

SKIN SHOWS

Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters

Judith Halberstam

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*This book is dedicated to
Heini and Doreen Halberstam*

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SKIN SHOWS



Parasites and Perverts: An

Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity

So many monsters; so little time.

—promotional slogan for **HELLRAISER**

Skin Shows

In *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) by Jonathan Demme, one of many modern adaptations of *Frankenstein*, a serial killer known as Buffalo Bill collects women in order to flay them and use their skins to construct a “woman suit.” Sitting in his basement sewing hides, Buffalo Bill makes his monster a sutured beast, a patchwork of gender, sex, and sexuality. Skin, in this morbid scene, represents the monstrosity of surfaces and as Buffalo Bill dresses up in his suit and prances in front of the mirror, he becomes a layered body, a body of many surfaces laid one upon the other. Depth and essence dissolve in this mirror dance and identity and humanity become skin deep.

My subject is monsters and I begin in Buffalo Bill’s basement, his “filthy workshop of creation,” because it dramatizes precisely the distance traveled between current representations of monstrosity and their genesis in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. Where the monsters of the nineteenth century metaphorized modern subjectivity as a balancing act between inside/outside, female/male, body/mind, native/foreign, proletarian/aristocrat, monstrosity in postmodern horror films finds its place in what Baudrillard has called the obscenity of “immediate visibility”¹ and what Linda Williams has dubbed “the frenzy of the visible.”² The immediate visibility of a Buffalo Bill, the way in which he makes the surface itself monstrous transforms the cavernous monstrosity of Jekyll/Hyde, Dorian Gray, or Dracula into a beast who is all body and no soul.

Victorian monsters produced and were produced by an emergent conception of the self as a body which enveloped a soul, as a body, indeed, enthralled to its soul. Michel Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* that “the soul is the prison of the body” and he proposes a genealogy of the soul that will show it to be born out of “methods of punishment, supervision and constraint.”³ Foucault also claims that, as modern forms of discipline shifted their gaze from the body to the soul, crime literature moved from confession or gallows speeches or the cataloguing of famous criminals to the detective fiction obsessed with identifying criminality and investigating crime. The hero of such literature was now the middle- or upper-class schemer whose crime became a virtuoso performance of skill and enterprise.

There are many congruities between Gothic fiction and detective fiction but in the Gothic, crime is embodied within a specifically deviant form — the monster — that announces itself (de-monstrates) as the place of corruption. Furthermore, just as the detective character appears across genres in many different kinds of fiction (in the sensation novel, in Dickens), so Gothic infiltrates the Victorian novel as a symptomatic moment in which boundaries between good and evil, health and perversity, crime and punishment, truth and deception, inside and outside dissolve and threaten the integrity of the narrative itself. While many literary histories, therefore, have relegated Gothic to a subordinate status in relation to realism, I will be arguing that nineteenth-century literary tradition *is* a Gothic tradition and that this has everything to do with the changing technologies of subjectivity that Foucault describes.

Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity, one which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known. Gothic, within my analysis, may be loosely defined as the rhetorical style and narrative structure designed to produce fear and desire within the reader. The production of fear in a literary text (as opposed to a cinematic text) emanates from a vertiginous excess of meaning. Gothic, in a way, refers to an ornamental excess (think of Gothic architecture — gargoyles and crazy loops and spirals), a rhetorical extravagance that produces, quite simply, too much. Within Gothic novels, I argue, multiple interpretations are embedded in the text and part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that meaning itself runs riot. Gothic novels produce a symbol for this interpretive mayhem in the body of the monster. The monster always becomes a primary focus of interpretation and its monstrosity seems available for any number of meanings. While I will examine closely the implications of embodied

horror (monstrosity) in nineteenth-century Gothic, I will also be paying careful attention to the rhetorical system which produces it (Gothic).

Many histories of the Gothic novel begin with the Gothic Romances of the later eighteenth century by Mrs. Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, and Matthew Lewis.⁴ While, obviously, there are connections to be made between these stories of mad monks, haunted castles, and wicked foreigners and the nineteenth-century Gothic tales of monsters and vampires, we should not take the connections too far. I will argue in this book that the emergence of the monster within Gothic fiction marks a peculiarly modern emphasis upon the horror of particular kinds of bodies. Furthermore, the ability of the Gothic story to take the imprint of any number of interpretations makes it a hideous offspring of capitalism itself. The Gothic novel of the nineteenth century and the Gothic horror film of the late twentieth century are both obsessed with multiple modes of consumption and production, with dangerous consumptions and excessive productivity, and with economies of meaning. The monster itself is an economic form in that it condenses various racial and sexual threats to nation, capitalism, and the bourgeoisie in one body. If the Gothic novel produces an easy answer to the question of what threatens national security and prosperity (the monster), the Gothic monster represents many answers to the question of who must be removed from the community at large. I will be considering, therefore, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Gothic as separate from eighteenth-century Gothic, but I will also be tracing Gothic textuality across many modes of discourse.

Within the nineteenth-century Gothic, authors mixed and matched a wide variety of signifiers of difference to fabricate the deviant body — Dracula, Jekyll/Hyde, and even Frankenstein's monster before them are lumpen bodies, bodies pieced together out of the fabric of race, class, gender, and sexuality. In the modern period and with the advent of cinematic body horror, the shift from the literary Gothic to the visual Gothic was accompanied by a narrowing rather than a broadening of the scope of horror. One might expect to find that cinema multiplies the possibilities for monstrosity but in fact, the visual register quickly reaches a limit of visibility. In *Frankenstein* the reader can only imagine the dreadful spectacle of the monster and so its monstrosity is limited only by the reader's imagination; in the horror film, the monster must always fail to be monstrous enough and horror therefore depends upon the explicit violation of female bodies as opposed to simply the sight of the monster.

Furthermore, as I noted, while nineteenth-century Gothic mon-

strosity was a combination of the features of deviant race, class, and gender, within contemporary horror, the monster, for various reasons, tends to show clearly the markings of deviant sexualities and gendering but less clearly the signs of class or race. Buffalo Bill in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for example, leads one to suppose that the monstrous body is a sexed or gendered body only, but this particular body, a borrowed skin, is also clearly inscribed with a narrative of class conflict. To give just one example of deviant class in this film, the heroine, Clarice Starling, is identified by Hannibal Lecter as a woman trying to hide her working-class roots behind “bad perfume” and cheap leather shoes. Given the emphases in this film upon skins and hides, it is all too significant that cheap leather gives Starling away. Poor skin, in this film, literally signifies poverty, or the trace of it. As we will see, however, the narrative of monstrous class identity has been almost completely subsumed within *The Silence of the Lambs* by monstrous sexuality and gender.

