dissimilar to the monster from *Frankenstein* that Victor describes as having “watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips” (Shelley 58). Scrooge’s “cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice” (*A Christmas Carol* 2); the last quality in partial contrast to the monster whose “voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it” (Shelley 134). Scrooge also appears to have an innate, unnatural presence, bordering on a supernatural uncanny as evidenced by his disturbing and overpowering effect on animals and nature, as “[e]xternal heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn’t know where to have him” (*A Christmas Carol* 2). Scrooge also is reminiscent of the title character from William Beckford’s Gothic novel, *Vathek*, as when Vathek “was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired” (151). Whereas, with Scrooge, “[e]ven

the blindmen's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, 'no eye at all is better than an evil eye,²⁷ dark master!'" (*A Christmas Carol* 2).

In a Gothic sense, Scrooge is feared by all who know him—save, perhaps, by Mrs. Cratchit—and is especially feared by all who know him the most—save, perhaps, by his nephew, Fred. Cratchit, the primary, poor, working-class character of the story is absolutely unnerved and dominated by Scrooge, revealing a power relationship between them that, in many ways, parallels Foucault's discussion of power in "Panopticism":

But the peculiarity of the disciplines is that they try to define in relation to the multiplicities a tactics of power that fulfills three criteria: firstly, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval; thirdly, to link this "economic" growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system. (Foucault, "Panopticism," 179)

²⁷ Sigmund Freud also writes in "The Uncanny": "One of the most uncanny and wide-spread forms of superstition is the dread of the evil eye, which has been exhaustively studied by the Hamburg oculist Seligmann (1910-1911). There never seems to have been any doubt about the source of this dread. Whoever possesses something that is at once valuable and fragile is afraid of other people's envy, in so far as he projects onto them the envy he would have felt in their place. A feeling like this betrays itself by a look even though it is not put into words; and when a man is prominent owing to noticeable, and particularly owing to unattractive, attributes, other people are ready to believe that his envy is rising to a more than usual degree of intensity and that this intensity will convert it into effective action. What is feared is thus a secret intention of doing harm, and certain signs are taken to mean that that intention has the necessary power at its command" (Freud 240).

As far as Scrooge and Cratchit are concerned, their power relationship is a static one, as Bourdieu explains, “the mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world. As perceptive dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine—especially when you look at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of a dominant” (18). Particularly from Scrooge’s perspective, this power relationship in terms of his dominance over Cratchit is part of the natural order of things, and it is only through the Gothic device of the spiritual haunting that this construct of power is disrupted. Granted, it is not a class revolution, but rather the perceived threat of the ultimate revolution of life: death—a rather Gothic as well as natural phenomenon in itself—that causes Scrooge to change his ways and his inhumane economic subjugation of the Cratchits. While *A Christmas Carol* is far more a Realist and sentimental text rather than a Gothic text, it is indeed a Gothic sense of fear that motivates Scrooge’s conversion of character, particularly in terms of his having to witness the morbid Gothic doubling of his own tomb as his motivation.

Scrooge and Cratchit can be seen as a microcosmic representation of the employer and employee relationship that often appears in Realist fiction that uses Gothicism as a mode. However, it is that sense of Gothic fear instilled in Scrooge that takes up for Cratchit, the social cause, rather than Cratchit himself. Cratchit—like Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* (1854), and Toodle in *Dombey and Son* (1848)—is a kind and sentimentalized working-class character who is by no means represented as a Gothic threat. Oftentimes in the Realist novel, it is indeed the working-class characters that are

Gothic in their representation, and are even perceived as a Gothic threat and symbol of Gothic fear by the upper classes, but this is almost exclusively the case when the characters appear in groups. In Gaskell's *North and South*, Bessy Higgins threatens Margaret Hale, "'yo' wench, yo!' said she, sitting up, and clutching violently, almost fiercely, at Margaret's hand, 'I could go mad, and kill yo', I could'" (*North and South* 100), but Margaret is a fellow working-class character. Later in the novel, it is Margaret who witnesses the mob of angry millworkers, moving in a Gothic mass towards the Thornton home in Marlborough Street, as she "saw the first slow-surfing wave of the dark crowd some, with its threatening crest, tumble over, and retreat, at the far end of the street, which a moment ago was so full of repressed noise, but which now was ominously still" (*North and South* 170). The mob is Gothic in its potential for power and destruction, and in its suspenseful and fear-inducing inconsistency that lends a sense of dark mystery to its intended purpose. The mob is the ultimate Gothic Other in its opposition to anything or anyone that might get in its path, Margaret included. Yet even though the mob's exact intent is not clear, the mob's focus on their middle-class employer, Mr. Thornton, is that of a likewise perceived Other, as Mr. Thornton is similarly a symbol of dark, Gothic power as the importer of "Irish blackguards" (*North and South* 176) to steal the mob's wages.

In *Hard Times*, Dickens takes a different tact, as it is Slackbridge, the union delegate, who takes on Gothic traits, "roaring at the top of his voice under a flaring gaslight, clenching his fists, kitting his brows, setting his teeth, and pounding his arms" (*Hard Times* 106), with his "fiery face" (*Hard Times* 106), like a Gothic demon. Slackbridge is contrasted by his working-class audience, as "he was above the mass in

very little but the stage on which he stood. In many respects, he was essentially below them. He was not so honest, he was not so manly, he was not so good-humoured; he substituted cunning for their simplicity, and passion for their safe solid sense” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 106). In terms of a leader of working-class men, in *Mary Barton* (1848) Gaskell provides a more worthy example in John Barton, as he is less prone to selfishness and self-interest, in contrast to the questionable morality and agenda of a union delegate like Slackbridge:

[John Barton] had a pretty clear head at times, for method and arrangement; a necessary talent to large combinations of men. And what perhaps more than all made him relied upon and valued, was the consciousness which everyone who came in contact with him felt, that he was actuated by no selfish motives; that his class, his order, was what he stood by, not the rights of his own paltry self. For even in great and noble men, as soon as self comes into prominent existence, it becomes a mean and paltry thing. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 170)

Yet, despite the contrast to more worthy and honest working-class representations, it is indeed Slackbridge in *Hard Times* who solidifies the workers into a singular purpose, therefore rendering them a mass of men capable of the same threat, power, and Othered opposition as the mob in *North and South*, as it was the case that “every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards the making of it better; that every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to the comrades by whom he was surrounded; and that in this belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of that crowd were

gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 107). Of course, from the perspective of Mr. Bounderby, the factory owner, the alliance of his workers with the cause of Slackbridge essentially renders them Gothic extensions of Slackbridge, and therefore they “are a set of rascals and rebels whom transportation is too good for!” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 113). Gaskell prefigures Dickens’s depiction of Slackbridge, the union delegate in *Hard Times*, with the “gentleman from London” who acted as delegate to the workers’ strike in *Mary Barton*:

Then the “gentleman from London” (who had been previously informed of the masters’ decision) entered. You would have been puzzled to define his exact position, or what was the state of his mind as regarded education. He looked so self-conscious, so far from earnest, among the group of eager, fierce, absorbed men, among whom he now stood. He might have been a disgraced medical student of the Bob Sawyer class, or an unsuccessful actor, or a flashy shopman. The impression he would have given you would have been unfavourable, and yet there was much about him that could only be characterised as doubtful. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton* 185)

Both Gaskell and Dickens present the delegate character with a Gothic sense of devilish duplicitousness that is contrasted with the more genuine working-class audience, but despite that contrast, the delegation is seen as a Gothic extension of the threat of power and fear represented by the working class in united number. After all, there are those on the side of the poor and working-class in the strike in *Mary Barton* that tend more

towards a Gothic sense of demonization in their depiction rather than the mere eager and fierce absorption in the passage above.

And so with words or looks that told more than words, they built up a deadly plan. Deeper and darker grew the import of their speeches, as they stood hoarsely muttering their meaning out, and glaring, with eyes that told the terror their own thoughts were to them, upon their neighbours. Their clenched fists, their set teeth, their livid looks, all told the suffering which their minds were voluntarily undergoing in the contemplation of crime, and in familiarising themselves with its details (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 190).

This is a dangerous, murderous Gothic threat that is reflective of the inherent fear in the upper classes of a violent and vengeful poor and working class; a fear reminiscent of the view of the poor and working class as a Gothic, monstrous threat to the upper classes, stemming as far back as—according to Maurice Hindle—the use of “‘monster’ imagery to warn of the dangers of reform since the French Revolution in 1789 and its aftermath, the Terror” (xliii). Such a Gothic, demonized depiction of the striking workers in *Mary Barton* is also consistent with the imagery that Gaskell uses to describe their working environment, as described when the police come to arrest Jem Wilson in the novel:

Dark, black were the walls, the ground, the faces around them, as they crossed the yard. But, in the furnace-house, a deep and lurid red glared over all; the furnace roared with mighty flame. The men, like demons, in their fire-and-soot colouring, stood swart around, awaiting the moment when the tons of solid iron should have melted down into fiery liquid, fit

to be poured, with still, heavy sound, into the delicate moulding of fine black sand, prepared to receive it. The heat was intense, and the red glare every instant more fierce; the policemen stood awed with the novel sight. Then, black figures, holding strange-shaped bucket-shovels, came athwart the deep-red furnace light, and clear and brilliant flowed forth the iron into the appropriate mould. The buzz of voices rose again; there was time to speak, and gasp, and wipe the brows; and then, one by one, the men dispersed to some other branch of the employment. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 222)



Figure 14: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Limekiln of Coalbrookdale*, c. 1797, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.

It makes sense that such a hellish environment is capable of producing dark, glaring, livid, potentially murderous working-class characters as Gaskell describes them in the

former passage above, as if they were a collection of some of Satan's low-level demons, sent from hell with a mission of evil. As Sheila M. Smith argues, "[f]rom the early days of the Industrial Revolution in the latter part of the eighteenth century, artists and writers had used the image of Hell to express its impact on the landscape and on society, especially that of the key industries in the new technology, coal, iron, and steel" (15).



Figure 15: Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, oil on canvas, Science Museum, London.

Such Gothic description of industry is also reminiscent of the Gothic, hellish depiction of industry's disruption of a formerly more idyllic, eighteenth-century society in Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Limekiln of Coalbrookdale* (fig. 14), and especially Philip James de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night* (fig. 15). Like Gothic literature itself, the fire and smoke in the painting simultaneously illuminates the night scene, like the technological advancement of the Gothic arch in architecture, yet also creates a stark,

chiaroscuro effect of darkness, intensified all the more by the Gothic, disruptive hellfire. As discussed in the previous chapter, a similar combination of industry and visions of hell is at stake in John Martin's *Bridge over Chaos* (fig. 2), as Francis D. Klingender observes that John Martin "created his picture of Milton's hell from a jumble of images, among which must have been insistent the pit disasters he would have heard described again and again in his childhood at Haydon Bridge near Hexham in the Newcastle coalfield" (122). Like the scene in the ironworks in *Mary Barton*, industrial, scientific, and technological advancement are brilliantly novel and darkly terrifying at the same time.

Such a Gothic contrast is similarly at stake within the employer and employee construct in the Realist novel. While Gaskell—in *North and South*, at least, rather than in *Mary Barton*—represents employer and employee alike with a sense of dignity and esteem that is complicated by a mutual misunderstanding as well as acknowledged flaws on both sides of the labor relationship, Dickens—in *Hard Times*—represents employer and employee in a manner reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein's professors, M. Krempe and M. Waldman. While Victor admits that Krempe, as "a little squat man, with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance [...] did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuits" (Shelley 47), it rather is Waldman, who possesses "an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence" (Shelley 48), that, for Victor, "smoothed for me the path of knowledge" (Shelley 51). However, despite Waldman's more pleasant and less gruff representation, that smooth path ironically led to Victor's "destruction and infallible misery" (Shelley 54), while the following of Krempe's advice that Victor should abandon the principles of natural philosophy and "'begin [his] studies entirely anew'" (Shelley 47) would have

saved Victor from his painful and tragic path. Similarly, it is in *Hard Times* that Josiah Bounderby of Coketown is represented as “a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 15), but it is Bounderby who fraudulently represents himself as a man of great character; as a “man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 15). Bounderby, though packaged in a more wealthy and purportedly more upstanding and admirable fashion, is no more upstanding than the cunning Slackbridge in the end, while it was the path represented by the lowly, disgraced, yet in the end, morally-upstanding Stephen Blackpool that represents what would have been the righteous path for the workers of the town, as far as Dickens seems to imply.

The rioting mob mostly populated by working-class miners from the Sproxtton Colliery in George Eliot’s *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866) are depicted in a more straightforward manner, as it was a “sort of mob which was animated by no real political passion or fury against social distinctions” (298). However, the Gothic effect is still achieved, as Felix “thought he discerned here and there men of that keener aspect which is only common in manufacturing towns” (Eliot 292), and this mob of the working-class is again Gothicized in its sheer power in numbers. As the mob scene on election day intensifies, Felix “heard the voices turning to a savage roar, and saw a rush towards the hardware shop, which furnished more effective weapons and missiles than turnips and potatoes” (Eliot 293). Soon, it “was not unlikely that lives might be sacrificed; and it was intolerable to Felix to be witnessing the blind outrages of this mad crowd, and yet be

doing nothing to counteract them” (Eliot 295). Despite Felix’s claim that the working-class mob has no political or social agenda, it is indeed the Debarrys’s wealthy home, Treby Manor, which becomes the target of their Gothic power in numbers, wrath, and destruction.

What these novels by Gaskell, Dickens, and Eliot concern themselves with, at least in relation to the Gothic, are attempts at the disruption of the power structure of the old social order, or to return to Hindle’s reference to the French Revolution: the social *ancien régime*. Such a power structure, of course, entailed the power of the few over the many, facilitated by modes of power maintenance that Foucault identifies in “Panopticism”: “In a word, the disciplines are an ensemble of minute technical inventions that made it possible to increase the useful size of multiplicities by decreasing the inconveniences of the power which, in order to make them useful, must control them” (181). As Barry Smart points out, “Foucault’s explanation has been that power is most effective and tolerable when its operations go undetected, when in fact it is possible for individuals to console themselves with the idea of pockets of freedom or limits to power” (88). However, such a construct of the power of the few over the power-deceived many is no longer so easily achieved in the Realist novel that expresses the mode of Gothicism. It will no longer be tolerated by the many. Such a resistance to the old social and economic order in these Realist novels is in one way a result of the abuse of power by the few. In *North and South*, Mr. Thornton explains his view of this progression of power to Margaret Hale and her father:

“I only name such things to show what almost unlimited power the manufacturers had about the beginning of this century. The men were

rendered dizzy by it. Because a man was successful in his ventures, there was no reason that in all other things his mind should be well-balanced. On the contrary, his sense of justice, and his simplicity, were often utterly smothered under the glut of wealth that came down upon him; and they tell strange tales of the wild extravagance of living indulged in on gala-days by those early cotton lords. There can be no doubt, too, of the tyranny they exercised over their work-people. You know the proverb, Mr. Hale, ‘Set a beggar on horseback, and he’ll ride to the devil,’—well, some of these earlier manufacturers did ride to the devil in a magnificent style—crushing human bone and flesh under their horses’ hoofs without remorse. But by and by came a reaction; there were more factories, more masters; more men were wanted. The power of masters and men became more evenly balanced; and now the battle is pretty fairly waged between us.” (Gaskell, *North and South*, 82)

Such vivid, Gothic language referring to the “crushing of human bone and flesh” establishes a foundation of Gothic fear felt by the disadvantaged, relatively powerless workers towards their powerful superiors, but as Mr. Thornton argues, the battle of power is more evenly balanced than it used to be—though likely still not as “fairly waged” as perceived from his middle-class perspective—and therefore a Gothic fear is a mutual one between the classes, rather than existing primarily in the Gothic fear of the many in relation to the immense power of the few. For, as Gaskell observes, “[c]ombination is an awful power. It is like the equally mighty agency of steam; capable of almost unlimited good or evil. But to obtain a blessing on its labours, it must work under the direction of a

high and intelligent will; in capable of being misled by passion or excitement. The will of the operatives had not been guided to the calmness of wisdom” (*Mary Barton* 173).

The laborers have realized their power in number, but like Gaskell’s metaphor of steam—and like the unionized and/or riotous mob, as explored so far in this chapter in novels by Gaskell, Dickens, and Eliot—that power can be Gothic in its awful, potentially evil nature. Such a sentiment also explains the typically negative depiction of unionism in Dickens and Gaskell.

And now began the real wrong-doing of the Trades’ Unions. As to their decision to work, or not, as such a particular rate of wages, that was either wise or unwise; an error of judgment at the worst. But they had no right to tyrannise over others, and tie them down to their own Procrustean bed.

Abhorring what they considered oppression in the masters, why did they oppress others? Because, when men get excited, they know not what they do. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 173)

Like steam, and the unpredictable and potentially volatile power of the union and/or the riotous mob, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argue that the working-class proletariat is a wavering, unstable entity, as “the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population” (11). The specifically terminology that Engels and Samuel Moore used in the translation of *recruited*—from the German, *rekrutiert*, in the original text of Marx and Engels—signals a more active designation as proletariat rather than exclusively a natural progression. Of course, the concept of *work* is inherently *active*, but again, it is the old social order, or social ancien régime, that is no longer considered to be the natural order of things. Quite the opposite.

This concept of the unnatural is, once again, reminiscent of Victor's creation, as Franco Moretti argues that, like "the proletariat, the monster is denied a name and an individuality. He is the Frankenstein monster; he belongs wholly to his creator (just as one can speak of a 'Ford worker'). Like the proletariat, he is a *collective* and artificial *creature*. He is not found in nature, but built" (85). From a Marxist point of view, the proletariat is a class that is artificially constructed, and is therefore inherently unnatural in its birth. Equipped with a social point of view such as this, it is no wonder that Marx and Engels argue that "[o]f all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product" (13). At least to some extent, this social point of view seems to permeate throughout the post-*Communist Manifesto* novels that have been discussed in this chapter: *Hard Times*, *North and South*, *Felix Holt*, *the Radical*, and especially *Mary Barton*, though the latter was published in October 1848 not long after the February 1848 publication of *The Communist Manifesto*. Yet, from a historical point of view, it is Chartism and *The People's Petition of 1838* with which *Mary Barton* is mainly concerned, as the Chartists argue that, despite all of the "elements of national prosperity, and with every disposition and capacity to take advantage of them, we find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering" (*Petition of 1838* 287).

John Barton, speaking with his friend and fellow working-class employee, Wilson, speaks of public and private suffering, but also discusses the labor that they produce in a manner directly related to economic power in *Mary Barton*:

“You’ll say (at least many a one does), they’n gotten capital an’ we’n gotten none. I say, our labour’s our capital, and we ought to draw interest on that. They get interest on their capital somehow a’ this time, while ourn is lying idle, else how could they all live as they do? Besides there’s many on ‘em has had nought to begin wi’; there’s Carsons, and Duncombes, and Mengies, and many another, as comed into Manchester with clothes to their back, and that were all, and now they’re worth their tens of thousands, a’ gotten out of our labour; why the very land as fetched but sixty pound twenty year ago is now worth six hundred, and that, too, is owing to our labour; but look at yo, and see me, and poor Davenport yonder; whatten better are we? They’n screwed us down to th’ lowest peg, in order to make their great big fortunes, and build their great big houses, and we, why we’re just clemming, many and many of us. Can you say there’s nought wrong in this?”

“Well, Barton, I’ll not gainsay ye. But Mr Carson spoke to me after th’ fire, and says he, ‘I shall ha’ to retrench, and be very careful in my expenditure during these bad times, I assure ye’; so yo see th’ masters suffer too.”

“Han they ever seen a child o’ their’n die for want o’ food?” asked Barton, in a low deep voice.” (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 66)

The northern working-class characters of Gaskell realize the economic power of their labor, and they are emboldened with a general irreverence for economic and class

distinction, as Margaret Hale observes of the working-class inhabitants of Milton²⁸ that they “came rushing along, with bold, fearless faces, and loud laughs and jests, particularly aimed at all those who appeared above them in rank and station” (*North and South* 70). While Dickens’s Stephen Blackpool is steadfast in his beliefs yet still apparently meek in his conversations with the factory owner, Mr. Bounderby, in *Hard Times*, in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, Gaskell creates characters and a northern working-class environment that confronts the Gothic fear of the employer. Margaret Hale contrasts the working-class of the North with that of the South, in response to Mr. Thornton’s disparagement of the South, arguing that ““I see men here going about the streets who look ground down by some pinching sorrow or care—who are not only sufferers but haters. Now, in the South we have our poor, but there is not that terrible expression in their countenances of a sullen sense of injustice which I see here”” (*North and South* 80). Nicholas Higgins explains this mentality of the North later in the novel, claiming that ““[w]e know when we’re put upon; and we’ve too much blood in us to stand it. We just take our hands fro’ our looms, and say, “Yo’ may clem us, but yo’ll not put upon us, my masters!” And be danged to ‘em, they shan’t this time!”” (*North and South* 131). But the effect of this emboldened behavior, not surprisingly, only tends to exacerbate the Gothicization of the working class in the novel, from the point of view of the employers. Mr. Thornton’s mother, Mrs. Thornton, reveals both her extreme bias against the working class in Milton as well as her perception of Margaret Hale’s reaction to their northern forwardness when she infers that ““South country people are often frightened by what our Darkshire men and women only call living and struggling. But

²⁸ The association of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* with the name of the town in Gaskell’s *North and South* must also be noted.

when you've been ten years among a people who are always owing their betters a grudge, and only waiting for an opportunity to pay it off, you'll know whether you're a coward or not, take my word for it'" (*North and South* 115). Again, for Mrs. Thornton, such a grudge is completely unjustified, as, from her point of view, "the truth is they want to be masters, and make the masters into slaves on their own ground'" (*North and South* 114), all in the pursuit of "the mastership and ownership of other people's property'" (*North and South* 114). Such a biased sentiment is stated in an even more extreme manner by one of the masters in reference to the striking workers in *Mary Barton*, when he claims that "I for one won't yield one farthing to the cruel brutes; they're more like wild beasts than human beings'" (*Mary Barton* 182). While, from the middle-class employer's point of view the working-class in *Hard Times* are reduced to the rather nondescript term 'Hands,' *Mary Barton* they are reduced to more unruly, less human, beasts.

Margaret Hale's reaction to this different, northern working class is naturally more tempered than that of Mrs. Thornton, or that of the master in *Mary Barton*, but it is still a reaction that falls far short of approval. When speaking to Mr. Thornton about Milton, Margaret observes that "I see two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own; I never lived in a place before where there were two sets of people always running each other down'" (*North and South* 117). For Margaret, the symbiotic nature of the employer and employee relationship should outweigh any antagonism. Furthermore, in a conversation with Nicholas Higgins, Margaret implies a sense of irrationality in relation to the working-class contingent.

"And yo' say they never strike down there?" asked Nicholas abruptly.

“No!” said Margaret; “I think they have too much sense.”

“An’ I think,” replied he, dashing the ashes out of his pipe with so much vehemence that it broke, “it’s not that they’ve too much sense, but that they’ve too little spirit.” (Gaskell, *North and South*, 132)

Despite Margaret’s appeal in *North and South* for a more rational realization of the symbiotic and therefore intertwined interests of the employer and employee, the two factions maintain not only a Gothicization of each other in *Hard Times*, *North and South*, and *Mary Barton*, but that mutual Gothicization fosters a level of contention based on a conflict between emphasis on the individual or emphasis on the principle of fellowship.



Figure 16: Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852-1863, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Galleries.

Ironically, much of the foundation of this conflict can be found in a text written by a man that in many ways provided an effective link between working-class and middle-class interests. Samuel Smiles was a supporter of the Chartist movement, but in *Self-Help* (1859) he placed emphasis on work and the power of the individual in relation to all social classes, as “youth must work in order to enjoy,—that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence” (294). Work is indeed an ideal not limited by social class, but as Ford Madox Brown’s *Work* (fig. 16) illustrates, work is by no means a social cure-all. As Tim Barringer quite eloquently states, this “group in the throes of labour, brilliantly lit, casts the rest of society into the shade” (22). In, most likely, an unintentionally Gothic manner, Ford Madox Brown—as Barringer observes—has bathed the laborers in light in the center of the composition, while the more unseemly, dark, and Gothically Othered subject matter haunts the periphery.

Around the margins of the composition are ranged figures less happy in their relation to work. Among the busy mill and throng of humanity there is no sign of the starving, unemployed mechanic (a factory labourer, perhaps, thrown out of work in hard times) [...]. His role is taken by itinerant agricultural labourers, temporarily workless, who lie on the shaded bank to the right, their tools arrayed idly around them. The strong arm of one slumbering harvester, clad in green fustian, follows the line of his scythe, the blade carefully bound up to avoid danger. His older comrade stares bleakly upward, despairing, deprived of work. A third rests his face on his hand. Nearby, urchin children play in the gutter, too young for work but too close to the excavations for comfort or safety. To

the far left is a sinister, ragged character, who ekes out a living selling flowers and plants—hardly work at all—and whose swarthy face is partly concealed by a battered hat. (Barringer 22-24)

Similar to the Gothic darkness of industry depicted much earlier in de Louthembourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night*, Barringer argues that there was indeed a dark side and Gothic underbelly of work and industry, again relying on the trope of well-lit display in contrast to darker problems on the periphery, in reference to the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Despite the Great Exhibition's bombastic rhetoric of industrial progress and prosperity, it was clear that the "condition of England question," framed by Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present* in 1843, remained unanswered. Class-conflict, deprivation, and cyclical unemployment were symptoms, Carlyle had suggested, of a deeper social and psychological malaise. Despite the opulence of the products on display in 1851 and the show of social harmony among the visitors, no one was unaware of the poverty and social dislocation that beset the industrial cities of Britain. Throughout the period of the Exhibition, Henry Mayhew was publishing fortnightly parts of his pioneering survey of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1850-1852), based on extensive research in the East End, which revealed the profusion of bizarre forms of low-paid employment at the margins of a burgeoning capitalist economy. Mayhew alerted the metropolitan readership to the existence of the "residuum" around them, and figures from his investigation found their way into Brown's *Work* and into novels by Charles Dickens and others. But the members of the

London “residuum” had no place within the Crystal Palace. (Barringer 8-9)

However, the working-class contingent of the “residuum” was indeed able to view the Exhibition, as Andrew H. Miller points out, as a “celebration of Victorian industrial strength, the Exhibition also revealed middle-class fears about that strength and the workers who were gathered to view the products of their labor at the Palace” (10). As a real-life example of the Gothic fear of the poor and working-class *en masse* that has been explored in the Realist novels discussed in this chapter, there was much debate as to whether the laborers should be allowed to attend the Exhibition, as “anxieties over the simultaneous presence of street-sellers, workers and foreigners activated fears of the mob” (Andrew H. Miller 79).²⁹

Again, beyond his emphasis on work, regardless of class distinction, Smiles, in *Self-Help*, likewise emphasized the importance of the individual. Smiles argues that “it is energetic individualism which produces the most powerful effects upon the life and action of others, and really constitutes the best practical education” (296). In an argument for the greater good, it is the responsibility of each individual to do one’s part, as “National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice” (Smiles 295). However, such a strong emphasis on the individual implies less emphasis on organized groups and institutions in Smiles, as “it follows that the highest patriotism and philanthropy consist, not so much in altering laws and modifying institutions, as in helping and stimulating men to elevate and improve themselves by their own free and independent individual

²⁹ While the working class were allowed into the Exhibition on designated “cheap days,” such a strategy also kept the “residuum” segregated onto certain days.

action” (295). Despite his connection to Chartism, Smiles argues that “the function of Government is negative and restrictive, rather than positive and active” (295). Rather, self-help should be privileged over institutional aid.

