The following article comes from the introductory chapter to Skin Shows: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity. *Its author, Judith Halberstam, is a professor of English who specializes in gender studies. Since its publication in 1995,* Skin Shows *has had a strong influence over how scholars think about both novels and films that feature monsters. It has also contributed important ideas to an area of study known as* queer theory. *Instead of treating sexuality and gender as universal concepts, queer theory approaches ideas such as "heterosexual" and "homosexual" as well as "male" and "female" as labels that convey the assumptions and prejudices of particular cultural and historical contexts. Halberstam's book isn't written for a general audience: it presents academic arguments that rely both implicitly and explicitly on concepts familiar to scholars who study literature, film, and queer theory. Parts of it are therefore likely to be difficult for readers who are new to such study, but the difficulty pays off with a sophisticated understanding of monsters' social significance.*

Although Halberstam's work makes important claims about the ways monsters both reflect on and help to shape social constructions of human sexuality, it doesn't consider sexuality in a vacuum. Like the work by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen included in this book, it focuses on ways monsters represent Otherness, "the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known." According to Halberstam, monsters "can represent gender, race, nationality, class, and sexuality in one body... Monsters have to be everything the human is not and, in producing the negative of human, [they] make way for the invention of the human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual." In other words, representations of inhuman monstrosity include many aspects of human identity, and in doing so, they mark certain categories of people as inhuman. Only straight white men with money—arguably the most powerful category of people in the English-speaking world—end up looking fully human. As you read, pay particular attention to Halberstam's discussion of "how sexuality became the dominant mark of otherness" rather than marks of otherness such as gender, race, nationality, and class.

PARASITES AND PERVERTS
AN INTRODUCTION TO GOTHIC MONSTROSITY

By Judith Halberstam

So many monsters; so little time.
—promotional slogan for HELLRAISER

SKIN SHOWS

In *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) by Jonathan Demme, one of many modern adaptations of *Frankenstein*, a serial killer known as Buffalo Bill collects women in order to flay them and use their skins to construct a "woman suit."

Sitting in his basement sewing hides, Buffalo Bill makes his monster a sutured beast, a patchwork of gender, sex, and sexuality. Skin,,in this morbid scene, represents the monstrosity of surfaces and as Buffalo Bill dresses up in his suit and prances in front of the mirror, he becomes a layered body, a body of many surfaces laid one upon the other. Depth and essence dissolve in this mirror dance and identity and humanity become skin deep.

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

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

There are many congruities between Gothic fiction and detective fiction but in the Gothic, crime is embodied within a specifically deviant form—the monster—that announces itself (de-monstrates) as the place of corruption. Furthermore, just as the detective character appears across genres in many different kinds of fiction (in the sensation novel, in Dickens), so Gothic infiltrates the Victorian novel as a symptomatic moment in which boundaries between good and evil, health and perversity, crime and punishment, truth

and deception, inside and outside, dissolve and threaten the integrity of the narrative itself. While many literary histories, therefore, have relegated Gothic to a subordinate status in relation to realism, I will be arguing that nineteenth-century literary tradition *is* a Gothic tradition and that this has everything to do with the changing technologies of subjectivity that Foucault describes.

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

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

Furthermore, as I noted, while nineteenth-century Gothic monstrosity was a combination of the features of deviant race, class, and gender, within contemporary horror, the monster, for various reasons, tends to show clearly the markings of deviant sexualities and gendering but less clearly the signs

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

The discourse of racialized monstrosity within the modern horror film proves to be a discursive minefield. Perhaps because race has been so successfully Gothicized within our recent history, filmmakers and screenplay writers tend not to want to make a monster who is defined by a deviant racial identity. European anti-Semitism and American racism towards black Americans are precisely Gothic discourses given over to the making monstrous of particular kinds of bodies.

To give an example of what I am arguing here, one can look at a contemporary horror film, *Candyman* (1990), and the way it merges monstrosity and race.

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

monstrosity turns upon his desire for the white woman and his murderous intentions towards black women.

