

**THE CHILD AND THE GOTHIC BODY:
A STUDY OF ABJECTION AND NINETEENTH CENTURY INFLUENCES IN
SELECTED WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of child-monster figures in a selection of contemporary Gothic children's novels: *Surrender* by Sonya Hartnett, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs* by Jack Gantos, and *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer. Using a combined psychoanalytic and historicist approach, drawing on the works of Julia Kristeva and numerous nineteenth-century European theorists, including Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau, this thesis explores how the experience of abjection has continued to be expressed and understood in contemporary texts through nineteenth-century European pseudo-science. The analysis reveals a connection between current cultural anxieties and nineteenth-century anxieties in Britain in regard to rising technology, specifically technology threatening to affect the human body/species. The three primary texts examined in the thesis use the child-monster's connection with the maternal body to express anxieties about the future of human reproduction.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As a child I developed a taste for all things Gothic: art, literature, film, and, during my angst-ridden phase, music. From my adolescence to my adulthood, scary movies and frightening books have continued to appeal to me. The allure of Gothic literature, movies, and iconography was not just about fear for me. It was about my own misgivings about the world around me, the suspicions that tapped their bony fingers at the back of my mind. Even though scary movies and books surrounded me, I, like so many children, was insulated from real threats and disturbing truths by the adults in my life. As I grew older, those dark suspicions revealed themselves in reality. I inevitably learned about family skeletons and why children were never supposed to talk to strangers. The Gothic imagination represents, for me, the dark imaginings that played out in my mind before each reality behind the suspicion showed itself. What happened to kids who were kidnapped and what death really looked like were two of the big realizations that made the world a lot more frightening for me. The truth was nauseating, disappointingly real and unalterable. It was artless. But for me, Gothic art, especially literature, returned the mystery and allure to fear. The Gothic became the ideal expression of my fears. It was so fantastically ugly, and fascinating, and far, far away. This is how the Gothic genre became a part of my concept of childhood. It is, for me, the dark side to the child's imagination, a prickly security blanket.

Upon entering the Master of Arts in Children's Literature program at UBC, I inevitably sought out children's texts that contained familiar, if somewhat sinister friends. As I searched the shelves of local bookstores for some new titles, it became clear to me that publishers are aware of the draw of the horror genre for young readers. The most popular new publications in Canada, specifically for tweens and teens, have obvious dark ties. In 2008, all four of the installments of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2006-2008) were in the top five on the

Canadian bestseller list, not just under the juvenile category, but across all categories (Medley n.pag.). Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999-2006), Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008), not to mention the inescapable works of J.K. Rowling, have all met with huge success and cleared the way for other children's and young adult writers to spook their audiences. Gothic children's literature, it seems, has found a home with North American youth. Yet, as Karen Coats, Anna Jackson, and Roderick McGillis note in their introduction to *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders* (2008), "surprisingly little critical attention has been paid so far to Gothic children's literature" (1).

Perhaps this is because the Gothic has generally been frowned upon when it is aimed at the vulnerable minds of the young. In her introduction to *Frightening Fiction* (2001), Kimberley Reynolds observes that parents and teachers typically consider children's and young adult horror fiction tasteless, and devoid of any qualities that might enrich young minds (2). Existing under such antagonistic adult scrutiny, Gothic children's books may not be considered worthy of serious, in-depth academic study. However, in my reading I have come across a number of books that have obvious literary value and the potential to impact the evolution of children's literature.

Rationale for Selecting Texts

When first considering topics for this thesis, I knew I wanted to explore the dark tradition. I initially considered exploring Gothic elements in fairy tales, specifically themes of incest and cannibalism, but I quickly realised that Jack Zipes and Maria Tatar among many others, have completed extensive research on fairy tales, and I wanted to write about an emergent area in the study of children's literature. Next I considered the transformation of the fairy tale in the hands

of Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean in the illustrated novel *Coraline*. While this is a new and exciting text, it was difficult to find other primary texts that would fit a similar analysis.

By the time I resolved to abandon the prospect of focussing on *Coraline*, I had realized my interest in the common literary expressions of cultural anxieties from the nineteenth century to the present. I decided to write about child-monster figures in adolescent children's literature. I had already focussed on Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* in my undergraduate thesis and books such as those in Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series and R.L. Stine's *Fear Street* and *Goosebumps* series did not fit into my concept of Gothic literature. My definition of a Gothic narrative requires the text to present the reader with disturbing and taboo subject matter, (thereby allowing the reader to experience fear and disgust), to address current North American cultural anxieties, and, above all, to feature protagonists who are morally compromised. This excludes most of the popular horror fiction I have mentioned. I am not alone in my assessment of these novels: Kimberley Reynolds believes that publishers are applying the horror genre to its children's and adolescent literature too loosely. She explains the problematic influence of marketing over the application of the horror genre in *Frightening Fiction*:

anyone who reads widely in the current wave of juvenile and adolescent 'horror' fiction will recognize that publishers apply the label very loosely and frequently inaccurately, largely for the purposes of increasing sales. Whereas traditionally horror has been characterized by the drive to leave readers feeling uneasy and fearful in the face of uncertainty ... much of the fiction now sold as horror and written with a juvenile audience in mind is notable for the sense of security it ultimately engenders. Instead of ambiguous endings, the closure of these novels is typically a disclosure in which what was thought to be inexplicable is explained, and what seemed dangerous and menacing is made safe and often even comfortable. (2)

Many of the most popular books labelled by publishers as “horror fiction” lack the defining characteristics of the Gothic genre and this disqualified them from consideration in my analysis. Predictably there were not many texts then left to choose from. Those that I did come across, such as Jeanne DuPrau’s *The City of Ember* (2004), Laura Whitcomb’s *A Certain Slant of Light* (2005), M.T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2004) and *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing* (2006), and Sonya Hartnett’s *The Devil’s Latch* (1997), draw on classic nineteenth-century Gothic texts like *The Coming Race* (1871), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), and *Frankenstein* (1818). This connection revealed similarities between our current anxieties and early nineteenth century and Victorian anxieties. These shared fears are about the encroaching impact of scientific advancement on the quality of human existence. In her introduction to *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (2002), Laura Otis describes the effect of nineteenth-century scientific theory on literature written in its wake:

Perhaps the most disturbing question nineteenth-century writers faced was what it meant to be human. The rapid development of industrialization, physiology, evolutionary theory, and the mental and social sciences challenged the traditional view of people as uniquely privileged beings created in the divine image ... it became increasingly difficult for educated writers to refer to a ‘soul’. Too many other fields offered alternative explanations of human behaviour. (xxvi)

According to Otis, the theoretical and philosophical implications arising from the study of human biology and psychology were not limited to scientists and writers. Scientific theories were published alongside short stories and serial novels in popular publications such as Charles Dickens’ *Household Words* where they would be read by housewives and men of business alike (xviii). The rooting of individual human nature in biology led to pursuits of physical “tells” such

as the slope of one's forehead, or the prominence of one's jaw, that would separate classes of evolution. In *The Gothic Body* (1996), Kelly Hurley writes about how the fast-paced development of scientific thought resulted in the division of Victorian society into the human and the abhuman. She explains, "The abhuman subject is a not-quite-human subject, characterized by its morphic variability, continually in danger of becoming not-itself, becoming other" (3-4). The work of theorists such as Benedict-Augustin Morel, who first wrote about degeneration and was cited by other theorists, including Max Nordau, reinforced the Victorian public's fears and strengthened the division between human and abhuman by offering scientific support. In his study of the effect of degenerative theory on the treatment of the mentally ill in European and American society, Rafael Huertas explains how the body became a symptom:

Certain traits of the degenerated person's external morphology (stigmata) made the abnormal shape of his body quite clearly evident, and justified ... his 'qualitative' separation from the normal individual on apparently scientific grounds.... Anthropological racism, medical somaticism, persecution of the abnormal or the unusual, and so forth, were some of the major contributions of positivist science. (391)

This division within Victorian society surfaced in the period's Gothic literature, a genre centrally concerned with the horrific re-making of the human subject, within a general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical, which served to dismantle conventional notions of "the human" as radically as did the Gothic which arose in response to them. Evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology, pre-Freudian psychology – all articulated new models of the human as abhuman, as bodily ambiguated or otherwise discontinuous in identity. (Hurley 5)

For Victorians, this anxiety centred on the emerging concept of evolution and theories that branched out from it. Fears of degeneration together with evolutionary ambition, the desire to further improve the human species, led to the advancement of eugenics and pseudo-sciences such as phrenology. Under the scrutiny of the scientific gaze, the human body became a book on which its origins and destination could be read. The working classes, the physically disabled, the female and child populations became specimens of deviance for physiologists, physicians, and the large portion of upper and middle class citizens who read articles in household publications such as *Household Words*.

In the twenty-first century, we are approaching the development of technology that could create and manipulate the human body to intimidating specifications. Rather than weed out populations with so-called degenerative traits as the eugenicists of the past proposed, we will be able to remove them *in vitro* and surpass the eugenics movement by enhancing desirable traits through genetic manipulation. In this ability lies the potential for both great and terrible consequences and, even before such technology has been harnessed, controversy surrounds it. In both the present and the nineteenth century, we see the potential for a radical change in the definition of humanity, a confrontation between religion and morality on one hand, and the drive to advance knowledge and enhance the physical body on the other. Some nineteenth-century European authors expressed their anxieties by integrating science into their narratives. This is especially true of writers of Gothic fiction. The genre was permanently altered by scientific thought. Its narratives began to take place in urban settings and the Gothic found a Romantic hero in its mad scientists. The physical bodies of Gothic protagonists, who were often born or grew to be monsters, became the focus of cultural anxieties. This relationship between science and Gothic literature has survived and is enacted in contemporary narratives. To analyse this

parallel between the Victorian and the contemporary eras, my primary texts will use the same figure to express contemporary anxieties. The child protagonists of the narratives are monsters.

The three texts I have chosen as the focus for my thesis are Sonya Hartnett's *Surrender* (2005), Jack Gantos' *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs* (2006), and Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* (2004). While each of these texts addresses current anxieties about the present and near future, all three also reveal the persistence of Victorian anxieties that have lingered in the collective imagination. The books are marketed to adolescent readers, but their commitment to Gothic conventions makes them accessible to an older audience. In their introductory article to the twenty-fifth volume of the journal, *Children's Literature* (1997), "From the Editors: 'Cross-Writing' and the Reconceptualizing of Children's Literary Studies," U. C. Knoepfelmacher and Mitzi Myers acknowledge that "[a]uthors who write for children inevitably create a colloquy between past and present selves" (vii). By using traditional adult Gothic themes and archetypes, while writing for an adolescent audience, Hartnett, Gantos, and Farmer create a dialogue between the past and the present, and between the adolescent and adult genres.

Research Question, Topic, and Focus

My principal research question throughout my thesis project has been this: How do the developing bodies of child-monsters influence their developing identities? This question is not concerned exclusively with their internal maturation, both biological and psychological, but the dynamic between their external and internal experiences. For example, I examine how a child's biological inclination toward monstrosity reacts to an abusive or hostile community, or even contact with certain substances. Their bodies are the signifiers through which they interact with the world and develop relationships. In the context of nineteenth-century scientific theories of physiology such as phrenology, the appearance and structure of human body parts became

signifiers of an individual's human nature. Basing their theories on physical attributes, scientists such as Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau created literal "body language." I want to study how the protagonists' bodies in the primary texts I have selected signify and how their physical impression affects their relationships with their environment, with other children, adults, and themselves.

As twenty-first century works, these three novels also share a contemporary understanding of the human body. For readers today, bodies are not only shells; they are formed by genetic codes that underlie basic desires and aptitudes. However, the question of whether environment, genetics, or conscious effort effects an individual's development more remains unanswered. The war between the child-monsters' natural desires and aptitudes, and the demands of the social contract of the communities in which they exist, meaning the set of rules citizens must conform to in order to remain within the protection of the fold, is their primary site of development. I want to explore this conflict and study how the protagonists' bodies signify, what internal qualities their physical characteristics betray.

The logic of the secondary worlds in which my protagonists live emulates nineteenth-century scientific theory in the portrayal of the children and surrounding community. Simultaneously, however, the fictional communities also acknowledge contemporary scientific beliefs about heredity and genetics, thereby creating a connection between the fears of the past and present; In the early nineteenth century, Frankenstein's creation reflected fears about the inhumanness of the scientific production of humanity and so does Nancy Farmer's young protagonist, Matt, in *The House of the Scorpion*. Both nineteenth century and twenty-first century Gothic writers turn to the physical body to express concerns, and describe their monsters using similar physical traits, extracted from both the imagination and nineteenth-century scientific theory. Though the

methods of creation between Victor Frankenstein's cut-and-paste job and Matt's cloning process are very different, in the eyes of each fictional community, the outcomes are equally monstrous. The key difference does not lie in the separation of technological strategies so much as it lies in the separation of child and adult bodies. The child body complicates the portrayal of a monster by eliminating the exaggerated distortion of an adult body that is easier to identify and easier to destroy.

The three primary texts I have chosen enable me to construct an analysis that progresses over a continuum of technological preoccupation, ranging from primitive rituals to human cloning; all three embody neo-Victorian sensibilities. The technological progression also allows me to trace how the child monster evolves with the technology. The novels move from *Surrender*, a narrative with a superstitious/psychological preoccupation to *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, which traces the development of post-mortem preservation and enters into the realm of cloning, ending with *The House of the Scorpion*, a narrative set in a futuristic world where clones are bred as organ donors. All three texts feature child-monster protagonists, and the depictions of their physical bodies reflect Victorian anxieties about the shifting conception of humanity.

Introduction to Primary Texts

Surrender, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, and *The House of the Scorpion* progress along lines of both technological presence and the decreasing visibility of monstrosity in contemporary Gothic literature. However, the emphasis on the importance of the physical body in monstrosity does not vary.

Surrender

Sonya Harnett's *Surrender* follows the story of Anwell, who reminisces about his childhood in the isolated town of Muylan, while, at twenty years of age, he wastes away on his deathbed. Anwell recalls when he first meets Finnigan, who is later revealed to be a split in Anwell's personality. Anwell is overwhelmed by guilt after accidentally killing his mentally and physically disabled brother, Vernon. Finnigan offers to take on Anwell's darker proclivities so that Anwell can be the perfect child for his parents and avoid punishment. Upon reaching this agreement, Anwell is split into an evil self (Finnigan) and a good self (Gabriel). While Finnigan begins an arson spree that terrorizes the town, Gabriel becomes increasingly victimized by his parents. After being publicly humiliated by his mother and forced, by his father, to kill his dog Surrender, Gabriel murders both parents with a hatchet. As the story reaches its conclusion, the reader learns that the present-day Gabriel, who is narrating the story, is willing himself to die in order to defeat Finnigan. The final scene describes Finnigan falling into hell and Gabriel rising into heaven as Anwell dies.

By aligning the divided nature of its protagonist's monstrosity with the figure(s) of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *Surrender* contains only a subtle scientific presence. Instead of being the result of consuming an experimental elixir, young Anwell's division of self into the angelic Gabriel and demonic Finnigan can be traced to two possible origins—one scientific, the other superstitious. The first is a psychological break resulting from a traumatic childhood event and/or hereditary predisposition to mental illness. The second is supernatural: a struggle between heaven and hell within his body.

Sabine Bussing observes that “[s]ince the origins of Gothic literature ... the human soul, its entanglement with good and evil forces, and its eventual redemption or damnation were always major points of interest; the child, on the other hand, was excluded from attention because its

nature hardly seemed to qualify it as a personality in which spiritual struggles ... may take place” (82). *Surrender* brings the entanglement of good and evil found in the Gothic villain-hero as described by Robert Hume in his article, “Gothic versus Romantic,” into a child’s body as Finnigan appears when Anwell is only nine years old (285). This battle between good and evil within Anwell’s developing body both legitimizes the literary child figure by acknowledging its ability to contain complex qualities, and provides a suitable host for contemporary anxieties. The child is the future of humanity and, unlike Frankenstein’s creation, who is born a full-grown man, the child is a body and mind in the process of becoming. Anwell’s monstrosity, whether it be psychological or supernatural, lies in his genealogy. His monstrous tendencies are in him from birth and are drawn out by his family, specifically his mother. As his body grows under her monstrous tutelage, it begins to break down.

My analysis of *Surrender* in chapter 3 of this thesis focuses on the effect of Anwell’s tainted genealogy on his efforts to construct boundaries between himself and his monstrous biology. I argue that Anwell’s efforts are both motivated and sabotaged by his mother’s monstrous nature.

The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs

Like *Surrender*, Jack Gantos’ *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs* is narrated by a monstrous protagonist who looks back on her childhood. Ivy tells the story of her struggle against a genetic predisposition in her family that she calls the love curse. The curse leads her to love her mother obsessively, in life and death. The reader is presented with her two possible paths. She either gives in to her genetically based monstrosity and performs taxidermy on her own mother, as her father and his twin did to their own mother, or she overcomes the curse and pursues a life within the Catholic Church as a nun, ending the tainted Rumbaugh line. While she wavers between the

two futures, Ivy learns the art of taxidermy under the guidance of her father, Ab, and his identical twin, Dolph. When her mother finally dies, Ivy loses her inner battle to overcome the curse and surrenders to it, preserving her mother in order to clone, carry, and give birth to her once the technology becomes accessible.