The discourse of racialized monstrosity within the modern horror film proves to be a discursive minefield. Perhaps because race has been so successfully gothicized within our recent history, filmmakers and screenplay writers tend not to want to make a monster who is defined by a deviant racial identity. European anti-Semitism and American racism towards black Americans are precisely Gothic discourses given over to the making monstrous of particular kinds of bodies. This study will delineate carefully the multiple strands of anti-Semitism within nineteenth-century Gothic and I will attempt to suggest why anti-Semitism in particular used Gothic methods to make Jews monstrous. But when it comes to tracing the threads of Gothic race into modern horror, we often draw a blank.

The gothicization of certain “races” over the last century, one might say, has been all too successful. This does not mean that Gothic race is not readable in the contemporary horror text but it is clear that, within Gothic, the difference between representing racism and representing race is extremely tricky to negotiate. I will be arguing, in relation to *The Silence of the Lambs*, that the film clearly represents homophobia and sexism and punishes actions motivated by them; it would be very difficult in a horror film to show and punish racism simultaneously. To give an example of what I am arguing here, one can look at a contemporary horror film, *Candyman* (1990), and the way it merges monstrosity and race.

In *Candyman* two female graduate students in anthropology at the

University of Illinois at Chicago are researching urban legends when they run across the story of Candyman, the ghost of a murdered black man who haunts the Cabrini Green projects. Candyman was the son of a former slave who made good by inventing a procedure for the mass production of shoes. Despite his wealth, Candyman still ran into trouble with the white community by falling in love with a white woman. He was chased by white men to Cabrini Green where they caught him, cut his right hand off, and drove a hook into the bloody stump. Next Candyman was covered in honey and taken to an apiary where the bees killed him. Now, the urban myth goes, Candyman responds to all who call him. The two researchers, a white woman and a black woman, go to Cabrini Green to hunt for information on Candyman. Naturally, the black woman, Bernadette, is killed by Candyman, and the white woman, Helen, is seduced by him. While the film on some level attempts to direct all kinds of social criticisms at urban planners, historians, and racist white homeowners, ultimately the horror stabilizes in the ghostly body of the black man whose monstrosity turns upon his desire for the white woman and his murderous intentions towards black women.

No amount of elaborate framing within this film can prevent it from confirming racist assumptions about black male aggression towards white female bodies. Monstrosity, in this tired narrative, never becomes mobile; rather, it remains anchored by the weight of racist narratives. The film contains some clever visual moves, like a shot of Helen going through the back of a mirror into a derelict apartment. She next passes through a hole in the wall and the camera reverses to show her stepping through a graffiti painting of a black man's face. She stops for a moment in the mouth of the black man and this startling image hints at the various forms of oral transmissions that the film circulates. Is Helen contained by the oral history of the Candyman or is she the articulate voice of the academy that disrupts its transmission and brings violence to the surface? Inevitably, Helen's character stabilizes under the sign of the white woman victim and Candyman's horror becomes a static signifier of black male violence. If race in nineteenth-century Gothic was one of many clashing surfaces of monstrosity, in the context of twentieth-century Gothic, race becomes a master signifier of monstrosity and when invoked, it blocks out all other possibilities of monstrous identity.

Moving from nineteenth-century Gothic monsters to the monsters of contemporary horror films, my study will show that within the history of embodied deviance, monsters always combine the markings of a plu-

rality of differences even if certain forms of difference are eclipsed momentarily by others. The fact that monstrosity within contemporary horror seems to have stabilized into an amalgam of sex and gender demonstrates the need to read a history of otherness into and out of the history of Gothic fiction. Gothic fiction of the nineteenth century specifically used the body of the monster to produce race, class, gender, and sexuality within narratives about the relation between subjectivities and certain bodies.

Monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditioned rather than a psychological universal. Tracing the emergence of monstrosity from *Frankenstein* through to the contemporary horror film (in both its high- and low-budget forms), I will attempt to show that monsters not only reveal certain material conditions of the production of horror, but they also make strange the categories of beauty, humanity, and identity that we still cling to. While the horror within *Frankenstein* seemed to depend upon the monster's actual hideous physical aspect, his status as anomaly, and his essential foreignness, the threat of Buffalo Bill depends upon the violence of his identity crisis, a crisis that will exact a price in female flesh. Buffalo Bill's identity crisis is precisely that, a crisis of knowledge, a "category crisis"⁵; but it no longer takes the form of the anomaly — now a category crisis indicates a crisis of sexual identity.

It is in the realm of sexuality, however, that Buffalo Bill and Frankenstein's monster seem to share traits and it is here that we may be inclined to read Buffalo Bill as a reincarnation of many of the features of nineteenth-century monstrosity. As a sexual being, Frankenstein's monster is foreign and as an outsider to the community, his foreign sexuality is monstrous and threatens miscegenation. Frankenstein's lonely monster is driven out of town by the mob when he threatens to reproduce. Similarly, Buffalo Bill threatens the community with his indeterminate gender and sexuality. Indeed, sexuality and its uneasy relation to gender identity creates Buffalo Bill's monstrosity. But much ground has been traveled between the stitched monstrosity of Frankenstein and the sutured gender horror of Buffalo Bill; while both monsters have been sewn into skin bodysuits and while both want to jump out of their skins, the nineteenth-century monster is marked by racial or species violation while Buffalo Bill seems to be all gender. If we measure one skin job against the other, we can read transitions between various signifying systems of identity.

Skin, I will argue with reference to certain nineteenth-century mon-

sters, becomes a kind of metonym for the human; and its color, its pallor, its shape mean everything within a semiotic of monstrosity. Skin might be too tight (Frankenstein's creature), too dark (Hyde), too pale (Dracula), too superficial (Dorian Gray's canvas), too loose (Leatherface), or too sexed (Buffalo Bill). Skin houses the body and it is figured in Gothic as the ultimate boundary, the material that divides the inside from the outside. The vampire will puncture and mark the skin with his fangs, Mr. Hyde will covet white skin, Dorian Gray will desire his own canvas, Buffalo Bill will covet female skin, Leatherface will wear his victim's skin as a trophy and recycle his flesh as food. Slowly but surely the outside becomes the inside and the hide no longer conceals or contains, it offers itself up as text, as body, as monster. The Gothic text, whether novel or film, plays out an elaborate skin show.