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

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

Monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditioned rather than a psychological universal. While the horror within *Frankenstein* seemed to depend upon the monster's actual hideous physical aspect, his status as anomaly, and his essential foreignness, the threat of Buffalo Bill depends upon the violence of his identity crisis, a crisis that will exact a price in female flesh. Buffalo Bill's identity crisis is precisely that, a crisis of knowledge, a "category crisis"[4]; but it no longer takes the form of the anomaly—now a category crisis indicates a crisis of sexual identity.

It is in the realm of sexuality, however, that Buffalo Bill and Frankenstein's monster seem to share traits and it is here that we may be inclined to read Buffalo Bill as a reincarnation of many of the features of nineteenth-century

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

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

How sexuality became the dominant mark of otherness is a question that we may begin to answer by deconstructing Victorian Gothic monsters and examining the constitutive features of the horror they represent. If, for example, many nineteenth-century monsters seem to produce fears more clearly related to racial identity than gender identity, how is it that we as modern readers have been unable to discern these more intricate contours of difference? Obviously, the answer to such a question and many others like it lies in a history of sexuality, a history introduced by Michel Foucault and continued by recent studies which link Foucault's work to a history of the novel.[5]

Where sexuality becomes an identity, other "others" become invisible and the multiple features of monstrosity seem to degenerate back into a primeval sexual slime. Class, race, and nation are subsumed, in other words, within the monstrous sexual body; accordingly, Dracula's bite drains pleasure rather than capital, Mr. Hyde symbolizes repression rather than the production of self, and both figure foreign aspect as a threat to domestic security.

The body that scares and appalls changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity, as do the preferred interpretations of that monstrosity. Within the traits that make a body monstrous—that is, frightening or ugly, abnormal or disgusting—we may read the difference between an other and a self, a pervert and a normal person, a foreigner and a native.

GOTHIC GNOMES

In her 1832 introduction to *Frankenstein*, Shelley writes, "I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper."[7] Shelley's "hideous progeny" was not merely her novel but the nineteenth-century Gothic novel itself. The Gothic, of course, did indeed prosper and thrive through the century. It grew in popularity until, by the turn of the century, its readership was massive enough that a writer could actually make a living from the sale of his Gothic works. In 1891, for example, Robert Louis Stevenson loosed his "shilling shocker," *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, upon the reading public hoping for commercial returns. Stevenson described his novella as a "Gothic gnome" and worried that he had produced a gross distortion of literature.[8] Such an anxiety marked Gothic itself as a monstrous form in relation to its popularity and its improper subject matter. The appellation "Gothic gnome" labeled the genre as a mutation or hybrid form of true art and genteel literature.

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

consumes monstrosity, who revels in it, and who then surveys its individual members for signs of deviance or monstrosity, excess or violence.

Anxiety about the effects of consuming popular literature revealed itself in England in the 1890s in the form of essays and books which denounced certain works as "degenerate" (a label defined by Max Nordau's book *Degeneration*).[9] Although Gothic fiction obviously fell into this category, the censors missed the mark in denouncing such works. Rather than condoning the perversity they recorded, Gothic authors, in fact, seemed quite scrupulous about taking a moral stand against the unnatural acts that produce monstrosity. Long sentimental sermons on truth and purity punctuate many a gruesome tale and leave few doubts as to its morality by the narrative's end. Bram Stoker, for example, sermonizes both in his novels and in an essay printed in the journal *The Nineteenth Century* called "The Censorship of Fiction." In this essay, Stoker calls for stricter surveillance of popular fiction and drama. Stoker thinks censorship would combat human weakness on two levels, namely, "the weakness of the great mass of people who form audiences, and of those who are content to do base things in the way of catering for these base appetites." Obviously, Stoker did not expect his own writing to be received as a work that "catered to base appetites"[10] because, presumably, it used perverse sexuality to identify what or who threatened the dominant class.