“Heaven helps those who help themselves” is a well-tried maxim, embodying in a small compass the results of vast human experience. The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done *for* men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless.

Even the best institutions can give a man no active help. Perhaps the most they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well-being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct. Hence the value of legislation as an agent in human advancement has usually been much over-estimated. (Smiles 294)

While Smiles stresses the importance of the individual, such an emphasis actually conflicts with an overall emphasis on the importance of community and human fellowship throughout the progression of the nineteenth-century novel. Such a conflict

and favoring of fellowship over individuality can be observed as far back as *Frankenstein*, as it was observed in the previous chapter that it was partially Victor Frankenstein's isolation from human fellowship—and particularly from a sense of morality represented by his family and the rest of the scientific community—that facilitated his downfall in the novel.

This privileging of human fellowship over social isolation becomes a major theme in the Realist novel, and though it is often expressed through sentimentalism, it is also consistently expressed through the Gothic. Scrooge is the most representative example of this emphasis on human fellowship rather than social individuality, and he also provides an effective link between social human fellowship and economic human fellowship. As Audrey Jaffe argues, the “culture from which Scrooge has been absent is, of course, commodity culture; his failure to participate in human fellowship is signaled by his refusal of, and need to learn, a gift giving defined as the purchase and exchange of commodities” (261). Jaffe also argues that “Dickens's text draws out further implications of the connection between capitalism and the spirit that travels far and wide” (262). Scrooge must engage in commodity culture—a term that Jaffe uses to unify social human fellowship with economic human fellowship—again, in order to survive socially and literally in the story, but Jaffe's argument also stresses the fact that such a thorough engagement in the social and economic economy will not only benefit the national economy, but it will also benefit Scrooge's own business interests. Scrooge is described as socially, and economically, individualized and isolated early in the story, as he was “[h]ard and sharp as a flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster” (*A Christmas Carol* 2). Such metallic

language combined with the reference to the oyster's covetous nature in relation to its pearl clearly alludes to coin and economic imagery. However, by the end of the story, Scrooge is about as animated and as emotionally engaged as any character in the history of literature, "laughing and crying in the same breath" and exclaiming "'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!'" (*A Christmas Carol* 63). Likewise, his economic engagement at the end of the story is nothing short of thorough in his purchase of a turkey that "never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing wax" (*A Christmas Carol* 65). Scrooge also splurges for a cab to transport the turkey, along with the man from the Poulterer's shop, sending it as a gift to the Cratchits, while also giving the boy from the street that fetched the turkey and the man from the Poulterer's shop a generous gratuity. Scrooge is also later complimented for a charitable pledge with the exclamation, "'[m]y dear sir [...] I don't know what to say to such munifi[cence!]" (*A Christmas Carol* 66). Scrooge is a social and economic lesson for humanity in general, but such a lesson is particularly aimed toward the middle class.

While *A Christmas Carol* does contain Gothic—and particularly supernatural—elements, its methods are more sentimental. However, in *Hard Times*, Dickens focuses more specifically on how individuality and isolation go against the message of an emphasis on the greater good in the Realist novel that uses Gothicism as a mode. While Stephen Blackpool, in *Hard Times*, admittedly isolates himself from his fellow working-class brethren in his refusal to unionize, it is more harmful to the greater good that Mr.

Bounderby, in the same novel, falsely claims to be an example of the principles of self-help and the self-made man that Samuel Smiles would publish in *Self-Help*, three years after the publication of *Hard Times*. While Bounderby is habitually free with his accusations of Stephen and other working-class employees having a desire “to be set up in a coach and six, and to be fed on turtle soup and venison, with a gold spoon”

(Dickens, *Hard Times*, 57), Bounderby is also habitually free with his false bluster in claiming that “I can see as far into a grindstone as another man; farther than a good many, perhaps, because I had my nose well kept to it when I was young” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 57), as he worked hard, and persevered, and made himself from nothing.

However, when Mr. Gradgrind queries Mrs. Pegler—whom is discovered to be Mr. Bounderby’s mother—as to Mr. Bounderby’s mean upbringing involving his being “brought up in the gutter” as a result of a mother that “deserted him in his infancy, and left to the brutality of a drunken grandmother” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 195), Mr. Bounderby is revealed to have “built his windy reputation upon lies, and in his boastfulness had put the honest truth as far away from him as if he had advanced the mean claim (there is no meaner) to tack himself on to a pedigree” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 196). In actuality, according to the woman herself, “his mother kept but a little village shop” (Dickens, *Hard Times*, 195), and would therefore be considered, like Sol the shop owner in *Dombey and Son*, as middle class, or at least *petite bourgeoisie*, and is therefore far less self-made than he claims to be. Gaskell writes, in reference to the truly self-made men that worked their way into mill ownership in *Mary Barton*, that it “is well known, that there is no religionist so zealous as a convert; no masters so stern, and regardless of the interests of their work-people, as those who have risen from such a station

themselves” (*Mary Barton* 172). However, Bounderby’s severity to his employees cannot even be attributed to a middle-class shortcoming such as this.

In *North and South*, Gaskell creates truly self-made men that emulate some of the more positive aspects of middle-class values in their desire for education and intellectual growth that likely would not have been available to them in their formerly working-class social position, and Margaret Hale is surprised by such a desire when discussing their impending move to Milton with her father:

“[T]here is a good opening for a private tutor there.”

“A private tutor!” said Margaret, looking scornful: “What in the world do manufacturers want with the classics, or literature, or the accomplishments of a gentleman?”

“Oh,” said her father, “some of them really seem to be fine fellows, conscious of their own deficiencies, which is more than many a man at Oxford is. Some want resolutely to learn, though they have come to man’s estate. Some want their children to be better instructed than they themselves have been.” (Gaskell, *North and South*, 38).

However, it is when the manufacturer, or middle-class employer, spurns growth and a consciousness of deficiencies, that the principle of human fellowship is likewise spurned and rejected. Individual growth as a self-made man is revered, but the message of the Realist novel that uses Gothicism as a mode is one that gothicizes the self-made that are likewise self-interested. Such a mutual, individualized self-interest between employer and employee causes the strike in *Mary Barton*, as the “masters would not be bullied, and compelled to reveal why they felt it wisest and best to offer only such low wages; they

would not be made to tell that they were even sacrificing capital to obtain a decisive victory over the continental manufacturers. And he workmen sat silent and stern with folded hands, refusing to work for such pay. There was a strike in Manchester” (*Mary Barton* 172). Although he acknowledges that the phenomenon of the strike might be inevitable, Mr. Thornton, in a conversation with a rising member of Parliament, Mr. Colthurst, preaches the doctrine of partnership and human fellowship, while also questioning the role of institutions in such a process—much like Smiles would later do the same in *Self-Help*:

“I have arrived at the conviction that no mere institutions, however wise, and however much thought may have been required to organize and arrange them, can attach class to class as they should be attached, unless the working out of such institutions bring the individuals of the different classes into actual personal contact. Such intercourse in the very breadth of life. A working man can hardly be made to feel and know how much his employer may have laboured in his study at plans for the benefit of his workpeople. A complete plan emerges like a piece of machinery, apparently fitted for every emergency. But the hands accept it as they do machinery, without understanding the intense mental labour and forethought required to bring it to such perfection. But I would take an idea, the working out of which would necessitate personal intercourse; it might not go well at first, but at every hitch interest would be felt by an increasing number of men, and at last its success in working come to be desired by all, as all had borne a part in the formation of the plan, and even

then I am sure that it would lose its vitality, cease to be living, as soon as it was no longer carried on by that sort of common interest which invariably makes people find means and ways of seeing each other, and becoming acquainted with each other's characters and persons, and even tricks of temper and modes of speech. We should understand each other better, and I'll venture to say we should like each other more."

"And you think they may prevent the recurrence of strikes?"

"Not at all. My utmost expectation only goes so far as this—that they may render strikes not the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been. A more hopeful man might imagine that a closer and more genial intercourse between classes might do away with strikes. But I am not a hopeful man." (Gaskell, *North and South*, 422-423)

Implied in *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, *Hard Times*, *Felix Holt*, *the Radical*, and many other Realist novels that use Gothicism as a mode is a message that argues for the rejection of habitual, individualized self-interest in favor of human fellowship and the interest of the greater good, and it is when this individualized self-interest is at its most severe, and its most violent, that Gothicism is darkly expressed, which can be observed in *Mary Barton*:

It is a great truth that you cannot extinguish violence by violence. You may put it down for a time; but while you are crowing over your imaginary success, see if it does not return with seven devils worse than its former self.

No one thought of treating the workmen as brethren and friends, and openly, clearly, as appealing to reasonable men, stating exactly and fully the circumstances which led the masters to think it was the wise policy of the time to make sacrifices themselves, and to hope for them from the operatives. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 181)

Such an expression of Gothicism is, of course, based on fear, but it is a Gothic fear of fragmentation that reveals the role of Gothicism, in the Realist novel, to be that of a healing one rather than a divisive one, as Moretti argues that the “literature of terror is born precisely *out of the terror of a split society*, and out of the desire to heal it” (83). Sheila M. Smith also alludes to this nineteenth-century terror of a split society when she discusses the Two Nations of the wealthy and the poor and “the belief, very common at the time, that if the Two Nations are brought together in understanding, society’s ills will have a chance of being cured” (25). There is a real fear that is expressed in the Gothicism of Realism that the social and economic ills of the nineteenth century will create not just a Gothic doubling of society, but a social fragmentation reminiscent of the horrors of the French Revolution, or reminiscent of Victor and his monster on a more metaphorical and fictional level.

While many of the examples of Gothicism expressed as a mode in Realism that this dissertation has explored have been in the realm of suffering, oftentimes based on economic and class issues, Gothicism can therefore be seen as a mode of expression in Realism that can foster fellowship and promote partnership through suffering. This fellowship through suffering can be seen in *Mary Barton*, despite John Barton’s early

skepticism of Mr. Carson's ability to suffer, as Barton expresses to Wilson much earlier in the novel, and excerpted earlier in this chapter:³⁰

The eyes of John Barton grew dim with tears. Rich and poor, masters and men, were then brothers in the deep suffering of the heart; for was not this the very anguish he had felt for little Tom, in years so long gone by, that they seemed like another life?

The mourner before him was no longer the employer, a being of another race, eternally placed in antagonistic attitude; going through the world glittering like gold, with a stony heart within, which knew no sorrow but through the accidents of Trade; no longer the enemy, the oppressor, but a very poor and desolate old man.

The sympathy for suffering, formerly so prevalent a feeling with him, again filled John Barton's heart, and almost impelled him to speak (as best he could) some earnest tender words to the stern man, shaking in his agony. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 366)

It is fitting that one of the darkest, most Gothic moments of *Mary Barton* is a potentially violent and fatal one, involving a conflict between middle-class Mr. Carson and working-class John Barton.

Mr Carson took his hands away from his face. I would rather see death than the ghastly gloom which darkened that countenance.

³⁰ "Well, Barton, I'll not gainsay ye. But Mr Carson spoke to me after th' fire, and says he, 'I shall ha' to retrench, and be very careful in my expenditure during these bad times, I assure ye'; so yo see th' masters suffer too."

"Han they ever seen a child o' their'n die for want o' food?' asked Barton, in a low deep voice" (*Mary Barton* 66).

“Let my trespasses be unforgiven, so that I may have vengeance
for my son’s murder.”

There are blasphemous actions as well as blasphemous words: all
unloving, cruel deeds, are acted blasphemy. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 367)

But just as a realization of Mr. Carson’s suffering helped to trigger a sense of fellowship towards him from John Barton’s perspective, it is Mr. Carson’s reciprocal sense of fellowship—despite his murderous rage not long before—that is triggered by a feeling of empathy for John Barton’s economic suffering, and also by a reminder his former, somewhat similar lot in life, as in “the days of his childhood and youth, Mr Carson had been accustomed to poverty; but it was honest, decent poverty; not the grinding squalid misery he had remarked in every part of John Barton’s house, and which contrasted strangely with the pompous sumptuousness of the room in which he now sate. Unaccustomed wonder filled his mind at the reflection of the different lots of the brethren of mankind” (*Mary Barton* 370).

Gothicism can therefore be read as a subtext, and also as a rather ironic facilitator of fellowship in the Realist novel, as such a class-identified version of domesticity—as evident in the home of the Cratchits, and also in the home of John Barton—is representative of an emphasis on interiority that continues to develop in connection with the Gothic as a mode in the Realist novel, and that is based on the familial, domestic interior as a novel space of fear in *Frankenstein*. According to Armstrong, the “novel performed its own version of the inward turn, as it used a class-specific model of the household to displace the ideal of civil society as the collective body on which one depended for care and protection” (7). Similar to how Gothicism was used in the Realist

novel as a way of facilitating partnership and fellowship on the basis of class and labor, Gothicism likewise facilitated an emphasis on domestic fellowship and a focus on the family.

Once novelists displaced the expanded and renewed society imagined by their enlightenment predecessors with a constricted and idealized household, anyone who tried to imagine a different model of social relations had to grapple with the family first. This, I believe, is how Victorian fiction painted modern utopian thinking into a corner, where it either had to come up with a genuine alternative to the modern family or else offer readers a reformed version of the status quo. (Armstrong 9)

Armstrong connects this focus on familial fellowship to the Gothic by claiming that it “is the job of the nineteenth-century gothic: to turn any formation that challenges the nuclear family into a form of degeneracy so hostile to modern selfhood as to negate emphatically its very being” (10). Townshend also connects domestic fellowship and an emphasis on the family to Gothicism, arguing that although “the historical invention of the bourgeois family at the end of the eighteenth century logically precludes the notion of a return to what is figured as an anterior familial unit, the Gothic, through the workings of fantasy, constructs the nuclear family as an *a priori* origin to which the subject need only make its way back” (43). Furthermore, Townshend reinforces the link between domestic fellowship and the theme of interiority in the Gothic:

The Gothic psyche is a strange admixture of surface and interiority. Here, constructions of subjectivity in Gothic writing seem to accord well with Foucault’s model in *Discipline and Punish*, which is, after all, a model of

internalization, particularly in its account of the process in which the modern disciplinary subject internalizes Panoptical technology in the form of the ‘modern soul.’ The only exception to the similarities between the interiority of the Gothic subject and Foucault’s account is that, in Gothic, the modern soul is more the introjected effect of torturous sovereignty than the spectralized product of modernity’s Panoptical arrangements. Even so, Gothic fits well with Foucault’s account of the rise of subjective interiority from the end of the eighteenth century onward. (Townshend 286)

This link between domestic fellowship and the theme of interiority can be discovered in the Gothic novel’s early beginnings, but becomes an even more influential aspect as the Gothic novel evolves throughout the nineteenth century, as this dissertation will establish. Again, *Frankenstein* can be revealed as a key text in terms of developing the theme of interiority in the Gothic, as well as the emphasis on domesticity—and even middle-class domesticity. Kate Ellis observes of the novel and its author that, in “her analysis of domestic affection Mary Shelley carefully sifts the degree to which members of the various families in the novel accede to the separation of male and female spheres of activity characteristic of the bourgeois family” (124). Ellis also observes that it is the monster that articulates “the experience of being denied the domestic affections of a child, sibling, husband, and parent. In his campaign of revenge, the Monster goes to the root of his father’s character deformation, when he wipes out those who played a part, however unwitting, in fostering, justifying, or replicating it” (126). Yet, as horrific as the monster’s murderous rampage on Victor’s family and friends in the novel might be, such

rage is ironically born the monster's extreme desire for domesticity, as he claims that if
 "any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an
 hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind!"
 (Shelley 148). Such extreme emotions in the monster are at the foundation of Ellis's
 discussion of domestic exclusion in the novel:

Repeatedly throughout the novel Shelley gives us examples of the ways in
 which the insulated bourgeois family creates and perpetuates divided
 selves in the name of domestic affection by walling that affection in and
 keeping "disunion and dispute" out. We have noticed already that those
 whose role is to embody domestic affection cannot go out into the world.
 "Insiders" cannot leave, or do so at their peril. At the same time Shelley
 dramatizes, through the experiences of Victor's creature, that 'outsiders'
 cannot enter; they are condemned to perpetual exile and deprivation,
 forbidden even from trying to create a domestic circle of their own. (Ellis
 137)

From Victor's perspective—as the ultimate narrator to Robert Walton of the saga
 between himself and the monster—the monster is the Gothic threat to his past and future
 domesticity, but from the monster's perspective—as a creature possessing no natural
 parentage and no other link to the world of humanity—Victor represents the only chance
 at potential domesticity for the monster, and therefore when Victor perpetually denies
 him that chance, the monster's Gothic rage is unleashed on symbols of Victor's past and
 future domesticity. However, Ellis argues that "an additional meaning emerges if we also
 take the violence in the novel to constitute a language of protest, the effect of which is to

expose the ‘wrongs’ done to women and children, friends and fiancés, in the name of domestic affection” (126).

As has been discovered in relation to *Frankenstein*, particularly through the analysis of Levine, that novel’s influence on the Realist novel—especially the Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode—whether overtly or subconsciously, is extensive. Going so far as to make further connections to Dickens, Levine observes of *Frankenstein* that “[o]ne of the most interesting mirror images is in Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, where the plight of Magwitch, the monstrous-seeming convict who is full of violence and the capacity to love, strangely mirrors the story of the Monster in *Frankenstein*” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 21). Levine argues further of Magwitch that, “if he is like the Monster in one way, he is like Victor in another. To redeem his thwarted life, he creates a gentleman—Pip” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 21), as “Pip refuses to see that he, albeit a gentleman, is a created monster” (“Ambiguous Heritage” 22). Pip, as a monstrous twist of the claim in the *Communist Manifesto* that “the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population” (Marx and Engels 11), is not recruited but is unnaturally created as a gentleman *from* the proletariat class.

Gaskell, likewise, draws a parallel between Victor’s monstrosity and a working-class character: John Barton.

And so on into the problems and mysteries of life, until, bewildered and lost, unhappy and suffering, the only feeling that remained clear and undisturbed in the tumult of his heart, was hatred to the one class, and keen sympathy with the other.

But what availed his sympathy? No education had given him wisdom; and without wisdom, even love, with all its effects, too often works but harm. He acted to the best of his judgment, but it was a widely-erring judgment.

The actions of the uneducated seem to be typified in those of Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities, ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil.

The people rise up to life; they irritate us, they terrify us, and we become their enemies. Then, in the sorrowful moment of our triumphant power, their eyes gaze on us with mute reproach. Why have we made them what they are; a powerful monster, yet without the inner means for peace and happiness?

John Barton became a Chartist, a Communist, all that is commonly called wild and visionary. Ay! but being visionary is something. It shows a soul, a being not altogether sensual; a creature who looks forward for others, if not for himself.

And with all his weakness he had a sort of practical power, which made him useful to the bodies of men to whom he belonged. (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 170)

Such a parallel makes an interesting comparison, but it must also be observed that the monster, in relation to class, represents the economic and social nadir. As the monster's "unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes" (Shelley 102), the monster has no place within commodity capital, as he has no natural records of his birth

and lineage, has no name, and is utterly unemployable on account of his hideousness. Even in his attempt to build an account with the De Lacey family in the novel on the basis of assisting in their labor by “collecting wood for the family fire” (Shelley 114), the monster is eventually thwarted by his own hideousness and the family’s negative reaction to it. The result is an epiphany of the implications of his own hideousness, as well as of his hopeless role in relation to humanity:

“I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages; but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury on my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?” (Shelley 123)

This concept of monstrosity will continue in the nineteenth-century Gothic, as despite its inherent focus on the real, Realism’s expression of Gothicism as a mode would continue to push the limits of reality on the basis of the physical exterior and an emerging

psychological interior, culminating in a reemergence of the truly Gothic novel in connection with Naturalism.

CHAPTER 3

WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND THE NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION OF THE
GOTHIC MONSTER

Ellen Moers writes of *Frankenstein* that what “Mary Shelley actually did in *Frankenstein* was to transform the standard Romantic matter of incest, infanticide, and patricide into a phantasmagoria of the nursery. Nothing quite like it was done in English literature until that Victorian novel by a woman which we also place uneasily in the Gothic tradition: *Wuthering Heights*” (87). While *Frankenstein* is complicated by its nascent Realism, as well as by its status as—by general consensus—the first Science Fiction novel, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is a primary example of a text that can certainly be considered as part of the Gothic tradition, as Moers concedes, but rather is more accurately a Realist novel that expresses the Gothic as a mode than it is a Gothic novel *per se*. However, *Wuthering Heights* is decidedly something very different from the more industrially-based Realist novels expressing Gothicism as a mode that were discussed in the previous chapter. While Brontë’s novel is set in the West Riding of Yorkshire, just east of the industrial county of Lancashire—as Lancashire is the setting of *Mary Barton*, and might also be the setting of *North and South* and *Hard Times*—its association with industry is almost nonexistent. But despite lacking an active association with industry, *Wuthering Heights* is a novel that concerns itself with social issues, similar to almost all of the novels and works of art discussed in Chapter 2.

Ever since *Frankenstein* and the evolving relationship between Realism and the Gothic, the more exclusively supernatural monsters of the early Gothic novel were replaced by a version of humanity, but a humanity made monstrous. Victor’s monster,

after all, is human in his foundation, but Victor renders monstrous his collection of human parts through his supernatural aspirations as a creator of life. Likewise, the humans rendered monstrous of the industrial Realist novel are Gothicized as the feared Other as a result of the power struggle between the employer and employees, and their Gothicization of each other, but despite these Gothic enhancements, they are all indeed but human beings made monstrous. Even the later Gothic monsters at the end of the nineteenth century—Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, Dorian Gray, and Dracula—despite their Gothic powers of transformation and apparent immortality, begin as human beings and are consequently made monstrous. This chapter specifically explores how, reminiscent of the supernatural Gothic of the early Gothic novel, Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* is a human character made monstrous, enhanced by economic factors, his sexuality, and an element of cannibalism, and also enhanced by a fairy tale element reminiscent of the supernatural monsters of the early Gothic novel.

What these changes and enhancements in these initially human and consequently Gothic characters indicate is an evolution of the Gothic monster during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a species, the Gothic monster in Realism is made monstrous by acquiring monstrous traits, culminating in characters that—like the *fin de siècle* Gothic monsters mentioned above—possess sufficient wealth, power, social advantage, and privilege. However, such monsters also possess traits of sexual deviance, and even cannibalism. This chapter will explore not only how all of these traits are acquired by the species of the Gothic monster in mid-nineteenth century Realism—by looking to Heathcliff as a prime example of this monstrous evolution—but also how the Gothic monster is expressed through increasingly scientific terms leading up to the evolution to

Naturalism discussed in this dissertation's final chapter. Such a monstrous Gothic expression reveals not only another link between *Frankenstein* and the Gothic of Realism, but it also reveals the evolution of the Realist novel, that expresses Gothicism as a mode, to the Naturalist Gothic novel. This evolution of science in Gothic expression is consistent with the development of proto-Naturalism in the Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode, and it also coincides with the development of a doubling of science. Again consistent with the development of Naturalism in the Gothic novel at the end of the nineteenth century, a scientific study of a psychological interior—rooted in the concept of the domestic family and also the theme of isolation in the Gothic expressions of Realism—doubles the more established scientific exteriority of the natural sciences in the nineteenth-century novel. As discussed in the previous chapter, social isolation is a transgression in the nineteenth-century novel, and the Gothic is used to promote human fellowship over social isolation, despite its stereotypically fearful and divisive qualities. However, isolation does enhance a sense of interiority, as the isolated individual is oftentimes explored on a psychological basis in Realism. The isolated environment in *Wuthering Heights* therefore enhances an interiorized psychological element in the novel, consistent with Naturalism's even more thorough focus on psychological interiority at the *fin de siècle*.

While isolation is a major theme in *Wuthering Heights*, and while Heathcliff is in many ways a primary symbol of isolation in the isolated world of Brontë's novel, the novel's ultimate message is that of human fellowship as represented by the demise of Heathcliff and the union of Cathy and Hareton at the end of the novel. However, even though Heathcliff, in his isolation, ultimately suffers a tragic end like Victor in

Frankenstein, the demise and supplantation of Victor and Heathcliff supports an argument for the privileging of human fellowship over social isolation. Therefore, like Victor, Heathcliff can actually be read as a similar symbol in the interest of a promotion of social healing via the Gothic in *Wuthering Heights*, at least as a lesson representing what is *not* conducive to positive human fellowship.³¹ Despite Heathcliff's isolationism, Matthew Beaumont argues that "Heathcliff's desire for a form of sexual consummation with Catherine which is, at the same time, a kind of consumption of her, is an expression of his own, and indeed Emily Brontë's desire to heal at the level of individual relations the very split that structures the social world of the Heights" (140). Therefore, on an individual level, Heathcliff is indeed capable of overcoming his tendencies towards social isolation in terms of his desire for union with Catherine, and this might be extended to the ultimate message of social healing and human fellowship at the end of the novel, on a larger scale. Beaumont also argues that, in "*Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë demonstrates that the barbaric is a fantastic projection structural to the self-identification of civilised culture, and that, as such, it is ultimately a reflection of this culture's own fractured and troubled identity" (140). *Wuthering Heights* is certainly consistent with a cultural reflection of "fractured and troubled identity"—though again, the ultimate message of the novel undercuts that argument—but the novel also challenges what is considered barbaric or civilized, consistent with the manner in which the Gothic has been represented in this dissertation.

Again at stake in *Wuthering Heights*—as well as in many of the other Gothic texts and Realist texts that express Gothicism as a mode that have been discussed in this

³¹ Similar to how Scrooge, before his conversion of character, represents a negative and ultimately tragic example.

dissertation—is an interiorized sense of family and domesticity that is in conflict with the Gothic. Heathcliff maintains an ambiguous relationship with domesticity in the novel, as Terry Eagleton explains in his discussion of the youthful beginnings of Heathcliff’s relationship with Catherine:

Both are allowed to run wild; both become the “outside” of the domestic structure. Because his birth is unknown, Heathcliff is a purely atomised individual, free of generational ties in a novel where genealogical relations are of crucial thematic and structural importance; and it is because he is an internal *émigré* within the Heights that he can lay claim to a relationship of direct personal equality with Catherine who, as the daughter of the family, is the least economically integral member. Heathcliff offers Catherine a friendship which opens fresh possibilities of freedom within the internal system of the Heights; in a situation where social determinants are insistent, freedom can mean only a relative independence of given blood-ties, of the settled, evolving, predictable structures of kinship. (Eagleton 103)

Heathcliff’s status as an economic, social, and familial outsider in the novel might lead one to read him as a character who is marginalized and even excluded from the domestic sphere. Despite such a reading, his early relationship with Catherine reveals his desire for domesticity. However, as their union with each other, as youths, exists almost exclusively in the outdoor exterior of nature, Heathcliff’s desire is for a domesticity of the natural exterior rather than the cultural interior, as the two characters seem far more at home in the exterior rather than the interior. Eagleton argues that, in “loving Heathcliff,

Catherine is taken outside the family and society into an opposing realm which can be adequately imaged only as ‘Nature’” (103), and that therefore one might assume that “Nature and culture, then, are locked in a complex relation of antagonism and affinity” (107). *Wuthering Heights* interiorizes, cultures, and domesticates the exterior, as Eagleton argues that “Nature, in any case, is no true ‘outside’ to society, since its conflicts are transposed into the social arena. In one sense the novel sharply contrasts Nature and society; in another sense it grasps civilised life as a higher distillation of ferocious natural appetite. Nature, then, is a thoroughly ambiguous category, inside and outside society simultaneously” (110).

