UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS E LINGUÍSTICA
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM ESTUDOS LITERÁRIOS

GUILHERME AUGUSTO DUARTE COPATI

POSTMODERN GOTHIC: PARODYING GOTHIC FICTION IN ADELE GRIFFIN'S *TIGHTER*, DANIEL LEVINE'S *HYDE*, AND JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *FRANKISSSTEIN: A LOVE STORY*

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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários do Instituto de Letras e Linguística da Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Doutor em Estudos Literários.

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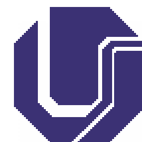

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Data:	30 de agosto de 2021	Hora de início:	9:00	Hora de encerramento:	12:00
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Às nove horas do dia trinta de agosto do ano de dois mil e vinte e um, reuniu-se, por videoconferência, a Banca Examinadora, designada pelo Colegiado do Programa de Pós-graduação em Estudos Literários, composta pelos Professores Doutores: Fernanda Aquino Sylvestre / ILEEL-UFU, Orientadora do Candidato (Presidente); Dale Knickerbocker / ECU (Coorientador); Adelaine LaGuardia Nogueira /UFSJ, que participou por meio de parecer circunstanciado; Alexander Meireles da Silva / UFG, Cynthia Beatrice Costa / ILEEL-UFU; Flávia Andrea Rodrigues Benfatti / ILEEL-UFU.

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"Although in every culture many stories are told, only some are told and retold, and [...] these recurring stories bear examining. If such stories were parts of a symphony you'd call them leitmotifs, if they were personality traits you'd call them obsessions, and if it were your parents telling them at the dinner-table during your adolescence you'd call them boring. But, in literature, they hold a curious fascination both for those who tell them and for those who hear them; they are handed down and reworked, and story-tellers come back to them time and time again, approaching them from various angles and discovering new and different meanings each time the story, or a part of it, is given fresh incarnation."

Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things*.

ABSTRACT

In light of the critical reading of Adele Griffin's novel *Tighter*, Daniel Levine's novel *Hyde*, and Jeanette Winterson's novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, this thesis affirms that the postmodern gothic can be defined as a practice of postmodern parodic play on the gothic genre. Building primarily on the theoretical approaches to gothic, parody and postmodernism epitomized in the works of Botting (1996), França (2017), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013), and Punter (1996a, 1996b), postmodern gothic novels such as the ones examined here will be defined as fictional "textworks" in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to complex and sophisticated revisions of the literary and historical past. By means of that practice, specific gothic novels and novellas of tradition — respectively, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* — and the general narrative conventions of gothic fiction — the exploration of the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly presentification of the past, and/or the monster in order to elicit fear — are paradoxically repeated with difference so as to emphasize each novel's ironic inversion and critical appropriation of tradition. This thesis argues that this metafictional strategy is paradoxically meant, in the postmodern novels under study, as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform their targeted texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, these parodic "textworks" draw attention to the continuing centrality of those ideological assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world through attention to contextual conditions of textual production. In Adele Griffin's *Tighter*, the diegetic and formal similarities and distinctions between parodic and parodied texts will be examined with particular attention to the parodic novel's playful and ironic inversion of the ways in which the conventions of the *locus horribilis* and the supernatural are activated in *The Turn of the Screw*. The pragmatic range of parodic intent displayed in *Tighter* will likewise be discussed in terms of the novel's paradoxical reenactment and transgression of the stylistic strategies which contribute to creating effects of ambiguity in both *The Turn of the Screw* and its parodic trans-contextualization. Parody will also be suggested to be the paradoxical means by which Griffin manages to unearth from her source material a number of carefully concealed ideological preconceptions relating to the family, and subsequently turn them into the main story of her own novel. As a result of that agenda, the assorted effects of

terror expected of the conventions of the gothic genre are parodically established and transgressed to mark parody's ideological dependence and differentiation from concealed assumptions in the background material. In Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger* will be shown to be both installed and subverted in order to give shape to the novel's ironic inversion of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This metafictional strategy, which demands continuing engagement from the reader in order to be actualized, is paradoxically meant as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the monstrosity of Edward Hyde, the actualization of truth claims, the problem of identity as a fractured construct, and homophobic persecution. In Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, the gothic conventions of the ghostly visitation of the past, the *locus horribilis*, and the monster will be addressed for being both used and abused in order to give shape to the novel's ironic inversion of *Frankenstein*. This metafictional strategy will in turn prove instrumental in paradoxically revising and criticizing from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, history, the future of science, and the making of monstrosity. Those problems, which are nested both in gothic fiction and in Western liberal humanism as a whole, are examined critically, while the parodic "textwork" draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. For all of that, all three postmodern novels examined here qualify as postmodern gothic novels in the terms that comprise our hypothesis. This thesis will be defended with recourse to the studies of Allan Lloyd Smith (1996), Allué (1999), Andrew Smith (2013), Barthes (1977), Beville (2009), Botting (1996, 2002, 2008), Castle (1995), França (2017), Genette (1997), Helyer (2006), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013), Huyssen (1986), Jameson (1991), Kristeva (1980), Lévy (2004), Nash (2004), Punter (1996a, 1996b), Punter and Byron (2007), Sedgwick (1986), Stamenkovic (2016), and Truffin (2009).

KEYWORDS: gothic; postmodernism; parody.

RESUMO

À luz da leitura crítica dos romances *Tighter*, de Adele Griffin, *Hyde*, de Daniel Levine, e *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, de Jeanette Winterson, esta tese afirma que o gótico pós-moderno é uma prática de reelaboração paródica pós-moderna do gênero gótico. Tendo como pressupostos fundamentais as abordagens teóricas sobre o gótico, a paródia e o pós-modernismo sintetizadas nas obras de Botting (1996), França (2017), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013) e Punter (1996a, 1996b), romances góticos pós-modernos como os examinados neste trabalho serão definidos como "textworks" ficcionais nos quais as dimensões formal, pragmática e discursiva da paródia se fundem para dar origem a revisões complexas e sofisticadas do passado literário e histórico. Por meio dessa prática, certos romances e novelas pertencentes à tradição do gótico — respectivamente, *The Turn of the Screw*, de Henry James, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, de Robert Louis Stevenson, e *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, de Mary Shelley —, bem como as convenções narrativas da ficção gótica — o *locus horribilis*, a presença fantasmagórica do passado e/ou o monstro — são paradoxalmente repetidos com diferença, de modo a enfatizar um típico jogo pós-moderno de inversão irônica e/ou trans-contextualização paródica. Esta tese argumenta que tal estratégia metaficcional é paradoxalmente empregada com vias à revisão crítica, a partir de uma distância ex-cêntrica, de pressupostos ideológicos latentes que informam os textos-alvo. Por meio dessa estratégia, os textos góticos paródicos chamam atenção para a contínua centralidade de suposições ideológicas na estruturação das culturas e ansiedades do século vinte e um, enquanto, paradoxalmente, instauram o aspecto formalmente paródico no mundo das relações socioculturais por meio da atenção dada às condições contextuais de produção textual. Em *Tighter*, de Adele Griffin, as semelhanças e distinções formais entre o texto paródico e o parodiado serão examinadas com particular atenção dada à inversão lúdica e irônica das convenções do *locus horribilis* e do retorno sobrenatural do passado em relação a *The Turn of the Screw*. A gama pragmática de intenção paródica exibida em *Tighter* será também discutida em termos da transgressão das estratégias estilísticas que contribuem para os famosos efeitos de ambiguidade do texto-alvo. A paródia também será sugerida como o meio paradoxal pelo qual Griffin focaliza uma série de suposições ideológicas relacionados à família, cuidadosamente ocultadas em *The Turn of the Screw*, para subsequentemente transformá-las na história principal de seu romance pós-moderno. Em relação a *Hyde*, de Daniel Levine, serão discutidos os modos como a convenção gótica do

Doppelgänger é instalada e subvertida para dar forma à irônica inversão pós-moderna de *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Essa estratégia metaficcional, que exige envolvimento contínuo do leitor para ser atualizada, é paradoxalmente concebida como um instrumento discursivo para revisar e criticar a partir de uma distância ex-cêntrica uma série de pressupostos ideológicos latentes que informam o texto-alvo, incluindo a monstruosidade de Edward Hyde, a reivindicação de verdades fundamentais, o problema da identidade como uma construção fragmentada e a perseguição homofóbica. Em relação a *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, de Jeanette Winterson, observaremos como as convenções góticas da presença fantasmagórica do passado, do *locus horribilis* e do monstro são usados e abusados para dar forma à irônica inversão de *Frankenstein*. Tal estratégia metaficcional é paradoxalmente concebida como um instrumento discursivo para revisar e criticar a partir de uma distância ex-cêntrica vários pressupostos ideológicos latentes que informam o texto-alvo, incluindo a formação da tradição gótica, políticas sexuais e de gênero, a história como discurso, o futuro da ciência à luz do pós-humanismo e a feitura da monstruosidade. Esses problemas, que estão aninhados tanto na ficção gótica quanto na tradição ocidental do humanismo liberal como um todo, são examinados criticamente, já que o "textwork" paródico revela a permanência destes como fontes perenes de ansiedade cultural contemporânea. Por tudo isso, todos os três romances em apreço se qualificam como romances góticos pós-moderno nos termos que compõem nossa hipótese. Esta tese será defendida com recurso aos estudos de Allan Lloyd Smith (1996), Allué (1999), Andrew Smith (2013), Barthes (1977), Beville (2009), Botting (1996, 2002, 2008), Castle (1995), França (2017), Genette (1997), Helyer (2006), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013), Huyssen (1986), Jameson (1991), Kristeva (1980), Lévy (2004), Nash (2004), Punter (1996a, 1996b), Punter e Byron (2007), Sedgwick (1986), Stamenkovic (2016) e Truffin (2009).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: gótico; pós-modernismo; paródia.

RESUMEN

A la luz de la lectura crítica de las novelas *Tighter*, de Adele Griffin, *Hyde*, de Daniel Levine y *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, de Jeanette Winterson, esta tesis afirma que el gótico posmoderno es una práctica de reelaboración paródica posmoderna del género gótico. Teniendo como fundamentos los planteamientos teóricos sobre el gótico, la parodia y el posmodernismo sintetizados en las obras de Botting (1996), França (2017), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013) y Punter (1996a, 1996b), novelas góticas posmodernas como las evidenciadas en esta obra se definen como "textworks" ficticios en los que las dimensiones formales, pragmáticas y discursivas de la parodia se unen para dar lugar a complejas y sofisticadas revisiones del pasado literario y cultural. Por medio de esta práctica, ciertas novelas pertenecientes a la tradición gótica — respectivamente, *The Turn of the Screw*, de Henry James, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, de Robert Louis Stevenson y *Frankenstein*, or *The Modern Prometheus*, de Mary Shelley —, así como las convenciones narrativas de la ficción gótica — el *locus horribilis*, la presentificación fantasmal del pasado y/o el monstruo — se repiten paradójicamente con diferencia, de modo a enfatizar el juego paródico de inversión irónica y crítica. Esta tesis sostiene que dicha estrategia metaficcional se emplea paradójicamente como un medio para revisar críticamente, desde una distancia excéntrica, los supuestos ideológicos latentes que informan los textos parodiados. A través de esta estrategia, estos textos góticos paródicos llaman la atención sobre la continua centralidad de estos supuestos en la estructuración de las culturas y ansiedades del siglo XXI, mientras que, paradójicamente, establecen lo formalmente paródico en el mundo a través de la atención que se le da a las condiciones de producción textual. En *Tighter*, de Adele Griffin, se examinan las similitudes y distinciones diegéticas y formales entre los textos paródico y parodiado, con especial atención a la inversión lúdica e irónica de las convenciones del *locus horribilis* y del retorno sobrenatural del pasado en relación a *The Turn of the Screw*. La gama pragmática de intención paródica que se muestra en *Tighter* también es discutida en términos de la transgresión de estrategias estilísticas que contribuyen a los famosos efectos de ambigüedad del texto parodiado. También se sugiere la parodia como medio paradójico por el cual Griffin se centra en una serie de supuestos ideológicos relacionados con la familia cuidadosamente ocultos en *The Turn of the Screw*, para convertirlos posteriormente en la historia principal de su novela posmoderna. En *Hyde*, de Daniel Levine, la convención gótica del *Doppelgänger* se instala y se subvierte para dar forma a la irónica inversión posmoderna

de *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Esta estrategia de metaficción, que requiere la continua participación del lector para ser actualizada, se concibe paradójicamente como un instrumento discursivo para revisar y criticar desde una distancia excéntrica una serie de supuestos ideológicos latentes que informan el texto parodiado, incluida la monstruosidad de Edward Hyde, la reivindicación de verdades fundamentales, el problema de la identidad como construcción fragmentada y la persecución homofóbica. En *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, de Jeanette Winterson, las convenciones góticas de la presencia fantasmal del pasado, el *locus horribilis* y el monstruo son utilizados para dar forma a la irónica inversión de *Frankenstein*. Tal estrategia metaficcional se concibe paradójicamente como un instrumento discursivo para revisar y criticar desde una distancia excéntrica varios presupuestos ideológicos latentes que informan el texto parodiado, incluyendo la formación de la tradición gótica, la política sexual y de género, la historia como discurso, el futuro de la ciencia a la luz del posthumanismo y la fealdad de la monstruosidad. Estos problemas, que están anidados tanto en la ficción gótica como en el humanismo liberal occidental en su conjunto, son examinados críticamente, mientras que el "textwork" paródico revela su permanencia como fuente de ansiedad cultural contemporánea. Por todas estas razones, las tres novelas en cuestión se califican como novelas góticas posmodernas en los términos que componen nuestra hipótesis. Esta tesis será defendida utilizando los estudios de Allan Lloyd Smith (1996), Allué (1999), Andrew Smith (2013), Barthes (1977), Beville (2009), Botting (1996, 2002, 2008), Castle (1995), França (2017), Genette (1997), Helyer (2006), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013), Huyssen (1986), Jameson (1991), Kristeva (1980), Lévy (2004), Nash (2004), Punter (1996a, 1996b), Punter y Byron (2007), Sedgwick (1986), Stamenkovic (2016) y Truffin (2009).

PALABRAS CLAVE: gótico; posmodernismo; parodia.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will suggest that there is a significant amount of narratives in twenty-first century literature in English which parodically rewrite canonical works in the tradition of gothic fiction. We will hereby refer to this practice as "postmodern gothic". The thesis is the culmination of an academic research work that began during my time as an undergraduate student in Letras at Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei, from 2007 to 2012. In the course of my time at UFSJ, I worked on a scientific initiation project titled *O Gótico na Pós-Modernidade: Uma Leitura de* Alias Grace*, de Margaret Atwood*, in which I explored the presence of the motifs and narrative conventions of the gothic in Margaret Atwood's fiction, beginning with the short story "Death by Landscape", from her collection *Wilderness Tips*, then one of the required readings of a course on Postcolonial Literatures in English, and moving forward with Atwood's emblematic 1996 postmodern novel *Alias Grace*. Based on the magisterial studies of David Punter (1996a, 1996b) and Fred Botting (1996), the research proved that those selected texts from Atwood's *oeuvre* displayed typical tropes and conventions of the gothic genre, including the picturesque, the *locus horribilis*, ghostly visitations of the past, monstrous or madlike characters, dreamlike, excessive and disruptive emotional states, criminal behavior, the persecution of female characters, effects of horror and terror, and the uncanny manifested in the return of the repressed. The partial results of that project were shared with the academic community *vis-à-vis* the publication of two papers in Brazilian journals (LaGUARDIA; COPATI, 2012; LaGUARDIA; COPATI, 2013).

That initial project then birthed another, which I went on to develop into a Master's dissertation in the Graduate Program in Teoria Literária e Crítica da Cultura from Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei, between years 2012 and 2014, titled *Horror e Paródia: O Gótico Pós-Moderno de Margaret Atwood* (2014a). The focus of that second stage of the research was somewhat different: being the fictionalized biography of historical figure Grace Marks, an Irish immigrant living in nineteenth-century Canada who had been convicted of the murder of her employer and governess, and of whose life little was actually known, *Alias Grace* proved itself an example of historiographic metafiction, the paradigmatic mode of postmodern fiction according to Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon (2004, p. 5) defines historiographic metafiction as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages". The paradox of historiographic metafiction depends on its being both formally introverted, often including its own critical commentary, and inscribed into the political and the historical

vis-à-vis its problematization of the authority of the canon, strategies of representation, the role of language in reinforcing ideology, the relation between historical fact and experiential event, and the multiple venues through which power is exercised (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. xii). That irresolute paradox, for Hutcheon (2004, p. 22), is best achieved with recourse to what she names parody, or “repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 26). The reading of *Alias Grace* through the lens of historiographic metafiction and the general poetics of postmodern parody as proposed by Hutcheon led me to hypothesize that, in appropriate postmodern fashion, Atwood’s novel did not so much *display* conventions of the gothic as it *explored them parodically*; in other words, I believed that, in writing *Alias Grace* as gothic fiction, Atwood possibly played with the gothic genre by both using and abusing its conventions, or repeating them with difference. This, as I hypothesized, was meant to create an ironic inversion of the gothic in order to claim a space for fiction as a competing historical account of the life and times of Grace Marks, while shedding light on a number of ideological assumptions often implicated in the tradition of gothic fiction.

I then went on to explore a number of ways in which this is accomplished in the novel, which have in turn given fodder to several publications deriving from my dissertation. I began my analysis by exploring how Grace Marks is presented in the novel as *both* a potential heroine, an angel of the house, a persecuted victim of a patriarchal and xenophobic society, *and* a potential villainess, a *femme fatale*, a cruel and cunning cold-blooded murderer. Such a paradoxical understanding of the character, one that remains irresolute in the novel as Grace’s actions are never conclusively reconstituted nor is her character ever finally deciphered, is in part responsible for how she is perceived as a monster, while also being a testament to how the historical Grace Marks became a symbol of larger social tensions underlying the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada and its questioning of the colonial order (COPATI, 2014b). That led me to explore how the character of Grace Marks reflects a postmodern understanding of identity as a fragmentary, de-centered and multiple cultural construct, one that is manifested in the novel through the use and abuse of the gothic motif of the *Doppelgänger*. In *Alias Grace*, several instances of duplication involving the triad of female protagonists of the novel — Grace, Mary Whitney, and Nancy Montgomery, all of whom will have ended up either dead or arrested for life within a five-year time frame — top one another to create a spinning web of multiplicity that builds up into a cathartic séance; as a result of that complex fracture, the inherent duality of the “double goer” is made to embrace the heterogeneity of postmodern identity and the biases that sustain cultural and historical discriminations on the basis of sex

and gender (COPATI, 2017).

Deriving from that perspective, I observed how the intellectual and eroticized banter between Grace Marks and Simon Jordan, the psychiatrist doctor summoned up to help her access the repressed memories of her alleged criminal endeavors, both installs and subverts the power dynamics of patriarchy that often provides the subject matter of the novels in the subgenre of female gothic (MOERS, 1976). As the detainer of crucial intelligence that might be repressed or might else be purposefully retrieved, Grace is placed in a powerful position from which public speech — the social privilege of patriarchy, which kept nineteenth-century women in a state of subalternity —, are employed to manipulate the expectations of the male listener. Grace's impressive prowess as a storyteller, the suspense created by her deferral of the crucial night of the murders, and her seductive but possibly contrived tale of maculated innocence, all contribute to mystifying the doctor's rational and scientific attempts at getting to the core of his patient's mind, which ultimately drives him to insanity. As Grace walks out of prison after decades of incarceration with an official government pardon, a now mentally unstable Simon Jordan is made to succumb to his mother's plans to have him married into the wealthy family of a lady he wholeheartedly despises. Thus made a victim of the patriarchal expectations of which he is also a structural enforcer, Simon is a character that reveals the postmodern (ab)use of the narrative conventions and ideological implications of the female gothic (COPATI, 2018).

The bulk of this extensive analysis confirmed my working hypothesis, which was then formulated into a concept in the following terms: Margaret Atwood's historiographic metafictional novel *Alias Grace* is structured as a postmodern parodic play on the gothic genre, by which narrative conventions of the gothic are both installed and subverted in order to emphasize the novel's ironic inversion of the gothic tradition. This metafictional strategy is paradoxically meant as a discursive instrument to approach problems of history, identity, and gender that reinstate the parodic into the world through discourse. I have since referred to that form of parodic play on the gothic, one that involves both a metafictional and a discursive dimension, as "Margaret Atwood's postmodern gothic".

By the time my dissertation had been duly written, defended, and published, I had become interested in such works of historiographic metafiction as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Lin-Haire Sargeant's *H: The Story of Heathcliff's Journey back to Wuthering Heights* (1973), and Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990), all of which could be described as postmodern and would, to my view, appear to engage with the gothic in parodic ways at once similar and more extensive than those of Atwood's *Alias Grace*. They are similar in that they

too may be said to be structured as parodic plays on the gothic that highlight how they both repeat and differ from the narrative conventions and tropes of the genre; conversely, they are more extensive in that they not only do that at the level of narrative convention, but also at a diegetic level — that of what Gérard Genette (1997, p. 5) has named hypertextuality. All three of these novels are hypertexts, both derived from and directed at previous specific hypotexts in the tradition of gothic fiction, which they aim at reclaiming, revising, rewriting, reincorporating, and representing under a different perspective: *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents through a postcolonial lens the origin story of Antoinette "Bertha" Mason, neé Cosway, the "madwoman in the attic" in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; *H* is directed at Emily Brontë's 1848 novel *Wuthering Heights* and fulfills the mysterious three-year period during which Heathcliff grows from runaway foundling to wealthy landowner; and *Mary Reilly* revisits Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from the perspective of a maiden in Jekyll's household, one who, having been mostly silent (and unnamed) in the original novella, now gets entangled in the harrowing details of the case.

At first my interest in these novels knew no particular order or system; it was merely motivated by my personal interest in both the postmodern texts themselves and their targeted material. However, as my curiosity grew stronger, my investigation suggested as strongly that the practice of writing back to the canon of gothic has been consistent, particularly in twenty-first century literature in English. Examples of the practice include Rachel Klein's novel *The Moth Diaries* (2002), which finds an unnamed boarding school student reading Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" while pondering whether or not her roommate Lucy is being preyed upon by a vampire schoolmate, Ernessa; Will Self's *Dorian, An Imitation* (2002), a queer — we had better say, queer*er* — modern version of Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* set around the time of Princess Diana's life; Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* (2006), a modern take on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* that mixes the account of three generations of scholars in search of the lost tomb of the medieval prince Vlad Tepes; Adele Griffin's *Tighter* (2011), which offers a modern retelling of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* from the standpoint of a troubled teenage *au pair*, Jamie; Daniel Levine's *Hyde* (2014), which addresses Stevenson's narrative from the position of the silenced monster; Valerie Browne Lester's *The West Indian* (2018), another origin story to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Height*'s protagonist, Heathcliff; Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), which revisits Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and the famous anecdote of its creation in order to weave together the stories of Ry Shelley, a transsexual man, and Victor Stein, a tech mogul and Ry's love interest; and many others.

The sheer volume of material would suggest the existence of a systematic practice consisting of the postmodern parodic retelling of novels in the canon of gothic fiction. In other words, it would suggest that "Margaret Atwood's postmodern gothic" is in fact not an appanage of the Canadian writer, but rather an extensive and shared practice, which may be referred to as simply the "postmodern gothic". On that account, possible similarities and differences among any number of postmodern gothic novels may be duly mapped out and systematized, and a theorization may be carried out in order for a conceptual framework describing the practice to be developed. Keeping those hypotheses in mind, I turned to current theoretical investigations in order to determine the state of the art in the field; investigation of the existing literature on the topic, however, has proven mostly alarming, since most of the novels I have listed above have been largely marginalized in academic studies. Only a few, perhaps more emblematic novels — including *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Mary Reilly*, *Dorian, an Imitation*, and *The Historian* — have been subjected to consistent academic scrutiny, while the remaining novels have either been restricted to punctual investigations or, most frequently, unacknowledged as the subject matter of academic work.

The relatively scanty number of studies of most of these texts may signal different critical positions. On the one hand, the scarcity of approaches to parodic retellings of the canon may signal that the gothic classics — those ultimately ungraspable works that never cease to say what they have to say, and thus never cease to generate a cloud of critical thought surrounding them, according to Italo Calvino's (2000, p. 5-6) celebrated definition — remain problematic and provocative enough to keep pulling the focus of critical attention. On the other, more alarming hand, it may be that the dearth in studies of what we are naming postmodern gothic may be predicated on a pervasive understanding of parody as a derivative mode of engagement that must fail to live up to the auric quality of its source material, thus resulting in texts that are less than worthy of the critic's time (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. xiv). The scarcity in academic interest may conversely result from "the continuing strength of a Romantic aesthetic that values genius, originality, and individuality", as Hutcheon (2000, p. 4) suggests, one that finds support in a historically inaccurate understanding of parody as playful minimal change, often aiming at ridicule (GENETTE, 1997, p. 25). That understanding is inaccurate because, while it may have been suitable to describe a certain form of parodic practice that was highly popular in the eighteenth century, it fails to account for both the extensive parodic engagement the postmodern novels cited above actually entertain with their targeted texts, and the several strategies they employ to transcend witty mockery towards a greater variety of intended effects. Needless to say, it is my understanding — and also that of

the scholars who go to great pains to open up a space of academic legitimacy for parody — that none of the novels above are derivative or unoriginal; what they are is *different*, as Hutcheon (2000, p. 6) has often reinforced, and their ironic difference from their source material, as well as the multiple implications of that deviation at the diegetic, formal, pragmatic, and discursive levels, is what they systematically draw attention to.

Having acknowledged the scarcity of studies of the postmodern gothic novels that had become of interest, I turned to study of the concept itself in order to determine what the current lines of theory seem to be. Indeed, there have been extensive discussions of the postmodern gothic in the past few decades, though what is understood by the name is far from consistent. If anything, it is as varied as the number of theoretical perspectives on postmodernism available — which are constellational, historically specific, and often incongruent with one another, to replicate Andreas Huyssen's argument (1986, p. 10). As a result, the postmodern gothic has been discussed — often under multiple aliases — in terms of critical disturbances of categories of analysis, narrative style, and hyperreality (BOTTING, 1996, p. 168-176), the spreading of the gothic through new media and its disruption of genre boundaries (ALLUÉ, 1999), the decline of faith in paternal metaphors or authoritative grand narratives (BOTTING, 2002), the dynamics of popular culture's appropriation of the canon (NASH, 2004), a counter-discourse to the Enlightenment (TRUFFIN, 2009), and a quintessential correspondence between postmodernism and the gothic (BEVILLE, 2009; PUNTER; BYRON, 2007, p. 50-53; SMITH, A. L., 1996). As far as parody, as well as other forms of textual appropriation, are concerned, studies have proven likely to communicate an understanding of parody as character performativity (HELYER, 2006), as a refashioning of gothic tropes (SMITH, A., 2013, p. 141-142), as a pastiche of the gothic style, in particular of the eighteenth-century gothic (TRUFFIN, 2009, p. 76), as an update (SPOONER, 2006, p 74) or else an upgrade (STAMENKOVIC, 2016, p. 400) to the genre, or as a form of mockery, free play or bricolage that denotes the umpteen ways the gothic has leaked from literature into other venues of cultural production, which is usually taken to denote a decline of the former powers of the genre (BOTTING, 2008, p. 12). Rarely, if ever, parody is taken in Hutcheon's perspective, as a prominent historical postmodern genre that denotes a complicitous and critical mode of metafictional and discursive engagement with tradition.

Critical commentary on the parodic aspects of the postmodern gothic in fiction — my own previous contribution included — has also proven unusually limited in that it has tended to privilege a synchronic approach to the problem: studies are more often than not limited to case studies and/or commentary on one single writer or one thematic line. While that is not a

problem *per se*, it does prove problematic in providing a theoretical framework that may be useful for studies of other texts, in particular when there is little agreement as to what constitutes the specific postmodern practices of individual fictionists. As a critical practice, it also makes it harder for critics to perceive the necessarily historical and political nature of postmodernism, which then restricts their comments to the purely aesthetic dimension of parody and its many relatives, such as pastiche and travesty. That is not to say there have not been any attempts to consider the postmodern gothic as an extensive practice, perhaps a genre: Maria Beville (2009), for one, has done so thoroughly in her book *Gothic-Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodernity*, though her focus is placed on the theoretical discussion of simulation and the postmodern sublime, while parody hardly ever makes an appearance.

In short, what recourse to the current theory of the postmodern gothic has shown is that either parody is considered to be an important aspect of the postmodern gothic, though one mostly restricted to a formal dimension that fails to account for the larger contestation of cultural norms that the postmodern parody actually operates at both the formal and the discursive levels; or parody is invoked in order to sustain synchronic approaches to the postmodern gothic that fail to account for the diachronic nature of the actual novels available for study; or else parody is thoroughly absent. Thereby none of the studies available proved suitable for the description of the specific practice of postmodern gothic I have singled out for analysis, in that they neither acknowledge the parodic play on the gothic as a shared practice, nor give an accurate account of the multiple formal, pragmatic, and discursive implications of the parodic play of the gothic in their selected material. The practice of writing back to the canon of gothic exists; it has been a frequent enough one to suggest that possible similarities may be observed, so that a conceptual framework to describe these novels may be developed — and yet, a systematic study of the practice in those terms is currently lacking.

In light of that problem, it is the general objective of this thesis to develop an inceptive conceptual framework to describe a number of novels that participate in the postmodern gothic. I will attempt to prove that there are enough similarities among a number of them to sustain the characterization of the postmodern gothic as a shared practice of addressing the canon of gothic in postmodern parodic form. The tag "postmodern gothic" will be suggested to define those novels in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to complex and sophisticated revisions of the literary and historical past. By means of that practice, both whole targeted works and the narrative conventions of gothic fiction are paradoxically installed and subverted so as to emphasize each novel's ironic

inversion and critical appropriation of tradition. This metafictional strategy is paradoxically meant, in these postmodern novels, as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that subsume the targeted texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, these parodic novels draw attention to the continuing centrality of those assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world *vis-à-vis* the attention dispensed to contextual conditions of textual production.

It would be impossible, considering the pretensions of this project, to develop the aforementioned hypothesis in relation to the whole bulk of novels available for study; it is in fact arguable that a reduced, historically limited corpus will provide the best alternative for the current objective to be achieved with a degree of success. It has also been my interest to privilege texts that have seldom, if at all, been addressed by academic literary criticism, while also allowing myself to foreground my personal favorites. It is in such spirit that verification of the hypothesis and ensuing comments will focus on Adele Griffin's *Tighter*, Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*.

Adele Griffin is a celebrated American author of Young Adult fiction whose novels *Sons of Liberty* (1997) and *Where I Want to Be* (2005) were finalists of the prestigious National Book Award for Fiction in the United States of America. Her YA novel *The Unfinished Life of Addison Stone* (2014) has been the recipient of multiple literary and commercial prizes and nominations, including the *YALSA Best Book*, an *Amazon Best YA Book of the Year*, a *Booklist Top Ten Arts Books for Youth*, a *Junior Library Guild* selection, a *Romantic Times Finalist for Book of the Year*, and a *School Library Journal Top Fiction* pick. Several of her novels, including *Tighter* (STEVENSON, 2011, p. 417-418), have been reviewed for the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* of Johns Hopkins University, yet no academic studies of any of her novels have been published to my knowledge. Information about her life and published books can be found in the author's website https://adelegriffin.com/.

Daniel Levine is an American academic and Creative Writing Professor. He studied English Literature and Creative Writing at Brown University in Rhode Island, and received his graduate title of Master in Fine Arts in Fiction Writing from the University of Florida. He has since taught Composition and Creative Writing at North American High Schools and Universities, including the University of Florida, Montclair State University, and Metropolitan State College of Denver. *Hyde*, his first published novel, was a New York Times' Editors

Choice of June 2014, and was selected by *The Washington Post* as one of the five best thrillers of that year. Although the novel has been reviewed by several newspapers upon publication, no academic studies of it have been published to my knowledge. Information about his life and curiosities about *Hyde* can be found in the author's website http://danielglevine.com/.

Jeanette Winterson, CBE, is an acclaimed British author and Professor of New Writing at the University of Manchester. She has published novels since 1985, and her most notable works include *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* (1985), *The Passion* (1987), *Gut Symmetries* (1997), *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011), and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* — the latter of which was longlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction in 2019. Winterson's novels have been published in several countries, and have been approached from an academic perspective for their dramatization of lesbian and queer dilemmas, their attention to sexual and gender politics, and their participation in the poetics of postmodernism. Important studies of Winterson's *oeuvre* include Paulina Palmer's inclusion of several of her novels in the category of "lesbian gothic" in papers such as "Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions" (2010) and "Lesbian Gothic: Genre, Transformation, Transgression" (2004). Winterson's narratives have also been discussed in terms of their participation in the poetics of postmodernism, two examples of which consisting of Natália Lima de Andrade's Master's dissertation *A Performatividade de Villanelle e Henri: As Representações de Gênero em* A Paixão*, de Jeanette Winterson* (2019), and Ana Cecília Acioli Lima's Doctoral dissertation *As (Re)Configurações do Corpo Sexuado na Ficção de Jeanette Winterson* (2008). The gothic in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* has been approached recently in Júlia Braga Neves's paper "'I Live with Doubleness': Gótico, Ficção Científica e Distopia em *Frankissstein*, de Jeanette Winterson" (2019), though not from the viewpoint suggested in this thesis. Information about Winterson's life and writings can be found on her website http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/.

In order for the general objective of this research thesis to be accomplished, the following specific objectives will be carried out: definition of operational concepts; reading of the corpus; collation and cross-reading of the novels integrating the corpus towards the formulation of a concept. In Chapter One, "Towards a Concept of the Postmodern Gothic: Defining a Theoretical Framework", the operational concepts that will underscore the study of the literary texts will be developed. In subsection one, "Gothic", will briefly present a history of gothic fiction pieced together from the field-defining studies of David Punter (1996a, 1996b), Fred Botting (1996), and Júlio França (2017) to eventually suggest that the gothic is a stable literary genre that deploys a set of basic conventions — the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly manifestation of the past, and/or the monster — to materialize terror in paranoia, barbarism,

and taboo while examining the fears and anxieties that subsume the hegemonic ideology of the middle class. From that brief explanation, I will move on to subsection two, “Postmodernism”, in which I will explore the concepts of parody and postmodernism in the canonical work of Linda Hutcheon (2000, 2004, 2013). Taking after Hutcheon (2004, p. 22), I will suggest that postmodernism in the arts, including fiction, is founded upon a paradox: it is “marked paradoxically by both history and an internalized, self-reflexive investigation of the nature, the limits, and the possibilities of the discourse of art”. The name Hutcheon gives to that paradoxical configuration in fiction is *historiographic metafiction*; and the formal strategy she claims to be responsible for holding that paradox together is *parody*. After observing the implications of metafiction and parody for Hutcheon’s overall theory of postmodernism, I will briefly examine in subsection three, “Postmodern gothic”, a number of existing studies of the postmodern gothic in order to ascertain by default the relevance of the hypothesis presented in this thesis. It will become clear that, although the postmodern gothic has been of academic interest in the past few decades, most of the existing literature fails to account for both the specificities and the interconnectedness of the corpus of parodic novels selected for analysis.

Having thus established the understanding of parody, postmodernism, and the gothic that shall be used as the conceptual framework of the following discussion, I will proceed with the reading of the corpus. Keeping in mind that parody, in Hutcheon’s understanding, must be understood in its formal, pragmatic, and discursive or ideological dimensions, all three dimensions will be examined as discussion moves forward. The formal aspects of the postmodern gothic will be mapped out onto both the diegetic and conventional levels of each novel’s interaction with its background material; in reading the corpus, I will take into consideration both the ways by which each parodic text rewrites its targeted material with critical distance — with attention, for example, to issues of point of view, refashioning of characters, and manipulation, confirmation or contestation of previously known events —, and the ways by which each novel engages parodically with gothic conventions as they are elaborated in the targeted text. The pragmatic aspects of the postmodern gothic will be analyzed in reference to the *ethos* of the parodic play as it is encoded in each novel — contesting, respectful, or neutral. The implications of the pragmatic range of the postmodern gothic may be briefly discussed. The discursive aspects of the postmodern gothic will include an understanding of the ways by which the postmodern parody of the gothic tradition, by force of its status as historiographic metafiction, invites considerations of history, ideology, and power, which are often brought about as a result of the ex-centric points of view these

postmodern novels purport to sustain, as well as their ostensible concerns with problems of representation, language, identity, gender, sexuality, and the like.

In Chapter Two, “Yet Another Turn of the Screw: Adele Griffin’s *Tighter*”, I will explore Adele Griffin’s novel in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Henry James’s ghost story *The Turn of the Screw*, a novella considered by David Punter (1996b, p. 47) to have been “a decisive moment in the history of the Gothic and of the ghost story”. Although it may be risky to sort out the formal, pragmatic and ideological elements of parody, given how the three dimensions interact in order to authorize the strategy of repeating with critical distance, I will segment the discussion in three distinct subsections, each focusing on one set of aspects of the novel (it should be noted, however, that subsections may eventually crisscross as certain narrative problems are raised and discussed). In subsection one, “Depths, depths!”, I will focus on a number of diegetic and conventional similarities and distinctions between the parodic and the parodied texts, in order to reflect on how *Tighter* parodically plays with the gothic genre and its conventions. In subsection two, “This was no trick of the eye”, I will zoom in on the pragmatic range of intent displayed in the parodic novel, in order to discuss how it both reenacts and transgresses a number of stylistic strategies that contribute to creating effects of ambiguity in *The Turn of the Screw*. In subsection three, “In my family, we just call it mopey”, I will discuss how parody, an introverted metafictional genre, comes as the means by which Griffin manages to unearth concealed ideological preconceptions from her source material and turn them into the main story of her own postmodern novel. By the end of the chapter, it will have become clear that the parodic elements of *Tighter* authorize its characterization as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms suggested in this thesis.

In Chapter Three, “The *Doppelgänger* Trouble: Daniel Levine’s *Hyde*”, I will analyze Daniel Levine’s novel in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Robert Louis Stevenson’s gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Due to the complexity of the novel’s ex-centric problematization of the ideology of liberal humanism, and the extent of its parodic activation of the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger*, one dominant configuration of the gothic monster in the works of tradition, I will propose a different segmentation: each of the three distinct subsections of the chapter will focus on one separate nucleus of the novel’s problematization of ideology, which will be examined in terms of the parodic playful activation of the gothic motif of the double. In subsection one, “The truth is inside this head”, I will discuss the parodic deployment of the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in *Hyde* as a support to the relativization of monstrosity, leading to the questioning of truth claims. In subsection two, “We can only marvel at its ruinous

multiplicity", I will examine how the convention of the *Doppelgänger* is used and abused in *Hyde* to metaphorize the concept of postmodern identity as a fragmented and multiple ideological construct. In subsection three, "I could feel Jekyll inside me", I will analyze how the conventional psychoanalytic explanation of the *Doppelgänger* as symbolic expression of abnormal homosexual desire is repeated with difference in order to emphasize the persecutory qualities of homophobic violence inherent in cultural dynamics of power and control over non-reproductive sexuality. By the end of the chapter, it will have become clear that the formal, pragmatic and ideological dimensions of parody conflate in *Hyde* to give rise to a sophisticated revision of the literary and cultural past embodied in several ideological assumptions integrating the ideology of liberal humanism which are filtered by the conventions of gothic fiction. The parodic elements in operation in *Hyde* thus authorize its characterization as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms suggested in this thesis.

In Chapter Four, "A Kiss at the Heart of Gothic: Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*", I will explore Jeanette Winterson's novel in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. Each subsection of the chapter will focus on the parodic activation of the conventions of gothic fiction as they are presented in *Frankenstein*, while issues of the pragmatic and discursive dimension will be addressed whenever possible. In subsection one, "The history we are making", I will analyze instances of the use and abuse of the gothic convention of the ghostly manifestation of the past in the postmodern gothic novel, in order to understand how the resurfacing of the past in ghostly guise structures a critique of ideological undercurrents regarding the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, and history. In subsection two, "This futuristic charnel house", I will examine the parodic repetition with difference of the gothic convention of the *locus horribilis* in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, with emphasis placed on the strategies of ironic inversion at play in the novel's treatment of the settings of the charnel house and the laboratory. In subsection three, "Freak", I will zoom in on how parody structures a reversal of expectations regarding the convention of the monster in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, in that the monster is valorized as an authentic self while the system of social values that caters to the regulation of bodies and identities is rendered monstrous, its monstrosity being predicated on the violence it deploys to ensure its own sustenance. By the end of the chapter, it will have become clear that the formal, pragmatic and ideological dimensions of parody conflate in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* as the novel paradoxically revises and criticizes from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities,

history, the future of science, and the making of monstrosity. For all of that, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* will in time qualify as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

Finally, in the Conclusion, “Postmodern Gothic, or, Postmodern Parodies of Gothic Fiction”, I will weave an operational concept of the postmodern gothic from a collation and cross-reading of elements of the previous analysis. In due time, the chapter will lead to a discussion of several important questions raised by the postmodern parodic appropriation of the gothic. Issues of legitimacy and cultural authority in relation to parodic practice will be briefly discussed as well, whereby we will reflect upon the possible reasons underlying the frequent appropriation of the tradition of gothic in postmodernism, as well as the implications of that practice for the cultural position of the gothic in the past decade.

The research is bibliographic. For general considerations about the gothic genre I will rely on the works of Botting (1996), Castle (1995), França (2017), Lévy (2004), Punter (1996a, 1996b), and Sedgwick (1986). Considerations of parody and postmodernism will find substantiation in the works of Barthes (1977), Genette (1997), Hutcheon (2002, 2004, 2010, 2013), Huyssen (1986), Jameson (1991), and Kristeva (1980). Existing concepts of the postmodern gothic will be traced back to the research works of Allan Lloyd Smith (1996), Allué (1999), Andrew Smith (2013), Beville (2009), Botting (1996, 2002, 2008), Helyer (2006), Nash (2004), Punter and Byron (2007), Stamenkovic (2016), and Truffin (2009). Other relevant References will be listed by the end.

CHAPTER ONE
TOWARDS A CONCEPT OF THE POSTMODERN GOTHIC: DEFINING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis will explore the hypothesis that one of the possible configurations of the postmodern gothic in fiction consists of parodic rewritings of the tradition of the gothic genre, which can be observed in novels such as Adele Griffin's *Tighter*, Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. If that is truly the case, we must first delimit an operational understanding of gothic, postmodernism, and parody that may allow us to refine that hypothesis before we can pursue a reading of the corpus. Unluckily enough, we are caught up in the intersection of a greatly overdetermined terminology, considering how difficult it is to find two scholars who would seem to agree on the meaning of any three of those terms. Of both the gothic (LÉVY, 2004, p. 34) and postmodernism (HEBDIGE, 1976, p. 78), it has been said that the terms have become highly all-encompassing, to the extent where they may have become indefinable; of parody, nothing of the sort has been said, and yet studies such as Gérard Genette's (1997) suggest that the very history of the term is founded upon imprecision, speculation, and confusion. While it is certainly not part of our goals to untangle this yarn to exhaustion, we must at least pull a few threads in order to tie an operational knot. To that we now proceed.

1.1 Gothic

As David Punter (1996a, p. 1-19) explains in the introductory chapter to his field-defining study *The Literature of Terror*, the word "gothic" has had a multiplicity of meanings attached to it: a geographical meaning, designating first the Goths, the barbarian northern tribes which precipitated the downfall of the Roman Empire in the first century AD, and later the Teutonic and Germanic peoples as a whole; a historical meaning, particularly in the course of the eighteenth century, suggesting anything medieval, relating to the Dark Ages, or more broadly anything preceding the seventeenth century historically; an aesthetic meaning, imparting a sense of opposition to the classical; and a more specifically architectural meaning, branding the medieval and ecclesiastical architecture of the Middle Ages, which was subjected to a "Gothic Revival" in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The value attributed to each meaning has been equally unstable: whereas up until the mid-eighteenth century the barbaric, medieval and anti-classical were invested with negative

connotations of paganism, primitivism, and excess, the Anglo-Saxon Gothic Revival declared a positive reassessment of the medieval period. Particularly in literature, the word "gothic" came to be used in reference to an authentically ancient British heritage, including the genre of ballads, the medieval poetry of Chaucer, and the works of Spenser and the Elizabethans, later to flow into the works of the greatest Romantic poets.

As a literary subgenre, gothic has had yet another roster of meanings attached to it. Punter (1996b, p. 193) describes the gothic as "a form of literature with a very specific period of origin — the mid-eighteenth century — and a fluctuating but continuing history in the present day", as a result of which the label "gothic fiction" may have been used to describe outwardly distinct narratives as centuries went by. The historical origins of gothic literature consist of works of British fiction written between the 1760s and the 1820s, all of which reflected the interests and anxieties of an emerging middle-class audience, while exemplifying a number of dilemmas that marked the rise of the novel as a literary form (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 21-53). According to Punter (1996a, p. 20-26), although the novel had often been declared a foe of the fanciful flights of the medieval romance at the time of its early formation, much as a result of its mainstream privileging of a realistic depiction of everyday life — a position entertained until recently in canonical studies of the form such as Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) —, the form's paradoxical exploration of sentimentalism, passion, and psychological depth would go on to influence the development of the gothic, a parallel narrative genre that has benefited from transgressing the self-acknowledged realism of the novel. Overall, as Punter (1996a, p. 26-40) argues, it was precisely the entanglement of discourses of sentimentalism and sensibility, along with the growth of the graveyard poetry and the development of the philosophical discourse on the sublime, which have provided the aesthetic and ideological groundwork out of which the gothic has first flourished.

Traditionally, the origin story of gothic fiction hails Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto* as the genre's inaugural act, and James Hogg's 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as its final act. As Punter points out (1996a, p. 7), everything in between has been positioned by literary history as a relatively homogeneous body of fiction, one that consists of a coherent set of narrative conventions, themes, and ideological preoccupations, of which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has provided a remarkably surgical list:

> You know the important features of its *mise en scène*: an oppressive ruin, a wild landscape, a Catholic or feudal society. You know about the trembling

> sensibility of the heroine and the impetuosity of her lover. You know about the tyrannical older man with the piercing glance who is going to imprison and try to rape or murder them. You know something about the novel's form: it is likely to be discontinuous and involuted, perhaps incorporating tales within tales, changes of narrators, and such framing devices as found manuscripts or interpolated histories. You also know that whether with more or less relevance to the main plot, certain characteristic preoccupations will be aired. These include the priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and live burial; doubles; the discovery of obscured family ties; affinities between narrative and pictorial art; possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame; nocturnal landscapes and dreams; apparitions from the past; Faust- and the Wandering Jew-Like figures; civil insurrections and fires; the charnel house and the madhouse. (SEDGWICK, 1986, p. 9-10).

What this inventory of conventions is meant to unify, however, is a multifarious body of fiction that more often than not contradicts the intended homogeneity of genre expectations. If Walpole's *Otranto*, Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, and Sophia Lee's *The Recess* are all more or less justified by Sedgwick's list, the first cycle of gothic fiction also included the novels of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis, which largely exchanged the medieval settings and times for an interest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and their accompanying concerns with Catholicism and Reformation, Jacobinism, and the reign of Elizabeth I (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 51). In the 1790s, when gothic fiction had become both more popular and more often acclaimed than despised by commentators, both Radcliffe and Lewis achieved the pinnacle of success with the publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian* by the former, and *The Monk* by the latter. Although they were still indebted to the themes and plot devices of the sentimental novel and graveyard poetry to a degree, those authors were more deeply influenced by other traditions: Radcliffe by the works of Shakespeare and Milton (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 55), Lewis by the scandalous *Schauerroman* or German terror-novel (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 57-58), and both of them by the discourse of sensibility that was a staple of eighteenth-century literature (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 65). According to Punter (1996a, p. 64), their novels were also anticipatory of Romantic preoccupations with the problematic antagonism between solitude and liberatory imagination on the one hand, and social life and repression on the other; in fact, in addition to the defining works of Radcliffe and Lewis, Punter (1996a, p. 87-113) includes in the sixty-year period that marks the birth of gothic fiction the works of the major Romantic luminaries: Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Polidori, and Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. These authors have not only displayed a continuing interest in the gothic throughout the course of

their (often short) careers, they have also helped to perpetuate the gothic in early nineteenth-century imaginary with recourse to their favoritism towards the symbolic figures of the wanderer, the vampire, and the seeker after forbidden knowledge (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 87). The origin period of gothic fiction finally included the "paranoiac novels" *Caleb Williams*, by William Godwin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, by Charles Robert Maturin, and *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, by James Hogg, which as a whole abandoned the medievalism of the earlier gothic masters in exchange for psychological investigations of terror through tyrannical persecution.

Precise as its historical origin may have been, then, the actual works of fiction first marshaled under the tag "gothic" by literary history all display definitive internal distinctions; what allows Punter to nonetheless group them together is his Marxist approach to the rise and development of the genre. By that, we mean more than his claim that the consolidation and continuing influence of the gothic is entangled in the rise of middle-class bourgeoisie, its modes of production and consumption, and the ideological preconceptions that have come to sustain its powerful social position; we mean, most importantly, his Marxist *dialectical* approach, which seeks to understand the progress of the gothic genre in terms of continuity through incorporation and change. To quote another foremost scholar, Fred Botting (1996, p. 14), the gothic is best grasped in its relentless historical persistence as "a hybrid form, incorporating and transforming other literary forms as well as developing and changing its own conventions in relation to newer modes of writing". In Botting's perspective (1996, p. 113-134), the mid-nineteenth century witnessed a particularly radical dialectical transformation of the gothic, whereby traces of the genre were domesticated and diffused through the forms and subgenres of realism, the historical novel, the sensation novel, the Newgate novel, and the ghost story. As the gothic became less reliant on the narrative paraphernalia of its first iteration, its range of concerns expanded to include immediate dangers to bourgeois domestic life (often implied to be of a sexual nature), as well as the monstrous and potentially hazardous effects of industrialization and urban development, the lives of criminals and aberrant individuals, and the ethical and moral limits of scientific innovation.

It was not until the final fifteen years of the nineteenth century that the gothic returned to something of its original, "uncontaminated" form, or so Botting (1996, p. 135) sustains; for it was in the dusk of the 1800s that the familiar gothic staples of the *Doppelgänger* and the vampire reemerged as sites of intense anxiety and as investments of terror. According to Punter (1996b, p. 1-26), the *Doppelgänger* and the vampire, along with the mask of innocence

and the maker of human beings, could be termed the gothic myths of decadence, both for their symbolic quality, that is, the variety of meanings they were able to embody, and for their persistence in the collective imaginary of modernity for decades to come. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, these myths cropped up in five emblematic gothic novels and novellas — Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* —, in which they were vested with impressive imperial, Darwinian, and Freudian overtones, often translated into metaphors of infection. The problem of degeneration connecting these works together was thus made to symbolize fears of social, imperial, biological, or psychological devolution: social, concerning the meddling of the upper-middle classes with the "barbaric" habits of the working class, which often took on a heavily sexualized, transgressive, or criminal undertone; imperial, concerning the fear of "going native", or degrading down into animalization due to the contamination of the colonial other; biological, as the very bodily manifestation of the former; and psychological, as the giving in to the uncontrollable urges of the unconscious and crossing taboo lines which are instituted to establish the functionality of society.

In the first half of the twentieth century, gothic fiction grew progressively synonymous with the ghost story, both to its advantage and to its detriment (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 47-95). Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* provides a definitive moment for the gothic in Punter's view, considering how it conflates the convention of the ghostly apparition with a myriad of complex problems including the instability of memory, paranoia, the incipient Victorian preoccupation with the purity of children, and anxieties concerning social class, in particular in how they relate to the ambiguous position of the governess in the social scale. However, Punter notices that, as the century moved forward, while certain important staples of the gothic were reinvigorated — such as paranoia, barbarism, and alienation — the ghost story turned into a highly formulaic and unoriginal genre, less intent on investigating the disturbances of the psyche and social fears, and more so on adhering to a formula that could be repeated to infinity. With the advent of cinema, the gothic also leaked into the horror film, both by offering literary sources for adaptation, and by providing cinema with a well of themes, interests, effects and attitudes towards monstrosity of which horror to this day feeds (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 96-118).

In the meantime, an important tradition of gothic fiction had been growing in the United States of America (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 165-186; PUNTER, 1996b, p. 27-46), beginning in the final years of the eighteenth century as what Punter (1996a, p. 165) believes

to be a refraction of the British gothic. In the land of immigration, professed freedom, and Enlightened republicanism, the past which is hailed as a site of fear was both an imprecise idea of a historical Europe standing as a hindrance in the path towards progress (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 184), and a more immediate inheritance of Puritanism and its legacy of guilt, witchcraft, and paranoia (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 165-166). Emblematic of the early American gothic were the writings of Charles Brockden Brown, author of *Wieland*, Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Scarlet Letter*, and, supremely, Edgar Allan Poe, author of a number of short stories and poems which have revolutionized the gothic in terms of tone, structure, and symbolism (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 177). Poe's concise stories of obsession, extreme mental states, and narratorial unreliability, which progress in a "spiralling intensification" (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 177), reveal both his absorption of the British tradition of Walpole and Radcliffe, and his intimacy with the decadent gothic of Stevenson, Stoker, and Wilde. Later American gothic fiction was somewhat plagued by the legacy of Poe, or at least this is what we can infer from Punter's insistence in explaining how later writers — in particular Ambrose Bierce, Robert W. Chambers, and H. P. Lovecraft — differ from Poe rather than patterning themselves after him. For Punter (1996b, p. 45), the tradition of American gothic going from the final years of the nineteenth century into the late 1930s was marked by the brevity of length, which was counterbalanced by the creation of extensive mythologies, such as Lovecraft's Cthulhu, to make up for the atrophy of form.