Similarly, Oscar Wilde was shocked by the critics who called *The Picture of Dorian Gray* "poisonous" and "heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefecation." Wilde's novel, after all, tells the story of a young man seduced by a poisonous book and punished soundly for his corruptions. Wilde defends his work by saying, "It was necessary, sir, for the dramatic development of this story to surround Dorian Gray with an atmosphere of moral corruption." He continues, "Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray."[11]

Producing and consuming monsters and monstrous fictions, we might say, adds up to what Eve Sedgwick has called, in her study of Gothic conventions, "an aesthetic of pleasurable fear."[12] The Gothic, in other words, inspires fear and desire at the same time—fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within the reader herself. But fear and desire within the same body produce a disciplinary effect. In other words, a Victorian public could consume Gothic novels in vast quantities without regarding such a material as debased because Gothic gave readers the

thrill of reading about so-called perverse activities while identifying aberrant sexuality as a condition of otherness and as an essential trait of foreign bodies. The monster, of course, marks the distance between the perverse and the supposedly disciplined sexuality of a reader. Also, the signifiers of "normal" sexuality maintain a kind of hegemonic power by remaining invisible.

So, the aesthetic of pleasurable fear that Sedgwick refers to makes pleasure possible only by fixing horror elsewhere, in an obviously and literally foreign body, and by then articulating the need to expel the foreign body. Thus, both Dracula and Hyde are characters with markedly foreign physiognomies; they are dark and venal, foreign in both aspect and behavior. Dracula, for example, is described by Harker as an angular figure with a strong face notable for "peculiarly arched nostrils . . . a lofty domed forehead," bushy hair and eyebrows, "sharp white teeth," and ears pointed at the tops.[13] Hyde is described as small and deformed, "pale and dwarfish . . . troglodytic."[14] By making monstrosity so obviously a physical condition and by linking it to sexual corruption, such fictions bind foreign aspects to perverse activities.

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

PERVERSION AND PARASITISM

Within nineteenth-century anti-Semitism, the Jew was marked as a threat to capital, to masculinity, and to nationhood. Jews in England at the turn of the

century were the objects of an internal colonization. While the black African became the threatening other abroad, it was closer to home that people focused their real fears about the collapse of the nation through a desire for racial homogeneity.[15] Jews were referred to as "degenerate," the bearers of syphilis, hysterical, neurotic, as blood-suckers and, on a more practical level, Jews were viewed as middlemen in business.[16] Not all Gothic novels are as explicit as *Dracula* about their identification of monster and Jew. In some works we can read a more generalized code of fear which links horror to the Oriental[17] and in others we must interpret a bodily semiotic that marks monsters as symbols of a diseased culture. But to understand better how the history of the Gothic novel charges the entanglement of race, nation, and sexuality in productions of otherness, we might consider the Gothic monster as the antithesis of "Englishness."

Benedict Anderson has written about the cultural roots of the nation in terms of "imagined communities" which are "conceived in language, not in blood."[18] By linking the development of a print industry, particularly the popularization of novels and newspapers, to the spread of nationalism, Anderson pays close attention to the ways in which a shared conception of what constitutes "nation-ness" is written and read across certain communities. If the nation, therefore, is a textual production which creates national community in terms of an inside and an outside and then makes those categories indispensable, Gothic becomes one place to look for a fiction of the foreign, a narrative of who and what is not-English and not-native. The racism that becomes a mark of nineteenth-century Gothic arises out of the attempt within horror fiction to give form to what terrifies the national community. Gothic monsters are defined both as other than the imagined community and as the being that cannot be imagined as community.

"Racism and anti-Semitism," Anderson writes, "manifest themselves, not across national boundaries, but within them. In other words, they justify not so much foreign ward as domestic oppression and domination" (136). The racism and anti-Semitism that I have identified as a hallmark of nineteenth-century Gothic literature certainly direct themselves towards a domestic rather than a foreign scene. Gothic in the 1890s, as represented by the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde, takes place in the backstreets of London in laboratories and asylums, in old abandoned houses and decaying city streets, in hospitals and bedrooms, in homes and gardens.

The monster, such a narrative suggests, will find you in the intimacy of your own home; indeed, it will make your home its home (or you its home) and alter forever the comfort of domestic privacy. The monster peeps through the window, enters through the back door, and sits beside you in the parlor; the monster is always invited in but never asked to stay. The racism that seems to inhere to the nineteenth-century Gothic monster, then, may be drawn from imperialistic or colonialist fantasies of other lands and peoples, but it concentrates its imaginative force upon the other peoples in "our" lands, the monsters at home. The figure of the parasite becomes paramount within Gothic precisely because it is an internal not an external danger that Gothic identifies and attempts to dispel.

