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GOTHIC MODERNISMS: AESTHETICS, POLITICS, CULTURE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT……..v

INTRODUCTION……1

1 SPIES……....18

2 ITALY……..…….48

3 SENSATION……..…….85

4 ELECTRICITY…….……..120

ABSTRACT

I analyze the persistence of Gothic conventions in the works of four major British modernist writers: Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and D. H Lawrence. These writers depict cultural, political, and aesthetic dimensions of modernism not only by questioning the past but by drawing as well on a wealth of cultural material and precursor genres rooted in Gothic conventions. The picture of modernism suggested by these authors presents multiple perspectives on thematically disparate yet culturally intertwined issues such as ethnicity and espionage, consciousness and electricity, formalism and sensation, and homosexuality and tourism. These sets of issues constellate the central argument for the four main chapters of my dissertation. Each set illustrates the double-faced nature of Gothic modernism—that is, its simultaneous attention to social renewal and cultural nostalgia. I argue that, faced with the xenophobic milieu of pre-War English society, Conrad seeks to refashion his ethnic Polish identity by adopting the Gothic logic of the fin-de-siècle British spy novel. I show that Lawrence employs a Gothic tropology of electricity in his modernist notion of blood consciousness. Woolf's theory and practice of the novel extends crucial elements of the Gothic sublime shared by earlier sensation fiction and by nineteenth-century psychiatric methods of diagnosis. Finally, I argue that Forster recasts modern English society by symbolically purifying it from homophobia through the image of Italy as both a Gothic dungeon and a tourist attraction.

INTRODUCTION: GOTHIC MODERNISMS

In *Loose from Loos: A Law Permitting Individual Building Alterations or Architecture Boycott Manifesto* (1968) Friedrich Stowasser, commonly known by his adopted name, Hundertwasser, rails against the architectural rationality initiated, in his view, by Adolf Loos's influential manifesto "Ornament and Crime" (1908). In contrast to Loos's functional forms and at the same time surpassing the stylistics of "sterile ornament" the latter was reacting against, Hundertwasser praises "living growth" and declares: "The straight line is the only uncreative line. . . . The straight line is the true tool of the devil. Whosever uses it is aiding the downfall of mankind" (118). He adds: "the damage caused by rational building methods exceeds several times over any apparent savings made" (119). In his architectural designs Hundertwasser seeks to displace the rational monotony of carefully calculated rectangular shapes, and, to do so, he takes inspiration from the works of such precursors as Gustav Klimt and especially Egon Schiele. He confesses: "For me the houses of Schiele were living beings. For the first time I felt that the outside walls were skins. . . . It is the third skin which really demonstrated something that cries, that lives . . . . When you look at these houses you feel that they are humans" (13). To view houses and thus essentially works of art as living, breathing beings is to reverse the order of priority establishing the classical distinction between

physis (nature) and *techné* (culture). It is also the enactment of a Gothic operation that informs modernist literature and culture.

Schiele's living houses are not merely examples of personifying the inanimate, but they can also be viewed as stretching the boundaries of reason by suggesting that cultural artifacts and aesthetic objects could easily come alive, threatening to displace the rational coherence of the natural world. As such, Schiele's art is symptomatic of the process by which modernism analogically relocates the initial distinction between nature and culture at the level of the opposition between the rational and the irrational. It is by no means accidental that Schiele's artistic experiments – which invoke and at the same time upset the relationship between the nature/culture division, on the one hand, and the rational/irrational distinction on the other – occur precisely at the beginning of twentieth-century modernism. Notably, modernism bears witness to key historical and social transformations that mark both the apotheosis and in certain ways the crisis of the Enlightenment project of modernity. Spanning back to René Descartes's philosophy of the *cogito* and developed through the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel, the pursuit of modernity has always been the establishment of the autonomous domains of nature and culture, or what Bruno Latour calls the "purification" of separate spheres (10-11). The constitution of the separate domains of nature and culture within modernity is underwritten by the distinction between the rational and the irrational, or, using Jürgen Habermas's terms, the insistence upon "the

cognitive potentials" and "the rational organization of everyday life" (9). The warning implicit in Schiele's art regarding the threat of the irrational against Enlightenment rationality comes precisely at the point in history when the separation between culture and nature, art and everyday life, the irrational and the rational seems to be the most intense but also the most brittle. The precarious two-way relationship between these terms, involving constant repetitive reversals, defines the generic logic of Gothic modernism.

The animate houses Hundertwasser encounters in Schiele's works are by no means uncommon or unrepresentative instances of the ways in which the irrationality and the supernatural of aesthetics inform the rational constitution of everyday life. Several modernist literary works are intensely preoccupied with the various ways in which lifeless objects come alive to upset the rational distinction between the animate and the inanimate. Thus, in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), for example, not only does Margaret Schlegel assert, in a fashion that recalls Schiele's influence on Hundertwasser, that "[h]ouses are alive" (113), but it is the aura of Howards End, carrying the late Mrs. Wilcox's ghostly presence, that makes Margaret conclude to her sister, Helen, "I feel that you and I and Henry are only fragments of that woman's [Mrs. Wilcox's] mind. . . . She is everything. She is the house, and the tree that leans over it" (222). A similar, almost telepathic communication takes place in Katherine Mansfield's short story "Bliss" between Bertha Young and Miss Fulton through the medium of an animated pear tree, while the two stand "side

by side looking at the slender, flowering tree . . . understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world . . .” (347). The irrational yet familiar experience of another world is also one of Clarissa’s major concerns in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), in which she experiences “odd affinities . . . with people she had never spoken to, some woman on the street, some man behind the counter—even barns or trees” (153). The impossibility of the death of the soul, which inevitably lives on through the medium of worldly objects and persons, is at the center of Clarissa’s “transcendental theory”: “our apparitions . . . are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, [that] the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death” (153).

In all these examples, the irrational at once elevates and jeopardizes the characters’ experience and existence: death is irrational communication, while irrational communication, in turn, is the death of the rational. Each of these characters is bound to realize that the irrationality of their epiphanies is inevitably coupled with a much more intense struggle to maintain the rational coherence of their everyday lives: for Margaret Schlegel it is the continuous fight with patriarchy in the person of an unscrupulous businessman, Mr. Wilcox; in the case of Bertha Young, the greatest experience of bliss means at the same time the potential disintegration of her family and the ruination of her marriage; finally, Clarissa Dalloway’s transcendental theory involves the

contradictory aesthetics of the trivial in which the growing of roses turns out to be more important than the fate of the Armenians and war in general. In fact, the focus upon the irrational in modernist literature illuminates the complex interdependence of the apparently simple opposition between the rational and unreason. The former constantly discovers in the latter not only its antagonist, but also its most important motivation. Thus, reason folds back onto itself in a characteristically Gothic fashion: rationalizing the irrational generates further instances of the unreasonable dimensions of reason. This paradoxical operation is not simply a marginal device that modernist writers deploy sporadically, but, as I show, it can rather be regarded as one of the central organizing principles of modernist literature and culture.

The irrational dimensions of reason can already be detected in the works of Matthew Arnold and Charles Baudelaire. In Arnold's "Dover Beach" (1867) a young couple is standing at the window, ready to profess their love for each other, hoping that that their sincerity will protect them against the sorrows and the chaotic uncertainties of a constantly changing modern world:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (29-37)

This closing passage of the poem vividly discloses the dual effect of the growing tension between nature and culture that culminates during early twentieth-century modernism. The fragile window-pane separating the lovers from the outside world can be viewed as a symbol of the precarious, two-way relationship between progress and regression. Viewed through the window-pane, which is itself a sign of artificiality and separation but also of communication, the promising world of technological development, seemingly "so various, so beautiful, so new," turns out to be pregnant with its opposite: a desolate, joyless world of fear and confusion. Similar setbacks to modernist novelty are also a major concern for Baudelaire, who finishes *The Flowers of Evil* (1857) with the image of plunging into "the abyssal depth of Hell or Heaven—what matter where?— / the abyssal depth of the Unknown, to find the new!" (213). For Baudelaire, just as for Arnold, the progress and achievements of the modern world are at the mercy of chthonic powers, which, far from being conquered once and for all, threaten to destroy but also to uphold the aspirations of modernity.

Baudelaire's prose poem "The Eyes of the Poor," written only five years before "Dover Beach," is also focused upon a pair of lovers, sitting this time "at a brand-new café on the corner of a new boulevard" (60) and separated, again, from the outside world by the thin glass pane that allows them to contemplate the Parisian streets. While enjoying the splendors of the coffee shop, the lovers suddenly find themselves exposed to the stupefied and sorrowful gaze of a poor family: "The father's eyes were saying, 'How beautiful! How beautiful! All the poor world's gold seems to have fallen upon those walls.' —The little boy's eyes, 'How beautiful! How beautiful! But only people not like us can enter this house'" (61). The separation between the dazzling café and the family in rags, the inside and the outside, "looking" and "being looked at" seems to be complete. And yet, just as in Arnold's poem, the thin window-pane acts as mediator and allows these two worlds to interpenetrate, exposing the falsity of a simple opposition between advancement and regression, suggesting instead that the latter in fact thoroughly informs the former. This is even more true in the case of Baudelaire. Unlike the lovers in "Dover Beach," Baudelaire's couple is unable to praise mutual affection as the ultimate protection against the contradictions of the modern world. The poem concludes with the skeptical warning, "[H]ow incommunicable thought is, even among people who love each other!" (61). Early modernism, both for Arnold and Baudelaire, implicates the emergence of an ambiguous world in which progress and destruction interact in a mutually

sustaining fashion. To innovate is to penetrate with Baudelaire “the abyssal depth of Hell or Heaven,” and thus to heed Friedrich Nietzsche’s admonition in *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you” (89).

A different way to put this is to claim, with Marshall Berman, that to live at the beginning of the twentieth century is to be suddenly thrown into “the maelstrom of modern life” in which people become at once “subjects as well as objects of modernization” (16). Significantly, Berman takes the phrase for the title of his book (“all that is solid melts into air”) from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s *The Communist Manifesto*, which illuminates the circular and, I argue, Gothic relation between subjects and objects of modernization. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels argue that “the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the means of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society” (21). The result is overproduction, which the authors describe in a famously vivid passage that sees the bourgeoisie as the imaginary product of a Gothic demon: “Modern bourgeois society . . . that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells” (24). One way to view the flip side of progress, expressed by Arnold’s “darkling plain,” Baudelaire’s “abyssal depth of the unknown,” and

Nietzsche's slippery monster, is by relating it to the changes in the capitalist mode of production and exchange that occur with full intensity approximately half a century after Marx's diagnosis, during the second Industrial Revolution.

Registering the circular relation between subject and object in Berman's modernist maelstrom and between the gigantic modes of production and the powers of the underworld in Marx is to look from different perspectives into the Nietzschean abyss, which inevitably gazes back into the beholder. The relationship between modernist progress and destruction in Arnold and Baudelaire's aesthetics as well as in Marx's and Berman's inquiries shows the Gothic logic through which destruction, instead of being closed off from progressive aspirations, turns out to be the latter's very motivation and condition of existence. Gothic modernism reveals at once the intensification and the crisis of the Enlightenment ideal of progress by registering the mutual interdependence between rational and irrational elements. This Gothic logic characterizes Berman's insight that modernism signals the process by which people become both subjects and objects of modernization. It reveals a process of inversion, which suggests that to act is always also to be acted upon in often unpredictable or uncontrollable ways. Thus, Marx summons "the powers of the nether world" not from some malicious underworld sealed off from capitalist development but in the name of the exclusionary oppositions generated by capitalism itself. The Gothic aspects of modernism illuminate

such oppositions as being reciprocally generating rather than simply exclusionary.

In *Gothic Modernisms* I analyze the persistence of Gothic conventions in the works of four major British modernist writers: Joseph Conrad, D. H Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster. I argue that these writers depict cultural, political, and aesthetic dimensions of modernism not simply by questioning the past but primarily by drawing on a wealth of cultural material and precursor genres rooted in Gothic conventions. The Gothic genealogy of modernism calls for the reconsideration of critical approaches that have hastily located the subversive elements of Gothic fiction in dehistoricized interpretive frameworks. According to such accounts, the Gothic disrupts or disavows Enlightenment modernity mainly by its exotic turn toward an idealized past, by its withdrawal into a world of psychic delusion, or simply by its fascination with irrational fantasy. While such wide-ranging interpretations have helped to encompass the Gothic as a polyphonous phenomenon, they overlook the role assumed by this genre not as antagonist but rather as guardian of modernity. In this light, Gothic distress is revealed to be a physically and psychically intrusive, albeit a socially and culturally revitalizing criterion. The modernist authors I discuss employ the generative implications of the Gothic to offer multiple perspectives on thematically disparate yet culturally intertwined issues such as ethnicity and espionage, consciousness and electricity, formalism and sensation, and homosexuality and tourism. These sets of issues constellate

the central argument for the four main chapters of my dissertation. Each set illustrates the double-faced nature of Gothic modernism—that is, its simultaneous attention to social renewal and cultural nostalgia.

In the first chapter I argue that, in his representations of Russian politics, Conrad enacts the broad redefinition of modern Western society by employing and extending the Gothic connotations of espionage elaborated in eighteenth-century Gothic and continued in fin-de-siècle British spy fiction. Spy novels at this time deployed Gothic aspects of espionage not only to strengthen but to construct the need for national cohesion. They recast key Gothic elements in ways that reveal the extension of familial affairs to issues of political propaganda. The usual Gothic seclusion into private chambers turns into the wholesale isolation of an island nation. Personal fear of threatening specters develops into a general alarm over alien spies. The typical exposure to intrusion via secret passages expands into the vulnerability of a society invaded through obscure cross-channel tunnels. Fin-de-siècle English spy novels imply that a nation's security depends upon the staging of its potential dissolution.

Faced with the xenophobic milieu of pre-War English society, Conrad refashioned his ethnic Polish identity by drawing on the Gothic logic of the fin-de-siècle British spy novel. To make his foreign heritage appear Western to a British audience, he dissociated Polish tradition from the Slavic irrationality typified by the allegedly nihilistic features of Russian mysticism. *Under*

Western Eyes (1911) exemplifies the Gothic matrix of Conrad's political imagination. The historical conditions causing the dismantlement of his native country provided Conrad with the artistic material to cast homogeneous Western culture as the "Gothic product," so to speak, of Slavic disruption. By using in his novel the generative functions of a fictionally invoked Russian lawlessness, Conrad's political Gothic works to secure his genealogical kinship with an expanded Western community, which has threatening foreignness built into its constitution. The many Gothic elements of *Under Western Eyes* echo Conrad's political writings by reinscribing the narrow conception of English identity into a broadly construed modern European context.

Chapter Two further consolidates the Gothic logic of English nationalism in Forster's early works. I argue that Forster imagines the social renewal of Edwardian England by drawing on the cultural history of the Grand Tour. He recasts modern English society by symbolically purifying it from timeworn Victorian values and modern homophobia through the image of Italy as both a Gothic dungeon and a tourist attraction. Italy and art are strategically married in Gothic fiction to help produce an enlightened English identity emancipated from Catholic superstition. Animated artworks function in Gothic fiction as a way of proclaiming modernity through the aesthetic containment of the past, which is now seen as being guided by gullibility and unreason. Moreover, the Gothic often explicitly depicts the transition from a feudal age to

modern times by mapping it onto a geopolitical division of Europe in which the South, especially Italy, marks, as opposed to England, the proper place reserved for antiquated beliefs and medieval tyranny. The vivified artworks featured in moldering Gothic manuscripts found a home in the wilderness of marble ruins perceived, from an English perspective, as evidence of a decayed glory smothering modern-day Italy. Modern England awoke from the slumber of feudalism through the tradition of the Grand Tour, which evoked Italy as a museum of art. The aesthetic containment of the past typifying Gothic fiction was reinforced by the cultural dynamics of the Grand Tour, which museumized Roman antiquity to celebrate the birth of modernity. Modern Englishness was, from its inception, fractured at its core; it was invented as a self-contained national identity and yet based on the image of a definitively foreign nation—Italy—as a living museum of art.

For Forster, as for eighteenth-century Grand Tourists, the road to the heart of England led through Italy. It was his genius to sense that, in order to energize a truly Anglocentric identity, one would have to reimmerse it into the conditions that had sparked its modern existence. Therefore, he adopted the cultural geography of the Grand Tour to redeem rural England as the source of a robust inner vitality countering at once the timeworn values of Victorian society and the alienating aspects of modern urbanization. In *A Room with a View* (1908) and *Maurice* (1971) Forster fuses the Gothic image of art that comes alive and the museum of classical art that is a product of the Grand

Tour. He does so, moreover, in order to create modern characters with Anglocentric sensibility, who reject bigoted bourgeois existence by seeing it as a thing of the past henceforth to be confined as antique art in a museum haunted by superstition.

While both Conrad and Forster actively rely on a Gothic conception of aesthetics as the anachronistic receptacle of irrational elements, Woolf's modernism draws on a nineteenth-century mutation of Gothic fiction, which turns art into supernatural tool of psychological diagnosis. In Chapter Three I argue that Woolf's theory and practice of the novel extends key elements of the Gothic sublime shared by earlier sensation fiction and by contemporary psychiatric methods of diagnosis. Nineteenth-century British sensation fiction, such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), employed the sublime in its explorations of human psychology. Regarded in its early reception as Gothic, it attempted to probe the psyche through pictorial representations of striking physical appearances. Sensation works furthered the project of modernity by using art as a window into the mind. Overwhelmed by the abyss of consciousness, sensation heroes find access to hidden mental reality through the psychologically revealing power of painted portraits. They discover a correlate for unfathomable machinations in art. By doing so, they offer a glimpse into the realm of the supersensible by means of a subject's awed inability to conceive its magnitude.

To demonstrate that Woolf's creative project of mapping the mind draws on key elements of the Gothic sublime, I discuss the theatrical conventions of British sensation fiction and the spectacular elements of Charcot's psychiatry. For Charcot, psychiatric photography offered a dramatic way to expose the secrets of the psyche. He saw in the mimetic accuracy of photographs scientific diagnoses of mental disorders. By relying on the fantastic power of vision in such a manner, he developed into medical knowledge the Gothic sublime, which also aided the detective protagonists of sensation novels. Working in, yet extending this tradition, Woolf uses the logic of the Gothic sublime as a model for exploring human character. Significantly, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), she associates psychological essence with formalist art in order to offer an accurate portrayal of the self. By virtue of the insufficiency of simple perception, artistic vision will afford an intuitive glimpse into an unfathomable realm of psychic patterns, solitary moments of being that Woolf identified with the real essence of human character. Furthermore, *To the Lighthouse* employs photography as a metaphor of an extraordinary sense of vision, which provides access to the hidden depths of human consciousness. The Gothic sublime illuminates in Woolf's modernist theory of consciousness a functional resemblance, striking and paradoxical, between the mimetic realism of photography and the abstract representations of formalist art. Both aesthetic modes offer, for Woolf, a window into the very depths of human psychology.

Finally, in Chapter Four I show that modernism remains faithful to the Gothic tradition that saw the irrational as the foundation of scientific rationality. Drawing on the cultural history of electric science, I show that Lawrence employs a Gothic tropology of electricity in his modernist notion of blood consciousness. Lawrence's conception of modernist subjectivity is deeply entangled in the earlier fantastic and Gothic connotations of electricity that functioned throughout the history of modernity as ways of questioning but also of generating the architecture and dynamics of human rationality. To corroborate this claim, I discuss the rational implications of Gothic electricity with reference not only to Aloisio Luigi Galvani's notion of animal electricity and Franz Anton Mesmer's popular electromagnetic therapy, but also to Andrew Crosse's notorious discovery of "electric" insects, to Cromwell Fleetwood Varley's spiritual telegraphy, and to the fashionable mind-reading séances conducted by the Society for Psychical Research during late-Victorian England.

I show that Lawrence used the Gothic aspects of electricity to rationalize the fantastic aspects of fin-de-siècle theosophy and thus to legitimize his modernist theory of the body. Vitalizing his characters by occult electricity, while skillfully distinguishing them from implausible theosophical mysticism, Lawrence turns them into Gothic monsters, instinctual misanthropes who paradoxically affirm their modernism through their destructive electric blood consciousness. As descendants of an earlier pre-

modernist generation, Lawrence's characters find their humanity at once confirmed and denied in their blood. Electric blood becomes the epitome of a complex historical continuity, registering destruction as a major revitalizing force of modernist aesthetics.

SPIES

Emblematic Gothic works such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* use fantastic operations of spies to reinforce the constitution of modern secular society. Both novels reveal the institution of the family as the site of spectral surveillance that gives birth to the rational modern subject rescued from superstition. Characteristically, Gothic protagonists discover their modernity when they are jeopardized by and at the same time successfully purified from the idea that their very existence might be the product of ghostly supervision. Personal insecurity shows itself to be, in Gothic circumstances, a key feature of modern social existence.[1] In his representations of Russian politics, Joseph Conrad enacts the broad redefinition of modern Western society by employing and extending the Gothic connotations of espionage elaborated in eighteenth-century Gothic and continued in fin de siècle British spy fiction.

Developing classic Gothic conventions, fin de siècle English spy novels explored the nationalist implications of espionage. A generic constant of spy narratives was a focus on an unprepared nation under assault from overwhelming albeit fictitious Continental forces, a feature established by late-nineteenth-century invasion fiction initiated with Sir George Chesney's *Battle of Dorking* (1871). Max Pemberton's *Pro Patria* (1901), Erskine Childers's *The*

Riddle of the Sands (1903), and William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* and *Spies of the Kaiser* are a few of the most famous examples of this immensely popular genre. It deployed Gothic aspects of espionage not only to strengthen but also to construct the need for national cohesion.[2] Spy novels at this time recast key Gothic elements in ways that reveal the extension of familial affairs to issues of political propaganda. The usual Gothic seclusion into private chambers turns into the wholesale isolation of an island nation. Personal fear of threatening specters develops into a general alarm of alien spies. The typical exposure to intrusion via secret passages expands into the vulnerability of a society invaded through obscure cross-channel tunnels. Fin de siècle English spy novels imply that a nation's security depends on the staging of its potential dissolution. Foreign spies regularly feature as the evil protagonists of the Gothic show, energizing campaigns for domestic unity in pre-World War I England.

Faced with the increasingly xenophobic milieu of pre-War English society, Conrad refashioned his Polish expatriate identity by drawing on the Gothic logic of the British spy novel. To make his foreign heritage appear nonetheless Western to a British audience, he dissociated Polish tradition from Slavic irrationality typified by alleged nihilistic features of Russian mysticism. Although Conrad had often been labeled by his contemporaries as "Slav," his remarks against Edward Garnett's and Henry Louis Mencken's allegations tellingly display a Gothic defense strategy designed to evince an ethnic

integrity. In both cases, Conrad transforms the term “Slav” into an exclusive national trademark of primitive and confusing Russian character, so that Poland may occupy a position among the civilized Western Powers. “You remember always,” he writes to Garnett in 1907, “that I am a Slav (it’s your idée fixe), but you seem to forget that I am a Pole” (492), adding, “[Y]ou have been learning your history from Russians no doubt” (*Letters*, vol. 3: 492-3). His fierce reaction against Mencken’s use of the epithet is to quickly ascribe Slavonic qualities to a Russian realm of “primitive natures fashioned by [a] byzantine-theological conception of life, with an inclination to perverted mysticism,” while defending by contrast his native Poland as “an outpost of Westernism with a Roman tradition” (*Letters*, vol. 7: 615). Conrad’s depiction of Russia in “Autocracy and War” (1905) is emblematic of how his political writings employ Gothic patterns. Outlined as a spectral champion of autocracy, a “dreaded and strange apparition” in the guise of a “ravenous Ghoul” (*Notes on Life 75*), Gothicized Russia is judged the “negation of . . . everything else that has its root in reason” (*Notes on Life* 84). Reason is associated with enlightened Polish civilization delivered from the destructive political influence of its major historical antagonist.[3] Russian irrationality functions as the Gothic foil to Conrad’s Westernized Eastern European identity in modern Britain.

Under Western Eyes exemplifies the Gothic matrix of Conrad’s political imagination. It sets out to generate a model of modern Western society rooted in symptomatic cultural distinctions. Seeking to portray the “psychology of

Russia itself," Conrad claims in the "Author's Note": "The obligation of absolute fairness was imposed on me historically and hereditarily, by the peculiar experience of race and family" (*Notes on My Books* 84). *Under Western Eyes* reveals, however, that Conrad's purported racial impartiality is not the cause but rather the effect of his insistence on the nihilism of Russian temperament. The historical conditions causing the dismantlement of his native country provided Conrad the artistic material to cast homogeneous Western culture as the Gothic product, so to speak, of Slavic disruption. By utilizing in his novel the generative functions of a fictionally invoked Russian lawlessness, Conrad's political Gothic works to secure his genealogical kinship with an expanded Western community, which has threatening foreignness built into its constitution. The many Gothic elements of *Under Western Eyes* echo Conrad's political writings by reinscribing the narrow conception of English identity into a broadly construed modern European context.

Conrad's novel continues his crusade against obscure Slavonic mysticism, which he expounds elsewhere in his political essays and letters. In developing the historical background to his novel, Conrad was inspired, as is well-known, by David Soskice's article in the March 1909 issue of *The English Review*, "The Russian Spy System: The Azeff Scandals in Russia."[4] Soskice's piece described the remarkably successful, duplicitous career of Eugene P. Azeff, the native-born Russian agent provocateur whose double roles as trusted revolutionary and police spy illustrated for Conrad the innate obscurity

of the Russian social order. *Under Western Eyes* blurs the distinction between autocratic despotism and anarchist insurrection, suggesting that both factions operate within the realm of threatening irrationality typically attributed to Gothic demons. Bearing a symbolic name derived from *razum*, the Russian root for reason, Conrad's protagonist, Kirylo Sidorovitch Razumov, is entangled in a Gothicized world of Russian turmoil as agent and victim of espionage. Razumov's ruination is set up, in a characteristic Gothic fashion, as the imaginary distress that the novel's provincial narrator, the English teacher of languages, must undergo in order to confirm the broad redefinition of Western identity. The much-debated role of the English narrator is that it allows Conrad to refashion his own foreign identity as part and parcel of the aesthetic production of modern Western society. He projects the destructive elements of Russian experience into a seemingly deracinated, civilized society that is vivified through the staging of its own disintegration. To demonstrate the Gothic motifs of Conrad's political imagination, I summon up the significance of espionage in Gothic literary history and its functions in the nationalist propaganda of the British fin de siècle spy novel. Previous scholarship on Conrad, examined in some detail later, has overlooked the Gothic matrix and its curious dynamics in *Under Western Eyes*.

I

Under Western Eyes adumbrates the disquieting effects of political commitment through the common Conradian and Gothic motif of fictional doubles. This novel, like several other major works by Conrad, uses the double as the receptacle of failed confidence as well as the emblem of threatening otherness. In Bertrand Russell's astute judgment, Conrad "thought of civilized and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths" (87). This grim view lies behind Conrad's doubles. Marlow and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Marlow and Jim in *Lord Jim*, the captain and Leggatt in "The Secret Sharer" (1917), and Razumov and Victor Haldin in *Under Western Eyes* are fateful pairs, who dramatize Russell's depiction of an attenuated shadow-line between civilized humanity and its chthonic depths. Razumov is haunted by the moral ghost of Haldin, the Russian Interior Minister's insurgent assassin, whom he puts to death by secretly betraying him to the repressive state authorities. Coerced into the role of police spy but also mistaken for Haldin's aide, he ironically becomes the trusted member of overzealous revolutionary groups that quickly label him as "*un des nôtres*" (154). Echoing Marlow's often-used words for Lord Jim, "one of us," Razumov's destructive double allegiance comes to typify the fate of enlightened human existence doomed to failure at the hands of

obscure Russian politics. Conrad then uses his protagonist's destruction to substantiate that very existence, according to an aesthetic model developing Russell's description of imperiled identity into a Gothic logic of self-fashioning.