The Love Curse is steeped in themes and motifs developed in traditional Gothic narratives. It includes themes such as doubling, incest, the unnatural union of oppositional elements such as life created from death (as exemplified in Frankenstein's creation), and Catholicism, which Robert Miles explains was established as a motif early in the development of the Gothic genre because of Protestant unease with Catholicism's mysterious and theatrical nature (16). Ivy's obsession with her mother's death and preservation of her body has ties to Victorian post-mortem photography in which the bodies of the dead were placed in active poses before being photographed (Draper 51). Indeed, the Rumbaugh's engagement with death and preservation is an art form to them. For a cursed Rumbaugh, the maternal body is the ultimate artistic creation and each accursed child engages with the technology available to them in order to recreate it as exactly as possible. It is through various forms of posthumous art and reproductive technology that the book creates a link between the nineteenth century and the near future. The Rumbaugh's move from embalming to the development of genetic engineering and cloning. The handling of bodies in the text exhibits historical concepts and treatment of monstrosity and reveals anxieties about how technology could become a medium of degeneracy in the future as human monsters whose family line would normally die out find artificial means of propagation.

My analysis of *The Love Curse of the Rumbaugh's* focuses on the nineteenth-century union between art, entertainment, and science in the medical study of human monsters, individuals with serious physical malformations. I address how the spectacle that surrounded such visible deviant

bodies is reproduced in Ivy's narrative. The Rumbaugh family is, according to Lombroso's methods of measuring evolutionary status, as exemplified in Chapter Four, an ideal specimen of human biology. However, to the contemporary reader, the family, in its immersion in posthumous art and experimentation, is a monstrous spectacle. Its members are examples of the medical body set free to ruthlessly pursue the logic and amusement of nineteenth-century pseudo-science and medical spectacle using contemporary technology.

The House of the Scorpion

The House of the Scorpion is set in a future dystopian world in which monsters are created in order to be sacrificed for the survival of the wealthy. For a price, anyone in this world can be cloned in order to have an organ donor on standby. The brains of the clones are normally disabled, turning them into drooling, mindless creatures, exaggerations of present-day imaginings of what clones would be like. Daniel Dinello describes the popular Western conception of clones as "mindless, soulless, imperfect imitations of a real person (211). This perception of clones as less than human makes their deaths, in service of "real" people, less objectionable. Matt is one of these monsters, but he is incomplete; his brain is untouched and he is a perfect human replica. In the household of his "father," he grows up in the borderland between privilege and ostracism, unsuspecting of his true purpose as an organ donor. The original Matt, known as El Patrón, is ruthless, repeatedly described as vampiric, and young Matt, having escaped the full effect of monstrosity at birth, may yet become monstrous like his El Patrón. When the time comes for his heart to be cut out and implanted in El Patrón, Matt abandons El Patrón, effectively killing him, and escapes to pursue a fully human status.

The analysis of *The House of the Scorpion* focuses primarily on Farmer's use of dark mythology and Gothic presence. Monstrosity runs strong in El Patrón's family. The Alacrán

family is born of Gothic monsters, live in a Gothic landscape, and imbibe Gothic substances.

The analysis addresses how each of these factors is tied to nineteenth-century science, literature, and cultural anxieties.

All three books trace a timeline from past Gothic monsters to the imagined monsters of the future. All three protagonists are monsters. Anwell, Ivy, and Matt are defined as such through their Gothic bodies, and in how they were created, who created them, and how they interact with their creators.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CRITICAL THEORY

Literature Review

The focus of my thesis, considering two genres and eras in order to analyze three contemporary texts, requires that I draw on knowledge from several areas of study. These include cultural and literary criticism of historical and contemporary Gothic and children's literature. My research and analysis emphasize themes of science, psychoanalysis, and cultural anxieties, and their treatment of the body. Few publications discuss contemporary Gothic children's literature at length. Therefore establishing a foundational knowledge of both Gothic literature and children's literature has been imperative to my ability to understand how the two coexist in my primary texts.

Darwin and Locke: The Golden Age of Monsters and Children

In nineteenth-century Britain and North America, both Gothic literature and children's literature underwent significant shifts that would create a divide between them. In the late seventeenth century, part of the Puritan movement aimed to distinguish children's books as a

separate category of literature. These books focused on the spiritual well-being of young readers who faced high mortality rates. Seth Lerer, author of *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (2008), explains that

[t]here was a kind of moral literacy to the Puritan movement, a sense that books could shape lives. Only through reading, through performing the catechism, and through reflecting on exemplary narratives could the child be prepared for heaven, whenever the invitation might come.

For death was everywhere ... The fear of death gripped even the youngest of readers. (83)

As medical science developed over the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, the threat of death to children, while still present, was less than it was when the Puritans began to emphasize the importance of didactic literature for children. The content of children's books shifted to influence their moral and social development. Under the influence of the works of seventeenth-century educational theorist John Locke, the child became understood as a blank slate, written upon by experience. Children's books thus became seen as an important tool in the shaping of a future adult, and gruesome stories, containing frightening or disturbing content, could adversely affect that process. "Simply put," Dale Townshend writes, "culturally approved forms of children's literature became everything that the Gothic is not" (21).

After the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, the theory of evolution began to saturate Victorian society. At the same time, the child became an object of study, identified by some nineteenth-century theorists such as Cesare Lombroso, as something other than entirely human. Darwin's theory of evolution became a lens through which the child could be understood as existing in a state of evolution, developing into full personhood. "By the

end of the nineteenth century,” Martin Fichman tells us, “hardly a field of thought remained untouched by the concept” (15). This cultural obsession invaded the nineteenth-century imagination, resulting in significant changes in the century’s fiction, both Gothic and children’s.

The concept of evolution’s influence on the development of Gothic literature removed the genre’s focus from the supernatural to the horrors of the natural world. In *Gothic* (1996), Fred Botting writes about the growing presence of science in Gothic literature:

Scientific theory and technological innovation, often used as figures of human alienation and Gothic excess themselves, provided a vocabulary and objects of fear and anxiety for nineteenth century Gothic writing ... Science, with its chemical concoctions, mechanical laboratories and electrical instruments became a new domain for the encounter with dark powers, now secular, mental and animal rather than supernatural. (12-13)

Out of the threat of the scientific world came a new literary figure who, in his heroic attempt to improve the human species, became a villain: the mad scientist. David Punter, one of the foremost experts on Gothic literature, considers the villain to be “always the most complex and interesting character in Gothic fiction, even when drawn with a clumsy hand: awe-inspiring, endlessly resourceful in pursuit of his often opaquely evil ends, and yet possessed of a mysterious attractiveness” (11). The Gothic villain has always been othered, but the nineteenth-century Gothic villain was othered according to scientific theory. Popular texts such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* matched the characterization of their villains to the theories of criminologists Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau. In *The Gothic Body*, Kelly Hurley addresses the paranoid theories that emerged in the wake of the theory of evolution, specifically, fears about the possibility of biological degeneration:

Degeneration was evolution reversed and compressed. Like evolution theory, degenerationism concerned itself with the long-term effects of heredity within the life-span of a species, and with biological variations from type that affected not just the individual but the generation to follow. But for the idea of evolution towards ever-higher forms of life, degenerationism substituted a terrible regression, a downward spiral into madness, chaos, and extinction ... manifesting itself in visible physical deformity ... degeneration was rapid and fatal. (66)

Fears such as these naturally led to an increased desire for mastery over nature. Yet such ambitions brought up their own set of anxieties about what would come of a constructed life form that crossed the boundary between the natural and the divine, representing humankind's usurpation of creation (Goss 440). So while some literary monsters simply embodied the re-emergence of the primal, others were products of unnatural scientific experimentation. Regardless, the monster's body generally betrays its degeneracy.

According to Lombroso, the child also existed in a degenerative state. Children needed to go through sociocultural evolution to develop past the "savage" phase (qtd in Hurley 97). Only a white male could ever entirely escape childhood degeneracy; women, children, racial minorities and animals were all placed by Lombroso on a lower evolutionary plane. In addition to this, in order for a male child to develop successfully, it was necessary that he grow up in a proper environment, "in respectable private families ... or in suitable institutes where no pains are spared to give them a good education and, more important still, sound moral training" (Hurley 97; Lombroso-Ferrero¹ 156). Lockean theory limited the ideal environment to the upper class and specific educational practices such as recreational epistemology, using toys to teach children, which moved the student away from disturbing or provocative materials (Lerer 106).

¹ *Criminal Man* was written by Cesare Lombroso's daughter, Gina Lombroso-Ferrero.

Highly valued children's books of the time leaned away from violent and frightening subject matter.

Lombroso emphasized what great criminals children would make if only they were bigger: "What terrific criminals would children be if they had strong passions, muscular strength, and sufficient intelligence; and if moreover, their evil tendencies were exasperated by a morbid psychological activity!" (qtd. in Hurley 98). Marina Warner sees a similar proclivity in contemporary children's engagement with scary stories. She observes that "[m]onsters have become children's best friends, *alter egos*, inner selves" (15). This is why nineteenth-century British and North American science and culture is well-suited for contemporary Gothic children's literature; this was a time and culture that could see the threat present in the child's body. Contemporary British and North American ideology is what gave birth to the "Disneyfication" of children's culture, a process that emphasizes sentimentality and simplification of children's subject matter. In other words, the comforting and unchallenging nature of Western children's literature suggests an underlying cultural belief that children's materials should be as simple and pleasant as possible. Today, Locke has prevailed over Lombroso and emphasis lies with the protection of children rather than protection from them. But it is easy to see the darker side that Lombroso pointed out. In their pre-socialized state, children generally lack inhibition and can be ruthless and selfish (Horn 41). If they were not so small, they would be terrifying.

In fact, the nineteenth-century Gothic monster often behaves like a child. Warner sees "monsters of popular dread, with their unbridled appetite, insatiable tyranny, unappeasable desire for gratification, are just like ... babies, big babies" (145). Monsters are ruled by instincts rather than reason, just as a child must rely on instinct to interact with the surrounding environment

until he or she learns to live by society's rules and is integrated into the community. A monster, by definition, can never become integrated into society, and so language and reason remain secondary to instinct.

R.L. Stevenson to R.L. Stine: Gothic Literature from Nineteenth-Century Britain to Contemporary North America

Traditionally, the reason behind a community's exclusion of a monster lies in its reaction against the creature's unnatural appearance. The monsters of contemporary Gothic literature are not as visible as they were in the nineteenth century. In *Skin Shows* (2000), Judith Halberstam outlines the relationship between monsters of the nineteenth-century and the postmodern monsters written of in contemporary Gothic literature:

The postmodern monster is no longer the hideous other storming the gates of the human citadel ... Monsters within postmodernism are already inside – the house, the body, the head, the skin, the nation – and they work their way out. Accordingly, it is the human, the façade of the normal, which tends to become the place of terror within postmodern Gothic.

Monsters of the nineteenth-century – like Frankenstein, like Dracula – certainly still scare and chill but they scare us from a distance. We wear modern monsters like skin, they are us, they are on us and in us. (162-163)

Today, then, the monsters of Gothic literature blend in. They are terrifying specifically because they look like everyone else. The fear that comes with camouflaged monsters is reflected in my primary texts in two ways. First, there is an underlying anxiety about biotechnology and the inability to tell the posthuman from the naturally human. By posthuman I mean human beings produced through scientific endeavours, such as cloning, genetic

engineering, and artificial intelligence. Second, the child as monster emphatically enacts the uncanny threat of the seemingly harmless body. In her 1987 study of child characters in contemporary North American horror fiction, *Aliens in the Home*, Sabine Bussing underlines the potency of the child's body in the genre. She says, "Strangely enough, the child's traditional image as pure, innocent creature also means an advantage in those cases when it acts as a monstrous killer" (xvi). She attributes the growing popularity of the child-monster in contemporary adult horror fiction to the genre's increasing reliance on "perverse" content to shock its readers (xvi). The consensus among authorities on Gothic literature argues against Bussing. Botting, Hogle, and Punter all believe the Gothic has consistently adapted in response to cultural anxieties (3, 2, 289, 402). In the nineteenth century, Gothic literature moved into an urban landscape and absorbed science as a theme, creating the archetype of the mad scientist. Today, our anxieties have returned to the scientific sphere and its potential effect on future generations – on future children. In light of how Gothic literature has changed throughout its history to reflect the emotional state of its cultural environment, I must disagree with Bussing. This new embodiment of fear cannot be simply dismissed as a "perverse" writing technique. There is a reason behind the changing body of the Gothic monster. The child-monster is reflective of fears concerning the technological interference in the development of humanity's future generations.

Mark Edmundson's *Nightmare on Main Street* (1999) is a widely cited cultural critique of the Gothic culture in America. In his book, Edmundson explores the odd relationship between fear and possibility. The fears explored in Gothic literature exist in peculiar balance with a Western capitalist ideology that Edmundson has termed "facile transcendence": a belief that a person can will him- or herself to change (6, xiv-xv). Edmundson ties this belief to popular talk

shows and the self-help culture of the 1990s, both of which have survived into the twenty-first century. Edmundson claims that while Gothic works bring up our fears about the future, they also provide the antidotes: “works that summon up, then cavalierly deny, Gothic fears” (3). This ideology of self-transformation has been internalized by each of my child-monster protagonists and lies behind the efforts each makes to alter his or her nature. But only one is able to escape monstrosity.

According to Kimberley Reynolds, facile transcendence is what characterizes commercial horror fiction in writing for children and young adults and separates it from true Gothic fiction. In her introduction to *Frightening Fiction*, Reynolds reveals how the frightening conventions of horror literature are undermined and even eliminated in commercialized children’s Gothic fiction in response to adult concerns about the appropriateness of the genre and its potential harmful effects (1-2). Lockean theories about protecting children from fearsome material remain in place in Western society today. The focus of many of the contemporary children’s and adolescent “Gothic” books is to reinforce conventional morality, offering the young reader closure in conformity to Western ideology. Reynolds emphasizes the importance of ambiguity in Gothic literature. Both characters and events are disturbing particularly because of the reader’s difficulty in separating right from wrong and the real from the unreal. These are the defining characteristics of Gothic literature that are absent in popular adolescent horror fiction (3).

Jackie Stallcup’s “Power, Fear, and Children’s Picture Books” (2002) further explains the tendency of parents, writers, editors and publishers to compromise Gothic conventions. Stallcup explains how children’s books have evolved from those that frightened children into obedience to those that alleviate children’s fears. She argues that contemporary children’s literature is teaching children to rely on adults to soothe their fears rather than empowering young audiences

to confront fear independently. Stallcup also criticizes Western cultural insistence on the existence of this state of childhood purity and efforts to maintain it by placing limitations on children's exposure to dark content. She highlights the restriction in the characterization of child protagonists to flat personas and development to a few simple and familiar stereotypes such as the hero or the bully. While the article relates specifically to picture books for young children, its depiction of the cultural attitudes that influence the content of children's literature speaks to the compromised status of juvenile horror literature that Kimberley Reynolds identifies. It also exemplifies the exceptional position of my three primary texts in both the tradition of children's literature and of Gothic literature.

Genuine Gothic children's literature is rare and, as a result, academic research in the field is sparse. One of the few resources available on the subject is a collection of scholarly essays, *The Gothic in Children's Literature* (2008), edited by Karen Coats, Anna Jackson, and Roderick McGillis. The book provides a link between the historical and contemporary adult Gothic and recent publications in children's literature. The authors discuss changes in the genre and, most importantly, how Gothic literature has adapted to reflect the contemporary culture of childhood:

Recent children's Gothic ... reflects our culture's changing attitude toward the innocence of children ... we also begin to experience a sense of unease about the degree to which they are complicit in their own exploitation. In keeping with a more general trend to complicate victim/abuser status, we begin, in a strange way, to dignify the child by granting him or her complex motivations that are not the results of a bland innocence. (7)

The question of the child's role in his or her own exploitation or victimization provokes questions of manipulation of the old by the young, and reminds us of the power the child holds over adults as a vulnerable body in need of protection and care. By evoking the uncanny image

of a child's calculated exploitation of an adult's protective instincts, the editors' observations have added a new dimension to my understanding of how the child's body makes the contemporary monster more frightening than the physically grotesque creature that thrived in the nineteenth-century's tales of terror.

Karen Coats argues that "children's Gothic has become prevalent enough as a phenomenon to represent what can be considered a cultural symptom – an indicator that points to an underlying trauma" ("Between" 77). The culture of childhood has changed. Technology works to erase the boundary between the child and adult in many ways. For example, the internet, one of the most revolutionary and widespread technological developments of the twentieth century, has brought with it access to information about every subject imaginable, including violent imagery, pornography, and a new population of strangers who are no longer tied to their physical bodies but, instead, screen names and photos. An internet girlfriend asking to borrow money could be a three-hundred-pound man in Tulsa, or a clever twelve-year-old in Thunder Bay. Thus, technology has created new ways in which a child can be damaged and do damage to others. And so, a child can become a technologically enabled predator.

In contemporary Gothic literature featuring a child-monster, it is necessary that this figure be damaged in some way. In her essay, "Cyberfiction and the Gothic Novel" (2008), Nadia Crandall explains the function of the "dream-space," a state in which the protagonist's experience is fragmented, often into a double consciousness, and they shift away from reality (46). Her discussion relates to Anwell's experience of his psychological split in *Surrender*. She asserts that "[t]his duality of experience, the constrained and the liberated, the visible and the hidden, allows writers to explore aspects of forbidden behaviour within dream-space" (46). Crandall's observation implies that there is only so much evil an audience is willing to witness in

child characters without requiring some means of explaining away their unnatural behaviour through some physical, psychological, or supernatural malady. All three of my protagonists have a flaw that permits them to enact their monstrosity. This trope of character trauma is rooted in nineteenth-century Gothic literature. Crandall explains that, “[i]n their treatment of psychic landscape, the divided consciousness, and the moral framework which informs them, contemporary writers have drawn directly from late Victorian models” (41). Despite the drastic cultural and technological shifts that have occurred in the Western world since the Victorian era, elements of the nineteenth-century Gothic have continued to perform as effective mediums of expression for cultural anxieties.