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

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

connection between the homosexual and the uncanny, Dracula embodies once and for all the danger of the hybrid race and the perverse sexuality within the form of the vampire.

THE POWER OF HORROR

In Gothic, as in many areas of Victorian culture, sexual material was not repressed but produced on a massive scale, as Michel Foucault has argued.[19] The narrative, then, that professed outrage at acts of sexual perversion (the nightly wanderings of Hyde, for example, or Dracula's midnight feasts) in fact produced a catalogue of perverse sexuality by first showcasing the temptations of the flesh in glorious technicolor and then by depicting so-called normal sex as a sickly enterprise devoid of all passion. One has only to think of the contrast between Mina Harker's encounter with Count Dracula—she is found lapping at blood from his breast—and her sexually neutral, maternal relations with her husband.

The production of sexuality as identity and as the inversion of identity (perversion—a turning away from identity) in Gothic novels consolidates normal sexuality by defining it in contrast to its monstrous manifestations. Horror, I have suggested, exercises power even as it incites pleasure and/or disgust. Horror, indeed, has a power closely related to its pleasure-producing function and the twin mechanism of pleasure-power perhaps explains how it is that Gothic may empower some readers even as it disables others. An example of how Gothic appeals differently to readers may be found in contemporary slasher movies like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Halloween* (1978). Critics generally argue that these films inspire potency in a male viewer and incredible vulnerability in a female viewer. However, the mechanisms of Gothic narrative never turn so neatly around gender identifications. A male viewer of the slasher film, like a male reader of the nineteenth-century Gothic, may find himself on the receiving end of countless acts of degradation in relation to monstrosity and its powers while the female reader and spectator may be able to access a surprising source of power through monstrous forms and monstrous genres.

In her psychoanalytic study of fear, *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines horror in terms of "abjection." The abject, she writes, is "something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and

ends up engulfing us."[20] In a chapter on the writings of Celine, Kristeva goes on to identify abjection with the Jew of anti-Semitic discourse. Anti-Semitic fantasy, she suggests, elevates Jewishness to both mastery and weakness, to "sex tinged with femininity and death" (185).

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

THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

In an introduction to *Studies on Hysteria* written in 1893, Freud identifies the repressed itself as a foreign body. Noting that hysterical symptoms replay some original trauma in response to an accident, Freud explains that the memory of trauma "acts like a foreign body which, long after its entry, must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work."[21] In other words, until an original site of trauma reveals itself in therapy, it remains foreign to body and mind but active in both. The repressed, then, figures as a sexual secret that the body keeps from itself and it figures as foreign because what disturbs the body goes unrecognized in the mind.

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

THE TECHNOLOGY OF MONSTERS

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

The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities. [. . .]

Notes

1. Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 130. Baudrillard writes: "Obscenity begins precisely when there is no more spectacle, no more

scene when all becomes transparence and immediate visibility, when everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication."

2. Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989).

3. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), 30, 29.

4. This term is coined by Marjorie Garber in Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (New York: Routledge, 1992), 16. In this study of transvestism, Garber suggests that the cross-dresser and the transsexual provoke category crises that are displaced onto the place of gender and ambiguity. This argument is useful to the claim that I make that all difference in modernity has been subsumed under the aegis of sexual difference.

5. Most notable, for my purposes, among such studies are Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) and David A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

6. Claire Kahane, "Gothic Mirrors and Feminine Identity," *The Centennial Review* 24 (1980): 43–64.

7. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1831; reprint, ed. M. K. Joseph, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 10.

8. See Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle, "The Education of Edward Hyde: Stevenson's 'Gothic Gnome' and the Mass Readership of Late Victorian England," in *100 Years of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, ed. Gordon Hirsch and William Veeder (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

9. Max Simon Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1895).

10. Bram Stoker, "The Censorship of Fiction" *The Nineteenth Century* (September 1908): 4810.

11. See the introduction to Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891; reprint, ed. and with an introduction by Isobel Murray, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

12. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), vi.

13. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897; reprint, New York: Bantam, 1981), 18.

14. Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886; reprint, New York: Bantam, 1981), 18.