Critics have interpreted Razumov's story by focusing on Conrad's dual nationality. According to these accounts, narrative doubles in *Under Western Eyes* are typically seen as fictional enactments of Conrad's attempt to contain psychologically his feelings of remorse rooted in his Polish background.[5] Indeed, Conrad's comment to Cunninghame Graham regarding his "double life one of them peopled only by shadows" (*Letters*, vol. 3: 491) hints at the autobiographical motivation of his fiction, justly reflected in such arguments. However, a closer attention to the Gothic features of Conrad's fiction and politics situates *Under Western Eyes* as the expression of a related yet in crucial ways remarkably contrary argument.

Conrad's Polish shadows are not masked or overcome in this novel, but rather mobilized and channeled through Razumov's Russian affliction in order to produce a distinctly Gothic matrix for his account of modern Western identity. Critics focusing on the many Gothic aspects of *Under Western Eyes* have neglected this insight, restricting their understanding of the Gothic genre to a narrow, mainly psychoanalytic, orbit. Conrad's depiction of Haldin's ghostly visitations disturbing Razumov's peace of mind, one of the places where the novel most readily yields a Gothic reading, is usually made out to be the symptom of unconscious or uncanny conditions. Haldin's specter, Lisa

Rado argues, serves "to intensify a subconscious . . . doubt about the sanctity of human reason" (85), while it conveys, in Robert Hampson's view, "the impressions of unconscious forces driving Razumov" (173). Noel Peacock's otherwise Foucaultian interpretation highlights supernatural surveillance in relation to "the paradoxical significance of the uncanny" (118). The act of haunting, according to Allan Hepburn, illustrates "the uncanny effects of illegitimacy and political obligation" (97). While all these approaches have helped to trace the Gothic dynamics of *Under Western Eyes*, they employ a tautological argument that refers Gothic phenomena to the similarly spectral dimensions of modern psychoanalysis.[6] More importantly still, by dehistoricizing the Gothic features of the novel, they overlook the broad fin de siècle political underpinnings of Conrad's insistence on the ghastly nature of Russian realities. Razumov's tragedy enacts the Gothic idea that reinscribes Polish history and tradition into a Western cultural context reconfigured by, as it is disentangled from, Slavic irrationality on display in the pre-war period.

Conrad conceives of the political divisions between liberal Poland and autocratic Russia in terms of opposing sets of national characteristics. "[N]ational temperament," as he puts it, "is about the only thing on earth that can be trusted," adding that because of the "physiological" incompatibility between the two nations "any alliance of heart and minds would be a monstrous thing" (*Notes on Life* 104). Following the premises of organic nationalism, "Autocracy and War" offers a detailed account of the monstrous

yet perversely sacred nature of Russian society. It assigns autocratic Holy Russia the role of a Gothic demon, depicted in its "strange mystical arrogance" (*Notes on Life* 75) as spectral and "grimly fantastic" (*Notes on Life* 77), casting an evil spell on Western civilization. The Russian curse bedeviled Conrad's life not only by destroying his family and forcing him into exile, but also by extending the Slavic stigma onto his native background and his public life. Conrad's 1919 "Author's Note" to *A Personal Record*, in addition to his numerous letters on this subject, is emblematic of his lifelong endeavor to reject this stigma.[7] He famously stresses that his heritage is "Western in complexion" (94), drawing an ethnic cordon sanitaire between "Polish temperament" (93) and what he pejoratively calls "Sclavonism [sic]" (*Notes on My Books* 93). However, the negative imagery of Russian lawlessness does not simply oppose but rather justifies Conrad's inclusion of his foreign tradition within the extended scope of modern European culture.

Conrad's political essays reflect his broad definition of Western society in opposition to Slavic influence. Submitted as a letter to the British Foreign Office in 1916, "A Note on the Polish Problem" registered Conrad's anti-Slavic sentiments in the form of a notorious mid-war proposal. It demanded that England and France aid the reestablishment of a Polish state delivered from the increasing expansion of the Russian Empire. Conrad wished to convince his audience that Western culture could not retain its natural boundaries unless it rescued its easternmost outpost from barbaric Slavonism. Given the

political unfeasibility of his plan, it is not surprising that the disillusioned Conrad explained the reemergence of his native country at the end of World War I by the tenacity of national character rather than by external assistance. “The Crime of Partition,” written in 1919, at the time of the Treaty of Versailles, articulated his reproach against the occidental powers for pursuing too narrow interests and for hastily ceding to Russian territorial claims. But ultimately the historical example of Polish endurance facing overwhelming Slavic odds was turned into a symbolic gesture preserving the eastern borders of the civilized world. Polish nationalism enabled Conrad to reassert the Western affinities of his foreign background in modern England. By virtue of its sufferance, he redeemed Poland from the margins of Europe, turning it into the very cornerstone of an expanded notion of Western society.

The noxious activity of imperial Russia is, for Conrad, the most formidable protagonist in the criminal partition of Poland. It also represents the threatening yet vital circumstances under which modern Western metaphysics and identity are historically produced and readjusted. “[T]he untold sufferings of a nation which would not die,” he writes in “The Crime of Partition,” “was the price exacted by fate for the triumph of revolutionary ideas,” adding that “even crime may become a moral agent by the lapse of time and the course of history” (*Notes on Life* 96). This exemplary articulation of Conrad’s Gothic manner of thinking recalls his earlier declarations to Cunninghame Graham: “Crime is a necessary condition of human existence. Society is fundamentally

criminal—or it would not exist" (*Letters*, vol.2: 160). Such seemingly glum statements suggest a picture of Conrad not as the conservative pessimist that so many critics too simply take him to be, but rather as a Gothic modernist. They illuminate the Gothic logic through which the celebrated image of the sea, regarded as a receptacle of irrational elements, emerges in his aesthetics as perhaps the most prominent metaphor of modern life. "Trust a boat on the high seas," Marlow observes in *Lord Jim*, "to bring out the irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion" (88). The criminal jump into the sea by which Jim abandons the Patna and its Muslim pilgrims to their fate is the symbolic portal into a Gothic conception of modern ontology which proclaims: "The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up" (154). But the most intimate link between the Gothic aspects of Conrad's politics and aesthetics gets crystallized in *Under Western Eyes*—the novel that conjures up a devastating world of Russian espionage in order to justify an expanded definition of modern Western culture, employing Gothic elements on the surface and in its depths.

Under Western Eyes is a dramatic expression of Conrad's "Gothic politics." Geoffrey G. Harpham acutely observes that "the force with which Poland determines Conrad's work is directly proportional to its literal nonappearance within it" (12). But the notorious absence of any reference to Poland in *Under Western Eyes* does not indicate the abstract Lacanian order

of “the real,” as Harpham has argued.[8] It is rather meant to exhibit Conrad’s “obligation of absolute fairness” (84) in giving an accurate account of “the psychology of Russia itself”—as his famous 1920 “Author’s Note” describes the general purpose of the novel (*Notes on My Books* 82). To Garnett’s mention of Conrad’s insistence on the obscurity of Russian character, the latter quickly retorts by calling his friend “russianized” (*Letters,* vol. 4: 488) and by stressing the purely aesthetic scope of his work, “concerned with nothing but ideas” (*Letters*, vol.4: 489).[9] However, the Gothic features of Conrad’s seemingly impartial fictional representation of ruinous Russian mysticism ultimately underlie and uphold the concrete social and historical implications of his political imagination.

Conrad uses the tragic fate of his protagonist in *Under Western Eyes* as the synecdochic stand-in for a nihilistic Russian society rife with the threatening activity of domestic espionage. The futility of Razumov’s reasonable attempt to extricate himself from the harmful influence of spies reflects the idea of innate Slavic mysticism elaborated in Conrad’s political writings. In keeping with the deep structure of Conrad’s political imagination, Razumov’s destruction must be not only inevitable but also typically Russian. Conrad meets both criteria by carefully selecting his main character on explicitly ethno-national grounds and by deploying in his fiction the literary conventions of the Gothic. The novel emphasizes early on that the orphaned Razumov’s “closest parentage was defined in the statement that he was

Russian" (8). "Russia *can't* disown me," Razumov asserts later, adding, "I am *it*" (154). The Gothic features of *Under Western Eyes* allow Conrad to entrap his main character in a ghastly world indicating in all aspects the impossibility of privacy. Sought out by the unwanted confidence of the revolutionary Victor Haldin, but also terrified by the coercive presence of state officials, Razumov, like Gothic heroes, repeatedly discovers that isolation and repose are unattainable in a world of spies.

The network of government agents operates in the novel with the terrifying secrecy and the perplexing irrationality typically attributed to Gothic demons. In the Czarist Russia of social turmoil depicted by Conrad, political allegiances are constantly questioned and readjusted by a despotic state bureaucracy whose vigilance is overwhelming and imponderable. To turn in a criminal conspirator like Haldin ironically questions rather than justifies Razumov's loyalty, leading not to respite but to further persecution. After his apartment is ransacked by the police, he voices his predicament in a fashion that is characteristic of Gothic contexts. "I want to guide my conduct by reasonable convictions," he ponders, "but what security have I against something – some destructive horror – walking in upon me as I sit here?" (58). Through its two chief agents of state surveillance, General T— and Councilor Mikulin, autocratic Russia is not simply the precursor of a Foucaultian panoptic society, but the anachronistic image of everything medieval that precedes or is alien to modern existence. Razumov is tormented by visions of the General's

“goggle eyes waiting for him—the embodied power of autocracy, grotesque and terrible” (62). Mikulin’s “mild, expectant glance” (64) ironically heightens Razumov’s desperation during a dreadful interrogation resembling in the latter’s anguished mind “some dark print of the Inquisition” (65). Mikulin himself admits that Russian society is reminiscent of “monstrous chimeras and evil dreams and criminal follies” (218-19). By mockingly portraying these two iniquitous officials as “servants of the nation” (222), Conrad heightens his protagonist’s Russian despair in a typically Gothic fashion.

As a way of accentuating Razumov’s utter hopelessness, *Under Western Eyes* offers a scathing condemnation of the narrow-minded revolutionary alternative to autocracy, shown explicitly to share the latter’s Gothic apparatus. Haldin’s haunting presence, “a moral spectre infinitely more effective than any visible apparition of the dead” (220-21), exemplifies for Razumov not only the classic Conradian motif of unfulfilled confidence, but also the empty idealism of insurgent agendas. Spreading from St. Petersburg to Geneva, the underground activity of the Russian vanguard party reflects, instead of cutting-edge ideas, an antiquated aristocratic system in decline. Château Borel, the revolutionary center in Geneva, resembles in appearance the dilapidated strongholds typifying Gothic aesthetics, while its upper-class owner, Madame de S—, looks demonic, “like a galvanized corpse out of some Hoffmann’s Tale” (159). Her disciple, Peter Ivanovitch, the doyen of radical resistance, is no less a throwback. Reduced during his Siberian exile to a

“primeval savage” and a “tracked wild beast,” he manages to escape, is redeemed by a peasant woman, and becomes a self-proclaimed feminist, while he nonetheless abuses his typist *dame de compagnie* in the name of liberal scholarship (91). When summarizing the predicament of the revolutionary circle to which she belongs, Sophia Antonovna refers to Russian autocracy in Gothic terms: “One lies there lapped up in evils, watched over by beings that are worse than ogres, ghouls, and vampires” (184).

Conrad uses Razumov’s story as the expression of his political crusade against Slavic irrationality by strategically increasing the Gothic magnitude of his protagonist’s distress and eventual destruction. Ruined by two reciprocal and equally repressive ideologies, Razumov is both victim and product of Gothic surveillance. It is not enough that he is haunted by the moral specter of Haldin, and that he can never escape the suspicion and the incredulity of General T—, “the incarnate anger, the incarnate ruthlessness of a political and social régime on its defence” (62). Nor is it sufficient that he finds it impossible to “retire” (74), as he puts it, when faced with Mikulin’s plan to recruit him as an undercover spy and thus to have him constantly watched. Beyond all that, his reconnaissance mission as a double agent in Geneva is made to depend on the zealous but tenuous revolutionary impression that self-deceptively acclaims him as Haldin’s secret accomplice. Furthermore, as if all his apprehensions in Château Borel were not enough, he is also confronted with Miss Haldin’s “trustful eyes” (256), which stir up in him feelings of remorse,

leading to the confession of his fatal role in her brother's betrayal and death. His tragedy culminates in being crippled by a speeding carriage, but only after his eardrums are burst by the sinister Nikita, who turns out to be a double agent himself.

Conrad's depiction of Razumov's symptomatic Russian suffering draws on the generic conventions of both the classic eighteenth-century Gothic and the British fin de siècle spy novel. Paradigmatic Gothic works such as Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* use espionage to register the extent of insecurity lying behind the shaping of modern society during this period. Moreover, as agents of suffering, evil uncles and cruel masters serve in these novels not merely as fantastic tormentors but also as catalysts of a modern subjectivity saved from superstition. The fin de siècle British spy novel wove the Gothic notion of the family into the national paranoia of the time meant to strengthen patriotic feeling in an era characterized by simultaneous desire for imperial expansion and fear of cultural regression.[10] Like the Gothic, which used disruptive espionage to help produce modern subjects, the spy novel suggested that a nation's cohesion depended on the staging of its own potential disintegration. Late-eighteenth-century Gothic writing signals a decisive shift toward the political, initiating a political strain in the Gothic, which continues through fin de siècle spy fiction and into the work of Conrad.[11]

II

The emergence of Gothic fiction at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the widespread political employment of spies for the suppression of the growing revolutionary turmoil caused by British Jacobinism.[12] Over the course of the 1790s, the Tory government led by Prime Minister William Pitt introduced severe measures to repress the radical ideas disseminated by The London Corresponding Society, a working-class association founded in 1792 by one Thomas Hardy. These measures culminated in 1794 in the suspension of habeas corpus and in the notorious treason trials that made accusations of seditious libel against not only Hardy but also radical authors such as Thomas Paine, plus various publishers and booksellers. The same decisive year gave birth to two of the most influential Gothic novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Caleb Williams*, signaling a shift in the thematic focus of this genre from the romance tradition to what were arguably the first exemplars of the political Gothic. In keeping with the contemporary political tendency to encroach on private life, Anne Radcliffe and especially William Godwin depicted the idea of espionage as physically and psychically intrusive, albeit a socially and culturally revitalizing activity.

The constitutive effects of multifaceted distress reflected in these novels call for the reconsideration of critical approaches that have often hastily

located the subversive elements of Gothic writing in dehistoricized interpretive frameworks. According to such accounts, the Gothic disavows or disrupts Enlightenment modernity primarily by its nostalgic turn toward an idealized past, by its escape into the realm of psychic delusion, or simply by its fascination with irrational fantasy.[13] While such critical accounts have helped to trace diverse elements of Gothic fiction, they downplay the role assumed by this genre not as antagonist but rather as guardian of modernity.[14] The view of spies as theater highlights this significant but frequently overlooked feature of the Gothic genre by aestheticizing the considerable extent of psychological and social disquietude underlying enlightened modern practices. The Gothic context of espionage turns disruptive fantasy into a generative element of modern society.

Classic Gothic novels such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Caleb Williams* are consistent on this point. Imprisoned in the grim castle of Udolpho in the Apennines by her sinister uncle, Montoni, Radcliffe's protagonist, Emily St. Aubert, embodies the degree of insecurity Gothic characters must suffer as objects of surveillance in order to reinforce modern standards of thought. With its insecure chambers always accessible through obscure private doorways and hidden passages from within the thick castle walls, Udolpho is invoked as the anachronistic realm of imaginary spies against which, but also through which, modern enlightened subjectivity is reasserted. The seemingly reactionary aspects of Radcliffe's fiction, then, described by James Watt as "a

legitimate form of withdrawal from the troubles of the present" (103), actually demonstrate her modernity. As Emily gradually abandons her fears of ghostly supervision, she cannot any longer "forbear smiling at . . . so much superstitious terror" (635). Haunted rooms in Radcliffe's demystifying novel turn out to be nothing but convenient hiding places for pirates and brigands. Similarly, the mysterious spectral apparitions constantly disturbing Emily's peace of mind are revealed to be simply the anxious but secret acts of supervision performed by one of her eager admirers from childhood, Monsieur Du Pont. Radcliffe's celebrated technique of explaining away the supernatural at the end of her novels, however, is not significant merely for its artificial reestablishment of a rational social order, nor for its attenuation of Gothic suspense.[15] On the contrary, it lays bare the generic sleight of hand by which Gothic writing conjures up the obsolete image of ominous ghostly surveillance as motivation for modern social design.

This mechanism is at the very center of *Caleb Williams*. Godwin's novel signals the birth of modernity by replacing the superstitious idea of spectral oversight with the equally paranoid yet distinctly modern notion of social and political visibility. The fictional act aestheticizing the former as anachronistic actually undergirds the Gothic process licensing the latter as part of the contemporary sphere of everyday life. As Caleb, Mr. Falkland's vigilant servant, gradually discovers his master's secret of murdering his fellow-squire, Tyrell, he is plagued by Falkland's relentless efforts to subdue him. The

wealthy squire, aided in his pursuit by a panoptic network of social institutions, nearly drives Caleb into madness during the course of “many anxious days, and sleepless, spectre-haunted nights” (279).[16] *Caleb Williams* invokes the story of Caleb’s ghostly apprehensions to supply the aesthetic justification of a society ushered into modernity as it is disabused from superstition. The fantastic reality of watchful specters is ultimately reinscribed in the form of cultural material disseminated by the modern media. Godwin’s protagonist finds his Gothic tale on display for the general public in a large-circulation pamphlet. Like Razumov’s story of Russian espionage, which implicitly confirms modern Western identity, Caleb’s distress revives modernity within a self-generated spectacle of jeopardy.

Gothic fiction is consistent in this regard with the modern tradition in which real spies operated as guardians as well as enemies of British civilization. Historically, the figure of the spy was increasingly difficult to distinguish from that of an agitator, suggesting the marriage of real and counterfeit information. The late eighteenth century and the fin de siècle shared not only a general upsurge of Gothic writing, but also a common feeling of paranoia about political conspiracy, reflected in the extensive employment of spies as instigators and sentinels of modern culture. At the height of the British government’s fight against Jacobinism, the official police force was complemented by a large number of private spies, manufacturing sensational data about inaccurate or outright imaginary revolutionary

activities.[17] In a different social and political context, but resting on similar working principles, espionage surfaced in early-twentieth-century England with the purpose of saving a nation threatened by pervasive but false alarms of imminent overseas invasion.[18] The self-generating logic of the early-twentieth-century spy craze is exemplified by "Englishman Charged with Espionage," a striking article in the August 19, 1914 issue of *The Times*. This short piece tells the story of eighteen-year-old Robert Blackburn, who was taken for a spy because he was sending over to the German Embassy worthless information "anybody could get from papers" (3). As he confessed, his main source of inspiration ironically came from the plethora of fictional material on foreign espionage he had found in domestic writings. Blackburn's case shows that modern British nationalism does not merely struggle against but rather is predicated on the idea of disruptive espionage. Like the Gothic aesthetics of insecurity, the spy novel's imaginary sketch of national destruction is the sign of a modern society under construction.

Fin de siècle spy fiction reinscribes Gothic espionage into British culture in the form of a national dread of Continental invasion. The placing of this canonically marginal yet hugely popular novelistic subgenre within the literary history of the Gothic requires a revision of critical accounts that have inaccurately construed disruptive espionage as the fictional reflection of temporary social and political anxieties.[19] Here are three examples. David Stafford's dialectic between malicious foreign spies and honest British

gentleman-agents rests on the too narrow view that the former merely cause "visions of internal disorder, decline, and decadence" ("Spies" 500). Michael Denning argues more broadly that spy thrillers help to "unravel the culture of the social imperialist crisis" (42). He misses the socially constitutive role of espionage. Although Martin Tropp recognizes the generic affinities between the Gothic and the espionage novel, he confines the latter's frame of reference to "the secret fears of the populace, not what the official culture wanted to believe" (176). However, the function of espionage in Gothic fiction shows that spies do not simply or occasionally threaten national coherence by generating social restlessness. Instead, they rather motivate and justify patriotic feeling in the very name of a nation threatened by civic disaggregation.

Spy novels in Edwardian England incorporate Gothic conventions, helping maintain the intensity of popular nationalism and the legitimacy of military organizations. Perhaps no other fictional work illustrates these political implications better than William Le Queux's best-selling *The Invasion of 1910*. As a way of reinforcing the author's bare bones propagandist slant, the novel is notably prefaced by an encomium from Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, president of The National Service League, a militarist organization famously advocating mandatory peacetime conscription. Le Queux's melodramatic plot, summoning xenophobia and jingoism, fit in a historical milieu that gave birth in 1911 to a stricter Official Secrets Act and that eventually led to the founding of the British Secret Intelligence Service. Aided in the novel by the

reconnaissance of invisible foreign spies disguised as average British citizens, the German invasion of England is described as the sudden isolation of an island nation under Gothic style distress. The invading German forces are assigned, in a Gothicized fashion, the qualities of a barbaric people variously labeled throughout the novel as “Saxon” or “Teuton.” By virtue of their belonging to an anachronistic realm of inhuman looting and torture, Le Queux’s alien plunderers, like Gothic villains in general, are authorized to assault and yet thereby to reawaken the vitality of a civilized nation.

The Gothic mode of self-fashioning of Edwardian society is starkly illustrated by the alarmism created in Le Queux’s *Spies of the Kaiser*. The Gothic elements of espionage evoke the prospect of self-destruction, with the didactic result that England must assume its place among the dominant Western nations of modern history. Written with the aim “to prove that German agents are at this moment actively at work among us” (1), Le Queux’s novel depicts a whole army of German spies in England, variously disguised as waiters, servants, and tradesmen. Hidden in Gothic secrecy, spies work strenuously on crippling technological assets by cutting and tapping telegraph wires and phone lines, stealing confidential plans of airplanes and submarines, and gathering top-secret information. *Spies of the Kaiser* suggests that one can never be prepared enough for the activity of foreign surveillance paving the way for overseas invasion. It asks its audience to realize the Gothic idea that their very lives are subject to elaborate emplotments construed by

malicious foreign invaders. When the English populace flooded Le Queux with letters alerting him of suspicious immigrant behavior, they implicitly asserted that their patriotism was rooted in unsettling narratives that had turned their everyday existence into art. Spy fiction of this sort reveals that the defense of England's cultural homogeneity and unity lies in its ability to imagine its own dissolution.

Under Western Eyes revamps the generic conventions of the fin de siècle spy novel as well as features of older Gothic fiction. It reinscribes provincial English identity into a broad conception of Western society created through, just as it is delivered from, Slavic disruption. Confronted with pre-World War I British xenophobia, Conrad extended the Gothic matrix of espionage to Russian society and so confirmed the Western affinities of his Polish heritage. Joseph Retinger, Conrad's closest Polish friend, notes that Conrad "liked to be taken for an Englishman" (140), adding that "he wished to avoid doing anything that might be unbecoming to a naturalized Britisher" (173). However, Conrad's own remarks reveal a more complex account of his double allegiance to England and Poland. "Both at sea and on land," he writes to Kazimierz Waliszewski, "my point of view is English, from which the conclusion should not be drawn that I have become an Englishman" (*Letters*, vol. 3: 89). Like other modernist writers with a foreign background, Conrad was hypersensitive to issues of national belonging.[20] His thick accent as well as the Slavonic label contemporary critics stuck to his life and work

occasionally came up as vexing factors throughout his career.[21] The former set off his bitter quarrel with Pinker, who complained against his English language, while the latter prompted his occasional artistic despondency.[22] Conrad thus had good reasons for extending to the history of his native Poland a literary mechanism—political Gothic—which recast the boundaries of the rational West over and against destructive Russian mysticism.

III

The placing of Conrad's novel within the literary history of the Gothic challenges previous accounts, especially of the political implications of *Under Western Eyes*. Critics typically view Conrad's quarrels with the Slavic label as manifestations of the nostalgic recovery of his native roots, or as his condemnation, from a Polish perspective, of Western racial stereotypes. Eloise Knapp Hay wrongly argues that *Under Western Eyes* illustrates Conrad's wish to redeem the notion of "romantic nationalism" by purifying it from "absurd mysticism" (267). According to Avrom Fleishman, the novel offers both a "critique of Russian obscurantism" (224) and "a warning to the West to resist the temptation of diabolic explanations . . . of Russian politics" (226). That misses the point. Revising both of these arguments, Christopher GoGwilt usefully notes that Conrad's work reflects "the attempt to correct the

mistake of political genealogy encoded in the stereotype of the Slav" (134). GoGwilt shows that Conrad's failed endeavor to avoid being typecast as a Slav enabled him "to expose the falsity of the recent articulation of 'the West' as an impartial political identity seeking to escape the set of racial resentments on which it depends" (3). While this claim illuminates the fabricated nature of the modern West, it implies that Conrad's foreign background afforded him the external vantage point from which to debunk the political hypocrisy stigmatizing his native Poland. But the Gothic elements Conrad assigns to Slavic conditions suggest not an attack on but rather the production of Western society in the very name of his Polish tradition saved from Russian irrationality. Instead of rectifying Slavic stereotypes, as these critics propose, Conrad confirms and uses them in the novel to extend the political boundaries of the West to the eastern margins of Europe, making Poland part of the West.

This dynamic enables a new understanding of the narrator's role in *Under Western Eyes*. Critics dealing with Conrad's nameless English narrator typically emphasize his quite diverse roles as dull eyewitness; authorial mask; plus faithful, ironic, deceptive, and sometimes diabolic spokesperson.[23] So far, so good. However, the English teacher of languages more significantly foregrounds this novel as an expression of Conrad's political imagination. He creates an exemplary character for whom Russian affairs appear obscure, timeworn, and illusory so that broad-minded Western values, purified of English insular nationalism, are able to be reinvented as distinctly rational,

forward-looking, and modern. Conrad ensures that his narrator should occasionally interrupt Razumov's story in order to perform what is expected of Gothic storytellers—namely, to intensify his protagonist's distress for purposes of self-definition, which includes national identity. The Gothic features of *Under Western Eyes* indicate that Conrad's Western identity is anything but "ingrained," as Edward Said argued (xviii), but rather an unstable political construct in need of warranty.

To underscore the political implications of Razumov's story in terms of its Gothic effects, Conrad introduces the unnamed English teacher of languages, seemingly a modest, commonsensical narrator for his novel. Moreover, in a letter to J. B. Pinker in early January 1910, just before finishing the book, Conrad proposed to replace his initial title, "Razumov," with what was to become the final one, "Under Western Eyes" (*Letters*, vol. 4: 319). The new title foregrounds the novel's focus on the interpretation of Razumov's symbolic tale about Russian lawlessness from a Western perspective. Yet, in the end, the English narrator is not just an objective mouthpiece securing Conrad's much-desired "effect of actuality" *(Notes on My Books* 85). Nor is he, as Terry Eagleton argues, the embodiment of a "subtle form of deception" (23), openly contradicting the author's claim of factual detachment. He is rather an exemplary character enabling Conrad to reinscribe a narrow conception of Englishness into a much broader Western community rescued from Slavic disruption.[24]

Conrad's slyly unassuming English narrator quotes, interprets, and adapts Razumov's diary into a perilous story, the disarray of which excites but cannot possibly characterize the modern West. So believes the narrator. Razumov's tragedy, he points out, is "a Russian story for Western ears, which . . . are not attuned to certain tones of cynicism and cruelty, of moral negation, and even of moral distress already silenced at our end of Europe" (121). Under Western eyes, Russian political turmoil is isolated to the anachronistic realm of Gothic art, but in order to certify modern social standards to an English audience. "To us Europeans of the West," Conrad's narrator explains, "all ideas of political plots and conspiracies seem childish, crude inventions for the theatre or a novel" (81-82). The disturbing reality of Russian autocracy and revolution is transformed into a mere fictional possibility for the English public, "the sport of revolution—a game to look at from the height of . . . superiority" (147). The fictional exploration of the noxious spectral conflicts of a Russian society on the verge of disintegration contrasts with a distinctly modern Western society in the making.