This cursory history collected from the works of David Punter and Fred Botting will comprise our understanding of the canon of gothic fiction moving forward. However, considering the multiple differences among texts that integrate that canon, a problem of unity must be brought up and examined. As we have argued, Punter is interested in examining the history of gothic fiction in Marxist dialectical terms of continuity through incorporation and change. So far, we have mapped out how the gothic has changed to integrate and be absorbed by complimentary literary modes, hence we must now examine what it is that has provided the genre with continuity from the eighteenth century to postmodernism. For Punter (1996a, p. 13), that element of continuity is terror, the feeling of extreme fear that has become intertwined with the gothic throughout its history; thereby "where we find terror in the literature of the last two centuries [...], we almost always find traces of the gothic". What is truly distinctive about the gothic, Punter claims, is rather less its themes and style, its conventions and narrative devices, than the consorting of such devices with terror. To be more specific, fear in gothic fiction "is not merely a theme or an attitude, it also has consequences in terms of form, style and the social relations of the texts" (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 18). Terror,

then, is *inscribed* in the text, materialized in a number of narrative strategies: convoluted style, disorienting and suspenseful plotlines, the first-person point of view, the irruption of the fantastic to collapse the grounds of realism, the cropping-up of multiple frame narratives providing internal verification to the narrative, among others. These strategies pivot, according to Punter (1996b, p. 184), on problems of paranoia, barbarism, and taboo, those being "the aspects of the terrifying to which the Gothic constantly, and hauntedly, returns". Paranoia, or the growing sense of persecution and impending doom, is present in fiction in which the reader "is placed in a situation of ambiguity with regard to fears within the text" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 183), and comes to question whether or not there is reason for the internal turmoil a character is going through; in gothic fiction, "the attribution of persecution remains uncertain, and the reader is invited to share in the doubts and uncertainties which pervade the apparent story" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 183), including whether or not the supernatural has actually taken place. Barbarism, in its turn, consists of any elements which "bring us up against the boundaries of the civilized" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 183); often projected onto the distant past — and, lately, increasingly observed in the immediate past, the present, and even the future — barbarism confronts us with cruelty, criminality, and the breaking down of social codes. Taboo, on the other hand, is a wide-ranging concern of gothic fiction, which is translated into the work of writers who probe those "areas of socio-psychological life which offend, which are suppressed, which are generally swept under the carpet in the interests of social and psychological equilibrium" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 184); more often than not, the taboo at the heart of gothic is of a sexual or gendered nature, or of humanity's place in the natural or divine hierarchy of life.

Moreover, terror may be manifested in the narrative conventions of the genre, which scholar Júlio França (2017, p. 117-118) appropriately narrows down to the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly irruption of the past, and the monster. The terrible place where secrets of past transgressions and supernatural threats are harbored may have been the most iconographic convention of the gothic over the centuries, beginning with the gothic castles, medieval ruins and Catholic priories which abounded in the first cycle of novels. According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2005, p. 158-159), the terrifying setting intersects the past with the present in order to blur the boundaries of time, space, and self, while also serving as "an allegorical and psychological extension to the human character and behavior" portrayed in the text. The maze-like *locus horribilis*, where social isolation is enforced and hazards to physical and emotional integrity are experienced, proves itself a metaphorical representation of the entrapped character: its locked rooms standing for repressed desires, its staircases being

pathways towards sexuality (LÉVY, 2004, p. 25). For Botting (1996, p. 20), "[o]ld castles, houses and ruins, as in wild landscapes and labyrinthine cities, situate [heroes], heroines and readers at the limits of normal worlds and mores": the *locus horribilis* is thus a space where social convention, as well as the conventions of the rational world, are suspended, and shockingly barbaric action defies the expectations of normalcy to veer too close to breaking taboo norms. The horrific site, for França (2017, p. 117), "affects, not to say determines the character and actions of the personages inhabiting it"[1], as seclusion and impending doom leads to vulnerability, paranoia and excessive emotional states (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 67). As decades progressed and new anxieties emerged, contemporary spaces were also regimented as *loci horribilis*: haunted attics and vaults, scientists' chambers and laboratories, madhouses and churchyards, dark alleys and prisons in the urban scene, tropical and selvatic areas, ghost towns and secluded properties on the moors, and the very best of bourgeois households. The gothic setting has thus turned from an iconographic representation of pastness to an import of the hidden dangers of the present, as gothic itself leans more closely onto an extended examination of the ideological fringes of modernity.

The ghostly irruption of the past is the second central convention of the genre in França's point of view. In gothic fiction, the past is usually hailed as a site of barbarism and transgression, where the most primitive, punitive and sadistic impulses — revenge being the most prominent — run amok (BRIGGS, 2012, p. 182). In this genre of fiction, the after-effects of past transgressions are best exemplified by that which may have been the foremost theme of gothic fiction in the opinion of several scholars: "the revisiting of the sins of the father upon their children" (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 46), a theme first elaborated in *The Castle of Otranto* and later picked up on by several novelists over two and a half centuries. According to França (2017, p. 117), the acceleration of time experienced in the course of modernity has caused a break in continuity between historical times, whereby past events "become strange and potentially uncanny, returning in ghostly guise to affect present actions"[2]. As Julia Briggs (2012, p. 179) argues in her turn, the sudden intrusion into the present of a dead past which refuses to stay buried brings along with it a liquefaction of boundaries between reality, fantasy, and delusion, which finds material — we had better say, immaterial — manifestation in the figure of the ghost. For Briggs (2012, p. 185), "the figure

[1] The translation is mine. Original: "a literatura gótica caracteriza-se por ser ambientada em espaços narrativos opressivos, que afetam, quando não determinam, o caráter e as ações das personagens que lá vivem". (FRANÇA, 2017, p. 117).
[2] The translation is mine. Original: "Os eventos do passado [...] tornam-se estranhos e potencialmente aterrorizantes, retornando, de modo fantasmagórico, para afetar as ações do presente" (FRANÇA, 2017, p. 117).

of the ghost has provided a powerful imagery for the darkness of the past and its inescapable historical legacies"; hence supernatural visitors varying from "ghouls and ghosts, apparitions, poltergeists, witches, [and] spooks" (SNODGRASS, 2005, p. 329) turn, in the words of Punter (1996a, p. 47), into symbols of "our past rising against us, whether it be the psychological past — the realm of those primitive desires repressed by the demands of [a] closely organized society — or the historical past, the realm of an [aristocratic] social order characterized by absolute power and servitude". Not surprisingly, one of the most systematic and endurable transformations of gothic fiction has been the ghost story (BRIGGS, 2012, p. 177), which we will address in more details moving forward.

The monstrous character, either a villain or an anti-hero, is the third central convention of the genre in França's summary. The word "monster" is rooted in the Latin language, having evolved either from *monstrare*— to show, to display — or *monere*— to warn (HUET, 1993, p. 6). According to the etymological tradition, the monster may be described as an unnatural being, regarded as a divine omen, whose arrival signals a warning from beyond, a presage of evil, a menace of calamities to come. The monster is a harbinger, a stand-in — it is a *sign* of something "other" than itself. The monster's body, for Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996, p. 4), is a cultural body, which means monstrosity is culturally specific: monstrous figures can thus be described as the constitutive others of a given culture, "the exceptions [allowing] structures to be identified and instituted, difference providing the prior condition for identity to emerge" (BOTTING, 2008, p. 8), always at a specific time and place. Yet, in providing a negative parameter for categorization to be exacted, monsters themselves resist easy categorization: they are hybrids by nature, ambiguous embodiments of deviation, and thus of taboo (COHEN, 1996, p. 6). Monsters are "difference made flesh", in Cohen's (1996, p. 7) popular definition, and as such they may be inscriptions of any kind of difference, in particular "cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual" (COHEN, 1996, p. 7). As a result, the reasons underlying any delimitation of monstrosity are culturally specific, and may include, according to França (2017, p. 118), "psychopathologies, cultural differences, social determinants, the hubris of the man of science, among others"[3].

Terror, then, in its multiple forms of paranoia, barbarism, and taboo, is made visible in gothic fiction in the conventions of the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly irruption of the past, and the monster. Yet terror also bears witness to the social relations of the texts: the gothic not

[3] The translation is mine. Original: "As causas atribuídas à existência do monstro são variáveis — psicopatologias, diferenças culturais, determinantes sociais, a *hubris* do homem de ciência, entre outras" (FRANÇA, 2017, p. 118).

only gives textual shape to terror, but also inscribes in textual form the fears and anxieties of a world that lies without — the world of the bourgeois middle-class and its ever increasing hegemonic ideology. For Punter (1996a, p. 112), "[g]othic writing emerges at a particular and definable stage in the development of class relations: [...] the stage when the bourgeoisie, having to all intents and purposes gained social power, began to try to understand the conditions and history of their own ascent". Gothic fiction is thus understood as "a process of cultural self-analysis" (1996b, p. 205) by which the powerful Western bourgeoisie in Europe and North America has come to examine the many anxieties fostered by its coming into being: its miscegenated class origins, its mix of appreciation and fear for the aristocracy; the successive changes in modes of capitalist production, knowledge, and governance that came along with its social ascendancy; its moral, religious, and aesthetic values; its racial, ethnical, and gender biases; later, particularly from the twentieth century onwards, the consequences of the expansion of capitalist production into late and global capitalism; the ensuing restructuring of the social strata; the horrors of global warfare; the hidden terrors of suburbia and the nuclear family; child abuse; the rise of the digital world — and that is just to name a few.

That is the reason why, for Punter (1996b, p. 187), gothic fiction is "a mode — perhaps *the* mode — of unofficial history", or at least, as Maurice Lévy (2004, p. 31) suggests, a useful semantic tool [...] to approach and interpret history". Throughout the course of gothic fiction, a negative history — an "other" history of modernity and the rise of the middle class — has been written in its own tortuous, fragmentary, symbolic, and inconsistent way. That is not the history of the successful rise of a merchant class to social prominence and political power, but rather the history of that class's unremitting fear that the world might actually be powered in secrecy by an obscure elite of aristocratic origin; it is not quite the history of a domestic middle class, whose values are founded upon marriage, family, and childbearing, but rather of how that class's domestic ideology conceals threats to women, children, and non-conforming sexualities; it is hardly ever the history of the consolidation of the Enlightenment and its promises of universal human progress as the focal grand narrative of modernity, but rather one of the "toxic side effects" the Enlightenment has produced, to quote Terry Castle (1995, p. 8); it is less the history of the successful establishment of Republicanism as a staple of the modern political state, but rather of the Terror that hovers over the allegedly democratic order, as Lévy (2004, p. 32) suggests; it is even less so the history of industrial progress and urbanization, but that of the aberrant exploration concealed in the fringes of industrial urban contexts, as Botting (1996, p. 123) highlights.

Gothic could thus be described as a literary history of the terrors of modernity. It is arguably due to gothic's cultural development as a mode of unofficial history of modernity that the genre has become an impressive tool of investigation into the hegemonic ideology of the middle class. Ideology here must be understood in the terms developed by Louis Althusser (2014, p. 171-207): as an imaginary representation of the social codes, moral values and conventions of a dominant group or class, which shape and determine the material conditions of life through their codification in a number of state apparatuses including the family, the arts, religions, and language. The Althusserian concept of ideology and its postmodern elaboration, as Hutcheon (2004, p. 69) highlights, presupposes the existence of a "never fully articulated, but always present, system of preconceptions which govern a society" and determines its dominant structuring of categories of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other marks of "ex-centric" difference. It is the function of ideology, as Punter (1996b, p. 200) reminds us, to naturalize those codes, values and conventions so that they can appear to be God-given, immutable, eternal; ideology is thus made to misconstrue itself as emanating from the material conditions of life, rather than shaping the *status quo* by force of its innumerous apparatuses. Yet ideology, in Althusser's conceptualization, conversely contributes to subjecting individuals through interpellation and discipline, thus getting them to adjust to the mores of the hegemonic norm. As a result of such a homogenizing dynamic, according to Punter (1996b, p. 200), ideology establishes by opposition what is to be considered unnatural, and thus invested with terror. The gothic is thus deeply implicated in the questioning, unveiling, and, to a paradoxical extent, sustenance of bourgeois ideology: both paranoia and barbarism, in the ambiguity and distortion that they produce, are meant to "demonstrate to us the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 183-184), while taboo is activated as a tool of enforcement through its implication in "[the] process of sealing off questions" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 200) that ideology sustains in the name of social cohesion.

In spite of its historical evolution and change, then, the gothic could be defined as a highly stable literary genre that deploys a set of basic conventions — the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly presence of the past, and the monster — to produce effects of terror while examining the fears and anxieties that subsume the maintenance of the hegemonic ideology of the middle class. That does not allay a certain problem of periodization lying at the heart of Punter's considerations. Punter's study, in its 1996 edition in two volumes, extends into what he titles "Modern perceptions of the barbaric", comprising fiction of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (1996b, p. 119-144), and "Contemporary gothic transformations" (1996b, p. 145-180), incorporating

fiction from the final years of the millennium. In both segments of his discussion, he acknowledges the increasing range of meanings the gothic has come to designate, some of which quite different from the original usages of the term, and the ensuing difficulty in delimiting a pathway of investigation. Interestingly enough, his discussion of the "modern" and "contemporary" gothic is actually centered on a number of canonical "postmodern" texts, including Joyce Carol Oates's *Expensive People*, Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*, J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition*, Robert Coover's *Pricksongs and Descants*, Stephen King's *The Shining*, Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory*, Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, and, most alarmingly, the high priest of postmodernism's sacred tomes, Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*. Punter is clearly reluctant to use the term "postmodern" at all — possibly an effect of his Marxist approach —, and when he does use it (1996b, p. 207), it is to decry the alleged erasure of history, characteristic of a certain understanding of the postmodern condition and deeply ingrained in his opinion in an apparent decline of gothic in contemporaneity. We will later return to this argument to contest it, but important here is noticing how a certain diffusion and loss of specificity of the gothic is indirectly attributed to the consolidation of postmodern fiction. What ensues, perhaps as a strategy to contest the dispersion of gothic, is an emptying out of postmodernism, both as a particular historical manifestation of the gothic and as a historical period in itself. That evacuation has been refracted in a somewhat fractured conceptualization of the postmodern gothic, since postmodernism is not usually seen to bear any possibility of continuity and similarity of the sort Punter relies on when developing his history of gothic fiction.

Postmodernism thus enters the scenario through the backdoor, at the expense of its sequestration from that which may be called the definitive history of gothic fiction. Its entrance could not have been more proper: the postmodern is, among other things, the very historical contestation of definitive histories. But before we can get to that contention, we must first provide a few lines of understanding to postmodernism.

1.2 Postmodernism

Postmodernism, much like the gothic, is a term that has acquired multiple meanings *vis-à-vis* extensive and unruly usage, so much so that, for Linda Hutcheon (2004, p. 3), it may have become the most overdetermined and under-defined term in cultural studies and contemporary literary theory alike. So overdetermined, indeed, as to actually verge on the emptiness of a buzzword — or that is how Dick Hebdige describes its vertiginous contours:

> When it becomes possible for people to describe as "postmodern" the decor of a room, the design of a building, the diegesis of a film, the construction of a record, or a "scratch" video, a TV commercial, or an arts documentary, or the "intertextual" relations between them, the layout of a page in a fashion magazine or critical journal, an anti-teleological tendency within epistemology, the attack on the "metaphysics of presence", a general attenuation of feeling, the collective chagrin and morbid projections of a post-War generation of Baby Boomers confronting disillusioned middle age, the "predicament" of reflexivity, a group of rhetorical tropes, a proliferation of surfaces, a new phase in commodity fetishism, a fascination for "images", codes and styles, a process of cultural, political or existential fragmentation and/or crisis, the "de-centering" of the subject, an "incredulity towards metanarratives", the replacement of unitary power axes by a pluralism of power/discourse formations, the "implosion of meaning", the collapse of cultural hierarchies, the dread engendered by the threat of nuclear self-destruction, the decline of the University, the functioning and effects of the new miniaturised technologies, broad societal and economic shifts into a "media", "consumer" or "multinational" phase, a sense (depending on who you read) of "placelessness" or the abandonment of placelessness ("critical regionalism") or (even) a generalised substitution of spatial for temporal co-ordinates — when it becomes possible to describe all these things as "postmodern" (or more simply using a current abbreviation, as "post" or "very post") then it's clear we are in the presence of a buzzword. (HEBDIGE, 1976, p. 78).

This kaleidoscopic list covers over three decades of academic inquiry to illustrate, in a somewhat haphazard fashion, how postmodernism has been sequentially appropriated by a myriad of disciplines to describe phenomena that do not necessarily converge. To produce a useful definition of postmodernism thus comes as a Herculean work of theory, and a critic may find themselves immersed in something of a terminological aporia: how, if at all, is it possible to conceive of what has come after the modern? If the modern itself is in principle the sign of a "present-absolute", as Perry Anderson (1999, p. 14) and others have suggested, should the postmodern be understood as the telltale sign of the collapse of the modern into a relative past, the epitome of the contemporary, or else as the oracular prediction of the future? Is the modern inherent in the postmodern the sign of a set of complex artistic practices collectively named "modernism" or the sign of an epoch in the history of the West named "modernity"? Though these questions bear more answers than we may be able to handle, we must make our way through the conundrum until we have reached a satisfactory operational paradigm. It is tempting to accept Anderson's claim (1999, p. 14) that the use of the term "postmodernism" has been of a merely circumstantial importance in comparison to the scope of its theoretical development, but the very problems inscribed in the term reveal the existence of friction and dilemmas that are no stranger to those of the gothic — thus, as we

shall see, of the postmodern gothic. Off we must go, then, in an attempt to "ride the postmodern bullet", to cheerfully (mis)quote a book by Stephen King.

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Linda Hutcheon's definitive contribution to the study of the postmodern, and arguably one of the most polished accounts given to the term, the Canadian critic characterizes postmodern art, including fiction, as paradoxically parodic: both formally introverted in its repetition with critical distance of the art of the past and grounded onto "the world" by means of its historical awareness. Hutcheon (2004, p. 3) warns us from the outset that, however we choose to define the postmodern in the arts and fiction, we must first acknowledge that, by its very nomenclature, postmodernism establishes a critical relationship of continuity and break with the modern that has preceded it historically — both the aesthetic modernism and the broader assortment of ideological preconceptions of modernity to which she conveniently refers as "liberal humanism". Artistically, postmodernism "challenges some aspects of the modernist dogma: its view of the autonomy of art and its deliberate separation from life; its expression of individual subjectivity; its adversarial status *vis-à-vis* mass culture and bourgeois life" (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 43). *Contra* those dogmatic positions, postmodern art foregrounds the fact that it is both historical and discourse-specific, a result of the social, political, and ideological contexts of its production and reception; as such, it must not so much be understood as the expression of an individual genius, as it must be positioned as a venue where multiple voices converge in a dialogical interaction that evades any ultimate synthesis. Yet, on the other hand, "the postmodern clearly also developed out of other modernist strategies: its self-reflexive experimentation, its ironic ambiguities, and its contestations of classic realist representation" (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 43). Postmodern art is thus interested in examining its own processes, its own codes, and its own conditions of possibility, as well as the ironic effects produced by a confrontation between self-referentiality and mimesis. Thereby, for Hutcheon (2004, p. 22), postmodernism in the arts is founded upon a paradox: it is "marked paradoxically by both history and an internalized, self-reflexive investigation of the nature, the limits, and the possibilities of the discourse of art". The name she gives to that paradoxical configuration in fiction is *historiographic metafiction*; and the formal strategy she claims to be responsible for enabling that paradox is *parody* (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 124).

Understanding Hutcheon's concept of postmodernism thus demands that we trace back its vestiges in her previous studies of metafiction (2013) and parody (2000), both of which find their definitive formulation in her reflections on historiographic metafiction and the postmodern parody. In the Prefaces to the new editions of both *Narcissistic Narrative: The*

Metafictional Paradox (2013, p. ix) and *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (2000, p. xi), Hutcheon examines in hindsight how her influential theories of postmodernism are indebted to her earlier interest in metafiction and parody; what postmodernism adds to these forms of introverted, self-reflexive, self-referential — narcissistic — practice in literature and other arts is its deep consciousness of its paradoxical implications in what the Canadian critic names simply "the world" — that is, their implications in history, ideology, and power (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 36). Hutcheon's previous studies are nonetheless anticipatory of both the fundamentally paradoxical identity of postmodernism, which is a central element of her description, and her rejection of prevalent positions that see the postmodern as a thorough break with the modern, such as Fredric Jameson's (1991, p. 1-54) equally influential theory. For, if we accept Hutcheon's claims that metafiction, be it modern or postmodern, is not an invention of the twentieth century, but simply a more overt development of the inherent condition of the novel as a form (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 8), and that parody is the strategy that connects the modern to the postmodern (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. xii), then it will become extremely difficult to frame historiographic metafiction in terms of an epistemological break with the modern. It will be possible, however, to think of it in terms of *both continuity and discontinuity* with what came before — namely, the aesthetics of modernism —, which is the route Hutcheon favors.

Hutcheon wrote *Narcissistic Narrative* as an intervention in the larger debate about the fate of the novel in the 1970s. As the debate went (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 13), the rise in the late 60s and early 70s of a consistent and international trend of "fiction about fiction — that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 1) — signaled the exhaustion of the realist paradigm, and thus of the novel as a form fundamentally reliant on the mimetic representation of the world. Although accusations of the death of the novel, denunciations of metafiction, and claims for a return to realism and the social novel were not infrequent in that context (see, for instance, BUFORD, 1983; ROTH, 1961; WOLFE, 1989), Hutcheon's argument rests on a different understanding. According to the Canadian critic (2013, p. 5), the theoretical characterization of the novel as an intrinsically realist form, now allegedly imperiled by the promiscuity of metafiction, is a transhistorical and equivocal one; because that characterization had risen from a scholarly focus on dominant forms of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction, with its valorization of formal realism as the final goal of fiction, it has tended to

camouflage or misrepresent the ever-present narcissistic[4] dimension of the novel. Hutcheon argues that that self-referential dimension has been encoded in the novel from its beginnings, in multiple forms and shapes: in early journal and epistolary novels (2013, p. 12), in *Don Quijote*'s parody of the medieval romance (2013, p. 18), in *Tristan Shandy*'s manifest concern with the textualized actualization of the author (2013, p. 9), in the Romantic forms of *Bildungsroman*, *Entwicklungsroman*, and *Klüsterroman*, in all of which the novelist and his craft figured as legitimate subject matters (2013, p. 11), in the psychological realism of early twentieth-century fiction (2013, p. 25), not to say in genre fiction as a whole (2013, p. 94) — and, though she does not mention it but Punter has certainly done so and we have singled out in the subsection above, in the tradition of gothic fiction.

For Hutcheon (2013, p. 18), in a word, "[i]f self-awareness is a sign of the genre's disintegration, then the novel began its decline at birth". The forms of metafiction under development in the 1970s are thus considered by Hutcheon (2013, p. 5) to be the culmination of a gradually evolving historical process. In line with her usual definition of theory as a practice that stems from art rather than imposes itself onto it, the Canadian critic (2013, p. 6-7) claims that metafiction has serious implications for a theory of the novel as a mimetic genre, since it forces us to recognize that fiction — even realist fiction — has no actual claim to represent empirical reality, but simply to create "heterocosms", worlds of its own whose referents are necessarily fictive, albeit often based on empirical entities. Metafiction also forces us to confront the fact that the activities of reading and writing are as much part of the empirical reality as anything else realism might claim to represent, and thus necessarily included as a possibility in any possible heterocosm in both realist and non-realist fiction. In order to account for that, Hutcheon (2013, p. 38-39) argues that the concept of mimesis must be enlarged from that of a *mimesis of product* — focusing on characters, actions, settings, and how perfectly they are made to resemble empirical reality — to include a *mimesis of process* — focusing on the baring of conventions or disruption of the linguistic codes of the fictional text. Particularly in the last case, the reader is invited to do more than just recognize from afar the fictionality of the text at hand; embedded in the text as a structural position, the reader is

[4] "Narcissistic", in Hutcheon's assertion, is not meant as a diagnosis of excessive self-infatuation on the part of authors, but rather as an adjective to describe texts that are "introspective, introverted, and self-conscious [...] self-reflective, self-informing, self-reflexive, auto-referential, auto-representational" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 1) — all of which were used pejoratively in the early 1970s in the broader context of discussions on the death of the novel. Narcissistic, here, gains an ironic underling: Hutcheon is actually counteracting the argument that, much as the mythic Narcissus jumped to his death in pursuit of his own image, the novel genre was on the verge of destruction as it veered towards metafiction.

actually enticed to engage with the author in a shared activity of conscious textual construction (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 39).

Consequently, it is possible to affirm with Hutcheon (2013, p. 6) that the two focuses of metafiction are the role of the reader and the self-referential foregrounding of linguistic and narrative structures. Metafictional narratives, in the Canadian scholar's assertion (2013, p. 144, emphasis added), are "fictions about their own processes, *as experienced and created by the reader's responses*". Readers are thus integral to metafictional texts: not only may they be interpellated, textualized as a structural position, or thematically included in the text, they must also be foregrounded as essential actors in a process of co-creation of fictional heterocosms. In line with theories of Semiology and intertextuality that had just been made popular through the works of Julia Kristeva (1980), Roland Barthes (1977, p. 142-148), and Gérard Genette (1997), Hutcheon (2013, p. 7) argues that metafictional texts foreground the role of the reader in actualizing the signifying process of the text at the expense of the authoritative intentions of the writer. Narcissistic narratives, in their multiple possible configurations, demand "that [the reader] participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in [their] co-creation" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 7), thus assuming a composite identity: that of reader, writer, and critic at once (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 144). Metafiction thus demands that the reader refuses a passive position of receiver or mere spectator of a text — a position implicit in the act of reading realist fiction — to take on an active role of decoding, and as such co-authoring, the text at hand.

Having thus established the fundamental role of the reader, Hutcheon (2013, p. 22-23) goes on to provide a typology of metafiction in terms of modes and forms of its linguistic and narrative structures. For Hutcheon, there are two modes of metafiction, which can be termed *diegetic* and *linguistic*: the diegetic mode, on the one hand, includes texts that are "conscious of their own narrative process", in which case "the text presents itself as diegesis, as narrative" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 22-23); the linguistic mode, on the other hand, includes texts that "demonstrat[e] their awareness of the limits and the powers of their own language", in which case the text presents itself as "unobfuscated text, language" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 23). In addition to that, Hutcheon argues that metafiction can manifest in either an *overt* or a *covert* form. Overt forms of metafiction are present in texts in which the self-consciousness or self-reflection is "usually explicitly thematized or allegorized within the 'fiction'", whereas in covert forms "this process would be structuralized, internalized, actualized" (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 23). We are thus left with the following four-part system:

METAFICTION	*linguistic mode*	*diegetic mode*
overt form	pastiche (stylistic parody), awareness of the medium, thematic word play (jokes, riddles)	**parody**, mise en abyme, allegory
covert form	generative or actualized word play (puns, anagrams)	detective story, fantasy, game structure, erotica, **and, we must add, the gothic**

The overt form of the linguistic mode, according to Hutcheon (2013, p. 99-101), consists of those texts that are self-conscious and self-reflexive about their existence as language. Such texts “draw the reader’s attention overtly to the fact that he is reading words, words with their different textures and meanings” (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 118). This is achieved with recourse to various strategies, including the pastiche of a certain style of writing, the text’s extreme awareness of its medium, its exploration of the auditory or visual attributes of the linguistic sign, the thematization of the activity of writing words on a page, and the inclusion of jokes and riddles within a text. The covert form of the linguistic mode, for Hutcheon (2013, p. 120), is harder to analyze, but it may be located in forms of generative word play, such as puns and anagrams. We must say here that the linguistic mode of metafiction is a poorly developed side of Hutcheon’s study at this point, one that poses more problems than it provides answers. One noteworthy problem is her posing of pastiche as “parodic play on a certain style of writing” (2013, p. 99); in later studies, particularly after her interest in postmodernism had become more blatant, she abandoned the conflation of pastiche and parody in search of a more affirmative distinction between parody as creative differentiation and pastiche as uncreative similarity (cf. HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 38). Another noteworthy problem is her difficulty in deciding whether puns and anagrams are overt or covert forms of the linguistic mode: she gets away with referring them to both forms (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 101; p. 120) and never explaining to which category they actually belong. While it may be argued that puns and anagrams may be both thematic and actualized exercises in word play — that is, both inscribed as themes in a text and explored for their material attributes — the indecision proves problematic in light of Hutcheon’s highly

schematic typology. All in all, the problem will be largely abandoned later, as her focus becomes more closely placed on diegetic modes of metafiction, parody in particular.

The covert form of the diegetic mode consists of those texts — or, to be more precise, those genres — that "function as self-reflective paradigms, making the act of reading into one of active 'production', of imagining, interpreting, decoding, ordering, in short of constructing the literary universe through the fictive referents of the words" on the page (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 86). Such texts demand of the reader an actualization of narrative structures: the author assumes the reader is able to recognize the inherent rules of the genre in which the text is written, while the reader themselves is invited to activate their previous knowledge of narrative structures in order to "co-author" the text. The reader is thus inscribed in the text through sequential acts of anticipation, so much so that the act of reading is made an evident act of reading *fiction* — that is, reading a text that is contrived according to certain rules and expectations. For Hutcheon, covert diegetic metafiction is more readily perceived in highly conventionalized and ritualized genres, also usually referred to as "genre fiction", such as the detective story, fantasy, games, erotica — and, we must again add, the gothic.

Finally, the overt form of the diegetic mode consists of those narratives that thematize narrative artifice, whereby "the 'rules' of fiction-making come into play as the overt *subject matter*" of fiction (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 52, emphasis added). The reader is often evidently inscribed in the text and interpellated or addressed to focus on certain aspects of the story told. Conversely, the narrative may draw explicit attention to its condition as narrative, which is achieved with recourse to parody, mise en abyme, and allegory. Already, in this earlier study, parody is included as a distinctive device of metafiction; however, Hutcheon's (2013, p. 24) understanding of parody here is still theorized in conformity with a Russian formalist paradigm. According to the formalist understanding, parody comes as a result of a refunctionalization or repurposing of old aesthetic forms and conventions, one that takes place when such forms and conventions have become insufficiently motivated — that is, too conventional, too formal, too obvious and expected; whenever that happens, a new, parodic usage is given to the form or convention in case, in order to revitalize it, lest it degenerate into pure protocol. Therefore, parody, in the formalist understanding, both self-consciously unmasks the artifice of genre conventions and reinvigorates the canon by opening up new possibilities for the artist (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 50).

Why is this detailed review of Hutcheon's work on metafiction important? First and foremost, if one of the most prominent configurations of postmodernism in literature, in her opinion, is historiographic metafiction, then it is important to understand what she defines as

metafiction proper before we can delve into the later form. It is also interesting to note how, in this earlier study, Hutcheon (2013, p. 2-3) deliberately avoids equating metafiction and postmodernism: though at the time of this earlier treatise postmodernism had already been bracketed as the very practice of narrative narcissism as a whole, in special in the critical work of John Barth (1984), Hutcheon senses that the postmodern version of narrative narcissism is something other than pure metafiction, or perhaps metafiction *plus something else*. That something else, she will claim later (2013, p. ix), is an acute awareness of history and its modes of telling. This is a point of contention she will later sanction as the strongest distinction between modern and postmodern metafiction in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (2004, p. 40). It is also in regard to metafiction that her embryonic understanding of postmodernism takes shape: when acknowledging that "there is a certain continuity of concern between contemporary self-reflective texts and those of the earlier modernist period", Hutcheon (2013, p. 2-3) already concludes that "[t]he 'post' of 'postmodernism' would therefore suggest not 'after', so much as an extension of modernism and a reaction to it". This is an insight that she declines to pursue here, but that will later inform both her reformulation of the formalist concept of parody and her entire theory of postmodernism as a paradoxical phenomenon of continuation and break with modernism, and complicity (with) and critique of the ideological assumptions of modernity and liberal humanism.

As a matter of fact, her study of metafiction already demonstrates her proclivity for paradoxical definitions of complex phenomena. For Hutcheon (2013, p. 7), metafiction itself is founded upon a paradox: while the text turns inwards into expressing its own condition as text, it is also oriented outwards into the world through the challenging demands of intellectual, imaginative, and affective co-creation it imposes on the reader. Thus it is that the paradox of metafiction explored here already implies a preoccupation with how art and life can be bridged together (HUTCHEON, 2013, p. 70), one that is a central concern of postmodernism in its configuration as the parodic form of historiographic metafiction. At this point, the worldly dimension of narrative introversion is restricted to how the reader is implicated in the activity of co-creation of fictional heterocosms; in later studies, however, the worldly dimension of self-referentiality will be expanded to include the pragmatic range of parodic play, until it finds its most complex formulation in the postmodern concerns with history, ideology, and power. All in all, we already sense here that, due to the paradoxical nature of metafiction, its cannibalizing urges cannot be simply blank or derivative, as, for instance, Fredric Jameson (1991, p. 17) would claim; in fact, one of the most notable of Hutcheon's suggestions (2013, p. 6) is that "metafiction constitutes its own first critical

commentary, and in so doing [...] sets up the theoretical frame of reference in which it must be considered". Metafiction, then — as the prefix *meta-* would suggest (GENETTE, 1997, p. 4-5) — is not simply fiction about fiction, but rather fiction that establishes a critical view of fiction and language.

Another remarkable aspect of Hutcheon's preliminary incursion into metafiction is that it hitherto forecasts most of the paramount arguments in her later definition of parody as the organizing strategy of postmodern art. Although here her comprehension is still founded upon the Russian formalist debate of parody as the attribution of a new function to an insufficiently motivated form, Hutcheon (2013, p. 25) already implies that this very breathing of new life into an old form hampers dominant definitions of parody as a function of mockery, ridicule, or destruction (GENETTE, 1997, p. 23-25). She chooses instead to see it in more neutral terms of "an exploration of difference and similarity" — another paradox — shaped into a form of art that both deviates from the norm and includes that norm within itself as backgrounded material (2013, p. 50) — yet another paradox. She also suggests (2013, p. 50) quite lightly that there is a problem inherent in definitions of parody as satirical ridicule of non-literary external elements, seeing as what lies at the heart of metafictional parodic play is an internal and literary code. Later on, the distinction between parody and satire will be an important innovation of her comments on intertextuality. All of these comments are ventured in *Narcissistic Narrative* as mere insights, several of which will be later developed more consistently in *A Theory of Parody*, a transitional study which is, in many respects, Hutcheon's first attempt at theorizing the postmodern in art.

In *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon makes a strong case for parody as not simply one among many metafictional strategies, but rather the utmost blueprint of postmodernism, later to be rebranded "historiographic metafiction". Hutcheon's interest in parody grew from what she considered "a lack of fit between what parody did and what people said it did", considering how the arts of the twentieth century "seemed to present serious challenges to the many existing theories of parody" (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. xi). As French critic Gérard Genette (1997, p. 10) explains, the confusion stems from the very genesis of the term, originating in or around the writing of Aristotle's *Poetics* (1997). After defining poetry as the representation in verse of human actions, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of actions — high and low — in terms of their moral or social dignity, and two types of genres — dramatic and narrative — in terms of their modes of representation. We are left with four possibilities, according to Aristotle's scheme: representation of high actions in dramatic mode, or tragedy; representation of low actions in dramatic mode, or comedy; representation

of high actions in narrative mode, or epic; and finally, representation of low action in narrative mode, to which Aristotle refers in the most elusive terms by the name *parodia*. Elusive, that is, because the topic of *parodia* proper is never developed in the Aristotelian *Poetics* — or, if it has been indeed developed, the manuscript has not survived. The few works to which Aristotle refers as illustrative of low action in the narrative mode have not survived either, which has left critics somewhat free to frolic on the perilous territories of blank-filling. In short, according to Genette (1997, p. 10), "we are reduced to conjectures as to what seems to constitute, in principle or in structure, the uncharted territory of [parody], and these conjectures do not entirely converge". Historically, then, the concept of parody has developed as a succession of unauthorized versions, which is made clear by the great confusion often surrounding the term.

Much of the confusion may have stemmed from the etymology of the word. The prefix *para-* means both "counter" and "along, beside", while *ode* is the Greek term for "chant". Parody could thus be defined, in one possibility, as either a counter-chant, or as a singing along or singing beside. The implications of this definition, according to Genette (1997, p. 10-11) are multiple: parody might simply have meant that the rhapsodist would modify, perhaps minimally, the delivery or traditional musical accompaniment of an epic chant; or else that he would manipulate the meaning of the text by minimally transforming its subject matter. Considering, however, how *parodia* might be related to the epic in ways possibly similar to how comedy relates to tragedy — that is, in terms of a certain comic vulgarization of a serious subject matter — then parody, for Aristotle, might in fact have implied a counter-narrative, or the treatment of a lowly or vulgar subject in a noble, epic style. Thus, the traditional concept of parody derived from Aristotle might have been conditioned by a mockery ethos, whereby laughter was the effect intended by the contrast between the noble narrative style of the work and the crass spirit of the plot. The two possibilities of interpretation — parody as a minimal formal or thematic transformation, parody as mockery of the epic — are not at all contiguous, and may in fact be considered very much unlike each other. What is striking about parody, however, is that, as millennia went by, the first, more neutral interpretation has largely vanished, while the second, more ethically marked one has become paradigmatic: parody has come to signify ever more frequently a parallel mocking "chant", intended as ridicule of a previous one. This is one relevant aspect of parody with which Hutcheon will beg to differ.

According to Genette (1997, p. 15-19), during the classical age, the appeal of parody as a preoccupation of poetics vanished, yet interest in parody as a rhetorical trope grew

considerably. In the eighteenth century in particular, parody was granted what may have been its clearest definition to date: a brief and punctual play on words which is meant to alter the meaning of a previous well-known verse or sentence, often with a mocking intention in mind. For Genette (1997, p. 16, emphasis original), "[t]he most rigorous form of parody, or *minimal parody*, consists, then, of taking up a familiar text literally and giving it a new meaning, while playing, if possible and as needed, on the words" of that previous text. Distortion, in this assertion, is minimal but necessary; most usually, what stands for parody is a quote that, deflected from its original context and subjected to a minimal transformation, is demoted from its noble standing. Because it was brief, punctual, and intended to perform a comic though transient effect, parody has been hailed in the classical age as a figure of speech rather than a genre or category of works. That is the reason why, as Genette (1997, p. 17) explains, the practice of parody at the time was seen to be limited to brief texts, such as short poems, verses, and proverbs.

However, the rigorous definition of parody in the eighteenth century was not to be reproduced in later times. As Genette (1997, p. 24) explains, in the nineteenth century in particular, the term "parody" was often used in tautological definitions of an assemblage of practices that "designate at times playful distortion, at times the burlesque transposition of a text, and on other occasions the satirical imitation of a style". The confusion came as a result of the functional convergence of the genres, all of which were believed to produce similarly comic effects through mockery. Though Genette would agree to define parody as the practice of playful distortion, he is adamant that the remaining practices differ considerably, both in their scope and their mode of relationship to a previous text. Contrary to parody, the burlesque transposition of a text — what he names burlesque travesty — would signal the rendition of a noble subject in a vulgar or popular style. Both are transformations of a previous text, but parody transforms the subject matter while burlesque travesty transforms the style. The satirical imitation of a style — what he names pastiche —, on the other hand, does not imply transformation, but merely stylistic imitation meant as ridicule of the stylist. All in all, according to Genette (1997, p. 20), the understanding of parody as stylistic imitation aimed at ridicule will be faithfully transmitted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — and well into the twentieth, we might add, seeing as this is the very definition at the heart of Fredric Jameson's (1991, p. 16-17) condemnation of postmodernism as pastiche, "blank parody", parody destitute of any satirical effect. At this point, however, the conceptual bewilderment has become so overwhelming that Genette (1997, p. 25-26) fastidiously

exclaims that “it is impossible to clear up this lexical area effectively”, and thus “it would be useful perhaps to reform the entire system”.

Both Genette and Hutcheon have taken the clearance of the field to heart; yet, mystification goes on, considering how their definitions of parody still diverge. Genette’s study is more encompassing: he begins by defining a whole field of hypertextuality — one among five fields of transtextuality or the textual transcendence of the text — in the context of which parody and its companions can be defined. Hypertextuality, for Genette (1997, p. 5), names any relationship uniting a text B — a hypertext — to a previous text A — a hypotext — upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of critical commentary. According to Genette (1997, p. 5), a hypertext, or “text in the second degree”, is achieved by means of either imitation or transformation of a hypotext. Processes of imitation in Genette’s attribution include pastiche (neutral stylistic imitation), caricature (stylistic imitation meant as ridicule, or what was previously called “satirical pastiche”) and forgery (serious stylistic imitation); processes of transformation include parody — the playful distortion of a text by means of minimal transformation —, travesty (the transformation of a style meant to debase said style) and transposition, or “serious parody” (serious transformation of a hypotext). It is interesting to notice, however, that, even if the French critic claims to reject the functional distribution of hypertextuality — that is, the succession of definitions stemming from the encoded intent of the text — in exchange for a structural distribution based solely on transtextual relationships of either transformation or imitation, the problem of intent — and that of the mocking or ridicule intent in particular — persists.

In some respects, Hutcheon’s understanding of parody overlaps with Genette’s, not to say with the overall debate of intertextuality, though her study marks an important conceptual difference with the inscription of parody in the larger problems of pragmatics and ideology. This is the reason why her discussion of parody is more appropriate for considerations of postmodern fiction, which, Hutcheon (2004, p. 36) herself highlights, is self-reflective of both its textual and contextual dimensions, thus carrying out a necessary statement on ideology and power. Contrary to Genette in particular, Hutcheon largely avoids proposing a concept of parody that is in any way indebted to how the term has been previously defined; it is her belief that concepts of parody should be historical, and that the nature of parodic play in twentieth-century art would forbid any transhistorical reliance on the theoretical models of old (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 10). For starters, Hutcheon (2000, p. 19) does not see parody as limited to minimal transformation; she sees it as an extended practice of reformulation that informs the overall artistic production in the twentieth century, in both fiction and other arts.

She also refuses to restrict parody to *textual* transformation only, proposing instead that the target of parody may be any work of art or any form of codified discourse (2000, p. 16). In terms of the ethos of parody — that is, its encoded pragmatic intent —, Hutcheon's (2000, p. 15-16) main contribution is to reformulate the scope of pragmatic intent to include a whole gamut of possibilities ranging from neutral playfulness through contestation to admiration. And in terms of its often claimed satirical intent, Hutcheon (2000, p. 43) makes an important distinction: while parody is intramural in its aims, satire is extramural, directed at social mores and conventions, often with an ameliorative purpose in mind.

Much like Genette (1997, p. 25), Hutcheon (2000, p. 38-49) establishes distinctions between parody and other forms of textual imitation and appropriation. Besides satire, she takes a moment to differentiate between parody and pastiche, plagiarism, quotation, allusion, and burlesque travesty. With the probable exception of satire and, of course, parody, Hutcheon's discrimination of these concurrent forms is arguably less solid than Genette's; it must be noted, however, that most of them have few implications for her overall theory of parody. As a whole, against her concept of parody as repetition with difference, Hutcheon argues that pastiche is the imitation of style; plagiarism is textual "borrowing" aimed at concealing the borrowed element; quotation is *ipsis litteris* borrowing aimed at providing argumentative authority by default; allusion is correspondence between codes, not difference; and burlesque travesty requires a ridiculing ethos, whereas parody does not. More compelling, however, is Hutcheon's passing suggestion (2000, p. 40) that the distinction between forms of imitation and appropriation in terms of high and low art are too rigid to account properly for much modern and especially postmodern art, the latter of which is particularly known for its cannibalization of both canonical and popular art forms.

If in *Narcissistic Narrative* parody had been offered equanimous status with other metafictional devices, in *A Theory of Parody* it is focused as a major strategy of self-reflexivity in the arts of the twentieth century, so much so that it could be hailed as a model for the artistic process of much modern and postmodern art (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 5). After recognizing that concepts of parody grounded on minimal transformation intended to produce ridicule no longer apply to the more complex and extensive parodic practices of postmodernity in special, Hutcheon (2000, p. 6) defines parody as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" from its source material. The definition is far less generic than it may come off as initially. The transformative strategy of repeating with critical distance circumvents "an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inverting, and 'trans-contextualizing' previous works of art"

(HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 11). For Hutcheon (2000, p. 12), the operation can be directed at either entire art works or general iconic conventions, and often both at the same time — an aspect that, particularly for diegetic metafiction, extends the influence of parody from the formalist confines of the ameliorative repurposing of tired genre tropes, to that of the more neutral ironic inversion of covert genre conventions. What parody does, then, is absorb another work of art in order to replay it in a different context, and, in doing so, revise the (often ideological) premises most deeply embedded in the targeted work. Parody is thus a paradoxical genre in many ways; one of them being that, while its strategy is one of incorporation, its function is one of reworking, separation and contrast (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 34). Trans-contextualization and inversion are the main formal strategies by which this paradoxical operation is performed, both of which rely on the structural operation of irony to inscribe difference at the core of similarity.

The ironic dimension of parody, according to Hutcheon (2000, p. 54-55), is structural rather than pragmatic. Irony, in the Canadian critic's words (2000, p. xiv), could be described as the rhetorical miniature of parody, because, formally, both operate the superimposition of two contrasting levels — that is, two contrasting meanings, voices, or texts. That is why parody could complimentary be defined, in formal terms, as a "bitextual synthesis or double-voiced discourse" that produces ironic inversion: it superimposes two levels — that of the foregrounded or parodic text, the hypertext, and that of the background or parodied text, the hypotext —, the final meaning of which rests on the recognition of the ironic difference that lies at the heart of their similarity (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 34). The difference between parody and irony, however, lies in pragmatic intent: while irony superimposes meaning to materialize an often pejorative judgment of something, the ethos of parody, for Hutcheon (2000, p. 60), is unmarked, and thus must be determined in relation to each parodic occurrence. A parodic text, according to this assertion, may challenge or contest the codes of the backgrounded text; it may pay respect and deference to it; or it may be neutrally playful in its tackling of the parodied text. That does not mean that parody may never be ironic in its pragmatic intent, but simply that the sort of judgment implied in irony is neither a given nor a *sine qua non* of the parodic process; more often, the ironic intent of parody is restricted to a smirk of recognition of the encoded playfulness of the parodic text (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 61).

The word "recognition" is crucial for a detailed understanding of how parody works. Hutcheon's description (2000, p. 93) often highlights the fact that parody can only manifest itself as a phenomenon when both the producer and the decoder of a parodic text share a

hegemonic set of codes. That is why "when we call something a parody, we posit some encoding intent to cast a critical and differentiating eye on the artistic past, an intent that we, as readers, then *infer* from the text's (covert or overt) inscription of it" (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 84, emphasis original). The intent to parody is encoded in the text, inscribed in it through clues and hints, in such a way that the author will guide the reader's understanding of the text *as parody*, while it is up to the reader to successfully recognize the clues in order to complete the parodic performance. Hence parody, contrary to the prevalent intertextual model of emphasis on the reader and the intertext alone, draws attention for the whole pragmatics of enunciation: the author's intent to parody, their skill in encoding recognizable clues of that intent, the reader's success in decoding such hints, the effect produced by the competent decoding of the parodic intent, the contextual elements that mediate the comprehension of the parodic text — all of these are constituents implicated in the successful co-authoring of parody (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 22).

In *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon (2000, p. 22) sets out to develop a theoretical model that is both formal and pragmatic, which she does very successfully, yet the discursive implications of parody are never too far from surfacing. The attention to pragmatics positions parody as a genre that, self-referential as it may be, is involved in "the world", and must be examined in relation to its discursive or contextual implications. Hutcheon (2000, p. 100) is well aware of the fact that parody, like any other form or genre of art, is discourse-specific, that is, it cannot evade its historical, social, and ideological contexts of production and reception. Parody is paradoxical in yet that other aspect: while it is a mode of self-reflexivity — and not just any mode, but one that the critic has singled out as a model for the "mimesis of process" — it is paradoxically integrated in a discursive dimension, short of which its full interpretation would be hindered, if not denied. After we have determined how parody works, then, the issue of how this worldly aspect of parody can be assessed may be phrased in terms of motivation: why does parody occur at all? Answers to this question are only partially provided in Hutcheon's theory of parodic art.

In Hutcheon's study of parody, the worldly dimension of *parodia* is thus summarized: "through interaction with satire, through the pragmatic need for encoder and decoder to share codes, and through the paradox of its authorized transgression, the parodic appropriation of the past reaches out beyond textual introversion and aesthetic narcissism to address 'the text's situation in the world'" (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 116). The differentiation between parody and satire takes up a considerable portion of the discussion prior to this quote: for Hutcheon (2000, p. 51; 58), if parody is to the present day erroneously conceptualized as having a

marked ridiculing ethos, it is due to its interaction with satire, which has been made a close one since at least the eighteenth century. Yet, according to the Canadian critic (2000, p. 43), parody and satire are different genres: while parody is a mode of self-reflexive discourse that has a broad range of possible *ethe*, the target of satire is extramural, whereby the social and moral conventions of a certain time and place are held to ridicule with an eye to their amelioration. Being different, however, does not entail being mutually exclusive; indeed, Hutcheon (2000, p. 11; 62) suggests that modern and postmodern parodic art can still be used to fulfill satirical ends. As such, if the differences between the two genres are duly noted, it is possible to safely consider satire as a venue of the worldly harvesting of parody.

Yet Hutcheon's summary leaves us to muse upon a more striking undercurrent: the posing of parody as a mode of appropriation of the past. This rebranding of parody pushes the genre further away from the confines of an intertextual approach, for the belief in an osmotic — rhizomatic, if you will — absorption of texts into the "infinite text" (BARTHES, 1998, p. 36) is replaced with a profound intimation of historical awareness that parody cannot by any means elude (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 4). What is appropriated through parody, then, is not simply any other text; it is a text from the past, one that integrates tradition, or else the very history of art, which is activated in order to subsume ironic difference. Hence, *pace* Hutcheon (2000, p. 110), "[parody's] appropriation of the past, of history, its questioning of the contemporary by 'referencing' it to a different set of codes, is a way of establishing continuity that may, in itself, have ideological implications". Such implications are indeed manifold: who appropriates the past in parodic fashion and why? What and whose past is thus appropriated — or, in another formulation, whose stories are told and whose stories are silenced? How, if at all, is that past held to criticism? What are the ideological implications of the power struggle enacted between silencers and the silenced ones? How is it even possible to access and assess past events that have become lost in the mists of time? *A Theory of Parody* lifts the veil to take a sneak peek of these problems underneath, but only in its concluding chapter. These, however, are the very problems at the heart of *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon's subsequent investigation into the problems of parodic metafiction.

As we have suggested before, *A Theory of Parody* is, in many respects, Hutcheon's first theory of postmodern artistic practices. Although she claims here that parody is what links the modern to the postmodern, she unsurprisingly reflects (2000, p. xi), in the Introduction to the 2000 edition of the book, that the term postmodernism would later become the accepted way to refer to the paradoxically parodic and historical art she was interested in

exploring. Several unassuming indexes may point to the fact that, in describing parody in the terms she chooses to, Hutcheon is in fact describing a form of *postmodern parody* — a collocation that crops up amply in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. It is in *Parody*, for example, that Hutcheon (2000, p. 11) will first declare her belief that postmodern architecture is the archetypal configuration of parody — merely four years before she will declare (2004, p. 22), in *Poetics*, that postmodern architecture is the archetypal manifestation of the postmodern. Her *Parody* is also filled with references to John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a text that had figured prominently in *Narcissistic Narrative* as a paradigmatic example of diegetic metafiction, and that was now hailed as a paradigmatic example of parody, only to crop up again later in *Poetics* as a paradigmatic form of historiographic metafiction. But it is Hutcheon's (2004, p. 11; 35) more incisive qualification of parody as "postmodern parody", as "a perfect postmodern form" and "a privileged mode of postmodern self-reflexivity", in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, that finally conflates her sophisticated concept of parody with the realm of her study of the postmodern. Here, however, parody undergoes a reassessment of sorts: while the impulse to parody may still be said to provide continuity between the modern and the postmodern, the postmodern parody is also investigated for its signs of a simultaneous paradoxical break, one that must declare a differential trait at the heart of continuity. What distinguishes the postmodern parody, for Hutcheon, is its explicit foregrounding of the problems of discourse, particularly in reference to history, ideology, and power.

In Hutcheon's *magnum opus*, then, considerations on the discursive or ideological dimension of parody are added to the formal and pragmatic features of previous studies (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. x) in order to amplify the scope of the postmodern parody and its paradoxical activation of aesthetic introversion and historical awareness towards its engulfment in the domain of postmodernism. Thereby, the paradoxical language of parody — one of repetition and difference, inscription and distance, authorization and transgression — is magnified in her *Poetics* to describe the paradoxical dynamic of postmodernism as one of incorporation and contestation — use and abuse — complicity (with) and critique — of the modern and its assortment of ideological preconceptions. Here, a longer quote of Hutcheon's will make the entanglement clearer:

> [P]ostmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent paradoxes and provisionally and, of course, to their critical or ironic

> re-reading of the art of the past. In implicitly contesting in this way such concepts as aesthetic originality and textual closure, postmodernist art offers a new model for mapping the borderland between art and the world, a model that works from a position within both and yet not totally within either, a model that is profoundly implicated in, yet still capable of criticizing, that which it seeks to describe. (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 23).