15. In an article on the influence of Spanish models of nationhood upon English debates of "the Jewish question," Michel Ragussis looks at nineteenth-century novels like *Ivanhoe* and their positioning of questions of nationhood alongside calls for Jewish assimilation: "By depicting the persecution of the Jews at a critical moment in history—the founding of the English nation-state—*Ivanhoe* located 'the Jewish question' at the heart of English national identity" (478). See "The Birth of a Nation in Victorian Culture: The Spanish

Inquisition, the Converted Daughter, and the 'Secret Race,'" *Critical Inquiry* 20 (spring 1994): 477–508.

16. See, for example, Henry Arthur Jones, "Middlemen and Parasites," *The New Review* 8 (June 1893): 645–54; and "The Dread of the Jew," *The Spectator* 83 (September 9, 1899): 338–39, where the author discusses references made in popular periodicals of the time to Jews as "a parasitical race with no ideals beyond precious metals." "Parasite" and "degenerate" became coded synonyms for Jews in such literature.

17. See, for example, Richard Marsh, *The Beetle* (1897), in *Victorian Villainies*, ed. Graham Greene and Sir Hugh Greene (New York: Penguin, 1984). For an excellent article on this little-known Gothic text, see Kelly Hurley, "'The Inner Chambers of All Nameless Sin': *The Beetle*, Gothic Female Sexuality and Oriental Barbarism," in *Virginal Sexuality and Textuality in Victorian Literature*, ed. Lloyd Davis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 193–213.

18. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 133.

19. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980).

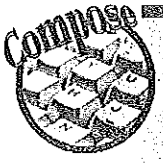
20. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

21. Sigmund Freud and Josef Brauer, *Studies on Hysteria* (1893; reprint, trans. and ed. James Strachey, New York: Basic, 1987), 6.

Halberstam argues that "the signifiers of 'normal' sexuality maintain a kind of hegemonic power by remaining invisible." First, use your library's resources and/or the Internet to find two or three definitions of "hegemonic" (alternately, "hegemony"). In your own words, what is "hegemonic power?" How could sexuality have this kind of power? Next, consider the ways "normal" sexuality can be invisible by searching the Internet for novels and films, some that feature gay characters and some that feature straight characters. How often do your results refer to straight characters or the stories they're in explicitly as "straight" or "heterosexual?" How often do your results refer to gay characters or the stories they're in *explicitly* as "gay" or "homosexual?" How do you explain the differences you discover? With your discoveries in mind, make a list of novels and films that you might classify as "straight." What difference does applying this label make in the ways people might perceive those texts?

Because "Parasites and Perverts" is the introduction of a book-length argument, most of the evidence for Halberstam's claims doesn't appear here. However, the history of monster stories offers much evidence that you might use to support her claims. Consider Halberstam's claim that "The Gothic text, whether novel or film, plays out an elaborate skin show" in which skin is "a kind of metonym for the human." First, what is a "metonym," and how is skin a "metonym for the human"? Next, brainstorm your own list of evidence that shows the significance of skin in monster stories. Finally, using what you've learned so far about monsters in novels and films, consider examples where skin is shown, discussed, or otherwise emphasized. What do these examples specifically reveal about the relationships among skin, monstrosity, and humanity?

Join a small group of students to discuss the many claims about monsters in "Parasites and Perverts." Individually, each group member should list at least three claims from the chapter that either were difficult to understand or would benefit from further explanation. As a group, compare your lists. If a claim appears on someone else's list that isn't on yours, elaborate, in your own words, on what that claim means. Similarly, your collaborators should explain ideas on your list that aren't on theirs. For claims that appear on everyone's lists, use library and Internet sources to look up any unfamiliar words, authors, or texts mentioned near where the claims appear in the chapter. Together, your group should finish with a much fuller understanding of Halberstam's argument.



"Parasites and Perverts" comments on many of the novels and films represented in this book, including the classic Gothic novels *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula* as well as the movies *Candyman* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. After considering the monsters in these texts and many others, Halberstam concludes, "The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters and need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities." Choose a monster from one of the novels or films with which you are now familiar, and write a short essay about something useful in the way the monster disrupts categories. Craft a thesis with a very specific claim about why we need this monster, and cite both the monster's original text and "Parasites and Perverts" as you demonstrate how the monster disrupts categories and why that disruption is valuable.