Invisible Monsters and Mad Scientists

In her analysis of the original Frankenstein creation and of Cormac McCarthy’s reworking of the monster in *Child of God* (1973), Ashley Craig Lancaster identifies the defining condition that results in their monstrous actions: “the Monster represents a being in constant search for personal companionship that neither his creators nor his community will provide for him. This lack of companionship becomes a catalyst for the desperate and violent attempts made by these Others to gain a sense of purpose and a sense of self” (133). Frankenstein’s creation is denied companionship because he looks monstrous. Today our literary human monsters cannot only be made from scratch, they can be made to order, with custom parts. Goss and Riquelme explain: “The character of technology ... has changed because the mechanistic science that Shelley knew has been displaced ... by atomic physics and genetic engineering” (438). Technology has affected the development of children’s literature as well. The authors of *New World Orders* argue that

[i]n children's literature so far, the prospect of a posthuman future is invariably aligned with notions of dystopia, shaped by a humanistic hesitation about or suspicion of the far-reaching ideological and social implications of those developments within information theory and cybernetics which have been driving 'posthumanism' since the 1940s. Such developments have impacted on how we think about the world, how we make sense of our experience, and, most significantly perhaps, what it means to be human. (155)

According to Jules Law, technology is a child of Gothic thought. He explains that the "Gothic is...not so much about embodiment as it is about a dangerous desire for transcendence which must be articulated but held at bay" (976). The Gothic genre is ideal for exploring the dark side of technology, and therefore, it is fitting that children's literature has adopted it in order to accomplish the same goal. Technology in literature has evolved to reflect the looming realities of science that both authors and readers are aware of. As a result, monsters have become invisible, believably indistinguishable from natural humans. Monstrosity has become a social category that demonizes the body, a mirror of how, in the nineteenth century, the working classes, women, children, and racial minorities were defined as degenerative through their bodies.

Tom Tyler's "Deviants, Donestre, and Debauchees: Here be Monsters" (2008) is an analysis of Michel Foucault's study of cultural influences on the definition of the human monster. Tyler applies Foucault's work to various human monsters in literature. He describes the human monster as "an exception to the species in some way, a transgression of natural law" (114). The child-monsters in my primary texts look normal, but physical origins haunt them and they are recognized as abhuman. In *Surrender*, Anwell is alienated as a child because his mother is accused by the surrounding community of being a witch, something abhuman. His

demonization is based on a town's superstitious belief in a supernatural lineage. Because of his community's superstitious persecution, his first destructive act, his unintentional killing of his brother, is construed as an act he would naturally perform. His resulting psychological break creates an identity that assumes the physical and social role of a monster. Finnigan is described as dirty and dark, and literally lives separate from the community. Finnigan's purpose is to signify monstrosity so that Anwell believes himself to be purified and, through his physical characterization and isolation from the community of Muylan, Finnigan serves his purpose for a few short years.

In her book, *Hystories* (1998) Elaine Showalter claims that anxieties at the end of the last millennium produced phantom ailments, what she calls "hysterical epidemics" (10) and imagined events. Her ideas surrounding the rise in repressed memories and psychological "splitting" are useful in reading *Surrender*, for they help readers to understand Anwell's discordant memories. Her cultural analysis provides a link between contemporary and nineteenth-century medical science and literature. In their introduction to *The Gothic in Children's Literature*, the editors explicitly recognize the survival of this hysteria:

in the time when the Gothic was emerging as an important genre, medical science was just starting to replace the mystery of the ... body with scientific facts; hysteria was the dominant response to sexual confusion and abuse ... In modernity ... there are still those fear-enshrouded moments where the archaic body reasserts itself – those moments when our new scripts fail us in the face of the mute mystery of embodiment. (5)

The difference between the nineteenth-century concept of hysteria and our understanding of it today is that in the nineteenth century, hysteria was considered a diagnosis, whereas today, it refers to a medical mystery, a phantom ailment. Hysteria is about the body's control over the

individual and the survival of an anatomical mystique, despite humankind's colonization of the human body through medical knowledge and practice. While every part has been discovered, characterized and catalogued, how the body operates as a whole and how it can disintegrate, seemingly on a whim, undermines both the security of knowledge and our faith in technology.

The colonial ambition of science towards the body has resulted in unpalatable practices in discrimination such as sexism and racism. The theory of evolution created a sociomedical ethical gap, in which those bodies labelled abnormal also became seen as less human. This division caused eugenics to become a political tool. In *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, Ivy is a product of "superior genes," as defined by phrenology and an organization in the novel called the Eugenics Research Association. As a member of a so-called genetically superior family that has been experimenting with human bodies for generations, she turns naturally to the role of a mad scientist, preparing to construct and improve upon human life. David J. Skal's *Screams of Reason* (1998) analyses the archetype of the mad scientist in popular culture. He describes the mad scientist as "[a] prototype outsider ... the mad scientist has served as a lightning rod for otherwise unbearable anxieties about the meaning of scientific thinking and the uses and consequences of modern technology" (18). Ivy, in her female body, subverts the mad fathers of science. Through her own mad ambition, she takes from them what they strive to take from the female sex. Goss and Riquelme observe, for instance, that Victor Frankenstein crosses the boundary between the natural world and the divine and he "also attempts to move beyond the limitations of being male, but he does so by eliminating the female role" (444). Victor is, in a sense, his creation's mother. He eliminates the need for the female body to nurture and bear life. Ivy, by appropriating Victor's role, is ironically able to improve upon his methods. Her body is able to provide a natural laboratory in which her creation can take shape. Through her, the

female race is theoretically enabled to monopolize both natural and scientific forms of creation. Ivy's body becomes a bridge between the nineteenth-century mad scientist and an Eve of technological creation.

Religion and technology have an uneasy alliance in Matt in *The House of the Scorpion*. The story takes place at a time when human cloning, while not entirely a common practice, is available for a price. Matt is only identifiable as a clone by a tattoo on his foot. This constructed birth mark anchors his identity in his physical body, in where it came from and in how it was created. In Matt, we see a Frankenstein creation in reverse; he is created as a complete and perfect replica of El Patrón so that the old man can use him as a hub for spare parts. Writing about today's evolving technology in *Radical Evolution* (2005), Joel Garreau explains, "Whenever any powerful new technology disturbs our ideas of what it means to be human – interspecies organ transplants, genetic engineering, cloning – such research is rocked by that one-word hiss: *Frankenstein* ... Shelley's fears ... suffused society" (152). Nineteenth-century Gothic literature was significantly influenced by science, and today science is often explained through Gothic literary allusions, especially when its potential risks are being discussed.

The perception of Matt as a monster in his narrative world is a distinct possibility in future reality. In *Technophobia!* (2005), Daniel Dinello discusses the general North American response to the idea of human clones:

the clone counters our sense of possessing a unique identity – it's another created-by-technology being that potentially can replace us. This anxiety about facing our clone is reminiscent of an older fear, that of the doppelganger or double ... At a psychological level, the double represents our evil side, the embodiment of a violent, primitive subconscious. (216)

The House of the Scorpion reveals, despite leaps in scientific progress and the looming guarantee of mastery over the natural world, a society that is constantly haunted by a fear of returning to a primal state of slobbering incoherence and violent impulses. Anwell, Ivy, and Matt are each a witness to and a child of technological anxieties. They are doubles of nineteenth-century monsters and fears, but the key differences between them, their youth and physical conformity, act as bridge between what literary monsters have been and what they are becoming.

Surrender, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, and *The House of the Scorpion* move readers through the present and into the future but keep readers looking over their shoulders to the past, keeping their eyes on the thing that crawls after them. “The most breathtaking ... depiction of technology’s impact on human nature,” writes Garreau, “came from Mary Shelley” (151), and that jigsaw-puzzle construction of the human body haunts the perception of biotechnology in each of the three narratives. However, the mismatched pieces have become subtler. Instead of mixed animal and human parts, taken from various bodies haphazardly thrown together, the breach of human nature is anchored in blood, at both a genetic and subconscious level.

Critical Theory and Methodology

In my thesis, I combine both psychoanalytic and historicist literary theory to create a framework for my textual analysis. This framework ties the psychological construction of the secondary worlds of my protagonists to the beliefs of a specific time and place: nineteenth-century England. The communities in which Anwell, Ivy, and Matt are born and raised are all isolated and, though they exist in a contemporary or futuristic society, they reveal Victorian tastes and attitudes ranging from advocating eugenics to advocating Gothic architecture. My analysis is based primarily on the theoretical writings of Julia Kristeva and her concept of

abjection and also on the nineteenth-century scientific theories of criminologist Cesare Lombroso and those such as Charles Darwin, B.A. Morel, and Max Nordau, whose works informed Lombroso's theories or were inspired by them. Taken all together, these writings will guide my analysis of the narrative portrayal of my protagonists' abject bodies.

Kristeva and Abjection

In her essay "Powers of Horror," Kristeva introduces abjection as the experience of being possessed by

one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful – a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places one haunted by it literally beside himself. (1)

This introduction tells us that abjection threatens the subject's sense of his or her reality.

Whether the threat comes from the subject's environment or from within him- or herself, it takes the subject to a borderland "where meaning collapses" (2). One of Kristeva's clearest explanations of the experience of abjection is in a subject's observation of a corpse:

The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It 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. (4)

In her analysis of Kristeva's works, Megan Becker-Leckrone explains, "Kristeva's abjection refers to an extreme state of subjectivity – a crisis in which the borders of self and other radically break down" (151). In the corpse, the subject is forced to recognize the inescapable future he or she faces. The subject will become the terrifying thing he or she sees and this reality throws him or her into crisis. The subject experiences a "massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness" and, "on the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if [the subject] acknowledge[s] it, annihilates [him or her]. There, abject and abjection are ... safeguards" (Kristeva 2). The abject, in other words, is a safeguard against the breakdown of the subject's identity because it can be physically separated from the subject through the symbolic transformation of the body. The subject draws a line, creating what Kristeva calls "boundaries of the self's clean and proper body" (101). The skin acts as the boundary. Everything inside is abject.

The subject's instinctual reaction is one of physical purification, often through purging the body of food and excrement:

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection... "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it ... I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself* ... that turns me inside out ... "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. (2-3)

The subject is cleansed by expelling excrement from his or her body. The subject's purging creates a physical separation between his or her body and abject filth and defilement. Excrement does not merely symbolize the abject, it is the embodiment of impending death. "Such wastes," Kristeva explains, "drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, cadaver...dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be" (3).

The unclean substances that the subject expels from his or her body are separated and contained by skin. Skin is the border between the unclean inside and the clean outside. So abject fluids are not limited to food and vomit and feces. They include bone and blood, saliva – everything that our skin holds inside. The significance of this border in my primary texts operates at both a cellular and psychological level. Anwell, Ivy, and Matt are tied to their monstrosity through their bodies and their birth. Their genetics are tainted by the DNA of their parents, and their bodies, their clean skin, are stained by their mothers' bodies. Generally speaking, all children are tainted by their development in a womb filled with maternal abject fluid. However, the monstrous natures of Anwell, Ivy, and Matt revolve around the maternal. Anwell's mother is identified as a witch by her community and is portrayed as the driving force, both genetically and psychologically, behind Anwell's social isolation and destructive acts. Ivy is overcome by paternal genetics to re-embrace the maternal abject, wishing to recreate and relive her fetal gestation. Matt's mother is, literally, a cow. He is damned because he is fostered in an animal womb, which results in his legal status as livestock. The monstrous nature of all three protagonists can be traced back to the womb and its especially potent abject fluids which coat both the skin and the genes of these three children. They are tainted through and through.

Lombroso and the Deviant Body

In the introduction to the 1972 reprint of *Criminal Man*, Leonard D. Savitz observes that Cesare Lombroso's work in criminology represented the integration of several scientific theories that had a resounding impact on nineteenth-century European and Western thought. These theories include Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as presented in his *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, B.A. Morel's theory of degeneracy as presented in his *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce* (1857) and the concept of "moral insanity" with roots in Benjamin Rush's "The Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty" (1786) (vii-viii). Lombroso's work was also influenced by the growing interest in physical anthropology and nineteenth-century racial theory such as the claims made by Arthur de Gobineau in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-55), which "persuaded many of the inequality between the black and the white races, and, more significantly, of the existence of 'higher' and 'lower' races" (qtd. in Savitz viii-ix). These emerging sciences and theories tied the nature of individuals and humanity in general to the body and created a scientific prejudice against racially specific physical characteristics.

In the original 1911 introduction to *Criminal Man*, Cesare Lombroso himself tells how he came to recognize the characteristics that separated so-called degenerates from the mainstream population. He claims that his ideas "did not suggest themselves ... instantaneously under the spell of a single deep impression, but were the offspring of a series of impressions. The slow and almost unconscious association of these first vague ideas resulted in a new system" (xxii). And when Lombroso describes his inspirational discovery of a dent in an executed criminal's skull he describes an instinctual response:

At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek-bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh, and drink its blood. (xxiv-xxv)

Lombroso's description of criminal physical attributes, the exaggerated size of the jaw and eyes, lack of control over animal and "savage" drives and seemingly superhuman sight and invulnerability to pain and plain love of evil and unnatural acts mirrors the descriptions of a few familiar nineteenth-century literary monsters such as Mr. Hyde and Dr. Moreau's creations. However, Lombroso also included children in his study of criminality. His stigmatization of children as less-than-human from the adult point of view is particularly relevant in my analysis of child monsters in contemporary Gothic narratives. Lombroso believed that children lacked morality and were generally cruel:

They are cruel and inflict suffering on animals out of curiosity, enjoying the manifestations of pain. They are thieves for the gratification of their appetites, especially the chief, gluttony, and they are unscrupulous and often cunning liars, not hesitating to put the blame on the innocent when their misdeeds are discovered. (qtd in Horn 42)

David Horn goes on to explain that "[t]he criminal could be regarded ... as an individual who, to some extent, remained a child for his entire life" (42). There is a divide between the

contemporary reverence of childhood innocence and the nineteenth-century recognition of the darker side of childhood. This is the lens through which readers of my three novels are invited to perceive their protagonists.

Today, Lombroso's theories of criminal physiology have been dismissed by the scientific community as pseudo-science, as well as fundamentally racist, classist, sexist, and ageist. His epiphany about the physical evidence of criminality written on the body is described as being derived from his unconscious, the product of instinct as much as observation. He fit his criminals into a preconceived image of a deviant body. By turning monstrous physical characteristics into official flags of degeneracy, Lombroso provided his readers with a means of identification, making the so-called degenerates who threatened the evolution of the human race easy to spot and separate. His work also reinforced cultural preconceptions about gender, race, and class. Lombroso's case studies represented the fear, under the shadow of theories of evolution and degeneration, of what humanity would become: the death of civilization. Abject.

The twenty-first-century prognosis for the future of humanity has altered the appearance of the deviant. Max Nordau predicted in 1913 that degenerates would die off by the end of the twentieth-century. He wrote they "are not capable of adaptation. Therefore they are fated to disappear" (540). He claimed they would be too weak to handle the stress rapidly developing technology would inflict on their nervous systems (541). Instead, what we have witnessed is technology's ability to assist those whom Lombroso and Nordau would label as degenerate. Today, with advances in medicine and surgery, the developed world finds itself in a borderland. The human body, the organic tomb that Lombroso and his contemporaries identified as the source and evidence of deviance, is about to become modifiable at a genetic level. Frankenstein's creation was made from spare body parts, both human and animal, mixed with a

bolt of electricity. The future creation of my primary Gothic texts is a chameleon constructed with God-like exactness to human specifications. The appearance of monsters must change alongside the science of creation. Yet, despite advances in the Western and European public's general understanding of biology, the deviant bodies of my three protagonists conform, at least in part, to Lombroso's debunked theories. The pseudo-science of the nineteenth-century has a hold in the Western and European mind. The scientifically disproven link between physical abnormality and predatory behaviour survives through abjection. To many, a notable difference in the structure of a human body suggests a malformation under the skin, where the abject thrives. This persistent relationship is suited to Gothic literature:

Abjection is, for Kristeva, an experience of unmatched primordial horror, putting the subject in the most devastating kind of crisis imaginable; but ultimately, certain modes of discourse have found a way of speaking that horror instead of repressing it. Literature, she proposes, offers this possibility in an exemplary way. (Becker-Leckrone 20)

Gothic literature has a habit of reflecting the anxieties of the time and place in which it is written. In 1812, for example, Sir Humphry Davy's *Elements of Chemical Philosophy* was published. In it Davy describes the psychology of an ideal chemist. Chemistry, he explains,

has given to him an acquaintance with the different relations of the parts of the external world; and more than that, it has bestowed upon him powers which may be almost called creative; which have enabled him to modify and change the beings surrounding him, and by his experiments to interrogate nature with power, not simply as a scholar, passive and seeking only to understand her operations, but rather as a master, active with his own instruments. (qtd in Mellor 93).

Davy also experimented with electricity in which there was a widespread interest, especially in regard to its effects on the human body. His thoughts on electricity and the scientist's potential role as a creator of life inspired Frankenstein's creation, the prototype of the scientific Gothic monster.

Mary Shelley was exposed to many of the scientific theories of the time, including the work of Sir Humphry Davy whose book she reported reading in her diary (Mellor 91). The idea for the story came to Shelley in what she described as an "acute mental vision" while she was falling asleep (Garreau 151). The surrounding scientific theory provided a means through which anxieties about medicine and the body and the horrifying image of the monster, arising from the unconscious, could be united and explored by Shelley and other Gothic writers. Science, as an existing source of cultural anxiety, established itself as an effective and lasting platform on which the Gothic monster would continue to act out readers' fears. For example, from Dr. Moreau to Dr. Brundle in *The Fly* (Cronenberg 1986), the horror of animal-human hybrids has resurfaced. The scientific process has become a spectacle of Gothicity.