Thrushcross Grange represents a more typical and traditional sense of domesticity that is easily perceived as in conflict with the Gothic, but the rural Gothic of *Wuthering Heights* and *Wuthering Heights* challenges this traditional notion of domesticity, placing a stronger emphasis on individual value and responsibility, as Eagleton points out that “the family, at once social institution and domain of intensely interpersonal relationships, highlights the complex interplay between an evolving system of given unalterable relations and the creation of individual value” (98). In chapter 6, when the young Heathcliff and Catherine read an element of the dark and Gothic that subverts an imagined sense of domestic and familial harmony in Thrushcross Grange—as Heathcliff deridingly tells Nelly that Isabella “lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her” and “Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them” (Emily Brontë 44)—the status quo of the Grange mans its defenses.

Dorothy Van Ghent positions the status quo of the Grange as a civilized culture that is Gothically doubled by the inhumanity of the Heights, as “*Wuthering Heights* exists for the mind as a tension between two kinds of reality: the raw, inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies, and the restrictive reality of civilized habits, manners, and codes” (199). However, Eagleton argues that, as “the children spy on the Linton family, that concealed brutality is unleashed in the shape of bulldogs brought to the defence of civility. The natural energy in which the Linton’s culture is rooted bursts literally through to savage the ‘savages’ who appear to threaten property” (106-107). Speaking of the domestic culture imagined in Thrushcross Grange, Beaumont argues that this “culture, if in a rarified fashion, turns out to be quite as cruelly barbaric as that of the Heights—and all the more so because of its deceptively polite surface” (141). For Beaumont, “*Wuthering Heights* unveils the profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization, to use Marx’s expressive phrases—but it quite deliberately returns to home in order to do so” (138).

It is clear that Brontë means to represent *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange as Gothic doubles of each other. The aesthetic and economic differences between the houses are plain to see, as Heathcliff tells Nelly that Thrushcross Grange is ““a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers”” (Emily Brontë 43-44), which reveals his having never seen a chandelier before. Lockwood observes of *Wuthering Heights* that the main family sitting room area was a “huge, warm, cheerful apartment” (Emily Brontë 7), but the “furniture would have been nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely,

northern farmer” (Emily Brontë 3). The two houses seem to, in many ways, parallel the aesthetic and economic Gothic double of the woodman’s daughter and the aristocratic boy in Millais’s *The Woodman’s Daughter* (fig. 6). However, as with Millais’s painting and the crimson-covered petulance of the aristocratic boy, there is a darker, Gothic reading of Thrushcross Grange that is consistent with Heathcliff’s youthful criticisms to Nelly of the house’s inhabitants, as Barbara Munson Goff observes: “Artificial wealth has made it possible for the inhabitants of Thrushcross Grange, including the tenant Lockwood, to cut themselves off from the land, do no work for a living, and act out a town scenario in the midst of the rugged moors, which they keep out of sight and mind by the gardens, fences, and hedges of Thrushcross Park” (493). Even though the rural setting of the novel seems isolated from the neighboring county of Lancashire’s plentitude of urbanized industry, it is still a novel that is as much to do with the working class as those written by Dickens and Gaskell. Goff argues that “*Wuthering Heights* itself testifies to the close attention Brontë had paid the working people among whom she grew up, to her fondness for their ‘plain speaking’ and matter-of-fact vision of the ways of the world and of their supposed ‘betters.’ Brontë was schooled by them” (481). Goff also observes of the novel that “there seems so much blatant cruelty and destructiveness on the premises. Considering that action, however, within the context of the realities of rural life—a context not available to most urbane reviewers and critics and, consequently, not brought to bear on the action—goes far toward explaining it as one of the hard facts of a harder way of life” (497). Like the more industrially-based novels discussed in the previous chapter, *Wuthering Heights* Gothicizes these “betters” despite their at least logistical, rural isolation from urban industry, as Beaumont observes of Brontë that, “if

the city hardly seemed heavenly to her, she held no illusions about the surrounding hills either. After all, their fictional inhabitants are scarcely serene, and the isolated community on the moors is not inviolate or even self-contained. Conflict between the yeoman farming culture of *Wuthering Heights* and the agrarian capitalist culture of Thrushcross Grange structures its social relations” (138).

This distinctly rural combination of agrarianism in close proximity to the industry and international trade of neighboring Lancashire creates a unique setting for the Gothic elements of the novel. Eagleton observes that its characters “happened to live in a region which revealed the friction between land and industry in peculiarly stark form—starker, certainly, than in a purely agrarian or industrial area. The same part of the country, as we have seen, witnessed working-class struggle at an extraordinary pitch of militancy, and in that sense too highlighted certain ‘typical’ historical trends” (8). Aside from this Gothicized combination of urban and rural working-class struggle in the regional setting of the novel, the element of isolation that Brontë constructs likewise enhances the modal expression of Gothicism in *Wuthering Heights*. Jack Morgan observes that the “Gothic tale is itself a closed system” (76), and this is certainly true of the Gothic mode of expression in *Wuthering Heights*. Arthur Pollard observes that the title of the novel “directs us compellingly to the harshness of the place. The novel itself portrays a confined world of fierce passions—jealousy, hatred, and love as hard as hatred” (115). Eagleton parallels the fictional harshness and isolation of *Wuthering Heights* with the environment in which the author of the novel was raised, as he claims of the Brontë sisters that they “were *isolated* educated women, socially and geographically remote from a world with which they nonetheless maintained close intellectual touch, and so driven

back on themselves in solitary emotional hungering. At certain points in their fiction, indeed, that loneliness becomes type and image of the isolation of all men in an individualist society” (8).

The isolation of the moors around the Heights, the Grange, and the area of Gimmerton transforms the novel’s English rurality into a setting that is as Gothic as any foreign land that served as the setting for countless Gothic novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. As Emily’s sister, Charlotte, would observe in her preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, “the inhabitants, the customs, the natural characteristics of the outlying hills and hamlets in the West-Riding of Yorkshire are things alien and unfamiliar” (Charlotte Brontë 179). That alien unfamiliarity, of course, breeds fear. Such fear is a very elemental, primeval fear, whether it is a fear of the inhabitants or the outlying hills and moors. Romer Wilson claims that the “moors are primeval; perhaps that is why they repulse many folk and are meaningless to others. The old primeval passions wake there still, with the old monotony and timelessness that cares nothing for an hour or a million years. The moors care nothing for you or me, as you or me, nothing at all. They know neither time nor man” (75).³²

Brontë uses this setting and these moors to foster a Gothic environment—a Gothic environment that in turn fosters characters that express the dark mode of Gothicism. Consequently, in rendering the moors Gothically monstrous, critics tend to anthropomorphize the moors, as Wilson writes that the “moors are not all fulfillment, they are craving also. Ecstasy of experience and ecstasy of desire. Though we hear the music of the spheres, we burn with a heathenish desire for reciprocation. There is hate,

³² In many ways foreshadowing Marlow’s sojourn into isolation up the Congo River in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where Marlow observes that the “smell of mud, of primeval mud, by Jove! was in my nostrils, the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes” (Conrad 85).

black as night up there” (76). Wilson also echoes the primeval reading of the moors by claiming that there is “an unrest and black craving in those moors; the unrest of the lost who have seen Heaven and know hell. A backward going from the day of cities to the time when God walked upon the earth” (77). Again, such a setting has a significant level of Gothic influence on the psychological as well as moral make-up of the characters that inhabit such an environment, as “the dark people go on to the moor to rejoice in the pride of their loneliness, to exalt their exile and their sufferings” (Wilson 78), and “[n]o human man or woman could bear the passion of creatures such as these, unless their souls were made of the same strife. Not even then. It is a damnation to succumb to the love of lost souls of the moor” (Wilson 77). Naturally—and in acknowledgement of the extreme dysfunctionality of their relationship—Wilson focuses such a reading on the two main characters of the novel:

No sane man could stand Catherine for a wife, no sane woman Heathcliff for a husband.

These creatures are the dark part in us, the unmatable, the utterly lone.

They have their sweet moments, their moments of beauty and rapture, but their ravings are not comfortable and not good. They do not wish those they love greater torment than they have themselves. They only wish never to be parted from their loves—either in torment or in joy.
(Wilson 77-78)

Heathcliff and Catherine, at least in their youth, are paired in isolation, acting as a microcosmic relationship built on isolation within the novel’s setting built on that very

same principle. However, before their paired relationship is formed, and after Catherine's death, Heathcliff is the epitome of isolation in the novel, as Eagleton points out that "he is cast out by Hindley, culturally deprived, reduced to the status of farm-labourer" (104).

Though marked by his race rather than an appearance of ugliness, Heathcliff, during his early days in the novel, plays a role similar to the monster in *Frankenstein*, but while the monster had no recourse whatsoever, Heathcliff carries only his humanity as consolation, as Eagleton discusses Heathcliff:

Stripped as he is of determinate social relations, of a given function within the family, Heathcliff's presence is radically gratuitous; the arbitrary, unmotivated event of his arrival at the Heights offers its inhabitants a chance to transcend the constrictions of their self-enclosed social structure and gather him in. Because Heathcliff's circumstances are so obscure he is available to be accepted or rejected simply for himself, laying claim to no status other than a human one. He is, of course, proletarian in appearance, but the obscurity of his origins also frees him of any exact social role. (Eagleton 102)

However, as the novel progresses, Heathcliff acquires a social role within the novel, and he does so in a manner that is reminiscent of the isolated, Gothic self-interest that has been revealed in *Scrooge*, *Slackbridge*, *Bounderby*, *Carson*, and many others in Realist novels that express Gothicism as a mode. While *Bounderby* invented his history as a self-made man, Heathcliff is a character that is a self-made man from as humble beginnings as anything that *Bounderby* imagined. However, Heathcliff's social role is

that of a self-made man that has no interest in anyone but himself—including his selfish desire for Catherine—and is therefore a negative, monstrous example of social isolation and self-interest like the other fictional men listed above.

Heathcliff, in his self-interested quest for revenge on *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*, is every bit as ruthless a businessman as Scrooge, Bounderby, or Carson, and is therefore a man rendered monstrous on a socioeconomic level. Eagleton claims that, in “pitting himself against both yeomanry and large-scale agrarian capitalism, then, Heathcliff is an indirect symbol of the aggressive industrial bourgeoisie of Emily Brontë’s own time, a social trend extrinsic to both classes but implicated in their fortunes” (116). Furthermore, his racial Othering in the novel as “a dark-skinned gipsy” (Emily Brontë 3), and his unknown “‘cuckoo’s’” (Emily Brontë 31) history, lead not only to questions but to outright fantasies in terms of his ethnicity and past. Such an unknown pedigree in Heathcliff also leaves open the enhancement of his monstrosity in the novel on the basis of fairy tale. Eagleton points out that Nelly compares Heathcliff to a Prince: “as Nelly Dean muses [...] he might equally be a prince” (102). Nelly seems to be simultaneously humoring young, despondent Heathcliff with a romanticized story about his past in order to make him feel better, while also projecting her own romanticized fantasy vicariously on to the boy:

“You’re fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week’s income, *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth;

and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer!” (Emily Brontë 52-53)

Yet, even critics acknowledge the fairy tale aspects of the novel, as Beaumont argues of a scene later in the novel—when Catherine is near death—that “*Wuthering Heights* is never more a fairy tale than in this scene. For Heathcliff desires not only sexual union with Catherine, but also her unborn child, and the right to its paternity—in order to merge himself with her and, simultaneously, to sever himself from the Lintons and the Earnshaws” (158-159). Van Ghent connects Heathcliff’s fairy tale aspect to that of his relationship to morality and evil, claiming that if “Heathcliff is really of daemonic origin, he is, in a sense, indeed of ‘high birth,’ a ‘prince in disguise,’ and might be expected, like the princes of fairy tale, to drop his ‘disguise’ at the crisis of the tale and be revealed in original splendor” (205). Therefore, the role of the fairy tale in the enhancement of Heathcliff’s monstrosity can be read as a reference to the more supernatural, demonic, and unreal monsters that haunted the pages of the early Gothic novel.

Even beyond his monstrous enhancement in relation to fairy tale, Heathcliff indeed is enhanced by some of the very same demonic and supernatural aspects that empowered Gothic monsters in the early Gothic novel. Nelly, in particular, attaches multiple demonic and devilish epithets to Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Likewise, Van Ghent discusses how “Heathcliff’s eyes have been spoken of as ‘the clouded windows of hell’ from which a ‘fiend’ looks out. All other uses of the ‘window’ that we have spoken of here are not figurative but perfectly naturalistic uses, though their symbolic value is inescapable” (202). For Van Ghent, “the fact that Heathcliff’s eyes refuse to close in death suggests the symbol in a metaphorical form (the ‘fiend’ has now

got 'out,' leaving the window open), elucidating with simplicity the meaning of the 'window' as a separation between the daemonic depths of the soul and the limited and limiting lucidities of consciousness, a separation between the soul's 'otherness' and its humanness" (202).

A darker, Gothic reading of the scene of Mr. Earnshaw's death further enhances Heathcliff's monstrosity, and also implicates Catherine. If Catherine can be seen to be vulnerable to the accusation that she practiced the "Black Art" that the younger Cathy would playfully indulge in (Emily Brontë 13), then Heathcliff's spiritual and also physical connection to Catherine, when Mr. Earnshaw passes away, also implicates Heathcliff. As Catherine "leant against her father's knee" with Heathcliff "lying on the floor with his head in her lap" she kissed her father's hand, "and said she would sing him to sleep. She began singing very low, till his fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast" (Emily Brontë 39). This could certainly be read as a nice little scene where a father dies sweetly under the caresses and docile tones of his daughter, but it could also be read as a man having his life sucked right out of him with a low demonic chant performed by his daughter and her demonic cohort!

Despite these fairy tale and demonic fantasies, Heathcliff is not a story book prince or evil demon, as he actually functions rather well within the socioeconomic environment of the novel, once he is sufficiently acclimated. Daniela Garofalo points out that "Heathcliff's form of love is not the inassimilable other of capitalism but functions, on the contrary, as a necessary fantasy that energizes a culture of both production and consumption. His love is not the opposite of his culture of acquisition but the necessary erotic force that makes it work better" (819). In reality, he is no more primeval or

barbaric than the other characters in the novel, as Beaumont argues that his ““otherness”” and his “own supposedly barbaric origins serve starkly to expose, by comparison, the barbarism of his civilised new environment” (138).

While the fairy tale enhancements of Heathcliff in the novel are reminiscent of the supernatural Gothic monsters of the early Gothic novels, Heathcliff is also a man rendered monstrous by his vengeful economic agenda in the novel, and also by allusions to cannibalism. Consistent with Eagleton’s reading of the novel, Garofalo analyzes Heathcliff’s position in the novel on the basis of his relationship to capitalism:

Heathcliff is not the anachronistic other of capitalism but that his desire is made to order for this new economy, which gains its luster from what seems to lie outside of capitalism. If from Lockwood’s perspective Heathcliff is an interesting rustic obsessed with his one object, unable to consume a variety of dishes like the urban sophisticate, Heathcliff proves to be a far more modern figure than Lockwood might wish to believe: not a throwback to an older era but a modern capitalist, brutal, hard-headed and miserly, addicted to the accumulation of property both in the form of people and land. In this way he actually represents not the opposition to capitalism but a way of, as it were, being a capitalist and enjoying it too. Unadulterated by the excesses of consumption that cloy Lockwood’s palate, Heathcliff represents those archetypal Victorian figures such as the captain of industry, the venture capitalist, or the imperialist. (Garofalo 828-829)

While Garofalo uses the terms of consumption above, Beaumont takes things a step further, arguing that Heathcliff exhibits cannibalistic qualities, as the novel “uses images of cannibalism in order to strip this culture of its respectable clothing and expose it in its naked form” (138-139). According to Beaumont, such a depiction should render Heathcliff unredeemably barbaric, as the “almost unspeakable barbarity of cannibalism is an unassailable popular rationale behind Europe’s civilising mission throughout this period” (143), and according to “the colonial culture of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, the cannibal was the ultimate image of the other” (143). Of course, Mr. Earnshaw collects Heathcliff on the streets of Liverpool. As an international seaport, this leaves open the possibility that he could indeed have origins in a culture that contemporary English society would have deemed barbaric to the point of cannibalism. Even though Mr. Earnshaw’s collection of him seems to have been an act of charity and kindness, he does the child no favors in introducing him to the family by remarking that “‘it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil’” (Emily Brontë 33). Such a remark is, as Beaumont argues, consistent with “Emily Brontë’s often allusive identification of Heathcliff with the emblematic figure of the cannibal, which, historically, has functioned in imperial discourse as the ultimate emblem of enlightened civilization’s dark other” (139). H. L. Malchow also connects such imagery to the Gothic, arguing that “Cannibalism evokes an even deeper response than Western sexual taboos, with which it has much resonance. It is such an obviously available trigger for sensational emotion that virtually all gothic literature employs some anthropophagic element” (45). Nelly certainly does well to perpetuate such a cannibalistic depiction, as she remembers that, when Heathcliff and Catherine were “locked in an embrace from which I thought my

mistress would never be released alive” Heathcliff “gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered her to him with greedy jealousy” (Emily Brontë 152). She later recounts that Heathcliff, “lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast” (Emily Brontë 158), and also later muses to herself, ““Is he a ghoul or a vampire?”” (Emily Brontë 310).

Consistent with the theme of consumption and also the taboo of cannibalism, Heathcliff is also a highly sexualized monster, setting the stage for later Gothic monsters in that tradition, such as Mr. Hyde, Dr. Jekyll, and Dracula. Mark Schorer argues that Heathcliff, as well as Catherine, are “demonic beings” that are “special creatures, set apart from the cloddish world about them by their heightened capacity for feeling, set apart even from the ordinary objects of human passion as, in their transcendent, supersexual relationship, they present themselves in the stature of beings larger than life, as mythical powers, nearly, in their identification with an uncompromising landscape and cosmic force” (185). Van Ghent also writes of the “inhuman excess of Heathcliff’s and Catherine’s passion” (200). Their passion might seem *inhuman* in light of the bestial manner that Heathcliff, at least, tends to express his own part, but more accurately that passion might be considered to be *suprahuman*, as it exceeds the social and moral boundaries of humanity in Heathcliff’s refusal to accept Catherine as lost to him despite her marriage to Edgar, while Catherine likewise seems to desire a union with Heathcliff, as well as Edgar, that rejects human convention. Garofalo write that, “[a]bsurdly, impossibly, Catherine proposes that Heathcliff be brought into the Linton family, that he be allowed to share their wealth, that he should also enjoy the love of Linton’s wife, and that Catherine should give up on nothing—not her social ambition, her conventional love

for Edgar, nor her passion for Heathcliff” (832), and she “continues to ask for it when Heathcliff returns, when she hopes for a kind of *ménage à trios* or perhaps *quatre*, if one takes Isabella into account” (834). James Phillips also argues that, with “regard to Linton, Catherine’s love is determined empirically: it presupposes a scrutiny of experience and an evaluation of the relevant data. She reserves the right to cease loving him once there is no longer a basis” (96). However, as Phillips argues, she “is unable to bring herself to acknowledge disloyalty to either Heathcliff or Linton because she does not see their claims as overlapping. It is the people around her who foment conflict between the empirical and transcendental aspects of her love” (97).

Catherine just cannot see anything wrong with loving Edgar and Heathcliff at the same time, and the result is a three-headed chimaera of sexual and socioeconomic monstrosity. Heathcliff is the Gothic, social, and economic double of Edgar, but Catherine of course, famously claims to Nelly: “‘*I am Heathcliff!*’” (Emily Brontë 77). Therefore, as she is transcendently linked to Heathcliff, and legally/economically/ socially linked to Edgar, Heathcliff and Edgar represent a Gothic duality of a fragmentation of the character of Catherine, similar to the fragmentation of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Edgar represents her more material aspirations, while Heathcliff represents her more spiritual or naturalistic aspirations. After all, Heathcliff views the love between himself and Catherine as more profound than any, admitting that “‘I was a fool to fancy for a moment that she valued Edgar Linton’s attachment more than mine. If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn’t love as much in eighty years as I could in a day. And Catherine has a heart as deep as I have: the sea could be as readily contained in that horsetrough, as her whole affection be monopolized by him’” (Emily

Brontë 141). Furthermore, Phillips's "transcendental" depiction of their love is supported when Heathcliff asks of Catherine, "'Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you—oh, God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?'" (Emily Brontë 152), and also when he exclaims after her death, "'I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!'" (Emily Brontë 158). Heathcliff even desires to be composted with his love, as he strikes one side of Catherine's coffin loose and "'bribed the sexton to pull it away, when I'm laid there, and slide mine out too. I'll have it made so, and then, by the time Linton gets to us, he'll not know which is which!'" (Emily Brontë 270). But of course, the implication is that, ultimately, they will all be composted together, though Heathcliff will beat his rival to her. Such a composting of the love triangle is consistent with Van Ghent's argument that there exists in the novel "an imaged recognition of that part of nature which is 'other' than the human soul (the world of the elements and the animals) and of that part of the soul itself which is 'other' than the conscious part" (202).

In many ways, Heathcliff might be interpreted as a Gothic double of himself in *Wuthering Heights*, consistent with Eagleton's remark on his duality: "He is, indeed, contradiction incarnate—both progressive and outdated" (112-113). His relationship to the Heights and the Grange is also one of a double-duality, as Eagleton observes:

[H]is roughness and resilience link him culturally to *Wuthering Heights*, and he exploits those qualities to destroy both it and the Grange. He is, then, a force which springs out of the Heights yet subverts it, breaking beyond its constrictions into a new, voracious acquisitiveness. His capitalist brutality is an extension as well as a negation of the Heights world he knew as a child; and to that extent there is continuity between his

childhood and adult protests against Grange values, if not against Grange weapons. Heathcliff is subjectively a Heights figure opposing the Grange, and objectively a Grange figure undermining the Heights; he focuses acutely the contradictions between the two worlds. His rise to power symbolises at once the triumph of the oppressed over capitalism and the triumph of capitalism over the oppressed. (Eagleton 112)

Furthermore, Heathcliff's duality reverberates throughout the other characters in the novel, according to Van Ghent:

Heathcliff does have human shape and human relationships; he is, so to speak, "caught in" the human; two kinds of reality intersect in him—as they do, with a somewhat different balance, in Catherine; as they do, indeed, in the other characters. Each entertains, in some degree, the powers of darkness—from Hindley, with his passion for self-destruction (he, too, wants to get "out"), to Nelly Dean, who in a sense "propitiates" those powers with the casuistry of her actions, and even to Lockwood, with his sadistic dream. Even in the weakest of these souls there is an intimation of the dark Otherness, by which the soul is related psychologically to the inhuman world of pure energy, for it carries within itself an "otherness" of its own, that inhabits below consciousness. (Van Ghent 203)

This sense of duality in the characters of *Wuthering Heights*, and particularly in the characters of Heathcliff and Catherine, displays a physical world that is not only fraught with social mores and conventions, but is also a world that privileges nature over those

mores and conventions. With its sense of isolation *Wuthering Heights* rejects the outside world and instead embraces the physical nature of the world of the novel as a sense of escape—again, Heathcliff and Catherine are primary in this construct—and also the psychological and spiritual world as a sense of escape, and it does so in the manner of Realism that expresses Gothicism as a mode, as this subjugated Gothic world is likewise a realm of escape. Consequently, in the Gothic Naturalist novel later in the nineteenth century, these themes of a physical exteriority and a psychological interiority allow Gothicism to escape from its subjugated role in the Realist novel. At the *fin de siècle*, Naturalism embraces Gothicism more completely.

As with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this movement towards Naturalism likewise focuses more on the scientific, whether it be the physical sciences or the emergence of a more thorough study of the psychological towards the end of the nineteenth century, and signs of this proto-Naturalist movement towards the scientific can be discovered in *Wuthering Heights*. While referring to *Frankenstein* and science in the *fin de siècle* Gothic, Beaumont argues that "*Wuthering Heights* is something like a missing link between these two gothic accounts of the limits of an instrumentalist attitude to science, in its emphasis on the inseparable unity of the monster and the monster's scientific creator, and on the dialectic of civilization and barbarism" (154). Van Ghent also acknowledges the *elemental* aspect of the novel, as its "strangeness is the perfect simplicity with which it presents its elemental figures almost naked of the web of civilized habits, ways of thinking, forms of intercourse, that provides the familiar background of other fiction" (198).

Although it was published in 1847, *Wuthering Heights* is a novel that exhibits not only the sense of physical exteriority and psychological interiority that would become integral to the Naturalist method later in the century, but the novel also exhibits an expression of proto-Naturalism that coincides with its Realist expression of Gothicism as a mode. Joseph Carroll argues that by “foregrounding the idea of human nature, Darwinian literary theory provides a framework within which we can assimilate previous insights about *Wuthering Heights*” (1), as “a Darwinian approach has a naturalistic aesthetic dimension that is particularly important for interpreting *Wuthering Heights*” (1). Quite clearly, nature plays a very prominent role in *Wuthering Heights*, reminiscent of the Romantic Gothic in the early 1800s and late 1700s. Arnold Kettle observes of the novel that its “powerful evocation of nature, of moorland and storm, of the stars and the seasons is an essential part of its revelation of the very movement of life itself. The men and women of *Wuthering Heights* are not the prisoners of nature; they live in the world and strive to change it, sometimes successfully, always painfully, with almost infinite difficulty and error” (196-197). But despite the novel’s connections to the earlier Gothicism of Romanticism, the manner in which nature is presented and utilized in *Wuthering Heights* more often looks forward to Naturalism than backwards to the early Gothic novels. Kettle also argues that “[t]here is nothing vague about this novel” (189), and that the “power and wonder of Emily Brontë’s novel does not lie in naturalistic description, nor in a detailed analysis of the hour-by-hour issues of social living” (189). While perhaps the “power and wonder” of the novel is not reliant upon any sense of naturalistic description or detailed analysis, there is most certainly a strong sense of vagueness about the novel ranging from questions concerning its narration, to questions

concerning character motivations, to the questionable relationship that the isolated setting shares with the outside world—if any such relationship exists. Furthermore, Kettle argues for a seemingly ironic sense of scientific precision in the novel, essentially connecting the novel to a sense of scientific naturalism:

[T]he mists in it are the mists of the Yorkshire moors; if we speak of it as having an elemental quality it is because the very elements, the great forces of nature are evoked, which change so slowly that in the span of a human life they seem unchanging. But in this evocation there is nothing sloppy or uncontrolled. On the contrary the realization is intensely concrete: we seem to smell the kitchen of *Wuthering Heights*, to feel the force of the wind across the moors, to sense the very changes of the seasons. Such concreteness is achieved not by mistiness but by precision.

(Kettle 189)

For Kettle, it appears, such concreteness is scientific.

It is quite possible that Emily had a scientific background that would have been sufficient in terms of allowing for an at least nascent scientific naturalism in *Wuthering Heights*. Goff observes that “Emily copied drawings from Thomas Bewick’s *British Birds* (1797), and all three sisters did naturalistic portraits of the family pets. Given their obvious interest in natural history, it is probably a persistent sentimentalism (and possibly sexism) regarding the Brontës’ intellectual isolation that has prevented us from seeing them relatively aggressively pursuing scientific interests” (489). Edward Chitham observes that “Emily did indeed adore (in a real sense) the world of nature, but in an interesting way” (208), and that way appears to have been scientific, as Chitham also

observes that “weather, times of day, seasons, clouds, winds, sunlight, grey stones, masses of heather, the wheeling lapwing, imbue a great deal in her work” (208). Furthermore, Chitham observes that, in her essay “‘*Le Papillon*’ Emily broods on the predatory aspect of Nature. She notes the chain of predation, one creature on another, and the way in which man completes the chain. In fact, Nature is inexplicable: ‘*elle existe sur un principe de destruction*’” (148). This is key, because it reveals that Brontë’s depiction and exploration of nature indeed goes well beyond a Romanticized representation, and is far more an early expression of Naturalism. Goff argues that the “novel is about far more fundamental, eternal human problems and overwhelms us with its remorseless—if not easily definable—sense of the workings of things” (481).