How sexuality became the dominant mark of otherness is a question that we may begin to answer by deconstructing Victorian Gothic monsters and examining the constitutive features of the horror they represent. If, for example, many nineteenth-century monsters seem to produce fears more clearly related to racial identity than gender identity, how is it that we as modern readers have been unable to discern these more intricate contours of difference? Obviously, the answer to such a question and many others like it lies in a history of sexuality, a history introduced by Michel Foucault and continued by recent studies which link Foucault's work to a history of the novel.⁶

In this study I am not simply attempting to add racial, national, or class difference to the already well-defined otherness of sexual perversion nor am I attempting merely another reading of the Gothic tradition; I am suggesting that, where the foreign and the sexual merge within monstrosity in Gothic, a particular history of sexuality unfolds. It is indeed necessary to map out a relation between the monstrous sexuality of the foreigner and the foreign sexuality of the monster because sexuality, I will argue, is itself a beast created in nineteenth-century literature. Where sexuality becomes an identity, other "others" become invisible and the multiple features of monstrosity seem to degenerate back into a primeval sexual slime. Class, race, and nation are subsumed, in other words, within the monstrous sexual body; accordingly, Dracula's bite drains pleasure rather than capital, Mr. Hyde symbolizes repression rather than the production of self, and both figure foreign aspect as a threat to domestic security. While I will attempt here to delineate the mechanism by which multiple otherness is subsumed by the unitary

otherness of sexuality, it is actually beyond the scope of this study to account for the very particular and individual histories of race, nation, and class within the nineteenth century. I am concerned specifically with representational strategies and with the particularities of deviant race, class, national and gender markings.

Past studies of the Gothic have tended toward the psychological, or more precisely, the psychoanalytic, because the unconscious is assumed to be the proper seat of fear. So, for example, there are studies of the Gothic which associate Gothic with masochism,⁷ with the abject maternal,⁸ with women's "fear of self,"⁹ with the very construction of female identity.¹⁰ And yet, as critics like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have shown, the unconscious itself and all of its mechanisms are precisely the effects of historical and cultural production. Therefore, to historicize monstrosity in literature, and especially in the Gothic novel, reveals a specificity within the way that, since the age of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, monsters mark difference within and upon bodies. A historical study of Gothic and of Gothic monstrosity must actually avoid psychoanalytic readings just long enough to expose the way that Gothic actually participates in the production of something like a psychology of self. However, as will be clear, certain psychoanalytic positions on fear and desire are useful ways of negotiating between the psychic and the social and of showing how some social mechanisms are internalized to the point that they are experienced as internal mechanisms. In order to examine such a process, a detour through Freud's case histories of paranoia will be necessary.

The body that scares and appalls changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity, as do the preferred interpretations of that monstrosity. Within the traits that make a body monstrous—that is, frightening or ugly, abnormal or disgusting—we may read the difference between an other and a self, a pervert and a normal person, a foreigner and a native. Furthermore, in order to read monsters as the embodiments of psychic horror, one must first of all subscribe to psychoanalysis's own tale of human subjectivity—a fiction intent upon rewriting the Gothic elements of human subjectivity. As I have said, my study refuses the universality of what Deleuze and Guattari call the "daddy-mommy-me triangle"¹¹ but it cannot always escape the triangle. With characteristic grim humor, Deleuze and Guattari describe the psychoanalytic encounter between analyst and patient: "The psychoanalyst no longer says to the patient: 'Tell me a little bit about your

desiring machines, won't you?' Instead he screams: 'Answer daddy-and-mommy when I speak to you!' Even Melanie Klein. So the entire process of desiring-production is trampled underfoot and reduced to parental images, laid out step by step in accordance with supposed pre-oedipal stages, totalized in Oedipus. . . ."¹² Within modern Western culture, we are disciplined through a variety of social and political mechanisms into psychoanalytic relations and then psychoanalytic explanations are deployed to totalize our submission. Resistance in such a circular system, as many theorists have noted, merely becomes part of the oppressive mechanism. However, as we will see in later chapters of this study, psychoanalysis, with its emphases on and investments in the normal, quickly reveals itself to be inadequate to the task of unraveling the power of horror.

In relation to Gothic monstrosity, it is all too easy to understand how the relation between fear and desire may be oedipalized, psychologized, humanized. Psychoanalysis itself has a clinical term for the transformation of desire into fear and of the desired/feared object into monster: paranoia. Freud believed that his theory of paranoia as a repressed homosexual desire could be applied to any and all cases of paranoia regardless of race or social class. This, of course, is where the psychoanalytic crisis begins and ends—in its attempt to reduce everything to the sexual and then in its equation of sexuality and identity. The process by which political material becomes sexual material is one in which the novel plays a major role. And the Gothic novel, particularly the late-Victorian Gothic novel, provides a metaphor for this process in the form of the monster. The monster is the product of and the symbol for the transformation of identity into sexual identity through the mechanism of failed repression.

One Lacanian account of monstrosity demonstrates simultaneously the appeal and the danger of psychoanalytic explanations. In Slavoj Žižek's essay "Grimaces of the Real, Or When the Phallus Appears," he reads the phantom from *The Phantom of the Opera* alongside such enigmatic images as the vampire, Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893), and David Lynch's *Elephant Man* (1980).¹³ Žižek attempts to position images of the living-dead as both mediators between high art and mass culture and as "the void of the pure self" (67). Žižek is at his most persuasive when he discusses the multiplicity of meaning generated by the monster. The fecundity of the monster as a symbol leads him to state: "The crucial question is not 'What does the phantom signify?' but

'How is the very space constituted where entities like the phantom can emerge?'" (63). The monster/phantom, in other words, never stands for a simple or unitary prejudice, it always acts as a "fantasy screen" upon which viewers and readers inscribe and sexualize meaning.

Žižek also seems to be very aware of the dangers of what he calls "the so-called psychoanalytic interpretation of art" which operates within a kind of spiral of interpretation so that everything *means* psychoanalysis. Accordingly, rather than explain the mother's voice in *Psycho* as the maternal superego, he suggests "turn(ing) it around, to explain the very logic of the maternal superego by means of this vocal stain" (51). But Žižek does not always sustain his challenge to the hegemonic structure of psychoanalysis. Indeed, he often stays firmly within the interpretive confines of the psychoanalytic model and merely uses cultural texts as examples of psychoanalytic functions (particularly Lacanian functions). Within this model, the phantom of the opera, for example, is a "fetish," it literally stands in for various kinds of antagonisms: class-based, racial, economic, national, etc. But the fetish remains always a sexual mechanism and this is where Žižek's analysis is doomed to reproduce the process which it attempts to explain; the fetish is a sexualized object that stands in for and indeed covers up other kinds of antagonism. Žižek gives, as an example of the fetishistic role of the phantom, the Jew of anti-Semitic discourse. While this book will also make concrete connections between anti-Semitism and the Gothic production of monsters and indeed, between racial and sexual layers of signification, it is crucial to an interpretation of Gothic to understand that the Jew/phantom/monster is sexualized within fictional narratives (and this includes pseudo-scientific and social-scientific narratives that are usually classified as nonfiction) as a part of the narrative process that transforms class/race/gender threat into sexual threat.

Žižek's claim, then, that "the Jew is the anal object par excellence, that is to say, the partial object stain that disturbs the harmony of the class relationship" (57) precisely leaves intact the sexualization of Jewishness; his assertion that the phantom of the living-dead is the emergence of "the anal father" or "primal father" and the opposite of paternal law reinscribes parental (symbolic or otherwise) relations into a scene that precisely seems to escape the familial; his claim, finally, that vampires do not appear in mirrors because "they have read their Lacan" and know, therefore, that "they materialize object *a* which, by definition, *cannot be mirrored*" (55), begs to be read as a parody of what it invokes

but instead actually continues to posit subjects that simply do not exist independent of their production in Lacanian psychoanalysis.