In addition, Conrad uses his narrator's ethos to condemn the provincial notion of English identity and to redeem the cosmopolitan conception of modern Western society.[25] The obtuse teacher of languages displays narrow-mindedness by repeatedly voicing his confusion when faced with certain recurring traits of Russian character. He hastily and stereotypically calls Russia the "land of spectral ideas and disembodied aspirations" (25),

characterizing Russians by the “illogicality of their attitude” (3-4) and the “arbitrariness of their conclusions” (4). Not surprisingly, Haldin’s handwriting looks “cabalistic” and “incomprehensible” to him (99). Razumov’s terrifying story provokes his perplexed comment, “the spirit of Russia is the spirit of cynicism” (50). Conrad ironically describes the narrator’s bigoted nature as the “frigid English manner” (12) of a “collected” personality, “cool as a cucumber”—in other words, the personality of a “regular Englishman” (16). The narrator’s prejudice reflects the xenophobic milieu of fin de siècle England, which accentuated Conrad’s foreignness by scrutinizing his linguistic proficiency and by labeling his Polish background as “Slavic.” However, it also provided Conrad the Gothic matrix justifying the modern architecture of Western society manufactured through, as it is disentangled from, Razumov’s obscure Russian tragedy.

A captivating expression of Conrad’s politics, *Under Western Eyes* adapts the Gothic pattern of the fin de siècle British spy novel to a social setting that exploits the constitutive implications of Slavic irrationality. It shapes the destructive elements of Russian reality into popular news items and into fictional entertainment. It does so, moreover, in order to design the modern West as a symptom of its own imaginary dissolution. Astonished to find her brother’s fatal story in the columns of a foreign newspaper, the Russian Miss Haldin uneasily acknowledges the penetrating power of contemporary journalism: “The English press is wonderful. Nothing can be kept secret from

it" (85). On his arrival at Geneva as the reluctant agent enacting Mikulin's plans for the "police supervision over Europe" (226), Razumov is dismayed to reach the same conclusion. When the English media turn the story of Haldin's arrest into an exciting newspaper article, Razumov is confronted with a shallow journalistic version of his perilous life story. No wonder that he vehemently disavows any affiliation with imaginary characters by explicitly stating, "I am not a young man in a novel" (137). "What's going on with us," he tells the English narrator, "is of no importance—a mere sensational story to amuse the readers of the papers—the superior contemptuous Europe" (139). Ultimately, Conrad's aesthetic representation of disruptive Russian experience does not add up to his covering over of political issues, or his foregrounding of ethical dilemmas.[26] It rather indicates the Gothic operation through which Conrad enacts a broad redefinition of modern Western society. *Under Western Eyes* conjures up a Gothic world of Slavic turmoil in order to give birth to a seemingly deracinated, loosely-assembled, civilized community that is continuously animated by aestheticizing its own jeopardy in Gothic form.

ITALY

I

Italy and art are strategically married in Gothic fiction to help produce an enlightened English identity emancipated from Catholic superstition. Horace Walpole's inaugural novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) are consistent on this point. Walpole notably prefaced his work with the caveat that the story was based on a manuscript printed at Naples in 1529 and found "in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England" (5). Moreover, in his characteristic Gothic narrative of familial secrecy, social order is finally restored with the aid coming from vigilant ancestors communicating via sighing portraits and bleeding statues. Animated artworks function here, and in Gothic fiction in general, as a way of proclaiming modernity through the aesthetic containment of the past, which is now seen as being guided by gullibility and unreason.[1] Further developing the genre, Radcliffe explicitly depicts the transition from a feudal age to modern times by mapping it onto a geopolitical division of Europe in which the South, especially Italy, marks, as opposed to England, the proper place reserved for antiquated beliefs and medieval tyranny.[2] The overall structure of *The Italian* illustrates this idea. Radcliffe ingeniously frames her novel with the anecdote of an

Englishman who is astonished to find in an ancient convent of Naples an assassin protected by the Catholic Church's feudal practice that offers asylum to criminals. The novel's main body is the confession made public of one such criminal, whose sinister story of murder, involving even the dungeons of the Inquisition, can rightfully awaken the Englishman's sense of modernity. Art, like Italy, operates in Gothic fiction as a receptacle of anachronistic elements but only to reinforce modern social standards.

The role of the Gothic as a symbolic expression of social renewal is rooted in the eighteenth-century philosophical tradition, which, by isolating art from everyday life, facilitated the birth of the public museum.[3] According to Immanuel Kant, art should be freed from political influence and religious patronage, occupying an autonomous sphere disconnected from the utilitarian practices of crafts and commodities. A secular invention sequestered from ordinary existence, aesthetics governed the anachronistic image of Italy both as a place of Gothic superstition and as a museum of antique art. The vivified artworks featured in moldering Gothic manuscripts found a home in the wilderness of marble ruins perceived from an English perspective as evidence of a decayed splendor smothering modern-day Italy. The Gothic dimensions of such neoclassic perspective later found a new expression in F. T. Marinetti's 1909 Futurist Manifesto, which declared his intention "to free [Italy] from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards" (Apollonio 22). The notion of art as mausoleum subtends the socially transformative effects produced by Walpole's enlivened portraits and experienced by Radcliffe's

bourgeois Englishman on tour in Italy. It creates the historical conditions for the rise of the middle-class subject, who invents modern existence in contradistinction to cultural material of the past thenceforth to be rendered obsolete and put on display in the museum as art.[4]

The European public museum appeared as a way of repudiating, rather than simply connecting with, the ways of the past. Although allowances must be made for the various types of museums in terms of historical formation and national origin, pioneering English and French institutions confirm this thesis.[5] The opening of the Louvre in 1793 was an offshoot of the French Revolution—in Georges Bataille's memorable phrase, it was "linked to the development of the guillotine" (25). Turned from the king's private palace into a museum open to the public, the Louvre was for the newly formed bourgeoisie a symbol of triumph over the deceptive values of the ancien régime. Entering the Louvre and reading a Gothic novel were very similar activities in this regard: both meant an exercise in modernity of a generation preoccupied with mastering a historically defunct age through art. Unlike the French, the British aristocracy found a peaceful alternative to revolution by readily transforming their country houses into precursors of public museums.[6] In eighteenth-century England country estates gradually lost their supercilious nature, suggesting instead a growing sense of noblesse oblige on the part of educated gentlemen eager to show their exquisite taste in the arts. For the first time in history, the middle class could gain feelings of social power and national pride from a virtual collective ownership of objets d'art acquired from foreign lands. The role of the

guillotine was superseded by that of paintings and statues, many of which had been obtained by upper-class young men in Italy while taking the Grand Tour.

Modern England awoke from the slumber of feudalism through the tradition of the Grand Tour, which evoked Italy as a museum of art. Given its name in *The Voyage of Italy* (1670) by Richard Lassels, professor of classics and Catholic priest, the Grand Tour started as a mainly educational enterprise.[7] Its initial purpose was to complete a young gentleman's development by exposing him to the ennobling artifacts of classical antiquity. However, it quickly expanded into a large-scale Italian art market involving the excavation and relocation of antique relics to private collections all over England. Crossing the Alps into the South, Grand Tourists found themselves on a journey back in time to the cradle of European civilization, whose cultural legacy they claimed as rightful descendants. Like the self-righteous Englishman of Radcliffe's novel, they felt justified in their claim by what they saw as a squalid and backward-looking contemporary Italy. The aesthetic containment of the past typifying Gothic fiction was reinforced by the cultural dynamics of the Grand Tour, which museumized Roman antiquity to celebrate the birth of modernity. The great classical collections initially stored in country houses and later in public museums were no longer considered to be signs of social privilege enjoyed in exclusivity by the upper classes. Instead, they gave the middle class an idea of cultural genealogy and a vision of national unity by offering them a virtual Grand Tour in miniature on domestic soil. From its inception, then, modern Englishness was fractured at its core. It was invented as a self-contained

national identity and yet based on the image of a definitively foreign nation—Italy—as a living museum of art.

Recasting this pattern for the early twentieth century, E. M. Forster imagined the social renewal of Edwardian England by drawing on the long cultural history of the Grand Tour. In "Notes on the English Character" (1926) he acutely diagnosed what New Left theorists would later identify as the increasing gap in the national identity at the center of an expanding British Empire.[8] According to Forster, the complexities of Englishness can be traced back to the overarching idea that the English character is "underdeveloped" and ultimately "incomplete" (10). He identifies the attenuation of Englishness, which becomes a dominant feature of postcolonial literature brilliantly encapsulated by the stuttering Sisodia in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988): "The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (343). Writing at a time marked by simultaneous awareness of imperial expansion and fear of cultural regression, Forster saw the need for a social revival coming from homegrown national essence rather than from the sprawling British economy.[9] But for him, as for eighteenth-century Grand Tourists, the road to the heart of England led through Italy. It was his genius to sense that, in order to energize a truly Anglocentric identity, one would have to reimmerse it into the conditions that had sparked its modern existence. Therefore, he adopted the cultural geography of the Grand Tour to redeem rural England as the source of a robust inner vitality countering at once the timeworn values of Victorian society and the alienating aspects of

modern urbanization. In his private writings and early fiction Forster endows rural landscapes with the spirit of national consciousness through the historical image of Italy both as the birthplace of modern civilization and as the emblem of social decline. His signature trope of the unspoiled, rustic masculinity representing the ideal nature of Englishness grows out of, as it surpasses, the faded glory of classical Italy.

Shortly after his second visit to Italy in 1903, Forster began to reevaluate the significance of the English countryside in light of his "Grand Tour." Biographies recount a curious anecdote about this period of Forster's life according to which he met a lame shepherd boy during one of the habitual country walks that took him this time to the prehistoric earthworks of Figsbury Rings in Wiltshire.[10] In a sudden moment of revelation Forster discovered that the boy's apparent simplicity held a deep wisdom attributable to the pervading spirit of the place, the genius loci of pastoral Wiltshire. In a diary entry of 1904 he turns this young shepherd into the synecdochic embodiment of a national identity by raising his native-born charisma over that of any Italian. Referring to his illuminating experience, Forster avers: "This 'incident' assures my opinion that the English *can* be the greatest men in the world: he [i.e., the boy] was miles greater than an Italian: one can't dare to call his simplicity naïf" (qtd. in Furbank 117, emphasis in the original). Forster sees England's grandeur originating from innate national characteristics that turn out to be conditioned nonetheless by a broad international vantage point located in Italy.[11]

Inspired by Forster's epiphany in Wiltshire, *The Longest Journey* (1907) develops this idea into a Bildungsroman form. Notably, the spiritual growth of the main character, Rickie Eliot, is calibrated to the symbolic significance of geographic locations in a spatially segmented England. Abandoning first the sterile intellectualism of Cambridge and later the suburban narrow-mindedness of Sawston, Rickie eventually gains a sense of integrity in Wiltshire, where "the fibres of England unite" and where, he ponders, "we should erect our national shrine" (126). Throughout the novel, he asserts his devotion to his native country in line with the cultural logic of the Grand Tour—that is, by stressing England's historical descent from, yet social superiority over, Italy. "Thank God I'm English," he opines, adding, "We've been nearly as great as the Greeks, I do believe. Greater, I'm sure than the Italians" (45). Admiring the latent energies of Wiltshire, Rickie "could not imagine a place larger than England," a country that eclipses in his view even the greatness of Italy, which he considers nevertheless "the spiritual fatherland of us all" (126). As these examples suggest, Rickie's patriotism springs from a liberal internationalism rooted in the perception of Italy as a place that is artistically fertile but socially and politically obsolete. However, his internationalism does not lead to the simple overstepping of provincial nationalism, as some critics have argued.[12] It rather motivates the maturation, together with Rickie, of a distinctive Englishness whose center is the province.

Further developing this idea, *A Room with a View* (1908) employs, perhaps more than any other novel by Forster, the aesthetic conventions

shared by Gothic fiction and the Grand Tour. It sets out to revitalize English society through the aesthetic internalization of a once refined yet in actuality untamable image of Italy. In the first half of the book Forster takes his characters to Italy but only to ship them back to England in the second half as modern subjects purified from old-fashioned Victorian values by virtue of their encounter with Gothic superstition and antique art. To underscore the formative effects associated with Italy, Forster depicts his young protagonist, Lucy Honeychurch, en route to Florence with a domineering older cousin, Charlotte Bartlett, whose outmoded Victorian prudishness he constantly ridicules as properly belonging to Gothic fiction. Like a Gothic hero haunted by the impossibility of privacy, Charlotte is searching for “oubliettes” and “secret entrances” (13) before going to bed in the Pension Bertolini in Florence. Her judgment of Italy as a Gothic dungeon is reinforced by her dismay at Lucy’s exposure to what she sees as a licentious mob of English tourists, including the working-class George Emerson. The early love and eventual marriage between Lucy and George, however, adumbrate the social renewal of modern England—an overthrow of sexual barriers and a leveling of class distinctions performed in the art museum of the Italian Peninsula. In keeping with the deep structure of Forster’s liberal internationalism, Lucy finally returns to Windy Corner, her provincial family estate in Surrey, as a character transformed by her contact with Italy. Repeatedly termed “Leonardesque,” she redeems the rural soul of England by Italianizing it and thus saving it from the pernicious expansion of bourgeois urbanization. Here, as in the cultural evolution of the Grand Tour,

Italy motivates the birth of an English society that reveals its modernity through the transformation of its anachronistic image into art.

Critical accounts of the role of Italy in Foster's life and work typically focus on the distinction between the tourist and the traveler, broaching issues pertaining to the authenticity of experiencing foreign cultures and the impact of the guidebook industry on English tourism.[13] Critics relating Forster's fiction to the Gothic and the Grand Tour overlook the mutually sustaining relationship between the two, for they narrowly define the former as a mere escape into fantasy and the latter as simply the finishing stage of a gentleman's classical education.[14] A useful alternative to these approaches comes from Jonah Siegel, who acutely identifies the Gothic dimensions of English travel to Italy from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. He argues that Forster's fascination with the South is an example of the art romance tradition in literature. It shows Gothic characteristics by using the notion of Italy as "the externalization of longing and fear" (197) and as a return to a place of "creative origin" (xiv) associated with erotic pleasure, beauty, and death. Siegel convincingly elucidates the revitalizing effects of the Gothic and tourist image of Italy; however, he misses the broad geopolitical underpinnings of these effects, ultimately anchoring his analysis in the dehistoricized framework of Freudian psychoanalysis.[15] When Forster's characters go to Italy in *A Room with a View*, they are not faced with the abstract notion of a "womb" (81), as Siegel's definition of the art romance suggests. Instead, they illustrate the historical

adaptation to modernism of a distinct literary and cultural strand in the English perception of Gothicized Italy as a socially rejuvenating museum of art.

The museum functions in Forster's fiction as a symbolic space for the redefinition of middle-class identity. Among other effects, it activates in his characters a spiritual growth that is meant to overcome, in conjunction with the genius loci of England's backwoods, the pervasive homophobia characterizing Edwardian society. Forster extends the sexual liberation achieved by Lucy in *A Room with a View* to his eponymous protagonist in *Maurice* (finished in 1914 and published posthumously in 1971) by employing the same strategy inspired by the generative capacity attributed to the art museum. Significantly, he unfolds the homosexual love between Maurice and Alec as a spiritual journey that culminates in the British Museum in a tête-à-tête during which "rows of old statues tottered" (225) in the gallery described as "a tomb . . . miraculously illuminated by the spirit of the dead" (219). Here and elsewhere in his fiction Forster fuses homosexuality both with the Gothic image of art that comes alive and with the museum of classical art that is a product of the Grand Tour. He does so, moreover, in order to create modern characters invested with an Anglocentric sensibility such as Maurice, who rejects bigoted bourgeois existence by entombing it, so to speak, as a thing of the past henceforth to be confined as antique art in a museum haunted by superstition. The role of the British Museum as mausoleum, which gave birth in the eighteenth century to modern English society, enables Forster to question and broaden the scope of that very existence and thus to envision a homosocial existence for Maurice in

“an England in which it was still possible to get lost” (254). Prompted in part by the sexual inhibitions he was forced to experience in the aftermath of the Oscar Wilde trials of 1895, Forster could only imagine a future for Maurice in the untamed “greenwood” of England’s periphery (254).[16] Yet he turned this geographical periphery into the central motivation of an English society renewed through the Gothic dimensions of the art museum represented by Italy as a nation.

In doing so, Forster drew on a literary tradition that developed in response to and in active interplay with the sociocultural reality conditioned by the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival and the Grand Tour. Prefiguring the work of Forster, Madame de Staël’s *Corinne, or Italy* (1807) and, to some extent, George Eliot’s *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1872) combine the Gothic and tourist notion of Italy in order to make provincial England cosmopolitan. Eliot transforms her heroine by sending her to Rome, and Staël explicitly portrays her main character after Emma Hart, the actress wife of the longtime British ambassador to Italy, William Hamilton. Hamilton’s activity included not only the collection of antiques such as those that filled the country houses and museums of England but also the animation of antique art by way of his talented wife’s theatrical performances. Emma’s performances, or so-called Attitudes, illustrated the Gothic dimensions of the Grand Tour, grafting the formal perfection of the classical world onto the conventional device of moving artworks displayed in Gothic fiction. This fusion, which also informs Forster’s fictional representation of Italy, was undergirded by the Gothic logic

that recast the modern present as the tormenting continuation of the feudal past.

II

The rise of Gothic fiction in the eighteenth century was embedded in the social tendency afoot at the time that sought to confirm modernity by invoking Gothicism as an anachronistic cultural style. Emerging in response to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, Gothic sham ruins became chief accessories of landscape gardens as emblems of victory over England's Catholic and feudal past.[17] They functioned not merely as images of scenic beauty or signs of cultural nostalgia but more importantly as conspicuous monuments of medieval obscurity conquered by Enlightenment reason. Characteristically, in the midst of the aesthetic debate on the picturesque in the 1790s, Uvedale Price advanced the idea that ruined abbeys in England were "the pride and boast of this island: we may well be proud of them; not merely in a picturesque point of view: we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruin" (*Essays* 2: 264). The prefabricated nature of sham ruins was seen as offering direct evidence of the overthrow of superstition achieved by modern English society. Its social significance was so great that it was often taken to extreme lengths, as in the case of one Lord Milton, who, after pulling down the Gothic abbey on his estate in Dorset and building his new house on its place, erected a few

years later a spanking new ruin from the stones left from the original one.[18] More famously perhaps, not only did Walpole author *The Castle of Otranto*, the first Gothic novel, published in 1764, but he also equipped his Gothic villa, Strawberry Hill, with false battlements. The fictional strategy confining superstitious credulity to the implausible realm of vivified artworks was the product of a society that was ushered into modernity through the popular aestheticization of the past performed in the landscape garden and subsequently in the public museum.

This insight alters mainstream definitions of the Gothic, including its historical affinities with the Grand Tour. It calls for the revision of critical approaches that have often hastily located the subversive elements of Gothic writings in ahistorical interpretive frameworks. According to such accounts, the Gothic disavows Enlightenment modernity mainly by its nostalgic turn toward an idealized past, by its withdrawal into a world of psychic delusion, or simply by its fascination with irrational or escapist fantasy.[19] While such wide-ranging readings have helped to encompass the Gothic as a polyphonous phenomenon, they overlook the role assumed by this genre not as antagonist but rather as guardian of modernity. The Gothic does not "oppose Grand-Tour neoclassicism" ("Grand Tour" 45), as James Buzard suggests by limiting the scope of Gothic fiction "to supply imaginary *substitutes* for travel to southern European places" (44, emphasis in the original). On the contrary, as a generative matrix of modern society, it provides the cultural logic underlying the pervasive travel to Italy in the eighteenth century. The aesthetic containment of

the past featured in Gothic fiction serves as a blueprint for the historical adaptation of the Grand Tour to a set of neoclassic ideals that revived Roman antiquity but only to confine it as proof of defunct glory in art collections throughout England.

By the end of the eighteenth century the English tradition of the Grand Tour had grown into a widespread Italian art market, which created a distinctly domestic solution to the social upheaval sweeping across revolutionary Europe. The demand among wealthy gentlemen for artwork from Italy was by this time hardly a new tendency. As early as the reign of Charles I (1600-1649), who was himself an avid collector, English connoisseurs of the arts had already started building cabinets of curiosities.[20] The most famous of these was that of the Earl of Arundel, which comprised a wide range of his purchases from Italy, including paintings, drawings, statues, and manuscripts but also coins, gems, altars, and sarcophagi. However, seventeenth-century virtuosos such as Arundel did not observe categorical boundaries separating various kinds of antiquities. Therefore, their collections consisted of a dazzling jumble of objects meant to be exhibited mainly with a documentary purpose for a small circle of aficionados affiliated with the royal court. It was not until a century later that enlightened descendants of the virtuosos, the so-called dilettanti, laid down the standards of taste for a large middle-class audience by endowing with a new mystique the artworks they brought back from the Grand Tour. Unlike the virtuosos, whose activity presupposed and at the same time reinforced a system of quasi-feudal hierarchy, the dilettanti adapted to the changing historical conditions of

modernity by using art to socially transformative effects. They set the pattern for exhibiting objets d'art in country houses for a large number of spectators and thus disseminated the wonders of the Grand Tour in England.

Founded in 1734 by young men who had just returned from their Grand Tour of the Continent, the Society of Dilettanti helped create a cultural milieu in which neoclassic art was regarded as the emblem of a decisive break with England's feudal past.[21] Yet the actual members of the Society did not typically see themselves as being driven by such a lofty purpose. Few of them would have quarreled with Horace Walpole's jeering remark depicting them as "a club, for which the nominal qualification is having been in Italy, and the real one, being drunk" (*Correspondence* 18: 211). These facts might seem to undermine my argument. Nevertheless, the dilettanti were more than just a cohort assembled merely on the basis of conviviality. As arbiters of taste, they built a modern nation on the ruins of Roman antiquity by influencing the English aristocracy to transform their formerly exclusive country estates into veritable show houses open to the public.[22] Just as Gothic sham ruins were ostentatious reminders of a modernity defined in contradistinction to a superstitious past, so too the antique artifacts accumulated in country houses showed evidence of a cultural genealogy whose limitations could yet be surpassed by enlightened England.[23] The custom of visiting country houses had developed by the late 1700s into a mass industry of domestic tourism, which reconfigured the social makeup of modern England.

In spite of Walpole's jibe at the dilettanti, his Gothic villa, Strawberry Hill, was at the center of this emerging tourist industry. Of course, due to its extravagantly Gothic architecture, Strawberry Hill was an oddity of sorts among typical country houses such as the classical-style Chatsworth in Derbyshire or the Palladian Holkham Hall in Norfolk.[24] However, as a popular contemporary curiosity, it illustrates the fusion of Gothic style and neoclassic art characteristic of eighteenth-century modernity. Visitors thrilled by its false battlements could find reassurance in the fact that medieval obscurity was successfully subdued and turned into modern entertainment. Those still doubting the demise of aristocratic hauteur could admire Walpole's private collection and feel empowered by the extension of his refined taste for antiquities to a newly formed tourist nation. The genteel Walpole, who walked on tiptoe according to the aristocratic fashion of the age, was well aware of the great extent of social adjustment required by an enterprise that put him in direct contact with the vulgar mob. Throughout his voluminous correspondence he repeatedly gives voice to the "great inconvenience" and "many rudenesses" he is constantly being exposed to at the hands of an obtrusive and unappreciative crowd (2: 275).[25] The sheer number of people demanding access to Strawberry Hill compelled Walpole to lay down in 1784 an elaborate set of rules for visiting his house. The most important elements of the regulation stated that the house was open from the first of May to first of October; the maximum number of any visiting party was limited to four; only one party was to be admitted each day; and, last but not least, prospective visitors were to send a written application in

advance and obtain a ticket authorizing admission. But even these restrictions failed to put Walpole's mind at ease. His rules did not stop the ongoing succession of inconveniences and accidents such as when a careless visitor broke one of the precious marble statues he had procured on his Grand Tour of Italy.[26] Yet his persistence in keeping his house open to "customers" – as he would refer to visitors – established Strawberry Hill as an early precursor of the public museum (*Correspondence* 11: 25). It also illustrates the opening of the elite enacted through the structural transformation of the English country house. While contemporary France was thrown into revolutionary turmoil, English gentlemen, in effect, anticipated a potential rebellion by using tourism to sublimate social inequality into art.

For all his grumbles about troublesome guests, Walpole was in a significantly better position than the French nobility, who had to face the mass executions implemented during the Reign of Terror. In fact, the role of the museum as a socially transformative institution and thus one that could possibly prevent a revolution was also recognized by the French Court. The Comte d'Angiviller, in charge of the buildings and gardens of Louis XVI from 1774 onward, entertained ambitious plans for a massive museum that was meant to demonstrate the king's emancipation, power, and generosity.[27] Thwarted as they were by the outbreak of the French Revolution, d'Angiviller's plans were belatedly supplemented by the institutionalized preservation of the arts from the fury of the revolutionaries, who turned into reality Denis Diderot's memorable suggestion: "If we love the truth more than the fine arts, let us pray God for

iconoclasts" ("si nous aimons mieux la vérité que les beaux-arts, prions Dieu pour les iconoclasts") (*Œuvres Complètes* X: 390-91). Shortly after the Revolution, the Monuments Commission was established in Paris with the purpose of relocating into the safety of public museums the entire cultural and artistic heritage of a feudal era that was suddenly decreed as being dysfunctional. The nationalization in 1789 of church as well as royal property divested artworks of the aura of religiosity that had previously surrounded them as icons of the French Catholic monarchy.[28] On the walls of the recently opened Louvre, as in the eighteenth-century Gothic revival, works of art assumed a political function precisely by virtue of their newly acquired autonomy.

The historical conditions giving rise to the Louvre accentuate the political implications of the Italian art market in England initiated by the Grand Tour and popularized by the country house. The public opening of the Louvre in 1793 was a symbol of social renewal. It created a public space in which art was no longer an expression of blind worship but rather a separate sphere of inquiry. The museum was a container of a dogmatic past and thus the very emblem of the Cult of Reason. Moreover, as an occasion for national pride, the inauguration of the Louvre was meant to make Paris the enlightened tourist capital of modern Europe. But while Revolutionary France turned its royal past into monuments with the help of the guillotine, England reinvented its social architecture through classical art imported from Italy. English Grand Tourists saw in Italy a ready-made museum that was yet to be explored and whose riches were in need of being rescued from the hands of a people who had

proved unworthy of them. The stereotypical image of the Mediterranean South as a place marked by rampant crime and superstitious beliefs was at this time not only a stock feature of Gothic fiction but also one of the incentives for the removal of antiques to the sanctuary of English country houses and public museums.