However, despite increased exposure of the process behind its creations in contemporary narratives, Gothic technology is no less of a mystery to its audience. The science behind cloning is, to me, more elusive than the pseudo-science behind the modern Prometheus. It is easier to understand a mad genius sewing together necessary parts than it is to attempt to lift the shroud of specialized knowledge that surrounds modern technology. Joel Garreau observes that "[w]henver any powerful new technology disturbs our ideas of what it means to be human – interspecies organ transplants, genetic engineering, cloning – such research is rocked by that one-word hiss: *Frankenstein*" (152). This is because, though the science has become increasingly unfathomable, the creations evoke the same reaction: abjection.

The three protagonists of the novels I am analysing exist in this borderland between technology and superstition. They are physically normal, but public knowledge of their biological origins compromises public perception of their humanity. In many ways, the treatment of the protagonists follows Lombrosian logic. Lombroso's actual system of identification was faulty and unreliable. David Horn describes the function of Lombroso's work as a modern day "cautionary tale about deviant or spurious science; it has been invoked ... to make visible the differences between impure and pure ways of knowing" (2). Lombroso's theories of criminal anthropology were inspired by sexism, racism, and classism. Science became a way to understand and justify cultural discrimination. The secondary worlds that Hartnett, Gantos, and Farmer have created operate through similar reasoning. It has no logical justification, but persists nonetheless. Kristeva herself explains, "It is...not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order" (4). The real site of anxiety is the act of human creation and disintegration, and the potential catastrophes that could result.

The relationship between monsters (sites of abjection) and science has survived for almost two centuries. The appearance of the monster has changed but both the reader and fictional community's sentiment of disgust and fear remains rooted in the unnatural construction of its body. The lingering presence of nineteenth-century fears in my primary texts is suited to both a psychoanalytic and historicist analysis in order to demonstrate how the abject in these three contemporary texts is translated through nineteenth-century understandings of the human body. This approach allows me to use the bodies of my protagonists as keys to the cultural logic of the secondary worlds in these Gothic novels.

Kristeva's work provides the psychoanalytic tools to understand the significance of maternal characters, bodily fluids, corpses, and other elements present in my primary texts that plunge the reader and characters into abjection. The bodies and behaviour of my protagonists are explored with a view to showing how they fit Lombroso's classification of the criminal. Lombroso's work is also used to highlight the way the abject status of science and its potential monsters of creation becomes understood and demonized through the resurrection of nineteenth-century pseudo-science both inside and outside of the secondary worlds of the novels.

The regression into superstitious and faulty reasoning in contemporary texts in the face of the disintegration of humanity, whether through literal physical disintegration, genetic manipulation, or the separation between natural and scientific creations, is evidence of the parallel between nineteenth-century England and present-day North America and Europe. Lombroso's work has intermingled with the primal elements of abjection to create a secular superstition around science and its material replacements of divine or natural creations. The presence of his ideas in these Gothic narratives superimposes nineteenth-century Britain over present-day North America and Europe and illuminates the common threshold between them. We stand at a time of uncertainty, when the meaning of our physical bodies becomes ambiguous. Turning back to Lombroso's method of physical-based ranking on a hierarchy of evolution provides the comfort of othering that brings us, the readers, back from the borderland of abjection and restores meaning to our bodies. We seek that separation between ourselves and what humanity may become because the instinctual abject reaction to and classification of what Lombroso considered abnormal bodies is present in us. Anwell, Ivy, and Matt each repulse readers because, through genetics and environmental influences, they are driven to embrace what we instinctually fear. Despite appearance, they are not quite right because we, like their

communities, know where they came from and have a horrible feeling about where their biology is going to take them. My analysis of *Surrender*, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, and *The House of the Scorpion*, explores this relationship between abjection, nineteenth-century science, and the Gothic body.

CHAPTER THREE **BAD BLOOD: MOTHERING A MONSTER IN *SURRENDER***

It was his natural state of being: wet-faced and snot-nosed, ribboned with saliva, his bland face rosy with a woe he could not explain or comprehend, dribbling out a soulless sound that was, I decided, the sound of the boy-he-was grieving for the boy-he-should-have-been. The idea, I knew, was fanciful. I knew Vernon wept simply because there was nothing he could say and nothing else he could do. (Hartnett 55)

The suffering body of a mentally and physically disabled child is disturbing, particularly in Western culture, which tends to idealize the experience of childhood as one of pleasure and innocence. To be confronted with a child such as Sonya Hartnett's Vernon, whose entire lifetime of experience is fated to be one of relentless confusion and suffering, rattles any belief we might have in an ordered universe. The notion of a reality in which every act and experience is ultimately meaningless, every life the product of chance, and death eliminates every being entirely, is generally disturbing to anyone, no matter his or her beliefs. If there is no karmic guiding principle behind existence we are all vulnerable; each of us could have been born or pushed into that helpless suit of flesh through random circumstance: with a damaged allele or a damaged brain. We could have been Vernon or we could become Vernon. We look at bodies, such as Vernon's and many of us may feel the repulsion inspired by the fear of vulnerability and possibility. We recognize ourselves in him and are driven to assure ourselves of the divide

between us. This recognition and repulsion involving the self in relation to the other is especially true of characters in the world of Hartnett's novel – of Vernon's mother and, to a lesser extent, of Anwell.

Julia Kristeva discusses this kind of experience in her work. Drawing on Lacan's idea of *jouissance*, "where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other" (9), she explains that the abject

is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so the "I" does not disappear in it but finds in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence.

Hence a *jouissance* in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant.

We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. (9)

Abjection is all about borders. The mind's disassociation, the body's skin, a culture's rituals of defilement: these are the thresholds that allow us to cleanse ourselves of the abject and protect us from our desire to embrace and be consumed by it. But these borders are only as strong as they are clean. Vernon's mind and body are unable to sustain the border between the clean and unclean. His body, constantly leaking excrement, is as he sees it, coated in abjection.

Anwell's conflicted feelings about his brother, moving from love to pity to resentment to hatred and disgust, are correspond to the cleanliness of Vernon's physical borders. He says, "I felt bad for hating Vernon, yet the sight of him – his tongue wobbling like a fish, his nappy working loose at the waist, bubbles erupting out of his nose – made me despise him all the more" (62-63). His descriptions of Vernon's painfully thin and helpless body, his incontinence, his

desperate howling for companionship, his food loathing, and even his suffocation, foreshadow Anwell's own physical disintegration which he ironically ends up pursuing and even finds gratification in. As he lies on his deathbed, Anwell describes the bond he shares with his brother as rooted in the broken boundaries between his body's abject inside and its clean outside. He says, "The places where bone has broken the skin are the places that remind me of him" (53).

The Maternal Abject

Being witness both to his brother's suffering at the hands of their mother and to the torment of his physical and mental disabilities, young Anwell is torn between his love for Vernon and his desire to be free from him. Anwell's parents force him into unrelenting proximity to his brother by forcing him to care for Vernon. He is seven years old and has the selfish proclivities of a child that age. He wants to be free to play, not burdened with the care of his older brother. Anwell's feelings of resentment are inevitable. The bittersweet blend of love and resentment turns to guilt. Pulsating under this confusion is Anwell's disgust and fear. Looking back on his childhood when Vernon was still alive, Anwell remembers his conflicted feelings toward his brother and most clearly recalls the overwhelming guilt he felt because of the thoughts that emerged out of his emotional tumult:

Vernon, I'd breathe, past the bars of his cot, you should die. You will be safer if you die. You might be happier. The doctor said he could live forever, there was no reason he wouldn't grow old. I loved Vernon, but I would lie awake listening to him and I'd pray for a snake to slide in his bed, hope for an illness that would finish him fast, dream that some collector of damage would take my brother away. Such wishing brought tears of shame to my eyes, but inside I must have known that Vernon was a curse on my life.

(57)

Anwell's wish for Vernon to slip away quickly and peacefully and find relief from his physical torment is distressing but benevolent. When it comes true, Anwell's wish becomes ugly and violent. He unwittingly takes on the role of the snake and the disease, and when he locks Vernon in the refrigerator his actions are driven by fear and anger, not the love and pity that first formed the wish. The climactic event which leads to Anwell's contribution to Vernon's death is one that threatens the clean outside of the younger brother's body. Anwell tells the story of the deformed manifestation of his wish to Finnigan. Describing the moment when his benevolent frustration with Vernon transforms into hatred born of abjection, Anwell says:

he lashed at me. His fingernails, kept square and short, were nonetheless sharp as kitten claws, and shaved strips of skin from my cheek. The pain of it rocked through me, chased by revulsion and hatred. My hand came up and slapped him hard across the face. He arched his back and screamed ... purple and green with rage ... I felt plasma wetness between my fingers at my face His mouth was stretched as wide as it would go. His lips were jaundice-yellow ... my mother would surely be woken by the commotion ... My only thought now was to hide – to hide myself from my fate and to hide the monster I'd made of my brother. (62)

Vernon, dripping excrement, imbued with the qualities of an animalistic corpse, breaks the barrier between his insides and Anwell's when he claws through Anwell's skin. At this moment Vernon *is* monstrous. But, like Kristeva's example of the corpse, he is not what is feared, but proof of the inescapability of what has made him abject. He threatens to infect Anwell's body, but more importantly, threatens to anger Mother.

While Vernon is the source of Anwell's revulsion, Mother is the object of his terror. Anwell sees her as tall and bony, disgusted by her own offspring (Hartnett 56, 65). She is the

anti-mother. According to Cesare Lombroso and his son-in-law William Ferrero, the degenerate female is “weak in maternal feeling, inclined to dissipation, astute and audacious and dominates weaker beings sometimes by suggestion, and others by muscular force” (qtd in Hurley 98). This link between Anwell’s experience of abjection and his terror of Mother suggests that Mother, as a constant reminder of his degenerate birthright, is an extension of Anwell’s internal abject self. She has gotten under his skin. In her writings about internal abject matter, Kristeva touches on genetic impurity, writing about “a concrete, genetic, and social authority – a natural one, so to speak – that leads to the interiorization of impurity. Through re-cognition of your parents, that which is external threat to you will appear as internal danger” (115). Indeed, Anwell’s fear of Mother causes a natural disaster within him.

Mother’s terrorization of Anwell orchestrates the manifestation of his monstrosity. Under her manipulation, he commits his first murder at age seven, and the resulting guilt alters his reality. Anwell begins to erect walls around what is left of his humanity using the techniques available to him as a psychologically damaged child. His distorted sense of reality manifests itself as an imaginary friend. When Finnigan first appears, two years after Vernon’s death, Anwell sees only a potential playmate that he is desperate to hold onto (Hartnett 16). But there are subtle details that distinguish Finnigan as something dark and malevolent: his body, with its yellowed lips, tanned skin, the “black pit of [his] eyes,” and the fly that crawls over his face (Hartnett 7, 11-14), is the appearance of a child’s corpse during late putrefaction when the skin has darkened and the eyes are decomposing (Cengage n.pag). Anwell separates what he sees of Vernon in himself from himself and projects it into Finnigan. This is confirmed as the novel concludes and Vernon returns, looking like he did when he was alive. Anwell realizes that “[w]hen [Vernon] speaks, it is with Finnigan’s voice” (242). Vernon tells him, “*You have two*

names. So do I' (242). Anwell's split personality is in itself divided.

In the eyes of the surrounding regressive culture, Vernon is evidence of his family's degeneracy. In an attempt to contain the family's perceived unclean presence, boundaries are constructed around and within the family, and within Anwell himself. But it is clear from the beginning that these boundaries will fail Anwell because the boundaries themselves are unclean, tainted by Mother's blood. Mother's bad blood stains her children's boundaries with its abject touch and degenerate qualities.

The significance of the maternal abject originates in the birth act. The fetus is steeped in the internal bodily fluids of the mother throughout its development. When the child is born and the placenta is expelled, both become separate from the mother as her unclean insides are now on the outside. The fluids that nourished the fetus' development are suddenly altered when they have served their purpose and what remains on the baby as the three bodies, mother, baby, and placenta, are separated, becomes a mark of abjection. Kristeva explains that "the skin apparently never ceases to bear the traces of such matter. These are persecuting and threatening traces, by means of which the fantasy of the born body, tightly held in a placenta that is no longer nourishing but devastating" (101).

Mother is a central site of anxiety for her youngest son throughout his life. As an abusive parent, she breaches the long-standing North American and European ideology surrounding the maternal instinct. The idea of the maternal instinct, a mother's overwhelming desire to protect her offspring with no regard for her own safety or wellbeing, was entrenched in the Victorian concept of femininity. Under this standard of female behaviour, Mother's abuse of her children is considered unnatural. Her treatment of Vernon throughout his life, as Anwell remembers it, is especially shocking. He describes the cruel nature of her abuse: "Let him starve to death then,

Mother would rage ... He disgusts me ... Rub his face in it, she'd sometimes say. That will teach him. Even a mongrel can be house-trained. God help me, I wish he'd never been born; and she'd run his bath cold or too warm" (56-57). Mother's cruelty toward her son is another sign of degeneracy. She amply fulfills her legacy when she uses seven-year-old Anwell's fear of her to turn his panicked attempts to silence his brother and avoid her wrath into a fatal accident. On the day of Vernon's death, Anwell is alone in the house with his brother and Mother, who is suffering from a migraine. Anwell's foremost concern is to not disturb his mother. When Vernon becomes upset and begins to scream and lash out Anwell panics and hides him in an old fridge to muffle the noise. Unfortunately, it is too late and Mother emerges from her room and comes after Anwell. She asks:

"What have you done with him, Anwell?"

I could not help it – I was only a child. In an instant I composed a story and prepared myself to tell it. But first I did something very true of a child. My eyes left my mother's face and dashed to the refrigerator. They touched its flank and sprang away, a glance over and done in a second. But when I looked back at my mother, she was not looking at me. She was looking at the refrigerator ...

I prayed Vernon would stay quiet just a few moments more ...

"You're a good boy, Anwell," she said. She turned away slowly, as if she were old and shuffled along the hallway ... I wanted to be certain that she would disappear.

She walked slowly, she drifted. (66-68)

Mother, aware that as each second passes Vernon is more likely to die, takes her time moving out of sight. Vernon suffocates and Anwell becomes a murderer.

Even before Vernon is born, Mother's in-laws recognize her as an unsuitable

reproductive partner for her husband. When Anwell asks about his aunt Sarah, Mother admits to him, “Your dear aunt Sarah didn’t want me in the family. As if they were royalty! As if I got better than I gave” (78). Anwell’s father is a lawyer who is granted a degree of acceptance from the community because he works to maintain order. The rest of the family is isolated because their deviant bodies and unnatural acts threaten the order in Muiylan.

Anything that threatens order can be experienced as abject and, in the nineteenth century, the abnormal body threatened a hierarchy of species, dispossessing the human body of its superiority in the animal kingdom. “Significance,” Kristeva explains, “is indeed inherent in the human body” (10), and several nineteenth-century theorists agree. Like Kristeva, theorists such as Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau tied psychology to the physical body. Studied from the perspective of these men, Mother, Anwell, and Vernon are visible specimens of degeneration. Their abhuman status is the product of tainted heredity. Nordau describes what he considers the origins and possible progression of degeneration:

When under any kind of noxious influences an organism becomes debilitated, its successors will not resemble the healthy, normal type of the species, with capacities for development, but will form a new sub-species, which, like all others possesses the capacity of transmitting to its offspring, in continuously increasing degree, its peculiarities, these being morbid deviations from the normal form – gaps in development, malformations and infirmities ... and ... madness. (16, 18)

The most damning evidence against Mother is Vernon. Applying the theories of B.A. Morel and Max Nordau, Vernon, being both physically and mentally disabled, embodies a high degree of degenerative qualities and thus signifies the approaching extinction of his “sub-species,” something seen only in later generations of a degenerative line (Morel 5, Nordau 16). Nordau

assures his readers that degenerate sub-species are “soon rendered sterile, and after a few generations often die out before ... reach[ing] the lowest grade of organic degradation” (16).

Anwell and Vernon are the end of Mother’s degenerate legacy.

Torches and Pitchforks

The community of Mulyan senses the difference in Anwell’s family. “You’re the kook boy,” Finnigan teases Anwell when they first meet. “Your mother and father are kooks, too. Your mother is a witch ... Everybody knows” (12). While the narrative is set in recent times, it takes place in an isolated community that is culturally static, its attitudes and beliefs are frozen in the past. The culture of the small town reflects both nineteenth-century Western and European mentalities and has Gothic characteristics. Anwell says,

nobody chooses to come here. In this little town ringed by shark-tooth mountains we are far, far away. We know only each other. And the names on the gravestones stay the same.

Mulyan ... a town of abominable secrets and myth. Its elders gather in the Chamber to vote against everything. They are frightened of change, and defiant. (8)

Under the gaze of this throwback community, Mother and her sons are ostracized and feared. The community instinctively reacts against Anwell’s family. This response was expected of a healthy person in reaction to criminal bodies in the nineteenth century:

The criminal is abject; his physiognomy elicits nausea, aversion, revulsion, repugnance at some deep level below consciousness. This dynamic can be explained by heredity: one’s sense of revulsion in the presence of the atavist is a survival of the fear one’s remote ancestors would have felt confronting man-eating predators or cannibalistic savages, whom the atavist recapitulates. (This would explain the stronger intuition of women,

children, and common people, who are less highly evolved and thus more attuned to primitive ancestral fears.). (Hurley 101-102)

The children of Muylan act as though they were following a Lombrosian script. They sense Anwell's difference and are threatened by it, as though as a child he were already a dangerous criminal. Recalling his isolation at school Anwell says, "The eccentric reputation of my mother and father-a thing unavoidably inherited by myself-protected me from obvious harm ... By ten years old I had learned to say nothing, to keep my head sourly down" (47-48). Anwell is bullied until he learns to remove himself from any kind of contact with his peers. Thus, Anwell fits the principle criterion for a monster as defined by Ashley Craig Lancaster in her article, "From Frankenstein's Monster to Lester Ballard: The Evolving Gothic Monster": he is socially isolated, both within his family and in his community at large. Finnigan appears to fulfill his desire for companionship, both by becoming a companion and by absorbing Anwell's abject character. Finnigan offers Anwell the possibility of establishing another connection.