The vampire of the nineteenth-century narrative has most certainly not read his/her Lacan (*avant la lettre*) and does not know that he/she cannot be mirrored. This vampire crawls face down along the wall dividing self from other, class from race from gender and drains metaphoricity from one place only to infuse it in another. While Žižek claims often in his work to be using psychoanalysis and specifically Lacan to explain popular culture paradigms, too often he merely uses popular culture to explain Lacan. And, of course, this particular relationship between host and parasite is the only one that psychoanalytic discourse can endorse. Žižek warns: "The analysis that focuses on the 'ideological meaning' of monsters overlooks the fact that, before signifying something, before serving as a vessel of meaning, monsters embody enjoyment qua the limit of interpretation, that is to say, *nonmeaning as such*" (64). The idea that a realm of "nonmeaning" exists prior to interpretation is only possible in a structural universe in which form and content can easily be separated. Gothic literature in particular is a rhetorical form which resists the disintegration of form and content.¹⁴ Monstrosity always unites monstrous form with monstrous meaning.

In *Skin Shows* I will be situating Gothic as a site or topos in nineteenth-century fiction and contemporary horror film. In its typical form, the Gothic topos is the monstrous body à la Frankenstein, Dracula, Dorian Gray, Jekyll/Hyde; in its generic form, Gothic is the disruption of realism and of all generic purity. It is the hideous eruption of the monstrous in the heart of domestic England but it is also the narrative that calls genre itself into question. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which I think functions as an allegory of Gothic production, contains a domestic tableau of family life (the De Laccys) right in the heart of the narrative. This structure inverts and threatens to maintain a reversal whereby, rather than the Gothic residing in the dark corners of realism, the realistic is buried alive in the gloomy recesses of Gothic. It may well be that the novel is always Gothic.

Gothic Gnomes

In her 1832 introduction to *Frankenstein*, Shelley writes, "I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper."¹⁵ Shelley's "hideous progeny" was not merely her novel but the nineteenth-century Gothic novel itself.

The Gothic, of course, did indeed prosper and thrive through the century. It grew in popularity until, by the turn of the century, its readership was massive enough that a writer could actually make a living from the sale of his Gothic works. In 1891, for example, Robert Louis Stevenson loosed his “shilling shocker,” *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, upon the reading public hoping for commercial returns. Stevenson described his novella as a “Gothic gnome” and worried that he had produced a gross distortion of literature.¹⁶ Such an anxiety marked Gothic itself as a monstrous form in relation to its popularity and its improper subject matter. The appellation “Gothic gnome” labeled the genre as a mutation or hybrid form of true art and genteel literature.

But monsters do indeed sell books and books sell monsters and the very popularity of the Gothic suggests that readers and writers collaborate in the production of the features of monstrosity. Gothic novels, in fact, thematize the monstrous aspects of both production and consumption—*Frankenstein* is, after all, an allegory about a production that refuses to submit to its author and *Dracula* is a novel about an arch-consumer, the vampire, who feeds upon middle-class women and then turns them into vampires by forcing them to feed upon him. The Gothic, in fact, like the vampire itself, creates a public who consumes monstrosity, who revels in it, and who then surveys its individual members for signs of deviance or monstrosity, excess or violence.

Anxiety about the effects of consuming popular literature revealed itself in England in the 1890s in the form of essays and books which denounced certain works as “degenerate” (a label defined by Max Nordau’s book *Degeneration*).¹⁷ Although Gothic fiction obviously fell into this category, the censors missed the mark in denouncing such works. Rather than condoning the perversity they recorded, Gothic authors, in fact, seemed quite scrupulous about taking a moral stand against the unnatural acts that produce monstrosity. Long sentimental sermons on truth and purity punctuate many a gruesome tale and leave few doubts as to its morality by the narrative’s end. Bram Stoker, for example, sermonizes both in his novels and in an essay printed in the journal *The Nineteenth Century* called “The Censorship of Fiction.” In this essay, Stoker calls for stricter surveillance of popular fiction and drama. Stoker thinks censorship would combat human weakness on two levels, namely, “the weakness of the great mass of people who form audiences, and of those who are content to do base things in the way of catering for these base appetites.”¹⁸ Obviously, Stoker did not expect his own writing to be

received as a work that “catered to base appetites” because, presumably, it used perverse sexuality to identify what or who threatened the dominant class.

Similarly, Oscar Wilde was shocked by the critics who called *The Picture of Dorian Gray* “poisonous” and “heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction.” Wilde’s novel, after all, tells the story of a young man seduced by a poisonous book and punished soundly for his corruptions. Wilde defends his work by saying, “It was necessary, sir, for the dramatic development of this story to surround Dorian Gray with an atmosphere of moral corruption.” He continues, “Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray.”¹⁹

Producing and consuming monsters and monstrous fictions, we might say, adds up to what Eve Sedgwick has called, in her study of Gothic conventions, “an aesthetic of pleasurable fear.”²⁰ The Gothic, in other words, inspires fear and desire at the same time — fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within the reader herself. But fear and desire within the same body produce a disciplinary effect. In other words, a Victorian public could consume Gothic novels in vast quantities without regarding such a material as debased because Gothic gave readers the thrill of reading about so-called perverse activities while identifying aberrant sexuality as a condition of otherness and as an essential trait of foreign bodies. The monster, of course, marks the distance between the perverse and the supposedly disciplined sexuality of a reader. Also, the signifiers of “normal” sexuality maintain a kind of hegemonic power by remaining invisible.

So, the aesthetic of pleasurable fear that Sedgwick refers to makes pleasure possible only by fixing horror elsewhere, in an obviously and literally foreign body, and by then articulating the need to expel the foreign body. Thus, both Dracula and Hyde are characters with markedly foreign physiognomies; they are dark and venal, foreign in both aspect and behavior. Dracula, for example, is described by Harker as an angular figure with a strong face notable for “peculiarly arched nostrils . . . a lofty domed forehead,” bushy hair and eyebrows, “sharp white teeth,” and ears pointed at the tops.²¹ Hyde is described as small and deformed, “pale and dwarfish . . . troglodytic.”²² By making monstrosity so obviously a physical condition and by linking it to sexual corruption, such fictions bind foreign aspects to perverse activities.