The extent of England's involvement in the revival of Roman antiquity is evidenced in the longtime activity as collector and connoisseur of Sir William Hamilton, envoy extraordinary to the Kingdom of The Two Sicilies from 1764 to 1800. When Hamilton took office, Naples was suggestive of Gothic conditions. A city torn by famine and plague as well as rife with violence and looting, it resembled the terrifying setting of Radcliffe's *The Italian* and what Mary Shelley later called "a paradise inhabited by devils" (*Letters* 2: 99). Yet for Hamilton, as for Gothic authors, Naples and its surroundings justified the modernity and social superiority of enlightened England. Setting up his main residence in Villa Angelica near Portici, conveniently located at the foot of Vesuvius and within easy reach of ancient Pompeii and Herculaneum, Hamilton became a pioneering vulcanologist and a noted antiquarian. He saw in these activities sophisticated inquiries into science and taste, both of which rose above, in his view, the superstitious and visceral milieu of contemporary Italy.[29] In addition to hunting for antiques, he also entertained the swarm of Grand Tourists, who, like him, found in Naples a true antiquarian's paradise enhanced rather than inhibited by Italy's past natural disasters and latter-day social stupor. It was in this vein that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a guest of Hamilton in 1787,

contemplated the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the entry for 13 March of his *Italian Journey*: “There have been many disasters in this world, but few which have given so much delight to posterity” (195). Goethe’s statement reveals the Gothic logic of eighteenth-century antiquarianism, which turned the material traces of an extinct civilization into a modern collector’s gratification. Literally petrified by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, these two ancient cities gave evidence of a fantastic sudden death infused by the Gothic-style pleasure of turning everyday life into monuments. The spectral sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum offered a window into the past—an instant museum whose rediscovery appealed to Hamilton’s acquisitive nature and placed him at the vanguard of a new age of *virtu* in England.

Put on display in country houses and public museums, his extensive collection took on an expressly civic function, which reconfigured English society by cultivating a general taste for cultural artifacts. His motivation for collecting is symptomatic of the tendency to forge from the ruins of antiquity a renewed national identity and a sense of political superiority. The precious artworks he had amassed in Italy over several decades ended up chiefly in private collections in England and most notably in the British Museum, where they laid the foundation in 1772 of the Department of Classical Antiquities.[30] Based on Hamilton’s letters, it is clear that his reasons for collecting and selling his treasures as well as for keeping them in English hands were rooted not in pecuniary interests but in the pride he felt from contributing to a collective ownership of antiques that would raise England’s prestige above that of other

major European powers.[31] Of course, museums did not become truly public until the nineteenth century, and even then their accessibility to all was questionable. Still, early museums of art extended Hamilton's feelings of pride as a collector to an emerging bourgeoisie. They did so not by functioning as simple transmitters of a glorious Roman past but by externalizing national ancestry as a fascinating yet ghastly journey into the anachronistic realm of art.

The Gothic dimensions of the eighteenth-century revival of classical antiquity found vivid expression in Hamilton's ambition to animate through a series of tableaux vivants the artworks recently excavated at Pompeii and Herculaneum. His second wife, the beautiful and talented Emma Hart, played a major part in this regard. The former mistress of his nephew, Charles Greville, Emma married Hamilton in 1791 and quickly became the center of attention as a celebrated entertainer among wealthy European tourists in Naples. In her so-called Attitudes she put on ancient Greek and Roman garments, and, with a few shawls and a tambourine, she played the role of various classical characters, acting out famous mythological scenes through a unique combination of dramatic posture, improvised dance, and mimic expression.[32] Many of her Attitudes were inspired by the figures painted on Hamilton's collection of antique vases. The symmetry of Emma's form and the delicacy of her movements drew in large audiences, including Goethe, who wrote in his *Italian Journey* that her spectacles impersonated "all the antiquities, all the profiles of Sicilian coins, even the Apollo Belvedere" (200). Indeed, the general opinion of the time made it out that, by marrying Emma, William Hamilton secured the

most precious acquisition of his collection.[33] That Hamilton himself shared this view is shown in a letter to Greville in which shortly before Emma's arrival to Naples he wrote, "The prospect of possessing so delightfull [sic] an object under my roof soon certainly causes in me some pleasing sensations" (Morrison 114). Hamilton transmuted his future wife into art even before the acclaimed contemporary painter George Romney made her immortal as the muse behind several dozen of his portraits.

As a living object of art and a source of creative inspiration, Emma epitomized the fusion of the Gothic terror triggered by moving artworks and the artistic genius underlying the etymological definition of the museum as a dwelling place of the muses. Her Attitudes were surely conditioned by the performative traits assigned to feminine identity pointed out by Chloe Chard, but they were not simply exhausted in what she saw as the "comedy generated by an anomalous combination of the living and the immobile" (167). More than that, like the sighing portraits and bleeding statues of Gothic novels, they were meant to breathe life into a distant era that could thus be ritually laid to rest in an effort to reinvent the present as distinctly forward-looking and modern. At the same time, Emma's graceful appearance and theatrical ingenuity were symbolically contained within the space of the museum, where they could be harnessed for maximum effect. Her Attitudes showed evidence of ennobling effects of classical antiquity that were capable of turning the illiterate daughter of a poor English blacksmith into the tasteful wife of a British ambassador. No wonder that the Grand Tourists bearing witness to her transformation were

eager to furnish their country houses with antiques and various artworks inspired by her performances.[34] Viewed as a collectible item, the image of Emma was the symbol of a new national identity that was distanced from the past through the Gothic and brought to life in the public museum.

Modeled after Emma Hamilton, the eponymous heroine of Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* motivates the rebirth of English nationalism in keeping with the constitutive implications shared by the Gothic and the Grand Tour. The synecdochic embodiment of a socially disconcerting yet artistically captivating Italy, Corinne represents that which England must come into contact with but must ultimately reject in order to gain cultural inspiration from ancient history while also retaining its traditional values and domestic integrity. The novel's general conflict and resolution confirm this idea. On his arrival in Rome, Lord Nelvil (Oswald), a Scotsman on his Grand Tour, falls in love with the attractive poetess and improvisatrice Corinne, only to find that the hopelessness of their relationship is entangled in a series of Gothic-style family secrets. Like a Gothic character simultaneously lured and repelled by Italy, Oswald declares, "I love this mysterious, invisible danger . . . which lurks beneath the most pleasing impressions" (87), adding later, "Corinne, Corinne, I cannot but fear you as I love you!" (98). Oswald's ominous premonitions are confirmed as he unravels Corinne's ancestry and learns that she is in fact the half sister (from Lord Edgermond's first marriage to an Italian woman) of Lucile Edgermond, the young Englishwoman whom his late father had intended him to marry. Furthermore, his disquietude is heightened when he learns that not only did his

father know about Corinne's true identity but he explicitly warned his son not to marry Corinne on account of her foreign descent and theatrical ambitions. Finally, Oswald chooses Lucile over Corinne but remains haunted by the latter through the presence of his newborn daughter, who retains not the features of her mother, Lucile, but those of Corinne. Staël's Lord Nelvil, much like Radcliffe's patriotic Englishman in *The Italian*, fulfills his duties to his country and comes to be a responsible citizen while defending British domesticity from the corrupting effects of Gothic Italy.

To fully establish Corinne's role as foil to Englishness, Staël complements the Gothic image of Italy with the conventions of the Grand Tour. She depicts Corinne as a symbol of antique art, who, divested of her native-born Italian frivolity and her harmful feminine independence, would enrich the socially virtuous yet artistically barren small-town England represented in the novel by Lucile. While some critics have interpreted such independence as a form of protest and an icon of feminine liberation, the vantage point offered by the social history of the Grand Tour repositions it in a starkly contrary argument.[35] Rather than celebrating Corinne's association with artistic genius as a subversive element, Staël actually shows how it is ultimately contained by masculine desire in order to strengthen and reproduce patriarchal ideals. In line with Emma Hamilton's dual identity, illustrated by her astonishing rise from mediocrity to fame, Corinne functions as her half-sister's double—the driving force, at once banished and interiorized, which endows Lucile with "new charms" in Oswald's eyes (399). Corinne plunges into inactivity shortly after

Oswald's return to Britain and eventually wastes away due to a fatal illness; Lucile, meanwhile, takes on the brilliance of the half-sister whom she briefly met in Italy. By extending the Gothic motif of the double to the cultural tradition of the Grand Tour, Staël anchors the center of cosmopolitan England in its Italianized and Gothicized periphery.

Such transformative implications of the Gothic and tourist image of Italy surface in nineteenth-century fiction and later in the work of Forster. In *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* George Eliot draws on this literary and cultural history to emancipate her protagonist, Dorothea Brooke, from narrow-minded English Puritanism while also checking her freedom by keeping her within the bounds of the family. Honeymooning in Rome with Edward Casaubon, her newlywed husband, a pedantic, middle-aged scholar, Dorothea finds herself in a setting familiar from Gothic novels and from accounts of the Grand Tour. She contemplates "[r]uins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence" (124). The topographic distinctions between Italy and England stimulate Dorothea to question the faith she naively put into Casaubon precisely when he tries to use those distinctions to justify his role as a patriarch. Casaubon alters the phrase "see Rome and die" and encourages his wife to "[s]ee Rome as a bride, and live thenceforth as a happy wife" (127). Ironically, Eliot saves her heroine from a confined existence as Casaubon's slavish companion only to send her back to Middlemarch to fulfill his prophecy (after his

sudden death) as the happy wife of his nephew, Will Ladislaw. With Ladislaw by her side, Dorothea transforms the English province and brings a bit of Italy back to the Middlemarchers, who "were in a state of brutal ignorance about Dante" (374).[36] For Staël, Italy justified British patriotism through a love relationship that grew out of national allegiance. For Eliot, Italy motivates the idea of romantic love as the culmination of feminine Bildung extending to the English province. Following this strand of literary history, Forster would further expand the genius loci of the Mediterranean to a sexual liberation that includes the possibility of homosexual existence in an England revamped through symptomatic distinctions of cultural geography.

III

When Forster's main characters travel to Italy in *A Room with a View*, they are remarkably altered by their firsthand exposure to the physical passion associated with antique art. Indeed, in this novel art is so completely intertwined both with Victorian decorum and with Italian licentiousness that one is tempted to quickly designate it as the common source of these two conflicting concepts without questioning the cultural conditions and generic conventions behind it. This is precisely what critics do when they interpret Forster's many references to classical antiquity as unmediated expressions of social constraint and gender critique.[37] But doing so is to overlook the significant extent to which the

transformative power of art can fully establish itself in Forster's fiction only as a response to and the continuation of the cultural tradition of the Grand Tour and the literary history of the Gothic. The idea that Italy as museum magically works its charm on Forster's characters is caught up in the tautological argument that identifies the effects of antique artifacts with the principles governing the causes for the aesthetic selection of those same artifacts.[38] The fact that Forster has Lucy Honeychurch and George Emerson fall in love as if they were figures created by Michelangelo is not the sign of some "'authentic' . . . spiritual power beyond the merely metaphoric," as Tess Cosslett argued (324). It rather shows the peculiar extension to Edwardian times of almost two centuries of English tradition that saw in Gothicized Italy a national museum of art.

In *A Room with a View* Forster empties out and recycles the classic Gothic conventions that helped transform English society at the dawn of modernity. The characteristic image of a corrupt and superstitious Italy, which ushered Radcliffe's self-doubting heroes into an age of enlightened ideas and secular beliefs, develops into a tourist attraction purifying Forster's characters from Victorian prudery and class bias. In Italy, a space in which "[t]he well-known world had broken up" (55), Forster brings together as tourists a number of figures who would not typically come into contact with each other in early-twentieth-century England. These figures are as different as the bigoted, bourgeois Charlotte Bartlett and her young cousin, Lucy; the lower-class Mr. Emerson and his son, George; the opinionated novelist Miss Eleanor Lavish; and the dogmatic clergyman Mr. Eager. Significantly, the Italy of medieval

torture and destructive horror tormenting the protagonists of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction loses its power to genuinely imperil any of Forster's characters. As a well-established literary convention, it takes on instead the role of entertainment and becomes an occasion for the ridicule of social distinctions, as well as an excuse for travel adventure.

Forster evacuates the trademark notion of Italy as a Gothic dungeon, transforming it into a source of parody and, ultimately, social critique. Stripped of the trappings of inhuman suffering and involuntary seclusion, Forster's Italy is populated by a crowd of guidebook-wielding tourists and can therefore pose a threat only to those who are foolish enough to mistake the modern geography of tourism for the extravagant malevolence of foreign environments depicted in Gothic novels. As main targets of Forster's ridicule of Victorian morality, Charlotte Bartlett and Mr. Eager stand out as key representatives of this foolishness. Charlotte's enthusiasm as chaperone to Lucy is exaggerated when, in an effort to get rooms overlooking the river Arno in Florence, she misinterprets as a breach of propriety Mr. Emerson's offer to swap rooms. Her priggish behavior is further heightened as she accepts the rooms (after being persuaded, ironically, by the Anglican minister, Mr. Beebe) but ensures that Lucy does not sleep in that which was, in her view, contaminated by George. Finally, Forster crowns the ridicule by having Charlotte search the room for "oubliettes and secret entrances" only to find "an enormous note of interrogation [that] . . . gradually became menacing, obnoxious, portentous with evil" (13). As the note later turns out to be nothing but George's innocent scribbles, Charlotte

emerges as Forster's latter-day version of Catherine Morland, who, in Jane Austen's parody of the Gothic, *Northanger Abbey* (1817), confuses, in a similar moment of delusion, an ordinary inventory of linen with a secret manuscript. Mr. Eager is no less of a throwback than Charlotte. Overzealous to defend Victorian decorum against a pernicious crowd of English tourists, he quickly brands the eccentric Mr. Emerson a criminal who murdered his wife. Like Charlotte's imaginings of danger and terror, Mr. Eager's accusation is revealed to be an idle conjecture, which nevertheless conditions Lucy's development in Italy and her eventual preference for George Emerson over Cecil Vyse.

By using Gothic conventions as a source of parody, Forster reinvents Italy as a cultural space in which the elevated class status of a sophisticated Londoner such as Cecil morphs into a curious embodiment of feudal superstition. This transformation was a distinguishing feature of typical Gothic villains from Radcliffe's evil noblemen to Bram Stoker's count Dracula: exotic environments, whether the Italian countryside or the Transylvanian foothills, turned them into despotic misanthropes and superhuman demons. But, while these figures regularly drove unsuspecting victims, especially innocent family members, to the verge of ruination, Forster's Cecil can merely assume the role of Lucy's short-lived fiancé, acting as the bloodless remnant of a once fully functional literary convention. Puckishly described as "the kind of fellow who would not wear another fellow's cap" (85), he shows an inability to connect with people outside his class, which makes him "medieval . . . [l]ike a Gothic statue," resembling "those fastidious saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral"

(86). A vestige of aristocratic decadence, he serves to underscore the incompatibility Forster draws between a socially stratified fin-de-siècle England and a liberal Italy in which Lucy feels that “social barriers were irremovable, doubtless, but not particularly high” (110). Lucy’s grounds for breaking her engagement with Cecil and for marrying the lower-class George Emerson rest on the principles guiding the cultural development of the Grand Tour. They rest on the values that enabled England to break with its feudal past and emerge as an enlightened tourist nation by virtue of discovering its anachronistic image turned into art in the Italian museum.

Like the Grand Tourists at once captivated and repulsed by the decayed magnificence of classical monuments, Forster’s young protagonists map the ancient world onto symptomatic national distinctions characterized by uneven modernization. They lay claim to the cultural legacy of ancient Rome by saving it from an unappreciative nation that has grown criminal and barbaric. Forster uses the Gothic not only as a source of parody but also as a way of substantiating the picture of a hostile Italy that is the signature motif of this genre. Gothicized Italy, although blunted to arouse curiosity rather than feelings of horror, remains the driving force behind Lucy’s perception of Florence as a place inconvenienced by beggars, infested with pickpockets, and bedeviled by murderers. Yet, for her, the encounter with such undesirable characters validates the “pernicious charm of Italy” (20) and functions as proof of genuine adventure. As Gothic horror gives way to modern entertainment, Lucy exposes herself to danger in response to boredom and in an attempt to gain excitement

from finding the Italy of everyday life that she sees as escaping the average tourist. “Nothing ever happens to me” (40), she complains even after getting lost near Santa Croce due to the intervention of Miss Lavish, who, eagerly in search of “the true Italy” (16), takes away her Baedeker and encourages her to “simply drift” (18). Lucy eventually does manage to have an adventure but not until she bears witness to a murder that could well belong in the realm of the Gothic. Mingling with the crowd in the Piazza Signoria, she ends up standing next to an Italian man who is stabbed to death in a sudden altercation, which covers with specks of blood her recently purchased photographs of Sandro Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus* and some of the Sistine frescoes.

As she faints into George’s arms, Lucy’s distress comes to motivate the development of a new identity created through the fusion of Gothic elements with the conventions of the Grand Tour. The blood-tainted photographs of Renaissance paintings are the symbolic expression of the socially degraded yet artistically magnificent Italy familiar from the accounts of the Grand Tour. They are the product of the same national stereotypes as those that enabled Hamilton to become a self-styled patron of the arts in a society that failed to live up to its noble history. In both cases the image of this deplorable society is called upon to justify the rebirth of Englishness through the aesthetic internalization of Italy’s glorious past. Hamilton’s contempt for the primitive and superstitious milieu of contemporary Naples energized his campaign to illustrate the ennobling effects of classical antiquity by turning his wife into a living statue. Similarly, Forster makes Lucy and George rise above the squalid conditions of

contemporary Italy by depicting them as the very embodiments of its artistic heritage. While undergoing a transformation similar to that of Emma Hamilton or Staël's Lucile, Forster's Lucy is repeatedly termed Leonardesque, and George is described in the role of Michelangelo's acorn bearer from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Such references to art are not merely Forster's way of "superimposing classical flourishes on to a fully believable story of a woman's sexual awakening" (18), as Peter Jeffries has argued. On the contrary, instead of being ornamental accoutrements, they perpetuate the tourist notion of Italy as museum at the center of Forster's Bildung plot.

In Forster's fiction, as in the tradition of the Grand Tour, the art museum of Italy expands beyond the sphere of narrow personal development and takes the form of a symbolic space that helps redraw the broad sociocultural fault lines of modern England. The Grand Tour, which came into being as the final stage of a gentleman's education, later evolved into the cornerstone of an enlightened national identity celebrated in country houses open to the public. To contemplate the classical art put on display in show houses was to contemplate one's relatively unobstructed access to a cultural genealogy which until then had been the privilege of a select few. Of course, to illustrate the precarious nature of this grand and freely shared common ancestry, it is enough to recall the difficulties imposed by Walpole's elaborate set of rules and the reluctant condescension with which he accommodated his visitors at Strawberry Hill. Forster astutely diagnosed that in Edwardian England, just as in Walpole's time, the battle over the legacy of ancient Rome had to do with inner social

stratification as well as a porous national identity. Therefore, he drew out the latter-day implications of the Grand Tour as an instrument of identity formation in an era of mass tourism, relocating in the process England's cosmopolitan center to the province.

Resonating with Forster's deep-seated admiration for the genius loci of England's backwoods, Lucy uses Italy to reclaim the vital spirit of Windy Corner from the relentless forces of modern urbanization that threaten to turn it into a droll suburb. Forster faces his heroine in *A Room with a View* with the predicament he broaches while referring to the train station for Howards End: "Into which country will it lead, England or Suburbia?" (13). But while in *Howards End* (1910) the issue is solved by the compromise of an uneasy union between the refined and artistic Schlegels and the pragmatic and materialistic Wilcoxes, Forster chooses a quite different and, in effect, more radical solution for Lucy. For her, as for Staël's Lord Nelvil, the future of England lies in the salutary mixture of unspoiled rural life with the artistic genius of Italy. Transformed by Italy, Lucy becomes critical of her old surroundings, and, as she starts questioning the pettiness of a community reflected in "their kindly affluence, their inexplosive religion, their dislike of paper bags, orange-peel and broken bottles," she learns "to speak with horror of Suburbia" (109). It is not surprising that she cannot redeem Windy Corner by marrying Cecil, who relies on the genius of Italy only to bolster his snotty attitude as a city slicker and thus to further the advance of bourgeois urbanization.

In this regard, too, Forster's novel remains faithful to the definition of the museum handed down by the Grand Tour, a definition caught on the cusp between tradition and innovation. In keeping with Walpole's dilemma of how to share artworks with common people, Forster employs the notion of Italy as museum to justify both the snobbish arrogance of London and the rural cosmopolitanism of Windy Corner. Characteristically, when Mrs. Vyse declares to her son, Cecil, that "Lucy is becoming wonderful" and that "she is one of us already," she is "thinking of the museum that represented Italy to her" (122). "Italy has done it," replies Cecil in agreement, and, on the basis of this insight, he even goes so far as to propose his own theory about the noble future of Italianized England: "I shall have our children educated just like Lucy. Bring them up among honest country folk for freshness, send them to Italy for subtlety, and then—not till then—let them come to London" (122). Cecil's plan for edifying the imperial center evokes the conservative origins of the Grand Tour, which cordoned off Italy as a space for an exclusively aristocratic pastime with a view to consolidating, as William Hamilton did, England's national prestige in modern Europe. However, just as the Grand Tour was ultimately a vehicle of domestic social restructuring, so Forster's Italy makes rural England cosmopolitan while saving it from the internal colonization of middle-class urbanization.[39]

The mechanism of rural cosmopolitanism also involves a critique of heteronormativity and the possibility of homosexual identity formation. In a curious short story entitled "The Classical Annex," Forster proposes such

critique by animating classical artworks in a manner that recalls the terrifying moving pictures and statues featured in eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. To register the Gothic logic of self-fashioning that goes into the making of middle-class society, he shows how this society sustains itself by designating homosocial desire as a fantastic menace posed by the classical museum that comes to life. On news of a breakage in the Classical Annex of the Municipal Museum at Bigglesmouth, the museum's curator is astonished to encounter the nude statue of a Roman gladiator threatening to kill him. Vivified by the "impish . . . powers of darkness," the statue becomes the embodiment of a destructive homosexuality, an "obscene breath from the past" summoned to throw into disarray modern society's aspirations for common standards of decency (*Stories* 149). The symbolic containment through art of such obscenity can thus be made out as the very foundation of these aspirations.

Forster illustrates this idea by inventing a Gothic plot interwoven with homosexuality, superstition, and classical art. As the curator reluctantly "embrace[s] the stone buttocks" (148) of the gladiator in a failed attempt to reattach the fig-leaf that had fallen off the statue, the marble leaf snaps off again and, whizzing across the room, almost kills him. His horror is heightened when the whole statue suddenly cracks off the pedestal barely missing him as he jumps into "the Early Christian sarcophagus" and quickly makes the sign of the cross to put a stop to these tormenting apparitions (148). After escaping from the museum and carefully locking the door behind him, he is still unable to rest, for he is dismayed to learn that on his way home he passed his son,

Denis, who went looking for him with a spare key, wearing “nothing . . . but his football shorts” (149). Rushing back to the museum, he stands horror-struck as he witnesses his son succumbing to debauchery amid “[g]ladiatorial feints” and “post-classical suctions” (150). Finally, as the curator crosses himself yet again, the gladiator clasping his prey in his arms instantly becomes motionless while also petrifying Denis into a marble figure to form the latest addition to the Classical Annex, a pair of ancient statues years later to be admired by visitors as the Wrestling Lesson. Relegated to the superstitious past through classical art, homosexuality is put on display in the museum as entertainment for English citizens who know better than to affiliate themselves with the lewd aspects of an otherwise noble national descent. In this regard, the classical past is, indeed, “a worthy but tedious relative” (146), as the curator considers it to be, but also one that is worthy because of its unworthiness.

In *Maurice* Forster shifts the Gothic role of the museum from a place of middle-class homophobia to a site of homosexual identity formation. By doing so, he turns the animated artworks destroying Denis to Maurice’s advantage. The haunted museum, which in “The Classical Annex” revealed bourgeois existence as the product of social exclusion, allows Maurice to profess his love for Alec by questioning the premises of that very existence. It allows him to embrace homosexuality by leaving his doubts behind in the British Museum among tottering Greek and Roman statues and “[o]ld things belonging to the nation” (220).[40] At the same time, as a space of social renewal and relative equality from as early as the golden age of the Grand Tour, the public museum

also enables Maurice to overcome the class difference separating him as a Cambridge man from a simple gamekeeper such as Alec Scudder.

Like Lucy and George in *A Room with a View*, Maurice and Alec dramatize Forster's hopes for a national consciousness remade through the union between the magnificence of antique art and the robust vitality of rural England. Maurice "had no use for Greece" (110), so for him the antique world in itself is useless, unless, museumized, it is brought to bear on the genius loci of England's backwoods. Together with Alec, "England belonged to them," Forster writes while adding the caveat that "[t]hey must live outside class, without relations or money" (239). The utopian nature of this existence is confirmed in the "Terminal Note" to the novel, retrospectively written in 1960, in which Forster laments the "last moment of the greenwood" that allowed people "to be left alone" (254). A similar feeling of despondency pervades Forster's 1958 "Appendix: A View Without a Room," which, playfully continuing the lives of the protagonists into the post-World War II era, poses the same issue of homelessness in an urbanized England in which "Windy Corner [has] disappeared" and which no longer holds a "resting-place" for the likes of Lucy and George (211). The museum of Italy that launched eighteenth-century England on that path of social transformation is resurrected by Forster in a last effort to find a home for a nation caught between fossilized Victorian values and a hollowed-out urban center.

SENSATION

I

I argue that Virginia Woolf's theory and practice of the novel extends key elements of the Gothic sublime shared by earlier sensation fiction and by contemporaneous psychiatric methods of diagnosis. Nineteenth-century British sensation fiction employed the sublime in its explorations of human psychology. Regarded in its early reception as Gothic, it attempted to probe the psyche through pictorial representations of striking physical appearances.[1] In doing so, it crucially modified the established functions of art in Gothic literature. Notably, it reshaped the classic Gothic trait that used the aesthetic containment of superstition as a way of proclaiming modernity.[2] The notoriously animated artworks of eighteenth-century Gothic served as receptacles of superstitious, anachronistic elements against which, but also through which, enlightened existence could be foregrounded. Sensation works furthered the project of modernity by using art as a window into the mind. Emblematic examples of this genre, which dominated the British literary scene during the 1860s, include Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). A main source of sensational appeal in these novels lies in various socially subversive activities often orchestrated by insane

criminal masterminds. Their designs, however, are successfully decoded by lead characters acting as detectives.[3] These detectives redeem modern society from the brink of disintegration using aesthetic techniques of the sublime. Overwhelmed by the abyss of consciousness, they find access to hidden mental reality through the psychologically revealing power of painted portraits. Sensation heroes discover a correlate for unfathomable machinations in art. They enact a distinctly Gothic version of the sublime, offering a glimpse into the dark psyche by means of a subject's awed inability to conceive its magnitude.

The Gothic sublime displayed in sensation fiction reflects an expansion of visual perception characteristic of modernity. Consider the two examples cited above. The memorable villains created by Braddon and Collins endanger middle-class life by plunging it into insanity through devious plans involving bigamy and false imprisonment. They turn into Gothic material the obscurity surrounding contemporary definitions of madness rooted in external symptoms of physiognomy. Characteristically, Lady Audley, Braddon's attractive and devious hero, almost ruins the wealthy Lord Audley by marrying him under a fake name, but ends up instead in a mental asylum. Count Fosco, Collins's sinister plotter in *The Woman in White*, locks up the innocent Laura Fairlie in a madhouse after successfully swapping her identity with that of her demented half-sister. In both cases, things eventually clear up due to the psychological knowledge offered by art. Lady Audley's lurking insanity is already visible in a pre-Raphaelite portrait of her, and Laura is saved by her teacher of drawing, who senses her true identity in his watercolor painting of her. These examples

illustrate a shift of focus in Gothic fiction from exotic places of medieval times to the domestic sphere of modern Britain. However, they also initiate a Gothic strand within the long history of the sublime by suggesting that one can explain though art that which exceeds the power of the naked eye. Sensation fiction translates visual observation into rational insight rooted in aesthetic symptoms of mental states.