This lack of remorse and a documentary inquiry into “the workings of things” is indicative of a more Naturalist agenda in representation, as well as even a pre-*Origin of Species* Darwinian inquiry. Goff argues that “Emily Brontë became as determined as Darwin to present the whole picture of human nature and as driven as an Old Testament prophet to speak the truth, regardless of its effect on an audience for whose moral weaknesses she, like the prophets and her own Joseph, felt little pity” (482), revealing an agenda in Brontë that tended more towards a Naturalist attempt at an objective truth rather than a “truth” based on a Realist social agenda. Goff also argues that “Brontë’s vision of the natural order of things, as I have suggested, was very close to Darwin’s, based, as it may have been, on the same sources—both written and observed—and the same sense of wonder in the beauty, economy, justice, and apparent wisdom of ‘Nature,’ in Brontë’s case, or ‘natural selection’ in Darwin’s” (494). As a result, “for both Darwin and Brontë, unnecessary cruelty was the distinct feature of human behavior. In nature,

death and destruction on a massive scale are necessary for the proliferation of life and variety” (Goff 495), and Brontë’s novel reveals “an intuitive, religious version of the theory of natural selection, derived, as Darwin’s was, from close observation of nature and a profound respect for its driving forces, the simultaneity of creation and destruction, the laws of conservation of matter and energy. *Wuthering Heights* shows these driving forces, embodied in Heathcliff, at work over three generations” (Goff 485).

If *Wuthering Heights* is, indeed, an example of Emily Brontë’s engagement with a pre-*Origin of Species*, Darwinian, scientific naturalism, and is therefore also an early articulation of Gothicism expressed through Naturalism, then Heathcliff is the primary example in terms of a character representing all of these elements in the novel. As Goff argues, the Darwinian principle of natural selection is very much at stake in the novel:

Wuthering Heights similarly moralizes on the strong and the weak, and virtually everyone is weak except for Catherine and Heathcliff, Joseph and Zillah, the survivors at the Heights. Nelly, Hareton, and Cathy Linton are also survivors, but, as I shall argue, they pave the way for vitiation of the breed by their voluntary domestication at Thrushcross Grange. The third generation is, therefore, absolutely necessary to Emily Brontë’s because it is in them that specific strengths and weaknesses of the human animal can be expressed and assessed. (Goff 485-486)

If the Heights is a house that represents the survival of the fittest, then the Grange is an example of the unfit, according to Goff:

The Grange allows for the proliferation of moral runts, whose very survival is made possible by peasants and servants. They sicken, even die,

at the slightest provocation. Had they been born at Wuthering Heights, Hareton Earnshaw would have hung them by the chairback. Emily Brontë's contempt for them is exceeded only by Heathcliff's. *Wuthering Heights* is indeed a "retrospective reconstruction" of how humankind got into this sorry state, suggesting that the species has been weakened by poor breeding methods, hyperdomestication, and the hyper-"adaptation of external nature" to humanity's fallen nature. (Goff 493-494)

While focusing on Brontë's evident derision of the landed elite, Goff argues that "*Wuthering Heights* selects for a different sort of animal, infinitely more rugged and surviving with little apparent variation for at least 300 years. Outsiders—except Heathcliff—do not hold up well there: the mistresses predecease its own offspring, the men and the peasants, who are virtually immortal" (499). Although Heathcliff is initially the economic, social, and natural Other in the novel, he manages to adapt on the basis of all three of those factors, leading Goff to connect socioeconomics to natural survival in the novel, claiming that *Wuthering Heights* "suggests again and again that money instead selects for weakness, that it is the poor who are more 'fit' for survival—or, at least, that those who do survive the harshness of their 'artificially' brutal lives are virtually indestructible if feral" (500). Goff reads Heathcliff as a character that is more "fit" than the others in the novel, even to the point that he is almost deified, arguing that "Heathcliff's power transcends that of mere humans and, I believe, is the power that Brontë equates with nature, if not God Himself" (483). Perhaps more acceptable is Goff's argument that Heathcliff represents a naturalistically symbolic Darwinian mechanism in the novel:

Brontë, more aggressively than Darwin, had come to conclusions about the literal descent of Victorian man from his essential animal nature; that Brontë's conclusions, like Darwin's, grew out of a reverence for the pitiless economy of nature; that Brontë, unlike both Darwin and the natural theologians, was perfectly comfortable with a personal God who operated as ruthlessly as Darwin's "mechanism"; and that—to return this argument to the novel that plays out its propositions—*Wuthering Heights* represents this "God" of hers, this "mechanism," in the character of Heathcliff. (Goff 479)

Although the role of religion in the novel should not be ignored,³³ even in light of a Naturalist reading of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's representation as a Darwinian or Naturalist mechanism in the novel reinforces even further the extent to which Brontë constructed a world very much influenced by natural science.

Heathcliff's status as the "fittest" character in the novel, despite the fact that his origins are almost completely unknown, introduces some revealing parallels to scientific naturalism. First and foremost, when Nelly Dean replies to Lockwood's question, "Do you know anything of his history?" in reference to Heathcliff, Nelly replies, "It's a cuckoo's, sir" (Emily Brontë 31). Nelly's response is not only idiomatic, but it also refers to the fact that the egg of the cuckoo is laid in the nest of other bird species, eventually leading the larger and stronger cuckoo to supplant the chicks of the other species while continuing to be fed by the parents of the very chicks that were supplanted. The cuckoo, as well as Heathcliff, can both be seen as microcosmic examples of the

³³ See Graeme Tytler, "The Role of Religion in *Wuthering Heights*," *Brontë Studies* 32.1 (March 2007), 41-55.

invasive species phenomenon, and therefore, when Townsend A. Peterson writes that “Invasive species have become an issue of great concern in fields as diverse as biology, agriculture, transportation, and economics” (419), one might even add the field of literature to the list.

On Heathcliff’s initial arrival at the Heights, it is explained that Mr. Earnshaw apparently saved him from fending for himself on the streets of Liverpool in an act of humanity, but Heathcliff’s reception at the Heights is anything but humane, as “Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors” (Emily Brontë 33), as if he were indeed an unwanted, invasive species of animal. Nelly continues to refer to Heathcliff as “it” as she recounts that everyone “entirely refused to have it in bed with them or even in their room; and I had no more sense, so I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow” (Emily Brontë 34), admitting her own “cowardice and inhumanity” (Emily Brontë 34) in her initial treatment of the child. Eagleton argues that “Heathcliff disturbs the Heights because he is simply superfluous: he has no defined place within its biological and economic system” (227), making Heathcliff sound like an organism that has been removed from its indigenous ecosystem and relocated to another where it has become an uncontrollable pest that thrives unchecked as a result of a lack of natural predators, as Charles Darwin reminds us “how powerful the influence of a single introduced tree or mammal has been shown to be” (131). However, despite such predatorial vulnerability and harsh treatment, Heathcliff survives, and eventually thrives in this environment. Peterson observes of invasive species that a “distinct approach toward predicting the behavior of invasions, however, can be referred to as ‘climate-matching.’ This approach is based on the concept of ecological niches as a constraint on

the distributional potential of species, and involves a logical extension of the basic niche concept—that species will be able to establish populations only in areas that match the set of ecological conditions to which they are limited on native distributional areas” (420). Charles Elton likewise emphasizes the importance of climate/environment-matching in the fostering of invasive species:

When one is studying limiting factors, it is really more important to have a nodding acquaintance with some of the things which are going on in the environment, than to know very much about the physiology of the animals themselves. This statement may sound odd, and is certainly rather in opposition to much of the current ecological teaching, but there is a perfectly good reason for making it. Most animals have some more or less efficient means of finding and remaining in the habitat which is most favourable to them. This may be done by a simple tropism or by some elaborate instinct. (Elton 39)

Heathcliff’s economic, social, and ecological success in the moors of the Heights, the Grange, and Gimmerton is a result of not only his adaptability, but also due to the highly effective manner in which his character make-up fits the economic, social, and ecological niche that the setting of the novel represents. Mark Williamson explains that biological “Invaders are widespread but far from universal. They are common in disturbed areas; recent invaders are often rare in pristine communities” (55). Peterson adds that, in terms of the patterns leading “to the existence of uninhabited suitable distribution areas” (423) by invasive species, firstly “the spatial extent of a species’s ecological niche is invariably

greater than the extent of its actual geographic range; and (2) uninhabited suitable areas are concentrated in disjunct regions” (423).

The Greater Gimmerton Area surrounding the Heights, the Grange, and Gimmerton is one of the more disturbed and disjunct environments in English literary history. Charlotte Brontë would write in her preface to Emily’s novel that, had “Ellis Bell been a lady or a gentleman accustomed to what is called ‘the world,’ her view of a remote and unreclaimed region, as well as of the dwellers therein, would have differed greatly from that actually taken by the homebred country girl. Doubtless it would have been wider—more comprehensive” (Charlotte Brontë 179). Wilson would also describe *Wuthering Heights* as “an escape from the world and all that is in it, and a panegyric of wind and weather, full of hyperbole and other madness” (74). Such an isolated, hyperbolic environment is the perfect niche for Heathcliff, and the match is reiterated by Lockwood in the opening lines of the novel:

I have just returned from a visit to my landlord—the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist’s heaven: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us. A capital fellow! He little imagined how my heart warmed towards him when I beheld his black eyes withdraw so suspiciously under their brows, as I rode up, and when his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution, still further in his waistcoat, as I announced my name. (Emily Brontë 1)

However, despite his eventual success as a result of the manner in which his character make-up ends up matching his environment so effectively, it is still a wonder that such harsh and inhumane initial treatment on his arrival falls short of causing the still transient Heathcliff to move on to a less-menacing environment. Again, a parallel to the natural world explains this development, as seen in Elton:

It is usually supposed that animals choose their habitats merely by avoiding all the places which are physiologically dangerous to them, in the way that a *Paramecium* turns away from certain kinds of chemical stimuli in the water in which it is swimming. This is true in one sense; but the stimuli which lead an animal to keep away from the wrong habitat are not usually capable of doing any direct harm to it, and are much more in the nature of warning signals which indicate to it that if it goes much further into this unsuitable habitat, or remains there for too long, the results will be dangerous. (Elton 39-40)

Elton also explains that “the signs by which animals choose their habitats are not warnings of danger to the animal itself, but have the effect of keeping it out of places in which it could not breed or bring up its young successfully” (40). Therefore, when it is considered that Heathcliff’s progeny, Linton, is not only weak and sickly, but it is also clear that Heathcliff cares little for his successful upbringing beyond the child’s use as a pawn in Heathcliff’s game of vengeance, the parallel to the natural world is strengthened even further.

After all, it becomes clear in the novel that Heathcliff is far more of a threat to the other characters in his environment than they are to him, again consistent with Heathcliff

as a character enhanced by monstrosity. Williamson explains that the most important major effect in terms of an invasive species's success is based on that species being an "enemy of the native biota, by being a predator, parasitoid, parasite, pathogen or herbivore. Sitting on top of the food-chain, or being a generalized enemy, an enemy of many species, seem particularly likely to produce marked ecological effects" (115-116). John Allen Stevenson remarks that Heathcliff's "emergence from old Earnshaw's coat is like childbirth" (67), intimating that Heathcliff's arrival at the Heights, as a result of Mr. Earnshaw "opening his great-coat, which he held bundled up in his arms" (Emily Brontë 33), was Heathcliff's *de facto* birth scene. However, beyond Stevenson's birth metaphor, Heathcliff is obviously physically born well before his emergence from Mr. Earnshaw's coat, as he was either transported from his native environment of Liverpool, or more likely had emigrated to Liverpool from somewhere else by some unknown means of transport, as Elton observes that "many animals migrate [...] in order to *get away from* a particular place rather than to *go towards* anywhere in particular" (156).

Perhaps reading Heathcliff more as a parasite than an invasive species is more accurate, particularly considering the fact that species invasion involves more than a singular organism. Mr. Earnshaw collected him from the streets of Liverpool, and can therefore be read as a host organism, carrying Heathcliff from an overpopulated, urban environment to a more isolated, rural environment where he might have a greater chance of survival. Mr. Earnshaw wraps Heathcliff in his coat, transforming him into a maggot or larva that is unwittingly unleashed on the Heights, Grange, and Gimmerton.³⁴ Such a

³⁴ This larval metaphor might also lead to a reading of Heathcliff's life development in the novel as paralleling the larval, pupal, and imaginal stage of a holometabolous insect, as it is during his absence from the Heights after Catherine's marriage to Edgar that Heathcliff appears to undergo some dramatic transformations in his isolation from the setting of the novel, returning as a much changed man.

means of travel for the migrating Heathcliff, facilitated by his host, Mr. Earnshaw, is typical of parasite migration, as Elton explains:

Amongst the various means of dispersal we can distinguish roughly between the more voluntary, or at any rate active, migration of the animal itself on the one hand, and the numerous means of “accidental” dispersal on the other. An enormous number of the smaller species of animals get about from one place to another by special means of transport other than their own legs, wings, or cilia. In certain cases, as when the larva has a special instinct or tropism which leads it to hang on a particular animal. (Elton 153)

But of course, if Mr. Earnshaw is indeed Heathcliff’s host organism, it has already been discussed that the host dies soon after Heathcliff’s introduction into the Heights. Elton observes that “[o]ne of the greatest questions which has to be solved by many parasites is what to do when their host dies, as it is bound to die sooner or later” (75). Such an early demise of his host and protection, while Heathcliff was still learning to navigate and was still quite vulnerable to the harsh realities of his new environment, would have been devastating to the parasite that was Heathcliff. However, while providing an example in the life cycle of the tapeworm, Elton again provides a biological example of Heathcliff’s character cycle in *Wuthering Heights*:

It is here that the food-cycle comes in and plays an important part. Probably the commonest death for many animals is to be eaten by something else, and as a result we find that a great many parasites pass automatically with the prey into the body of its enemy, and are then able

in some way to occupy the new host. Let us take the case of a tapeworm which lives as a young larva or bladderworm in the muscles of a rabbit. When the rabbit is eaten by some enemy, say a fox, some of the bladderworms pass unharmed into the intestine of the fox, and there continue their development and grow up into adult tapeworms; and, in this way, the problem created by the death of the first host is solved. But foxes also being mortal, the tapeworm has to get back again into the rabbit before the fox dies, and this is also brought about by the food-cycle. For the tapeworm produces vast numbers of eggs which pass out with the excretory products of the fox; some of these eggs contaminate the vegetation which the rabbit is eating, or in some other way get in with its food, and are then able ultimately to grow up into more bladderworms in the body of the rabbit. (Elton 75-76)

When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Heathcliff's attachment to Catherine could be read as symbiotic, if not also parasitic, but it is when Heathcliff attaches himself to Hindley and proceeds to ruin him and render him a penniless alcoholic that it becomes apparent how truly parasitic—rather than merely predatory or carnivorous—Heathcliff is as a character in the novel. Elton's explanation of the feeding habits of a parasite in comparison to that of a carnivore not only, again, introduces some striking parallels to Heathcliff's monstrous role in the novel, but Elton also incorporates an allusion to economics in the process.

It is very important to realise quite clearly that most parasites are in their feeding habits doing essentially the same thing as carnivores, except that

while the carnivore destroys its prey, the parasite does not do so, or at any rate does not do so immediately or completely. A parasite's existence is usually an elaborate compromise between extracting sufficient nourishment to maintain and propagate itself, and not impairing too much the vitality, or reducing the numbers of its host, which is providing it with a home and a free ride. In consequence of this compromise, a parasite usually destroys only small portions of its host at a time, portions which can often be replaced fairly quickly by regeneration of the tissues attacked. Or it may exploit the energies of its host in more subtle ways, as when it subsists on the food which the host has collected with great expenditure of time and energy. The difference between the methods of a carnivore and a parasite is simply the difference between living upon capital and upon income. (Elton 72)

Eagleton also uses language that doubles as parasitic and economic, as he argues that, just as "Hindley withdraws culture from Heathcliff as a mode of domination, so Heathcliff acquires culture as a weapon. He amasses a certain amount of cultural capital in his two years' absence in order to shackle others more effectively, buying up the expensive commodity of gentility in order punitively to re-enter the society from which he was punitively expelled" (104).

Whether the focus is on Heathcliff as an economic, Gothic double-duality, that both enacts and acts in opposition to the socioeconomic principles represented by Thrushcross Grange, or whether he is seen as a naturalistic, Darwinian mechanism that, as an invasive or parasitic organism, thrives in the ecosystem of the Heights, the Grange,

and Gimmerton, or whether he is seen as a monstrous, carnivorous cannibal, all of these factors focus on a material, physical exteriority. But even in its physical proto-Naturalism, the novel likewise presents a spiritual or psychological, proto-Naturalist reading, as illustrated by Elton's discussion of invasive species:

It is therefore undesirable that the animal should run the risk of meeting such dangerous conditions, and it has various psychological reactions which enable it to choose, to a large extent, the optimum conditions for life. The animal is not usually occupying the extreme range of conditions in which it could survive, since at the limits it is not so efficient, and because the actual habitat is usually still further limited by the breeding requirements. In other words, it is usually possible to use the psychological reactions of animals as an indication of their physiological "abilities," and to what extent it is possible to solve ecological problems without knowing a great deal about the physiological reasons *why* certain conditions are unsuitable. We simply assume that they are unsuitable from the fact that animals avoid places where they occur. (Elton 40-41)

Applying this connection between the biological and the psychological to *Wuthering Heights*, Goff argues that Brontë "speaks for a biological/psychological destiny, the irreversibility of human nature, regardless of whether her position rests on notions of humankind's fall or an individual's psychological endowment" (487). *Wuthering Heights* simultaneously presents a biological, physical exteriority, as well as a psychological, spiritual interiority, and it does so in a manner that would be developed even further in Gothic Naturalism later in the century, but the novel does all of this while

primarily maintaining a Realist expression of Gothicism as a mode, as *Wuthering Heights* is consistent with other Realist works that use Gothicism as a form of social healing. After all, at the end of the novel, the ultimate message is that of human fellowship and companionship, and even a rather conventional love story in the pairing off of Hareton and Cathy, essentially supplanting the Gothic darkness of Heathcliff that had loomed over the novel during his life as a character. However, like Victor in *Frankenstein*, Heathcliff is meant to be read as a tragic example, and therefore suffers his Gothic fate as a didactic symbol.

Despite all of the Gothic, fractious dysfunctionality of the novel, and despite Lockwood's misanthropic disgust, the final image of the novel is of Hareton and Cathy looking at the moon, and also looking at each other, leading Lockwood to complain, "'*They are afraid of nothing,*' I grumbled, watching their approach through the window. 'Together, they would brave Satan and all his legions'" (Emily Brontë 317). Despite the intent of Naturalism—similar to Lockwood—to view the world in a more cynical, less sentimental manner, and also with a view more consistent with scientific objectivity, the subjugated Gothic mode of Realism would finally emerge out of the shadows in order to render this Naturalist intent a failure.

CHAPTER 4

THE GOTHIC EVOLUTION OF NATURALISM

Wuthering Heights is a Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode, and within that expression of the Gothic, the novel presents a conflation of not only the supernatural and the real—as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Heathcliff’s monstrous enhancements—but also the supernatural and the natural. Edward Chitham argues that Emily Brontë views nature in the sense of “nature mysticism” (208) in *Wuthering Heights*, while Glen Cavaliero discusses some of the complications involved in reading Brontë’s novel as a work of natural supernaturalism:

To claim that *Wuthering Heights* is a supernaturalist novel may seem wrong-headed and contentious; and the book certainly contains sufficient elements of obviously authentic detail as almost to warrant its being read primarily as a tale of late eighteenth-century Yorkshire rural life, with its probable origins in a real-life domestic drama at Walterclough Hall near Halifax. As a naturalistic novel it satisfies through its apparent spontaneity and informed use of local speech and manners; but it is also naturalistic about certain subjects—religion, family life, the reverence for femininity—which contemporary literary convention tended to regard as sacred and only to be handled in the mealy-mouthed manner encouraged by the circulating libraries. Emily Brontë does not decry them; but her concern is with what lies behind them. *Wuthering Heights* supplies a critique of idolatrous materialistic values, but nowhere in unqualified or simplistic terms. (Cavaliero 2)

As Srdjan Smajić discussed in relation to Realism in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, the same might be said of the supernatural's seemingly antithetical relationship to Naturalism.³⁵ Cavaliero argues that, as “an element within naturalistic fiction, the supernatural has a teasing, confrontational quality that upsets the self-sufficiency of naturalistic art and the materialistic philosophies of which it is an expression” (7), and *Wuthering Heights* “epitomizes most of the issues raised for English fiction by the supernaturalist tradition as a whole, and raises the question as to the true scope and authority of traditional materialistic naturalism as determining individual and social responses. Is any comprehensive portrait of human nature and society really possible? Or is the naturalistic novelist simply a conjurer among other people's conjurations?” (7). Yet, similar to Smajić's discussion of Realism,³⁶ Cavaliero ultimately comes to the conclusion that the “literary relationship between natural and supernatural is, however, reciprocal. Again and again touches of realism guarantee the authenticity of the extraordinary, as Horace Walpole had foreseen that they would: indeed, the quotidian aspect of fictional narrative heightens the extra-temporal one, and the tension between them enlivens the novels in which they are at odds. A supernaturalist story needs a naturalist setting” (241). Such a reconciliation between the natural and the supernatural in *Wuthering Heights* is a phenomenon that will become a consistent theme in works of Gothic Naturalism at the *fin de siècle*, but as Cavaliero argues, such a conciliatory movement has been at stake in the Gothic novel at least since *Frankenstein*:

³⁵ Smajić argues that “supernaturalism's relation to realism has traditionally been theorized as oppositional, subversive, parasitic” (Smajić 2), and that “realism is understood to be a kind of radical anti-supernaturalism” (1-2).

³⁶ Smajić argues that “supernaturalism, as far as the nineteenth-century British novel is concerned, is not disruptive but consistently and overtly constitutive of its realism” (3).

The struggle between Victor Frankenstein and his creation mirrors the tension between the dictates of naturalism and the demands of natural forces and what human responses have made of them; between the dictates of reason and the overwhelming demands of the subconscious; between the separateness of arbitrary fantasy and its integration into a world of responsibility and human claims. These tensions safeguard fictive representations from the limiting extremes of naturalistic materialism on the one hand and the suffocating solipsism of interiorized narration on the other. (Cavaliero 241)

Cavaliero also addresses the interiorizing aspect of Gothic Naturalism that becomes more and more prominent in Naturalism as a whole, as the Naturalist movement evolves from Realism. This exploration of a psychological interiority in Naturalism corresponds with the continuing study of a physical exteriority that Naturalism maintains in its evolution from the Realist movement.

As Naturalism evolves from Realism, it further develops this emphasis on a psychological interiority that corresponds with a continuing focus on a physical exteriority. As this evolution develops, Naturalism is revealed as an interdisciplinary movement, extending throughout the disciplines of visual art and literature, at the very least. Furthermore, Naturalism is revealed to be an international movement that begins in France, but extends throughout Europe and also into the Americas. Therefore, this Naturalist methodology is shown to have affected the visual art as well as the literature of Britain, which of course includes the British novel. As Naturalism develops in the British novel, it is expressed on an interior and exterior basis specifically through Gothicism.

Naturalism, unlike Realism, facilitates a complete rebirth or reanimation of the truly Gothic novel at the *fin de siècle* in Britain. That full embrace of Gothicism, through Naturalism, in the British novel effectively trumps Naturalism's attempt at documentary, scientific objectivity, inevitably betraying a social agenda reminiscent of Realism in spite of itself. This Gothic Naturalism likewise focuses on an aesthetic of ugliness that also trumps the efforts of the Aesthetic and Decadent movements, as the morality and aesthetic of ugliness of this inevitable social agenda subverts the attempt at objectivity of Naturalism, and the attempt at a lack of morality in Decadence.

As with all movements and genres of art and literature, Naturalism is not definable in any sense of the exact. Pieter Borghart accurately observes that "apart from the obvious etymological origin of the term *Naturalism* denoting a profound interest in the study of nature, its precise meaning in literary studies is still under debate" (211). This might also be extended to the study of visual art, as many of the same principles that govern the Naturalism of literature are present in the Naturalism of visual art. Borghart, while acknowledging the imprecision of the term, goes on to paraphrase David Baguley in stating that there is at least some consistency in the following viewpoints:

Naturalism is often identified with at least one of three disciplines out of which historically the movement has grown: philosophy, science, and art. In the first case, Naturalism is broadly defined in terms of the positivist concept of "materialism"; the second definition can be traced back to Zola's manifesto *Le roman expérimental* (1879) and regards the naturalist text as a scientific experiment. In the last instance, Naturalism is merely reduced to the aesthetics of realistic imitation. A fourth and fairly

common definition tends to identify this movement with the scandalous subject matter of some naturalist novels. (Borghart 211)

These are certainly acceptable parameters, particularly in terms of the acknowledgment of the influence of Émile Zola. Fittingly, Borghart goes on to paraphrase Yves Chevrel in stating that “[he] tentatively defines Naturalism as a Pan-European literary movement, consisting of an international corpus of texts, published between 1870 and 1910, and inspired by Zola’s oeuvre” (212). Gabriel P. Weisberg also remarks upon the influence of Zola, while also characterizing Naturalism as a multinational genre, as he argues that “despite national boundaries, painters used a set of shared characteristics in establishing Naturalist imagery, which allowed for an interchangeable pattern or a ‘formula’ for the construction of such works. Among the traits were the isolation and sharpening of factual details, which were akin to Emile Zola’s method of highlighting facts to assist in creating a textual image” (8).

Borghart, Chevrel, and Weisberg do well to point out that, even in acknowledging the seminal influence of France, Naturalism exists not only as a multinational genre, but that genre is also the result of a multinational movement in both literature and art. Furthermore, Naturalism was reproduced with enough consistency in methodology that referring to the genre as having been the result of a legitimate movement is justified. Weisberg writes of a “highly standardized, impersonal attitude, which made it possible for painters to share their method with other artists. This sharing meant that a style could be readily learned and passed on to others in an effort to continue a Naturalist outlook over a long period of time” (8). Weisberg also observes that the “Naturalists continually exchanged ideas across boundaries, providing a means by which their visual messages

could be understood” (12). As a result, in 1916, Frank S. Frederick observes of recent English art that the “genre of the last decade of the century is influenced by Bastien-Lepage, Dagnan-Bouveret, and others of the French School, and presents a new movement in English painting. For want of a better name, perhaps, the followers of this movement are classed as the Naturalist School, the fundamental idea being truthfulness to nature” (330).