The foremost contradiction of postmodernism is that it works within the systems it attempts to subvert: what both postmodern art and theory do is install and destabilize convention, which is why they are less iconoclastic than they are ironically playful. The strategy that allows that paradox to materialize is parody — but, contrary to her more sober intimations of possible ideological implications in the concluding remarks to *A Theory of Parody*, Hutcheon (2004, p. 22-23) is now more inclined to declare that the formal introversion of parody is *the very reason why* postmodernism is both overtly historical and unavoidably political. The historicity and politics of postmodernism are only possible, she claims, because parody incorporates the literary and historical past textually to contest it ideologically, thus implying that art and the world are intrinsically connected. The paradox of self-referentiality and historical awareness hinted at in the final chapter of *A Theory of Parody* is thus rendered the very *raison d'être* of postmodernism, and the consequences for artistic practices are multiple. For starters, parody is more overtly described as a textual incorporation of the past into the present, though one that is meant to emphasize ironic difference. Through parody, the past is not simply acknowledged, let alone nostalgically exalted, then, but heavily problematized; it is used and abused, activated and modified, first incorporated then held to critique *vis-à-vis* the very tensions entertained by the practice of repeating with difference. For Hutcheon, the problematization of the past in postmodern parodic art such as historiographic metafiction encompasses

> issues such as those of narrative form, of intertextuality, of strategies of representation, of the role of language, of the relation between historical fact and experiential event, and, in general, of the epistemological and ontological consequences of the act of rendering problematic that which was once taken for granted by historiography — and literature. (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 12).

A whole range of critical possibilities is then opened up. Postmodern parody incorporates and contests the narrative forms of the past and its many conventions: in fiction, that would include the mimetic pretensions of realist art; the well defined limits between narrative genres, between fiction and reality, or art and criticism; traditional notions of

perspective anchored on the author as the harbinger of meaning; omniscient narration; internal logics; coherent characterization; traditional closure devices such as marriage or death, among others. Yet this form of parody also problematizes "what was once taken for granted by historiography and literature", that is, the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and invention, anchored on the acknowledged transparency of the historical report, not to say the very working of ideology in posing as a transparent, immutable given. Historiographic metafiction is known to weave an intertext out of both fiction and history — for example, by having historical personalities interact with fictional characters, by altering well-known historical facts, by placing fictional characters in real life events, by patterning fictional constructs out of historical reports, by filling in the gaps left unaddressed by authoritative accounts of history —, and, in doing so, it makes obvious the fact that the past as referent is rendered inaccessible unless it may be given textualized form. What the postmodern parody ultimately renders evident is the argument that the past can only be known and interpreted with recourse to its textual vestiges, and as such it cannot be too unlike fiction after all (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 125). Both are textual reconstructions, performed *a posteriori* and materialized in language; hence they are both to different degrees subjected to manipulation, interpretation, and questioning. Neither can sustain a stronger claim to conveying truth than the other, and their difference in status is in part ideological.

Postmodern parodic writing can, in a certain sense, be distinguished by its insistence in foregrounding — and often thematizing — the ideological critique of the premises it both installs and subverts (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 25; 129). Beyond the restraints of its critique of historiography, its revaluation of the past through parody is directed at the whole range of assumptions that integrate what Hutcheon (2004, p. 57) refers to as liberal humanism: "autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totalization, system, universalization, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, uniqueness, origin". These premises are not revoked, nor are they denied, but they are nevertheless criticized from within. For example, parodic texts both install and subvert assumptions of creative authority, uniqueness and origin, considering how, in its bitextual synthesis or double-voiced discourse, parody is both reliant on the recognition of encoded authorial intent and discursive contextualization of all art, and implicitly critical of notions of originality and genius as discursive custodians of artistic value. We might say that parody is *both* a work of art in the modernist notion *and* a text in the post-structuralist assumption of intertextuality — a "textwork" might be a useful neologism — and *neither* one of them in particular. In fact, the whole bulk of postmodern parodic arts, for Hutcheon (2004, p. 46), is characterized by the

shifting and unstable "both/and/neither" structure. One of the reasons why parody has become a privileged mode of postmodern self-reflexivity is precisely that its paradoxical incorporation and contestation of the past points didactically to such ideological assumptions; that, for Hutcheon (2004, p. 35), is also why parody has become a favored mode of revisionism for "the ex-centric", those marginalized by the dominant ideology.

Hutcheon (2004, p. 57-58) argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that, among the many assumptions of liberal humanism questioned by postmodern art, the notion of the center, in all of its forms, shapes, and modes, has been a central one (the paradoxical pun is very much intended). The center, and its associated concerns with origin, originality, unity, eternity, universality, homogeneity, and truth, have been placed under a magnifying glass as postmodernism has come about with a profound interrogation of the basis of any certainty or any standards of judgment. In postmodernism, according to Hutcheon (2004, p. 58), the center gives way to the margins while remaining a desired fiction; as such, it is questioned for the exclusions it operates and camouflages, and the limits of its homogenizing strategies. As fiction, the center is revealed to be a cultural construct, an inconspicuous position that passes for truth, one plenty of ideological friction which now becomes the very subject matter of art. In opposition to the injunctions of the center, postmodernism focuses on the heterogeneity, plurality, and marginal difference of the ex-centric — those who, in both depending on the center and being marginalized by it, are able to question its centrality from within. Yet in questioning the fixity of the center for ideology, those identifying as ex-centric are also subjected to shifting alignments. The focus on difference in postmodernism thus assumes opposition to be "a flux of contextualized identities: contextualized by gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, education, social role, and so on" (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 59). Those identities, too, have a vested interest in the center which they are denied, and they, too, are always on the verge of reproducing the binary structures that establish hierarchies of power in the name of the center. The challenge of postmodernism is to avoid making the margin into another center, thus reinstating the monolithism of the center in the name of difference (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 65).

For Hutcheon (2004, p. 61), the breakout of ex-centric questioning in the West thinks back to the 1960s, the historical period that witnessed "the inscribing into history [...] of previously 'silent' groups defined by differences of race, gender, sexual preferences, ethnicity, native status, class". In light of the fusion of the political and the aesthetic into the countercultural, an abundance of diverse reactions to a shared condition of marginalization brought about vigorous challenges to the multiple andro- (phallo-), hetero-, Euro-, and

ethno-centrisms which hold the center in place as a powerful fiction. As Hutcheon (2004, p. 66) explains, those heterogeneous responses against the hegemonic culture had in common a paradoxical position: they all contested the center from within its structures, incorporating it first to criticize it later, in the manner of an implosion followed by a reconstruction. It is only expected, then, that parody might have become the favored strategy of ex-centric contestation in postmodernism. The activation of parody by the ex-centric reveals that historiographic metafiction may be granted relevant socio-political uses. By its very definition, parody asserts difference at the heart of similarity, and that difference is often politically charged in terms of intersectional identity. From the perspective of a marginalized race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality, to read the past parodically is to revise it politically; hence, aesthetic appropriation and difference are made into an instrument of ex-centric ideological contestation.

In Hutcheon's words (2004, p. 35), "parody has certainly become a most popular and effective strategy of […] black, ethnic, gay, and feminist artists […] trying to come to terms with and to respond, critically and creatively, to the still predominantly white, heterosexual, male culture in which they find themselves". Parody thus figures as an instrument of reckoning, of reassessing the system of ideological preconceptions that govern society while never being fully articulated — and it does so by expanding that system to include multiple identitary axes that participate in the reproduction and contestation of the center. Besides, the "[i]ntertextual parody of canonical American and European classics is one mode of appropriating and reformulating — with significant change — the dominant white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, Eurocentric culture" (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 30). Through its use and abuse of the canon, signaling both its dependence and its distant criticism of the powerful influence of the canon's central position, parody may be activated in order for a newcomer artist to come to terms with the inexorable persistence of tradition and the concealed ideological preconceptions that inform the works of a past moment in time. These seem to be in part the underlying motivations of Adele Griffin's *Tighter*, Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, all of which, we will attempt to prove, may be described as parodic appropriations of specific works in the canon of gothic fiction — respectively, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* —, in Hutcheon's terms.

After we have briefly reviewed the conceptual framework that will inform our reading of these novels in the following chapters, it has come time to refine our hypothesis in light of the comments above. Adele Griffin's *Tighter*, Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, and Jeanette Winterson's

Frankissstein: A Love Story are novels that may be referred to as *postmodern gothic*, a shared practice of postmodern parodic play on the gothic genre. They are fictional "textworks" in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive or ideological dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to complex and sophisticated revisions of the literary and cultural past. By means of that practice, both the whole targeted works and the narrative conventions of gothic fiction — the exploration of the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly irruption of the past, and/or the monster in order to produce effects of terror — are paradoxically installed and subverted so as to emphasize each novel's ironic inversion and critical appropriation of tradition. This metafictional strategy is paradoxically meant, in these novels, as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform their targeted texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, these parodic "textworks" draw attention to the continuing centrality of those assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world through attention to contextual conditions of textual production. In the following discussion, we will observe how this dynamic plays out in each particular novel, prior to collating them towards a concept of the postmodern gothic. However, before we can proceed, it is important to briefly review a number of existing attempts at conceptualizing the postmodern gothic. It will become clear that neither are those attempts able to account for the specificities of the practice described above, nor are they sustainable as general descriptions of any literary practices. That being the case, pursuing and developing the thesis expressed above proves itself a valid and urgent academic enterprise.

1.3 Postmodern gothic

If it is true, as Huyssen (1986, p. 10) suggests, that the postmodern can only be thought of as constellations of meanings, then the postmodern gothic has certainly absorbed some of that star quality — an evidence of which being the utter amount of diverging comments to be found in the academic literature of the past three decades. While it is our understanding that recent scholarship on the "contemporary" gothic has tended to erase the postmodern nominally while retaining its tenets as constituents of theorization — which has given rise to several conceptual inconsistencies and a long list of alternative monikers — it might be unnecessary for the moment to take a detour and split critics' hairs in order to examine this particular point. It is arguably more important, for the time being, to provide an

overview of the field in order to locate ourselves within its limits while delimiting the importance of the alternative theoretical approach proposed here. We shall focus, then, on critical comments which either admittedly speak from a postmodern standpoint or elaborate on the idea of parody even if they make away with the "postmodern" nominally. It will become clear that concepts of the postmodern gothic are stuck in an unseemly crossroads: they are either author-oriented or vexed by unsystematic or poorly explained understandings of parody, or else lost in accusations of the decline of the gothic. Our thesis is at once more systematic in its understanding of parody, more encompassing in its scope, and more willing to affirm that parodic play is a rich mode of engagement with the gothic — one that has important consequences for both the genre in specific and "the world" as a whole.

The postmodern gothic has been discussed in terms of critical disturbances of categories of analysis, narrative style, and hyperreality (BOTTING, 1996, p. 168-176), the decline of faith in paternal metaphors or authoritative grand narratives (BOTTING, 2002), the spreading of the gothic through new media and its disruption of genre boundaries (ALLUÉ, 1999), the dynamics of popular culture's appropriation of high fiction (NASH, 2004), a counter-discourse to the Enlightenment (TRUFFIN, 2009), and a quintessential correspondence between postmodernism and the gothic (BEVILLE, 2009; PUNTER; BYRON, 2007, p. 50-53; SMITH, A. L., 1996). As concerns multiple intertextual strategies, studies have proven likely to communicate an understanding of parody as character performativity (HELYER, 2006), as a refashioning of gothic tropes (SMITH, A., 2013, p. 141-142), as a pastiche of the gothic style, in particular of the eighteenth-century gothic (TRUFFIN, 2009, p. 76), as an update (SPOONER, 2006, p 74) or else an upgrade (STAMENKOVIC, 2016, p. 400) to the genre, or as a form of mockery, free play or bricolage that denotes the umpteen ways the gothic has spread from literature to culture, which is usually taken to denote a decline of the former powers of the genre (BOTTING, 2008, p. 12). Rarely, if ever, is parody taken in Hutcheon's perspective, as a prominent historical configuration that denotes a complicit and critical mode of metafictional and discursive engagement with tradition.

Several studies of the postmodern gothic fall prey to the specificities of what might be termed a synchronic approach to genre, meaning the study's privileging of one single author, and perhaps one single novel, who or which are taken to be paradigmatic examples of the whole genre. For example, in a study of Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*, Jesse W. Nash (2004) discusses the dynamics of popular culture's appropriation of the canon in the way the novel relates to various canonical texts ranging from the tragedies of Sophocles to Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein. He concludes that "King's novel is an example of what we might fruitfully think of as 'postmodern Gothic', which is a transformation or historical mutation of the traditional Gothic tale" (NASH, 2004, p. 152). His main argument is somewhat Jamesonian: in Stephen King's narrative, he claims (2004, p. 153;157), the postmodern gothic has allegedly absorbed the dissolution between high and mass culture into the "privileging of folk, archaic, and popular traditions over that of scientific rationalism [...] wherein the premonition is privileged over reason, where the dream should be taken seriously, and where ghosts have more authority than scientists". This is allegedly done so that the author can more willingly tackle "explicitly cultural issues as opposed to the traditional Gothic preoccupations with personality and character" (NASH, 2004, p. 152). For Nash, the aspect of this experience most often attacked by Stephen King is the institution of the American family and its mistreatment of kids and teenagers. According to Nash (2004, p. 155), King's superficiality is the very reason why his narratives are extremely successful as instruments of ideology critique; accordingly, postmodernism has been hailed by Fredric Jameson (1991, p. 9) as the aesthetics of depthlessness and superficial pastiche, a counteraction to the auric depths advocated by a modernist aesthetic in which personal style and uniqueness were paradigms of true art. Therefore, in Nash's version of the postmodern gothic, meaning is supposed to be found in the superficial articulation of the narrative, rather than its often nonsensical deeper implications.

In a chapter on Chuck Palahniuk, Sherry R. Truffin (2009, p. 75) delves, in her turn, into the *oeuvre* of the celebrated American writer to illustrate how, in an echo of the first gothic's handling of the obscure legacy of the Middle Ages, the postmodern gothic now "wrestle[s] with the legacy of the Enlightenment itself". Truffin (2009, p. 75) notes in her analysis that "the Gothic is not the only literary discourse with a counter-Enlightenment strain", since, in addition to it, "there are Modernism and Postmodernism". She believes the legacy of the Enlightenment is best represented by the dominance of reason over obscurantism and the development of capitalism and subsequent rise of the middle class, which have come to signal both a blessing and a curse. She claims that "[c]ontemporary discourse on the Gothic is, in fact, dominated by the notion that it is simultaneously a product of and a challenge to the reason and visibility valorized by the Enlightenment and embodied in the term" (TRUFFIN, 2009, p. 75), later arguing that the postmodern gothic of Chuck Palahniuk works through this legacy by centering on "mystified, tormented, and dehumanized" monstrous protagonists, "with a propensity for violence and a complete disregard for taboo" (TRUFFIN, 2009, p. 76). Moreover, she trusts that "it is easy to see

correspondences between Postmodern pastiche in which older aesthetic forms are wrenched from their contexts and combined in new ways, and the Gothic, which originated in contemplation of the ruins of the past" (TRUFFIN, 2009, p. 76). Chuck Palahniuk's postmodern gothic is thus assessed for its campy quality, which translates both into his grotesque monsters and his citation of gothic forms of the past; yet, in foregrounding the concept of pastiche, Truffin loses touch of forms of parodic play that seem to inform a considerable number of other postmodern gothic texts.

Parody, other than pastiche, has not been altogether absent from studies of the postmodern gothic. For example, in an analysis of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, Ruth Helyer reasons that

> [t]he potential for characters within modern Gothic narratives to parody not only the genre, but themselves, suggests that the title is no longer a convenient genre 'label', evoking affected eighteenth-century novels, but a new and modern representation, or rather a fissure between representations, through which we can look back, to multiple scenes. (HELYER, 2000, p. 741).

Her description is launched by a checklist of similarities between the postmodern and the gothic, but it diverges from previous definitions in that it foregrounds, as an outstanding feature, a double-take on parody: parody as a visitation of the subject matters and characteristics of the earlier gothic tradition, and parody as character performance. The first is up to par with the genre's extremely conventional nature, which renders it prone to imitation. As Helyer (2000, p. 730) notes, "the Gothic genre in general [is] easily mimicked due to [its] strong distinguishing features", a fact that highlights the readily recognizable iconography of the genre and its apparently endless commercial appeal. However, parody is seen here as imitation rather than transformation, an adoption of characteristics that, rather than producing ironic inversion, usually works as an actualization of tradition that lacks any degree of critical distance. Parody would seem to be, in other words, conflated with pastiche. More interestingly, in Helyer's second assertion, parody has to do with the stereotypical nature of the gothic persona, especially in the figure of the villain. Patrick, the protagonist of *American Psycho*, is seen to consciously "imitate the self he wants to perpetuate" (HELYER, 2000, p. 729), as he purposefully plays the role of a murderous villain as a means to make sense of his moral ambivalence and sociopathic lack of empathy.

An interesting aspect Helyer (2000, p. 741) hints at but fails to develop further is her review of the postmodern gothic as "a self-conscious and parodic mixing of multiple genres

and strands". In this respect, she might be indebted to Sonia Baelo Allué's (1999) previous study, in which the latter claims that "[t]he contemporary gothic still presents narratives of darkness, desire and power, although these effects are achieved through new techniques and have extended into different genres and media" (ALLUÉ, 1999, p. 31). Here, Allué considers the parodic postmodern gothic of *American Psycho* in view of the novel's self-awareness and uncertainty at the level of genre and narrative, "which is a trait typical of postmodern gothic and postmodern products in general" (ALLUÉ, 1999, p. 31-32). By the genre's self-awareness, Allué (1999, p. 31) means "the expansion of the gothic, which is now used in a wider range of contexts: cinema, music videos, advertisements, [and] comics". She believes that this spreading of the gothic through new media has resulted in the genre's self-awareness, a process that has been encoded in *American Psycho* in how the novel draws from the languages of the slasher movie, the yellow newspaper, and television ads. According to Allué, this "combination of the languages of different cultural manifestations" (ALLUÉ, 1999, p. 34) into a novel that defies easy categorizations leads to uncertainty at the level of genre, one further enhanced by diegetic uncertainty as it becomes impossible to ascertain whether Patrick represents the monstrous side of the postmodern condition, or simply the new normal of a society that is unable to destroy the monsters it has engendered.

It may have become clear by now that what we have termed the synchronic approach to the postmodern gothic structures a problem of definition, given how what is said about one specific writer/novel can hardly ever be mapped out on considerations of another specific writer or novel, not to mention that the usual confusion between parody and pastiche persists. Nonetheless, there have been attempts to define the postmodern gothic in diachronic terms, which often consider postmodernism to be a period category rather than an aesthetic one. Fred Botting (1996, p. 168-176) for one has addressed the topic more consistently in *Gothic*, in Jamesonian terms of critical disturbances of categories of analysis, narrative style, and hyperreality. For Botting (1996, p. 168), the postmodern gothic is inscribed in a "play of fear and laughter", considering how its narratives find humor in fear, and strangeness in comedy. Postmodern gothic fiction shapes dark humor into pastiche in its disturbance of genres and narrative affects through "fictions that juxtapose, and thereby reorganize, narrative styles and relations" (BOTTING, 1996, p. 169). By means of this artificial assemblage, the postmodern gothic discloses the artificiality of those identitary constructions that question the grand narratives of modernity for being "social, historical and individual formations [...] bound up with the organizing effects of narratives" (BOTTING, 1996, p. 169). By figuring identity as performativity, the gothic thus reflects the postmodern loss of confidence in truth, history,

authority, and power. Finally, for Botting (1996, p. 171), the postmodern gothic overlaps with the hyperreal world of simulacra, which allows it to question the "unity of word or image and thing" by foregrounding "words and images without things or as things themselves, effects of narrative form and nothing else".

Taking after Fredric Jameson (1991), Botting (2002, p. 277-300) finds the postmodern gothic to be the result of the expansion of late capitalism and its cultural logic of depthlessness, apathy, and ahistoricism. In "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes", he argues that, with the expansion of the gothic into the culture as a whole, itself a product of late capitalism, fear and terror have become intensely marketed-oriented, mostly produced for the sake of power and profit. As a result, gothic descends into the state of consumerist exhilaration that characterizes the postmodern waning of affect, which in Botting's view has shaped a cultural condition of "aftergothic". Postmodernism is the divide that has set the gothic apart from its aftergothic dispersal into the forms of an alienated gothic culture, which for Botting has brought about ever more pessimistic results:

> A sense of cultural exhaustion haunts the present. An inhuman future is shrouded in old Gothic trappings emptied of any strong charge; past images and forms are worn too thin to veil the gaping hole of objectless anxiety. Gothic fiction, which served as earlier modernity's black hole and has served up a range of objects and figures crystallizing anxiety into fear, has become too familiar after two centuries of repetitive mutation and seems incapable of shocking anew. Inured to Gothic shocks and terrors, contemporary culture recycles its images in the hope of finding a charge intense enough to stave off the black hole within and without, the one opened up by postmodernist fragmentation and plurality. Gothic figures, once giving form to the anxieties surrounding the transition from aristocratic to bourgeois culture, now disclose only the formlessness, the consuming void, underlying the flickering thrills of contemporary Western simulations. (BOTTING, 2002, p. 298).

This paradigmatic quote must be contextualized. The transition from aristocratic to bourgeois culture Botting mentions here must perforce restrict his comments to the first cycle of gothic fiction, which mirrored a greater crisis in the authority of the aristocracy as the middle class initially rose to economic and political power. In the first batch of gothic novels, the genre's figures or conventions — the medieval *locus horribilis*, the ghostly irruption of the past, and the monster — often inscribed in textual imagery the bourgeois anxieties concerning the continuing power of the barely overcome political order. If those anxieties were eventually dispelled — medieval ruins fled from, past transgressions amended, monsters and villains destroyed — it was in the interest of reaffirming the more deserving authority of

the new order. With postmodernism, however, it is the metanarrative of final authority that stands accused: as Botting hints at here and develops later in his *Limits of Horror: Technologies, Bodies, Gothic*, it is the "paternal metaphor" of a coherent and centered source of social authority that is dead, lost in a mist of provisional and fractured cultural interests that never finally cohere (BOTTING, 2008, p. 15-77). If the conventions of gothic fiction once gave metaphorical shape to a dynamic of lost and recovered bourgeois authority, they have now become "old trappings", simulacra devoid of their former function, subsisting only as iconography, unable to absorb anxiety and crystallize it into fear. As a result, "[t]he genre [...] begins to eat itself, consuming its own conventions in a highly reflexive play of recycled features" (BOTTING, 2008, p. 12): it is, in other words, aestheticized under the pressure of the machinery of late capitalism to become invested in pastiche and superficial repetition, while, deprived of its erstwhile functions, it is rendered an empty vessel for the powers of capital to tighten their grip.

Botting's words are far from configuring a celebratory stance on the intertextual dimension of the postmodern gothic; most importantly, they do not seem to describe with any particular precision the practice of parodic appropriation of the gothic canon that we are considering here. They nevertheless have the merit of conceptual cohesion. Other critics have not been so cohesive, and may have been at times quite elusive in their comments. In more than one consideration, the postmodern gothic has been described in increasingly generic assertions in terms of an intensification, complexification, refashioning or reworking of the gothic, free of any distinguishing characteristics other than a certain "postmodern twist". Scholar Sladana Stamenkovic (2016, p. 400) has claimed, for instance, that "[t]he genre of Postmodern Gothic represents a postmodern incarnation of the traditional Gothic genre and it includes traditional Gothic elements although somewhat modified and upgraded". What an upgraded incarnation of the traditional gothic is supposed to resemble is never clarified, though it might arguably verge on either pastiche or parody. Scholar Andrew Smith (2013, p. 142) argues in his turn that the postmodern gothic of popular culture stands for the horror text that "reworks Gothic tropes", thus keeping with the gothic tradition while working as "exercises in postmodernism". It is more or less clear that a reworking of gothic tropes as exercises in postmodernism must entail an underlying consideration of intertextuality, perhaps parody, but that understanding is not made clear; however, considering how Smith (2013, p. 147-148) reads the works of Shirley Jackson, Angela Carter, and Toni Morrison to explore "the meaning of absence [...] as a critique of the type of empty representation that defines one version of the postmodern", it would seem reasonable to suspect that version to be Jameson's.

A similar problem is to be found in David Punter and Glennis Byron's chapter "Gothic Postmodernism" in their handbook *The Gothic* (2007, p. 50-53), in which the scholars list complex hallmarks of gothic fiction that they see to find "further home" in the postmodern: a "superflux of meaning [...], a series of transfers and translocations from one place to another [...], an attention to the divisions and doublings of the self [...], a mixture [...] of narrative voices [...], [and] a distortion of perspective" are some of the "complications of postmodern writing, particularly in the areas of subjectivity and location [that] reflect back onto and into the Gothic". Although the exemplification is more detailed now, we are still left adrift in the murky waters of unexplained postmodern "complications".

Interesting as these comments may be, their vagueness is to their detriment, their most important aspect being their intimation of an inherent suitability between the gothic and postmodernism. It is to account for that perceived similarity that the most thriving examinations of the postmodern gothic have been developed in the works of Allan Lloyd Smith (1996) and Maria Beville (2009). Smith (1996, p. 6-19) has offered an in-depth contribution to the subject in an essay titled "Postmodernism/Gothicism", in which he claims that "[t]here are striking parallels between the features identified in discourses concerning postmodernism and those which are focused on the Gothic tradition" (SMITH, 1996, p. 6), seeing as "postmodernists seem to have borrowed certain particular qualities of the Gothic to pursue their own agendas" (SMITH, 1996, p. 14). He believes that the reason underlying the overlap of gothic and postmodernism is that both have emerged in periods of social and political change brought about by the development of new technologies — the former at the heydays of the Enlightenment, the latter at the outset of late capitalism, in which information and technical knowledge have become the main commodities in circulation, according to the celebrated assertion of Jean-François Lyotard (1984). Drawing from this proximity, Smith goes on to investigate those aspects of postmodernism that may be said to think back to the gothic tradition: indeterminacy, as both a suspense technique, a reaction against Enlightened classicism, and the result of the postmodern distrust of metanarratives; a dominant focus on ontology over epistemology, both as the trigger of mystery and suspense, and as the result of digression, multiplicity of narrators and registers, and disputes over veracity in postmodern texts; superficiality, a mark of both gothic conventions and the postmodern aesthetic of the hyperreal image; a favoring of comedy and burlesque as sources of grotesque images; and the foregrounding of the unspeakable as a means of approaching deep-rooted taboos in sensationalist fashion: perversities, war atrocities, sexual deviance, violence and terrorism abound in both the gothic and postmodernism.

A couple of particular interactions stand out in Smith's analysis. The first is the obsession with nostalgia that has been noted of both gothicism and postmodernism, for both are held accountable for "ransacking an imaginary museum of pastness" (SMITH, 1996, p. 11) to produce a pastiche of archaic images which lacks historical accuracy. It would follow that "the tokens of the past are exhibited without discrimination [as a] playful admixture of inaccurate histories" (SMITH, 1996, p. 10), that is, as nothing but a vast collection of superficially cannibalized images. The second important interaction concerns pastiche as a privileged mode of engagement with tradition in both gothicism and postmodernism, for they are both omnivorous forms "composed of elements borrowed from other forms and its own earlier examples [...] without observable parodic implications [... or] too much reworking and reappraisal" (SMITH, 1996, p. 11). Smith (1996, p. 13) suggests that issues of self-reflexivity and metafiction in postmodernism are shaped into two different strains: postmodern gothic novels are either stylized as a "flat repetition of Gothic narrative structures" or as fictions in which "the Gothic appears as one element among many", especially in the works of broadly non-Gothic writers. What our analysis will suggest is that there is a third alternative: postmodern novels may be more than a cannibalized pastiche of past images; they may in fact be predominantly gothic in metafictional form, while at the same time demonstrating a highly acute understanding of history and being critical of the narrative structures they set out to employ and destabilize in parodic fashion.

Maria Beville (2009, p. 8-9) in her turn has chosen to discuss "Gothic-postmodernism" as a distinctive genre of postmodernist fiction, "a hybrid mode that emerges from the dialogic interaction of Gothic and postmodernist characteristics in a given text". She claims that "[i]n Gothic-postmodernist works, Gothic and postmodernist ideologies exist in a sort of symbiotic relationship which effectively increases the intensity of each" (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 55); hence, "the literary devices of each mode and their respective strategies deserve equal status within the limits of a definition" (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 51). Beville thus sets out to look into "some of the issues that are explored separately in Gothic and postmodernist fiction, [which] are one and the same" (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 53): a sense of crisis in identity, the shattering of Enlightened subjectivity, the workings of the human psyche, and the subversion of Illuminist perspectives on ontology and epistemology. Beville (2009, p. 7) sees postmodernism as "experimental, radical and often metafictional literature which problematizes the relationship between reality and fiction, reader and text". These comments suggest that the focus of her analysis is purportedly placed onto the metafictional experimentation that characterizes the poetics of postmodernism in the terms that have been

established by Hutcheon; however, this aspect will go on to fulfill an only marginal part in her discussion, as she later centers more closely on the so-called characteristics of the postmodern condition: “that experience of darkness, confusion, and lack of meaning and authority in a desensitized world that confronts alienation and death on a daily basis” (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 53). That is why, despite acknowledging that both the gothic and postmodernism operate in metafictional realms, Beville (2009, p. 55) concludes that “the manifestations of gothicism in postmodernist writing can be narrowed down to a few primary agents, namely, the concept of the sublime as experienced through terror, suspense, and horror; the supernatural; metamorphosis; the grotesque; and an obsession with death or the end”.

Among these, and following on David Punter, she elects terror as the favored affect intended by Gothic-postmodernist authors. Noting that terror has been foregrounded in postmodern political discourse, though it has been somewhat displaced as a defining aspect of gothic fiction, she sustains that the gothic should be seen as “the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors of postmodernity [...] in the present context of increased global terrorism” (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 8). Historically speaking, terror has been part of the modern political order since the Reign of Terror that marked the ideological decline of the French Revolution, which has translated into a peak of gothic production in the second half of the eighteenth century. Beville (2009, p. 27) thinks that this is a reality comparable to our postmodern times, only now terror arises as a result of a “sublime experience in the sense of a liminal state of existence that puts the ‘real’ into question”. Terror is thus linked with deconstruction: it denies oppositions in favor of liminality and in-betweenness, as “[i]t functions to *resurrect* both the real and the fictional in that sublime moment when binary ideologies are destabilized and we are confronted with the unrepresentable” (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 30, emphasis original). Moreover, it betrays the self-consciousness of our postmodern condition, ever more shaped into a culture of fear by the exploration of terrorism and death in the media, and aware of “reality” as a cultural and linguistic construct. Hence, for Beville,

> Gothic-postmodernism can be regarded as an artistic response to the terror that currently haunts our collective unconscious as part of our postmodern culture of fear, and also as part of our subjective desire for its return and for discourse to open unto the darker side of our known ‘realities’. (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 24).

Beville’s thorough rendition is very carefully developed, yet it seems to fail to account for the particular set of concerns raised by the novels that integrate the corpus of this research. That is not to the detriment of her theory, which is crowned by an acknowledgment of what

could be used as a conclusion to this review of the main contributions to the conceptualization of the postmodern gothic: “due to its expansive nature, the Gothic, like postmodernism is amenable to numerous and often disparate theories” (BEVILLE, 2009, p. 20). This conclusion implicitly suggests, in other words, that there is not one postmodern gothic, but many, and that, in theorizing the genre in good postmodern fashion, we could never claim to hold a final authoritative say, but merely to add another provisional layer to a more heterogeneous field of artistic practices and theoretical discussion. In reclaiming the tag “postmodern gothic” for a different set of literary artifacts, then, it is not our intention to invalidate pre-existing comments, but simply to account for both the specificities and the interconnectedness of a considerable number of postmodern novels that have largely flown under the critical radar. These novels are indeed parodic, but in terms that have rarely, if ever, been addressed in academic scholarship of gothic literature; they are also examples of a shared authorial practice that must be examined in both synchronic and diachronic terms before an encompassing concept of postmodern gothic may be enunciated. It is to that task we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO
YET ANOTHER TURN OF THE SCREW: ADELE GRIFFIN'S *TIGHTER*

In this chapter we will explore Adele Griffin's novel *Tighter* in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Henry James's ghost story *The Turn of the Screw*, a novella considered by David Punter (1996b, p. 47) "a decisive moment in the history of the Gothic and of the ghost story". Although it may be risky to sort out the formal, pragmatic and ideological elements of parody, given how the three dimensions interact in order to authorize the strategy of repeating with critical distance, we will segment the discussion in three distinct subsections, each focusing on one set of aspects of the novel (it should be noted, however, that subsections may eventually crisscross as certain narrative problems are raised and discussed). In subsection one, "Depths, depths!", we will focus on a number of diegetic and conventional similarities and distinctions between the parodic and the parodied texts, so that we may reflect on how *Tighter* parodically plays with the gothic genre and its conventions. In subsection two, "This was no trick of the eye", we will zoom in on the pragmatic range of intent displayed in the parodic novel, in order to discuss how it both reenacts and transgresses a number of stylistic strategies that contribute to creating effects of ambiguity in *The Turn of the Screw*. In subsection three, "In my family, we just call it mopey", we will observe how parody, an introverted metafictional genre, is the means by which Griffin manages to unearth concealed ideological preconceptions from her source material and turn them into the main story of her own novel. By the end of the chapter, it will have become clear that the parodic elements of *Tighter* authorize its characterization as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms suggested in our thesis.

2.1 "Depths, depths!"

Before we can map out with clarity any given number of similarities and differences between *Tighter* and *The Turn of the Screw*, it will be imperative to provide a synopsis of both novels, beginning with Henry James's historically anterior ghost story.

The Turn of the Screw is a short novella that can be easily summarized in its central events. The novella opens with a group of characters telling ghost stories by the fireplace on a Christmas Eve. One of the characters, simply referred to as Douglas, claims to be in possession of a manuscript that registers the disturbing affair of a ghostly visitation befallen the heads of two innocent children. The manuscript is authored by an unnamed former

governess, hired by a mysterious gentleman who has been left in charge of his nephew and niece, Miles and Flora, after the children's parents died in India of unexplained causes. The governess, who is a countryside parson's daughter and feels extremely anxious that she won't be up to par with what is presently expected of her, is fascinated by her employer's seductive manners, though he himself is rather curt: before she is dispatched to Bly, the rural estate where Miles and Flora have been placed for protection, the gentleman determines that she should never so much as bother him with anything relating to the education of the children. Upon arriving at the premises, the governess is met by Mrs. Grose, an uneducated but benevolent housekeeper, and soon takes charge of her wards, whom she describes in terms of the utmost innocence, beauty and intelligence. Yet, upon receiving a letter from Miles's boarding school in which the headmaster discloses the youth's permanent expulsion for reasons that are never addressed, she begins to suspect that the boy must have exerted a corrupting influence upon his fellow classmates to deserve such harsh punishment. Soon enough, she begins to see ghosts on the property. The visitants from the other side, a man and a woman, are identified by Mrs. Grose, from the description provided by the governess, as the disincarnated spirits of Peter Quint, the master's former valet, a brutish and uncouth man of irregular habits who had recently passed from a violent accident, and Miss Jessel, the former governess, who had had an infamous sexual affair with Quint and died shortly after him of mysterious causes (it is implied that she may have gotten pregnant and soon left Bly to commit suicide). The governess promptly connects Miles's strange banishment from school to the supernatural occurrences she has experienced, and swiftly concludes that the ghosts, who must have exerted an unnatural influence on the siblings while serving at Bly, have now returned from the abode of the damned to possess the children's souls and seduce them into sharing their infernal pangs. She takes upon herself the mission of cleansing Bly from the unwelcome presence of the specters, and shielding the youths from the nefarious influence of the infamous couple; but by and by she begins to interpret the children's independence, their intellectual superiority and occasional misbehavior, as telltale signs that they already consort in secrecy with the evil visitors. Her mission thus turns into a fight with the ghosts over the souls of the children: she causes an emotional breakdown in Flora after confronting her over the presence of Miss Jessel, of which the girl claims to have no knowledge, and later instructs an increasingly distraught Mrs. Grose to leave Bly with Flora so that she (the governess) might stay alone with Miles and extract from him a confession of the evil deed. Once alone with the boy, she presses him to provide an explanation for his dismissal from school, which he finally does: he had said "things" to boys that he liked, "things" such as outraged the

masters. Upon hearing Miles's queer but perfectly reasonable explanation, the governess sees the ghost of Peter Quint one last time, and forces the boy to confront him to save his own soul from damnation. Perhaps finally free from the evil influence of the queer valet, perhaps terror-stricken by the governess's madness, Miles succumbs to her arms — dead.

The overall development of *The Turn of the Screw* is replicated in *Tighter*, albeit with a number of noteworthy differences. The novel is the first-person account of 17-year-old Jamie Atkinson, a troubled teenager and drug addict who is hired by Miles McRae to spend a summer as an *au pair* at his manor, Skylark, on the island of Little Bly, where she is supposed to look after his daughter, Isa. Jamie takes on the job as an opportunity to leave behind recent trauma she has undergone: she has been seduced and dumped by her adult Chemistry teacher, Sean Ryan, and has of lately begun to see the ghosts of her suicidal family members, Uncle Jim and Cousin Hank. Upon arriving at Skylark, Jamie sees the ghosts of a teenage couple jump into the rough seas below a lighthouse on the premises. Shocked by a vision that may have been the side effect of the many pills she usually takes, she soon meets Isa, who naively informs her that Jessie, Jamie's predecessor in the position, had died the previous summer under mysterious circumstances. She is also surprised by the sudden return home of Milo, Isa's older brother, who has been expelled from summer camp for reasons that are never made clear. In the weeks following the ghostly encounter by the lighthouse, Jamie continues to see the ghosts of the couple, but mostly that of Peter Quint, a local boy who used to have secret encounters with Jessie at Skylark and now makes himself known by material evidence of sabotage scattered all over the manor: engravings on the surfaces of ancient furniture, damages to expensive artworks, corpses of dead squirrels, cigarette burns, little fires on every hearth. By and little, Jamie uncovers the story of Peter and Jessie's relationship: Jessie had been the daughter of a well-off family who used to summer on Little Bly yearly, and Peter a local boy from a working-class family; their romantic involvement had been considered scandalous by Little Bly standards, and Jessie used to have flings with other boys. They had died from a helicopter crash against the lighthouse at Skylark that may or may not have been caused by Peter, and now Jamie believes his spirit is back with a vengeance against the posh "summer people" who had often humiliated him. In the meantime, Jamie continues to take care of Isa, and befriends a number of locals and summer people, including Sebastian, whom she begins to date. Both Sebastian and Jamie's other new friends admonish her to let the story of Quint and Jessie be, but the *au pair*'s growing obsession leads her to visit Peter's family in search of explanations, and perhaps closure. In the novel's final act, Jamie is confronted by Sebastian with the fact that Milo does not exist: he is a creation of Isa's imagination, a

figment of the child's psyche picked up on by the *au pair* in her need to handle her own traumatic past. Back at the lighthouse, Jamie sees the ghosts jump into the sea once more, only to realize what she had previously seen was not a vision of ghosts, but a premonition of her own suicide. After jumping into the ocean, Jamie is rescued from Little Bly and diagnosed with schizophrenia; yet mysteries about Peter Quint's ghost persist.

The synopsis presented above circumscribes *Tighter* as an example of what is usually named a "modernized version"[5], a "modern retelling"[6], or a "contemporary reboot"[7] of a traditional or canonical text. It would be more fitting to describe Griffin's ghost story, following Linda Hutcheon's terms, as a postmodern parodic trans-contextualization of James's prior ghost story, one in which the narrative conventions, characters, conflicts, plot twists and overall development of the parodied text are replayed in a contemporary context. The "modernization" of the canonical text with recourse to strategies of parody suggests that the aesthetic and narrative merits of James's tale continue to be of great importance to the newcomer author, but also that the canon is an institution whose centripetal force must be challenged, revised and come to terms with for the exclusions it operates and the gaps it leaves unaddressed. That conflicting stance on a source material that is both hailed as a model of narrative originality and excellence, and a force that deserves transgression, is characteristic of the paradoxical nature of the postmodern parody, hence of the postmodern gothic.

The novel's title is highly ambiguous: in the course of the narrative, the word "tighter" evokes the pull of the supernatural — "They [the ghosts] come to you when they sense your need. And all they want is to pull you in tighter." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 81) — and the seduction of suicide — "*Jump*. *Done*. *Peace*. The moment lured me, held me tight and tighter, transfixed me and then abruptly let me go." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 72). In many respects, in Griffin's novel, the two pulls are one and the same; from beginning to end, ghostly visitations will signal to Jamie the sense of what she believes to be her biggest need: to give herself over to the hands of the Grim Reaper and finally let go of the pain of depression and abuse. Moreover, the comparative of superiority suggests that the difference between parodic and parodied text may be one of intensity, and perhaps daring — of the willingness of the later writer to lift the veil on the "depths, depths!" of taboo and monstrosity that the former one only hints at. Griffin's novel could thus be described as a "tighter turn" of the screw, one that

[5] Available at: https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-375-86645-6. Access: 01/02/2021.
[6] Available at: https://adelegriffin.com/tighter. Access: 01/02/2021.
[7] Available at: https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/adele-griffin/tighter/. Access: 01/02/2021.

forces the source material into taking unexpected turns while bringing to the fore problems that play a peripheral — though arguably determining — role in the development of James's plot. Those issues, as we will see in detail in subsection three, have to do with the taboos of suicide and child abuse, as well as Victorian middle-class ideological values and anxieties placed on the family and the child. It is part of the postmodern gothic's agenda — in particular when the postmodern gothic is shaped as a "contemporary reboot" of a canonical text —, to hold such values to scrutiny and examine the extent to which they continually provide culture with sources of anxiety and fear.

The epigraph of Griffin's postmodern gothic novel is taken from *The Turn of the Screw*: "No, no — there are depths, depths! The more I go over it, the more I see in it, and the more I see in it, the more I fear. I don't know what I don't see — what I don't fear!" (JAMES, 1991, p. 30). In the postmodern gothic as well as elsewhere, epigraphs and other paratextual paraphernalia (such as the "Acknowledgements" section that we will approach later) constitute textualized evidence of the authorial intent to parody. As inscriptions of the text of the past in that of the present, epigraphs often dramatize the mutual dependency of both parodied and parodic texts in establishing parameters of reading and interpretation that the reader must acknowledge and pursue. The quote in question is taken from a moment of frantic misery on the part of the governess: after seeing the ghost of Miss Jessel for the first time, she has just persuaded herself that the children must be perfectly aware of the supernatural shenanigans taking place at Bly. The repetition of the words "the more… the more" communicates both the intensity of the governess's terror and her growing certainty of the mischievousness of the haunted children; yet its association with the actions of going over and seeing leading to fear also anticipates how her growing obsession will quickly result in blindness and tragedy. For all that, the epigraph foregrounds the governess's paranoia as one of the organizing motifs of *Tighter*, a novel in which obsession is a motivating psychological force: "If I could unlock the secret of Peter, maybe then I'd have the key that might release us both from our obsession" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 163), Jamie hopefully declares, thus uniting herself with Peter in their joint habit of going to extremes: if Peter is obsessed with Jessie and Skylark, to the point where he is willing to sacrifice both in an act of murder/suicide, so is Jamie with figuring out the extent of Peter's power and the obscure inheritance of his unwelcome presence. In both cases, obsession will result in tragedy.

In *Tighter*, the typical gothic conventions of the frame narrative and the found manuscript are skipped so that the only account provided is Jamie's. That sort of direct approach both evades the many justifications Douglas supplies for the unnamed governess in

The Turn of the Screw and allows us to read Jamie's account with fewer reservations, as if we were confidantes of hers. That is largely the reason why we are enthused for so long in Jamie's "game of Milo", to use Connie's words: it is only in hindsight, after a more thorough second reading, that we are able to realize Milo is not real, but a projection of Jamie's insecurities and her need of companionship. However, as Punter explains (1996a, p. 137) strategies such as the frame narrative and the found manuscript integrate the gothic as verification techniques, by which means an author of fantasy fiction provides internal verification for the highly improbable occurrences — often pivoting on the supernatural — they are about to report. In *Tighter*, the absence of the frame narrative is partially justifiable in terms of the novel's final scientific explanation for the ghosts Jamie sees: the protagonist is eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia, a psychosocial disease of the neurological system whose symptoms include visual and auditory delusions and the inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy, resulting in paranoia. In that respect, Griffin's novel might be termed an example of the explained supernatural, whereas in James's novella the supernatural elements remain unjustified by any other means than those presented by the governess herself.

Nevertheless, the parodic novel relies on the exploration of other gothic conventions, in particular of the *locus horribilis* and the ghostly irruption of the past, in order to both generate and quell effects of terror. Skylark, the summer mansion allegedly haunted by the ghosts of Peter Quint and Jessie, is thus described by Jamie upon her arrival on the island of Little Bly:

> Skylark was astonishing. Mom had mapped it online, and then estimated its property worth based on other prime oceanfront real estate, but I still wasn't prepared for its beauty, its fanciful gables and turrets, its crisp white latticework and trellises of climbing roses. The flat emerald sail of lawn complemented the pressed pearl-gray sheet of ocean behind it. Everything ironed smooth to suit the view.
> "Holy crap." The words fell out before I could stop them, and shamed me. I didn't want Connie to think I was some loser townie who'd never seen a mansion. But I hadn't, not one like this, and I actively repressed speaking my next thought — *and this is just their friggin' summer house!*
> Connie said nothing, but I sensed she enjoyed my awe. She seemed to be driving extra slow, allowing me time to marinate in Skylark's splendor versus my comparative irrelevance. I braced myself as the tires ground hard against the bleached crushed-shell drive, then strained against gravity as we shifted gears and rumbled up.
> I never stopped looking at the house. It reminded me of a ship. A ship that had been tossed clean from the sea by some monster storm to survive intact on the cliff above.
> From a third-floor window, I saw the shadow of someone observing us drive in, but once the car stopped, the curtain twitched and the figure moved off.

> It’s never a good feeling, that prickle of being watched. Who was it? I frowned up. Then yawned, fake and on purpose — as if to ensure that whoever was looking down on me didn’t think that I cared. [...]
> Colors deepened as we ascended. At the landing, the stained-glass window of Noah gathering animals into his ark filtered hues of orange, cherry and lemon into a pattern of light over the carpet runner. Down wide corridors hung with family portraits, I noticed the ancestral repeat of teardrop nose and gingery hair. Not beautiful, but dramatic features that carried all the way around to the full-length painting at the end of the hall. Where two redheaded boys and their raven-haired but drop-nosed sister, swathed in dark velvet and white lace, were grouped around a chunky Saint Bernard.
> Here, we stopped. Gawking at the children’s sweet faces, I was acutely self-conscious of my blundering intrusion into this cloistered world of genteel innocence. I didn’t belong here. I should go while I could. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 12-14).

Skylark is portrayed as a typically gothic medieval castle, surrounded as it is by gables, turrets, latticework, trellises — and unforthcoming shadows that watch from behind curtains. That corny spatial description signals for the reader authorial awareness of the iconographic conventions of gothic fiction, one that is true to form to the self-consciousness of metafictional narratives: it is, in other words, another textualized index of the parodic playfulness of the text. Jamie’s extreme reaction of astonishment at the sublime proportions of the place is not necessarily incongruent with the extremity of its beauty and size; still, as she braces herself to go uphill, the enormity of the castle both oppresses and engulfs her, thus suggesting forebodings of her unpleasant experience of self-obliteration to come. The manor thus magnifies her sense of irrelevance, a sense that she already carries from home as a result of her depression and a symptom of her schizophrenic state; besides, her concern with how people might perceive her — Connie, the tacky shadow by the window — bespeaks her lack of self-confidence and her paradoxical need of approval even from those she apparently despises. Her sense of insignificance and awkwardness is reinforced by her ambiguous choice of words to describe a shadow who is “looking down” on her: while the shadow is clearly placed in a position that allows for a downward view, we are conversely able to observe, with regard to its appearance, how a depressed Jamie frequently expects to be treated with contempt. Notably, the shadow observing Jamie’s arrival from upwards is reminiscent of the governess’s first ghostly encounter in *The Turn of the Screw*: in that novella, Peter Quint prowls the rooftop of a turret, from whence he keeps a sharp glance over the unprotected preceptress that lies frozen underneath. Here, however, the shadow is more sensed than seen, though it immediately triggers Jamie’s paranoia, thus suggesting that she may be unstable to venture sensible judgements of the reality surrounding her.

The detail of the hallways whose walls are filled with creepy family portraits is another conventional trait that highlights Jamie's inadequacy; yet, if most of her anxieties are courtesy of her psychological deterioration, her staring at the portraits of the McRaes intimates a more tenuous, because external, source of anxiety. Skylark's world is one of *genteel* innocence, of the affluence and sumptuosity of a social class to which Jamie does not belong, but merely intrudes. Connie, who acts weirdly proprietorial (Skylark, we will learn later, has been built by her great-grandfather, and her family has worked for the McRaes for generations), is the harbinger of the class codes operating on Little Bly: she self-describes as a "local" while distinguishing between the people on the island as "locals" — those born on Little Bly but of lower social standing, usually working for the richer families of "summer people" —, "lifers" — those likes of Miles McRae who have spent money and summers on Little Bly for eons, but who are looked down upon by those "pure-breed Blyers" who keep the island going — and "tourists" — poor Jamie herself, a complete outsider who feels utterly alienated from the obscurity of Little Bly's "genteel innocence" and its bizarre class dynamics. Jamie, who already feels marginalized by the awkwardness of her position, on top of being extremely concerned with how she is perceived by others, has yet that source of anxiety to cope with.

Therefore, *Tighter* low-key works out a subtext of class conflict that, being germane to *The Turn of the Screw*, pivots, in both novels, on the character of Peter Quint. In Henry James's gothic novella, the relationship between Miss Jessel and Peter Quint is perceived as scandalous not only on the basis of its promiscuity, but also on that of class dissimilarity: "She was a lady", Mrs. Grose pronounces, "and he so dreadfully below." (JAMES, 1991, p. 32). According to scholar Sean Purchase (2006, p. 23), at the time *The Turn of the Screw* was written — the end of the Victorian Era (1837-1901) in England — any movement across classes, in particular romantic or sexual involvement, was considered extremely unsettling; thus the relationship between Miss Jessel, a governess[8], and Peter Quint, an uneducated valet of rude habits and probably lower social origin, would have been seen as an anomaly, a social aberration. Even Mrs. Grose, an uneducated lower-class woman herself, admits to the impropriety, while the unnamed governess, whose social preconceptions seem to be many, is

[8] Studies such as Maria Conceição Monteiro's *Sombra Errante* (2000) explore in depth the problematic social standing of the governess in the Victorian Era: usually a well-born and well-bred lady whose family's poverty had forced her to take on a position as preceptress, one of the few relatively respectable paid jobs available to women in the nineteenth century, the governess occupied a liminal position in the social hierarchy of the household. Her education and fine habits were far from enough to ensure that she would be treated as part of the family, but being an educated woman from a higher social background, whose job was to teach the children and help shape their characters and habits into the expectations of gentlemanhood or ladyhood, she was considered to be above the servants of the household.

quick to declare Miss Jessel is a "horror of horrors" (JAMES, 1991, p. 31). In *Tighter*, however, the problem gains a contemporary version that is specific to the class distinctions operating on Little Bly: Peter is a working-class local while Jessie comes from a family of opulent lifers who disapprove of their relationship.

From the chit-chat that runs on the island, Jamie concludes that Peter was none too pleased about his lower social standing and the cold shoulder he was given by the wealthy lifers. As Isa reveals to her, "Peter wasn't happy. He always said he'd make his mark one day. He wanted everyone to know he was just as smart — even smarter — than any of the summer people." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 54). After Peter and Jessie die from a plane crash by the Skylark shores, it is suggested that Peter — who was piloting Jessie's father's private jet — may have crashed the aircraft on purpose, perhaps as a grandiose flip-off to Little Blyers and lifers alike. Thus, if the ghosts of the deceased teenagers have survived the destruction of their bodies and returned from the plane wreckage to haunt Skylark, their motivations — Peter's in particular — are of a different order than those of the "original" Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. In the *au pair*'s understanding, if Peter has come back as an angry presence to haunt Skylark, it is not Isa he wishes to secure — but Skylark itself, Little Bly's most evident symbol of the prosperity of the "summer people" that he both desired and despised. The inference gradually presents itself to Jamie as she confronts an adamant Connie about the numerous "scars" Peter has left on Skylark:

> "Like the cigarette burns. [...] And the missing tiles in Isa's fireplace. I know you saw the *J* that he knifed into the wood of that lounge chair upstairs. At first I'd thought it was Jessie, but that's not her style at all. She was outgoing, a free spirit. He was different, more withdrawn, but he was angry, too — and he's done a lot of damage around here. That's why you never go up to the third floor, right? Because you take good care of this house, Connie. You see everything. Except for some reason you've decided not to see the pinholes in that portrait of the three kids." [...] You let Peter hang out here all last summer. Because he was a local, and the locals always watch each other's backs. But you didn't know the damage he was doing, or you'd never have let him. You're probably still kind of upset about it, since it all happened on your watch, am I right?" [...]
> "I go over it in my head, over and over, but I jutht don't know why he did it. Like the way thome people pull a dog'th tail or pinch a baby. Peter liked to pick at Thkylark. I didn't thee the half of it until he wath gone. Even now. Theemth like I'm alwayth dithcovering thomething new."
> "Connie" — I spoke carefully — "that's because he's still doing it." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 87-88)[9].

[9] Connie has a lisp, which is signaled in the text by the replacement of "s" with "th".

According to Jamie's hypothesis, it is Skylark Peter targeted in life, and it is the manor he now targets in death. The damage done to the property — cigarette burns on the walls, floor tiles grossly removed, and even a *J* carved out on the wood of a chaise-longue formerly belonging to Marie Antoinette! — signals Peter's derision of the material signs of upper-class consumption that have proven him inferior to Jessie in the eyes of the summer people, and thus undeserving of her love. To Jamie, such signs now add up to renewed ones: fresh ashes in a fireplace, the stinking cadaver of a squirrel, pinholes in one of the family portraits on the hallway walls. Some of these mysterious occurrences will be explained later as being caused by Jamie herself in the somnambulistic state she is left by her several psychotic breaks, but some — such as the pinholes on the eyes of the portrait — will remain a mystery until the end of the story. Considering that the ghost of Peter Quint might have been the only actual supernatural element of the narrative, as we will see shortly, the fact that at least some of the mystery should remain unexplained is an important index of Adele Griffin's indebtedness to the purposeful imprecision of her source material.