The most telling example I can find of a monstrous foreigner in Gothic is Bram Stoker’s Count Dracula who obviously comes to En-

gland from a distant “elsewhere” in search of English blood. Critics have discussed at length the perverse and dangerous sexuality exhibited by the vampire but, with a few exceptions, criticism has not connected Dracula’s sexual attacks with the threat of the foreign. Dracula, I argue in my fourth chapter, condenses the xenophobia of Gothic fiction into a very specific horror — the vampire embodies and exhibits all the stereotyping of nineteenth-century anti-Semitism. The anatomy of the vampire, for example, compares remarkably to anti-Semitic studies of Jewish physiognomy — peculiar nose, pointed ears, sharp teeth, claw-like hands — and furthermore, in Stoker’s novel, blood and money (central facets in anti-Semitism) mark the corruption of the vampire. The vampire merges Jewishness and monstrosity and represents this hybrid monster as a threat to Englishness and English womanhood in particular. In the Jew, then, Gothic fiction finds a monster versatile enough to represent fears about race, nation, and sexuality, a monster who combines in one body fears of the foreign and the perverse.

Perversion and Parasitism

Within nineteenth-century anti-Semitism, the Jew was marked as a threat to capital, to masculinity, and to nationhood. Jews in England at the turn of the century were the objects of an internal colonization. While the black African became the threatening other abroad, it was closer to home that people focused their real fears about the collapse of nation through a desire for racial homogeneity.²³ Jews were referred to as “degenerate,” the bearers of syphilis, hysterical, neurotic, as blood-suckers and, on a more practical level, Jews were viewed as middlemen in business.²⁴ Not all Gothic novels are as explicit as *Dracula* about their identification of monster and Jew. In some works we can read a more generalized code of fear which links horror to the Oriental²⁵ and in others we must interpret a bodily semiotic that marks monsters as symbols of a diseased culture. But to understand better how the history of the Gothic novel charts the entanglement of race, nation, and sexuality in productions of otherness, we might consider the Gothic monster as the antithesis of “Englishness.”

Benedict Anderson has written about the cultural roots of the nation in terms of “imagined communities” which are “conceived in language, not in blood.”²⁶ By linking the development of a print industry, particularly the popularization of novels and newspapers, to the spread

of nationalism, Anderson pays close attention to the ways in which a shared conception of what constitutes “nation-ness” is written and read across certain communities. If the nation, therefore, is a textual production which creates national community in terms of an inside and an outside and then makes those categories indispensable, Gothic becomes one place to look for a fiction of the foreign, a narrative of who and what is not-English and not-native. The racism that becomes a mark of nineteenth-century Gothic arises out of the attempt within horror fiction to give form to what terrifies the national community. Gothic monsters are defined both as other than the imagined community and as the being that cannot be imagined as community.

“Racism and anti-Semitism,” Anderson writes, “manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign wars as domestic oppression and domination” (136). The racism and anti-Semitism that I have identified as a hallmark of nineteenth-century Gothic literature certainly direct themselves towards a domestic rather than a foreign scene. Gothic in the 1890s, as represented by the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde, takes place in the backstreets of London in laboratories and asylums, in old abandoned houses and decaying city streets, in hospitals and bedrooms, in homes and gardens. The monster, such a narrative suggests, will find you in the intimacy of your own home; indeed, it will make your home its home (or you its home) and alter forever the comfort of domestic privacy. The monster peeps through the window, enters through the back door, and sits beside you in the parlor; the monster is always invited in but never asked to stay. The racism that seems to inhere to the nineteenth-century Gothic monster, then, may be drawn from imperialistic or colonialist fantasies of other lands and peoples, but it concentrates its imaginative force upon the other peoples in “our” lands, the monsters at home. The figure of the parasite becomes paramount within Gothic precisely because it is an internal not an external danger that Gothic identifies and attempts to dispel.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt has argued convincingly that the modern category of anti-Semitism emerges from both nineteenth-century attempts to make race the “key to history” and the particular history of the Jews as “a people without a government, without a country, and without a language.”²⁷ As such, the Jew, with regards to nation and, for our purposes, to English nationality, might be said to

represent the not-English, the not-middle-class, the parasitical tribe that drains but never restores or produces. Arendt shows how the decline of the aristocracy and of nationalism by the mid-nineteenth century made people seek new ground for both commonality and superiority. She writes, "For if race doctrines finally served more sinister and immediately political purposes, it is still true that much of their plausibility and persuasiveness lay in the fact that they helped anybody feel himself an aristocrat who had been selected by birth on the strength of 'racial' qualification." Arendt's point is of central importance to an understanding of the history of Gothic. We might note in passing that, from the late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the terrain of Gothic horror shifted from the fear of corrupted aristocracy or clergy, represented by the haunted castle or abbey, to the fear embodied by monstrous bodies. Reading Gothic with nineteenth-century ideologies of race suggests why this shift occurs. If, then, with the rise of bourgeois culture, aristocratic heritage became less and less of an index of essential national identity, the construction of national unity increasingly depended upon the category of race and class. Therefore, the blood of nobility now became the blood of the native and both were identified in contradistinction to so-called "impure" races such as Jews and Gypsies. The nobility, furthermore, gave way to a middle class identified by both their relation to capital as producers and consumers and a normal sexuality that leads to reproduction.²⁸

The Gothic novel, I have been arguing, establishes the terms of monstrosity that were to be, and indeed were in the process of being, projected onto all who threatened the interests of a dwindling English nationalism. As the English empire stretched over oceans and continents, the need to define an essential English character became more and more pressing. Non-nationals, like Jews, for example, but also like the Irish or Gypsies, came to be increasingly identified by their alien natures and the concept of "foreign" became ever more closely associated with a kind of parasitical monstrosity, a non-reproductive sexuality, and an anti-English character. Gothic monsters in the 1880s and 1890s made parasitism — vampirism — the defining characteristic of horror. The parasitical nature of the beast might be quite literal, as in Stoker's vampire, or it might be a more indirect trait, as suggested by the creeping and homeless Hyde; it might be defined by a homoerotic influence, as exerted by Dorian Gray. Parasitism, especially with regards to the vampire, represents a bad or pathological sexuality, non-reproductive sexuality, a sex-

uality that exhausts and wastes and exists prior to and outside of the marriage contract.

The ability of race ideology and sexology to create a new elite to replace the aristocracy also allows for the staging of historical battles within the body. This suggests how Gothic monstrosity may intersect with, participate in, and resist the production of a theory of racial superiority. The Gothic monster—Frankenstein's creature, Hyde, Dorian Gray, and Dracula—represents the dramatization of the race question and of sexology in their many different incarnations. If Frankenstein's monster articulates the injustice of demonizing one's own productions, Hyde suggests that the most respectable bodies may be contaminated by bad blood; and if Dorian Gray's portrait makes an essential connection between the homosexual and the uncanny, Dracula embodies once and for all the danger of the hybrid race and the perverse sexuality within the form of the vampire.

The Power of Horror

In Gothic, as in many areas of Victorian culture, sexual material was not repressed but produced on a massive scale, as Michel Foucault has argued.²⁹ The narrative, then, that professed outrage at acts of sexual perversion (the nightly wanderings of Hyde, for example, or Dracula's midnight feasts) in fact produced a catalogue of perverse sexuality by first showcasing the temptations of the flesh in glorious technicolor and then by depicting so-called normal sex as a sickly enterprise devoid of all passion. One has only to think of the contrast between Mina Harker's encounter with Count Dracula—she is found lapping at blood from his breast—and her sexually neutral, maternal relations with her husband.