Such mechanisms also undergirded the emerging field of modern psychiatry. The study of mental science was broadly defined throughout the nineteenth century as a loose mixture of physiognomy and philosophy as well as aesthetic and social theory. Following the humane treatment of madness introduced by Philippe Pinel and William Tuke, French and British physicians laid the foundations of modern psychology in close conjunction with visual artists, including most famously photographers.[4] Hugh W. Diamond's pioneering contribution to psychiatric photography inspired John Connolly's important collection of essays, *The Physiognomy of Insanity* (1858). Jean-Martin Charcot's joint research with the artist Paul Richer gave birth to the notable publications of *Les démoniaques dans l'art* (1887) and *Les difformes et les malades dans l'art* (1889). In these landmark studies Charcot offered psychopathological diagnosis through a method of "retrospective medicine" ("médicine retrospective") by recovering from the history of art previously overlooked manifestations of scientific data. Drawings, engravings, and especially photographs of madness established evidence of an artistic yet objective clinical eye capable of penetrating insight. Early psychiatrists turned

sensory perception into medical judgment—they recast the body according to a phenomenology of vision, which served as a blueprint for understanding the enigmas of the mind. Mimesis operated here not as external artistic imitation but negatively, as an aesthetics of the sublime: it used the rational faculty of eyesight for the ultimate measure of what was beyond comprehension.

The modernist crisis of representation explored in Roger Fry's formalist aesthetics and in Woolf's theory of the novel is an extension of the Gothic sublime shared by sensation fiction and nineteenth-century psychiatry. This is a point not previously observed in scholarship.[5] In Fry's view, the shift from impressionism to post-impressionism signals a progression toward authenticity, for the latter captures formal patterns behind individual appearances. Fry adopts Charles Mauron's notion of "psychological volume" in arguing that abstract shape in art stimulates a pleasure akin to mathematical truth in science.[6] When Fry claims that "I feel I can almost *draw* [Henry] James's psychological patterns" (*Letters* II: 629, emphasis in the original), he thinks like a psychiatrist of the nineteenth century—he corroborates the fantastic marriage of form and feeling and transforms aesthetics into a branch of psychology. Fry identifies the revealing dimensions of formalism in the repudiation of representation as simple verisimilitude. For him, these dimensions are best illustrated by the "deformed" shapes on the post-impressionist paintings of Paul Cézanne, who, notes Fry, achieved "the discovery in appearances of some underlying structural unity which answered a profound demand of the spirit" (*French Art* 145). Yet, in light of the history of the Gothic sublime, Fry's post-

impressionism is not the simple abandonment of ocularcentrism in the arts.[7] More than that, it enacts the subtle culmination of the Gothic argument securing artistic vision as integral to deep psychological knowledge.

Although Woolf's fiction is usually believed to be far removed from that of writers such as Collins and Braddon, she in fact extends the Gothic sublime displayed in sensation fiction, especially in her modernist depictions of consciousness. As she explains in her famous literary manifesto, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1923), the novelist's task is the creation of character through formal experimentation that supplants subsidiary external elements with an immediate access to the mind. So Arnold Bennett distorts Mrs. Brown, Woolf's mythical epitome of human nature: he deceptively substitutes material details for subjective existence, "trying to hypnotize us into the belief that, because he has made a house, there must be a person living there" (Essays I: 330). However, to render the crucial aspects of inner life that she sees as escaping Bennett's powers of observation, Woolf affirms, rather than opposes, the operation of perceptual understanding. But with a difference. The premise confining the realist novel within the bounds of mere appearances is reinscribed into modernist fiction only now as evidence of deep psychological material shaped by the aesthetics of the sublime. For Woolf, sensory experience validates and typifies the dramatic expression of consciousness, which, nevertheless, always transcends its possible simple mimetic representations. Like a post-impressionist painter, she seeks to reveal mysterious, invisible structures by aestheticizing the susceptibility to disorderly stimuli used as

shortcuts into the psyche.[8] In keeping with the creative vision Fry admired in Cézanne's conceptual designs of broken-up spaces and parallactic angles, her technique of multiple narrative viewpoints generates epiphanic "moments of being" and indicates "a pattern hid behind the cotton wool" (*Moments* 73). But Woolf's role within the Bloomsbury group goes beyond supplying narrative analogues for pictorial effects. It also constitutes an original continuation of a distinctly Gothic strand in the literary and cultural history of the sublime.

To the Lighthouse (1927) demonstrates Woolf's clearest articulation of the Gothic sublime. According to her, the writing of this novel served as a psychoanalytical defense mechanism against her lingering memory of her parents.[9] Critics generally tend to take Woolf at her word. Even when their arguments go well beyond the scope of autobiographical motivation, they maintain, in varying degrees, the opposition between Victorian and modern stereotypes.[10] Indeed, the novel's theme and overall structure easily justify such readings. Conceived by Woolf as if they were a letter H, "two blocks joined by a corridor" ("Appendix A" 48), the first and third chapters focus on two temporally distant days in the lives of the Ramsays during their summer visits to the Isle of Skye in Scotland. The two events are joined by the short middle section, "Time Passes," which records in a dream-like narrative the ten years between 1909 and 1919, including Mrs. Ramsay's and two of her children's deaths as well as the cataclysmic social changes triggered by the Great War. Looking back into the pre-War past, Lily Briscoe, the artist present on both trips, attempts an investigation into the obscure nature of consciousness. In view of Woolf's

celebrated statement, “in or about December, 1910, human character changed” (*Essays* I: 320), *To the Lighthouse* is usefully seen as the inauguration in fiction of a complex subjective interiority, involving explanations of the mysterious, often astonishing psyche. However, despite the novel’s implied critique of Victorian values, its modernist aesthetics rests on the psychologically revealing dimensions of art shown in sensation fiction and in nineteenth-century psychiatry.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf uses the logic of the Gothic sublime as a model for exploring human character. Her artist protagonist is the literary descendant of the detective characters of sensation fiction, who deciphered the dark and impenetrable depths of human consciousness though artistic representations of physical appearance. Significantly, Lily Briscoe associates psychological essence with formalist art in order to offer an accurate portrayal of the self. She approximates through abstract painting Mrs. Ramsay’s mental processes, including the latter’s typically Gothic predicament of being thrown into a life that is “terrible, hostile, quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance” (51). Faced with the task of understanding Mrs. Ramsay’s intricate emotional life, Lily develops a post-impressionist aesthetics of geometric forms and overlapping visual fields. “Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with” (161), she ponders, aesthetically casting the human body as a “triangular purple shape” (45). By virtue of the insufficiency of simple perception, Lily’s artistic vision affords an intuitive glance into a mysterious and

unfathomable realm of psychic patterns, solitary moments of being that Woolf identified with the real essence of human character.

The Gothic sublime reveals in Woolf's modernist theory of consciousness a functional resemblance, striking and paradoxical, between the mimetic realism of photography and the abstract representations of formalist art. Both aesthetic modes offer a window into the very depths of human psychology, for they activate an extraordinary expansion of visual perception. In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf employs photography as a metaphor of a fantastic sense of vision that provides immediate access to the hidden depths of human consciousness. To demonstrate that Woolf's creative project of mapping the mind draws on key elements of the Gothic sublime, I discuss the theatrical conventions of British sensation fiction and the spectacular elements of Charcot's psychiatry. For Charcot, psychiatric photography offered a dramatic way to expose the secrets of the psyche. He saw in the mimetic accuracy of photographs scientific diagnoses of mental disorders. By relying on the fantastic power of vision in such a manner, he developed into medical knowledge the Gothic sublime, which also aided the detective protagonists of sensation novels. Drawing on and yet extending this tradition, Woolf summons the incapacity of vision to a surprisingly productive end—to offer a glimpse into the secret workings of the human mind.

II

A generic hybrid displaying a fusion of elements taken from Newgate novels, melodrama, and romance as well as realism, sensation fiction also maintains strong ties with the Gothic. Contemporary reviews define this genre as an everyday Gothic of sorts, which describes, as Henry James puts it, "the mysteries that are at our own doors" (594). In his essay on sensation, H. L. Mencken also stresses the importance of temporal proximity, arguing that "a tale which aims at electrifying the nerves of the reader is never thoroughly effective unless the scene be laid in our own days" (488-89). Following James and Mencken, critics considering the Gothic aspects of sensation fiction develop their arguments around the pivotal transfer of crime scenes from exotic foreign places to the present-day British domestic sphere. Such accounts typically view scandalous content as a resurgence of repressed anxieties upsetting modern society.[11] However, a close attention to the function of art in these novels repositions this genre according to a related but starkly opposite argument. Sensation works build on and develop a cultural logic that sees in Gothic literature not the disruption but the inauguration of modernity. They do so by initiating a crucial mutation in the structural dynamics of Gothic fiction. While the classic eighteenth-century Gothic corroborated modernity through the aesthetic containment of superstition, sensation fiction continues the same project through the aesthetics of the sublime.

This thesis revises the usual conception of the Gothic sublime, including the established critical tendency to restrict its operation to the narrow confines of the natural sublime. Critics working within this tradition trace the manifold manifestations of the classic Burkean and Kantian theories of the sublime in the majestic and awe-inspiring landscapes of eighteenth-century Gothic narratives, especially the works of Ann Radcliffe.[12] Studies providing useful alternatives to this pattern loosely follow Thomas Weiskel's Freudian analysis in his landmark *The Romantic Sublime* (1976). As such, they explain the Gothic sublime by ultimately resorting to the dehistoricized theoretical frameworks of traditional as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis.[13] Sensation fiction, however, suggests a definition of the sublime developed from a conception of the socially generative potential of art rooted in Gothic literature and historically based in the birth of modern psychiatry. The Gothic sublime regulates two historically convergent nineteenth-century developments: on the one hand, the unsettling relocation of Gothic material from unfamiliar settings into modern middle-class society, and on the other, the equally terrifying rationalization of insanity through aesthetic symptoms of mental reality.

Published in 1860 and regarded as the founding text of sensation fiction, *The Woman in White* exhibits both of these phenomena. In writing the novel, Collins drew inspiration from a curious case of identity theft and false imprisonment taken from Maurice Méjan's *Recueil des causes célèbres* (1809), a collection of French criminal records.[14] This story of one Madame de Douhault unfolds as her brother attempts to usurp her inheritance by imprisoning her as

an inmate under a fake name in the Salpêtrière, the renowned mental hospital of Paris. By openly relying on Méjan's report as a major source for his novel, Collins justifies the credibility of his sensation plot. He effectively adumbrates a possible disintegration of the middle-class world only to reconstruct modern society through the aesthetics of the sublime. Specifically, he uses the psychologically revealing power of art – also a touchstone for the dominant method of curing in contemporary psychiatry – to help detect and foil abysmal Gothic machinations.

In order to do so, Collins confronts his protagonist with a series of astonishing puzzles entangled in the multiple secrets characteristic of Gothic intrigue. Landing a new position as drawing master at Limmeridge House, his main character, Walter Hartright, falls in love with his beautiful student, the orphaned Laura Fairlie, who, accompanied by her half-sister Marian Halcombe, is in custody of her reclusive and hypochondriacal uncle, Mr. Frederick Fairlie. On his way to the Fairlies, Hartright is bewildered by the strange appearance in the middle of the road of a distraught woman dressed in white and asking for directions. When he learns that Laura must satisfy her late father's wish for her to marry Sir Percival Glyde, Hartright leaves Limmeridge but later returns to unravel the story of the enigmatic woman in white and to clear up the devious plan to rob Laura's identity and estate, which was elaborately conceived by Sir Glyde and his charismatic accomplice, Fosco. Hartright is amazed to discover that Anne Catherick, the woman in white, bears a startling resemblance to Laura and later turns out to be her half-sister and double. Moreover, he is

shocked to learn that Anne has partly gone mad from being shut up in an asylum by Glyde so that she cannot divulge his long-time secret. Hartright finally does disclose Glyde's secret, which consists in his illegitimate birth, but only after redeeming Laura from Fosco's sinister conspiracy. (Profiting from Ann's death of a heart condition, Fosco ingeniously swaps their identities, burying Ann as Laura at Limmeridge, while placing Laura in an asylum as Anne.) In the end, as if all these complications were not enough, both Glyde and Fosco die on account of their secret identities. The former perishes in a church fire while trying to conceal his illegitimacy; the latter is murdered for betraying, as a former espionage agent, the Italian secret Brotherhood.

Hartright is notably aided in his detective work by the psychological aspects of art. As a teacher of drawing, he is endowed with an aesthetic vision that senses the doppelgänger theme at the center of the novel's plot. Looking at his watercolor portrait of Laura, he is puzzled by a curious feeling that there is a mysterious realm of Gothic motivations lurking beyond her fair countenance. He feels "in a shadowy way . . . the idea of something wanting" and thinks: "The mystery which underlies the beauty of women is never raised above the reach of expression until it has claimed kindred with the deeper mystery in our own souls" (76). This key moment in Collins's narrative is typically interpreted as a presentiment based simply on a neoplatonic conception of abstract beauty.[15] However, it also illustrates the logic of the Gothic sublime, which derives extraordinary intuitive knowledge from the limits of ordinary perception. Confused but also stimulated by his crucial lack of understanding, Hartright

undertakes a tireless investigation to fill the void opened up by the obscure mental dimension created by his sketch of Laura. His initial vision is fulfilled in the "ominous likeness" (101) between Laura and Anne, but it also guides his actions throughout the novel. It feeds his frequent instinctive premonitions, such as when he comments, "The foreboding of some undiscoverable danger lying hid from us all in the darkness of the future was strong in me" (101).

To rescue modern society from elaborate Gothic intrigues that would throw it back into a medieval era of undetected crime, sensation fiction relies on the modernization of sensory perception through the aesthetic mapping of consciousness. Let me explain this claim. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon employs this device in a dramatic way. Robert Audley, the widowed Sir Michael Audley's barrister nephew, sets out to inquire into the perplexing disappearance of his friend, George Talboys, just returned from fortune-hunting in Australia on news of his wife, Helen's, death. Suspecting from the beginning the involvement of Sir Michael's newlywed wife, the seductive and deceptive Lady Audley, Robert starts to systematically collect evidence against her. He gradually discovers that Lady Audley is in fact Helen Talboys, who staged her own death and took up the feigned name Lucy Graham so that she could marry the wealthy Lord Audley. When recognized by George, Lady Audley pushes him down a well in order to hide her bigamy. Forced to confess everything as a result of Robert's persistence and investigation, she is pronounced insane and placed in a mental institution abroad, where she later dies. In a strange twist, it

turns out that George has survived and has in the meantime gone back to Australia, but he returns to celebrate his sister's engagement to Robert.

Like Hartright in *The Woman in White*, Braddon's barrister hero uses art to glimpse the obscure mental reality of human character. He is forewarned of Lady Audley's demonic temperament as well as of her predisposition to insanity through a pre-Raphaelite portrait of her. Curious to meet his uncle's beautiful wife, before she has encountered and murdered George, Robert, accompanied by his friend, gains access to the painting by entering Lady Audley's locked chamber through a secret trap door. Expanding traditional Gothic conventions, Braddon performs here a structural mutation that supplants the strangely animated artworks of classic Gothic literature, meant to evoke a supposedly distant era of superstition, with the notion of art as a shortcut into the contemporary mind. Scrutinizing the picture of Lady Audley, George privately recognizes the wife he assumed to be dead, while Robert experiences a chilling spectacle revealing the monstrous core of her identity. "It was so like and yet so unlike," Robert muses in front of the portrait: "it was as if you had burned strange-coloured fires before my lady's face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before" (70-71). He senses beyond the façade of her beauty "something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend" (71), discerning "a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes" (70). The signs of madness in these perceptions, as in sensation fiction in general, do not show the repression of a subversive female subjectivity, as some critics have argued.[16] Instead, they

indicate how the Gothic sublime works as a form of social management by invoking through aesthetic symptoms the incomprehensible depths of human consciousness. Lady Audley's story is not a form of feminine protest but that through which modern civilized existence is produced and historically reconfirmed. To expose her insanity in this way is to contain it as an attack on modernity by virtue of rational explanations obtained from the fantastic extension of vision to unknown mental reality.

Sensation fiction is consistent, in this regard, with the broad theoretical foundations of modern psychiatry. Both sensation authors and early psychiatrists employ to socially constitutive effects the obscurity surrounding any direct knowledge of the mind. Collins turns this focus into a source of sensation by readily substituting sanity for insanity through the motif of doubles. The relative ease with which Laura's identity is exchanged with that of Ann rests on the vague definitions of madness characteristic of contemporary times. In Collins's novel, Marian Halcombe describes her uncle's purported mental hypersensitivity by stating, "[W]e all say it's on the nerves, and we none of us know what we mean when we say it" (61). "Mad to-day and sane to-morrow" (205) is Braddon's catch phrase in *Lady Audley's Secret*, to which she adds expressions denoting medical confusion. For instance, Dr. Mosgrave's interpretation of Lady Audley's illness is not only unclear but also almost oxymoronic: "The lady is not mad . . . she has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence" (379). The aesthetic approximations of insanity shown

in sensation fiction were historically embedded in and theoretically sustained by the uncertain medical discourse of the time.

The great liberation symbolized by Pinel's epic unchaining of inmates at the Bicêtre in 1793 did open up new ways for the scientific treatment of madness. However, like Braddon's fictional doctor, early physicians exploring insanity proposed far-fetched conjectures that mixed physiognomy with aesthetics as well as social theory. In particular, they used the power of vision as a means of rational diagnostics not despite but because of the actual mystery of mental phenomena.[17] Their reliance on the supposed aesthetic projection of the innermost self in drawings and photographs of madness shows how modern psychology was born out of the Gothic sublime. In other words, it was born as a triumph of reason screened through the limits of artistic representation.

Jean-Martin Charcot's pioneering work in psychiatry at the Salpêtrière during the last decades of the nineteenth century confirms this thesis. Following the influential seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of physiognomy, but also relying on his own background as an artist, Charcot offered a systematic description of the hysterical attack. He turned his accounts of the symptoms of illness into proof of an extraordinary visual sensitivity, a clinical-artistic perception, which supposedly uncovered the true nature of the psyche. The impression he gave of practicing a medical science based on descriptive objectivity was produced by the fact that he ultimately left unexplained the cases he described in his weekly lectures. "What a marvel this would be if I

could, in fact, fabricate illnesses according to my whims or fantasies," he claimed, adding the scientific caveat, "but in fact all I am is a photographer. I describe what I see" (*Tuesday Lessons* 107). Yet Charcot's descriptions were actually prescriptions in the form of carefully constructed images designed to yield an impression of a profundity beneath their surfaces. Drawing in a large audience of both professional and lay people, his famous Tuesday Lectures were true spectacles.[18] Standing at the center of the amphitheater, he staged madness by deploying dramatic features such as soliloquies, dialogues, and costumes, thereby achieving cathartic scenes of theatrical therapeutic success. He was not an objective photographer, even supposing there could be such a thing; he was a magician, a dramaturge, and, in short, a modern artist-physician.

Charcot consolidated the idea of a scientific clinical eye capable of exercising a penetrating reason by extending the purported objectivity of photographic technology by means of artistic representation. For him, photography provided a medical physiognomy that rewrote the history of art as overlooked evidence of insanity. Building on Hugh W. Diamond's pioneering work in psychiatric photography, Charcot offered in his *Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (1877-1880) an extensive collection of images documenting the symbolic postures, gestures, and facial expressions of delirium. Legitimized by technology, these pictures revealed for him accurate symptoms that he employed to explain previously misunderstood visual representations of insanity. His *Les démoniaques dans l'art*, co-written with the

artist Paul Richer, used the photographic precision of observation to relocate the demonic possessions in art as symptoms of modern madness. In this important work, he proposed to retrieve artistic examples of nervous hysteria from times "when they were considered not a disease but a perversion of the soul due to the presence of the demon and its acts" ("alors qu'ils étaient considérés non point comme une maladie, mais comme une perversion de l'âme due à la présence du démon et à ses agissements") (v). As he turned pictorial imagination into medical knowledge, Charcot used the fantastic elements of art as emblems of a disinterested realism. In recasting the satanic convulsions of medieval times into standardized phases of the hysterical attack, he invented modern psychiatry through the graphic mapping of consciousness typifying the Gothic sublime.

Anticipating Woolf's modernism, Charcot's project also echoes here the process by which sensation fiction shifted the focus of the Gothic genre from superstition to the sublime, from the aesthetic containment of anachronistic credulity to the notion of art as a window into the unsettled psyche. Charcot substitutes for irrational explanations of demonic control a rational blueprint of the mind produced by the psychological extension of mimesis. Like the detective heroes of Collins and Braddon, he secures aesthetics as a safeguard of reason by finding in drawings and photographs external traces of the unfathomable psyche. His medical judgment rests on a phenomenology of vision motivated by the limited nature of human perception. His scientific aesthetics functions negatively, according to the general logic of the Gothic

sublime. It is designed to offer an objective mirror of mental reality by expanding the faculty of sight into the final gauge of what perpetually eludes the power of common observation. This mechanism is also the most important distinguishing feature of Woolf's modernist theory of consciousness. In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf will dramatize a distinctly Gothic version of the sublime by relying on the mysteriously revealing aspects of photography and formalist aesthetics.

III

Critics have typically interpreted the sublime in Woolf's novels as the triumph of a liberating feminist aesthetics and the fulfillment of an inspiring androgynous imagination. Jane Marcus observes that Woolf denounces patriarchal systems of domination through a "democratic feminist 'collective sublime'" (82). Building on Marcus's analysis, Kari Elise Lokke isolates *Orlando* (1928) as a satire of the egotistical Romantic subject culminating in a "comic sublime" characterized by "an explicitly sexual ecstasy of union with nature and another human being" (242). Lisa Rado uses a psychoanalytical argument and shows that Woolf's empowering "androgynous sublime" ultimately involves "the repression of nothing less than her own body" (140). What I add to these versions of the sublime is the idea that Woolf actively employs a Gothic tradition of the sublime as a way of gaining a seemingly unmediated access into the psyche. I am not convinced that Woolf's sublime is collective, androgynous, or

comic. I argue that it is an original form developed in response to the literary tradition and the historical milieu immediately preceding her writing career. If there is a redeeming dimension to modernism through the sublime, as the aforementioned critics rightly urge us to believe, it lies in the psychological expansion of everyday experience by virtue of the aesthetic reconception of sensory perception. Woolf follows and expands the practice of the sublime evidenced in sensation fiction and in psychiatric diagnosis, which registered in art a mental reality that escaped plain perception.

Developed in her ongoing debate with E. M. Forster, the key question of just what constitutes everyday experience is at the center of Woolf's theory of fiction.[19] In the last chapter of his monumental *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach exhibits *To the Lighthouse* as the prime example of modernist formal innovation capable of offering a more authentic approximation of daily as well as inner life. The new technique of Woolfian stream of consciousness is more effective, explains Auerbach, because it supplants the premeditated elements of traditional plot with "the unprejudiced, precise, interior and exterior representation of the random moment in the lives of different people" (552). Critical approaches rehash with wearisome regularity some variation on Auerbach's thesis, neglecting to explore the self-contradictory nature of random representation already noticed by Forster in his quite critical 1941 Rede Lecture on Woolf.[20] "She has all the aesthete's characteristics," he complains, pointing out that she "selects and manipulates her impressions; is not a great creator of character; enforces patterns on her books; has no great cause at heart" (9). But Woolf's

depiction of chance effects is not the sign of superficiality, indicating the loss of the well-rounded Victorian character, as Forster argued.[21] It is rather meant to evince inscrutable mechanisms of the psyche by capturing through ostensibly accidental subjective impressions that which forever exceeds the scope of traditional observation.

In her essays Woolf turns the incapacity of ordinary perception into a deeper sense of reality located in commonplace events. She quarrels with Forster's restriction of novelistic themes to external details and redefines the very notion of life by asking, "[W]hy is it absent in a pattern and present in a tea party?" (*Essays* II: 53). Self-professedly following Proust and Joyce, she seeks instant admission to a hidden sphere of life, revealing "the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain" (*Essays* II: 107), and uncovering "a whole series of thoughts, sensations, ideas, memories which were apparently sleeping on the walls of the mind" (*Essays* II: 83). To do so, Woolf proposes a sublime aesthetics predicated on the impossibility of containing excessive numbers of trivial, infinitesimal stimuli. Her fiction is the expression of her belief that, by focusing on characters overwhelmed by the intensity and quantity of their own perceptions, she can dramatize the astonishing internal dynamics of the psyche. Her oft-quoted admonition, "look within," entails the discovery that "the mind receives a myriad impressions" and is bombarded by "an incessant shower of innumerable atoms" (*Essays* II: 106). Woolf's effect of randomness, although taken at face value by Auerbach, is actually her roundabout strategy for charting the mind through careful selections

of narrative snippets that always miss some simple mark. Significantly, she selects seemingly disorganized perceptions as artistic traces of the inexhaustible complexity of human consciousness. To reach such subjective experience, she employs the operations of the Gothic sublime exhibited in sensation fiction by pursuing in appearances psychological meanings that elude the average power of vision.

In keeping with this aim, Woolf adapts to literature certain optical metaphors borrowed from the visual arts. Her biography of Fry suggests, indeed, her close yet not uncritical association with his rapprochement between the two disciplines.[22] "Cézanne and Picasso had shown the way," she asserts, adding that "writers should fling representation to the winds and follow suit" (*Roger Fry* 172). It is a well-established practice within Woolf studies to draw a parallel between her rejection of "materialism" in fiction and Fry's assault on verisimilitude in art. However, when this criticism advocates a sharp distinction between abstract art and mimetic realism, it relies on a starkly reductive theory of vision as a more or less objective mirror of the external world.[23] The resulting broadened definitions of modernism are stories of authenticity involving the gradual renunciation of the "false" ocularcentrism dominating the history of art ever since the Renaissance achievement of artificial perspective.[24] The Gothic sublime rooted in sensation fiction and in psychiatric research of the nineteenth century challenges this genealogy by unmasking the alleged objectivity of vision as being prescriptive rather than simply descriptive. It corroborates an alternative theory of vision that reveals in mimesis, including the Renaissance

practice of linear perspectivism, not the rationalization of sight but the remaking of the world, visible and invisible, contingent on subjective perception.[25] The modernist formalism championed by Woolf and Fry as a radical break with the past reinforces the very strategy of realist representation it was meant debunk as superficial and naive. As a graphic mode of mapping the abyss of consciousness, it bears a functional resemblance to the realist portrayal of striking physical appearances performed by Charcot and sensation detectives.

Like the impressionist empiricism it claims to supersede, Fry's formalist aesthetics still retains the primacy of sensory experience—if not the perception of what is directly discernible, then at any rate of what invariably conditions and escapes vision. Thus, what escapes vision is nonetheless marked within the visible as its tormenting or frustrating limit. In this light, post-impressionism signals not a break with but rather the culmination of the impressionist tradition. According to this version of the history of art, the impressionists initiating the technical innovation of short, disconnected brushstrokes to capture fleeting sensations also anticipated the abstract content conveyed by Cézanne's angular shapes and Georges-Pierre Seurat's pointillist technique. They did so, moreover, not by subverting the philosophical significance of sensation but by expanding it in a direction contained within, yet opposed to, the perception of external reality. Confining representation to observation, impressionism also, unwittingly or not, turned mimesis into an instrument of abstraction. It implicitly led to the extension of vision from physical appearances to invisible, conceptual

phenomena such as the psychological and emotional elements of later so-called abstract art.