The goal of what little hostility the other children dare enact against Anwell, apart from being inspired by fear, is meant to prevent him from infecting their community. When he reaches puberty, Mother joins their cause. Her motives are separate and self-serving, but her goal and the goal of the community are identical: she is enacting an unspoken eugenics policy against her son. When Anwell becomes aware of this silent conspiracy against him, he realizes he may never connect with another person. He could be exiled for the rest of his life. He remembers the moment he has this realization and his internal walls begin to break down:

My mother was making an island of me ...

Since childhood I'd been building a wall meant to protect me from the worst of the harm. In that moment of understanding, however, the wall quaked and near-fatally

cracked ... My mother had breached the wall and I stood knee-deep in a brackeny fluid that was seeping through the cracks. I fought to control myself, halt the slide, expel her from my head. Already a corner of my brain had been made black and sodden by her. ... the mush in my brain ... smelled of pond scum, an odor that oozed through my skin. (118-119)

Mother has caused the first breach of Gabriel's skin. It is not substance that leaks through but a scent, a prelude to the violent upheaval that will eventually take place. Mother's abuse of Anwell has weakened the walls around his monstrosity, but it is her efforts to suppress his sexuality that allow them to crack just enough for him to recognize what is behind them and realize what he is becoming. For Anwell, the leak in his mind is literal. His body is physically polluted by his psychological damage and needs to be cleansed. This is something Anwell has attempted before in a failed ritual of defilement.

Contaminated Ritual

Anwell makes several attempts at what Kristeva calls "rituals of defilement" (64). She explains in *Powers of Horror*,

[R]ituals of defilement and their derivatives, which, based on the feeling of abjection and all converging on the maternal, attempt to symbolize the other threat to the subject: that of being swamped by the dual relationship, thereby risking the loss not of a part ... but of the totality of his living being. The function of these religious rituals is to ward off the subject's fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother. (64)

Rituals of defilement are about purifying the subject of abjection. Anwell seeks to erect a boundary between himself and the stain his mother has left on his skin and in his blood. He tries to do this with a pact meant to externalize his monstrous nature using Finnigan as a host.

Finnigan introduces the idea after Anwell confesses to murdering Vernon:

“You must feel pretty bad about your brother.”

I nodded again, wonky as a doll.

“You must wish you never did such a bad thing.”

I sighed. “Yeah.”

“We should make—a *packet*, or something.” He struggled. “A packet. You swear not to do bad things—never again. From now on, you only do good things ... I’ll do the bad things for you ... You would be an angel!” (36-37)

Anwell refers to their pact as an act of repentance. While he considers Finnigan’s proposed pact, he “th[inks] about a life lived in shimmering goodness and wonder[s] if this [i]sn’t, in fact, the path of repentance, if this [is] not the truest way of making amends” (39). He intends this agreement to be a ritual of defilement that will eject his dark side into a separate host body. Though he may be unaware of it, Anwell is attempting to expel Mother from his body. But the ritual is contaminated.

Finnigan sabotages Anwell’s efforts to purify himself by re-creating the abjection of the birth act. He suggests they seal their agreement in an age-old childhood ritual: the blood pact. Anwell balks at cutting himself, and the only blood shared is Finnigan’s: “I watched as he dug out a seam of blood without flinching and smeared it first across his forehead, then across my own ... *Gabriel*. The blood on my forehead crimped and itched when it dried. I would always be lonely, but never more alone” (39-40). This passage creates a sense of permanence about the blood that reflects Kristeva’s observations about the permanent stain of placenta on the body. Because Finnigan’s blood is doubly tainted as a product of Vernon and Mother’s biological and psychological impact on Anwell, Gabriel becomes an even worse creature. Thus, Anwell’s

rebirth as Gabriel is ruined by Finnigan through this corporeal act.

Finnigan, who is untouched by Gabriel's blood, remains a purely malevolent and abject being. He has tricked Anwell/Gabriel into worsening his monstrous condition. He reveals a number of characteristics that Lombroso identifies with the criminal man: insensitivity to pain, no desire for companionship or affection, and remorselessness (Lombroso-Ferrero 25, 27, 29). Despite the markers that Finnigan bears, it is Gabriel who kills Anwell's parents.

Lombroso found "an important series of offenders, who are not criminals from birth, but become such at a given moment of their lives, in consequence of an alteration of the brain, which completely upsets their moral nature and makes them unable to discriminate between right and wrong. They are ... insane" (qtd in Lombroso-Ferrero 74). Gabriel breaks from reality when his father forces him to shoot his dog, Surrender. He smothers the memory with a fantasy about defying his parents and hiding Surrender in the forest, safe with Finnigan. The delusion only holds up for a short time, but in that time, the reader shares the unreality with Gabriel. When this hastily constructed wall collapses, the reader realizes the protection that delusion offers, not just to Gabriel, but to the community around him. Anwell's return to reality, his return to sanity, makes him monstrous. When he remembers what he did to Surrender, Gabriel surrenders to Mother's influence and abandons Finnigan:

What's left to take? What's left to wreck? If people run when they see me, if I can't walk down the street-what difference will that make, Finnigan? *No* difference-hardly none! I'm *immune*-I'm untouchable-I'm free! You don't have to stay-you can go. I don't need your help. (191)

Gabriel recklessly breaches his community's social barriers. He enters the home of Evangeline, with whom he has fostered a secret friendship and who has become the object of his sexual

interest. His mother severs his last link to humanity by publicly acknowledging his abhuman and unworthy status as she ejects him from Evangeline's bedroom:

I glimpsed my mother standing in the doorway, thin as a blade. "Get out, Anwell," she said.

I was stunned. I was astonished and horrified ... Evangeline and I stood like pillars of salt, crumbling ... I crossed the threshold, through Mother's overhang and out into the hall. A multitude of eyes scanned my face eagerly. (204-205)

Gabriel goes on to describe the hall lined with every person he knows, the entire town bearing witness to his own mother's rejection of his humanity. *Now* he is free because he is hopeless. He is condemned to be alone, the last member of his species and facing extinction. The experience is saturated with religious and ritualistic significance. The body turning into a pillar of salt is a divine punishment inflicted on Lot's wife when she turns back to Sodom. The metaphor exposes Gabriel's conscious surrender to his unnatural desires and his monstrosity. It is only logical that the threshold he crosses into abjection, even as it physically exists as part of another family's home, belongs to Mother. His final descent into abjection and monstrosity is publicly witnessed by the entire community, at least in his mind, giving the transformation an official and permanent quality. Upon returning home, he perfunctorily murders his parents and buries their bodies in the forest.

Unnatural Acts

After murdering his parents with a hatchet, Gabriel searches himself for a reaction. He "searched for horror or grief, repentance or surprise. But there was only a kind of exhaustion, and peevisishness at the heat" (211-212). Lombroso believed that in the case of the insane criminal "[s]ometimes the suicidal attempt is indirect and takes the form of the murder of some

important personage or their own kin, in the hope that their own condemnation may follow” (qtd in Lombroso-Ferrero 75). The morning after he murders his parents, Gabriel is institutionalized while the community is still ignorant of his violent actions. It is in this space, where the medical establishment quarantines and dehumanizes the abject body, that Gabriel is truly disconnected from his community and resolves himself to the long process of dying. The process recreates, through the physical degeneration of Gabriel, Vernon’s body: “Several times a week I must be cleaned ... I am proffered a pan, and the sight of it shames me; at other times I can’t call for it fast enough. My food comes mashed, raised on a spoon; spillage will dapple my lap. I am addressed as if an idiot” (1).

As a child, Anwell is desperate to separate himself from his brother because of the collapse between Vernon’s unclean inside and clean outside. As a young adult, as Gabriel, he strives to become Vernon in order to purify himself. He resists the urge to propel himself away from the boundary of abjection and instead crosses it and drowns himself in it. This is not the moment Anwell becomes a monster; it is the moment he accepts his own monstrosity and uses it to enact a final ritual of defilement. Boundaries are given up and the body begins to reflect what has been festering inside, waiting to break through the skin.

After cradling the dead body of his brother, transporting and burying the corpses of his dog and his parents, being witness to the moment each one moved from being alive to being dead, and shouldering responsibility for all of their deaths, Anwell/Gabriel has developed strong emotional and physical ties to death. This kind of exposure to undisguised death, Kristeva explains,

Show[s] me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of

death. There I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver. (3)

Gabriel operates according to this line of logic. He tries to drain his body of all its unclean fluids. He coughs up blood and bile, empties his bowels, sweats out plasma until “[h]e’s not much more than a collection of bones ... sockets, clavicle, wrists ... nothing but gristle and rib cage” (167). He cleanses his body of all evidence of abjection as if he were removing evidence of his crimes, including his degenerate genealogy. He claims to cure his body of its deviance through sheer will: “I thought it would be difficult, even impossible, to will oneself to die; I’ve discovered that it’s not. The body is a faithful servant: it knows when it’s not wanted ... My illness comes from the time of chivalry and towers, of armor and sunken swords” (221). From a threat against his community, in his mind, Anwell transforms himself into its savior. He has created a new branch of facile transcendence that fits into the Gothic world. He controls his monstrous body by following the logic of abjection.

Anwell is a recognizable nineteenth-century Gothic anti-hero and he and the narrative’s secondary world do not break free from nineteenth-century discriminatory thought, that is, they think along the lines of Euro-centric and pseudo-scientific reasoning. His murderous acts ultimately cleanse the town of his degenerate family. Once he sees in himself what his mother and Muiylan feared, he engages in his own pro-active eugenics movement against his own subspecies and against himself. Ironically, his surrender to his abject self is rewarded. The physical boundary he has been struggling to build between himself and Vernon/the maternal abject, occurs at death:

At the last moment I feel the dead weight of [Vernon], and wrench my hand from his.

He roars, enraged, grappling; darkness surges toward me. But wings unfold around me and, with a mighty sweep of air, I alone am lifted skyward, from where I first arrived. (248)

Hartnett's ambiguous development of Vernon is authentically Gothic. The role of Vernon as a victim and villain, as a symptom of degeneration and a way to escape from it, purposely creates conflicting feelings in us. There is no clear divide between good and evil in Anwell and Vernon and, as Vernon is dragged into hell and Gabriel ascends into heaven, part of us revolts against their separate fates. Vernon is, above all a victim, and Gabriel commits more monstrous acts than Finnigan. Hartnett's narrative holds onto its nineteenth-century mentality until the very end. The monstrous body that refuses to die on its own is guiltier than the monstrous body that recognizes its danger and sacrifices itself for the good of human evolution.

CHAPTER FOUR
ENTERTAINING THE MEDICAL GAZE:
MONSTROSITY AND SPECTACLE IN *THE LOVE CURSE OF THE RUMBAUGHS*

His nostrums taste nasty; that is how we know they will work. He must operate upon us, painfully—terribly painfully before the discovery of anesthesia about the middle of the nineteenth century. He has dangerous knowledge—poisons, opiates, exotic and forbidden things ... He is eager for knowledge, but this leads him into dreadful courses—grave-robbing and worse. If there are doctors who buy murder victims for dissection, what may not happen to a helpless patient on the operating table [?] ... The doctor brings healing ... but he carries it in a black bag. (Millhauser qtd in Skal 232)

Like Vernon and Anwell, Ivy Spirco in *The Love Curse of the Rumbaugh's* is psychologically splintered because of her abnormal biological status, and she is also saturated with strong emotional and physical ties to the dead. But, in the view of nineteenth-century criminal anthropologists, Ivy is not degenerate. In fact, she is one of them, a scientist, in her own way. She is a descendant of the Rumbaugh's, a family afflicted by a love curse, passed on to one son in each generation, who is doomed to obsessively love and care for his mother, in both life and death. Ivy is the first female to inherit the curse. The afflicted Rumbaugh children inevitably turn to medical science to gain control over the human body and, upon their mothers' deaths, apply what knowledge they have to the preservation of bodies. Though their methods become more advanced as time and technology progress, the Rumbaugh's remain immersed in nineteenth-century scientific thought, both as products and as advocates of it.

According to the judgment of American eugenicists in the novel, the Rumbaugh's are superior specimens of human evolution. However, the origins of their physical perfection lie in abjection. Ties to body collection and reassembly, the Third Reich's eugenics project, and Mengele's twin studies have made the Rumbaugh family what it is today. Even in their genealogical perfection, the Rumbaugh's are descendants of human monstrosity. Being both scientists and monsters, the family exemplifies the relationship between myth and medicine in nineteenth-century Britain (Angell 142). Using the Rumbaugh's hybrid construction, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaugh's* parodies the spectacle that surrounded the study of the human monster in Britain in the nineteenth-century and reenacts the nineteenth-century dialogue between science and superstition in the relationship between the Rumbaugh's curse and technology.

Staging the Body

In the nineteenth-century, the English medical profession became enamoured with abject

bodies. Those individuals with especially grotesque bodies were diagnosed as human monsters. Teratology, a new branch of medicine that theorized the origins of human monsters emerged, but “[u]nable to provide an agreed scientific alternative to explain, diagnose and treat monstrosity ... [it] became a scientific ‘limbo’ ” (Angell 132). The science was largely subjective, and understood and applied as individual physicians saw fit. As a result, the goal of teratologists, to present “monstrosity as a *natural* rather than a *supernatural* phenomenon,” failed spectacularly as “[m]any doctors found themselves explaining monstrosities through folklore or traditional theories” such as divine retribution (Angell 133). Some doctors abandoned their scientific pursuits entirely, instead revelling in the spectacle of the monstrous body.

The most famous example of this is Dr. Frederick Treves who “regularly visited ... freak shows ... and exhibited the most interesting cases for discussion at the Pathological Society of London. Treves’s interest in monsters was not in finding a cause or in an attempt to diagnose them; his ... interest was pure curiosity and fascination for the distortion of the human body” (Angell 142). Not only did Treves attend freak shows, he produced them. Under the influence of doctors such as Treves, the medical gaze grew idle.

Gantos mimics this practice of medical spectacle in the Rumbaugh family as each afflicted child acts out the curse through posthumous art. Ivy learns about her family history beginning in the early nineteenth century, when the Rumbaughs first arrived in America from Germany (73). The first sign of aberration is located in Hermann Rumbaugh, Ivy’s great-grandfather who profited from the collection of dead Union and Confederate soldiers in the Civil War years. Hermann charged families for the return of their sons’ and fathers’ bodies, reassembling them from scattered body parts when necessary and altering the corpses through “the new ‘body preservation science,’ ” otherwise known as embalming (74). Hermann’s work

was about exhibition. We learn about his protocol from Ivy's mother, who explains her family's curse on the girl's sixteenth birthday:

His men would fan out and sort through the casualties, matching insurance policy photographs to faces. Then they'd find intact, presentable uniforms and fill them with whatever extra body parts were needed to compose a respectable corpse and top it off with the proper head, hat, and rankings ... family lore has it he claimed to have gotten into a tug-of-war with the Civil War photographer Mathew Brady over bodies that they both wanted. (74-75)

Hermann and Brady were in similar businesses: recreating the bodies of the dead and attempting to freeze them in time. Hermann did this by literally reassembling bodies, and Brady through photography. The artificial and exploitive nature of his work does not prevent Hermann from finding value in it: "after his mother died, Hermann personally embalmed her and then in grief committed suicide through arsenic poisoning, leaving strict instructions to be embalmed himself and buried with her in a double-wide coffin he had commissioned" (75-76). Hermann enacts his consuming mother-love through embalming, what is for him, cutting-edge science. While embalming did not cure the body of death, it was an early step in denying death's power over the body through decomposition.

Peter Rumbaugh, Ivy's grandfather, was involved in eugenics, exacting a measure of control over reproduction in both his mink farm and his family:

Peter knew of Mendel's early genetic experiments with crossbreeding peas and used the same selective breeding techniques to breed superior minks. He and his robust wife of Nordic descent had twelve children, the last two of which were the twins. Peter was very proud of his family—a family that had never suffered a death during childbirth, or from

any disease. (76)

Peter applies Mendel's experiments on beans to his business and to his own family, producing, what was in his mind, high-quality specimens of both species through selective breeding. Sir Francis Galton, cousin to Charles Darwin and father of eugenics, described the role of superior genes in human evolution: "The most merciful form of what I ventured to call 'eugenics' would consist in watching for the indications of superior strains or races, and in so favouring them that their progeny shall outnumber and gradually replace that of the old one" (Otis 479). Galton referred to this as a "merciful" scenario, hinting that other, less pleasant methods, could render a similar result. His suggestion foreshadowed the proactive action taken on the part of American and European governments to sterilize and, in the case of the Third Reich, isolate and exterminate groups of individuals they categorized as lower races. The Eurocentric bias and wide range of physical signifiers that informed the separation of so-called superior and inferior races created "seemingly infinite possible combinations of signs of atavism and degeneration [which] frustrated the effort to construct typologies and taxonomies" (Lombroso-Ferrero 16). Lombroso identified so many physical signs of degeneracy that a person could pick and choose whom to isolate and whom to ignore.