Again, these traversed boundaries were not only international, but were also interdisciplinary. In Zola’s lengthy essay, *Le Roman expérimental* (1880), he sets down many of the principles of “l’évolution naturaliste qui emporte la siècle” (1). However, Zola was not merely articulating “l’idée d’une littérature déterminée par la science” (1), but also the idea of a *visual art* determined by science. As this dissertation chapter will address, a direct connection of influence clearly existed between Zola and Vincent van Gogh, and van Gogh likewise was influenced by English Realism during his time in London from April to December 1876,³⁷ revealing specific examples of a cyclical sharing of style across international and interdisciplinary borders. Yet, Borghart argues that a strict adherence to the influence of Zola in defining the genre of Naturalism is problematic, and as his argument progresses, he makes some perceptive observations of aspects of Naturalism that are clearly independent of Zola, and that sometimes even predate Zola. Clearly, the Naturalist genre became more dynamic as it evolved over time and across other disciplines, but many of the principles that Zola articulated are still recognizable: “En somme, toute l’opération consiste à prendre les faits dans la nature, puis à étudier le mécanisme de faits, en agissant sur eux par les modifications des circonstances et des milieux, sans jamais s’écarter des lois de la nature. Au bout, il y a la

³⁷ See: van Gogh, V. W., ed. *Vincent van Gogh on England*. Amsterdam: NV’t Lanthuys, 1968.

connaissance de l'homme, dans son action individuelle et sociale" (Zola, *Le Roman expérimental*, 8).

Naturalism not only experienced its own evolution in terms of many of the non-Zolaesque qualities that Borghart explores—as well as the interiority and exteriority that this current chapter explores—but Naturalism also was very much a part of the overall evolution of nineteenth-century art. After all, Weisberg observes that Naturalist artists have traditionally been “[d]erided for following what was seen as a literal path devoid of imagination, these painters and their works were overlooked by collectors and critics who believed that the avant-garde—those artists in total opposition to an academic tradition—came to full ascendancy at the turn of the twentieth century” (7). Weisberg also claims that “[w]orks not conforming to the stylistic traits of nascent modernism either have been banished from view or languish in artists’ studios (or worse), far from the eyes of contemporary critics and modern-day historians” as the artists of such works “are now found in the margins of art history—if at all” (7). Impressionism—and even more so, its uninventively-named progeny: Post-Impressionism—is a movement thoroughly acknowledged and legitimated as a stage in the artistic evolution towards Modernism. However, Naturalism was by no means supplanted by movements more traditionally viewed as having possessed “stylistic traits of nascent modernism,” as Weisberg states that “the movement was not immediately pushed aside by more modernist styles” (7). By revealing Naturalism as having been inseparably intertwined with Impressionism, Naturalism’s own legitimacy as an integral part of the evolution towards Modernism will be made clear. Furthermore, Gothicism’s relationship with Naturalism renders that dark form of expression as part of this evolution.

Naturalism in a general and scientific sense claims a long history in human understanding. In terms of the origin of the evolution of naturalism, Rudolf Otto argues that a naturalist, scientific impulse to document “is very ancient—as old, indeed, as philosophy,—as old as human thought and doubt. Indeed, we may say that it almost invariably played its part whenever man began to reflect on the whence and the how of the actual world around him” (17). Specifically scientific naturalism began decades before Naturalism proper, even in the field of visual art, as the task of illustrating discovered species and their habitats was useful as a scientific tool as early as the eighteenth-century, long before Charles Darwin’s publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859). This naturalistic drive to document continued as eighteenth-century naturalists such as Leclerc, de Buffon, de Monet, de Lamarck, Cuvier, and Saint-Hilaire used illustrated, naturalistic observations to formulate their theories as early as mid-century. Robert Herbert observes of the following century that, “by mid-century, the model of investigation derived from the natural sciences had become all-pervasive. It thoroughly penetrated the arts, and lay behind the rejection of romanticism. Flaubert and Duranty stressed the need for the author to remove himself from the role of editor or judge of the action he described, and to acquire instead the precision and neutrality of the scientist” (44). One must always remember that, acknowledging the inevitable changes in Naturalist philosophy, this theme of scientific observation is at the root of the Naturalist movement, and it is also through science that Gothicism oftentimes connects with Naturalism in the late-nineteenth century novel and visual art.

Zola, the quintessential Naturalist writer, has a method of scientific observation at heart in the settings and characters that he depicts in his novels. Concerning Zola’s

Naturalist novel *Germinal* (1885), F.W.J. Hemmings writes of Zola that he was able to make firsthand observations of a strike that broke out at Anzin (one of the biggest collieries in the north of France), just a few weeks before he began writing his novel: “Zola was able to visit the district and mingle with the strikers. He saw for himself the conditions in which they worked underground and in which they were housed on the surface; he was able to observe the stigmata of malnutrition and of occupational diseases, and the stunting of their spirit by the ugliness of the surroundings in which they lived” (21). One can see the effects of these observations in Zola’s early descriptions of his character Catherine in *Germinal*, as she was “still very slim at fifteen years of age, she had delicate arms, whose milky whiteness contrasted with her face, which had already become sallow from the constant use of soft soap. A final yawn made her open her somewhat large mouth and show her teeth, which were splendid, albeit set in pale gums that indicated chlorosis” (*Germinal* 11-12). Catherine’s physical sexuality is even negated by the conditions of the mines, as Étienne, when first meeting her, “kept looking at Catherine, who, with her chloritic complexion, showed whitely in the gloom; and he could not tell her age: he took her to be about twelve, she seemed so slight and thin” (33). Such description is reminiscent of a scientist observing the pigment-less insects and reptiles that populate the deep recesses of underground caves, yet it also carries with it a tone of dark Gothic ugliness, and even of the supernatural, as Catherine glows in the dark of the mine as if she were a haunting spirit. Of course, from a scientific/medical point of view, Catherine’s complexion is consistent with her diet almost exclusively of bread, as any doctor might deduce that she is malnourished and iron-deficient after reading the above passages. Fittingly, Hemmings observes via a disease metaphor, Zola “preferred,

as he would continue all his life to prefer, ‘a “scientific method in which society is conceived as a harmonious entity and the criticism applied to society formulated as a struggle against the diseases attacking its organic unity, a struggle against the “undesirable features” of capitalism’” (Georg Lukács quoted in Hemmings 22).

Although at this point, Naturalism sounds decidedly more militant, one can already sense a connection between Naturalism and Impressionism. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that, while Naturalism indeed does ally itself with the darkness of Gothicism in many respects, it also has close associations with the light of Impressionism. Impressionism’s focus on contemporary issues such as emerging technology, civil reformation, emerging social and class issues, and images of work and leisure are all consistent with that of Naturalism, though Impressionism is typically viewed as a more subjective study of light and its effects, and also as a more overt attempt to depict a fleeting moment in time than Naturalism. However, as an example, there are several fleeting moments in *Germinal* that have a tendency to hover brilliantly before the reader. Zola uses in-depth descriptions of oftentimes rather complicated scenes in terms of the action that they contain and the sheer power of the pregnant moment. As Étienne and the mob move from place to place; as the soldiers fire on the miners on strike; as the old horse, Battle, gasps for a last drowning breath; including many others, these are all very picturesque, fleeting moments of the novel that are temporarily static in their description. Of course, with the exception of some of Édouard Manet’s work, the subject matter depicted in these picturesque moments of *Germinal* is inconsistent with that of Impressionist painters, in general. But perhaps the assignation of a social agenda to Naturalistic works is unfair to the scientifically-impartial intent of



Figure 17: Cécile Douard, *Coal Gleaners*, 1891, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mons, Belgium.

the Naturalist philosophy? Borghart argues that Naturalism “seems to rely, above all, on a textual method—a common poetics—which aims at mapping out every facet of contemporary society as scientifically and objectively as possible, regardless of ideological preoccupations or invariable thematic topics” (222). So even though *Germinal* is fraught with human misery and dark Gothic ugliness, and even though Cécile Douard’s *Coal Gleaners* (fig. 17)—which looks to be a scene taken directly out of Zola’s novel—is executed with an almost monochromatic palette, looks like some sort of bleak, Gothic, post-apocalyptic landscape, and almost breaks one’s back just to look at the strain on the bodies of the women depicted in the painting, Zola and Douard are merely executing, as Hemmings would argue, “a work which is a masterpiece of realist [art] but

which, being carefully and intentionally neutral, evades the immediate significance of the social issues while it makes their existence blindingly plain” (35). Weisberg would agree, claiming that the “successful rustic or urban Naturalist veered away from socially upsetting themes or subjects charged with radical implications” (9). Naturalism is, in general, more hard-hitting than Impressionism, but much of the respective intent of each movement is not that different from the other: the attempt to depict a revealing, illuminating, natural representation of subject matter. However, perhaps due to its focus on light and its effects—which would obviously be antithetical to darkness—Impressionism has little to do with Gothicism, other than its relation by degrees with Naturalism. Yet, it is through that relationship by association that Gothicism and Impressionism act as a Gothic double of darkness and light, coercing Naturalism in their respective directions like the motif of the angel and devil on each shoulder.

The last passage taken from Hemmings uses the term ‘realist’ by no accident. In fact, Naturalism is generally accepted as a derivative of Realism. Using language similar to that used by Borghart and Hemmings to describe Naturalism, and even Impressionism, in the paragraph above, Robert Rosenblum explains that “the Realist impulse to record the facts of a here-and-now world continued to dominate painters working in the most adventurous styles of Impressionism” (364). He continues, observing that “the range of subject matter, from miserable city slums to fashionable boulevards, from the regimented activities of schools and sweatshops to the leisurely movements of cafés and wealthy drawing rooms, also expanded to match the complexities of nineteenth-century life” (Rosenblum 364). Shedding light on the distinction and similarities between Naturalism

and Impressionism, Rosenblum explains how the two schools indeed are branches that grew from Realism:

The category of Naturalism, although generally implying a record, even an exposé, of the darker facts of the human condition in the later nineteenth century, is often used interchangeably with the category of Realism, not only by the painters, writers, and critics of the 1870s and 1880s, but by later historians.³⁸ If such a distinction can serve any purpose at all, in the midst of the semantic confusion surrounding an umbrella word like Realism, it might be used to define the branch of Realism that concentrates on the reportorial account of lower-class life in a more literal style, as opposed to the branch of Realism that became known as Impressionism, which, in its pursuit of a more ephemeral and subjective experience of the seen world, evolved a style that tended to transform the slice of life selected by the painter into something that was more clearly art than social documentation. (Rosenblum 369-370)

Perhaps it is indeed the tendency towards objectivity in Naturalism and the tendency towards subjectivity in Impressionism that really distinguishes the two genres from each other, but one also gets the sense that there is an aesthetic distinction at work, as well. Herbert argues that “a naturalist did not praise the environment he wrote about or painted, but treated its homely ordinariness as the only proper setting for his art” (24). Julian Treuherz would also argue that by “the end of the [nineteenth] century, art critics had ceased to be shocked at pictures of poverty, and concentrated on their alleged artistic

³⁸ Weisberg also observes that “writers during the 1860s and 1870s often used the concepts of Realism and Naturalism interchangeably, and critics and artists were similarly unable to isolate the characteristics of each tendency” (Weisberg 7).

defects or virtues rather than on breaches of taste or propriety. Poverty, dirt and distress were now part of the accepted language of art” (13).

However, Naturalism, aesthetically-speaking, oftentimes seems to go beyond the “ordinary” or “accepted.” Returning to the tone of some of the excerpts from Hemmings and Zola, one can observe no less than an aesthetic of ugliness in Naturalist depictions of subject matter. The world that Zola creates in *Germinal* projects a significant level of ugliness. The men and women in the novel are sexual beings, as they are constantly off in the woods and by the piles of cinders having sexual intercourse, yet this seems ironic in light of the desexualized description of Catherine in the first two excerpts from Zola that we have explored. The physical features of the miners are distorted, scarred, and diseased, and the living conditions that they endure, especially during the strike, are no less than subhuman. One can almost smell the stench of cooked onions and poor hygiene emanating from the pages of the novel. The setting of the novel is bleak and dark, again like Douard’s painting. This is not a study of the effect of light, but rather an exploration of the Gothic horrors of darkness. Consistent with this methodology of Zola, David Trotter argues that “Naturalism does not delight, or arouse or broaden moral sympathies. It does not frighten or enrage. Naturalism makes you sick” (209). The aesthetic is not of beauty, but rather of ugliness. By relying on the principles of Naturalism, we are meant to trust that the ugliness of this world is natural and “real,” while beauty is just not indigenous to this natural habitat of ugliness.

It is in the relation to this element of ugliness in Naturalism where Gothicism comes into play. Friedrich Nietzsche argues in *Twilight of the Idols* that, “[a]t bottom, man mirrors himself in things; he considers everything beautiful that reflects his own

image: the judgment ‘beautiful’ is the *vanity of his species*” (525). However, such ugly reflections in Realism and Naturalism reveal the dark, Gothic hideousness of the species of man. Nietzsche also argues that “[n]othing is beautiful except man alone: all aesthetics rest upon this naïveté, which is its *first* truth. Let us immediately add the second: nothing is ugly except the degenerating man—and with this realm of aesthetic judgment is circumscribed. Physiologically, everything ugly weakens and saddens man. It reminds him of decay, danger, impotence” (526). Through Gothicism, man must confront the ugliness of human nature, as the Gothicism in Naturalism has everything to do with degeneration, decay, danger, etc., as evidenced by the major characters of the British Gothic novel at the *fin de siècle*: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Dorian Gray, and Dracula. Furthermore, such elements of danger and impotence connect to the major theme of fear in the Gothic, as the role of ugliness in Gothicism is often one that causes fear, repulsion, and distress. Freud’s discussion of the uncanny reveals this connection between ugliness and fear in the Gothic, as he argues that, as “good as nothing is to be found upon this subject in comprehensive treatises on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime—that is, with feelings of a positive nature—and with the circumstances and the objects that call them forth, rather than with the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress” (219).

However, keeping in mind this theme of Gothic ugliness in Naturalism, one must ask the question that is in many ways at the very heart of Naturalism: Is this representation of ugliness truly Natural? The implications of the world depicted in *Germinal* are not forced upon us by any overt social agenda on the part of Zola, but the implications are observable all the same. After all, is ugliness truly indigenous to the

coal country of France? Had it always been a black, bleak, scorched habitat since the beginning of time? The answer, of course, is ‘no.’ It was only by the manipulations of man that this habitat of ugliness was created. Therefore, even though Zola’s intent is a scientific, objective exploration of the habitat of the miner, this habitat is no more natural than a contrived depiction of Monet’s cultivated gardens at Giverny.



Figure 18: George Frederic Watts, *The Irish Famine*, c.1850, oil on canvas, Watts Gallery, Compton, Guilford, UK.

Like many other nineteenth-century painters—such as Gustave Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, and even Claude Monet to an extent—Edgar Degas is generally accepted as an artist that participated in both the realm of Impressionism and Naturalism. Quite revealingly, he defined his art in the following terms: “‘A painting is a thing which requires as much trickery, malice, and vice as the perpetration of a crime; make counterfeits and add a touch of nature’” (Edgar Degas, quoted in Herbert 45). This

makes painting sound more like the work of a con-artist than that of a scientific naturalist, but perhaps Degas is revealing—granted, rather cynically—the real “truth” and “naturalness” of visual art as a whole, including the presumed objective and scientific approach of Naturalism. After all, it is well-known that almost all paintings belonging to either the label of Impressionism, Naturalism, or both, were executed completely, or at least partially, in studio. Even the majority of the most well-known and romanticized *en plein air* painters throughout history would perform touch-ups in studio.



Figure 19: Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874, oil on canvas, Royal Holloway College, Egham, UK.

Such contrivances of Naturalism are reminiscent of similar effects in Realism to attempt to depict “truth,” as discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. For example, according to Treuherz, when the Realist artist George Frederic Watts composed *The Irish Famine* (fig. 18), “Watts had not yet visited Ireland in 1849 when the picture was painted” (28). Later, according to Treuherz, Naturalist painter, Hubert von “Herkomer saw *The Irish Famine* when it was exhibited in 1881 and it may have inspired his own

outcast picture *Hard Times*” (28). Furthermore, according to Treuherz, Luke Fildes’s *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* (fig. 19) was based “on the engraving *Houseless and Hungry* which had appeared in the first issue of the *Graphic*” that “showed the scene outside a police station with a queue of homeless paupers seeking overnight shelter” (83). However, Treuherz points out that “*Houseless and Hungry* was carefully contrived in the studio” and “the *Graphic* published it with a journalistic description emphasising the documentary quality of the scene” (84).

The level of nature taken directly from the source must then be questioned not only in the genre of Naturalism, but also in nineteenth-century visual art as a whole. But this is especially relevant to Naturalism, because, beneath the surface of this objective, scientific, naturalist intent, lies a decidedly unnatural element of artifice, slight-of-hand, and subjective manipulation. Weisberg observes, in reference to this dilemma, that for Naturalist artists, “the suggestion of offhand, unposed reality was quite a painstaking process. In essence, artists became explorers in their studios, learning to produce objective, focused images” (19). Reminiscent of the Gothic double, Naturalism is caught up in a paradoxical duality of subjectivity and objectivity in this subjective fabrication of objectivity, in-studio.

Vincent van Gogh was well aware of this element of “counterfeit” that Degas so bluntly reveals in reference to visual art. Returning to a discussion of the quintessential Naturalist, Judy Sund reveals that van Gogh “recognized early on that for all of the author’s stress on documentation, Zola’s prose passages rarely were literal transcriptions of ‘reality.’ Van Gogh was impressed by the fact that Zola as author did not ‘hold up a mirror to things’ but instead ‘poeticized,’ manipulating his subjects to a great effect” (5).

Perhaps we can read the term ‘poeticized’ as a euphemism for Degas’s ‘counterfeit.’ Van Gogh’s participation in Naturalism was neither deliberately objective nor thoroughly scientific. Likely due to the fact that his methods no less than sprang directly from those of Zola, van Gogh’s Naturalism reads much like a visual representation of the scenes and characters from *Germinal*, and therefore van Gogh also expresses the element of ugliness in Naturalism in a manner consistent with Gothicism.

Van Gogh, like Zola, experienced firsthand the misery of the plight of the miners. However, as Zola made his observations as an unbiased scientific naturalist performing a study, van Gogh no less than immersed himself in the mining community. In his twenties, as a probational lay preacher, Vincent moved to the Borinage coal-mining region of Belgium. According to Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson, Van Gogh, in a no less than Christ-like fashion:

[M]oved into a hut drearier than the hut of the meanest miner. He gave away all that he had—it was little enough, but he gave it away—his bed, his few francs, all his clothes. He dressed himself in sackcloth, slept on the mud floor of the hut, lived on scraps of bread. He went down the mine, enduring the terrors, the discomforts that made up the miners’ daily life; he came up, like them, with his face black with coal dust; he left it so—he was not going to insult them and God with the white face of a man who preached but did no work. (Hanson 47)

As a result of being so immersed in this culture, there were “obvious signs that he was identifying himself increasingly with the miners—not now in appearance and style of living, but even more dangerously by taking their side politically” (Hanson 48). This

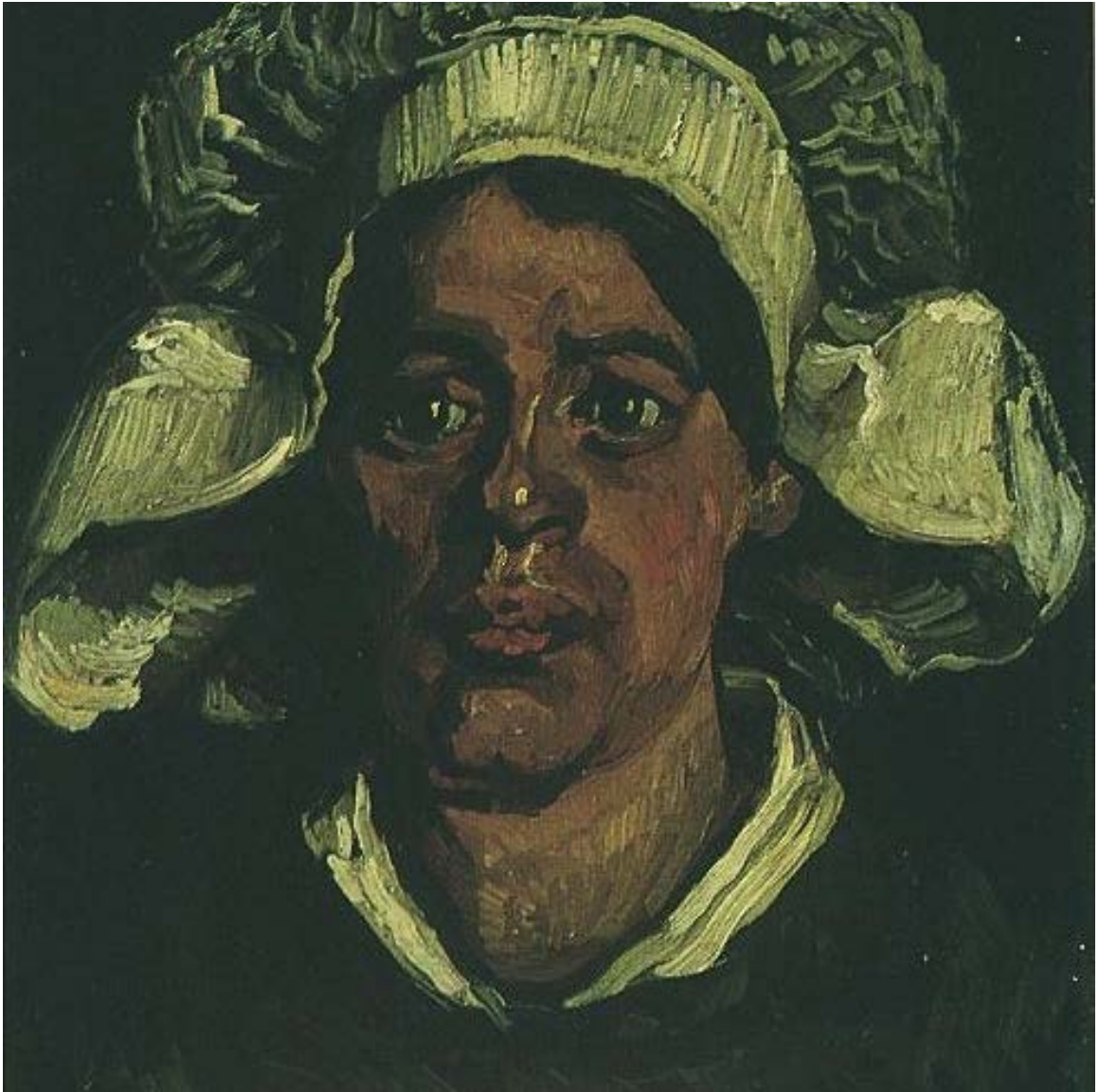


Figure 20: Vincent van Gogh, *Head of a Peasant Woman with White Cap*, March-April 1885, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, Netherlands.

effect of political alliance was achieved not just as a result of his immersion into the mining way of life, but also as a result of his immersion into Realist literature—such as George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Harriet Beecher Stowe—and French Naturalist literature—such as Guy de Maupassant, Paul Alexis, and especially Émile Zola. Sund argues that it was “Zola’s fiction that Van Gogh had in mind when, in 1885, he allied a group of peasant portraits he had made to Zola’s descriptions of miners in the newly

published *Germinal*” (4). As evidenced by a May 15, 1885 letter to his brother, Theo, Vincent van Gogh indeed began reading *Germinal* almost immediately after finishing *The Potato Eaters*, but still in the midst of this multitude of peasant portraits and studies—for example, *Head of a Peasant Woman with White Cap* (fig. 20)—that were very similar in style to *The Potato Eaters* (van Gogh, letter 409). The strained, distorted physiognomies of the figures with their unmistakably Zolaesque complexions, combined with the dingy palette and dark settings, are very familiar to the reader of *Germinal*. It becomes very clear that this particular novel of Zola had a direct influence on the painter during this period. Even van Gogh remarks of *Germinal* that, as soon as he received a copy, he “started to read it at once. I have read about fifty pages, and think it splendid; I once travelled through these same parts on foot. / Enclosed is a sketch of a head, which I just brought home” (letter 409). A few lines below he would also remark that “I hope to go and paint the miner’s heads someday” (letter 409). As Sund observes, “Van Gogh had adopted a high-keyed palette that was not only inspired by his experience of avant-garde Parisian painting, but encouraged by his desire to formulate a visual equivalent to the verbal ‘richness’ of Naturalist literature” (6). As a result, he reconfigured his conception of what Realism entailed, morphing his style into one that was recognizably influenced by Zola, but also decidedly his own.

[Van Gogh] threw overboard his views about realism; he forgot his chastisement of the painters at The Hague for working in their studios; realism, he now told [his brother] Theo, “that is, *exact* drawing and local color, leads to a kind of uncertainty and narrow-mindedness. There are other and better things than *literal* truth.” He abandoned his careful,

labored paintings and struck out at a single comprehensive impression. He knew the peasants by heart, he had painted them dozens of times; he knew their cottages. (van Gogh quoted in Hanson 138)

The language that the Hansons use above not only echoes Impressionism—a genre of painting that, at least to some extent, van Gogh both enacted and reacted against in terms of stylistic method—but it also reveals some of the ways in which van Gogh contributed to the evolution of Realism to Naturalism.

According to van Gogh, literal/”real”/”natural” truth in Naturalism is, in a way, counterproductive. Perhaps van Gogh felt that the branch of Naturalism that dwelt on photographic style in representation was missing something essentially Naturalistic: that being a meaning or poetics that transcends not only the subject matter and the way that that subject matter is represented, but more specifically how that subject matter is stylistically depicted on the artistic surface itself. Therefore, photographic exactitude in artistic style is, according to van Gogh, philosophically inhibiting. The Hansons observe van Gogh’s efforts in terms of artistic philosophy in their discussion of his motivation for painting *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 21):

He painted his “Potato Eaters” by heart “in the sense of using my imagination.” The labored brushwork fell away into strong, sweeping strokes. “I want to make it *live*,” he said; and he did. The subject is not a pleasing one, the heads have a suspicion of caricature, the monotonous tone (“the color of a good dusty potato”) gives an effect of morbidity, the figures are sometimes preposterous, but the picture, though a failure as a

painting, has life. It has also strong individuality; decidedly it had not been painted before. (Hanson 138)



Figure 21: Vincent van Gogh, *The Potato Eaters*, 1885, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

The borderline caricature quality of the painting is difficult to deny, but the representation of the five peasants that van Gogh uses in the painting were based on the many study heads that he had executed during and shortly after his time in Nuenen. According to Sund, van Gogh “declared himself willing to forsake exactitude in favor of ‘sentiment’ and a truth to nature that was *felt* rather than optically precise” (93); again echoing some of the sentient philosophies of Impressionism. The subjective, optically-imprecise element of *The Potato Eaters* is perhaps also a result of the fact that, as the Hansons observe, “the interior he painted from memory. / From memory! Here was a revolution

indeed” (137). Therefore, one would assume that the hovel-like environment of the cottage is a stylized representation, or even an amalgamation, of the many poverty-stricken homes that van Gogh encountered while living in the Borinage and Nuenen. Such subjective liberties taken by van Gogh expose the painting not only to a revelation of the artifice of Naturalism—despite its objective, documentary, scientific intent—but it also stylistically lends elements of monstrosity and the Gothic to the painting, reminiscent of Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*. The caricatured, warped forms of the family in their dark, Gothic cave of a dwelling present an element of Gothic ugliness and monstrosity, as these manipulations and enhancements of their form allude to their poverty in a manner of representation that is indeed dark and Gothic.