The production of sexuality as identity and as the inversion of identity (perversion—a turning away from identity) in Gothic novels consolidates normal sexuality by defining it in contrast to its monstrous manifestations. Horror, I have suggested, exercises power even as it incites pleasure and/or disgust. Horror, indeed, has a power closely related to its pleasure-producing function and the twin mechanism of pleasure-power perhaps explains how it is that Gothic may empower some readers even as it disables others. An example of how Gothic appeals differently to different readers may be found in contemporary slasher movies like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween*

(1978). Critics generally argue that these films inspire potency in a male viewer and incredible vulnerability in a female viewer. However, as we shall see in the later chapters of this book, the mechanisms of Gothic narrative never turn so neatly around gender identifications. A male viewer of the slasher film, like a male reader of the nineteenth-century Gothic, may find himself on the receiving end of countless acts of degradation in relation to monstrosity and its powers while the female reader and spectator may be able to access a surprising source of power through monstrous forms and monstrous genres.

In her psychoanalytic study of fear, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines horror in terms of “abjection.” The abject, she writes, is “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.”³⁰ In a chapter on the writings of Celine, Kristeva goes on to identify abjection with the Jew of anti-Semitic discourse. Anti-Semitic fantasy, she suggests, elevates Jewishness to both mastery and weakness, to “sex tinged with femininity and death” (185).

The Jew, for Kristeva, anchors abjection within a body, a foreign body that retains a certain familiarity and that therefore confuses the boundary between self and other. The connection that Kristeva makes between psychological categories and socio-political processes leads her to claim that anti-Semitism functions as a receptacle for all kinds of fears—sexual, political, national, cultural, economic. This insight is important to the kinds of arguments that I am making about the economic function of the Gothic monster. The Jew in general within anti-Semitism is gothicized or transformed into a figure of almost universal loathing who haunts the community and represents its worst fears. By making the Jew supernatural, Gothic anti-Semitism actually makes Jews into spooks and Jew-hating into a psychological inevitability. The power of literary horror, indeed, lies in its ability to transform political struggles into psychological conditions and then to blur the distinction between the two. Literary horror, or Gothic, I suggest, uses the language of race hatred (most obviously anti-Semitism) to characterize monstrosity as a representation of psychological disorder. To understand the way monster may be equated with Jew or foreigner or non-English national, we need to historicize Gothic metaphors like vampire and parasite. We also have to read the effacement of the connection between monster and foreigner alongside the articulation of monster as a sexual category.

The Return of the Repressed

In an introduction to *Studies on Hysteria* written in 1893, Freud identifies the repressed itself as a foreign body. Noting that hysterical symptoms replay some original trauma in response to an accident, Freud explains that the memory of trauma “acts like a foreign body which, long after its entry, must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work.”³¹ In other words, until an original site of trauma reveals itself in therapy, it remains foreign to body and mind but active in both. The repressed, then, figures as a sexual secret that the body keeps from itself and it figures as foreign because what disturbs the body goes unrecognized by the mind.

The fiction that Freud tells about the foreign body as the repressed connects remarkably with the fiction Gothic tells about monsters as foreigners. Texts, like bodies, store up memories of past fears, of distant traumas. “Hysterics,” writes Freud, “suffer mainly from reminiscences” (7). History, personal and social, haunts hysterics and the repressed always takes on an uncanny life of its own. Freud here has described the landscape of his own science — foreignness is repressed into the depths of an unconscious, a kind of cesspool of forgotten memories, and it rises to the surface as a sexual disturbance. Psychoanalysis gothicizes sexuality; that is to say, it creates a body haunted by a monstrous sexuality and forced into repressing its Gothic secrets. Psychoanalysis, in the Freudian scenario, is a sexual science able to account for and perhaps cure Gothic sexualities. Gothicization in this formula, then, is the identification of bodies in terms of what they are not. A Gothic other stabilizes sameness, a gothicized body is one that disrupts the surface-depth relationship between the body and the mind. It is the body that must be spoken, identified, or eliminated.

Eve Sedgwick has advanced a reading of Gothic as the return of the repressed. She reads fear in the Gothic in terms of the trope of “live burial” and finds in Gothic “a carceral sublime of representation, of the body, and potentially of politics and history as well” (*Coherence*, vi). Live burial as a trope is, of course, standard fare in the Gothic, particularly in eighteenth-century Gothic like Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* and Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Live burial also works nicely as a metaphor for a repressed thing that threatens to return. Sedgwick’s example of the repressed in Gothic is homosexuality. She characterizes the “paranoid Gothic novel” in terms of its thematization of homophobia

and thus, she describes *Frankenstein's* plot in terms of "a tableau of two men chasing each other across the landscape" (*Coherence*, ix).

But Sedgwick's reading tells only half the story. The sexual outsider in Gothic, I am suggesting, is always also a racial pariah, a national outcast, a class outlaw. The "carceral sublime of representation" that, for Sedgwick, marks the role of textuality or language in the production of fear does not only symbolize that Gothic language buries fear alive. Live burial is certainly a major and standard trope of Gothic but I want to read it alongside the trope of parasitism. Parasitism, I think, adds an economic dimension to live burial that reveals the entanglement of capital, nation, and the body in the fictions of otherness sanctified and popularized by any given culture. If live burial, for Sedgwick, reveals a "queerness of meaning," an essential doubleness within language that plays itself out through homoerotic doubles within the text, the carceral in my reading hinges upon a more clearly metonymic structure. Live burial as parasitism, then, becomes a tooth buried in an exposed neck for the explicit purpose of blood sucking or a monstrous Hyde hidden within the very flesh of a respectable Jekyll. Live burial is the entanglement of self and other within monstrosity and the parasitical relationship between the two. The one is always buried in the other.

The form of the Gothic novel, again as Sedgwick remarks, reflects further upon the parasitical monstrosity it creates. The story buried within a story buried within a story that Shelley's *Frankenstein* popularizes evolves into the narrative with one story but many different tellers. This form is really established by Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860). In this novel, Collins uses a series of narrators so that almost every character in the novel tells his or her side of the story. Such a narrative device gives the effect of completion and operates according to a kind of judicial model of narration where all witnesses step forward to give an account. Within this narrative system, the author professes to be no more than a collector of documents, a compiler of the facts of the case. The reader, of course, is the judge and jury, the courtroom audience, and often, a kind of prosecuting presence expected to know truth, recognize guilt, and penalize monstrosity.