As Griffin attempts to provide a less elusive backstory to Peter Quint and Jessie's relationship, other gothic elements and storylines are introduced to the plot of *Tighter*. Peter is often described as "a dark Romeo, the reckless romantic" for whom there could be no way out of family morals and class imperatives hindering love but "violence, passion, death" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 143). It is also suggested that Jessie, who is often described as a "free spirit" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 16; 87; 154), considered her involvement with Peter in less romantic and more carefree terms. Looking into Peter's final steps before the plane crash, Jamie figures out that he had paid a final visit to his mother, Katherine Quint, who, having formerly been an absent parent to Peter, is now a patient at a mental illness facility outside the island. Jamie promptly manages to pay a visit to Mrs. Quint, with hopes that the mother may be able to shed light on the reason behind Peter's reckless final act, and perhaps finally point out a way to lay the modern Romeo's spirit to rest. In doing so, Jamie is also in pursuit of her own peace of mind: "I need to be released from this burden, this weight that Peter's presence has put on me", she tells Mrs. Quint. "This history, Peter and Jessie, everything that happened last summer — I inherited it, in a way" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 179). Jamie carries the burden of Peter's and Jessie's deaths much like she does that of her suicidal family members, Uncle Jim and Hank: she is burdened by the suicides of others and what they may supernaturally presage about her own upcoming fate. Of Peter's final visit, Mrs. Quint has the following to report:

> He came for the ring to give her. The one his father'd given me, and his father him. I couldn't. Not at the time. I just couldn't. A mother knows. [...] When her child isn't loved enough." Katherine's gaze had found her lap and finally settled there. "I didn't give it to him, and I suppose I regret that now. I told him things I wish I hadn't. It was his mistake to make. It was his ring, no use for me anymore." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 179-180).

Peter wanted the family's engagement ring — perhaps the only valuable heirloom his family of working-class locals had ever kept hold of, generation after generation — to give Jessie. His mother — who herself had eloped leaving behind her son and husband — refused to give him his due, thus proving to Peter that locals and lifers could be similarly hypocritical when it came to money. Isa, who was a confidante of Peter, thus reports to Jamie the final turn of the screw at the aftermath of Peter's visit to his mother:

> "He was really angry at his mom," she blurted, "for saying Jess was spoiled and silly and not worth the family engagement ring." "He told you that?" She nodded. "He was slamming things around. He said it was his ring. His ring for Jessie. And that's when I told him what I'd seen." "What, Isa? What had you seen?" It couldn't have been more than five seconds, but time made no sense to me; the moment before her confession was nearly unendurable for us both. "Jessie and Aidan," she whispered. "I saw them from the lighthouse. She'd taken Aidan up to the third floor. All I meant to do was explain that maybe Jess didn't want that ring, either. Not yet, anyhow. But then, what he did … after I told him. What he did …"
> "What?" I reached out and touched her shoulder. "What did he do, Isa?" [...]
> "All Jess wanted him to know was that she wasn't ready," she whispered. "She was always saying she wasn't ready. That Pete was too clingy. She even told me she wouldn't be mad if I let it slip out that Aidan was hanging around. But then, when I did let it slip out, Pete … he ended up killing them both. He did, Jamie, didn't he?" And even when I couldn't answer, she kept asking this question, as the sun dropped away and cast us in cooling shadows. *He did, didn't he, Jamie? Didn't he?* (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 184; 186).

Peter had been doubly hurt in the hours leading up to the crash: by his mother, whose actions further enhanced the precariousness of his social standing, and by Jessie, his loved one, whose immaturity translated into betrayal. The plane crash, symbolically carried out against the sumptuosity of Skylark, ensues. Hurt as he may have been, the responsibility of his decision and the monstrosity of his acts are only his to account for; nonetheless, Isa feels guilty as charged, as if she had directly caused the death of both Peter and Jessie. In the postmodern parodic revision of Henry James's gothic novella, if the ghosts of Peter Quint and Jessie haunt the child in any way, it is not by appearing to her and dragging her to hell, but rather by means of the guilt she has been left to cope with. All in all, it is not the souls of the

dead who may not be at rest on Little Bly, but mostly those of the living — Jamie, Connie, and Isa — who are left to figure out the motivations behind monstrous acts of sacrificial violence. And as such, by the conclusion of *Tighter*, another parodic ironic inversion has finally been structured: Peter Quint and Miss Jessel's libertine sexual affair by Victorian standards is reimagined as a dark romantic story of forbidden love, base betrayal, extreme pain, and sacrificial death. A hackneyed one, arguably, but again one that displays its author's understanding and exploration of conventions of gothic fiction, including some that may be thoroughly absent from her source material.

It is this sort of extensive parodic engagement with a canonical gothic text that characterizes the postmodern gothic. When approaching a novel such as *Tighter*, the reader is constantly comparing and contrasting it with the parodied source material from which it both derives and differentiates. In the postmodern gothic, the diegetic and conventional elements of the genre, such as the *locus horribilis* haunted by supernatural visitations and acts of monstrous violence, are both installed and subverted, used and abused or repeated with difference from the particular configuration they are given in the targeted novel. It is precisely the play of similarity and difference that is dramatized by the postmodern parody, a bitextual synthesis or double-voiced discourse, in Hutcheon's words, that keeps both parodic and parodied text in a constant state of formal, thematic and ideological tension.

As the above roster of a number of formal, thematic and diegetic differences between *Tighter* and *The Turn of the Screw* may have proved, this manner of parody is not intended as a mockery of the parodied material; on the contrary, its engagement is often performed in order for the more serious concerns of both novels to be examined against each other. One relevant point of contention in both novels under consideration here is arguably the tricky position of uncertainty in which the governess/*au pair* is placed: is she actually seeing ghosts, or is she projecting her own lunatic fantasies, social preconceptions and repressed sexual desires onto ghostly figments of her imagination (BROMWICH, 2011, p. 163; PUNTER, 1996b, p. 50)? In James's text, the irresolution of the matter comes as a result of several ambiguities, suppressions, and innuendos, the complexities of which have contributed to turning it into one of the most important modern texts for an understanding of the limits of interpretation and the act of reading, according to Bromwich (2011, p. 163-164). In its parodic revision of the stylistic magnitude of the canonical text, *Tighter* is configured as a respectful paradoxical attempt at *both* resorting to ambiguity and indetermination in exploring the *au pair*'s predicament *and* letting her off the hook by providing an explanation for the

supernatural events experienced in the course of the narrative. To that side of the problem we turn with the following section.

2.2 “This was no trick of the eye”

As we have seen in Chapter One, Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodern parodic texts often display a wide range of *ethe* that evade the limitations of mockery to include contestation and homage. In Adele Griffin’s *Tighter*, the issue of parodic intent is most clearly brought up in the “Acknowledgements” paratextual section that closes the book: among the many individuals to whose contributions she expresses her gratitude, the author makes sure to mention “[her] absolute debt to the Master, Henry James, for giving us the greatest ghost story ever written” (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 217). James’s narrative — its ambiguities, innuendos, half-sentences, and so on — is thus taken as a masterful model of literary craft to be learnt from, which renders *Tighter* a respectful parody of *The Turn of the Screw*, in Hutcheon’s terms. However, as Griffin (2011, p. 217) conversely claims, “like so many before [her], [she] has deeply enjoyed [her] turn”: her respectful parody is also one that tries to assert itself as a separate, different, turn on James’s previous text and its disorienting sequence of implications that are never clarified. The challenges this duplicitous intention creates for the activity of reading, as well as the solutions invented by the postmodern writer, revolve both around the ambiguity of James’s style and that which may be the ultimate irresolute paradox of his ghost story: how to declare the governess mad when she had been so precise in her description of Peter Quint? In the following observations, we will attempt to give an overview of the implications these questions pose to the issue of parodic playfulness in *Tighter*.

Reading *The Turn of the Screw* may be a disorienting exercise in determining the meaning underlying innuendos, half-sentences, interruptions, half-baked suggestions, ambiguous word choices, and the imprecision of a first-person point of view. According to Punter (1996b, p. 49), the combination of those factors adds up to the emphasized unreliability of the governess’s memory to manipulate the reader into a situation of chronic doubt. One of the reasons why the ghosts are so disturbing is precisely that they may not be there at all, being in fact mere figments of the governess’s imagination, projections of her fears, preconceptions, and repressed desires. Whatever wickedness the ghosts may metaphorize is thus only ever suggested by the ambiguities of the text. How else to account for the following interaction between the governess and Mrs. Grose, just to quote one?:

> And you tell me they [Quint and Miles] were 'great friends'?"
> "Oh, it wasn't him!" Mrs. Grose with emphasis declared. "It was Quint's own fancy. To play with him, I mean — to spoil him." She paused a moment; then she added: "Quint was much too free."
> This gave me, straight from my vision of his face — *such* a face! — a sudden sickness of disgust. "Too free with *my* boy?"
> "Too free with everyone!"
> I forbore, for the moment, to analyse this description further than by the reflection that a part of it applied to several of the members of the household, of the half-dozen maids and men who were still of our small colony. But there was everything, for our apprehension, in the lucky fact that no discomfortable legend, no perturbation of scullions, had ever, within anyone's memory, attached to the kind old place. It had neither bad name nor ill fame, and Mrs. Grose, most apparently, only desired to cling to me and to quake in silence. I even put her, the very last thing of all, to the test. It was when, at midnight, she had her hand on the schoolroom door to take leave. "I have it from you then — for it's of great importance — that he was definitely and admittedly *bad*?"
> "Oh, not admittedly. *I* knew it — but the master didn't." (JAMES, 1991, p. 25-26).

The governess has just seen the ghost of Quint for the second time, outside the dining room window, and has managed to get Mrs. Grose to spill the beans on his previous indiscretions, in particular those relating him to the children. The nature of such indiscretions, however, remains to be determined through the careful work of the reader in reconstructing ambiguous meaning. We learn that Quint wanted to "spoil" — most readily, to pamper — Miles, and "play with" him — that is, perhaps, amuse himself at the expense of the boy; as such, he might have crossed a line of propriety separating a valet from a young gentleman to be, and this seems to be Mrs. Grose's sole reason for concern somewhere else in the narrative. Yet, in light of the governess's preconceived suspicions of the depravity of the lower classes, on top of Mrs. Grose's unhelpful intimations of Quint's habitual philandering, those verbs in quotes take on darker undertones: Quint might have tried to "play" with the boy sexually, thus consequently "spoiling" his purity, tarnishing the innocence the governess instinctively attributes to the child. On the other hand, if the repetition of the words "too free" to describe Quint's inappropriate behavior might suggest sexual indiscretion, the fact that he was "much too free with everyone" might imply that Miles was not a particular target of his. It is, after all, the governess and only she who consistently suggests that Quint has come back to continue "playing with" the boy, and even she is aware of the fact that, in being much too free, with the boy and everyone else, he was probably none too different than several other members of the household. Finally, upon asking Mrs. Grose whether Quint was truly "bad", it is possible to observe that the governess attributes a highly moralized tone to the adjective:

what she wishes to determine is whether Quint had been a corrupting influence on Miles, a concern that echoes her suspicions of the corrupting influence the boy may have had on his schoolmates, whence his unexplained expulsion. The consequence is somewhat implicit: if Miles had become a corrupting influence himself, it was due to his being corrupted in advance by Quint. Yet no conclusion is ever achieved by the reader: it is impossible, after reading this ineffable passage, to unequivocally affirm anything about the nature of Peter Quint's many suggested transgressions, or the actual character of his involvement with Miles.

Unlike *The Turn of the Screw*, in Adele Griffin's novel most of the ghosts are explained away by perfectly rational reasons when the *au pair* is diagnosed with schizophrenia; yet the need to retain suspense and mystery still demands the creation of ambiguity. As a result, the rational explanation is actualized, or else textualized in the denotative and overtly factual style of Griffin's narrative, while she conversely activates suspense and creates disorientation with recourse to contradiction. That strategy is made clear from Jamie's first supernatural experience at Skylark, when she searches for Isa by the lighthouse:

> And as it turned out, once I'd scaled the hill, I found a wooden walk secured on its ocean side by a rail. I took it and became instantly engrossed with watching my feet; my pedicure was so chipped it showed more toenail than polish. So when I finally did look up, I stopped cold, my heart jumping in surprise.
> Either I was going deaf, or the kids hadn't made a sound.
> There were two of them, standing a dozen yards ahead where the rail ended, at the edge of a jut of overhang. I shaded my eyes. One painkiller's side effect was occasionally a fuzzy double image, but this was no trick of the eye.
> Two same-sized girls in shorts and T-shirts. Or maybe a girl and a skinny, shortish guy?
> The longer I looked, the more I was sure, yes, definitely a guy, but not so shrimpy as the girl was tall. And they were sharing a private moment. There was a leaning-in-ness and face-to-face-ness about them. They must not have seen me yet, either, and so I started self-consciously clearing my throat — though neither of them reacted. Maybe they were neighbors — part of the "kick-back bunch" of Little Blyers that Miles McRae talked about. If I could make a couple of friends right from day one, then I wouldn't have to
> "Jamie!"
> At the sound of my name, I snapped around.
> She was a flit of white high above, her arms making broad arcs, as if she needed rescuing. Standing in front of the lighthouse, she seemed as matched to it as a Dutch girl guarding her windmill. I signaled back as I swerved off the walk and broke into a jog to meet her, glancing back over my shoulder at the couple.
> Only they weren't there, and in my next breath, the late afternoon sun had burned through the haze to shine harsh in my eyes. I spun around, confused — *whoa whoa wait wait*, where had they gone? Had they climbed down, or

> dived off that rock? No way, it was so high. But I had to know, and I veered in the opposite direction, running to look over the edge of the cliff. I hadn't been too aerobic since my injury, and by the time I reached the place where they'd been, I could feel the burn in my lungs and gently used muscles. Nothing. Nothing below but the phlegm of foam breaking over the peaks of rock. [...] I had seen them, hadn't I? I knew I had. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 21-22; 24).

This is the moment when Jamie first sees the ghosts she will later associate with Jessie and Peter. The scene moves forward in a fast-paced spinning of changing atmosphere: Jamie's comedic remark about her toenails immediately gives place to terror, then wishful thinking about the possibility of making friends, then doubt. Why she should be afraid of seeing unexpected visitors at the lighthouse is never explained, but we are left with the impression that it is the secretive behavior of the teenagers that seems out of place. Along with Jamie, we, readers, intrude upon a private moment that is supposedly not ours to behold; in fact, throughout the course of the whole scene, Jamie's conversational and conspiratorial tone invites us to share responsibility for trespassing alongside her into the realm of what she may or may not be seeing. Remarks such as the rhetorical question — "Or maybe a girl and a skinny, shortish guy?" — and tag question — "I had seen them, hadn't I?" — connote a friendly banter, a conversation with an implied reader or attentive listener who is supposed to be taking in her story in big slurps. They also insinuate that we may be able to freshen up her perspective for her, thus rendering us complicit in the act of reconstructing — co-authoring, if you will — the heterocosm of the scene. It is to us, readers, more so than to herself, that Jamie directs such questions. Parody, as one mode of metafiction, relies on such instances of linguistic awareness on the part of the reader to get its effects across; in this particular case, what it expects to get across is our complicity with the narrator and the ensuing effects of suspense and terror that are of interest to the gothic.

The fact that we have so far been made the sharers of Jamie's most secluded secrets, including the Sean Ryan situation and her occasional encounters at dawn with the ghosts of dead relatives, certainly contributes to our taking her side of the story and accepting as truth that she has just witnessed legitimate supernatural occurrences; yet by now we have also found out that she has been struggling with addiction, a problem that, per her own judgment, has often caused her to see things that may not be there. In the passage above, it is the actualized contradiction between Jamie's vouched sincerity and the inconsistencies in her speech that magnifies our doubts as to whether or not she has actually seen anyone else by the lighthouse. The inconclusiveness of *The Turn of the Screw* is still here, in a sense, but,

through the sieve of the parodic strategy of ironic inversion, it is more strongly predicated on Jamie's policy of full disclosure rather than on any blanks we readers are left to fill in, nor any linguistic aerobics we might be invited to overanalyze.

In Jamie's straightforward and highly denotative sentences — "One painkiller's side effect was occasionally a fuzzy double image, but this was no trick of the eye" — nothing is kept from the reader, nothing is half-baked. It is the fact that they *contradict* each other in the intelligence they impart, along with the perception that Jamie has nothing else to offer but the paradox itself, that triggers the suspense of the scene. Hence, even if the ambiguous *effect* of Henry James's narrative is repeated, his ambiguity of *style* is exchanged for a practice of oxymoronic phrasing which will often crop up in Griffin's novel. Moreover, the paradox of the phrasing is metaphorical of Jamie's mental disturbances: unable to distinguish between reality and hallucination, she surrenders to the fundamental instability introduced by the conjunction "but". By the end of the passage, her "I had seen them, hadn't I? I knew I had" — another succession of contradictory positions — sounds like an attempt at persuading us of the reality of her vision through the sheer force of her own confusion.

Jamie's initial relationship with Isa is soon redefined by the introduction of Milo, Isa's older brother who has just been tossed from summer camp. It is Isa who first alludes to the boy, but it is through the eyes of Jamie that the reader will be acquainted with his snarky and disturbing presence. By Isa's words, Milo is "sweet when he is not intense" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 24); to Jamie, he seems like "nothing *but* intensity" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 29-30). He is the ultimate rulebreaker, "the kid who bought the beer, the kid who broke the locks and knew the passwords, the kid who'd fooled around with older girls late night in the lodge during his last ski holiday" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 29); the sort of kid who often raises hell and gets in trouble for it. He is also the kid Jamie fears the most, the one who seems to read into her inner dramas — "Did he know my secret? [...] Could he tell I was the type of girl who'd be dumb enough to get semiseduced (and then fully rejected) by her barely-out-of-school-himself science teacher?" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 36) — and jab at her insecurities with his "uncanny ability to whittle [her] down to [her] weakest self" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 139). Yet he is also "a devil, a tease" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 49), who flirts with Jamie on purpose, often inviting comparisons with Sean Ryan and forcing himself between the *au pair* and her love interest, Sebastian. Milo is, in many ways, the parodic opposite of Henry James's Miles, himself all cuteness and politeness; in another indication of parodic playfulness or ironic inversion, he may be more suitably described as a younger version of James's Peter Quint, the handsome and devilish valet who corrupts children by day while sexually teasing unprotected *au pairs* by night. He

might have been what a possessed Miles would have acted like, and at the extremes of her paranoia Jamie truly considers whether Milo might have been possessed by the ghost of Peter Quint.

He is also a "phantom" — a figment of Jamie's imagination, a projection of her teenage anxieties and blooming sexuality. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the possibility that the "phantoms" might be projections of the governess's overheated imagination, of her preconceptions and repressed desires, is one of two mutually exclusive interpretations, the other being that the ghosts are indeed real in the metaphysical sense; however, while in James's novella both interpretations are kept in a state of tension by the unsolvable ambiguities of the text, in *Tighter* an important part of that ambiguity is eventually dispelled. By the time we have reached the novel's penultimate chapter, Jamie breaks down to the reader that she has picked up on the idea of Isa's phantom friend for want of actual human connection: Milo had become her own imaginary friend. He may not have been real, but he was "real enough", a "terrifyingly intimidating boy who spoke to all [her] own fears of what those Little Blyers were 'really' like" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 203), "a fight in the mirror, a tussle with [her] insecurities [...], a reproving smack across [her] own cheek when [her] emotions threatened to destabilize [her]." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 204).

Perhaps we have been engrossed with more pressing problems in Jamie's narrative, perhaps pushed by prior knowledge of James's novella towards determining whether it is *Peter and Jessie* who are not real; the fact, nonetheless, is we may have missed subtle indications scattered all over the text that Milo must be counted amongst the "phantoms" or "ghosts" of *Tighter*. Griffin's novel is full of its own tricks, and it is only after a second reading has been carried out that we are able to piece together the linguistic subtleties that have been deployed to deceive us into accepting Milo as a flesh-and-bone character. See for instance this apparently innocent interaction amongst Jamie and her newfound peers:

> "So, Jamie, tell me something." Emory, seated directly across, had been looking at me. Now she leaned closer in, pitching her elbows in my direction so we could speak more privately. "What's your take on Isa? I taught her tennis last year. Or tried to, anyway. She was pretty hopeless with the hand-eye coordination."
> "She's an excellent swimmer," I said, probably too defensive.
> "But she's an odd duck. She's got a major case of la-la land, don't you think?"
> "Well, she has a great imagination."
> "No doubt. Sometimes that girl could make me feel like I was the freak," said Emory, shaking back her hair and smiling as if this thought were so ridiculous it could hardly be imagined. "Just because I couldn't see the

> people in her world. It's lucky she's grown up here, around all of us who've known her since she was teeny."
> "My friend Maggie and I were goofy kids, too," I confessed. "In fact, Isa and Milo seem fairly normal, considering the circumstances."
> "Uh-oh." Emory's perfect eyebrows angled skeptically. "Milo's back?"
> I nodded. "He left camp early. It's no big deal. We hardly ever see him. Honestly, it's a good thing. It makes Isa happy to have her big brother again. Obnoxious as he can be."
> Emory primmed up her mouth as she shook her head. Not a Milo fan, either. "Yeah, sure, right. She used to try to make me play tennis with him. For me, Milo's always been a pest who's best left ignored. You're cool to handle it."
> "Not everyone would," said Aidan, his leg a sudden, intimate pressure against mine; it startled me. "But then again, you've got a lot of Jessie's light." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 104).

Upon first reading it, this is an innocent enough passage: although Isa's imagination and "the people in her world" are the ostensible topics of concern, there is no evident indication that Milo might be one of those imaginary people. Arguably, sentences such as "He left camp early. It's no big deal. We hardly ever see him" are too factual to imply Milo's phantasmagoria, while "Milo's always been a pest who's best left ignored" carry a peremptory judgment of character that would be out of place in considerations of an imaginary friend. It is only with the benefit of hindsight, after we have learned for sure that Milo is a symptom of Isa's (and Jamie's) all too apparent case of "la-la land", that the interaction acquires a second, more ambiguous meaning. It becomes apparent, for instance, that a question such as "Milo's back?" had different meanings for Emory and us readers: while she must have meant Isa was again having fantasies about Milo, we had yet to learn that particularly defining piece of information.

By the time Jamie has finally admitted to deceiving us into her "game of Milo", our realization that she has held back crucial knowledge might feel like a betrayal of sorts of our good faith in her. It also contributes to casting a shadow of doubt over similarly "factual" elements of her narrative — e.g., her schizophrenia diagnosis, her emotional and possibly sexual abuse at the hands of Sean Ryan —, so much so that Griffin's novel may arguably be said to end in ambiguity, suspense, and terror despite its ironic attempt to explain away its most crucial supernatural events. Yet, "deception" of that kind is hardly out of place in parody, given how parodic metafiction often relies on the actualization of linguistic awareness in order to achieve its ends of both repeating and transgressing its parodied material. One thing, however, remains undeniable: if in *The Turn of the Screw* it is the apparent lack of explanation of the reality of the ghosts that sustains the ambiguity of the text, in *Tighter* it is only after an explanation is finally provided that the text takes on an ambivalent meaning. In

both cases, the intended ambiguity is predicated on textual awareness and linguistic competence on the part of the reader, but it is the parodic text in specific that foregrounds its metafictional playfulness as a dominant means of readerly engagement with both the text of the present and the text of the past.

Nevertheless, according to David Bromwich (2011, p. 185), affirming that the ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* are real demands an addendum: their reality is conditioned by the character and situation of the governess, that is, they are only real to the extent where they are real effects of her psyche. To that scholar, the governess has displayed from the start a proclivity for hyperbolic judgements of relatively ordinary situations, while also being prone to rhapsodizing a heroic role for herself, hence the reality of the ghosts must be understood in terms of their existence as effects of her highly imaginative and possibly delusional mind. That would explain, among other things, the fact that the governess is the single medium through whom the ghosts manifest themselves, and also that she should be able to hypothesize so profoundly, and with such authority, about their evil intentions. What Bromwich's hypothesis fails to explain is why the governess should be able to produce a highly accurate description of Peter Quint's looks and demeanor if he were but a figment of her imagination.

The first time the governess sees Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*, he is standing above a rooftop on a tower at Bly; he is then singled out for the fact of "his wearing no hat" (JAMES, 1991, p. 16) — a physical sign of his disrespect of the Victorian dress codes for gentlemen, and consequently of other improper liberties of which he may be the harbinger. There remain doubts as to the governess's ability to clearly distinguish his traits from however afar on the grounds of Bly she stands from the rooftop, and she does admit to a "bewilderment of vision" (JAMES, 1991, p. 16) that might be interpreted as an obfuscation of one's sight when looking against the sun; yet she still clearly states that "the man who looked at [her] over the battlements was as definite as a picture in a frame" (JAMES, 1991, p. 16), to the point where she is able to recognize him for a complete stranger. The second time she sees Quint, however, he is standing outside the dining room window, looking in, and the governess is able to catch a clearer sight of him. Moments later, when describing her vision to Mrs. Grose, she is able to muster several details of his "extraordinary" figure:

> "He has no hat. [...] He has red hair, very red, close-curling, and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer whiskers that are as red as his hair. His eyebrows are, somehow, darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a good deal. His eyes are sharp, strange — awfully; but I only know clearly that they're rather small and very fixed. His mouth's wide, and his lips are thin, and except for his

> little whiskers he's quite clean-shaven. He gives me a sort of sense of looking like an actor."
> "An actor!" It was impossible to resemble one less, at least, than Mrs. Grose at that moment.
> "I've never seen one, but so I suppose them. He's tall, active, erect," I continued, "but never — no, never! — a gentleman." (JAMES, 1991, p. 23).

The passage is revealing of the governess's habit of judging others from general assumptions rather than from experience and thoughtful consideration: she, a reclusively brought up country parson's daughter, has never seen an actor in person, yet she judges the stranger for being one, on the basis of her preconceptions of what an actor might look like. All in all, her description of the extravagant and seducing male as an actor might be a poorly phrased attempt to account for what she perceives as his counterfeit manners, his feigning of gentlemanly habits; however, the governess is still able to physically describe her vision with such accuracy that Mrs. Grose immediately concludes that he must be Peter Quint, whom the governess has neither seen nor heard of before. Bromwich (2011, p 164) is correct in declaring that if we assume the ghosts to be mere hallucinations, a scene such as the one above remains unexplained and unexplainable in the established terms of the heated debate over the reality of the ghosts. That debate has arguably assumed a dominant either/or structure: either the governess is mentally stable and is thus seeing ghosts that have a metaphysical existence beyond her own psyche, or she is mentally unstable and the ghosts must be projections of her imagination. It is that either/or structure that *Tighter* strives to subvert.

In Adele Griffin's novel, the circumstances and identification of Peter Quint are as mysterious as those in Henry James's novella. From a window on the third floor, Jamie catches an unclouded sight of Peter's figure:

> A sound drew me to the window. I parted the curtain. Through the sheet of the downpour, I saw Isa dashing toward the orchard. Someone was chasing her; I caught a flash of a gangly kid in a pink shirt and khakis who was just as quickly lost among the trees.
> Milo? No. But I knew that kid.
> Isa was laughing as she reappeared, streaking across the wet grass. Zigzagging around the trees through the downpour. And then the boy stopped. Lifted his head slowly to look up at the window. As if he knew I'd been watching all along. He struck a muscleman pose. To show that he enjoyed my spying on him? He was a few years older than Milo, and he wasn't as classically handsome, but he had something to him, a fierce charisma. He took a few steps closer, almost exaggeratedly, as if he were sneaking up on me, and yet his eyes were trained to a point just past me —

> quickly I glanced over my shoulder, to make sure nobody else was in the room. But I was alone.
> I tapped on the glass, to normalize it. So that I wasn't just gawking at him. I halfway smiled.
> In answer, he yawned, but from him, the gesture seemed more tantalizing, and I realized that I was standing at the very same window I'd gazed up at that first day, when Connie had picked me up and driven me here.
> Only now the situation had reversed itself, and the boy was closer, almost directly below.
> He was staring upward. I was looking down at him. His eyes were extraordinarily pale, a washed-out, tobacco-juice color, like those of the portrait children. And now a shiver of recognition ran down my spine as panic plucked at the root of me. My heart was racing — because yes, it was the same kid, it was the boy from the cliff, the gangly boy it was
> *No no no you're being paranoid. It's just some kid from next door or a friend of Milo's you're just dozy on that pill.*
> And then he was gone, turning away to speed around the corner of the house. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 60-61).

The scene ironically inverts another notorious passage from *The Turn of the Screw*, in which the governess watches from an upstairs window, in terror and at the dead of night, as Miles runs across the grounds of Bly and looks upwards beyond her, possibly at the ghost of Quint. Here, it is the ghost himself who looks up at the *au pair*, and Jamie immediately recognizes him for the boy from her vision by the lighthouse. Again, the ghost's demeanor is described in vaguer terms that imply his magnetic attraction — strong, fierce, charismatic, tantalizing, indefinable — and, again, we are immediately transported to Jamie's usual self-doubts as to the precision of her daydreams. However, she is now able to produce certain details of his appearance — his lanky built, the color and shade of his eyes, and the clothes he is wearing — that will be of importance a few moments later, when she confronts Connie:

> "What happened to you?"
> I'd returned to the kitchen, my unease refocused with the express purpose of finding Isa.
> "Nothing. Have you seen Isa?"
> Connie, holding a basket, was about to head downstairs to the laundry room. Her shark eyes looked suspicious. "Latht I knew, thee wath playing out in the rain without a raincoat. But what'th wrong with you? You look pale ath death."
> By the view from the kitchen windows, no Isa. "If she's still out there, I should go get her and bring her in."
> Turning, I saw them. *His clothes*. Pink shirt and khakis made a large, sopping wet ball on the top of the basket. My fears refreshed. "Where'd you find those?"
> Connie adjusted her basket. "On the lawn. Panth might be ruined — they're linen. Itha mutht've taken them out of her father'th clothet for dreth-up."
> She spoke so matter-of-factly, as if daring me to contradict her. "Connie, didn't you see that kid out there with Isa? It wasn't Milo."

> A pound of thunder made me jump as glasses rattled on the shelves. Connie was frowning. “Oh, tho now ith Milo playing in the rain, too?” A fleck of spit hit my cheek.
> “I just said that it wasn’t Milo. It was someone else. A skinny kid, with pale eyes and reddish brown hair.”
> Connie’s lips pinched, but she let her laundry basket slip-slide to the floor as she blew into her hankie. “Jutht thtop. I mean it, Jamie. Whyever would you thay that? Nobody wath out there. Nobody.” (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 63-64).

It is Connie’s alarmed reaction of recognition, letting the basket slide from her hands and curtailing Jamie’s description of the boy who has probably resembled Peter in her eyes, that grants Jamie’s vision an exterior source of justification lacking from the *au pair*’s vision of the other ghosts in the novel: Jamie may be making up ghosts in her mind, but this time around she has made up a too-readily recognizable one. Up until this point in the narrative, Jamie has received little knowledge about Peter, and would not have been able to provide such a detailed description of his looks by any other means that had been shared with us. She will later browse his Facebook page, but — contrary to her “game of Milo”, of which there are several indications we may have missed — there is not a single textualized pointer allowing us to hypothesize she has had any access to Peter beforehand. Even after she has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, and most of the ghosts she claims to see have been proven symptoms of her hallucinatory condition, she claims to have shared a true moment of supernatural connection with Peter and that “it still matters to [her] to have [her] truth” (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 212). She also vouches to return to Little Bly and bury the Quints’ engagement ring in Peter’s grave, as she had promised his mother. Up until the end, she is convinced that Peter’s soul is not at rest.

What does that conundrum say about the issue of postmodern parodic intent, as it is expressed in *Tighter*? For starters, it says that a paradoxically respectful but contesting parody such as Griffin’s will both attempt to retain certain elements of its source material while contesting the authority of their canonical position. In the specific problem entailed by the supernatural manifestation of Peter Quint’s ghost *contra* Jamie’s mental illness diagnosis, *Tighter* both repeats the central paradox of its source material — if the governess is producing the phantoms in her mind, how come she has produced such a perfect carbon copy of Peter’s ghost? — and questions the authoritative interpretation of the governess’s quandary that has prevailed in critical approaches. In doing so, Griffin’s deployment of parodic strategies of trans-contextualization and ironic inversion dramatize a terrifying implication that lies at the core of *The Turn of the Screw*: that the ghosts may be real *despite* the governess’s mental illness, rather than *as a result of* it. That is not to accept, as Bromwich (2011, p. 185) has

suggested, that the ghosts are only real in that their reality has been conjured by the governess, but that they have a metaphysical existence apart from the projections she lays on them. If that might truly be the case, perhaps they have not returned to haunt the children, as the preceptress theorizes — but they have returned to Bly nonetheless. The question we must try to answer *vis-à-vis* renewed readings of the novel is: why so? In some ways, Griffin's backstory of Peter Quint is her own attempt to venture an answer.

There is one more important implication of the relativization of the governess's predicament in *Tighter*: it also constitutes a relativization of her blame. All through *The Turn of the Screw*, and in particular during her final encounter with Miss Jessel by the lake, the governess questions her own sanity, which leads her to constantly try to prove (perhaps even to herself) the validity of her reasoning: "She was there, and I was justified; she was there, and I was neither cruel nor mad" (JAMES, 1991, p. 70), she proclaims with relief at the sight of the "horror of horrors", though neither Mrs. Grose nor Flora are able to see the woman in black that watches them from the lake. The moral implication that usually underlies the governess's dilemma is also one that is all too apparent in the critical proclivity to distinguish her narrative by either the actual or the imagined existence of the ghosts: if she is mad, that is, if the ghosts are mere projections of her deranged psyche, then she must be held responsible for the damage done to Miles and Flora. In *Tighter*, the governess is granted the justification she had hoped for, though in the terms of the ironic inversion which characterizes parody: Jamie is proven to be indeed mentally disordered, but that is precisely what quenches her responsibility for any harm she may have caused to herself and others — "It's not your fault, Jamie," her doctor tells her. "Not at all. You have a disease. The good news is that your disease is really, really treatable." (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 209). Although it might be an overstatement to characterize *Tighter* as a feminist reading of *The Turn of the Screw*, it is certainly possible to argue that Jamie's diagnosis finally provides the governess with some sort of ex-centric vindication: if anything, it is the fate of imprecision turned into blame that accrues the governess in the canonical text that is questioned and revised *vis-à-vis* Griffin's "apocryphal", marginal postmodern narrative. If the canon may be correctly described as a centripetal force in itself, the strategies of revision operated by the postmodern gothic thus help to de-center the imperative of its parameters of interpretation.

For all that has been said, it is possible to argue that the either/or reading of *The Turn of the Screw* is subverted in *Tighter* by a paradoxical both/and possibility that is of interest to the postmodern parody as a whole, and to the effects of terror of this postmodern gothic novel in particular. In guise of a conclusion, it may be argued that, in *Tighter*, the issue of parodic

intent which Hutcheon considers integral to parody unfolds around the recurrence of paradoxes: on the one hand, the paranoiac disorientation produced by James's celebrated ambiguities is retained as the supreme narrative goal of a writer of gothic fiction, though in Griffin's postmodern novel the effect is often accomplished by means of oxymoronic factual statements rather than by innuendos, half-sentences and suppressions; on the other hand, *both* the possibility that the phantoms are figments of one's trances — e. g., Milo — *and* that they have autonomous existences that happen to manifest through the medium of a psychotic mind — e. g., Peter — are held in an irresolute antinomy that carries the suspense further, even after the narrative has closed. All of this is accomplished with recourse to language, as is expected of parody, a linguistic mode of metafiction according to Hutcheon. It is up to the reader to pursue the trail of linguistic crumbs that lead the way from parodied to parodic text and vice-versa in order to identify instances of playfulness that integrate the double-voiced discourse of parody — and relish in the challenges thus demanded of the activity of reading a "textwork" of historiographic metafiction.

It must be noted that *Tighter*, as other postmodern gothic novels that can be discussed in terms of our hypothesis, is precisely that: an example of historiographic metafiction, in which parody paradoxically activates a critique of the world of ideological implications. Its metafictional strategies of ironic inversion and trans-contextualization are intended as discursive instruments of ex-centric revision of latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, *Tighter* draws critical attention to the continuing centrality of those assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world through attention to contextual conditions of textual production. In Griffin's novel, that end is carried off with attention to the potential threats directed to and arising from the family, threats such as lie underneath the overt concerns with the battle between the ghostly servants and the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. It is with that discussion we will now proceed.

2.3 "In my family, we just call it mopey"

David Punter (1996b, p. 49) and David Bromwich (2011, p. 163) both seem to accept as a given that discussions of *The Turn of the Screw* tend to zero in on the conundrum of whether or not the ghosts — seen solely by the governess as they are — are real, and the ensuing consequences of their reality for the reader's understanding of her character and

motivations: if they are real, she is to be considered a virtuous and heroic protector of the children; if not, her increasingly hysterical behavior must represent her uncontrollable need to exert complete dominance over the foundlings. All in all, the collusion of a number of elements — the first-person point of view, the parsimonious characterization of the narrator, the ambiguous phrasing of multiple passages, and perhaps the sensational implications of the material — allows the governess to succeed in placing herself as the sole protagonist and vortex of a terrifying situation: though she is aware that the alleged ghosts want nothing to do with her, and are in fact back for the children and the children alone, she insists on taking the spotlight in going to the nitty-gritty of the supernatural encumbrance.

However, as Punter (1996b, p. 50) suggests, though the power of the governess's account relies on her taking center stage in purifying the house and delivering Miles and Flora from evil, "we are given repeated suggestions that her importance to the children, in their eyes, is at best peripheral". What he means is that, as the story unfolds, the children give growing demonstrations of independence, with Miles in particular implying that he wishes to go away from Bly because his preceptress is below him in social and intellectual skills (a suggestion she promptly interprets in terms of the wicked influence of Peter Quint in pulling the youth further away from her grip). It is, however, possible to argue that it is from the very periphery of *The Turn of the Screw* that a number of its most disturbing problems emerge, although these problems are also smothered under the centripetal force of the governess's report. It is to such latent, but paradoxically pivotal, problems that a postmodern gothic novel such as *Tighter* will often turn.

Martin Scofield (2003, p. 97) suggests that, regardless of how we choose to see the governess's predicament, James's narrative revolves around an "implied story" which, in providing justification for the main story at hand, must be inferred by the reader from the scraps of information available. The task of unearthing and interpreting the implied story, in Scofield's opinion (2003, p. 97-98), depends on "the activation of certain shared frames of reference, or of cultural codes" which render the implicit tale intelligible. The implied story could thus be said to communicate an ideological message, perhaps one that might be too much of a taboo to allow for a straightforward conveyance, especially by the Victorian standards of James's time.

Scofield's discussion (2003, p. 101) of the implied story in *The Turn of the Screw* revolves around the lives of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, and the nature of sexual transgression and malevolent influence they may have exerted in life over the children, to the point where the main story turns into a concealed report of what is today called child abuse —

the locked secret within most of the "contemporary" gothic, according to Punter (1996b, p. 200). That implied secret thoroughly opposes the ruling ideology of the Victorian middle class, according to which children must be the bastions of "humanity in its most natural and innocent, because non-sexual, state", to quote Purchase (2006, p. 17). That is arguably only expected, considering how the gothic, per Punter's definition, delimits the very *locus* where the ruling ideology of the middle class can be addressed for the exclusions it operates, the discipline it imposes, and the fears and anxieties it entertains. Yet, if Miles and Flora are indeed harassed — sexually, morally, or otherwise — by Quint and Miss Jessel, it bodes to ask why the rascals had been granted access to the children in the first place. For, as governess in supreme authority of her wards and valet in charge of the house of Bly — something odd by Victorian household ranks, it must be said —, Jessel and Quint were stand-ins for an absent figure: the elusive uncle, legal guardian of the children, whose presence at Bly is somehow more ghostly than that of the ghosts themselves.

According to Julia Briggs (2012, p. 181), the ghost story — the dominant configuration of gothic fiction in the Victorian era — was "the product of a divided society which set a high premium on particular forms of social community, above all the family". The Victorian ideology, often expressed and enforced through the material apparatus of fiction, hailed the family as a paragon of "defense against the chaos of the outside world, against elements such as loners, criminals, gypsies, the mad, vagrant children, disreputable men, loose women and foreigners", to quote Purchase (2006, p. 66). At least to a limited extent, that ideology is implicit in *The Turn of the Screw*: it is only after Miles and Flora find themselves unprotected and on the brink of orphanhood that they are assailed by the evils of the world of disreputable men such as Quint, and loose women such as Miss Jessel. Yet, as Briggs (2012, p. 181) conversely suggests, the gothic has from the outset been ideologically ambiguous, its writing displaying "a marked tendency to represent the family as a source of [...] dangerously concealed secrets, even of literal skeletons in the cupboard". That counter-ideological message is also encoded in *The Turn of the Screw* in subtle references to the lack of interest the uncle entertains in the wards left in his responsibility: it is clear from his sole condition upon hiring the governess — that "she should never trouble him — but never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything; only meet all questions herself, receive all moneys from his solicitor, take the whole thing over and let him alone" (JAMES, 1991, p. 6) — that he sees the children as a burden, and is less than enthused by the hard work of finding them an adequate set of caretakers. Even the governess, who entertains a platonic admiration for the uncle, eventually proclaims that he is ultimately to blame for

whatever perils have befallen the children. In *that*, at least, and considering the injunctions of the Victorian middle-class ideology, she is hardly in the wrong at all; yet, it is also the merit, or perhaps the side effect of her self-centered narrative that *she* should bear the blame for the fall of the house of Bly at the hands of generation after generation of literary critics — whereas the uncle, at least as far as the narrative is concerned, remains unscathed.

What we mean to suggest, in short, is that, before reading James's novella as the story of whether or not a governess sees the ghosts of the odious former servants, itself harboring an implied story of how, if at all, those servants may have corrupted the children in their care, we must read it as the "implied implied story" of the highly questionable choices made by a family guardian who places *his wards* in an appalling string of less than capable hands: first Miss Jessel, who is unable to tighten her authority over the handling of the children (of Miles in particular, who turns to Peter Quint as a tutor); then Quint himself, who, despite his uncouth manners and improper, possibly criminal behavior, is left in charge of both Bly and the kids, to overrule the positions of authority of both a governess and a housekeeper in the handling of domestic matters; and finally the unnamed governess herself, who is at best well-intentioned but unfit to handle the education of the children and the delicate business of Miles's expulsion from school, and at worst mentally unhinged. It is only after the family has become the ultimate provider of threat to its junior members, either by action or by omission, that both the ghostly visitations of *The Turn of the Screw* and the all too vivid perils brought about by a possibly deranged new governess find their most powerful force.

It is certainly to that "implied implied story" that *Tighter* will turn, in its own terms. In the postmodern parody of James's ghost story, the ghostly threats to Isa and Skylark are peripheral to the *au pair*'s account of her all too imminent breakdown and the motivations that lie beneath. The ghosts Jamie sees at Skylark and elsewhere only matter to the narrative to the extent where they magnify the issues she experiences from home: her alienation from her family, her abuse at the hands of an older man, her history of mental illness and her suicidal tendencies. It is the critical distance of parody that allows Adele Griffin to read Henry James in terms of that ironic inversion — that "counter-turn of the screw", we might say —, so that the most implicit of stories from her source material may be unearthed and made into the main story of her postmodern gothic novel.

In order to accomplish that goal, Griffin's parodic playfulness on *The Turn of the Screw*, which is meant to emphasize difference at the heart of similarity, renders the protagonist, Jamie, as a proxy for both the unnamed governess who may or may not be a clairvoyant, and the haunted, abused children who may or may not be living a secret life of

their own. What is intended by the ironic inversion is an overt concern with Jamie's family's inability to prefigure, and perhaps override, the tragedy of mental illness and abuse that befalls the *au pair*, an overturn that revises the typical gothic theme of the sins of the father in terms of the alienation of the contemporary middle-class family and its inability to confront the hidden troubles it harbors in its bosom. The conflation is evidenced from the beginning of Jamie's account:

> The last thing I did before I left home was steal pills.
> "Wait!" I raised my finger and did the *oops* smile, then sprinted back inside while Mom stayed in the car to take me to the train station. First to Teddy's bathroom to swipe painkillers — we were an athletic family, prone to sports-related injury — and then to my parents' stash. Mom's allergies, Dad's insomnia.
> Maybe fifty, all in. A good haul, but would it be enough?
> Pills were new for me. I'd been sucked in innocently enough, after a track hurdle that ripped some tissue. A major lower-lumbar strain, the doctor had diagnosed. When the pain persisted, I'd started therapy at the Y, which just became another thing to skip. And pill filching was easier.
> Now here it was late June and I wasn't an addict, not at all, but the heat packs and aspirin hadn't been getting it done for weeks.
> The pills also helped me not think too hard about Mr. Ryan. Sean. I'd called him Sean, a couple of times, in the end. And I was so tired of thinking about him. I gripped a small fantasy that the moment I set foot on Little Bly, he'd evaporate from my memory.
> Mom honked. I wavered in the doorway of my bedroom, so safe and familiar. I shouldn't be leaving home. I was worse than anyone knew — not my parents, not my best friend, Maggie. Maybe I needed more than pills, but I'd already swiped such a haul. I stepped inside, gravitating toward my bookshelf. What to take? What would help? (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 3).

If James's novella is frugal on the intelligence it gives on the governess's background, Griffin's parodic inversion makes sure to offer the reader enough detail to clarify the progress of Jamie's motivations. This introduction to her plight establishes from the start the shabby mental state in which she lives her life. Jamie is a skillful drug addict who employs dissimulation and deceit to feed her addiction; that is the first index of her difference from the governess and similarity to the haunted children, considering how Jamie does lead a life of her own that no one knows about. In that, however, she wouldn't seem to be too different from the remainder of her family members, her parents in particular, all of whom keep stashes of unsupervised medicine way too ready for use and abuse — their own and that of others, stealthy visitors in the night. Hers is a family of hypochondriacs who disguise addiction under a dominant middle-class lifestyle — ideology, if you will — of healthcare and physical activity. Her father, in special, suffers from insomnia, a condition usually associated with

anxiety, stress, depression, and drug abuse; it is the father's side of the family, as Jamie will later tell us, that carries "the Atkinson gene", the long history of mental illness that she has but too apparently inherited.

Her insistence on not being an addict, itself reminiscent of the governess's desperate appeals to our trust, does little to vanquish any of our doubts as to Jamie's mental fitness for the position she is about to undertake (notice, again, how that insistence is phrased into a paradox: "I was not an addict, but the drugs hadn't been doing it for weeks"). Not, at least, when clear signs of her instability pile up: not only has she abused prescription drugs for months, drugs as have now become ineffectual in giving her the hit she yearns for, but she has also indulged in other acts of self harm by skipping physical therapy, while leaving her closest ones — even her best friend Maggie, even her mother — unaware of her ongoing problems. Jamie has become secretive and lonely, isolated and reliant solely on her own disturbed perceptions — disturbed both by her intoxication and deteriorating mental state — to assess reality around her. The irony of such an extensive parodic engagement with the source material of *Tighter* is hard to miss: as a whole, and in greatest gothic fashion, the family who is supposed to shelter Jamie from the dangers of the outside world is posed as the one whose inside dangers are all too readily accessible. The family who is supposed to protect her, perhaps even from herself, is the one who will provide Jamie with multiple sweet escapes — escapes swiftly turned sour as the youth nearly overdoses on prescription pills on Little Bly, away from those who are supposed to be the custodians of her well being.

Although the governess in James's novella at times distrusts her mental state, Jamie, unlike her predecessor, is way too sure that she is not sane and should not be leaving home to be in charge of anyone else, let alone a child. And yet, the matter is not hers to decide: it was her mother who had set her up for a position as a summer *au pair* at the paradise island of Little Bly. The mother who believed a summer spent away from home would be therapeutic for Jamie, a nice change for her, a way to kick her "mopey" teenage daughter out of the house and rush her into responsible and independent adulthood. "*Mopey* was Mom's determinedly cheerful shorthand for the thick-walled depression I'd been trapped behind all spring" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 9), Jamie confesses, though she finds it hard to break it down to her mother the actual state of her wrecked emotions. Communication is non-existent between mother and daughter, beyond the typical and empty words of parental encouragement and concern — words that fail to actually confront the darkness underneath the veil of a child's mopey surface.

All in all, it is the disturbing revelation of the mother's inability/refusal to distinguish between episodic adolescent lethargy and thick-walled depression that rings the bell on the dysfunctionality of Jamie's family. Her mother does not seem to be purposefully wicked, that much is granted; on the contrary, she comes across as supportive and encouraging, to both Jamie and her twin siblings, Teddy and Tess. In spite of the limited financial resources of the Atkinsons, both siblings have either gone to college or to attend exchange programs abroad after graduation. It is perhaps that the mother has been too self-centered, too focused on conforming to dominant prerogatives of what it means to be an ideal middle-class parent — that is, to provide children with an overabundance of extracurricular activities and opportunities that will help them blossom into the perfect middle-class adults they are intended to be — to actually *be* a parent to Jamie, flaws and all. It will take the mother weeks to realize Jamie has stolen pills, and even then the red flag looks merely rosy to her:

> "Jamie! How are you adjusting? Is the job easy to handle? Is Isa a good girl?"
> "Yeah, yeah. She's sweet. And it's really scenic here. Like a postcard." I looked out my window. Lighthouse. Of course. I'd bet anything Isa went there. "But, Mom, it's raining pretty hard and I need to go —"
> "Then, Jamers, I guess I better cut right to it. Dad and I think someone's been into our prescriptions. Scads of pills have gone missing."
> "That's odd." Hunch confirmed.
> "Honey, please be honest. Did you … borrow … any of our painkillers? I need the truth here."
> "Maybe I took a handful. For my back pain."
> "And what about my allergy meds?"
> "Oh, right, and maybe four or five of those. But Tess grabbed some of Dad's muscle relaxers for her stress fracture. I saw her with the bottle. Right before she left for Croatia."
> "A lot of Dad's antihistamines are gone, too."
> "Probably Tess again." My sister could handle some blame. She'd be safe at college in a couple of months anyway.
> Mom, who hardly ever got mad, sounded maddish. "Those are Dad's and my own specific doctor's prescriptions. What are you girls thinking, treating our medicine cabinet like some kind of pharmacy buffet? I would never have thought my own daughters — wait, now Dad wants to say something."
> As Dad's voice burred in the background. "Oh yes, sleeping pills," said Mom. "Any of those, Jamie?"
> "Okay, you got me, but only two. Tess and Teddy took most. They like them for the plane trips."
> "This is incredibly disturbing." She did sound disturbed. "Any kind of self-medicating, Jamie. It's so worrisome. Please promise me, if you insist on using a sleeping pill, you'll break it in half and go straight to bed. That's a narcotic, that's not a joke."
> *… bumped my head and went to bed and couldn't get up in the morning.*
> "What did you say?" Mom sounded nervous. Uh-oh. Had I said that out loud?
> "My back hurts so bad it wakes me up in the morning."

> "Then I'm going online this minute to look up a local doctor, and I'll make you an appointment. But if you're really having such serious issues, you need to come home — because sleeping pills are no kind of solution."
> "Mom, you're overreacting. Don't make me a doctor's appointment that I won't keep."
> "You just told me your back pain woke you up in the morning, Jamie. How do you think I'm going to react?" My silence frustrated her, but there was no way she could vault the distance between us. "At the very least," she continued, "let me find you a doctor and email you the information. And we'll go see a chiropractor when you get home. *Capisce*?"
> "*Capisce*." I was off the hook, kind of. *Capisce* was one of those Atkinson family words that signaled good humor. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 66-67).

The mother is wary of confronting Jamie on the vanishing of the pills, which is clear from the choice of the verb "borrow" to sugarcoat the enormity of the danger the daughter might be incurring. That danger is not lost on the mother, who by no means seems convinced that Jamie is blameless, but she nonetheless fails to take appropriate action: her response — "if you're really having such serious issues, you need to come home" — keeps the responsibility on Jamie's shoulders, and even then it is phrased in terms of condition before necessity. Although the mother is incredibly disturbed, the intensity of her disturbance does not translate into any intense measures to prevent her teenage daughter from using a worrisome variety of unprescribed medicinal pills; on the contrary, her attempts at suggesting a chiropractor's appointment and persuading Jamie into wisdom on the sheer force of her perturbation are preceded by a baffling instruction on how to use the sleeping pill — "a prescription pill", "a narcotic", and "not a joke" — correctly. Jamie, who is often unable to distinguish between the pills she takes until their effects kick in, and just as often takes multiple pills at a time, is left "off the hook", free to continue her rambunctious career of drug abuse, which will inevitably end badly.

Overall, this interaction suggests that the mother is concerned about Jamie, but also concerned about not trespassing on the limit of her teenage daughter's privacy: again, she is prey to middle-class family values which regard a teenager as more of an adult than a child, thus someone who must have their privacy respected at any cost. The result of that, in the particular problems presented by *Tighter*, is that an unbridgeable distance between family members is created, hence the mother remaining clueless as to who her daughters — Jamie in particular — really are. Clueless, for example, to the fact that her youngest daughter has been visited at late hours by defunct family members:

> Of course, my other Atkinson relatives hadn't exactly mastered solutions for moping. My dad's brother Uncle Jim had hanged himself on his twenty-first

> birthday, and my second cousin Hank Wilcox had put a bullet in his brain three years ago after the bank repossessed his house. And what neither of my parents knew was that Uncle Jim and Hank had started to appear to me, claiming me in secret hours as one of their own. My eyes would open into darkness — not in terror, not yet — to find them right there, in my room. The rope skewed around Uncle Jim's neck and Hank staring blankly, the bullet wound black as a cigarette burn at his temple. And then I'd wake up for real, in a gasp, my heart beating fast as rain, my newly identified lumbar muscles — extensor, flexor, oblique — pulsing the nerve roots of my spine.
> By then, they'd be gone. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 9-10).