The influence of *Germinal* on the painting’s composition is also observable in the obligatory cups of coffee and the high-carb, low-nutrient diet that—instead of by the bread incessantly consumed by Zola’s miners—is represented by potatoes, and the effects of such a diet are noticeable in the complexions and overall physiognomies of the peasant figures. According to Sund, van Gogh acknowledged “that the heads [of the peasants] probably would be considered ‘unfinished’ or ‘ugly’ by most” (91). Their ugliness is a compound of the scientific—reflecting their diet—as well as of a Gothic representation of their socioeconomic status—reminiscent of industrial Realism. Sund also argues that, “in a conscious attempt at synesthesia, Van Gogh sought to use color and texture to evoke not only the look, but the *smell* of peasant life—smoke, cooking odors, crops, manure” (94). Van Gogh himself would write that “[i]f a peasant painting smells of bacon, smoke, potato steam, fine—that’s not unhealthy—if a stable reeks of manure—all right, that’s what a stable is all about—if a field has the smell of ripe corn or potatoes or of guano and

manure—that's properly healthy” (letter 404). These efforts of visual-olfactory synesthesia are, of course, reminiscent of the smells of cooked onions, coal smoke, and poorly-washed bodies that enjoy a strong olfactory presence in *Germinal*.

This theme of ugliness, as this dissertation has already explored, linked Gothicism to Realism earlier in the nineteenth century and therefore oftentimes revealed early expressions of Naturalism in relation to the Gothic. Such an early and Gothic expression of Naturalism can be observed in *A Christmas Carol* when Cratchit's wife is described as “dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown” (37), and Dickens writes of the rest of the Cratchits that “they were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's” (41-42). It is also strongly intimated by Dickens that Tiny Tim's days are numbered as a direct result of the family's inability to fund proper nourishment and medical care for the boy. However, the Cratchit home is not a dark claustrophobic hovel like the Gothic interior of *The Potato Eaters*. The poverty-stricken environment and malnourished physiognomies of the sitters in that quintessentially Naturalist work of visual art are very much evident. There is perhaps too much sentiment and not quite enough intricate detail to render the scene of the Cratchit home *too* strong of an example of Dickens's Naturalism. The visions aboard ship that the Ghost of Christmas Present reveals, and particularly the ““place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth”” (Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 43), are better examples of Naturalism, though still rather underdeveloped.

Recalling the Gothic enhancement of monstrosity discussed in the previous chapter, such representations of ugliness in Realism become even more prevalent in

Naturalism, and also become more bestial. While, in *Hard Times*, Dickens zoomorphizes “the piston of the steam-engine” as it “worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness” (22), it is humanity—rather than just machine—that is consistently zoomorphized. It is in *Mary Barton* that one of the masters says of the men on strike, “‘I for one won’t yield one farthing to the cruel brutes; they’re more like wild beasts than human beings’” (Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 182). While, from the middle-class employer’s point of view, the working-class in *Hard Times* are reduced to the rather nondescript term ‘Hands,’ in *Mary Barton* they are reduced to more unruly, less human, beasts. Angela John discusses the tradition of working-class animalization in relation to mine workers in the Borinage region:

There was frequent use of the animal as metaphor. As John Berger has argued, this was part of a very old tradition, anthropomorphism having been in the past an expression of the close economic and productive relationship between man and animals. Animals had been “with man at the centre of his world”. Now their centrality had been challenged, the encroachment of industrial capitalism altering their significance for man. Yet there were important residual connections. In the first stages of industrialisation, the animal was used as a machine. Women and children too were increasingly reduced to being mechanical assets. The early women pit brow workers, the mines’ alternatives to beasts of burden, were soon endowed with the qualities of animals. (John 219)

John particularly focuses on the animalization and dehumanization of female miners: “At a time when the horse had replaced the human beast of burden underground and was

gradually giving way to machinery both above and below ground, it was ironical that the language used to describe the pit women achieved the same unfortunate results that critics deplored in the process of industrialisation and dehumanised them” (220). According to John, such representations of women were masculinizing as well as animalizing: “The brute strength of the woman surface worker was stressed. She was like a wrestler and was robust and masculine in appearance. Her simple clothes were imprinted with coal from the tips which looked like the yoke of an ox. At the local *Kermesses* or fêtes she was the chrysalis transformed into the butterfly. On her way home from work, her singing, carefree behaviour and independence made her like the birds” (218). Such bestial representations are consistent with the female beasts of burden depicted in Cécile Douard’s *Coal Gleaners* (fig. 17), as John argues that female “[c]omparisons with horses were also extended to surface work” (220), and that it “was not really surprising that employment underground prompted equine comparisons. Women had been performing haulage jobs, had been harnessed and travelled on all fours” (219-220). At the root of all of this, John argues that “[t]hose in the mining industry were seen to be near to nature and Darwinist theories about evolution now reinforced the process of animalization” (219).

Consistent with Naturalism’s scientific foundations, Darwinism formed a major part of the movement’s methodology, and consistent with John’s arguments, Darwinism often was intertwined into working class representations in Naturalism. Even as early as *Mary Barton*, Gaskell depicts Job Legh as something of a mystical Naturalist, as his “eyes absolutely gleamed with intelligence; so keen, so observant, you felt as if they were almost wizard-like. Indeed, the whole room looked not unlike a wizard’s dwelling.

Instead of pictures were hung rude wooden frames of impaled insects; the little table was covered with cabalistic books; and beside them lay a case of mysterious instruments” (40). Gaskell argues that there is “a class of men in Manchester, unknown even to many of the inhabitants, and whose existence will probably be doubted by man, who yet may claim kindred with all the noble names that science recognises. I said in ‘Manchester’, but they are scattered all over the manufacturing districts of Lancashire” (*Mary Barton* 38), and that there are “botanists among them, equally familiar with either the Linnæan or the Natural system, who know the name and habitat of every plant within a day’s walk from their dwellings” (*Mary Barton* 39). The Chartists also incorporated pre-*Origin of Species* Darwinian language into their Petition, arguing that “[r]equired as we are, universally, to support and obey the laws, nature and reason entitle us to demand, that in the making of the laws, the universal voice shall be implicitly listened to” (*Petition of 1838* 288-289), and also arguing that the “management of this mighty kingdom has hitherto been a subject for contending factions to try their selfish experiments upon” (*Petition of 1838* 290). According to Darwin, in *The Origin of Species*, “if any one species does not become modified and improved in a corresponding degree with its competitors, it will soon be exterminated” (147). Aside from using the terminology of scientific naturalism in reference to “nature” and “experiments” in their rhetoric, the Chartists also allude to the “universal” and “contending factions”; terms that have Darwinist implications in relation to natural selection, and also in relation to Darwin’s reference to “competitors.” The Darwinian principle of rarity is also at stake in the Chartist Petition. Darwin points out that “[r]arity, as geology tells us, is the precursor to extinction” (153). The principle of rarity is also at stake when the Petition states that the

“good of a party has been advanced to the sacrifice of the good of the nation; the few have governed for the interest of the few, while the interest of the many has been neglected, or insolently and tyrannously trampled upon” (*Petition of 1838* 288). Contrary to rarity, the Chartists promote “the good of the many, as it is the only legitimate end, so must it be the sole study of the Government” (*Petition of 1838* 288).

The element of Darwinism in Naturalism speaks further to the interdisciplinarity of the movement. As Thomas Kuhn points out, the “evidence pointing to evolution, including the evolution of man, had been accumulating for decades, and the idea of evolution had been suggested and widely disseminated before [*The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* (1871)]” (171). Peter J. Bowler and Iwan Rhys Morus discuss the extent to which evolutionary theory had already taken an interdisciplinary hold before Darwin’s above publications:

Long before he published the *Origin of Species* in 1859, radical writers were promoting the theory as a foundation for a political philosophy that demanded social progress. By undermining the traditional beliefs that sustained the Church, evolution opened up the prospect that nature itself was founded on a law of progress—which then made human progress seem inevitable. Such ideas made little impression on the scientific elite, but they paved the way for the reception of Darwin’s theory and may have shaped the popular assumption that it, too, was the basis for a philosophy of universal progress. If this is so, many of the philosophical, theological, and ideological consequences normally attributed to Darwinism may be a reflection of this wider cultural movement. (Bowler and Morus 131)

According to Bowler and Morus, “the impact of Darwinism must be evaluated both in terms of its scientific advantages (which were real enough even to those who had doubts about the detailed theory of selection) and its appeal to the values and prejudices of potential supporters both inside and outside science” (131-132). However, despite the wide dissemination of evolutionary theory before *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, “it was only after Darwin published his findings that people began to think seriously of struggle as the driving force of progress” (Bowler and Morus 147).

Darwinism, of course, had great impact on nineteenth-century novelists and artists, including those that expressed elements of Realism, Naturalism, and also Gothicism. George Levine discusses the extent to which Darwin affected such novelists—even somewhat anachronistically—while also reintroducing the concept of “truth” that this dissertation has discussed in relation to Realism, and its connection to Darwin:

There were many evolutionisms before Darwin and there have been many since. His theory found ostensibly scientific form for the ideologies that dominate Victorian society and was received by that society, despite some ruckus, with remarkable speed; its language pervaded its literature—had already found some voice in it before he ever published the *Origin*.

It is because of this peculiarly complex and even counterchronological interpretation between science and literature that I concentrate on writers who were probably not directly “influenced” by scientific writing. My concern is not “influence” but the absorption and testing of Darwinian ideas and attitudes (even when the writers are not

thinking of them as Darwinian) in the imagination of Victorian novelists.

Theirs, after all, was a time when science was most forcefully extending its authority in the realm of knowledge and even beyond, into religion and morals, and when it really did seem for a while that apparently insoluble problems could be solved, that the limits imposed on human society by material conditions could be broken, and that knowledge was an aspect of morality, so that the highest Victorian virtue was “Truth.” (Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists*, 3)

Levine also discusses “Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Dickens, and Trollope, as well as Conrad and Hardy. Most of these, I should repeat, did not know Darwin’s work well, and, at certain stages of their careers, *could* not have known it” (*Darwin and the Novelists* 20).

As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, Dickens is a novelist that bridges the gap between the evolution of Realism to Naturalism, and he also illustrates how Gothicism plays a role in that evolution. There are certainly pre-Darwinian traits of Naturalism evident in *A Christmas Carol*, as well, as we are given a relatively thorough and detailed idea of the habitat of the Cratchits with little romanticization of their meager living conditions. Levine observes that “Dickens begins his career as a reporter whose skills are based on his powers of observation, with an uncanny eye for the ordinary. In his eyes the ordinary is transformed, not by miraculous or catastrophic intrusions, but by intense and minute perception. So in his sketches he examines door knobs and reports on the behavior of cabbies, shopkeepers, marginal gentlemen” (*Darwin and the Novelists* 131-132). Levine argues that “Dickens’s worlds often seem to be narrative enactments of

Darwin's theory" (*Darwin and the Novelists* 147), and also argues that "the question of connection is critical in both writers: things hang together in Dickens's world, stories converge, unlikely connections are made, entanglements and dependencies are inevitable. In modern jargon, Dickens has an ecological vision; and so, of course, has Darwin" (*Darwin and the Novelists* 131). There are, at times, some very evident consistencies between Dickens and the documentary, scientific observational method of Naturalism that finds much of its foundation in the scientific naturalism of Darwin. For example, when Esther Summerson visits a poor brickmaker's home in *Bleak House* (1853), the man of the house, while "lying at full length on the ground, smoking a pipe," very nonchalantly and matter-of-factly growls, "'An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty—it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides'" (*Bleak House* 132). Even as the head of such a tragically dirty and unwholesome home, the man maintains a tone of observational, documentary objectivity that is typical of the Naturalist intent. However, beneath the surface of this tragic intent of objectivity is a Gothic darkness that is consistent with Levine's discussion of Dickens's Gothicism: "Dickensian gothic is merely an entertaining way to emphasize that the natural wonders revealed by science were evidence of / its value, and, indeed, of its value as entertainment; it further expresses Dickens's instinctive view that matter of fact is really mysterious and wonderful and not fully visible to any but an intense and imaginative moral vision" (*Darwin and the Novelists* 126-127). This Gothic Naturalism of Dickens is representative of Gothic fiction as a point of intersection between

Naturalism and the Gothic during the latter half of the nineteenth century, as Kelly Hurley explains:

The implications of Darwinism [...] were perceived as disastrous and traumatic—one might say “gothic”—by a majority of the population. Gothic fiction, working in the negative register of horror, brought this sense of trauma to vivid life, supernaturalizing both the specific content of scientific theories and scientific activity in general. In this sense it can be said to manage the anxieties engendered of scientific innovations by reframing these within the non-realistic, and thus more easily distanced, mode of gothicity. (Hurley 6)

Hurley’s discussion sounds strikingly similar to interpretations of *Frankenstein* as a blending of realism and the Gothic on the basis of scientific and technology-based anxieties. This blending develops even further in the post-Darwinian, Naturalist Gothic, as Glennis Byron argues that the “scientists at the center of Victorian Gothic, like latter-day Frankensteins, are frequently shown dabbling with forces that are better left alone. During the *fin de siècle*, what the scientist tends more and more to dabble with is the mind” (190).

The Gothic that emerges in the evolution of Naturalism conceives of science not just in terms of the physical sciences, but also the psychological. Dale Townshend argues that the earlier “Gothic of Dacre, P. B., and Mary Shelley effects a shift in focus away from more familiar, commonplace understandings of objectification in order to focus upon the object that persists within the human subject itself” (291). Andrew Smith also observes an emerging internalization in the Gothic, arguing that “one of the most telling

characteristics of the Gothic from the 1790s to the 1890s concerns the progressive internalisation of ‘evil’ as the Gothic develops “a new focus on psychology” (87). For Smith, “Monsters are not, as they were with Walpole’s animated giants, or Lewis’s demons, externally manifested sources of danger. Instead, by the mid-nineteenth century such horrors had largely been internalized” (Andrew Smith 87). This sense of psychological interiority evolves from the concept of domestic interiority that was established in the early Gothic novels and was maintained in *Frankenstein* and later works of Realism that expressed Gothicism as a mode, like *Wuthering Heights*. Barbara Munson Goff discusses this internal, psychological emergence in *Wuthering Heights*, arguing that the “novel’s chief interest, for narrators and readers alike, is psychological” (483), while Daniela Garofalo explains how the familiar interior of the domestic family is expressed in *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights*:

In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, families function precisely to establish boundaries against the other so that the creature, who variously identifies with the fatherless, Native Americans, slaves, and the outcasts of heaven, can never be accepted within the home even by the novel’s most admirable characters. Instead, Catherine invites the other into her home to share everything with her. Flouting the laws of property which give economic rights to men over their wives, Catherine imagines Linton’s money will not simply be his but hers as well because money, in Catherine’s vision, is shared with those we love and therefore it will be shared with Heathcliff. Edgar will have no more right to it than she does herself. (Garofalo 833)

.Catherine allows the domestic interior to be violated by the Other, Heathcliff, as their connection transcends the physical and the financial and rather exists on the basis of the psychological and the spiritual. Physical monstrosity is still the feared Other that is seen as a threat, as Nancy Armstrong explains that “[t]his is the full-blown logic of polygenesis at work, rendering phobic the idea of humanity as a single family, autonomous, relatively self-sufficient, and dedicated to caring for all its members” (10), and Peter K. Garrett argues that physical “Gothic figures infiltrated and intensify scenes of domestic realism” (141). But as Realism seeks new realms in which to create fear, the psychological develops as a Gothic double to the physical, once again reminiscent of David Ketterer’s discussion of the doppelgänger relationship between Victor and the monster in *Frankenstein*,³⁹ and also consistent with Townshend’s Lacanian discussion of “the *extimate* object that exists simultaneously inside and outside of the human subject” (317). As Audrey Murfin explains, “[w]hen Gothic phantasms occur in the realist novel, they are likely to be in the imagination or psychology of a character” (par. 5), and this development reflects Armstrong’s discussion of “that event in the history of the European novel known as the inward turn” (6).

Psychology’s relation to Naturalism is, of course, complicated by the genre’s evident focus on predominantly scientific, physical documentation. Where does a typically non-physical field like psychology fit in with all of this physicality? Michael Davis observes that, in “the 1880s, a psychological tradition, which sought to read minds by reading the physical features of the body, and especially of the head and face, enjoyed ever-increasing influence” (208). Connecting these ideas directly to Robert Louis

³⁹ The “monster is both a psychological double and an independent character leading a realistic existence” (Ketterer 56).

Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Davis observes that "Jekyll's secret suggests interesting connections with the ongoing debates about minds and bodies, and the extent to which the latter can be used as means of reading the former" (210). Essentially, this is the *modus operandi* of Naturalism, as Naturalist artists and writers used external physicality to depict interior psychology. This is, of course, consistent with Dr. Jekyll, drinking a physical, scientific, chemical compound that physically transforms him into a physical manifestation of the evil part of his psyche.

Of course, science—and, particularly, natural science—is very much based on the observation and evaluation of the physical, especially in the nineteenth century. But there is clearly something more than just physical observation going on in Naturalism. Heather Seagroatt argues of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that "If Dorian's body does not change, his mind clearly does. It is because his imagination is in a constant process of evolution that Harry finds him so interesting" (752). One can observe a real drive to transcend the physical—and even, in a sense, to escape the physical—in many more psychological, *interior*-based expressions of Naturalism, and particularly Gothic Naturalism. This interiority of Naturalism effectively links together texts such as Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À Rebours*, in terms of the participation of these texts in a Naturalism of psychological interiority, as well as Gothic elements in Huysmans and outright Gothicism in Stevenson and Wilde.

Through this interior mode of Naturalism, the characters in these texts—Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde, Dorian Gray, and Des Esseintes—engage in acts and experiences that embrace this psychological interiority and reject the exteriority of Victorian morality, in

preference to Naturalistic expressions of escape from Victorian social pressures and proprieties. As Andrew Smith argues, the “Gothic’s use of doubling is a clear indication of the internalisation of ‘evil’. Indeed in the new, predominantly secularised context of the mid- to late nineteenth-century Gothic, ‘evil’ seems a misnomer because such ‘inner’ narratives can be explained in psychological *and* social, rather than strictly theological, terms” (94). Consistent with the duality of the more exterior physical sciences and the interior science of psychology, Aatos Ojala describes Wilde’s artistic technique in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with a similar sense of duality in mind, claiming that “like most of Wilde’s Fiction and Drama *Dorian Gray* divides itself into two different layers: into a *superstratum* consisting of witty conversational elements and into a *substratum* which delves deep into the psychological basis of life” (206). Concerning this relationship between psychology and the physical sciences in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Seagrott argues that “Wilde uses psychology to exemplify the ways in which the materialism of the ‘hard’ sciences (which cannot measure or assess aesthetic response) threaten to efface the impact of the arts on the individual psyche. Thus Wilde deploys psychology to resist the growing hegemony of scientific materialism” (748). According to Seagrott, “human psychology was essential to Wilde’s critique of Victorian empiricism in the novel” (743). Wilde seems to support Seagrott’s arguments in his emphasis on the interiority of the brain in relation to experience in *De Profundis*, and he does so in a rather scientifically-naturalist discussion of psychology and brain functionality: “I said in *Dorian Gray* that the great sins of the world take place in the brain, but it is in the brain that everything takes place. We know now that we do not see with the eye or hear with the ear. They are

merely channels for the transmission, adequate or inadequate, of sense-impressions. It is in the brain that the poppy is red, that the apple is odorous, that the skylark sings” (1033).

Although it did not take a firm hold in British visual art until the 1880s, Naturalism is indeed a recognizable trait in the nineteenth-century Realist novel that expresses Gothicism as a mode—as has already been discussed in relation to Dickens, Gaskell, Brontë, and others—and as the Naturalist movement proceeds from France and the Continent into an international, interdisciplinary network of influence in Britain, it culminates in the Gothic novel as the main facilitator of Gothic expression. Frederick remarks on the influence of Naturalism in Britain during the latter decades of the nineteenth century: “Great advances [sic] has been made in the art of painting in England in the last two decades. American students were not the only foreigners in the Parisian studios during the past quarter century. English painting has received new life through the exertion of these young men who have traveled widely and studied wherever they could learn; but the independent and individual quality of English art fortunately remains” (328-329). In terms of specific artists of influence, Frederick points out that the “genre of the last decade of the [nineteenth] century is influenced by Bastien-Lepage, Dagnan-Bouveret, and others of the French School, and presents a new movement in English painting. For want of a better name, perhaps, the followers of this movement are classed as the Naturalist School, the fundamental idea being truthfulness to nature” (330). Networks of French Naturalist influence in Britain during the last decades of the nineteenth century include the artists of the Newlyn Art Colony that was founded in Cornwall in 1884, the New English Art Club (NEAC) that was founded in London in 1886, and also on the work of Hubert von Herkomer. The Newlyn Art Colony, which



Figure 22: Hubert von Herkomer, *Hard Times*, 1885, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Gallery.

was founded by English artist Stanhope Alexander Forbes, focused mainly on rustic Naturalism. In rustic Naturalism, as Frederick explains, “[s]imple subjects are selected, the plowman is painted in his own field. The old fisherman is posed not in the corner of a studio, but in his own cottage. The reaper is caught in the act” (330). The NEAC likewise focused on rustic Naturalism—as represented by the work of George Clausen, and especially Henry Herbert La Thangue—but this particular network of artists also contained a contingent that were more recognizably influenced by Impressionism, such as Walter Sickert and James McNeill Whistler. Hubert von Herkomer’s work displayed a focus that was more overtly characteristic of social realism, similar to some of the work of George Clausen that betrays a more observable social agenda. However, at the heart



Figure 23: Hubert von Herkomer, *On Strike*, 1891, oil on canvas, Royal Academy of Art, London.

of this network of influence in Britain was Zola as a seminal foundation of Naturalism, and even though Zola was not widely read in Britain during this time, his Naturalist methodology very much influenced the French painter, Jules Bastien-Lepage, whom Frederick mentions above. In turn, Bastien-Lepage is shown to have either directly or indirectly influenced all of the Naturalist artists in Britain that this dissertation discusses,

as Weisberg argues that “Bastien’s influence was so pronounced among independent painters and those in art colonies that some may have felt his high status in contemporary British art could not be diminished” (109).

While Weisberg argues above that Naturalists often “veered away from socially upsetting themes” and also argues that “many virtually renounced the element of sentiment” (9), the work of Hubert von Herkomer in *Hard Times* (fig. 22) and *On Strike* (fig. 23) not only violates this intent in Naturalism and clearly aligns itself with the sentimentality reminiscent of Realists such as Daumier, Dickens, Gaskell, and Eliot, but that Realist sentimentality also alludes to the Gothic. While the two paintings are less blatant in their allusion to Gothic darkness as Douard’s *Coal Gleaners* (fig. 17) or van Gogh’s *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 21), the element of the Gothic in connection with the plight of the poor and working class is still evident in the tragic circumstances of the families in both paintings, and particularly in the dark, furrowed brow of the man in *On Strike*. Furthermore, despite the rustic simplicity of Clausen, his focus on a Naturalist portrait of a working-class woman in *Head of a Peasant Woman* (fig. 24) that he later incorporated into a larger work, *Winter Work* (fig. 25), reveals the international network of Naturalist influence of Bastien-Lepage, Zola, and van Gogh, as van Gogh would do the same with his *Head of a Peasant Woman with White Cap* (fig. 20) and *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 21) just a couple of years later.

Among Zola, and the other decidedly Naturalist French writers that van Gogh read extensively, was Joris-Karl Huysmans; a writer that, in his early career, formed a close friendship and philosophical alliance with Zola, but as Huysmans’s writing

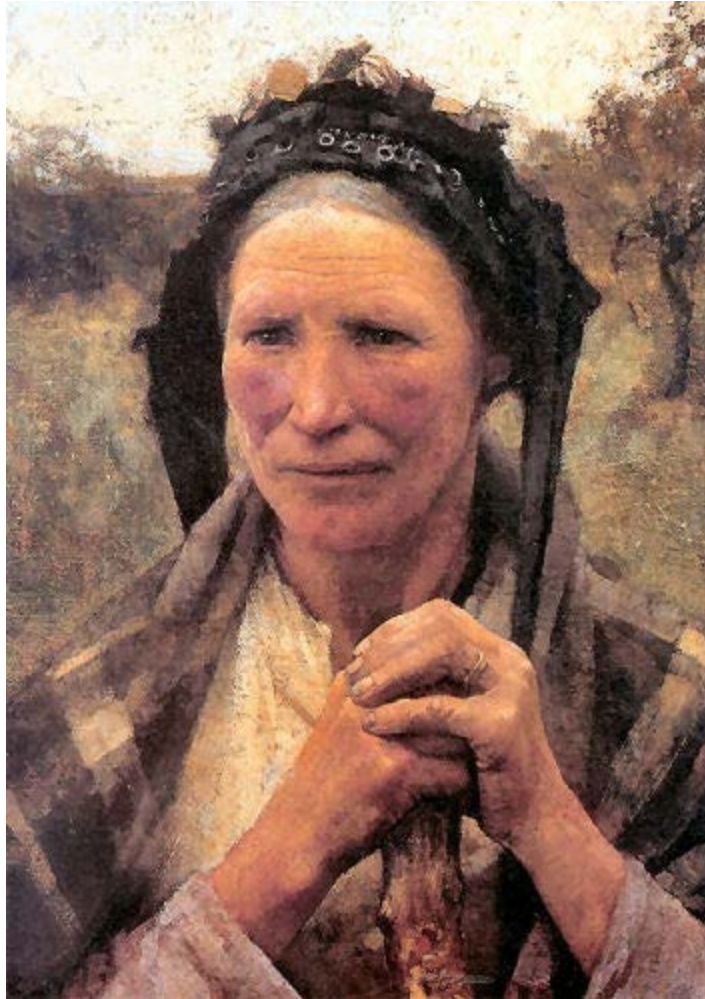


Figure 24: George Clausen, *Head of a Peasant Woman*, 1882, oil on canvas, Private Collection.

progressed, he became more and more frustrated with some of the fundamental tenets of Naturalism that Zola held so dear. Sund observes that van Gogh “would always categorize [Huysmans] as a Naturalist, though Van Gogh can hardly have remained oblivious to Huysmans’s clear break from the movement with the publication of *A Rebours*, the quintessential Decadent novel” (8). Sund’s point is well made because *A Rebours* is, at its very foundation, a reaction against the Naturalism of Zola, even to the extent that the English translation of the title has changed from *Against the Grain* to the perhaps more fitting *Against Nature*. But perhaps van Gogh’s retention of the Naturalist



Figure 25: George Clausen, *Winter Work*, 1883, oil on canvas, The Tate Gallery, London.

label for Huysmans is not so much a case of obliviousness as it is a reasoned and insightful definition of Huysmans's *de facto* method, regardless of any genre that the writer sought to react against. As the Naturalist movement often sought to distance itself from a subjective social agenda with its objective scientific intent—yet still betrayed an unintended subjective social agenda—two primary writers of the Decadent movement, Huysmans and Oscar Wilde, likewise betrayed strong elements of Naturalism despite their Aestheticist intentions. While Huysmans's *À Rebours* is considered to be the “quintessential Decadent novel” by Sund, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) is not only a decidedly Decadent novel, but is also very much a Gothic novel.

Like Huysmans's *À Rebours*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* might also be considered a reaction to—yet a *de facto* participation in—the Naturalist philosophy. This paradox can be most effectively represented by Lord Henry, when he states: ““Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know”” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 8). Ironically, Lord Henry—and even more so, the actual painting of Dorian—is the most blatant example of Naturalism in the novel. As irritating as it might be, Naturalism is the pose that Lord Henry strikes most often. Lord Henry is a Naturalist, in the sense that “[h]e had been always enthralled by the methods of natural science” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 51). Wilde consequently constructs Lord Henry's relationship with Dorian as a scientific experiment: “the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions; and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to his hand, and seemed to promise rich and fruitful results” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 52). This is, of course, reminiscent of the presumably failed social experiment that Des Esseintes performs on the young boy, Auguste, in Huysmans's *À Rebours*. And if Lord Henry is a Naturalist in the scientific sense, then Basil Hallward—the composer of the painting of Dorian—is most certainly a Naturalist painter. Each in their own way, Basil and Lord Henry “paint” Dorian into a Naturalist pose—both of them figuratively do so, and of course Basil does so literally.