This observation repositions Fry's post-impressionist theory and Woolf's modernist fiction as historical continuations of the aesthetic tradition of the Gothic sublime. In both cases, vision is integrated into the understanding of the mind negatively, through its ability to offer limited artistic indications of what it cannot fully capture. Although in *Vision and Design* (1920) Fry denounces impressionism for merely giving expression to a "totality of appearance" (7), he employs and intensifies the operation of perception by revealing in geometric shapes the fragmented traces of an instinctual "unity-emotion" (55). He notably exhibits Cézanne as an exemplary post-impressionist painter, who is "sincere enough to rely on his sensations" (*Cézanne* 72), while finding in appearances "profounder and less evident realities . . . an architecture and a logic which appealed to his most intimate feelings" (*Cézanne* 37). For Fry, post-impressionism extends the artistic scope of sensation beyond the limits of its established range of operation. It conveys deep-seated states of mind by endowing artistic vision with the ability to overstep the common sense of sight, and thus to discern underlying formal structures. In her fiction Woolf also depicts inner realities by way of the eye's inability to penetrate the depths of the psyche, often pictured metaphorically as the true skeletal backbone of subjectivity. Alternatively, this skeletal life may be pictured as a paradoxically hollow ground. "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters" (*Diary* II: 263), she confesses, approximating in fiction the "empty spaces" Fry admired in

Seurat's "definition of the art of painting as 'the art of hollowing out the canvas'" (*Transformations* 189). As these examples suggest, both Fry and Woolf sketch the unfathomable nature of consciousness via formalist representations that follow the curious dynamics of the Gothic sublime. Like the striking portraits of lurking insanity displayed in sensation fiction and in nineteenth-century psychiatry, these representations use the incapacity of vision to offer unmediated access to the secrets of human consciousness.

To the Lighthouse offers a dramatic expression of Woolf's formalism infused with the conventions of the Gothic sublime. Woolf creates the idea of immediate psychological knowledge by endowing quotidian life with the potential to trigger heightened states of understanding. She exhibits fleeting, everyday sensations as symptoms of pervasive underlying orders by virtue of an artistic vision that transcends the faculties of ordinary perception. Lily establishes a spiritual connection with Mrs. Ramsay by evoking and reliving through the artistic harmony of geometric forms the epiphanic moments that constitute the emotional cores of the self. Lily's revelation finally comes after a ten-year interval, including the dizzying changes of the Great War as well as Mrs. Ramsay's death. This temporal gap signals the work of mediation, but not exclusively of the Freudian "deferred action" (*Nachträglichkeit*), or the after-effect of psychological impressions. It rather justifies within Woolf's theory of consciousness the operation of an aesthetic mediation through the mind's ability to make as well as uncover patterns. In line with the Gothic dimensions of the sublime, Woolf confronts her protagonist with an overwhelming task but

redeems her by virtue of her very failure to contain magnitude. Unable through plain perception to fathom the abyss of Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness, Lily, like a psychiatrist or a detective of Gothic sensation novels, identifies correlates for the cerebral kernel of Mrs. Ramsay's identity in the creative vision prompting abstract art.

Woolf depicts complex subjective interiority by putting on display ordinary events as limited outward manifestations of the enigmatic patterns of things reflected in recurrent aesthetic forms. Mrs. Ramsay attains the highest levels of understanding during unlikely times that involve petty domestic acts. Knitting in solitude and looking at the lighthouse, she has a sudden revelation of a different horizon of existence, which takes part in eternity by virtue of the freedom of "being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others" (52). Later on, it is the simple serving of dinner that activates a similar feeling of awe, an intimation of "stability," of something "immune from change" (85). *To the Lighthouse* illustrates Woolf's celebrated conclusion, which she calls her "philosophy"—the idea "that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we . . . are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art" (*Moments* 72). Indeed, one of Mrs. Ramsay's most memorable moments of being resonates with Fry's idea of the psychological content of art, especially the post-impressionistic designs of Cézanne's still lifes, populated by his signature objects oddly tilted forward. Mrs. Ramsay regards the dish of fruit on the table through the vision of an artist, seeking inner harmonies, and feeling "more and more serene" while pensively

rearranging items, “a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape” (88). To achieve a formal perfection in her painting, Lily, like Mrs. Ramsay, also compares life to a work of art. “I shall put the tree further in the middle,” she ponders about her painting at the dinner table while placing the salt cellar “on a flower in the pattern in the table-cloth, so as to remind herself to move the tree” (70). The two characters connect on a deep level of individual emotion and insight generated by a sublime aesthetics that is rooted in the mysterious overstepping of reason via artistic manipulations of sensory perception.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf uses abstract art as a window into the psyche. In doing so, she turns the shortcomings of the realist approach she attacked in her essays to Lily Briscoe’s advantage. Drawing on the conventions of the Gothic sublime, she grants her artist protagonist exceptional powers of perception by virtue of an aesthetic vision predicated on the limited nature of traditional observation. Lily offers her painting not only as a “tribute” (45) to Mrs. Ramsay but also as an epistemological tool for directly capturing the real workings of the mind, the “very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything” (158). Her conclusion about the peculiar nature of subjectivity coincides with Mrs. Ramsay’s intuitive Gothic statement: “Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by” (53). Like the detective characters of Braddon and Collins, Lily feels that her ambitious undertaking exceeds both the bounds of linguistic representation and the faculties of her

senses. Realist description is useless, for she finds that “words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low,” raising a desperate question: “how could one express in words these emotions of the body?” (146). Sight is also insufficient, for she realizes that out of the “fifty pairs of eyes to see with,” she would need one that is “stone blind” (161). The proximity of touch, too, is inadequate, for “nothing happened . . . as she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay’s knee” (43)—so Lily concludes that “all one’s perceptions, half-way to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh” (44). Finally, in a state of utter desperation, she dreams of “some secret sense, fine as air, with which to steal through keyholes and surround [Mrs. Ramsay]” (161). Such secret sense, a classic Gothic trait, is provided by the revealing qualities of formalist aesthetics and the earlier findings of psychiatric medicine and sensation fiction.

Woolf’s version of the sublime is Gothic because it operates according to the aesthetic tradition exhibited in Victorian sensation fiction and in nineteenth-century psychiatry. Lily sees in abstract art visible traces of perplexing and astonishing psychological dimensions that escape everyday perception and expand the traditional boundaries of reason. She establishes a metaphysical relationship with Mrs. Ramsay by experiencing through art emotional intensities similar to those that accompanied the latter’s epiphanies. Going back to the summer house of the Ramsays, she decides to continue her investigation into the enigmatic nature of consciousness by finishing the painting she started ten years ago, “tunneling her way into the picture, into the past” (142). With brush in hand, she has a sudden revelation when, like the late Mrs. Ramsay, she senses

the inscrutable, underlying unity of things in the harmony of shapes on the canvas. “In the midst of chaos,” she reflects, “there was shape; this external passing and flowing . . . was struck into stability” (133). In line with Fry’s theory of post-impressionist aesthetics but also drawing on the Gothic sublime, Lily actively employs and mystically transcends everyday observation as she discovers in art visual manifestations of otherwise inaccessible psychic moments. The Gothic quality of Lily’s sensations resonates with Mrs. Ramsay’s general attitude toward life as a personal predicament marked by antagonism, a “transaction . . . in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her” (50). Moreover, to underscore the fantastic nature of Lily’s perception through art, Woolf also employs photography as a metaphor of a heightened sense of vision. She adopts the mimetic accuracy of the camera, like the geometric shapes of Lily’s formalist painting, as impaired artistic representations of elusive and obscure mental realities.

IV

The visual dynamics of the Gothic sublime illuminates, I argue finally, a central role for photography in Woolf’s modernism. Her ambivalence toward photography is well documented. Just like her sister, Vanessa, Woolf was an avid photographer, who even occasionally developed her own prints. At the

same time, she is also known for her ironic comments about the purported objectivity of the camera, ridiculing its claim to "absolute truth" (*Letters* II: 428). In her biography of Fry, she remembers him asking why English novelists were "all engrossed in childish problems of photographic representation?" (164). Woolf's sympathy to Fry's thinking is reflected in her only play, *Freshwater* (1923), in which she parodies realist accuracy and models the central character after her great-aunt, the famous Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Despite her critical attitude, however, Woolf employs photography as a technological analogue of sensory perception, which allows, as for Charcot, an immediate contact with consciousness. Moreover, as in Charcot's images of madness, the main function of photography in Woolf's aesthetics is to render a feeling of psychological depth beyond the camera's representation of surface impressions.

Critics have mainly interpreted photography in Woolf's life and fiction as unconscious mnemonic receptacle and as evidence of her modernist formal experimentation. While Maggie Humm usefully observes the psychological dimensions of photography, she interprets them within psychoanalytic frameworks, arguing that visual images function for Woolf as "clues to multiple and repressed femininities" (7). From the vantage point offered by the Gothic sublime, however, photography functions in *To the Lighthouse* as the continuation of the curious optics initiated in sensation fiction and corroborated in Charcot's spectacular psychiatry. It suggests a version of modernism historically rooted in the aesthetic conventions characterizing theories of the

psyche predating Freud.[26] As such, it goes beyond a mere stylistic level of formal innovation illustrated by the "verbal imitations of snapshots" (146) in Diane F. Gillespie's argument and by the "cinematic composition" (11) in Sue Roe's essay. More significantly, photography forms an integral part of Woolf's philosophy of the mind, offering, like abstract art, a window into the very nature of consciousness.

In *To the Lighthouse* Woolf utilizes photography in keeping with the artistic tradition of the Gothic sublime. Like Charcot, who invoked snapshot images of madness by "developing," so to speak, the minds of his patients, she captures Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness as if it were a photographic negative. Drawing a structural parallel between the human eye and the shutter of the camera, she extends to photography the psychologically revealing power of artistic vision. As a metaphor of sight, the rhythmical stroke of the lighthouse operates as does Lily's penetrating gaze guiding her abstract art. Described as "a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly and softly in the evening" (152), the lighthouse registers, like a camera, the invisible reality of the brain. It reveals what remains inaccessible to the naked eye by offering insight into Mrs. Ramsay's psyche during one of her moments of epiphany. Watching the light, she feels "hypnotized, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight" (54). Woolf's aesthetic representation of consciousness resonates here with Charcot's medical practice, which advanced the idea of a clinical-artistic eye capable of prying open the minds of his patients. In "A Sketch of the Past"

(1939) Woolf confirms the importance of such psychological optics by depicting her own self-awareness in the same terms as that of Mrs. Ramsay. She confesses, “I am porous vessel afloat on sensation; a sensitive plate exposed to invisible rays” (*Moments* 133). She is both photographer and photographed. To describe mental reality, she performs an expansion of ordinary observation through a refined sense of visual dynamics that she associates here with photography and elsewhere with abstract art.

The photographic significance of the lighthouse corresponds in the novel to Lily’s perceptual sensibility as an artist. Following the general logic of the Gothic sublime exhibited in sensation fiction, her elevated sense of vision is capable of unmasking the obscurity of mental reality such as hidden intentions and suppressed motivations. For instance, when facing one character (the arrogant Mr. Tansley) at the dinner table, Lily sees through the façade of physiognomy, glimpsing into the innermost secrets of his consciousness. She discerns “as in an X-ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man’s desire to impress himself lying dark in the mist of his flesh” (74). Lily satisfies here one of the main characteristics of Gothic sensation heroes. Her extraordinary ability recalls the amazing visual susceptibility with which Robert Audley and Walter Hartright investigated the mental core of subjectivity. During the same dinner scene, several characters, including Mrs. Ramsay and the family friend Mr. Bankes, are shown to share a concern to protect the privacy of their thoughts from the penetrating gaze of others. Woolf writes, “All of them bending themselves to listen thought, ‘Pray heaven that the inside of my mind

may not be exposed'" (77). This passage illustrates the Gothic convention formulated in sensation fiction according to which even one's most deeply private experience is open to public view through external symptoms of physiognomy. It correlates to the literary tradition, in earlier Gothic fiction, in which people find themselves being spied on when they think they are alone, in a condition of privacy, in a room. Moreover, like sensation authors, Woolf endows vision with psychological insight through an aesthetics of the sublime that captures the overwhelming magnitude of mental realities.

Woolf explicitly incorporates both photography and abstract art into her modernist epistemology. They supplement one another. As she gazes into Tansley's consciousness, Lily deploys the same approach that allows her to establish an intimate, emotional connection with Mrs. Ramsay through the revealing dimensions of geometric shapes on the canvas. Aesthetically casting Mrs. Ramsay as "an august shape, the shape of a dome," she aims to decipher her thoughts by imagining "how in the chambers of the mind . . . were stood, like treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions" (44-45). Lily broaches here the central question that also puzzled the detectives of Collins and Braddon: "What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers?" (45). Like Gothic sensation heroes, she finds the answer in the psychological insight supplied by visual art. Reinscribing a Gothic version of the sublime designed to add fantastic dimensions to artistic vision, Lily discovers that the abstract forms of

nonfigurative painting correspond to hidden emotional cores of the self, just like those captured by Charcot's photographs.

In her theory of fiction Woolf suggests similar correspondences when she describes her quest into the enigmatic origins of emotional life as an attempt to disclose the permanent mesh of things. She refers to the narrative representation of psychological reality as a project that seeks to "get to the bones" (*Diary* II: 248), uncovering "something stark, something formidable and enduring, the bone and substance upon which our rush of indiscriminating emotion was founded" (*Essays* II: 131-32). Significantly, Woolf proposes to chart the deep structures of subjective experience by virtue of a visual sensibility that surpasses the scope of ordinary observation. In *To the Lighthouse* she dramatizes her theory of consciousness by integrating vision into the understanding of the mind via limited artistic indications of what the eye cannot fully capture. The visual is a psychologically expansive realm in Woolf's fiction not despite but precisely because of its limitations. Her seemingly post-Victorian representation of inner subjectivity is in fact an expansion of the modernization of perception reflected in the nineteenth-century Gothic sublime found in sensation fiction. In addition, she adapts to literature the visual dynamics of the camera in ways that resonate with the guiding principles of Charcot's aesthetic psychiatry. For her, as for Charcot, the mimetic accuracy of photography is relevant not as an objective mirror of things but primarily as an impaired external manifestation of the abundance of inner experience that always surpasses its possible representations. A captivating expression of the

Gothic sublime, *To the Lighthouse* suggests that the only reality Woolf deems worthy of capturing is the one disclosed through the exceptional visual sensitivity offered by photographic perception and abstract art combined.

ELECTRICITY

In two of the most famous Gothic novels, electrical experimentation situates the human body as the product of the fantastic nature of reason. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Victor Frankenstein harnesses the mysterious, creative powers of electricity in order to complete his monstrous creation by infusing the "spark of being" into lifeless matter (38). Hypnotism and thought-reading, both bearing important affinities with scientific as well as occult experimentation with electricity during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, are at the very center of Dr. Van Helsing's vampire-hunt in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), giving him the opportunity to eavesdrop through hypnosis on Mina Harker's "current of thoughts" (411). In these examples, as in Gothic novels in general, monsters and vampires do not simply jeopardize the rational forces of modernity from without. On the contrary, they illustrate the intellectual uncertainty and the self-incurred suffering modern bodies must undergo in order to become true guardians of reason. Thus, scientists such as Victor and Van Helsing can extend the physical and the psychic potentials of modern humanity, because they conjure up and then successfully repudiate the electric demons of irrationality. Gothic electricity illuminates the constitutive potential of unreason to generate modern enlightened bodies.

The Gothic elements of the history of electricity complicate the usual conception of the Enlightenment. In place of a period based upon Cartesian

"clear and distinct ideas" and tabula rasa, this cultural history suggests that the universal categories of reason, which were supposed to ensure a range of secular scientific notions, were undergirded by irrational phenomena such as mystical organic naturalism and mesmerism, featuring elements of electric science.[1] This reversal repositions our approach to modernity (early and late) and to modernism. Historically, modernism has been defined in terms of unprecedented scientific technological developments. These are then intimately linked to an increasing sense of crisis and fragmentation as well as to the disruption of traditional continuities. Without denying the significance of such approaches, the overlooked occult history of electricity questions such an account, suggesting unusual overlaps between the cultural constitutions of the Enlightenment and modernism. I see modernist subjectivity here and there deeply rooted in the fantastic and Gothic connotations of electricity that persisted under different social and scientific conditions throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century modernity.

D. H. Lawrence's works are a key case in point. Modern bodies throughout Lawrence's oeuvre are particularly sensitive to electric vibrations, which turn out to be mystic invisible powers that redraw the boundaries of human consciousness. When Aaron in *Aaron's Rod* (1922) feels the fingers of his landlady accidentally touching his thighs, "the fine electricity ran over his body, as if he were a cat tingling at a caress" (22). In the suffusing Mexican heat of *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), Kate "could feel the electricity pressing like hot iron on the back of her head. It stupefied her like morphine" (244). Whether

illuminating the intensities of sexual relationships or signifying vital resonances with nature, Lawrence has his characters discover electricity as a magnificent but also potentially destructive inner force. During his love-relationship with Anna in The Rainbow (1915), Will Brangwen experiences “an electric state of passion,” turning shortly afterwards into “a mad creature, black and electric with fury” (192). Stepping in Will’s footsteps, Ursula, just like her father, encounters the passions and limitations of her relationship with Anton Skrebensky, as she “vibrated like a jet of electric, firm fluid” in her lover’s arms (529). Lawrence’s electrical tropology gets crystallized in all its ambivalence, however, in *Women in Love* (1920)—the novel focusing on the fate of Ursula and Gudrun, two sisters of the third generation of the Brangwen family, fully experiencing the impact of early-twentieth-century modernity.

In his theoretical works on the unconscious and, most dramatically, in *Women in Love*, Lawrence deploys a Gothic tropology of electricity that defines his conception of the modernist body. In *The Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922), Lawrence casts the relationship between modern individuals as a matter of a “dynamic polarized flow of . . . electricity” (140). Sexual passion and love relationships are conceived in terms of the contact between surcharged electric bodies, producing “a great flash of interchange . . . like an electric spark” (141). Similarly, Gerald in *Women in Love* becomes “acutely and delightfully conscious of himself” only when he feels “full of strength, able to give off a sort of electric power” (65). He also experiences in his relationship with his mistress the ecstasy of an electric state of passion with an almost

mesmeric intensity: “He felt that he was in his power . . . . The electricity was turgid and voluptuously rich, in his limbs” (66). Lawrence invents authentic modern subjects characteristically in Gothic fashion. For him, acute consciousness and genuine sexual passion are prerogatives of electric bodies, but significantly only when they reach the brink of destruction. At that point they become enthralled to mysterious and ungovernable demonic powers from within. Drawing in more detail on *Dracula*, as well as on crucial junctures in the cultural history of electricity such as mesmerism and galvanism, I argue in this article that Lawrence’s bodies are animated by a Gothic electricity conceived of as a creative-destructive modern scientific mystery.

Lawrence’s conception of modernist subjectivity is deeply entangled in the earlier fantastic and Gothic connotations of electricity that functioned throughout the whole history of modernity as ways of questioning but also of generating the architecture and dynamics of human rationality.[2] In order to corroborate this claim, I discuss in Part II the generative rational implications of Gothic electricity with reference not only to Aloisio Luigi Galvani’s notion of animal electricity and Franz Anton Mesmer’s popular electromagnetic therapy, but also to Andrew Crosse’s notorious discovery of “electric” insects as well as to the fashionable mind-reading séances conducted by the Society of Psychical Research during late-Victorian England. Part III shows that Lawrence used the Gothic aspects of electricity to legitimize his electric theory of modernism by rationalizing certain fantastic aspects of fin-de-siècle theosophy. Thus, in vitalizing his characters by occult electricity, while skillfully distinguishing them

from implausible theosophical mysticism, Lawrence turns his protagonists in *Women in Love* into Gothic "monsters," often instinctual misanthropes who paradoxically affirm their modernism through their destructive electric blood consciousness. As descendants of an earlier pre-modernist generation, Lawrence's characters discover their humanity at once confirmed and denied in their blood, as Part I makes clear. Electric blood becomes the epitome of a doubtful continuity, registering death as not simply passing away but also as a major revitalizing force of modernization.

I

Critics have noted the significance of electricity in Lawrence's works, but always with reference to the modernist avant-garde or, more broadly, to his occult and esoteric sources. Andrew Harrison very usefully identifies the "electric vocabulary" of *Women in Love*, yet he interprets Lawrence's "new electrical science" solely in terms of its thematic and linguistic affinities with Italian Futurism (11-12). Other critics who comment on Lawrence's attention to the mystical features of electric science relate them to the fin-de-siècle Theosophical revival, oriental esoteric material, Romantic philosophies of polarity, and contemporary medical theories of physiology.[3] Peter Whelan discusses the "metaphysical" and "metapsychological" dimensions of reality in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, focusing on the influential doctrines of the Theosophical Society, disseminated at the turn of the century by the Society's

chief initiator, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and her successor, Annie Besant. Thomas Miles argues that Lawrence's electro-mysticism in *Women in Love* draws directly on Hindu yogis' belief in "a cosmic force called kundalini which lies inert . . . at the base of the spine and which can be aroused so as to flood the body with its radiance" (194). Robert Montgomery explains the electric circuits of Lawrence's bodies in relation to the idea of polarity in Romantic thought, with special focus on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Jacob Boehme. Kathryn Walterscheid investigates Lawrence's attempt to turn the electric sensation of touch into the major organizing principle governing the developmental stages of human life. What I add to these valuable studies is a demonstration of Lawrence's overlooked indebtedness to the Gothic genre, for it dramatizes mechanisms by which occult electricity both generates and threatens the rational constitution of modern bodies.

To begin with, I need to recast critical approaches that have focused on the Gothic aspects of Lawrence's fiction. In writing on Lawrence, critics have discussed the stock figures of this genre and have treated them primarily as threatening forces, demonic markers of modernist fragmentation and social decline. Judith Wilt's seminal study identifies three such figures in Lawrence's works – the Ghost, the ghoul, and the vampire – and argues that "the whole human enterprise for Lawrence trembles at a massive crisis of confidence" (235). Andrew Smith's recent analysis further develops Wilt's argument by isolating the social and pseudo-scientific contexts that link Lawrentian vampirism to fin-de-siècle theories of degeneration. Several authors note that

Lawrence's sexual politics is rooted in Gothic images of female vampirism, lamias, and demon-creatures driven by blood lust. All these accounts maintain, in one way or another, the oppositional logic that presents monstrous predators disrupting, endangering, and even ruining the affections of gullible or subconsciously submissive victims.[4] While this antagonism is undoubtedly a central part of the Gothic features of Lawrence's fiction, it signals more than modern humanity in jeopardy. It shows us modern bodies in formation.

Lawrence's modernism has Gothic dimensions not simply because vampires and demons populate his fictional world, but, more importantly, because it is precisely by virtue of such irrational forces that his characters become authentically and rationally modern. This recognition substantially changes standard readings of *Women in Love* and calls for a reassessment of Lawrence's mystical theory of the body, developed in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922). In these works, Lawrence deploys in a unique way the history of occult electricity in order to reinvent the modernist subject as the manifestation of the irrational dimensions of reason. Lawrence situates the body within the contexts of electrical science, Gothic secrecy, and the occult. He places it at the intersection of scientific technology and Gothic mysticism, setting up a modernist miscegenation of electro-magnetism and blood lust. Humans in this conception are beings with electric blood—modern bodies produced by the fantastic nature of reason. This "reason," it turns out, is thoroughly rooted in the Gothic science and literary conventions of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century culture.

According to Lawrence, electricity is one of the major organizing principles of the modernist psyche. In his *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, the human body functions as a vital magnet structured around four polarized nerve-centers or chakras that constitute individual consciousness: the solar plexus below the navel, the lumbar ganglion of the spine, the cardiac plexus, and the thoracic ganglion in the breast. Connecting these nerve-centers, the complex electromagnetic network that regulates the general "life-flow" of the body is described as a "lovely, suave, fluid, creative electricity" (22 italics in the original). Human existence for Lawrence is confirmed by the ubiquitous force of vital electricity, organically blending into the natural constitution of the universe. "The individual," he points out, "is never purely a thing-by-himself. He cannot exist save in a polarized relation to the external universe" (44). Occult electricity, however, is for Lawrence not just a marker of supernatural mental capabilities disconnected from corporeal factors. It signals rather the birth of an esoteric physical knowledge that can be confirmed only by the magnetic blood circuits of the body.

Lawrence's complex electric anatomy reveals its Gothic logic by assigning blood consciousness the role of a demonic magnetism that enlivens modern individuals precisely with its irrationality. He succinctly describes the sexualized body charged with electricity and capable of generating a cryptic electromagnetic energy field: "We know that in the act of coition the *blood* of the individual man, acutely surcharged with intense vital electricity, . . . rises to a culmination, in a tremendous magnetic urge toward the magnetic blood of the

female" (*Fantasia* 141 italics in the original). Lawrence believes, moreover, that the fusion of electro-magnetism and blood lust is the key to a bodily knowledge of pure "blood-consciousness" conceived as "the basic consciousness of the blood, the nearest thing in us to pure material consciousness" (*Fantasia* 202). As chief representative of modernist sensibility in *Women in Love*, Rupert Birkin idealizes this Gothic electric state of being not despite but rather because of its demonic contingency, which serves to legitimate modern sexual fulfillment. In search of the ideal "star-balanced" love relationship with Ursula, he identifies the apotheosis of intimate blood knowledge with the lapse into unreason—the condition when "you find yourself a palpable body of darkness, a demon" (44).

The modernist electricity in *Women in Love* always remains faithful to its Gothic legacy: it becomes at once the symbol of social and technological development and the source of an occult knowledge of blood-consciousness. In its role as a touchstone for fin-de-siècle modernization, electrical science functions in the novel as a key generational separator. When Gerald Crich takes over his father's mining business, his most important innovations include the construction of a private electric plant and the employment of electrical engineers. Not surprisingly, Gerald's era signals a new phase of industrial capitalism, characterized by the "terrible purity" (243) of mechanization and the decline of "organic unity" (242). "The whole unifying idea of mankind seemed to be dying with his father," Gerald thinks, "the centralising force that had held the whole together seemed to collapse with his father, the parts were ready to go asunder in terrible disintegration" (231). Yet Rupert Birkin, the intellectual

mouthpiece of this new generation and Lawrence's spokesperson, cannot stress enough the fact that disintegration is not only desirable but also essential for the new modernist attitude: "We've got to bust [life] . . . completely, or shrivel inside it, as in a tight skin. For it won't expand any more" (55). Consequently, Birkin and his disciples, Ursula, Gudrun, and Gerald, like true Gothic heroes, seek to burst and reconstruct ordinary life from within, by penetrating the darkest recess of consciousness in the very name of modernity. In other words, they discover in occult electric blood-consciousness the deepest proof of their modern humanity.

The two protagonist couples are icons of modernity for Lawrence because sooner or later they reveal themselves as Gothic bodies animated by occult electricity. Here are two examples. Early in the novel, Gerald's mistress, the Pussum, seduces him by "passing into him in a black, electric flow" (74). The sexual relationship between the two reflects Lawrence's theosophical theory of the chakras, but it also illustrates the electromagnetic nerve centers regulating the sinister life-flows of the human body: "Her being suffused into his veins like a magnetic darkness, and concentrated at the base of the spine like a fearful source of power" (74). Later on, it is precisely Gerald's demonic electric aura that Gudrun Brangwen finds so fascinating and repelling in her soon-to-be lover, distinguishing him right away as a modern Gothic body. In her encounter with Gerald, she "perished in the keen frisson of anticipation, an electric vibration in her veins" (123). Modern love relationships are authenticated by the binding force of occult electricity, transmitted interpersonally as a kind of

“diabolic freemasonry” between electric bodies (126). Modernist subjects, Lawrence suggests, find the demons of unreason as the most genuine evidence of their humanity and their sanity.