This passage allows for an important insight into Jamie's situation at the beginning of her narrative: whatever else she may or may not have experienced later on in Little Bly in terms of supernatural visitations, Jamie is already haunted by the ghosts of her own deceased family members. Ghosts of those who carry the Atkinson gene, those who, having been unable to find solace in "moping", have finally taken recourse to the most extreme solution: taking their own lives. It is those ghosts of depressed and suicidal family members who have now come back from the hinterlands of the deceased to lay claim to Jamie as one of their own, as a depressed and suicidal one herself. All through her narrative it is clear that Jamie has been dangerously flirting with death, taking pill after pill after shot of alcohol, driving under the influence, doubling up on doses of whatever comes her way… Yet, upon seeing Uncle Jim and Hank at the dead of night, Jamie's reaction is not of terror, or at least not at first — not, anyway, until she wakes up for real and the ghosts are finally gone. The phantoms she sees might be nightmarish images, but the fact that they are only terrifying when they are gone, leaving her alone and unprotected, is certainly more disturbing than what is usually expected of the proverbial things that go bump in the night, on whose sheer *presence* gothic terror is predicated. That sort of reversal of expectations, by which a gothic convention is subverted in the terrifying effects it no longer produces, is usual to the postmodern parody of gothic fiction.

It must be recalled here that in gothic fiction the ghostly manifestation of the past is one of the central narrative conventions meant to impart a sense of fear (FRANÇA, 2017, p. 117). Ghosts, as Briggs (2012, p. 176) argues, wreak terror by hijacking the world of rational and natural order in order to disturb its orderliness, hence their being invested as sites of the "fearful, alien, excluded or dangerously marginal" elements of culture. In *The Turn of the Screw*, as we have amply argued, it is the disembodied spirits of Quint and Miss Jessel that return from the dead with a shiver of terror to carry further the prospects of child abuse that they may have enacted at some point in the past. In Griffin's postmodern gothic novel, however, that convention is both used and abused, installed and subverted, complied with and

criticized, in typical postmodern parodic fashion: as far as Jamie can be read as a surrogate for the haunted children, it is the living abusers and the consequences of their deed, rather than those who are no more, that represent the truest danger to her safety. Ghosts such as Uncle Jim's and Hank's remain a central staple of the narrative, yet they are always on the lookout *for* Jamie (rather than *against* her), always ever appearing to her at those solitary times when she feels most strongly the need of friendship. As such, their presence transgresses expectations of gothic conventions that envelop the ghost in a shroud of fear: in *Tighter*, Uncle Jim and Hank gradually settle into the role of guardians of the narrator, keepers of her fate, knowing companions to a solitary family member in need:

> They arrived in spite of the deadening effects of my sleeping pill. I'd hoped they wouldn't follow me to Little Bly. I'd even considered not taking anything. But then I popped it on the decent chance it was a muscle relaxer. My grab-bag game always held an element of risk, and the only pill I didn't want was one of Mom's weaker antihistamines. Okay by day, but too thin a blanket for night. [...]
> They'd been waiting. Hank was facing me on the small chair by the vanity. Uncle Jim was closer, cross-legged on the duvet I'd pushed to the foot of the bed. The steady pressure of his kneecap against my foot had caused me to wake up, although I'd tried, in my twilit state, to ignore him.
> *Go away*.
> My vision adjusted. Hank was slumped in his seat the way I imagine he used to watch television: his arms hanging over the sides and his chin doubled, his gaze lifted. They were distant as twin moons, my dependable companions, visible and yet far out of reach as always.
> "You don't have to watch over me," I whispered, sitting up. "I think I'll be okay here. Mom was right. I needed the change."
> Silence. That's always how it was with Hank and Uncle Jim. They didn't acknowledge our communion. Then I could stare at them all I wanted. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 37-38).

Uncle Jim and Hank, Jamie's own secret ghosts, are not as deadening as the effects of the pills she carelessly takes. As always, they arrive when there is nothing else to distract her, and, much like Peter Quint and Miss Jessel in James's ghost story, they do appear but do not act. It is difficult, however, to imagine that they have an agenda against Jamie, and as the story progresses the *au pair* becomes less and less scared of their presence; she is, at best, mildly annoyed by their manifestation, as one would be by a familiar presence who accidentally wakes one up in the middle of the night. In her understanding, they are dependable companions who follow her to watch over her, so that she won't be alone.

All the while, the ghosts that truly haunt Jamie are the lifelike memories of past abuse she has experienced at the all too living hands of Sean Ryan, her adult High School Chemistry

teacher with whom she had had a romantic involvement for over three months the previous year. Sean Ryan, the unspeakable secret of whose abuse Jamie is too ashamed to admit, is the reason why the teenager has been triggered into using pills, and it is him she wishes to leave behind by fleeing to Little Bly over the summer. To no avail: she keeps seeing Sean Ryan in every other potential love interest on the island, from Milo through Aidan to Sebastian; she keeps stalking him online, writing him feverish letters that she subsequently burns; she keeps having dreams and nightmares about him. Sean Ryan integrates, for all that matters, the clique of ghosts and phantasmatic memories that Jamie carries along with her satchel of pills onto the island:

> I'd been born three years after Uncle Jim died, and I'd only met Hank once, at a long ago holiday party. Yet they'd both known exactly what it was like for me that night, when I'd stood outside Mr. Ryan's door, unable to breathe, buried alive in the avalanche of the moment.
> "Who is it?" the woman had called. I'd gotten a glimpse of a brunette in a twinset.
> "Some kid needs directions." Mr. Ryan was already turning away from me.
> The shut of the door, the slide of the bolt. I'd stumbled to my car. In motion, my humiliation turned liquid; my eyes were swimming in it and my brain was toxic with it until I got home and dropped a couple of muscle relaxants — one more than I'd been prescribed. I went to bed and let the bath of anesthesia wash over me. Lying numb and motionless, I let my mind slip into the quietest room of myself, and I thought absently of bridges and pills, of filling the tub and drowsing into the courage to slice. I hadn't. I hadn't sunk my blade or looked beneath the kitchen sink. Instead, I'd fallen asleep. But late that night, Uncle Jim and Hank had come to me for the first time. They couldn't reason with me. They didn't even want to. But they didn't want me to be completely alone, either, if I decided to do it for real. They were family, after all.
> That's why they were here now. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 39).

The romantic and sexual relationship between adults and underage persons is a contemporary taboo of its own, perhaps *the* absolute contemporary taboo, if we accept Punter's suggestion that haunted childhood and troubled adolescence are the problems the postmodern gothic most often confronts; yet suicide is another lingering cultural taboo, according to psychologist Russell Noyes, Jr. (2016, p. 173): its rebuke is near unanimous, and the weight of its cultural interdiction is reinforced by the law, religion, medicine, and social costume alike. In *Tighter*, the conflation of both makes up for an emotionally excruciating reading experience, as we grow to learn details of Jamie's raw reaction to being rejected and the multiple psychological consequences of her involvement with Sean Ryan. From the passage above, we learn that the trauma of Jamie's abuse at the hands of Sean Ryan is what

triggers her downward spiral of detachment and addiction, which would eventually propel her towards attempting suicide. It also marks Uncle Jim's and Hank's first ever appearances to the teenager, and their growing status as sole dumb confidants of the secrets she is ashamed of confessing. Although Jamie says that they had both known what she must have felt at Sean Ryan's door, when she was fully rejected with a tap in the back and an excuse, her description of subsequent suicidal thoughts implies that it is she who must have known exactly what they had felt the night they had decided to take their own lives.

Truly enough, suicides may be counted amongst the most marginal individuals of culture, as Noyes (2016, p. 173) explains. They are, therefore, important elements in a gothic novel. Uncle Jim's and Hank's manifestation, despite being hailed as a call to protection, often turns death into "a vibrant, if muted, awakening" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 54) for the teenager: they never cease to represent, at least marginally, a potential seduction into self-obliteration. Moreover, Jamie often muses whether their persistence is the sign of a bleak fate she must have inherited from her family. And yet, if Uncle Jim and Hank are ghostly manifestations of the marginal and taboo act of suicide, what they offer Jamie is ultimately a sense of communion and comfort: distant and silent, unreasonable and unreasoning as they may be, it is them whom she ultimately considers her actual family, those in whom she finds a sense of solace and membership up until her final moment — "the moment before The Moment" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 144) when she jumps to her death off the lighthouse bridge at Skylark.

By the end of her narrative, a suicidal Jamie is rescued from Little Bly miraculously alive. A doctor breaks down to her that she has displayed a number of symptoms including auditory delusion, hallucination, paranoia, somnambulism, catatonia, and depression, and her brain scans have shown patterns associated with certain types of psychosocial disease such as schizophrenia. The diagnosis is followed by one of Jamie's rawest considerations:

> "In my family, we just call it mopey." Though even saying it, I felt like a traitor to my mom. Who seemed particularly wrecked. Especially when she and Dad returned from lunch to find out I'd learned everything.
> "It's my fault, Jamie. I knew something wasn't … I just knew it."
> "Mom, you didn't. You couldn't have."
> "I should have." Her eyes were so sore-looking they made mine hurt.
> Dad, carrier of the black marble, the Atkinson gene, could not seem to keep still for a minute. Then, and every other time he came to see me, all those long, lying-around days, he paced restless and uncertain. Always fiddling with the curtains and experimenting for the exactly correct fraction of shade to sunlight. Leaving Mom to talk about everything she'd done wrong in raising me. (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 210).

The bitterness in Jamie's remark stays with the reader long after she has acknowledged a certain sense of the injustice it does to her mother: yet, the mother's particular feelings of wretchedness do little to finally vault the distance between herself and her child after all. She surely feels the weight of her irresponsibility in pushing Jamie out of the house when the teenager was visibly worse than mopey, and still, in spite of herself, remains unable to confront the reality of her daughter's mental illness diagnosis. Her version of what had happened to Jamie is "heavy on tender loving care, but light on facts" (GRIFFIN, 2011, p. 208), the girl claims elsewhere, and the mother continues to display a certain tendency towards inertia: resorting to what she should have done differently instead of what she can actually do differently moving forward, and treating Jamie's diagnosis as if it were a matter of how to raise a child right. The Dad, on the other hand, remains the absent shadow he has been throughout: a muffled voice in the background, a fiddling with the curtains, himself unable to face reality in any productive way.

Faced with Jamie's parents' inability to shape their terrible experience into ways to see their roles afresh, we are left with the feeling that this family has a long way to go before they can look beneath the opaque veil of middle-class ideology and its preconceptions of what actually constitutes parental responsibility. Hence the postmodern parodic rewriting of *The Turn of the Screw* undertakes a double ideological function: it lends itself to a critique of the ideology of the contemporary middle-class, whose dominant discourse on family (as ushers of tender but ineffectual loving care, among others) has thoroughly failed Jamie, while also suggesting that the latent ideological conflicts that inform its targeted text's take on the inner dangers of family remain a primary focus of anxiety in the twenty-first century. It is parody, that apparently introverted exercise in intertextual playfulness, that paradoxically reintroduces *Tighter* into the world of ideological relations, thus proving itself a complex strategy of reading the past of textual tradition as well as the past of contextual culture.

Still, the fact that this family is willing to stick together in the face of disaster is a testament to what seems to be a degree of faith on Griffin's part, a faith that James's novella arguably lacks. While in *The Turn of the Screw* the narrative closes with the removal of Flora and the death of Miles at the hands of a crazed and self-righteous governess, Jamie's survival and reintegration into the family who has alienated her ironically inverts the parodied text to impart the belief that wounds may be healed and bridges may be built. Sean Ryan remains a secret Jamie does not bring up, but the fact that he is never once mentioned in the final chapter would seem to imply that she has finally begun to let go of the ghosts that haunt her

troubled past. Those, of course, include Uncle Jim's and Hank's, who may both have been symptoms of Jamie's multiple psychotic breaks, but who have nonetheless faded into the background as her family — her real family, after all — rescues her from Little Bly when The Moment subsides.

Linda Hutcheon (2004, p. xii) argues in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* that historiographic metafiction is not as radical a genre as the experimentation of the modernist writers; after finishing reading a novel such as *Tighter*, one might argue in tandem that the postmodern gothic may not be as hopeless as the dominant form of decadent gothic of the Victorian *fin de siècle*, of which *The Turn of the Screw* is a prime example. It is the paradoxical strategy of bringing to the fore the silenced taboos of the parodied text and daring to lift the veil that keeps them hidden that allows hope to finally be found. The paradoxical dependence on, and distrust of the ideology of the family that lies buried as an "implied implied story" in *The Turn of the Screw* is made explicit as the main story of *Tighter*, only so that the shortcomings of the family may be faced head on and eventually mended together. If in James's novella that contradictory stance is overwhelmed to smithereens by the focus on the governess and her possible delusion, its centrality for the plot of Griffin's parodic reading only contributes to highlighting the paradox while allowing us readers to dwell on a more positive endnote.

In the course of this chapter, we have delved into an analysis of the formal, pragmatic and ideological elements that conflate in Adele Griffin's novel *Tighter*. In subsection one, "Depths, depths!", we focused on the diegetic and formal similarities and distinctions between parodic and parodied texts, with particular attention to the parodic novel's playful and ironic inversion of the ways in which the conventions of the *locus horribilis* and the supernatural are activated in *The Turn of the Screw*. In subsection two, "This was no trick of the eye", we zoomed in on the pragmatic range of parodic intent displayed in *Tighter* in order to discuss how the novel both reenacts and transgresses a number of stylistic strategies that contribute to the effects of ambiguity in both *The Turn of the Screw* and its parodic trans-contextualization. In subsection three, "In my family, we just call it mopey", we observed how parody, an arguably self-referential metafictional genre, is the paradoxical means by which Adele Griffin manages to unearth from her source material a number of carefully concealed ideological preconceptions relating to the family, and subsequently turn them into the main story of her novel. As a result of that agenda, the assorted effects of terror expected of the conventions of the gothic genre — for instance, the ghostly irruption of the past — are parodically

established and transgressed to mark parody's ideological dependence and differentiation from concealed assumptions in its targeted material.

As a result of our analysis, it is possible to affirm that Adele Griffin's *Tighter* can be suitably described as a fictional "textwork" in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to a complex and sophisticated revisions of the literary and historical past. By means of that practice, several narrative conventions of gothic fiction are both installed and subverted in order to give shape to the novel's ironic inversion and critical trans-contextualization of the gothic tradition as a whole, and of *The Turn of the Screw* in specific. This metafictional strategy, which demands continuing engagement from the reader in order to be actualized, is paradoxically meant as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. The taboos of suicide and child abuse, as well as the gothic distinction of the family as a source of threat to its junior members, are thus activated, examined, and eventually alloyed, while the parodic "textwork" draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. For all of that, *Tighter* qualifies as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

In the following chapter, we will study Daniel Levine's novel *Hyde* in order to determine whether it can be read as a postmodern gothic parody of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

CHAPTER THREE
THE *DOPPELGÄNGER* TROUBLE: DANIEL LEVINE'S *HYDE*

In this chapter we will analyze Daniel Levine's novel *Hyde* in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. As we have argued before, it is not always possible to distinguish the formal, pragmatic and ideological elements of parody, that selection being a critical artifice that allows for a certain didacticism and legibility. In the course of our approach to *Hyde*, such a didactic undertaking has proven particularly laborious, due to the complexity of the novel's ex-centric problematization of the ideology of liberal humanism, and the extent of the parodic activation of the convention of the *Doppelgänger*, one dominant configuration of the gothic monster in traditional gothic works. Therefore, we will attempt a different segmentation this time around: each of the three distinct subsections that follow will focus on one separate nucleus of the novel's problematization of ideology, which will be examined in terms of the parodic playful activation of the gothic motif of the double. In subsection one, "The truth is inside this head", we will discuss the parodic deployment of the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in *Hyde* as a support to the relativization of monstrosity, leading to the questioning of truth claims. In subsection two, "We can only marvel at its ruinous multiplicity", we will examine how the convention of the *Doppelgänger* is used and abused to metaphorize the concept of postmodern identity as a fractured, multiple, shapeshifting ideological construct. In subsection three, "I could feel Jekyll inside me", we will analyze how the conventional psychoanalytic explanation of the *Doppelgänger* as symbolic expression of destructive homosexual desire is repeated with difference in order to emphasize the persecutory qualities of homophobic violence inherent in cultural dynamics of power and control over non-reproductive sexuality. By the end of the chapter, it will become clear that the formal, pragmatic and ideological dimensions of parody conflate in *Hyde* to give rise to a sophisticated revision of the literary and cultural past embodied in several ideological assumptions integrating the ideology of liberal humanism which are filtered by the conventions of gothic fiction.

3.1 "The truth is inside this head"

Although the narrative of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is somewhat short, its complexity results in part from its fragmentary structure. The action progresses in a

succession of anecdotes, recollections, and holographs, which are up to the lawyer John Gabriel Utterson to piece together into a coherent whole. The story begins with Utterson and his half-cousin, Mr. Enfield, on their usual Sunday walk on the streets of London. As they halt by a door on a busy commercial thoroughfare, Enfield reminisces about an odd occurrence he had witnessed by that very door once: a strange, deformed man, going by the name of Edward Hyde, had trampled upon a child at an early morning hour, and been made to pay a scandalous sum of hush money to silence the raging family of the wandering girl; in order to summon the required quantity, the obnoxious Hyde had gone in through that particular backdoor and come back merely minutes later with a cheque to bearer signed by Dr. Henry Jekyll, a respectable and influential doctor and lawyer. Mr. Utterson muses gravely upon the anecdote; he is one of Jekyll's closest friends, and also his lawyer, and has recently been made to accept Jekyll's oddly phrased testament, in which the doctor leaves all of his possessions to Mr. Hyde in case of his "decease, disappearance or unexplained absence for any period beyond three months". Utterson, who has never properly met the ominous Edward Hyde, begins to suspect his friend Jekyll has been blackmailed by the creep to give over his fortune. He decides to keep vigil by the backdoor nightly, until he sees Mr. Hyde surreptitiously going in. He is later informed by Poole, Jekyll's trustworthy butler, that Mr. Hyde has a key to the backdoor — which leads into Jekyll's office, previously used as an anatomy laboratory — and is allowed to come and go into the property as he likes.

Utterson finds his friend's connection with Mr. Hyde to be rather inappropriate. He confronts Jekyll with rumors of Hyde's violent manners, but the doctor ensures that the incident by his backdoor had been of little consequence. Yet, shortly after the incident, Mr. Hyde is singled out by an eyewitness as having murdered Sir Danvers Carew, a beloved member of the British Parliament. A national search for the murderer is put in motion by Scotland Yard, while Jekyll, after vowing to cut ties with the imp, confines himself to his laboratory, apparently ill. Following Hyde's unexplained escape from the police, Utterson receives a letter from Dr. Lanyon, another close friend of Jekyll's, only to be opened in the case of Jekyll's death or disappearance. He is alarmed by the mysterious terms of the letter, but is rendered unable to clarify Lanyon's secretive motives: the doctor dies before they can meet one last time. Meanwhile, Poole summons Utterson to Jekyll's house, claiming that the doctor has been walled in his laboratory for weeks and won't come out. Poole suspects that the person barricaded therein is not his Master, but Hyde, and suggests that there may have been foul play. The butler and the lawyer break into Jekyll's laboratory to find the doctor missing and the body of Mr. Hyde in the final throes of death by cyanide. Upon a nearby

workbench, another letter addressed to Mr. Utterson, now containing Dr. Jekyll's "full statement of the case".

The final portion of the narrative weaves together an answer to the mystery, from the content of both Lanyon's and Jekyll's letters. Lanyon narrates how he had once been subjected to a strange request from Dr. Jekyll: he was to retrieve a certain drawer from his laboratory and bring it to his own office untouched, from whence it should be redeemed by some person at midnight. Come midnight, Lanyon was accosted by a mysterious gent who he recognized as Mr. Hyde from news of the Carew murder case. Lanyon witnessed in disbelief as Hyde reclaimed the drawer and fixed a potion from the chemical ingredients within — one that transmuted him upon its drinking into none other than Dr. Henry Jekyll. In Jekyll's report, the doctor recalls his inner struggle between disreputable desires and the constraints imposed upon him by accepted norms of sociability — which, in his own words, had led him into a life of "duplicity". His scientific investigations had allowed him to procure drugs that let out his darkest side in the form of Mr. Hyde, his double or alter ego; "hydden" underneath that new facade, he had dedicated himself to a nightly life of sex, mayhem and, ultimately, murder. After the assassination of Sir Danvers Carew, the beast, having grown stronger and bolder, had begun to manifest without the aid of the drug — including, in one particular occasion, in the streets of London, whereupon Jekyll had had to prevail upon Lanyon for help. Having used up the available stash of his chemicals, and being unable to turn himself back from Hyde into Jekyll, the doctor had awaited in his laboratory, knowing that Utterson and Poole would eventually come to fetch him, dead or alive.

The monster in gothic fiction — the detestable creature who embodies grotesquerie, evil, and transgression, both establishing and pointing towards limits of cultural and individual integrity — comes in different forms and shapes, one of which is that of the double or *Doppelgänger*. As "the best-known *Doppelgänger* story of them all" (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 1), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* frames the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde in the conventional terms of that particular expression of monstrosity in gothic fiction. It is, in fact, arguable that Stevenson's record of a dual personality, materialized in the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger*, is ironically inverted in Daniel Levine's postmodern gothic novel Hyde to give shape to several concerns of ideological nature, which is a common strategy of the postmodern parody. Among such concerns figure the ideological questioning of truth claims, the postmodern proposition of identity as a multiple and fragmentary ideological construct, and the cultural problematic of homosexuality. The parodic activation of the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger*, that is, its repetition with critical distance in

order for differences from the source material to be emphasized, will organize our following discussion.

The term *Doppelgänger* is attributed to German writer Jean-Paul Richter, whose 1796 novel *Siebenkäs* introduced the modern form of the theme, later to become a "subset of Gothic psychological fiction in which characters gaze inward at warring dichotomies through shadowscapes, look-alikes, sexual doubles, mirror images, portraits and statues, and dreams and nightmares." (SNODGRASS, 2005, p. 83). In gothic fiction, the pervasive motif of the double is relatively easy to pinpoint. As John Herdman (1990, p. 14) explains in his classical study of the motif, *The Double in Nineteenth Century Fiction*, a *Doppelgänger* usually manifests as "a second self, or *alter ego,* which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses (or at least, by *some* of them), but exists in a dependent relation to the original". The mutual dependence quickly turns into a power struggle, as the double aims at dominating, controlling, and ultimately usurping the functions of the subject. In all cases, although the objective existence of the double is made clear, there subsists "an element, whether overtly supernatural, numinous or otherwise extraordinary, which goes beyond the merely natural relationship". Necromancy, Faustian pacts, Promethean *hubris*, ancient family curses, and pseudo-scientific drugs and potions, all figure among the usual triggers for the emergence of a character's haunting double image, particularly in gothic fiction.

According to Herdman (1990, p. 11), as a literary theme, the double emerged via the conflation of various trends in Romantic fiction of the eighteenth century, in particular the German *Schauerroman*, Romantic drama, and the English gothic novel. In the Romantic tradition, it materialized as a response to the powerful sway of Reason, characteristic of the Enlightenment: against expectations of coherence, unity, progress and human perfectibility, which would go on to integrate the ruling ideology of liberal humanism as explained by Hutcheon, the double reignited in fiction cultural and philosophical concerns with duality, self-division, ambiguity, savagery, and the untamed in human spirit. Scholar Harry Tucker, Jr. (1971, p. xiii), in the Introduction to Otto Rank's celebrated treatise *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, suggests that, going into its heyday in the nineteenth century, the motif became progressively more invested with psychological undertones deriving from theories of the unconscious, with Psychoanalysis playing an important role in carrying out detailed investigations of the theme. In the twentieth century, and arguably in the twenty-first as well, an ideological interpretation may have dominated readings of the trope, an example of which is Zivkovic (2000, p. 126) reading of the double as a materialization of all "which lies outside

the law, that which is outside the dominant value system [and thus] traces the unsaid and unseen of culture”.

All in all, due to its multilayered symbolism, both religious and folkloric, and possible origins in ancient myth and primitive beliefs and taboo, it is not surprising that the *Doppelgänger*, literally the “double goer” or “double walker”, should have become a topic of interest to Psychoanalysis, Anthropology, and Literary and Cultural Studies. Considering the extent of its theoretical outreach into such various fields, Herdman (1990, p. 2) distinguishes between form-based and content-based approaches to the motif of the double in fiction. With respect to form, there appears to be little disagreement among scholars as to characteristic traits of the *Doppelgänger*. Studies such as Rank’s and Herdman’s trace back the roots of the double to mythic and folkloric narratives, such as those of Narcissus and Dr. Faustus, as well as primitive beliefs and taboos concerning shadows, reflections, portraits, spiritual doubles, physically identical individuals, twins, Guardian Angels, and representations of the soul. Those images, characters, and narrative schemata have not only subsisted to different degrees in modern superstition, but have also gone on to shape the character of the *Doppelgänger* in modern gothic narratives, such as Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde*, Oscar Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson”, just to name a few.

It is with respect to content, however, that explanations tend to differ most dramatically among psychoanalytic, theological, and culturalist ones. Predominant readings in Psychoanalysis include Rank’s interpretation of the trope in terms of primitive narcissism, articulated in light of Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality, and Freud’s interpretation of the double as the uncanny return of the repressed. Rank peruses a considerable number of *Doppelgänger* narratives of the nineteenth century to conclude that, in most, if not all of them,

> [w]e always find a likeness which resembles the main character down to the smallest particulars, such as name, voice, and clothing — a likeness which, as though ‘stolen from the mirror’ [...], primarily appears to the main character as a reflection. Always, too, this double works at cross-purposes with its prototype; and, as a rule, the catastrophe occurs in the relationship with a woman, predominantly ending in suicide by way of the death intended for the irksome persecutor. In a number of instances this situation is combined with a thoroughgoing persecutory delusion or is even replaced by it, thus assuming the picture of a total paranoiac system of delusions. (RANK, 1971, p. 33).

Rank (1971, p. 48) interprets this archetypal configuration of the motif of the double as a literary transfiguration of pathological narcissism, the nature of psychological disturbance characterized by an abnormally strong interest in one’s own person, leading to an

overexaggerated attitude of love towards one's own ego, i. e. their inability to experience desire towards an outer object of affection. Rooted in narcissism is the allegedly abnormal homosexual drive, the sublimation of which, according to Rank, leads to paranoia, and as a defense against which the individual projects their narcissistic drive onto a feared and hated double who prevents the consummation of heterosexual affection (RANK, 1971, p. 80-86). For Rank (1971, p. 49-68), projections of the fictional *Doppelgänger* over such images as portraits, shadows, and reflections are likewise rooted in primitive narcissism, whose many beliefs and taboos relating shadows and reflections to the soul as a double reflect the narcissistic refusal to accept man's inexorable demise — *ergo* the controvertible configuration of the double as a wish-defense against death turned uncanny harbinger of approaching destruction in folklore and myth (such as that of Narcissus, in which self-love and death coincide).

In his influential essay on the subject of "The Uncanny", Freud acknowledges Rank's contribution to the theoretical development of the topic, yet seeks to expand the scope of his peer's explanation. He begins by examining the motif in the work of Hoffman in order to expand Rank's definition of the *Doppelgänger*, thus including nuances and manifestations beyond the appearance and avowed antagonism of the lookalikes. For Freud, one's relationship to their double is intensified by

> spontaneous transmissions of mental processes from one of these persons to the other — what we would call telepathy — so that the one becomes co-owner of the other's knowledge, emotions and experience. Moreover, a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of its true self; or he may substitute the other self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged. Finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations. (FREUD, 2003, p. 141-142).

Much like Rank, Freud believes that the *Doppelgänger* in fiction is symbolic of mental processes; yet, beyond the scope of Rank's investigation, Freud counts the *Doppelgänger* amongst other instances in the distinctive category of frightening experiences which compose *Das Unheimliche*, the uncanny. Freud defines the uncanny as the disquieting feeling of dread experienced at the occurrence of the return of once painful or distressing repressed memories, thoughts, feelings, desires, or surmounted phases in the development of the ego, under un-familiar forms; thus, if the double is to be perceived as uncanny, it is due to its being invested as the material manifestation of the return of a repressed drive, whose

original affect has, as a rule, been converted into fear. Taking after Rank, Freud (p. 142-145) argues that the motif of the double is unequivocally to do with the primordial narcissism that dominates the mental life of the infant: it is only after that early phase in one's infantile mental life is surmounted in favor of the development of the ego that its impulses may return, projected onto images of the double and invested with fear. However, according to Freud, the double need not express pathological narcissism exclusively; even if one's early narcissistic phase may be surmounted successfully, the image of the double may still be invested with a range of disturbances that will arise from the development of the ego. The particular dread of the uncanny can derive, for example, from the pathological detachment and isolation of the superego as a double in delusions of observation; the duplication or multiplication of genital symbols in the work of dreams to counteract castration anxiety; or else, the unintended, chancy repetition of the same thing, which might evoke either the animistic and superstitious idea of fate, harking back to primitive narcissism, or the compulsion to repeat characteristic of the unconscious mind.

Herdman (1990, p. 1) suggests that the dominant interpretation of the double in psychoanalytic terms interlocks with a theological reading in a mutually supportive way. According to the Scottish scholar (1991, p. 3-4), narratives of the double display a consistent preoccupation with "moral conflict, with conflict in the human will, with the dialectic of spiritual pride, and especially with the problem of evil and the issue of free will". Those, he believes, have been reshaped in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to respond to the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment and the geopolitical configuration of colonialism, whereby moral evil became associated with primitivism, savagery, the untamed in human spirit, and the unconscious. He nonetheless argues that the overall conflict of moral duality in the Western Christian tradition, going as far back as the Biblical episode of Christ's prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane, constitutes the underlying motivation of the struggle between self and double in *Doppelgänger* narratives. The duality pays respect to the conflict of opposing wills in man: the natural (or fleshly or evil or Devilish), and the divine (or spiritual or good or Godly). For Herdman (1990, p. 5-7), aside from Orthodox Catholicism, the heterodox tradition of Gnosticism has radicalized the problem of duality in Christian theology *vis-à-vis* its belief in fate and predestination, later to find a home in the extremes of Reformation theology. In the scholar's understanding, the *hubris* involved in one's utter self-identification with the Spiritual realm and their belief that they are predestined to be saved regardless of their actions paradoxically triggers a "denial and suppression of all natural impulses and of the darker sides of the personality, [which] would make them peculiarly

prone to sudden and unexpected moral reversals" — such as are metaphorized in the astonishing, unexpected reversals of character and plot in *Doppelgänger* stories.

In tandem with the ethnographic, psychological, and theological explanations given to the motif of the *Doppelgänger* in fiction, it is possible to singularize a culturalist reading of the topic, exemplified by scholar Milica Zivkovic article "The Double as the Unseen of Culture: Toward a Definition of the *Doppelgänger*". According to Zivkovic (2000, p. 124), "[t]he double has always provided a clue to the limits of the culture, by foregrounding problems of categorizing the 'real' and of the situation of the self in relation to the dominant notion of "reality" and "human identity". The double, considering this assertion, stands for the "other" of culture, thus delimiting by opposition society's deeply ingrained ideological beliefs; therefore, strangers, foreigners, outsiders, social deviants, or anyone whose origins are unknown tend to figure most prominently as *Doppelgängers* of those who vouch to reproduce cultural norms. The arrival of the double sheds critical light upon "categories and structures of the accepted and established social order, attempting to dissolve that order at its very base, where it is established and where the dominant system is re-produced — in the individual"; hence, their being invested with evil attributes. Indeed, according to Zivkovic (2000, p. 124;126), if doubles are conceived as malignant, it is because "[a]ny social structure tends to exclude as 'evil' anything radically different from itself or which threatens it with destruction"; yet, if they were to be seen as "the unsaid and unseen of culture, that which has been silenced, made invisible, made 'absent'", they might regain something of their mythological ambivalence, aside from shifting the focus of the debate from the idea of monstrous otherness to that of constructive difference — or, we might add, from the centric to the ex-centric, to recall Hutcheon's arguments.

Regardless of the explanation advanced, it is possible to postulate at least two dominant aspects that seem to cohere in content-based analyses of the motif of the *Doppelgänger* in gothic fiction. First and foremost, in all of them the double, as its name may perhaps imply, stands for a binary configuration, an articulation of a fundamental experience of duality; in fact, as Herdman (1990, p. 1) contends, in both the most usual forms of the trope and the content it articulates, it is the experience of self-division, the cleavage between "the I and the not-I" — who is really another, displaced I — which is at stake in modern narratives of the *Doppelgänger*. Second, in all of them, the *Doppelgänger* is a proxy for the gothic monster. Its form, though not necessarily grotesque, is unnatural, and so are the means by which its existence is set in motion. Its content notoriously stands in for the second, degraded term in the binary matrix of thought: against the ego, the double is the alter ego, against the

self, the double is the other, against the good, the double is the evil, and so onwards. Thereby, the *Doppelgänger* is predominantly characterized with negative attributes, as it stands for multiple forms of psychopathology, fixations in primitive stages in the development of the ego, narcissism, the return of repressed drives which hinder healthy forms of sociability, excessive pride, moral deviation, superstition, taboo, signs of impending death, evil otherness, and the like. In a certain sense, the original ambivalence of the double is exchanged in favor of its description as an embodiment of cultural anxiety or monstrous deviation (even when the double is supposed to stand in for a character's detached moral consciousness, its persecutory agenda reverses its moralized attitude into a monstrous one); as a consequence, its arrival will bring along fear and uncanny terror.

In light of this brief explanation of the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in gothic fiction, it will be possible to argue that Daniel Levine's postmodern gothic novel *Hyde* operates a systematic parodic inversion of the double motif, which branches out into several stances of formal reconfiguration and ideological ex-centric questioning. The most prominent index of formal parodic inversion of the *Doppelgänger* in Levine's novel lies in the narrative's strategies of focalization. As scholar Elaine Showalter (1991, p. 113) observes, amongst the multiplicity of voices that conflate in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a pivotal perspective is missing — that of Edward Hyde himself, Jekyll's *Doppelgänger*, whose story is only told through the voices of others: Jekyll, Utterson, Lanyon, Enfield, Poole, and even the eyewitness of Sir Danvers Carew's murder. The absence is not unusual: narratives of the *Doppelgänger*, in particular in the nineteenth century, tend to be focalized from the perspective of the persecuted self. However, it has been noted by several scholars, Fred Botting (2008, p. 46) and Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 70) included, that the postmodern gothic often reveals an interest in the monster's perspective on, and potential subversion of the subject matter of their monstrosity. The postmodern gothic, it could be said, frequently holds the category of the monster to critical examination *vis-à-vis* strategies of parodic inversion. In the particular case of interest to this chapter, in order to parodically establish itself as the inversion of the original, Levine's version of the strange case is narrated by the voice which has not been heard thus far: that of Edward Hyde, now upgraded from silenced alter ego to loquacious self in his own right.

The parodic intent is thus aimed at contesting the account of Hyde's alterity and monstrosity given in Stevenson's novel. It must be recalled that, in the original account of the *Strange Case*, whereas Jekyll, like all humans, claims to be "commingled out of good and evil", Hyde is minimized as "pure evil" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 45). In truth, whatever little

is known about Hyde serves the purpose of characterizing him as a stereotypically evil gothic monster. Enfield describes him as "some damned Juggernaut" to whom his peers take a loathing at first sight, going so far as "turn sick and white with the desire to kill him" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 3). Utterson, too, notices a churning at the stomach, an "unknown disgust, loathing, and fear" at the sheer sight of Hyde; he describes him as "pale and dwarfish", giving an "impression of deformity without any nameable malformation" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 10). The maid-servant witness in the Carew murder case describes how Hyde breaks out "in a great flame of anger [...] carrying on like a madman [...] with ape-like fury" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 14). Poole describes him as an inhuman "thing" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 31) and Lanyon as a creature who has "something abnormal and misbegotten" to his very essence, "something seizing, surprising, and revolting" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 39). Jekyll, finally, describes his alter ego as a despicable creature who is "inherently maligned and villainous", with a self-centered disposition towards the "monstrous" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 46). Ouch! There is nothing redeeming in Hyde *per* the description given by his foes, and even if a reader clings to certain inconsistencies in his characterization — for example, why should Hyde ever choose to reverse to Jekyll if he were pure egotistic evil? — it is the overbearing portrayal of monstrosity which predominates.

There are several episodes in *Hyde* in which the canonical report of Hyde's monstrosity is parodically inverted. That does not necessarily entail that he will present himself as a heavenly angel free of sinful impulses — that might have been a cynical strategy, but hardly an ironic one —, but rather that he will regain some of the ambiguous complexity of the *Doppelgänger* which is lost in Stevenson's novella. That is the case, for instance, with his version of the story of the door which sets in motion the events that will eventually lead to his and Jekyll's undoing. In Stevenson's novel, the story is recounted by Enfield in less than endearing terms:

> All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 2-3).

The violent stamping upon the child's body is a disturbing image in itself; yet, its unsaid undercurrent is even more distressing: it is arguable that, to the Victorian readers of

1886, the scene would have immediately connoted Hyde as a pedophile, hence the tramping over the child serving as a subtle metaphor of sexual violation. A brief parenthesis is necessary in order to clarify the argument. In 1885, a year prior to the publication of Stevenson's *Doppelgänger* novella, London witnessed the eclosion of the "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon", a series of scandalous newspaper essays authored by journalist William Thomas Stead and published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of which Stead was the editor, between the 4th and the 13th of July, 1885[10]. In the articles, now considered by historian Judith R. Walkowitz (1992, p. 81) as "one of the most successful pieces of scandal journalism of the nineteenth century", Stead denounced in inflammatory language the sex traffic in young virgins from the lower social classes of London, in the second half of the 1800s. He revealed that the practice of buying and selling children for sexual abuse was a commonplace activity in Londonian brothels, one which was shamelessly sponsored by gentlemen from the upper-middle class. The purchase of virgins, he related, was accomplished with recourse to the invaluable services of a complex network of characters: procuresses who mediated the negotiation of girls, doctors who attested for their maidenhead, and bawds in charge of brothels equipped with padded rooms, wherein the child's cries of pain would be muffled as they were raped. In order to prove the veracity of his claims, which were often passed upon as something of urban lore, Stead went so far as enlisting a procuress and a doctor to provide him with a virgin child, for which he was subsequently tried and convicted to a three-month stay in prison. As Walkowitz (1992, p. 82) explains, the publication of the articles and the disclosing of Stead's unconventional fact-checking methods provoked a strong public commotion which resonated internationally. It ultimately led to the passing of several age-of-consent bills that had languished in the English Parliament for years, after which Stead emerged as a martyr to the causes of social justice and purity.

Several portions of Stead's articles figure in *Hyde* verbatim, while the overall climate of popular uprising in the aftermath of their publication is a considerable force of plot development in the novel. Written in metaphors of how the heart of London was a modern Crete, inhabited by a lustful Londonian Minotaur fed virginal tributes by nightfall, the third chapter in Stead's chronicles of English lewdness, published in the 8th of July, 1885, singles out a "Dr. —, now retired from his profession and free to devote his fortune and leisure to the ruin of maids", and a "Mr. —, another wealthy man, whose whole life is dedicated to the gratification of lust", as the most dissolute patrons of juvenile prostitution in London. The suppression of names for modesty, although typical of Victorian narrative conventions, serves

[10] Available at: https://www.attackingthedevil.co.uk/pmg/tribute/. Access: 03/15/2021.

a political purpose in Stead's narrative: in order to draw his reader's attention to the alleged crimes of upper-middle class gentlemen, whom he places under the spotlight as the prime benefactors of maiden prostitution, suffice it to invoke signs of social standing and respectability, such as those enclosed in the vocative Dr. In Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, however, Stead's reticence is timely appropriated as a backhanded evocation of Stevenson's pair of degenerate characters: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, potential candidates to the chair of London Minotaurs.

What Hyde strives to do in his version of the episode is undercut Enfield's perspective by offering a parallel account in which he characterizes himself, if not as a victim of circumstances, at least as something less than a purely evil pedophile:

> I was gazing upward as I turned the corner onto Castle Street, and when I heard the quick slap of bare feet on stones I spun out in surprise. A small hurtling body hit me in the belly with a yelp.
> It was a girl. I caught her arms and hoisted her into the air, as if I were her father returned from distant travels. A black tangled mane covered her face as she squirmed in my grip, kicking her naked feet at nothing. She wore only a nightshirt. I could feel her sliding skin prickled into points. Where was she going, dressed like this, with no shoes, in such a hurry? *Easy, lassie*, I said, giving her a shake. She stopped struggling. Through her tresses she breathed fiercely at me, a frightened, defiant animal. I caught a hint of odour from her nightclothes, medicinal, urinous, obscurely arousing. Then she shrieked and kicked me square between my legs. I dropped her, doubling over with belly nausea, and she fell and tripped backward onto the stones. As she tried to scramble up, I put my foot down on her chest.
> I did not *stamp* on her, as everyone would later accuse me of doing. I placed my foot lightly on her chest, with just enough pressure to pin her down. It was reflex, like stepping on a news sheet before the wind snatches it away. The girl beat at my leg with tiny fists. I could feel her frail rib cage under my boot sole. I returned her glower a moment, then stepped off and hobbled away, my lower belly and bollocks sick with that specific pain. (LEVINE, 2014, p. 7-8).

It is interesting to notice how Hyde reclaims the use of the pronoun "I" in his description of the episode, so as to assume responsibility as a distinct self, endowed with a personality of his own and the capacity of reasoning and making moral decisions. All through the narrative, the complex interaction between Jekyll and Hyde will be delimited by the use of pronouns: I/me and he/him for when the characters diverge, and we/us for when they share motivations and experiences. In his account, Hyde ostensibly claims that he did not trample over the girl, i. e., that he did not violate her; yet, the ironic brilliancy of the postmodern take on the scene is that he cannot help but intimate his monstrosity in other, vaguer ways. His claim is specifically counteracted by his unsettling description of the child as an eroticized

being. Her tangled hair, her squirming body, her heavy breathing, her kicking legs and pointing feet, are all evocative of the pangs and contortions of a body on the brink of orgasm; so is her seminakedness, so is the frailty of her relatively nude torso, so is the "obscurely arousing" odor of her bodily fluids; and so, finally, is Hyde's "specific pain" in the lower belly and bollocks — which is as specific to being kicked as it is to being on the verge of ejaculation. In light of subsequent developments, the metaphor of a foot stepping down on a news sheet is uncannily anticipatory of Hyde's later association as the ringleader of the pedophile clan inhabiting the labyrinths of London.

All in all, the paradox structured between what Hyde says *versus* what he may be saying in spite of himself does little to ensure he will clear out his name; it may in fact worsen his prospects, as it reinforces to a postmodern reader that Hyde may indeed be cradling many a monstrous desire in his bosom. In the end, it is not that the passage clearly declares Hyde's monstrosity; it is instead that it raises the possibility in the very act of denying it, which keeps readers in a stage of ambiguity, hence doubt. The passage thus recaptures some of the ambivalence of the *Doppelgänger*, as Hyde is presented, in terms similar to Jekyll in Stevenson's version, as an unstable commingling of potential good and evil rather than as pure evil. The play of difference and similarity, of difference at the heart of similarity — or, it may be said, monstrosity at the heart of innocence — thus structured between parodic and parodied accounts is the parodic play of the postmodern gothic. In *Hyde*, the play is intended to keep the reader guessing, constantly engaged in an activity of textual mystery-solving, and constantly shifting their perspective to adjust their expectations to the stakes of each situation. The historical conditionality of *Hyde*'s narrative, in Hutcheon's words (2004, p. 53), "will guarantee that we never stop thinking — and rethinking" what those stakes must actually be "hyding". Is Hyde a monster or is he not? No final answer is ever possible — had it been so, *Hyde* could hardly have been categorized as a postmodern gothic novel.

The parodic inversion of point of view thus propels a potential response from readers that can be summarized as "sympathy for the devil". The expression, it will be noted, is purposefully ambiguous — a devil may be sympathetic and still be a devil nonetheless, if not a bigger one at that. As the story of the door, as recounted by Hyde, makes evident, Daniel Levine's novel certainly builds a case for intended ambiguity and conflicting readerly response. In the postmodern version, Edward Hyde is an unfiltered character, to say the least; he consistently pleads for our sympathy while allowing us into the harrowing details of his wicked nightlife, so that we are left in a state of perpetual doubt as to whether or not we should stick to his side of the story. What is more, the ambiguity translates into a paradoxical

problem of authority which is typically postmodern in its necessary lack of resolution: to question truth is also to subject one's own "truthful" account to questioning. Therefore, Hyde's pleas to our sympathy will ever be to an extent tarnished by the liabilities of his own carefully concocted report relayed from a partial, interested standpoint. There is no possible resolution to the paradox, as there is no final truth to be achieved. Any allegiance to either Hyde or his detractors must ultimately come down to choice; to this reader, however, the interest in the drama of conflicting versions can only be sustained if we do away with any intention of uncovering a final, redemptory truth.

"Truth" is a keyword that points to another interesting index of parodic inversion in *Hyde*: in the postmodern gothic novel, the convention of the *Doppelgänger* is repeated with difference in order to sustain a typically postmodern questioning of truth claims. The insertion of the "Maiden Tribute" series into the fictional narrative of *Hyde* allows for a characterization of the novel as historiographic metafiction, while suggesting that the problematization of truth, a primary focus of concern in historiographic metafiction, must be integral to Daniel Levine's postmodern gothic take on Stevenson's novella. Although a journalistic report may, and often does, lay claim to truth, the fact that Edward Hyde may have been misconstrued as Stead's London Minotaur due to the gaps left open in a supposedly objective account of reality, insinuates that truth is often discursively constructed as a result of interpretation, point of view, public interest, and — why not? — paranoid guilt. Hence, the tension thus created suggests that there can be no final truth derived from any account of reality, be it a narrative of a paranoid narrator, be it a supposedly objective journalistic report grounded on factual information: as Hutcheon (2004, p. 93) claims, both are "discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity". The questioning of truth, however, is more than a simple effect of the mélange of historical and fictional events: in the postmodern gothic novel, the activation of the "Maiden Tribute" articles adds another piece to an unreliable story composed of "fragments and fractions, told through a series of narratives that the reader must organize into a coherent case history" (SHOWALTER, 1991, p. 109). By functioning as the propelling force of paranoid terror, the expected objectivity of Stead's journalistic narrative contributes little to the achievement of the professed coherence of the strange case; on the contrary, it first contributes to contesting the possibility that that ultimate coherence may ever be achieved, that a final, foundational truth will ever be disclosed.

The paradox is made evident through the focalization of Hyde's version. A considerable portion of his version consists of a critical consideration of "Henry Jekyll's Full

Statement of the Case". That will be recognized by the attentive reader as the title of the final chapter in Stevenson's novel, consisting of Jekyll's final statement addressed to Mr. Utterson, which is supposed to unify the remaining fragments of the narrative into a full, truthful and coherent ultimate report. Hyde suspects, however, that it will sooner than later become clear to Utterson that Jekyll's statement is far from "the story entire, but rather a carefully manicured account". "From the first line", he claims, "Utterson will see that the statement is anything but *full*, that it is little more than his friend's dying, desperate protestation of innocence." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 5). "The truth is inside this head", he goes on arguing; "I simply must extract it. In the end, no one will know it but me, but that will be enough" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 6). Hyde's goal is thus to contest as false the fullness of the truth of a canonical account of which he has been excluded. Put more prosaically, novels such as *Hyde* set out to persuade us that whatever we have learned for facts in the canonical source material is in fact the product of a carefully concocted report relayed from a partial, interested standpoint. Interestingly enough, it is some sort of magical, perhaps supernatural trick, which defies logic and rationality, that grants to the reader access to truths never enunciated, but merely thought through; such are the tricks of the gothic, and such are, in a sense, the playful strategies of metafiction, which draw attention to Hyde's unwritten text by dint of the very words written on the page.

The inherent problem with Hyde's professed disclosing of the truth is that, as Hutcheon (2004, p. 109) succinctly puts it, "there is hardly any falseness *per se*, but only others' truths". In other words, as much as Jekyll's statement can never be full, Hyde's report can never convey *the* truth either, but merely *his* truth. His version will ultimately remain precisely that: another version, partial and liable to the arguable incompleteness of his predecessor's "full" report. As a result, the paradoxical quality precipitated by Hyde's version, which mirrors the postmodern position of the radical relativity of all truth, enhances the effects of desperation, urgency, and terror of this particular postmodern gothic novel: Hyde's version is the more terrifying, the more shocking and obscure, and even the more despondent indeed, precisely due to his inability to disentangle himself from the self-assured perspective of what he deems Jekyll's "demented monologue" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 4), his "abstruse and misleading nonsense" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 291). It is metafiction that allows the contradiction to take place: arrested behind the locked door of Jekyll's laboratory, Hyde resorts to metafictional metaphors to reflect on the ghastly inevitability of his doubtful fate:

> Why does it obsess me so, that idea — that everything happens the way it was always going to happen? Because it means that there is no escape? Yet I already know there is no escape, from this cabinet, from the ending that awaits me. Utterson banging at the cabinet door, then the axe, the door splintering apart, me cringing by the windows clutching the phial of cyanide. That's how I'll do it. With the cyanide. Jekyll cooked up the dram of clear, colourless extract a month ago. As if he could see the ending too. As if the cyanide were to be his parting gift to me. That is what I'm saying. Inevitability. You cannot evade what is going to happen because, in a sense, it already *has* happened. It's just a question of perspective. Even as I lie here on my bed of hard floorboards, atrophied, exhausted, but perfectly alive — even now I am already dead. (LEVINE, 2014, p. 63).

Hyde's story has been already written, in more ways than one: as a wanted criminal inhabiting a diegetic heterocosm, it is a matter of time until he is bested by Utterson and brought to justice by the police; in the world of readerly experience, however, Hyde is one of the best known antagonists in gothic fiction, whose fate is certainly known by most readers taking up his version of the story. The fatalism of the passage, an extreme emotional reaction which is frequently displayed in narratives about the *Doppelgänger*, thus doubles up parodically as a metafictional commentary that disturbs the purported goal of Hyde's narrative. His realization of the limitations of his own perspective could be described in Hutcheon's words (2004, p. 53) as "a very postmodern realization that [his] own discourses have no absolute claim to any ultimate foundation in 'truth'". What follows from such an ironic understanding, in the context of the postmodern gothic, is death — the ultimate punishment to the persecuted self in stories of the double.

In sum, in Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, the gothic motif of the *Doppelgänger* is parodically activated to relativize Hyde's description as an evil double and subsume the novel's questioning of truth claims. It is important to reaffirm that this sort of parody is not intended as a mockery of the parodied material; the whole point of an ex-centric narrative such as *Hyde* is to evidence the cracks, inconsistencies and incoherence hidden underneath the apparent continuity between segments of the interrelated network of centric assumptions governing our ideas of truth — and that is a mighty serious business. In the course of doing so, it not only questions what stands for truth in both narratives, but also exposes to whom that truth might be beneficial. Thereby, in place of a final, unquestionable Truth with a capital T, the postmodern novel propels a dynamic of relativization in which "the local, the limited, the temporary, the provisional [which] define postmodern 'truth'" gain center stage (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 43). For that to take place with any success, both novels must be pushed into the maelstrom of ideology critique — indeed, what *Hyde* does best is force

readers to go back and forth between parodied and parodic novels, to read one novel in the light of the inconsistencies of the other, so that a more relative, less definitive perspective on the events told may be constructed. That can only happen after the marginalized, ex-centric character has been given the chance to voice their silenced side of a lived experience. Previous knowledge of gothic conventions such as the monster is activated and subverted in the course of the process, which creates a tension of similarity and difference that is intrinsic to the working of the postmodern parody.

Beyond relativizing what stands for monstrosity and truth in culture, the motif of the *Doppelgänger* in Daniel Levine's *Hyde* arguably foregrounds considerations about identity as an effect of discourse. It is, in fact, possible to argue that Stevenson's record of a dual personality, materialized in the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger*, maps out on a dominant concept of cultural identity from the late nineteenth century, whereas Daniel Levine's postmodern gothic version *Hyde* parodically activates the convention, thus repeating it with difference, to account for a postmodern proposition of identity as a multiple and fragmentary construct. The parodic activation of the convention of the double in a discussion of identity will be the topic of the following subsection of our chapter.

3.2 "We can only marvel at its ruinous multiplicity"

Scholar Milica Zivkovic (2000, p. 123) argues that the motif of the *Doppelgänger* is intrinsically connected to ever changing concepts of identity. The double in gothic fiction, according this assertion, could be said to signal what Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall (1992, p. 274-275) has named a "crisis of identity", that is, a counter-discourse to a dominant concept of identity manifested in characters that embody the loss of a stable sense of self. To define identity, however, is a difficult task: as Hall (1992, p. 274) explains, not only is the notion historical, i. e. anchored in developments in modes of production, consumption, governance, and sociability, it is also "too complex, too underdeveloped, and too little understood in contemporary social science to be definitively tested". Hence, there appears to be something inherently unstable in any dominant concept of identity at any given historical time, the double being a material manifestation of its internal instability.

If we are right to ponder that concepts of identity are historically given, it follows that the emergence of modernity in the Western world may have given rise to an accompanying notion of identity, whereas the emergence of postmodernity, marking a paradoxically discontinuous continuity with modernity, as Hutcheon claims, may have caused the modern

concept of identity to enter a state of crisis. Indeed, this argument is supported by Hall (1992, p. 275), who claims that "in what is sometimes described as our post-modern world, we are also 'post' any fixed or essentialist conception of identity — something which, since the Enlightenment, has been taken to define the very core or essence of our being, and to ground our existence as human subjects". In fact, what Hall's argument appears to be suggesting is that postmodern identities — in the plural, as they are best perceived — are inherently unstable, decentered, fractured, and devoid of any strong anchorage on either self or culture. In light of this definition, we would like to argue that the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger* is used and abused in Daniel Levine's *Hyde* to give shape to the inherent instability of postmodern identities.