The tools used by eugenicists to measure and identify indicators of superior genes were developed and used by criminal anthropologists such as Cesare Lombroso. Gantos integrates this method of measuring a person's place on the evolutionary scale into his novel. At a eugenics booth at the 1921 Westmoreland County Fair, Peter Rumbaugh took his family to be studied:

Each family that applied was charted for tuberculosis, delirium tremens, syphilis, hair color, eye color, skin pigmentation, mental traits, epilepsy, diabetes, and financial status

as well as alcoholism, criminal behavior, sexual misconduct, and religious beliefs. The final test was administered by a nurse who used a pair of steel calipers to measure their cranium size, since it was commonly believed that the inferior races had smaller heads and, as a result, smaller brains. (78)

To a modern audience, the diagnostic tests for genetic ranking are obviously lacking in any scientific viability. But for the Rumbaughs, the scientific stamp of approval on their family cemented their love affair with themselves and their disassociation from outside gene pools that they believed would only weaken their bloodline. The medal they won at the fair declaring their genetic superiority may be meaningless in the eyes of present-day science, but Peter's youngest sons, the Twins, still display it proudly. Peter exhibits his family with similar pride, at the fair and in research, when he donates his twin sons to a eugenics study. He tells them: "You will go down in history. ... Be proud of your heritage, and when I see you in twenty years you will rule the world" (80). Peter believes the academic exhibition of genetic superiority will enable world domination, an ambition common amongst mad scientists.

When his mother dies, Peter's obsession with breeding superior bodies and his faith in the significance of individual body parts is reflected in his treatment of her body:

When his mother died, Peter lined her coffin with mink ... She had been diabetic, and as her circulation declined she lost bits and pieces of limbs—toes at first, then fingers, and then a leg. He preserved her bits as if tanning a hide or taxiderming a specimen and kept the pieces in a case that was constructed like a velvet-line musical instrument case, perfectly compartmentalized to secure the various discards. (82)

Peter's treatment of the body bridges the gap between his father's embalming practice and his sons' taxidermy. More significantly, his placement of her body parts, marks of her evolutionary

superiority in the eyes of eugenicists, in a luxurious instrument case, ties his family's preservation techniques to art. In the past, Hermann's corporeal reassembly and embalming is paired with photography, the positioning and freezing of an image in time. Now his son's collection of body parts, previously arranged to form an ideal body, is aligned with music, a collection of sounds, ideally arranged to please an audience. The Twins take family tradition a step further:

Like many men in fish-and-game towns, they practiced taxidermy as a hobby. The Twins competed in contests at the Westmoreland County Fair ... It was with great pride that within the pharmacy they displayed their winning entries in dust-proof glass-and-oak cases set on top of the tall shelves. (9)

In the hands and minds of the Rumbaugh Twins, science becomes an art, and the corpse is their medium of expression. Their dioramas are inspired by canonical literature and myth. They recreate famous Gothic doppelgangers, or doubles, such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the Picture of Dorian Gray, and Narcissus (123, 139, 121). When their mother dies, they divide her into two halves as well:

They must have sawed her in half somehow, I guessed. After I checked the moms over, going back and forth between the rooms and looking under their clothes, I figured it out. The sitting mom had wooden legs and was real above the waist, and the one I had first seen had real legs but was a mannequin's dummy from above her hips to her neck. They couldn't possibly get two heads, so they taxidermed one and carved a dummy for the other, and then, I guessed, they could mix and match the pieces back and forth. (134)

The idea behind the taxidermy is to pose each corpse so that it appears life-like. "[G]ood taxidermists," Ivy's mother tells her, "breathe a little life into the scene. And in a way you end

up caring about it and kind of get away from being creeped out that you are staring at something that was once alive” (120).

The point of taxidermy is to overcome abjection, to mask it in an effort to conquer the impression of finality and decay that comes with death. The Twins’ recreation of themselves through Gothic posthumous art suggests their attitudes toward their own bodies; they see themselves as the product of reproductive art, sculpted by genetics. However, the Twins also recognize that their identical appearance, thoughts, and mannerisms threaten other individuals’ sense of autonomy.

Invisible Monsters

[W]e threaten them because we are so alike. Everyone believes that they are individuals and that their lives have been shaped through their experiences. But that’s a charade, and they know it when they take one look at us because we are who we are through our genes. They believe in nurture, but we represent nature, and for most people nature is untamed and primitive and too dark and unpredictable. We live out our lives as the actors in a genetic script—that’s nature’s path. (Gantos 144)

The Twins are objects of medical and scientific spectacle. They embody a mythology that surrounds identical twins. Ideas about psychic connections and secret languages have become part of the scientific and cultural fascination with identical twins. Twin studies are the cornerstone of the nature versus nurture debate, representing the nature side of the argument. Observations about twins, separated from birth, having the same or similar jobs, spouses, clothing and mannerisms, have burrowed their way into the Western world’s own mythology (Leo 1). Other widespread and fantastical perceptions about the extent of the links between twins include the documented phenomenon of cryptophasia, a secret language developed and

understood only by twins, and speculation about psychic connections that enable twins to share emotions and physical sensations (Stewart 30). Whatever the reality of twin relationships, the Rumbaugh Twins feed our curiosity about the mysterious qualities of their physical link. While, like the monsters Treves exhibited, this particular set of twins does not advance medical knowledge about the human body, they confront us with the power of the body over our thoughts, behaviors, abilities, and relationships. They explain their relationship to Ivy in an effort to help her understand the power of genetics over behaviour and experience:

“Think of the burden of being cursed with a double,” Ab said. “You haven’t a life of your own – no thought, no pain, no love, no secret is safe between us. We know the insides of each other maybe better than we know ourselves. There are times when I ask, how does Dolph feel today? And the answer is often clearer than if I asked myself how I felt ... that struggle to be alone,” Ab continued, “to be just one individual self, is akin to some desire to murder the other.” (142-143)

The strength of the relationship between the Twins evokes both intense love and hatred in them for each other and though she is only one person, Ivy too finds herself divided: “You are different from us,” Dolph tells her, “But your Rumbaugh affliction is like a twin self, and the older you become the stronger you’ll find the fight between who you are and what you want to be” (144). As the narrative concludes and Ivy’s mother dies, any illusion of Ivy having a choice between succumbing to the curse or fighting it, abruptly collapses: “Once my mother died, the curse fully occupied the space she’d left behind, and whatever religious goals I had gave way to my adoration of her” (171-172). Ivy’s uncontrollable instinct to preserve her mother’s body immerses her in the maternal abject. As Julia Kristeva might observe, Ivy’s instincts run counter to those of the rest of humanity, which fears both corpses and being reabsorbed by the maternal

body. However, Kristeva does identify the allure the maternal body holds for “devotees of the abject,” especially the daughter who is more resistant to “identifying with the owner of the penis” (54). She explains that

she as well as he, do not cease looking, within what flows from the other’s “innermost being,” for the desirable and terrifying, nourishing and murderous, fascinating and abject inside of the maternal body. For, in the misfire of identification with the mother as well as with the father, how else are they to be maintained in the Other? How, if not by incorporating a devouring mother, for want of having been able to introject her and joy in what manifests her, for want of being able to signify her: urine, blood, sperm, excrement. Harebrained staging of an abortion, of a self-giving birth ever miscarried, endlessly to be renewed, the hope for rebirth is short-circuited by the very splitting: the advent of one’s own identity demands a law that mutilates, whereas *jouissance* demands an *abjection* from which identity becomes absent. (54)

The placenta is an individual’s original life support and means of nourishment. It is how one first knows his or her mother, through her body. But pregnancy is not permanent. The Rumbaughs chase that *jouissance*, pleasure that exceeds how much joy the body can stand and so is experienced, instead, as pain. Their interaction with the dead is all in an effort to recreate life as their mother created their own lives. They are elbow-deep in the decay of the maternal bodies they create for themselves with their own hands. Their experiments on the bodies of fallen soldiers, the bodies of unborn minks, and the bodies of dead animals, is training for the moment their mothers’ bodies die and cross into abjection, so that they can attempt to pull their mothers back out of the abject space. Until Ivy, none could reach that place of *jouissance*, where the boundaries between their bodies and their mothers’ bodies disintegrate and they become

inseparable.

The Twins and their daughter represent a pivotal point in the Rumbaugh's scientific pursuit of maternal re-absorption and the Rumbaugh family's place in human evolution. Though their mothers were the women they loved best, both Hermann and Peter marry and have several children. Under the control of their overbearing mother, the Twins never form romantic relationships. Mrs. Rumbaugh "had no interest in allowing the Twins to marry anyone. They belonged to her ... And maybe ... she had figured out the Rumbaugh curse and decided to put an end to it – to keep them from marrying and passing the curse to another generation" (83). Mrs. Rumbaugh's intervention alters the Twin's sexual behaviour, successfully suppressing their desire to form a lasting reproductive relationship, but she is unable to crush their instinct to pass on the Rumbaugh curse. When Mrs. Rumbaugh dies,

they [begin] to have desires like any adult, which [confuse] them. Staying in love with their mother had allowed them to be children forever, and children are entirely self-involved. They didn't want to get married, but they still had those unused adult passions, which turned them into ancient adolescents. And now they wanted their mommy in a different way. (94)

The incestuous undertones of the story come to the surface at this moment, and the reader is confronted with reproductive instincts that, in Nordau and Lombroso's opinion, would doom the Rumbaugh family line as inbred children would become increasingly degenerate until they became sterile. In the case of the Twins, because their mother is deceased, they must look outside their family for a mate. Their attitude towards sex with Ivy's mother is nothing short of disgust, as if she were an animal and not another human being. She relates the experience to Ivy:

I held out my hand for [Ab] to hold, and I leaned toward him thinking we might kiss as

kind of an ending to the event. But he shuddered and pulled back in horror Now I understand, of course, that he never *wanted* sex with me for any other reason than to perpetuate the Rumbaugh curse. It was in his blood to procreate even though it was against [his mother's] wishes. (98-100)

The invasive and unrelenting interaction between the brothers and the narcissistic attitude that they have inherited from their father have placed their understanding of themselves as outside and above the general population. The bodies which have defined their identities have also isolated them from the rest of the human species: “Everything about the Twins aged in a singular way, so that they stood out among other men as if they were an idiosyncratic variation within a breed, like cats with extra toes, or albino birds with see-through feathers” (8). For her part, Ivy permanently marks her body with the origin of her species’ difference: “Against my white skin was a solid red tattoo of a heart. A scroll across the top read: MOTHER. A scroll below read: ETERNAL LOVE” (107). According to Lombroso, tattoos represent “the true writing of savages, their first registry of civil condition” (qtd in Lombroso-Ferrero 51). Ivy’s tattoo can thus be read as marking a complete break from the rest of the human species and the beginning of a new civilization as the population of her town dies off. After her mother’s death, Ivy describes the town’s own decline: “People are poor. Business is poor. And both are getting worse. . . .the town seems to be fighting for its life. The vital young people leave to make plans in new places . . . However, the old people still stick together, steadfastly remaining to be buried where they had always planned. . . .They have so little time left” (175-176). Once the town is emptied of all other inhabitants, Ivy will have a space in which she can achieve the first successful fulfillment of the Rumbaugh curse using her family’s traditional Gothic strategies: entangling posthumous art and science successfully to create a new body.

Mad Science

Mad science and mad scientists have emerged in part to bridge the cultural chasm between hard science and wild superstition. The mad scientist's demeanor is evidence of our intuitive knowledge that something is missing in a purely scientific model of the universe ... The mad scientist is a modern priest who mediates our communion with the new gods of specialized knowledge, raising impertinent questions no one else dares ask. We may be suspicious of his motivations and hesitate to move too close to his operating table/altar, but nonetheless we have a grudging admiration for his audacity. (Skal 315)

The mad scientist, as David Skal seems to suggest, creates whatever he or she can imagine, without the filter of demand or morality. They do it because they can. Outside chance discovery, scientific advancements cannot exist without the imagination. We can only theorize and create what we can conceive of, desire, and allow. The paradox, then, is in the power of the unconscious or instinctive proclivities over how and what scientific endeavors produce.

Traditionally, what the mad scientist creates is almost human and almost alive. Skal tells us: "The problem of infusing dead matter with life, a central concern of mad scientists everywhere, is also a pointed allegory of the modern world's difficulties in reconciling the seeming contradictions of matter and mind, science and superstition" (23). Traditionally, the experiments of mad scientists ultimately fail. Altered life forms such as Dr. Moreau's human-animal hybrids or Dr. Frankenstein's creation are physically deformed and become dangerous; Dr. Jekyll's potion and Dorian Gray's portrait, meant to bring out the best of human nature and beauty, end up corrupting it.

In his analysis of the figure of the mad scientist in Western popular culture Skal found that "[f]rom *Metropolis* to *Dr. Strangelove* and beyond, overreaching scientists routinely have

damaged bodies (especially mangled hands, a particularly powerful symbol of twisted human endeavor)” (273). But the Rumbaughes are a new breed of mad scientists. Ivy takes note of the appearance of the Twins’ hands and how they value them:

their thin, nearly transparent skin looked like milk spilled over a road map of blue and red veins. They were pharmacists, and I’ve never seen hands as clean as theirs, which they hygienically scrubbed to a ruddy glow at the beginning and end of each workday ...

When I asked if it hurt to scrub his hands, Ab (or it could have been Dolph) replied as if his words were a medical college oath he had pledged to uphold, “Good health is built on the foundation of a sanitary science.” He held his hands erect before him as if he were drying two white-hot flames. (8)

In the view of eugenicists, academics, and Nazi scientists, the Rumbaughes are models of human perfection. Their bodies are built to survive a hostile human environment, and what the Rumbaughes are planning to create through cloning technology is perfect in every way Ivy can imagine her mother-daughter to be. The process of creation has come so close to replicating the natural process and so precise that, though what the Rumbaughes will be creating is a monster, its abnormalities will not be visible to the human eye. In contemporary literature, Sabine Bussing explains, it is their seeming normalcy and, in the case of a child-monster such as Ivy, their seemingly harmless bodies that evoke terror:

The new monsters can no longer be recognized by their outward appearance; the Gothic villain with black clothes and vicious glittering eyes and the gigantic roaring beast must tolerate the rise of a novel species that looks sweet, harmless, and, in a word, angelic.

The possibility that such a creature could harbor the most hideous intentions ... seems to be against the very laws of nature. The effect which the child produces within the reader

is thus an exceptionally strong and enduring one. (xvi-xvii)

Ironically, the advancement of medical science, designed to cure the body of degeneracy, emerges as its co-conspirator, hiding degeneracy from detection. Biotechnology is the key to the Rumbaugh's ability to enact their devotion to the maternal abject and pass on their genetic monstrosity.

As a product of ideal genetics, embodied by men of science who are drawn to their professions by a desire to control dead, dying, and reproductive bodies, Ivy is a hybrid creature. She, like her fellow mad scientists, is "a lightning rod for otherwise unbearable anxieties about the meaning of scientific thinking and the uses and consequences of modern technology" (Skal 18). Francis Fukuyama, one of the loudest voices in the twenty-first century decrying the possibly disastrous effects of bio-engineering on humanity as a species, claims in *Radical Evolution*, that "[h]uman nature exists, is a meaningful concept, and has provided a stable continuity to our experience as a species," and if genetic engineering becomes an available service we will "no longer struggle, aspire, love, feel pain, make difficult moral choices, have families, or do any of the things that we traditionally associate with being human" (qtd in Garreau 155). Fukuyama's prediction about the isolating and de-humanizing effect of genetic engineering on its subjects presents enhanced humans as psychopathic and more robotic than human. Ivy is in the process of disconnecting from the rest of humanity. In her vision of the future, she is concerned only with the survival of herself and her mother:

I have saved her genetic material for the future. ... I can have Mother's genetic samples altered. ... When the time comes, there will be a lot of improvements to consider. ... Eventually her designed genetic material will be implanted into my egg, which first would have had my genetic material removed. Then my mother could become my baby.

And someday, when I get old, I can become her baby. Then she will be mine. And I will be hers. We will take the men out of it altogether. It will be pure mother love. Just me and her and me and her forever. (177)

For Ivy, all that will remain is the love curse, the consuming desire to be reabsorbed into the womb, a desire that can now be realized within her lifetime. Ivy marks her heart, the muscle that spreads Rumbaugh blood throughout her body, with the same words that the Twins had engraved on their mother's gravestone: "MOTHER" and beneath it "*Eternal Love*" (88). She has transformed her body into her own mother's gravesite, tombstone and all. The woman will emerge, like a vampire, reanimated by the blood of her child. Science has become a passageway into the heart of abjection: Ivy's re-entry into the womb and her absorption of a corpse. This is a process that will be replicated many times over in Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion*.

CHAPTER FIVE
FRUIT OF THE POISON TREE:
BIOLOGICAL TRANSCENDENCE AND TRANSGRESSION IN *THE HOUSE OF THE SCORPION*

The microscopic analysis of cell structure reveals what we may call the *gothic* of matter. Matter is not mute and stolid, but rather clamorous and active. In its viscosity, in its oozing mobility, in its unexpected, incessant animation, this "physical basis of life," protoplasm, emerges as a testament to the horrific potentialities of a sheerly physical world. (Hurley 33)

In *The House of the Scorpion*, the protagonist Matteo is a clone desperate to believe in facile transcendence so that he can control his genetic destiny through sheer will. His unique position as a clone demonstrates the materialist basis of human life, jeopardizing the value we place on ourselves through religion or any field of metaphysical thought. If life is simply matter

which can be altered and created through technology, how can the body be thought to hold anything sacred or divine that can survive death?