Vampirism in *Women in Love* excites modern bodies not merely with its predatory nature, as previous criticism has noted, but also by virtue of its capacity to bestow authenticity on intense electric passion. Sexual intimacy for Ursula is confirmed by her instinctual desire to dominate Birkin viscerally, in the blood—“to drink him down . . . like a life-draught” (278). Gudrun discovers that to feel “the vibrating, inhuman tension of [Gerald’s] arms” is tantamount to yielding to an irresistible blood lust during which she “seemed to melt, to flow into him, as if she were some infinitely warm and precious suffusion filling into his veins, like an intoxicant” (349). Meanwhile, Gerald acts “as if he were soft iron . . . surcharged with her electric life,” quenching his vampiric blood thirst by “pour[ing] her into himself, like a wine into a cup” (349-50). Lawrence’s Gothic deployment throughout *Women in Love* of such transfusions of electric energy in the blood reveals the dynamic that produces modern love. With all its apparatus of chthonic devilry, this novel proposes that if modernist conceptions of genuine affection and supreme consciousness are to exist, they must be rooted in a plainly destructive, vital, and perplexing electric domain.

To establish this formula, Lawrence deploys the Gothic tropology of electricity reflected in eighteenth-century galvanism and mesmerism, and perhaps most notably displayed in *Dracula*. The cultural history of electricity shows that its image has lent itself as readily to mystic theology as to physics,

biology, and medicine. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century modernity was characterized by a general fascination with scientific and occult electromagnetism, electrophysiology, and electric bodily fluids in the expositions of Galvani, Giovanni Aldini, Franz Anton Mesmer, and Karl August Weinhold. The exciting fad of galvanism attracted large audiences with experiments in which the tongues and ears of recently decapitated animal and even human heads would move when exposed to electric shocks. These experiments illustrated the influential argument that cemented an analogy between the electric apparatus of the Leyden jar and the cell structures of the muscular nerve system. Crossing the disciplinary boundaries of physics and biology, this analogy was extended to justify spiritualist and occult practices, especially over the course of the nineteenth century. Occult electricity is at the very center of Stoker's fin-de-siècle Gothic classic, *Dracula*. I turn now briefly to this cultural history of electricity in order to account for the complex functions electricity assumes in Lawrence's time and his fiction.

II

The eighteenth-century theory of subtle fluids, explaining phenomena of heat, light, electricity, and magnetism, emerged within the overlapping scientific contexts of physics and biology. The intense debate over the identification of the electric with the nervous fluid in this period is representative in this regard.[5] Eighteenth-century physicians and natural philosophers modified the ancient

belief that explained muscular movement simply by the existence of “animal spirits” in the mind. Instead, scientists such as Albrecht von Haller promoted the theory of a very subtle and invisible nervous juice that ran from the brain to all of the body parts, constantly activating the appropriate muscles. The discovery of the Leyden jar in 1745, essentially the first electric condenser, also encouraged the external, electric stimulation of muscle nerves in experiments conducted by Haller, Giambatista Beccaria, and Marc Antoine Caldani. Although most of these scientists distinguished between the nervous and the electric fluid, the possible identity of the two offered itself as a convincing analogy, mainly because of the discovery in the 1770s of the “electric” organs of the torpedo fish. The idea of the nerve and cell structures of the fish functioning as a Leyden jar produced culturally a version of scientific rationality based upon the electric potential of animal spirits.

The eighteenth century placed electricity at the very center of Gothic physiology. Relying on previous historical developments, Galvani’s *De vitribus electricitatis in motu musculari* (1791) could confidently assert at the close of the century the existence of animal electricity, produced by the nervo-electric fluid inherent in animals. Galvani’s experiments showed that a frog’s legs began to move not only when he applied small electric shocks to them, but also when he touched them with two different but connected metal rods. The disputed but popular conjecture quickly followed that living organisms produced their own electricity.[6] Galvanic electricity opened the era of electric insects, of twitching and blinking corpses, and of decapitated animal heads with moving tongues

and ears. Electricity was commonly associated at this time with the vital principle regulating organically the whole material universe. Giovanni Aldini, along with physician-scientists such as Karl August Weinhold, even pondered – just as Gothic scientists from Shelley's Frankenstein to Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll did – the physical creation, transformation, and expansion of human life.[7] The popular excitement about the artificial creation of life in the beginning of the nineteenth century illustrates the Gothic implications of electric science.

Gothic electricity calls for the reshaping of critical analyses that have hastily located the subversive energies of this genre in mostly dehistoricized interpretive frameworks.[8] According to such accounts, Gothic fiction disrupts Enlightenment modernity primarily by its nostalgic turn toward an idealized past, by its escape into the realm of psychic delusion, or simply by its fascination with irrational fantasy.[9] While all these critical approaches have helped to trace the diverse and disjunctive dimensions of Gothic fiction, they all tend to gloss over the role assumed by this genre not as antagonist but rather as guardian of modernity.[10] The cultural connotations of electrical phenomena throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century illustrate this significant but largely overlooked feature of Gothic writing. Gothic electricity turns disruptive fantasy into the generative contingency of modern rationality.

Experiments during the early nineteenth century bore witness to the fantastic nature of electric reality. The most notorious of these was perhaps the English natural philosopher Andrew Crosse's purported discovery of electric

insects.[11] Working on an electrical experiment with mineral formations in his private laboratory in Somerset in 1836, Crosse unexpectedly found that crystals suddenly came alive and grew legs, emerging into full-fledged insects, later identified as *Acari*, new members of the spider family. The astonishing discovery quickly became a popular sensation of its time. The findings were presented in a study delivered to the recently organized London Electrical Society (1837), where its author, just like a true Gothic scientist, was surrounded at once by mysticism, God-like authority, and incredulity. Just as Frankenstein's creation makes him ponder that "a new species would bless me as its creator and source" (47), Crosse, too, was credited by some not simply with the discovery but with the creation of a new species.[12] Such a view was further consolidated by the Kentish surgeon William Henry Weekes's successful replication of Crosse's experiment in 1842. Artificial insects are symptoms of a loosely defined field of scientific knowledge in which the popular interest in the fantastic participates in the philosophical reason of the Enlightenment.

As *Frankenstein* illustrated this point for the early nineteenth century, *Dracula* crystallized it for the fin de siècle. "Let me tell you, my friend," explains Dr. Van Helsing to the skeptical Dr. Seward, "that there are things done today in electrical science which would have been deemed unholy by the very men who discovered electricity—who would themselves not so long before have been burned as wizards" (247). From a historical standpoint, it is not at all surprising that Van Helsing should promote practices that merge scientific and occult understanding. No wonder that the technological devices constantly used in the

novel appear as unholy equivalents of Dracula's superhuman capabilities.[13] Technical innovations in *fin-de-siècle* media, many of them relying on electricity, ironically guarantee the success of the vampire-hunt and the eventual triumph of reason because they prove to be even more powerful – even more supernatural – than the supernatural attributes of the vampire.

In this context, two electrical forms of media, used strategically throughout the novel, exemplify the marriage of scientific actuality and irrational fantasy. Not only does the telegraph facilitate a quick exchange of information, but it does so by virtue of the dissociation of message from bodily presence, just as Dracula's telepathic capabilities do. In a similar way, the phonographic cylinders on which Dr. Seward records his diary allow for the reproduction of voice in the absence of the speaker—a process akin to Dracula's corporeal transference and manipulation of Mina's "current of thoughts" (411). In using these technological devices, Stoker knew that they were closely associated with spiritualist and occult practices in Victorian England.[14] Yet they also served to legitimize the practices of Western rationality. They do so in the name of essential secular social and scientific concepts that the characters in this novel wish to rescue from Dracula. In the end, Stoker's novel shows that the forces of modernity can outdo the demonic conspiracy of a Transylvanian count precisely because they mystically mimic the power of vampires. People who are modern, Stoker suggests, become so by virtue of their experience of Gothic history: modern bodies are electric, with the fantastic nature of human rationality.

In the most advanced scientific theory, as in the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, electrical phenomena retained their mystical aura. Further developing James Clerk Maxwell's groundbreaking 1873 *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism*, Heinrich Rudolf Hertz and the so-called "Maxwellian" physicists, such as George Francis Fitzgerald, Oliver Lodge, and Oliver Heaviside, sought to rectify the scientific view that electricity traveled in wires just like a fluid in a pipe.[15] Instead, they described electromagnetic waves in terms of the electric field *surrounding* the wire, strengthening the view accepted throughout the late nineteenth century that matter in general was made up of clusters of charged particles. When the knowledgeable Van Helsing sums up the salient characteristics of the vampire, he could just as well be describing popular fin-de-siècle scientific theories. This ancient demon is able to breach the laws of time and space, pursuing a transnational existence throughout the ages, because it is characterized, in our Gothic scientist's account, by amazing superhuman capabilities: in addition to taking on various animal shapes, it can move in the form of "mist which he create [sic] . . . round himself" and travel "on moonlight rays as elemental dust" (*Dracula* 308). Dracula's haunting psychic presence in the artificially generated fog and the elemental dust of moonlight reflects particle theory as well as the unique electric field of the vampire, mystically reinforcing rather than opposing the increasingly expanded rational ways of science.

The analogy between electricity and extraordinary capabilities of the human psyche, such as hypnotism and telepathy, enjoyed its heyday in late-

Victorian England.[16] The Society of Psychical Research, founded in 1882, encouraged the mind-reading performances of Washington Irving Bishop and Stuart Cumberland, both famous for explaining their special mental powers not by supernatural abilities but simply by extraordinary sensory perception. It is no surprise that the Society attracted the attention of contemporary physicists and engineers who eagerly relied on the latest scientific discoveries to offer their own demystified explanations of occult phenomena. Physicists such as William Barrett and Oliver Lodge used the premises of electric induction to explain the theory of hypnosis. Just as electric conductors generated electromagnetic energy fields in the surrounding space, the human brain, too, could expand a person's consciousness beyond the confines of traditional perception. Similarly, Cromwell Fleetwood Varley, who was one of the leading engineers laying the first Atlantic telegraph cable during the 1860s, was also a keen proponent of spiritualist telegraphy. In his electric experiments and séances, Varley sought to prove the correlation between spiritualist and telegraphic communication by substituting a medium for telegraph cables. As these cultural phenomena indicate, by the end of the nineteenth century electricity had developed into a legitimate modern scientific mystery with occult trappings.

The occult history of electricity influenced modern science for more than two centuries, participating in the secular conceptions and practices of Enlightenment rationality. Preceding Galvani's treatise on animal electricity, Mesmer dazzled the popular imagination of Parisians in the late 1770s by dwelling on the medical and psychic implications of the subtle electric fluid

pervading and surrounding human bodies. He claimed that he could ultimately manipulate for therapeutic purposes the magnetic electric fluid that established the salutary natural order of the universe. Electrical charges were also transmitted through mesmeric “chains” of persons holding hands, seeking to cure diseases by reestablishing the harmony between the terrestrial and the celestial spheres. Mesmerism suggested that humans could control the mysterious, invisible forces of nature collectively and without regard to social privilege. Occult electricity illuminated the radical, revolutionary aspects of Enlightenment rationality; it functioned, just as it would for Stoker’s Gothic scientist, Van Helsing, as a secular way of expanding and justifying the edifice of reason and of making sense of the universe.[17]

A recognition of the cultural history of electricity, broadly construed, must alter too narrow conceptions of modernism. Critical studies of modernism have justly described it as a historical period characterized by unexampled scientific and technological developments.[18] These developments, in turn, are closely related to social and cultural crises concerning reason, in contrast with the relatively homogenous Enlightenment period, based upon the premises of Kantian disinterested rationality and of Cartesian “clear and distinct ideas.” Recent post-Enlightenment definitions of modernism implicitly warrant the tense distinctions between the irrational and the rational. The occult aspects of electrical science, however, collapse in telling ways these separations, suggesting an understanding of modernist culture not as the overstepping but as the continuation and complexifying of the Enlightenment’s Gothic electrical

project. Lawrence's portrayal of modern subjects in terms of a Gothic tropology of electricity indicates such multifaceted continuity. His characters become truly modern only when they recognize their demonic nature confirmed in their electric blood. Lawrence occupies a unique place in early-twentieth-century British literature and culture not only as descendant of a broadly based occult revival, as previous criticism has argued, but also as a modernist representative of a distinctive electric strand of Gothic tradition.

III

Lawrence's modernism is Gothic, in large part, because it is rooted in the intellectual instability surrounding the full implications of electric science in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century England. His celebrated idea of the "allotropic" states of the self draws directly on *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), an occult work by F. W. H. Meyers, co-founder of the Society of Psychical Research, an avid spiritualist and psychologist who coined in 1882 the term "telepathy."[19] The occult history of electricity is centrally involved in Lawrence's notion of multilayered modernist consciousness and in his attack on "the old stable ego of the character" (*Letters* II: 183). The famous theory of blood-consciousness highlights the constitutive potential of the irrational in a Nietzschean fashion, recalling Zarathustra's caveat: "Of all that is written I love only what a man has written with his blood" (40). The rational

legitimacy of this occult knowledge of blood pulsating in the body in the form of vital electricity is a key component of Lawrence's Gothic modernism.

Where does theosophy fit in here? Lawrence's theory of rational electric bodies confirms but also significantly modifies popular early-twentieth-century theosophical definitions of selfhood. Initiated in 1875 by the Russian émigré Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and her disciple Colonel Henry Olcott, the Theosophical Society's major goals included the interdisciplinary investigation of the hidden animistic principles of nature and the discovery of the Higher Self—both related in crucial ways to the modernist crises of representation and fragmentations of subjectivity. Blavatsky's popular work, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), sought to perform the synthesis between science and religion, the primary operation of "Theosophy," a term generally referring to sacred science and divine truth. By its appeal to the mystical aspects of electricity, such as thought-transference, magic, and oriental esoteric knowledge, theosophy helped redraw the boundaries of scientific rationality.

Lawrence, however, sought to justify his version of electric modernism by subtly rationalizing certain fantastic aspects of theosophy. His attitude toward Blavatsky's works reflects intense preoccupation but also moderate skepticism. In a letter to Dr. David Eder in 1917, Lawrence expresses his ambiguity toward esoteric material: "Have you read Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*? In many ways a bore, and not quite real. Yet one can glean a marvellous lot from it, enlarge the understanding immensely" (*Letters* III: 150). He even goes as far as to scorn Theosophists as "herb-eating occultists" who "meditate for hours and hours,

upon their own transcendent infinitude," making "most dreadful fools of themselves" (*Letters* III: 158). By dissociating his modern electric bodies from obscure occult mysticism, Lawrence grounds his notion of the self in a contradictory secular scientific realm of the supernatural. For him, just as for Gothic scientists from Frankenstein to Van Helsing, the lack of precise proof for his theory magnifies rather than diminishes faith in occult electricity. "Occultism," he claims, "is very interesting, and important – though antipathetic to me" (*Letters* III: 239). Yet, for all its opposition to theosophy, Lawrence's modernism is confirmed by the productive forces of "unreason"—precisely the kinds of fantastic elements his critique of Blavatsky's theory was directed against.[20] To become modern, Lawrence suggests, one has positively to discover the irrational as the deepest motivation of human rationality.

Women in Love develops this idea through its conventional arsenal of Gothic monster images, including the figure of the misanthrope. In addition to vampiric features, the modern protagonists of this novel repeatedly turn out to be embodiments of demons and animals. While Gudrun is disgusted with the barren streets of the small colliery town of Beldover, asserting haughtily that "[its] people are all ghouls, and everything is ghostly" (11), she turns out to share with Gerald a mystic "underworld knowledge" implicated in "abhorrent mysteries," going as far as "hellish recognition" (253-54) and "diabolic freemasonry" (126). She experiences erotic emotions bordering on bestiality when hypnotized by "the electric pulse" (174) of stray cattle or when fascinated by the German art student, Loerke, "as if some strange creature, a rabbit or a

bat, or a brown seal, had begun to talk to her" (450). Gerald is frequently described throughout the novel as demonic, "furious and destructive" (240), while Birkin approaches Ursula "like a demon, laughing over the fountain of mystic corruption" (321). She, in turn, reproaches him for his unconventional deathly philosophy of love and calls him an "eater of corpses" and a "whited sepulchre" (324-35). When Ursula objects to Birkin's purposefully demonic nature by saying, "You *want* us to be deathly," he simply responds, "I only want us to *know* what we are" (180 italics in the original). This strange notion of beastly knowledge illustrates the Gothic logic of *Women in Love*, which resembles that of *Dracula* and that of the occult history of electricity. Lawrence's repertoire of Gothic monsters suggests that the denuded architecture of modern secular epistemology is unsustainable. Modernist selves should entertain the perplexing possibility that their very electrified bodies might be enthralled to demonic blood instincts.

Lawrence's heroes are made to seem natural-born instinctive misanthropes who carry the germs of their hatred of humanity in the electric blood flowing through their veins. Such misanthropy is a salient feature of modern Gothic. Ursula believes "a clean, lovely, humanless world" desirable (131). She finds that "human beings are boring, painting the universe with their own image. The universe," she reflects, "is non-human, thank God" (277). Gerald considers his father's philanthropy disgusting, while he would prefer to simply "immolate" colliers' widows along with their free coal rates "on the pyre of the husband, like the sati in India" (241). But perhaps the novel's greatest

theoretician of misanthropy is Birkin, who even confesses, “I loathe myself as a human being,” adding, “I abhor humanity, I wish it was swept away” (130-31). Later in the novel, he highlights the quintessential logic of modern misanthropy, which is designed to generate a new multilayered conception of the self: “How could he say ‘I’ when he was something new and unknown, not himself at all? This I, this old formula of the age, was a dead letter” (390). In Birkin’s reasoning we discover the Gothic mechanism that creates modern bodies as products of the fantastic nature of rationality through mystic conceptions of death and hatred. Misanthropy, along with other incomprehensible forces of unreason, is thus turned into a proof of a deeper, more authentic sense of humanity, ushering in the era of modern Gothic bodies with a cryptic sense of comprehension confirmed by their “fluid and electric” blood (61).

Inhuman misanthropic blood-consciousness functions as a worldly consolation for the characters in *Women in Love*: it strengthens their faith in secular conceptions of ultimate knowledge and love. Both of these notions are to a large extent borne out in the novel by virtue of the existence of invisible electric vibrations conceived as occult sources of power. “It is a fulfillment—,” Birkin anxiously explains to Ursula, “the great dark knowledge you can’t have in your head—the dark involuntary being. It is death to one’s self—but it is the coming into being of another . . . in the blood” (44). Indeed, Ursula gradually discovers the secrets of a passional electric understanding that approaches a telepathic form of communication: “She must lightly, mindlessly connect with him, have the knowledge which is death of knowledge, the reality of surety in

not-knowing" (336). Birkin's utopian "star-balanced" (158) love-relationship can only develop between two modern Gothic bodies capable of special extrasensory perception. Through the "magical current of force in his back and loins," Birkin possesses a mystical "force in darkness, like electricity" (335). According to Lawrence, occult electricity becomes, in a Gothic fashion, a legitimate modern scientific mystery that ensures the authenticity of sexual passion. Ursula and Birkin's relationship exemplifies this electric trend of Gothic modernism: "She had established a rich new circuit, a new current of passional electric energy, between the two of them, released from the darkest poles of the body and established in perfect circuit. It was a dark fire of electricity that rushed from him to her, and flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction" (330). Modern subjects are electromagnetic demonic beings conditioned by the irrational nature of their tempestuous humanity.

Other alternatives to this idea are dismissed in the novel as expressions of the nostalgic, false idealizations of an earlier generation in demise. Ursula finds the life led by her parents utterly meaningless, stating to her sister that "if they had *not* met, and *not* married, and not lived together—it wouldn't have mattered" (395 italics in the original). Such a life seems to her nothing but "merely human" (463), caught in the epistemological cul-de-sac of what Birkin ironically calls superficial "old meanings" (134). Ursula's attitude recalls the Gothic pattern of *Dracula*, which locates the rational triumph of modernity in a scientific actuality that is sustained precisely because it is supernatural and ultimately unverifiable. "To live as an entity absolved from the unknown," Ursula

recognizes, “that is shameful and ignominious” (201). Old Mr. Crich, for example, cannot become a modern subject, because “he never drove the dread out of its lair within him,” and “he dared not penetrate and drive the beast into the open” (224). Gothic electric bodies illuminate one of the central ambiguities of modernism: its simultaneous rejection and continuation of the past. Descendants of a pre-modernist generation, Lawrence’s protagonists find that electric blood consciousness jeopardizes but also motivates their very existence. Destruction becomes not merely passing away but rather the central revitalizing contingency of modernist subjectivity.

This paradoxical logic operates throughout *Women in Love*. It illuminates the perverse process by which acts of murder and self-destruction are made to justify supreme forms of mystic knowledge. Early in the novel, Birkin explains to Gerald his theory of murder, which displaces the opposition between assassins and victims. “It takes two people to make a murder: a murderer and a murderee,” Birkin argues, adding, “And a murderee is a man who is murderable. And a man who is murderable is a man who in a profound if hidden lust desires to be murdered” (34). Birkin’s caveat to Gerald turns out to be disturbingly appropriate, since the latter had “accidentally” shot his own brother as a child while playing with a loaded gun. More important, by the end of the novel, this sadomasochistic argument gets confirmed by Gerald’s fateful love relationship with Gudrun, when he intends to kill his mistress before, in the end, he commits suicide instead. As Gudrun’s words “[run] through his blood like a current of fire,” Gerald feels “one blind, incontinent desire, to kill her” (488).

Pondering over Gerald's involuntary, electric desire to kill and to be killed, Birkin strengthens his theory that ultimate knowledge finds its deepest consolation and final justification in the fundamentally enigmatic realm of death. In a final paradoxical twist, Birkin's strongest hopes are kept up by his most desperate feelings of despondency: "To have one's pulse beating direct from the mystery [of death], this was perfection, unutterable satisfaction" (505). His reasoning reveals the Gothic formula of *Women in Love*: modern bodies are animated by destructive electricity in the blood.

No wonder that the main characters in *Women in Love* turn out to be, as true Gothic monsters, inveterate promoters of the art and pleasure of death. Gerald's sexual passion for Gudrun is permeated with the "voluptuous finality" of murder: "He thought, what a perfect voluptuous fulfillment it would be, to kill her" (486). When Gerald's sister Diana Crich is drowned at the water-party, Birkin, a typical aesthete of physical consummation, observes: "Better she were dead—she'll be much more real. She'll be positive in death" (198). Under the conditions of Gothic modernism, mourning in its traditional conception is unimaginable. Death becomes rather the very sign of the vitality of electric bodies by virtue of its nature as an irrational realm impossible to recuperate. "To die is also a joy, a joy of submitting to that which is greater than the known, namely, the pure unknown," Ursula believes (200-01). As a final admonition, Lawrence suggests that the modern self can be brought to life only when one finds oneself terrified and fascinated simultaneously by the specters within—

when the rational reflexes of modern humanity are threatened but also confirmed by the irrational throbs of electric blood.

NOTES

Chapter 1

[1] My approach to the Gothic is consistent in this regard with Baldick and Mighall's observation that Gothic narrative "witnesses the birth of modernity" (220). On this idea, see also Cottom's argument that "the challenge this genre took up was that of justifying the ways of modernity to man" (1068).

[2] On the salient characteristics of this genre, see I. F. Clarke's seminal *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749*, which discusses the varied social and historical conditions facilitating the emergence of invasion fiction and spy narratives, including national "big-power" status, military problems, and the guarantee of a free press (38). For a comprehensive list of such works, see also Clarke's *Tale of the Future*.

[3] Regarding the impact on Conrad's family and on his heritage of the three historical partitions of Poland, occurring in 1772, 1793, and 1795 at the hands

of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, see Meyers, especially chapter 1. See also Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, chapter 1, and Krajka, part I.

[4] For a detailed analysis of the thematic connections between *Under Western Eyes* and the Azeff scandals, see Moser's argument that Conrad acquired the information from Ford Madox Ford, who had immediate access to revolutionary affairs through his Russian brother-in-law, David Soskice, a leader of Russian insurgent activity, imprisoned in St. Petersburg and subsequently forced into exile in 1893. See also Hay, especially 224-27, 279-80; and Fleishman, 219-20.

[5] The important motif of the double represents Conrad's disguise behind multiple "masks of incomprehension" in Szittya (823), his need to "exorcise his haunting, inescapable Polish 'shades'" in Carabine (4), and his thwarted attempt to "free himself from the burdens of the past" in Ash (305).

[6] On this issue see Robert Young's incisive analysis showing that a Freudian approach to Gothic fiction turns out to be a tautological enterprise, because "Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) was in fact itself a Gothic novel" (206).

[7] On Conrad's constant attempts to segregate his Polish heritage from the Slavonic label by associating it with Western cultural tradition, see his letters to Edward Garnett (8 Oct. 1907), John Galsworthy (24 Oct. 1907), George T. Keating (14 Dec. 1922), and Charles Chassé (31 Jan. 1924).

[8] See Harpham's argument that, in Conrad's fiction, "Poland functions not as a biographical background but as what Jacques Lacan (undoubtedly thinking of Poland) calls 'the real,' that which guarantees the consistency of the symbolic order, but which cannot appear within that order except as disfigurement or 'stain'" (12).

[9] See Garnett's October 1911 review of *Under Western Eyes*, in which he observes: "The artistic intensity of the novel lies, however, less in the remarkable drawing of characteristic Russian types than in the atmospheric effect of the dark national background." While Garnett does not directly accuse Conrad of anti-Russian sentiment, he predominantly links Conrad's novel to "flying aspects of Russia's mournful internal history," associated with "deep-rooted vices in the national blood" (Sherry 238).

[10] On this issue, see Brantlinger's definition of imperial Gothic characterized by a set of anxieties governed by atavistic impulses, the fear of invasion, and the disappearance of genuine heroic adventure.

[11] For a different approach to the Gothic aspects of Conrad's politics, see Saint-Amour's argument that *The Secret Agent* illustrates "the politics of the 'really intelligent detonator'" (223), a trans-politics of instantaneity rooted in the Victorian Gothic notion of perpetual suspense.

[12] On the social and political history of English Jacobinism, haunted by the general fear of government espionage, see E. P. Thompson's detailed study, especially chapters 5 and 14. For critical accounts of the political aspects of Gothic fiction including its Jacobin and anti-Jacobin affinities, see Miles and Watt.

[13] See the seminal critical evaluations of Gothic writing in Punter and Jackson. See also the critical approaches in Botting, Kilgour, and Wein.

[14] On this idea, see note 1.

[15] See, for instance, Kilgour's argument that Radcliffe's recourse to the rational recuperation of supernatural elements results in a "process of gradual enlightenment and clumsily artificial revelation" (122). See also Punter's observation that the events after Emily's escape from Udolpho tend to lose their Gothic effect and are, consequently, "pallid beside the richly coloured and terrifying Udolpho scenes" (59).

[16] For Foucaultian approaches to Godwin's novel, see James Thompson, and Ellis, chapter 8.

[17] On this common phenomenon in late-eighteenth-century modernity, see E. P. Thompson's comprehensive study, which draws attention to the fact that information obtained from spy reports offers "a kind of distorting mirror in which to view history," mostly because of the "occupational bias" and "mercenary motives" of contemporary spies (490). Thompson illustrates the constructivist logic of British politics during the 1790s by arguing that "in a sense, the Government *needed* conspirators, to justify the continuation of repressive legislation which prevented nation-wide popular organisation" (485).

[18] For a detailed account of the self-generating aspects of espionage, see David French's summary of the conservative political implications of the general "spy

fever" prevalent throughout fin de siècle Britain (355). These implications included limiting "the freedom of movement of aliens," the strengthening of the 1889 Official Secrets Act, and the pressing concern that "a regular secret service should be established" (358). On mixed reactions to the paranoia of spies, see two conflicting articles in *The Times* of 1908. The August 21 issue features "The Spy Mania," which observes that the mania of foreign invasion has resulted in "an unfortunate, and in some respects rather absurd development" (9). The article by Lonsdale, on the other hand, printed just a few weeks earlier, calls attention to the gravity of this issue by arguing that "the cause is very serious, and the alarm well grounded" (9).