In "The Question of Cultural Identity", a chapter of *Modernity and Its Futures*, Hall (1992, p. 275) singles out three dominant concepts of identity that have emerged along with the rise of the modern and postmodern worlds: the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject. Those concepts, which may be aptly described as a progressive journey towards decentralization, inhabit the core of first Stevenson's, then Levine's gothic narratives of the *Doppelgänger*. According to Hall (1992, p. 281-282), a revolution in the conceptualization of identity was brought about by historical changes taking place between sixteenth-century Renaissance and eighteenth-century Enlightenment in Europe. The change was largely characterized by the rise of a new and dominant form of individualism in opposition to the theocentric medieval order, which unshackled the individual from "his" moorings in religion, tradition, and subservience to nobility. "His", as the Jamaican critic highlights, is not a casual word, given how the subject of the Enlightenment was usually described as male. We must add, however, along with Hutcheon (2004, p. 61), that the "he" implied in the Enlightenment is not only male, but also white, heterosexual, and European. All in all, up until the brink of the Enlightenment, there emerged a dominant sense that one's status, rank, and position in the order of things must no longer be overshadowed by any means that hinder one's perception of himself as a "sovereign individual".

Along with that shifting order, came a concept of one's identity as

> a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same — continuous or 'identical' with itself — throughout the individual's existence. (HALL, 1992, p. 275).

That essential and never-changing core of man's individual being, for Hall, was considered to be the core of "his" identity. Instrumental in the change, besides Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers, were Reformation and Protestantism, which debunked the supremacy of the Church, and the scientific revolution, which foregrounded methods of rational inquiry and advanced the basis of man's superiority over nature. The motto of the Enlightenment subject might be the Cartesian formula "*Cogito, ergo sum*", which emphasized both rational thinking and man's centrality as its agent. Quoting Raymond Williams, Hall (1992, p. 282) concludes that the modern history of the individual subject has brought together two distinct meanings: "on the one hand, the subject is 'indivisible' — an entity which is unified within itself and cannot be further divided; on the other, it is also an entity which is 'singular, distinctive, unique'".

According to Hall (1992, p. 283-284), as modern societies developed and grew more complex in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their collective and social imperatives came to play a more prominent part in defining identity. Although the sovereign individual continued to be a pivotal figure in the discourses of economics and the law, Darwinian biology, Psychology and the Social Sciences were instrumental in relativizing concepts of identity to ground them in external developments: Darwinian biology suggested that reasoning was anchored in nature, in the physical development of the brain, which was part of a long process of adaptation of which man had little to no rational control; Psychology, and Psychoanalysis in particular, sustained that man was not a sovereign of himself, but a vassal to his unconscious desires; and Social Sciences located the individual in collective processes and norms which arguably underpin any and all social contracts. Overall, an alternative account of identity developed, in terms of the ways "individuals are formed subjectively through their membership of, and participation in, wider social relationships; and, conversely, how processes and structures are sustained by the roles which individuals play in them." (HALL, 1992, p. 284). Hence, a new strategy for conceptualizing identity emerged from the increasing awareness that

> this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to 'significant others', who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols — the culture — of the worlds he/she inhabited. [...] The subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me', but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer. (HALL, 1992, p. 276).

As Hall (1992, p. 282) observes, the emergence of the Enlightenment and its Cartesian concept of identity grounded on the centered, unified, coherent, rational, conscious, monadic individual, is usually characterized as “the engine which set the whole social system of modernity in motion”. Therefore, the transition from a predominantly Enlightened concept of identity to a predominantly sociological one may be understood as a first significant crisis in the Enlightened conceptualization of modern identity. This inceptive crisis is latched onto a relativization of the autonomous, rational, and self-reliant capacities of the individual, whose identity is now perceived to not fully depend on the singularity of his thoughts, wants, needs, desires, and interests. The sociological concept of identity, predicated on the “‘internalizing’ of the outside in the subject, and ‘externalizing’ of the inside through action in the social world” (HALL, 1992, p. 284), requires acknowledgement of ambivalence, codependency, dialectics — in a word, duality. It is in the context of this shift or crisis in perceptions of identity that Stevenson’s *Doppelgänger* novella may be located.

The issue of identity and what defines it is undeniably embedded in Jekyll’s “full” statement of the case. It is noteworthy that, upon first transforming into Hyde, he regards the transformative drug as powerful enough to potently control and shake “the very fortress of identity” (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 44): the body. Jekyll’s fantasy of identity stands for the core nested inside the fortress, over which the body is merely a “thick cloak” (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 46); indeed, if Hyde’s body differs from Jekyll’s in looks and stature, it is due to its being a material embodiment of a single, weakened side of the core within: that of his inner “evil”. The better part of Jekyll’s, the dominant, centripetal side of his core — i. e. his essence — is his inner goodness, which had been his natural inclination from birth: from the moment he was born, he was “endowed with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future” (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 42). Yet in what exactly does that core of goodness materialize? One important element seems to be Jekyll’s capacity for rationalization; it is, after all, in the course of his extenuating scientific enquiries — tended toward the mystic and transcendental as they may be — that the discovery and isolation of “man’s dual nature” (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 42) is achieved. Another seems to be his self-reliance and active, conscious attempts at leading “a life of effort, virtue and control” (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 44): he is, or so he tries to persuade us by dint of the use of reason, a conscious and conscientious individual whose every action is dedicated at the betterment of himself and humanity. As to his being a unified, coherent whole: even if he might be said to be a compound of diverging elements, part good and part

evil, with the good side overcoming the ill one by means of a life dedicated to virtue — "even if [he] could rightly be said to be either, it was only because [he] was radically both" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 43). The duality in itself was not a testament to his incoherence, or else his inner fracturing, as long as he may have remained committed to the core of goodness and rectitude that defined and centered his "self". As a whole (no pun intended) Jekyll entertains a concept of himself as a unified, coherent, and autonomous individual, whose inner core of goodness he is able to express in rationalized language. Why, then, had his *Doppelgänger* eventually emerged?

The answer is: the emergence of desires he was not rationally able to control, and his subservience to the impositions and constraints of life in society, the internalization of both of which leads to a profound cleavage in the inner core of Jekyll's coherent self:

> And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 42).

According to this reasoning, duality is neither abnormal nor pathological *per se*; on the contrary, it is characteristic of the inner core of human nature, which is understood to be both divided and compounded by provinces of good and evil. If Jekyll's duality differs from the characteristic ambivalence of his peers, it is due to its extremity rather than its uncommon nature. Again, his extreme duplicity of life escapes any intrinsic degradation in his faults; it is instead motivated by his having been unable to balance the impulses of his "impatient gaiety" which compound his inner core and such outer expectations of seriousness, sobriety, gravity which he seems to take to heart with unusual fervor. The radical moralization of Jekyll's predicament in terms of good and evil, as well as the pride he takes in carrying his head high "before the eyes of the public", reinforce the suggestion of the strenuous internalization of social mores and cultural taboos, a formative process that depends on one's recognition of their relation to others. It is the pressures of social life, its active capacity of molding what an

individual is or must be, which ultimately suppress certain "natural" sides of the doctor's identity, thus revoking his complete agency over what must have been his autonomous, coherent, wholesome self. The conflict in turn triggers the division and projection of Hyde, Jekyll's double, whose "pure evil" nature is in fact a testament to his not abiding by any cultural taboos or social mores. Upon first transforming, Jekyll relates "a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in [his] fancy, *a solution of the bonds of obligation*, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul" (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 44, emphasis added); it appears, in other words, that Hyde embodies the transgression of social bonds, not unknown to Jekyll but no longer under his control. In short, one possible key to read the *Doppelgänger* in Stevenson's novella is as an embodied representation of the crisis of Enlightened identity *vis-à-vis* the sociological concept of identity, whereby beliefs in man's autonomy, self-reliance, and essential inner indivisibility are placed under suspicion.

The development of the *Doppelgänger* in Stevenson's novella as an embodiment of identity crisis could be said to anticipate what Hall names the decentering of the Enlightened subject in postmodernity, that is, its dislocation and fragmentation due to the loss of a stable sense of self. According to Hall (1992, p. 285-291), several advances in social theory and the human sciences in the twentieth century have progressively furthered the critique of the Cartesian subject by attacking its claims to autonomy, unity, and rationality. These revolutionary propositions include: the Althusserian reading of Marx, according to which Marxism, by placing social relations at the center of is theoretical system, rejected the Enlightened proposition of autonomous subjectivity; the Psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious, in both its Freudian and Lacanian interpretations, and its associated questioning of Enlightened rationality and unity; the Saussurean structuralist concept of language as a system and its influence on Derrida's proposition of the deferral of the final meaning, which is never in control of an "author"; Foucault's description of disciplinary power as an institutional force of subjection, and its accompanying conceptualization of identity being the effect of discourses and institutions which regulate, surveil, and govern individuals; and the emergence of identity politics in the 1960s, feminism in particular, which have decentered the Euro-phallo-hetero-centrism of Western thought. As a result of this encompassing intervention, "the Enlightenment 'subject', with a fixed and stable identity, was de-centred into the open, contradictory, unfinished, fragmented identities of the post-modern subject" (HALL, 1992, p. 291). As a result, a postmodern conception of "ex-centric" identities has been articulated in social theory. As Hall describes it:

> Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about. If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves. The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with — at least temporarily. (HALL, 1992, p. 277).

In Daniel Levine's postmodern gothic novel *Hyde*, the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger* is parodically activated — that is, repeated with difference — to signal the postmodern crisis of identity explained above. The parodic use and abuse of the motif of the double results in a lack of definition of who Hyde is supposed to be, or what Hyde is supposed to metaphorically stand for. In the novel, several explanations for the emergence of the *Doppelgänger* are tried out, examined, but never fully embraced or rejected; each explanation develops into a number of both conflating and conflicting trends which unauthorize any final, unitary, coherent definition of identity.

To begin with, Hyde may have emerged as a second personality as a result of Jekyll's dissociative personality disorder. As a child, Jekyll's father, a violinist and conductor of the Edinburgh Orchestra, had horribly abused him, forcing him to engage in precocious sexual intercourse with the maidens of the household. At those times, Jekyll would dissociate, isolating a portion of his psyche "to bear the pain. The discomfort, the humiliation, to bear it when it became unbearable" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 95) — a part of him behind whom he could "hyde", a separate personality who would emerge, when triggered, as a surrogate or scapegoat to preserve the integrity of the dominating personality. As he grows apart from his abusive father to become a celebrated "alienist", Jekyll treats a patient in France named Emile Verlaine, who has also been sexually abused by his mother. Emile's past history of abuse has similarly precipitated the birth of a second personality, Pierre. In the course of Emile's treatment, Jekyll develops a drug that functions as a trigger to summon each of the patient's personalities separately; it is then that a third, maleficent personality emerges, one who has been developing in secrecy for years: L'inconnu, the Unknown, whose function was "for Emile to punish himself" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 97). Unable to bear the pressure of his multiple personalities' inner turmoil, as well as that of Jekyll's unconventional treatment, Emile

commits suicide. Jekyll, in his turn, returns to England to continue to test the drug on himself — now summoning "Mr. Hyde", his own alter ego who has been dormant for years, as well as "Mr. Seek", a third personality, a mischievous prankster, Jekyll's own L'inconnu.

The triad Jekyll, Hyde and Seek are replicated in another triad, Emile, Pierre and L'inconnu respectively, though as the narrative progresses it becomes increasingly troublesome to determine who is a double of whom. As a consequence, two important indexes of parodic inversion of the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in the postmodern gothic novel may be pinpointed. Firstly, in the tradition of the *Doppelgänger* in fiction, the double is a derivative character, a projection of a "self" from whose point of view the uncanny events are focalized; eventually, the double threatens the self with the possibility of destruction, which deflagrates a conflict of motives between the antagonists. In Levine's postmodern version, one important trait of parodic inversion lies in the idea of Hyde being initially devised as a psychological strategy of *survival rather than self-destruction*; a "psychological mutation, an evolution of the mind" brought about as a result of Jekyll's "urgency to survive." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 93). The explanation is Darwinian in scope, and so is Jekyll's final subsuming under Hyde's dominance: "Extinction. [...] Jekyll refused to explain this concept to me. But now I begin to glimpse what *extinction* really means. I have been singled out. Selected for survival." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 3). Contrary to Stevenson's novel, then, Hyde is not as much Jekyll's evil side as he is his more resilient side, hence he does not as much overpower Jekyll out of wickedness as he outlives him. However, if Hyde does not embody self-destruction, Seek does; indeed, as Hyde's opposite in meaning, Mr. Seek is Hyde's "own demonic double stemming from [his] soles." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 288). In the postmodern gothic, doubles have doubles who have doubles — which leads us to our second index of parodic inversion: if the double is supposed to stand for the foundational experience of duality in human consciousness, as Herdman (1990, p. 1) believes it must, in the postmodern gothic it metaphorizes cleavage while resisting the idea that what results must be two halves. The possibility had been ventured prior in Stevenson's version:

> With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens. (STEVENSON, 1991, p. 43).

Yet his version of the *Doppelgänger* predominantly remains within the domain of duplication and duplicity, whereas in Levine's novel, the binary *self x double* fragments into the hinterland of multiple selves who may be suitably considered *Doppelgängers* of one another. Indeed, others have followed to outstrip Jekyll on the basis of his own reasoning: Levine's Edward Hyde is a perfect example of how the convention of the double may be activated to implicate the multifaceted and incongruous proliferation of unassimilable denizens of which postmodern subjectivity consists.

Since Hyde has been naturally selected to survive, he begins to believe that he has flourished into a man in his own right: "Just like that, I was a legitimate human being. I was Mr. Edward Hyde of Ghyll Road, an untethered entity." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 34). His assumption, however, is founded upon the exterior signs of social existence; he assumes a name, rents the house on Ghyll Road, hires a housekeeper, and has clothes tailored to suit his body to perfection, hence his feeling like a legitimate individual: "I didn't expect to enjoy that as much as I did, ridding myself of Jekyll's dragging hand-me-downs. I posed before the huge Gothic mirror in my bedroom as the wizened tailor scuttled around marking me with chalk, making me into a real person before my very eyes." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 33). It is interesting that the specular image, perhaps the clearest representation of the alter ego in gothic fiction, is what allows Edward Hyde to envisage himself as a "real self", the bearer of a "legitimate" identity, an individual apart from Jekyll; it is ironic, then, that the coming about of his identity should be described as an imposture, a performative act, in terms of his relying on the superficial signs of class and masculinity to put up a show of living in society. The (il)legitimacy of his identity stands for blending in, rather than cherishing a core of inner qualities that may ultimately remain unachievable:

> I stopped before a pawnshop one day, my attention snagged by a set of painted wooden dolls. They had been designed to nest one inside the other, all fitting within the largest oblong doll, but in the window they were arrayed in a line, ten or so, all wearing kerchiefs like Russian peasants, arranged from the largest to the smallest, which was the size of a bullet. The display unsettled me. This one dummy with so many replicas stored inside. [...] Was three the limit or could the multiplicity go on and on, like these dolls with their cryptic, replicated smiles? (LEVINE, 2014, p. 141).

The image of the Russian dolls is suitable both as a metaphor for the unending multiplicity of postmodern identities, and as a critique and ultimately a revocation of the Enlightened belief in an achievable core of human identity. The dolls suggest that what is nested inside the exterior is simply another version of the exterior, and so it is *ad infinitum*;

there are neither wicked or redeeming qualities, there is no core of either goodness or evil, there is in fact no core at all — nothing but another replica. If Stevenson's novella nods at the multiplicity of identity as a marvelous discovery yet to come, Levine's version evokes through the image of the multiplied Russian dolls the unsettling side of the radical fragmentation of identity of the postmodern subject.

So far, we have seen how Hyde is first suggested to have been "born" a fragment or second identity out of Jekyll's dissociative personality disorder, only to outlive Jekyll as a dominant personality and become an individual in his own right, even if one ridden with anxiety as to the pivotal emptiness of his inner core. Nevertheless, the character retains some of the original symbolic ambivalence of the *Doppelgänger* in that, from a protection against sexual abuse, he changes into an outlet for the discharge of Jekyll's sexual desire in often abusive ways: "All this time, convinced of his impotence. All the trouble he'd taken to hide inside while I discharged his desire" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 258), Hyde explains. Interestingly, as the story progresses, Hyde will come to represent Jekyll's ever more "perverse" sexual interests — hinging on pedophilia, as we have seen in subsection one above, and incest, homosexuality and rape, as the passage below shall illustrate:

> Jekyll pushed her into the room and shut the door. Lizzie's hair was caught in his fingers as he grasped for her face. She was trying to shake loose his grip on her nightdress. She jerked her shoulder free and backed away, crouching. Little box of a room, a desk and a bed and four pulsating walls. Lizzie's fingers were splayed and her eyes wide in the white face, her nightcap askew. No, she was whispering, sir, no, please just wait, sir, please. Jekyll reached out and she stumbled back against the bed. He caught her slender forearm, spun her in a rough pirouette, slipped his arm around her throat. You little whore, he breathed into her ear, grinding the thing into her hip. His other hand was fumbling with the buckle, and then the trousers dropped to his ankles. She kept whimpering, Please, sir, not like this, oh God, please wait. Jekyll took the collar of her cotton nightdress and tore it with a gratifying *rrrip*. He pressed her down at the edge of the bed; her knees buckled, and she collapsed onto her belly. Dizzy with urgency, he peeled off her drawers; her slim white buttocks were clamped. He drooled a glob of saliva into his fingers and then felt into her cleft for the seam. I watched him work in his thumb and smear her petals apart as Father had taught us. By the hair, Father had held us tight, a haze of whisky in our ear whispering what to do, Jekyll obediently fitting the bell of his thing into her seam and beginning to push. It was like Father was here in the room behind us, his fingers twisting our hair from our scalp, his goading whisper on our cheek. *That's it, boy, all the way in now, to the hilt*. Jekyll shut his eyes and turned his head aside and suddenly groaned out, Hide! The spasming began, a bucking from the core as the grip on our hair tightened in climax and then gradually, almost tenderly, released, his fingers fading like a ghost's. (LEVINE, 2014, p. 256).

The passage describes the rape of Lizzie, a housemaid in Jekyll's household. After years of forced celibacy, Jekyll appears to be assaulting the maiden mostly to prove to himself that he is able to engage in heterosexual intercourse without the aid of his alter ego; yet, Hyde's presence is made felt halfway through the disgusting episode, when his position shifts from that of a mere spectator of Jekyll's actions to a participant in the brutal rape of the handmaid. Besides, Hyde participates as an outlet to Jekyll's sexual desire as the venue through which the memories of the erotic touch of the father circulates, thus intimating a dominant thesis of male homosexuality being grounded on a previous experience of sexual abuse. The rape scene is arguably laden with unobtrusive homosexual undertones; metaphorically, it presents a father engaging with his sons in a ghostly threesome from hell, in which the raped maiden is made a mere conduit of the pleasure exchanged between men. The father, who had initiated Jekyll into his sexual life, remains a ghostly presence haunting his son's sexual life. Repressed memories from Jekyll's childhood uncannily emerge in the course of the act, as the ghostly figure of the father erects from sheer ether behind Jekyll and Hyde, in a position of copulation, touching him as he touches Lizzie, tightening his grip as both himself and his sons reach the orgasm.

As an outlet of socially unsanctioned desire, Daniel Levine's Edward Hyde remains connected to Stevenson's account of the emergence of the *Doppelgänger*, though in other respects it abuses the account to offer a more personal backstory to Jekyll's sufferings. Nevertheless, what matters to the critical intents of this subsection is to notice the fractured account given to the character of Hyde. The multiple sides explored in the narrative pile up rather than add up; accordingly, none of the issues raised by the progress of Hyde's characterization are ever resolved, but rather remain fractures of an incoherent whole. The novel progressively examines each alternative only to alter direction without warning and impose a different course of identification that the reader must be willing to assess. Hence, much like the Russian dolls behind the pawnshop window, Edward Hyde proliferates as a set of frenetic possibilities of identification without ever being defined by an ultimate core of definite (and definitive) identity. As readers aware of the parodic status of the postmodern novel, we ought to be aware that Hyde must be a *Doppelgänger*, an alter ego, another Jekyll, though what that other Jekyll represents in himself is denied resolution — both owing to the fact that he is not always defined in relation to Jekyll, the self of whom he is supposed to be a fragment, and in view of his claim to be his own private individual. Our reaction in contemplating the development of the character in such incongruent axes must be similar to Jekyll's: "[We] can only marvel at it, its ruinous multiplicity." (LEVINE, 2014, p. 274). In the

postmodern gothic, identity stands for a ruinous construct — not simply the physical and psychological ruin of the characters, but the ruin of humanist concepts of identity emerging from the Enlightenment.

Our brief analysis has allowed us to conclude that, in *Hyde*, the convention of the *Doppelgänger* is retained in that Hyde remains characterized as Jekyll's double, yet subverted in several ways: in rejecting duality as the defining trait of the double, refusing to reckon the double a derivative fragment of the self, and by offering several diverging explanations for who or what the double may stand for, until a final definition is lost in the superimposition of possibilities. Hyde thus embodies the fractured, random, intangible, "movable beast" that characterizes the postmodern identity as a result of the parodic activation of the gothic motif of the *Doppelgänger*. In the course of mapping out the postmodern identity as the ideological substratum of the convention of the double in *Hyde*, we have failed to address with depth one significant aspect of the fragments of which his identity is composed: Hyde's embodiment of Jekyll's homosexual desire. The problem of homosexuality in relation to the *Doppelgänger* deserves a separate approach due to the particular parodic spin given in *Hyde* to the gothic motif of the double. In the postmodern gothic novel, it is not the psychological struggle against one's abnormal homosexual impulses which the *Doppelgänger* metaphorizes, but rather the ideological dynamics of the exclusion of the homosexual different as one possible monstrous other of culture. In shifting the prism of persecution from mental to social life, the novel parodically repeats the paranoiac plot of the *Doppelgänger* with difference to emphasize the politics of homophobia in gothic fiction. The concluding section of our discussion will be devoted to examining this aspect of Daniel Levine's *Hyde*.

3.3 "I could feel Jekyll inside me"

As we have explained above, Rank interprets the double in psychoanalytic terms as an outer projection of one's fixation in primary narcissism, leading to the abnormal selection of a homosexual love object. Anxiety at having selected an abnormal, narcissistic object is metaphorized in a paranoiac plot, in which the self is persecuted by his *Doppelgänger* before suicide ensues. In Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, the insight is not lost: as far as Hyde may be described as Jekyll's *Doppelgänger* in the postmodern gothic novel, he partially embodies and discharges the doctor's homosexual impulses. From Jekyll's perspective, both in Stevenson and Levine, the projection of homosexual desire onto a *Doppelgänger* reflects the often caimed hypocrisy of Victorian ambivalence with regard to the subject of sexuality; from

Hyde's perspective, however, anarchy has free rein: to the extent where he remains pure *id*, the experience of his polymorphous sexual life is unconstrained by prohibitive social mores, and thus supremely enjoyable. See for example the following episode of "mutual" masturbation:

> I could feel Jekyll inside me, branching through my blood, stiffening from the root of my groin. Shivering as if with cold, I unbuttoned my flies and worked delicately toward the crest. I had never done it like that before, drawing it out like torture, nearing the burning brink and then ebbing back, over and over, its sensitivity toward the end so exquisite that I held our rigid life at the lowermost stem, kept it in excruciating limbo, like that paradox of halving and halving forever without ever reaching the mark — and when I crushed out the climax at last, the whole body bucked in raputre. I could not open my eyes; a brilliant grid of phosphorescence cast its tracery across the darkness. Jekyll was fused to my every nerve, welded to me. Oh God. I did not need a house, a canopy bed, satin sheets. I did not need servants, dolly, neighbours, friends. I did not need a bank account; I did not need a name. All I needed was this. (LEVINE, 2014, p. 162).

Images of being inside one another, fused to one another, welded together as if the two were one, are frequent in uncanny narratives of the *Doppelgänger* — and just as frequent in marriage vows and poems of a romantic plum. In gothic fiction, they are supposed to signal a character's terrified distress at the pathological duplication of the phallic selfsame, but never to trigger such enjoyable — romantic, even — orgasmic experiences, let alone such profuse and unexpected declarations of infatuation. It is nonetheless clear that what Hyde most longs for is the experience of romantic homosexual connection, which, considering the passage above, does not seem to signal to him any sort of terrifying psychological disturbance; on the contrary, the bulk of the social paraphernalia attendant on his performative public life can be disposed of, as long as he can enjoy feeling Jekyll inside him. Yet, it is known in advance to the reader of the postmodern parodic novel that Hyde's state of homosexual bliss will not last for much longer. Although the homosexual side of Jekyll's desires eventually subsumes the other sides, as Hyde takes over the body for good, his existence as Hyde is forbidden by Victorian social mores. Eventually, it is known to us, Hyde too will crumble under the pressure of his homophobic persecutors.

It is important to take a moment to highlight the reference to homophobia, considering how it signals another parodic inversion related to the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in Daniel Levine's *Hyde*. If it is true, as Elaine Showalter (1991, p. 107) argues, that Stevenson's *Strange Case* is best read as "a fable of fin-de-siècle homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self" — in other words, a metaphor of inceptual homophobia —

then Daniel Levine's postmodern reading of the original conveniently refocuses the gothic motif of the double to express conflicts that lie without, rather than within the mind. In the postmodern gothic novel, it is not the psychological struggle against one's "abnormal" homosexual impulses which the *Doppelgänger* metaphorizes, but rather the ideological dynamics of the exclusion of the homosexual different and his subsequent transformation into one possible configuration of monstrous otherness, as well as the many strategies of control devised at the level of social relations to "discover and resist the homosexual self". In shifting the prism of persecution from mental to social life, the novel parodically repeats the paranoiac plot of the *Doppelgänger* with difference: Hyde, the displaced and duplicated representation of homosexual desire, does not so much *persecute* Jekyll as *he is himself persecuted* by Jekyll's peers. Rather than a symbolic expression of innersome narcissistic delusion, the monstrosity accruing the homosexual *Doppelgänger* is refocused as an effect of discourse, an ideological construct aimed at the control of sexual practices and the chastisement of non-reproductive sexuality in the name of bourgeois family values, a dynamic brought about with recourse to several discursive practices of containment and discipline. Therefore, in *Hyde*, the parodic activation of the double de-naturalizes the imperative of compulsory heterosexuality inherent in dominant interpretations of the *Doppelgänger* in the novels of tradition, relying instead on an ex-centric unveiling of centric ideological premises embedded in Victorian discourses on homosexuality.

The "discovery and resistance of the homosexual self": that could have been a summary of portions of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. In the first volume of his elementary incursion into the modern configuration of biopower, Foucault (1978) examines how "sexuality" emerged as an episteme — that is, as an ideological effect carried out by a complex discursive apparatus — in the nineteenth century. By "apparatus of sexuality", Foucault means an interconnected network of discourses, disciplines, and institutions, which together have worked to convert a set of sexual experiences and practices into a correlated set of identitary paradigms — including that of the bugger, or homosexual. If it had been previously counted in the roster of unlawful sexual acts among bestiality, infidelity, and onanism, buggery or sodomy crystallized as the defining impulse of a particular homosexual nature, or identity, in or around the nineteenth century. As a result, via the discursive work of certain disciplines and institutions, such as psychoanalysis, the law, and the nuclear bourgeois family, the homosexual, in Foucault's words, became

> a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology [...] a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself [...], a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 43).

This configuration of homosexual identity, according to Foucault, is discursively created to be subsequently pathologized as unnatural and persecuted as criminal by means of those correlated disciplinary practices which apparently "discover" and "resist" the prior existence of the homosexual. As an index of identity, homosexuality is as much an effect of discourse as a source of it; hence, the paranoia of being discovered and resisted is not projected from the inside out, as if it were a truth suddenly come to light, but rather from the outside in, in the manner of inculcated cultural values harnessing and defining the terms in which desire must be experience.

Along with the "birth" of the homosexual, then, came the modern strategies of homophobic violence. In *Between Man: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests a concept of homophobia that in several respects overlaps with Foucault's discussion of sexuality, discipline, and power. In her field-defining study, the scholar defines homophobia as a mechanism of disciplinary power in the Foucauldian (1995, p. 153) sense: a practice of surveillance, governance and control directed at the regulation of bodies, desires, and identities, aiming at their docility, that is, their submission to the values of the dominant bourgeois ideology. Sedgwick (1985, p. 86) argues that in virtually every patriarchal society, their historical and cultural distinctions respected, "heavily freighted bonds between men exist, as the backbone of social form or forms". That continuum of established social bonds that relate men to one another in shared pursuits of their best interests, she names "male homosocial desire". Male homosocial desire, she argues, is an inherently oxymoronic formulation: it suggests several correlative practices of man-on-man desire for sociability or "male bonding" — including friendship, mentorship, entitlement and rivalry — while resting on a declared practice of homophobia, the fear or hatred of homosexuality and homosexual acts. Homosexuality is thus defined by default as a potentially unsanctioned expression of homosocial desire, while homophobia emerges as a set of historically contingent regulatory mechanisms that weed out and punish that prohibited form of male homosociality.

Homophobia, according to this assertion, is not directed exclusively at homosexual individuals or identities, but rather at the bonds that unite all men through ties of

exclusively-male sociability, in hopes that those transgressive identities may be corrected into culturally accepted forms of male homosocial desire. It is designed to secure that a compulsory heterosexual identity — one of the strongest discursive instruments of discipline according to the celebrated theory of Judith Butler (2002, p. xxx) — will be performed both publicly and privately. *Pace* Sedgwick (1985, p. 88), modern expressions of homophobia, emerging from the seventeenth century and consolidating throughout the modern era, operate with recourse to terror. Homophobic derision, she explains, is not consistent, but unexpected; it is not expansive, but punctual; it targets scapegoats, rather than going about a genocide of queer men; and the grandiosity of its violence is often inconsistent with the irrelevance of the perceived "crime". Homophobia is, in short, an unexpected act of terrorism; hence, it is impossible for any man, homosexual or not, to determine whether the bonds he has established with other men will eventually be targeted in "random" episodes of homophobic violence. It is the fact that a man might be targeted, that he might be scapegoated in spite of keeping vigilant, that proscribes those elements of homosocial bonding which may be interpreted as signs of something other than a merely homo*social* desire. In order to enforce its power, then, homophobia demands paranoia; *ergo* the relevance of the gothic in the investigation and enforcement of homophobic panic in European culture: not only was the genre "the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality" (SEDGWICK, 1985, p. 91), but it is also arguable that "a tradition of homophobic thematics was a force in the development of the Gothic" (SEDGWICK, 1985, p. 92).

In her study of gothic fiction and the dilemmas of homosocial desire, Sedgwick (1985, p. 91) famously singles out the gothic convention of the paranoid male "who not only is persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male". That description fits the dynamic of duplication and homosocial integration leading to homophobic paranoia displayed in Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, a novel in which the *Doppelgänger* is subjected to homophobic violence, particularly as a result of Hyde's being targeted as Stead's "London Minotaur". As we have discussed above, Hyde's paranoia is triggered in the novel due to extrinsic occurrences, mostly as a result of Stead's "Maiden Tribute" campaign. Not surprisingly, as Walkowitz (1992, p. 118) suggests, the campaign enhanced the homophobic connection of homosexuality to pedophilia in the Victorian imagination: in the back of the audience's mind, the crusade against juvenile prostitution in London was also a campaign against illegitimate, non-reproductive sexuality. In the novel, as a result of Stead's campaign, Jekyll will be subjected to Sir Danvers's "blackmail" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 200), a

word which, according to Showalter (1991, p. 112), would have suggested in a Victorian context the underlying occurrence of monstrous homosexual liaisons. Blackmailability, as Sedgwick (1985, p. 89) complements, is an effect of homophobic terror, in particular for those closeted homosexuals whose secret activities might have rendered them liable to extortion. Hence, vulnerability to blackmail, for Sedgwick, figures among the conditions for the perpetuation of modern forms of homophobia. All in all, given the transposition of a prohibitive discourse against pedophilia into the Victorian abhorrence of illegitimate homosocial bonding, it is possible to suggest that Jekyll and Hyde's paranoia in Levine's novel can be correctly discussed in terms of displaced suggestions of closeted homosexuality.

The antics of homosocial bonding between Jekyll and his peers, already a prominent characteristic of Stevenson's novella, is considerably raised in *Hyde*. Levine's novel explores in deeper detail Jekyll's relationship with his male peers, in particular Utterson and Lanyon, whose friendship going back decades is presented through flashbacks in moments of heartfelt affection: "I know you, Harry", Utterson says; "As much as any man can" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 101). Those friends, however, most quickly place Jekyll's relationship with Hyde under suspicion — as if Hyde knew Jekyll a little more than any other man could, or should. They believe their help in disentangling Jekyll from Hyde's grip is needed at every moment, and distrust that the doctor's newly arrived friend and "protégé" — a typical configuration of the homosexual *Doppelgänger*, according to Rank (1971, p. 71) — may have crossed the line separating their sanctioned expression of homosociality from another, culturally unsanctioned and monstrous (because sexual) form of male bonding. Their collective concern is made clear when Jekyll first alludes to Hyde in a conversation with Utterson, in an attempt to persuade the lawyer to elaborate a testament benefiting his "protégé". Utterson thus reacts to his friend's singular entreaties:

> Harry, forgive me, but you haven't considered this properly. [...] I'm not certain that you are in the proper frame of mind to execute such consequential decisions. The events of this year, you cannot tell me they have been without effect. I don't know what happened in Paris, and I respect your decision not to speak of it. But losing a patient under any circumstances — and then, shortly after your return, losing your father as well. [...] Harry, the manner in which your father… It must have been tremendously disturbing for you to witness such a thing. I am sorry. Obviously it's on your mind. This idea of yours seems to stem rather directly from this last contact with your father. And now you come to me wishing to leave the whole of your fortune and property to a man whose name I have never heard until tonight, a man who has suddenly reemerged out of the past [...]. Utterson shook his head and said, reproachfully, Harry. Can't you understand? I'm

> concerned. You can be truthful with me. Are you in some kind of trouble? This Hyde. Did he put you up to this? (LEVINE, 2014, p. 23).

Utterson's typically Victorian modesty — his unwillingness to name the "trouble" that haunts Jekyll — is undercut by his imperative command for the trouble to be "uttered". The tension between unspeakability and verbosity implicated in Utterson's demeanor arguably underscores the operation of the apparatus of sexuality and one of its disciplinary mechanisms, homophobia, that all-too-frequent thematic verve of gothic fiction. Let us clarify that point. Sedgwick (1985, p. 94) argues that the "unspeakable" is a distinct and pervasive gothic convention which has had a symptomatic role in the reproduction of homophobia. If she is right in claiming that "[s]exuality between men had, throughout the Judaeo-Christian tradition, been famous among those who knew about it at all precisely for having no name" (SEDGWICK, 1985, p. 94), it is not impossible to see how metaphors of the unspeakable have often been activated in gothic fiction to intimate homoerotic behavior. Yet the unspeakable is often paradoxically textualized, included in the acts of its silencing. It rises to textual configuration, for instance, in the shape of those secrets that only halfway come to the fore, perhaps in whispers, barely audible but not fully inaudible, or else as unreadable, bloated passages on the pages of a manuscript. The unspeakable, as Utterson's behavior above complementary suggests, is never an absolute injunction to silence; it is, in fact, quite its opposite, an ironic injunction to volubility, an invitation to opening up. Such an ambivalent exploration of the "unspeakable" in terms of the "speakable" it both propels and denies adds another dimension to the dominating strategy of parodic inversion of the convention of the *Doppelgänger* in Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, a novel in which strategies of silencing are projected and materialized onto their opposite "double" — on injunctions to speech.

The duplicated configuration of the unspeakable integrates the characteristic paradoxical complexity of the modern apparatus of sexuality. According to Foucault (1978, p. 8), in predicating the silencing of sexuality, in particular of those pathologized expressions of desire such as homosexuality, the apparatus of sexuality paradoxically structures a complex network of middle-class discursive and institutional spaces where the very processes of silencing must be periphrastically discussed, examined in minutiae. Hence the unspeakable, that basis of homophobic terror so central to the development of gothic conventions, could be theoretically construed as the injunction to "speak verbosely of its own silence", to quote Foucault's celebrated formula (1978, p. 8). One of such spaces in which the paradox is articulated is the institution of the law, of which Utterson is a representative; another is the

institution of the clinic, of which Lanyon figures as a beacon; yet another is politics, of which Sir Danvers is a member; yet another is the bourgeois press, of which Stead has been a prolific contributor. It is not casual, then, that all four of them will eventually pressure Jekyll to speak of the forbidden subject of Edward Hyde, either directly or indirectly: as representatives of the institutions that sustain the bourgeois ideology of compulsory heterosexuality, they are also agents of the duplicated unspeakable, instruments of disciplinary power, catalysts of homophobic proscription, propellers of the unspeakable which speaks eloquently of its silence. It is the paradoxical baring of unspeakability, the materialization into language of what should have remained unnamable, which will invite the possibility of correction, the violent disciplinary proscription of Jekyll's "hydden" homosexual identity.

Although Utterson attempts to excavate a confession out of Jekyll, he appears to have a very clear idea of the nature of the "trouble" his friend has found himself in: either Jekyll is reacting hysterically to his father's tragic passing by suicide, or he has been blackmailed by Hyde into giving over his fortune — perhaps both at once. Neither case fares better than the other in salvaging Jekyll's reputation, for both cases cast the doctor in a disconcerting light of identitary effeminacy. Blackmail would have suggested Jekyll had at some point engaged in a queer affair, and that his lover was now back to milk the doctor for all his fortune was worth, lest his secret homosexual activities should be disclosed to his chaste upper-class peers. Hysteria, too, as Showalter (1991, p. 106) highlights, was stigmatized in the Victorian times as a humiliatingly female affliction, thus it would have signaled the bodily expression of Jekyll's homosexuality. Although Utterson had heard rumors of Hyde's misdeeds, including the story of the door, the terms in which he organizes his refusal to attending to Jekyll's entreaties suggest his shock to be motivated, on a deeper level, by his suspicion that Jekyll might be a closeted homosexual. A predicament of that nature would have irked a self-righteous Victorian gentleman such as Utterson greatly, to the point where a reaction of repulsion would possibly ensue; thus it is that his "concern" for his friend manifests itself in a vehement, ironically hysterical offer of help: "Whatever it is that binds you to this man, I can help you break it. You don't have to do this on your own. Harry, for God's sake, let me help you!" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 102). His offer of assistance is mere steps away from a homophobic injunction for Jekyll to be done with Hyde, that his desire may be directed to a suitable, (hetero)sexual partner. That Jekyll repeatedly refuses his lawyer's frantic attempts to get him to break up his "unnatural" connection with Hyde only aggravates Utterson's bewilderment at what he sees as his friend's deteriorating psychosexual condition.

It is the paradoxical loquacity of the unspeakable — a social injunction that operates from the outside in, as exemplified by Utterson's reaction of loathing towards Jekyll's predilection for Hyde — that triggers the paranoiac episodes of persecution of the homosexual *Doppelgänger* in the novel. Putting it more specifically, it is only after the "monster" of abnormal homosexual behavior is forced out of the closet, and shoehorned as a monster into an order of discourse that ostensibly unauthorizes its very existence, that terror ensues. A chain of homophobic persecution whose links include virtually all other men in the narrative is consequently triggered: Enfield, who forces Hyde to pay hush money to the family of the girl he had allegedly trampled on in order to avoid scandal; Utterson, who stands guard outside Jekyll's backdoor, awaiting an opportunity to confront Hyde; Sir Danvers, who blackmails Jekyll for intel about how he transforms into his "hydden" self; Poole, whose close watching of the backdoor in the final act of the novel warrants that Hyde will not escape unpunished for his "crime"; and finally, Jekyll and Hyde themselves, both of whom eventually begin to suspect the other's ulterior motives, to the point of mutual destruction. In light of that complex ideological dynamic, it is possible to conclude that the prominent trope of the *Doppelgänger* in the postmodern gothic novel *Hyde* structures a parodic inversion of the roles typically attributed the main antagonists of Stevenson's original gothic novella: rather than concerned friends and bastions of unclenched morality fighting an evil double, Utterson & Co. are ironically presented in the postmodern version as instruments of disciplinary power, as perpetrators of homophobic violence.

At any rate, a question imposes itself: are there any actual indications that Jekyll may be a closeted homosexual, or had his peers been overreacting out of their homosexual panic alone? Hyde himself, by the beginning of his narrative, affirms that "[u]ntil now, it had merely been women [Jekyll] wanted, the novelty of women, after a life of virgin control" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 29); it bodes to ask, however, to what extent that assessment actually translates into fact. It is possible to notice that Jekyll seems to refuse the possibility of acknowledging his homosexuality publicly; that, when he is bullied in the streets of Soho by a pair of female prostitutes who call him "a fucking cock-sucking poof" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 254), he turns around and runs in terror. In several of his mysterious nightly wanderings, however, Hyde, Jekyll's personification of his concealed homosexual desire, shows subtle indications that he has engaged in man-on-man sexual play. Such episodes of homosexual play are addressed in innuendos and half-sentences: in one occasion, he confronts a man in a back alley, whom he orders to "get undressed", and later finds himself back at home, drunken and confused, yet "through the booze, [he] could smell the sharp whiff of shit from his

thumb" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 120); in another, separate occasion, he wanders for weeks on end on the streets of Whitechapel, until he eventually wakes up exhausted, only to realize that "an itchy rash had invaded [his] anus" (LEVINE, 2014, p. 165). Needless to say, there are very few ways one can end up with one's thumb smelling like feces, or with a rash in one's anus, after engaging in mysterious fumbling with fellow jockeys in the night.

This manner of subdued though evident — unspeakable — intimation of sodomy girdles homosexuality within the realm of those criminal sexual practices with which the pages of *Hyde* are filled, along with its sister practice, pedophilia. Arguably, Jekyll's suspected homosexual practices might not only tarnish his reputation, but also pose legal danger to his person, as sodomy and other homosexual misdemeanors were punishable under the English law. That was, in part, a result of Stead's campaign against juvenile prostitution in London: although sodomy had been punishable by death since The Buggery Act 1553, later turned to life imprisonment sentence since The Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, one particular consequence of the "Maiden Tribute" series was the criminalization of all acts of "gross indecency between males" under the infamous Labouchere Amendment to The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. In practice, the Amendment not only raised the age of sexual consent from 13 to 16 years of age, but also criminalized all and any homosexual acts among consulting adults, which came to be punishable with a penalty of two-year prison plus hard labor. Not for nothing, as Showalter (1991, p. 112) explains, the Labouchere Amendment was popularly referred to as the "Blackmailer's Charter": it laid closeted homosexuals, particularly those originating from the upper classes, considerably more vulnerable to having the "unspeakable" secret of their homosexuality publicly addressed.

The overall characterization of homosexuality in terms of transgression, criminality, and violent perversion — in short, in terms of the unspeakable — contributes to situating the postmodern gothic novel *Hyde* as historiographic metafiction: it can be read as an index of historical awareness on the part of the author, who demonstrates his understanding of the discursive configuration of homosexuality and homophobia at the time of the publication and circulation of his source material. Furthermore, the associated exploration of both fictional and historical textual evidence — Stevenson's novella, the "Maiden Tribute" series — serves the parodic purpose of criticizing, from a postmodern vantage point, the tenets of the modern forms of homophobic ideology which circulated equally through the materiality of fictional, journalistic and legal discourses in the Victorian era. Criticism of that sort is more often than not shaped as an ex-centric exercise, which aims at revalorizing a marginalized experience *vis-à-vis* the problematization of the ideological premises that sustain its marginalization.

Still, the fact that Hyde the character eventually crumbles under the pressure of his homophobic persecutors suggests that *Hyde* the novel ultimately fails to commit to a positive ex-centric perspective on homosexuality.

The novel's failure in sustaining its ex-centric allegiance with Hyde's perspective against the homophobic proscription of homosexuality is in part determined by the very limits imposed by the parodic intent displayed in the postmodern gothic: Levine's respectful approach to his source material, added to his explicit intention of not fully transgressing the original account, may have unauthorized any extreme desecration of its diegetic premises, whereby Hyde's survival might be safeguarded. More importantly, however, problems of ideological coherence may have surfaced as a result of the postmodern parodic exploration of the gothic, an ideologically ambivalent genre in itself: when a novelist is committed to the ex-centric dismantling of certain ideological values — in this case, those of compulsory heterosexuality — while relying, to the utmost of historical awareness, on the activation of narrative strategies of a genre so utterly implicated in the proscription of homosexual behavior, problems of ideological coherence are bound to take shape. Parody may be defined as repetition with difference, and still repetition may at times prevail; that does not translate as a rule, as we will see in our analysis of Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* in the following chapter, but in *Hyde* that may have been the case. None of the indeterminacy thus achieved is to the detriment of the novel's narrative strengths: the paradoxes of postmodernism, as Hutcheon argues, are irresolvable.

Still, it is possible to advance another, more buoyant interpretation of the prohibition of homosexuality in *Hyde*: standing on the edge of postmodern parodic appropriation in the year 2014, Levine may have been suggesting that, with respect to homosexual desire, we are still very much "the Other Victorians" as Foucault (1978, p. 2) has shrewdly put it. In other words, we are, to this day and as a society, dominated by an imperative to punish those who do not conform to normative configurations of desire in the name of the still dominant ideology of the bourgeois middle-class. It is not, then, that *Hyde* ultimately excommunicates its ex-centric sympathy for the plight of the persecuted homosexual, but that it dramatizes the ongoing violence of disciplinary power and homophobic prohibition. If that interpretation is correct, its buoyancy is limited by the consequences it imparts: the ex-centric fundamental concern for respecting and celebrating difference, as Hutcheon (2004, p. 61; 67) defines it, has not yet managed to fulfill its promise of communal integration in full. A novel such as *Hyde* may indeed share glimpses of those "liberating effects of moving from the language of alienation (otherness) to that of decentering (difference)" (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 62) while

offering a humanized perspective of its hitherto silenced protagonist; yet the ultimate homophobic subjection of Edward under the logic of alienation and otherness reveals that the political work of postmodernism is far from done. Hence the continuing relevance of its aesthetic discursive strategies — not least of them parody, "the form that heterogeneity and difference often take in postmodern art." (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 66).

In sum, in Daniel Levine's *Hyde*, the gothic motif of the double is repeated with difference in that the *Doppelgänger* expresses cultural anxieties relating to homosexual and homosocial desire, yet reframed in terms of the exercise of homophobic discipline *vis-à-vis* the apparatus of sexuality towards the maintenance of compulsory heterosexuality. In *Hyde*, the double is presented as a victim of homophobic persecution rather than an agent of abnormal homosexuality; consequently, terror, an effect of revulsion and fear typically triggered by confrontation with a *Doppelgänger*, emerges as a result of homophobic strategies of control which render a subject liable to paranoiac reactions, rather than the refusal of a supposedly perverse manifestation of desire. By repeating the paranoiac plot of the *Doppelgänger* with difference, the novel advances the argument for homosexuality as an ideological construct, an effect of discourses, institutions and disciplinary practices which first create and subsequently pathologize, criminalize, and proscribe the homosexual as a monstrous other of culture. Through its postmodern prism of analysis, the novel suggests that the Victorian discourse on homosexuality is still prevalent, hence the postmodern valorization of the ex-centric in terms of difference rather than alterity is yet to fulfill its progressive promise of liberation.

In light of our analysis, it is possible to affirm that Daniel Levine's *Hyde* can be described as a fictional "textwork" in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to a complex revision of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In the course of the novel's parodic revision of the literary and historical past, the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger* is both installed and subverted in order to give shape to the novel's ironic inversion of the gothic tradition. This metafictional strategy, which demands continuing engagement from the reader in order to be actualized, is paradoxically meant as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the monstrosity of Edward Hyde, the actualization of truth claims, the problem of identity as a fractured construct, and homophobic persecution. Those problems, which are nested both in gothic fiction and in Western liberal humanism as a whole, are thus examined critically, whereas the parodic "textwork" draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of

cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. For all of that, *Hyde* qualifies as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

In the following chapter, we will analyze Jeanette Winterson's novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* in order to assess whether it can be characterized as a postmodern gothic parody of Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*.

CHAPTER FOUR
A KISS AT THE HEART OF GOTHIC: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *FRANKISSSTEIN: A LOVE STORY*

In this chapter we will explore Jeanette Winterson's novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* in terms of its ex-centric postmodern parodic reading of Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. Each following subsection will focus on the parodic activation of the conventions of gothic fiction as they are presented in *Frankenstein*, while issues of the ideological dimension will be addressed whenever possible. In subsection one, "The history we are making", we will analyze instances of the use and abuse of the gothic convention of the ghost of the past in the postmodern gothic novel, in order to understand how the resurfacing of the past in ghostly guise structures a critique of ideological undercurrents regarding the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, and history. In subsection two, "This futuristic charnel house", we will examine the parodic repetition with difference of the gothic convention of the *locus horribilis* in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, with emphasis placed on the strategies of ironic inversion at play in the novel's treatment of the settings of the charnel house and the laboratory. In subsection three, "Freak", we will zoom in on how parody structures a reversal of expectations regarding the convention of the monster in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, in that the monster is valorized as an authentic self while the system of social values that caters to the regulation of bodies and identities is rendered monstrous, its monstrosity being predicated on the violence it deploys to ensure its own sustenance. By the end of the chapter, it will have become clear that the formal, pragmatic and ideological dimensions of parody conflate in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* as the novel paradoxically revises and criticizes from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, history, the future of science, and the making of monstrosity. For all of that, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* will in time qualify as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

4.1 "The history we are making"

On January 1st., 1818, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley published, anonymously, the first version of her debut gothic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. In her groundbreaking novel, which would eventually be considered the inaugural act of the modern

science fiction genre, Mary Shelley deploys typical conventions of eighteenth-century gothic fiction such as the proliferation of picturesque scenarios, the deployment of extreme emotional states and the presence of a grotesque creature; these features are nonetheless adapted to the context of radical effervescence and scientific development that marked the development of rationalism in the context of the Enlightenment. The fortuitous political complexity of Mary Shelley's novel, not to say its reinvigorating up-to-dateness in light of the medieval archaisms of eighteenth-century gothic, adding to the mythic imagery of a mad scientist engaged in a secret activity of monster-making, has given rise to one of the most influential and compelling examples of the gothic in Western literature, one that continues to resonate with audiences and fictionists two centuries later. Proof of that is the publication of Jeanette Winterson's novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, which pays homage to the bicentennial of Shelley's novel, to the author herself, and to the multiple philosophical, moral, and ethical questions *Frankenstein* has never ceased to generate since it first came out.

The narrative of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is organized in three levels of framing, which, by drawing attention to the structuring of the story *as story*, contribute to characterizing the novel as an example of metafiction. In the outermost frame, the reader is introduced to Robert Walton, an adventurer who intends to explore the deepest chasms on Earth, enlisting for that purpose a crew of sailors to accompany him on an expedition towards the North Pole. Walton communicates with his sister, Mrs. Margaret Saville, through letters in which he expresses both the extent of his ambition and the lack of intellectually stimulating friendship he experiences in the course of his adventure. On one surprising occasion, when Walton's vessel is stranded in glaciers and its occupants have lost hope of release, the captain catches glimpses of a frightening shape in the mist; although similar in appearance to that of a human being, the shape, which tracks across icebergs on top of a sledge, stands out for its gigantic proportions. Crew members subsequently pinpoint a delirious gentleman, himself driving a sledge, stranded on a fragment of floating ice, and fish him into the vessel.

The gentleman is Victor Frankenstein, protagonist of the novel's larger and more encompassing midsection. Born in Geneva the eldest offspring of affluent parents, Frankenstein has from a child been interested in the natural sciences, yet no more so than in the mysterious arts of alchemy. Raised in the company of his brothers, Ernest and William, and his adoptive sister Elizabeth Lavenza, who has been promised to him in wedlock, Frankenstein leaves his father's house at age seventeen to pursue a degree at the University of Ingolstadt, where most professors repudiate his interest for the basics of alchemy. Though his interest for alchemy is never fully quenched, the youth throws himself diligently into the

study of chemistry and biology, thus easily surpassing his classmates in the consistency of his evolution and the novelty of his conclusions — among which lies the supreme and groundbreaking discovery of "the principle of life", of how to endue dead matter with life again. The discovery awakens in Frankenstein the wish to manufacture a new being — stronger, more handsome, and more perfect than man himself. Over the course of countless nights, in absolute secrecy and against his better judgment, the scientist harvests cemeteries, charnel houses, and morgues for bones, organs, tissue and other parts of the human body; these he intends to gather, sew together, and inflate with the divine spark of life.

The task, as ambitious as it is morally degrading, ends on a terrible November night; after toiling uninterruptedly to achieve his horrific ends, Frankenstein finally witnesses the creature of gigantic and deformed proportions he has put together half-open its bleary eyes and articulate desperate and unintelligible sounds. Overcome with horror at the sight of the living creature, he escapes the laboratory in a fright, leaving behind his monstrous progeny to fend for himself. In the wake of his successful but ultimately horrific experiment, Frankenstein, once a lively and agreeable youth, is ridden with profound regret. After a succession of sleepless nights, he plans to return to Geneva, in the company of his friend Henry Clerval. He is greeted upon arrival with dire news: his little brother William has been murdered. The accused murderer, Justine Moritz, a member of the Frankenstein household, is tried and sentenced to death on the gallows. On a belated visit to his brother's grave, however, Frankenstein is surprised by the approach of a shadow of enormous size watching him from afar; he is quick to recognize in the fleeting shape the fruit of his secret creation, and is taken over with certainty that the creature, and not Justine, is the true culprit of his brother's murder.

He is soon accosted by the creature, who is willing to tell his tale, thus triggering the third and innermost frame of the narrative. In his report, the creature bitterly recalls how, upon his first coming into being, and after being left for dead by his runaway creator, his hideous appearance had rendered him a target to the hostility of mankind. Hidden in a barn adjacent to a cottage in the woods, where a family of French exiles, the DeLaceys, cohabited in poverty, he had secretly observed the habits of the residents and learned from them the meaning of the noblest human feelings — filial respect, commiseration, mutual help. His observation of their habits had helped him master the use of language, which he had then perfected through reading. His intellectual progress had eventually led him to hypothesize that, even though he was capable of nurturing noble feelings, social contempt for him was due to his unusual physical appearance. Yet the need to establish bonds of affection with others had in due time led him to introduce himself to the DeLaceys, in hopes that they would welcome him in spite

of what they too might perceive to be a monstrous deformity. With the exception of the family patriarch, who was visually impaired and thus unable to judge him by his preternatural looks, the DeLaceys had fled in horror at the creature's approach. Once again disinherited, he had sworn revenge against his creator and the entirety of the human race — unless, that is, Frankenstein should agree to manufacture a second being, a female creature and companion, in exchange for the appeasement of his anger. Horrified, but taken hostage by the monster's demands, Frankenstein agrees to put together a female body, a companion of sorts for his foundling son. Moments before animating the body with the spark of life, he anticipates disastrous consequences should the new race he has created decide to procreate, which leads him to destroy the female body in a frenzy. Enraged at another betrayal, the monster promises Frankenstein that he will be with him on the night of his wedding to Elizabeth, hinting at an attack against the scientist's bride. The threat is duly fulfilled. On the wedding night, the creature strangles Elizabeth. Surrounded by tragedy and death, Frankenstein vows to exterminate the monster of his own creation, thereby chasing him to the ends of the world.

Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* may be characterized as a postmodern gothic novel in that it repeats Shelley's famous novel with difference while parodically engaging elements, tropes and conventions of gothic fiction originating from the preceding novel. In order to approach Winterson's novel in terms of its parodic appropriation of the gothic, we must first provide an overview of how it engages Mary Shelley's novel at the diegetic level. In Winterson's version, Mary Shelley's narrative is never tackled directly, never made over in the manner of Adele Griffin's *Tighter* or Daniel Levine's *Hyde*; indeed, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* is not so much a detailed rewriting as it is an incursion into the cultural legacy of *Frankenstein*, including the problems of sexual and gender politics it has been suggested to metaphorize, as well as a sustained examination of the unforeseen developments of its fictional subject matter into matter-of-fact problems now comprising the rise of biotechnology, the burgeoning of cryonics, and the development of robotics towards what has been named by Rosi Braidotti (2019, p. 31) a posthuman condition: the convergence of posthumanism[11] on the one hand and post-anthropocentrism on the other, being that "the former focuses on the critique of the humanist ideal of 'Man' as the allegedly universal measure of all things, while the latter criticizes species hierarchy and human exceptionalism".

[11] The term "posthuman" ought to be understood here in its most general assumption. It is not, however, without political implication; for example, in the context of decolonial studies, Walter D. Mignolo (2018, p. 119) has suggested that posthumanism "presupposes that all on the planet is posthuman when, in reality, modernity has reduced the majority of the population to quasi-human". These implications escape the scope of our discussion of the postmodern parody of gothic fiction, but they could certainly be examined in relation to Winterson's novel. For a more detailed discussion, cf. WALSH; MIGNOLO, 2018.

In its most elementary definition, the posthuman, in the words of scholar Scott Jeffery (2003, p. 1), comprises those "forms that blurred the line between the human and technology and the human and animal". *Frankenstein*, which may be argued to have established the modern blueprint of the posthuman in gothic fiction, looms over the intermeshed network of posthuman quandaries raised by Winterson, at once as a theme, a metaphor, a symbol, a generative hodgepodge of literary tropes, narrative artifice, philosophical and ethical issues, and questions of ideology and social life that Winterson weaves together in a vertiginous succession of fragments. Not much happens in Winterson's novel in terms of plot, although two distinctive storylines may be seen to intersect. The first storyline follows Mary Shelley's toil towards the creation of her "hideous progeny" in the eighteenth century. As well-known as *Frankenstein* itself may be the anecdote of its creation, as recounted by Jerrold E. Hogle (2017, p. 16-26). In 1816, young Mary Godwin, daughter of philosophers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, elopes across Europe in the company of her lover and husband-to-be, the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. In Geneva, they reside in the Maison Chapui, on the outskirts of the picturesque Villa Diodati, the Swiss abode of their poet friend, Lord Byron. In their sojourn at the Villa Diodati, they are joined by the doctor John Polidori and Claire Clairmont, Mary's half-sister and Byron's paramour. The rain pours down; conversation revolves around poetry, the scientific advances of galvanism, the origin of the life principle, the Luddites uprising in England, the French Revolution, and sexual politics. At regular intervals, the sojourners peruse translations of German *Schauerromane*, filled with supernatural occurrences, violent crime, and charming, rebellious bandits. At the end of three particularly stormy nights, which leave them confined indoors, Byron proposes a competition: each must compose a frightening story, which will then be read and judged by their peers. By the end of their stay, only two stories had emerged: *The Vampyre*, brought to light by Polidori from a discarded argument by Lord Byron, and now considered the forefather of the modern vampire tale; and the first draft of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

As Winterson's novel tracks down further interactions among the fictionalized versions of these historical characters — a typical strategy of historiographic metafiction —, in particular Mary Shelley's succession of miscarriages and the death by drowning of her husband, the second storyline is introduced by means of a parodic strategy of trans-contextualization. In the present, Ry Shelley, a transgender man, is engaged in a complicated romance with Victor Stein, a scientist and A. I. advocate described as a "high-functioning madman" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 113). Ry, who is a medical doctor, has been enlisted to provide Victor with severed body limbs that the scientist wishes to scan and

study, with hopes of furthering scientific advances in the field of transhumanism, defined by Jeffery (2013, p. iv) as "the philosophy and practice of human enhancement with technology". On surface level, Victor claims to be in search of ways to enhance longevity with recourse to technology; yet secretly Victor conducts experiments of another kind in an underground laboratory in Manchester, where he plans to develop once and for all Hans Moravec's prospective technology of scanning and uploading brains to computers — a common transhuman ambition according to Jeffery (2013, p. 13; p. 30). One particular brain he wishes to upload is I. J. Good's, a famous British mathematician and Victor's former mentor, whose head has been preserved in cryonics at the Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, to be defrosted back into life whenever the technology may be available. Another such individual is, of course, Victor himself, "[a] man who wants to be without his body" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 153). What Victor wishes, he explains, is to overcome death — to be able to "upload [his] consciousness, to a substrate not made of meat" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 110), but at present the operation of scanning and copying his brain contents would kill him. Victor's research is unknowingly sponsored by Ron Lord, a wealthy mogul in the promising field of sexbots whose fiancée, Claire, an evangelical fundamentalist, has plans of releasing a Christian version of a sexbot. Meanwhile, Victor is stalked by Polly D., a journalist for the *Vanity Fair* magazine who suspects the scientist may be involved in shady enterprises. The five of them eventually end up trapped in the undergrounds of Manchester as Victor reanimates I. J. Good's head — though he vanishes from sight before the deed is made public.

It is not our intention to develop in detail the complex issues brought about by the field of critical posthumanities in this chapter, but simply to pinpoint eventual moments when the posthuman might intersect with the gothic in the terms we are currently analyzing. Having thus provided a short overview of *Frankissstein: A Love Story* and its parodied material, it is time we proceed with our analysis of strategies of parodic repetition with difference which contribute to characterizing the novel as a postmodern gothic "textwork". As we have argued in previous chapters, the postmodern parody — hence the postmodern gothic — often consists of the use and abuse of a source material, one that points both outwards at the world as the means to a critique of ideology and inwards at itself as an example of metafiction. One very emblematic overt linguistic metafictional strategy in Winterson's postmodern gothic novel is the slight transformation of the title of its parodied material from Fran*ken*stein to Fran*kiss*stein. This purposeful sliding in form has implications for a conversant slide in meaning, as it arguably signals a parodic intent of subverting genre and gender expectations regarding terror as the defining element of gothic fiction — a strategy so pervasive in

Frankissstein: A Love Story that it will be addressed in relation to the three major conventions of the gothic we have singled out for study in each of this chapter's subsections. It will be recalled that, for David Punter (1996a, p. 13), terror is the affect that provides continuity to the tradition of the gothic over centuries, hence "where we find terror in the literature of the last two centuries [...], we almost always find traces of the gothic". Fear, according to the scholar, is an index of form, style and the social relations of the texts (PUNTER, 1996a, p. 18); it is materialized in the gothic in narrative strategies such as its convoluted style, its disorienting plotlines, and the irruption of the fantastic to collapse the grounds of realism, as well as in its foremost narrative conventions, which we have trimmed down to the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly manifestation of the past, and the monster. Notwithstanding that which might be deemed the defining element of the gothic, by focusing on a potential "kiss" lying at the heart of *Frankenstein*, Winterson seeks to carve a love story out of its gothic source material; conversely, it may be she is in pursuit of a gothic story which is not all terror, which is not even *necessarily* terror, one in which terror comes not from where the tradition of gothic fiction has for two centuries claimed it does. The parodic intent of troubling the linkage of gothic to its most prolific tropes and its most expected range of affect contributes to shaping a continuous parodic play on the gothic, whereby its conventions are both used to generate fear, and abused to undercut the affects of terror thus generated. It is parody's doing to bring that subversive stance to light.

We shall begin to explore the strategy in question with a brief discussion of how the past and its continuing effects on the present, a gothic convention typically referred to as the ghostly manifestation of the past, is parodically deployed in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. In Winterson's postmodern gothic novel, both the repetition of storylines and its enhancement of the coexistence of fictional and historical characters allow for an examination of the possible continuities and discontinuities between past and present, history and fiction, textual narcissism and extratextual ideology, which betrays the novel's concern with history in the established terms of historiographic metafiction, as defined by Hutcheon (2004, p. 105). The duality of storylines in the postmodern gothic novel foregrounds the quintessential problem of history in relation to parody. We have argued before that historical awareness is a foremost (though often overlooked) element of parody, given how parodic "textworks" activate *history* in the act of activating past *stories*; *ergo*, engaging parodically with a text from the past, either by trans-contextualization or inversion, is a means to engaging with history itself — both tradition, i. e. the history of fiction, and the history of the meanings inherent in social life, i. e. those hegemonic values and codes which constitute a dominant ideology at any given time.

Those issues remain central to *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, a novel in which the ironic dialectic of repeating with difference relies on a specific exploration of chronology. In the course of Winterson's novel, the past emerges into the present in both overt and covert form: On the one hand, the dual chronology of the novel, whereof characters and situations mirror one another between chronologically separate storylines, highlights the uncanny continuity of dangerous preconceptions emerging from the past, particularly those regarding sexual and gender difference; on the other hand, the evocation of Frankenstein's dilemma in his postmodern counterpart, Victor Stein, actualizes the content of Shelley's novel in terms of the evolution of Artificial Intelligence and its push towards the posthuman. In both cases, the convention of the ghostly repetition of the past is paradoxically deployed to both generate and dispel effects of terror.

At the outset, the repetition of storylines in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* serves the purpose of actualizing the dilemmas of the past, which are thus suggested to remain in their core none too different from those of the present. For instance, in the early eighteen hundreds, as Mary Shelley writes the first draft of *Frankenstein*, she ponders on what the nature of humanity is: "The monster I have made is shunned and feared by humankind. His difference is his downfall. He claims no natural home. He is not human, yet the sum of all he has learned is from humankind." (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 128). In the twenty-first century, Mary's musing upon the nature of artificial life morphs into a mirror image of the characteristics of A. I.: shunned and feared by many, not natural, not human, yet a sum of all possible human learning. The repetition would seem to suggest that the quandaries humanity has faced in the past two centuries have remained the same; it is just that scientific developments such as the advent of superintelligences have opened up other venues for the asking of those questions with which humanity has long grappled. If readers are aware of how the creation of artificial life in *Frankenstein* brings about an apparent endless streak of destruction, death and terror, they must be ready to anticipate a similar outcome lying ahead of A. I.; as Ry puts it, Victor's defense of Artificial Intelligence and Ron Lord's empire of sexbots might be the harbingers of "an end to the human" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 199), the ultimate means of destruction of what singularizes humanity — the body, in Ry's opinion. Since Victor's studies are a step too close to breaking the barrier of death towards a "disembodied" lifestyle, readers are invited to conclude that his experiments, mysterious and unclear as they may remain, are always on the verge of breaking out a posthuman version of destructive artificial life; therefore the potential of Victor's agenda to deflagrate a new age of terror remains in the horizon of readerly expectations. The past, thus evoked in an actualization of Frankenstein's dilemma in the

unforeseen consequences potentially faced by Victor Stein, makes itself present as a ghostly warning to be heeded: never meddle with the laws of the natural world, lest terror ensue. That is precisely the fateful nature of the ghost of the past in gothic fiction and, to a certain extent, the cautionary nature of the questions raised in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*.

That is also, however, where the ironic inversion of parody comes into play in the postmodern gothic: where *Frankenstein* is a hopeless cautionary tale of science gone rogue, a warning against the excesses of the scientist's *hubris* — the presumption and ambition with which he has overridden the divine prerogative of the creation of life, as defined by scholar Julio Jeha (2009, p. 11) —, its postmodern counterpart paradoxically takes on a less caustic stance on scientific progress. The pursuit of Artificial Intelligence might provide a mad scientist with the means to overcoming mortality; yet it might also provide knowledge of "how to preserve and rewarm donated organs [so that] we can store those organs for use as needed." (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 186). It may empower "autistic-spectrum white boys with poor emotional intelligence and frat-dorm social skills" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 76) to finally get laid — with a bot, but still laid; yet it may also empower a trans man to pursue surgery to "align [their] physical reality with [their] mental impression of [themselves]" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 188). If positive transformation of some kind may be achieved against the grain of the impending cataclysm, the posthuman may be more than the end of the human: it may conversely be the means for the continuation of "the human dream" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 344), what Rosi Braidotti (2019, p. 32) has optimistically deemed "a way of reconstituting the human"; a new mode of being human in the world, a means to enhancing humanity rather than destroying it. Instead of terror at the end of the human, it may bring the joy of a new beginning of the human dream. Frankenstein's tale, the novel thus seems to suggest, may be more than a repository of the flaws to avoid; it may provide the teachings of the route to follow — who is to say for sure? Certainly not Winterson, who does not seem to pick sides as both of these probabilities unfold.

That is not a strategy on Winterson's side to avoid the ethical implications inherent in examining Frankenstein's *hubris*, but in fact one to highlight aspects of its reach that may have been camouflaged under the strength of the mythical quality of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Where in Shelley's novel Frankenstein's creation is treated as inherently transgressive for being the result of the scientist's *hubris* — "A new species would bless me as its creator and source", Frankenstein wonders, "Many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs" (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 52) —, in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* the

multiple advances in the fields of A. I. are suggested to be little hazardous, if not neutral in themselves. If they turn out to be destructive, Winterson ponders, it is due to their being operated on the soiled ground of societal mores and preconceptions of multiple sorts, many of which tend to target and undermine the ex-centrics, those marginalized by dominant ideologies. Science (and creative work as a whole, for all that matters, including the creation of fiction), the novel suggests, is entangled in political forces which shape what is and what is to come, forces such as those of misogyny and sexual politics; hence in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* the uncanny forebodings of history are more strongly felt by the unrelenting influence of an androcentric hegemonic ideology in limiting the roles women and other gender minorities have been allowed to play in the progress of humanity.

Let us see an example of how this unfolds. In the eighteenth century storyline, Mary reflects profusely on the origins of humanity and of man's creative faculties. Over the course of the summer, she discusses the matter in profundity — though, as far as her peers are concerned, never in equality — with Shelley, Byron and Polidori:

> Byron is of the opinion that woman is from man born — his rib, his clay — and I find this singular in a man as intelligent as he. I said, It is strange, is it not, that you approve of the creation story we read in the Bible when you do not believe in God? He smiles and shrugs, explaining — It is a metaphor for the distinction between men and women. He turns away, assuming I have understood and that is the end of the matter, but I continue, calling him back as he limps away like a Greek god. May we consult Doctor Polidori here, who, as a physician, must know that since the creation story no living man has yet given birth to anything living? It is you, sir, who are made from us, sir.
>
> The gentlemen laugh at me indulgently. They respect me, up to a point, but we have arrived at that point.
>
> *We are talking about the animating principle*, says Byron, slowly and patiently as if to a child. Not the soil, not the bedding, not the containment; the life-spark. The life-spark is male.
>
> Agreed! said Polidori, and of course if two gentlemen agree that must be enough to settle the matter for any woman. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 12-13).

Women, the gentlemen believe in tandem with centuries-old preconceptions, are dominated by their physical impulses, whereas men are the natural bearers of the spirit, the spark that animates the physical body. Ironically, part of Frankenstein's ruin in Shelley's novel is that he, a man, creates life from pure "clay" in the absence of woman, yet the (also male) life he creates is much less the epitome of the spirit than a physical catastrophe that fills his heart with horror and disgust (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 55). If it is true, as scholars Ellen Moers (1976, p. 94) and Karen Karbiener (2003, p. xxv) argue, that children and motherhood were at

the back of Mary Shelley's head while she wrote *Frankenstein*, then the passage above suggests that Mary's concerns with the problem of creation were probably filtered by her recognition of how sexual politics plays a role in determining and limiting the conditions of who is allowed to create. She is treated with contempt when she points out that the gentlemen's understanding of the animating principle of humanity is not a neutral one — that when they speak of humanity as "*human*kind" from the pinnacles of their liberal, Enlightened minds, they are actually speaking of "*man*kind", of those who are not women. Indeed, respect for the woman dwindles when she questions the presumptions of patriarchy, here exemplified through the gentlemen's shared and to them unquestionable belief in man's prerogative as the prime generator of humanity's intellectual and spiritual prowess, source and origin of the "life-spark". All in all, the scene suggests that the leading poets of English Romanticism, overall supporters of freedom and radical revolution, may have often been unable to see past the subjugation of some of their closest peers, and might even have enforced it when considering women to be naturally inferior to men.

It might have been expected that prejudice of the sort Mary Shelley had to endure two centuries ago would have been over by now; "Think how far and how fast we've travelled in the last 200 years" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 108), Victor eagerly claims, and so we are willing to believe. Yet, if his evaluation applies perfectly to the swiftness of scientific progress since the aughts of Industrial Revolution, it lacks insight about the unhurried pace with which social change appears to proceed. Those ahead of the A. I. revolution, either the science geniuses or the capitalist buffs, may be witnessing technology evolve faster than their eyes can follow, and yet remain almost Victorian in how they go about their businesses — or so is suggested in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. As a result, the altruistic ends of the posthuman world they envision, one where "[t]here will not be a division between [...] binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 79), may end up botched by the reproduction of the power politics inherent in the real world they inhabit. Ron Lord, for instance, the sexbot franchise mogul who claims to be starting the future of sex, is unable to avoid the trap of objectification of women and gender imperatives as he goes about his business. "They're all pretty. We're all kings" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 51), he says of his bots — an acknowledgement of how the future of sex Ron ideates is bound to reproduce male dominance and the culture of female objectification. His description of the "Deluxe" version of his line of sexbots is another among many instances in which what might be called the sexual politics of robotics is made clear:

> Deluxe has a big vocabulary. About 200 words. Deluxe will listen to what you want to talk about — football, politics or whatever. She waits till you're finished, of course, no interrupting, even if you waffle a bit, and then she'll say something interesting.
> What like? Oh, well, something like; *Ryan, you're so clever. Ryan, I hadn't thought about it like that. Do you know anything about Real Madrid?*
> Yeah — that's what I mean about education. Climate change. Brexit. Football. This model is a companion — and that's how we'll forward her career as the technology develops.
> Some men want more than sex. I get that. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 46).

What Ron really "gets" is that what men want, beyond sex with a non-responsive partner whose desires do not need to be met, is a female companion who caters to them as though they were true kings. That is not all: aside from being unable to think of women as other than an ear for a man's ramblings, Ron is also unable to conceive of both men and women outside the binary. He keeps calling Ry "Ryan" until he finds out that the doctor is trans and Ry is actually short for Mary. That Ry defines themselves as hybrid, as "a man but anatomically also a woman" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 119), is unthinkable to Ron, who every now and then resorts to that now futile question: "Listen, Ryan, or Mary, or whatever your name is, I'm not being personal, but have you got a dick?" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 85). For Ron, "manhood" equals "dickhood"; hence, since Ry does not have a dick, they are "not a bloke really, so what blokes want is not about [them]" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 85). The novel's warning, in short, is quite clear: as long as the Ron Lords are ahead of the future of A. I. sex, we can expect it to reproduce some of the worst biases and prejudices of humanity.

Victor, in his turn, when questioned about the dangers of A. I. reproducing sexual bias — "*Professor Stein, as you know, the Hanson robot, Sophia, was awarded citizenship of Saudi Arabia in 2017. She has more rights than any Saudi woman.* [...] *Will women be the first casualties of obsolescence in your brave new world?*" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 74) — replies that "A. I. need not replicate outmoded gender prejudices" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 74); as the argument goes, once A. I. is able to reprogram itself, it will eventually overcome any human bias grounded in the likes of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, or nationality. The world he envisages is one where artificial superintelligence will democratize the human experience of difference rather than supplant it. Yet, even if Victor presents a public "deconstructed" persona, when Ry presses him on the subject of their relationship he falls back into the trap of misogyny which not even he — a man who wants to be without his own body — is able to live past.

> I like your dick, I tell him. You'll miss it when you're just a brain in a box.

> I'll miss it or you'll miss it? He pushes me off and tucks himself neatly into his trousers, adjusting to the left. He says, Sex happens in the head.
> You could have fooled me. I thought it was happening in your dick.
> Pleasure receptors can be anywhere, he said. Even for a brain in a box.
> OK. Let's imagine that's what you are, just for a game, I said, what body would you choose for yourself, in order to experience the world?
> He says, I like being in a male body. I wouldn't change that — at least not until I don't need a body at all. But if I do have one, well, the one modification I would make: I would prefer to have wings.
> I try not to laugh, but I can't help it.
> Wings? Like an angel?
> Yes, like an angel. Imagine the power of it. Imagine the presence of it.
> What colour wings?
> Not gold! I'd look like Liberace. I'm not gay.
> Is that right? I said, squeezing his balls.
> I am not gay, he said, any more than you are.
> I don't think of myself as part of the binary, I said.
> You're not. He shook his head.
> No, I'm not. But you are. Wings or no wings, angel or human, you don't want to be gay, do you, Victor?
> He goes to comb his hair in the mirror on the wall. He doesn't like this conversation. He says, It's not about what I want — like buying a new car. It's about who I am — identity. We make love, and you don't feel like a man to me when we make love.
> How would you know? You haven't made love to a man… have you?
> He doesn't answer.
> Anyway, I say, I look like a man.
> He smiles at me in the mirror. I can see myself behind him in the mirror too. We are a pose.
> He says, You look like a boy who's a girl who's a girl who's a boy.
> Maybe I do (I know I do), but when we are out together, like it or not, as far as the world is concerned, you are out with a man.
> You don't have a penis.
> You sound like Ron Lord!
> That reminds me — I need to call him. Listen, I have said this before but I will say it again — if you did have a penis, then what happened between us in the shower in Arizona…
> And after the shower when you fucked me…
> He puts his finger to my lips to shush me. Would never have happened. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 155-156).

What say you is more ironic: that Ron Lord should ostensibly refer to his sexbots as female beings, and yet be unable to assimilate the masculinity of a transgender human being — or that Victor, the deconstructed scientist who wants to overcome the limits of the body, should ultimately reproduce the bias inherent in the perception of a continuum between body and gender identity, the very sort of idea he claims to be fighting against? We shall return to Victor's position later; for now, suffice it to say that its surprising backwardness lays open the grounds for another layer of how the ghost of the past manifests in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. No matter how fast we may have travelled in the past 200 years, the most virulent

biases of old, violence and prejudices such as Mary Shelley had to handle on a daily basis, often make themselves operative in the present against an ostensible backdrop of progressivism. "The future always brings something of the past" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 108), Victor says, which is precisely the risk the postmodern parodic inversion of *Frankenstein* warns us to heed: what the future recuperates from the past may be its most barbaric qualities. The future of A. I. and human life both may remain haunted by the ghost of supposedly overcome forces of subjection that refuse to stay put. The future of the human project may be built upon a waste land of past terror.

There is one more aspect of the topic worth mentioning in brief. As we have quoted in Chapter One, according to França (2017, p. 117), the advent of modernity has caused a break in continuity between historical epochs, whereby past events have become potentially uncanny, returning in ghostly guise to affect present actions. It is the perception of a clear break between epochs, the medieval and the modern, along with the set of preconceptions upon which each epoch is founded — barbarism, backwardness, superstition, subjugation *versus* modernity, progress, science, freedom — which allows the past to be invested with fear as an uncanny other. In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, this manner of discontinuity between historical epochs is examined alongside its opposite; centuries go by, people live — die — are reborn, the future lies ahead within the grasp of a brilliant scientist, yet the singular questions humanity asks itself are shown to have remained largely the same. In the perception of the historical continuity entrenched in discontinuity lies another key to the novel's interrogation of history: what is the past, indeed, but a collective ideological construction? As Ry ponders:

> The timeless serenity of the past that we British do so well is an implanted memory — you could call it a fake memory. What seems so solid and certain is really part of the ceaseless pull-it-down-build-it-again pattern of history, where the turbulence of the past is recast as landmark, as icon, as tradition, as what we defend, what we uphold — until it's time to call in the wrecking ball. [...] History is what you make of it.
> Tonight we are the history we are making. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 72).

The recasting of a convoluted past in terms of a valued and valuable tradition recalls the progression of the ideological value attributed to the term "gothic", in particular its shifting in meaning from the negative sign of a barbaric past to the positive sign of a chivalric tradition long gone. What the shifting in meaning suggests, and the passage above ratifies, is that, though the past may be always gothic, it does not necessarily follow that it is always the cradle of terror. Indeed, there is nothing inherently negative or positive about the past: nothing

necessarily barbaric, nothing necessarily chivalric. The only constant in history is its instability, hence the past being a mass of interconnected events that can be interpreted differently — either as menace or as tradition — at different times. The past, Ry suggests, is made and remade, pulled down and built up again, and if that process can be construed as a time of turbulence leading to fear, it can conversely be cast as one of timeless serenity in opposition to the sentience of a chaotic present. In either case, the past is fiction — it is what we, human beings, historical subjects, make of it, out of our need to provide an order to the chaos of our lived experiences, past and present alike.

If, in the early tradition of gothic fiction, the past was oftentimes pictured as a time of barbarism and transgression, whose backward ethos phantasmatically invades the prospects of modernity carrying along effects of fear, that was the result of a discursive construction, elaborated out of a collective necessity to affirm the values of modernity against those of a perceived medieval tradition. Come postmodernity, parody has replayed the dilemma in the minor scale of its appropriation of the past of art as tradition. Indeed, as our analysis of several postmodern gothic novels has suggested, if parody oftentimes targets the gothic as a means of discussing its frightening ideological ambiguities, it also does it with a celebratory intention in mind — as a means of affirming the gothic *as tradition*, *contra* centuries of its being the butt of cultural marginalization. Hence, an important question lies buried in Ry's musings of history: what is gothic, but what we make of it? In the larger context of Winterson's recasting of *Frankenstein* as a love story, the question is one directed at the expected effects of gothic terror. If the gothic carries along an understanding of the past as a time of instability and terror, upheld against a notion of the present as a nurturing, stable time, then Ry's rationale expressed above contributes to further destabilizing genre expectations. Not only is the instability of the past not necessarily transgressive or terrifying, according to Ry, but neither is instability the prerogative of the past at all; it is instead part of the ceaseless deconstruction of historical discourse which incorporates the past, the present, and the future in a vertiginous push towards the "un-making" of history.

All that suggests that *Frankissstein: A Love Story* uses and abuses the gothic convention of the ghostly manifestation of the past in several instances, which allows for a critique of ideological precepts regarding the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, and history. Winterson interweaves two separate storylines which double up on one another to create a sense of foreboding, as events in the past appear to repeat themselves in the present, and events from Mary Shelley's fictional work appear to shape Ry Shelley's and Victor Stein's "real" lives. In particular, the novel foregrounds the theme of the scientist's

hubris, his ambition in either overcoming death or creating new life, but ironically inverts it both to actualize the theme of artificial life in that of artificial intelligence and at times to suggest that the nature of scientific progress thus achieved is not necessarily terrifying. However, the repetition of storylines foregrounds the continuing objectification and subjugation of women and other gender minorities within the historical period examined, which suggests a ghostly manifestation of the past in the survival of gender biases otherwise claimed to have been surpassed. That aspect of the debate on gender and identity provides the novel with a focus of anxiety which leaks into several concerns regarding the potential of A. I. to reproduce the sexual politics of the past and the present alike, which in turn is suggested to be potentially terrifying. In sum, an important part of the ironic inversion of parody in Winterson's novel stems from the perception of how, in discussing the future, we are in fact discussing the potential continuity of the ghost of the past. Finally, the ghost of the past in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* allows for an interrogation of the very concept of history, which is typical of postmodern parodic novels, also known as historiographic metafiction; "textworks" such as Winterson's, as we have argued in the course of our discussion, paradoxically demonstrate historical awareness through the act of revising a literary artifact, which is a testament to the ambiguous nature of parody as both original and intertextual. In the following section, we will examine how the gothic convention of the *locus horribilis* is parodically activated in the novel with similar ends in mind.

4.2 "This futuristic charnel house"

In the subsection above, we discussed how terror in gothic fiction is partly a function of the ghost of the past. As a rule, gothic characters are haunted by the past, their own and others', and must grapple with the horrendous inheritance the past leaves behind its passing: the after-effects of transgressions, generational guilt, the superstitions of old, family curses, the sins of the father. Yet the ghost of the past is not the only gothic convention parodically activated in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*; that novel also deploys strategies of ironic inversion of its source material in its parodic treatment of the gothic convention of the *locus horribilis*, the terrifying setting that metaphorizes hidden transgression, social isolation, barbaric behavior, and supernatural threats (not necessarily all at once). It must be recalled that, according to Snodgrass (2005, p. 158-159), the *locus horribilis* intersects the past with the present in order to blur the boundaries of time and space, thus geographically representing the return of the past. Examples of the *locus horribilis*

include haunted attics and vaults, scientists' chambers and laboratories, madhouses and churchyards, dark alleys and prisons in the urban scene, tropical and selvatic areas, ghost towns and secluded properties on the moors. In the present subsection, we will focus on two predominant instances of ironic inversion of the *locus horribilis* in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, consisting of the novel's treatment of the space of the charnel house and of Victor Franken/Stein's laboratory, both of which are prominent settings in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor claims that his devotion to the study of natural philosophy had eventually led his attention to the constituents of the human frame: "Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed?" (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 49). In order to pursue an answer to that bold question, one which animated several philosophical and medical debates in the course of the European Enlightenment, the scientist delves deep into the study of physiology and anatomy, but finds that the sheer reading of treatises on the subject shall not be enough to satisfy his curiosity; if he truly wishes to catch a firm grasp on the principle of life, he ponders, he must also observe firsthand the natural process of decay and corruption of the body. "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death" (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 49), Victor declares in his narrative to Captain Walton — which, in practical terms, meant he had spent several nights at graveyards and charnel houses, digging out dead matter to examine its mysteries. Here is how he describes his experiences at such locations:

> In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay, and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiæ of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me — a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius, who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret. (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 49-50).

At first, Victor deems the charnel house to be nothing but a secular setting: neither has he been educated to fancy superstition, nor is he bothered with any sense of the holiness of the abode of the dead. Ostensibly, his stance on the subject is that of a man of science, who defines death as an inevitable cessation of biological functions due to trauma, illness, old age, or the sudden stopping of the heart. For a man like Victor, what the passing of an individual leaves behind is not a spirit, a soul which ought to proceed to the netherworlds (either Heaven or Hell), but simply decaying matter, a body in decomposition. Indeed, his all too apparent lack of fear of his nightly activities amongst the deceased may be an effect of his apparently rational (though, on second thought, quite madlike in its consequences) secular approach to death. If the sight of a decomposed body is “insupportable to the delicacies of the human feelings”, as Victor describes it, it is due to its being neither beautiful nor sublime, the touchstones of eighteenth century aesthetics, but merely grotesque; in other words, the sight of defiled matter is not believed to elevate the senses in any way, but rather fills the heart with horror and disgust at the abjection of bodily remains. All in all, in *Frankenstein*, if the charnel house is supposed to be taken for a disturbing place, one that awakens reactions of either horror or terror in both the character and the reader, it is not due to its being visited by the spirits of the dead, but rather for situating the grotesquerie of death geographically; the contents of an open casket, the smell of the underground vault, the sound of a shovel ploughing through an open grave must all remind the beholder/reader of their own abject mortality, the fragility of their own bodies, the inescapable destiny of their cherished earthly shell.

Still, an unabashed Victor toils upon the storage of dead matter, examining in profusion every minor step in the natural progression of a body’s decay — the fading bloom of a cheek, the burial of the corpse, its eating away by the worm — until he realizes the “astonishing secret” of the life principle and “becomes [himself] capable of bestowing animation on lifeless matter” (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 50). His ambition, or *hubris*, is triggered when he finds “so astonishing a power placed within [his] hands” (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 51), whereupon he begins to act recklessly. His scientific interests are supplanted by arrogance. His discovery blinds him to the ethical implications of his activities, so much so that “all the steps by which [he] had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and [he] beheld only the result” (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 50) — the result in question being the creation of new life, the infusion of the life sparkle into lifeless matter. He finds that preparing a frame for the reception of the spark of life, “with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour” (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 51); yet he

reasons with himself, if reason it may be called, that the daily improvements of science should vouch for the inevitable success of his attempts. He ponders for a brief while "whether [he] should attempt the creation of a being like [him]self or one of simpler organization; but [his] imagination was too much exalted by [his] first success to permit [him] to doubt of [his] ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man" (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 51). As a consequence, not only does he decide to begin with a bang by creating a fully formed human being, but chooses to manufacture one of gigantic proportions.

It could be said that, upon finding evidence of the life principle, Victor begins to play God. It is in light of Victor's renewed understanding of himself as an individual belonging to a godly realm that his description of the charnel houses where his shady goings-on take place changes:

> Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. [...] I collected bones from charnel houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. (SHELLEY, 2009, p. 52-53).

Perhaps motivated by terror at the taboo he is in the course of breaking, perhaps prey to a distorted perception of himself as a superior being closer to God than man, perhaps even lacking conscious control of his actions, or taken over by a feverish madness, Victor begins to refer to his activities at the charnel house in less than secular terms. The grave, formerly described as the physical receptacle of lifeless matter, is now "unhallowed"; his study of bone and tissue now comes off as a "profane disturbance of [spiritual] secrets" of life and death, which are supposedly only God's to behold. In the wake of Victor's paradoxical understanding of himself as near-God, and of his actions as profanation, it is possible to ponder that his apprehension of the world has begun to include more strongly the possibility of the supernatural, which he had hitherto attempted to override. The charnel house consequently turns into the iconographic embodiment of a dominantly superstitious view of the world, which Victor, whose interest in alchemy had never been fully smothered by his scientific endeavors, now embraces unreservedly. The charnel house is, most of all, the *locus* where the past of a theocentric worldview intersects with the present of an anthropocentric, Enlightened one, in order to geographically represent the uncanny return of the past.

In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, the epithet "charnel house" is given to The Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Phoenix, Arizona, a non-profit organization that performs cryonics — the freezing of human deceased bodies and brains in nitrogen, with hopes of resurrecting them should a new technology ever be developed to allow for it. As such, Alcor is one step closer to fulfilling the ends Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein had predicted: "If I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter", he reflects, "I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 52). Thereby, Alcor might have come off as a futuristic charnel house to Victor, so to speak — which is precisely how Ry describes the location in their narrative:

> This futuristic charnel house. This warehouse for the departed. This stainless-steel tomb. This liquid-nitrogen limbo. This down-payment plan eternity. This resin block of nothingness. This one-chance wonder. This polished morgue. This desert address. A nice town to live in. This sunset boulevard. Dead men. Not walking. Hotel Vitrification. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 103).

Ry glosses upon the significance of Alcor in terms that emphasize loneliness, isolation, and nothingness, which is ironic considering the outward goal of the facility: to provide a place where death could be overcome.

Parodic critical distance allows Alcor to be portrayed in the postmodern gothic novel as the hypothetical charnel house where Frankenstein might have found the means to achieve his goal, had he lived long enough to see it through. Still, in Winterson's novel, Alcor is described as "futuristic" for yet another reason: as a charnel house, it is neither the iconographic rendition of the past, in the mode of the medieval gothic castle or the graveyards Victor disturbs in Mary Shelley's novel, nor of the present, in the mode of Victor's science laboratory, but of the future. Unlike the typical *locus horribilis*, which intersects past and present in order to suggest the continuing influence of apparently overcome superstition, Alcor provides the anticipation and projection into the future of an upcoming technology of resurrection. The meaning of death in relation to this futuristic charnel house is likewise ironically inverted, as can be seen from Ry's description of the *modus operandi* of cryonics at Alcor:

> Should you decide to gamble on your resurrection here at the Casino for the Dead, this is what happens:

> As soon as possible after death — and preferably the team is already assembled near by, masks on faces, discreetly waiting for your last breath — your body will be placed in a bath of ice water to lower its temperature down to around 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Blood circulation and lung function will be artificially restored using a heart — lung resuscitator. Not to revive you, but to prevent your blood from pooling in your abdomen.
> The medical team will access your major blood vessels and you will be connected to a perfusion machine that will remove your blood, and replace it with a chemical solution that prevents the formation of ice crystals in the cells of your body. You are going to be vitrified — not frozen. The process of filling you with cryoprotectant takes about four hours. Two small holes will be drilled in your skull so that brain perfusion can be observed.
> Then you will be further cooled over the next three hours to make sure that your suspended body is like glass, not ice. After two weeks you are ready for your final resting place — at least in this life. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 103-104).

If the regular charnel house is a place where dead bodies putrefy, Alcor is the location where the natural process of decomposition is halted, perhaps even reversed. It is thus associated more closely with the expectations of new life *vis-à-vis* the preservation of the body with hopes of a possibility of resurrection. Again ironically, and perhaps comically, the staff at Alcor has managed to halt the natural process of decay of bodily matter, a deed Frankenstein has been unable to perform; what Alcor is yet to provide its cryonically-preserved bodies is the spark of life — a deed Frankenstein has managed to perform two centuries prior. In the shared heterocosm of the novels, parody thus renders the past as a site of precious knowledge rather than barbaric superstition. Much like the goals of Alcor, then, any possible effects of disturbance and terror are projected onto the future, in particular the unforeseen consequences of the return of the dead: "All those preserved bodies in their sleeping bags and nitrogen — they aren't coming back to life, and it would be horrific if they did" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 187), Ry evaluates, which invites several questions: Will the technology of reheating the body ever be developed? Should it be so, will the resurrected want to live in their old, illness-stricken bodies? Will they ever be able to adapt to the new world? Will living make any sense after one has been dead for just how many years? Will they be zombie-like creatures? Questions such as these situate the parodic inversion of the *locus horribilis* in terms of the terrifying effects of a hypothetical return of the dead in a nearby future, thus parodically inverting the conflation of past and present typically pivoting on the gothic terrifying place.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor's laboratory is another place described as a gothic *locus horribilis*:

> In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion. (SHELLEY, 2009, p. 52-53).

The description of the laboratory merges with that of the nature of activity pursued therein: it, too, is filthy and loathsome, solitary and alienating. The secrecy and remoteness of the place contribute to segregating Victor from society as he becomes ever more engaged in procedures for creating a human being. Isolation leads to unease at his growing perception that what had begun as a valid (albeit controversial) scientific endeavor has now turned into an obsession, one to which he ought to attend at the expense of his own health and well-being. The lab begins to feel like a prison, a projection of Victor's feeling of entrapment within his compulsive pursuit of the life principle. It is also, in a certain sense, another version of the charnel house, another deposit of body parts, wherein Victor sews the parts together in order to create a full human frame which he will later endue with the spark of life.

In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, it is Ry who provides Victor with body parts for his research. "I'm not a *grave robber*", Ry explains to Ron Lord, moments before painting a cartoonish picture of what Victor Frankenstein may have looked like in his exploratory voyages to the graveyard: "Do you think I go to the churchyard at night with a crowbar and a sack? You think I spade away the heaped mound of earth, prise open the coffin lid, lift her out from her last resting place, clothes damp with decay, and carry her off for dissection?" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 86). The pompousness of word choice in a novel written in a mostly conversational tone draws attention to the passage as a parody of the gothic vernacular, which here figures as a way of emphasizing the purported absurdity of Ron's distorted understanding of Ry's allegiance to Victor. Yet, considering how "Victor Stein needs more body parts than his research currently allows" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 89), it is unclear how Ry truly manages to provide the scientist with body limbs that must not figure in any official records. Perhaps Ry indeed harvests graveyards for body parts, exactly as they have described to Ron!

All in all, the destination of the material and the actual usage given to it are unknown to Ry, up until the point where they demand to see Victor's laboratory. The laboratory in question is nested in the undergrounds of Manchester. It consists of a complex of tunnels and bunkers built in the 1950s by NATO as a Cold War strategy, meant as a retreat should the

Cold War happen to turn into a nuclear conflict. Victor's bunker is laden with doors, each of which conceals a secret. Behind the first door, Ry beholds images that disturb them:

> This one had a window; an internal viewing window like the window onto an aquarium.
> Through the window, bare concrete. Light bulb. Monitor lights glinting weirdly through the dry ice that fills the space. I can see from the thermometer on the outside wall that inside is kept just above freezing. Then I notice motion. Through the icy fog. Running towards me. Towards the glass. How many? Twenty? Thirty?
> Victor pressed a switch and the dry ice swirled away. Now I saw them clearly. On the floor, scuttling. Are they tarantulas?
> No…
> Oh, God, Victor! For God's sake!
> Hands. Spatulate, conic, broad, hairy, plain, mottled. The hands I had brought him. Moving. Some were still, twitching a single finger. Others stood raised and hesitant on all four fingers and thumb. One walked using its little finger and thumb, the mid-fingers upwards, curious and speculative, like antennae. Most moved quickly, senselessly, incessantly.
> The hands had no sense of each other. They crawled over each other, locked themselves together in blind collision. Some made piles, like a colony of crabs. One, high on its wrist, scratched at the wall.
> I saw a child's hand, small, crouched, alone.
> Victor said, These are not alive. They certainly aren't sentient. This is simply an experiment in motion, both for prosthetics, and smart attachments.
> How do they move like that?
> Implants, said Victor. They are responding to an electrical current, that's all. It may be possible in the case of accident and limb severance to reattach the original and programme it to respond more or less like an existing limb. Similarly, it may be possible to add an artificial digit to an injured hand. Some of the hands you see there are hybrids in that way.
> It's horrible, I said.
> You're a doctor, he said. You know how useful horrible is.
> He's right. I do. Why does this disgust me? (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 170).

This long passage is a very interesting example of the extent of parodic playfulness with *Frankenstein* displayed in Winterson's postmodern gothic novel. Whereas Shelley's description of what transpires in Victor's lab is overall vaguer, Winterson revels by comparison in the anatomic details of Victor Stein's groundwork. Once again, the laboratory embodies the nature of activity pursued therein: it is secretive, horrific, disgusting, at least as far as Ry is concerned. Ry's visceral reaction to the sight of the animated hands stems from their humanization of the amputated limbs: although the hands are not yet endued with the "life spark", the doctor describes them by turns as curious, speculative, lonely. To Ry they are lost "living beings" trapped together as animals within the confines of a dehumanizing cage; hence the lab is a purported *locus horribilis*, to the extent where the dehumanization it harbors is disgusting, horrible. Yet that is not the only possible view of what the laboratory is, neither

is it necessarily the dominant one. According to Victor, the hands are simply inanimate matter responding to electrical stimuli. To Victor, the experiments in motricity performed on the amputated hands have beneficial ends in sight, as they can lead to a breakthrough in smart medicine. They might be uncommon, even shocking at first sight, but they remain ultimately useful. Victor's down-to-earth and perhaps more objective evaluation provides a counterpoint to Ry's somewhat emotional response — a response Ry themselves ends up questioning; to Victor, his lab is less a "workshop of filthy creation" than one of incomparable importance for the scientific community. It is much less a *locus horribilis* than Ry's reaction makes it seem like.

Regarding the passage above, it could be said that the parodic activation and relativization of the effects of terror associated with the gothic *locus horribilis*, in this case Victor's laboratory, is in tandem with the parodic intent of both catering to the gothic and subverting the operation of its internal logic as a genre. The further down the laboratory Victor and Ry move, the more evident the strategy becomes. Succeeding their meetup with the spider-hands, Ry is introduced to several other disturbing figures stacked behind the closed doors of Victor's lab: real "broad-legged, furry spiders" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 170) whose leg movements Victor intends to replicate; "shelves [...] neatly lined with small vats of cryopreserved heads" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 184), including those of rabbits, cattle, dogs and cats. Finally, Victor opens up the door to the most secret room in the facility, wherein his most ambitious research takes place:

> From my perspective, said Victor, the body can be understood as a life support system for the brain. Look here… He opened another door.
> Two lever-and-probe robots were bent over slices of human brain.
> Meet Cain and Abel, said Victor. I copied them from their parents, Adam and Eve, who work at the University of Manchester in the bio-tech department, synthesising proteins.
> These two are tireless. They need neither food nor rest, holidays nor recreation. Bit by bit they are mapping the brain.
> Whose brain? I said.
> Don't panic, Ry, I'm not a murderer.
> He sat on the table, ignored by Cain and Abel, This is slow work, he said. Mapping the brain of a mouse takes forever. Even the stupidest human looks like Einstein when we try to map the content of his brain.
> But if we could restore an existing brain…
> Yes… The answer may lie in reviving the brain at a very high temperature and very quickly. This could happen with radio frequencies.
> Microwave the brain? I said.
> No, said Victor. All you would get is brains on toast, which some consider a delicacy. [...] Electromagnetic waves are more likely. What we are trying to do is to avoid the formation of ice crystals as we rewarm tissue. You saw for

> yourself at Alcor that the purpose of cryopreservation is to avoid ice crystals, which do enormous and irreparable damage to tissue. We face the same problem of crystallisation when we reheat the organism.
> If we could solve this problem it would have life-changing implications for tissue transplants. How long do you have at present from donor to recipient? Thirty hours?
> Thirty-six max, I said.
> Well, then, if we can understand how to preserve and rewarm donated organs, it will mean we can store those organs for use as needed. The waiting list for a kidney would be over.
> All of that is good, I said, and laudatory. But you aren't really interested in kidney transplants, are you? You are interested in bringing back the dead.
> You make it sound like a Hammer Horror movie, said Victor.
> What else is it? I said. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 184-186).

This is the room where the most horrific shenanigans are supposed to take place. It is the *locus horribilis* where Victor Stein, shielded underground from the eyes of society, possibly morphs from scientist into voodooist, from researcher into reanimator. It is the venue where he intends to bring back the dead — even if that means "nothing but" the successful upload of the contents of a brain. Two implications pop from this lengthy description of the *locus horribilis* in order to endow the scene with the ambiguous activation and subversion of gothic terror, which we have been suggesting is characteristic of Winterson's novel as a whole. The first one is Victor's professed innocence in the business of getting severed heads — "Don't panic, Ry, I'm not a murderer" —, which echoes Ry's previous acknowledgement of innocence in the business of getting other body parts — I am not a *grave robber*". In both cases, their declared blamelessness may be concealing criminal behavior; yet, because the narrative is focalized through the eyes of Ry, whose method of ploughing for body parts is (at least to a small extent) explained, Victor's profession of inculpability remains the more mysterious, less convincing one. The unbelievability of his speech, added to his coldness at sitting on the table where lie steaks of brain he must have sliced himself, lends him something of a truly sinister character, one who inhabits a truly *horribilis locus*.

However, the ambiguous tone of his professed innocence sets Victor up for the second surprising assumption underlying the scene: Ry's insinuation that his work is conducted in the mode of a mad hero-villain from a Hammer horror film. According to Punter (1996b, p. 104), the Hammer Studios, a London-based film production company best known for its cycle of gothic horror films from the 1950s and 1960s, played a significant role in providing a venue for the continuity of the tradition of gothic in the twentieth century. The mention of the Hammer tradition in Winterson's novel is an appropriate tool to emphasize the parodic strategy at play in the scene: not only did Hammer begin its cycle of notorious adaptations of

the gothic with a 1957 version of *Frankenstein* (*The Curse of Frankenstein*, directed by Terrence Fisher from a screenplay by Jimmy Sangster), its brand of horror movies, as Punter (1996b, p. 108) highlights, is recognizable for its "self-ironizing" qualities. In other words, a Hammer film is usually self-aware of its status as an adaptation of the gothic while also being ironically conscious of the assumptions of the gothic tradition in which it works. The same could be said of the passage above, in which Victor's characterization as a Hammer madlike doctor renders his madness cartoonish, a parodic imposture, a decal of a mad scientist. Sinister he may be, the passage imparts, with an ironic wink at the reader — but he is so in a funny, self-conscious way, the way a character in a book resembles a stereotype from a horror film. If terror is the actual intended effect of the characterization of both the mad doctor and his secret lair, its intended effect is paradoxically shown to be a contrived effect, a genre artifice, a byproduct of the activation of multiple semiotic systems. As a result, the scene arguably does not so much terrify a reader in their core as it invites them to actively recognize terror for the desired effect of the scene. Overall, the scene adds yet another dimension to the non-stop movement between the activation and subversion of effects of terror which characterizes Winterson's version of a postmodern gothic take on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

It is possible to affirm, considering what has been analyzed above, that *Frankissstein: A Love Story* repeats with difference the gothic convention of the *locus horribilis*, particularly in its description of the prominent sites of the charnel house and the laboratory. Strategies of ironic inversion are at play in the novel's treatment of both settings. On the one hand, Alcor, the "futuristic charnel house", projects anxieties with death, decay and reanimation onto the future, thus undercutting gothic's usual projection of the same anxieties onto the past, while also reversing the predicted function of a cemetery from the isolation of decaying matter to the preservation of dead matter with hopes of a possible reinstatement of life. On the other hand, Victor's laboratory and the mysterious doings happening therein are described in terms that both cause and reveal as contrived the expected effects of terror in gothic fiction. Interestingly enough, the characterization of the madlike doctor inhabiting a subterranean lair as parodic, cartoonish and artificial invites considerations about monstrosity, a prominent feature of both the gothic as a whole and the postmodern gothic novel at hand. In the following section, we will examine how the gothic convention of the monster is parodically activated in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* as a means to the valorization of marginalized identities, in particular those of the trans community. To that we will now proceed.

4.3 "Freak"

Readers of *Frankissstein: A Love Story* might feel surprised that the mythical core of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* — the manufacture of the monster — is absent from Winterson's postmodern parody in any straightforward version. None of the characters in the postmodern gothic novel actually manufacture a living creature out of dead tissue in the way Victor Frankenstein does, but that does not entail monstrosity should not be an important aspect of the novel: in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, monstrosity manifests itself as an allegory, one that is marked by a transfiguration in meaning. Transfigurations of this sort are by no means a novelty in terms of the reception of Shelley's novel; according to scholar Karen Karbiener (2003, p. xvii), writing in her Introduction to *Frankenstein*, a prominent trend of interpretation of the novel seeks to contemplate why "the monster has taken on the name of his creator in popular culture". Winterson's postmodern gothic parody furthers and enhances the phenomenon both by slightly altering the signifier from Fran*ken*stein to Fran*kiss*stein, and by changing the signified into an overall indication of creation and creativity developing into the story arcs of several characters in the novel. In the first storyline, focalized through Mary Shelley's point of view, "Frankissstein" comes into play as a metaphor for Shelley's creative process, her invention of Victor Frankenstein and his monster — a "hideous progeny" which is also hers to "give birth to". In the course of her creative process, the monster comes to represent several of the personal dilemmas Mary experienced in early adulthood: the death of her mother in childbirth, her own successive miscarriages, her extensive and philosophically challenging reading habits, her intellectual involvement with radicalism, her love for a self-absorbed man for whom their relationship would often come second place. In the trans-contextualized storyline, "Frankissstein" branches out as a metaphor for separate experiences of creation of/on/through/in spite of a human body: Victor, when he is not finding ways to upload his very human brain into a computer or robot, attempts to resurrect a cryogenically preserved head; Ron Lord envisions the creation of an empire of sexbots as the future of human sex; and Ry, the beguiling transgender doctor, writes themselves a new body, a medley of female and male traits. Although all of the above could be fruitful venues for the exploration of monstrosity in Winterson's postmodern gothic novel, we will circumscribe our analysis to the character of Ry, for their ambiguous characterization foregrounds a relevant aspect of the parodic strategies inherent in several examples of the postmodern gothic: the celebration of monstrosity as a sign of authenticity.

We have argued in Chapter One that monstrous figures are the constitutive others of culture, “the exceptions [allowing] structures to be identified and instituted, difference providing the prior condition for identity to emerge” (BOTTING, 2008, p. 8). Gothic staples *par excellence*, monsters vest the center with centrality: it may be said that, being the abnormality that renders norms visible, monsters in the tradition of gothic fiction often served the purpose of instituting cultural standards, in that they embodied, and subsequently cast out deviation. Monsters could thus be defined as “difference made flesh”, in the words of Cohen (1996, p. 7), and as such they usually inscribe differences of “cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual” orders — often all at once, according to scholar Jack J. Halberstam (1995, p. 3). In the tradition of gothic fiction, not to say of the cultural and political soil where the gothic fermented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, those axes of difference have delimited a space of otherness against which ideology came into play to define patterns of normality. Hence, it is possible to argue that monstrosity is a byproduct of historically and culturally specific values which both constitute and police the borders of what must be considered normal in the context of a given time and culture. As Fred Botting shrewdly puts it,

> modernity partially stabilises anxiety with objects of fear, exclusion or repugnance. [It] thus constitutes and polices its boundaries on the basis of the exceptions, the others or monsters, it excludes: workers, women, deviants, criminals, “orientals” etc. are produced as the antitheses fantasmatically and ideologically establishing modern norms of bourgeois rationality, heteronormative sexuality, racial integrity, [and] social and cultural cohesion. (BOTTING, 2008, p. 8).

In short, the arrival of a monster in gothic fiction evidences the ideological ambiguity of the tradition of the gothic, given how the genre both revels in crossing the line separating the normal from the forbidden and taboo embodied in the monster, and reinforces its allegiance to ideological discourses constituting normality when the monster is eventually vanquished (as they more often than not are).

However, the overlapping of those concerns with a celebratory stance on difference, epitomized in the critical vocabulary of postmodernism, has produced a change in cultural perceptions of monstrosity. The change has been largely motivated by the political and cultural progresses of the ex-centric and the multiple questions those decentered subjects of history emerging from the 1960s have brought to bear on the values of liberal humanism. It may be recalled from Chapter One that, in her study of the ex-centric in *A Poetics of*

Postmodernism, Hutcheon (2004, p. 57) highlights how the postmodern has absorbed the political and cultural agendas emerging from the margins of (the dominant white-European-straight-cisgendered-male) Western culture, while providing their marginal representatives with a toolbox of aesthetic strategies, e. g. parody, with recourse to which their ex-centric critical claims could be shaped, validated, and included in the broader conversation of artistic practices. Criticism promoted by the ex-centric, according to Hutcheon (2004, p. 62), is mostly one of focus; their critique of the center and its assortment of correlated values is not aimed at overcoming the center towards pure multiplicity, but at shedding light on the ideological work of the center, thus making evident how it depends on the exclusions it operates in order to sustain its powerful position. Put differently, postmodernism does not dispense with the center, since it paradoxically depends on notions of centrality to produce its de-centering critique, but, in claiming voice to the margins, it does change the focus of critical approaches, “moving from the language of alienation (otherness) to that of decentering (difference)” (HUTCHEON, 2004, p. 62). In essence, according to Hutcheon, those ex-centric subjects of history have refused to be defined as simply the others supplying the normativity of the selfsame, claiming instead political and cultural validation for their noteworthy existence, in their own terms.

Hutcheon may as well have said that the ex-centric work of postmodernism often verges on the cultural integration of the monster — the unveiling of strategies which determine who is to be considered a monster, and ultimately the evolution of monstrosity from an abhorrent site of alterity into a celebrated signifier of decentering. The postmodern emphasis on the ex-centric has allowed those identities potentially construed as monstrous to collapse the grounds upon which their monstrosity had so far been perceived; and along came a new type of monster, “[n]o longer marginalized and contained by the voice of his creator”, as Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 70) describes it — “no longer the other” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 72). Reoriented in its sensibilities towards the monster, postmodernism has invested monstrosity with a romantic *élan* which has allowed the monster to morph from “a figure of fear [to a] metaphor of change and possibility, a model to be imitated and affirmed rather than abhorred” (BOTTING, 2008, p. 46). According to Spooner (2006, p. 74), a scholar whose work on the “contemporary” gothic usually foregrounds the deconstruction of the monster in twenty-first century fiction and art, monsters have grown into desirable models of unapologetic authenticity in proportion to how “the concept of freakishness is embraced by the culture at large”; they have thus come to circulate within the system, perhaps still relatively marginal, but now vested with the interest of critiquing the center, thus revealing the

making a monstrosity to result from the workings of ideology. As such, they have opened up new avenues of signification which have often brought them closer to their etymological origins. As we have argued above, the word “monster” is rooted in Latin, having evolved either from *monstrare* — to show, to display — or *monere* — to warn (HUET, 1993, p. 6). According to the etymological tradition, the monster may be described as an unnatural being regarded as an omen, whose arrival signals a warning, a presage, a message; the monster is a harbinger, a stand-in — it is a *sign* of something “other” than itself. As scholar Sam Coale (2007, p. 119) suggests, however, when monsters are revealed to be the byproduct of ideology, what they point at — what their arrival signifies — is the operation of the system of preconceptions governing society, enabler of a symbolic devaluation of counter-normative identities. *The system itself* is in turn rendered horrific, undesirable, monstrous.

In light of the comments above, it may be argued that a certain strategy of parodic inversion is often at play in the postmodern gothic in order to represent the monster as a sympathetic individual worthy of celebration, rather than the abhorrent, fearsome other of culture. When considering how the strategy plays out in Jeanette Winterson’s *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, it becomes evident that the novel takes a step ahead in its celebratory approach to the monster, in opposition to, say, Daniel Levine’s more ambiguous stance in *Hyde*. We have argued in Chapter Three that the postmodern gothic often reveals a sympathy for the monster’s perspective of his own monstrosity; we have also noted how strategies of ironic inversion often serve the purpose of spinning the focus of critical attention, from the monster itself as the incarnation of evil otherness to the system of interconnected discourses and institutions which both create monstrosity and use it as a parameter against which normalized behavior can be enforced through discipline. Yet *Hyde* never quite celebrates the monster it purports to give voice to; on the contrary, Edward Hyde remains trapped within the discourses of other, more privileged individuals — discourses such as continually place him in a position of otherness — not to say a prey to the shocking “unconscious” possibilities his own narrative fails to conceal. Hyde killed, he participated in rape, he may even have been a pedophile, and none of this is ever forgiven, let alone saluted in the postmodern gothic account of his life and times. The sustained ambiguity (and ultimate irresolution) of the novel in its treatment of a complex monstrous character is typically postmodern, but it is not all the postmodern gothic is about. Ry Shelley, one of the protagonists of Jeanette Winterson’s *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, is equally complex as a character, and equally disruptive of categories of gender identity and normative sexual practices, though the novel’s treatment of their monstrosity is far more celebratory.

In order to examine the disruption of notions of monstrosity Ry brings about, we must give attention to the subject matter of their transitioning body. The body is at the center of the everyday dilemmas faced by trans people, according to Butler (2002, p. 90); it is arguably important for most, if not all trans individuals to manipulate their biological body so that it can accord with their perception of their own gender, which frequently entails a multiplicity of medical treatments including cosmetic body modification, hormone-based therapy, and gender reassignment surgery. The body is also at the vortex of the dilemmas faced by the monster, according to Huet (1993, p. 1) and Coale (2007, p. 102). The monster's body is always at odds with what is perceived as natural, *ergo* normal: it may be too small or too big, too beautiful (to the point where it comes off as otherworldly) or too ugly, overly strong yet weak to a disproportionate measure. The monster's body is often both, as far as characters such as the creature of Frankenstein are concerned; his features have been selected from all that is supposed to be beautiful — his hair is black and lustrous, his teeth of a pearly white shade, his skin smooth and fair, his limbs in excellent proportion —, yet the creature turns out loathsome, its intended perfection only ever forming "a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips." (SHELLEY, 2003, p. 55). The monster, as this description suggests, may be deformed in the way of a Cubist painting; it may defy the logics of nature and biology (in the manner of a zombie, or undead, who is dead matter still living); it may reunite physical traits of opposites — say, two different genitalia, two opposing genders. In all cases, it disrupts categories. As a consequence, a monster often disturbs the shared codes of understanding of those who rely too strongly on fixed and immutable categories to catch hold of the world around them. The monster brings along fear, and often a horror strong enough to render rejection the only possible alternative to catching sight of it — note how swiftly Victor and everyone else, with the exception of the blind patriarch of the DeLaceys, flee with breathless horror and disgust at the sight of the creature.

To an extent, the disturbance of stable categories is the dominant effect of Ry's body in transition. A hybrid body it is — "liminal, cusping, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental, a start-up (or is it an upstart) in [their] own life" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 29); a body so disruptive of categories of female/male, gay/straight, cis/trans, human/posthuman, that it short-circuits the thinking abilities of Ry's peers, even the most brilliant, "deconstructed" ones. By that we mean Victor, who feels attracted to Ry, but unbalanced by the imprecision of their embodied self. He loves Ry, or at least the idea of Ry, the fact that Ry "chose to intervene in [their] own evolution, accelerate [their] portfolio of

possibilities" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 154); yet, as we have mentioned above, he finds himself resorting to the life-saving buoy of binary gender categories to render his love — truly, the impossibility of his love, for he is "not gay" — understandable. None of it is to any avail: Ry does not think of themselves as part of the binary; they insist on being a hybrid, on being unassimilable, a man but also a woman, both and neither in particular, a being whose defining feature is the fact that "[they] live with doubleness" (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 89). "We are both freaks", Victor eventually concludes, which prompts a hurt response from the doctor: "Don't call me a freak because I'm trans." (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 171). However, Ry's response is only in part justified; although Victor indeed seems bewildered by the doctor's body to the point of scaling back to preconceptions he elsewhere claims to despise, his attraction for Ry seems paradoxically genuine. His evaluation of their freakishness is less grounded in Ry's troubling of gender performativity, or else in the unwelcome novelty of the feelings Ry awakens in him, than in their shared marginality to ideological interpellation, their refusal of patterning themselves after the values which constitute normality: "We are freaks according to the behavior of the world." (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 171). Both are marginal, and yet thinking ahead, towards a moment where marginality will be revealed for the fictional structural value it carries. To Victor, that is something to celebrate — Ry is someone to celebrate. "We are the smartest" (him and Ry, that is); "We are not waiting for Mother Nature any more. [...] And you, Ry, gorgeous boy/girl, whatever you are, you had a sex change. [...] That attracts me. How could it not? You are both exotic and real. The here and now, and a harbinger of the future." (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 154).

A beautiful, seductive body, a body ahead of itself; attractive and delicious to Victor precisely for the fact that it disturbs categorization. That is Ry's body, a monstrous body which beguiles rather than terrifies. A monster's body from which Victor does not dare to shy away. Indeed, Victor's attraction to Ry is overbearing, almost inexorable:

> The shower was plentiful and strong and the water was hot. I soaped my body, getting rid of sand from every crack and soft place. Soon the room was as steamy as a Hitchcock movie. I didn't notice Victor had come in until I stepped out of the shower. He handed me a towel. Then he saw me.
> He saw the scars under my pecs. I watched his eyes work down my body. No penis.
> There was a pause, short enough but long enough.
> I'm trans, I said. I had top surgery about a year ago. These things take time.
> [...]
> I thought you were a man, he said.
> I am. Anatomically I am also a woman.
> Is that how you feel about yourself?

> Yes. Doubleness is nearer to the truth for me.
> Victor said, I have never met anyone who is trans.
> Most people haven't.
> He smiled. Weren't we just saying that in the future we will be able to choose our bodies? And to change them? Think of yourself as future-early.
> I am always late for appointments, I said, and we both laughed. To break the tension.
> Once you are out of the room I will drop this towel and take a shower.
> The thin towel wasn't hiding much. I said (why did I say this?), Do you want to touch me?
> I'm not gay, he said.
> I know it's confusing, I said.
> He moved nearer. He ran his long fingers down my forehead and over my nose, parted my lips and rubbed my two front teeth, pulled down my lower lip, passed on over the light stubble of my chin and to my non-existent Adam's apple, the dip of my throat, then he spread his hand, thumb and fingers on either side of my collarbone. As though he was scanning me.
> With his other hand, flat, he stroked my chest, pausing over the scars. He is not afraid of the scars or their bumpy beauty. To me they are beautiful. A mark of freedom. When I find them in the night, in the dark, I remember what I have done, and I go back to sleep.
> He touched my nipples. My nipples have always been sensitive, now more so since the surgery. My chest is strong and smooth from the weight training I do. The testosterone injections make it easy to build muscle. I like the solid plane of what I have become. We were near to kissing but we didn't kiss. [...]
> I am a woman. And I am a man. That's how it is for me. I am in the body that I prefer. But the past, my past, isn't subject to surgery. I didn't do it to distance myself from myself. I did it to get nearer to myself. [...]
> Why are you so easy in your body? he said.
> Because it really is my body. I had it made for me. (WINTERSON, 2019, p. 118-122).

Many interesting aspects of this long passage support the claim that the postmodern gothic ventures a valorization and celebration of the monster through strategies of parodic inversion, of use and abuse of gothic conventions and the manipulation of readerly expectations. Victor and Ry have been caught up in a storm (one of many in the novel) in the Arizona desert, and they have been offered the chance of a shower by a waitress in a nearby restaurant. The steamy bathroom is directly referenced as another version of the most famous scene in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*, in which the protagonist, Marion Crane, played by Vivien Leigh, is slayed in the shower by Norma(n) Bates, played by Anthony Perkins. The parodic activation of the semiotic system of the horror film, of which *Psycho* is one of the most emblematic examples, creates an anticipation of calamity reliant on the similarity of gender bending in both scenes: both Norman and Ry exist somewhere between male and female, neither fully woman *nor man*. However, the valuation inherent in that bending of gender performances is inverted in tandem with the positions those gender-benders occupy in each respective scene. In *Psycho*, Norman is a disturbing prowler, an impotent

serial killer targeting women in their outermost moment of vulnerability, a mentally-ill mama's boy with a weirder than normal Oedipal complex; his bending of gender norms is an externalized sign of this whole inner brokenness, of a terrifying monstrosity in the sense supported by several kin monsters in the tradition of gothic fiction. In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, it is Ry — Ry, whose gender bending is far more radical than Norman's, Ry, for whom doubleness is nearer to the truth than it must have been for Norman — who finds themselves in a position of vulnerability; given over to Victor's voyeuristic (and who knows at this early point, potentially transphobic) glance, their reaction is suppressed in an anticipation of what might be an act of brutal violence.

Victor reacts differently than what the filmic intertext of the scene implies might have happened. Bewildered he is, that is for sure, but not repelled; perhaps confused to the point of resorting to gender patterns that do not fit his current predicament, but far from interested in either pursuing transphobic carnage or fleeing in terror of the "monster". Indeed, he is interested by the physical ambiguity of Ry's body, curiously seduced by its amalgam of masculinity and femininity, and attracted to the point of accepting Ry's invitation for sharing skin. Which Victor does, in the guise of a human version of his "Cain and Abel" robots in the undergrounds of Manchester: absorbing Ry, reading them for their physical complexities. That subtle invitation discloses the extent to which Ry finds themselves easy in their own skin, worthy of being touched, of being treasured for the body in which they have chosen to be. It is relevant to the budding sense of validation the scene substitutes for carnage that, given Ry's unabashed acknowledgement of themselves in the easiness of their own body, Victor's bewilderment should quickly give way to praise, as binary categories dissolve and meld into one another. Ry, in the scientist's appreciation, is not a monster to be contained and eliminated, but an individual ahead of their own time. That could hardly have been any different considering how they embody what Victor most wishes to achieve for himself, a wish he has so far been unable to turn into feasible technology: to own his body so thoroughly that he will no longer be a slave for its limitations.

To Ry, that transformative power manifests their ability in forging a body that is both male and female, both gay and straight, both cis and trans, and neither one in particular. Ry's body disturbs the smooth operation of ideologically enforced categories of understanding, but what ensues is not terror; it is the beauty of physical connection, of Victor's thorough examination of Ry's every crack and crease. All in all, Victor's appreciation remains second in importance to Ry's own sense of self-worth, which pervades their own careful description of their every inch; truly, if *Frankissstein* is a love story, it is also one of how Ry finds

self-acceptance through the manufacturing of a body they are able to cherish. Through Ry, the in-betweenness of the trans body — a body they describe in terms both erotic and endearing, made stronger by the tangible sexual tension of the scene — renders monstrosity an experience of self-discovery leading to freedom. In parodic opposition to the creature of *Frankenstein*, whose monstrous body is made in spite of himself and thus is the cause of much chagrin, Ry's is a body they have had tailor-made for them; it is one that feels nearer to whom they perceive themselves to be at their core, one they feel comfortable inhabiting, one they know and respect in its minute details — one that they find beautiful and lovable as it is.

That beautiful scene between Ry and Victor in the bathroom defines the stance taken in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* on the association of monstrosity and celebrated authenticity. In doing so, the scene provides an impressive contrast with a later one in the novel, in which Ry is accosted in a public restroom by a drunk transphobe who attempts to rape them:

> There was a guy at the urinal, older, heavy, unsteady on his feet. I glanced at him and went into a cubicle. I heard him finishing up. He heard me peeing. He kicked the door and shouted, YOU THINK I'M A FAGGOT? [...] WHAT'S SO PRECIOUS ABOUT YOUR FUCKIN' COCK THAT YOU KEEP IT TO YOURSELF?
> You're drunk, I said. Leave me alone.
> I went towards the door. He blocked my way, his eyes swimming with drink.
> PISS LIKE A MAN. GO ON!
> I'm done, I said. Excuse me, will you?
> He mimicked me: EXCUSE ME, WILL YOU? You talk like a girl.
> He lunged at my crotch — and found what I don't have.
> WHAT THE FUCK? [...]
> I thought: I'm going to get beaten up or raped. Which is worse? [...]
> YOU FUCKIN' FREAK! YOU HAD YOUR TIT SLASHED OFF? NO TITS. NO DICK. FUCKIN' FREAK!
> He started pulling at my jeans. His fat, dirty fingers were trying to get the zip down.
> Get your hands off me, I said.
> YOU DON'T LIKE MY HANDS ON YOU, YOU LITTLE FREAK?
> He hit the side of my face with the back of his fist.
> DROP THEM, I SAID!
> His face was an inch away from mine. He was breathing cigarettes and whisky in my face. I undid my jeans and turned my head away from him. I could feel the blind, dead nub of his cock against my pubic hair.
> He couldn't come. Kept dry-pumping me and couldn't come. He was a lot taller than me and twice as heavy, but in the clarity that fear can bring I thought I could unbalance him. Use his weight and his drunkenness against him. He was so drunk he was resting his head against the cubicle door while he shoved his way in.
> OPEN YOUR FUCKIN' LEGS WIDER!
> I moved, and as he moved I took a chance and pushed him as hard as I could. He fell back against the toilet, falling down, banging his head on the concrete wall. He was stunned for a second, and away from the door enough for me to get out. I pulled up my jeans, and ran into the night behind the bar.

> Outside, I stood still and quiet, fixing my clothes, feeling myself carefully. No rips, no blood, no sperm. The dirty smell of him on my fingers. He was coming out now, lumbering, stumbling, shouting obscenities, angry. He paused in the outside door, the shadow of him on the deck. My sweat went cold. If he found me now… [...]
> I let myself slide down the rough wall of the outside shack. Knees under my chin. Folded into my own body. I was aching and sore. I needed a douche of disinfectant. Some cream. This isn't the first time. It won't be the last. And I don't report it because I can't stand the leers and the jeers and fears of the police. And I can't stand the assumption that somehow I am the one at fault. And if I am not at fault, then why didn't I put up a fight? And I don't say, try working on the Accident and Emergency unit for a few nights and see where putting up a fight gets you. And I don't say the quickest way is to get it over with. And I don't say, is this the price I have to pay for…?
> For… For what? To be who I am? [...]
> The tears make my knees wet as I sit with my face on my legs as small as I can make myself. Make myself. This is who I am. (WINTERSON, 2019, p, 241-244).

Public restrooms are at the center of multiple debates regarding both the access to public spaces by trans individuals and the violence — ideological and physical — to which their bodies may be subjected at those "cabins of gender surveillance", as trans activist and professor Paul B. Preciado (2019, s.p.) names them. According to Preciado, the restroom is a powerful "technology of gender", a generative space which enforces and affirms as ultimate truth the ideological codes defining (heterosexual) masculinity and femininity; whenever one is compelled to visit such spaces under pretense of public hygiene, one is also subjected to the reproduction of gender codes, to the inspection and surveillance of oneself by peers eager to affirm acceptable gender and sexual performances, and proscribe unacceptable ones. To Preciado, the apparently simple, natural acts which are supposed to take place in a public restroom — getting rid of the contents of one's bladder or bowels — in fact participate in the circulation of power by transforming residue into gender. In that respect, the gents' room is distinctive from the ladies' room in that it delimits separate spaces for urination and evacuation, whereby the urinal renders the inspection of genitals — phallic signs of heterosexual masculinity — public, whereas the private cabin renders anality — and by extension "buggery", penetration, homosexuality — a secretive, forbidden act. As a consequence, Preciado suggests, standing urination makes up for a shared code of homosociality, one that may be understood as a public performance of gender, constitutive of acceptable forms of the modern heterosexual masculinity. Standing at a public urinal under the scrutiny of one's peers, thus offering one's "precious fuckin' cock" for inspection, is to "piss like a man" — which, according to Butler's comments on the stability of gender norms, would entail the adherence to compulsory heterosexuality; choosing the private cabin instead,

thus safeguarding oneself from inspection, is to piss and act like a "freak", someone who has something to "hyde".

Injunctions such as "piss like a man" are violent in and of themselves; by suggesting that there are correct ways of being a man, they act as discursive and corporeal instruments of interpellation, thus condemning one to act according to certain social expectations despite one's sense of privacy, not to say one's understanding of what constitutes their masculinity. There is, however, a certain ambiguity that goes with the inspection of masculinity enacted in the public restroom, being as the restroom is also a public space where homoerotic action can take place at the expense of one's sense of their heterosexual identity. Indeed, the public restroom is a site where intensely anonymous sexual activity between men will often occur. Not surprisingly, the drunkard's inspection of Ry's body quickly moves from discursive to physical — a move that never places the attacker's heterosexuality in question, given how the shared unspoken code at play affirms heterosexual masculinity in the very act of public surveillance. The scene operates as the diametrical opposite of Victor's growing interest in the previous example: the touch is uninvited and unwelcome; it focuses solely on the ostensible absence of the biological signs of masculinity and femininity ("no tits, no dick"); as such, it exacerbates the normalizing function of the technology of gender operating in the space of the restroom. As a result, the valorization of the monstrous body for the fact that it is perpetually in the process of becoming itself, is undercut by the drunkard's revulsion at its impossible in-betweenness. The restroom morphs from a "technology of gender" into a "technology of monstrosity", as Halberstam (1995, p. 21) calls it — a technique operating in gothic fiction for rendering the multiple and ambiguous generativity of the monster unacceptable and subjected to correction. Ry is subsequently declared a freak — no longer in the prior sense of the invaluable gender-bender whose troubling of categories is worn in their sleeve as a badge of authenticity, but rather as the unnatural deviation which must be contained, exploited, and destroyed. Interpellation to piss like a man quickly escalates to physical abuse and corrective rape. Fear follows suit.

We have often argued in the course of this chapter that the basic strategy at play in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* is a relativization of terror, and thus of the basic constituents of the gothic as a genre. That strategy also holds true to the novel's treatment of monstrosity, which declares the parodic inversion of the expected origin of terror in relation to the figure of the monster. Terror, that most crucial of gothic effects, is not an absent undercurrent of the whole scene at the public restroom, but it is crucial that *Ry* should be the one experiencing fear throughout the course and in the aftermath of the scene. If fear in gothic fiction is an

effect of the actions of a "monster", it is then the drunkard — indeed, the larger system of preconceptions woven by power of which he is a conduit — who ultimately stands for evil monstrosity in the postmodern gothic rendition of *Frankenstein*. Terror, here, comes not as an effect of the destabilization of categories embodied in the in-betweenness of Ry Shelley's trans body, a body in a perpetual process of becoming itself, but truly as a result of the violent processes of subjection which tend at the production of stability, at the categorization of bodies as either stable and normal or unstable and monstrous. In sum, it may be said that in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* parody structures a reversal of expectations in that the monster is valorized as an authentic self while the system of social values that caters to the regulation of gendered bodies and identities is rendered monstrous, its monstrosity being predicated on the violence it deploys to ensure its own sustenance.

By foregrounding the operation of silent but pervasive preconceptions placed in motion by power, such as the ones constituting our matrixes of understanding and experiencing of gender, as "technologies of monstrosity", Ry's predicament constitutes a strong argument for the de-naturalization of the monster in postmodern gothic fiction. As we accompany Ry in and out of the gents' room, we realize how freakishness comes as an effect of power, and is naturalized as perilous otherness *vis-à-vis* the dominant ideology of a given time and place. Monstrosity, the situation suggests, is not an inherent trait, not the natural attribute of those bodies that trouble nature or destabilize normative categories, but rather a naturalized effect of the silent but powerful values operating and vindicating normality and stability in the first place. Monsters are not so in and of themselves; they are rather a byproduct of ideology, and ideology just so happens to make itself invisible, unspeakable, to the point where monstrosity is naturalized as transgression of a norm. Attempts at the monster's destruction, such as the attempted rape against Ry, thus come to signal the silencing of the ex-centric, the oppression of difference in the name of the selfsame, and the terror inhabiting the heart of disciplinary power. Indeed, that monsters like Ry operate a critique of ideology in the postmodern gothic by unveiling the monstrous ways of the system is also a matter of celebration in the context of *Frankissstein: A Love Story*.

In light of our analysis, it is possible to affirm that Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* can be described as a fictional "textwork" in which the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate to give rise to a complex revision of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. In the course of the novel's parodic revision of the literary and historical past, the gothic conventions of the ghostly visitation of the past, the *locus horribilis*, and the monster are both used and abused in order to give shape to the

novel's ironic inversion of the gothic tradition. This metafictional strategy, which demands continuing engagement from the reader in order to be actualized, is paradoxically meant as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the gothic tradition, sexual politics, gender identities, history, the future of science, and the making of monstrosity. Those problems, which are nested both in gothic fiction and in Western liberal humanism as a whole, are thus examined critically, as the parodic "textwork" draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. For all of that, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* qualifies as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

In the following, concluding chapter, we will collate the novels analyzed in the course of our discussion towards the enunciation of an operational concept of the postmodern gothic in fiction. That concept will allow us to discuss in passing some of the implications of the postmodern gothic for both the place occupied by the gothic in tradition and the continuing influence of postmodernism in shaping cultural standards.

CODA
POSTMODERN GOTHIC, or, POSTMODERN PARODIES OF GOTHIC FICTION

We have stated in the Introduction to this thesis that, in light of the perceived theoretical disconnect between what a dominant version of the postmodern gothic does and what the theory of the postmodern gothic says it does, our general objective would be to propose an inceptive conceptual framework to describe a number of novels that participate in the postmodern gothic *qua* the generalized practice of parodically addressing the canon of gothic fiction. In order for our general goal to be accomplished, we have segmented our endeavor into three specific steps: definition of operational concepts; reading of the corpus; collation and cross-reading of the novels integrating the corpus. In Chapter One, "Towards a Concept of the Postmodern Gothic: Defining a Theoretical Framework", we have tackled the first of those specific objectives; in the course of that chapter, we have reviewed a number of canonical studies in gothic and postmodernism in order to structure a conceptual framework to sustain our working hypothesis. We have concluded from the studies of David Punter, Fred Botting, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Júlio França that the gothic could be defined as a highly stable literary genre that deploys a set of basic conventions — the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly presence of the past, and the monster — to produce effects of terror while examining the fears and anxieties that subsume the maintenance of the hegemonic ideology of the middle class. We have likewise suggested that postmodernism could be defined as a paradoxically parodic discourse: both formally introverted and grounded onto "the world" by means of historical awareness. That paradoxical configuration in fiction is named by Linda Hutcheon *historiographic metafiction*, a composite genre of narrative whose prime strategy is *parody*, the practice of repetition with critical distance meant to emphasize difference *vis-à-vis* sub-strategies of trans-contextualization and ironic inversion. In light of these theoretical discussions, we have refined our working hypothesis to present it in the following terms: the postmodern gothic is a shared practice of addressing the canon of gothic in postmodern parodic form, by means of which practice both whole targeted works and the narrative conventions of gothic fiction are paradoxically installed and subverted to emphasize each novel's ironic inversion and critical appropriation of tradition. This metafictional strategy is paradoxically meant, in these postmodern novels, as a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform their backgrounded texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, these parodic "textworks" draw attention to the continuing centrality of those

assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world through attention to contextual conditions of textual production.

In Chapters Two, Three and Four, we have proceeded with the reading of the corpus. In Chapter Two, “Yet Another Turn of the Screw: Adele Griffin’s *Tighter*”, we have delved into an analysis of the formal, pragmatic and ideological elements of parodic play on the gothic in general and *The Turn of the Screw* in particular operating in Adele Griffin’s novel. We have focused on the diegetic and formal similarities and distinctions between parodic and parodied texts, with particular attention to the parodic novel’s playful and ironic inversion of the ways in which the conventions of the *locus horribilis* and the supernatural are activated in *The Turn of the Screw*. We have also zoomed in on the pragmatic range of parodic intent displayed in *Tighter* in order to discuss how the novel both reenacts and transgresses a number of stylistic strategies that contribute to the effecting of ambiguity in both *The Turn of the Screw* and its parodic trans-contextualization. We have finally observed how parody makes possible the unearthing of the implied story from *The Turn of the Screw* and its trans-contextualization as the main story of *Tighter*. By means of that strategy, the assorted effects of terror expected of the conventions of the gothic genre — for instance, the ghostly irruption of the past — are parodically established and transgressed to mark parody’s ideological dependence and differentiation from concealed assumptions in its targeted material. We have concluded that Griffin’s novel can be aptly described as postmodern gothic in the terms proposed in our hypothesis. In Chapter Three, “The *Doppelgänger* Trouble: Daniel Levine’s *Hyde*”, we have observed how the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of parody conflate in Levine’s novel to give rise to a complex revision of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. We have analyzed the ways by which the gothic convention of the *Doppelgänger*, a typical manifestation of the gothic monster, is activated with difference in the novel as both a metafictional instrument, revealing of the author’s awareness of the conventions of gothic fiction, and a discursive instrument to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance several latent ideological assumptions that inform its targeted text, including the monstrosity of Edward Hyde, the actualization of truth claims, the problem of identity as a fractured construct, and homophobic persecution. Those problems, which are nested both in gothic fiction and in Western liberal humanism as a whole, are thus examined critically, whereas the parodic “textwork” draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. For all of that, we have concluded that *Hyde* qualifies as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms

that illustrate our working hypothesis. In Chapter Four, “A Kiss at the Heart of Gothic: Jeanette Winterson’s *Frankissstein: A Love Story*”, we have discussed the multiple ways in which the gothic conventions of the ghostly visitation of the past, the *locus horribilis*, and the monster are both used and abused in Winterson’s novel in order to give shape to the novel’s ironic inversion of the gothic tradition. As a result, several latent ideological assumptions that inform the targeted text are addressed, including sexual politics, gender identities, history, the future of science, and the making of monstrosity. Those problems, which are nested both in gothic fiction and in Western liberal humanism as a whole, are thus examined critically, as the parodic “textwork” draws attention to their continuing centrality as a source of cultural anxiety and terror in the twenty-first century. We have concluded that *Frankissstein: A Love Story* also qualifies as a postmodern gothic novel in the terms that comprise our working hypothesis.

Given the amount of evidence made available by our analysis, our working hypothesis has been repeatedly confirmed in its validity. It has thus warranted the formulation of an operational concept of the postmodern gothic meant to describe those parodic novels of interest to our research. It has now come time, in this concluding chapter, to tackle our third specific objective by collating and cross-reading the novels in order to formulate our concept of the postmodern gothic in terms that are both more encompassing and more specific. We will depart from our working hypothesis as it has been stated in Chapter One, and fill it in with the elements of the postmodern gothic our analysis has unearthed out of the three novels of which our corpus consists; by the end of this swift reading, we will have achieved an operational illustrated concept of the postmodern gothic that may serve the purpose of guiding further reading of postmodern parodies of gothic fiction. After we have formulated our concept of the postmodern gothic novel, we will raise three important implications of the postmodern gothic for the cultural standing of gothic fiction and postmodernism in Western cultures. By the end of this final chapter, we will suggest pathways for the research to move forward into future work.

The *postmodern gothic* can be conceptualized as a practice of postmodern parodic play on the gothic genre, best illustrated by novels such as Adele Griffin’s *Tighter*, Daniel Levine’s *Hyde* and Jeanette Winterson’s *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, all of which revisit, replay, rewrite and reexamine canonical gothic works from a postmodern vantage point. These novels could be deemed fictional “textworks” — both original works of fiction and intertextual revisitations of the canon of gothic — in which traditional gothic narratives are repeated with critical distance to give rise to complex and sophisticated revisions of the

literary and historical past. This metafictional strategy is meant to foreground the difference between parodic and parodied material, which allows readers to examine both novels in light of each other in terms of the strategies of trans-contextualization and ironic inversion deployed in the course of the parodic process. Moreover, in these novels, metafictional strategies revolving around parody are deployed as discursive instruments to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform their targeted texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. In doing so, these parodic "textworks" draw attention to the continuing centrality of those assumptions in the structuring of twenty-first century cultures and anxieties, while paradoxically reinstating the formally parodic into the world through attention to contextual conditions of textual production.

Postmodern gothic novels often operate parodically on several levels of complicity with and critique of their backgrounded material, mainly the formal, pragmatic and ideological or discursive levels. The formal level of parody in postmodern gothic is integrated by the paradoxical use and abuse of diegetic and conventional elements of gothic fiction. Postmodern novels tend to establish themselves apart from their source material by pursuing differences in diegesis through strategies of trans-contextualization — situating the hypotext in a different formal, cultural or historical context — and ironic inversion — when the hypotext is examined against its grain, so to speak. Postmodern gothic novels such as *Tighter* may engage parodically with the gothic *vis-à-vis* trans-contextualization by situating their Victorian target material in contemporary times, or changing the scenery from a Victorian country house to an island by the North American shores. In more structurally complex novels, such as *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, the trans-contextualization of an early-nineteenth century period into contemporaneity may motivate the development of the plot. Trans-contextualization may also come into play when characters from the parodied novel integrate and disseminate into one another in the parodic novel, as is done for example in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, in which Victor serves as a surrogate for both Frankenstein and Percy Shelley, and *Tighter*, in which Jamie is a stand-in for both the unnamed governess and the haunted children in the source material. Another version of trans-contextualization is activated when postmodern gothic narratives situate their plots in the same time and space privileged in their source material, yet deploy strategies of ironic inversion to clothe its eighteenth or nineteenth-century geopolitical contexts in a postmodern involucrum; this may be done when fiction focalizes the viewpoints and experiences of previously marginalized or secondary characters — those who are now considered the ex-centric — and give them center

stage in the postmodern parodic version; this is done, for instance, in *Hyde*, in which the prolix narrator and antihero of the story is none other than the silenced and much hated antagonist of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It is likewise done in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, in which the experiences of Mary Shelley in creating enduring literature are privileged over those of her male peers, those who have been considered the uttermost canonical voices of English Romanticism. Furthermore, postmodern gothic novels often expand their parodied material in several directions in order to further establish themselves apart from their sources; characters and situations which are absent from the hypotext are often added to the plot in order to extrapolate the limits of the source material and provide newly nuanced undertones to those characters and situations which are already known to the reader. All this is done so that a shared heterocosm — an invented world communicated through language and shared by authors and readers (we might even say, authors who are readers and readers who are authors) in acts of co-creation — can be established. Hence, when reading postmodern gothic fiction, one is always necessarily aware of their being reading two stories at once; one is thus invited to actively look for differences and similarities placed in perpetual tension, while determining as best as possible the critical function of the play thus enacted.

Still at a formal level of parodic engagement, the postmodern gothic displays several paradoxical instances of differentiation from and similarity with the conventions of gothic fiction, which could be trimmed down to the *locus horribilis*, the ghostly presence of the past, and the monster when they are used to create effects of terror. Postmodern gothic novelists are recognizably aware of how gothic conventions operate and often use them to create effects of terror in their parodic versions of canonical gothic fiction. For instance, in *Tighter*, Skylark is described in the typical terms of a gothic *locus horribilis*: a magnificent construction which harbors the after-effects of past transgressions, manifested in the ghosts of the former servants, whose unvanquished secrets contribute to further disorienting an already unstable and growingly agressive protagonist, leading her to experience paranoia, terror, and two attempts at suicide on the grouds of the property. Ghosts — both those at Skylark and those haunting Jamie prior to her arrival at Little Bly — populate the novel as signs of taboo rising from the margins of culture to disturb the existence of the living; yet, in typical postmodern inversion, effects of terror are not necessarily a result of the arrival of ghosts: those of Jamie's suicidal family members serve as her personal protectors against solitude, whereas those of Peter and Jessie have no designs against the innocent children of the house. In *Hyde*, the convention of the *Doppelgänger*, one of the several facets of the gothic monster, is activated

in the symbiotic relationship between Jekyll and Hyde, and its monstrous contours are explored both in terms of the terror Hyde awakens in his peers and in those of the several interpretations given to the double, not least of them those relating to the fragmentation of identity and the expression of homosociality/homosexuality/homophobia. Again, the effects of terror associated with the *Doppelgänger* are relativized *vis-à-vis* Hyde's attempt at rendering himself sympathetic to readers and the examination of the cultural dynamics of monstrosity as an effect of ideology. The convention of the double is nonetheless transgressed in that it refuses the binarism or duality perceived to be inherent in its symbolic value, disseminating instead into a fragmentation of operational schemata towards a more radical form of decentering. In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, both the charnel house and the laboratory make an appearance among several of the most readily recognizable gothic icons, albeit ironically inverted: the charnel house is changed from a sign of death and decay to one of the possibility of the after-life materialized in the cryonically-preserved body parts of the elite, whereas the laboratory raises the continuing problems of ethics and the limits of morality in relation to unrestrained scientific progress. The monster, whose arrival always defies binary categorizations, is also present in the character of Ry, a transexual man with a liminal body integrating both male and female traits, whose very identity is haunted by ever present acts of violence ranging from microagression to rape. Typical of the postmodern gothic, however, is the questioning of the dynamics of alterity underlying definitions of who is to be considered a monstrous other, which in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* leads to the valorization of the monster as an authentic, beautiful self, a model of Romantic originality and untethered identity to be coveted. In the postmodern gothic, gothic conventions are thus used and abused in order to engage readers in a defiance of expectations concerning that which is usually considered the basilar aspect of gothic fiction: terror. Considering how terror is the most commonly expected effect of gothic fiction, postmodern gothic novels can be said to enlarge the scope of typical effects of the gothic canon, thus both relying on, and refusing to rely on the stability of the genre to create its own version of the gothic.

At the level of pragmatic intention, the postmodern gothic may display a wide range of *ethe*. Postmodern gothic parodies may display both a textualized and an implied intention of paying homage to the tradition of gothic literature. That is the example of *Tighter*, in which gothic's stylistic ambiguities and tendency to probe taboo with recourse to the baring of the unspeakable, most notably expressed in *The Turn of the Screw*, are actualized. Novels such as *Tighter* take the gothic as a model genre to be imitated, an example of superior mastery of the art of narrative to be achieved; yet a newcomer author's paradoxical impulse to establish

themselves apart from the great masters often comes at play to create a tension between similarity and difference, as a result of which gothic is transgressed in the very gesture of its parodic activation. Postmodern gothic fiction may also display a strong intent to contest its backgrounded or parodied material, often in the very act of its parodic activation; this could be directed both at the formal elements of the genre and the more specific implications of ideology for the structuring of the unformulated values which inform the text's relationship with the world of social relations. An example of the former case can be found in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, a novel in which the expected effects of terror in gothic fiction are both relied upon and contested. Although the novel serves as a timely homage to Mary Shelley's distinguished creation and its continuing resonance with readers, to the author herself, and to the cross-pollination between gothic fiction and several postmodern media and genres, the novel also contests the apparently stable relationship between the conventions of gothic and the expected effects of terror they are supposed to give rise to. As a result, the novel contributes to both contesting the gothic and enlarging the scope of which texts ought to count as gothic fiction. An example of the latter case can be found in *Hyde*, a novel which relies strongly on the relationship between the convention of the gothic monster and its associated effects of terror, while focusing on the social and cultural processes which determine alterity and create monstrosity, to invest *these*, rather than the monster, as harbingers of terror. In all cases, contestation and homage are added up to more neutral forms of parodic playfulness, often expressed in the more or less overt reliance on the recognizable imagery of gothic literature in the "textworks" of the parodic trend.

At the discursive or ideological level, which Hutcheon refers to as the engagement of parody with issues of "the world", the postmodern gothic makes use of metafictional strategies as discursive instruments to revise and criticize from an ex-centric distance the latent ideological assumptions that inform their targeted texts, as well as how they are involved in the production of effects of terror. Much like traditional gothic works, the postmodern gothic is invested in a practice of ideology critique, by means of which those not always formulated, but nonetheless always present, hegemonic values of society are examined for the exclusions they operate and the revelation of their concealed workings. Both traditional gothic fiction and postmodern gothic fiction are interested in examining the dominant values of the middle class, often to reveal them to be sources of anxiety and terror. In *Tighter*, the bourgeois nuclear family is the main focus of concern; the parodic novel revisits the Victorian ideology of the family, of which the innocence and purity of children were an important tenet, to foreground the role of an absent, often irresponsible family in the

affirmation of the terrors deposited on its junior members. In doing so, and at risk of incurring in conservatism, the novel reaffirms the need for the family to act both as a venue of protection of children and a material apparatus where the ideology of the middle class is reproduced. In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, the subjection of gender minorities and the cultural construction of performative gender roles are foregrounded by the parodic recombination of fictional versions of real life characters and fully fictional characters, most notably Mary Shelley/Ry Shelley and Percy Shelley/Victor Stein. Monstrosity is examined in this context as a technology of gender, one powerful enough to subject even the most outwardly progressive individuals, while gender insubordination is rendered an ex-centric act of ideology critique. In *Hyde*, both identity and compulsory heterosexuality are aspects of ideology held to ex-centric critique. With recourse to the ironic inversion of the convention of the *Doppelgänger*, the postmodern fragmentation of identity is metaphorized in a protagonist that has no particular or fixed center, but remains ultimately inapprehensible. Terror is also suggested to be an effect of the homosocial dynamics that institute monstrosity as a means to the stabilization of heteronormative values integrating the center, rather than an effect of abhorrent individuals who disturb God-given, unquestionable formations of the normal.

With the postmodern gothic, other values included in the ideology of liberal humanism are held to ex-centric critique. In *Hyde*, for instance, the parodic repetition with critical distance of the gothic monster serves, among other purposes, that of questioning the validity of truth claims, one decisive element composing the center. The canonical "full" narrative is suggested to be incomplete for the absence of the monster's voice, hence what passes for truth — the consensus of every other character over Hyde's inner wickedness — is suggested to be a version of facts, one prone to being contested. Moreover, the very achievement of a final truth is constantly deferred, not least by the fact that all versions of the narrative, Hyde's included, are limited by the constraints of a first-person point of view and the multiple interests in either safeguarding or tarnishing the reputations of those involved in the strange case. What we end up with is ex-centric truths, truths inside one's head: personal, limited, incomplete and often incongruous with one another. That inconclusiveness is the final source of terror around which the plot revolves. In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, it is the authority of history which is placed under an ex-centric spotlight. The gothic convention of the ghostly return of the past in that novel allows for an ex-centric critique of the radical differentiation between fictional and historical reports, which renders Winterson's version a perfect example of historiographic metafiction. The interweaving of two separate storylines, one consisting of the fictionalized version of real life characters, the other consisting of the

trans-contextualization of those already fictionalized versions in a contemporary setting, suggests that neither history nor fiction hold a privileged position at the center of cultural experience: both are narrative modes, already fictionalized to some degree. Besides, the repetition of storylines foregrounds the continuing objectification and subjugation of women and other gender minorities, which in turn makes evident the survival of gender biases ostensibly claimed to have been surpassed. That aspect of the debate on gender and identity projects into the future the potential of A. I. to reproduce the sexual politics of the past and the present alike; the ghostly return of the past thus allows for an interrogation of the very concept of history, considering how the author paradoxically demonstrate historical awareness through the act of revising a literary artifact, a testament to the ambiguous nature of parody as both original and intertextual. The postmodern gothic thus proves the ongoing influence of historiographic metafiction in the literary production of the twenty-first century.

With the formulation of our concept of the postmodern gothic, the general objective of this thesis has been achieved at last. There remains, however, a few issues to be quickly addressed, issues such as may point out further ways for our research to develop. In the epigraph to this study, taken from Margaret Atwood's collection of essays *Strange Things*, the Canadian writer wonders why some stories exercise a particularly magnetic attraction to readers and writers alike, to the point where those stories grow into obsessively told and retold tales, to be examined and reexamined from an assortment of angles, given new meaning every time they are given a new version. Although it is safe to assume that many works in the canon of literature have been parodically approached in that manner, it seems equally safe to say, given the sheer amount of material available and the conclusions ventured hereby, that the gothic has been granted a privileged position in the development of the postmodern parodic form of historiographic metafiction. Gothic is, to some degree, the literature of obsessive mindsets, and it has been subjected to a somewhat obsessive revisitation at the hands of postmodern novelists. Why so? What are the implications of this apparent postmodern obsession with the canon of gothic for how the genre has developed, particularly in the past decade? It is always possible to say, along with Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 23), that gothic sells. The canon of gothic fiction is composed of catchy, juicy material that reading audiences love to gloat over, which can make up for an extremely lucrative niche for writers willing to put some effort into an actualization of gothic sensations. It is likewise possible to think of writers as first and foremost readers whose craft has been shaped by gothic fiction, as both Adele Griffin and Daniel Levine have suggested in the acknowledgment sections of their respective postmodern gothic novels. Yet there seem to be

more profound reasons for the mutual, symbiotic attraction between the gothic and postmodernism. We will hint at four of those reasons in the following few paragraphs; as we do so, we will attempt to unearth possible pathways for our research to develop further in the coming years.

First and foremost, both the gothic and postmodernism are modes of what David Punter has named “negative history”, that “other” history of modernity and of the rise of the middle class. The gothic has from the eighteenth century investigated modernity for its “toxic side effects” (CASTLE, 1995, p. 8), thus foregrounding, in its own tortuous ways, those who have been left out of the canonical accounts of historical progress; that is a task postmodernism has picked up on since at least the 1960s, an agenda for the completion of which parody has figured among the most relevant strategies. This may have been the reason why historiographic metafiction has absorbed the gothic almost naturally: both are modes of anti-history, modes of writing the history that has not been written by the official canons. Considering this apparently undeniable confluence in ultimate goals, and given the great importance placed by Punter on his argument of the historicity of gothic, it is surprising that the British scholar has chosen not to refer, in his *Literature of Terror*, to the “contemporary” gothic as postmodern at all. As we have highlighted in Chapter One, when he does refer to a possible connection between the gothic and postmodernism (PUNTER, 1996b, p. 207), it is to decry the alleged erasure of history characteristic of a certain understanding of the postmodern condition — we might say, Fredric Jameson’s (1991) understanding of the postmodern condition in terms of superficiality, empty historicism and the waning of affect. Because Punter (1996b, p. 206-207) feels that postmodernism has erased history (and not in a Derridean sense, arguably closer in meaning to the workings of historiographic metafiction), that it has become merely historicist in its surface-level, unproductive deployment of gothic iconography, he proclaims that “‘the literature of terror’ and ‘Gothic’ are not coterminous” — a most puzzling assertion indeed, and one that contradicts his own foundational argument that wherever we may find terror in the literature of the past two and a half centuries, we will have found the traces of the gothic. The contradiction is deeply ingrained in Punter’s opinion concerning an apparent decline of the gothic in contemporaneity; had he approached the gothic through the more positive (and less apocalyptic) lenz of historiographic metafiction, he might have found out that the gothic continues to be as vital as ever, and greatly aware of history and its modes of narration at that. This is a topic that bears closer examination moving forward.

There is one very important implication of this blindspot in Punter's theory, both for the gothic and for Punter's project of securing a place of honor for the genre in the canon of literatures in English. As Hutcheon (2000, p. xii) has argued in detail in *A Theory of Parody*, parody performs an authorized transgression of the parodied material — that is, in place of denying or revoking the original, it authorizes its importance in the very act of transgressing its boundaries. Parody, we should add, is not only a practice of authoriz*ed* transgression, but also one of authoriz*ing* transgression; to parody, in Hutcheon's words (2004, p. 126), is not to destroy the past, but "both to enshrine the past and to question it". In the course of our study, we have often focused on how this paradoxical game of authorization and transgression is performed at the level of the formal, pragmatic and discursive dimensions of narrative; we have given particular importance to how parody incorporates both specific traditional gothic works and the narrative and iconographic conventions of the genre to motion differentiation and contrast, often at the discursive or ideological level of its historiographic metafictional involvement with the world, but there is plenty of room left for a discussion of the role of parody in authorizing the gothic as a canonical genre of narrative. If it is true that historiographic metafiction includes its own first critical commentary; and that, in the very act of transgressing the gothic, a genre subjected to disrepute and critical marginalization for decades (arguably up until the advent of postmodernism), parody contributes to enshrining the genre atop the echelons of the canon; then it is not far-fetched to suggest that the postmodern gothic integrates the critical project of Gothic Studies as a mode of literary and academic metacritique. Against the haphazard assortment of critical considerations of the postmodern gothic witnessed in the field so far, and despite Punter's, Botting's and other scholars' often conservative comments on the decline of gothic in contemporaneity, it is our belief that parody ought to be given more systematic attention in the context of Gothic Studies and its project of cementing a place of cultural value and continuing vitality for the gothic. Here lies another niche to fulfill as we carry on researching the gothic.

Secondly, both gothic and postmodernism, being versions of the unofficial history of modernity, share an interest in the investigation and critique of hegemonic ideology. There is a measure of ambiguity in the manner each relates to the hegemonic ideology they attempt to criticize from a distance; as we have discussed in the course of this thesis, the gothic relies both on a cultural need to reinforce boundaries and parameters of normality and the transgression of those same boundaries and parameters to effect terror, whereas the ex-centric critique of ideology in postmodernism paradoxically depends on the center it aims at deconstructing. What might be different, here, is where allegiance stands: the postmodern

gothic, at least in the novels we have studied, would seem to be less interested in approaching the margins from a caustic point of view. Where the gothic tradition is intended, for instance, towards the characterization of the monster as evil and fully othered, the postmodern gothic tends to humanize its monsters, sometimes to the point where they are fully validated as their own beautiful selves. Although the gothic and the postmodern come off as ideologically ambiguous, at least to some extent, these different positions might indicate concurring differences in political allegiance, whereby the tradition of gothic might be seen to be more invested in the sustenance of hegemonic ideology, whereas the postmodern gothic might be seen to be more closely invested in its critique. That, too, is a possibility which demands further investigation.

Thirdly, both postmodernism and the gothic defy the theoretical characterization of the novel as an intrinsically realist form from its rise. Both David Punter and Linda Hutcheon have advanced this argument in one way or another. For Punter (1996a, p. 20), the origin of gothic, a genre of fiction dedicated to the fantastic, the supernatural, the medieval, and anything unexplainable by rational means, is intrinsically bound to the rise of the novel form in the eighteenth century; what is usually considered to be a strongly realist form, he argues, has in fact been influenced by a range of other genres and forms with which the gothic has also been connected, including the sentimental novel, graveyard poetry, and Elizabethan drama. For Hutcheon (2013, p. 5), there has been a self-referential dimension to the novel from its beginnings, a dimension encoded in multiple forms and shapes: in early journal and epistolary novels, in parodies of the medieval romance, in the Romantic forms of *Bildungsroman*, *Entwicklungsroman*, and *Klüsterroman*, in all of which the novelist and his craft are thematized, in the psychological realism of early twentieth-century fiction, not to say in genre fiction — the gothic included — as a whole. The postmodern form of historiographic metafiction, according to the Canadian critic, is the most recent heir to this trend of self-referentiality in the novel form. Again, we notice a confluence of roles that may have played a part in the attraction of postmodern parody to gothic fiction. Moreover, the postmodern gothic has arguably come to hold a privileged position in the “negative history” of the novel form if we consider recent developments in said history from the 1970s onwards — including accusations of the death of the novel in the 1970s, claims for a return to realism and the social novel in the 1980s, denunciations of metafiction as a sign of exhaustion of the form in the early 1990s (BUFORD, 1983; WALLACE, 1993; WOLFE, 1989; ZIEGLER, 1993), and the more recent discussions on the end of postmodernity in the 2000s (GLADSTONE; WORDEN, 2011; HOBEREK, 2007; HUBER, 2014; McLAUGHLIN, 2008;

NEALON, 2012; RUDRUM; STAVRIS, 2015; TOTH, 2010; VERMEULEN, VAN DEN AKKER; GIBBONS, 2017). It is not our place to examine these issues in depth here, but the sheer existence of postmodern parodic forms of the gothic in the 2010s may be a cause of much friction within many of these theoretical approaches, hence the need for further study.

Finally, it would be interesting to take our study a step further by discussing whether the postmodern gothic may be considered a subgenre of gothic fiction. Following Punter and França, we have referred to the gothic as a genre of literature in the course of our study, which seems to be more or less consensual today. The status of parody, however, remains in limbo; as we have tried to explore in Chapter One, parody has at times been considered a genre in the Aristotelian sense, at times a rhetorical trope, and at times an extended form. As far as the postmodern parody is concerned, although Hutcheon sometimes refers to it as a genre in her *Theory of Parody*, she is more often adamant that parody "seems to be an extended form, *probably* a genre, rather than a technique" (HUTCHEON, 2000, p. 19, emphasis added). It is the "probably" that might defy the apparently strong mutual attraction of gothic and postmodernism, thus setting a problem in motion. How to determine whether or not parody may be named a genre? How in turn to determine whether or not the postmodern gothic, so utterly reliant on parody as it has proven itself to be, may be named a subgenre of gothic? In which terms — those of the gothic, those of the postmodern parody, or those of the symbiosis of both — should the generic status of the postmodern gothic be predicated? These are questions that deserve answers, and it is to them we shall turn in future academic work.

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