Despite the emergence of a psychological interiority in Naturalism, and particularly Gothic Naturalism, that has been discussed in this chapter, Gothicism is still fraught with an objective agenda in Naturalism, as Garrett argues that “[a]s we move from *Frankenstein* to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula*, the perspective increasingly shifts from the isolated monster to his collective antagonists” (131). According to Garrett,

“[I]like the accounts of the dream origins of *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a motif that goes back to the beginnings of the Gothic in Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, it traces a movement outward from private to shared experience” (133). This objectivity is, of course, typical of the influence of scientific naturalism on the Naturalist movement. And similar to *Frankenstein*’s combination of science and the Gothic, science would maintain a central role in the Gothic Naturalism of the *fin de siècle* novel. Garrett points out this revisiting of science and the Gothic in *Frankenstein* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as he argues that in Stevenson’s text, “[a]gain, a scientist produces and loses control over a creature who is both his double and his antagonist; again, they are caught in shifting relations of dissociation and conjecture, the denial and reassertion of a bond that tightens into mutual destruction” (103).

As a result, Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll can certainly be read as relatively parallel characters. *Frankenstein* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are similar at least in terms of their scientific and Gothic representations of reanimation, as Jekyll is described by Dr. Lanyon, after his transformation back to his original self, “like a man restored from death” (Stevenson 47), and Jekyll also complains of feeling during his transformations the “most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death” (Stevenson 50). But even beyond this scientifically Gothic parallel, both Victor Frankenstein and Henry Jekyll, as Garrett suggests above, represent a loss of control and particularly a loss of control in relation to scientific morality and ethics. Dr. Lanyon of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* acts similarly to M. Krempe in *Frankenstein*, as he seems to notice Jekyll’s tendency to stray from scientific ethics and is unsuccessful in leading him

down the correct path. Lanyon states that “‘it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in the mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake’s sake as they say, I see and have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash,’ added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, ‘would have estranged Damon and Pythias’” (Stevenson 14). Both characters are bent on scientific advancement to the point of obsession, as Jekyll takes great pains to protect Edward Hyde at all costs. Jekyll also seems to display a sense of scientific obsession when he throws his achievements in Lanyon’s face, as he transforms before his eyes, taunting him with “‘you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!’” (Stevenson 46-47). At first—as in this scene of transformation in front of Lanyon—it is clear that Jekyll has control over his transformations to Hyde, and like an addict that claims to be able to “quit whenever I want to,” Jekyll claims to Utterson, “‘I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde’” (Stevenson 20). However, any sense of control is soon lost, as Jekyll eventually discovers one morning that “I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde” (Stevenson 54).

The role of science in Stevenson’s text is rather obvious, on a general level, but soon *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* becomes a scientific study of the psyche, as Stevenson constructs a pre-Freudian construct of the fear of oneself and one’s most primitive desires. At first, Jekyll enjoys being able to resist the social mores of his position in society and of Victorian society itself, as he brags that “I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that

of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to be humorous” (Stevenson 52). The fragmenting of Dr. Jekyll and his projection of Mr. Hyde becomes the most scientific, psychological, and even quintessential study of the trope of the Gothic double, as not only is a double created that can be considered more “evil” than the original other, but it also allows the original other to get in on the fun of being bad, as Jekyll again brags that “[m]en have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures” (Stevenson 52). But eventually, despite this sense of freedom and simultaneously vicarious/nonvicarious enjoyment, Jekyll’s pre-Freudian superego comes to detest and fear Hyde, because “while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost” (Stevenson 55). Jekyll later writes that “I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me” (Stevenson 60), and he then becomes “solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self” (Stevenson 60). Hyde is constantly described in animalistic terms that not only speak to his monstrosity and his association with evil, but such descriptions also allude to a Darwinian primitivism similar to the zoomorphism of the poor and working class in Realist and Naturalist representations. Hyde is described in the novel as having “shrank back with a hissing intake of breath” (Stevenson 16), and is described as having “snarled aloud into a savage laugh” (Stevenson 17). Poole describes having seen and heard Hyde “cry out like a rat, and run from me” (Stevenson 36), and when Poole and Utterson finally break down the door of Jekyll’s cabinet towards the end of Jekyll and Hyde’s life in the narrative, they hear a “dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet” (Stevenson 38), as if Hyde were an animal caught in a deadly trap.

However, it is when Poole remembers “‘when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet’” (Stevenson 37), and also when Jekyll writes of “the apeline tricks that he would play on me” (Stevenson 61) that Stevenson appears to be making direct references to Darwinian evolutionary theory, and particularly *The Descent of Man*.

What these Gothic monstrosities of characters represent in the *fin de siècle* Gothic novel is a moral and also Darwinian sense of degeneration. Dorian Gray’s Gothic and monstrously immoral degeneration is at stake in Wilde’s novel, while Edward Hyde represents an immoral and also Darwinian degeneration in his animalism and apeline primitivism. David Punter discusses this degenerative tendency of the *fin de siècle* Gothic novel in the opening of his chapter called “Gothic and decadence”:

As we look at these books, we shall see certain interconnexions—at any rate in terms of theme, even where authorial stances may be quite different—but one thing can be said at the outset which underlines the meaning of decadence in connexion with these texts, and that is that they are all concerned in one way or another with the problem of degeneration, and thus of the essence of the human. They each pose, from very different angles, the same question, which can readily be seen as a question appropriate to an age of imperial decline: how much, they ask, can one lose—individually, socially, nationally—and still remain a man? One could put the question much more brutally: to what extent can one be “infected” and still remain British? (Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 239-240)

Hurley likewise argues that “Degenerationism, in other words, is a ‘gothic’ discourse, and as such is a crucial imaginative and narrative force for the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic” (Hurley 65).

While the Gothic theme of degeneration in relation to science, Darwinism, and Naturalism in the *fin de siècle* British novel is at stake in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the threat to humanity of vampiric degeneration is explored in Dr. John William Polidori’s “The Vampyre: A Tale” (1819), Joseph Sheridan LeFanu’s *Carmilla* (1872), and also in other more modal expressions throughout the nineteenth century, culminating the most famous of nineteenth-century vampire texts: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. At the very least, degeneration in *Dracula* occurs on a moral and sexual level, as represented by the vampire. Martin Willis also discusses the vampire’s degenerative qualities in terms of infectious disease, as “*Dracula*’s engagement with disease is so very apparent in the novel (vampirism is clearly both infection and illness) that there is a critical desire to reach beyond its seeming superficiality to uncover the metonymic and metaphoric ‘meanings’ of disease in alternative medical practices and debates” (302). The term ‘unclean’ is used several times in Stoker’s novel, particularly in reference to vampiric infection and subsequent degeneration, as after her vampiric infection, Lucy Westenra’s eyes are described as “unclean and full of hell fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew” (Stoker 181). Mina Harker also refers to herself as ‘unclean’ several times, after she is vampirically infected by Dracula. Mina draws back from her husband, Jonathan, crying “‘Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear’”

(Stoker 244). Later Mina is described as “[p]ulling her beautiful hair over her face, as the leper of old his mantle” and she again wails “‘Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgement Day’” (Stoker 254). Willis explains how the novel dramatizes contemporary perceptions of disease as signifying evil, as “[e]ven before the nineteenth century those unfortunate enough to contract an infectious disease had been categorized as sick or unclean, a form of temporary identity that was very easily transformed into dirty and wicked” (314), and Willis also explains that “Victorian sanitary scientists were equally persuaded of the connection between disease and immoral activity” (314). Willis further argues that “Lucy’s vampiric infection is a marker of moral laxity leading to sexual transgression” (315), and consequently “the novel does lead us to consider Lucy’s sexuality as responsible for her own infection, nowhere more so than when she attempts to seduce Lord Godalming while under Dracula’s influence, an episode that reinforces the connection between her diseased state and her sexual assertiveness” (315). The vampire continues the Gothic tradition of the sexualized Gothic villain; a tradition that was also connected to Heathcliff in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

The association between the vampire and disease does not always have to be specifically sexual, but it does always appear to be specifically unclean and therefore dirty. Dracula is constantly associated with and is never physically very far away from his native dirt, as Willis points out that the “connection between the vampires and the dust makes certain the link between history and ancestral disease (disease that has remained dormant in a specific place over time until re-invigorated into action by external forces), now excited into action by Harker’s violation of Transylvania’s past”

(319). Such an association with dirt, dust, ashes and death is apparent not only in more specific studies of the vampire in Gothic fiction of the nineteenth century, but also in a text like Dickens's *Bleak House*, which expresses Gothicism as a mode through its Realism. Dickens repeatedly associates the character of Mr. Vholes in *Bleak House* with traits of the vampire, and also alludes to his infection of some of those around him. One of Vholes's eventually infected associates includes Richard Carstone, as Vholes repeatedly raps his desk and calls it Richard's "rock," though "it sounds as hollow as a coffin" (*Bleak House* 625), and also sounds "as if ashes were falling on ashes, and dust on dust" (*Bleak House* 626). Vholes has three daughters, which eerily foreshadows the three female vampires that share Dracula's home in Stoker's later text, Vholes is described as "never winking his hungry eyes" (*Bleak House* 628) foreshadowing Dracula's hungry red eyes, and while Vholes constantly complains of impaired digestion, Dracula is never seen eating food in Stoker's novel. Vholes has a "lifeless manner" (*Bleak House* 607), and on greeting Esther at one point in the novel, she describes Vholes as having "put his dead glove, which scarcely seemed to have any hand in it, on my fingers" (*Bleak House* 698). Furthermore, as a Gothic villain, Vholes is cannibalistic like Heathcliff, as with his aforementioned hungry eyes he is described as "looking at [Richard] as if he were looking at his prey and charming it" (*Bleak House* 608). Consequently, Richard is described in a way that reveals vampiric infection, as Esther worries that Richard is "[s]o slow, so eager, so bloodless and gaunt, I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this adviser, and there were something of the Vampire in him" (*Bleak House* 924). Richard's signs of vampiric infection later become more severe, as he is described as "quite destitute of color" (*Bleak House* 976), and in an

appearance in Chancery he “made as if he would have spoken in a fierce voice to the judge” but “was stopped by his mouth being full of blood” (*Bleak House* 976). The extent of vampiric infection in *Bleak House* even becomes so severe that Jo, the crossing sweeper—whom is far less associated with Vholes than is Richard in the novel—is described in subhuman, vampiric terms, as “[h]e is of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity” (*Bleak House* 724).

Not only does the vampirism in *Bleak House* predate such parallels in Stoker’s *Dracula*, but Stoker himself, as a Gothic Naturalist, possessed a scientific knowledge of disease and infection well before writing *Dracula*, as Willis points out that “Stoker’s consideration of disease theory significantly predates *Dracula*” (303). Stoker’s scientific knowledge of infection was reflective of contemporary scientific debate, as Willis observes that “theories of disease were constantly in flux in the second half of the nineteenth century and had reached a point of such significant controversy in the 1890s” (302). According to Willis, in the “final decade of the nineteenth century the germ theory of disease gradually became the dominant scientific paradigm of infection, replacing the contagionist and miasmatist theories that had previously been regarded as scientific orthodoxy. *Dracula* examines the shift towards germ theory in its portrayal of the vampire” (302). Willis argues that this shift towards germ theory in the novel was fitting since “germ theory did offer one clear difference from these previous systems of belief; that disease was the product of a living organic being—the microbe or bacteria—whose life, like the life of the vampire, depended on human illness” (312).

Willis’s rather convincing arguments concerning Stoker’s thorough knowledge of contemporary theories of infection and disease is again indicative of the prominent role

of science in the Gothic Naturalism of *Dracula*, as has also been explored in relation to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Midway through *Dracula*, Dr. Seward writes in his diary of a late-night visit, with Dr. Van Helsing, to Lucy Westenra's tomb. The purpose of this visit is that Van Helsing might prove to Seward a theory concerning the demise and subsequent activity of Lucy. Seward is rather skeptical of Van Helsing's theory, as when Van Helsing reveals to Seward that Lucy's coffin is mysteriously empty, Seward argumentatively replies:

“I am satisfied that Lucy's body is not in that coffin; but that only proves one thing.”

“And what is that, friend John?”

“That it is not there.”

“That is good logic,” he said, “so far as it goes. But how do you—how can you—account for it not being there?”

“Perhaps a body-snatcher,” I suggested. “Some of the undertaker's people may have stolen it.” I felt that I was speaking of folly, and yet it was the only real cause which I could suggest. The Professor sighed. “Ah well!” he said, “we must have more proof. Come with me.” (Stoker 169)

As men of scientific minds, and as men of what Van Helsing describes as “this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see” (Stoker 275), Seward expects and Van Helsing must provide empirical proof, particularly in the case of Lucy and a theory based on what Van Helsing freely acknowledges as “traditions and superstitions” (Stoker 204). Similar to the methodology of *Frankenstein*, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as many other Gothic texts that rely on the epistolary

form and the more specific use of supposed legal documents and the like, the methodology of the novel *Dracula* seeks to convey “internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed” (Shelley 31), as Victor Frankenstein says to Robert Walton in preparation for the telling of his own fantastic story. Rosemary Jann argues that, for the major characters in *Dracula*, “the recording of events implicitly endows experience with the authority of ‘fact.’ It is as if the very act of ordering details and writing them down verifies the experience as authentic, even if its meaning is not fully understood at the time” (278). Jonathon Harker certainly supports this, as he eventually overcomes his aversion to writing in his journal after Mina ““showed me in the doctor’s letter that all I wrote down was true. It seems to have made a new man of me. It was the doubt as to the reality of the thing that knocked me over. I felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful. But, now that I *know*, I am not afraid, even of the Count”” (Stoker 160). Jann further argues that “although the characters are at the beginning, at least, often wrong or puzzled about the interpretation of the ‘facts,’ their ability to record, reorder, share, and reason from their observations becomes at least as vital a weapon against Dracula as their willingness to believe in his supernatural reality” (280). For Jann, the “instruments of reason are needed finally to master Dracula’s gothic supernaturalism” (278). Jann is clearly intimating that reason conquers the Gothic in *Dracula*. However, Stoker’s novel also reveals that reason and Gothicism very well might have a relationship with each other that goes beyond such a contentious depiction. Though the traditions and superstitions observable in Gothicism might appear to be antithetical to one of the main reason-based byproducts of that enlightened age: science, *Dracula*, as well as the other

Gothic texts already mentioned, reveal that these two strangely-matched companions: Gothicism and science, are frequently in each other's intimate company.

Anne Stiles observes that "since vampires are so often associated with archaism and legend, it is easy to forget that the invention of the vampire coincided with a period of intense scientific progress" as in "*fin-de-siècle* Britain, vampires continued to be associated with the science and technology, as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* amply attests" (132). Jann points out that "Stoker's narrative is also heavily invested in valorizing the rationalistic authority conventionally associated with scientific thought" (273), which further emphasizes a strong relationship between science and the vampire as a result of their combination in Stoker's novel. However, Glennis Byron argues that as "Stoker moves further into the more problematic sciences of the mind in *Dracula*, so the clear boundaries between the rational and the irrational, science and superstition, begin to break down" (55). Jann likewise acknowledges that "the rigid line Seward would maintain between science and superstition is an artificial one" (276).

Returning to Van Helsing's theory concerning Lucy Westenra and Seward's resistance, it is only through the methodology of science and reason that the men can essentially find proof for Gothic superstition. Rather than relying on the term 'gothic supernaturalism' taken from Rosemary Jann a bit earlier, that term might be reconceived as Gothic Naturalism. After all, Dr. Seward and Dr. Van Helsing are clearly naturalists in terms of their scientific methodologies in the novel. Seward classifies his patient, Renfield, much in the same way a naturalist might classify a new species of animal, as Seward observes that "[m]y homicidal maniac is of a peculiar kind. I shall have to invent a new classification for him, and call him a zoöphagous (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker 61).

Van Helsing likewise exhibits a scientific drive to observe and classify his own humankind, as he admits to Mina “‘I, who am old, and how have studied all my life men and women; I, who have made my specialty the brain and all that belongs to him and all that follow from him!’” (Stoker 157). Even in his grammatical error in assigning a gendered pronoun to the word ‘brain,’ Van Helsing essentially foreshadows Mina eventually belonging to and following the brain of Dracula via a psychic connection. Therefore, purposeful or not, Van Helsing reveals himself to be a naturalist—or a Gothic Naturalist—very much interested in the study of one specific Gothic species: the vampire. However, the scientific classification of the vampire is still a difficult task. Although the vampire is a much simplified version, rather than in the case of the complicated hybridity of Victor’s monster and his combination of body parts from multiple donors, the vampire is indeed a hybrid, and therefore combines, scientifically speaking, the traits of two distinct species. As Garrett argues, “Dracula concentrates such ambiguity: he is both outside and inside, an alien invader from a remote time and place yet also strangely familiar, a figure of unacknowledged fantasies; he violated the privacy and autonomy of the self yet enters only where invited” (135).

While Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is an immoral and psychological hybrid, and the vampire is likewise a scientific and immoral hybrid, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* contains elements of scientific naturalism, but also presents Dorian as a morally degenerative hybridization of man and a work of art. Concerning the fate and symbolic significance of his character, Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde writes in *De Profundis*, “‘Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art?’ a phrase which when I wrote it seemed to me little more than a phrase: a great deal of it is hidden away in the note of Doom that like a purple thread

runs through the gold cloth of Dorian Gray...At every single moment of one's life one is what one is going to be no less than what one has been. Art is a symbol, because man is a symbol" (1026). This passage makes it very clear that Dorian's fate was set; his Doom was inevitable. Wilde comes to the realization in *De Profundis* that "the artistic life is simple self-development" (1026). If man is a symbol, then Dorian Gray is most assuredly a symbol, as well, and this condition is worsened when he takes on the persona of art in the novel. Man is a symbol of self-development. Man suffers, experiences misery, and is the wiser for it. The life of man runs like a thread through the cloth of life, and misery makes its mark on the body and soul of man. Man is a symbol of observable misery; a true-to-life representation of the Naturalism of visual art. Man's Nature is to suffer and to self-develop through that suffering, and like a portrait of Naturalism, man bears the psychological and physical marks of life as a symbol of knowledge and misery. Not a pretty picture, but again, ugliness has its place in the Gothic as well as the Aestheticism of Oscar Wilde just as it has its place in the Naturalism of visual art. The scarred, disfigured, sickly, subhuman transmutations that the picture of Dorian endures throughout Wilde's novel are reminiscent of the scarred, disfigured, sickly, subhuman characters of *Germinal*. The difference is, the characters of Zola can be read as having been socially and even morally *victimized*, while the social and moral transgressions of Dorian that mark his portrait are presumably a result of his having been the *victimizer*. The influence of *À Rebours* on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is unmistakable, as even within the world of Wilde's novel, Dorian is directly influenced by the "yellow book" written by Huysmans. Wilde's narrator describes the book as the story of a "wonderful young Parisian, in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely

blended, became [to Dorian] a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 141). And eventually the reader is informed that “Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 161). It is this privileging of living life through the senses and using life merely as a vehicle through which to experience aesthetic pleasure that parallels the attempts at scientific, objective observations of social squalor that came to be such an essential part of the Naturalist philosophy of Zola, as both methodologies are merely passive documentations rather than active influences.

Huysmans, in his Preface to *À Rebours*, written twenty years after the novel, complains that Naturalism “was destined to perform the never-to-be-forgotten good service of showing real personages in accurate surroundings, was condemned to go on repeating itself, marking time for ever on the same spot” (xxxiii). It was the aforementioned ordinariness of Naturalism that irritated Huysmans. And though he does not specifically state it, one could argue that, even more than the ugly, it was the ordinary that just did not interest him:

Naturalism was getting more and more out of breath by dint of turning the mill for ever in the same round. The stock of observations that each writer had stored up by the self-scrutiny or study of his neighbours was getting exhausted. Zola, who was a first-rate scene painter, got out of the difficulty by designing big, bold canvases more or less true to life; he suggested fairly well the illusion of movement and action; his heroes were

devoid of soul, governed simply and solely by impulses and instincts,
which greatly simplified the work of analysis. (Huysmans xxxv)

Admitting not only a significant level of *ennui*, and also a fear of the exhaustion of subject-matter-resources, Huysmans perhaps also reveals an element of fear in general, when he declares that “the rest of us, less robust and concerned about a more subtle method and a truer art, were constrained to ask ourselves the question whether Naturalism was not marching up a blind alley and if we were not bound soon to knock up against an impassable wall” (xxxvi).

Ironically, the main character in *À Rebours*, Des Esseintes, encloses himself within the walls of his suburban dwelling almost as if *they* were impassable. Des Esseintes, in an obvious reaction to the social Naturalism of Zola, is a social recluse, and throughout most of the book he experiences the world exclusively through literature, art, music, and science. The few excursions that he takes away from his seclusion are incredibly short-lived, and even in their brevity they seem to be borderline overwhelming to the touchy nerves of Des Esseintes. For Huysmans, this literary construct of exploring the world not through social interaction and *externally* physical interchange, but rather through mental/intellectual interaction and *sensually* physical interchange, was greatly preferred. For Des Esseintes, “it appeared to him a futile waste of energy to travel when, so he believed, imagination was perfectly competent to fill the place of the vulgar reality of actual prosaic facts” (Huysmans 20), as “there is no doubt we can, and just as easily as in the material world, enjoy false, fictitious pleasures every whit as good as the true” (Huysmans 21). In a sense, we can certainly see in Huysmans an adherence to many of the *fin de siècle* artistic principles that Belinda Thomson explains in *Post-Impressionism*.

In discussing the Rosicrucian Symbolist Salons of the 1890s, she observes that art in these exhibitions was meant to “rise above the banal realities of daily life and set its sights on lofty idealised subjects” (Thomson 51). Thomson also points out that “in France the Symbolist poets, inheriting the philosophical outlook of Baudelaire and the Decadents, turned aside from the marvels or horrors of the age of science and its social and democratic upheavals, to focus inwards upon the human soul” (57). Huysmans, via *Des Esseintes*, displays a marked interest in the works of the Symbolist poets and artists, as well as the artists of the Nabis. But even in his attempts to escape the confines of Naturalism by making reference to, and even sometimes meticulously discussing, Symbolist and decidedly non-Naturalist art and literature, the method that he uses to explore these works is no less than Naturalist. In a veritably scientific manner, it is as if *Des Esseintes* is no less than cataloguing various sensual experiences, various works of art and literature, and various mental/intellectual experiences. Similar to Lord Henry in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Des Esseintes* is a Naturalist in the most basic sense of the term, despite any feelings of irritation that that reality might cause.

Therefore, van Gogh indeed was not inaccurate in his apparent obstinacy in regarding Huysmans as a Naturalist even after the publication of *À Rebours*. After all, according to Weisberg, when one looks at the critical writings of Huysmans during the 1870s, the pre-*À Rebours* author preaches for the “necessity of abandoning old routines in order to become a true Naturalist” (16). This argument certainly sheds light on some of the sentiments expressed in the Preface to *À Rebours* that have been explored, as it appears that, in the 1870s, Huysmans already felt the stirrings of a longing to abandon the old, but to do so with the intent of becoming a “true Naturalist.”

As the Naturalist principles of physical exteriority and psychological interiority, and their relation to Darwinism and the sciences are all applied even more specifically to the Gothic, the manner in which the Gothic is drawn out of the shadows of Realism becomes more apparent in the *fin de siècle* British Gothic novel. Garrett argues that “Dickens uses Gothic to figure both the most inward private experience and the social forces or shared destinies of institutions and groups” (143), revealing an inward, subjective, psychological interiority as well as a more shared, objective, physical exteriority of experience in relation to the Gothic in Realism. As the truly Gothic novel reemerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, so too would this sense of psychological interiority as a scientific pursuit on par with the physical sciences. The narrator of LeFanu’s *Carmilla* describes the vampire-afflicted Millarca as “looking like a person in a trance” (67), setting the stage for the use of the psychological hypnotism in Bram Stoker’s later vampire novel, *Dracula*. As Hurley argues, “the distinction between science fiction and the fantastic is difficult to maintain in the case of the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, which could readily be subsumed within either category” (16). Hurley “identifies the Gothic as a *productive* genre: a highly speculative art form, one part of whose cultural work is the invention of new representational strategies by which to imagine human (or not-so-human) realities. Here it should be seen as in opportunistic relation to the sciences” (6). As with *Frankenstein* earlier in the century, the Gothic maintains a direct relationship with the sciences—physical and psychological—in its creation of monsters. While discussing *Frankenstein*, Ellen Moers argues of the nineteenth century that with “the coming of Naturalism late in the century, and the lifting of the Victorian taboo against writing about physical sexuality (including pregnancy and labor), the subject of

birth was first brought to literature in realistic form by the male novelists” (79). Gothic Naturalism would likewise work to lift the taboo against sexuality, and would give birth to more sexualized monsters in the tradition of Heathcliff: Dr. Jekyll, Dorian Gray, and Dracula, and these characters and their respective novels that birthed them would still maintain a close relationship to scientific naturalism. Hurley remarks on the constant connection between science and the Gothic in the nineteenth-century novel: “The province of the nineteenth-century human sciences was after all very like that of the earlier Gothic novel: the pre-Victorian Gothic provided a space wherein to explore phenomena at the borders of human identity and culture—insanity, criminality, barbarity, sexual perversion—precisely those phenomena that would come under the purview of social medicine in later decades” (5-6).

One of the effects of this emerging psychological interiorization is a further enhancement of realism in the Gothic. Although psychological interiority still maintained some connection to the spiritual—as in *Wuthering Heights*, and also in the psychic connection between otherworldly creatures of the undead, like the vampire, in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*—a more scientific exploration of the psychological in the Gothic allowed even the realm of the mind and its fears to be rationalized with a more realistic sense of scientific study. Therefore, as Robert Geary argues, the “Victorian horror tale escapes much of the confusion and embarrassment besetting the Gothic supernatural by insinuating a new context for the numinous. This, in turn, enables the writer to discard the clumsy Gothic distancing devices of cardboard medieval settings and characters for a contemporary scene and sharply drawn figures” (110). In terms of even later Victorian Gothic novelists, Geary argues that “Sheridan Le Fanu, Lord Lytton, and Robert Louis

Stevenson, for example, were able to develop strategies for integrating supernatural terror into probable, contemporary settings without the embarrassments, evasions, and hesitations which plagued the Gothic novel of an earlier age” (102). Such contemporary settings in the late-Victorian Gothic novel maintained a close relationship to the urban Gothic, and as Glennis Byron argues: “If the city is now the primary Gothic landscape, the primary figure at the heart of most Victorian *fin de siècle* texts is the scientist” (Byron 188). The city becomes a breeding ground for monsters, and it is Gothic Naturalism that seeks to explore, discover, and classify those foul creatures on a scientific basis. Arthur Morrison writes a Naturalist and quite Gothic description of the East End of London in the opening pages of his *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894), calling it “a shocking place” and “an evil plexus of slums that hide human creeping things; where filthy men and women live” (7-8). Though somewhat exaggerated for effect, Morrison’s description is a typically Naturalist exposé, but it is also still consistent with Realism, as it implies that, as things are so awful, something needs to be done: there is a social and moral implication.