Nancy Farmer resists the inclination to label all scientific products of life as soulless or inhuman. Instead, she creates Matt, a clone more human than the naturally produced and corrupt Alacrán family who own him, headed by El Patrón. The Alacrás consider Matt at best as livestock and at worst as a monster. Both the enactment and the understanding of monsters within the Alacrán family and surrounding communities follow a specific script. The social constructs and the choices offered to characters in this secondary world are limited to boundaries which are defined by biology and nineteenth-century morality. Financially and physically dependent on opiates, purposely creating their own doppelgangers, and voluntarily practising vampirism, the Alacrán family lives what might be called a nineteenth-century Gothic literary lifestyle. Linked to the family only through biology, Matt dabbles in their practices of Gothicity, but fails to fulfill his biological destiny when he fails to perpetuate the inhuman acts of El Patrón.

Matt is born in Opium, a literal borderland between America and what was once Mexico, now known as Aztlan. Aztlan is a prominent community in Mesoamerican history and mythology, a place from which many Aztecs fled when they became victimized by more prominent citizens, most notably through human sacrifice which was often performed by removing the victim's heart (Bragg n. pag.). The reversion to the old, fallen civilization places Opium between a mythological and ritualistic society and a British colony that defines itself as civilized. The placement of the borderland nation is suited perfectly to Matt's biologically and socially constructed status between myth and science. The story ranges from the time of Matt's creation to the moment he takes over Opium at age fourteen.

Matt lives on a poppy farm where the original Matteo, now called El Patrón, uses technologically mentally disabled slaves to harvest opium. Matt too is grown and harvested: created from a seed of skin, fertilized in a petri dish, and planted in a cow's womb to emerge as a neatly wrapped package of organs, ready to be torn open when El Patrón's body needs to be fed. Their physical conditions situate the two Matts between a pleasant delusion and a horrifying nightmare, human and animal, living and dead. This in-between position traps Matt in a place of unassailable and unrelenting abjection. He is caught in the intolerable space between irreconcilable natures, and he displays the symptoms of the various samples of monstrosity around him. Farmer's plot is about the choices her characters make: between good and evil, human and monster. El Patrón's bodyguard tells Matt that

El Patrón has his good side and his bad side. Very dark indeed is his majesty when he wants to be. When he was young, he made a choice, like a tree does when it decides to grow one way or the other. He grew large and green until he shadowed over the whole forest, but most of his branches are twisted. ... What I mean to say is this: When you're small you can choose which way to grow. If you're kind and decent, you grow into a kind and decent man. If you're like El Patrón ... Just think about it. (70)

This comment, which Matt reflects upon throughout the novel, comes from a character named Tam Lin. Tam Lin is the name of a popular figure in Scottish folklore, a young man who is captured by fairies and saved from them by his true love's willingness to maintain her grasp on his body as his captors change him into increasingly horrifying forms (Housman 77-83). Farmer's reincarnation of the figure is a former Scottish nationalist who, in an attempt to assassinate the British prime minister, planted a bomb outside the politician's house. The explosive detonated as a school bus pulled up nearby and caused the deaths of twenty children

(176-177). Through his affection for Matt and his ties to the Scottish folk tale, Tam Lin reminds readers that despite the form a person might take, he or she is inevitably a mixture of good and bad qualities and just as we are all capable of inhuman acts, whether we mean to commit them or not, we are equally capable of empathy and compassion.

Farmer has created a multi-layered foundation of science, myth, and history that works to communicate the changing landscape of possibility in the world outside the novel. Those things that were once thought impossible, such as the human creation of life and willful alteration of the body are becoming possible; science is materializing myth. At the same time, however, we only need to look back a few decades to see that “[s]cience has not given men more self-control, more kindness, or more power for discounting their passions....Men’s collective passions are mainly for evil; far the strongest of them are hatred and rivalry directed toward other groups” (Bertrand Russell qtd in Garreau 169). This pessimistic view of human nature is both reproduced and overcome, at least for a short time, in Farmer’s narrative.

The Bio-Doppelganger

Matt’s potential for evil is demonstrated by El Patrón, who lobotomizes, enslaves, and murders others for profit and pleasure. As exact, though chronologically mismatched, biological mirrors of each other, Matt and El Patrón are a unique example of the doppelganger, or double, a common element in Gothic literature. The inescapable condition of Matt’s genetic destiny is revealed through this relationship as described in *Gothic*:

Alienated from society and themselves, Romantic-Gothic heroes undergo the effects of this disillusion, doubting the nature of the powers that consume them, uncertain whether they originate internally or from external forces. Without an adequate social framework to sustain a sense of identity, the wanderer encounters the new form of the Gothic ghost,

the double or shadow of himself. An uncanny figure of horror, the double presents a limit that cannot be overcome, the representation of an internal and irreparable division of the individual psyche. (Botting 93)

El Patrón is not a traditional ghost. Though technically he is not dead, at 140 years old, he should be. He is the living dead, made up of more donor-clone organs and cells than his original and naturally born body. He contains the ghosts of Matt's brothers and confronts him with his likely destiny: to die and return to home, to El Patrón's body, or to survive and become El Patrón. El Patrón does not damn Matt to the life of a ruthless sociopath, but he confronts the clone with the permanence of his darker nature. And Matt cannot help but be drawn to him:

He liked El Patrón instinctively. There was something so right about the way the old man looked. His eyes were a *good* color. Matt didn't know why it was good, only that it was. El Patrón's face seemed oddly familiar, and his hands – thin and blue-veined – had a shape that appealed to Matt in some deep way. (56-57)

Matt establishes their connection through physical attributes, which resonate with his instinct toward self-preservation. This instinct is so strong that, even when El Patrón is ready to take Matt's heart, and the boy is in hiding, Matt finds it difficult to resist the old man:

What if he was wrong? What if El Patrón really loved him? Matt thought about the old man lying on a hospital bed, waiting for the one person who could bring him a glimpse of his youth.

...What was he to do? What *could* he do?

...No matter how treacherous El Patrón had been, Matt loved the old man. No one was closer to him in the whole world. No one understood him better. (216-218)

The tie between the body and the survival instinct, even as it is separated into different human beings, survives and reconnects. Matt desires to be around El Patrón all the time, despite the old man's repetitious stories and hostile personality. In any other child, this attraction would seem strange. In this situation, however, it is the epitome of natural attraction; in order to have the will to survive, you must value your self/body above all others. That is exactly how El Patrón feels about himself, and how Matt feels about El Patrón because he *is* El Patrón. He continues to be drawn to the host, even as it threatens to consume him, because he is driven to protect El Patrón's body in the same way the Rumbaugh's seek to protect their mothers'; El Patrón, in this sense, can be read as a maternal figure.

Like Ivy of *The Love Curse of the Rumbaugh's*, Matt desires to be reunited with the maternal body. In this case, however, the maternal has been distanced both by species and the absence of the violent act of separation of mother and child at birth. First, Matt's literal birth mother is a cow, but there is no suggestion he feels one way or the other toward bovines. Secondly, his true mother is El Patrón. Matt is created from the DNA extracted from skin cells. This distancing from the taint created from gestation within the maternal womb, sharing and recycling abject fluids with one another for nine months, and the absence of the violent birth act leaves Matt's skin clean and pure, free from the stain of the abject. He is also created from El Patrón's skin cells, the purest part of the old man, vampire or not. Matt, in the method of his creation, does not break the barrier between inside and outside. This is why he is able to resist his monstrosity, though it still peeks through.

Matt's abject status within the Alacrán household is due mainly to his technological and bestial origins. The animal and technological birth that establishes Matt's abject status is what allows El Patrón to use him as a living organ donor. When Matt attempts to escape Opium and is

caught, El Patrón's great-great-grandson Steven explains, "The law is very clear. All clones are classified as livestock because they're grown inside cows. Cows can't give birth to humans" (226). Clearly, however, they can and do. The monstrous niche Matt is actually born into is primarily a social construct. But the biological mirror that El Patrón holds in front of him prevents Matt from achieving a wholly human status in the eyes of the reader and narrative community.

Tom, who will be examined in more detail later in this chapter, summarizes the effect an animal birth has on Matt's status in the Alacrán household: "You're a clone ... Know what that is? A kind of *puke*. You were puked up by a cow" (67). The Alacrás see Matt as an entirely abject substance, ejected from a nonhuman body. Those who come into contact with him fear he will contaminate them. There is an unspoken rule the Matt comes to recognize and accept: "He was a clone. He wasn't supposed to touch humans" (114). The Alacrás also have a heightened aversion to his blood. When his blood stains a sheet, rather than clean it, the Alacrás have it burnt (23). Yet, El Patrón is comfortable having Matt's heart, the centre of his circulatory system, replace his own. His embrace of the beating heart of the object of abjection adds another layer to his vampiric monstrosity.

El Patrón's claim to his future heart is established through Matt's birthing process. In the bovine uterine space, Matt moves from human to animal, from a precious life to private property, and Matt's body and blood become contaminants. By the time he is 148 years old and ready to receive Matt's heart, El Patrón has replaced and repaired so many organs with the lives and parts of his clones, ranging from fetal brain implants to the organs of young men, he is more clone than human. He has become a hybrid between Frankenstein's creation and Dracula.

The Maternal Vampire

Fred Botting tells us that in the nineteenth-century, “[s]cience, with its chemical concoctions, mechanical laboratories and electrical instruments became a new domain for the encounter with dark powers, now secular, mental and animal rather than supernatural” (12-13). The vampire is a unique monster in that, unlike the werewolf, which represents a mindless surrender to primitive violence, the vampire is clever and calculating in its violent acts. Because of the vampire’s inescapable relationship to blood, it is the perfect vessel for nineteenth-century science to use to showcase its horrors:

Blood is a synecdoche, a part which may signify the qualities of a greater whole. The health of the blood stands in semiotic relation to the health of the associated body; likewise, that body stands in synecdochal relationship to the race, family or nation with which it is associated. Thus, the vampire’s attack, as Punter suggests, ‘blurs the lines’ between the demarcations of species, of spirituality and of gender that stabilise late-Victorian society. That blurring, though, is dependent upon a symbolic conception of blood underpinned by medical convention. (Hughes 54)

David Punter’s conception of blood has not changed drastically since the nineteenth-century. It is still seen as a source of contamination, but it is also becoming a potential source of knowledge and creation. It has become a window into a person’s biological destiny. Blood can predict the future of a child before it is born, “what color hair it [is] to have, how tall it [will] become, and even whether it [prefers] spinach to broccoli” (Farmer 2). That magical predictability is what grants El Patrón his immortality and ensures he is always in possession of the perfect sacrificial body. El Patrón is called “the old vampire,” but he is in no way a supernatural being, merely a surreally material one. His vampirism is technologically enabled. He creates his victims and feeds from their bodies to stave off death. The metaphorical nature of the vampire becomes

literal and therefore all the more terrifying because it is possible outside the narrative. El Patrón's life experiences have grown repetitive: he tells the same stories over and over again, and his friends and subordinates have long ago run out of gift ideas for his birthday. When the man literally has everything and has experienced everything he is going to experience, what do you get him? As brimming with objects as El Patrón's life is, it is empty. His wealth and powerful status raise him above the law, give him absolute control over others, and place immortality within his grasp. There is nothing left for him to desire except more time, and nothing left to challenge him except death. El Patrón's static existence deprives him of what Fukuyama believes makes us human:

Even something like the elimination of pain and suffering, you know. This is the argument that's the most difficult to make. But I think it's ultimately the most critical one. There's something about the experience of pain and longing and anxiety and all of these things that ... [is] somehow necessary to our self-understanding of what we are as human beings. I mean, you can't have courage without risk. You can't have real compassion or sympathy without the ... experience of pain. (qtd in Garreau 162)

El Patrón festers in his own body, growing increasingly detached from the rest of humanity. He becomes a predator, feeding off his own family. El Patrón's literal metamorphosis into a vampire branches out to mock the entities that, according to Barry Milligan, particular species of monster represented in the nineteenth-century: the aristocracy, and the sexual threat of racial others posed to the Victorian female body (85). El Patrón eliminates the involvement of any human female body, and even acts as a literal gatekeeper, maintaining the separation between Mexico and America by capturing and lobotomizing anyone who attempts to leave their designated homeland. Even his aristocratic status is artificial. In *Nightmare on Main Street*,

Mark Edmunson says that “to be one of the undead some nobility of blood – or exquisite, aristocratic beauty – is generally required” (43). However, the class system in *Opium* suspends those ideals. Matt looks around at the guest of El Patrón’s one-hundred-forty-third birthday and observes:

There were senators and famous actors, general and world-renowned doctors, a few ex-presidents, and half a dozen dictators from places Matt had heard about on TV. There was even a faded-looking princess. And of course there were the other Farmers. The Farmers were the real aristocrats here. They ruled the drug empire between the United States and Aztlan. (98)

These men are not of noble blood, or even particularly attractive. The two highest ranking Farmers are El Patrón who, despite his immortality still looks his age, and Mr. MacGregor, who is “doughy,” “creepy,” and “repulsive” (98, 100). But they are powerful and wealthy men who have achieved this status by producing a drug that, in the nineteenth-century, was more alluring than it was repulsive. Their artificial status, justified by material goods rather than those historical favourites of divine right and biological superiority, promotes civil stasis. There is no interest in changing civilization or upholding a standard of conduct. El Patrón’s estate is evidence of this:

As a boy, El Patrón had observed the grand estate of the wealthy rancher who owned his village ... he tried to duplicate that memory ... The Alacrán *estancia* was laid out over a large area. Modern conveniences were kept to a minimum, except in special areas like the hospital. Thus, Celia cooked over a wood-burning stove when El Patrón was visiting because he liked the smell of burning mesquite ... But during the annual birthday party

modern conveniences came out. The famous celebrities would have been miserable without their air-conditioning and entertainment centers.

Not that El Patrón cared whether they were miserable. He merely wanted to impress people. (136-137)

This is the horror of a purely material existence. Accumulating material wealth defines an individual's worth – not intelligence or ambition or actions in furtherance of knowledge or living conditions. The future of the human race is decided by materialist motivations such as vanity and greed. In his analysis of predictions about a potential posthuman future in *Technophobia*, Daniel Dinello identifies this as a likely outcome of advanced reproductive technology:

With the completion of the Human Genome Project, new reproductive techniques, and advances in cloning, profit-driven scientists can reengineer evolution in accordance with military, corporate, and consumer demands. ... Genetic enhancement, therefore, will not be determined solely by scientists, corporations, and the military, but will also be driven by capitalism, advertising, and upper-class preferences. (192-193)

Fukuyama fears that this will lead to a division within the human race:

the divisions between The Enhanced, The Naturals, and The Rest may be so profound as to make past ruptures over race and religion seem quaint and paltry. If wealthy parents figure out a way to increase the intelligence of all of their descendants, “we have the makings not just of a moral dilemma but of a full-scale class war,”... The Enhanced, in time, “will look, think, act, and perhaps even feel differently from those who were not similarly chosen, and may come to think of themselves as different kinds of creatures.” (qtd in Garreau 162)

While El Patrón has not become physically enhanced to such a degree, he does exemplify how science can be exploited by the rich at the expense of the poor. Instead of considering himself something other than human, he sees others as less than human and manifests his perception by turning them into technologically mind-controlled slaves, and possessions. To El Patrón everyone else is less human than he. Tam Lin calls El Patrón's collection of goods "his dragon hoard" (184). When El Patrón finally dies, it becomes clear that he counted his family and employees amongst his belongings. Celebrating his death, they drink the champagne he had set aside for a special occasion:

Everyone cheered and then they drank-except for me. Before the next minute had passed, they had all fallen to the ground...they were all dead...

"Listen to me," said Celia. "El Patrón had ruled his empire for one hundred years. All that time he was adding to his dragon hoard, and he wanted to be buried with it. Unfortunately...the dragon hoard included people." (375-376)

El Patrón's final resting place is modelled after a pharaoh's tomb, filled with all his possessions, including his servants and family. His consideration of himself as a supreme being, worthy of the sacrifice of others' lives of others, cements his disassociation from the rest of his community.

Harvesting Nightmares

I took it; and in an hour, -- oh heavens! what a revulsion! what an upheaving, from its lowest depths, of the inner spirit! what an apocalypse of the world within me! That my pains had vanished, was now a trifle in my eyes; this negative effect was swallowed up in the immensity of those positive effects which had opened before me, in the abyss of divine enjoyment thus suddenly revealed. Here ... was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered; happiness might

now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat pocket; portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle; and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail-coach. (DeQuincey 34-35)

The borderland that El Patrón rules is the sub-nation called Opium, named for his source of wealth and power. As a drug, opium had a strong presence in both nineteenth-century culture and literature, as Thomas DeQuincey notes in the epigraph that leads off this chapter of my thesis. Imported from the Orient, the home of Victorian England's threatening Other, opium invaded the pure Victorian body, creating physical dependence while at the same time haunting the mind. Matt literally lives *in* Opium, where human monsters have communed and multiplied through both selective breeding and cloning. Opium began as a peripheral territory, similar to the space that Gothic monsters have been known to haunt. But the lure of the drug and its hold on the Western body allowed the monsters in this periphery to survive and caused their liminal domain to expand until it became an official nation dividing the North American continent. Now, in Matt's lifetime, it has become a cannibalistic territory that swallows the mind and enslaves the body of anyone who attempts to cross or escape it. El Patrón is Opium's "supreme leader, dictator, and fuhrer," and is extremely possessive of everything in his realm, including his servants and family (170).

Farmer's evocation of "fuhrer" immediately invokes the memory of Hitler, raising the disturbing images of masses following the racist vision of a single individual; it reminds readers of what can happen when a monster becomes a leader. While this is a simplification of the reality of life in the Third Reich, which was populated by both Nazi supporters and dissenters, it remains a powerful portrayal of conformity under monstrous rule. El Patrón controls his citizens and family through fear and when that fails, he turns to science and medicine:

El Patrón found it hard to control the illegals. They slipped through his fingers. They helped one another escape. They flooded across Opium to the border of the United States until that government threatened to put El Patrón out of business.