[19] For critical works that, despite their different interpretive frameworks, leave this assumption largely unquestioned, see Tropp; Stafford, *The Silent Game* and "Spies and Gentlemen"; French; and Denning.

[20] Notable examples of modernist authors whose foreign German heritage aroused suspicion in early-twentieth-century England include Robert Graves and Ford Madox Ford. To prove political allegiance to England, Graves enlisted in the British army during World War I, while Ford gave up his German name, "Ford Hermann Hueffer," and wrote several anti-German propaganda pieces, including *When Blood Is Their Argument* (1915) and *Between St. Dennis and St. George* (1915). On the nationalist dimensions of war paranoia before and

during the years of the Great War, see Kingsbury, especially chapter 4. On the theme of émigrés, as it pertains to Conrad, see Eagleton.

[21] For Conrad's irritated remarks on Slavonism, see the list of letters in note 7.

[22] See, for instance, Conrad's January 6, 1908, letter to Galsworthy in which he calls *The Secret Agent* "an honorable failure" (9) mostly because of his own "foreignness" (10), which is "unsympathetic to the general public" (*Letters*, vol. 4: 9). See also Conrad's comment in his interview with Marian Dąbrowski: "English critics – and after all I am an English writer – whenever they speak of me they add that there is something incomprehensible, inconceivable, elusive" (Najder, *Familial Eyes* 199).

On Conrad's quarrel with Pinker, see his injured comment in the May 23, 1910, letter: "you told me that 'I did not speak English'" (*Letters*, vol. 4: 334). On this issue, see also Jessie Conrad 140; and Najder, *Joseph Conrad* 410.

[23] See the arguments that view the narrator as a "nonentity" able to "explain without understanding" in Hay (296); as "ludicrously incapable of joining or comprehending the swirl of motion around him" in Secor (34); as creating the "effect of . . . authorial retreat" in Szittya (822); as one who undoubtedly "speaks for Conrad" in Leavis (220); as illustrating Conrad's "interested irony" in Ash (254); as providing "an ironic perspective on things Russian" in Busza (114); as

a “subtle form of deception” in Eagleton (23); and as “diabolic” in Kermode (153).

[24] For a quite different argument suggesting that Conrad’s English narrator is “forced into positions where his Western rationality . . . is overwhelmed by a capacity for sympathetic identification with the subject of his narrative” (61), see Fincham.

[25] For a detailed account of Conrad’s cosmopolitan reputation, see chapter 1 of Walkowitz’s excellent study.

[26] See, for instance, Jameson’s famous argument that Conrad’s fiction tends to emphasize moral issues, evading the political through a “strategy of aestheticization” (231) and “narrative containment” (217).

Chapter 2

[1] On this key feature of Gothic fiction, see Baldick and Mighall’s observation that Gothic narrative “witnesses the birth of modernity” (220). See also Cottom’s

argument that in the Gothic novel “credulousness was to be assigned to a past thenceforth to be defined in terms of superstition, while modernity could be defined as the era that is able to confine the incredible within the realm of art” (1070).

[2] For an excellent account of the spatial and temporal distancing employed by early Gothic novelists such as Radcliffe and Walter Scott, see Mighall, especially chapter 1.

[3] For relevant studies on the history of the modern public museum, see Pomian, Miller, McClellan, Hudson, Hooper-Greenhill, Bennett, and Benedict.

[4] The historical connection between museums and mausoleums is reinforced by a mutual concern for the preservation of dead objects. On this point, my argument is in agreement with Adorno’s observation: “Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like family sepulchers of works of art” (175).

[5] On museum types, see Pomian’s useful discussion of four distinct formation patterns—that is, museums emerging from traditional historical institutions; by

revolutionary decree; from private collections; and via institutional acquisition (261-67).

[6] For an incisive analysis of the social functions of eighteenth-century country houses, see Ousby, who argues that such show houses played a major role in the social and political transformation of England by encouraging an emerging middle class to "become tourists instead of revolutionaries" (91).

[7] On the history as well as the social and political significance of the Grand Tour, see Black, Buzard, Chaney, Chard, and the collection of essays in Hornsby.

[8] On this view, see the pioneering work of influential New Left theorists Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn. See, in particular, Anderson's view that "it was [the] ostensible apotheosis of British capitalism that gave its characteristic *style* to that society, consecrating and fossilizing to this day its interior space, its ideological horizons, its intimate sensibility" (*English Questions* 24, emphasis in the original). See also Nairn's observation that "a peculiar repression and truncation of Englishness was inseparable from the structure of British imperialism" (79). For a more comprehensive discussion of Forster in relation to New Left theorists, see Esty, especially chapter 1.

[9] See Brantlinger's seminal notion of imperial Gothic, which aptly illustrates the atavistic impulses as well as the anxiety of invasion governing the British Empire at the height of its territorial expansion.

[10] For detailed accounts of this anecdote, see Furbank (116-19) and Beauman (151-53).

[11] Drawing on Perry Anderson's definition, I use "internationalism" as a mind-set that "tends to transcend the national towards a wider community, of which nations continue to form the principle units" (6). On a thoughtful approach to Forster's internationalism in relation to his novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), see Goodlad.

[12] See, for instance, Parrinder, who argues: "The shadow of liberal internationalism lurks behind Rickie's words. In the very moment of affirming his national identity he is implicitly setting himself above the provinciality of petty nationalism" (292).

[13] See Buzard's seminal *The Beaten Track*, which offers a detailed account of Forster's "considerable critical engagement with tourism" (285), in addition to

Cosslett, who discusses Forster's representation of Italy in the context of a tension between tourism and anti-tourism.

[14] According to Ardis, Forster rewrites the tradition of the Grand Tour to create characters who are "transformed in a positive way by their actual travels to southern Europe" and who typically oppose, for instance, the "lurid Gothic fantasies" (72) of Catherine Morland, Jane Austen's main character in *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Ardis never questions the narrow definition of the Grand Tour as an exclusively educational phenomenon. See also Churchill, for whom Gothic Italy represents an "illusory escape from the comparative monotony of life in a more rationally ordered society" (7).

[15] On the general faults of psychoanalytical approaches to the Gothic, see Young's incisive analysis showing that a Freudian interpretation of Gothic fiction is a tautological enterprise, for "Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) was in fact itself a Gothic novel" (206).

[16] Fully aware of the homophobic milieu of early-twentieth-century English society, Forster notably asserted that *Maurice* would be unpublishable "until my death or England's" (qtd. in Furbank 259). On Forster's homosexuality as a decisive trait of his life and work, see Furbank, 78-79, 182-83; and Sauders, 8-14.

[17] For an incisive historical analysis of the intimate ties between the Jacobite Rebellion and Gothic sham ruins, see Stewart, who traces the architectural history of sham ruins from their earliest exemplar, built by Sanderson Miller in 1750, to their demise towards the end of the eighteenth century. On the literary and social significance of Gothic ruins in this period, see also Charlesworth, who observes that “Gothic novelists were . . . developing and elaborating habits of mind and thought that had first arisen in the landscape garden” (76).

[18] A detailed account of the story of Lord Milton is offered by Jones, who discusses the social history of follies and grottoes in England from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, focusing on their various forms and topographical settings.

[19] See the seminal critical approaches to the Gothic in Jackson and Punter. See also the more recent critical accounts in Botting, Kilgour, and Wein.

[20] On the broad social significance of curiosity cabinets as precursors of the modern museum, see Mauriès and Benedict, chapters 4 and 5 in Hooper-Greenhill as well as chapters 1 and 3 in Altick.

[21] For a comprehensive account of the activity of the Society of Dilettanti, including a full list of members, see Cust.

[22] On this important aspect of the history of the English country house, see Girouard; Jackson-Stops and Pipkin; and chapter 2 in Ousby.

[23] On this issue, although not on all others, I agree with Stewart's observation that "the taste that created the classical . . . country house also created the Gothic sham ruin" (406).

[24] For a comprehensive account of Strawberry Hill and its riches, see Walpole's *Description*.

[25] See, for example, Walpole's letter to William Cole (14 June 1769) in which he complains that he has been "plagued all the week with staring crowds" and that keeping his house open is "as bad as keeping an inn" (1: 166). See additionally his letter to Lady Ossory (20 June 1776) where he protests against "all the profane that come to see the house, who in truth almost drive me out of my own house" (32: 295). On Walpole's objection to large crowds at Strawberry Hill, see also his letters to Edmond Malone (10 July 1785) and to Lady Ossory (1 July 1789; 23 Aug. 1789).

[26] On this incident, see Walpole's letter to Mary Berry (14 June 1791).

[27] The political importance and possible social impact of d'Angiviller's project is emphasized by the comment made by Jacques-Henri Meister, the editor of the *Correspondance littéraire* from 1773 to 1813: "Who knows if this museum, completed to perfection, might not have saved the monarchy, by providing a more imposing idea of its power and vision, by calming anxious spirits, and by dramatizing the benefits of the Old Regime" (qtd. in McClellan 8).

[28] For a detailed account of the various measures taken to prevent iconoclasm during the aftermath of the French Revolution, see Idzerda and McClellan, especially chapter 3. See also Mercier's vivid description of the overthrow of Catholic "superstition" after the Revolution: "The progress of irreligion was rapid indeed among these people armed with hammers and crowbars for the breaking up of the sacred images before which they had but six months before bowed the knee" (225). On the superstitious milieu characterizing European monarchies see Keith, who shows that at the beginning of the eighteenth century kings still practiced healing by touch.

On the shift of function in the arts entailed by the birth of the public museum, see Marlaux's seminal work, especially his observation that museums

tend “to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions and to transform even portraits into ‘pictures’” (9).

[29] See, for instance, Hamilton’s letter to Charles Greville (10 Aug. 1779) in which he describes an eruption of Vesuvius, all the while contrasting his scientific method of observation by way of his “Ramsden’s telescope” with the superstitious reaction of the Neapolitans, who started “forming processions” and believed that “St. Januarius was opposed to the fury of the mountain . . . and miraculously stopped it” (Morrison 59). See also his letter to the Earl of Oxford (17 Apr. 1792), in which he condemns the political indifference pervading contemporary Italy: “The Neapolitans, provided they can get their bellies filled at a cheap rate, will not, I am sure, trouble their heads with what passes in other countries” (Morrison 167).

[30] Hamilton’s contribution to English private collections of art is illustrated by the many artworks he sent to Strawberry Hill. See, for instance, the letter to Hamilton (23 May 1777) in which Walpole writes: “Strawberry Hill is filled with your presents . . . . Your name is in every page of my catalogue” (35: 431).

On detailed accounts of Hamilton’s extensive collection and his contribution to the British Museum, see Acton and the excellent collection of essays in Jenkins.

[31] See Hamilton's letter to Charles Greville (2 Jan. 1776) in which he stresses the financial inconvenience he undertakes so that certain artifacts should end up in the British Museum, stating that "it is the honour of the Hamiltonian collection that spurs [him] on" (Morrison 44). See also another letter to Greville (7 Mar. 1786) where Hamilton refers to certain "Bartolozzi's plates" and writes, "[I]t is a shame if allowed to go out of Great Britain, & I know foreigners that will try to get it, if it is on sale" (Morrison 112).

[32] For notable studies discussing the social and historical significance of Emma Hamilton's Attitudes in relation to her life and her rise to fame, see the biographies by Fraser, Lofts, and Williams. For more recent studies focusing on the feminist implications of the Attitudes, see Chard and Touchette.

[33] Walpole's attitude is representative in this regard. Shortly after William and Emma were married, Walpole commented in a letter to Mary Berry (11 Sept. 1791) that "Sir William Hamilton has actually married his gallery of statues" (*Correspondence* 11: 349).

[34] On Emma Hamilton's rise to fame and her influence on European taste, see Fraser, especially chapter 16 and Williams, especially Part IV: "Scandal and Stardom."

[35] See, for instance, Chard, who notes that Staël's strategy of "investing the feminine with a power to revive antiquity" is related primarily to the forces of Nature and of Italy in particular ("Comedy" 156). See also Lokke's more specifically feminist argument according to which Corinne is "the emblem of women's true liberation, intellectual, spiritual, and political (35).

[36] For a more comprehensive account of the Italian influences in *Middlemarch,* see Thompson's book-length study, especially chapter 7. Thompson also notices the distinction Eliot draws between Italy and the English province but interprets it largely oppositional terms, as when he argues that "Ladislaw defines himself in contrast with the provincial Middlemarchers" (141). Although this view is accurate, the distinction goes even further than that—Ladislaw and Dorothea use their experience in Italy not simply to oppose but to reinvent provincial Middlemarch.

[37] See Heath, who argues that in Italy Lucy is "[c]onstrained by propriety to sublimate real experience into art" (399). See also Cosslett's argument that, by

overtly comparing Lucy to antique statues, Forster "seems to be critiquing the trope of comparing women to works of art" (323). See, additionally, Wagner, who recognizes Forster's allusions in *A Room with a View* to Roman mythology as the source of "passionate awakenings," though he does not interrogate the broad social and historical conditions that make such allusions possible in the first place.

[38] See McIsaac's Foucaultian argument, which complicates the understanding of the museum as the transmitter of the past, showing that "[h]ow objects are collected and arranged . . . grounds the knowledge and narratives that a discourse based on the display of objects can generate" (19). For a similar view, see Clifford's observation, "The *making* of meaning in museum classification and display is mystified as adequate *representation*. The time and order of the collection erase the concrete social labor of its making" (220, emphases in the original).

[39] On this idea, my argument is in agreement with Peppis, who observes that "Forster's English novels render suburbia and the city as alien colonies, conquering England's rural soul" (51).

[40] The anachronistic dimensions of art in these examples are at odds with Jeffreys' argument according to which at this point in the novel "Forster strips Greek sculpture of its grandeur and reduces it to the status of ornamental irrelevance" (49).

Chapter 3

[1] In his review of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's work, Henry James famously credits her novels with "introducing into fiction the most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries that are at our own doors." He adds, "instead of the terrors of Udolpho we were treated to the terrors of the cheerful county house, or the London lodgings" (594).

[2] On this key feature of Gothic fiction, see Baldick and Mighall's observation that Gothic narrative "witnesses the birth of modernity" (220). See also Cottom's argument that in the Gothic novel "credulousness was to be assigned to a past thenceforth to be defined in terms of superstition, while modernity could be defined as the era that is able to confine the incredible within the realm of art, which essentially belongs to the past and so may be licensed to thrill the present" (1070).

[3] For useful introductions to British sensation fiction see Hughes; and Pykett, "Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel."

[4] On the medical and social significance of Tuke's pioneering Quaker asylum, Retreat, founded in 1792, including its impact on the subsequent development of the moral treatment of madness in the Victorian asylum, see Andrew Scull's *The Most Solitary of Afflictions*, his *Museums of Madness*, and the collection of essays in his *Madhouses, Mad-Doctors, and Madmen*. See also Showalter, *The Female Malady*, especially part one. For a detailed account of the social and political importance of Pinel's unchaining of patients at the Bicêtre in 1793, see Goldstein as well as Foucault's magisterial *History of Madness*. Notable studies tracing the relationship between art and the physiognomy of madness include Sander L. Gilman's edited volume, *The Face of Madness* plus her *Seeing the Insane*, in addition to Didi-Huberman and chapter 5 in Silverman.

[5] For a quite different approach to the Gothic aspects of Woolf's fiction in relation to Collins, see Saint-Amour.

[6] See Fry's statement to Mauron that "one must admit the possibility of psychological volumes in the visual arts" (*Letters* II: 594). On the close

friendship and professional collaboration between Fry and Mauron, see Hutcheon as well as Caws and Wright, especially part III.

[7] On this idea I agree, in part, with Compagnon's observation that cubism reflects a "surreptitious return to representation" (50), suggesting a view of the progression from realism to impressionism to post-impressionism in terms of a sophisticated continuity rather than a radical rupture.

[8] For important critical accounts of Woolf's relationship to post-impressionist aesthetics, focusing in particular on Fry's influence, see Roberts, Torgovnick, Goldman, and Banfield.

[9] See Woolf's declaration that "I used to think of him [Sir Leslie Stephen] and mother daily; but writing *The Lighthouse*, laid them in my mind" (*Diary* III: 208). See also her confession in *Moments of Being*: "when it [*To the Lighthouse*] was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. . . . I suppose I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest" (81).

[10] See, for instance, the various critical accounts that see Woolf's depiction of Victorian culture as "a world of dead stereotypes and empty performances" (79) in Latham; as evidence of a "disintegrating" family life (143) in Whitworth; as proof of "a break, even a 'chasm' between the past . . . and the present" (2) in Briggs; and as simply "nostalgic" (79) in Ellis.

[11] See the arguments that consider sensation fiction as striking "at the roots of Victorian anxieties" (5) in Hughes; as an expression of "evolutionary anxieties" and "collective nervous decline" (20) in Taylor; as an index of "over-hastily repressed anxieties" (471) in Daly; and as a presentation of "repressive social practices" (2) in Salotto.

[12] See, for instance, the liberating feminist implications of the natural sublime in Radcliffe's novels expounded as "democratic experience" (xiii) in Milbank, and as "a vision of the ideal society" (108) in Shaw. For a thoughtful critique of such arguments, locating the source of the sublime in mother-daughter relationships instead of natural phenomena, see Heiland.

[13] In this regard, see David B. Morris's assertion that "borrowing Freud's Language, we might describe Gothic sublimity as drawing its deepest terrors from a return of the repressed" (307). See also Vijay Mishra's definition of the

Gothic sublime as “a version of the Lacanian Real . . . into which the subject inscribes itself as an absence, a lack in the structure itself” (17).

[14] For a detailed account of Collins’s use of Madame de Douhault’s story, see Hyder.

[15] For instance, Taylor considers Hartright’s vision as the expression of a “neo-platonic ideal” (117). Similarly, Hartley argues that “Hartright’s encounter with Laura’s beautiful face dramatizes the potential correspondence of physical beauty with an essential, tough abstract, concept of beauty” (130).

[16] See the thesis-like chapter title, “Subverting the Feminine Novel: Sensationalism and Feminine Protest” in Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*. See also the view that Braddon’s novel proposes through Lady Audley’s character “a strategy for survival in a hostile, male-dominated world” (473) in Gilbert and Gubar’s groundbreaking book. See, additionally, Heller’s argument that the Gothic material in sensation fiction “encodes feminine subversion” (3).

[17] On this issue, see Foucault’s famous notion of interlocking disciplinary networks functioning on the axis of seeing/knowledge/power (*voir/savoir/pouvoir*), in addition to his specific comment in *The History of*

Madness: “And it was precisely there that psychology was born, not as the truth of madness, but as a sign that madness was now detached from its truth, which was unreason” (339). See also Gilman’s observation that the nineteenth-century visual diagnoses of madness are “the product of the application of existing paradigms to those aspects of the universe which a culture has defined as inherently inexplicable” (*Seeing the Insane* xi).

[18] On the spectacular aspects of Charcot’s sessions, see Didi-Huberman’s excellent book, especially part I and chapter 7.

[19] On the friendship between Woolf and Forster as well as their close professional relationship, see Dowling, Henley, and Lee.

[20] For a list of studies impacted by Auerbach’s narratological analysis, see Snaith, especially chapters 1 and 2.

[21] See, for example, Forster’s subtle suggestion that Woolf should “retain her own wonderful new method and form, and yet allow her readers to inhabit each character with Victorian thoroughness” (“Early Novels” 108). See also his more pointed critique of Woolf in *Aspects of the Novel*, where he lumps her together

with Laurence Sterne as a “fantasist,” who is “extremely aloof,” creating “odd effects” in fiction (36-37).

[22] See Woolf’s remark about Fry that “as a critic of literature . . . he was not what is called a safe guide” but that “his theories held good for both arts” (*Roger Fry* 240).

[23] For influential studies exemplifying this trend in Woolf criticism, see Roberts, who asserts that Woolf “did ‘fling representation to the winds’” (836); Torgovnick, who documents the way in which “abstract art [versus simple mimesis] gave Woolf a vocabulary and images for expressing unconventional states of mind” (142); and Banfield, who thoughtfully links Fry’s aesthetics to contemporary analytic philosophy but never questions the separation of the two aesthetic modes.

[24] See, for instance, Martin Jay’s view that modernism reflects anxiety over the nineteenth-century “psychologization of vision,” conceived as “the loss of confidence in the veracity of the eye and such systems of representation as Renaissance perspective” (99).

[25] The Gothic sublime rewrites the history of mimesis in agreement with Snyder's argument that Leon Battista Alberti's Renaissance study of linear geometric perspective, *De Pictura* (1435), exemplifies the notion of "vision as picture," suggesting "not the objectification of the subjective, but rather the externalization of the internal" (525-26). On this idea, see also Mitchell's acute observation that "part of the power of perspectival illusionism was that it seemed to reveal not just the outward, visible world but the very nature of the rational soul whose vision is represented" (39).

[26] On this point, although not on all others, my argument is consistent with Micale's view that a "desideratum of studying aesthetic and psychological Modernism . . . is the need to move beyond Freud" (7).

Chapter 4

[1] On this issue, see Darnton's argument that irrational beliefs and practices such as mesmerism are at the very center of the "radical" definition of the Enlightenment. See also Jacob's idea that "the repudiation of magic on the part of Enlightenment radicals occurred simultaneously with their adherence to a pantheistic naturalism that had once been the prevailing philosophy of Renaissance adepts and *magi*" (34 italics in the original).

[2] For definitions of modernist subjectivity stressing its irrational aspects related especially to late-Victorian spiritualism and the fin-de-siècle occult revival, see Owen, “Occultism and the ‘Modern’ Self in Fin-de-Siècle Britain.” See also Owen’s argument in his detailed study of the occult aspects of modernism, *The Place of Enchantment*, that “the ‘new’ occultism in particular co-opted the language of science and staked a strong claim to rationality while at the same time undermining scientific naturalism as a worldview and rejecting the rationalist assumptions upon which it depended” (13). See, additionally, Armstrong, Chapters 4 and 6. Neither source explores the significance of electricity in any detail.

[3] On Lawrence’s Theosophical and oriental esoteric sources, see Whelan and Miles. For critical accounts on Lawrence’s relationship to Romantic theories of polarity and contemporary theories of physiology, see Montgomery and Walterscheid.

[4] On the threat of the female vampire as *femme fatale* in Lawrence’s fiction, see Twitchell, Petersen, and Kim. On ghosts and the uncanny in Lawrence’s major novels and short fiction, see Williams and Hollington.

[5] For a detailed account of the debate over the scientific legitimacy of the identification of the nervous and the electric fluids, see Home. On the medical history and cultural significance of electricity, see the detailed comparative study of Rowbottom and Susskind.

[6] On the dubious status of Galvani's popular theory of electricity in canonical science, see Alessandro Volta's sneering remark directed against Galvani, "Physicians are ignorant of the known laws of electricity" (qtd. in Silver 85). On this issue, see also Channel, especially Chapter 2.

[7] On the Gothic aspects of Aldini and Weinhold's scientific experiments, see Finger and Law, who focus in more detail on Weinhold's electric theory, showing that "he not only argued that dissimilar metals can temporarily take the place of brain and spinal cord, but also maintained that bimetallic electricity could even restore life to a corpse" (166).

[8] Influential critical evaluations of Gothic writing which, despite their differences, generally agree upon the subversive nature of this genre include those of Punter and Jackson. For more recent critical approaches that leave this assumption largely unquestioned, see Botting and Kilgour. For a detailed account of de-historicist approaches to Gothic fiction, see Baldick and Mighall's polemical argument that traces back this interpretive trend to the works of

Montague Summers and André Breton, who "both inherit a certain common romantic assumption that 'dream' or fantasy is in itself the deadly enemy of bourgeois materialistic rationalism" (211).

[9] In Jackson's view, for instance, the Gothic discloses the "epistemological confusion" of "personal disorder" (97), while "Gothic and fantastic episodes" are primarily viewed as "disturbing reminders of things excluded and expelled" (122). Classic late-eighteenth-century Gothic novels, according to Punter, suggest "not an escape from the real but a deconstruction and dismemberment of it" (85). This assumption remains unchallenged in Kilgour's more recent work, which argues that "the gothic is especially a revolt against a mechanistic or atomistic view of the world" and "is symptomatic of a nostalgia for the past which idealizes the medieval world as one of organic wholeness" (11).

[10] My argument is consistent in this regard with Baldick and Mighall's observation that Gothic narrative "witnesses the birth of modernity" (220). On this idea, see also Cottom's assertion that "the challenge this genre took up was that of justifying the ways of modernity to man" (1068).

[11] On the scientific, social, and cultural implications and receptions of Andrew Crosse's popular discovery, see. Secord and Morus.

[12] On the controversy regarding the reception of Crosse's electric insects, see Secord, who emphasizes, in addition to the significance of contemporary printing technologies such as the steam press, the different disciplinary reactions to Crosse's findings, ranging from the sympathetic attitude of surgeons and Unitarian physicians to the scathing remarks of entomologists, who argued that "the newness of the species reflected the rudimentary state of the taxonomy of the Arachnidae, rather than a genuinely novel 'creation'" (356).

[13] For an excellent account of the modern technological aspects of *Dracula*, see Wicke.

[14] On the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century spiritualist and occult connotations of the telegraph and the phonograph, see Wicke, Noakes, and. Kittler. See also Cuddy-Keane's argument that the concepts of "diffusion" and "auscultation" (the act of listening in its nonmedical sense) are crucial for the understanding of "the new aural sensitivity coincident with the emergence of the gramophone and the wireless" (71).

[15] For an illuminating account of the pervasive impact of James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic discovery, enhanced by the theories of Heinrich Rudolf Hertz and of the "Maxwellian" physicists, see Hunt.

[16] On this issue, see Luckhurst, “Passages in the Invention of the Psyche: Mind-reading in London, 1881-84,” which shows that the psyche during the 1880s was invented at the “hybrid sites” of electricity and spiritual forces (137). See also Luckhurst’s argument in *The Invention of Telepathy 1870-1901*, emphasizing the contemporary understanding of telepathy “in analogy to nervous induction, which is conceived in analogy to electrical induction, which is itself conceived in analogy to occult sympathy” (83).

[17] See Darnton’s book-length study, which discusses some of the most significant aspects shared by mesmerism and the French Revolution: their large-scale public appeal to equality, their opposition to social privilege, and their sympathy for radical anti-government activities, represented in particular by the ideas of Jacques-Pierre Brissot. Darnton shows that “revolutionaries strongly related to late-eighteenth century occult, pseudoscientific practices such as mesmerism” (44). He argues, moreover, that “in its first stages, mesmerism expressed the Enlightenment’s faith in reason taken to an extreme, an Enlightenment run wild, which later was to provoke a movement toward the opposite extreme in the form of romanticism” (39).

[18] See, for instance, the persuasive and comprehensive study of Berman. On the influential argument that modernism is characterized by technological, scientific, and cultural "crises of abundance," see Kern and Schleifer.

[19] On this issue, see Gibbons.

[20] Despite his often harsh dismissal of theosophy, Lawrence is ironically consistent in this regard with the disputed status of theosophy as scientific enterprise. See Washington's revealing study, which shows that "on the one hand Olcott and Blavatsky were attempting to operate with . . . [scientific] standards; on the other they were trying to restore just the sense of mystery that the insistence on such standards had allegedly banished from the modern world" (55-56). On Lawrence's ambivalence toward theosophy, see also Kinkead-Weekes's authoritative biographical study, which points out that the occult doctrine of Blavatsky and Meredith Starr "might be a joke, but . . . [it] opened up ideas and images Lawrence could use" (387).

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