This duality of an attempt at a scientific, documentary exposé and also of a morally-based social agenda comes to typify Gothic Naturalism at the *fin de siècle*, despite the prevalence of Decadent and Aestheticist leanings in the late-Victorian novel. Much in the way that Darwinism, according to Levine’s sometimes “counterchronological interpretation between science and literature” (*Darwin and the Novelists* 3), is inevitably at stake throughout the work of novelists of the nineteenth century, Naturalism, in its internationality and interdisciplinarity, made its way into the visual art and novels of the *fin de siècle*, even if some novelists actively opposed its

principles—as both Wilde and Huysmans claimed to do. While Realism was also a movement that spread from the Continent to Britain on the basis of an international and interdisciplinary network of shared principles, the Gothic novelists of the *fin de siècle* maintained an even closer relationship to the realm of visual art, as already seen in the example of the Naturalist network formed by Zola, Bastien-Lepage, van Gogh, Huysmans, and Wilde. Essentially, the Gothic novelist in Britain at the *fin de siècle* was well versed in not only contemporary artistic but also scientific developments.

As Darwinism represented the most influential aspect of scientific thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is the relationship between Darwinism and Gothic Naturalism that reveals Gothicism's triumph in terms of carrying on—in an even more blatant and overt manner—the social agenda of Realism despite the scientific, objective intent of Naturalism in the *fin de siècle* Gothic novel. Consistent with the reemergence of the truly Gothic novel in Britain at the *fin de siècle*, Hurley depicts the late-Victorian Gothic novel as something decidedly different than the Gothic expressions in Realism in the decades before, but also as something unique from the early Gothic novels of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century:

The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the reemergence of the Gothic as a significant literary form in Great Britain, after its virtual disappearance in the middle of the century. While certain broad narrative and thematic continuities link this form to the late eighteenth-century and Romantic Gothic novel, the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic rematerializes as a genre in many ways unrecognizable, transfigured, bespeaking an altered sensibility that resonates more closely with contemporary horrific

representations than those generated at the far edge of the Enlightenment. More graphic than before, soliciting a more visceral readerly response than before, the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic manifests a new set of generic strategies, discussed below, which function maximally to enact the defamiliarization and violent reconstitution of the human subject. (Hurley 4)

However, this “reconstitution of the human subject” is consistent with virtually all articulations of the Gothic novel in that it is based on monstrosity, as Hurley points out:

The narrative of Darwinian evolution could be read as a supernaturalist or Gothic one: [E]volution theory described a bodily metamorphosis which, even though taking place over aeons and over multiple bodies, rendered the identity of the human body in a most basic sense—its distinctness from the “brute beasts”—unstable. Thus the cultural commonplace of man’s bearing “the mark of the beast” became literalized within scientific discourses, and gave rise to two fears. If humans derived from beasts, then they might still be abhuman entities, not yet “fully evolved,” not yet “fully human.” And worse, the evolutionary process might be reversible: the human race might ultimately retrogress into a sordid animalism rather than progress towards a telos of intellectual and moral perfection. (Hurley 56)

Hurley’s discussion of monstrosity in the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic also supports the connection between Gothicism and Darwinism, as these seemingly contradictory ideas indeed do share some common traits.

If Darwinism is perceived as a mode of thought that simultaneously represents both a paradigm of thought in terms of the way that life and human life is viewed, and also as a way of thinking that met with much resistance, then a parallel can be seen between Darwinism and the theme of a social agenda based on human fellowship that has been discussed in relation to the Gothic throughout much of this dissertation. As Kuhn discusses in his “Preface” to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he defines paradigms as “universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (viii), and later discusses Darwin’s theory of natural selection as an example of a paradigm shift. However, when discussing the resistance to the paradigm of thought represented by Darwin’s theory, Kuhn makes sure to point out that “[t]hough evolution, as such, did encounter resistance, particularly from some religious groups, it was by no means the greatest of the difficulties the Darwinians faced” (171). According to Kuhn, “[w]hen Darwin first published his theory of evolution by natural selection in 1859, what most bothered many professionals was neither the notion of species change nor the possible descent of man from apes” (171). Kuhn’s arguments, of course, at least initially sound rather contradictory to the manner in which Darwin addresses possible resistance in the *Origin of Species*, as Darwin proclaims that “the chief cause of our natural unwillingness to admit that one species has given birth to other and distinct species, is that we are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps” (452-453). Darwin appeals for an open-minded reception of his ideas based on species change:

A few naturalists, endowed with much flexibility of mind, and who have already begun to doubt on the immutability of species, may be influenced by this volume; but I look with confidence to the future, to young and rising naturalists, who will be able to view both sides of the question with impartiality. Whoever is led to believe that species are mutable will do good service by conscientiously expressing his conviction; for only thus can the load of prejudice by which this subject is overwhelmed be removed. (Darwin 453)

Despite his appeal, Darwin realistically accepts that even many of his peers will likely be resistant to his theory, admitting that “[a]lthough I am fully convinced of the truth of the views given in this volume under the form of an abstract, I by no means expect to convince experienced naturalists whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed, during a long course of years, from a point of view directly opposite to mine” (453).

However, as Kuhn has alluded, the basis on which many of Darwin’s peers, and others, resisted his theory was more to do with the Decadent implications of Darwin’s theory, rather than the idea of species change itself. As this chapter has already discussed, evolutionary theory had been established well before Darwin, but the basis of that theory was inevitably goal-oriented, as Bowler and Morus argue that the “original Darwinian revolution turned out to be only a transition to an evolutionary interpretation of an already-existing worldview based on faith in the idea of progress as the product of divine providence or of nature’s laws” (161). Kuhn also explains the concept of evolutionary theory before Darwin in goal-oriented terms:

All the well-known pre-Darwinian evolutionary theories—those of Lamarck, Chambers, Spencer, and the German *Naturphilosophen*—had taken evolution to be a goal-oriented process. The “idea” of man and of the contemporary flora and fauna was thought to have been present from the first creation of life, perhaps in the mind of God. That idea or plan had provided the direction and the guiding force to the entire evolutionary process. Each new stage of evolutionary development was a more perfect realization of a plan that had been present from the start. (Kuhn 171-172)

However, Kuhn explains that Darwin’s conception of evolution was much different, as actually the “*Origin of Species* recognized no goal set either by God or nature. Instead, natural selection, operating in the given environment and with the actual organisms presently at hand, was responsible for the gradual but steady emergence of more elaborate, further articulated, and vastly more specialized organisms” (172).

Consequently, Kuhn poses the question: “What could ‘evolution,’ ‘development,’ and ‘progress’ mean in the absence of a specified goal? To many people, such terms suddenly seemed self-contradictory” (172). A lack of a specified goal, of course, often has the effect of rendering an enterprise meaningless, but from a Decadent point of view, as in *l’art pour l’art*, it is in the experience itself that meaning is created, rather than in the pursuit of a moral or progressive goal. As Levine explains in reference to Realism, “the realist can find symbolic representations of the moral implication, but the symbol and the moral reality are human inventions. Nature is Darwinian. For Eliot, as for Dickens, the novelist was to make the ordinary resonant with myth. But the romance of the ordinary is never inherent in nature. Nature’s language is neutral” (*Darwin and the*

Novelists 134). Levine explains that Darwinism acted as a catalyst for change in Realism:

The radical difference between Darwin and Dickens, despite Dickens's predisposition both to science and to the overall Darwinian vision, is simply in that Darwin's "laws" have no moral significance. Although they can be adapted for moral purposes (and were, immediately and continuingly), they do not answer questions like "Why?" except in physical or probabilistic terms. Birds can carry seeds in their talons, or deposit them thousands of miles away in their excrement. But what design is there in these particular seeds, these particular species making the trip? Why did the bird eat this plant rather than that, travel to this island rather than that? Survival in Darwin's nature is not *morally* significant. Adaptiveness is not designed, being the mere adjustment of the organism to its particular environment, and it has no direction. There is no perfection in Darwin's world, no intelligent design, no purpose. Fact may not be converted to meaning. (Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists*, 141)

Levine's articulation of the changing concept of morality in post-Darwinian Realism not only illustrates a more Naturalist, scientific, objective, and documentary view of the world, but it also reflects an intended distancing from morality that is typical of the Decadent and Aestheticist intent. Otto explains of Naturalism that "it seems to reduce the higher products of religion, morality, poetry, and the æsthetic sense to the level of an ignoble tumult of animal impulses, desires and sensations" (85), while Peter K. Walhout argues that the "aesthetic nature of science is then not some divine reflection but an idea

in human brains that has resulted, without divine input, from natural selection” (758), both critics revealing a link not only between Naturalism’s and science’s problematizing of morality, but also between science and aesthetics.

The Decadents and Aestheticists, of course, likewise problematized morality, and even in their emphasis on aesthetics, their knowledge of science was often thorough and their expression of Naturalism—though usually unintended—was often at stake, as a world view that privileges only an understanding of beauty and a world view that privileges only a scientifically objective and documentary exposé both sound decidedly similar in their disinterest in morality. As Wilde writes in “The Preface” to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art” (3), and he also writes that “There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book” (3), revealing not only a typically Decadent disinterest in morality, but also a rather scientific and even Naturalist view of the “instruments” of art. Nietzsche, of course, also derides morality, arguing that “*all* the means by which one has so far attempted to make mankind moral were through and through *immoral*” (505), and also arguing that “Morality, as it has so far been understood—as it has in the end been formulated once more by Schopenhauer, as ‘negations of the will to life’—is the very *instinct of decadence*, which makes an imperative of itself. It says: ‘*Perish!*’ It is a condemnation pronounced by the condemned” (490-491). Nietzsche seems very consistent with Wilde and the rest of the Decadents when he labels morality as “*Anti-natural* morality—that is, almost every morality which has so far been taught, revered, and preached—turns, conversely, *against* the instincts of life: it is *condemnation* of these instincts, now secret, now outspoken and

impudent” (490). For Nietzsche, morality is an entity of emptiness, particularly in its relation to religious symbolism:

My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he take his stand *beyond* good and evil and leave *beneath* himself. This demand follows from an insight which I was the first to formulate: that *there are altogether no moral facts*. Moral judgments agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities. Morality is merely an interpretation of certain phenomena—more precisely, a misinterpretation. Moral judgments, like religious ones, belong to a stage of ignorance at which the very concept of the real and the distinction between what is real and imaginary, are still lacking; thus “truth,” at this stage, designates all sorts of things which we today call “imaginings.” Moral judgments are therefore never to be taken literally: so understood, they always contain mere absurdity. Semeiotically, however, they remain invaluable: they reveal, at least for those who know, the most valuable realities of cultures and inwardness which did not know enough to “understand” themselves. Morality is mere sign language, mere symptomatology: one must know what it is all about to be able to profit from it. (Nietzsche 501)

In terms of morality’s potential relationship to art and aesthetics, Nietzsche concedes that the “fight against purpose in art is always a fight against the moralizing tendency in art, against its subordination to morality. *L’art pour l’art* means, ‘The devil take morality!’” (529). However, Nietzsche is not altogether accepting of art only for art’s sake, arguing that when “the purpose of moral preaching and of improving man has been excluded

from art, it still does not follow by any means that art is altogether purposeless, aimless, senseless—in short, *l'art pour l'art*, a worm chewing its own tail. ‘Rather no purpose at all than a moral purpose!’—that is the talk of mere passion” (529). Nietzsche’s argument is consistent with a Decadent disinterest in morality having much or anything to do with art, but he insists that art indeed needs meaning, as he asks of the artist: “Does his basic instinct aim at art, or rather at the sense of art, at life? at a desirability of life? Art is the great stimulus to life: how could one understand it as purposeless, as aimless, as *l'art pour l'art*?” (529). Nietzsche also connects morality to a scientific discussion of psychological interiority, arguing that “Men were considered ‘free’ so that they might be judged and punished—so that they might become *guilty*: consequently, every act that had to be considered as willed, and the origin of every act had to be considered as lying within the consciousness (and thus the most fundamental counterfeit in *psychologism* was made the principle of psychology itself)” (499-500). Both Wilde and Walter Pater also justify this rejection of exterior morality on the basis of an implied subjectivity of morality—a more subjective psychological interiority where one dictates one’s own social morality. This is consistent with Pater’s emphasis on “the inward world of thought and feeling” (234). Pater predicts the life of the character Des Esseintes in Huysmans’s *À Rebours* when he writes of “the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world” (235). Within this realm of isolation and interiority, morality not only does not matter, but in the privileging of feeling and experience over morality, no thought or moral consideration of those feelings and experiences is addressed. Rather, “[w]ith this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch,

we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch” (Pater 237).

Despite the Decadent protestations against morality in Nietzsche, Huysmans, Wilde, and Pater, morality is at least acknowledged in Nietzsche, and despite his protestations it is indeed at stake in Wilde. While Nietzsche problematizes morality, he also accepts the negative consequences of *immorality*, as he acknowledges that “the criminal is a decadent” (475). A lack of morality can have the tendency to lead to criminality, as the monster from *Frankenstein* acknowledges that, early in his development of a conception of morality, “[a]s yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil” (Shelley 130). Wilde certainly deals with the possible implications of criminality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and it is through Dorian’s blackmail of Alan Campbell, a man whose “dominant intellectual passion was for science” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 139), that Dorian is able to dispose of the main piece of potential criminal evidence against him: the corpse of Basil Hallward. Furthermore, despite his derision of morality in “The Preface” to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde freely admitted that there was very much a moral at stake in the novel, and a moral based on morality for that matter. In a July 2, 1890 letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Wilde answers the critique that the moral of *Dorian Gray* is simply “that when a man feels himself becoming ‘too angelic’ he should rush out and make a ‘beast of himself’” (“Letters on Dorian Gray” par. 5). Wilde responds in admitting that, “I cannot say that I consider that a moral. The real moral of the story is that all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment” (“Letters on Dorian Gray” par. 5). Wilde also admits earlier in the same letter, “so far from wishing to emphasise any moral in my story, the real trouble I experienced in

writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect” (“To the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*” par. 5). Wilde, it seems, attempted to subvert this rather obvious moral and render it part of the substratum of the novel, but instead, it remains part of the superstratum. It is a wonder that the critics to which Wilde had to answer did not read the novel in the manner of a moral fable, where Dorian “sells” his soul for eternal youth, but in the end is punished for his transgressions. Wilde writes that, “from an aesthetic point of view, it would be difficult to keep the moral in its proper secondary place; and even now I do not feel quite sure that I have been able to do so. I think the moral too apparent” (“To the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*” par. 4).

While the three most prominent Gothic novelists of the *fin de siècle*—Wilde, Stevenson, and Stoker—fully and completely embraced Gothicism, unlike earlier Realist novelists of the mid-nineteenth century that merely expressed Gothicism as a mode, their expression of a primary Gothicism was inevitably intertwined and even facilitated by Naturalism and science in general, despite any intended resistance to do so and also despite any perceived conflict between Naturalism and Decadence as forms of expression. Shelton Waldrep observes of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that “the contradictions contained in Wilde’s novel between realism (or Naturalism) and decadence—the finely etched and the broadly stroked, the detailed underside of life and the frivolous surface of the aristocracy—express the paradoxes of his aesthetic doctrine” (105). However, as this chapter has explored in terms of their consistencies in relation to morality, Naturalism and Decadence are really not that contradictory. Waldrep later writes that “it is possible to argue that Naturalism and Aestheticism, though seemingly

antagonistic” are indeed bound together in Wilde’s novel (105), and it is the element of Gothicism that often acts as a binding agent.



Figure 26: Frank Holl, *The Song of the Shirt*, 1875, oil on canvas, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, UK.

Furthermore, there exists in Naturalism an element of a surviving social agenda that is likewise bound to Gothicism, and that social agenda subverts the intended documentary objectivity of Naturalism, while also appearing to be in conflict with the Decadent and Aestheticist elements within the *fin de siècle* Gothic novel. As an example of a surviving social agenda of earlier Realism still evident within later Naturalism, one can see the allusion to the Realist subject matter in Anna Blunden’s ‘*For Only One Short Hour*’ (fig. 8) in Frank Holl’s *The Song of the Shirt* (fig. 26), as even though Holl’s painting avoids the more overt social and sentimental appeal of Blunden’s seamstress, much like the “distressed gentlewoman” motif discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation,

the plight of the seamstress is so recognizable that any allusion to it inevitably calls to mind a related social agenda, despite the more objective and “moment in time” aspect of Holl’s presentation. After all, how can one view a painting like Douard’s *Coal Gleaners* (fig. 17) or van Gogh’s *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 21) and not be affected by a blatant social and even sentimental appeal reminiscent of the Realism of Honoré Daumier’s *The Third-Class Carriage* (fig. 13), despite the expression of Naturalism in Douard and van Gogh? One might ask the same of the blatant social agendas evident in spite of Naturalism in novels by Zola and Arthur Morrison that are reminiscent of Dickens and Gaskell. Again, this social agenda is facilitated by a dark, Gothic ugliness that might appear to be in conflict with an emphasis on aesthetics in Decadence and Aestheticism, as Tim Barringer points out that, as a “complex and nebulous phenomenon, Aestheticism’s project is aptly summarised by Sidney Colvin’s sentiment of 1867: ‘perfection of forms and colours—beauty, in a word—should be the prime object of pictorial art’” (Sidney Colvin quoted in Barringer 314).

One way in which this conflict might be reconciled is the view that Naturalism is quite often prone to the aestheticization of ugliness. Keeping in mind Frederick’s labeling of Naturalism as simplistic,⁴⁰ Kenneth McConkey also observes of Naturalist paintings that they “might seem no more than large genre pictures, but they carried the implicit belief that such ordinary subjects could be portrayed in the face of High Art” (47). But even beyond a depiction of Naturalism as aestheticizing the boring and mundane, the surviving presence of a social agenda in Naturalism that is still connected to a Gothic sense of ugliness recalls the discussion as to whether there is beauty in

⁴⁰ “Simple subjects are selected, the plowman is painted in his own field. The old fisherman is posed not in the corner of a studio, but in his own cottage. The reaper is caught in the act” (Frederick 330).

ugliness, in relation to Realism. Much of the Naturalist movement appears to be founded on the philosophy that ugliness can indeed be aestheticized, even in terms of the Gothic. Such an exploration of a more negative aesthetic of ugliness in relation to the Gothic is also found in Freud's discussion of the uncanny, as he complains that "[a]s good as nothing is to be found upon this subject in comprehensive treatises on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime—that is, with feelings of a positive nature—and with the circumstances and the objects that call them forth, rather than with the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress" (219).

After all, there is not only plenty of room for ugliness in the Gothic—which is by no means surprising—but also in the Decadent and Aestheticist movement. Ugliness can be viewed as intertwined with the principles of morality and immorality within Decadence and Aestheticism, as has already been discussed (particularly in relation to Wilde and Dorian Gray). However, ugliness can also be viewed as intertwined with the experience of pain in Decadence/Aestheticism and the Gothic. While Huysmans's *À Rebours* might appear to be no less than obsessed with beauty and aesthetics, the novel also allows that pain and ugliness are likewise life experiences that can be enjoyed just as much. Townshend argues that "torture in Gothic writing endows the nascent bourgeois subject with a rich sentimental interior. Indeed, far from coming to act upon an anterior subjective plentitude, torture draws the matrix or ground-substance of a vulnerable bourgeois psychology into place, inscribing upon it its agonies even as it fashions it" (286). Therefore, according to Townshend, pain and torture enhance psychological interiority, and that argument is consistent with the almost exclusively interiorized psychological world of *Des Esseintes*. Huysmans writes with meticulous, ugly, cringing

detail of Des Esseintes's visit to a dentist, where "so unspeakable were the tortures he was enduring, he had started beating the floor with his feet and bellowing like an animal under the slaughterer's knife" (Huysmans 48):

There was a loud crack, the molar had broken in coming away; he thought they were pulling off his head, smashing in his skull; he lost all control of himself, howled at the top of his voice; fought furiously against the man who now came at him again as if he would plunge his arm to the bottom of his belly; had then suddenly stepped back a pace and lifting the patient bodily by the tooth still sticking in his jaw, had let him fall back again violently in a sitting posture into the chair; next moment he was standing up blocking the window, and puffing and panting as he brandished at the end of his pincers a blue tooth with a red thread hanging from it.

(Huysmans 48)

Des Esseintes then proceeds to "spit out a basin full of blood" and a short time later "he was once more in the street, a happy man, feeling ten years younger, ready to be interested in the veriest trifles" (Huysmans 48). Des Esseintes not only appears relieved that such a horrific experience is over, but it also seems to have energized him in painful, bloody ugliness as an experience in itself. Such feelings of youthful happiness are also felt by Dr. Jekyll when he is in the form of Mr. Hyde, as he joyfully admits that "I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race in my fancy" (Stevenson 50). Such a parallel to a Gothic text only reiterates the very apparent Gothic nature of Des Esseintes's episode at the dentist, as well as his aestheticization of the Gothic in his



Figure 27: Jan Luyken, “Decapitation of Wolfgang Binder, Scharding, Bavaria, 1571” from *Religious Persecutions*, 1685.

decorative prints of Jan Luyken’s *Religious Persecutions* (fig. 27) that he had framed and displayed on his walls. These prints, “replete with abominable imaginations, stinking of the stake, reeking with blood, echoing with curses and screams of agony, made Des Esseintes’ flesh creep as he stood stifled with horror” (Huysmans 58). However, despite “the qualms of disgust they provoked” (Huysmans 58), Des Esseintes admired them for their depictions of “architecture, costumes, manners and customs in the days of the Maccabees” (Huysmans 58), as they “were all noted with a scrupulous exactitude, and put on paper with a supreme skill” (Huysmans 58). Even on an aesthetic level, such imagery of pain and ugliness is consistent with the Gothic, as Townshend observes that “[d]espite its complexity, pleasurable pain was rapidly installed at the heart of the Gothic aesthetic” (271). In Townshend’s discussion of this concept of “pleasurable pain” the

Gothic aesthetic of ugliness, the Decadent aesthetic in its disinterest in morality, and the Naturalist aesthetic of scientific objectivity are all plain to see:

James Beattie had also attempted to account for the paradoxes of pleasurable pain in his 'Illustrations on Sublimity' of 1783. What Beattie finds most disconcerting is that the enjoyment of pain is not always founded in the spectator's sympathetic identification with the object of torture and public execution. Rather, the spectator's magnetic attraction to such scenes of horror as battles, executions and shipwrecks points to a strange, morbid enjoyment of pain and suffering for their own sake. (Townshend 271)

According to Freud, such a Gothic enjoyment of "pleasurable pain" as well as a Gothic fear of the uncanny are both related to a an infantile and even primitive sense of fear that not only refers to childhood, but also to a Darwinian sense of the primitive in the evolution of humanity from a presumably more animalistic and primitive species:

[A]n uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. Finally, we must not let our predilection for smooth solutions and lucid exposition blind us to the fact that these two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable. When we consider that primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them, we shall not be greatly astonished to find that the distinction is often a hazy one. (Freud 249)

Of course, the discussion of the primitive in this dissertation has recalled not only Darwinism, but also Realist depictions of the poor and working class, and despite Naturalism's reconciliation with Decadence and Aestheticism on the basis of the Gothic, the issues of labor and the poor were still relatively shunned from consideration in Decadence and Aestheticism. On the subject of labor and Decadence/Aestheticism, Barringer argues of the *fin de siècle* that "a change had occurred in perceptions of the relationship between art and labour, and that the dominance of the ethical and aesthetic values symbolised, more than anyone, by Ruskin, had begun to wane. Under the challenge of Aestheticism, the labour and value were no longer bound together" (318). According to Barringer, "[a]ny notion of the value of labour, either as a subject or as a component of artistic method, was absolutely rejected. Aestheticism, as practised by Albert Moore, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Whistler himself, shunned representation of the active body and preferred costume pieces or domestic interiors to outdoor scenes from modern life. Its favoured subjects are enervated, feminized" (314). However, Barringer also argues for a key point of intersection: "the industrial world of labour and the chaos of the modern city were the very antithesis of the hermetic sphere of art, however, modern capitalism provided Aestheticism's patrons and occasionally crept into the margins of its artistic productions" (314).

While Decadence/Aestheticism and representations of labor and the poor evidently did not mix well, the extent of interconnectivity between Decadence/Aestheticism, Naturalism, and the Gothic at the *fin de siècle* was reminiscent of Darwin's only accompanying diagram in his *Origin of Species* (fig. 28), as the evolution of Gothicism in relation to the novel is only a small sampling of the international and

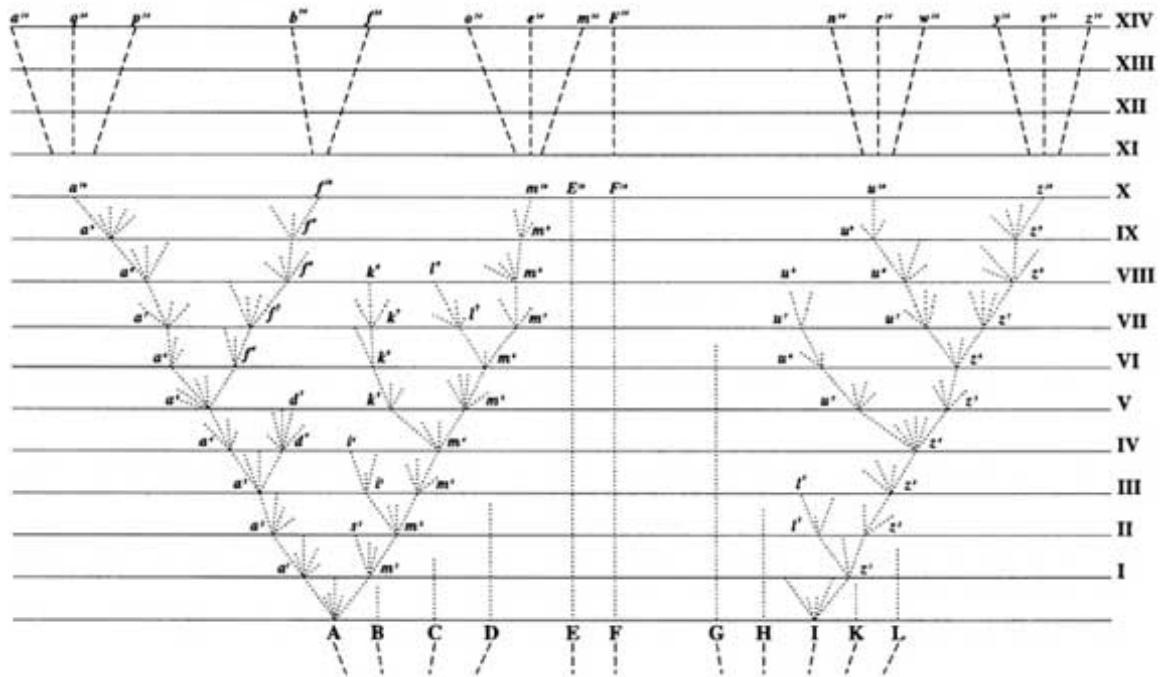


Figure 28: Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 1859, ed. J. W. Burrow (Harmondsworth, England: 1968), 160-161.

interdisciplinary species of the Gothic that continue to evolve and reproduce even at present. Also in the spirit of Darwin, this evolution of Gothicism in visual art, in the British novel, and in general is not necessarily a goal-oriented process. Rather, Gothicism is in a constant state of progression and degeneration. However, in terms of the nineteenth-century novel and the manner in which nineteenth-century visual art speaks to Gothicism as context for its role in the nineteenth-century novel, Gothicism indeed displays a sense of evolution from a fad, to a complicated and rather subjugated relationship with the Realist novel after *Frankenstein*, to a reemergence from the dark shadows as a primary focus in the Gothic novel at the *fin de siècle* facilitated by an offshoot species from Realism: Naturalism.

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