In *Dracula* Bram Stoker directly copies Collins's style. Stevenson also uses Collins's narrative technique in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* but he frames his story in a more overtly legal setting so that our main narrator is a lawyer, the central document is the last will and testament of Dr. Jekyll, and all other accounts contribute to the "strange case." All Gothic novels employing this narrative device share an almost obsessive con-

cern with documentation and they all exhibit a sinister mistrust of the not-said, the unspoken, the hidden, and the silent. Furthermore, most Gothic novels lack the point of view of the monster. Collins does include in his novel a chapter by the notorious Count Fosco but Fosco's account is written as a forced confession that confirms his guilt and reveals his machinations. Neither Dracula nor Dorian Gray ever directly give their versions of events and Jekyll stands in at all times for his monstrous double, Hyde.

Collins's novel is extremely important to the Victorian Gothic tradition in that it establishes a layered narrative structure in which a story must be peeled back to reveal the secret or repressed center. The secret buried in the heart of Gothic, I suggested much earlier, is usually identified as a sexual secret. In an essay on the function of sensationalism in *The Woman in White*, Ann Cvetkovich argues that the sexual secret in this novel ultimately has little to do with a random sexual desire and everything to do with the class structure that brings Walter Hartright into contact with his future bride, Laura Fairlie. Cvetkovich suggests that the novel, in fact, sensationalizes class relations by making the relationship between Laura and her lowly art teacher seem fateful—preordained rather than a product of one man's social ambition.³²

Novels in a Gothic mode transform class and race, sexual and national relations into supernatural or monstrous features. The threat posed by the Gothic monster is a combination of money, science, perversion, and imperialism but by reducing it to solely sexual aberrance, we fail to historicize Gothic embodiments.

The Technology of Monsters

This book will argue that Gothic novels are technologies that produce the monster as a remarkably mobile, permeable, and infinitely interpretable body. The monster's body, indeed, is a machine that, in its Gothic mode, produces meaning and can represent any horrible trait that the reader feeds into the narrative. The monster functions as monster, in other words, when it is able to condense as many fear-producing traits as possible into one body. Hence the sense that Frankenstein's monster is bursting out of his skin—he is indeed filled to bursting point with flesh and meaning both. Dracula, at the other end of the nineteenth century, is a body that consumes to excess—the vampiric body in its ideal state is a bloated body, sated with the blood of its victims.

Monsters are meaning machines. They can represent gender, race,

nationality, class, and sexuality in one body. And even within these divisions of identity, the monster can still be broken down. Dracula, for example, can be read as aristocrat, a symbol of the masses; he is predator and yet feminine, he is consumer and producer, he is parasite and host, he is homosexual and heterosexual, he is even a lesbian. Monsters and the Gothic fiction that creates them are therefore technologies, narrative technologies that produce the perfect figure for negative identity. Monsters have to be everything the human is not and, in producing the negative of human, these novels make way for the invention of human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual.

But Gothic is also a narrative technique, a generic spin that transforms the lovely and the beautiful into the abhorrent and then frames this transformation within a humanist moral fable. A brilliant postmodern example of what happens when a narrative is gothicized is Tim Burton's surrealistic *Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993). *Nightmare* is an animated fantasy about what happens when Halloween takes over Christmas. Halloween and Christmas, in this film, are conceived as places rather than times or occasions and they each are embodied by their festive representatives, Jack Skeleton and Santa Claus. Indeed religious or superstitious meanings of these holidays are almost entirely absent from the plot. Jack Skeleton is a kind of melancholic romantic hero who languishes under the strain of representing fear and maintaining the machinery of horror every year. He stumbles upon the place called Christmas one day after a stroll through the woods beyond his graveyard and he decides that he wants to do Christmas this year instead of Halloween.

The transformation of Christmas into Halloween is the gothicization of the sentimental; presents and toys, food and decorations are all transformed from cheery icons of goodwill into fanged monsters, death masks, and all manner of skullduggery. Kids are frightened, parents are shocked, Santa Claus is kidnapped, and mayhem ensues. Of course, a pathetic sentimental heroine called Sally uses her rag-doll body to restore law and order and to woo Jack back to his proper place but nonetheless, the damage has been done. Christmas, the myth of a transcendent generosity, goodwill, and community love has been unmasked as just another consumer ritual and its icons have been exposed as simply toys without teeth or masks that smile instead of grimace. The naturalness and goodness of Christmas has unraveled and shown itself to be the easy target of any and all attempts to make it Gothic.

While *Nightmare* suggests that, at least in a postmodern setting, gothicization seems to have progressive and even radicalizing effects, it is not always so simple to tell whether the presence of Gothic registers a conservative or a progressive move. Of course, Gothic is, as I have been arguing, mobile and therefore, we should not expect it to succumb so easily to attempts to make a claim for its political investments. But it does seem as if there has been a transformation in the uses of Gothic from the early nineteenth century to the present. The second part of my study attempts to read the contemporary horror film in order to argue that horror now disrupts dominant culture's representations of family, heterosexuality, ethnicity, and class politics. It disrupts, furthermore, the logic of genre that essentializes generic categories and stabilizes the production of meaning within them. Gothic film horror, I propose, produces models of reading (many in any one location) that allow for multiple interpretations and a plurality of locations of cultural resistance.

In this study I am using terms like "Gothic" and "technology" very specifically. Gothic has typically been used to refer to two sets of novels: first, to refer to Gothic revival novels of the late eighteenth century and then second, to refer to a cluster of fin-de-siècle novels in England. Obviously this study is more concerned with the latter group but I am not simply using Gothic as a generic organizing term. Gothic, I will be arguing, is the breakdown of genre and the crisis occasioned by the inability to "tell," meaning both the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize. Gothic, I argue, marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse. Gothic monsters, furthermore, differ from the monsters that come before the nineteenth century in that the monsters of modernity are characterized by their proximity to humans.

This book follows Gothic monstrosity through its various incarnations in fiction and film and across two centuries. In chapter 2, "Making Monsters: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," I read *Frankenstein* as an allegory of the history of the novel. Mary Shelley, I argue, produces a "totalizing" monster who defines the cultural and symbolic functions of monstrosity. This monster signifies an array of societal, political, and sexual threats and must be read as a textual technology and a Gothic history of narrative itself. In the next chapter, on *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, I examine these two Gothic texts as inversions of each other which both produce a model of human subjectivity predicated on a topology of surface and depth. Hyde is hidden within Jekyll and Dorian Gray's picture takes upon its own sur-

face the traces of his debauched life. In each case inner and outer identities are layered over each other to produce the effects of humanity, perversity, racial impurity, and degeneration. My fourth chapter, on Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, understands *Dracula* to be a cornerstone of Gothic writing in that it produces another "totalizing" monster, a brother to Frankenstein's monster, who represents the fate of anarchic consumption. In my reading of the vampire's particular brand of monstrosity, I comment upon the peculiar consistencies between the Gothic vampire and the anti-Semite's Jew.