*It was then the Despot of Dope, fearful of losing his slave empire, came up with *eejits*. (197)*

Eejits are El Patrón's workforce. They are people who are caught trying to cross the border or those who defy or fail El Patrón. All have been punished by having a microchip implanted in their brains which effectively lobotomizes them (197). Opium is another source of El Patrón's control. It is the source of his wealth. This wealth translates into power, and allows El Patrón to gain the support of the United States and Mexico in his drug trade, eventually enabling him to turn Opium into a recognized nation (170).

However, opium also becomes a means of escape for his victims. Like Hitler, El Patrón has an interest in controlling reproduction, and he does so within his family. His daughter, Felicia, breaks free long enough to have an unsanctioned child, Tom. Upon her return to El Patrón's household, Felicia becomes an alcoholic and opium addict. Hiding in the music room, Matt witnesses Felicia's craving for the drug:

"It's all right," soothed the doctor. "*I'm* here. I'll take care of you." He opened his black bag and took out a syringe. Matt held his breath. The doctor had given him a shot when he was sick and he'd hated it! Matt watched, fascinated, as Felicia's arm was swabbed and the needle jammed in. Why didn't she cry out? Couldn't she feel it?

Willum sat next to her and draped his arm around her shoulders. He murmured things Matt couldn't hear. It must have pleased Felicia, because she smiled and rested

her head against the doctor's chest. After a while he guided her from the music room.

(89)

Thomas DeQuincey, author of "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" (1822), like many other opium addicts of the Victorian period, began taking the drug to relieve physical pain. Felicia takes both morphine and laudanum to escape her unhappy life. The desired effect for both DeQuincey and Felicia is the same. Opium allows them to escape from the pain of the material world. However, that escape comes at a cost. Opium is renowned for its addictiveness and double nature. It can create waking ecstasies that turn sour and become tormenting nightmares. But the patient cannot simply avoid the nightmares because he or she has become addicted to the relief opiates create. The addict succeeds in escaping the pain of the material world only to enter a disturbing and terrifying vision.

In Victorian culture, there was anxiety about the Eastern origins of opium. Barry Milligan explains,

[p]opular magazines portray Englishwomen assimilated – by both opium addiction and sexual unions with Chinese opium masters – to opium dens and Oriental identities. This assimilation of women destabilizes the totemized center of English domestic life by darkly mirroring "the angel in the house" in what should be the antithesis of the sacred English hearthside, an Oriental den of vice. (13)

Felicia, a deviant female figure who defied her patriarch by leaving her chosen husband, returns to Opium tainted. The child of this forbidden union, Tom, is tainted through his ties to her body and also by her opium consumption. Her favourite form of opium is laudanum, which, in nineteenth-century Britain, had a distinct stigma attached to it and its effect on the maternal body: "Being both Oriental commodity and milk of Paradise, laudanum plays the role of milk

from an Oriental body, thus indirectly realizing cultural anxieties surrounding Oriental women's wet-nursing English children as it orientalizes the drinker's consciousness" (Milligan 38).

Felicia consumes laudanum; Tom consumes her breast milk, and becomes othered.

Tom embodies the dual nature of opium. He can switch from frightening and cruel to sickly sweet in a moment as in this scene from the novel: "Tom's face flushed with rage, and Matt braced himself for a fight; but just as suddenly the anger drained away, as though it had never been there. Matt shivered. It bothered him when Tom made a lightning shift like that. It was like watching a crocodile submerge" (128-129). Tom has complete control over his body's affect, how he physically reveals his emotions. This ability repeatedly shields Tom from punishment for his cruel behaviour. Tom is, indeed, a rare breed of monster.

The Renfield Hypothesis

My homicidal maniac is of a peculiar kind. I shall have to invent a new classification for him, and call him a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac. What he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can, and he has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way. He gave many flies to one spider and many spiders to one bird, and then wanted a cat to eat the many birds. What would have been his later steps? ... I wonder at how many lives he values a man. (Stoker 111-112)

Renfield, Bram Stoker's infamous zoophagous maniac, is one of the most popular figures of the so-called lunatic, perhaps because readers recognize the logical nature of his madness: if you swallow life, you gain life; the bigger the life you swallow, the more life you gain. His theory may not be true, but it does make sense. Renfield mimics the nature of Dracula's monstrosity, just as Tom mimics the nature of El Patrón's monstrosity. Talking to Matt minutes before he intends to take the boy's heart, El Patrón tells him the story of how his brothers and

sisters died when he was young and poor. He says, “There were eight of us *Don't you think I'm owed those lives?*” (233). After El Patrón's death, Matt is told he was to be the eighth clone sacrificed for El Patrón's survival, which would have given the old man an extra ninth life. He follows Renfield's hypothesis but over-indulges and, fittingly, has a heart attack.

Tom is El Patrón's defective Renfield. He recognizes hierarchies of consumption, but does not bother to benefit from them. Instead of consuming lives he wastes them. He is in the habit of torturing small animals, fascinated with hierarchies of existence and pain. Matt comes across one of his pseudo-vivisection exercises:

An ibis rose from the grass. It flapped its mutilated wings and blundered across the pond
Matt ... saw a frog on the lawn. Its hind legs had been nailed to the ground, and it
flopped frantically, trying to escape ... “You can learn a lot from studying a place like
this,” Tom said in a casual voice. “The ibises live on frogs, the frogs eat bugs, and the
bugs eat one another. It teaches you about the meaning of life.” (128-129)

Tom enjoys inflicting pain in order to feel powerful. His body is a concentrated elixir of nineteenth-century immoral behaviours, from both the literary and scientific imagination. Like Renfield, he consumes lives of increasing importance, according to nineteenth-century evolutionary thought. From frogs to fish, from birds to dogs, and even to clones – if Tom is not their executioner, he is their tormentor, feeding on their pain, suffering, and death.

Matt is subject to the same tendencies as Tom. As a child he is fascinated by the food chain, and his rudimentary experiments echo Stoker's mad genius:

First he attracted wasps to a chunk of apple. Then he lured a glorious, buzzing fly to a piece of spoiled meat...Afterward Matt discovered a writhing mass of worms living in

the meat, and he watched them grow and eventually turn into buzzing flies themselves. He found this extremely interesting.

Then, of course, there were the cockroaches. Small, brown ones struggled through the sawdust...and made Rosa scream.

“You’re a monster!” she cried. “it wouldn’t surprise me if you *ate* them!” (44)

There is an unconscious logic to Renfield and Matt’s collection of animals. William Carpenter, a nineteenth-century British physician, called this “unconscious cerebration” (qtd. in Hughes 48). The difference between Matt and Renfield is that Matt does not seek power through consumption, but El Patrón does, and Tom abandons the goal of Renfield’s theoretical process by killing and tormenting animals for pleasure without consuming them.

Matt as a clone is legally defined as an animal and, as he threatens to invade Tom’s territory through his friendship with Maria, Tom’s cousin, Matt becomes the target of the boy’s cruelty. Tom offers to take the two other children on a tour of El Patrón’s hospital. As they walk through the halls they hear what Maria thinks is a kitten and when they investigate, instead find a clone:

“It’s a boy,” whispered Maria.

It was. Only at first Matt thought it was some kind of beast, so alien and terrible was its face. It had doughy, unhealthy skin and red hair that stuck up in bristles. It seemed never to have been in the sun, and its hands were twisted like claws above the straps that held it down. It was dressed in green hospital pajamas, but these had been befouled by its terror. Worst of all was the terrible energy that rolled through the trapped body. The creature never stopped moving. It was as though invisible snakes were

rippling beneath the skin and forcing its arms and legs to move in a ceaseless bid for freedom.

“It’s not a boy,” Tom said scornfully. “It’s a clone.” (119-120)

Tom tortures Matt by showing him his so-called equals, all of whom have been turned into monsters that can be read as replicas of Hartnett’s Vernon in his worst abject state. They simultaneously threaten the fragile connection Matt has to a non-monstrous family member. Even at that moment, however, Matt continues to function as a diluted reflection of his nemesis: “It looks like you,” Matt said to Tom. “You wish! You *wish!*” yelled Tom, dropping his cheerful grin. “Look Maria. It has the same red hair and ears” (120). The clone belongs to Mr. MacGregor. Mr. MacGregor is Tom’s biological father. Though he is unaware of the connection, Matt is able to break down the wall between himself as a clone and Tom as a person, to reveal to the other boy his own abject qualities.

This and the many other altercations between the two boys revolve around their desire for Maria. Tom demonstrates his attraction through sadistic tricks, while Matt naively believes his kindness will be enough to win Maria. In the end, it takes a revolution to do so. Once the Alacrán family has died, the society that defined Matt as livestock no longer exists and he inherits the estate and is able to claim a human status.

As the narrative concludes, and Tom and the other Alacráns swallow the poison El Patrón has left behind for them, it becomes clear that both boys were meant to share the same fate, to be sacrificed for the vanity of an old vampire. But, unlike the crazed genius Renfield, neither would think to sacrifice themselves willingly to eliminate the monstrous Alacrán family. Matt survives, supposedly ready to marry Maria, now that the governing bodies preventing such a marriage are decomposing in El Patrón’s tomb. The two will most likely continue the family line through

natural methods. This means re-introducing the maternal abject to Alacrán children, rather than engaging in the cloning process which saved Matt from succumbing to his monstrous legacy. El Patrón's offspring have already shown an affinity for the Gothic lifestyle of the nineteenth-century villain. Matt will be contributing DNA identical to El Patrón's. *The House of the Scorpion* leaves the reader to wonder: which is stronger, generations of monstrosity written into the blood, or the will of the new El Patrón?

CONCLUSION

Sabine Bussing recognizes that “[d]eath and fertility have always formed an inseparable union which manifests in countless rites practised by all cultures on earth. They are two sides of one coin, and their correlation is a perfectly natural one. As soon as a human being interferes with the rhythm of life, the same union becomes a perversity”(117). The contamination of the reproductive acts that we witness in *Surrender*, *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, and *The House of the Scorpion* perverts the bodies of the children born and reborn in these acts. The bodies' unnatural origins place each child on the edge of abjection where he or she struggles to maintain a balance.

For Hartnett's Anwell, Gantos' Ivy, and Farmer's Matt, their relationship with the maternal body has revealed itself to be the defining factor in the development of their monstrosity. The stain of the maternal abject is experienced in varying degrees in each character, becoming increasingly distant as the role of technology becomes a larger part of the reproductive act. The original stain of maternal decay on Anwell's skin is renewed in a contaminated ritual of defilement. Ivy is on a quest to host and eventually return to the maternal body via her own clone, a clean new body about to be stained for the first time all over again.

And Matt does not gestate in El Patrón's body, which, in its giving of life and DNA to Matt, is maternal despite its maleness. Matt's skin is untouched by the maternal body's internal decay.

This does not mean that one character is more monster than another. All three show the potential for horrendous thoughts and actions. The difference is in their environment and whether or not they have access to the rituals or technologies which can help them to overcome their abject status. Anwell uses primitive techniques, submerging himself in his own abjection to purge himself of it. Ivy abandons her pursuit of a cure and uses technology to strengthen and recreate her genetic curse, while Matt's technological origins, initially placing him in a socially constructed niche of monstrosity, diminish the malevolent influence of El Patrón's DNA.

It is fitting that the heart of monstrosity in these narratives is located in the female body. It is here that Kristeva and nineteenth-century medicine speak to each other most clearly. The female body was a site of mystery in the nineteenth century. It was the abnormal body, whereas the male body was, for the British medical establishment, the standard model of human anatomy. The woman was a mysterious specimen exposing science's shortcomings. Her body was subject to abrupt changes and unusual symptoms that fell under an umbrella diagnosis: hysteria.

"Hysteria," Elaine Showalter argues, "is inevitably a feminist issue, because for centuries doctors regarded it as a female reproductive disease" (9). The hysterical female body became part of the spectacle of medicine that the Rumbaugh's were a part of. Whereas the Rumbaugh's were publicly studied and displayed as specimens of human perfection, the hysterical female was an extension of Treves' tradition of medical freak shows. In her analysis of the re-emergence of hysteria in the 1990s, Showalter looks back on nineteenth-century European medicine and

introduces her readers to Jean-Martin Charcot who, like Frederick Treves, put the abnormal body on display:

He brought an artist's eye ... to the study of hysterical bodies ... he even installed a full photographic studio, with a professional photographer ... a showman with great theatrical flair, [Charcot] instituted two weekly public performances ... a prepared lecture-demonstration ... [and] he publicly diagnosed patients he had never seen before – like a magician, or an acrobat, working without a net. This bravado and virtuosity drew huge, spellbound audiences of as many as five hundred. (31)

Until the function of the uterus can be mimicked by technology, the woman's body is an inescapable vessel of creation and the Gothic has continued the spectacle surrounding its monstrous capabilities. Without a womb there is no life. It is a powerful position that technology now threatens to usurp. If the mother is removed from the creation equation, how does this affect what is created? Is it more or less human? My three primary texts are all about reproduction, how it affects a child's identity, what it reveals about the family, how it is changing, and how this change in the most basic of human experiences is changing what it means to be a human being. These narratives suggest that the mother is the primary focus of her child's monstrosity, either as the object of it or the source of it. Matt, the one child-monster who successfully overcomes his monstrosity has no mother. He is the least natural and yet, somehow, the most human of my protagonists.

Matt is unusual in the tradition of man-made and motherless monsters, and this can be attributed to his natural development; he is born as a baby in a baby's body. Other monsters created in the same way are born as babies in adult bodies, expected to behave with the restraint

of an adult. In his article, “Deviants, Donestre, and Debauchees: Here be Monsters,” (2008) Tom Tyler says, “the monster is essentially a mixture. It is the mixture of two realms, the animal and the human ... It is the blending, the mixture of two species ... It is the mixture of two individuals ... It is the mix of two sexes ... It is a mixture of life and death ... Finally, it is a mixture of forms” (115-116). The man-made monster is a child in an adult body, so obviously awkward and ill-matched to this powerful vessel.

In *No Go the Bogeyman*, Marina Warner addresses the changing quality of monsters in children’s literature. She notes that “[t]he bogeys are becoming more complexly hybrid, more terrible, in step with the magnified sense of human capacity for harm and a corresponding need to mount a spectacular defence” (181). These child-monsters seem more human, and that makes them potentially more dangerous. Matt, instead, is a child-monster in a child’s body, as will be Ivy’s children. Anwell was man-made in a different way. His mother moulds his monstrous attributes until they take over his body and destroy her own.

These children demonstrate that the traditional nineteenth-century Gothic monsters are not unique in their mixed nature. Whether a monster is born or created, if it has human parts it has the potential for evil. Perhaps this is one area where Cesare Lombroso was right, he simply did not realize that the criminal was deviant because he *had* a nose, not because of how wide it was. The human body has been hybrid since Darwin drew the line between animals and civilization. No longer are we the image of a god, if ever we were. Instead, we are the uptown cousins of Curious George. If technology removes this confusion and makes its children clean and pure, inside and out, what happens to the abject? Will children who are not stained by the abject be able to recognize it?

The last time science was used in an effort to “purify” a race, monstrosity ran rampant taking the form of the Holocaust. While the ties between Gothic children’s literature and the Holocaust require a further in-depth discussion to understand the impact of monstrous history on monstrous narratives, it is important to note that both *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs* and *The House of the Scorpion* make sure to establish the Third Reich as a check point between their reflection on the nineteenth century and the present. The Nazis put nineteenth-century theories into practice, destroying millions upon millions of othered bodies. Today, the Nazi propaganda images of the iconic Aryan bodies, tied to a horrific history, are nauseating. It is the attempt to remove the other from within a community that creates the monster. In Germany, the participating and apathetic portion of the community became the monster. In my primary texts, the children become the monsters. The human body is meant to be a mixed form: good and evil, person and beast, alive and dying. The duality of human existence causes conflict within us. We vomit and bleed, try to cleanse ourselves and suffer. These are the things, Fukuyama reminds us, that enable us to feel empathy and appreciate joy. These are the things that bolster our humanity and inspire Gothic literature.

Anwell, Ivy, and Matt each represent the danger of an unbalanced mixture, when the maternal abject lies too heavily on the skin, or is missing entirely. Anwell is dehumanized by his mother, given only Mother’s death-side and denied her nurturing-side. Ivy finds herself torn between her love for her mother and her desire for her mother’s death so that she might enact her affection as her genes tell her to: through the physical preservation and eventual recreation of her mother. She wants to mother her mother and can only do so when her mother dies. Her engagement with the maternal death and life union is inversed. Matt is nearly a clean and pure body, free from the external stain of the abject fluids of the maternal body. However, his

physical and instinctual link to El Patrón's unclean body prevents him from leaving the realm of known humanity altogether. He is given life under the shadow of death. His life is meant to be sacrificed to maintain the circulation of an undead body. El Patrón's maternal nature is pure death, with no room to experience decay in himself in order to offer life to another body.

Across all three narratives, these child-monsters, still growing into their monstrous bodies, are surrounded by nineteenth-century communities. All three live in isolated towns, one surrounded by mountains, another populated primarily by failing senior citizens, and another made up mostly of zombie slaves. Each environment is in stasis. The only change and excitement originates with the child-monsters. They push their way into the communities that shun them and bend them to their will. For Anwell, the foray into Evangeline's bedroom and the heart of his community, results in his own destruction, a risk all monsters take when they migrate from the periphery. Ivy maintains an ear to the outside world, ready to bring new technology into a withering community that she will soon be able to populate with her own sub-species. Matt, the most successful of the child-monsters, is able to overthrow his community thanks to the post-mortem homicidal actions of El Patrón. For these fictional communities and for the reading community, these monstrous figures represent the fear that comes with change: they bare their baby teeth and chase us into it.

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