The second half of *Skin Shows* begins to trace Gothic monstrosity into the twentieth century and into contemporary horror film. I use psychoanalysis in chapter 5 in order to bridge the gap between nineteenth- and twentieth-century conceptions of monstrosity, fear, and horror. In keeping with my claim throughout that fear and monstrosity are historically specific forms rather than psychological universals, I try to account for a switch in emphasis within the representation and interpretation of monstrous bodies from class, race, and nationality to a primary focus upon sexuality and gender. In large part, this narrowing down of monstrous features to monstrous sex and gender has to do with the success of the hegemonic installation of psychoanalytic interpretations of human subjectivity which understand subjectivity as sexual subjectivity and identity as sexual identity and monstrosity as sexual pathology. Freud's case histories of paranoia illustrate well the psychoanalytic fictions of fear and loathing which tend to revolve around a rather homophobic insistence on paranoia as fear of homosexual desire. I conclude this chapter by reading Freud's case of paranoia in a woman against the grain and arguing for a productive site of inquiry into fear through female paranoia that may produce feminist readings of horror.

To demonstrate the effects of a psychoanalytic account of horror and fear, I graft my analysis of Freud's case history of paranoia in a woman onto Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963). It becomes clear immediately that the cinematic monstrosity of the birds represents something very different, and functions differently, than the textual horror of Frankenstein's monster and *Dracula*. As we will see in relation to postmodern horror film, the postmodern era does not offer any totalizing monsters, and meaning refuses to coalesce within one hideous body. The birds themselves in Hitchcock's film are a good example of the transference of horror from a specifically unnatural body to nature itself embodied within the myriad form of a flock of aggressive birds. The horror

genre itself, as it moves from book to cinema, from word to image shatters into many pieces and every horror film simultaneously creates the genre anew and conforms loosely to the conventions of a subgenre.

In order to trace the evolution of a post-psychoanalytic cinema of cruelty, I examine symptomatic instances within two models of horror. While one's first impulse might be to mark these models as "masculine" and "feminine," gender soon becomes inadequate as an axis of identification. While a film like *The Birds* seems to readily offer itself to a psychoanalytic interpretation based upon gender identifications, a later subgenre known as "splatter cinema" seems to refuse the neat classification of aberrant gender horror. Splatter films themselves have a long history going back to the early Hammer films based upon the myths of Frankenstein and Dracula and it is this genre which seems to continue the Gothic lineage of the nineteenth-century Gothic novel. Even in relation to the avowed economic motivation behind the production of Gothic, Hammer films and nineteenth-century Gothic are in accord. Sir James Carrera, the founder and president of Hammer film productions, is quoted as saying, "We're in the business to make money, not to win Oscars. If the public were to decide tomorrow that it wanted Strauss waltzes, we'd be in the Strauss waltz business."³³ It is not hard to hear in this statement an echo of Robert Louis Stevenson's justification of his "Gothic gnome." Also implicit in Carreras's words is the connection between monstrous art, monstrous economy, and the perverse pleasures of the public.

Horror, in other words, within twentieth-century cinema has both a high-culture and a low-culture life. *The Birds*, of course, belongs to the oeuvre of auteur Alfred Hitchcock while much splatter horror is made by low-budget gore masters. The mind/body split that divides nineteenth-century Gothic from nineteenth-century realism is reproduced here as the difference between films for money that depict graphic violence for a voyeuristic audience and films for art's sake which depict the epic struggles of human against other. And popularity is not the difference between these two branches of Gothic cinema; the difference again lies in the depiction of bodily monstrosity and the division of fear into psychological and physiological categories. Nowadays, of course, the psychological horror film is called the "thriller" and in the psychoanalytic tradition, it tends to represent fear through narratives about rape and sexual murder (*Jagged Edge*, *Unlawful Entry*, *Blink*).

Since I do not have room in this study to catalogue the horror genre in any kind of comprehensive manner, I examine representative films

from high and low Gothic cinema in order to give a symptomatic history of the horror film and to show how it descends from nineteenth-century Gothic. I look first at Hitchcock's *The Birds* as an example of female paranoia which bears comparison to Freud's case history of a paranoid woman and as an example of the psychohorror lodged within the heart of the ordinary, the natural, and the everyday. Next, I turn to a lugubrious example of splatter cinema in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*.

My final chapter, on *The Silence of the Lambs*, claims that this film is important to the genre partly because it represents the horror of the extraordinary and the horror of the ordinary side by side but also because it marks the place where low-budget basement gore comes to mainstream Hollywood as an art film. It is not enough to remark that Jonathan Demme, therefore, sells out the cult status of the B movie and transforms it into a mainstream commodity, rather Demme robs liberally from both the psychodrama and the blood fest to create the thinking person's splatter film. Demme's later work, like the deplorable *Philadelphia* (1994), suggests what makes him so suited for this function of cleaning up the splatter genre—he is part of a new crop of blockbuster directors, including Oliver Stone and Steven Spielberg, who manage to capitalize on the popularity of a subject without acknowledging any of the material conditions which make that subject popular.

Throughout my readings of the horror film, I stress the role of reception and call for a Gothic spectatorship, a set of practices not bound by the strict rules of psychoanalytic film theory. I suggest the limits of psychoanalytic readings of horror and I call simultaneously for feminist and queer Gothic readings. Since the horror film, as I have suggested, seems to locate monstrosity primarily within monstrous gender and monstrous sexuality and since the predations of the monster inevitably focus upon a female victim, feminist and queer responses to these Gothic modalities are most certainly called for if we are to make a claim for the positivity of horror. Any consideration of monstrosity within contemporary film, in other words, has to reckon with the function of male violence and female passivity. I suggest that we apply the insights learned from nineteenth-century Gothic to twentieth-century Gothic to read the monster as mobile and open to multiple interpretations and the Gothic text itself as a meaning machine available for any number of readings.

In my final two chapters, then, I attempt extended readings of some of the different trajectories of Gothic monstrosity within the modern slasher film. In the chapters on *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* and *The*

Silence of the Lambs, I argue that they reproduce the terms, conditions, and technologies of nineteenth-century Gothic horror but tend to shift the position of monstrosity within those narratives. The monster, eventually, is no longer totalizing. The monstrous body that once represented everything is now represented as potentially meaning anything — it may be the outcast, the outlaw, the parasite, the pervert, the embodiment of uncontrollable sexual and violent urges, the foreigner, the misfit. The monster is all of these but monstrosity has become a conspiracy of bodies rather than a singular form. Milton, Blake once commented in relation to *Paradise Lost*, was of the devil's party. Within postmodern Gothic we are all of the devil's party. My final chapter, on *The Silence of the Lambs*, claims that monstrosity is almost a queer category that defines the subject as at least partially monstrous. Within postmodern Gothic we no longer attempt to identify the monster and fix the terms of his/her deformity, rather postmodern Gothic warns us to be suspicious of monster hunters, monster makers, and above all, discourses invested in purity and innocence. The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities.