WHITENESS AS TERROR/HORROR

WHITENESS AS TERROR/HORROR: A BLACK FEMINIST READING (OF) LONG
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TRANSATLANTIC, COLONIAL GOTHIC

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2023) Hamilton, Ontario (English and Cultural Studies)

TITLE: Whiteness as Terror/Horror: A Black Feminist Reading (Of) Long Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic, Colonial Gothic
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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Eugenia Zuroski
NUMBER OF PAGES: ix, 318

LAY ABSTRACT

This project examines the entangled relationship between whiteness and terror/horror in literature from the long eighteenth century. Drawing from contemporary Black Feminist theories to analyze Transatlantic works that make use of the Gothic mode, this study reframes historical concepts of terror and horror as separate affective categories, reimagining the foundational elements of Gothicism, to underscore the inseparable nature of psychological and physical manifestations of colonial oppression. Focusing on race and racialization, I illustrate how specific conceptions of whiteness generated, bolstered, and deployed terror/horror to shape the experiences of Black humans inhabiting Transatlantic locations in the period and beyond. I think with(in) Black Feminism(s) to delve into the impact of Enlightenment philosophy on Gothic narratives that grapple with slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. By retheorizing the Gothic as a migratory mode, I emphasize its capabilities to address the haunting legacies of whiteness and its violent manifestations across time and space.

ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines the intersections between whiteness and terror/horror in texts produced during the long eighteenth century. I reframe the Gothic as a migratory Transatlantic, colonial mode that problematizes eighteenth-century distinctions between terror as a form of the intellectual sublime and horror as a bodily reaction that generates shock and aversion. Drawing upon contemporary Black Feminism(s), I analyze Enlightenment theories of mind and objective reason and consider whiteness as a spectral and material presence throughout long eighteenth-century writing, with which the Gothic mode grapples directly. Highlighting how the Gothic operates in Transatlantic spaces that rehearse the legacies of violence enacted against Black and racialized peoples, my project contends that classifications such as terror-Gothic (i.e., psychological horror) and horror-Gothic (i.e., bodily horror) are arbitrary and reductive; instead, the Gothic responds to colonialism by imagining that the experience of embodied knowledge is a conflation of both.

Centered primarily as a study of literary methodology, this thesis presents readings of three works of literature that operate within and against the backdrop of Anglo-American Enlightenment myths of white supremacy: Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), and Matthew Lewis's *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (1834). This thesis puts questions to each text, regarding the reproduction, mobilization, and subversion of whiteness in their portrayal of terror/horror; the use of mobility to illustrate preoccupations with displacement, socio-political, and cultural conditions; the depiction of Black life, agency, and subjectivity despite oppression. By unraveling complexities of whiteness and terror/horror, noting the Gothic modality's haunting/haunted relationship to colonial discourses of power, this study emphasizes the enduring relevance of these themes in understanding contemporary racial imaginaries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has been long in the making, and it would not have been possible without the daily invocations of and inspiration from my grandmother, my Mamá Dulce, who has always motivated me to "Echar para adelante"—to move forward, to be kind and thoughtful, and to stay human. Everything I am, I owe to you. To my late grandfather, my Papá Lorne, I am forever grateful for the time we had together, and for everything you instilled in me. I hope that I have made you proud. To my mother, Dulce Biason, I have treasured the last ten years spent in your company—you teach me about bravery, strength, determination, and the praxis of love, every single day.

I am deeply indebted to the communities who have sustained, nourished, and supported me throughout my graduate studies in North America. I begin by expressing my unending gratitude to my first mentors at Buffalo State University of New York—Dr. David Ben-Merre, for offering guidance and advice, and for believing that I could embark on this Ph.D. journey; Dr. Peter Ramos, for teaching me how to think about the Gothic critically and for being the first person to show me that Latin Americans can carve out spaces for ourselves in academia; Dr. Karen Sands-O'Connor, for being the most supportive teacher, mentor, and friend. During my time at McMaster University, I have been fortunate enough to count with the mentorship, support, advocacy, and encouragement of my supervisor, Dr. Eugenia Zuroski. I cannot overstate how lucky I am to know you, Gena, and what it means that I get to inhabit this world alongside you—you show me every day what is possible, you motivate and inspire me, and you model the intersections between care, relationality, and love. I hope this completed thesis has made you proud. If, by the end of my career, I am half the person you are, I will be very contented indeed. To my committee members, Dr. Peter Walmsley, and Dr. Sarah Brophy: words cannot hope to express how grateful I am to you both, for your generosity and care, for your thoughtfulness and insights; in short, this thesis would not have been possible without your crucial input, and I will remember you, always, for introducing me to the writings of Sharpe and McKittrick, and for always being so positive, caring, and supportive. To all the professors who inspired me during coursework, thank you, especially to Dr. Cathy Grisé for being so kind, uplifting, and always delightful to be around. To the ECS Chair, Dr. Susie O'Brien, the departmental administrative assistant, Ilona Forgo-Smith, and the academic manager, Sophie Goellnicht, thank you so much for helping me and for chatting with me all those times I was in CNH.

I would not have reached this stage without community, co-working, and collaboration. My peers, Crystal Beamer, Alexandra Basekic, Kaitlin Blanchard, and Sheena Jary; each of you knows how very thankful I am to have met you, for all the joint work(ing), chats, and mutual respect and appreciation. Much love to you all. To my dearest friend and colleague, Barbara Ferguson, I do not think that any words, in any language, can accurately describe what you mean to me; for the massive message thread between us over the years, for giving me a safe space to vent and be myself, for reminding me (how) to breathe: "Mille mercis!" To my Latin American/Latinx community at McMaster,

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

I, Stacy A. Creech de Castro, declare this dissertation to be my own work. I am the sole author of this document. No part of it has been published or submitted for publication or for a degree at another institution.

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Introduction – Unsettling (Whiteness in) the Transatlantic, Colonial Gothic

The topic of this dissertation is the mobilization of whiteness in long eighteenth century texts that make use of the Gothic mode. When analyzed through contemporary Black Feminism(s), the three main texts which are the primary subject of discussion in this project each gesture to an Enlightenment culture in which the Gothic mode of literature is evoking terror/horror to set in motion the kinds of socio-political and cultural conditions that dictate which groups of peoples are considered and treated as human. This socio-political, economic, and cultural hierarchy, in which Black and racialized peoples are located in specific Transatlantic spaces that delimit their physical and cultural mobility, continues to rely on the violence with which a specific conception of whiteness instigates colonial and imperial terror/horror.[1],[2] Operating within and against the

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use the compound term "terror/horror" to describe the effect of the Transatlantic Gothic. As I discuss in more detail below, this formulation deliberately pushes back on the Enlightenment distinction between terror, associated with the mind, and horror, associated with the body. Terror/horror, as I will argue, belongs to a Black Feminist reformulation of Gothic effects with regard to Transatlantic colonialism.

[2] This is a footnote about footnotes; or, rather, about the use of footnotes throughout this dissertation. Thinking alongside and within a Black Feminist tradition as it models interdisciplinarity in form and structure, I make use of extended footnotes throughout this document as a way to highlight the crucial role conventions of citations play in anticolonial praxes. Rather than include traditional footnotes and citations that reinforce problematic hierarchies of knowledge and support epistemic violence, I borrow methodologies from thinkers like Katherine McKittrick, as in her article, "Mathematics Black Life" (2014) and her text, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (2021), to "think about the epistemological grounds through which we theorize and imagine and name liberation in our referencing practices" (*Dear Science* 22), and because "the intellectual project of black studies—with its long history of citing and surviving racial violence in numbers—provides a deliberate commentary on the ways in which blackness works against the violence that defines it" ("Mathematics" 19). It is imperative, then, that the footnotes contained in this document be read not as mere technical aspects of academic writing, but as political tools that can be disruptive at the same time as they shape my knowledge production and meaning making. Like McKittrick, I too am "observing how arranging, rearranging, and collecting ideas outside ourselves are processes that make our ideas our own [to] think about how our ideas are bound up in stories, research, inquiries, that we do not (or should not claim we) own" (*Dear Science* 15). In addition, footnotes play a significant role in long eighteenth-century Gothic works, as in the case of novels like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), in which they operate, simply, to furnish the texts with a sense of verisimilitude.

backdrop of Anglo-American Enlightenment myths of white supremacy, these works of literature—Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), and Matthew Lewis's *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (written between 1815-1818, and published posthumously in 1834)—bring attention to slavery, and to oppressive, racist systems that continue to measure the humanity of Black and racialized peoples against an ideal, white referent. My objective is to map out the ways in which a particular conception of whiteness is deployed in these texts as a literary technique for grappling with emergent questions of empire, colonialism, and race and racialization. The readings that comprise this doctoral thesis join a current field of scholarship that situates specific long eighteenth-century deployments of whiteness in relation to the aftermath of Transatlantic slavery, during which, as Christina Sharpe has intimated, "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (Sharpe 9). It is key to note that this dissertation approaches Transatlantic or colonial Gothic in the long eighteenth century not as a particular literary genre, but as a migratory mode that negotiates themes across genres concerning colonialism and its afterlives—the yet unfolding aftermaths of whiteness—including oppression, enslavement, enclosure, entrapment, and injustice as embodiments of terror/horror. My three primary texts address these problems from a variety of material and cultural perspectives generated by Transatlantic mobility and

travel in Britain, the United States, and the Caribbean;[3] they also set the historical

parameters of this study, approximately covering the abolition era from 1789-1834.

Because the Gothic literary tradition emerged at around the same time as the abolition

movement in Anglo-American socio-political and cultural settings, I am interested in the

overlap Equiano's nonfictional slave narrative, Brown's novel, and Lewis's journal

articulate between the Gothic mode and the institution of slavery. Noting these features,

this project interrogates the material, aesthetic, and discursive intersections between a

Gothic modality that relies upon fictionalizing terror and horror as two kinds of separate

affective experiences, and the rise of a racial capitalist system that relies upon the large-

scale forced movement of Black, enslaved peoples.

Each of my chapters locates the literary Gothic mode in the context of colonial

structures that invest in the circulation of whiteness, attending to how these same

structures make use of terror and horror to keep a people subjugated, controlled, and

dehumanized. For the better part of four years, while I read, conducted research, and

designed and taught courses that center Blackness and anticolonial thought, focusing on

the long eighteenth century and its contemporary legacies, I have been grappling with

how to make sense of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis together. Olaudah Equiano is a Black

African man writing and publishing a first-hand account as a formerly enslaved person—

his nonfictional autobiographical text, one of the first and certainly one of the most

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[3] Throughout this thesis, I think about "mobility" insofar as it denotes the socio-political, cultural, and economic conditions that dictate the physical, intellectual, and cultural movements of Black and racialized peoples during the long eighteenth century. Focusing on movement across Transatlantic spaces, I emphasize how the social hierarchies of the time relied on confining Black(ened) peoples—in their socio-political and cultural movement—to specific locales, spaces, and spheres and examine the ways in which these hierarchies relied as well on the terror/horror instigated by specific conceptions of whiteness.

popular in the genre, helped to advance the pro-abolitionist cause in Britain. Charles Brockden Brown is a white American man—a fiction writer whose first novel, *Wieland*, is widely considered the first Gothic work published in the United States, and whose plot allegorizes the racial imaginary of that nation. Matthew Lewis is a white man from England, whose literary career revolved around fictional Gothic novels and dramas, until he inherited two large sugar plantations in Jamaica; his *Journal* presents real-life, first-person musings written by a white enslaver who is attempting to sustain mastery over Black and mixed-race African-descended peoples in the Caribbean. In light of their differences, both in situation and in style, this dissertation asks why they are drawing on the same kinds of vocabulary to generate distinct perspectives on Transatlantic culture. I argue that what these texts are working on in common, though for ostensibly different purposes, is an articulation of readings of colonial Enlightenment racial categories.

This study presents perspectives from different points of privilege, emphasizing how they have greater or lesser access to believing, and benefiting from, particular myths of the Enlightenment. While Brown's and Lewis's texts are seemingly engaged in and profiting from the rampant diffusion of whiteness, Equiano's narrative attempts to break and trouble conceptions of whiteness by challenging the genre we have come to understand as the "slave narrative," though this was not yet a genre per se when his text was published, as I discuss in Chapter 2. As white men, Brown and Lewis write from positions that grant them access to imagining their subjectivity in the Cartesian vein of all mind and no body, as their embodied experiences are allowed to recede into Enlightenment theories of mind in a way that perhaps makes them less cogent theorists of

material structures of power than a writer like Equiano, who foregrounds his embodied experience as a form and site of knowledge.[4] Yet when Brown's *Wieland* and Lewis's *Journal* are brought into conversation with Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, it becomes clear that these works rely on the same racialized imaginary that Equiano contends with through a narratological insistence on registering "Othered" individuals and groups in specific ways.[5]

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[4] A connection between mobilities and minds/bodies becomes apparent in this study when I contrast the perspectives of Brown and Lewis with Equiano, since the first two authors write from positions of privilege and given the fact that all three texts allude to socio-political, economic, physical, and/or cultural movement across the Atlantic Ocean. Despite the stark differences present(ed) in each text, all three rely on or work through a shared racialized imaginary that addresses and grapples with Black and racialized peoples in specific ways, in turn indicating that all three writers are entangled in the larger colonial structures they inhabit, challenge, and/or subvert.

[5] While long eighteenth-century philosophy and proto-phenomenology address concepts of the self, consciousness, and experience, as treated in the writings of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Edmund Husserl, and later thinkers take up these notions to expand the definitions of the self and the so-called constitutive "Other" (see Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Lacan, and Emmanuel Levinas, for examples, as discussed by J.A. Indaimo), this study engages with "Othered" groups and individuals through a consideration of race, racialization, colonialism, and hegemony. Jacques Derrida's reconceptualization of Levinas' "alterity," as discussed in the latter's collection of essays *Alterity and Transcendence* (1995), is key here, since it goes beyond conceptualizations of the (white) self and into metaphysical and geopolitical aspects that change the language of "Otherness" to open an analytical avenue to consider a non-white "Other," but which interrogates the reasons behind categorizations like 'non-white' as something that cements a standard white imaginary. Consequently, this study thinks about "Otherness" as it is written about by postcolonial critics like Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who attend to racialist perspectives of an Anglo-American world that relies on and continues to be bolstered by whiteness and coloniality in order to suppress racialized peoples through a narrative that "Others" them. If, as Kathleen Glenister Roberts has observed in her text, *Alterity and Narrative*, the concept of alterity posits that consciousness of the self is unique from the 'Other," but phenomenologists and psychologists claim that the self can only be understood in differential ways wherein the self becomes determined by the 'Other,' what does it mean for racialized peoples when thinkers like Levinas call on "communication and dialogue… to the successful management of alterity" (Roberts 5)? Further to this line of inquiry is Martin Buber's intimation that there should be a welcoming of the 'Other' as counterpart, since the 'Other' inevitably interpellates some aspect of the self (see Buber's 1923 text *I and Thou*, as described by Rivka Horwitz), but when racialized peoples are taken into account, and when the concepts of 'the self' follow a white European Enlightenment standard, then felicitous encounters with these groups and individuals cannot ever be achieved, since an understanding of their experiences cannot be filtered through the white experience/gaze. This process is exemplified well in the three main texts which comprise this study, since, as I explain in the body chapters, each one seems to be working through and against these conceptions to present instead "Gothic images of alienation, fragmentation and Otherness… read through postcolonial ideas relating to alterity" (ix), as Andrew Smith and William Hughes have described.

In all three primary works, the Gothic mode is departing from and struggling against its familiar classifications as "an easily identifiable Gothic tradition" (2), as David Punter has termed it. The "tradition" that Punter and other critics refer to is precisely one which relies upon aestheticizing terror and horror to attend to "the problem of degeneration, and thus the essence of the human" (Punter 1). When critics of the Gothic insist on engaging in surface-depth analyses of long eighteenth-century texts without taking their colonial and imperial contexts into account, they run the risk of overlooking how these works negotiate, justify, and propagate whiteness.[6] At the core of these interpretations is a deleterious (mis)understanding of the human, as these readings marginalize or omit racialized and gendered experiences, and ultimately presuppose that "the essence of" humanity is an extremely culturally specific white, Anglo-American, and male status quo.[7] To this traditional field of criticism of the Gothic, later works of literature that comprise a recognizable Gothic tradition—like Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian*

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[6] See works like Sigmund Freud's, "The Uncanny" (1919), Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1997), and Valdine Clemens' *The Return of the Repressed: Gothic Horror From the Castle of Otranto to Alien* (1999), for examples of critical works that engage in these types of readings and analyses.

[7] See Ellen Ledoux's article, "Was there ever a 'Female Gothic'?" in which she discusses the tradition of "women-authored Gothic texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century" (1) that is often categorized under "the term 'Female Gothic'" (Ledoux 2), introduced by Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (1976). By presenting a survey of this tradition, Ledoux explains that "women novelists employ certain coded expressions to describe anxieties over domestic entrapment and female sexuality" (2), gesturing to the ways in which this tradition—including the works of Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, and Charlotte Dacre—can be interpreted as centering patriarchal violence. However, Ledoux "asks why criticism clings to an understanding of this genre as one depicting female victimization despite overwhelming textual evidence that represents a much more complicated picture of women's use and engagement with the Gothic mode" (1), concluding that "academic criticism [does] not represent the ideological diversity of women writers" (2). Certainly, my insistence to read Transatlantic slavery and the slave trade as Gothic adds yet another layer to this "ideological diversity," if we consider the works of women like Mary Prince, Harriet Jacobs, Phillis Wheatley Peters, among others. This is something I would like to take up through expanded research once I complete the dissertation.

Gray (1890), H. G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and Abraham (Bram)

Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), to cite the same examples David Punter examines in his "Gothic

and Decadence" chapter which is part of his *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic*

Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day (1996) collection—all serve the function of asking

the question, "to what extent can one be 'infected' and still remain British?" (Punter 1).

While acknowledging that these works are "appropriate to an age of imperial decline"

(Punter 1), during a time when the Gothic builds on its early British iterations in which

writers like Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and, to some extent, Matthew Lewis and

Mary Shelley all contend with a decaying aristocratic and monarchical rule, Punter's

commentary fails to engage in any impactful way with issues regarding colonial

terror/horror, imperial brutality, gender inequities, or—even during those moments when

his criticism claims to be "grounded in Marxist and sociological ways of thinking (Punter

vi)—with the material, racial, and socio-political realities that pervade the aforementioned

texts.[8] Punter's prefatory note to the second edition of the critical collection finds him

mentioning the appearance of a new "flood of critical material on the Gothic…" (viii),

which he estimates as having occurred in the intervening almost twenty years between

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[8] For instance, writing critically about the same texts Punter examines—*Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dorian Gray*, *Doctor Moreau*, and *Dracula*—Stephen D. Arata's more perceptive readings posits these works as having their "effects by bringing the terror of the Gothic home" (621), to Britain, and noting the cursory ways in which critics of the Gothic tradition evade considerations of themes surrounding contexts of colonialism, race, and empire. In this same chapter, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (1990), Arata notes that the criticism attached to and familiar to these texts has "undervalued [their] extensive and highly visible contacts with a series of cultural issues, particularly those involving race" (621), and goes on to assert that "This neglect has in part resulted from the various psychoanalytic approaches taken by most critics of the Gothic" (622). In one way or another, each of these literary endeavors locates terror/horror in expansion, invasions, threats from perceptibly distant "Others," and internal(ized) fears of racialized "Others" somehow enacting corruption from within male Britishness. Consequently, it is these kinds of anticolonial analyses this study thinks with and gestures to.

editions of the text, and which had altered the field making it seem "radically different" (viii).[9] In response to these shifts, Punter writes that to adapt this critical book "to the demands of these vast changes in the world and in the text is a task beyond my present means. It seemed better, therefore, to leave it largely as an 'unrestored' period piece, with its own characteristic style, silhouette, and mood" (Punter viii). The result, then, is a lauded and still heavily cited text on the Gothic that ultimately decides to ignore the more inclusive and critical shifts in scholarship that generate lasting, necessary, and crucial commentary on the field.[10] Even when Punter's analysis gestures toward a kind of criticism that engages with these issues, as when in his chapter entitled "Later American Gothic" he writes that while reading H. P. Lovecraft "one realises that the terms which he applies to his invading non-human monstrosities are precisely the same as those in which he describes members of all American ethnic groups with the exception of the caste of East Coast Old Americans to which he belonged" (Punter 40), the text loses the thread and does not actually identify how Transatlantic, colonial Gothic—both old and new—is always confronted with and haunted by whiteness. Putting it differently, I contend that by

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[9] Punter writes his "Preface to the First Edition" (vi) in "December 1978" (vii), and the "Preface to the Second Edition" (viii) in "January 1995" (ix).

[10] The *Google Scholar* engine indicates that since 2018, Punter's *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* has been cited in critical articles, chapters, and websites over one hundred times. While I engage with other critics of the Gothic throughout this study, I set up my work against Punter this early given his ongoing stature within Gothic Studies. Since this collection was published, however, Punter has written, *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (2007), in which he makes connections between the "instability of the postcolonial text" (90) and "all the materials of a Gothic imagination… a sense of history as an accumulation of relics, as an accumulative relic, an embedding of a notion of mourning" (91). Engaging with writers like Derek Walcott, this more recent version of Punter seems to produce more generative readings, as his suggestion that what he terms "postcolonial literature" carries within it a sense of the haunting, haunted, and unsettling elements associated with the Gothic mode might yield better understandings of the layers of colonial histories and traumas that linger in so-called "postcolonial" societies. For the purpose of this study, however, I am focusing on Punter's early, more heavily cited material.

overlooking colonial and imperial contexts in long eighteenth-century Gothic texts, Punter and similar critics advance superficial, trite readings that substantiate the omission and/or marginalization of racialized and gendered experiences. I would argue that despite his later attempts to generate more inclusive criticism, Punter's work ultimately ignores the transformational shifts in scholarship that make the field appear to be so "radically different" to him, as he skims over these key changes that (would) offer necessary commentary on the Gothic's (traditional) entanglements with whiteness.

The problem with Punter's recirculation of an "unrestored" history of Gothic fiction is that, in response to ongoing calls for the field of long eighteenth-century literature to engage more directly with contexts of race, racialization, colonial and imperial fear, and Blackness, it allows "traditional" criticism to justify its failures by loudly declaring, "this is not that kind of text." This line of interpretive inquiry, which continues to measure humanity to a white standard in which non-white "Others" are always-already found wanting, does so by conspicuously omitting the ways in which non-British, non-white, non-male subjects live through and attempt to survive the systems of whiteness rehearsed and reproduced in canonical literature. Here, I use the phrase "always-already" to further articulate how white, Eurocentric theory and philosophy (see Martin Heidegger's 1927 *Being and Time*, for example) have been persistent in their reductive and pernicious attempts to register, record, classify, and make sense of Black and racialized peoples. Reading alongside yet against these traditions, I am invested in the kinds of conceptions of the human that think with Black Studies and Black Feminism in order to, as Sylvia Wynter terms it, find the ways in which Black people "experience this

self, this body, in the specific culture-historical world in which [they] must necessarily realize [themselves] as human, through [their] interaction with 'normal' others, who are here, necessarily white" (Wynter 40).

When considering the many ways the Gothic mode attempts to read race in the long eighteenth century, it is key to engage with Black humanist and feminist thinkers like Wynter (as well as with the other Black Feminist theorists whose writings inform and animate this study, namely Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, and Katherine McKittrick), who are indebted to and in conversation with Wynter, since her works allow for a generative understanding of Enlightenment models that articulate(d) a universalized version of the human as embodied in Punter's "British… man" (Punter 1). In the body chapters of this study, therefore, I argue that Transatlantic, colonial Gothic works are effective precisely because they raise these questions while parting from and problematizing Black and racialized peoples' "modes… that compel [them] to know [their bodies] through the terms of an always already imposed 'historico-racial schema'; a schema that predefines [their bodies] as an impurity to be cured, a lack, a defect, to be amended into the 'true' being of whiteness" (Wynter 41). In their own ways, Equiano, Brown, and Lewis all allude to the question: what happens when Black and racialized groups and individuals resist taxonomic racial, phenotypical, and biologic classifications and refuse to be inscribed as dehumanized "Others," thus agitating Western conceptions of whiteness, racial capitalism, and imperial demarcation? I add to this question, drawing on Black Dominican scholar Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo: what if we were to look beyond the "recognizable human, or, more to the point Human (as in the Enlightenment model of

Manhood)? Might this line of inquiry lead us towards an 'ecumenically human [that is, homo sapiens] interpretation,' to cite Sylvia Wynter, that, in our current moment, might help save us from total environmental and political catastrophe?" (5).[11]

Reading canonical texts, especially those by white men, through contemporary Black Feminist methodologies, reveals the extent to which British writing of this period was generally haunted by the contradictions of white supremacist heteropatriarchy. I focus on these different examples of the Gothic mode to point to the colonial Gothic's specific capabilities to lay bare the enormous amount of pressure Black and racialized peoples apply to a Transatlantic world in which whiteness is the standard parameter of meaningful existence. What Equiano, Brown, and Lewis are working on in common, I argue, is the structural vulnerability of whiteness in the world of its own making, which the Gothic mode presents as a kind of narratological instability. Each of the texts featured in the discussion that follows reflects upon how the colonial Gothic mobilizes strains of terror/horror that implode narratives from within, generating stories about Anglo-American colonial identity that tend to topple under the weight of their own aestheticizing, assumptions, and imaginings. In this vein, I follow and present a reconceptualization of a field which has heretofore been too reluctant to provide answers to the lines of inquiry—to the pressures—that contemporary Black Feminist Theory and Black Studies put to it. In the first chapter, I attempt to provide answers to these questions through a discussion of the genealogy of the Gothic and its emergence as a literary

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[11] Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo voiced this idea during the roundtable, "Expanding the Dialogues: Afro-Latinx Feminisms," hosted by the *Latinx Talk* initiative, in 2017. The event brought together Black Latin American/Afro-Latinx Feminist thinkers, including Ramírez D'Oleo, Petra Rivera-Rideau, Omaris Z. Zamora, and Sandy Plácido.

tradition; through a description of Black Feminism as method and methodology, rather than a scope or lens; and through charting and illustrating prospective approaches that yield constructive ways in which scholars, thinkers, and critics can consider "our current moment… [of] catastrophe" (2), as Ramírez D'Oleo has termed it.

This doctoral thesis is the result of ongoing academic, professional, and personal journeys in which I have been interested in researching topics surrounding individual and communal fear. As an Afro-Latina from the Dominican Republic—a racialized woman who has migrated from the Caribbean, first to the United States and then to Canada, to pursue graduate studies—my embodied knowledge and lived experiences have commingled with academic and professional praxes in ways that bespeak my continued preoccupation with questions regarding the location of terror and horror in Gothic literature, and how these are exacerbated by Black Transatlantic mobility and Black livingness in spaces in which whiteness recurs persistently in tangible and umbrageous ways. Since the initial idea for this project, in 2016, encompassed the Gothic tradition but did not yet include the elements which make it a dissertation about the Transatlantic world—centering race, racialization, and/or Black diasporic thought—it is important to provide an account of the inception, development, and progression of my ideas, as part of this study's introduction. To this end, I include a description of the Gothic tradition in literature in English: my personal and scholarly interest in it, a genealogy of the term 'Gothic' with its oblique and numerous ethnocultural locations, the emergence and development of it in Anglo-American literary spheres once it crosses the Atlantic Ocean

to be tailored to specific ends in the United States, as well as the transformations it necessarily undergoes through its Transatlantic voyage which brought it to the Caribbean.

Over the course of the last ten years, my graduate readings, coursework, and research have led me down a critical path to attempt to locate and articulate the historical, social, and cultural experiences that call forth personal and collective affective responses that educe terror and horror in Transatlantic societies—in England, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This focus emerged in response to my having been immersed in the study of the literature produced in these locales dating back to the seventeenth century, through which I have taken note of the many instances in texts that highlight the more strained and uneasy aspects which underscore sociopolitical tensions running through their cultural fabric. As a result, the present study takes up notions surrounding fear, terror, and horror in fictional and nonfictional spaces, investigating which groups of peoples perceive and express the conditions that engender, instill, and propagate dread, harm, and alarm through and because of whiteness, and rethinks them in the context of the Gothic tradition in literature in English, ultimately reframing it as a Transatlantic, colonial modality that sheds light on material and abstract fear-inducing conditions. Essentially, by highlighting the material effects of enslavement, oppression, marginalization, and discrimination on the Black and racialized people implicated and implied in the texts I analyze, and connecting these tangible experiences with abstract notions of fear, and terror/horror, I aim to illustrate how the Gothic becomes an important modality through which it is possible to unravel the ways in which narratives disrupt conventional notions of race and racialization, the human, and dominant socio-political

and cultural hierarchies. At the same time, by bringing these issues to the forefront, this thesis points to the generative capabilities of critical scholarship that addresses the haunting legacies of whiteness and its violent manifestations across time and space.

To frame these discussions, I come into this project as someone who has always been interested in the Gothic but whose readings are now informed as much by critical, scholarly frameworks as they are by my own embodied knowledge and lived experiences as a racialized woman living in the Black, Latin American/Latinx diaspora in North America. Through a description of my continued interest in Gothic literature, in this portion of this thesis I illustrate how I have arrived at and come to view, formulate, and reformulate the readings that comprise this study, positing the reasons that enable such a detailed and non-traditional analysis of the Gothic tradition to be put forth as part of the requirements to complete a doctoral degree in English in a North American institution. I refer to this dissertation as being non-traditional, because, in many ways, I have followed an uncommon path to arrive at it in its present state. The project itself underwent a crucial critical transformation—first in scope— following an initial meeting early in 2016 with the scholar who would become my supervisor, Dr. Eugenia Zuroski. Her areas of expertise include long eighteenth-century British literature and culture and anti- and de-colonial thought, and during our first conversation about my prospective project I realized that it made more sense to build it as a Transatlantic rather than solely American examination of the Gothic (see the next sections for a detailed description of the inception and development of Anglo-American Gothic). Once this idea took hold, I was fortunate to bring together a supervisory committee which, in addition to Dr. Zuroski, included two

other scholars whose areas of expertise helped to further mold the present dissertation: Dr. Peter Walmsley, an expert on eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, and Dr. Sarah Brophy, whose areas of expertise include race, gender, and class, as well as post-slavery and Black diaspora Studies.

Though working with each of these specialists over the course of seven years has shaped and contoured my own thinking in urgently important ways, there still exists a sense of disquietude that has also textured my experience here. Living as a racialized woman navigating a place in the North American academy has been challenging; thinking about this project as a precise and orderly process gives me pause, because I have learned how conditions of precarity impact, obstruct, and ultimately hinder the amount of work one can accomplish in the four years that are funded for an international student whose access to other means of support are restricted and oftentimes inadequate in Canadian institutions. I am necessarily reminded of Sharpe's asseveration from *In the Wake* when she writes that:

> It is a big leap from working class, to Ivy League schools, to being a tenured professor. And a part of that leap and apart from its specificities are the sense and awareness of precarity; the precarities of the afterlives of slavery… the precarities of the ongoing disaster of the ruptures of chattel slavery. They texture my reading practices, my ways of being in and of the world, my relations with and to others. (9)

This passage presents numerous insights regarding the conditions of existence as Black and/or racialized peoples in North America, as we inhabit diasporic locations in places that continue to enact the legacies of colonial cruelty, violence, and terror/horror. It likewise bespeaks the state of the academy as a colonial and imperial machine which was not designed to support, care, or account for early career researchers whose work does not

necessarily engage with whiteness in the traditional ways it has been centered and approached. It matters, then, to think about this "big leap" (9) Sharpe references, in the context of people whose work seeks to reckon with the histories of brutality in these Transatlantic spaces. "The precarities of the ongoing disaster" (9) ineluctably structure scholarship such as my own, as this thesis joins similar critical efforts which remind us that:

> Black studies and anticolonial thought offer methodological practices wherein we read, live, hear, groove, create, and write across a range of temporalities, places, texts, and ideas that build on existing liberatory practices and pursue ways of living the world that are uncomfortably generous and provisional and practical, and, as well, imprecise and unrealized. (McKittrick, *Dear Science* 5)

As an Afro-Latina early career researcher from the Dominican Republic, my scholarship and research take up and acknowledge this line of criticism—which is social, political, and cultural all at once—to examine long eighteenth-century aesthetic, literary, socio-historic, and material contexts in ways that might illustrate how we can think and write more generatively about this (ongoing) moment of socio-political catastrophe. In this non-traditional study, then, my readings of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic interrogate whether we might look to long eighteenth-century colonial terror/horror—in literary works that deal with oppression, enslavement, enclosure, entrapment, and injustice as embodiments of these two affective categories—to think alongside but ultimately beyond the work of visibility and representation, toward more focused conversations about how our academic fields are structured.[12] As someone who is living under and in precarious circumstances,

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[12] My ongoing work with Latin American and Latinx Studies initiatives on campus at McMaster University—and indeed more widely in the province of Ontario through partnerships with the University of Toronto's Department of Spanish and Portuguese—has highlighted how the field of Afro-Latinx Feminisms reminds us in insightful ways that the work of visibility and representation must be accompanied by the

and whose present project demanded not the four years allotted to degree completion but almost seven, I wonder how higher education institutions might better support students of color who require more adequate access to advocacy, resources, and guidance.

At this moment of intensified calls across academic, artistic, and educational spheres for reflection on how 'traditional' fields engage with questions of race, colonialism, and empire, it is crucial to consider Eighteenth-Century Studies through an emphasis on the perspectives of Black and racialized human beings—the people who experience the most material, existential, and spiritual forms of violence, brutality, displacement, and disorientation within institutions descended from the Enlightenment. By turning to an analysis of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, it becomes possible to reframe and rethink a long eighteenth-century cultural landscape in which Enlightenment philosophy coincides with the institution of a Transatlantic economy based in a currency that trades in the enslavement of Black and racialized human beings. It is important to note here, nonetheless, that one of the (other) reasons which occasioned the lengthening of the amount of time it took to complete this project responds to the many adversities— the heaviness—that accompany such an undertaking. It is not painless, comfortable, uncomplicated, or indeed niche to conduct research, to study, and to write about slavery and the Gothic or haunted and haunting aspects of colonial terror/horror. My desire to present an analysis of long eighteenth-century Gothic and its afterlives, articulated through Black Feminism's capability to, as Katherine McKittrick claims above, "offer

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historical and socio-political inclusion of marginalized, underrepresented communities. Engaging with these fields to produce this type of meaningful work, then, must rely not only on empowerment and enhanced visibility but also on articulating the terms of inclusion in more effective ways.

methodological practices" (5) which attend to Black livingness and liberatory thought,

does not respond to a mandate to select a topic to fulfill degree requirements; rather, this

work is borne out of a sense of urgency—a sense of obligation—to voice the ways in

which our fields might continue to challenge the primacy of whiteness. McKittrick further

explicates that:

> Black method is precise, detailed, coded, long, and forever. The practice of
> bringing together multiple texts, stories… and places involves the difficult work
> of thinking and learning across many sites, and thus coming to know, generously,
> varying and shifting worlds and ideas. Sometimes this is awful because we are
> gathering dense texts and uncomfortable ideas that wear us out. Sometimes this is
> awful because we are aware we cannot know forever, yet we are committed to the
> everlasting effort of figuring out how we might, together, fashion liberation. (5-6)

While this work is not without considerable difficulties—personal, academic, and

professional—my critical intervention assumes these legacies and attempts to illustrate

how we might continue to remake, reclaim, and re-envision extant fields of literary

scholarship. To stay with McKittrick, perhaps a project such at this provides an apposite

response to the aforementioned difficulties, since racism, racial logic, and other forms of

oppression continue to be inescapably ubiquitous in Anglo-American, Caribbean, and

Latin American societies. Consequently, my dissertation is not merely thinking about

things that transpired and expired in the long eighteenth century, but points out that we

are presently in the midst of reckoning with the legacy of this violence. By highlighting

how Gothic writing is driven by an engagement with slavery and other forms of colonial

violence, it is possible to locate the socio-historic development of a Transatlantic, still-

colonial society and culture that relies on and continues to position whiteness as the

desired state of humanity. These are the kinds of observations which pervade this study,

and I primarily pinpoint these socio-historic and cultural locations through the works of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis.

This project is primarily guided by four sets of research questions, which are in turn applied to each of the body chapters devoted to a primary text to direct the analysis. These research questions are as follows: (1) How is this text reproducing and mobilizing specific conceptions of whiteness? To what end? Is the text doing the (conscious or unconscious) work of subverting whiteness? (2) How is this text using terror (i.e., mind) and horror (i.e., body) not as separate kinds of experiences but as a Gothic response to colonialism that imagines that the experience of embodied knowledge is not one or the other but a conflation of both? (3) How is this text using a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode and mobility to lay bare how literature (i.e., fiction and nonfiction) is obsessed with the past and its traumas at the same time as it reveals ongoing present brutality in Transatlantic spaces? And (4) How is this Transatlantic, colonial Gothic text depicting and portraying Black life, livingness, and liberation in the face of, and in opposition to, the oppressive structures of whiteness?

Each of my readings discusses these questions and attempts to provide an open-ended analysis; rather than aiming to foreclose the conversation by providing conclusive answers, my analysis gestures toward an ongoing revisioning of the ways in which the Gothic tradition has been written about and taught as a genre disconnected from the Black Atlantic. By centering the haunted experiences of Black and racialized peoples inhabiting diasporic locations in Transatlantic locales in the long eighteenth century and beyond, my work intervenes in the wider fields of Eighteenth-Century Studies, Gothic Studies, Black

Studies, and Black Feminism. My critical contribution to these fields accepts and assumes legacies but shifts the focus away from Anglo-American Gothic as a predominantly white genre in which works of literature emulate and duplicate the tropes used by its early proponents in Britain. Bearing in mind M. Jacqui Alexander's approach in *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*, in which text she asserts that, "For healing work to be undertaken there has to exist some understanding of cause" (312), this doctoral dissertation aims to join the ongoing prescient, insistent critical conversation surrounding these fields, in which there exists the need to continue to challenge whiteness, Eurocentrism, and American exceptionalism within and beyond the confines of the academy.

This thesis is structured with this introductory chapter, four body chapters, and a coda. The Introduction outlines and explains the project in broad strokes, including placing myself in it to account for the experiences, interests, and ways of knowing that have brought it into being. Chapter 1, "The Gothic Tradition: Toward a Reading of Transatlantic, Colonial Gothic," centers this project as, above all, a study of literary methodology, by laying out the genealogy of the Gothic tradition as it has descended through English-language literary criticism, and discussing how Black Feminist methodologies intervene in that tradition, reframing the possibilities for interpreting the stories that Gothic writing delivers to us. In this chapter, I elucidate my use of terror/horror as a compound phenomenon, by tracing the genealogy and uses of the term "Gothic," pausing to reflect on the etymology of the terms "Terror" and "Horror," arriving, ultimately, at a discussion of how contemporary Black Feminists make use of

these terms. This section of the study thus sheds light on the relevance of this compound concept, terror/horror, in relation to my analysis of the Gothic.

Chapter 2, "'[T]he groanings and deep sighs of the poor in spirit': Olaudah Equiano's Gothic *Interesting Narrative*," shows how *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African* operates as part of a colonial Gothic modality, highlighting the ways in which it resists racial taxonomic thinking as well as arbitrary classifications that reproduce eighteenth-century Enlightenment theories of mind and objective reason. By imagining that the experience of Black embodied knowledge is a conflation of mind, body, and spirit, Equiano's text responds to colonialism by decentering whiteness. Throughout the text, Equiano makes his life *Interesting* (as promised in his title, which I discuss in detail in this chapter in terms of Equiano's authorial decisions to position his life story beyond mere entertainment and curiosity), and calls attention to colonial Gothic as a nonfictional literary mode that problematizes eighteenth-century distinctions between terror as a form of the intellectual sublime and horror as a bodily reaction that generates shock and aversion.

Attending to how Equiano lays claim to the spiritual, through religious musings in which the author praises a Christian providence for occasioning his eventual deliverance, as well as through a description of his entrance into the Methodist religious faith, this chapter further articulates what I recognize as a Gothic mode—a mobile method of writing that repeatedly addresses and interrogates the abstruse, enigmatic, precarious, and often corrupt aspects of life in the haunted, colonial Americas. Questions of mobility necessarily pervade this chapter, since the *Interesting Narrative* does the work of

establishing Transatlantic (involuntary) migration as a condition that compels a distinct mode of writing—both in its need for techniques of registering the harrowing aspects of the Middle Passage, and in its sustained insistence that socio-political and cultural movement remain possible as part of an abolitionist text that emphasizes its Black, formerly enslaved writer as author. Reading Equiano's autobiography against Briton Hammon's early slave narrative text and examining how titles operate, in this chapter I focus on the limitations and implications of Black authorship, as well as on the multifaceted aspects of Black personhood. Ultimately, contemporary Black Feminism allows us to reach back and re-envision Equiano's literary project as something more than a straightforward political treatise, as it has traditionally been approached in scholarship of the Black Atlantic; to recognize it as a text that models how we might read eighteenth-century texts differently by becoming literate in the full humanity—not just legal personhood—of Black and racialized peoples. At the core of this second chapter is an invitation to (re)consider the complexities of Black literature and representation in the face of colonial terror/horror, and the possibilities for alternative readings and networks of thought.

Chapter 3, "'I Am Not Fearful of Shadows': *Wieland* and the United States' Racial Imaginary," engages with Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale*, the first Gothic novel published in the United States. Brown's literary endeavor borrows heavily from British Gothic conventions to highlight the transformations of the mode once it crosses the Atlantic Ocean to evince what appear to be American national concerns at the turn of the nineteenth century. At its core, the

novel seemingly suggests that religious piety and a reproduction of Anglo-American Enlightenment philosophy are the foundational values that shape the young nation. Yet by combining aspects of terror and horror in its storytelling, *Wieland* not only emphasizes the religious and familial underpinnings of the new republic, but also exposes the ways in which racial capitalism and colonialism are at the heart of the project called the United States of America. In this chapter, I interpret the Wieland family as a depiction of whiteness itself, even though the novel does not employ an explicitly racial vocabulary. This project interprets Brown's novel as a text that allegorizes and concretizes the racial imaginary of the United States, since through its use of terror/horror it presents a story about how an idyllic, rural, impenetrable family falls prey to the machinations of external, foreign, "Othered" forces, drawing out the ways in which social, political, economic, and cultural (upwards) mobility is not afforded to Black and racialized peoples. Focusing on the Wieland family—exhibited in the text as the model American family—Brown's tale intricately weaves into the fabric of the familial unit a singular religious zeal interspersed with certain aspects of superstition, which are at odds with the Enlightenment principles of science, reason, and skepticism. My discussion underlines that while these warring values appear to be at the forefront of the story, the text, perhaps against itself, demonstrates how these principles implode from within when one racialized character manages to breach, trouble, and agitate them.

Rather than focus on the tension between faith and reason as it defines a distinctly American ethos, and thinking alongside Black Feminist theory, my reading of *Wieland* attends to the way the novel's "faith versus reason" narrative depends on a racialized

outsider for its shape. The outsider is the mysterious Carwin, a figure who is at first regarded as a curiosity but who soon turns into an obsession for the Wielands. The whiteness of the Wieland family is generated less through embodied visual coding than through their anxiety around Carwin's identity and his relationship to their circle. Although they try throughout the narrative to study, scrutinize, and investigate his origins, Carwin refuses to be read by them. As the family exerts energy in both studying and rejecting this racialized character, the narrative expends considerable energy placing Carwin at the heart of the tale—he is the intellectual author of the crimes that occasion the destruction of the familial unit. Through Carwin's resistance to being read as a racialized body, the text—perhaps unwittingly—articulates a fictive person who cannot be classified or categorized neatly according to the racial logics that identify Americanness with whiteness. Consequently, early American Gothic gives us a text that unifies, or collapses into one another, the kinds of experiences eighteenth-century Enlightenment culture insists on theorizing as distinct. In this chapter, I read the Gothic mode as a form of racialized imaginary descended from the institution of slavery. The way the Wielands' characteristics add up to an uneasy whiteness reveals that early American identity relies on a racial distinction it will not, or cannot, name. Central to this chapter is an examination of the tenuous structure of colonial selfhood and its questioning of whiteness through a text that unsettles colonial epistemologies and challenges the sense of security of white settler Transatlantic societies.

Chapter 4, "'The Isle of Devils': Blackness Ruptures Prose and Verse in Matthew Lewis's *Journal*," concludes this dissertation's body chapters with Matthew Lewis's

Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica.

Lewis's *Journal* has not received as much critical attention as his other works since he acquired more notoriety in literary studies for his fictional Gothic texts. A nonfictional text like Equiano's, although one which follows a different structure and presents the perspective of a white British man who inherits and retains slave plantations in the Caribbean, the *Journal* expends time and energy describing and justifying its author's experiences as an enslaver in the island of Jamaica. The result is a curious, chimerical, and somewhat erratic text filled with contradictions, as it tries (and fails) to establish itself as a broadly detached journalistic account detailing the conditions of slavery on the island. Despite presenting itself as an objective report on the state of the Jamaica plantation, the *Journal* belongs to the genealogy of Gothic writing as a result of its inability to resolve the tension between the material foundations of Lewis's authority (his estate, his status as enslaver, his whiteness, his maleness) and the mythology of objective reason that locates the intellectual authority of the Enlightenment subject outside the contingencies of material situation. This tension culminates in the text's paradoxical assertion that the person best qualified to offer an objective account of plantation slavery is the one most directly invested in the ongoing enslavement of others. While struggling at every turn to sustain mastery over the people he subjugates, the journal entries thus pivot to adopt a discourse of slavery amelioration. Directly linked to his position as a British Enlightenment subject—with the advantages and sense of entitlement this includes in the context of the plantation—Lewis's nonfictional endeavor reveals the extent to

which he embodies the racial myths of the Enlightenment which arise from an alleged humanist tradition.

My analysis in this chapter begins with a discussion of the Gothic in relation to Transatlantic, colonial contexts, and challenges definitions of this kind of writing as a psychological phenomenon arguing instead for broader interpretations of it that encompass the haunting legacies of terror/horror that are inevitable part of colonialism. In this regard, I reposition the text as part of a colonial Gothic modality and consider it alongside and through Black Feminist (re)theorizations of terror/horror which posit that "to encounter people of African descent… both materially and as a problem for thought is to encounter [transformations] in the grand narrative of history" (33), as Sharpe puts it. My analysis of the text—which relies on close readings of the many instances recorded by Lewis in which he interacts with Black and racialized enslaved peoples and their cultures, beliefs, and everyday living conditions—uses Black Studies methodological approaches to consider the implications behind Lewis's repeated denials and refusals of his own corporeality. Through his consistent attempts to read, describe, and categorize the Black and mixed-race enslaved peoples he encounters, the text ultimately highlights Black embodied experience as a creditable form of knowledge, an experience to which Lewis, as the white author of the *Journal*, has no access. Under these circumstances, the text grapples with the haunting and often-contradictory aspects of Transatlantic mobility when whiteness carries terror/horror with it to animate a colonizing machine whose protagonist is an enslaver who is not only intent on presenting himself as an ameliorator, but who is also repulsed yet surprised by his own physical reactions to the brutality he is

enacting. Following this line of scrutiny, this chapter takes up specific instances in the text where it disavows its own notions of acting out a colonial Gothic fantasy; instead, even though the *Journal* is guided by and filtered through its author's whiteness, there are salient moments of unrepresentable terror which, perhaps unwittingly, manage to outline what Black resistance, nonconformity, and transformation look like. At the core of this chapter is a call to read Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a mode that acknowledges and confronts whiteness and the enduring terror/horror faced by those excluded from it. In this sense, by highlighting instances in the text that showcase the tensions inherent in Lewis's attempts to write colonial terror/horror, focused on an extended discussion of his poem, "The Isle of Devils," this chapter suggests how colonial Gothic storytelling suggests approaches for interpreting whiteness, colonial power structures, and racialized peoples and landscapes.

This study concludes with a Coda, "Beyond Closure: Black Feminist Reflections on Colonial, Transatlantic Gothic in Theory and Praxis," in which I lay out the ways in which my readings have argued for a sustained engagement with the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic tradition and its grappling with race, racialization, oppression, and inequality as specific forms of colonial terror/horror. Structured as a coda rather than a conventional conclusion, this final chapter further draws inspiration from Black Feminist thinkers and their generative approaches to reading and storying the world, and additionally makes use of Black Studies methodologies to explain how this project has re-envisioned the Gothic as a mode that disrupts established long eighteenth-century notions of race, embodiment, rationality, and individualism. Rather than offer an extended

overview of how Gothic texts operate, I use this final section of the dissertation to point

to Black Studies and Black Feminism as sites of knowledge that posit nuanced

understandings of the Gothic and its relevance to ongoing discussions of race,

racialization, and oppression. To this end, I provide two contemporary examples of

literature written by Black creators, which serve to emphasize the importance of

interdisciplinary approaches, and which further re-imagine the colonial past and re-

envision better, alternative futures. Key to this final section is my signaling of a

professional (and personal) desire to continue producing this type of scholarship—

particularly in the teaching-learning spaces I foster and inhabit with my undergraduate

students—and to carry out the work of foregrounding the transformative potential of

Black methodologies and approaches in (re)shaping traditional fields of study.

My Relationship with the Gothic: Intertwining Personal Narrative and Academic Praxis

> I am most interested in confessional writing when it allows us to move into the personal as a way to go beyond it. In all my work I evoke the personal as a prelude. It functions as a welcoming gesture, offering the reader a sense of who I am, a sense of location.
>
> bell hooks[13]

> Is this all just Gothic, or is there some magical realism here too? To answer that, we need to look again at definitions of the Gothic and magical realism, noting that, for British and Anglo-American readers, each term immediately strikes us as "foreign."
>
> Lucie Armitt[14]

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[13] hooks, *remembered rapture: the writer at work*, 120.
[14] Armitt, "The Gothic and Magical Realism," 226.

When I was a young girl in the Dominican Republic, my Scottish grandfather, Lorne D. Creech—the person who oversaw my homeschooling—introduced me to the writings of nineteenth-century American authors whose works, as I would later come to learn, form part of a recognizable American Gothic tradition. I grew up reading and admiring Edgar Allan Poe's short story collections, such as the aptly titled *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (1839); I was fascinated by Nathaniel Hawthorne's short stories, particularly the ones published in his collection *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846); and I was equally enthralled by the writings of Washington Irving, in volumes such as *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820) and *Tales of a Traveller, by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1824). As my interest in the Gothic grew during my adolescent years in Santo Domingo, my hometown, I could not yet describe the reasons why I was so invested in an intense reading practice that continued to find me seeking out similar texts to engage with: I became familiar and then intimate with texts published in the United States and in Britain, as in the writings of the Brontë sisters, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Herman Melville, H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, and other authors whose literary productions grapple with fear, fright, and the human psyche as sometimes inherently but always potentially corrupt, amoral, and villainous.

I write that I could not yet identify the source of my avid curiosity, because reading works like Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), or even Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), to mention some examples, could not be farther removed from the material and social realities of my everyday life as an Afro-Dominican girl in the Spanish-speaking

Caribbean. At the time, I had, perhaps not entirely accurately, assumed that the driving factor behind my reading interests had something to do with literary escapism, since being immersed through fiction in the haunting moors of England, in ancestral English estates and educational institutions, or even in a ship sailing down the Mississippi River had seemingly nothing to do with me and my quotidian life in Santo Domingo. Invariably, texts which are traditionally classified as Gothic all seem to feature white characters under duress: "fair" women in peril from concupiscent forces; the young, valiant men who love and defend them; the ghosts of ancestors whose motives for remaining tethered to the Earth in metaphysical ways generally follow some familial, intergenerational wrongdoing; and the mental terror, as opposed to bodily horror, with which these characters are forced to engage as part of their eventual growth and development. First as a child, then an adolescent, and through to my years as a young adult living in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, my personal, familial, and communal fears were far removed from these depictions; my anxieties had more to do with ongoing civil unrest in the Dominican Republic in the 1990s, something which is ubiquitous and oppressive in Latin American locales that continue to attempt to define themselves against the threat of colonial and imperial systems. As my parents had separated to each pursue a new, different life in North America—my father, originally born in Barbados to a Scottish father and a Bajan mother migrated to the United States following the divorce, when I was five years old; and my mother, an Afro-Dominican woman born in Santo Domingo to Dominican parents, migrated to Canada soon thereafter—the source of my panic at six years old then became the harrowing experiences I began to endure at the

hands of US and Canadian Immigration officers during border crossings when I traveled to spend time with them.

Nearly thirty-three years later, as I think about these two specific situations which began to instill in me feelings of dread and alarm as a child, I am faced with realizations of their connection to anti-Blackness. The socio-political crisis through which my country was going in the 1990s was not new to that decade and certainly has not been alleviated or dealt with since then. Through my academic and pedagogical work in the field(s) of Transatlantic literature(s), in which I have conducted extensive research on Black British, Black American, Black Caribbean, and Black Latin American/Afro-Latinx histories and cultures, I have begun to understand how the ineffable, inscrutable, but also corporeal and material aspects of coloniality and whiteness produce terror/horror in Black and racialized peoples. As part of my scholarship on these topics, I have been able to contextualize instructional, educational, and recreational literature designed for Dominican children and young adults, for example, from pre-Columbian, Spanish colonial, Haitian, and American rules, as well as the nation's long periods of dictatorships, which show that the Dominican Republic has traditionally identified itself in opposition to the Black African components of its culture and history, and that politicians, educators, writers, and artists in the insular nation have been invested in promoting a lineage that gestures almost exclusively toward Indigenous, European, and Anglo-American roots. This tendency, in a nation which is primarily Afro-descended, increased after the island of Hispaniola divided into two nations: the Republic of Haiti to the west and the Dominican Republic to the east. Ongoing colonial and imperial terror/horror, which is designed to abuse, shock, and

harm Afro-Dominicans, is at the root of a misleading and misguided concept of Dominican nationhood that has historically rejected Blackness.[15] To this day, even members of my own family cannot condone my identifying with Blackness and Afro-Dominicanness, regardless of the fact that they too are phenotypically, genotypically, and culturally Afro-Dominican(s); to this day, border crossings continue to fill me with extreme fright and horror, because to move in Transatlantic spaces as a racialized woman is to constantly incur in glares, aggressions, harsh questioning, and transgressions. When I was growing up in Santo Domingo, thus, even when I could not yet describe the connections and linkages between the terror/horror present in the Gothic and my own experiences as a visibly Black girl navigating my place within societies in which whiteness is a constant, pervasive referent—where it continues to be the intentional parameter of living safely—I was already well-versed in and intimately acquainted with fear.

As I trace these connections now, I am reminded that early on as a reader, I also expanded my reading practices into recognizable Latin American genres of literature in Spanish, such as magical realism, in which I could identify certain qualities that resemble(d) the Anglo-American Gothic. The magical realism of writers like Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and Jorge Luis Borges—to name the most personally impactful examples—takes up issues of socio-political, individual, and communal terror/horror and places them in the uncanny aspects of the everyday in Latin American

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[15] I treat these topics in detail in my article, "Blackness, Imperialism, and Nationalism in Dominican Children's Literature," published in the *International Research in Children's Literature* journal by Edinburgh UP, in 2019. The article was recently reprinted, with some additions, in an anthology entitled *Caribbean Children's Literature* by Mississippi UP (2023).

locales. In an article published online in 2016, entitled "Magic Realism and Grappling

with Fear," Kelsey Capps traces the development of magical realism noting that:

> The genre rose to prominence in the [19]30's during a period of intense conflict,
> literally positioned between the First and Second World Wars and after centuries
> of colonialism on almost every continent. This era of cataclysmic, unprecedented,
> and far reaching manmade events predicated a crisis in literature all over the
> world. Issues of morality, global citizenship, political prowess, identity, and
> anxiety came pressing and jostling to the fore as never before and demanded the
> attention of artists and writers. (Capps 1)

This brief description of magical realism points to the reasons for its critical treatment as

a kind of "overtly politicized" (224) Latin American version of the Gothic. Lucie Armitt,

in "The Gothic and Magical Realism," argues that while it is important "to consider to

what extent the terrain that lies on the blurry boundary between these two modes of

writing shifts in response to a larger political impetus that rejects the world of confidences

and its political tricksters" (224), it is more crucial still to discuss how they have both

been relying on the brutalities of colonialism and imperialism in ways that illustrate

particular socio-political resonances between them.

The common ground between these two modes of writing—magical realism and

the Gothic—has not been expressly examined by many critics and scholars yet, but as my

relationship with both has been considerable and essential to the development of this

project, I would like to briefly describe a few examples that emphasize the ways in which

they both depart from and feature an attention to mimetic representation. If we look to the

English Gothic via a text like Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), it is possible to

assume that it locates terror/horror in the setting of the moors of Northern England, or in

the tropes of ghosts, death, decay, and thwarted romance. However, the novel's specific

source of fright is its portrayal of the character Heathcliff, whose mysteriousness and inscrutable origins prompt every other character to despise and relish him in almost equal measures. In the novel, he is described as "a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect" (Brontë 7), a "heathen" and "a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway" (Brontë 109), as the English Gothic cannot quite make sense of him in racial terms, but cannot stop trying, nevertheless. All this text and its white characters can agree upon with varying degrees of apprehension is that this unnerving character, while appearing "in dress and manner a gentleman" (Brontë 7), cannot possibly be honorable or principled, since he does not appear to be aristocratic or lordly (read: white) enough. That the text supplies no explicit information about the origins of Heathcliff and that this is his effect throughout the narrative indicates that this "is a novel of terror," to be sure, as Tabish Khair has observed, but that it "is also a novel that brings the Empire into the heart of England, thus interlinking Gothic terror with imperial displacement and power" (Khair 157).[16] Despite its formal and stylistic differences from *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) deals with subtexts of race, gender, colonialism, and empire in comparable ways. While the dark and somber settings, supernatural encounters, and ancient, deteriorating English estates, establishes a Gothic mood, the narrative twist that injects the energy of

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[16] See Khair's "'LET ME IN-LET ME IN!': Why Does Terror Come from Elsewhere?" in which he articulates a connection between Gothic literature and modern acts of "terrorism." Through a focus on Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and the character of Heathcliff, Khair illustrates the tenuous nature of perceptions that place "terror" as located in a distant "elsewhere" that threatens the heart of (Western) European societies (155). Khair's readings of the Gothic match my own interpretations of it (as well as my interpretations of the magical realism of Latin America, as I mention in this section), precisely because, a text such as Brontë's "highlights Heathcliff's 'otherness' and suggests—without ever making it explicit— how his difference is negotiated by 'normal' people" (159). As we shall see across this study, this is the kind of analytical line with which I approach texts that make use of the Gothic mode to register, describe, and, yes, "negotiate" Black and racialized peoples.

terror/horror pivots on another racialized character, this time a Creole Jamaican woman named Bertha Mason, who is Edward Rochester's purportedly estranged wife and the only racialized character in the text with explicit colonial ties. Used as a plot device that inconveniences Rochester and momentarily impedes his union to Jane, Mason allows the novel to migrate however briefly, to the Caribbean, which is where Rochester travels to retrieve a wife with a dowry (Brontë 71). In these two examples, the Gothic's political preoccupation with racialized diasporas cannot be ignored. The existence of Black and racialized people in these texts is both haunting and menacing their central whiteness.

The same socio-political preoccupations find expression in the magical realism of Latin America. Take, for example, García Márquez's novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), in which an imaginary but eerily familiar community, located somewhere in South America, contends with oppressive and oppressing routines occasioned by the ever-present shadow of colonialism and imperialism. The protagonists of the story, Santiago Nasar, a half-Spaniard half-Arab Latin American man, and Angela Vicario, a seemingly chaste, virginal young woman of Spanish-descent, are both described as being phenotypically white, as the legacies of Spanish colonial rule and Arab migration in the region are felt everywhere in the text. While the novella does not expend too much energy on unearthing white characters' ancestries, as they are set-up to be the norm, it nevertheless suggests that the terror/horror pervading this community is located in the fantastical and fanciful ways in which the specters of colonial whiteness augment fright and shock daily. Enter Bayardo San Román, a mysterious figure, a stranger—like other ambiguously racialized characters of the Gothic mode, "not a man to be known at

first sight" (26)—and the person who wreaks havoc in the small village. While, on one level, the text at reads like a semi-detached, journalistic account or chronicle of this community's ethos organized around the event of Nasar's murder, on another it is the outsider San Román's romantic involvement with Vicario that animates the narrative. Characters are introduced ostensibly to piece together the details of Nasar's gruesome, shocking death, yet their conversations constantly turn to San Román, as they speculate obsessively about his origins, his desires, his access to wealth, and his motives. These are the kinds of speculations, as I detail in my reading of *Wieland*, that signal a white community's anxious encounter with the limits of whiteness; they indicate a struggle to put language to the phenomenon of whiteness failing to cohere.

In the end, the text reveals that even though Vicario's brothers slay Nasar because they mistakenly believe he has taken their immaculate, fair sister's virginity, the true responsible party might have been the secretive San Román all along. Adding to this character's layered racialization in the text is Angela Vicario's "feverish letter" she writes to him ten years after the events of the novella have unfolded, in which revelatory, intimate missive "She spoke to him of the eternal scars he had left on her body, the salt of his tongue, the fiery furrow of his African tool" (94). It is even more significant that this enigmatic and "bewitching" (34) figure's insistence in marrying Vicario throughout the story is dismissed by every resident in the town; the narrative tells us that "when it was discovered that Bayardo San Román wanted to marry her, many people thought it was an outsider's scheming" (32). Adding another layer of fright to this text is the eventual revelation that had the Vicario brothers not murdered Nasar, the latter had been biding his

time to corner and physically violate Divina Flor, the underage mixed-race daughter of Victoria Guzmán, the Black cook who is employed in the Nasars' home and who was continually sexually abused by Nasar's father. The novella ends soon after this revelation, leaving readers to realize that had these events not unfolded in the way in which they did, this white man, Santiago Nasar, would have sexually abused his racialized half-sister, effectively repeating his father's own violence. These themes, motifs, and images are all familiar and certainly form part of a more recognizable Anglo-American Gothic tradition. While the intricacies and specificities of socio-political circumstances might differ here and there, it is not difficult to note points of similarity, particularly when the specter of colonialism and the phantoms of whiteness continue to perpetuate violence in each of these texts.

The magical realism literary mode which is so popular in Latin America and the Caribbean rehearses these themes time and again. Another example worth mentioning here is the successful *City of the Beasts* trilogy by Isabel Allende, the first book appearing in 2002, which depicts white Latin American, European, and American characters "exploring" first the Amazon rainforest, then the Himalaya region, and finally embarking on a "journey into the heart of darkest Africa" (2), all portrayed as places where the fantastic abounds and to which these colonial "explorers" bring disease, violence, death, devastation, and brutality.[17] Blending the genres of adventure story, travelogue, and

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[17] Unless I am quoting text directly (as in the case of Paul Gilroy's quotation which appears in Chapter two of this study), nowhere else in this doctoral thesis is the term "exploration" or any of its variations or declensions used, because this type of language is reminiscent of colonial and imperial conquest. A later project, one which I would like to take up after degree completion, is to pen an article noting instances of white "exploration" of the Latin American and Caribbean regions, and then to articulate the ways in which we might begin to reclaim this and other terms like it (e.g., "discovery"). This is work I began to do in my

magical realism, these texts closely resemble a Transatlantic Gothic modality that combines romance, voyages, and the supernatural to grapple with problems of colonialism and imperialism. I would argue, then, that both literary modes are political in how they address, expose, and provide commentary on the ongoing legacies of coloniality in Transatlantic locations. This politicization takes different forms and formats, and may be directed to different readerships, but the socio-political affinities remain.[18]

I draw these parallels because it is important for this study to disclose the ways in which these two literary traditions—the Transatlantic Gothic and Latin American magical realism, the two fields which have most captivated my reading practices—feature fictionalized accounts of colonial terror/horror as a popular and compelling form of storytelling. Magical realism in Latin American and Latinx literature(s) is invariably advertised and described in bookstores, literary fairs, and educational events throughout Spanish-speaking locales as escapist fiction—that category of works that provide a respite from the everyday by allowing readers to become submerged in the fantastic, the imaginative, and the magical. As I have demonstrated in brief, the works of two of the most important authors in this field—Colombian García Márquez and Chilean Allende— depict supernatural and uncanny events in Latin American settings featuring Latin

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course INSPIRE 3EL3-C04: Topics in the Black Caribbean and its Diasporas (now rebranded as ABLD 3CD3) which I designed and taught at McMaster University in the Spring/Summer 2021 term, and which I have continued to teach yearly ever since. I would like to continue to flesh out my thoughts on the matter, particularly because the students enrolled in this course were greatly receptive to these ideas (re: the Age of Exploration, components of colonial expansion, language analysis, etc.).

[18] As I continue to become more involved in the fields of Latin American and Latinx Studies, the Black Atlantic, and the Black Caribbean, I would like to write and publish a piece (e.g., online article, chapter, journal article) in which I examine these connections between the Gothic and magical realism in greater detail, particularly since, as I mention in this introductory portion of the thesis, not much critical scholarship has been published on the subject.

American characters who grapple with hauntings and fantastic phenomena against the backdrop of socio-political and economic realities in Spanish-speaking contexts. Both magical realism and the Gothic, as I interpret them, gesture to what is ineffable, frightful, and horror-inducing in the wake of colonial devastation in Transatlantic spaces. Noting this similarity also allows me to locate myself as an early career researcher whose reading practices have been fixated on literary traditions that make use of terror/horror in Transatlantic locales to expose what Hartman refers to as "slavery's horrors" (20). Attending to these literary networks as they cross the Atlantic Ocean from Western Europe to the Americas, and as they circulate back to European locales, then, provides critical insight into how these literary modalities both trade in and address colonial and imperial terror/horror, and are therefore political projects oriented in complex ways within ongoing systems of empire.[19]

    As these texts respond to and are guided by whiteness at its most unsettled, they attend to racial discrimination and the oppression of racialized peoples indirectly through techniques of subtlety, evasion, and implication, while more overtly directing narrative attention elsewhere, usually to a secret, a murder, a community dilemma, a romance plot, or the landscape. It is difficult, for instance, to pinpoint what exactly might be frightening about a bright and seemingly cheerful Latin American village and its close-knit

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[19] While I do not put this analysis of Latin American magical realism into operation in later chapters of this thesis, it is important that I bring these brief examples to the forefront here, to establish socio-political, literary, and discursive parallels between these texts and Gothic texts, noting how they engage with whiteness and racialization in similar ways. Perhaps more importantly, by drawing these comparisons and noting these points of synergy between both modes of writing, I can place my former, present, and future reading selves within broader literary and cultural contexts that prompt me to engage with the complexities surrounding colonial terror/horror, racialization, and whiteness, and how these issues continue to resonate in the literature(s) I (have always) read.

community, which appears far removed from the somber European and American Gothic settings that eighteenth-century Gothic literature is so fond of, but it is precisely this contrast that speaks to how terror/horror does not just trade in thematic tropes like nightly machinations and gloomy settings. Rather, what is fear-inducing in these types of texts is the impenetrability of the communities, families, and groups which they depict and which often require an external and racialized catalyst to uncover collective bias, white supremacist ideologies, and xenophobia—something colonial Gothic texts do particularly well, as the body chapters of this thesis demonstrate.[20] In "Introduction: Haunted Landscapes and Fearful Spaces—Expanding Views on the Geography of the Gothic," Sharon R. Yang and Kathleen Healey insist that "Gothic landscapes are actually central to these works, a means by which political, psychological, social, and cultural ideals are laid

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[20] The affective responses which magical realism and the Gothic both put forth—terror/horror, fright, dread, alarm, apprehension, and fear of the unknown 'Other'—move beyond mental, intellectual, and inner violence, and into material, everyday repercussions, often to the detriment of Black and racialized peoples. The many shadows of colonialism and whiteness in Transatlantic locations steadily penetrate these two modes of literature, as texts belonging to both traditions are undergirded by festering individual, familial, or communal secrets which hinge on the violation and discrimination of racialized characters. See Yulissa Amadu Maddy and Donnarae MacCann's article, "White supremacy in Isabel Allende's *Forest of the Pygmies*," published in 2007 for the *Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature*, for a detailed discussion of Allende's trilogy mentioned above, in which the desired human status quo is a European, or "common Hispanic past" (xiv). The authors trace some of the same connections this study examines, and indicate the ways in which whiteness—Spaniard, American, or Western European more broadly—continues to produce characters in literature who can believe in their intellectual dominance over racialized peoples, since "Like many Euro-American novelists, historians, cartoonists, and 'scientists,' [an author like] Allende shrewdly reminds Caucasian readers about their superiority, about the indisputable greatness of Western wayfarers, colonizers, missionaries, and journalists" (xiv). It is key to note as well that the term "Caucasian" appears in this study only through citations, for similar reasons explained in the previous footnote in which I describe my ongoing struggles with similar colonial, racist terms. My work through teaching ENGL 2RW6A: Reading and Writing Criticism, a core course which I re-designed and offered through the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster U, in the Fall 2020 term, encouraged me to further analyze my immense dislike for the term "Caucasian" in all its usages. Engaging with critical works like Cedric J. Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), for example, in which he devotes a footnote to outlining the nineteenth-century pseudoscience that popularized the term as one whose primary aim is to establish and cement a "racial theory… [that continues to rely on the] hopeless future of inferior races" (379), has helped me to reject terminology that evokes a long history of colonial and imperial brutality.

bare, transmitted, and often critiqued" (Yang and Healey 1). While much scholarship has been written regarding the role of settings and landscapes in Anglo-American Gothic literature, the same critical attention has not been devoted to the function of landscape(s) in Latin American and Caribbean magical realism.[21]

How might we access the element of terror/horror woven into these colonized spaces, where the cobbled streets and architectural styles emulate Spanish, Portuguese, and French fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century structures, in locales in which impoverished, local communities have been taught to look toward these colonial edifices and monuments as a source of pride?[22] By establishing these points of likeness between the Gothic and magical realism, I propose that Transatlantic works of literature that use supernatural storytelling to shed light on colonial and imperial machinations also point to settings that reflect what is frightening about the mundane. Where the Gothic traditionally

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[21] For a detailed treatment of the function of landscape(s) in Gothic works, see texts like *Gothic Landscapes: Changing Eras, Changing Cultures, Changing Anxieties* (2016), edited by Sharon Rose Yang and Kathleen Healey, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002), edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, Anne Williams' *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995), and *Gothic Travel Through Haunted Landscapes: Climates of Fear* (2022), edited by Lucie Armitt and Scott Brewster.

[22] These architectural styles exist in every major port and capital city in Latin America and the Caribbean, in which places they are locally often referred to as 'the colonial part of town.' There are similar castles, villas, palaces, haciendas, and museums in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica, among other Central and South American insular and continental locales. For a detailed description of this style, see Cristina Ratto's "The Development of Architecture in New Spain, 1500-1810" (2017) in which she refers to it as "Viceregal Architecture" (2). An example of contemporary colonial Gothic terror/horror can be found in the royal visit of King Felipe VI (or Philip VI) of Spain to Puerto Rico in January 2022. For a popular newspaper originating in Spain, *El País*, which circulates as well in Latin America and in the Caribbean, Miguel González writes that, "The King has walked the cobbled streets filled with balconies that separate Puerto Rico's governor's palace from the town hall of San Juan, and has verified that there is a scent of 'Spanishness in the air; how could it be otherwise?'" (my trans. 2) as part of an article entitled, "The King Vindicates in Puerto Rico the 'Spanish Model' of Colonization in America" (my trans. 2022). The article includes photographic proof of the monarch's walk along the capital city in broad daylight, in seemingly deserted, uncanny colonial streets, appearing to look this way and that to ascertain or confirm that this nation, which is now ravished by US imperialism, does indeed still represent colonial Spain, in the twenty first century. The write-up, photographs, and quotes included in this article all paint a bleak, terrifying image which could very well form part of any Gothic colonial nightmare.

relies upon gloomy, cheerless, bleak settings to invoke eerie, grim atmospheres, works of magical realism employ similar tools in broad daylight. The effect is essentially the same: the obscure(d) running threads in Transatlantic, colonial works point to historically specific forms of terror/horror to which marginalized and racialized peoples are continuously subjected, even in texts that seem not to know that this is the kind of story they are telling.

The texts I analyze in this study, though they vary in their aesthetic, cultural, and political objectives, are driven nevertheless to reveal the causes of dread with which Black and racialized peoples have always contended in Transatlantic spaces. In making a case for the study, teaching, and interpretation of the Gothic tradition as a Transatlantic, colonial modality—one which bears much in common with other popular literary traditions such as magical realism—this doctoral project joins a growing body of criticism that argues that while:

> The Gothic, a fantastical literary form that had its heyday in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries might seem to inhabit a different world than that confronted by writers working in postcolonial contexts… the picture is more complex than this because an historical examination of the Gothic and accounts of postcolonialism indicate the presence of a shared interest in challenging post-enlightenment notions of rationality. (Smith and Hughes 1)

Long before I became a scholar of Gothic literature, I had developed a dedicated interest in literature of the implausible, the otherworldly, the immaterial, and the grotesque. I now understand how these reading practices have always been a method for understanding the conditions in which Black and racialized human beings live in a Transatlantic world and inhabit colonial diasporas.

This dissertation has therefore been long in the making, as it gathers my queries, interpretations, and ideas about a body of texts in which I have been engrossed since I was as a young girl growing up in Santo Domingo in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s. Rather than frame my interest in them as a depersonalized, purely academic one, I continue to think critically about these texts' complicated relationship to my early life in Latin America and the Caribbean; it is crucial to this project that I "Weav[e] personal narrative with [socio]political analysis… [to] offer a meditation on creating liberatory spaces for students and faculty of color within academia" (García Peña back cover), as Afro-Dominican scholar Lorgia García Peña continues to model. It is not difficult to identify the reasons why, in articulating this project, I have been struck by the political capacity—as well as the tensions and contradictions—of the Gothic mode of writing in Transatlantic spaces. It is my aim to move beyond a critical engagement with Gothic writing that considers it strictly as "a form of literature and culture wedded to anachronism, the interior and its claustrophobic secrets, the pathological and its sick desires" (Armitt 224), because I do not interpret this mode of writing as one that either misplaces or misdates the terror/horror it represents, and that continues to reverberate within and around a Transatlantic world. Given the traditional approach to the Gothic as a genre especially suitable to considering the human psyche and the inward-looking dynamics of personality, behavior, and pathologies, I argue that it is crucial to rethink, remake, and reclaim the Gothic as a migratory mode of writing that infiltrates Transatlantic, colonial spaces to point out myriad sources of terror/horror, including structural ones. In this sense, critical scholarship on the Gothic ought to interrogate and

consider how long eighteenth-century texts are depicting, portraying, and mobilizing whiteness and its oppressive, self-serving structures. What happens, I ask, when the colonial ship, the plantation, and the streets which continue bear the historical weight of the cruelties of colonialism are recognized as sites of actual physical, mental, and spiritual atrocities that transcend or explode the representational frameworks literary criticism has devised to explain the Gothic as a purely aesthetic and fictional phenomenon? What critical methods enable us to think with the forms of violence the Gothic rehearses without absorbing, reproducing, or disavowing their connections to real, ongoing material and systemic violence?

A Black Feminist reconceptualization of the Gothic, such as the one I am proposing in this project, thinks with but ultimately outside of the limits of a restricted Gothic tradition which has been structured as an artistic, niche category whose conventions always look to the past, or, as Guillermo Del Toro has described it, as an Anglo-American genre in which the settings, characters, and plots are usually "planted firmly in the past because it is there that ghosts reside" (Del Toro xv). While it is necessary to recognize that this is how the Gothic has generally been read and taught, this dissertation's reimagining of it as a migratory colonial modality thinks alongside Black scholarship that traces colonial and imperial legacies through to contemporary times to better understand current moments of racial and social disparities. Through describing and tracing my own relationship with the literature of the fantastic, eerie, and ineffable, and by doing so as an Afro-Latina Black Feminist early career researcher, I am finally able to express the reasons why recognizable Gothic tropes in Anglo-American literature

never elicited in me the kinds of affective responses—fear, terror, horror—they might educe in other kinds of readers. But as I now draw parallels between the Gothic and magical realism traditions, and as I turn an analytical eye toward texts that cannot possibly be divorced from ongoing systems of oppression, I understand the importance of my project to reclaim Gothic thinking as part of an ongoing collective effort to grapple with colonial violence and imaginative forms of fugitivity from it.

Through following the many movements and migrations of the Gothic, I argue that when considered as an unfixed, itinerant, colonial mode, it merges with Transatlantic Studies, a field that "is fundamentally a postcolonial, conceptual, and disciplinary relocation of the way we study the history and culture of the Americas and [Western Europe]" and which "Instead of ignoring, erasing, justifying, or explaining away empire, exploitation, and genocide… places the painful and lasting colonial history of [Western Europe and the Americas] at its center" (21), as Francisco Fernández de Alba has specified. The Gothic's migratory tendencies and capacity to penetrate colonial spaces to note how the specters of whiteness continue to support the oppression, discrimination, and violence committed against marginalized and racialized peoples is precisely what lends it to transatlantic lines of thought. It is crucial that our academic and scholarly practices continue to engage in generative ways with fields that address the terror/horror and traumas of the transatlantic slave trade, which cannot be excised from Transatlantic literature. I approach the study of the Gothic as a sustained engagement with the fields of Black Studies, Black Diaspora Studies, Black Feminism, Afro-Latin American/Latinx

Feminism(s), and Eighteenth-Century Studies, in ways that go beyond framing Black

existence within the parameters of colonial oppression. Rinaldo Walcott writes that:

> Black freedom is often offered only in opposition to the history of enslavement—
> an idea that recognizes the former (slavery) but struggles to articulate what we do
> not yet have a language for (something more). I suggest that, especially for Black
> people, the idea of freedom contains both oppositionality and the something more.
> By making such a claim, I am interested in examining what I call *glimpses of
> Black freedom*, those moments of the something more that exist inside of the dire
> conditions of our present Black unfreedom. To glimpse Black freedom requires
> that those of us who look for it reject the modes of looking and assessing freedom
> that blackness itself often refuses. (2)

A project such as this dissertation—which does not merely add the insights of Black

Feminist thought to conventional scholarship on the Gothic, but which traces the Gothic's

geographical and political movements to engage in a retheorization of how it operates

within colonial spaces—must, as Walcott points out, find its own way to reframe, remake,

and redirect the language that is generated through post-Enlightenment philosophy and

culture, particularly surrounding the logics of freedom and liberation for Black and

racialized peoples, as these are inevitably tied to the legacies of colonial and imperial

brutality. This study comprises close readings, interpretations, and arguments committed

to presenting precisely the kind of generative scholarship that, by practicing Black

Feminist thought as methodology, foregrounds race, racialization, and Blackness in the

long eighteenth century and beyond as articulated through life, joy, and Black

livingness—through those "glimpses of Black freedom" to which Walcott is attentive.

Additionally, as a study situated in Black Feminism(s), this dissertation thinks with

scholars like Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, whose *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in

an Antiblack World* (2020), presents a model for how to rethink the exhausted premises of

"the African's [denied] humanity" (23) as an exclusionary category that connotes difference while demanding sameness as a solution (24). Borrowing from Jackson's methodology and praxis, my work delves into literature to draw out and examine the relational nature of long eighteenth-century Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts to parse the moments in which Blackness manages to interrupt, obstruct, and infringe upon the extensive maneuvering of whiteness.

The dissertation's body chapters elaborate a method of reading that points to moments of liberation in texts which, while still addressing "the routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath" (4), as Hartman terms it, are also capable of utilizing terror/horror to place subjugated, discriminated, and marginalized Black peoples at the center of narratives that do not operate within systems that acknowledge their full humanity, as intellectual, corporeal, and spiritual beings. Since, as Jackson has shown, being conferred the gift of humanity does not shield Black(ened) peoples from antiblackness (Jackson 33, 62, 102), then, as Walcott suggests above, it is imperative that we practice readings that locate "those moments of something more that exist inside of the dire conditions of…" (2) erstwhile and still-ongoing catastrophe. For these reasons, this doctoral thesis looks to Olaudah Equiano in his *Interesting Narrative*, to Francis Carwin in Brown's *Wieland*, and to the real and fictional Black people Lewis presents in his *Journal*, as they all manage to agitate, disturb, and quite effectively contravene long eighteenth-century Anglo-American Enlightenment theories of racialization and of how the human being functions and operates. Perhaps it is true, as Walcott aptly notes, that "we do not yet have a language for" (2) imagining or enacting Black liberatory thought in

diasporic locations which continue to remind us every day that Black and racialized peoples are merely disposable bodies; yet we must continue to rethink and revise traditional approaches to our fields of scholarship, because the Enlightenment, liberal projects of nationalism, freedom, demarcation, and taxonomy which have long defined Western academic disciplines, including literary studies, are invested by design in colonial and imperial practices which will never account for Black humanity, freedom, and liberation in any worthwhile way.

I turn to the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode of literature, then, to highlight those instances in which Blackness is evidenced and presented as fully human, even when it must develop under the yoke of slavery; to illustrate the provenance of a racial imaginary in a fictive and yet too-real universe in which Blackness is not observable or measurable using the logics of Anglo-American racialization, but which is suspected, scrutinized, demonized, and policed all the same; and to emphasize those moments in which Blackness cannot be neatly subjugated, even in the context of the plantation, therefore occasioning a disintegration of whiteness and its attempts at mastery. Through this project's understanding and repositioning of the Gothic as a mode which responds to colonialism and imperialism, and which intervenes in the ways in which academic fields continue to think about Enlightenment theories of the human, I too, like McKittrick, wonder, "What happens to our understanding of black humanity when our analytical frames do not emerge from a broad swathe of numbing racial violence but, instead, from multiple and untracked enunciations of black life?" (105). These enunciations are what my primary readings seek to pin down in these texts. As the Gothic is a modality that

denotes various kinds of movements, disruptions, and upheavals in space and time, perhaps its capacity to unsettle familiar forms, styles, storylines, and conceptual categories is what allows it to problematize the ways in which the Gothic itself has been traditionally excavated.

Chapter 1 – The Gothic Tradition: Toward a Reading of Transatlantic, Colonial Gothic

The hauntings of the Gothic are not endemic to one nation but are connected by a global malaise related to ever-changing notions about social order… If the Gothic is the literature of disenfranchisement and of political upheaval and economic struggle, then ever-new hauntings will manifest in the Gothic literature of tomorrow as our global culture becomes more cataclysmically conflicted.

Bridget M. Marshall and Monika Elbert[23]

As it happens, this literature of nightmare was, from its earliest history in England and Europe, fundamentally linked to colonial settings, characters, and realities as frequent embodiments of the forbidding and the frightening.

Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert[24]

In this chapter, I trace the development of the term Gothic, through its different mediums of representation, and establish a prehistory of what this project refers to as a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic literary modality. By outlining the term's etymology from its original use to denote the purportedly barbaric Goth tribes who "were most famous for invasions of Rome that began in 238 CE [weakening] the western Roman Empire and [contributing] to its eventual collapse" (Fischer 143), this chapter illustrates an original ethno-cultural location that, through politicization, gives rise to rise to architectural, literary, and (other forms of) popular cultural styles that continue to capitalize on the fact that "these tribes were frequently demonized for their barbaric nature" (Fischer 143). The various socio-political and cultural meanings which have been attached to what later

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[23] Marshall and Elbert, *Transnational Gothic: Literary and Social Exchanges in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13.
[24] Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean," 229.

becomes an aesthetic(ized) literary tradition in mid-eighteenth-century England

correspond to these earlier descriptions. Following this line of analysis, I elucidate the

ways in which my study is thinking alongside the fields of Black Studies and Black

Feminism(s) to reclaim the vocabulary with which the Gothic has generally been

identified—especially terror, horror, and hauntings—to locate the still-unfolding sources

of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic fear. Leila Taylor observes that "The idea of white skin

and whiteness is … meshed with the gothic" (86) in *Darkly: Black History and America's*

Gothic Soul (2019), which interprets the binary palette of the colors black and white as

they operate in Gothic aesthetics. Here, I pause to consider the thinkers to whom my work

is indebted, directly and indirectly through my citation practices across this study, and

recall Frantz Fanon's discussions in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), about how the

Black/white binary operates in Transatlantic societies. Namely, I am making connections

between the way Fanon addresses the effects of colonialism, racism, and whiteness in

spaces that continue to rehearse the legacies of colonialism in the Americas, and how this

'colonial inheritance' produces what I refer to as Gothic terror/horror. For example, my

analysis of the primary texts which comprise this thesis illustrates how:

> Deep down in the European unconscious has been hallowed out an excessively
> black pit where the most immoral instincts and unmentionable desires slumber.
> And since every man aspires to whiteness and light, the European has attempted to
> repudiate this primitive personality, which does its best to defend itself. When
> European civilization came into contact with the black world, with these savages,
> everyone was in agreement that these black people were the essence of evil. (166-
> 167)

This passage is addressing this Black/white binary well in ways that resonate with my

project, particularly as I lead into the following section that offers a discussion about the

politicization of the 'Goth(ic)' which is conceived and deployed in opposition to (western) European (and later Anglo-American) "whiteness and light." Fanon's use of "these savages" when referring to cultural, racial "Others" is important to my discussion below, when I examine social, racial, and cultural hierarchies that figure in the Gothic, and which correspond to the etymology of the term. Certainly, as I point to time and again in my analyses, the Gothic, as Taylor argues, is "meshed" and grappling with an understanding of what 'Black(ened)' denotes and symbolizes. It is not implausible to link Fanon's writings about "the black man" (167) to how Anglo-American Gothic literature attempts to register and dissect Blackness or non-whiteness; Fanon writes that:

> In Europe the black man has a function: to represent shameful feelings, base instincts, and the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *Homo occidentalis* the black man—or, if you prefer, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine. Every bird of prey is black. In Martinique, which is a European country in its collective unconscious, when a jet-black person pays you a visit, the reaction is: "What misfortune brings him?" The collective unconscious is not governed by cerebral heredity: it is the consequence of what I shall call an impulsive cultural imposition. (167)

In short, by staying with Fanon's descriptions it is possible to do the kind of excavation work that highlights how, as we shall see, 'Gothic' comes to signify a type of literature that seizes on "black," racialized, and 'Other,' to "symbolize evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine," a list which already includes some Gothic thematic concerns since it becomes, after all, a literary tradition that seeks to (re)present "the dark side of the soul."

My own analysis of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic inquires to what end whiteness survives the long eighteenth century to permeate Anglo-American, Caribbean, and Latin American cultures like a pervasive, indistinct yet omnipresent mist that

continues to smother Black and racialized peoples.[25] Fanon's assertions regarding "the

collective unconscious" are especially meaningful when I think about my own

experiences as an Afro-Latina in "the Antilles" (171), to use the same geographic

descriptor as Fanon, and in North America. Throughout this study, I attempt to locate,

through Gothicism, what is contradictory, harrowing, and terrifying about Transatlantic

societies which are "based on the myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education,

enlightenment, and refinement" (Fanon 170). In Christina Sharpe's formulation, "the

weather [in the wake of Transatlantic colonialism] is the totality of our environments; the

weather is the total climate; and the climate is antiblack" (106). Since "The fear of

Blackness is so embedded in the fabric of [Transatlantic cultures]" (Taylor 75-6), rather

than produce an analysis that investigates the fear of Blackness and blackened peoples

and how this is present in Gothic works of literature, I look to Transatlantic, colonial

Gothic as a mode—"a way of thinking, more of a sensibility than a style" (Taylor 35)—

that has always contended with the specters of colonialism, imperialism, and a specific

conception of whiteness borne out of these systems. While it is possible and accurate to

argue, as Taylor has done, that whiteness "is reliant on Blackness as unknowable,

unfathomable, and strange" (68) to instill socio-political and cultural fears of a non-white

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[25] In an article for *The Guardian*, entitled "The invention of whiteness: the long history of a dangerous idea," published in 2021, Robert P. Baird likens the ubiquity of whiteness to a fog, writing that "Ten years ago, whiteness suffused mainstream culture like a fog" (1), something relatively new and intangible that is everywhere and nowhere at once. In similar ways, but writing from a psychotherapy perspective, Andrew Asibong's article, "Whiteness and Fog: Thinking About Traumatic Narcissism in a Racialized Context," published in 2022, posits that to understand specific conditions like "traumatic narcissism" and "parental negation" in racialized communities it is crucial "to engage emotionally, politically, and aesthetically with… spectrally internalized whiteness" (89). There is a line of emerging critical texts that address whiteness as a recent and disembodied idea, but, as the readings in this dissertation discuss, whiteness is not a new concept, and while it relies on immateriality to elicit terror/horror in the people in inherently excludes and affects through different means, a salient feature of it is its very real, material, and everyday effects.

"Other" in Transatlantic societies, what my readings of the Gothic mode consistently point to is that the opposite is also true: the spectral, unknowable yet expansive, even ubiquitous qualities of whiteness create a general atmosphere of dread, fright, and panic in the Black and racialized peoples it is designed to harm.

By charting the Gothic modality from its initial recorded uses, definitions, and connotations as a term, speaking to the prejudicial historical belief that the Germanic tribes who initially bore the appellative "were called Goth because of their barbaric nature" (Fischer 143), and through to its inhabiting of different mediums of artistic, social, and political representation, this chapter points to the Gothic's imminent interlacing with coloniality and whiteness. My aim it not to claim that a critical engagement with the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode provides answers to socio-political questions or that it makes use of Blackness to unearth facts about specific societal ailments. Instead, my goal is to elucidate how this engagement sheds light on the broad phenomena of individual and communal fear, the conflation of terror and horror as they operate within and against the backdrop of Anglo-American Enlightenment myths, the significance of hauntings, and the tensions which continue to beg the question: in Transatlantic spaces, "who is allowed to be reasonably afraid of whom"? (Taylor 75). If, as Robert Kiely has proposed, we ought to be thinking about the Gothic tradition in Anglo-American literature as an attitude of discontent that "defies conventional chronological sequence and replaces it with obsessive variations on the single theme of human misery" (191), then perhaps it is time to turn a critical eye toward the many colonial brutalities and atrocities—the human misery—with which the Gothic (and other

similarly political literary modalities, such as the magical realism of Latin America) has attempted to grapple in English, American, Caribbean, and Latin American spaces since the long eighteenth century. In this regard, and thinking with the first epigraph to this section, in which Marshall and Elbert observe that, "The hauntings of the Gothic are not endemic to one nation but are connected by a global malaise" (13), it is important to highlight the global nature of hauntings, insofar as these depict the effects of whiteness and of colonial terror/horror as fundamentally pervasive, transcending national boundaries.

The term Gothic, I argue, has always been political, making it necessary to outline its development through to the Transatlantic literary representations that make use of its purportedly barbarous, dark(ened), and unruly elements to find inventive and often guileful ways to address colonialism, imperialism, and the haunted and haunting qualities of whiteness. A project such at this necessarily models methodologies of care and relationality, since, as McKittrick reminds us, "If we are committed to anticolonial thought, our starting point must be one of disobedient relationality that always questions, and thus is not beholden to, normative academic logics" (45). Guided by this expectation, or rather, this promise, my analysis of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic includes a crucial reframing and repositioning of the Gothic not as a topical, isolated, and bromidic genre defined by a rigid formal distinction between terror and horror in exclusively Anglo-American settings, but instead as a kind of itinerant practice and protean engagement with fear, violence, and uncertainty as it responds to the terror/horror of coloniality in the dynamic geographic imaginary generated by colonial expansion into the Caribbean and

Latin America. This thesis reimagines Gothic literature as comprising texts produced in this period following particular methods, styles, and techniques for articulating the frightful and frightening atrocities that (still) occur to Black and racialized peoples in Transatlantic spaces. These aspects of the colonial Gothic modality are all present in the three primary texts this project delves into; each of these works is set into motion by Transatlantic movement and subsequently grapples with and attends to—in albeit divergent yet meaningful ways, as I discuss in subsequent chapters—the deleterious effects of whiteness as a presence both incorporeal and tangible. These qualities of the Gothic—its historical politicization and its capacity to politicize—charge it with a refractory energy as a term of analysis; as all things "Gothic" weave in and out of socio-cultural spheres in Transatlantic locales, this mode of writing heightens a general sense of danger or unease without reliably or definitively identifying its cause. The Gothic, in other words, problematizes without problem-solving. As my readings of it show, rather than present a clear-cut, definitive, or unambiguous (re)solution to what Sharpe refers to as "the disaster of Transatlantic slavery… [and] the disaster of Black subjection" (5), long eighteenth-century prose narratives that make use of Gothic elements respond to colonial terror/horror by troubling the Enlightenment's neoclassical virtues of order, reason, and (white) conceptions of the human, and continuously hold up a mirror to Transatlantic societies in which "terror is disaster and terror has a history and it is deeply atemporal" (Sharpe 5). With the purpose of laying out these connections, this project follows the Gothic mode from the Goth Germanic tribes who initially bore the identifier, through to works of literature which bear the same appellative or adopt its features, identifying the

ways in which these kinds of textual productions continue to engage, persistently if messily, with oppression, injustice, and socio-political contraventions. As I have explained in my Introduction, this engagement involves distinct and often contrasting ideas and perspectives: Equiano's Black, political interventionist text presents a different approach that Brown's Gothic novel, which, in turn, serves a different function than Lewis's journal as a kind of miscellaneous form of writing.

The convoluted genealogy behind the word "Gothic" and its derivations and declensions at different historical junctures constitutes a compelling prehistory to the mid-eighteenth-century emergence of a Gothic literary tradition in English. The term's historical and semantic association with disruptiveness, unruliness, and defiance also describe the dynamics of its own cultural trajectory. Dating back to the first century CE in Europe, the term 'Goth(ic)' was first used to identify a group of disjointed nomadic tribes who gradually unified and organized into two major branches by the fifth century, the Visigoths (i.e., western Goths) and the Ostrogoths (i.e., eastern Goths). Collectively, these tribes were known as 'the Goths' and their history and culture are described using the demonym 'Gothic.' Tracing the etymology of the name, these tribes are likely to have taken the appellative from the land they inhabited in Scandinavia, then referred to as Gotland (also spelled Gottland or Gothland), located in present-day Sweden (Lehmann 11). It is important to note that much of the historical information available regarding these Germanic peoples follows and reproduces the tendentious accounts of Roman historians, a people whose sources are not likely to be generous toward them, since these tribes "toppled the Roman Empire and plunged Europe into the Dark Ages" (Laredo 1).

In terms of the appellative by which these tribes are known, Rachel Fischer explains that,

"The Goths were not commonly known by what they called themselves, like Thervingi

(forest people) and Greuthungi (steppe or rock people), but were called Goth because of

their barbaric nature," and asserts that these tribes were "frequently demonized [by the

Romans]" (143). In her article tracing the development of the Gothic aesthetic, Fischer

clarifies that these ancient tribes' vilification responds to the fact that they "waged war

because they refused to be submissive to Rome's control" and that they "were acting out

of fear [since] the Holy Roman Empire and Christianity threatened their way of life"

(Fischer 143).[26] These socio-historic instances already reveal a kind of disparaging and

derisive connotation attached to the term 'Gothic,' as it designates a people who "fought

and lost their right to religious and cultural freedom" (Fischer 143). Extant written

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[26] The connection between the Gothic literary tradition and religion in Anglo-American settings has been examined by many critics, including Michael McKeon in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (2000), Ian Haywood in *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776-1832* (2006), Diane Long Hoeveler in *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* (2014), and Alison Milbank in *God and the Gothic: Religion, Romance, and Reality in the English Literary Tradition* (2018). Generally, these critical texts consider Anglo-American Gothic works through an analysis of their engagement with theological views, as a genre that makes ample use of Roman Catholic tropes, motifs, and themes, lambasting and critiquing them. While this project does not focus on religious elements and their treatment in Gothic texts, as it is not my aim to reproduce scholarship that centers around the religious tensions present in the Georgian Era in England, for example, or the growing unrest and political turmoil of the young American nation, it is important to note that these aspects are indeed ubiquitous in the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality, as depicted in the three primary works examined here: Equiano's spirituality and entrance into the Methodist faith serves a specific function in his *Interesting Narrative*, as a reaction against eighteenth-century Christian conceptions that deride a too-embodied, too-fervent demonstration of faith; Brown's *Wieland* sets Carwin in stark opposition to the pious Wieland family's religious zeal; and Lewis's *Journal* contains multiple accounts of the ways in which Black African-descended religious practices continue to intrude on and trouble white plantation owners' "mastery" over enslaved peoples in Jamaica. These are the kinds of sociopolitical and cultural aspects with which the present dissertation engages, since, as Sarah Gray points out, the Gothic tradition in literature emerges at a time in which "Instability and insecurity prevailed on both sides of the Atlantic as citizens of England and America experienced conditions of uncertainty and confusion that in themselves could only be described as Gothic" (5). It is not difficult to link these conditions of profound socio-cultural collapse with the history of the term Goth(ic), since the Goth tribes occasioned the eventual breakdown of the Roman Empire, amid religious turmoil and discrimination of 'Othered' groups of peoples.

accounts describing the manner(s), tradition(s), and culture(s) of this group of peoples characterize them as being "lawless" and "savage" in nature (Lehman 12), because they had the temerity to exist outside the bounds of Roman culture, society, beliefs, and values. Following these socio-historic and linguistic interpretations, together with the fact that these Goth peoples "are frequently referenced for their part in the fall of the Roman Empire and their subsequent rise to power in the region of northern Europe" (Mark 1), "Gothic" emerges as a concept or descriptor malleable in content but always attached to pejorative references to a cultural outsider's relative lack of civility. By challenging the reigning European social order, the members of the Goth(ic) tribes were permanently ascribed a place in history—a history largely written by Roman scholars and thinkers, or by the people who echo(ed) their writings, from Herodotus to Herwig Wolfram—as barbaric primitives whose culture, way of life, and habitual practices were uncivilized at best.[27]

To put it more plainly, referring to the history of the term's evolution, Leila Taylor writes that:

> The age of Enlightenment brought a rebirth of classical Greek and Roman forms of culture in which everything was to be rational, instructional, proportionate and harmonious. Rome became equated with culture and intellect, and since the Goths busted in and ruined it, 'gothic' became a pejorative. Gothic became synonymous with the Middle Ages and a belief in the superstitions, the supernatural, the obsolete, and outlandish. (34)

This open politicization of the term "Gothic" and the way it is recorded in history is

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[27] See the *Encyclopedia of European Peoples* (2006), edited by Catherine Mason and Carl Waldman, for a full account of the history of the Gothic tribe(s), as well as the Roman historians who wrote about them after decades of warfare, including thinkers under the rules of Aurelian, Claudius, and Constantine (205). For further details recounting the Gothic Wars, see Michael Kulikowski's *Rome's Gothic Wars: From the Third Century to Alaric* (2008).

irretrievably linked to the period that marks the decline of the (Roman) seat of power in Western civilization. It is no wonder, then, that other people should have taken the term to apply it to additional styles, forms, and modes of artistic, aesthetic, and cultural representation to express transgressiveness, disaffection, and recusancy. One of the adjectival definitions found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) describes the term "Gothic" as standing in for things which are "portentously gloomy or horrifying… barbarous or crude" ("Gothic"). Since being coined to name a tribe charged with transgressions against the Roman Empire, the term has multiplied into derivative forms and has become attached to a variety of forms of representation, across cultural and social spheres, featuring dark, grotesque, and horrific characteristics. For instance, the architectural style bearing the "Gothic" sobriquet, which originated in France in the twelfth century, is commonly described using language that carries similar connotations, particularly as can be found in early descriptions referring to it as "rough, barbarous and unrefined" (Vasari 33), as painter, architect, and historian Giorgio Vasari has termed it. Vasari "popularized the term Gothic as a pejorative term to describe a grotesque or barbarian aesthetic, reminiscent of the destruction of Roman buildings during the Gothic sacking of Rome" (Fischer 143), further cementing the ascription of the Gothic to a vulgar, coarse, or uncivilized quality.

The way "Gothic" comes to signify from the Ancient Roman context to neoclassical Europe resonates, for me, with the racialized discourses by which Black(ened) peoples are singled out from the Enlightenment to the present—language which we have inherited from oppressive systems that continue to make distinctions

between light and dark, white and black, civilized and uncivilized, and us and them, among other violently binaristic frameworks. The Gothic mode grapples with these categorizations by making use of its own disobedience to stir, trouble, and undermine them. This quality allows Gothic writing to expose processes by which specific but broad(ened) categories or groups of peoples whose divergence from the status quo—from an allegedly "civilized" and desired whiteness—excludes them from and marks them as somehow inferior to an ideal social, political, cultural, racial, and biological referent. This resonates with(in) Fanon's work, as in the quotations at the beginning of this chapter, particularly when he theorizes racial hierarchies as departing from notions of Blackness as inherently negative, at the same time as whiteness is perpetuated as being intrinsically, naturally positive. Considering this from a Black humanist and feminist methodology, I also recall Wynter's words about how conceptions of the human "in th[is] specific culture-historical world" set up the hierarchies in which "normal" means "white" (40). Staying with Wynter, then:

> if as Michel Foucault pointed out in his *The Order of Things*, Man as a new (and ostensibly universal because supracultural) conception of the human had in fact been invented by a specific culture, that of western Europe, during the sixteenth century… the anthropologist Jacob Pandian notes that this invention had been made possible only on the basis of a parallel invention… This had been so, he explains, because while western Europe was to effect the transformation of its medieval religious identity of the True Christian Self into the now secularizing identity of Man, it was confronted with the task of inventing a new form of binarily opposed Otherness to Man, one that could reoccupy, in secular terms, the place that its conception of the Untrue Christian Self had taken in the matrix of the religio-cultural conception of the human, Christian. (Wynter 43)

I read these notions of "Man," a western European conception of "the human," as revelatory and indeed indispensable to the kind of analysis I am proposing, as Wynter's

argument that this formulation was only made possible by simultaneously creating a new binary opposition to "Man" in the form of the "Human Other," is particularly important in light of the cultural, historico-linguistic, and political work of the Gothic. She continues:

> with the invention of Man in two forms (one during the Renaissance in the context of the intellectual revolution of civic humanism, the other in the context of that of Liberal or economic humanism which took place at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century), Europe [inevitably] invent[ed] the Other to Man in two parallel forms. And, because Man was now posited as a supracultural universal, its Other had logically to be defined as the Human Other. (43)

Then, the work of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic—through long eighteenth-century texts such as Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, Brown's *Wieland*, and Lewis's *Journal*—points to how Black and racialized identities, at once secular, religious, and spiritual, can complicate and disarrange binary distinctions.

In his entry for the term "Gothic" in the *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (2009), Ian Chilvers offers an insightful description of the tensions generated by its development. He writes that "Like many other stylistic labels, the word was originally a term of abuse: it was coined by Italian artists of the Renaissance to denote the type of medieval architecture they condemned as barbaric (implying, quite wrongly, that this architecture was created by the Gothic tribes who had destroyed the classical art of the Roman empire)" (263). Based on these descriptions, it might be tempting to abandon the term "Gothic" as a discriminatory and reductive tool of Western socio-political self-definition. This dissertation, however, takes a different approach by locating and outlining the ways in which the Gothic modality, while continuing to rehearse Western anxieties about the boundaries of selfhood and otherness, lends itself particularly well to exposing, revealing, and uncovering the atrocities and violence with which marginalized peoples

contend in Transatlantic spaces. By the mid-eighteenth century, "a new form of romantic literature emerged that renounced the rationality of neoclassicism and embraced the phantasmagoric" (Taylor 34). In this period, while the word "Gothic" continued to be used as an antonym for the neoclassical models of artistic forms which were held up as Enlightenment cultural ideals, it also named a growing field of aesthetic resistance to Enlightenment taste and rationalism. If, as scholars of Afro-diasporic history Sybil Newton Cooksey and Tamisha Thomas have stated, "At least vis-à-vis the Enlightenment, the Gothic has long been something of a pejorative label — a way to name something unreasonable, horrible, mad, magic, and monstrous — often applied to people, places, objects, and emotions that exacerbate our fear of the dark" (6), then examining the etymology and genealogy of the Gothic against the context of Transatlantic slavery, race, and racialization yields interesting, important results. Through this analysis of the historical and semantic associations of the term "Gothic" and its deployment as a socio-political, cultural, discursive, and literary mode(s), this study can draw connections to the ways in which the Gothic mode registers and grapples with the experiences of Back and racialized peoples in Transatlantic spaces. These historical associations are crucial to follow, in the notions attached to the Goth tribes which produce styles and forms that are disruptive, unruly, and defiant, as much as they are described as being "barbaric" and "savage," later echoed in the vilification of Black(ened) peoples; in dominant perspectives that propagate bias and perpetuate derogatory socio-cultural narratives; in the reproduction of labels and binary frameworks; and in the exclusion of "Othered" groups from the ideal social, cultural, and racial referents constructed by oppressive

powers. My critical move to draw out these parallels responds to a need to generate scholarship "to unmoor from the Gothic its trappings of universal aesthetics by explicitly tying it… to the horrors and romance of racial history" (Cooksey and Thomas 8). I thus (re)turn to the middle of the eighteenth-century, to think through the inception of the Gothic as a literary form and to note the ways in which my readings seek to challenge superficial and universal interpretations of it. In this regard, my critical approach discusses how the Gothic mode is tied to racial history, pointing out its complexities, capabilities, and resonances in discussions of race, power, fear, and oppression.

At that time in England, the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) coincides with changing worldviews and attitudes, producing a text which "was a throwback to the age of chivalry that centered on old familial curses, doomed romances, and tragic deaths" (Taylor 34-5) and which originates the style of literature that comes to be known as the English Gothic. Often dubbed "the first Gothic novel" (Clery 21), Walpole's *Otranto* "was published on Christmas Day 1764" and "it was subtitled simply *A Story*" (Clery 21), not having been labeled "Gothic" until the second edition. Nevertheless, this literary production defied generic classifications from its first appearance by drawing on unfashionably archaic literary forms. Clery notes:

> For Walpole's contemporaries the Gothic age was a long period of barbarism, superstition, and anarchy dimly stretching from the fifth century AD, when Visigoth invaders precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire, to the Renaissance and the revival of classical learning. In a British context it was even considered to extend to the Reformation in the sixteenth century and the definitive break with the Catholic past. "Gothic" also signified anything obsolete, old-fashioned, or outlandish. (21)

Otranto introduces Gothic fiction as a form of ahistorical storytelling unrestrained by measures of empirical realism or plausibility. Walpole clarified his deliberate playing with the relationship between past and present in the preface to the second edition, in which he describes *Otranto*'s "attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (Walpole 65). The tale highlights particular historical conditions of Western European inheritance and cultural reproduction, building upon an overtly fictional, quasi-Medieval European past—a past which is dominated by forms of power ascribed to white male patriarchs. The 1765 publication of the second edition, which the author furnished with the subtitle, "*A Gothic Story*" (Walpole 63), (eventually) initiated a Gothic literary movement poised to undergo as many connotative, denotative, and epistemic transformations as the term "Gothic" had already endured.[28] According to John Mullan, "Gothic fiction began as a sophisticated joke…When [Walpole] used the word it meant

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[28] It is not my aim to duplicate critical works which treat the Gothic comprehensively and enumerate and provide descriptions for the many existing subgenres of it, or indeed its classifications since its inception. Depending on the critical lens through which it has been examined, to mention some examples here, Gothic literature has been categorized using chronology and geographic locations, such as is the case with Early Gothic, Romantic Gothic, Victorian Gothic, American Gothic, and Modern Gothic; it has been described taking gender roles, representations, and viewpoints into account, in often-simplistic categories such as Male Gothic and Female Gothic; or, as is of more interest to the present study, it has been approached through noting a distinction between affective perceptions, such as terror-Gothic and horror-Gothic. For detailed descriptions following different kinds of readings of Gothic literature—its histories, styles, development, tropes, and categorizations—see critical works like Ellen Moers' "Female Gothic" (1976) in *Literary Women*, Patrick Brantlinger's "The Gothic Origins of Science Fiction" (1980), David Stevens' *The Gothic Tradition* (2000), Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing 1750-1820*: *A Genealogy* (2002), and Mary Ellen Snodgrass' *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature* (2005). A vital aspect of this doctoral project is my express desire to resist entering a critical praxis that employs this or that lens, theory, or concept to perform an analytical, generic reading of the Gothic. My interpretations, readings, and analyses follow a Black Feminist rearranging of the ways in which we theorize in our academic fields of study, adopting its urge to challenge and confront the (white) 'rigor' that accompanies traditional scholarship. I too am waiting "for the ultimate liberation theory to imagine its practice and do its work" (132), as Toni Morrison has voiced it, but I am everywhere seeing that this kind of work is already taking place, when Black, Afro-Caribbean, and/or Afro-Latinx thinkers like Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, Katherine McKittrick, Lorgia García Peña, Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo, and Canisia Lubrin, to list only a few key people, continue to engage with eighteenth-and nineteenth-century epistemology, culture, and the conditions of being in a Transatlantic world that subsists because of/on/through whiteness.

something like 'barbarous', as well as 'deriving from the Middle Ages'" (2). Since the

publication of *Otranto*, however, Gothic fiction has been interpreted in so many ways that

the question of what it is involved critical debates and "dissenting opinions," as Frederick

S. Frank has pointed out, including critics who interpret it to be "surrealist" writing,

"frivolous, lightweight, and escapist," or "comedy" (54-5). In the introductory section to

the 2011 Broadview edition of Walpole's novel, Frank opines that the author's interest in

Gothic architecture inserted itself in his writings, and that his:

> Gothicizing was no longer merely architecture but an attitude of discontent
> reflecting the subconscious fears and desires of an age grown too fond of reason
> and beginning to question its own empirical assumptions. Appealing as it did to
> the "vulnerable barbarism" [of its author] … the Gothic asserted itself as the
> literature of collapsing structures, malign enclosures, dark passions, and
> supernatural chaos. (13)

It is important to remark upon the connection between the experimental literary mode

Walpole calls "Gothic" and the Gothic architectural style in which he was interested. At

the age of twenty-nine, "keenly aware of the lack of a family castle" (Lewis 57) despite

being son to preeminent Parliamentarian Sir Robert Walpole, "he leased land in

Twickenham" and "began the alterations which were to bring back the 'Gothic' style into

everyday use throughout the English-speaking world" (Lewis 57). Called Strawberry Hill

House, and standing as an opulent "estate of 46 acres, consisting of about nine acres of

lawns and pleasure grounds almost entirely surrounded by a carefully designed cordon

sanitaire of his own fields and meadows" (Guillery and Snowdin 116), the material

implications of this kind of affluence are significant to the Gothic's political investments,

particularly since, as I discuss in later chapters, many of the authors (e.g., William

Beckford, Matthew G. Lewis) who come to define or be associated with the Gothic

tradition in literature in English are white men who have extensive access to wealth generated by colonial development and to the privilege and socio-political power that comes with it.[29]

Otranto can be easily (mis)read as being completely uninterested in the colonial and imperial contexts of the themes of terror and horror. Certainly, it is preoccupied with fantasies of European antiquity, as it is set in a Medieval castle, and its generic hallmarks—grisly death, ghostly apparitions, potential incest and sexual violence, confused identities, hidden passageways and trapdoors, as well as strong, suffocating, convoluted family birthrights—introduce the lasting tropes of a distinctly white Gothic tradition. I contend, however, that even this novel—the earliest of its kind—is not only assuming colonial legacies, but also initiating a tradition in which Gothic fictions grapple with the consequences of whiteness—its ascendance to designating the sites and subjects in whom colonial power is consolidated, and its disruption of older social hierarchies based on bloodline and regional attachments over embodied qualities like gender and race. This tradition comes to include books by Ann Radcliffe like *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1796), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Abraham Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire (*1897), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and short stories like "Young Goodman

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[29] I am not suggesting that Horace Walpole was an enslaver; in fact, in the article entitled, "Gothic fantasy: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill House" (2020), Nancy Alsop writes that, "Walpole was ardently opposed to the slave trade, about which he corresponded with the campaigner Hannah More, predicting the future disasters of colonialism and Empire" (Alsop). For this reason, I single out Beckford (see Chapter 2) and Lewis (see Chapter 4) as examples of Gothic authors who are enslavers.

Brown" (1835) and "The Birth-Mark" (1843), Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851), *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), and his shorter works like "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853), and "Benito Cereno" (1855), as well as a number of short texts written by Edgar Allan Poe, including "The Black Cat" (1843), "The Gold-Bug" (1843), and "The Raven" (1845). All rely in one way or another upon a racialized "Other," or on racialized language, to narrate life in the age of Transatlantic colonialism as ever on the brink of terror/horror.

This style of writing's precursor, *Otranto* marks a clear departure from neoclassical values through the portrayal of its characters' excessive subjective feelings. Manfred, the tyrannical patriarch, is constantly seized by wild, unruly fits, instances of which are seen when he convinces himself that his grandfather's portrait is haunted (81), and when he confuses young Theodore with the ghost of Alfonso (135); the young Isabella, on whom Manfred trains his violent machinations, is portrayed as the prototypical damsel in distress, emotional and in perpetual danger, as when the narrative finds her in a place where "Words cannot describe the horror of [her] situation" (83); and characters like Bianca, servant to Manfred's daughter Matilda, who by Walpole's own admission is but a plot device, are given to bouts of superstition and melancholy (96). *Otranto*'s portrayal of these emotionally discombobulated characters draws on the long tradition of imagining "Gothic" others in terms of chaotic passions that threaten classical social order.[30] It is precisely in the depiction of characters like Bianca, and others like her

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[30] In Sylvia Wynter's "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument" (2003), while presenting a reading of "two plays written in the first decades of the seventeenth century: one the well-known play by Shakespeare, *The Tempest*; the other the less well-known play by Spain's Lope de Vega, written at roughly the same time and entitled *The*

(i.e., Jaquez and Diego), "the domestics" bearing "Spanish names" (Walpole 59), that we

find Walpole grappling with the question of what whiteness means for British identity. Of

these potentially Spanish, non-British servants, Walpole writes that:

> Some persons may, perhaps, think the characters of the domestics too little serious
> for the general cast of the story; but, besides their opposition to the principal
> personages, the art of the author is very observable in his conduct of the
> subalterns. They discover many passages essential to the story, which could not be
> well brought to light but by their naïveté and simplicity: in particular, the
> womanish terror and foibles of Bianca, in the last chapter, conduce essentially
> towards advancing the catastrophe. (Walpole 60)

This description—which appears in the preface to the first edition of the novel, and

through which Walpole is assuming the guise of ancient manuscript 'discoverer' and

translator, effectively concretizing an authorial tradition which would pervade the Gothic

and follow it across the Atlantic Ocean and into the Americas[31]—clearly expresses the

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New World Discovered by Christopher Columbus" (289), she writes about the binary of rational/irrational.
In her reading of *The Tempest*, she notes that "the central opposition is represented as being between
Prospero and Caliban; that is, between Higher Reason as expressed in the former, and irrational, sensual
nature as embodied in the latter" (289). As we will recall, the character of Caliban is overtly racialized and
vilified, and Wynter's reading of this play is in accordance with my own readings of the Gothic, since it is
through Caliban that the play mostly expresses rebelliousness and chaotic passions that threaten the social
order. Or, in Wynter's words, this and other similarly racialized characters act in opposition to white
characters, enacting a "master code of rational nature/irrational nature… [that applies pressure to] the new
'idea of order'" (289). These interpretations prefigure my discussion of Lewis's poem, "The Isle of Devils"
in Chapter 4.

[31] I discuss authors' prefatory notes and their ubiquity and function in the Gothic as a key part of my
comprehensive examination topic paper, "Political Subversion in the Transatlantic Gothic" (2018). In it, I
trace the development of the novel form in England and the United States through to and beyond the
Romantic period, noting that certain authors (e.g., Walpole in England; and Hawthorne in the United States)
use prefatory remarks to establish a distinction between the novel and the romance. Robert Kiely observes
that the English novel—grounded in realism and societal conventions—shifted into a "strangely divided
genre under the influence of Romantic concepts of art, nature, and the self… [becoming] in some hands,
wild and flamboyant" (vii). In Gothic works, prefaces serve the function of positioning texts as either a
"Novel" or a "Romance" while also providing a justification for the excessive and often-horrific events that
unfold in the text. In the long eighteenth century, the Gothic Romance emerges as a form of storytelling that
somehow comes to lie outside of reality/realism, as when texts like Walpole's *Otranto* summon a Medieval
past and suffuse it with (quasi-)supernatural occurrences. While this is a familiar line of criticism, I am
more interested in following a line of critical inquiry that contends that instead of being completely
divorced from reality, the Gothic mode operates on various thematic and narrative levels to turn a critical
lens on it instead, as the present study illustrates. To cite some examples, we find that of *Otranto*, Walpole

instances in the novel which are provocative to thinkers like me, and which attend to the problems generated by the Gothic's aestheticization of terror and horror in order to think through questions of white legacy and reproduction. Walpole's distinction of terror as "womanish" even as he is referring to a woman character as well as his use of the term "subaltern" to minimize and demean the role of non-British characters in the novel, establish a Gothic vocabulary that both genders and exotifies certain styles of being marked as extravagant, artificial, and comically exaggerated. The first Gothic novel in English thus lays the political framework for the literary mode it engenders, initiating a tradition attuned to uses of the "subaltern" for representing cultural orders that marginalize and subordinate people so designated. These characteristics mark a textual tradition that relies on colonial and imperial terror/horror to represent minoritized

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first tells his readers that "The piety that reigns throughout [the story], the lessons of virtue that are inculcated, and the rigid purity of the sentiments, exempt this work from the censure to which romances are but too liable" (61), when the subtitle of the text is still "A Story" (57). However, in the preface to the second edition, when he has already divested himself from his spurious translator's role, and when the subtitle he uses is "A Gothic Story" (63), he writes that the text "was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success" (65). In a tale that amalgamates the implausible with the probable, and through which the Gothic is making use of antiquity, uncivility, and barbarism to suggest something of British superiority, there lies as well the creation of a type of literature that cannot escape its own political condition, and which cannot sever its ties with realism. Eighty-six years later, once the Gothic has migrated to the Americas, Hawthorne is doing something quite similar: in the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1850) he writes that, "When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel" (ix) and then differentiates both forms and justifies his choice by asserting that the while novel "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (ix) the romance "as a work of art… must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation" (ix). As *Seven Gables* demonstrates, however, Hawthorne manages to present a version of truth that displays a superb combination of imagination and realism, of fanciful excesses and faithful representations, and of the fantastic and the natural. Both texts, on either end of the Gothic tradition in Anglo-American literature, as well as the novels in between them on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, dramatize preoccupations regarding the human condition, and yield stories that are, as Peter Buitenhuis has ascertained, "at once imaginative… and [which] also represent a real, recognizable world" (7).

characters according to their proximity to whiteness in spaces that still operate through what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls "the continuing construction of the subaltern" (90) as a voiceless entity with which Eurocentric views cannot appropriately grapple. In this sense, it is not far-fetched to contextualize Paravisini-Gebert's assertion from the first epigraph to this chapter, when she writes that the Gothic was "from its earliest history in England and Europe, fundamentally linked to colonial settings, characters, and realities" (229). As my readings of it will demonstrate, the Gothic mode directly engages with the fears and anxieties stemming from colonialism and with the oppressive nature of whiteness.

If Walpole's *Otranto* is the first iteration of what has since become a "single Gothic conversation, however diverse" (175), as Robert Miles has designated it following the premise and promise of the field of Transatlantic Studies in which "the Anglophone writers of the Atlantic littoral shared a language, and an economy" (Miles 175), it becomes possible to excavate and point to the similarities that exist in works that deal with colonialism and imperialism insofar as these spell out scenes of terror/horror for Black peoples. Additionally, if *Otranto*'s content echoes descriptions of the Gothic attached to its other forms of representation—addressing Enlightenment's views on order, reason, and rationalism as they engage with Romantic values featuring Medieval and Baroque structures, excess of subjective feeling, imagination, and obscurity[32]—and if it

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[32] See Warren Breckman's *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents* (2008), for an elucidation of how Gothic Literature is linked to the Romantic Movement. In the article entitled, "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel" (1969), Robert D. Hume intimates "That Gothicism is closely related to romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way. There are those, indeed, who would like to

makes use of a kind of Anglo-American exceptionalism that designates "Othered" peoples as inferior, then it is also possible to argue against traditional scholarship claiming that this novel "ignore[s] the rich semantic history of the term [Gothic] in the centuries preceding Walpole's novel" (32), as Nick Groom has posited. It is the Gothic's fixation on/with the past that allows it to denude the troubled present, not because, as Del Toro suggests, it is in the past that individual, familial, and societal iniquities occur (xv), as I mentioned earlier, but because the Gothic's confusion of past and present corresponds to the lived realities of Black and racialized peoples in Transatlantic locales where the "past… is not past" (9), to recall Sharpe's words. Though Walpole likely had no intention to launch a critique of Transatlantic imperialism, his experiment with temporality and interest in rendering history uncanny provides a mode of narrative capable of unsettling the fiction of a "post"-colonial world. I read Glen Coulthard's exhortation that we must "shift our position to highlight the ongoing effects of colonial dispossession" (15) in the context of the literature I write about in my study, since colonial Gothic works bring attention to this. Following Eve Tuck's and C. Ree's descriptions of "haunting" as "the

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deny the relationship altogether. James Foster, in his *History of the Pre- Romantic Novel in England* (New York, 1949), pp. 202, 186-189, ignores Walpole almost completely, while discussing Ann Radcliffe's work as 'a special development of the sentimental novel' (p. 262) and dismissing Gothicism as mummery imported into sentimental fiction" (282). In response to these claims, Hume uses the rest of his article to discuss the many connections that exist between the Romantic movement and Gothic literature, ultimately confirming that the Gothic exists as a reaction to the ideas posited by Enlightenment thinkers. Rather than belabor this point as part of this study, since I have already discussed the connections that exist between Romanticism and the Gothic in the same comprehensive examination topic paper I mentioned in the previous footnote, I point to the ways in which Transatlantic Gothic arises as a response to different socio-political concerns on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but nevertheless can be read as an uninterrupted modality. In arguing for a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode as a particular style of writing which becomes easily repurposed to trouble socio-political and cultural categories in Transatlantic spaces, it is important to point out that as a body of writing, it continues to embody the unfixed, oblique, and problematic connotations which the term 'Goth(ic)' has always carried, even while it serves as a reaction to/against Enlightenment ideas regarding knowledge, the senses, and reason.

relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation. Haunting is both acute and general; individuals are haunted, but so are societies" (642), then the so-called "post"-colonial world "is permanently haunted by the slavery, genocide, and violence entwined in its first, present and future days. Haunting doesn't hope to change people's perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop" (Tuck and Ree 642). Since I interpret these descriptions in earnest, following the rich semantic history of the term "Gothic" and establishing its many links to forms of oppression is a crucial step in a project that moves beyond enacting conventional readings of the Gothic which merely present a reductive "revaluation of the Gothic novel" (282), as Robert D. Hume has done, in which such a critic can reach the dismissive conclusion that "Gothic novels… show no serious interest in veracity of fact or atmosphere" (Hume 283).

The transnational, Transatlantic literary Gothic modality on which I focus knows that the relationship between past and present has the quality of a haunting, and draws specific attention to the specters of whiteness as it attempts to articulate "the ghosted singularities of this [Transatlantic] territory's history and demographic composition" (Ramírez D'Oleo 219). When (re)framed as an itinerant modality rather than a nation-based generic tradition, the Gothic can be seen as entertaining the vagaries of Transatlantic socio-politics, especially as these affect Black, racialized, and other marginalized peoples. Its preoccupation with instability and adaptability can be seen to "reenact a continuous history of conquest and liberation" (Marshall and Elbert 9). The Gothic's stylistic peculiarities signal its geographic, historic, and temporal shifting to

contemplate and deal with changing social, cultural, and political questions and ideals: rather than attempt to "fix" sociopolitical problems in the field of colonization, it moves with them, tracing imperialism's internal contradictions. In Maisha L. Wester's words, "one of the reasons the gothic is pervasive and haunting is because it can contain and condense a seeming infinitude of threats and discourses" (3); this is one of the primary concerns of contemporary Black Studies and Black Feminism(s), which seek to locate in texts "the head-on encounter with very real, pressing historical forces and the contradictions inherent in them… [which, in Transatlantic spaces, have always found Black and racialized peoples] through which historical, moral, metaphysical, and social fears, problems, and dichotomies could be articulated" (Morrison 37). Consequently, I am interested in what makes possible a different, revised reading of texts that make use of the Gothic mode in the long eighteenth-century and beyond, through methodological approaches that not only inject new life into it, but which also generate critical interventions that highlight how moribund a field Gothic Studies is as long as it continues to avoid its interconnection with colonial and imperial terror/horror.

The Afterlives of the Gothic: Black Feminism as Methodology

> [B]lack studies represents a substantial critique of western modernity and a sizeable archive of social, political, and cultural alternatives. As an intellectual enterprise, black studies investigates processes of racialization with a particular emphasis on the shifting configurations of blackness. If racialization is understood not as a biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans, then blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot.

Alexander G. Weheliye[33]

> What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely.
>
> Avery Gordon[34]

My readers may have questions about my insistence on referring to "terror/horror" as a compound phenomenon in my discussion of the Gothic. In this section, I offer an explanation by way of drawing genealogical connections between the Gothic literary mode and the fields of Black Diaspora and Black Feminist Studies. By noting the linguistic genealogy of "terror" and "horror" and then turning to contemporary Black Feminist interpretations and uses of them, this project asks to what end long eighteenth-century writers, such as philosopher Edmund Burke and Gothic author and theorist Ann Radcliffe, insist on too adamant a distinction between these terms, as I detail below.[35] Following this line of critical engagement, my thesis hypothesizes that Enlightenment culture is working excessively hard to theorize a difference between mind and body in its model of human subjectivity—a distinction which deliberately fails to account for Black embodied knowledge and experiences in any effective, worthwhile way. Thus, parting

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[33] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, 3.

[34] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, xvi.

[35] In the chapter, "The Aesthetics of Terror and Horror: A Genealogy" (2020), Eric Parisot traces the eighteenth-century distinctions between terror and horror, offering a "genealogy of the aesthetic categories 'terror' and 'horror' as they were constructed in eighteenth-century criticism… drawing primarily upon authors such as John Dennis, Joseph Addison, Edmund Burke, Anna Laetitia Aikin, James Beattie, Nathan Drake and Ann Radcliffe" (284). Parisot traces the emergence of horror as carnal, embodied, and somatic to the works of mid-eighteenth-century graveyard poetry, such as "Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743)" (288), through which horror diverges from a pleasing terror; of this categorization, Parisot writes that horror appears in literature as "confounding, repugnant, and oppressive in its abundance, it is markedly removed from the genial pleasures of the sublime and the titillations of an active imagination, and one that is critically elucidated and creatively exploited later in the century" (289).

from Eurocentric definitions of the terms, and describing briefly how "terror" and

"horror" enter into the language of Gothicism as concepts that connote separate mental

and bodily realms, I contend that these categorizations are particularly fragile when we

think about a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode. The primary texts which are the focus

of the chapters that follow—Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, Charles Brockden

Brown's *Wieland,* and Matthew Lewis's *Journal*—each demonstrate how a Gothic

modality imagines the experience of embodied knowledge as the collapse of a Cartesian

distinction between mind and body.[36] By problematizing the ways in which we read these

categories and the kinds of knowledge/experience we imagine them capable of,

Transatlantic, colonial Gothic persistently intrudes upon the ongoing "relations that

discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (3), in

Weheliye's words.[37] I also discuss the ways in which these three male authors engage

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[36] Han-Kyul Kim explains that, "The phrase 'mind-body problem' sometimes refers to the classic problem of Cartesian dualism, but can also mean the 'difficulty' in accounting for the nature of mind and its relationship to the body" (439).

[37] In his book project, Weheliye is thinking alongside and borrowing methodologies from Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter, particularly when he uses these terms; he writes that his "theoretical design owes much of its fuel to Hortense Spillers's and Sylvia Wynter's important mediations about the intellectual project of black studies vis-à-vis racialization and the category of the human in western modernity" (5). Engaging with Wynter's writings through the works of thinkers who are indebted to and in conversation with her, such as Weheliye, Katherine McKittrick, Emily Anne Parker, S. Trimble, and Denise Ferreira da Silva, has been instrumental to my own understanding of her "reconceptualizations of race, subjection, and humanity" (5) as Weheliye terms it. By engaging with Parker, for example, I have been able to discern how crucial thinkers like Wynter and Fanon are to the genealogy of Black Feminist thought and criticism I have inherited. In Parker's essay, "The Human as Double Bind: Sylvia Wynter and the Genre of 'Man'" (2018), she offers an insightful discussion about Wynter's engagement with Fanon; for him, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), "The world is divided into humans and nonhumans… whiteness/language/religion in this way constitute a morphology in denial of its own contingent bodiment and bent on the active denunciation of any other than gives the lie to this denial. Sylvia Wynter expands this approach: a certain Man, constituted by, in terms only more recently emerging for naming Man, cis/white/masculinity/ability/sexuality/class/nationality/ geography, is produced by a denial of its own specific bodiment, something that this body hides from itself. It denies its status as a 'concrete individual,' as 'flesh-and-blood' body, precisely by contrasting itself with other bodies and ignoring and silencing those who would depart from this morphology. Such denial creates and relies upon a political realm thus constructed upon the denial of that which modernity projects and partitions as bodily, and today there are

with women in texts that grapple with colonialism, imperialism, and enslavement, to indicate how a Black Feminist method of reading allows us to recognize the common ideological underpinnings of colonial misogyny and racism. Finally, I provide an additional description of the coda of this doctoral thesis as part of the methodology I lay out, illustrating how, following the critical intervention offered herein, it is generative to engage with the Gothic as a wide-ranging, migrant, recalcitrant mode of socio-political and cultural representation which negotiates specific themes, tropes, topics, and tones to respond to coloniality and its resulting whiteness in the eighteenth century and beyond— and how the eschewing of a traditional "conclusion" allows me to do that.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides several entries for the term "terror," and attributes the origin(s) of the word to the Latin etymon "terrere," which means "to frighten." The entry goes on to list several of the term's later derivative forms, including "Middle French *terreur* (1325 or earlier)… Spanish *terror* (14th cent.)… Portuguese *terror* (15th cent.)… [and] German *Terror* (early 19th cent., originally after French (with reference to the French Revolution)" ("Terror"). In this same entry page, the OED proffers working definitions for the noun form of the word, of which the first reads, "The state of being terrified or extremely frightened; intense fear or dread; an instance or feeling of this" ("Terror"), denoting a quality of feeling, or an affective category, which

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words precisely for pointing to all that is left out of what is considered modern/political: the feminine, transness, blackness, dis/ability, queerness, nonbinariness" (Parker 441). These ideas regarding the construction of whiteness as something that denies its own embodied nature while marginalizing "Othered" peoples who do not fit the prevalent morphology, encapsulates an essential part of my argument across this study, since it is precisely this denial that creates socio-political and cultural spheres premised on the exclusion and marginalization of Black and racialized peoples. This resonates with my examination of terror/horror in the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, since it heavily involves the entanglement of whiteness, racialization, and oppression.

does not seem to extend much beyond the dimension of cognition. Conversely, the same

dictionary's entry for the term "horror," with its origin(s) traced back to the Latin etymon

"horrere," which means "to shudder" and/or "to tremble," produces derivative forms such

as "Middle French *orror* (1382)… Spanish *horror* (1697)… [and] Italian *orrore* (17th

cent.)" ("Horror"). The first definition offered here explains the term as "Roughness or

nauseousness of taste, such as to cause a shudder or thrill," but this meaning is declared as

being "Obsolete" in usage; the next working definition posits that "horror" is "A

shuddering or shivering" ("Horror"). Both of these definitions stay true to the Latin

morpheme, denoting a distinctly physical, bodily response to some stimulus. That these

terms in English (among other European languages) descend from Latin, which spread

widely across Europe and littoral regions of Africa with the expansion of Roman

economic and political control, is part of the imperial prehistory of the Gothic literary

mode.[38] The institution of Latin as a widespread system of communication carried with it

the vast influence—economic, social, and cultural—of imperial domination. It

demarcated the growing region whose limits the "barbarous" Goths were located.[39] The

fact that this literary mode which "expressed the new Romantic impulse to reclaim the

strange, the exotic, the savage, the improbable, the mysterious, and the supernatural"

(Frank 11) is anchored to Latin etymons constitutes a kind of paradox, or even retributive

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[38] Rebecca Posner and Marius Sala explicate that, "The modern Romance languages developed from the spoken Latin of various parts of the Roman Empire. During the Middle Ages and until comparatively recent times, Latin was the language most widely used in the West for scholarly and literary purposes. Until the latter part of the 20th century its use was required in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church" (1).

[39] It is important to note that, according to the OED, the term "barbarous," from the Latin etymon "barbarus," refers, linguistically to any persons "originally not Greek; subsequently not Greek nor Latin; hence, not classical or pure (Latin or Greek), abounding in 'barbarisms,'" and, more variously, to "unpolished, without literary culture; pertaining to an illiterate people" ("Barbarous").

justice: linguistically, "terror" and "horror" both illustrate that the kinds of deeply unsettling feelings that Roman-style civilization is meant to stave off actually do originate from within. The call is coming from inside the house, so to speak. On the other hand, since Latin is "used in the West for scholarly and literary purposes" (1), as Posner and Sala explain, and is traditionally considered to be the language of classical education and erudition by colonial and imperial systems, it makes sense that Anglo-American writers should have latched on to Latin morphemes and their declensions to analyze Gothic writing: it is a technique for disciplining the Gothic, rendering it comprehensible within an imperial episteme. The drive to stay true to the Latin distinctions between terror and horror—between a psychological and a bodily sensation—compounded with the critical urgency to distinguish them from one another in Gothic writing, illustrates how literary criticism has long adhered to this project of reducing the Gothic to colonial taxonomic classifications. It would be remiss not to note the parallels that exist between this "rigorous" attention to assigning labels, to arranging and dividing—to segregating—and the material processes of mobilizing, organizing, and policing racialized populations in the colonies: both practices employ colonial techniques of taxonomy to hierarchize and designate value.

Peter Sabor's research suggests that Enlightenment culture became preoccupied with taxonomizing terror and horror as separate kinds of experiences, as when he writes about "The efforts made by… theorists of the Gothic… to distinguish horror from terror" (168). Sabor is referring to the works of eighteenth-century writers, such as "Richard Hurd's… *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762)" (167), and "Some of Hurd's

contemporaries… [such as] Henry Home, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism*" (168), as they make "an interesting attempt to distinguish between 'horror' and 'terror'—a subject to which several subsequent critics would return" (168). In light of this, I ask: to what end is the Enlightenment subject making these distinctions, given that these affective lines are never quite as blurred as when the Gothic tries to grapple with colonialism? Long eighteenth-century theories propounded by writers like Ann Radcliffe posit terror as a phenomenon of the psyche, capable of transcending corporeality, and horror as somatic, carnal, revolting, and transgressive. In her 1826 essay, "On the supernatural in Poetry," Radcliffe writes that, "Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them" (5), categorically positing that while terror allows readers to grasp the sublime, the grotesque or bodily aspects of horror push them away from achieving such comprehension. Radcliffe's essay did not initiate this discussion in literary and philosophical spheres; rather, her opinions cemented and lent (Gothic) credibility to a familiar debate which had been taking place since Edmund Burke published his mid-eighteenth-century treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. In his first two footnotes inserted in the 2011 Broadview edition of Walpole's *Otranto*, Frank notes that:

> By the time [the novel was written], the words terror and horror had already disparate meanings partly as a result of Edmund Burke's aesthetic theories in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Terror indicated an anticipated dread of something fearful, the emotion often mingled with awe or amazement. The emotion of horror in Gothic fiction occurs when the terror that is anticipated or dreaded is horribly realized by being seen, touched, or experienced as a hideous physical sensation. (74)

It would not be a stretch to deduce that Burke's distinctions come as a result of adhering to the Latin linguistic denotations and connotations of 'terror' and 'horror.' *A Philosophical Enquiry*, published in 1757, elucidates its author's theories on the pleasing power of fear and the sublimity of terror. In it, Burke posits that supreme pleasure in terror is derived from being confronted with irrational, unexplained events (Burke 25). I cannot help but wonder what a sustained engagement with such descriptions might mean for Black enslaved peoples; or, put differently, what it would mean for Black enslaved peoples to have an interaction or involvement with these descriptions used by Burke. If, as Frank has ventured, the "corridors to a forbidden sublime were made accessible again by a speculative Gothic that opened the door to an alternative universe of pleasing horror and of psychic and social disorder whose very existence… had been ignored or suppressed by the decorous standards of the Enlightenment" (11), then we must interrogate the material, spiritual, and social conditions that denies the promise of this intellectual experience to peoples who live under the oppression of coloniality—the people who are living daily embodiments of colonial terror/horror. If a (white) Gothic tradition is defined by the promise of the subjective pleasures of terror and horror as aesthetic exercises, then how must we redefine the Gothic to account for its effects in spaces where terror and horror are not aesthetic possibilities but structural, material, and environmental inevitabilities—the ship, the plantation?

This conversation regarding the manner in which terror and horror operate—what they are, what they mean and signify, as well as to whom—is intrinsically connected to Enlightenment's 'mind-body problem' which asserts as a true subject one who exists only

in mind, and which was widely discussed and written about by thinkers from René Descartes and John Locke to Immanuel Kant.[40] Parting from debates that (attempt to) define and categorize the interaction between mind and body, and linking these with British writers' insistence on theorizing the Gothic as terror-Gothic (i.e., mind-Gothic, psychological horror) and horror-Gothic (i.e., bodily horror), it becomes apparent that the theorists of the Gothic I mention in this chapter are trying to make it fit Enlightenment philosophy by reproducing the idea that human existence is organized into minds and bodies.[41] These distinctions were instilled into the genre of Gothic fiction from the outset, as authors proclaimed to be either writing terror-Gothic or horror-Gothic. In the preface to the first edition of *Otranto*, Walpole insists that "Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions" (Walpole 60). Traditionally, the works of Walpole and Radcliffe have been categorized under the terror-Gothic subgenre, while the works of Matthew Lewis, Charles Maturin, and Mary Shelley, to note a few popular examples, have been classified as horror-Gothic.[42]

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[40] See *Ouevres de Descartes* (i.e., *The Works of Descartes*, in English, published in 2017), edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, for an elucidation of the French philosopher's ideas regarding the distinctions between mind and body. See also Immanuel Kant's *The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), for a description of the German philosopher's account of the mind-body interaction. See also John Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689); of Locke, Han-Kyul Kim has argued that "Locke's agnosticism about the essence of substance, both mental and corporeal, seems to be a very distinctive thesis in the history of philosophy" (439), suggesting that these categories are traditionally nebulous in Western philosophy.

[41] The resounding ramifications for people who do not inhabit whiteness and whose proximity to it dictates how they might be viewed as being cognitive or not, following colonial (pseudo)scientific thinking which relies on the exploitation of 'Othered' peoples, are enacting patterns of brutality that surpass any imagined/fictional terror/horror in their violence.

[42] In the article cited above, Robert D. Hume also explains the emergence of these subgenres and describes how critics of the Gothic have used them to classify published works that bear the Gothic designation.

By arguing for a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality that resists such classifications, the readings of the Gothic presented in this project aim to articulate the intersections of the fields of Gothic Studies and Black Studies. Refusing the foundational distinction of terror from horror, mind from body, my concept of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic takes into account (Black) embodied knowledge and experiences and posits this mode of writing as one which displays an inherent hybridity that rejects the colonial binaries that produce whiteness. Instead of disciplining terror away from horror, my method of reading locates instances of their convergence. Black Feminist thought reconfigures these categorizations precisely because it grapples with colonial terror/horror and thus effectively demand that Eighteenth-Century Studies evaluate the inequalities that continue to structure and support traditional academic fields of study. In other words, as Bianca C. Williams has termed it:

> Black feminist writers… have transformed how we understand both past (contemplating the archive, memory, 'in the wake,' and 'afterlife') and futures (reimagining world-making and liberatory possibilities). Generative concepts like these not only challenge ideas about *who* can create theory but also *how* we might ask more constructive research questions using both scholarly and creative methods. (204)

Attending to the convergence of terror/horror (and of mind/body), then, is an important technique used by contemporary Black Feminists to resist colonial structures of knowledge and experience. In my introduction, I write about how Christina Sharpe's scholarship offers a nuanced understanding of the Gothic and its relevance to discussions—past, present, and future—of race, racialization, and oppression. Another meaningful example is found in the writings of Saidiya Hartman, whose work continues to attend to Black life, Black liberatory thought, and the possibilities of transformation. In

texts like *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997) and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019), terror and horror are used interchangeably, inviting us to consider to what end Enlightenment culture theorizes a difference between them. Hartman writes about the "terrible spectacle… [of] slavery" (3), prompting reflections on what readers have to learn from scenes of terror and horror. While she does not name the Gothic overtly in her work, I wonder what it means to think about these issues in texts that use Gothic imagery to call attention to what Hartman terms the "routine display of the slave's ravaged body" (3). She associates this spectacle with "the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortions of torture… [and] the sheer unrepresentability of terror" (3), articulating a field of contemporary writing that centers Black life and Black being in non-extractive ways, and that knows how terror and horror operate differently than eighteenth-century theorists of literature described.

In this way, Black Feminist thought reframes, retheorizes, and reimagines the Gothic, marking a departure from the predominant ways in which it has been written about since the eighteenth century, and effectively intervening in Enlightenment theories of subjectivity premised on the criticism's formal distinctions. Black Studies and Black Feminism breathe new, necessary life into the Gothic, since these fields theorize and model methodologies that rely on "feeling-intuitive-subjective-internal-figurative-wholistic-communal approach[es] to life and living" (Frye 37). In tandem, these fields are effective in their goal to "dissect the social, economic, and political forces which oppress and exploit" (Turner and Perkins 8) Black and racialized peoples. The dynamism and

urgency driving this kind of thought display a more attentive and caring way to approach not just the field of Gothic writing but our scholarship more generally, by insisting that we dispel the racial(ist) myths through which literary criticism generates meaning by classifying, describing, and characterizing human beings in terms of hierarchical distinction as opposed to other modes of relation. Through a sustained engagement with Black Feminist thought, we might also challenge the so-called rigorous and/or long-established scholarship that erroneously proffers that, "When we look for constructs or postulates in Black Studies we find a collection of unordered attempts at theory building" (29), as T. K. Daniel has concluded. As the body chapters of this thesis illustrate, reading Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts using Black Feminist methodologies both highlights the effects of the mobilization and (re)production of whiteness and emphasizes the reproduction of embodied experience as a form of knowledge. If, according to writers like Ann Radcliffe—whose writings purportedly "embody… the gothic genre" (Durant 519)—there is something to be gained by readers from engaging with the so-called "philosophically traditional," "sedate," or "conservative Gothic" (Durant 519), then it is not an arbitrary exercise to imagine what kind of reader these writers had in mind and how they imagined that person's subjectivity would be built up by exposure to frightful, frightening, and/or shocking imagery. If, by the same token, we consider Transatlantic Gothic and its inherent contention with and against colonial violence, we can point to the ways in which slavery applies enormous pressure to the Gothic aesthetic; by insisting that the Gothic's imagined scenarios and affects correlate to the real-life material conditions experienced daily by subjugated peoples, the Transatlantic Gothic grounds fictional

experience in material histories that demand new modes of narration and representation.

Consequently, when contemplating the Gothic, I pause to grasp Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* project, which is primarily guided by her commitment not to reproduce or recirculate graphic images depicting the violence committed against enslaved peoples, as it is not my aim to replicate scholarship that is outrageously fascinated with eighteenth-century writing that harmfully reproduces images that dehumanize Black and racialized peoples, even when they do so for ostensibly abolitionist causes.[43] Part of a Black Feminist upheaval of the Gothic mode is then to call into question a long eighteenth-century Gothic tradition that structures itself as a purely aestheticized field that continues to be read and taught as a literary topic separate from slavery.

The genealogy of the term "Gothic" in English discourses shows that at the same time it came to name a specific mode of writing, it also accrued specific meanings in the Transatlantic colonies—namely in the Caribbean, Latin America, North America. In the long eighteenth century, the term "Gothic" made several appearances in periodicals published in the Caribbean region. A search of the *Caribbean Newspapers, Series I: 1718-1876* online database illustrates how the term is used in places like Antigua, Jamaica, and Grenada. Appearing in the *Antigua Mercury, or St. John's Weekly Advertiser*, in August of 1773, there is a printed message entitled, "A letter from the Bishop of C. to the Earl of Bellamont, on his late Duel with Lord Townshend." In it, the

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[43] Here, I am thinking about Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave* (1688) and John Gabriel Stedman's *The Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted N[——] of Surinam* (1796), to cite some examples of texts that are not generally considered Gothic in their images, but which feature colonial brutality and enact terror/horror, nonetheless. In my comprehensive examination papers, I have written in detail about how both texts use language and depict scenes of terror/horror that make a spectacle of Black suffering.

author decries the tradition of engaging in physical combat to restore a wronged party's

honor, concluding that, "in these enlightened times, when the sun of science has happily

dispelled the clouds of enthusiasm, a continuation of so Gothic a custom is a scandal upon

the human understanding" ("A letter from the Bishop" 1), gesturing to the "barbaric,"

"uncivilized" connotations of the term, which evidently flowed freely into the Caribbean.

Published in the *Daily Advertiser* in Jamaica, in February of 1791, is an excerpt of Mary

Wollstonecraft's pamphlet, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right

Honourable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France*,

which had first been published the previous year in England. Wollstonecraft's text is

driven by Enlightenment ideals, using the term "Gothic" seven times to refer to

crumbling, decaying, inequitable pasts. Published next to it is an advertisement by a W. F.

Harris searching for a Black enslaved man who "Ran Away" (*Daily Advertiser* 2). The

man in question, the notice reads, is a "N[——]… Tom, a native of Barbadoes… [who]

speaks very good English" and for whom Harris is offering "a reward of Five pounds" to

"Whoever will apprehend and lodge him in any gaol or workhouse" (2).[44] Similarly, in

the island of Grenada, the *St. George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette* publishes a

French political pamphlet entitled, "Letter of a Frenchman to the King," in November of

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[44] A key aspect of my project of reframing and remaking Gothicism includes a sustained attention to the language with which it is described. Borrowing methodologies from Saidiya Hartman, particularly as she models them through *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), I too choose "not to reproduce… the casualness" (3) of racist expressions and terms which are as violent and insidious as when writers recirculate graphic scenes of physical violence. John Nieto-Phillips' entry in *Keywords for Latino/a Studies* (2017), aptly entitled, "Language," offers an additional explanation that supports my reservations about reproducing some terms present in primary and secondary sources (including Lewis's *Journal* in Chapter 4), even inside quotation marks. He writes that "language usage is… intensely personal, often grounded in intimate contexts and choices" (109) and powerfully reminds us that "language is the perfect instrument of empire" (110). It is for these reasons that I choose to redact this (i.e., n[——]) and similarly racist language in my text.

1815. In this public, anonymously authored letter, which references the "monstrous" ("Letter of a Frenchman" 4) aspects of the French Revolution, there is an almost identical use of the term "Gothic" as denoting "primitive" traditions that belong to the past. Its author reminds the French ruler, Louis XVIII, that he is descended from a line of "Nobles of gothic ancestry" (4), and beseeches him to be prudent, cautious, and more competent than his predecessors. Again, this ostensibly politically progressive piece is framed by companion advertisements, including one by a William Burke which reads, "Wanted to Hire… three field n[——]" (4) and two others offering monetary rewards for "Runaway" (4) enslaved peoples.

These three examples indicate the importance of engaging with the Gothic in ways that account for the brutalities that transpire in Transatlantic, colonial spaces, which disproportionately affect Black and mixed-race enslaved peoples. The contrast produced by these uses of the term "Gothic" to declare the Caribbean an "Enlightened" place and the adjacent examples of the material economy based on the systemic terror/horror of slavery in the British colonies is disturbing, but also a call to critical action. Locating the Gothic in the Caribbean and other Transatlantic colonial spaces foregrounds its resonances with the real-world violences of enslavement and dispossession happening concurrently. The Transatlantic Gothic, in other words, cannot be formally abstracted away from actual atrocity, even when writers like Brown and Lewis are (seemingly) covert on the topic of colonial violence, as we shall see.

This chapter thinks alongside Hartman's—and more generally alongside Black Feminist—methodologies as an opening frame for how to reread the "scenes of

subjection" present in Equiano's, Brown's, and Lewis's texts. Instead of focusing on graphically violent details, I look to aspects of the text that challenge our notions of the Gothic as a whimsical tradition devoid of socio-political significance for marginalized peoples. My readings of the Gothic also lay bare the problematic and unstable nature of taxonomic thinking in general. As I discuss it in the chapters that follow, Hartman's scholarship models how we might read in ways that trouble and agitate our understanding of both slavery and the Gothic, by revealing that the categories of terror (i.e., minds) and horror (i.e., bodies) are not as stable as Burke, Radcliffe, and Descartes, among others, would have us believe. Parting from this line of inquiry, this project examines the works of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis to highlight how they each, in distinct yet similar ways, collapse racial, affective, and subjective categories and epitomize a modality Janina Nordius has termed "slavery-Gothic" (631), which features plots that focus on "confinement, threats of rape and lethal violence, and uncanny terrors" (631). I identify the Gothic as a Transatlantic modality to emphasize its migratory capabilities—its transcending of conventional literary, geographic, and historic boundaries, as well as its traversing varied contexts and narratives—and to center the traumas of the slave trade as a persistent presence in these works on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

I want to briefly discuss the ways in which the primary texts examined in this study are engaging colonial ideologies in their depiction of women. Each of these male authors—Equiano, Brown, and Lewis—depicts women by drawing on a Gothic vocabulary, even in cases where they try to center the presence or experiences of women in a positive way. Equiano, for example, mentions women (both Black and white) to call

attention to oppressive systems including the slave trade. He describes the importance of women in "That part of Africa, known by the name of Guinea, to which the trade for slaves is carried on" (46), to highlight the disparaging societal customs that prevent his mother from being physically affectionate toward him (56), and which hold women's rights to an unfair standard in matrimonial liaisons (47). Rather than expose these traditions as being delayed or lacking in progress, they are tinged by a familiar terror/horror, as when Equiano discloses that "Adultery… was sometimes punished with slavery or death" and then goes on to describe the particularly harsh punishments reserved for women who break the "sacred… honor of the marriage bed" (47). These descriptions of the unsettling effects of gender-based disparity in Guinea set Equiano up to represent the intersection of race and gender under colonization as nightmarish. When first abducted into the African slave network, he identifies women ambivalently as instruments of harm and sources of comfort. Noting the part a woman plays in his initial kidnapping, and that she follows the men's orders to wrest him from his home when he is a child (62), he quickly follows this harrowing account by a summary of how, when he "got into the hands of a chieftain" (63) after many days of travel, it was this chieftain's "first wife" who offered him "comfort… [since she] was something like [his] mother" (63). This unsettling dynamic arrives at a pitch of terror when whiteness comes into play. Equiano mentions the atrocities committed by "the whites" against "female slaves," to which he was "obliged to submit to at all times, being unable to help them" (120). These revelations are followed by the author's denouncement "not of Christians, only, but of men" (120) and by a powerful discussion of how colonial law punishes any Black

enslaved man severely—and bodily—if he has the temerity to engage sexually "with a white woman" in British colonies in the Caribbean (120). Equiano's insistence on the humanity of Black people—on their capability to read, write, and be educated, as well as on their cognition, subjectivity, and a purported acculturation and desire to enter into congress with a Christian deity—attends to men first and foremost, but he is unable to represent the trials that produce his own subjectivity without narrating the gendered as well as racialized structures of colonial society.

Brown, for his part, presents the novel *Wieland* through the eyes of a white, woman narrator, and dramatizes her role as someone who is feeble-minded and prone to fainting spells whenever she is confronted with sensations of terror/horror (136). This early American novel seems not to thematize race—and is categorically vacant of Black women—as it attempts "to make the picture of a single family a model from which to sketch the condition of a nation" (Brown 34). Yet I argue that the novel troubles racial categorizations by what Sami Schalk has described as "talk[ing] about race by not talking about race" (25). The novel's preoccupation with the forces of old-fashioned religious zeal and current rational beliefs as they war with one another is a way of thinking about colonial structures of feeling. The socio-political implications—in which race and gender must be considered—are pushed by the Gothic mode into the recesses of the narrative, from which they haunt it. The woman narrator's role in the novel is to provide readers with the limited and limiting perspective of someone who is thoroughly beguiled by racial alterity, which she experiences as both illegible and captivating.

Of my three primary texts, Lewis's *Journal* is the least subtle in its techniques of addressing gender as well as race. Lewis's depictions of women are both bewildering and pernicious, as shown in his retelling of the "Pandora's Box" (11) myth early in the narrative. Engaging with the misogynistic tropes of classical myth, Lewis refers to "curious Woman" (line 3) to assign blame to womankind for the release of "twenty thousand million devils" (line 4) unto the world. Rather than continue the story in the habitual fashion, however, Lewis's version reveals that:

> The story's spoil'd, and Tooke should well be chid;
> The fact, sir, happen'd thus, and I've no doubt of it:
> 'Twas not that Woman raised the coffer's lid,
> But when the lid *was* raised, Woman popp'd out of it. (lines 5-8)

This recriminating, contorted version of the story is inserted into the journal and is immediately followed by a nota bene from Lewis, in which he explains, apologetically: "I was most horribly sea-sick when I took this view of the subject. Besides, grapes on shipboard, in general, are remarkably sour" (12), as if self-deprecating humor deviates attention from his reductive attitudes and from the fact that wherever his bodily functions are concerned, terrifying and horrifying ideas/scenarios inevitably follow suit. Similar and increasingly alarming outlooks pervade the rest of the text—many of which I examine in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this study—and structure it as a work that systemically portrays women and their role in literary and material spheres as being either naïve and meek, malicious and immoral, depending on their perceived proximity to whiteness. By centering his experiences as an intellectual rather than bodily being, as well as by taking into account the experiences of other white colonists on the island of Jamaica, Lewis offers shorter and longer poems combined with his ostensibly detached

social, anthropological, and ethnographic accounts of life in the Caribbean; the result is writing that cannot exclude his tumultuous and violent views of women while it does the work of positioning him and his peers as deserving of pity because they cannot sustain mastery over the Black and mixed-race peoples they enslave. The *Journal*'s representation of women is consistently marked by language evoking a kind of impermissibly paternalistic yet carnal longing. As presaged by his version of the Pandora myth, Lewis approaches women as a problem with which the colonial world confronts the plantation owner.

I bring these various instances in Equiano's, Brown's, and Lewis's texts into the foreground of my study here, because while they reveal much inequality in terms of interactions with and attitudes toward women, they also bring attention to the social, legal, and domestic structures that generate whiteness as a Gothic phenomenon. At the same time, these examples prompt me to attend to Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's assertion that while "both white and black women [live with] a history of discriminatory experiences; what [makes] black women's experiences significant is that black women's experiences with discrimination [are] typified by a generality or 'everyday' discrimination" (261). The complexity of the Transatlantic Gothic—its destabilizing renderings of terror/horror, of mind/body, of race, of gender—both speaks from and speaks to socio-political systems that continue to relegate Black and racialized women to the riskiest positions in these spaces. As my subsequent chapters discuss in more detail, the Transatlantic Gothic invites us to learn to read in ways that draw out what remains not fully articulated or represented—including, crucially, the lives of Black and racialized women in colonial

writing. This is why my critical framework centers and foregrounds the analytical,

theoretical perspectives of Black and racialized women: through a Black Feminist reading

of the colonial Gothic, a fuller account of humanity can be manifested.[45] This analytical,

critical, and rhetorical move reveals significant implications—both material and more

abstract—which are operating here, when Transatlantic, colonial Gothic works strain to

make sense of the presence (and non-presence, as it were) of Black and racialized women.

These articulations between colonial terror/horror and the existence of women in

Transatlantic spaces more than highlight the absence of a key respondent, as well as sense

of history. When colonial terror/horror all but disclaims the embodiment of Black and

racialized women's subjectivity, it fully "represents a crisis of racial legibility" (28), as

Hartman has claimed. Furthermore, considering Lyndon J. Dominique's assertion that

"Black women in the eighteenth century are not so much absent as they are a spectral

presence that links desire with fear, dread, physical defect, and monstrosity… haunting a

dominant white culture that deliberately excludes them" (15), it is possible to argue that

the treatment of women in Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts represents a paradigm of

literary criticism since the eighteenth century insofar as so-called traditional scholarship

continues to suspect that fields like Black Studies and Black Feminism(s) are competing

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[45] It is crucial that fields like Eighteenth Century Studies, Nineteenth Century Studies, and Gothic Studies afford the same level of attention to the works of Black and racialized women in the period as they do to the works of Black and racialized men. This project does not claim that the experiences of women are more exigent than those of men, but through a sustained engagement with Black Feminist thought and an academic and pedagogical concern with the works of people like Phillis Wheatley Peters and Mary Prince, we might proffer more generative approaches which use "intersectionality [as a method that] understands… race and gender to operate simultaneously as identities, experiences, systems of privilege and oppression, discourses, and historically situated social constructions with material effects" (25), as Sami Schalk posits in her critical text, *Bobyminds Reimagined: (Dis)Ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (2018).

for space with whiteness. It matters, then, that this project provides analyses that move toward a revisioning and repositioning of the Gothic—and its affective vocabularies—as practiced by a Black Feminist, Afro-Latina early career researcher such as I am.

Finally, I provide a more detailed explanation as to the reasons why this doctoral project, following the introductory section and the four body chapters, culminates in a coda. I am here again learning from, practicing, and borrowing Black Feminist methodologies which, as McKittrick models them, are always concerned with what she refers to as "Method-making" (44). It makes sense for a study such as this to gesture toward future possibilities and possible futures, in practical and self-referencing ways. What I mean by this is that my own "Method-making" hinges on the recognition of the themes, topics, and ideas exposed in the project as ongoing, shifting, and dynamic in nature. If, as McKittrick further notes, "Doing anticolonial work in the academy and talking about race in relation to discipline and interdiscipline can be enriched by thinking across texts and places" (45), I accordingly intend to use this study's concluding section as an opportunity to outline a critical Black Feminist reframing of the Gothic, beyond the works of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis, following the specters of it in its literary migration well into the twenty-first century. Borrowing Jackson's technique through which she emphasizes that her critical text, *Becoming Human*, "closes with a coda that initiates a black feminist theory of the necropolitical" (37), I engage in a similar undertaking to continue and establish a Black Feminist reframing of the Gothic, particularly because I am always thinking about the dynamism that is possible between all kinds of cultural texts in and beyond the long eighteenth century. For this purpose, in the coda, I briefly

examine two contemporary texts which are unlikely to be considered as belonging to or extending the Gothic tradition—St. Lucian writer Canisia Lubrin's *The Dyzgraphxst* (2020), and Afro-Dominican writer Elizabeth Acevedo's *Inheritance: A Visual Poem* (2022). Both works directly engage "a black feminist theory of the necropolitical," as per Jackson above, and tap into a Gothic mode of storytelling and meaning-making to excavate and lay bare the way in which terror/horror operates through the intersections between race, gender, and power insofar as these shape the experiences of Black and racialized women inhabiting Black diasporic locations.

Throughout these years of reading, teaching, conducting research, and engaging with pedagogical and community-based initiatives as an Afro-Dominican educator living in North America, I have come to understand that Black Feminism—and Black Diaspora Studies more broadly—provides us with numerous clues as to the thoughtful possibilities that arise when we think about related and seemingly unrelated texts in caring, attentive ways. I keep returning critically to Gothic Studies and long eighteenth-century Transatlantic works of literature with a fervent desire to pose specific questions to them, enacting intellectual and subjective processes that investigate what we might glean about ways of knowing and being in the catastrophic world we have inherited. Working "across texts and places," like McKittrick, it is my wish that this study, including its coda because I have structured it as such, serves as a space through which I (further) rehearse and enact (re)readings of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic works of literature as a modality that is always haunted by the specters of slavery and whiteness. Even at the conclusion of this thesis, I find that I am invested in the afterlives of this project, as heavy as it is, because it

originated and continues to come from a place of care and relationality. To this end, my coda section also, meaningfully, includes a discussion of my teaching praxis as it continues to develop at McMaster University.

At the heart of this project is a "method-making" practice that inquires what it might mean if, instead of producing a piece of academic work to complete degree requirements—to retake the discussion from my introduction—my engagement with Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts acts as an invitation to produce similar kinds of re(readings) across disciplinary boundaries. Because I too wonder if "the project of academically attending to race… cannot always bear black life" (McKittrick 45), I am constantly imagining what is possible within but ultimately outside of the bounds of the academy, and beyond our fields of study. I would like to think that it is important for someone like me—an outsider—to make use of academic and scholarly platforms to continue producing critical work that speaks to and thinks alongside thinkers whose work "collectively consider[s] how our most important social institutions might be reimagined beyond the strongholds of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and racial capitalism" (Davis), as Angela Davis' words express printed on the back cover of Lorgia García Peña's timely, *Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as a Woman of Color* (2022). Responding to this prompt, this project posits that a crucial aspect of a thoughtful engagement with antiracist frameworks, decolonizing movements, and Black life and liberatory thought must be a critical praxis that considers the haunted and haunting nature of the Transatlantic spaces we inhabit, particularly as Black and racialized peoples. To this end, this study thinks about the process of haunting(s) with

Tuck and Ree as I mentioned earlier, but also as Avery Gordon has described it in the second epigraph to this section; she notes that it is "one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security)" (xvi), which serves to highlight how Transatlantic, colonial Gothic epitomizes these mechanisms through its many iterations and modes of representation. My insistence throughout the introductory section and in this chapter to frame this study as work that engages with but moves away from "traditional" scholarship is one of the ways in which I address the conflict—the dissonance—that exists when critical writing does not account for the fact that the Gothic modality invariably gestures backward and forward to oppressive systems that intensify racial hierarchies and binaristic frameworks of being. Thinking with and borrowing language from Gordon and Wynter once again, I am struck by how it has been possible for so much scholarship about the Gothic to proceed without a sustained critical engagement that centers how "abusive systems of power" (Gordon xvi) haunt and "structure our culture-specific orders of consciousness, modes of mind, and thereby of being" (Wynter 47). When a thinker like Dionne Brand asserts that, "to live in the Black diaspora is to move towards the vision beyond terror" (Brand "A Map"), it does not only call to mind the Gothic aspects—the terror/horror occasioned by whiteness—of a Transatlantic world, but it also resonates with a way of being and existing that challenges and refuses the ways in which antiblackness has always produced insistent hauntings, as my readings of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis show next.

Chapter 2 - "[T]he groanings and deep sighs of the poor in spirit":[46] Olaudah Equiano's Gothic *Interesting Narrative*

Olaudah Equiano was one of the first formerly enslaved African persons to write an autobiographical account detailing his life—his capture, the years he was obligated to spend as an enslaved man in the system of transatlantic slavery, and his subsequent life as a free man in England. First published in London in 1789, *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written By Himself* is a text fraught with political implications since its publication coincides with the time when the abolitionist movement in England was making its way into the mainstream socio-political milieu. From the title, title page, and the author's address to the British Parliament which acts the part of the prefatory note at the beginning of the text, it is evident that Equiano is advancing a pro-abolitionist agenda, necessarily yielding a narrative account that not only focuses on the unfreedoms he endured while living under oppression, but which also centers the author's process of acclimatization into Anglo-American society. According to Angelo Costanzo, Equiano's text ought to be credited for "inventing the new genre of literature that became known as the slave narrative, a personal work that played a significant role in the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement" (7). This literary genre, which critics continue to call the "slave narrative," was generated deliberately in the eighteenth century during the height of the abolitionist movement in Anglo-American socio-political spheres, and called on the formerly enslaved "to write or orally dictate

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[46] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written By Himself*, 205; 2004 Broadview edition.

their experiences in slavery" (Costanzo 9) to feed public political discourse. As one of the earliest and most widely read iterations of this style of writing, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* produces a structural formula by which subsequent slave narratives would be organized.[47] Carrying this weight of influence in the publishing and political realms alike, the text breaks literary and social ground by combining its author's spiritual journey with his cultural and socio-political commentary. I begin this chapter by noting this text's key positionality as one fraught with political implications aimed at promoting the abolitionist movement in England; then, I move beyond this framework to argue that Equiano combines socio-political, cultural, and spiritual elements to challenge Enlightenment theories and advocate for a more generative reading of Black Africans, allowing them in turn to be included more effectively—in humanitarian, moral, and legal terms—in Transatlantic societies. In the discussion that follows, I make a case for how Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* accomplishes this multifaceted undertaking, by highlighting how the text incorporates Gothic elements to disrupt perceptions of progress and racialized humanity. By centering Equiano's investment in spirituality through his (eventual) adoption of Methodism, I claim that he makes use of intangible, metaphysical means to assert his self-realization, establish his complex Black identity, and present his nuanced

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[47] Subsequent Transatlantic texts that follow a similar pattern include *Sketches of the life of Joseph Mountain, a N[——] Who Was Executed at New-Haven* (1790), *The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nick-named Jeffrey Brace* (1810), and *A Brief Account of the Life, Experience, Travels, and Gospel Labours of George White, an African* (1810), to note several other examples in this genre. Of the quasi-formulaic structure seemingly followed by such texts, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has written that, "These slave narratives come to resemble each other [so]… that it sometimes seems to the modern reader that the slave authors were tracing a shared pattern… [presenting] the black slave's narrative [as] a communal utterance, a collective tale rather than merely an individual's autobiography" (x). The inevitable aspects of sameness expressed through these texts, revolving around enslaved peoples' experiences in Transatlantic spaces marked by the presence of whiteness, are nevertheless underscored by distinctive voices, personal histories, and specific circumstances.

(Gothic) subjectivity, in an autobiography which at every point bespeaks aspects of hauntings, as I note below. Equiano's Methodist beliefs and praxes are significant in challenging Enlightenment philosophical ideas that would discount his access to spirituality or interiority, since he weaves in piety and intellectuality with physicality; for example, when he engages with "the scriptures [and…] God" (Equiano 205), he does so by using language that connotes his bodily self, since he "wrestle[s] hard with God in fervent prayer" (205). To further complicate long eighteenth-century understandings of the Black(ened) human, Equiano establishes his sense of self—bodily, mental, and spiritual—as being interconnected with the people he calls "the poor in spirit" (205), as in the title of this chapter, who are, by turns, his fellow enslaved Black Africans (205); Black people who, like him, have turned to a Christian faith, "to be born again" (206), allowing them to "taste […] the word of God" (206); or the "unconverted people of the world," like his "mother and friends" (207). Equiano's use of the terms that play a crucial affective role in Gothicism—through terror/horror, hauntings, and fright, as well as through spirits—are also deployed by his authorial self throughout the text, as when he describes his first encounter with white enslavers aboard a ship meant to transport him and other enslaved peoples. By taking note of his surroundings and the people who oppress him, he concludes that these must be "bad spirits" (70), a phrase he inserts in the same paragraph in which he also records the "terror" (70), "horror" (70), and "fears" (70) he experiences in this distressing situation. My attention to these issues, as they appear filtered through Equiano's relationship to spirituality and spirits, reframe the *Interesting Narrative* as a text which taps into a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic sensibility insistent

"upon the symbiosis between Gothic fiction and slavery's horrifying history [and which also] haunts back, rewriting Gothic conventions to their own resistant ends" (81), as Teresa A. Goddu has written.

Because this project is interested in inviting alternative critical approaches to long eighteenth-century texts, a key portion of this chapter is devoted to a comparative reading of Equiano's text against the earlier autobiography penned by Briton Hammon, an enslaved Black man whose text precedes Equiano's by nearly thirty years. In presenting this comparative reading, focused on the texts' titles, the level of editorial interference and censorship present in both works, and on their upholding or challenging of whiteness, I argue for Equiano's work to be interpreted as one which moves past the conditions of publication and content which hinder Hammon's text. Through this analysis, I note how Equiano is able to both express a Gothic subjectivity and assert the versatile, fluid aspects of (his) Black personhood and existence within a Transatlantic, colonial world haunted by whiteness. By juxtaposing both autobiographies and examining the many complexities at play when it comes to interpreting texts authored by Black people, this chapter provides a discussion about the failed project of Black representation and emphasizes the ways in which Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* challenges oppressive structures and discourses that rely on the marginalization and discounting of Black knowledge and experiences. Through readings that center anticolonial frameworks, I illustrate below how Equiano's text functions within and through the Gothic in order to dispel "the Gothic's double binds" (Goddu 81); through sharing his experiences with terror/horror, Equiano positions his text as one which is capable of "exorcising [the Gothic's] demons" (Goddu 81). In

other words, my reading of Equiano's project emphasizes the need for sustained engagement with Black cultural productions that, like his, work to "dismantle the Gothic's racialized narratives [and] racial traps" (Goddu 82), inviting readers to reconsider the nuances of Black literature and representation. In this sense, throughout this chapter I suggest that Equiano's text might present an answer to Goddu's observation that, "Despite its powerful potential, the Gothic remains a problematic mode through which to inscribe black liberation" (82), since I highlight the ways in which the text invites anticolonialism by challenging the culture of whiteness (and mastery) that has persisted since the long eighteenth century, even as its author contends with colonial Gothic terror/horror. My own method-making praxis that textures these readings of the *Interesting Narrative* responds to and thinks alongside a Black Feminist project that insists on evoking the conditions and subjectivities of Black life and living; a meaningful example I present below is through close readings of the significance of the full title of the text, as I have already mentioned, through which I highlight its deliberate abolitionist intervention, the author's reclaiming of agency through authorship, and the shift in affect from entertainment to terror/horror. Consequently, this chapter presents a Black Feminist reframing of Equiano's influential text by highlighting the many ways in which it connotes its author's (Gothic) subjectivity, in a published work that challenges racial taxonomies and reflects his repeated refusals and resistance to enslavement, and by treating the complexities of Black authorship as its functions in spaces dominated by the discourse of whiteness.

While the spiritual autobiography was not a novel mode of writing in 1789, the fact that Equiano uses it to lend credence to his project of reform puts the genre toward new political purposes.[48] Equiano's autobiography is compelling precisely because it combines different modes of writing while discussing a wide range of topics—from ethnographic and socio-historic accounts, to cultural, scientific, and political concerns—all in the service of advancing a pro-abolitionist agenda. Scholars have noted the striking ways in which the author employs language to craft his narrative, as well as the overall effect of his inclusion of Christianity to describe his religious awakening or conversion.[49] These critical readings focus on how Equiano weaves a tale of language, religion, and education acquisition to show that the acculturation of African peoples into Anglo-American societies is possible, setting himself up as a "success case" to debunk racist Enlightenment philosophies that would exclude Black people from British forms of "progress."

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[48] Costanzo notes that the spiritual autobiography had been "especially influential ever since the North African Saint Augustine composed his *Confessions* during the fifth century A.D" (9).

[49] In "Writing Space, Righting Place: Language as a Heterotopic Space in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*" (2012), Lelania Ottoboni Watkins suggests that Equiano's use of language allows his text "to define his sense of self, creating a space in which he was both in control and fully belonged" (4), as she traces the "multiplicity" (1) of Equiano's identities as "kidnapped African… [and later] a wealthy and famous father, husband, Christian, abolitionist, and businessman" (9). Additionally, in works like Tanya Caldwell's "Talking Too Much English": Languages of Economy and Politics in Equiano's 'The Interesting Narrative'" (1999), there is an argument presented regarding "Equiano's choice of the autobiographical mode" as one which "involves appropriation of that mode not for twentieth-century means and ends but as it was employed by eighteenth-century British writers of nonfictional, semifictional, and fictional lives" (264). According to Caldwell, through his authorial choices, which include descriptions of "the influences upon Equiano of Scripture and traditional Christian patterns of life" (263) and his facility to make use of the English colonial language expertly, the text positions him as someone who is able to "reconcile within traditional English cultural or political structures some kind of otherness" (264). It is key to note as well that, following the publication of Equiano's text, most of the subsequent narratives written or related by formerly enslaved peoples make use of comparable means to describe matters of education and religious conversion.

Departing from this critical narrative, I argue that Equiano is engaged in a more nuanced political undertaking. While arguing politically for the inclusion of formerly enslaved African peoples as members of British society, he also destabilizes the philosophical grounds on which British personhood is conceived. The *Interesting Narrative* subverts eighteenth-century socio-religious notions by centering Equiano's spirituality—specifically his religious beliefs as a Methodist—interspersing his descriptions with aspects of terror/horror in order to intrude in Anglo-American conceptions of what it means to be human. This technique produces a text that ultimately presents scathing commentary on Enlightenment philosophies premised on the separation of mind and body, which I discuss prominently in the introductory chapter. If, as Geraldine Murphy has argued, when Equiano "becomes preoccupied with his spiritual condition after escaping death on the polar trip, and he undergoes a conversion experience" (553), the text signals "his spiritual and material development reveal[ing] a pattern of acculturation and self-authorization as a British subject" (553), then it is crucial to discuss the ways in which he produces a text "written within and against the terms of the dominant culture" (Murphy 553). By focusing on the category of the spiritual, the text speaks to the humanity of enslaved peoples by praising a divine Christian providence that occasions Equiano's own deliverance. Yet it also indicates the limits of what is narratable under ongoing conditions of enslavement and white supremacy.[50] In this way, it actively reckons with what cannot be said in a published work penned by a formerly enslaved

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[50] Lelania Ottoboni Watkins further asserts that "To achieve his agendas, [Equiano] must have firsthand experiences with the stories he writes about, the stories of slavery; meanwhile, he must also be accepted on the terms of the white literature audience whose traditions he appropriates" (4).

Black person in its particular historical moment. This process further furnishes the text

with a Gothic—or haunted—attribute or quality, allowing it to pose additional pressures

on the project of whiteness, since the *Interesting Narrative* seems to grapple with the

intangible presence of its author's troubling of oppressive realities. As Avery Gordon has

worded it, "If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a

seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities" (8), then

perhaps Equiano's ongoing concern with nurturing and (re)presenting his spirituality,

which he channels through Methodist practices that necessarily add a layer of

corporeality—and individuality—to it, is one of the ways in which this text is

representative of a Gothic modality that interrupts, disrupts, and disorients the

narratological, social, and political categories through which it operates. Here, it is key to

note that Equiano's first experience with a strictly Methodist proceeding comes in the

form of his happening by chance upon a church in Philadelphia, in which "the Rev. Mr.

George Whitfield was preaching" (152); he recounts that:

> When I got into the church I saw this pious man exhorting the people with the
> greatest fervour and earnestness, and sweating as much as I ever did while in
> slavery on Montserrat beach. I was very much struck and impressed with this; I
> thought it strange I had never seen divines exert themselves in this manner before,
> and I was no longer at a loss to account for the thin congregations they preached
> to. (152-53)

That this was the impact on Equiano upon witnessing George Whitefield—a British

Methodist evangelist and known enslaver, "well-known for his fervent […] preaching"

(Costanzo 152)—exert himself physically while preaching is significant, and it clarifies

his attraction to a religious movement that allows for such individual, or personal,

engagements. My reading of the text responds to the invitation it extends to read against

the grain, as it were, of its own narrative certainty. By focusing on what the text cannot say, through considering its position within the "slave narrative" tradition and attending to its title, title page, and abolitionist content, my analysis excavates its author's spirited engagement with faith, religious deliverance, and yes, spirituality, which all show how the narrative dips into a Gothic mode of writing that disrupts the syntax of personal and national "progress." Gothic texts, after all, have always been about a world of spirits that insist on interacting with material reality. Equiano's involuntary movement through Transatlantic geographic spaces ravaged by the effects of the slave trade tells a tale of material struggle: he describes transformations in his homeland, being kidnapped and sold into slavery, learning to navigate and mitigate the many horrors of subsisting in Anglo-American societies as an enslaved person, acquiring the English language, and ultimately purchasing his own freedom. Throughout, Equiano's contact with the spiritual is presented as a crucial component of his material survival, positioning the Gothic mode as an unavoidable register in depictions of enslavement and racial capitalism.[51] There are

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[51] In "Division below the Surface: Olaudah Equiano's 'Interesting Narrative'" (2004), Douglas Anderson describes how "The years immediately surrounding the outbreak of the French Revolution produced a burst of remarkable 'gothic' fiction from the English press, much of which was committed to exploiting the entanglement of narrative and historical processes [identified] as the signature of the Gothic imagination" (439). This "Gothic imagination" Anderson references is one in which binaristic frameworks are blurred, as in the real and the fantastic, the natural and the supernatural, history and legend, terror and horror, and minds and bodies. Anderson posits that while this "interweaving is most vividly expressed in novels" (440), in nonfictional texts "few books were more suited to these complex and durable representational cravings than the stories that began to emerge from the transatlantic slave trade, during the course of the eighteenth century" (440). The critic goes on to mention the preliminary aspects of the *Interesting Narrative* which "allude to the 'horrors' of the slave trade that will form part of his subject" (440), including Equiano's "Haunting portrait, in the frontispiece of the book, as well as the suggestive nature of his dual names" (440). While Anderson completely misinterprets the manifold aspects of Equiano's identity and authorial choices, reading them as merely representing "the fusion of the exotic and the historical that his complex identities imply" (440), it is key to note that his article suggests that part of the "interest" the text generated was due to its "Gothick" nature or to its crafting and publication as an "improbable product of the cultural collisions associated with an imperial age" (440-1). This is directly related to some of the early denotations and connotations of the term 'Gothic' which appear as part of the introduction to this study.

many instances in the text that point to this process, or which denote this rhetorical move, as in the scene Murphy references in the quotation above during one of Equiano's near-death experiences in his polar trip; as he explains it:

> While we were at this hard labour I once fell into a pond we had made amongst some loose ice, and was very near being drowned; but providentially some people were near who gave me immediate assistance, and thereby I escaped drowning. Our deplorable condition, which kept up the constant apprehension of our perishing in the ice, brought me gradually to think of eternity in such a manner as I never had done before. I had the fears of death hourly upon me, and shuddered at the thoughts of meeting the grim king of terrors in the natural state I then was in, and was exceedingly doubtful of a happy eternity if I should die in it. (192)

This passage certainly evokes a Gothic mode that textures, or haunts, Equiano's close encounter with dying, as he mentions his state of being in "constant apprehension" as someone who is tormented by "death hourly." His immediate attention to the intervention of providence and the fate of his eternal soul is striking and made particularly Gothic in this description since Equiano's use of language expresses his frightfulness "at the thoughts of meeting the grim king of terrors in the natural state [he] was in," illustrating as well how his material, tangible self becomes subsumed into his sense of vulnerability and uncertainty about his afterlife. For Equiano, then, the tangible and material and the intangible and spectral are mired in one another, even as early on as in Chapter IV of the *Interesting Narrative*, when he describes feeling "great joy" (93) when his enslaver, "Miss Guerin," tells him that he is to be baptized. In the same paragraph, the narrative takes readers from a scene of christening "in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster in February 1759" (93) to another of its author's near-drowning experiences after an incident involving a "wherry-boat" (94); Equiano writes that, "I went to get out of the wherry I was in; but just as I had got one of my feet into the other boat the boys shoved it

off, so that I fell into the Thames; and, not being able to swim, I should unavoidably have been drowned, but for the assistance of some watermen who providentially came to my relief" (94), ascribing his physical safety as much to the "watermen" as to a kind of immaterial, heavenly intervention. It is important to note that Equiano's mention of a divine (and Christian) providence does not appear in the text only after he has been baptized; indeed, it appears in the text in Chapter I, when he writes that, "I regard myself as a particular favourite of Heaven, and acknowledge the mercies of Providence in every occurrence of my life" (45), suggesting that he had access to these "mercies" even before he is converted to Christendom.

The *Interesting Narrative*'s spiritual aspect is rooted in Equiano's Methodism, as I have alluded to. It expands the Enlightenment's Cartesian mind-body problem I have written about in the preceding chapters, into a more complex problem of mind-body-spirit. The place of "spirit" in the human constitution is, in eighteenth-century philosophy, fundamentally a question of race: as Zakkiyyah Iman Jackson notes, "The African character, according to Hegel, springs from a geographical climate hostile to the achievement of spirit" (29). My contention here is that while Equiano addresses white British reading audiences—from what he refers to as "nominal Christians" (75-6) to members of Parliament, who, in 1789 when the *Interesting Narrative* was published would have adhered to Anglicanism, following their ruler George III—and does so in full command of the English language, the most radical aspect of the text is its author's enacting of piety and spirituality as a form of Black embodiment and lived experience, as

I detail in this chapter.[52] His immersion in Methodism is more significant than existing accounts of Equiano's "spiritual autobiography" have indicated.[53] In *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2012), Misty G. Anderson shows how Enlightenment philosophy was agitated and challenged by Methodism because of its emphasis on the body, as I have pointed to above—for example, how its "emphasis on the warming of the heart, a felt experience of contact with God, subverted the material terms of Lockean consciousness by bringing to bear on it a mysticism that was at once both antimodern and sensuously immediate" (3). By locating his deliverance in Methodist practices, Equiano's narrative does not present a neat process of assimilation into mainstream British culture but tells a tale with Gothic lineaments about ways of knowing

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[52] In "The Spirit of the Trade: Olaudah Equiano's Conversion, Legalism, and the Merchant's Life" (1998), for instance, Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds explicates that Equiano's pro-abolitionist, political project must center his capability to become and inhabit the Christian faith to highlight "one extreme of Enlightenment individualism" (635), as someone who is a merchant in "an expanding capitalist marketplace" (635). While bringing attention to the socio-economic aspects of the text that lend credence to it as "A story of fiscal growth" (635), Wall Hinds also contends that Equiano's spirituality is always "sitting uncomfortably next to his narrative of capital gains. His conversion, coming as it does after Equiano's account of his early life, poses some uncomfortable questions" (635) regarding the place of spirituality in an otherwise "merchant's tale, a success story mounted on the mechanism of a rampaging mid-eighteenth-century market capitalism" (635). What is important here is what Wall Hinds' argument is articulating throughout this essay that seems to be solely about mercantilism and property: an overt connection between spirituality and race in Anglo-American Enlightenment culture. This is evident when the critic points to the fact that, "If Equiano were a Ben Franklin, the conversion tale would follow smoothly on the heels of a commercial success story, filling out with spiritual success—acceptance into a community of equally successful souls—acceptance into a secular community of commercial transaction. But Equiano's tale cannot be Franklin's tale: A former slave and ever an African moving through a world of European and American whites, Equiano's successes, spiritual and commercial, seem to come at the cost of his identity as an African, a member of a community for whom he from time to time ventures to speak" (635). As I argue here, however, rather than give up his corporeality or indeed his individualism as a Black African man, these become subsumed and expanded with the addition of Equiano's spirit(uality), in ways that push against the boundaries of Enlightenment conceptions of the human.

[53] For a treatment of Olaudah Equiano's text as a work adhering to and enriching the "spiritual autobiography" literary tradition, see critical works such as Adam Potkay's "Olaudah Equiano and the Art of Spiritual Autobiography" (1994), Mary-Antoinette Smith's "From Tribal Spirituality to Christianity: Olaudah Equiano's AfroEnglish View of Christians in Eighteenth-Century Western Culture" (2001), and Eileen Razzari Elrod's "Moses and the Egyptian: Religious Authority in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*" (2001).

and ways of being spiritually animated beyond the bounds of Enlightenment philosophy. In this respect, the *Interesting Narrative* is additionally tuned into and reflects a Gothic fascination with spirituality, faith, and religiosity, albeit tinged with aspects of terror/horror that necessarily include a corporeal dimension; a key scene in Equiano's text that encapsulates this is found toward the end of the second volume, in Chapter X, when he recounts not his formal, public entry into Christianity, but his private, intimate experience of "be[ing] born again" (206). To open this astounding passage, Equiano prefaces it in the fashion of any Gothic tale, writing that:

> On the morning of the 6th of October, (I pray you to attend) or all that day, I thought that I should either see or hear something supernatural. I had a secret impulse on my mind of something that was to take place, which drove me continually for that time to a throne of grace. It pleased God to enable me to wrestle with him, as Jacob did: I prayed that if sudden death were to happen, and I perished, it might be at Christ's feet. (205)

By introducing his transcendent(al) spiritual experience to follow in this way, the text taps into a Gothic mode of storytelling that features mysteriousness and allure, as well as an impenetrable quality augmented by the use of quasi-spectral imagery. There is here a sense of intrigue and danger which is engaging (and flowing through) Equiano's entire self—spiritual, mental, and physical. He continues by writing that, "In the evening of the same day… [when] I was reading and meditating… the Lord was pleased to break in upon my soul with his bright beams of heavenly light; and in an instant as it were, removing the veil, and letting light into a dark space, I saw clearly with the eye of faith the crucified Saviour bleeding on the cross" (206), effectively illustrating a way in which to negotiate the contrasting tensions that exist within the Gothic tradition between Catholicism's forbidding ritualistic practices and sacramental beliefs and Protestantism's

emphasis on individualism and personal salvation. Through a Methodist practice in which he himself can inhabit the role of savior—or through which he can imagine himself in the place of "Lord Jesus Christ" (206)—as when he writes that, "I saw myself a condemned criminal under the law, which came with its full force to my conscience, and when 'the commandment came sin revived… I died'" (206). Equiano's description of this experience is abounding in imagery that includes both his tangible and intangible selves, in writing that relies on the use of terminology denoting and connoting a sense of Gothic terror/horror; he mentions the "supernatural," "sudden death," "perish[ing]," and his "apprehensions" (205), followed by his inhabiting of the Christian savior's experiences on the cross, in which he, too, "died" (206). This is how Equiano understands his embodied experience of salvation, or, as he puts it: "It was given me at that time to know what it was to be born again," as he is convinced that one must first perish in order to "be made alive" (206). In the end, following this complete, full spiritual experience, he concludes, once again, that "The word of God was sweet to my taste, yea sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (206). More meaningful still is the fact that, as he expresses it, when "It pleased God to pour out on me the Spirit of prayer" (207), then:

> When I got out of the cabin, and told some of the people what the Lord had done for me, alas, who could understand me or believe my report!—None but to whom the arm of the Lord was revealed. I became a barbarian to them in talking of the love of Christ: his name was to me as ointment poured forth; indeed it was sweet to my soul, but to them a rock of offence.

Despite his entering into congress with "the Spirit of prayer" and "the Lord," Equiano is still "a barbarian" in the eyes of those around him, in the perception of whiteness. Rather than feel deterred by this, he is able to position himself as someone who, while feeling

"uncommon commotions within," holds on to "the bible… [his] sole companion and comfort" (207). Equiano can thus emphasize his spirituality as a form of Black embodiment, one which incorporates physical and sensory engagement(s) to evoke a sense of the sublime and supernatural, effectively imbuing his *Interesting Narrative* with aspects of the uncanny and the numinous—with key aspects of the Gothic.

The Methodist denomination to which Equiano subscribes, which has been referred to by Hannah Wakefield as being a type of "primitive Christianity" (651), sits uneasily in the ethos of eighteenth-century Anglo-American religiousness, since it "welcomed black converts" (656) openly, as Wakefield further explicates. In her paper entitled, "Olaudah Equiano's Ecclesial World" (2020), Wakefield traces Equiano's relationship to Christian-based faiths and denominations and argues that his *Interesting Narrative* "refashions and redeploys an eighteenth-century evangelical discourse… in order to advocate for the end of the slave trade and the creation of an inclusive community at once British, Christian, and African" (651). This would seem to suggest that Equiano, as a formerly enslaved Black African person, sets out to purposefully establish a Black British identity. While this might be the case, I am more interested in examining the ways in which Equiano's text positions him as someone who is deliberate in his choice of sectarian religious group—as is inferred when, after feeling "continually oppressed and much concerned about the salvation of [his] soul" (194), he becomes acquainted with several denominations, including the "quakers" (194), "Roman catholic principles" (194), and "the Jews" (195). His eventual choice, as I have pointed to, hints at

a larger, more meaningful project of challenging the parameters of racialized humanity in

an eighteenth-century Transatlantic world.[54] Wall Hinds has observed that:

> Methodism might have appealed to Equiano as it did to thousands of slaves in the U.S., for… a contract religion such as Methodism places equal responsibility in the hands of God and the convert, and unlike the arbitrary selectivity of predestinarian theologies, Methodism appealed to the great masses of the underclass. (638)

It is precisely aspects of this "equal responsibility," of shared duties, as it were, that offers

Equiano a suitable avenue through which to express the multidimensional nature of his

identity, even as he constantly calls Christian doctrinal beliefs into question because of

"not knowing whether salvation was to be had partly of our own good deeds, or solely as

the sovereign gift of God" (Equiano 205). But this attitude serves the purpose of further

cementing, through means of subversion, Equiano's experience as someone whose body,

mind, and spirit bespeak aggregation to illustrate that a formerly enslaved Black person

possesses the capabilities to not only interrogate religious tenets, but to bridge the gap

that exists between theory and practice, as it were, allowing him to make use of his faith

to promote equality, inclusion, and social justice. In *The Methodist Revolution* (1973),

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[54] Approaching Wakefield's paper in this manner, the most interesting and generative portion of it is perhaps the subtle connections it points to between religiosity and eighteenth-century literature produced by Black peoples, which the critic then links to early African American literature. The paper also presents Equiano's investment in the Methodist Church as a kind of "Afro-Protestantism—a form of Christianity uniquely fitted to black experience" (653). This is especially noteworthy since Wakefield suggests that it is Equiano's preoccupation with Methodism that gives him "the spiritual power that undergirds his resistance" (670), citing the episode in the *Interesting Narrative* in which, toward the end of his account, Equiano is violently suspended from the ship for insubordination. Wakefield interprets Equiano's passive, altruistic calmness as furnishing him with the capabilities to enact a form of rebellion; she writes that, "The apostolic role Equiano assumes allows him to dignify all Africans with spiritual power, but it also gives him the language and imagery of martyrdom, which he deploys to reveal African vulnerability in the face of brutality" (670). This study considers this "martyrdom" not necessarily as a condition that somehow elevates Black and racialized peoples "as morally superior to those who oppress them" (671), as Wakefield concludes, but as a deliberate choice which Equiano makes to find alternative ways to live in his body.

Bernard Semmel provides a comprehensive view of the theological principles that govern eighteenth-century Methodist doctrines, and credits John Wesley with having been the founder of this denomination at Oxford University, in 1729. Semmel quotes from Wesley's personal correspondence, particularly from an epistle he wrote in 1725 in which he expresses that, "To lie under either a physical or a moral necessity is entirely repugnant to human liberty" (qtd. in Semmel 29). Working against the grain of Anglo-American myths which would posit that someone like him—a Black person—is innately devoid of morality and liberty, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* makes use of the category of spirit to demonstrate that his human condition in one which exists beyond the bounds and limitations of whiteness. It is through his repeated use of the word "Spirit" and its variations, which appears in the *Interesting Narrative* a total of thirty-one times, that Equiano can further problematize questions of race in works that make use of Gothic elements. For Equiano, "Spirit" is fraught with meaning, since it connotes aspects of Black African Igbo traditional spirituality and ancestry, as when he recalls "the spirits of departed relations" (49) and when he writes that, "Those spirits, which are not transmigrated, such as our dear friends or relations, they believe always attend them, and guard them from the bad spirits or their foes" (54).[55] This use of spirituality reflects his connection to his African heritage, and it is meaningful that he singles out his peoples' belief in ancestral beings that guard, protect, and guide them, particularly in a text that is,

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[55] In his essay, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African" (2006), Paul Lovejoy maintains that aspects of Ibo (or Igbo) cultural manifestations and traditions pervade Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*. He observes that there is sufficient evidence in the text and through the study of Equiano's later life to make the claim that the "Cultural features" (326) Equiano references "could well be based on Vassa's own memory, probably embellished with information that he learned from other Igbo speakers in London but, nonetheless, deriving from his own experience" (326).

for all intents and purposes, meant to highlight its author's foray into Christianity. That he emphasizes these connections also serves the purpose of further adding a Gothic quality to the text, since this attention to African spirituality imbues it with a supernatural dimension. "Spirit" in the text also refers to how he first perceives white enslavers as magical beings, as when he expresses that he "really thought they were spirits" (72), after first having referred to them as "bad spirits" (70), as cited above; later on, Equiano confesses that he "no longer looked upon [white enslavers] as spirits, but as men superior to us" (93) and expresses a wish to "imbibe their spirit" (93) so that he may "resemble them" (93). This adds yet another layer of Gothic subjectivity to the *Interesting Narrative*, as Equiano's terror/horror is unmistakable in these passages, aligning the text further with the Gothic mode's preoccupation with the spiritual, ineffable, and magical. These scenes evoke the slavery-Gothic mode I discuss across this study, or the mode I call Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, not only because Equiano's encounter with white enslavers draws out a sense of awe and otherworldly experiences, but also, crucially, because his perception of these oppressors aboard a ship destined to undertake the Middle Passage underscores the power differentials that separate him from them. As the text's narrative advances, however, Equiano begins to use "Spirit" as a category which denotes his own consciousness as being distinct from his body and mind, writing that, "This gave me new life and spirits" (107) once he realizes that he is able to earn a living through business ventures only after he is a "black Christian" (107); he also uses the term when

something fortuitous happens in the narrative to "raise our drooping spirits" (168).[56]

Interestingly, the text also proffers the term "Spirit" as denoting the more ineffable or

ghostly aspects with which Gothic literature is familiar, as when he explains that:

> Some people have it, that sometimes shortly before persons die their ward has
> been seen; that is, some spirit exactly in their likeness, though they are themselves
> at other places at the same time. One day while we were at Bayonne Mr. Mondle
> saw one of our men, as he thought, in the gun-room; and a little after, coming on
> the quarter-deck, he spoke of some circumstances of this man to some of the
> officers. They told him that the man was then out of the ship, in one of the boats
> with the Lieutenant: but Mr. Mondle would not believe it, and we searched the
> ship, when he found the man was actually out of her; and when the boat returned
> some time afterwards, we found the man had been drowned at the very time Mr.
> Mondle thought he saw him. (106)

This passage, inserted into the text in the form of a footnote, conjures up Gothic imagery

by establishing an eerie, or uncanny, atmosphere. The footnote further disrupts the

narrative flow of the text by inviting readers to engage with its (paranormal)

paratextuality. On another level, this Gothic instance that emerges through this

supernatural anecdote in which a man, or specter, is seen in two places simultaneously,

bespeaks a Transatlantic, colonial world in which terror/horror are ever-present,

connoting both metaphysical and material dangers. What is additionally compelling here

is how this anecdote directly engages the instances of near-drowning experiences I have

already referenced, insofar as it also challenges the expectations of linear, straightforward

narratological structures or storytelling, which would befit this style of non-fictional

writing. The incident described in the above passage does not only evoke a sense of the

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[56] While these quotations taken on their own could be interpreted or understood as using the term "spirit" in the sense of one of the definitions provided in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), referring to "A person's mood or emotional state, esp. as liable to be depressed or lifted by events or circumstances" ("Spirit"), in the broader context I have been laying out, the effect is to merge these embodied emotional feelings with another realm of experience.

unknown—of the unease and foreboding which are so pervasive in Gothic fiction—but it also suggests a blurring of physical, metaphysical, and formal narratological boundaries that (inevitably) occurs when Black(ened) peoples are forced to move in spaces haunted by the effects of slavery and the slave trade. Consequently, as I stated previously, Equiano's text cannot help but present these engagements between the spiritual, and the otherworldly, and his reality as an enslaved person.

The Origins of the "Slave Narrative": A Comparative Reading of Briton Hammon and Olaudah Equiano

> I think I have not deviated from Truth, in any particular of this my Narrative, and tho' I have omitted a great many Things, yet what is wrote may suffice to convince the Reader, that I have been most grievously afflicted, and yet thro' the Divine Goodness, as miraculously preserved, and delivered out of many Dangers; of which I desire to retain a grateful Remembrance, as long as I live in the World.
>
> The penultimate paragraph of Briton Hammon's
> *Narrative* (1760)[57]

The title of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography calls attention to some key facets of the text, even before the content of it is revealed. The full title, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written By Himself*, follows a tradition started in colonial North America with Briton Hammon's text, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A N[——] Man*, published in Boston in 1760. The title of Hammon's narrative promises a genuine first-person account of the author's harrowing experiences living as a Black man

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[57] Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A N[———] Man*, 27.

within the oppressive system of slavery, and the narrative does present Hammon's

frequent encounters with violence, including his horror-filled experiences with

shipwrecks, repeated terrifying confinements, and narrow escapes from white colonists.

Nevertheless, in contrast to Equiano's later narrative, Hammon's does not attach these

"uncommon sufferings" to any transformative socio-political commentary. A likely

reason for this extraordinary political reticence is Hammon's heavily censored narrative

voice, which relays events in a manner that makes them appear as adventures designed

for the purpose of entertainment.[58] Zachary Hutchins writes that:

> Hammon's *Narrative* is viewed by scholars as the earliest slave narrative, but
> editorial interference, Hammon's legal status, and earlier memoirs of slave life
> written by white authors complicate this claim. While almost all slave narratives
> exhibit some signs of editorial intervention, the format and content of
> Hammon's *Narrative* correspond closely to… [the] captivity narrative. (Hutchins)

Hutchins's emphasis on "editorial interference" reveals how publication processes

compromise Black authorial autonomy and narrative freedom in the slave narrative genre.

But it also opens a dangerous avenue of critical inquiry and interrogation that enables

whiteness to continue calling into question the cultural productions of Black peoples.

Writers like Phillis Wheatley Peters and Olaudah Equiano contend, in their own lifetimes

and beyond, with this ongoing (white) critical tradition of approaching the works of Black

creators with varying degrees of apprehension and distrust, as their personal background,

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[58] See critical works such as Frances Smith Foster's "Briton Hammon's 'Narrative': Some Insights Into Beginnings" (1977), for examples of the ways in which critics have traditionally approached this early narrative as an adventure tale.

their capability to relay information, and their ability to exercise critical reason continue to be subjects of academic debate.[59]

Hammon's *Narrative* illustrates how, from its inception as a marketable genre, the "slave narrative" was written not to challenge but to reproduce eighteenth-century conceptions of whiteness. Hammon's proto-slave narrative upholds whiteness not only by way of editorial intrusion, but also through the reproduction of anti-Indigenous rhetoric. In the same vein as the prejudiced commentaries leveled at Indigenous peoples and communities in the "captivity narrative" literary tradition, Hammon (via the white editorial team guiding his narrative) accepts and promotes cruel images depicting the purported "savagery" of these peoples.[60] He describes an episode in which the ship he

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[59] Thomas Jefferson derides and disparages the poetic works of Wheatley Peters in his text, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), writing that, "Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. Love is the peculiar œstrum [sic] of the poet. Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination. Religion indeed has produced a Phyllis Whately [sic]; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions published under her name are below the dignity of criticism" (150). In a similar vein of invalidating and calling Black authorship into question, Vincent Carretta's text, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (2005), sparked critical and academic debate over Equiano's origins, claiming that the latter was born in the United States (108), not in Africa, and that much of this account was fictionalized in order to gain readership. Carretta also infantilizes Equiano's literary endeavor, writing that "Whether we consider Equiano's account of Africa as historical fiction or as straightforward autobiography, much of its power derives from the innocent child's voice heard by the reader" (8).

[60] The American captivity narrative genre, like the slave narrative genre, addresses Gothic elements fully, in stories like Mary Rowlandson's "A True History" (1682), and Abraham Panther's "The Panther Captivity" (1787), in which Indigenous peoples are used as plot devices who are set up to kidnap defenseless white women, for instance. The Indigenous peoples in these stories are described as 'uncivilized savages,' calling to mind descriptions of the early Goth tribes. The threat of rape is always looming in these tales, bespeaking colonial sexual anxieties. Offering yet another link between European and American texts that make use of Gothic elements, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse suggest that the European Gothic appropriates the American 'captivity narrative' by often featuring confined pure, dignified young women who are trapped in ancient castles and are being forcibly coerced into marriage (392-3). Providing a specific link between the so-called 'Indian Captivity' narrative genre and early slave narratives in the article entitled, "Capturing the Captivity: African Americans Among Puritans" (1992), Rafia Zafar writes that, "Straight-forward accounts of the capture, trials, and eventual liberation of Anglophone settlers, these [Indian Captivity] narratives provided early colonists with their first native genre. Pamphlets celebrating the heartrending trials, exploits, and Christian forbearance of women like Mary Rowlandson or Elizabeth Hanson went through numerous editions, delivering a message that both entertained and enlightened their avid readers" (19). Zafar goes on to explain that "By the end of the eighteenth century, African Americans had discovered the utility of this earliest of American forms. As had their Puritan predecessors, 'captivated'

was traveling aboard from New England to Jamaica, captained by white enslaver John

Howland, whom Hammon describes as "Master" (Hammon 3), was seized by Indigenous

peoples around the coast of Florida (4). After a violent confrontation between the ship's

crew and the group of approximately sixty people native to the area, Hammon blames the

crew's deaths on "those barbarous and inhuman Savages" (6), failing to account not only

for the fact that the ship and its crew are the intruders in this scenario, but also that he and

many of the crew members decide to "jump… overboard, chusing rather to be drowned"

than to risk an interaction. Hammon's dehumanizing language in this episode—language

which is still used today against Indigenous communities in Anglo-American contexts—

bespeaks the ways in which a colonial system instills in people of color an insidious

desire to approximate whiteness by distancing themselves from "Othered" communities.[61]

Though it is told from the perspective of its Black author, Hammon's narrative centers

whiteness by depicting him as being unaware that, in aligning himself with white

enslavers in their conflict with native peoples, he is positioning himself within a racial

hierarchy that dehumanizes him as well.[62]

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blacks like Briton Hammon… told the story of their encounters with frightening, Godless attackers, torture, and death" (19). In this sense, Hammon's early narrative taps into white colonists' fears and anxieties when they encounter Indigenous peoples in American frontier settings.

[61] Chapter 3 of this study takes up this phenomenon and examines it further in the fictional writings of Charles Brockden Brown, since his first novel, *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), which is the focus of that chapter, reproduces these same kinds of racist, anti-Indigenous images. As we shall see, the novel's white narrator speaks of "unbelieving… savage tribes" (11), as she and her family experience life in rural America with the certainty of their moral, religious, and racial superiority.

[62] It is important to engage with the work of scholars like Tiffany Lethabo King, whose necessarily urgent text, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (2019), provides a generative articulation between these fields, illustrating the ways in which distinct nations and diasporic entities can share the same territories and resources while outlining the need for mutual obligation and respect. Of her work, King thoughtfully intimates that, "I also trust Black freedom dreams when they consider Native freedom. This project confronts the various ways that Black politics and Black studies continue to deal with and incorporate the struggle against Native genocide into its ethical frame. This book is a multivoiced conversation. First, it is a Black intramural conversation. Second, it is a conversation with Native studies

If there were any doubt, following episodes like this one, that Hammon's *Narrative* uses its author/protagonist as a vehicle for white colonial propaganda, there is no uncertainty in the arc of its tale of Hammon's "Deliverance" (Hammon 1). Appearing in the text's title, "deliverance" presages something on the order of religious conversion, salvation, or redemption, implying Hammon's eventual extrication from the "sufferings" of what he refers to as "servitude" (Hammon 14). But this extrication never comes to pass. Instead, the narrative concludes with Hammon's delight at being deposited, or quite literally "delivered," back into the hands of his enslaver John Winslow—a turn of events for which Hammon expresses his gratitude to "the Divine Goodness" (Hammon 14). This baffling resolution, and I hesitate to even call it that, may explain why Hammon's text has not received the same scholarly and academic attention that other texts in the same tradition have received, despite the evidence that better-known writers like James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1770), Ignatius Sancho (1782), and Olaudah Equiano (1789) drew upon and reworked Hammon's narrative in their respective autobiographies.

Attending to the material conditions of the text's publication helps both to explain the bent of Hammon's narrative and its devotion to a white colonial status quo, and to

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and Native peoples who face genocide and a dispossession so profound that even 'land' cannot adequately speak to the loss" (xiii). Crucially, King adds that, "as a Black person living under relations of conquest, I care about Native people's survival… I care because the Black radical politics that I have inherited cares about Native people. It does not do it in response to political cajoling or guilt. It does not do it in the hope of coalition. It does not do it out of self-hatred. This ethics that eschews and actively resists genocide as an order of modernity and making of the human subject proper is an ethics of Black radical struggle, period. It is a Black radical politics that proceeds and moves toward Black and Indigenous futures" (xiii), offering a meaningful structure for how to approach these ongoing conversations. Here, I consider my own positionality as well as an Afro-Dominican early career researcher whose recent work in Africa and Black Diaspora Studies and Latin American and Latinx Studies centers diasporic thinking and communities in Transatlantic spaces that continue to enact violence against people of color. Scholarship like King's necessarily reminds us that we cannot conceive of fields like Latin American and Latinx Studies without foundationally integrating Blackness and Indigeneity.

highlight, in comparison, Equiano's project of disrupting white colonial ideals, structures, and discourses that marginalize Black experiences and knowledge. Hammon's text was published and circulated by the Green and Russell firm of Boston, the printers who later ran the *Massachusetts Gazette* (1768-69), a newspaper which devoted weekly spaces to advertising the sale of enslaved Black peoples.[63] In order to be published at all, Hammon's text had to be approved and supported by secular colonial enterprises which were invested in the reproduction and mobilization of white wealth and power. Early American print culture worked in service of preserving colonial order. Hammon's narrative bears the weight of what it cannot possibly say as a published work under these conditions; it shows that early American readers were interested in a first-person account by a Black enslaved man, one that cautiously allows him a certain amount of socio-political and cultural commentary, as long as it did not call into question the Anglo-American colonial project in general. As this section's epigraph illustrates, the end of Hammon's narrative alludes to the fact that he has "omitted a great many Things" (Hammon 27) from his story—what those things are, and what they might indicate, the *Narrative* literally cannot say. Through the act of publication, Hammon's identity becomes subsumed into colonial machinations, where all he is allowed to claim of his identity is that he is, in the words of his title, "A N[——] Man,—Servant to…" (Hammon 1).

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[63] According to scholar Carl Robert Keyes' digital project entitled, *Adverts 250 Project*, which examines the history of newspaper advertising in eighteenth-century America, Green and Russell's joined other Boston printers in the 1760s who "demonstrated even more active involvement as purveyors of people, not merely as conduits for disseminating information," since they "invested time in facilitating these transactions beyond what was required for receiving the copy and setting the type" (Keyes 4).

While Hammon's early narrative might strive for dignity for its author yet ultimately arrives at the opposite, it is no wonder that it has not been afforded the same place in the slave narrative literary tradition as other, more popular works, even if it is the earliest extant work of prose produced by an enslaved Black person. Yet, when positioned alongside a text like Equiano's, Hammon's work is consequential for our understanding of this genealogy of Black writing. For one, it allows us to consider the ways in which Equiano's project is an overtly pro-abolitionist political treatise unimaginable three decades earlier. It illuminates Equiano's investment in addressing the multifaceted aspects of Black personhood, of being, and of existing in Blackness as part of a world that only gestures to, centers, and attributes importance to whiteness. Perhaps more meaningfully, by reading both texts side-by-side, it is possible to further argue that Equiano is constructing a multifaceted model of Black personhood and the Gothic mode, in its disruptiveness, allows the *Interesting Narrative* to hold the multiple aspects of his personhood without resolving their internal contradictions. This is a particularly Gothic form of subjectivity that takes shape through its disruption of organized unity rather than by pursuing unity. In this regard, Equiano inherits Hammon's model and examines it in relation to the colonial structures and discourses that shape and continue to miscategorise Black being in the socio-historic and cultural imaginaries of Transatlantic contexts. The racial tensions that go unexamined in Hammon's narrative are repurposed by Equiano's to directly address the convergence of colonial subtexts in the episodes of his life. Through his positioning as a Black person who inhabits more than a single identity at once—including a spirituality that gives him access to engaging Christian deities directly,

as I discuss in the previous section—Equiano writes against Hammon, or against the version of Hammon who makes it into print—against eighteenth-century Enlightenment theories of subjectivity that reject Black embodied knowledge in favor of white intellectual and material property. That the *Interesting Narrative* accomplishes this by including Gothic undertones throughout gestures toward Transatlantic, colonial Gothic writing's capability to subvert dominant ideologies and challenge oppressive systems, as well as to examine colonial subtexts, address racial tensions, and, crucially, to navigate hybrid identities and subjectivities while disrupting reductive categorizations.

Reading Equiano and Hammon together invites us to interrogate whether it is enough—culturally, politically, and socially—to value a text like Hammon's as an example of "Black representation" in eighteenth-century literature. Building upon Black Latinx methodologies like Afro-Dominican Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo's, the present study asks how we might focus on the lives and works of Black peoples "without perpetuating patriarchal, Eurocentric frameworks" (Ramírez D'Oleo 1). Certainly, we must continue to read, write, and teach the works of Black people; we must continue to return to and center their stories through a sustained engagement with their cultural productions. But as Hammon's text shows, this strategy of "including" representative Black voices might be insufficient, since Black authorship is no guarantee that a text challenges white supremacy. In this context, a text like Olaudah Equiano's works to reframe the tradition of Black authorship it belongs to, calling attention to its structural limitations. By virtue of his multi-identity assertion(s), Equiano engages a similar question to Ramírez D'Oleo when she wonders "what there is after, before, or beyond representation" (1). This

dissertation moves away from identity-based "representation" in literature to consider

what literature makes possible across the Black, African-descended diaspora, and what

networks of thought, feeling, and belief are mobilized along the eighteenth century's

paths of movement; or, as Paul Gilroy puts it, in "the Black Atlantic, where movement,

relocation, displacement, and restlessness are the norms rather than the exceptions and

where… there are long histories of the association of self-exploration with the exploration

of new territories and the cultural differences that exist both between and within groups

that get called races" (133). In the same way that Equiano's narrative encourages us to

think back in historical time to a text like Hammon's, it also pushes us across

geographical space and linguistic difference to consider the so-called "slave narrative" as

a genre unbound by the colonial national traditions in which it appears.[64],[65]

Olaudah Equiano's (World of) Spirit(s) and Multiple Identities

> If then the following narrative does not appear sufficiently
> interesting to engage general attention, let my motive be some
> excuse for its publication. I am not so foolishly vain as to expect

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[64] An example that deserves more scholarly attention than it has received is Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiography of a Slave* (1840), the only extant narrative in the Spanish language written by an enslaved person in the Americas. Published by Irish abolitionist Richard Robert Madden, Manzano's narrative details the conditions of living as an enslaved Black person in Cuba of the long eighteenth century. Even though Manzano refers to himself as a "Slave" in his title (Manzano 39), his narrative, like Equiano's, uses the capacious possibilities of "autobiography" to elaborate other aspects of his Afro-Cuban identity beyond his enslavement. Sylvia Molloy points out in her 1989 article, "From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano," that the content of Manzano's narrative finds him inhabiting different aspects of his being—including mentions of his authorial ventures, since he was a published "N[——]… poet" (Molloy 393)—revealing the ways in which Manzano too departs from the model set by Hammon. While Hammon's tale entrenches its narrator in racial capitalism, works like Equiano's and Manzano's show that different moves are possible.

[65] Once I complete the Ph.D. program, I plan on expanding my research on Juan Francisco Manzano, as well as on other published works by African and Afro-descended peoples in Latin America. This includes texts like *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: His Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America* (1854), the only known slave narrative written by a formerly enslaved Black African man in Brazil.

> from it either immortality or literary reputation. If it affords any satisfaction to my numerous friends, at whose request it has been written, or in the smallest degree promotes the interests of humanity, the ends for which it was undertaken will be fully attained, and every wish of my heart gratified. Let it therefore be remembered, that, in wishing to avoid censure, I do not aspire to praise.
>
> Part of Olaudah Equiano's opening address to readers of his narrative[66]

When I first read Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* in 2014, as one of the assigned texts for a graduate class in the United States, I was struck by how strategic it appears to be, each aspect of it gesturing to the advancement of the end of the slave trade. Indeed, as a new and first-generation graduate student eight years ago, I could only react to the text in astonishment and wonder, lauding it as a literary feat. I was amazed by Equiano's "mastery" of English prose, which allowed his writing to enter into mainstream eighteenth-century circulation, and I was in awe of what I had initially identified as his successful acculturation into Anglo-American Christian societies. I did not yet know and could not realize back then that perhaps Equiano's text was not, in fact, engaged in the kind of project that merely claims Black visibility and representation, as a topical sort of literary contribution that is considered, for example, in academic courses that deal with slavery and its repercussions as a thematic concern. Like Julietta Singh, I too now move away from thinking about "mastery" as a desirable state of living, and I realize that a text like Equiano's is necessarily thinking "expressly about what it might mean to *survive* mastery, to live with mastery in such a way that lets other worldly forms of engagement

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[66] Equiano, 45-46.

resound" (Singh 27). I return to Equiano now, informed by my own embodied knowledge and experiences, to consider the ways in which his text invites us to decolonize a culture oriented, since the eighteenth century, toward mastery. It is precisely Equiano's "other worldly forms of engagement" that appear in the *Interesting Narrative*, interspersed with or intersecting with, spirituality and the Gothic, that allow him to propose a shift toward un-mastery as a way of living. As I have shown, Equiano's insistence in emphasizing the unknown and unknowable, the tangible and intangible, and the acceptable and not-quite-narratable, opens up possibilities for un-mastery and for thinking about the confines of material dominance, particularly since his text engages with spheres beyond the physical, enacting ways in which a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality critiques and challenges oppression through a sustained, if unruly engagement, with decolonization and liminality. Perhaps, then, one of the most compelling effects of this text is precisely its longevity, ongoing significance, and sense of urgency, even when its author expresses that he is "not so foolishly vain as to expect from it either immortality or literary reputation" (46), as noted in the epigraph to this section.

In order to study a narrative like Equiano's in generative, non-extractive ways, we must do so by building upon contemporary Black Feminist decolonial methodology, as practiced in the works of Black thinkers like Saidiya Hartman, because they are engaged in the kind of work that reaches back to a long eighteenth-century Atlantic world not merely to make the lives of Black peoples of the past "visible," but to evoke the feelings and conditions of Black life and liberatory thought that link the past to the present, effectively illustrating the inequalities that continue to structure and support academic

fields of study among other institutions. In this sense, I propose a different sort of reading

of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, where, instead of focusing on authorial intent or

literary merit, we center the ways in which the text is generating lasting commentary—

social, political, ethnographic, economic, cultural—through its own articulation of its

author's multifaceted eighteenth-century Black identity, which, as I have shown, the text

achieves and filters through an engagement with spirituality and the Gothic. If the text

does indeed play a part in the eventual dismantling of Transatlantic chattel slavery by

virtue of its being charged with political commentary and appeals to bodies of governance

to end this dehumanizing practice, and if Olaudah Equiano does offer an arresting and

consequential English-language account of his effective assimilation into Anglo-

American culture by pointing to the fact that he has become a successful Methodist

English businessman, it is imperative to analyze how the text accomplishes these feats.

A lot of work is performed by the title of Equiano's narrative alone: *The*

Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written By

Himself. The qualifier "Interesting" promises, in addition to providing the reader the

opportunity to exercise moral sympathy for its narrator, to deliver a life story worth

studying, at once compelling, intriguing, and consequential. By the time Equiano's

narrative is published in London in 1789, antislavery sentiment had been growing steadily

since the 1760s in the United Kingdom and throughout the British Empire, including its

overseas territories in the Americas. [67] As Keith A. Sandiford asserts:

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[67] See the "Slavery" entry on *The National Archives* government website in the United Kingdom, for a description of abolitionism in the British Empire, across insular, mainland, and overseas territories, which brought about the Abolition Acts of 1807 and 1833. See as well John Wesley's text, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), in which the leader of the Methodist movement writes that, "If an end was put to the import of n[—

> With the appearance in 1789 of Olaudah Equiano's two-volume autobiography, the revolution of racial and political consciousness in Black literature of eighteenth-century England reached its highest form and effectiveness. Published during the climactic phase of abolitionist agitation, [Equiano's text] was supported by the British Anti-Slavery Trade Society and was proposed to the British public as an authentic document to bolster the abolitionist case and to win the sympathy of Parliament, which was then beginning active formal debate on measures to end the slave trade. (118)

In contrast to the colonial propaganda of Hammon's narrative, Equiano's makes a deliberate abolitionist intervention in eighteenth-century Transatlantic socio-political discourse. In his hands, the slave narrative genre is transformed from colonial entertainment into a political appeal. Crucial to this turn is the shift in affect and atmosphere from Hammon's "delight" at being included in the colonial slave economy to what Equiano, like Mary Prince after him, describes throughout the text as "the horrors" (Equiano 41) of the slave trade. Since much scholarly and academic attention has been devoted to the content of the text itself—which indeed merits close analysis due to its positioning as a book of adventure, a tale of religious redemption, and a political treating all at once[68]—this section also considers the title of it, to highlight the ways in which Equiano establishes his many selves, or identities, emphasizing the reclaiming of agency

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—], and the odious and cruel distinction of master and slaves, with all its attendant horrors should cease, many labouring people from Europe, who are now discouraged from an apprehension of being put on a level with slaves, would probably be willing to come over and engage in the service" (39). Later on, Wesley expresses unease and discomfort at providing graphic details of the violence committed against enslaved peoples, writing: "I sicken at the recital of these horrors" (67). For additional information detailing the legal case which has long been interpreted as outlawing slavery in England (Cotter 31), see "The Somerset Case and the Abolition of Slavery in England," written by William R. Cotter in 1994.

[68] In addition to the scholarship referenced in this chapter, see as well critical works such as Susan M. Marren's "Between Slavery and Freedom: The Transgressive Self in Olaudah Equiano's Autobiography" (1993), George E. Boulukos' "Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa" (2007), Cathy N. Davidson's "Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself" (2006), and Peter Jaros' "Good Names: Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa" (2013), for a detailed treatment of elements to consider—philosophical, socio-economic, literary, political, cultural—in Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*.

through authorship, the complexities of Black authorship amidst white colonial discourses, and, significantly, a shift in affect from delight to terror/horror and spirituality. In addition to highlighting, as I have done, Methodist spirit and terror/horror, these processes further allow the *Interesting Narrative* to operate within a Gothic modality that is capable of troubling racial taxonomies and whiteness by virtue of manifesting the aggregate nature of Blackness.

Before delving fully into the meaning behind the title of the text, it is significant to note that throughout the narrative, Equiano mentions "terror" eight times, and "horror" eighteen times, never truly presenting them as separate kinds of affective experiences. Borrowing methodologies from Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, where, like Equiano, she uses the terms terror and horror interchangeably, it is possible to assert that the *Interesting Narrative* offers alternative avenues to understand how to engage with the scenes of actual terror/horror that take place in colonial contexts. Hartman's scholarship models how we might engage in different kinds of readings that trouble and agitate the ways in which we read slavery and the Gothic, gesturing to the fact that categories like terror (i.e., minds) and horror (i.e., bodies) are not as stable and established as Enlightenment thinkers and long eighteenth-century theorists of the Gothic would have us believe, as I explain in the preceding chapters. This framework illuminates how Equiano positions himself as inhabiting Gothic, colonial spaces as someone who is negotiating an identity that is both mind—as when he writes that, "From the various scenes I had beheld on shipboard, I soon grew a stranger to terror of every kind, and was, in that respect at least, almost an

Englishman" (92)—and body—as when he asserts that, "I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo" (70-71). This embrace of the Black narrator's whole "bodymind" illustrates that, when considered as a slavery-Gothic modality, this text resists racial taxonomic thinking as well as arbitrary classifications that reproduce eighteenth-century Enlightenment theories of subjectivity and embodiment. Equiano's narrative is responding to colonialism by decentering whiteness when he imagines that the experience of Black embodied knowledge is at the interstices of mind (i.e., terror) and body (i.e., horror). In his hands, terror is no longer merely the sublime expansive, and horror is not solely a bodily reaction that is capable of generating shock and aversion. By writing that after withstanding the atrocities of the Middle Passage and witnessing the brutalities of Transatlantic travel in a world devastated by slavery and the slave trade, he "grew a stranger to terror of every kind," and concluding that this "inure[d]" him and made him "almost an Englishman" (92), Equiano is destabilizing white subjectivities that adapt and become immune to the horrors of slavery. It is meaningful, then, that he should also write of horror in an almost-parallel way, as when he is first taken aboard a slave ship and quickly realizes that the life he knew was finished; that this "filled [him] with horrors of every kind" which were "heightened by [his] ignorance of what [he] was to undergo" (70-71), bespeaks the conflation of colonial terror and horror as, through his linguistic and rhetorical choices, he suggests that the horrors of enslavement manifest as mental and emotional terror. In both passages, Equiano combines mental anguish with the visceral aspects of being enslaved,

intertwining these categories in ways that emphasize the Gothic nature of the colonial experience; in other words, there is colonial Gothic terror/horror to be lived as a Black(ened) enslaved person.

The *Interesting Narrative* devotes its pages to denouncing the slave trade by highlighting the humanity and multifaceted aspects of enslaved and formerly enslaved peoples—of Black human beings—bringing attention to what it feels like to be forcibly wrested from one's homeland and familiar settings, the unspeakable realities of being sold into slavery as a sort of unfeeling, non-human commodity, and by illustrating what it is like to be stripped of one's name and identity. This last part is what brings us to a closer analysis of the title of the text. Equiano's choice to use the adjective "Interesting" to describe his "Life" (Equiano 1) in the title not only positions his narrative in the same category of autobiographical works that employ similar naming techniques, but it speaks as well to the authorial boldness which dares to declare that Black life and living are beyond the bounds of being perceived as merely entertaining, curious, or "Interesting."[69] Here, I am thinking alongside Sianne Ngai's examination of the aesthetic category of the "merely interesting" (777), which emerges "as an aesthetic of information" (792) that denotes "A way of making the least obtrusive, smallest possible claim of value for the

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[69] In addition to the slave narrative texts mentioned in an earlier footnote of this chapter, which follow these long eighteenth-century title and naming conventions, other notable Transatlantic examples include Charles Ball's *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia as a Slave* (1837), Lunsford Lane's *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C. Embracing an Account of His Early Life, the Redemption by Purchase of Himself and Family from Slavery, and His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin. Published by Himself* (1842), and John Joseph's *The Life and Sufferings of John Joseph, a Native of Ashantee, in West Africa Who Was Stolen from His Parents at the Age of 3 Years, and Sold to Mr. Johnston, a Cotton Planter in New Orleans, South America* (1848).

object at hand" (777). Ngai's argument that the "rhythms of everyday life" (791) of

capitalist culture generate the "interesting" as "a vacuous buzzword" (777), or as a

notably repetitive, not particular remarkable aesthetic quality—the "merely interesting"—

provides an effective framework with which to interpret Equiano's use of the term, since

his *Interesting Narrative* captures readers' attention at the same time as it (necessarily)

evokes intense emotions and compels deeper engagement. Examined alongside Ngai's

concept, Equiano's text suggests a purposeful rhetorical project that goes beyond mere

entertainment or passing amusement. In short, I argue that the genre of the autobiography

is already generating this kind of repetitive, predictable "interesting," and that Equiano is

repurposing or reclaiming it, deploying it toward addressing profound and morally

significant themes which a white readership may well find shocking, difficult, and/or

powerful. In lieu of perfunctory, somewhat cursory meanings attached to the term

"Interesting," given the weight of the content that lies within the text, it is possible to

assert that Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* is deliberately moving away from invoking

connotations that would render his text "vacuous"; instead, the title presupposes that the

text presents a forceful and political appeal which has to cause general interest. If, as

Douglas Anderson has suggested, "Equiano undertakes to be 'interesting' in the larger

'interest' of humanity" (442), as he expresses in the epigraph to this section, then his

project is even more meaningful and impactful not because "his book invites its audience

(initially at least) to take some interest in 'interesting,' a word that was in the process of

acquiring new, subjective meanings in the years that Olaudah Equiano was adjusting to

his English name in an English world" (Anderson 441), but because the content of his

narrative far surpasses superficial fascination or rhetorical games to invite deeper reflection on the human condition.

What is more interesting still is how the title of the narrative features both "Olaudah Equiano" and "Gustavus Vassa," and not solely "his English name in an English world," as Anderson reductively observes. Equiano is renamed Vassa by a white enslaver aboard a ship in accordance with one of the many dehumanizing techniques of the system of slavery, where kidnapped Africans were stripped of their own names. As Karen Sands-O'Connor has observed, the new names forcibly imposed on the enslaved "either ironically mark the low status of a figure… or highlight the slave's physical features… These names tend to have additional connotations as well… [people] named Caesar, for example, though enslaved, frequently have some (often ironic) noble or monarchical qualities associated with them" (Sands-O'Connor 43). By choosing to add to the title of his narrative one of the other names he was given—the one that finally stuck, as it were, since he remembers having been called by many different names, like "Jacob" and "Michael" (Equiano 78) until white enslaver Michael Henry Pascal resolved that he should be called Gustavus Vassa (79)—Equiano is claiming multiple aspects of a Black identity that echoes his name in a way that infuses him with the possibilities of existing as person, as narrator, and as author. The fact that Equiano chooses to mention, even in passing, that he was known as Jacob and Michael—identified in Judeo-Christian scripture as the son of Abraham and one of God's archangels, respectively—demonstrates how he might have been the subject of mockery through the conventions of renaming, but in a way that signals an authorial agency that survives these efforts to fracture his personhood.

Despite the proliferation of belittling names, a coherent agency operates within this text—which, after all, was "Written By Himself"—capable of reflecting critically on this and other aspects of his experience of enslavement.[70] It is important to consider that these processes of naming and renaming exist as well in the long eighteenth-century as a notable aspect of the Gothic, in which tradition of literature the act of naming can serve the function of diminishing racialized characters' humanity—as in the case of the nameless "creature" (58), "wretch" (59), or, "miserable monster" (59) created by Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein—or reducing them to archetypal figures or symbols—as in the case of Abraham Stoker's "Count Dracula" (6). That these figures continue to haunt the popular imagination to this day bespeaks their status as characters haunted by the oppressiveness of the systems that engendered them. The Gothic effects of fraught naming processes carry symbolic weight in fictive spaces; in actual colonial locales, they

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[70] It is of interest to note that Gustavus Vassa, the name Equiano was given by Michael Henry Pascal, coincides with the name of a sixteenth-century Swedish ruler, Gustav Eriksson Vasa, who is something of a liberator to the Swedish people. In his essay entitled, "Rewriting History: Humanist Oration at the Funeral of Gustav Vasa, 1560" (2006), Joseph Gonzalez explains that "Gustav Vasa was largely responsible for expelling the Danes and establishing an independent Swedish kingdom," adding that the ruler "had labored tirelessly to unify the kingdom and to provide it with a government and an identity that were capable of withstanding internal divisions and external threats" (21). This is significant in light of Equiano's early descriptions regarding his own Ibo ancestry in Africa, when he writes: "My father was one of those elders or chiefs I have spoken of, and was styled Embrenche; a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a *mark* of grandeur… my father had long borne it: I had seen it conferred on one of my brothers, and I was also *destined* to receive it by my parents" (46-7). Upon reading this passage, as it is included by Equiano in a lengthy paragraph describing his region's many customs and traditions, it might be easy to perceive this detail as one which affords the reader of this narrative an additional layer regarding the societal practices in African cultures. However, rather than an attempt by Equiano to humanize—in the service of white readership—the culture (and family) from which he was wrested, I argue that this inclusion serves the purpose of deliberately highlighting that a person such as he was always destined for greatness. In this sense, the name that he is forcibly given by Pascal takes on a more fraught kind of meaning, rather than simply marking him as a nameless "commodity in a system of exchange… [an] object upon which others confer meaning" (470), as Joseph Fichtelberg has concluded.

truncate so-called cultural, economic, and socio-political advancements and emphasize

the unease, fear, and anxiety attached to and produced by colonial terror/horror.

The "Written By Himself" appended to the text's title carries multiple meanings

specific to the phenomenon of Black authorship in English letters. As Henry Louis Gates,

Jr. has explicated:

> Accused of lacking a formal and collective history, blacks published individual
> histories which, taken together, were intended to narrate in segments the larger yet
> fragmented history of blacks in Africa, now dispersed throughout the New World.
> The narrated, descriptive 'eye' was put into service as a literary form to posit both
> the individual 'I' of the black author as well as the collective 'I' of the race. Text
> created author; and black authors, it was hoped, would create, or re-create, the
> image of the race in European discourse. (221)

This observation calls to mind the multiple accusations mentioned earlier in this chapter,

which are leveled at people of color when they are producing cultural texts. Returning to

Ngai and to her discussion of what is considered to be interesting, or "merely interesting,"

as "responses to… the experience of novelty and change in a capitalist culture in which

change is paradoxically constant and novelty permanent" (Ngai 794), then it is important

to note that Black people have always had to publish into white spaces that,

paradoxically, both yearn for "new voices" as varieties of familiar literary forms and do

not want to listen to 'Othered' voices that refuse to replicate recognizable cultural norms

like whiteness. What Gates and Ngai flesh out in common here for my analysis of

Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* is a sense that his work is perhaps perceived in the long

eighteenth century as a version of the "merely interesting"—denoting "change" and

"novelty"—whereas radical refusal or disruption is not "interesting" but problematic or

unsettling. Consequently, Equiano is writing and publishing as 'himself' into a world that,

to this day, continues to place the burden of authorial proof on people of color, who are always asked to account for themselves in normative terms—that is, in ways that are legible within a white colonial hermeneutic. And yet, Equiano the author seems to be conscious of the publishing business, of editorial choices, of para-and-inter-textuality, and circulation strategies, as is evidenced in his initial address to the British Parliament, in the way the text is structured, and in the multiple appendices he attaches to the *Interesting Narrative*, in the form of letters, reviews, and excerpts from abolitionist writings. In short, Equiano is asserting 'himself' in the world as a multitudinous author, one who writes legibly in any number of colonial frameworks, despite the fact that white colonial discourses seek to modulate, regulate, and censure what Black authors and writers of color are capable of saying in each of these modalities.

Through this analysis of the title of the text, I have hoped to illustrate that each aspect of the title is leading toward or building to this last phrase, "Written By Himself," not only to emphasize Equiano's authorial agency, but to signal the "Himself" as something more complex than the "I" of Western autobiography, as someone who contains multiple names and identities and functions fluidly within and among them. In this regard, *Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* is writing in a colonial Gothic modality that thinks with, through, and against a long eighteenth-century cultural landscape in which Enlightenment philosophy coincides with and is predicated upon a Transatlantic economy that trades in the enslavement of racialized human beings. Additionally, this fluidity enacted by Equiano serves the purpose of furnishing his text with an ineffable, or Gothic quality, since the duality and doubling of identities, or even

the fragmentation of identities, are ubiquitous in works of literature that are traditionally

considered as Gothic.[71] Equiano's narrative enacts his refusals and resistance through the

ways in which he gathers these multiple identities into 'Himself.' The title of his

Interesting Narrative establishes the slavery-Gothic modality's critical approach to how

names and naming operate(s), as I discuss in later chapters that take up similar aspects in

texts like Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), and Matthew Lewis's *Journal*

(1834).

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It might not be far-fetched to posit that the Gothic tradition in literature in English

does not fully recognize its own unconscious—the horrors/terrors of slavery[72]—even

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[71] In Gothic fiction, a work like Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) gives us give us characters like Jekyll and the racialized Hyde, who are experiencing a fragmented sense of self; and a work like Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) features characters like Robert Holt and the racialized beetle entity, who are experiencing a disintegration of their individual psyche. Read against these fictional instances of Transatlantic terror/horror, a text like Equiano's further demonstrates how a generative engagement with the Gothic can blur the boundaries of the self while destabilizing (acceptable) colonial forms of being.

[72] The terrors/horrors of slavery are referenced in many of the works published by formerly enslaved Black peoples. Making use of a recognizable Gothic vocabulary—invoking aspects of fear, extreme dread, fright, alarm, panic, pain, and dismay—these works necessarily transcend a fictionalizing of these experiences. When the abolitionist movement in both England and America called on the formerly enslaved to write or orally dictate their experiences in slavery in the long eighteenth century, people like Ottobah Cugoano, in *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787), and Mary Prince, in *The History of Mary Prince, a West-Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831), make significant contributions to the political slave narrative genre, and do so in ways that recall the Gothic aspects of colonial brutality. For example, Cugoano writes that, "the base treatment which the African Slaves undergo, ought to be abolished; and it is moreover evident, that the whole, or any part of that iniquitous traffic of slavery, can no where, or in any degree, be admitted, but among those who must eventually resign their own claim to any degree of sensibility and humanity, for that of barbarians" (10). Here, Cugoano is flipping the script, as it were, to show the "barbaric" aspects attached to such a horrific practice, calling to mind the ways in which, as per my discussion of "Goth(ic) barbarism" in the previous chapter, Transatlantic, colonial Gothic is always preoccupied with these tangible and linguistic categorizations. For her part, Prince exclaims: "Oh the horrors of slavery! – How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is" (21). Prince does not flinch from detailing colonial terror/horror— all the hardships she was forced to endure, in a text that reads like a radical gesture and a political treatise that undermines the authority of colonial discourse. At the same time, all of these works operate to

though many of the fictional and historical people directly involved in what is a recognizable Gothic literary tradition are actually enslavers or people who profit from slavery, as I discuss in the previous chapters. If we acknowledge that some of the main writers of a discernable Gothic literary genre in England are enslavers (e.g., Matthew Lewis, William Beckford);[73] that even some writers publishing texts that are eventually used to aid the pro-abolition cause are, in fact, reproducing images that further dehumanize enslaved peoples (e.g., John Gabriel Stedman, John Wesley);[74] and that texts that are not generally considered as Gothic in their images feature colonial brutality and enact terror/horror nonetheless (e.g., the slave narrative genre), then it is worth calling into question a long eighteenth-century Gothic tradition that structures itself as a purely aestheticized genre and discipline that continues to be read and taught as separate from

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demonstrate that the enslaved are not merely chattel or commodities with a suppositional value, but human beings who are oppressed, subjugated, and repeatedly violated.

[73] According to the *National Portrait Gallery* of London's website, William Beckford "was the son of a famous Lord Mayor of London and heir to a West Indian slave trade fortune that made him one of the richest men in England. At the height of his wealth, Beckford owned fourteen plantations across Jamaica. Declining sugar prices and his own financial mismanagement meant that by the time of the abolition of the slave trade in 1833 he owned just four, receiving compensation for the 660 enslaved Africans who worked them. Beckford was also known for his Oriental-Gothic horror novel *Vathek*, which he wrote aged 22, and for his extravagant lifestyle and Gothic residence Fonthill Abbey, with its 300 foot tower, which he built on his estate near Salisbury" ("William (Thomas) Beckford"). In Chapter 4 of this study, I discuss in detail Matthew Lewis's involvement in Transatlantic chattel slavery in the Caribbean.

[74] John Gabriel Stedman's text, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted N[——] of Surinam* (1806), which is presented as an ethnographic account featuring human struggles and relations, makes ample use of the elements of terror/horror to decry plantation slavery. However, Stedman's excessive use of horrific scenes, which serve the purpose of affecting shock and aversion among white reading audiences, risks becoming a bold reproduction of the violence endured by Black enslaved peoples. In a similar manner, John Wesley's aforementioned text, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), recreates graphic images of violence and brutality. Rather than engage in a shock-based reading of colonialism, racism, and enslavement that becomes itself symptomatic by recreating the trauma attached to these categories, my aim is to read it through the critical, more generative work of writers like Saidiya Hartman—as when she calls attention to the harm that comes from centering a "routine display of the slave's ravaged body" (3), as I discuss in previous chapters—whose ideas allow us to engage with Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a mode that invokes violence but manipulates it in subtle ways as to invalidate ideologies that (continue to) champion systems of oppression.

slavery. As I have been demonstrating through my reading of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, if the Gothic were to be read instead as a mode of negotiating, critiquing, and/or resisting issues surrounding racial inequality, subjugation, captivity, and fugitivity, to name only a few instances of the terror/horror it necessarily evokes, it would no longer be possible for theorists to continue to aestheticize it.

This aestheticizing of visceral horrors, such as the ones illustrated in the published works of enslaved and formerly enslaved Black authors, is another function of whiteness. As I argued in the dissertation's introduction, slavery is not merely a phenomenon that intersects with the Gothic but is fundamental to it in ways that have not yet been adequately theorized. To date, the Gothic has overwhelmingly been read as a sort of aesthetic imagining of exaggerated, quasi-improbable scenarios—ones that, as Black Studies have insisted be recognized, happen to correlate to real-life material conditions in Transatlantic locales. Anglo-American literary culture has used the category of artistic genre to moderate terror as an aesthetic experience; as long as literary criticism can make sense of the Gothic generically, it can be used as a rubric for making sense of "darker" aspects of history without grappling with them *as* histories for which particular populations of people are accountable.

To return to a question I ask at the beginning of this study: what happens when the colonial ship and plantation—or when Transatlantic places, more generally—become the sites of actual physical, mental, and spiritual atrocities that transcend and exceed what the Gothic genre has managed to imagine? In Transatlantic locales, writers like the much-celebrated Herman Melville greatly contributed to the popularizing of such practices, not

only by somewhat aestheticizing the "darker" sides to humanity, but also by attaching the language of "blackness" to them. In his 1850 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Mosses from and Old Manse* collection of short stories, Melville alludes to the Gothic aspects pervading the tales contained therein, writing that:

> For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side--like the dark half of the physical sphere--is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. But this darkness but gives more effect to the evermoving dawn, that forever advances through it, and cirumnavigates his world. Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it to produce in his lights and shades; or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,--this, I cannot altogether tell… At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more: this black conceit pervades him, through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight,--transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you;--but there is the blackness of darkness beyond; and even his bright gildings but fringe, and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds.--In one word, the world is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne…Now it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. (Melville 4-5)

On its own, such a passage as part of a literary review—which in this case appeared anonymously in *The Literary World* magazine on two separate occasions (Masten 45)—is striking. Here, writing in the long eighteenth century in the United States, Melville is fully engaging with and enacting the same white-bright-light vs. black-wicked-evil binaries Leila Taylor examines in her *Darkly* text (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of this). In this instance, we might begin to grasp to what end whiteness survives the long eighteenth century to permeate Transatlantic literary culture, when even such popular, beloved figures are missing the point entirely.

A project such as Equiano's, then, necessarily troubles methodological, literary, linguistic, and even ontological Anglo-American categorizations that always seem to

operate in the service of whiteness. It is his conflation of body-mind-spirit, as he articulates it in and through his practices as a Methodist and the multiple identities he inhabits as a Black person, that merits attention here and bears examining in the light of colonial (and later imperial) practices of effacement. As he describes it in the *Interesting Narrative* throughout his travels—to the Caribbean, as when he is forced to go to "the island of Barbadoes" (74); to "the North Pole" (194); and "London" (194)—forced mobility is inevitably attached to a sense of "much heaviness" (197) and terror/horror, when he experiences dangers firsthand and witnesses all manner of atrocities committed against Black(ened) peoples. For Equiano, the self and all its parts—physical, mental, spiritual—operate in tandem, effectively intruding in Enlightenment and colonial taxonomies that would consign someone like him to inhabit more of one (i.e., physical) and less of the other (i.e., mental), and would restrict him from accessing the latter (i.e., spirit). In his integration of his identities, and particularly through his (use of) spirituality, Equiano articulates a Gothic selfhood, or a refusal to conform, in which terror (i.e., mind) and horror (i.e., body) become terror/horror filtered through and guided by a sense of the spiritual. Even before he is "born again" (206), when he is feeling at his lowest and most discouraged, when he "frequently murmured against the Almighty, particularly in his providential dealings" and "blaspheme[s], [wishing] often to be any thing but a human being" (197), his relationship with belief and spirituality is tinged with a sense of the physical; following this scene of hopelessness, he writes that:

> In these severe conflicts the Lord answered me by awful 'visions of the night,
> when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed,' Job xxxiii. 15.
> He was pleased, in much mercy, to give me to see, and in some measure to
> understand, the great and awful scene of the judgment-day, that 'no unclean

> person, no unholy thing, can enter into the kingdom of God,' Eph. v. 5. I would then, if it had been possible, have changed my nature with the meanest worm on the earth; and was ready to say to the mountains and rocks 'fall on me,' Rev. vi. 16; but all in vain. (197-198)

This passage is further highlighting in the *Interesting Narrative* its author's sense of the spiritual as mediated through a Gothic subjectivity that necessarily invokes elements of terror/horror. That "the Lord answered" him by a use of "awful visions of the night" aligns well with the uncanny, the supernatural, and the sublime; these "awful visions" tap into a sense of terror/horror that disrupts the narrative while engaging his body-mind-spirit. His inclusion of "the great and awful scene of the judgment-day" establishes a Gothic atmosphere through this imagery of an impending judgment day, which is profoundly unsettling in its emphasis of the terror/horror that accompanies moral reckoning and (potential) damnation, since "no unclean person, no unholy thing, can enter into the kingdom of God." Here, Equiano is suggesting that in his ability to experience these feelings and think these thoughts, he, too, has access to salvation and intellectual enlightenment; his bodily self is engaged as well, intimating that the criteria for salvation transcend racial boundaries, effectively calling into question the moral superiority of whiteness. Immediately following this passage, Equiano additionally, and perhaps conclusively, establishes the interconnected nature of his selves by writing that:

> I then requested the divine Creator that he would grant me a small space of time to repent of my follies and vile iniquities, which I felt were grievous. The Lord, in his manifold mercies, was pleased to grant my request, and being yet in a state of time, the sense of God's mercies was so great on my mind when I awoke, that my strength entirely failed me for many minutes, and I was exceedingly weak.

Equiano's pleas are answered by "The Lord," but he feels "God's mercies" quite physically; they are "so great on [his] mind" and inevitably manifest in bodily ways. In

response to this overwhelming metaphysical experience, his "strength entirely failed [him] for many minutes, and [he] was exceedingly weak," expressing how a physical manifestation of vulnerability underscores this psychological and spiritual phenomenon he experiences. Throughout this scene, as seen in these passages, Equiano's ideas of piety might be interpreted as denoting the fearfulness with which he approaches ideas of Christian guilt, sin, and atonement, since he seems to be placing himself in a position of subordination; however, I am more interested in reading through and against this to illustrate how he conveys the convergence of his mind, body, and spirit through his experience of repentance. By requesting a "small space of time to repent," he demonstrates his investment in the spiritual realm, since his earthly, material actions are irrevocably connected with his moral and spiritual welfare. That he is evidently conscious of "being yet in a state of time" bespeaks how well he understands his position in an Enlightenment, colonial world that seems to be fixed on his physicality, with added limitations and constraints forced upon him as an enslaved (and later as a formerly enslaved) Black person. His mention of the temporal state of his being incarnate certainly emphasizes the material conditions of his experience on Earth, but that his physical strength is weakened by the sheer intensity of his spiritual experience is key here, as it blurs the boundaries of the self and suggests an interconnectedness between the bodily, mental, and spiritual realms, ultimately highlighting the holistic nature of Equiano's experience. Despite his self-realization, Equiano and his text remain haunted—by prevailing views on race, Enlightenment ideals, and slavery. In that regard, his project connotes a much more "interesting" undertaking, one which sets out to center his ability

to challenge these superbly haunting issues by virtue of undermining notions of racial

boundaries and moral judgement. He concludes this astounding scene by writing that:

> This was the first spiritual mercy I ever was sensible of, and being on praying ground, as soon as I recovered a little strength, and got out of bed and dressed myself, I invoked Heaven from my inmost soul, and fervently begged that God would never again permit me to blaspheme his most holy name. The Lord, who is long-suffering, and full of compassion to such poor rebels as we are, condescended to hear and answer. I felt that I was altogether unholy, and saw clearly what a bad use I had made of the faculties I was endowed with; they were given me to glorify God with; I thought, therefore, I had better want them here, and enter into life eternal, than abuse them and be cast into hell fire. I prayed to be directed, if there were any holier than those with whom I was acquainted, that the Lord would point them out to me. I appealed to the Searcher of hearts, whether I did not wish to love him more, and serve him better. (198)

For him, feeling a sense of "spiritual mercy" is irrevocably attached to a sense of

physicality—of living in his body, getting "out of bed" and "dress[ing]" (194)—and

attributes this same sense of physicality to a Christian deity—"God" (194)—as an entity

who dispenses such attributes, and who is capable of "permit[ting]," "suffering," being

"compassionate," "hear[ing] and answer[ing]," point[ing]" things out, and "Search[ing]…

hearts." These descriptions imply that religiosity, piety, and the achievement of "spirit"

are embodied traits, capable of unifying the aspects that Anglo-American colonial culture

attempts so very hard to separate, and, crucially, gesturing to the fact that Black(ened)

peoples have access to them. If, as Kristina Straub has observed, during the eighteenth

century, "Methodism's power and threat lie in the openness of consciousness to sensual

experience" (113), bespeaking its emphasis on embodiment and physicality, then

Equiano's numerous descriptions of his spiritual liberation as being linked to his physical

liberation, are ontologically meaningful and significant. Adding a layer of meaning to

Equiano's spiritual conversion experience, which is one that "makes the self vulnerable

even as it fulfills it" (Straub 113), is the articulation of his self-realization as a whole person, despite the reductive ways in which a Transatlantic world imagines (his) Blackness. This bespeaks what I term a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode, through which Equiano is capable of mediating his self-realization as a whole person in the *Interesting Narrative*, which is infused with Gothic elements of terror/horror that are capable of producing hauntings as much as the text itself is necessarily haunted. In Andrew Winckles' article, "Equiano, Liberty, and the Evangelical Conversion Narrative" (2010), the critic presents an apt analysis of Equiano's Methodism and what his spiritual and bodily freedom have in common, observing that:

> for these important evangelicals [Methodist leaders John Wesley and George Whitefield] as for Equiano, there were important parallels between a physical sea journey to a foreign place and the spiritual journey towards conversion… In Equiano's *Narrative*, of course, this rhetoric takes on added layers of meaning, for not only is he describing his spiritual freedom; he is also referencing his physical freedom, which was gained at such labor and cost. This contrast between physical freedom, which he labored hard to obtain, and spiritual freedom, which no amount of work could obtain, thus informs the dynamic of his experience. (Winckles 1)

This explanation illustrates that what "informs the dynamic" of Equiano's "experience," is a conflation of spiritual, mental, and physical aspects, in a text that uses the Gothic mode to also present a conflation of the ineffable, terrifying, and horrifying aspects attached to the Black experience within colonial systems. A poem entitled, "MISCELLANEOUS VERSES," written by Equiano and inserted into Chapter X of his *Interesting Narrative*, encapsulates these conflations well; throughout the piece, he intertwines the themes of spiritual and physical bondage, of anguish, terror/horror, and despair, as when he writes that, "Inur'd to dangers, griefs, and woes, / Train'd up 'midst perils, deaths, and foes, / I said "Must it thus ever be?— / No quiet is permitted me" (lines

65-68). He recounts the sorrow, suffering, and pain that characterize his life as an

enslaved Black man, experiences that evoke a sense of physical and emotional bondage,

leading up to his redemption. In this way, he draws parallels between his physical

bondage and his mental, and spiritual bondage, as these are inevitably entangled in

"perils, deaths, and foes" (line 66). Equiano continues the poem by expressing his belief

that salvation is only attained through spirituality and faith; he writes that:

> Like some poor pris'ner at the bar,
> Conscious of guilt, of sin and fear,
> Arraign'd, and self-condemned, I stood—
> 'Lost in the world, and in my blood!'
> Yet here, 'midst blackest clouds confin'd,
> A beam from Christ, the day-star, shin'd;
> Surely, thought I, if Jesus please,
> He can at once sign my release. (Lines 77-84)

If, as Winckles suggests, "Just as his manumission papers had to be signed by his master

before he could be free, so must his release be signed by Christ before his salvation [and]

in bringing the rhetoric of physical and spiritual slavery together in this manner, he also

calls on the supposedly Christian reader to consider the very real injustices of the slave

trade" (2), then Equiano's drawing together of spiritual and physical bondage, as

expressed throughout the *Interesting Narrative*, is able to problematize a Gothic tradition

that fictionalizes similar elements in white spaces. Equiano's rhetorical and narratological

practices are pointing to his religiosity and piousness—which might seem to otherwise

connote a sense of immateriality—as conditions of his Black embodiment and lived

experience beyond the parameters Anglo-American theory can imagine. My reading of

Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* as Gothic, or my insistence on reading slavery and the

slave trade as Gothic, responds to an idea that if we allow history, in its most

inconceivable forms including the embodied experience of enslavement, to inhabit the Gothic mode as its unconscious, then the Gothic operates less like a set of aesthetic rules and more like a kind of subjectivity constantly improvising to survive in one form or another under the pressure of culture—and more specifically, of organized violence.

Chapter 3 – "I Am Not Fearful of Shadows":[75] *Wieland* and the United States' Racial Imaginary

Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale*
is the first Gothic novel published in the United States of America, in 1798. Heavily
influenced by the writings of British author William Godwin, by Brown's own admission
Wieland reads like a work of literature adhering to the genre that Pamela Clemit later
refers to as "the Godwinian novel" (Clemit 2).[76] Of the appearance and publication of the
novel in the United States, Caleb Crain has expressed that:

> Until the starchily phrased, quirkily researched, zigzag-plotted fiction in this book,
> there was little reason to think that Gothic writing would come to America. The
> genre appeared to be distinctly European. It depended on the conflict of utopian
> ideals with ancient fears, and Americans were too practical for either—or so the
> national myth would have it. There might be specters haunting Europe, but the
> United States was too busy making money to lose sleep over them… however…
> Brown realized that the United States had new fears, which required new
> expression. (xi)

While borrowing formal characteristics from its British Gothic counterpart, Brown's
novel displays a consciously political form tailored to address early American socio-

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[75] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale*, 44; 2022 The Modern Library edition.

[76] In his article, "Textual Surveillance, Social Codes, and Sublime Voices: The Tyranny of Narrative in *Caleb Williams* and *Wieland*" (2005), David S. Hogsette draws overt comparisons between the writings of Brown in the US and Godwin in England, examining the latter's influence on the former. Hogsette explains that "many scholars establish Godwin as the literary and conventional center around which Brown's novel [*Wieland*] operates" and mentions Pamela Clemit's argument "that Brown transforms the social idealism of Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793) and *Caleb Williams* into a Federalist skepticism that emerged from the ambiguous political climate of a post-revolutionary American republic divided over the violent turn of the French Revolution" (Hogsette 38). Later in his critical piece, despite presenting evidence of the ideological, literary, and narratological similarities between Brown and Godwin's texts, Hogsette brings up a generative line of questioning; he posits: "What if we examined these novels within the aesthetic context that joins them in a discursive, transatlantic relationship?" (38), gesturing toward the kinds of connections this study maps out when considering a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode of writing. Additional works that establish a link between Godwin and Brown include Michael T. Gilmore's "Calvinism and Gothicism: The Example of Brown's 'Wieland'" (1977), Stephen R. Yarbrough's "The Tragedy of Isolation: Fictional Technique and Environmentalism in *Wieland*" (1980), and Peter Rawlings' chapter on *Wieland* in the *Americans on Fiction, 1776-1900 Volume I* (2002) collection.

political concerns, specifically the moral values and principles of conduct ruling Anglo-

American culture. Brown presents the novel as a moralizing tale in his prefatory note to

the text, which exhorts readers to approach it as reading that is aimed "at the illustration

of some important branches of the moral constitution of man," and goes on to explain the

importance and "usefulness" (5) of such literary productions.[77] Yet while *Wieland*

presents itself as a novel written by an American in and for America—using the guise of

the fantastical to provide moral direction, and highlighting aspects of the familial and

religious underpinnings of the new republic—it is urgently a novel about race and the

racial concerns that continue to afflict the United States. My interpretation of the novel

responds to this sense of urgency, since race and racialization are the most interesting

issues with which this Gothic text grapples. I write "interesting" because, as I detail it in

my discussion below, it is striking that these themes are not explicitly treated in the text;

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[77] What Brown leaves out, however, is the fact that his tale is inspired in real life events: see Caleb Crain's biographical note on Charles Brockden Brown, which appears in the 2002 Modern Library Classics edition of *Wieland*, in which he discloses that Charles Brocken Brown's tale is a fictionalized account based on the true events that took place in upstate New York in 1781, when a farmer named James Yates murdered his livestock and family after believing he had heard the voice of God commanding him to do so (vi). The *HathiTrust Digital Collections* online resource includes a digitized version of *The New-York Weekly Magazine, or, Miscellaneous Repository*, in which publication appeared a newsletter account of the killings, in July of 1796, entitled "An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr. J---- Y----, upon His Family, in December, A.D. 1781"; this account is also included by Crain in his edition of the text, as an "Appendix" (361). Additionally, the entry for Brown's *Wieland* in the *Library Company of Philadelphia*'s website explains that "The case was one of the models… for *Wieland*. Brown was only ten years old when the Yates murders were first reported in the press, but he was sure to have read this magazine account that appeared fifteen years later just before he began work on *Wieland*" ("Philadelphia Gothic" 1). The account published fifteen years after these events does not list an author, but it is written using the first-person essay style, opening with: "The unfortunate subject of my present essay, belonged to one of the most respectable families in this state" ("Appenxix" 361). Interestingly, according to the digitized version of this magazine, the full name of the publication is *The New-York Weekly Magazine; Or, Miscellaneous Repository: Forming an Interesting Collection of Original and Select Literary Productions, in Prose and Verse: Calculated for Instruction and Rational Entertainment—the Promotion of Moral and Useful Knowledge—and to Enlarge and Correct the Understandings of Youth*, and no names are provided for its editors, who insert a signature that reads, simply, "The Editors" ("The New-York Weekly Magazine" 11). The *Project Gutenberg* website lists the editors as John Bull and Thomas Burling.

on the contrary, on the surface *Wieland* seems to refuse to engage directly with slavery,

the slave trade, and Blackness, even as it unfolds during the mid-to-late-eighteenth

century in Pennsylvania. As Edward Raymond Turner has explained, "It is almost

forgotten now, but a long time ago there flourished in Pennsylvania a slavery not very

different from that which existed in Maryland and other colonies nearby" (141), in an

article in which he traces the oppressive practice in the area. Of the presence of enslaved

Black peoples therein he writes that:

> The beginnings of n[——] servitude in this region are lost in the mist of colonial
> antiquity, but we know that there were n[——] along the banks of the Delaware
> river in the days of the Dutch and the Swedes. As soon as English settlers appear,
> they also have them. Thus the records of New castle court mention them as early
> as 1677. In Pennsylvania they are found immediately after Penn's coming. "I have
> a n[——] servant whom I bought," says the Dutch baker of Germantown, Cornelis
> Bom. In 1684 Hermans Op den Graeff told in his quaint German how black men
> or Moors were held as slaves. (141)

While Turner is referring to the 1600s, this history is important to note, particularly as it

has taken place in the area in which Brown, "a young lapsed Quaker from Philadelphia"

(Crain xi), chooses to set his American Gothic nightmare into motion.[78] This chapter

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[78] Crain writes that, "as a group, Pennsylvania Quakers suffered a tremendous loss of prestige and power in
the late eighteenth century. For decades they had controlled the state legislature and sat at the top of
Philadelphia high society. The Revolution abruptly demoted them. As pacificists, they were sidelined by
military events. And observant Quakers could not in good conscience swear allegiance to the
commonwealth of Pennsylvania or the new republic, and so their loyalty was widely suspected and they
were subjected to legal and financial penalties. Tom Paine's famous attack on the Quakers at the end of
Common Sense was only one among many" (xvi-xvii). What Crain does not mention in his "Introduction"
to *Wieland* is that it is not until 1780 that "slave-holding among the Friends of Pennsylvania had come to an
end" (Turner 142), meaning that some of the Quakers (e.g., the Religious Society of Friends, "the Friends")
who had settled in the area, as well as their descendants, were enslavers, despite the fact that, "In 1693
George Keith declared that the enslaving of men and their posterity to the end of the world was a great
hinderance to the spreading of the Gospel" (Turner 142). Turner goes on to explain that "For some time
most of the Quakers did not follow this advice, but gradually a great reform was made. First the Quakers
stopped importing slaves; then they ceased buying them; and at last began to persuade each other to set n[—
—] free" (142). Additionally, the website for *The Library Company of Philadelphia* states that, "In 1780
there were about 6,855 slaves in the state, with some 539 in Philadelphia County. Ten years later there were
about 3,760 slaves in the state and 301 in Philadelphia. By the century's end, slavery was all but dead in

argues that it is necessary to interpret Charles Brockden Brown's novel as a text that allegorizes and concretizes the racial imaginary of the United States, through its use of terror (i.e., psychological horror) and horror (i.e., physical horror) in order to present a story about how an idyllic, rural, impenetrable family falls prey to the machinations of external, foreign, "Othered" forces. As I discuss it later in this chapter, the text achieves this by hinting that whiteness provokes the mind-body split—and therefore, terror-horror split—that so pervades Anglo-American Enlightenment culture and racial capitalism.[79] Through a key racialized figure by the name of Carwin, Brown's text subverts the idea that terror is exclusively of the mind and that it is a separate experience from horror that is solely physical; here, instead of making use of terror and horror as separate kinds of experiences, they are again deployed as terror/horror, a Gothic response to colonialism that imagines through a racialized person that the experience of embodied knowledge is not one or the other but a conflation of both. My main argumentative thread relies on readings of *Wieland* that treat this character as the novel's central(ized) figure, through whom the Gothic cannot possibly yield colonial racial readings by focusing on his phenotypical characteristics; therefore, while whiteness instigates these ideas, Brown's

Philadelphia, though it would linger in the state in ever declining numbers up to about 1847" ("From Slavery to Freedom in Pennsylvania"). Returning to Crain's description of the plight of the Quakers post-Revolution in the area, then, I cannot help but recall when Olaudah Equiano was sold to "one Mr. Robert King, a quaker… [of] Philadelphia" (Equiano 115-116), who in his treatment of Equiano (and other people he enslaves) resembles the slavery amelioration efforts which Matthew Lewis later exhibits in Jamaica. By noting this history, I am not suggesting that the Brown family or the fictional Wieland family were enslavers in Pennsylvania; rather, I am calling attention to how astonishing it is that in spite of this history in the area, *Wieland* is seemingly doing the work of disavowing it. This purported omission speaks volumes in the face of the Black Feminist argument I unfold in this chapter, since my reading of the text takes place in these spaces of disavowal/obscurity.

[79] See introductory section and the previous chapters for descriptions detailing the source and effect of these distinctions.

iteration of the Gothic, crucially, is not able to support such problematic distinctions in which Black(ened) bodies are thought to have no capacity for intellectual thought. Focusing on the Wieland family, which is of German ancestry and has settled in Pennsylvania (Brown 8, 12)—presented as the model American family, loving and close—Brown's tale intricately weaves into the fabric of the familial unit a singular religious zeal interspersed with certain aspects of superstition, which are at odds with the Enlightenment principles of science, reason, and skepticism to which other characters subscribe. While the novel seems to be suggesting that religious piety and the ability to engage with Enlightenment philosophy are at the core of the foundational values that shape the United States, it is crucial to examine how these principles are made to implode from within when one racialized character manages to breach, trouble, and agitate them.[80] Through my reading of *Wieland* as part of this thesis, I aim to present an intervention into Gothic Studies in connection to colonial representations of racialization—particularly its ambiguous othering formed through the logics of whiteness. Rather than focus on the tension between faith and reason as it defines a distinctly American ethos, my reading of

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[80] There is much existing scholarship that interprets Brown's *Wieland* in this way—as a novel about "faith vs. reason." Some notable examples that follow this line of critical interpretation include scholars like John G. Frank, in "The Wieland Family in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*" (1950), Michael D. Butler, in "Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*: Method and Meaning" (1976), and Christine Hedlin, in "'Was There Not Reason to Doubt': *Wieland* and Its Secular Age" (2014), whose analysis of the novel discuss the tension between religious piety and Enlightenment philosophy as foundational to it. Furthermore, in "Introduction: The Enlightenment Gothic and Postcolonialism," the opening chapter to the collection of essays entitled, *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (2003), Andrew Smith and William Hughes write that "an historical examination of the Gothic and accounts of postcolonialism indicate the presence of a shared interest in challenging post-enlightenment notions of rationality" (1). My interest in the Gothic's capability to present and enact this challenge lies in examining the ways in which a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode engages Enlightenment notions directly, not as ideas or assumptions posterior or subsequent to this era, but directly within it. Of *Wieland*, for instance, and its connection to the Godwinian novel I mention above, Crain notes that Enlightenment ideals figure in the text as "Godwinian anarchy… as a disruption of the social fabric—an unraveling in the carpet" (xix).

the text attends to the way the novel's "faith versus reason" narrative depends on a racialized outsider for its shape. The outsider—the mysterious Carwin—is a figure who is at first regarded as a curiosity but who soon turns into an obsession for the Wielands. The whiteness of the narrator—Clara Wieland—and her family, is generated, I argue, less through embodied visual coding than through their anxiety around Carwin's identity and his relationship to their circle. Although they try throughout the narrative to study, scrutinize, and investigate his origins, Carwin refuses to be read by this family. Even after they have somewhat reluctantly allowed him to be part of their intimate circle, a sense of an ulterior motive tinges their meetings; following one such occasion, Clara recounts that:

> He [Carwin] parted from us not till late, refusing an invitation to spend the night here, but readily consented to repeat his visit. His visits were frequently repeated. Each day introduced us to a more intimate acquaintance with his sentiments, but left us wholly in the dark, concerning that about which we were most inquisitive. He studiously avoided all mention of his past or present situation. Even the place of his abode in the city he concealed from us. (69)

Clara, her brother Theodore, and their close friends, the Pleyel siblings, exert energy in both studying and rejecting Carwin, desperately positioning him as an interloper unconnected to their tight community, even though their morbid curiosity about him continues to be the driving factor behind their meetings once he enters the narrative. It is key to note that their meeting place, amongst themselves and then with Carwin, was often the temple built by the Wielands' father on their property, standing "At the distance of three hundred yards from his house, on the top of a rock whose sides were steep, rugged, and encumbered with dwarf cedars and stony asperities" (13); Clara lets readers know that "This was the temple of his Deity" (13), to which "Twice in twenty-four hours he repaired… unaccompanied by any human being" (13). It is significant that while the elder

Wieland was exceedingly devout, or "sincere in [his] faith" (13), taking worship, like his wife, quite seriously, "The loneliness of their dwelling prevented [them] from joining any established congregation" (13). As early as Chapter 1 of the novel, through Clara's description of the history of the Wieland family, the text seems to be highlighting their extreme isolation, their oppressive whiteness. Following in their father's footsteps, the Wieland siblings thrive on their seclusion which is entangled with their faith, an inherited attitude from their father. Of the elder Wieland's inclination toward solitude and seclusion, Clara writes that:

> He allied himself with no sect, because he perfectly agreed with none. Social worship is that by which they are all distinguished; but this article found no place in his creed. He rigidly interpreted that precept which enjoins us, when we worship, to retire into solitude, and shut out every species of society. According to him devotion was not only a silent office, but must be performed alone. (13)

That their father's lonely place of worship, his temple, is where the Wielands and their close friends later choose to meet with Carwin, to covertly dissect, investigate, and be entertained by him, in turns, is telling, since this family's secluded lifestyle, rooted in their faith, is (re)presented throughout the text as a distinct feature of their whiteness. This temple structure serves the specific narrative purpose of emphasizing the Wielands' devotion and seclusion, while also underscoring their disconnection from society and established congregations. Once this family allows the enigmatic, impenetrable Carwin to join their private group, the text quickly, if implicitly, calls attention to how the religious extremism and isolation that generate the Wielands' whiteness contribute to a depiction of racial dynamics within the early American context (and beyond). Indeed, it not until Clara meets Carwin that she has occasion to remark upon her self-assurance regarding her

safety, or security, since the Wielands live so far removed from society; after hearing

mysterious, terrifying voices in her bedroom for the first time (other scenes like this

appear in the text, which I discuss below), Clara expresses that:

> No wonder that a circumstance like this startled me. In the first impulse of my terror, I uttered a slight scream, and shrunk to the opposite side of the bed. In a moment, however, I recovered from my trepidation. I was habitually indifferent to all the causes of fear, by which the majority are afflicted. I entertained no apprehension of either ghosts or robbers. Our security had never been molested by either, and I made use of no means to prevent or counterwork their machinations. My tranquillity, on this occasion, was quickly retrieved. The whisper evidently proceeded from one who was posted at my bed-side. (54)

This is a remarkable, revelatory passage, since Clara's reaction to the possibility of

"either ghosts or robbers" intruding upon her home within the Wieland estate is utter

disbelief due to the fact that she is accustomed to feeling assured of her safety; assured,

that is, in their state of complete privacy and withdrawal. That the family's "security had

never been molested by either," and that she "made use of no means to prevent or

counterwork their machinations," because she did not know how or because she was so

shocked that people (or specters) had breached her bedchamber in the first place, is

reminiscent of familiar contemporary racist and xenophobic exclamations such as "not in

my neighborhood!"[81] Additionally, that during this Gothic moment of (metaphysical)

uncertainty, Clara has access to feeling "terror" as her "first impulse," but that she quickly

"recovered from [her] trepidation," bespeaks not only her sense of impregnability but also

her perceived privilege. Even as the scene progresses, and she hears "murderers lurk[ing]

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[81] For an examination of how this expression, "Not in my neighborhood," has been leveled against minoritized groups in prejudiced, discriminatory ways, see works like Antero Pietila's *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (2010), in which he traces the history of racial segregation and discriminatory housing practices in Baltimore.

in [her] closet… One resolved to shoot, and the other menac[ing] suffocation" and "more" (56), she can only express: "My terrors urged me forward with almost a mechanical impulse. I stopped not till I reached my brother's door. I had not gained the threshold, when, exhausted by the violence of my emotions, and by my speed, I sunk down in a fit" (56). Here, Clara seems to be unaware of how intermeshed her mind and her body are, for it is terror that occasions her bodily movements and reactions. Brown's iteration of the Gothic would seem to be prescribing to or complying with a distinction of affect in terror and horror and saying something about the kind of person who has access to experiencing either-or. However, *Wieland* is far more complex than a presupposition or reading of 'terror as mired in whiteness' would suggest, since Carwin—the character who first prompts Clara to "rush into the midst of horrors such as no heart has hitherto conceived, nor tongue related" (48)—is the person the narrative pivots to place at its center. From the outset of the tale, Clara issues subtle hints regarding Carwin's ostensible maliciousness, as when she alludes to "the cause of [her] sorrows" and "the depth of [her] distresses" (7) in the first sentence of the novel. It is extraordinary that *Wieland* should only allow Clara to experience "horrors," or indeed to even use this term insofar as it denotes feelings of dread and dismay, in connection to this frustrating, inscrutable person who happens to be much closer to the heart of the tale, as he is eventually revealed to be the intellectual author of the crimes that occasion the destruction of the familial unit, as I discuss below. As Clara reluctantly comes to admit, "the intellectual endowments of this man [are] indisputably great" (69).

While the novel's characters spend the entirety of the narrative trying to pin down what it is about Carwin that is "Other," the narrative gives readers no concrete clues as to what it is about this character that is essentially troubling, or, I argue, not white. Instead, it employs the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode to generate an atmosphere of terror/horror through tropes of the "savage" and the fantastic, the peculiar and inscrutable, and the ancient and decaying, which depict a world of menace and unease for white characters without using an explicit vocabulary of racial difference.[82] It is key, then, to engage with these aspects of the Gothic mode as a form of racialized imaginary in order to frame a critical discussion about the ways in which the novel interrogates the material, aesthetic, and discursive intersections between Transatlantic, colonial Gothic writing and the institution of slavery. While the text does not treat race as an explicit theme, it is nevertheless trying to think through the interconnectedness between Enlightenment philosophy and the Transatlantic economy of the long eighteenth-century cultural milieu.

This period is characterized by the terror/horror inherent in the tangible realities of an economic system that thrived on the enslavement, subjugation, and discrimination of Black(ened) peoples. My readings of *Wieland* critically engage with these contexts and interpret the text as one which taps into the Gothic mode to invite readers to consider the complex, often-intertwined forces that not only shaped the cultural, socio-political,

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[82] Brown's efforts to shift affects of fear toward the experience of white people in a racialized world might be contextualized with his political involvement as a Philadelphia Quaker with British abolitionist discourses that aimed to reframe Black people as objects of sympathy rather than fear. See Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (1985). In *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938) C.L.R. James discusses the fear of white enslavers in the context of Black revolutionary movements in the Caribbean, arguing that white fear also plays a role in the underlying motivations for abolition. See James, *The Black Jacobins*, Chapter 4, "The San Domingo Masses Begin." I discuss the fear of white enslavers in more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

intellectual, and economic landscape of the time, but which also allowed the category of race to be codified through physical markers that became metrics used to uphold mechanisms based on hierarchization. In light of this, I turn to Black Feminist thought as critical methodology to present a reading of the racial undertones that figure in Brown's version of Gothic fiction. By unfolding the kind of analysis that centers the racial dynamics and implications hinted at throughout the text as they operate through the character of Carwin and his relationship with the Wieland family circle, it is possible to further challenge the idea that terror and horror are separate experiences, particularly in relation to the mind-body split and racial capitalism. The work of Toni Morrison is key to my Black Feminist interpretation of *Wieland*, predominantly as she engages with early American literature in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992). In this text, Morrison's insistence that race and racialization are not only crucial but also pervasive aspects in the literature(s) of the nation, since its inception, plays a fundamental role in my scholarship, since she notes that this is a phenomenon that takes place even in works that do not explicitly address or acknowledge Blackness. Given the nature of this thesis, like Morrison, "I [am] interested, as I [have] been for a long time, in the way black people ignite critical moments of discovery or change or emphasis in literature not written by [or sometimes even for] them" (viii), which certainly is the case with Brown's *Wieland*. Following my argumentative thread I have been laying out in this chapter, I too note the ways in which the presence of whiteness seems to be the default and dominant perspective in this text, but that it is not overtly stated or "a violently physical reaction… it is instead a conceptual response to a black, that is, nonwhite,

figuration" (Morrison viii). In essence, Brown's (re)formulation of the Gothic is one in which "black or colored people and symbolic figurations of blackness are markers for the benevolent and the wicked; the spiritual… and the voluptuous; of 'sinful' but delicious sensuality coupled with demands for purity and restraint" (Morrison ix), all of which appear, converge, and collide in *Wieland* when Clara meets Carwin, as I detail below. The complexities of racial representation in such a work of literature are important to consider, precisely because a mysterious figure like Carwin is depicted in such stark contrast to the Wielands' overwhelming whiteness. By considering these aspects of the novel alongside a Black Feminist theoretical, critical, and methodological practice— following the specific resonances of Morrison's thinking about early American literature as a corpus shaped by race, however tangentially it is touched upon—this chapter stands as a major part of this study that seeks to interrogate the intersections between slavery, colonialism, and the Gothic mode. Accordingly, then, the analysis that follows, treating this long eighteenth-century Gothic novel, is driven by my ongoing engagement with Black Feminist thought.

<p style="text-align:center">*****</p>

It is key to note that *Wieland* seemingly takes part in the enactment of the socio-economic pattern described above by treating Carwin as someone who is all body and no mind. This figuration is evident when he first enters the narrative, as Clara Wieland painstakingly describes every aspect of his appearance, voice, and embodied traits (as discussed below), in a clear departure from how she describes familiar characters around her. Through Carwin's many refusals to be "pinned down" in these terms, however, the

novel epitomizes how the Gothic mode unifies the kinds of experiences British

Enlightenment culture is making a strenuous effort to separate and theorize. It does this

by presenting terror as a phenomenon of the psyche, capable of transcending corporeality,

and horror as a somatic category, as something revolting and transgressive. Embracing

the refractory Gothic mode, Brown's text rejects the idea that human existence can be

neatly organized into minds versus bodies. My insistence to read the novel—the first of

its kind in the United States—in these terms responds to what Afro-Dominican scholar

Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo has articulated by writing that:

> As we know, the unequal binary between mind and body had emerged as an
> Enlightenment sine qua non. That a racist colonial economy tied black and mixed-
> race [peoples], enslaved and otherwise, inexorably to their bodies helped ensure
> their placement at the bottom of a racial hierarchy in which white (propertied)
> men symbolized the highest intellectual capacity. (81)

That the colonial (and later imperial) machine has exercised control over and driven the

budding project called the United States of America, since its inception as a republic, is

not a hidden or even discreet fact. In its resistance to these arbitrary classifications

between minds and bodies, between terror and horror, then, the Transatlantic, colonial

Gothic mode acknowledges and counters oppressive systems by articulating colonial

terror/horror in a way that suggests that someone like Carwin inhabits a bodymind,

referring to "the enmeshment of the mind and body" (Schalk 5).[83] By performing a

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[83] In the text entitled, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, Black Feminist scholar
Sami Schalk explains that "Bodymind is a materialist feminist disability studies concept from Margaret
Price… [about two categories] which are typically understood as interacting and connected, yet distinct
entities due to the Cartesian dualism of Western philosophy. The term *bodymind* insists on the
inextricability of mind and body and highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such
a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern"
(5). If critical scholarship is to interpret a colonial Gothic modality (such as that to which *Wieland*
subscribes) in generative ways, it will necessitate forms of inquiry that consider the full human context and

reading of *Wieland* that is focused on racial concerns, it is thus possible to show that the Gothic mode is never as effective as when it engages with colonialism, since this modality negotiates specific themes and tropes in order to respond to the social ills and anxieties that attend the emergence of modern life.

Wieland presents an indispensable addition to the body of works that this project reframes as the migratory, Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, since it makes use of this modality and colonial mobility to lay bare how Anglo-American literature is obsessed with the past and its traumas at the same time as it reveals brutality in the present. As I have alluded to already, treating terror/horror as it is deployed in the text primarily through the character of Carwin, my reading of Brown's novel examines the different strategies by which the Gothic is used to give voice to the more ineffably horrific aspects of slavery and colonial racialization, since, as Teresa Goddu has pointed out, this type of literature "registers actual events and turns them into fiction" (132). Additionally, a text such as Brown's, which in the United States alludes to racist and xenophobic views in its depiction of whiteness and its cursory treatment of marginalized and racialized peoples— in Clara's words, "The North-American Indians" and "the African slaves" (Brown 12)— expressly exemplifies a characteristic of the Gothic modality of literature in English which William Hughes has termed an "expanded temporality" (89). Such a feature, as Hughes explains it, "implicates the present [and] is intimately connected with the rise of a postcolonial consciousness among Gothic critics, and an acknowledgement of the Gothic

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status of Black and racialized peoples; additionally, it will require "modes of analysis… [that find] language that can effectively express the theoretical insights of these texts" (5), as Schalk further notes.

as both a genre and a discursive practice among those who work with literatures arising

from, or depicting, colonized or formerly colonized nations" (89). As I have pointed in

the Introduction and Chapter 1 to this dissertation, theorizing the Gothic as an aesthetic

genre which possesses a merely discursive interest in an archaic, unenlightened past is

reductive and does not fully engage with the capabilities of this modality; as Hughes

further observes:

> In a world of shifting signification, where terrors of the night are replaced by terrors of the light, the discourse of Gothic adds meaning, attempts to fix again the chiaroscuro of acceptable and unacceptable, to locate the reader in a familiar terrain of fear and outrage. Gothic *has* to be the face of the postcolonial because the culture of Gothic – grandiose, oppressive, deviant and yet awesome in the power its presence – is somehow not merely the face of the past, but of the imperialist past also. (89)

With this in mind, I return specifically to David Punter's text, *The Literature of Terror*,

which figures in my Introduction, and in which he discusses coloniality in such popular

works as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and H.

G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). While Punter's second edition to the text

presents what he calls "Some restorations" following "a flood of critical material on the

Gothic" (viii), and his revised chapters admit to a largely historicized problematic

engagement in these Gothic texts with race and racialization, pointing to their many

"images of white imperialism in its decline" (13), Punter nevertheless makes excuses for

these problems. For instance, after pointing to the ways in which Wells' *Doctor Moreau*

is "attempt[ing] to purify the race," the critic concludes that "None of this, of course, is to

think of Wells as a racist: far from it" (13). In this sense, taking up my discussion of

Punter's quasi-pernicious views, I wonder if we might not look to more reparative

readings of the Gothic, which, while attending to these problematic aspects in Gothic

texts, fully acknowledge how they are indicative of a long eighteenth-century tradition

that relies on racist readings of race and racial categorizations. As all the texts I examine

in this project suggest, in colonial settings that cannot divest themselves from the specters

of coloniality and whiteness the Gothic becomes almost predictive, in subtle and blunt

ways alike. This is certainly true of Brown's *Wieland,* since the ostensible protagonists of

the tale, the Wieland family and their neighboring friends, enact and inhabit a specific

form of whiteness that is animated as much through their secluded and self-contained

lifestyle, as it is by their religious piety which seems to contend with their adherence to

Enlightenment principles, as I elucidate above. Perhaps a key part of reimagining the

Transatlantic, colonial Gothic "requires modes of analysis that take into account both the

relationships between social systems of privilege and oppression as well as the context in

which categories of… race… exist and are given meaning" (Schalk 5). Moreover, if, as

Massimiliano Demata has observed, Gothic works create "a narrative space in which the

'tale' is intruded upon by elements of 'reality', a narrative space which discloses to

readers the dangerous proximity and closeness of the alien presence of the… 'Other'"

(23), then a text such as *Wieland* perfectly "reveals a complex strategy in which domestic

and alien, real and fictitious, familiar and unfamiliar converge and mingle" (Demata 23)

to "implicate the present" (89), as in Hughes' quotation above.

    As I have discussed it in the opening body chapter of this study, the term "Gothic"

is fraught with nuances and contradictions, since it shifted in British discourse from a

pejorative term to the name for a valuable subversive function, especially in the

Transatlantic context. The historical and socio-cultural shifts that enabled the term's

rehabilitation correspond to its Atlantic literary migration, as its role in working through

socio-political tensions connected to race and colonialism are substantiated in the

literature in English that is being published in the long eighteenth century. Just as it is

crucial to trace the genealogy of the term "Gothic," as I have done, to understand its

cultural work, it is equally necessary to consider the genealogy of the afterlives of

Wieland, as I also do in this study. As my reading of Brown's novel suggests, this text

plays a part—however indirectly and ineffably, since it is "Gothicized" (89), to borrow

this term from Hughes—in vocalizing a configuration of the racial imaginary of the

United States, an understanding and practice which have survived and outlasted the

eighteenth century. Indeed, my reading of this novel regards it as a text that sets the

groundwork for understanding the kinds of colonial socio-political concerns that generate

racial inequity, inequality, subjugation, and xenophobia that continue to run through the

fabric of American society to this day. The present moment that is being lived in the

United States, where division and racist views continue to generate violence against

racialized minorities, is inherited from long eighteenth-century concepts that, as *Wieland*

implies, center and depart from the category of whiteness. When, in the middle of the

narrative of this American Gothic novel Clara Wieland asserts, "I am not fearful of

shadows" as in the title of this chapter, and goes on to explain that, "The tales of

apparitions and enchantments did not possess that power over my belief which could even

render them interesting. I saw nothing in them but ignorance and folly, and was a stranger

even to that terror which is pleasing" (52), she is not only joining in the Anglo-American

tradition that theorizes the Gothic by distinguishing intellectual terror from a lower order of bodily horror; she is also gesturing, I argue, to the material histories of colonialism. While the narrator intimates that she is not afraid of ghostly or otherworldly specters, the text uses Gothic ambiguity to intimate that perhaps the emerging, growing "shadows" that haunted and continue to haunt the history of the United States are actually the complex, insidious effects of colonialism and racism.[84] As Morrison terms it when analyzing Edgar Allan Poe's use of images of whiteness vs. shadows in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838):

> Both are figurations of impenetrable whiteness that surface in American literature whenever an Africanist presence is engaged… these images of… whiteness seem to function as both antidote for and meditation on the shadow that is companion to this whiteness—a dark and abiding presence that moves the hearts and texts of American literature with fear and longing. (33)

By engaging with Morrison's idea that the black/white binary is a shaping dynamic underpinning American literature, it becomes possible to identify that the omission of race as an overt subject in *Wieland* reflects the underlying assumptions and biases of the white literary tradition. Further to these points is John Paul Riquelme's observation that

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[84] Years later, American author Nathaniel Hawthorne would use his prefatory note in *The Marble Faun* (1860) to level a complaint about the struggles of trying to write tales of haunting in an early republic that, according to his view, had no past and afforded few materials for writers of fiction to draw from. He asserts that, "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery" (4), which perhaps explains why his writings are so preoccupied with the shaming and shameful aspects of the history of Puritanism in early colonial times. It is telling that while Hawthorne's literary oeuvre does not make overt connections to the institution of slavery and does not immediately draw from the horrors of colonialism in the United States, works like *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), as well as his earlier collection of short stories, *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) and *Mosses From and Old Manse* (1846), contain themes that gesture as much to the effects of colonialism as they do to old curses and religious zeal. In this context, Hawthorne's lamentation about the young nation's lack of "shadow" seems to be particularly ineffectual. It is key to note as well that while Brown's fictive narrator is telling American reading audiences that she is not afraid of shadows, Hawthorne's very real address to them, years later, is stating that there are no shadows to speak of in the US.

Anglo-American societies ought to attend to "the Gothic character of history" (1), making it essential for critics, scholars, and even reading audiences to be aware of how the Gothic operates in Transatlantic settings, and to what end. Brown's own Gothic response would seem to be indicating that Blackness is portrayed in relation to whiteness, always, and that this reinforces racial hierarchies and produces all manner of hauntings.

By engaging in the type of work that approaches eighteenth-century literary texts in this particular historical and political context, through examining the Gothic mode's intersections with slavery and colonialism, my aim is to generate the kind of critical scholarship that does not reproduce the white artifact we refer to as the "long eighteenth century." As a descendant of the kind of Enlightenment structures that disavow their own whiteness, this category has not, to date, adequately allowed us to think alongside it in order to better understand where Anglo-American culture, as a colonial structure defined by race, is located in the present.[85] It is key to interrogate the positionality of the Gothic as well within such a tradition. This is key, I argue, given that critics like Riquelme point

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[85] I am using "descent" in the Foucauldian sense here to refer to how the disavowal of whiteness has passed genealogically from the eighteenth century to the present through liberal discourses including "multiculturalism." See Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (1980); and Lisa Lowe, "Imagining Los Angeles in the Production of Multiculturalism," in *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996). It is important to note that while I use "descent" in this way, it is generative to think about the concepts of genealogy with Black thinkers like Afro-Brazilian Denise Ferreira da Silva in her essay "Before *Man*: Sylvia Wynter's Rewriting of the Modern Episteme," appearing in the text *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (2015) edited by Katherine McKittrick. In this essay, da Silva draws on the work of Foucault on genealogy but reads it against Wynter in order to highlight the intersections of race, power, and knowledge, offering a discussion of the mechanisms that sustain global inequalities, racialization, and exclusionary notions of humanity; she writes that Wynter "deploys the colonial to fissure Foucault's glassy classical order, reproducing at the level of the symbolic, the colonial juridical-economic grid, thereby inviting a return to the kind of critique of ideology Foucault dismisses" (94). In this sense, it is key to think alongside thinkers like da Silva since she engages with Wynter to ultimately move beyond a Foucauldian theory that "formulate[s] a view of power as a 'theory of domination' without systematically considering colonial domination" (da Silva 97).

to how, within the long eighteenth-century literary tradition, "dread takes a new form as interminable suspense… a suspense that later writers and readers (including current ones) experience as an abiding anticipation of violence in the form of terrorism and total war" (2). If, as he explicates, these conceptions of terror (and horror, I contend), "emerge historically with the French Revolution" (2) to pervade colonial and imperial Transatlantic spaces, then his assertion that they are always "significantly registered in the Gothic tradition" (2) takes on additional meanings in the context of a novel like Brown's *Wieland*, a project that embodies and grapples with ideas like American exceptionalism.[86]

Perhaps engaging in critical attempts to delineate the seemingly arbitrary constants that nevertheless denote a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality might pose a somewhat paradoxical problem, since a Gothic subjectivity is not an easily definable concept. If, as my readings of it highlight, the Gothic mode continues to agitate and trouble categorizations like the human, race, and racialization through means of terror/horror and dread, in historical moments "in which extensive contact with other cultures was challenging the hierarchical notion that Europeans were the defining form of humanity" (Riquelme 3), then a significant element of its subjectivity lies in this literature's ability to respond to shifting historical situations which are already predicted in and invoked through it. Morrison's examination of early American literature levels a generative accusation when she asserts that "it is striking how dour, how troubled, how

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[86] See, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville's two-volume text, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840), for an early reference depicting the United States as a "quite exceptional" (36).

frightened and haunted our early and founding literature truly is. We have words and labels for this haunting—'gothic,' 'romantic,' … whose sources are to be found in the literature of the world these immigrants left…" (36). The kinds of descriptions and narratives that constitute what I term the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic—of which Brown's *Wieland* is very much part—engage with the material histories of colonialism in ways that expose how eighteenth-century Enlightenment socio-political and cultural anxieties are not only predictive but also ongoing. My reading of a text such as *Wieland*, then, moves away from the assumption that "Gothic fiction is typically the black sheep of the Anglo-American novel" (Riquelme 3), to examine it fully instead as writing that is insistently urgent, generative, and emphatic.

Reading Race in America: Finding Carwin's Origins

> His narratives were constructed with so much skill, and rehearsed with so much energy, that all the effects of a dramatic exhibition were frequently produced by them. Those that were most coherent and most minute, and, of consequence, least entitled to credit, were yet rendered probable by the exquisite art of this rhetorician… Mysterious voices had always a share in producing the catastrophe, but they were always to be explained on some known principles, either as reflected into a focus, or communicated through a tube.
>
> <div align="right">Clara's musings about Carwin when he interacts with the
Wieland family circle[87]</div>

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[87] Brown, 71. In this scene, Clara records Carwin's deportment and ideas in minute detail, since the Wielands and their friends are discussing "the inexplicable events that had lately happened" (71), in which "mysterious voices" had been heard by the family on different occasions. In the article, "The Function of Sound in the Gothic Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin" (2016), Angela M. Archambault traces the emergence of early Gothic texts in Britain, examining, as I do, the ways in which "the genre proved itself rather ungovernable and ever shifting" (3). What is compelling about Archambault's discussion is how she locates "acts of transgression – the principal occupation of Gothicism itself – [in] a sort of audio soundtrack of noise, music and voice" (3), singling out sound as "capable of triggering panic and confusion" (3). Writing about the effect and function of sound in the works of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis specifically, Archambault concludes that "Voice is a potential means of expressing menacing threats… [and that it also] first emerges in the Gothic novel as a means of establishing

Wieland is a novelistic venture that blurs the lines between the real and the fantastic, as the text's preface promises readers that there is much to learn from engaging with the story (5-6). The novel itself foregrounds religion as one of its main concerns, an assertion that has guided much of the existing criticism.[88] The American Gothic tradition thus begins by borrowing from the British Gothic tradition which emphasizes the capacity of "Gothic" writing to challenge and perturb theological, doctrinal, and sectarian thinking.[89] From its outset, *Wieland* makes heavy allusions to the persecution of dissenting Protestants in England, for example when Clara recounts her family's history and notes that her father's reason for immigrating to North America was owed in part to his unsustainable "religious tenets," since he had been seized by studying "the doctrine of the sect of Camissards" (10), as well as to the fact that "He had imbibed an opinion that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations" (Brown 11)[90]. By setting up the Wieland family history in this way, Brown is disclosing

a romantic connection between two protagonists" (4). This is something to which I return later in this chapter when I discuss Clara's reaction upon first meeting Carwin outside of her kitchen.

[88] There is a large critical tradition of published works that focus on the treatment of religious concerns in the text, including John G. Frank's "The Wieland Family in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*" (1950), Larzer Ziff's "A Reading of Wieland" (1962), and Justin D. Cosner's "The Flow of Narrative: Misleading Structures and Uncertain Faiths in *Wieland*" (2014).

[89] Some critical writings that articulate this understanding of the Gothic include texts such as *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity* (2008), in which its editor, John Paul Riquelme, writes that, "The historical origins of Gothic writing in the eighteenth century are simultaneously political and aesthetic. Rising along with the English novel during the same decades that prelude to Romanticism, the Gothic in its narrative form engages issues of… the quality of being English (including the holding of anti-Catholic religious attitudes" (4). Also see Diane Long Hoeveler's *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* (2014), which examines the rise of Protestantism in England as necessitating to define itself against other cultural practices in order to establish a sense of Englishness (3).

[90] In his essay, "'Do You Know the Author?': The Question of Authorship in 'Wieland,'" Walter Hesford explains that the Camissards are "a radical French Protestant sect" whose doctrines "shape"—and skew—the elder Wieland's interpretation of scripture (241), setting into motion the novel's "haunt[ing] drama" (241). Interestingly, in his notes to the Modern Library Classics edition of *Wieland*, Caleb Crain explains

that here is a familial unit whose religious beliefs and piety have dictated their migration

patterns and featured profoundly in their education. The Wieland siblings, Theodore and

Clara, grow up in rural Pennsylvania and inherit from their father a "species of

benevolence" (12) since he spent several years of his life engaged in the "conversion of

the savage tribes" (12). This is revealed casually at the novel's outset when Clara is

establishing a kind of prehistory of the Wieland family, placing them in the United States.

Of this, Walter Hesford has written that the elder Wieland's religious beliefs "seem to

displace all other authority in his life and govern his decision to journey to America,

where he engages in the common effort of displacing Native American culture with a

Bible-based logocentric culture" (240-241), omitting any of the terror/horror this

produces and indeed evokes. Hesford's analysis of *Wieland* focuses on the Wieland

patriarch's "failure" to carry out his (destructive) "mission" successfully, and only

mentions this aspect of the text insofar as it is linked to a white character whose

disposition is "gloomy, depressed, and genetically poetic" (241). The novel thus features

at its core characters that go through life convinced of their moral, religious, and racial

superiority, a conviction that amounts to a centering and substantiation of their whiteness.

This is a key aspect of this early Gothic text, one which assumes and confronts the

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that the Camissards of France "were subject to ecstatic trances, in which they heard voices and spoke in tongues" (368-369). There is also a connection between the Quaker movement and the Camissards; as Françoise Tomlin explains in the article, "Quakers – in France and in the World" (2016): "Quaker beliefs developed in the south of France through local Christian pacifists who belonged to a mystical branch of the Huguenots. Their services had long periods of silent reflection and no pastors. In the early years of the 18th century, they criticized the Camisards, a group of French Protestants who wanted to take up arms against the government in order to guarantee religious freedom. The pacifist group failed at that endeavor, and so distanced themselves from the Protestants" (Tomlin).

recalcitrancy with which the term Gothic has always been described.[91] It is telling that critics like David Lyttle denounce Brown's writing for being "exasperating," for "lead[ing] to critical uneasiness," for seeming "ambiguous," and for featuring a distinctive "unsettled fluidness of vision" (257). But, where such critical writings focus on authorial intent and the biography of Brown written by "his personal friend… William Dunlap,"[92] this study attends to the aspects of the story which point to the ways in which "the Anglo-American Gothic tradition, rooted in slavery, reveals the racialized construction of freedom in the Atlantic world" (Goddu 71). Clara Wieland's casual racist observations surrounding the treatment of Indigenous peoples at the hands of members of her family, early in the text—including their father's purported kindheartedness in thinking "that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations" even though "He was terrified at first by the perils and hardships to which the life of a missionary is exposed" (11)—provides an accurate indication of the racial dynamics with which this Gothic tale struggles. She describes, for instance, in a remarkably detached and dispassionate manner, that their father's "resolution of complying with what he deemed the will of Heaven" manifested itself in his decision to migrate to the United States, since "The North-American Indians naturally presented themselves as the first objects for this species of benevolence" (12). In the same paragraph, she lets readers know that once her father had moved on from "civilizing" North American Indigenous peoples, he went on to accrue land and wealth based on "the

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[91] See Chapter 1 of this thesis, in which I offer a detailed description of the genealogy of the term, as mentioned previously.

[92] In his essay, "The Case Against Carwin" (1971), Lyttle is referring Dunlap's biography, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown* (1815).

service of African slaves, which were then in general use" (12). Clara's full description of

how her father becomes a settler in Philadelphia reads as follows:

> purchasing a farm on Schuylkill, within a few miles of the city, set himself down
> to the cultivation of it. The cheapness of land, and the service of African slaves,
> which were then in general use, gave him who was poor in Europe all the
> advantages of wealth. He passed fourteen years in a thrifty and laborious manner.
> In this time new objects, new employments, and new associates appeared to have
> nearly obliterated the devout impressions of his youth. He now became acquainted
> with a woman of a meek and quiet disposition, and of slender acquirements like
> himself. He proffered his hand and was accepted. (12)

In this astoundingly insensitive paragraph, Clara has perfunctorily revealed that her

family's "wealth" is owed in great part to her father's practical and profitable "use" of

"African slaves," following his lack of success in his "spiritual errand into the

wilderness" (Hesford 241). In a critical move that seems to correspond with the text's

incidental mention of slavery, Hesford writes that, "The elder Wieland handily transforms

himself from a failed missionary into a successful capitalist, exploiting cheap land and

slave labor, though repressed guilt over his failure eventually works itself out

explosively" (241), referencing this character's mysterious death.[93] It is this desultory,

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[93] The elder Wieland's death (as well as the scenes leading up to it) is arguably one of the most puzzling events that occurs in the text, early in the narrative, and is described by Clara as a "mournful catastrophe" (15) and a "disaster" (19). Clara recalls that when she was six years old, her father, "After feeling "inquietude," "exhibit[ing] tokens of alarm," suffering from "fits," and "complain[ing], in a tremulous and terrified tone, that his brain was scorched to cinders" (15), makes his way to his temple, alone, where it is implied that he experiences a form of spontaneous combustion. Through Clara's narrative point of view, she discloses that: "By his imperfect account, it appeared, that while engaged in silent orisons, with thoughts full of confusion and anxiety, a faint gleam suddenly shot athwart the apartment. His fancy immediately pictured to itself, a person bearing a lamp. It seemed to come from behind. He was in the act of turning to examine the visitant, when his right arm received a blow from a heavy club. At the same instant, a very bright spark was seen to light upon his clothes. In a moment, the whole was reduced to ashes. This was the sum of the information which he chose to give. There was somewhat in his manner that indicated an imperfect tale. My uncle was inclined to believe that half the truth had been suppressed" (19). Following this description of the events, her father suffers from "Fever and delirium [which] terminated in lethargic slumber [and] in the course of two hours, gave place to death" (19).

almost cursory treatment of enslavement in the text, by the Wielands and critics alike, that

perhaps misses the opportunity to engage with the more nuanced aspects of it. A critic

like Hesford glosses over the histories of brutality attached to so-called "slave labor,"

indicating instead that the shameful aspects of the Wieland family in the U.S. are linked

to a white settler's "failure" to become an effective evangelist or converter of "savage"

peoples, occasioning him to turn to the commodification of Black enslaved peoples.

When, as an adult, Clara recalls the strange events surrounding her father's death, she can

only pose a series of questions that are as ambiguous as they are indicative of her family's

white, religious sensibilities; she asks:

> Was this the penalty of disobedience? this the stroke of a vindictive and invisible
> hand? Is it a fresh proof that the Divine Ruler interferes in human affairs,
> meditates an end, selects, and commissions his agents, and enforces, by
> unequivocal sanctions, submission to his will? Or, was it merely the irregular
> expansion of the fluid that imparts warmth to our heart and our blood, caused by
> the fatigue of the preceding day, or flowing, by established laws, from the
> condition of his thoughts? (20)

That her father's supposed "repressed guilt" is owed in no part to his enactment of cruelty

bespeaks an early American family that supports a socio-economic system based on the

Transatlantic slave trade. As Ian Baucom has argued, "what we know of the trans-

Atlantic slave trade is that among other violences it inflicted on millions of human beings

was the violence of becoming a 'type': a type of person, or, terribly, not even that, a type

of nonperson, a type of property, a type of commodity, a type of money" (11). It is not my

aim here to discuss the supposed economic viability assigned to enslaved peoples in the

United States or elsewhere, nor is it my goal to present a chapter that investigates the rise

of a global financial system based on the (ongoing) catastrophes of racialization; rather,

by pointing this out, I am interested in engaging with Brown's novel from a critical and human perspective, as per the Black Feminist methodologies practiced, lived, and modeled by the thinkers I engage with throughout this dissertation, which necessarily center the lived experiences of racialized peoples and offer critiques of (reading) race, universalism, and colonialism. These are perspectives that note the ways in which this Gothic text is aware of "what it might mean to suggest that the present is more than *rhetorically* haunted by the specter[s]" (Baucom 18) of slavery, colonialism, and racialization. Through the intrusive character of Carwin, then, after Clara Wieland has disclosed her family's racist past, this novel is able to delve into the essence of the Gothic modality as it struggles to register racialized peoples, inevitably turning to a kind of inexpressible terror/horror through a plot is that not easily describable.

The "Gothic" aspects guiding this initial part of the text—insofar as "Gothic" denotes terror/horror in Transatlantic spaces like the United States—are, on the one hand, the level of ease with which *Wieland*'s narrator can recount colonial violences committed first against Indigenous peoples and then against Black enslaved Africans, in the beat of a single paragraph. On the other hand, there is a certain sense of uneasiness which the text realizes once the narratological and meaning-making functions of this paragraph are revealed: the Wieland children were consequently brought up in a particularly crafted environment, in which they were encouraged to "retire into solitude, and shut out every species of society" (12), and where "The loneliness of their dwelling prevented [them] from joining any established congregation" (13), as I mentioned previously. As I allude to in an earlier footnote of this chapter, Diane Long Hoeveler has noted that "In Gothic

literature, a reactionary, demonized and feudal Catholicism is created in order to stand in

opposition to the modern Protestant individual, who then alternatively combats and flirts

with this uncanny double in a series of cultural production that we recognize as Gothic

novels" (3), suggesting not only that Gothic literature subverts Roman Catholicism, but

that it also challenges Protestant reason. Where British Gothic texts generate a demonized

Catholic other, *Wieland* tailors this form to speak to eighteenth-century American readers.

As Hoeveler suggests, the British Gothic deploys a caricatured version of Roman

Catholicism in order to depict its allure and challenge to Protestant reason, as well as its

frightfulness. The Gothic mode, in other words, acknowledges rather than suppresses its

own ambiguities, even revels in them. In *Wieland*, the specter of Catholicism that haunts

British history gives way to the specters of race and colonialism that condition even the

most "solitary" settler lives in the Americas.[94] Clara goes on to reveal to readers that she

and her brother "were instructed in most branches of useful knowledge, and were saved

from the corruption and tyranny of colleges and boarding-schools," since their "education

was assigned to a maiden aunt" (21); Brown's model American family—which through

the course of the novel's development only consists of the Wieland siblings and

neighboring siblings, the Pleyels—is initiated into a radically secluded life. The

disturbing and disaffecting portrait of this family's experience that subsequently unfolds

amounts to a questioning of the bonds and values around which such family units are

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[94] This is meaningful to consider in the context of Caribbean and Latin American locales as well, in which Christianity was imposed upon yet resisted by Indigenous, Afro-Indigenous, and Black persons and groups alike. See Nathaniel Samuel Murrell's *Afro-Caribbean Religions: An Introduction to Their Historical, Cultural, and Sacred Traditions* (2010), and Richard D. E. Burton's *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean* (2018).

organized, one that allows us to recognize the Wielands' ostensibly cozy seclusion as a form of unstable xenophobia.[95] During Hoeveler's time at Marquette University, she compiled an electronic Gothic Archive in which the entry for "Gothic Xenophobia" explains that, "Given that the Gothic is concerned with persons and objects that induce terror, it is no surprise that Gothic texts obsess over the specter of the foreign Other, particularly when the real or imagined presence of this Other threatens, as it tends to do, the realm of established civility, knowledge, and order" ("Glossary of the Gothic"). Through the introduction of Carwin in(to) the narrative, Brown thus furnishes the story with an inscrutable person of dubious origins, an "Other" who effectively destabilizes the Wieland circle's knowable social, religious, physical, and intimate boundaries.

In many ways, even though it makes ample use of the sensationalism, extravagance, and stylistic excesses which characterize the British Gothic mode of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Brown's text joins a broader Gothic tradition dedicated to the interplay between the real and the romantic, as I note at the beginning of this section.[96] *Wieland*, like the other texts presented in this study, strikes a

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[95] Alongside texts like James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826), Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold-Bug" (1843), and Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), to cite some notable examples, long eighteenth-century writing in the United States seems to be dissecting and grappling with the same racial issues which have been prevalent, continuous, and sustained in the American society. When American Gothic writers write about race, for instance—and here I designate the term 'writing' as an active, actionable category that either addresses race or completely disregards it—they do so in ways that fail to treat this topic in any effectual way, since many works would seem to depart from concepts of whiteness, writing race as "Other."

[96] In the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the novel which initiates a discernible Gothic literary tradition in English, Horace Walpole insists that, "Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions" (60). Presenting his work under the guise of translator, as I describe in preceding chapters, the author further explains that this work is meant to be taken "as a matter of entertainment," but that some aspects of (antique) reality still pervade it (60-61). In the preface to the second edition, published a year later, Walpole sheds his authorial disguise, and explains that the text is "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (65), providing us with a lasting

balance between realism and romance by refusing to position itself exclusively within either tradition, joining the ranks of the works of literature that use the fantastic and inscrutable as a vehicle for socio-political commentary.[97] Despite the text's framing of itself as a straightforwardly didactic cautionary tale about religious fanaticism, for instance, the narrative that unfolds deploys a Gothic mood and methodology to destabilize the very cultural institutions—including family, self-possession, and whiteness—that it purports to uphold.

My reading of the text does not view it primarily as a moral lesson about Theodore Wieland's religious fanaticism gone wrong. Instead, I read it as a tale about white intimacies within colonial conditions, intimacies that are internally strange and always bordering on degeneracy and decay, in spite of Clara's many descriptions about how, in their adulthood, the Wielands and their friends repurposed the elder Wieland's temple, decorating it with "a bust of Cicero" (24) and using it as an enlightened, learned

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definition of the Gothic mode which, this early on, blurs the lines between the fantastic and the real. Of this somewhat disorienting aspect with which Walpole inaugurates this mode of writing, Frederick S. Frank asserts that, "By replacing the rationalist's dream of bliss with Gothicist's nightmare, Walpole had dared to 'disturb the universe' by raising a terrifying new hypothesis about existence itself that can be stated in the form of a question: what if all traditional norms of reality,—psychic, social, cultural, and spiritual, turned out to be illusory and self-deceiving, mere flickering horror images on the walls of the Platonic cave? Such a tormented scepticism coupled with the startled awareness of a contrarian cosmos becomes the basis for much of the terror and horror of later Gothic fiction" (25). However, perhaps what is so disturbing about the Gothic is not so much that it reveals the "illusory" nature of social, ontological, or epistemological categories, but rather that it points to what is contradictory and paradoxical within these human realities. In other words, the Gothic mode in English has always been obdurate in its perpetual (re)presentation of oppositions, clashes, and dissensions.

[97] Later authors of American 'Dark Romanticism' continue to use this formula that defies categorization, as we find that writers like Poe and Hawthorne borrow from different genres, including realism and romance, to construct stories that, as Peter Buitenhuis has observed, are essentially "fiction that is at once imaginative… and also represents a real, recognizable world" (7). Following my previous footnote regarding the clash of genres and realities present(ed) in Gothic works, Transatlantic, colonial Gothic is even more effective—and nuanced—in its representation of terror/horror not "By placing natural characters in unnatural circumstances" (Frank 26), but by reversing these fictive paradigms in colonial settings.

space dedicated to "sing[ing]," "talk[ing]," "and read[ing]" (25), or a place in which they discussed elite, intellectual European cultures, by thinking with "authors… [such as] Cicero," "the Latin tongue," and "Roman eloquence" (25). If, as Kelly Hurley has posited, the British Gothic tradition "practice[s] insistently, almost obsessively" the "ruination of the human subject" (3), or, to be more specific, "the ruination of traditional constructs of human identity… in a place of possibility of human transcendence, the prospect of an existence circumscribed within the realities of gross corporeality; in a place of a unitary and securely bounded human subjectivity, one that is both fragmented and permeable" (3), then Brown's text operates in distinctively underhanded ways to not only suggest something of racialization and the codifying of race in the U.S., but also to point to the closeness of the Wieland family circle, and their preference for each other's company over all others, as resulting in bonds that border on the incestuous.[98] Theodore Wieland marries and procreates with their neighbor, Catharine Pleyel, who has been a kind of second sister to him and Clara; meanwhile, Clara and the other Pleyel sibling, Henry, develop a filial relationship that the narrative strains uncomfortably into a form of romantic feeling on Clara's part. United by what Clara refers to as "triple bonds," the Wieland and Pleyel siblings "gradually withdrew… from the society of others, and found every moment irksome that was not devoted to each other" (22), effectively denoting a kind of Gothic entrapment. Here, it is key to note a few examples that would suggest the

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[98] The centering of quasi-incestuous family units seems to be a persistent theme in works that bear the Gothic appellative, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, in the long eighteenth century: see, for instance, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and Robert Louis Stevenson's "Olalla" (1885). These literary works all feature decaying, wealthy families whose lines are at an end due to interbreeding, and their staunch refusal to open up, as it were, to the outside world.

disordered familial bonds pervading this circle: when Clara has a nightmare in the summer-house, it is her brother Theodore who is the main agent of evil in her subconscious mind (60); recalling the episode, she is astounded that, "In my dream, he that tempted me to my destruction, was my brother" (83). Equally disturbing is Clara's distress when, during a scene which follows other instances of home invasion, as I mention earlier, that infringe upon the feminine space she has carved out for herself on her family's property, she hears men's voices in her bedroom closet whispering about her graphically violent demise (55-57); on one of these occasions when she is certain that someone is hidden inside the closet once again, she tries to open the door to reveal who is within, but is unable to do so because her efforts from the outside are met with resistance. Suddenly, she thinks to herself: "Have I not said that my actions were dictated by phrenzy [sic]? ... The frantic conception that my brother was within, that the resistance made to my design was exerted by him, had rooted itself in my mind" (84), further indicating a kind of latent incest that runs through the narrative thread. Brown's iteration of the Gothic, as it is made to inhabit a U.S. setting, highlights what Jenny DiPlacidi has argued about the function and role of incest in the Gothic; she writes that:

> incest was representative of a range of interests crucial to writers of the Gothic – often women or homosexual men who adopted a critical stance in relation to the heteronormative patriarchal world. In repositioning the Gothic, representations of incest are revealed as synonymous with the Gothic as a whole: complex, multifaceted and consciously resistant to the dominant social and sexual hegemonies in their models of alternative agencies, sexualities, forms of desire and family structures. (3)

The links that join the small Wieland family circle together are both overdetermined and tenuous, a problem that becomes clear—and more overt—once the outsider Carwin enters

the narrative. It is telling, for example, that Clara only reveals her romantic attraction to Henry Pleyel after she has met Carwin for the first time; her revelation comes as a sort of afterthought, making the declaration resonate strangely within the story we are being told. Clara's first-person narration, which has until the point she meets Carwin used a combination of techniques that place her, by turns, in the roles of generational archivist, family historian, and learned, sensible, and 'enlightened' sister, becomes unexpectedly frustrated and disorganized when she describes her first meeting with the stranger. She first intimates that she will "now come to the mention of a person with whose name the most turbulent sensations are connected" (48), and only resumes her narrative once she has confessed that it is "with a shuddering reluctance" (48) that she will describe this intrusive figure. With such convoluted techniques of introduction, *Wieland* sets up Carwin as someone who is perplexing and fearful—someone who cannot be approached directly. At the same time, Clara's language calls attention to how the embodied symptoms of fear are indistinguishable from those of excitement, including the kind of romantic excitement she has never associated with Henry. When she recalls meeting Carwin, she declares, "My blood is congealed: and my fingers are palsied when I call up his image. Shame upon my cowardly and infirm heart!" (48). As someone whose "heart" has never been particularly affected by the other two male figures in the story, Theodore and Henry, and, as I have highlighted, any hint of a carnal relationship between the Wieland siblings mostly elicits a fearful and frenzied response from Clara, her "infirm

heart" in the presence of just the memory of Carwin places erotic excitement on the side of the fearsome unknown.[99]

After taking a narrative break to regain composure, Clara launches into a painstakingly detailed description of Carwin's "entrance on the stage" (49). She describes his pace as "careless and lingering" and carefully notes that it had "none of that gracefulness and ease which distinguish a person with certain advantages of education from a clown" (49); she lets it be known that, in her estimation, "his gait was rustic and aukward [sic]," and his form "ungainly and disproportionated" (49). Clara's assessment of Carwin relies on pointed attention to the features and proportions of his body: she points out that Carwin's "Shoulders [are] broad and square, breast sunken, his head drooping, his body of uniform breadth, supported by long and lank legs" (49), and finishes this unprecedentedly thorough physical description by commenting that "His garb was not ill adapted to such a figure" (49), before attending to every single detail of Carwin's threadbare, tattered attire. By conceding that "There was nothing remarkable in these appearances; they were frequently to be met with on the road, and in the harvest field. I cannot tell why I gazed upon them" (49), Clara lays bare her class-based prejudices. Additionally, this mention of "the harvest field," calls to mind the many images of Black and mixed-race enslaved peoples forced to labor on sugarcane, cotton, rice, and coffee plantation fields and farms, under violent and coercive conditions, in

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[99] As I have pointed to in my brief discussion of the function of voice within the Gothic tradition, this conflation of danger and desire seems to be a notable Gothic trope, one which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis in which I analyze the work(s) of Matthew Lewis.

Transatlantic spaces.[100] Mired in Clara's classist and racist observations is the implication

that class and race have an incalculable bearing on upward and downward class mobility

in her society, as the text reminds us that even a person as secluded as she has been can

draw on these violent images to make assumptions about the way someone looks. Yet

even as she is unable or unwilling to confront her own social biases, the minute quality of

her attention to the details of Carwin's appearance illuminates their foundational logics.

The narration continues in this fashion, with Clara's long paragraphs that seek to capture

and report Carwin's every move. Her fixation develops immediately, as she moves from

expressing anxiety at the fact that she cannot get a good look at his visage from her

vantage point in the kitchen (50) to spending "half an hour, vaguely, and by fits,

contemplating the image of this wanderer" (50). When, at last, the house "servant… a girl

about [Clara's] own age" (50) finally opens the back door to address Carwin, she hears

his voice for the first time. This prompts Clara to assiduously record the sound, tone,

pitch, intonation, and lilt of the speech of "the stranger" (50), as she listens attentively to

the dialogue taking place between him and the housemaid. Clara notes that Carwin's tone

"rendered [his words] remarkable" (50) and instinctually can only compare it to the

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[100] For information regarding the enforced labor conditions of so-called "field slaves" during Transatlantic chattel slavery, as well as details of the violent work attached to the support of plantation economies, see for example Dennis R. Hidalgo's article, "Introduction of Africans in the Caribbean" (2016), and Simon P. Newman's book, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (2016). In the context of Pennsylvania, Gary B. Nash's article, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia" (1973) offers some additional insight; he writes that, "If those with capital to invest in human labor had heretofore preferred white indentured labor to black slave labor, even at some economic disadvantage, by late 1756 their options had been narrowed and they turned eagerly, in the face of the rising cost and unpredictability of white labor, to African slaves. The shift to black slave labor is reflected both in the shipping records and in the annual bills of mortality in Philadelphia… Although precise figures are not available, it appears that at least one hundred slaves entered Philadelphia in 1759. By 1762, probably the peak year of slave importations in the colony's history, as many as five hundred slaves may have arrived, many of them directly from Africa" (230-231).

voices of Theodore and Henry, reaching the conclusion that the newcomer's "voice was not only mellifluent and clear, but the emphasis was so just, and the modulation so impassioned, that it seemed as if an heart of stone could not fail of being moved by it" (51). Clara's reaction to Carwin is nothing less than visceral, which calls to mind Angela M. Archambault's examination of the function of sound and voice in the Gothic, as I mention in an earlier footnote of this chapter. Archambault's assertion that voice encapsulates danger at the same time as it is used to "establish a romantic connection between two protagonists" (4) is especially meaningful here in light of Clara's powerful response to Carwin's voice, which seems to be filtered by her (white) sensibility, as she senses his otherworldliness and difference.

Clara's own confusion at his sensual effect on her is consistent with the Gothic mode's project of blurring boundaries that Enlightenment epistemologies and social orders sought to uphold. "When he uttered the words 'for charity's sweet sake,'" she reports, "I dropped the cloth that I held in my hands, my heart overflowed with sympathy, and my eyes with unbidden tears" (51), concretizing the conflation of moral sensibility and visceral sexuality in her physiological response to the drifter. More importantly, Clara asserts that "He brought with him a placid brow; but no sooner had he cast his eyes upon me, than his face was as glowingly suffused as my own," drawing on tropes of romance to sketch the inexplicable connection between herself and this bewildering "phantom" (51).[101]

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[101] I would argue as well that through these kinds of descriptions, enhanced later in the novel in the uneasy relationship between Carwin and Clara, and Carwin and the "servant" girl, Brown is allowing this Gothic novel to establish a thematic dialogue with works like William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797), both of which are published in the United States prior

Clara's startled, flustered account of the stranger arrives at a passage that contains a reading of Carwin's racialized features:

> It was some time before I could recover my wonted composure. I had snatched a view of the stranger's countenance. The impression that it made was vivid and indelible. His cheeks were pallid and lank, his eyes sunken, his forehead overshadowed by coarse straggling hairs, his teeth large and irregular, though sound and brilliantly white, and his chin discoloured by a tetter. His skin was of a coarse grain, and sallow hue. Every feature was wide of beauty, and the outline of his face reminded you of an inverted cone… his eyes lustrously black, and possessing, in the midst of haggardness, a radiance inexpressibly serene and potent… This face, seen for a moment, continued for hours to occupy my fancy, to the exclusion of almost every other image. I had purposed to spend the evening with my brother, but I could not resist the inclination of forming a sketch upon paper of this memorable visage. (52)

This passage is remarkably astonishing in that it provides the first concrete textual evidence through which Clara—and Brown—absorb or perceive Carwin's ambiguous, but significant, racialization as someone who is not white. The racial markers here that denote racialization include Clara's use of descriptors such as "vivid" and "indelible" to distinguish his face; his "sunken" eyes; the "coarse… hair" covering his forehead; his "large… brilliantly white" teeth; as well as his "coarse" skin and "lustrously black" eyes. These racial markers that appear in Clara's scrutiny of this character's discrete facial features—especially the texture and color of his skin, contrasted with the "brilliant whiteness" of his teeth—reproduce the idea that a person's phenotype is denotative of the

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to *Wieland*. These two novels make use of the "sentimental novel" genre, by featuring virtuous, unsuspecting women characters who inevitably fall prey to the sexual manipulation of the mysterious men who set out to seduce them. In his essay, "A Reading of *Wieland*," Larzer Ziff makes connections between Brown's text and the "sentimental novel" tradition, and writes that, "*Wieland* is conventionally and correctly regarded as a novel of purpose which marks a turn from the stories of love and seduction fathered by Richardson to the kind of story made prominent by Holcroft, Bage, and Godwin. The particular purposes of *Wieland*, however, have never been precisely identified" (51). Perhaps the "particular purpose" *Wieland* serves is to tap into the Gothic mode to create, whether deliberately or by accident, an interruption of established British literary traditions.

ascribed function of race as a category that, although not essential or biological, still carries with it the weight of socio-cultural difference.[102] Here, I turn to Black thinkers like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who writes that race "pretends to be an objective term of classification, when in fact it is a dangerous trope" (216), one which is also symbolic and metaphorical, and which has in turned allowed for readings of racial markers that perpetuate racism and difference. I am also compelled to think alongside other critics like Cedric Robinson, whose influence on Gates is evident. In his text, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), Robinson asserts that, "racialism" is "the legitimation and corroboration of social organization as natural by reference to the 'racial' components of its elements" (6). Understood alongside Robinson's assertion, Clara's reading of Carwin's physical characteristics, in a section that is as descriptive as it is

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[102] Here, I would like to explain how Carwin's skin, which is described by Clara as being of or having a "sallow hue," is indicating specific forms of racialization that not only involve color, but which also bespeak difference. In her essay, "The 'Sallow Mr. Freely': Sugar, Appetite, and Unstable Forms of Whiteness in George Eliot's 'Brother Jacob'" (2022), Alisha R. Walters argues that "ambivalent racial depiction is ideologically connected" (432) to texts' explicit mention or omission of main characters' race, in processes that "are key to understanding the complex fluidities of racial construction" (432). Writing about Eliot's 1864 Edward Freely character, she notes that "he is explicitly referred to as 'the stranger with a sallow complexion' by the townspeople" (446). "Sallow," she explains, is "an adjective denoting a sickly yellow or brownish yellow colour," affixed to Eliot's character "in ways that are implicitly and explicitly racialized," since "this descriptor of skin tone is only attached to [him] after he returns from the West Indies, suggesting the climate has altered his skin tone permanently" (446). In Eliot's text, as in Brown's, no other characters are described using any overt physical markers, and their skins are never remarked upon (in Eliot's case not until Freely returns from the Caribbean, in any event), which serves the function of highlighting their "complexion… [as] set in explicit contrast to the white-skinned inhabitants in town" (Walters 446). For additional contextualization, see Sara Ahmed's "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" (2007), in which she argues that "White bodies are habitual insofar as they 'trail behind' actions: they do not get 'stressed' in their encounters with objects or others, as their whiteness 'goes unnoticed'. Whiteness would be what lags behind; white bodies do not have to face their whiteness; they are not orientated 'towards' it, and this 'not' is what allows whiteness to cohere, as that which bodies are orientated around. When bodies 'lag behind', then they extend their reach" (156). In this sense, in *Wieland*, Clara does not have to describe what she and her family look like, only what Carwin looks like, because their whiteness is an "essential something" (Ahmed 149) that does not have to be spelled out.

encumbered by an inexpressible apprehension and peculiar interest, takes on a disquieting meaning. If, as per Robinson, race is traditionally looked at as naturally determining human traits, or, that is, if socially, long eighteenth-century conceptions of race reproduce the idea that certain races are naturally, hierarchically better, then the above passage in *Wieland* is pointing out the ways in which these notions of race trouble a text that seems to want to understand it as a naturally organizing category. By the end of the tale, of course, we realize that this does not hold up, since Carwin has effectively confused, disturbed, and upset these ideas. But, in the present study, I am not by any means examining the intricate dynamics of race and class in any meticulous ways, since the aforementioned thinkers—as well as many others—have done this successfully.[103] Rather, like Jamaican-born British thinker Stuart Hall when he presents an indictment of Marxist ideology, "I'm questioning the theory for the model around which [reading race] is articulated: its Eurocentrism" (280). An integral part of this project, then, is to call into question a critical Gothic tradition which has not been overly concerned with race and racialization in Brown's *Wieland*, when the text evidently includes such astounding passages at the one above.

Additionally, by paying close attention to Clara's initial readings of Carwin, it is possible to draw firm comparisons between her use of language to describe him and the long eighteenth-century descriptions of Black enslaved people appearing in "fugitive slave" advertisements which were then so popular, particularly in Transatlantic, colonial

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[103] See, for example, the works of Robin D.G. Kelley, who was a student of Cedric Robinson's; and the works of Angela Davis, whose considerations about how race and class are intertwined add gender as a third form of oppression.

locales. A search of the *Caribbean Newspapers, Series I: 1718-1876* online database yields many similar examples: the third page of the *Kingston Journal*, published in Jamaica on November 29, 1760, includes a notice written by a James Dawes, who is looking for a "Run away… M[——] fellow named Abraham," whom he describes as having "a large Nose [and being] tall and slim" (*Kingston Journal* 3). Another example is found on the first page of the *Gazette of Saint Jago de la Vega*, published on February 22, 1781, in Jamaica, in which a Jacob Hill has posted two separate notes; in one, he is searching for a "Run Away, a N[——] Man Slave Named Richard… belonging to his Excellency Gen. Dalling," proceeding to describe the escapee as being a "remarkably tall, well-made, likely fellow, speaks good English, is very plausible, and plays well on the French horn" (*Gazette of Saint Jago* 1). This same Hill person is also trying to locate the whereabouts of a "Run Away… N[——] Woman named Maria," whom he describes as being "a short, stout wench, of a very yellow complexion" (1), bringing to mind Clara's mention of Carwin's "sallow hue" (Brown 52). In the same periodical, a year later, on December 5, 1782, a Thos. Nichols posted an advertisement looking for "a new N[——] Man named Industry" (3), with "little or no beard… he is about five feet ten inches high, stout made and very square over the shoulders; filed teeth, and of a pleasing countenance" (3). These written representations produce a kind of terror/horror in themselves, as the lawful language of fugitivity used here—combined with the transactional quality attached to these published advertisements, and with the reprisal with which these people will undoubtedly be met should they be "found"—is harrowing. But also, crucially, by drawing these comparisons between Clara's descriptions of Carwin and these

advertisements, Brown's iteration of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic is suggesting

something striking about the dissection of this character's features and how it measures

up against genres explicitly producing racialized codes of seeing—and registering—the

bodies of others. It is also significant that Carwin is described throughout the text as being

a kind of fugitive, wandering, and itinerant figure, one who "was a traveller in Spain"

(64), who presents himself as being "enlightened by reading and travel" (71), and one

who is seen by Henry Pleyel as a kind of unremarkable drifter through "the city; but

neither his face or garb made the same impression upon him that it made upon [Clara]"

(59). When, as a Black early career scholar, I look to this text to extract and examine

these instances from it, I am involved in broader critical projects, as I explain in the

preceding chapters, that necessarily attend to the Gothic mode's ways to generate dissent.

It is no wonder that *Wieland* cannot hold up its own structure or presumptions, in turn

making critics like Ziff (see earlier footnotes in this chapter) feel disconcerted when

writing about it as they struggle to pinpoint what the "function" of such a text might be.

One of the effects produced by Brown's text precisely the tucking away between its pages

of the capabilities it has to upset both the racial and the colonial imaginary. The novel

seems to be suggesting that the Gothic experience in the United States carries with it

racialization, fear, and a sense of terror, all of which are, to Clara, at least,

indistinguishable from desire as they exert competing pulls.

As I have mentioned, as the story progresses, Carwin is tentatively accepted into

the Wieland and Pleyel family circle, and the other characters join Clara's compulsive

efforts to determine his origins. Brown's text never quite answers these questions, and

characters and readers alike are left with a deliberately ambiguous idea of the figure and his history.[104] In the context of an Anglo-American culture increasingly insistent on race and ethnicity as identifiable sets of embodied traits and characteristics that determine who, and what, a person "is," the sustained refusal of Carwin's body to clarify his origins despite intense scrutiny frustrates the logics of racialization that preserve the domestic sanctity of the Wieland home. Unable to decipher, categorize, or distinguish Carwin clearly, Clara, Theodore, Catharine, or Henry cannot speculate on his identity based on their observations of his body. This uncertainty and inconclusiveness generate Gothic suspense in distinctly racialized terms, as a result of racial difference remaining spectral, not dismissed but never materialized. Clara's rhetoric strains to pin him down in racial terms—Carwin's hair is "coarse," his skin is of a "sallow hue," and his teeth are "brilliantly white" (52)—but in their refusal to cohere, *Wieland* has interfered with the vocabularies that invite readers to conclusively imagine human phenotypes as a failproof measure to categorize them racially. In doing so, *Wieland* struggles against itself and its own understanding of Western, colonial systems.

The narrative takes a dark turn when Carwin's cumbersome, inscrutable physicality yields unexpected intellectual prowess. Toward the end of the novel, Clara realizes, along with readers, that Carwin had essentially been stalking the family and using his ventriloquist—or his biloquist—skills to toy with, undermine, and confuse

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[104] Some years after the publication of Wieland, between 1803 and 1805, Brown published an unfinished story fragment entitled, *Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, in which some of this history is addressed. This story, which can be read as a companion piece or prequel to *Wieland*, establishes Carwin as "the second son of a farmer, whose place of residence was a western district of Pennsylvania" (237), and as someone who has "nothing which the law permits [him] to call [his] own" (274).

every member of the Wieland circle long before his "entrance on the stage" (49).[105] His

effect on Theodore Wieland yields unexpectedly gruesome results, as this character,

Theodore, is the one who has appeared in the text to have led his family to "[rise] to

enlightenment" (Crain xxii). By causing a complete break(down) in Theodore's

ostensible wisdom, judgment, and rationality, when he hears Carwin's dislocated voice

throughout the story (Brown 32-34), the written account in the text unavoidably—and

somewhat conclusively, points to the stranger as "*Wieland*'s villain" (Crain xxiii). Rather

than simply establish Carwin as a foreign, villainous figure, however, I contend that the

Gothic plot of *Wieland* is conferring intellectual powers to Carwin while revealing

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[105] Of Carwin's "Biloquium, or ventriloquism" (189) as Brown's own textual footnote terms it, Carwin tells Clara that, "You are not apprized [sic] of the existence of a power which I possess. I know not by what name to call it. It enables me to mimic exactly the voice of another, and to modify the sound so that it shall appear to come from what quarter, and be uttered at what distance I please" (189-190). Once she has this information, Clara can only express shock and fright, and later, when trying to prevent Theodore from physically harming her, beseeches him with what she thinks is the power of reason, explaining Carwin's biloquism; she utters, "O brother! spare me, spare thyself: There is thy betrayer. He counterfeited the voice and face of an angel, for the purpose of destroying thee and me. He has this moment confessed it. He is able to speak here he is not. He is leagued with hell, but will not avow it; yet he confesses that the agency was his" (208), effectively destabilizing this would-be rational narrative in a moment of unrestrained terror/horror. In Caleb Crain's words, "It appears as ventriloquism, or biloquism… detaches people's eloquence… [when] an adept may learn how 'to speak where he is not,' to borrow Clara's horrified turn of phrase" (Crain xxii). If Carwin is "speak[ing] where he is not," then his attire and racial indeterminacy— which, as Clara's first reaction emphasizes, are completely disjointed from his appealing, inviting voice— add another layer to the levels of racialization that appear in *Wieland*, since he might be confounding the narrative further by enacting the phenomenon of "passing." Indeed, the text stresses Carwin's theatrical or performative characteristics, as I discuss later in this chapter, and his potential "passing" finds other characters in the novel thinking that he is English or Spanish, always the member of a white racial or ethnic group. But, as I have shown, since his body refuses to be read in these terms, "passing" here might allow Carwin to enact another form of dissent, as Daphne A. Brooks has discussed in her text, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (2006). Writing about another such person, Brooks observes that the embodied acts of performing and passing are disconcerting to whiteness, especially when the person's "personal life… remain[s]… a source of occlusion and contention" (134). Brooks is referring to American actress Adah Isaacs Menken, who, like Carwin, whiteness has tried to read and pin down to no avail; she writes that, "At various moments in time, over a century's worth of biographers imagined Menken to be Jewish, Irish, Spanish, French, and even African American "passing" for white" (134).

Theodore as his pawn.[106] Consequently, Carwin's manipulations of Theodore and their

ghastly results effectively intervene in the ways Enlightenment culture is inflexibly

categorizing, or taxonomizing, terror and horror, minds and bodies. It is interesting that

Brown draws on a vocabulary of religious zeal to depict the sinister unraveling of white

patriarchal subjectivity as it gives itself over to a mysterious higher power. Even after

Theodore is apprehended for the murders of his wife and children (157), for example, the

soliloquy he expounds during his trial reveals his confused state of mind: he praises God

for being "the object of [his] supreme passion" (158) and thanks him for asking Theodore

to make "this sacrifice" (158). Theodore's graphic descriptions of how he murdered his

family beclouds the literary critical distinction of terror from horror, where terror is a

phenomenon of mind and horror of body; the climax of *Wieland* makes use of both,

almost interchangeably, calling to mind the scholarship of Saidiya Hartman and her own

use of these terms in changeable ways, as I discuss in the preceding chapters of this

thesis. In *Wieland*, terror is a visceral feeling that "dazzle[s]" and "bereave[s]"

Theodore's organs of their activity (160), a "phrenzy" that seizes him (162). At the same

time, horror overtakes him as an impassioned feeling that, in Theodore's own words,

"diffused itself over me" and developed into a "conviction of my cowardice, my

rebellion" (162). Thinking through these scenes with Hartman, this "litany of horrors"

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[106] Crain further links Carwin's biloquial talents, or his ability to throw his voice and impersonate the voices of others to perfection, with "the power of fiction," and cites Brown as writing about "'the pleasure in assuming the persons or placing ourselves in the situations of others'" (qtd. in Crain xxii). The critic further explains that "Ventriloquism was a demonic emblem of this art and may have reflected Brown's personal anxiety about his creative power" (xxii). But, since Carwin's motives are not quite made clear in satisfactory ways, his origins and intentions bespeak the ways in which Brown's text is ill-equipped to understand and cope with this foreign figure whose unfathomability it cannot ever fully explain.

(Hartman 19) expressed here establishes an iteration of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic that, in the hands of Brown, cannot possibly make distinctions between terror and horror. If "pain provides the common language of humanity" (Hartman 18), then what do we make of the fact that "The shocking accounts" (18) presented here "assault the barrier of indifference, for the abhorrence and indignity roused by these scenes of terror" (18) enacted by Theodore are still, somehow, condemning Carwin in the text? *Wieland*'s rejection of the conventional distinction of "terror-gothic" from "horror-gothic," by collapsing the generic distinction of "mental thrills" from "body thrills," contributes to a general troubling of colonial epistemologies premised on assigning particular qualities of mind to particular kinds of bodies.

While Clara Wieland's initial descriptions of Carwin focus heavily on his physical appearance, the ending of the narrative finds her wrestling against his "genius," concluding that "Darkness rests upon the designs of this man" (173). Ultimately, *Wieland* presents a series of reversals that lay bare the tenuous nature of colonial structures of selfhood. Theodore Wieland is not all mind, and Carwin is not all body. What is more, although Theodore is ostensibly the central character in this spectacular tragedy, Carwin effectively upstages him from the moment he enters the story and seizes Clara's attention. As an oblique protagonist, Carwin tells a very different story than the Wielands' of Transatlantic migration, one steeped in material, existential, and spiritual forms of violence, brutality, displacement, and disorientation. His "vagrant" wanderings from one place to the next—to borrow this phrase from Sal Nicolazzo's work in *Vagrant Figures: Law, Literature, and the Origins of the Police* (2021), in which Carwin is presented as

being "quintessentially a stranger [since] nobody can deduce his origins or his proper

social status" (168)—where this figure inhabits different personas, allude vaguely to the

kinds of cultural drifts mobilized by intersecting histories of colonialism. Henry Pleyel

reveals at one point that he has met Carwin in the past, while travelling in Spain: "While

traversing the scite [sic] of the theatre of old Saguntum, he lighted upon this man

[Carwin], seated on a stone, and deeply engaged in perusing the work of the deacon

Marti. A short conversation ensued, which proved the stranger to be English," but,

nevertheless, "His garb, aspect, and deportment, were wholly Spanish. A residence of

three years in the country, indefatigable attention to the language, and a studious

conformity with the customs of the people, had made him indistinguishable from a native,

when he chose to assume that character" (64-65). Henry's recollections confirm Carwin

as a fundamentally malleable character, a spiritual and cultural shapeshifter: he "had

embraced the catholic religion, and adopted a Spanish name instead of his own, which

was CARWIN, and devoted himself to the literature and religion of his new country"

(65). Clara finds the complexities of determining his identity in the face of such

transformations almost intolerably frustrating: "On topics of religion and of his own

history, previous to his *transformation* into a Spaniard, he was invariably silent.[107] You

could merely gather from his discourse that he was English, and that he was well

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[107] It is telling that the word "transformation" should appear in the narrative only this once, and in italicized letters, to refer specifically to the character of Carwin. Since the full title of the novel is *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale*, much of the critical attention to the text has expounded views on Theodore's complete change and what it spells out for Clara's own inherited mental state, as in the works of critics like William M. Manly in "The Importance of Point of View of Brockden Brown's *Wieland*" (1963); or, they have focused on the ways in which Brown's text transforms, or weaves in an out of, English literary styles and genres, as in the works of critics like A. Carl Bredahl, Jr., in "Transformation in 'Wieland'" (1977).

acquainted with the neighbouring countries" (65). She cannot understand the reasons "Why he had assumed the garb of a rustic" (66), why "He had adopted Spain for his country" (66), and, perhaps more forcefully, what could have possibly "made him abjure his religion and his country" (66). The tale's dénouement confirms Clara's sense that there is something sinister about his cultural ambiguity, without explaining quite how: she learns that Francis Carwin is supposedly a criminal under sentence of death, "who had escaped from Newgate prison in Dublin" (125), and whose crimes are seen as "acts of the blackest and most sordid guilt" (125), prompting her to conclude that "Bloodshed is the trade, and horror is the element of this man" (127). Even after Theodore is himself imprisoned for his confessed crimes, Clara remains fixated on how "Carwin was the enemy whose machinations had destroyed us" (182). That Clara cannot divest herself of these notions reveals the extent of her need to understand Theodore as fundamentally good-natured, despite any actions that indicate otherwise. To the very end, Clara insists that although there is no question that Theodore has committed the tale's crimes, that the trait of *criminality* that made the crimes possible belongs solely to Carwin. Hartman has written that:

> In positing the black as criminal, the state obfuscated its instrumental role in terror by projecting all culpability and wrongdoing onto the enslaved. The black body was simply the site on which the "crimes' of the dominant class and of the state were externalized in the form of a threat. The criminality imputed to blacks disavowed white violence as a necessary response to the threatening agency of blackness. (82)

This addresses the intertwined coding of criminality and mobility concerning Black (and racialized) peoples, illustrating how whiteness has historically registered them as embodying criminality. It points to the ways in which racist and xenophobic imaginaries

have contributed to the criminalization of Black(ened) peoples, which in *Wieland* finds

Clara projecting culpability onto Carwin to conceal her own family's role in perpetrating

terror/horror. Read alongside Hartman, then, it is possible to argue that a Gothic text like

Brown's underscores how these processes are deeply rooted in colonial terror/horror, as

the whiteness of the Wieland family circle must maintain oppressive power structures in

order to survive.

Beyond Reading Race in America: Black Feminism(s)

> I am not this villain; I have slain no one; I have prompted none to
> slay; I have handled a tool of wonderful efficacy without malignant
> intentions, but without caution; ample will be the punishment of
> my temerity, if my conduct has contributed to this evil.
> Carwin speaking with Clara, toward the end of the novel[108]

How should we describe the function of race in a novel that refuses to supply the

logical connections of its own racial imaginary? A crucial aspect of *Wieland* is precisely

the text's inability or refusal to present or decide with any exactitude what it is about the

character of Carwin that is "Other" to the Wielands and Pleyels, while leaning heavily

into the insistence—and existence—of this otherness. By sustaining this ambiguity, the

text affords us an opportunity to "read race" differently than the Wielands themselves do

in their efforts to decipher his physiognomy. Instead of focusing on Carwin's

"nonwhiteness," we ought to ask how Brown's novel is defining the Wielands' whiteness,

as I have done throughout this chapter. While imperial taxonomies allow racialized logic

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[108] Brown, 189.

to assert itself as something real and rational, *Wieland*'s Gothic worldbuilding relies on allowing nothing to be taken for granted, including the domestic, intellectual, and material lives of white settlers. The sensationalism of Brown's tale calls the claims of whiteness itself into question. When Clara first meets Carwin outside of her kitchen, her attempts to read his features exercise a white gaze that finds itself perplexed, agitated, and unsettled rather than satisfied. Because this text has set up this quintessential American family as figures who are "reinforcing whiteness as their natural home and point of origin" (76)—to borrow a phrase from Zakiyyah Iman Jackson—with the unequivocal yet vague terror/horror this invokes and produces for racialized peoples, it is possible to assert that the text delineates the colonial persistence of power in the most intimate of Transatlantic spaces that (continue to) animate the project called the United States of America. It is therefore necessary to call this whiteness into question, since the Gothic mode is in this text interrogating a "Eurocentric humanism [that] needs blackness as a prop in order to erect whiteness: to define its own limits and to designate humanity as an achievement as well as to give form to the category of [the racialized 'Other']" (Jackson 4). If Clara's own sense of comfort and security can be attributed to a whiteness she lives and inhabits—a whiteness materially founded on Christian missionary work, the colonization of Indigenous lands, and the profits of an economy of enslaved labor—this whiteness is only made legible to her through its chafing against the unreadable stranger, who frustrates its complacence and composure. Perhaps the Gothic mode is through this text additionally troubling the complacency of socio-economic and ontological systems which "are commonly predicated on the assumption that whiteness secures what is

'normal'" (Jackson 258), in turn prompting a character like Carwin to address the narrative and ask why he should make himself legible to the very thing that renders him illegible.

What *Wieland* has emphasized in meaningful ways, then, is the fact that whiteness must find ways of asserting itself, and insisting on its reality, without referring to the structures, taxonomies, or material conditions within which it manifests. It does this by deflecting scrutiny onto its "Others"—anything and anybody it deems different, inadequate, or dissimilar. Confronted with Carwin's unsettling ability to deflect the Wieland's policing gaze right back at them by weaving in and out of identities in ways that fray the boundaries of whiteness itself, the ideal colonial family implodes violently. If *Wieland* is Charles Brockden Brown's adaption of a British Gothic tradition to the American literary and cultural milieu, then the text's preoccupation with whiteness illuminates the particular ways the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic grapples with histories of colonialism. Here, I think alongside and recall Toni Morrison's struggles:

> with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive 'othering' of people and language… The kind of work I have always wanted to do requires me to learn how to maneuver ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister… almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains. (xi)

The text's insistent efforts to racialize, marginalize, and bedevil the figure of Carwin, along with its refusal to make him a stable racial object, bring to light the ways in which the racial capitalism and colonialism at the heart of the American nation's development have relied as much on spectral thinking as rational empiricism. Rather than suggest that Brown is deliberately subverting white supremacist logics, the novel is, at every turn,

through its Gothic essence, pushing racial logics to the limit in the interest of storytelling, with strangely affective, crucial, and significant results, namely the troubling of whiteness. As I have done throughout this chapter, by putting into practice contemporary Black Feminist methodologies when I approach such a text, it is not my aim to present readings that elucidate how Black Feminist theory helps us to understand *Wieland*; instead, I am more interested in highlighting how my reading of *Wieland* is indebted to Black Feminist knowledge, and to outline the contributions it makes to this tradition of knowledge.

If, as Barbara Christian notes in her article, "The Race for Theory" (1987), embodied knowledge and survival ought not to be discounted, then by resorting to inhabiting these other roles, the Carwin figures of Anglo-American literature can claim a level of access to living a life in which they too can illustrate how their embodied experience is capable of breaking away from Enlightenment theories that negate that their existence is, in fact, a form of knowledge. Black Feminism and Black Studies remind us in insightful ways that embodied experience is knowledge that must not be discredited, as it has been in the Western male tradition. Christian's assertion that, "people of color have always theorized… in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic," opens up an analytical arena in which Black existence and experience, for instance, can intervene in the ways in which Anglo-American literature insists on reading race and racialized subjects. Christian goes on to note that, "our theorizing… is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language (52), which finds Carwin inhabiting yet another compelling, more genuine part, since his

would-be racialized body and existence inherently understand that race, origins, and ancestry are more nuanced than inferable, deducible physical traits, speech, and attire.[109] If, as Christian asserts, Black and racialized people inhabit "forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic" and Carwin himself has "handled [his embodied] tool of wonderful efficacy," as in the epigraph to this section, then every aspect of his self (re)produces a narrative form, story, and play that *Wieland* cannot quite contain. Through the "Othered" character of Carwin, the person who is seen as both intruder and outsider, the novel implies, perhaps against itself, that colonial terror/horror, and whiteness, are spectrally and tangibly informing life and living in the United States. Brown's novel thus emphasizes what I have asserted in previous chapters, as my reading of the text further reframes Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a migratory mode that engages with colonial (and imperial) systems, and which refuses to be theorized precisely or even tidily so as to fit these systems. If, as Leila Taylor has intimated, "America's soul is Gothic" (1) insofar as the Gothic denotes a sustained engagement with fearfulness and continuous interruptions of the present by an insistent, nefarious past, then this novel's re-enactments of racialization function as an ominous indication of the structures which have allowed, and which continue to sustain, an American racial imaginary that envisions, time and again, who and what is to be feared. Set up as a moral tale, *Wieland* posits a clear source

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[109] I would argue that the character of Carwin marks the beginning of a tradition in Transatlantic Gothic works, as well as in the works that make use of certain Gothic techniques, that set a precedent for how authors present and treat inscrutable characters that are not easily, conventionally qualified, or delimitated. See for example the character of Bartleby in Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1856), who is described as "one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable" (1), and whom the story tries at every turn to decipher. See the character of Holgrave as well, in Hawthorne's text which I previously mention in this chapter, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851); Holgrave is described as possessing a "dark, high-featured countenance" (32).

of villainy without providing any means of accounting for it, even as the character who is charged with it denies it vehemently, as seen as well in the epigraph above. Consequently, whiteness itself, revealed as both a failed heuristic for interpreting the world and a site of deep vulnerability, is the troubled ground that requires Gothic representation.

Chapter 4 – "The Isle of Devils":[110] Blackness Ruptures Prose and Verse in Matthew Lewis's *Journal*

Matthew C. Brennan posits that the Gothic, as a specifically recognizable literary genre, "embodies anxieties that center on the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism. These anxieties about repressed feelings and instincts clearly evoke the monstrous" (4). This definition concurs with critical readings of the genre that continue to interpret it as a tradition that fleshes out controversial aspects of Anglo-American societies, as I have elucidated in previous chapters. While it is conceivable that the Gothic does indeed seize on the past in order to bring it to light, as it were, to provide socio-political commentary at the same time as it rehearses tensions in the sociocultural spheres of the Transatlantic locations it touches, it is still important to pause with the implications of Brennan's observation, particularly its by-now familiar model of the Gothic as a psychological phenomenon. As I discuss in preceding chapters, Horace Walpole has often been constructed as the originator of the Gothic tradition in literature in English, through his text *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in a period that coincides with the upsurge of public opinion against slavery in Britain. If Walpole's prototypical Gothic engenders, however obliquely, a tradition that serves to unearth problematic pasts in untrammeled ways that highlight particular historical conditions, then the psychological model of repression that inevitably looks to uncover authorial repression(s) and intent does not

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[110] Matthew Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica*; "The Isle of Devils" is "A Metrical Tale" inserted at the end of the first portion of the *Journal*, 261; Scholar Select ed., Andesite Press, 2015.

sufficiently account for the cultural breadth of the genre's disruptions.[111] Instead, in the present study I read the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a modality that, in excess of personal forms and narratives of anxiety, agitates and discloses as much as it uncovers and exhumes. This type of analysis has its roots in the critical and interpretive groundwork laid out by Black Feminist thinkers who, like Christina Sharpe, indicate that in the aftermath of systems of oppression and unfreedom, "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (9), as I mentioned earlier. The Gothic's preoccupation with the past in all its iterations—with repressed individual, familial, and collective fears and anxieties, as well as with the "monstrous," the "non-human," and the "barbaric"—has always denoted a mode, rather than a discrete literary genre, that manifests representational reminders of the Transatlantic spaces we inhabit as ever grappling with colonial and imperial violence, brutality, and oppression. In this final body chapter of this study, I turn to Matthew Lewis to examine how his writing can challenge definitions of the Gothic as a psychological phenomenon and argue for a broader interpretation that encompasses the haunting legacies of colonialism and imperialism. In the discussion that follows, I focus on Lewis's writing to underscore the significant role of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic in the evasiveness, prevarications, and conflicting nature of empire in works that, despite this, also vividly showcase the enduring presence of Black resistance. Before delving into Lewis's works, however, I find it fitting to offer

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[111] See works like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), which has been approached in this manner by critics such as Anne K. Mellor in "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*" (2012), and the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, which have also been approached in biographical ways by critics such as Floyd Stovall in "The Conscious Art of Edgar Allan Poe" (1963). These examples demonstrate how Gothic literature provides a powerful means to examine historical conditions, confront traumas, and engage with the lives of authors to make sense of their writing.

additional context on the Gothic tradition, since, out of the three primary authors who comprise this study—Olaudah Equiano, Charles Brockden Brown, and Matthew Lewis— it is the latter who has been described as the author who "created a new gothic: atheistic, decadent, perverse, necrophilic and hellish… [his] influence was everywhere" (Bloom 2). By contextualizing Lewis's writing within this convention, my readings illustrate how Lewis transcends traditional Gothic genre classifications and engages with the material conditions of enslavement and colonialism.

When Brennan's description of the Gothic refers to "embodie[d] anxieties," he points specifically to the English cultural response to the end of feudalism and crumbling monarchical rules, or, rather, to the tensions that arise when the feudal order will not expire. This definition of the Gothic as a direct descendant of *The Castle of Otranto* is pervasive in critical writings that consider the Gothic as a thematic aesthetic genre in eighteenth-century studies.[112] In the field of literary studies, Gothic criticism never tires of narrating how Walpole added the subtitle "A Gothic Story" to the novel's second edition in 1765 (Walpole 63), as I discuss in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Writing for the British Library's 2014 virtual section entitled "The Origins of the Gothic," John Mullan ventures that "Gothic fiction began as a sophisticated joke. Horace Walpole first applied the word 'Gothic' to a novel in the subtitle – 'A Gothic Story' – of *The Castle of Otranto*… When he used the word it meant something like 'barbarous', as well as

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[112] This is the case with Frederick S. Frank's reading of Walpol*e* (13), as I mention in preceding chapters, J. Paul Hunter's reading of Shelley (xvi), Brenda Hammack's reading of Florence Marryat (vi), David Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf's reading of Lewis (9), and Chloe Chard's reading of Radcliffe (xxii), to mention some examples. These critics follow the tradition of engaging with Gothic works via biographical readings as well, in order to expose authorial repressions.

'deriving from the Middle Ages'" (Mullan). Adding to this observation in the

introductory section to the 2011 Broadview edition of Walpole's novel, Frederick S.

Frank writes that the author's interest in Gothic architecture inserted itself in his writings,

and that his:

> Gothicizing was no longer merely architecture but an attitude of discontent reflecting the subconscious fears and desires of an age grown too fond of reason and beginning to question its own empirical assumptions. Appealing as it did to the "vulnerable barbarism" [of its author] … the Gothic asserted itself as the literature of collapsing structures, malign enclosures, dark passions, and supernatural chaos. (Frank 13)

These descriptions of the literary tradition sparked by *Otranto* correspond to a style of

fiction—as well as poetry, drama, painting—which has been made recognizable by its

form, content, and mood, and which, at the same time, has not been taken into significant

consideration in the fields of Postcolonial Criticism and/or Critical Race Studies. This

was certainly the case until fairly recently, when critics like Maisha Wester and Alison

Rudd, to note some important examples, turned their attention to the Gothic as it operates

alongside and within these fields. In her chapter, "The Gothic in and as Race Theory"

(2019), Wester examines "the ways in which foundational Gothic texts are rife with

discourses and debates on racial otherness" (53), which is an approach I have pointed to

throughout this study. Similarly, in Rudd's chapter, "Postcolonial Gothic in and as

Theory" (2019), she discusses how the Gothic "emphasize[s] the effects of the colonial

past in the postcolonial present" (71). This is the kind of scholarship with which I

approach the Gothic, including the writing of Matthew Lewis later in this chapter, as this

type of approach denotes the ongoing, meaningful shift in critical and theoretical analyses

of the Gothic. If it is true that Walpole's decision to employ the "Gothic" appellative was

an attempt to furnish his novel with an aura of the "barbaric" past, touching not only on dark architectural styles but also denoting a specific group of peoples and their ethno-cultural location from centuries ago, then it is possible to assert that the Gothic tradition has always gestured to issues regarding race as a marker of socio-political difference. In the long eighteenth century, therefore, the Gothic mode may be said to function as a generically unfixed method—and as "critical interventions, aesthetically unstable" (Rudd 71)—not tied to the confinements of form or genre, but encompassing any and all texts that articulate hauntings, monstrosity, physical and mental threats and brutality, oppression, captivity, and fugitivity.

Reading the Walpolian Gothic on a continuum with Transatlantic, colonial Gothic reveals how the eighteenth-century genre's techniques of worrying (about) the past also lend themselves to worrying (about) colonial futures—for example, in how American iterations of the Gothic seize on quasi-incestuous familial bonds, as discussed in the previous chapter about Brown's *Wieland*. Transatlantic, colonial Gothic makes use of terror/horror not only to (re)present the ghosts of autocratic, feudal pasts, but also to lay bare the enormous pressure slavery applies on the Gothic genre, reinterpreting it from hyperbolic fantasy to a kind of aesthetic exaggeration of colonial scenarios that end up correlating in shocking ways to the actual material conditions of racialized "modernity" in England, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Alternatively, it is not implausible to consider that colonial oppression and brutalities may signify the lasting presence of feudal elements within the modern era, as if the "civil(ized)" world conceals an infiltration of horrors that never truly dissipated. These material conditions, which

affect racialized peoples in deeply disproportionate, extremely violent, devastating ways, can be linked to the "embodied anxieties" Brennan mentions, not only to signal a historical shift or transition from feudalism to racial capitalism, but more substantially to call attention to the colonial and imperial atrocities that take place on the ships and plantations where enslaved peoples are forced to exist as a crucial element of that transition. In my reading(s), the literary rehearsal of cultural "anxieties" necessarily illustrates the horrors and terrors that go beyond what the Gothic as a topical genre can imagine—those occurrences that are "barbaric" to the point that Anglo-American literature cannot represent them. This term, "barbarism," gives me pause, however, because it is being deployed in Brennan's description—as it has been since Roman antiquity—in service of the reigning status quo, where white, European chroniclers and historians used it to refer to a group of peoples whose transgressions against Roman imperial order has marked them not only as threatening cultural contestants, but also as uncivilized and uncivilizable, that is, barely human.[113] By attaching the genre's anxieties to the "rever[sion] to barbarism," this definition of the Gothic presupposes that as a genre it is designed to afford "non-barbarous," "civilized," and "cultured" societies—meaning the fraught categories that include privileged white and Anglo-European peoples who live in these societies, considering, certainly, the differentials of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender that operate within them—a fictive view of the ways in which, if caution is not exercised, "civilization" might return to "savagery." The implications of this statement,

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[113] See the Chapter 1 of this dissertation for a full discussion of the Goth tribes, a migrant Germanic people, as well as for an examination of the origins and effects of the language of "barbarism" which has, since their conflicts with the Romans, appeared in all things "Gothic."

not only for literary criticism but for how we read the world, are as insidious as they are frightening, particularly for Black and racialized individuals and communities. How might we turn to more reparative readings of the Transatlantic Gothic as a migratory mode that does more than (re)present "anxieties about repressed feelings and instincts [that] clearly evoke the monstrous," since monstrosity here implicitly refers to "non-civilized"—read non-white—persons? I propose an engagement with interpretations that point to colonial spaces as the sites of terror/horror that continue to haunt the Transatlantic racial imaginary even to this day. My definition of the Gothic as a mode that creeps into any number of generic forms to agitate irresolvable senses of unease identifies it not as a repository for white psychology but as a sustained study of the various kinds of terror/horror with which Black peoples are forced to grapple in the wake of the Transatlantic slave trade and ongoing colonial violence.

More often than not, long-eighteenth-century texts that name themselves Gothic manifest race and racialization in understated or convoluted ways.[114] There exist texts like Walpole's English *Otranto*, where race is treated almost exclusively insofar as it corresponds to lineage, the ruling class, and privileged ancestry; there also exist texts like Brown's American *Wieland*, where, as I discuss in the previous chapter, race is

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[114] There is, of course, the exception of the Oriental Gothic, which is flagrant in its racist codings. See, for example, Peter J. Kitson's chapter, "Oriental Gothic," which is part of the 2016 *Romantic Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* collection, edited by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend. In this chapter, Kitson traces the Anglo-American Gothic tradition to "that other, older eighteenth century and then Romantic mode, Orientalism" (167), and meaningfully notes that, "it is possible to locate both of the Gothic's most celebrated monsters – Frankenstein's Creature and Stoker's Count Dracula, the latter racially a 'Hun' or Mongolian deriving from the East – in the context of an Oriental Gothic tradition in which the East is radically othered and demonized" (179). Another less known example that comes to mind is Marie Corelli's *The Soul of Lilith* (1892), in which the perceivable villain is the mystic El-Râmi, who is described by English characters as being "a pure Oriental thoroughbred… an Oriental of the very old stock, not one of the modern Indian mixtures of vice and knavery" (9).

entertained less through embodied visual coding than through various characters' anxieties around a would-be racialized person who doesn't "fit" the domestic order for palpable if obscure reasons. These examples indicate Transatlantic, colonial Gothic's capacity to simultaneously acknowledge and conceal the object of its concern as it reckons with the legacies of whiteness. Yet, since all Gothic literature of the long eighteenth century is overtly positioned within the cultural context of institutionalized enslavement, its formal preoccupation with atrocity, violence, terror, horror, and other variations of extreme distress and unease can be understood broadly as a descriptive theory of racism—in particular, anti-Black racism—and its discontents.

Indeed, as work in Black Studies and other anticolonial fields has insisted, few present conditions are as immediately, comprehensively, and lastingly terrifying than continuing to exist under systems that uphold whiteness, especially for those people who are excluded from the protections of white supremacy. Here, I return once again to Janina Nordius, whose work in establishing connections between slavery and the Gothic I am indebted to, as I discuss in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Nordius' term, "slavery-Gothic" (631), or what I call Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, often features white characters that "voice their anxieties over issues such as the violence bred by rebellions… the threat of crossracial rape… and, not least, the inhumanity of slavery and their own shattering awareness of being themselves complicit in a system they detest" (630). Certainly, these are issues that appear across this study in various forms, but to bring my primary reading discussions to a close, I devote this chapter to an examination of a text which epitomizes the slavery/colonial Gothic: Matthew Lewis's *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept*

During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica, published in 1834. A complex text

operating under the guise of documentary non-fiction, Lewis's *Journal* is crowded with

journalistic entries in which he assumes the role of chronicler and archivist; it offers

anecdotes, original poetry, political commentary, descriptions of Afro-Caribbean folklore,

food, and everyday plantation affairs, as well as cultural observations. Astonishingly, at

the same time as it does all of this, the *Journal* also attempts (and inevitably, predictably

fails) to introduce and display its author as a compassionate, humane enslaver. As we

shall see, this literary endeavor—which was recorded on the course of two separate

transatlantic voyages on which its author embarked from England to Jamaica, between

1815 and 1818—departs from, upholds, and ultimately endorses whiteness under a

colonial system that cannot withstand the terror/horror that occurs on the plantation every

day, revealing its author as precisely the kind of (white) person who decries "the

inhumanity of slavery" at the same time as he is himself "complicit in" it, as per Nordius'

description above. Despite these issues, the analysis that follows notes some of the ways

in which the *Journal* provides material for challenging established systems of oppression,

as Lewis's attempt to write colonial terror/horror ultimately highlights how Gothic forms

of storytelling serve as a technique for engaging with colonial terror/horror, and

colonialism and imperialism, as well as the racialized landscapes they produce.

Matthew Lewis's Enactment of Concrete Terror/Horror

> The shouts, the gaiety, the wild laughter, their strange and sudden bursts of
> singing and dancing, and several old women… standing motionless in the
> middle of the hubbub, with their eyes fixed upon the portico which I
> occupied, formed an exact counterpart of the festivity of the witches in

Macbeth. Nothing could be more odd or more novel than the whole scene; and yet there was something in it by which I could not help being affected; perhaps it was the consciousness that all these human beings were my *slaves*; — to be sure, I never saw people look more happy in my life; and I believe their condition to be much more comfortable than that of the labourers of Great Britain; and, after all, slavery, in *their* case, is but another name for servitude, now that no more n[——] can be forcibly carried away from Africa, and subjected to the horrors of the voyage….

Lewis's reaction upon meeting the enslaved people on the Cornwall plantation[115]

Matthew Gregory Lewis is a celebrity writer in the Anglo-American literary tradition for having penned Gothic fictions including the popular novel *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) and the dramatic romance *The Castle Spectre* (1798). Where authors from Walpole to Radcliffe had established a recognizable Gothic formula that combined novelistic realism with flights of Romantic imagination, Lewis's *The Monk* revised this formula by pushing it to—and arguably beyond—imaginable limits of even Gothic taste. Generally classified by those who continue to use Radcliffe's taxonomies as belonging to the Gothic-horror category as opposed to the more refined Gothic-terror, *The Monk*'s thematic and stylistic excesses also seem to veer sharply away from the kinds of feminine sensibilities that animate Radcliffe's novels, pointing instead to a masculine indulgence in spectacle and obscenity. Rather than try to fit Lewis's work into these binary categorizations, however, I turn to his body of work to show how the Transatlantic framework puts structural pressure on the conventional generic categories through which the Gothic has been interpreted as a literary phenomenon. Lauren Fitzgerald writes that

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[115] Matthew Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica*, 61-62.

"The Gothic is an ideal site for investigating alternatives to the still potent Romantic construction of the author as masculine, heterosexual, and autonomous" (1), hinting that Gothic writing presents possibilities not for consolidating gendered subjectivities but for unraveling and rewriting them. Understood as a Transatlantic mode of writing, the Gothic is a kind of writing deeply contingent on shifting placements and positionalities; regardless of the ideological objectives of its author, it must be capable of being versatile and elastic in terms of the sensations it evokes, the genders it represents, and the commentary it offers as it strives to find purchase within ever-changing cultural coordinates. The complex and disturbing epigraph to this section is not, in fact, published in Lewis's Gothic *Monk* or *Castle Spectre*; it appears instead in the 1815 "January 2" entry in his *Journal* when he arrives at Cornwall, one of the plantations he owns in Jamaica. I discuss the epigraph (and Lewis's Jamaican plantations) in more detail below, but it is crucial to note how it depicts a scene that combines festivity, laughter, and dancing with an undertone of colonial terror/horror. This grotesque passage, filtered through the contented perspective of a white enslaver, calls to mind Saidiya Hartman's observations that enslavement and bondage:

> captured not only the debasements of slavery but also its diversions. Yet the convergence of pleasure and terror so striking in the humiliating exhibitions and defiling pageantry of the trade was also present in "innocent amusements." The slave dancing a reel at the big house or stepping it up lively in the coffle similarly transformed subjugation into a pleasing display for the master, albeit disguised… by the "veil of enchanted relationships." These "gentler forms" extended and maintained the relations of domination through euphemism and concealment. Innocent amusements constituted a form of symbolic violence—that is, a "form of domination which is exercised through the communication in which it is disguised." (42)

This scene recorded by Lewis—mingled with his pleasure at it and with his attempts to somehow soften the reality of slavery—is Gothic in its eeriness and in the disorientation it elicits, especially as the contrast between the lively festivity and the presence of enslaved humans receiving their "master" creates a kind of dissonance or disharmony that evokes a colonial Gothic mode that cannot quite find its footing when there is an acknowledgement of slavery in oppressive colonial contexts. Here, Lewis has set himself up as precisely the masculine figure who indulges in this kind of horrifying spectacle, which has been created for his benefit, in a passage that is not subtle in its Gothic-ness. Indeed, Lewis's mention of "the festivity of the witches in Macbeth" places readers in a kind of antecedent of the Gothic tradition in literature in English, since "in Macbeth, every detail of the witches' appearance and the short opening scenes impulse readers to sense a confusion of the usual human order and a world of darkness and foulness" (971), as Li Bao-feng and Zhao Xu-liang have stated. As my discussion below shows, however, Lewis's hold both on "[his] slaves" and on his status as a "virile" authoritative figure is tenuous at best, pointing to the ways in which his *Journal* becomes exactly the kind of Transatlantic text that relies heavily on fluid and changing positions and perspectives.

Matthew Lewis's works, I offer, adumbrate the ways in which the Gothic evokes structural distinctions including terror/horror, female/male, white/Black, and freedom/enslavement in order to dramatize the effects of their dissolution. To advance my argument that it is more generative to consider the Gothic as a mode of writing that transcends genre while remaining entangled in material conditions of colonialism, I focus not on Lewis's Gothic fictions but on his nonfictional *Journal of a West India Proprietor*,

as I have alluded to. The *Journal*, first released posthumously in England by the John

Murray publishing house in 1834, has received relatively little critical attention despite

growing interest in Lewis's fiction.[116] Reading Lewis's first-person account of his

experiences in Jamaica as an example of the Gothic requires us to grapple with the Gothic

as a set of real, material conditions under colonialism, not simply a meditation on "an

interplay of psychological and social forces" (Veeder 54). Lewis's *Journal* locates the

source of terror/horror not in Europe's ghosts or in collapsing Anglo-European socio-

economics, but in a colonial setting in which both the author and his white enslaver peers

in Jamaica are constantly afraid of Black revolts, of being murdered by enslaved peoples,

and of losing their tenuous hold over their chattel. Filtered through whiteness and

revolving around its uneasiness around the Black people it needs to keep disempowered,

the text nevertheless acknowledges the many failings of oppression and unfreedoms—that

is, both colonialism's failure to completely oppress people as well as the ethical failures

of the imperial project of oppression—even while it attempts to disguise them.

It is telling that the *Journal* starts with entries dated November 1815, when

Matthew Lewis set out from London to Gravesend to board a vessel that would take him

to Jamaica (1). The University College of London's web portal has a section on Matthew

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[116] This lack of critical attention is conspicuous, particularly when we note how much critical attention Lewis's other works have received over the years. See, for example, works such as Peter Brooks' "Virtue and Terror: The Monk" (1973), Daniel P. Watkins' "Social Hierarchy in Matthew Lewis's 'The Monk'" (1986), Steven Blakemore's "Matthew Lewis's Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in 'The Monk'" (1998), and Joseph Drury's "Twilight of the Virgin Idols: Iconoclash in *The Monk*" (2016), all of which follow an established practice of examining this novel from various critical perspectives and approaches. Brushing up against this Gothic critical tradition, Lewis's *Journal* sits somewhat uncomfortably within it as a work of (mostly) non-fiction, denoting a kind of literary rarity that albeit interacts well with how, as a mode, the Gothic "disdains generic purity and embraces hybridity, hence the dismay it inspired in many eighteenth-century neoclassicist critics scornful of its mixing of genres, its stylistic excesses, its troubling popularity and its resolute illegitimacy" (Kitson 167).

Lewis, as part of their Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery project, in which it is disclosed that the novelist, diarist, and playwright "inherited estates and over 400 enslaved in Jamaica as tenant-in-tail" ("Profile and Legacies Summary").[117] Upon his death in 1812, Matthew Lewis Sr. bequeathed his son two plantations and enslaved peoples as possessions, sparking Lewis's Transatlantic travels driven by colonialism and the obligation to oversee his property on these two Jamaican estates. It is significant that Lewis chooses the noun "Proprietor" (1) when referring to himself in relation to his colonial mobility and his role as visitor and owner of these plantations, and seems to be quite secure in his condition, as, during some bad weather when "Jamaica was in sight" (47), he writes that:

> I remember my good friend, Walter Scott, asserts, that at the death of a poet the groans and tears of his heroes and heroines swell the blast and increase the river; perhaps something of the same kind takes place at the arrival of a West India proprietor from Europe, and all this rain and wind proceed from the eyes and lungs of my agents and overseers, who, for the last twenty years, have been reigning in my dominions with despotic authority… [and now they cry and groan] because, on the approach of the sovereign himself, they must evacuate the palace, and resign the deputed sceptre. (47)

There is a form of humor pervading this "December 30" (47) journal entry, and it is almost like Lewis is inviting readers to read between the lines to locate his sense of modesty, but the whimsy here—and elsewhere in the *Journal*, as when he pokes fun at the French via a "lark… blown from the coast of France," which eats their food "readily" and "hop[s] about the deck without fear," prompting him to declare that: "I dare say, it

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[117] Sources vary as to the number of enslaved peoples Lewis inherited. For instance, the Peter Harrington Rare Books firm website out of England, states that, "Having inherited two Jamaican plantations from his father in 1812, Matthew "Monk" Lewis (1775-1818) travelled to the island to inspect his properties and the living conditions of the nearly 600 enslaved people living on his plantations" ("Journal").

was blown from the coast of France!" (10-11)—never quite strikes as amusing since the nature of his voyage looms over the pages of the text. Additionally, writing in a sentimental prose, the second entry in the text finds him sharing a cabin with another passenger, a "Mr. S-----" (3), who "wonders, considering how much benefit Great Britain derives from the West Indies, that government is not careful to build more churches in them" (3). Even though the journal's title has already set him up as owner and master, as "Proprietor," these kinds of entries at the beginning of the text carry an undertone of its author's lack of conviction and certainty in a system that enslaves and dehumanizes Black people, since he records racist opinions such as Mr. S-----'s—while indirectly mocking his speech when this man is saying that Black enslaved people need "hedicating… to make them appy" (3)—and leaves them suspended in the narrative, as if open to interpretation.[118] It is significant as well, in light of the history of how Lewis came to be in possession of the two sizable Jamaican plantations called Cornwall and Hordley respectively, that the subtitle of his travelogue, *Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica*, alludes to a sense of absenteeism. Certainly, "a Residence" connotes brevity, an impermanence and instability of occupation in tension with Lewis's role as "Proprietor." Yet despite this framing, throughout the text, the author's acceptance of and profiting by slavery indicate that he is satisfied, if never necessarily comfortable, inhabiting a position of mastery—of ameliorator and father figure—over the peoples he continues to enslave and oppress.

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[118] These readings of Matthew Lewis as a would-be pro-abolitionist correspond and perhaps arise from his political career in England, since, as a Member of Parliament "for Hindon 1796-1802" ("Profile and Legacies Summary"), the writer was outspoken in his opposition of Transatlantic chattel slavery.

As the epigraph to this section exhibits, once he has met the enslaved peoples he considers to be his possession, Lewis's perspective shifts entirely from levity to white colonizing authority, as he chooses to focus on what can only be described as a bizarre and hideous display of the skittish euphoria with which enslaved people initially greet him upon his arrival on Cornwall. Lewis's perpetually distorted readings of plantation life in Jamaica, which prompt him time and again to write that he "never saw so many people who appeared to be so unaffectedly happy" (Lewis 58) when referring to the enslaved, signals his inability to come to terms with or even to accurately interpret the brutalities of the system in which he, as a white enslaver, thrives. But a Black Feminist reading of Lewis's own misguided readings of the abject scenes around him yields a compelling if alarming revelation, since, as Hartman has observed, such scenes of apparent Black joy on plantations "illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian" (4) and highlight "the diffusion of terror and the violence perpetrated under the rubric of pleasure, paternalism, and property" (Hartman 4). Matthew Lewis's whiteness—his complicity in the system of slavery, his upholding of standards and ideologies that motivate him to imagine that he is superior to the people he repeatedly refers to as "my n[——]" (70, 73, 76), and indeed the structure that occasions the same racial epithet to appear in the text of the *Journal* a staggering 245 times—becomes the unnamed mechanism driving forward every narratological form—including scenes, stories, genres, and tropes—present in the text. In Lewis, terror/horror is a given not only because the text is developing in a colonial Gothic setting, but because it overrepresents whiteness and places it on a pedestal, ultimately constructing a fabricated white imaginary that informs its author's behaviors and beliefs

as he records them in his journalistic musings. In other words, the fact that a white British plantation owner like Matthew Lewis can simply change his mood and tone in writing when he is the "approach[ing]… sovereign" and that he can easily dictate how enslaved Black peoples should be treated, perceived, and understood, exemplifies the sheer horror of a socio-political order that endows whiteness with such extreme political, material, and epistemological power.

This same system allows someone like Lewis to act the part of historiographer through the writing of a personal journal, enabling him to produce callous, racist commentary with the authority of a knowledgeable observer. For example, he writes at one point: "I really believe that the n[——] can produce children at pleasure; and where they are barren, it is just as hens will frequently not lay eggs on shipboard, because they do not like their situation" (82). He later laments "the sixth death in the course of the first three months of the year, and we have not as yet a single birth for a set-off. Say what one will to the n[——], and treat them as well as one can, obstinate devils, they will die!" (388). In his conferred white authority to oversee the plantation, he takes it upon himself to keep track of births and deaths on both estates—and, as these passages show, his interest in both derives directly from his financial stake in the lives of Black peoples enslaved on his plantation. This position indicates the prevailing ideology in Anglo-American locales regarding slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Ian Baucom's theory about the ways in which the horrors of the eighteenth-century Transatlantic slave trade still haunt sociopolitical and economic systems in western societies is important to return to. Beginning with a discussion of the massacre that took place aboard the British slave

ship *Zong* in 1781, Baucom examines the emergence of a financialized logic based on a system of speculation, where enslaved Africans (and their descendants) were assigned a value according to the pseudo-scientific and political construction of racial typologies. Baucom argues that the *Zong* trials which followed the mass murder mark a key event in the history of capital not because the 133 murdered enslaved people were treated as commodities, but because they were treated as "suppositional entities whose value is tied not to their continued, embodied, material existence, but to their speculative, recuperable loss value" (139). The haunting imageries and brutal realities of the Middle Passage— replete with inhumanity, and mental and physical despair and abuse—cannot be overstated. Similarly, the terror/horror of living (in) Blackness after the Middle Passage cannot be adequately described, certainly not when an enslaver like Lewis is ruthlessly writing about births and deaths. In her essay, "Venus in Two Acts" (2008), Hartman writes about people who were made to endure these atrocities; she expresses that:

> the stories that exist are not about them, but rather about the violence, excess, mendacity, and reason that seized hold of their lives, transformed them into commodities and corpses, and identified them with names tossed-off as insults and crass jokes. The archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property. (2)

The haunting—and Gothic—legacies of these atrocities are apparent, as are the Gothic implications of ledgers. In this sense, I think alongside Katherine McKittrick once again, as when, in her essay, "Mathematics Black Life" (2014), she asserts that, "The tolls of death and violence, housed in the archive, affirm black death. The tolls cast black as impossibly human and provide the conditions through which black history is currently

told and studied. The death toll becomes the source" (17). Like McKittrick, I too resist

rehearsing "anti-black violence and black death" (18), and wonder instead:

> How then do we think and write and share as decolonial scholars and foster a commitment to acknowledging violence and undoing its persistent frame, rather than simply analytically reprising violence? How do we ethically engage with mathematical and numerical certainties that compile, affirm, and honor bits and pieces of black death? (18)

Indeed, how do we engage with a text like Lewis's *Journal*, which seems to almost paint

its author in a light that finds him relishing his level of detachment from the births, lives,

and deaths of the people he oppresses? This callous abstraction of Black life into

speculative forms certainly resonates within Lewis's *Journal*. While he presents himself

as someone who regrets losses, injuries, and deaths, he consistently frames such events

not as human misfortunes but in terms of how they relate to the business of profit-making,

furnishing this text with ample terrifying and horrifying capabilities. Moreover, if, as

Philip Steer has argued, colonial Gothic texts are invested in the "project of settler nation-

building" (255), then the enslaver-enslaved relationships Lewis mentions so callously

throughout his *Journal* can certainly be read as denoting sites of Gothic representation in

which Black enslaved peoples become "sources of epistemological, historical, and

cultural instability" (Steer 255) that threaten the colonial status quo. There are instances

in the text that serve as examples of how colonial Gothic works can both acknowledge

problematic truths and invalidate them, as they grapple with pervasive, ineluctable

whiteness. When Lewis writes on January 21, 1816, that he had "resolved to try my own

hand at curing" (122) the sick patients who visited Cornwall's hospital, or "sick-house"

(122), he cannot help but add that "The hospital has been crowded, since my arrival, with

patients who have nothing the matter with them" (122) and that these people "evidently only came to the hospital in order to sit idle, and chat away the time with their friends" (122). It is this attitude which punctures and saturates Lewis's daily observations of life on a slave plantation; his entanglement in and profiting by slavery ultimately yields a text brimming with contradictions. It is no wonder, then, as the text mobilizes whiteness and deploys it to undergird colonial and imperial terror, that Lewis should pivot publicly in order to adopt a discourse of slavery amelioration in moments of disavowal. This strategy further echoes Steer's understanding of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a mode "employed as a means of disavowing and distancing a sense of the past, whether a general notion of primitive savagery or a specific moment in colonial history" (255). Here, it is important as well to consider both the nature and the limitations of literary genres, since this *Journal* breaks away from coherent patterns of form, style, and subject matter. Ranging from poetry to broad journalistic observations that present themselves as objective accounts, to more sensationalist descriptions and narratives that make ample use of recognizably Gothic imagery, the *Journal* contorts itself to bring the intimate into the forefront, consequently struggling to carry the weight of its own conjectures. Certainly, a text like the *Journal* cannot help but depict the intimate in terms of what Christina Sharpe has described as "monstrous intimacies," which in the context of enslaver-enslaved relationships are textured "by the discursive codes of slavery" and are connected "by the everyday mundane horrors that aren't acknowledged to be horrors" (Sharpe 3). This is evident in passages in the text that find Lewis completely missing the point of his own positionality as oppressor; in one such instance, he writes that:

> My visit to Jamaica has at least produced one advantage to myself. Several runaways, who had disappeared for some time (some even for several months), have again made their appearance in the field, and I have desired that no questions should be asked. On the other hand, after enjoying herself during the Saturday and Sunday, which were allowed for holidays on my arrival, one of my ladies chose to *pull foot*, and did not return from her hiding-place in the mountains till this morning. Her name is Marcia; but so unlike is she to Addison's Marcia, that she is not only as black as Juba, (instead of being "fair, oh! how divinely fair!") but,— whereas Sempronius complains, that "Marcia, the lovely Marcia, is left behind," the complaint against my heroine is, that "Marcia, the lovely Marcia," is always running away. (109)

Here, Lewis displays a disturbing lack of awareness toward his role as someone who enacts violence against the peoples he keeps enslaved. That he cannot acknowledge the "everyday mundane horrors" of Marronage while objectifying Marcia and dismissing her agency, combined with his literary references, verges on the dangerous territory of romanticizing and trivializing the experiences of enslavement. The normalization of this violence, as portrayed in the passage, highlights a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality that grapples with the banalization of terror/horror and suffering, wherein cruelty becomes an everyday occurrence. Indeed, distinct Gothic images appear throughout the *Journal*. These include descriptions of the author's seasickness when he writes that he is, "Sick to death! My temples throbbing, my head burning, my limbs freezing, my mouth all fever, my stomach all nausea, my mind all disgust" (8), as well as the purported "terrors" (350) he attaches to the practice of Obeah—a spiritual folk practice brought to the Caribbean by enslaved Africans forcibly wrested from their homelands in Western-and-Central Africa. Lewis's reliance on aspects of terror and horror in the *Journal's* rhetoric places it squarely in the Gothic tradition, despite its claims to being a "report"—meant to entertain as much as inform—rather than fiction. Lewis's deployment of these terms is

undeniably ironic, operating within the constraints of an Enlightenment selfhood that allows a white enslaver en route to Jamaican slave plantations to describe in detail the "horrors" of his own Atlantic journey, while mentioning only in passing the "the horrors of the voyage" (62) Black enslaved Africans are forced to endure, as the epigraph to this section shows. It is similarly significant that the African practice of and belief in Obeah should be seen by Lewis and his white peers in Jamaica as "very suspicious" (95) and "strange" (95), an "exercise [in] magical arts" (95) that is to be outlawed because, in their estimation, it induces terror; by projecting terror onto African spirituality, Lewis disavows his own complicity in a terrifying system that criminalizes a peoples' faith-based religious practice in order to protect white "masters" and overseers against uprisings and revolts.[119] In this regard, we might understand Lewis's descriptions, contradictions, and opinions as being directly linked to his position as a full Enlightenment subject whose foundation of privilege—his Britishness and whiteness, as well as his social status and inherited wealth—allows him to accept as objective truth the racist myths of the Enlightenment which arise from an alleged humanist tradition. Living in a time when the white ruling classes in Anglo-American spaces relied upon Enlightenment theories of subjectivity that separated minds from bodies, as well as on theories of race that produced racial classification and modern "scientific" racism, a white slave plantation owner like Lewis has greater access to experiencing his own existence as

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[119] Another result of this, of course, is that henceforth, since the long eighteenth century, there have existed entire generations of Black people in the Caribbean who live under a system of law that dictates that those African syncretic practices—like Obeah in the English-speaking Caribbean, Voudou in the French-speaking Caribbean, and Santería in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean—are evil, uncivilized, or, yes, even 'barbaric.' See the writings of Nathaniel Samuel Murrell for discussions of African diaspora religions and Afro-Caribbean religions.

all mind and no body, as someone inhabiting the top of the hierarchy of humanity.[120] I

discuss Lewis's corporeality in greater detail below, but here, I find it fitting to point out

how he writes about his body; for instance, in the "January 13" (95) entry, he writes that:

> The Africans (as is well known) generally believe, that there is a life beyond this
> world, and that they shall enjoy it by returning to their own country; and this idea
> used frequently to induce them, soon after their landing in the colonies, to commit
> suicide; but this was never known to take place except among fresh n[——], and
> since the execrable slave-trade has been abolished, such an illusion is unheard of.
> (100)

Following this apathetic attitude toward the spiritual belief systems of a people who hold

an afterlife and the notion of returning to their homeland to be true, and combining this

with his dismissal of Black(ened) people taking their own lives, Lewis goes on to explain

that once enslaved peoples:

> got over the dreadful period of 'seasoning,' they were generally soon sensible
> enough of the amelioration of their condition, to make the idea of returning to
> Africa the most painful that could be presented to them. But, to be sure, poor
> creatures! what with the terrors and sufferings of the voyage, and the unavoidable
> hardships of the seasoning, those advantages were purchased more dearly than any
> in this life can possibly be worth. (100)

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[120] In an article published in 2020 on the *AEON* digital scholarship platform, Avram Alpert writes that "It is by now well known that some of the greatest modern philosophers held racist views. John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-76), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), G W F Hegel (1770-1831) and many others believed that Black and Indigenous peoples the world over were savage, inferior and in need of correction by European enlightenment" ("Philosophy's Systemic Racism"). Similarly, in her book *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (2020), Zakkiyyah Iman Jackson notes that, "The African character, according to Hegel, springs from a geographical climate hostile to the achievement of spirit" (29). Another example can be found in a 2021 article published on the *Medium* digital scholarship platform by Manu Samriti Chander, in which he writes that, "Kant's beliefs were… plagued by the same disregard for Indigenous and African peoples that made possible early colonial expansion and slavery. In his early works, sometimes grouped together as his *Racenschriften*, or "race-writings," Kant argued for the absolute inferiority of non-Europeans" ("The Dangerous Mischaracterization of CRT"). Evidently, there is a wealth of sources presently coming to terms with the more problematic aspects structuring long eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking and philosophy.

That Lewis can only reference "the dreadful period of 'seasoning'"—referring to a process of intense suffering and brutalization—in these terms, and that he then claims that there is an improvement in the lives of people forcibly made to withstand all this terror/horror, misconstrues not only the "terrors and sufferings of the voyage" but also his implication in the harrowing experiences endured by those subjected to the brutality of slavery, even if he alleges that "all that is now at an end" (100), since he is writing in a period of time after Britain abolished the Transatlantic slave trade. What is crucial to consider here, in the context of my discussion, is that these passages are leading up to Lewis's mention of his own mortality, as when he writes that:

> if I were now standing on the banks of Virgil's Lethe, with a goblet of the waters of oblivion in my hand, and asked whether I chose to enter life anew as an English labourer or a Jamaica n[——], I should have no hesitation in preferring the latter. For myself, it appears to me almost worth surrendering the luxuries and pleasures of Great Britain, for the single pleasure of being surrounded with beings who are always laughing and singing, and who seem to perform their work with so much *nonchalance*. (101)

Certainly, this is a striking passage that bespeaks Lewis's own understanding of his whiteness and privilege, as he is making careless comparisons between an "English labourer" and the enslaved peoples he has reduced to caricatures; his ostensible preference for the latter illustrating the disparities that exist in matters of agency, emancipation, and entitlement. But what gives him pause is that he is "told that there is one part of their business very laborious, the digging holes for receiving the cane-plants" (101), which prompts him to conclude that if he "could be contented to *live* in Jamaica, [he] is still more certain, that is the only agreeable place for [him] to die in," as the idea and imagery he has called up has given him "an appetite for being buried" (102). From

his position as someone who only considers his body in these terms—dreading physical labor and exertion, and fantasizing about where he will be buried—it is no wonder that he can then declare: "It is a matter of perfect indifference to me what becomes of this little ugly husk of mine" (102), as he is unconcerned with what will become of his "mortal coil" (102) once he has died, which, in this passage and in the context of this text, reads as distorted, empty, and even "monstrous."

There is a specific entry in the *Journal* which strikes me as marking the definitive moment in which Matthew Lewis chooses to believe—since he is ideologically entrenched on and supported by the idea that he is part of the ruling plantocratic class— that he is in every way superior to the enslaved Black peoples who live subjugated at his whim. The moment in question is recorded on January 11, 1816, when he writes: "I find it quite impossible to resist the fascination of the conscious pleasure of pleasing; and my own heart, which I have so long been obliged to keep closed, seems to expand itself again in the sunshine of the kind looks and words which meet me at every turn, and seem to wait for mine as anxiously as if they were so many diamonds" (90). This journal entry is as unfathomable as it is disquieting, since Lewis evidently chooses to walk about Cornwall, where enslaved Black people forcibly labour in the fields of sugarcane and in the house, and mistakes their deference and salutations for kindness and pleasure at seeing the person who continues to oppress them.[121] The text presents many such

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[121] This entry is reminiscent of Robert Browning's 1836 Gothic poem entitled, "Porphyria's Lover," at precisely the moment when the unnamed speaker comes to the stunned realization that this woman, Porphyria, does not only love him, but that she 'worships' him as well. The lines read: "Happy and proud; at last I knew / Porphyria worshipped me; surprise / Made my heart swell, and still it grew / While I debated what to do" (lines 32-35). In the fabricated poem, as we will recall, the imaginary speaker's actions conclude with the murder of the woman, since he has decided to preserve the moment in which he assumes

instances of obstructed, misconstrued situations, since the developing, chronological narrative cannot ever escape its author's predominantly Eurocentric perspective. Even when Lewis tries actively to assume the role of benevolent "master," or "ameliorator" (Robertson 220), to borrow a phrase from Lisa Ann Robertson, the text falls short of generating any lasting commentary—on how, for instance, to improve the conditions for enslaved peoples on the island or on his inherited estates—or affecting any socio-political change. While the *Journal* makes various allusions to the author's misgivings about owning enslaved people (61, 110), these revelations hardly showcase any feelings of compassion; instead, they bespeak Lewis's concerns about being able to sustain mastery over the people he refers to as "my slaves" throughout the text.[122]

The contradictions of Lewis's position as benevolent enslaver are evident in the writer's initial insistence against doling out physical punishments when enslaved persons show instances of "insubordination" (Lewis 139). He writes that:

> I am indeed assured by every one about me, that to manage a West-Indian estate without the occasional use of the cart-whip, however rarely, is impossible; and they insist upon it, that it is absurd in me to call my slaves ill-treated, because, when they act grossly wrong, they are treated like English soldiers and sailors. All this may be very true; but there is something to me so shocking in the idea of this execrable cart-whip, that I have positively forbidden the use of it on Cornwall; and if the estate must go to rack and ruin without its use, to rack and ruin the estate must go. Probably, I should care less about this punishment, if I had not been living among those on whom it may be inflicted; but now, when I am accustomed to see every voice cry "God bless you, massa," as I pass, one must be an absolute

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that she belongs to him. In Lewis's text, of course, the stakes are much higher, since the *Journal* is not fiction: real, racialized people are existing in oppression under the colonial system he upholds. It is striking to recognize how Gothic fiction attempts and fails to conjure up authentic sensations of terror/horror when it denies the existence of colonial and imperial concerns.

[122] See Lewis's journal entries dated January 2, January 16, January 19, and January 27, 1816, for examples highlighting the ways in which he continues to use the possessive adjectival form "my" when referring to "slaves."

> brute not to feel unwilling to leave them subject to the lash; besides, they are
> excellent cajolers, and lay it on with a trowel. (119-120)

This is a passage filled with incongruities. Lewis first sets himself apart from other white enslavers in Jamaica, but quickly declares that the ways in which these other colonizers resort to physical violence is probably correct. He then intimates that by having, as he terms it earlier, "made it [his] business to mix as much as possible among the n[——]" (118), he cannot possibly condone lashings against the people whom he has gotten to know. This claim of immersion in life on the plantation is in tension with the sense of impermanence and inconstancy attached to the subtitle of the text, "Kept During a Residence…" since, as critics like Keith Mason and Orlando Patterson have noted, the enslaved humans living on Caribbean and North American plantations purchased and ruled from a distance by absentee owners suffered the most brutal of treatments.[123] To make the case for his own benevolence, Lewis thus invites readers to imagine the kind of treatment with which the enslaved living on Cornwall and Hordley are met before, after, and beyond his "charitable," brief presence on the island. This treatment is particularly terrifying to consider when, on fifteen separate occasions in the *Journal*, he recounts anecdotes of how the enslaved have misbehaved, and how much his "agent… shakes his head, and evidently gives [him] to understand that the estate cannot be governed properly without the cart-whip" (139). By approaching the enslaved people with an air of combined superiority and benevolence, he seems determined to come across as someone

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[123] See Keith Mason's essay, "The Absentee Planter and the Key Slave: Privilege, Patriarchalism, and Exploitation in the Early Eighteenth-Century Caribbean" (2013), and Orlando Patterson's text, *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), for a detailed treatment of the topic of absentee plantation owners.

who is impartial, firm, and compassionate. Consequently, Lewis seeks to portray his relationship with the enslaved as one marked by appreciation and devotion—exhibiting an elitist paternalism that evokes echoes of Feudal, or "Gothic" eras—purportedly challenging the eighteenth-century practices of physical discipline that were mainly focused on bodily punishment and oppression.

Lewis presents himself as rejecting a dominant colonial ideology premised on the supposed "savage," "barbaric" nature, and non-humanness of enslaved, Black peoples. Yet his romanticization of the relationship, and in particular the emotional connection, between "master" and "slave," generates a form of "Enlightened" white subjectivity that thrives on its own kind of violence. Hartman points to the threat posed by such moves when she writes, "What concerns me… are the forms of discipline unleashed by the abandonment of the whip" (139). Lewis's repeated emphases on the forms of corporal punishment that he, personally, finds distasteful accumulate into an ever-present, spectral threat; he is careful to record each occasion in which he or his estate manager terrorize enslaved people by threatening them with the use of this torturous device. Hartman concludes that "These forms of constraint and discipline did not depend upon the spectacle of whipping or the lash but nonetheless produced compliant and productive bodies" (139). Hartman's observation that as the institution of slavery became ideologically entrenched, "the whip was not to be abandoned; rather, it was to be internalized" (140) rings particularly true in these diary entries that depict Black people as being grateful to and adoring of the plantation owner because they have not been bodily punished. For the most part, Lewis's rhetoric disavows the sense of horror one might

reasonably associate with the plantation's atmosphere of perpetual threat of corporal violence. Yet there is one instance, early on, when he includes the following observation regarding the local fauna in Jamaica: "The only dangerous species is the Whip-snake," he writes, "so called from its exactly resembling the lash of a whip, in length, thinness, pliability, and whiteness; but even the bite of this is not mortal, except from very great neglect" (67). This comparison between the type of snake which has apparently received its sobriquet on the island by virtue of its resembling "the lash of a whip" resonates powerfully and somewhat paradoxically with Lewis's pattern of both emphasizing and withholding the whip as an instrument of enslavement, especially in its allusion to the hazardous yet non-lethal attributes of whiteness. The implications here are not subtle, particularly as I have drawn from Lewis's documented experiences in Jamaica as a white enslaver to point to the ways in which his accounts underscore the inherent terror/horror and tensions entrenched within the system of slavery. Throughout the text, the pervasive power dynamics of whiteness come to the forefront, laying bare Lewis's complicity in upholding the oppressive structure of these dynamics, even if—and when—he claims to be unaware of their existence.

These readings are complicated by Matthew Lewis's repeated denials and refusals of his own corporeality, as when he disdains "his little ugly husk" and is repulsed and surprised by his own sea-sickness as much as he is "shocked" at the idea of using physical violence against Black enslaved people. These aspects of the text show Lewis establishing his subjectivity through intellect rather than embodiment, yielding an Enlightenment subject inhabiting his own whiteness and reproducing it through his

interactions with Black people under his power. His embodied experience is allowed to recede into Enlightenment theories of mind in a way that makes him, despite his first-hand experience, a less cogent theorist of plantation life than writers like contemporary Black Feminists including Barbara Christian (see preceding chapters) or Saidiya Hartman, who understand embodied experience as a form of knowledge. I am not claiming that Lewis does not address his physical self; on the contrary, my aim is to bring attention to the ways in which he discusses it. Even when he is recording his interactions with unfamiliar food, for example, he comes across as someone whose mindset predisposes him toward contempt; on one occasion, he writes that:

> A black pilot came on board yesterday, in a canoe hollowed out of the cotton-tree; and when it returned for him this morning, it brought us a water-melon. I never met with a worse article in my life; the pulp is of a faint greenish yellow, stained here and there with spots of moist red, so that it looks exactly as if the servant in slicing it had cut his finger, and suffered it to bleed over the fruit. Then the seeds, being of a dark purple, present the happiest imitation of drops of clotted gore; and altogether (prejudiced as I was by its appearance), when I had put a single bit into my mouth, it had such a kind of Shylocky taste of raw flesh about it (not that I recollect having ever eaten a bit of raw flesh itself), that I sent away my plate, and was perfectly satisfied as to the merits of the fruit. (50)

This description of his reaction to the watermelon brought to him by a "black pilot"—its "pulp" likened to the blood of a "servant," its "seeds" compared to "drops of clotted gore," its "taste" associated with "raw flesh"—denotes an aversion that almost parallels the most excessive and transgressive Gothic prose, as his physicality comes to the forefront and is expressed through a deep sense of disgust and repulsion. In this sense, this revulsion expressed by Lewis is but another instance in which the text suggests his desire to distance himself from anything that may be associated with corporeality—with blood, entrails, and enfleshment.

Rather than present and engage with the few yet familiar readings of Lewis's *Journal* that consider it a pro-abolitionist text, my critical contribution highlights Black embodied experience as a creditable form of knowledge.[124] My readings of this text are also reframing it within the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality, since the forms of writing inserted in the *Journal* engage with "the frightening colonial presence" (Paravisini-Gebert 229) with which its author is grappling, mirroring "a growing fear in British society around 1800 of the consequences of the nation's exposure to colonial societies, nonwhite races, non-Christian belief systems, and the moral evils of slavery" (230). Consequently, in the next section, I examine two specific examples that while guided by and filtered through Lewis's white, Eurocentric perspective, still manage to illustrate Black resistance, nonconformity, and agitation.

Matthew Lewis's Enactment of Fictive Terror/Horror

> There flock the damned! there Satan reigns, and revels!
> And thence yon isle is called "The Isle of Devils!"
> Nor think, on rumour's faith this tale is given:
> Once, hot in youthful blood, when hell nor heaven
> Much claimed my thoughts, (the truth with shame I tell;
> Holy St. Francis, guard thy votary well!)
> In quest of water near that isle I drew:
> When lo! such monstrous forms appalled my view,
> Such shrieks I heard, sounds all so strange and dread,
> That from the strand with shuddering haste I fled…[125]

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[124] See the works of scholars such as Carl Plasa and Nigel Leask, for example, for readings of the *Journal* that interpret it as an abolitionist text.

[125] Matthew Lewis, "The Isle of Devils" (part III, lines 67-76), inserted into the text of the *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica*, 267.

As I have highlighted in the previous sections, Matthew Lewis's *Journal* is a complex text which, as Judith Terry has noted, "belongs to a well-established tradition of travel and exploration literature" (xi) and has not conventionally been studied as part of the Gothic literary tradition. The categorization of Lewis's *Journal* as "travel and exploration literature" not only reproduces the colonialist framing of "travel and exploration" as empirical activities whose narration follows relatively straightforward rules of documentation and reportage; it also occludes the text's reliance on a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode that draws on tropes of colonial mobility and affective uncertainty to put language to the less empirical, even unrepresentable aspects of life aboard slave ships and within plantation economies. While Lewis's diary entries make ample use of Gothic imagery to call readers' attention to (what he considers) the more abject aspects of slavery, drawing attention as well to some of the ways in which the Gothic was "from its earliest history in England and Europe, fundamentally linked to colonial settings, characters, and realities as frequent embodiments of the forbidding and frightening" (Paravisini-Gebert 229), his journal nevertheless centers the white European colonizer who encounters, witnesses, and develops opinions about oppression on slave plantations in the Caribbean. As many scholars have argued, this all-too-familiar kind of storytelling, though it has been canonized as a form of "nonfiction," systemically produces a distorted and distorting view of Black reality.[126] The danger of referring to and

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[126] See Mario Klarer's essay, "Humanitarian Pornography: John Gabriel Stedman's 'Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted N[——] of Surinam' (1796)" (2005), in which he takes up this line of critique, as it relates to texts like John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative* (1806) and Thomas Clarkson's *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1786). According to Klarer, while these texts are aimed "at arousing the reader's compassion through detailed and gruesome descriptions of the torture and mutilation of African slaves on New World plantations" they ultimately promote white perspectives that

thinking about this mode of writing as belonging to a category like the travelogue lies in the insidiously reductive view that would regard a white enslaver like Matthew Lewis as anything other than that. That is, the genre of the "travelogue" reduces the white enslaver—someone like Lewis—to seeming like a sympathetic, humanitarian, and quasi-detached observer/recorder, while veiling the terror/horror he inevitably enacts. The miscellaneous and fragmented form and style of the *Journal*, combined with the many contradictory views it discloses, reveal that the broad effort in English writing to separate terror from horror in order to generate racist distinctions in human capacities of mind is a messier endeavor than leading theories of the Gothic as a genre acknowledge. Moreover, Lewis's *Journal* reveals the extent to which such efforts must actively misconstrue the embodied experiences of enslaved Black peoples existing under systems of oppression in order to arrive at their desired conclusions. In this sense, the text makes evident the tenuous nature of racial distinctions through its desire to describe and justify plantation life.

Yet there are two specific examples in the *Journal* that generate more promising material for thinking against the grain of colonialism, despite its author's colonialist machinations. The first such instance happens in the form of a Gothic inset narrative,

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makes them "lean towards the pornographic" (559). Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) also offers a similar yet distinct critique, since she frames travel writing as being intrinsically linked to the promotion of Eurocentric perspectives. One of the guiding questions of her study meaningfully interrogates "How… travel and exploration *writing produced* 'the rest of the world' for European readerships at particular points in Europe's expansionist trajectory" (5). Similarly, María Lourdes López Ropero's essay, "Travel Writing and Postcoloniality: Caryl Phillips's 'The Atlantic Sound'" (2003), in which the critic traces the histories of the travelogue literary genre, posits that this kind of writing, more often than not when written by white European settlers, presents a deep "entanglement in imperialist discourse" (52).

which is inserted in the text as a poem at the end of the first section of the journal,

marking the conclusion of Lewis's first voyage to Jamaica.[127] Lewis calls his poem "The

Isle of Devils: A Metrical Tale" (261), and by its conclusion it finally becomes clear that

this is a work penned by the same writer of Gothic fiction whose imagination produced

The Monk. This detail is something which I take up in greater detail below. At present, I

wish to pause to consider the poem as a piece of literature that bears all the excesses of

the Gothic, but which also produces engaging and meaningful results—to anticolonial

imagination and struggle as these relate to the terror/horror generated by whiteness—

when examined against the historical and sociopolitical discourse under which Lewis is

living in the long eighteenth century. Writing about the poem, D. L. MacDonald has

observed that, "Strangely enough, this fantastic and horrible poem, written on the way to

Jamaica and copied on the way home, provides an allegorical frame for all the

impressions of the island that Lewis recorded in his *Journal*, which is otherwise a

realistic, cheerful, and (within limits) humane document" (192). The poem applies a great

deal of pressure to the text as a whole, to the extent that it unravels any claims its author

has made about being compassionate or benevolent. The sexual tensions that arise in the

poem, I argue, demonstrate how insightful yet fragmented the Gothic becomes when it

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[127] In my Comprehensive Examination Topic Paper, "Political Subversion in the Transatlantic Gothic" (2018), I discuss the function of the Gothic inset tale as follows: "If we consider the structure of the interpolated narrative so utilized in the Gothic, for indeed it is widely found as a common thread linking Gothic works written on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, we discover that these texts carry so many layers of interpolation that it becomes impossible to follow the story in space and time. This is a key aspect of the Gothic that bears analyzing, since it enables the genre to become unfixed, thematically as well as structurally. Further than suggesting digression, the structural device of a tale-within-a-tale operates laterally to call forth things from the past into the present, in texts that are often set in a much more distant past. Additionally, it works obliquely to present a different type of structural arrangement within the texts, including different writing styles that require decoding or translating" (Creech 11).

attempts to write colonial terror/horror. My discussions in the preceding sections of this chapter show that Matthew Lewis is hard-pressed to escape his white colonizing perspectives even when he presents himself as exceptionally sympathetic or tolerant in his relations with Black people enslaved on his plantations. One especially noteworthy aspect of his self-presentation is that Lewis's journal entries leading up to "The Isle of Devils" do not portray him demanding or soliciting sexual favors from Black or mixed-race enslaved women in any overt ways, as it was customary for white plantation landowners to do.[128] Perhaps the absence of such scenes speaks to the role he has assigned himself of "benevolent master" and paternalistic protector—one who is well loved and respected by the enslaved people that live as his chattel. Instead of sexual pursuit or exploitation, his narrative is filled with moments of quasi-detached, passive "appreciation" of beautiful or charming enslaved women. Writing about his encounter with a light-skinned, mixed-race girl called Mary Wiggins, whom he describes as being "the most picturesque [he] ever beheld" (68), and who sought him out in order to procure an invitation to a festival, he concludes that "she was much too pretty not to obtain her invitation… on the contrary, I insisted upon her coming, and bade her tell her husband that I admired his taste very much for having chosen her" (69). This encounter prompts Lewis to write a lengthy

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[128] These horrific practices were commonplace in the colonial Americas; see, for example, Lamonte Aidoo's text, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (2018), for a full examination of the terror/horror of plantation life in Brazil, revealing the frightening extents to which the South American nation's racial imaginary has been built on "a history of sexual violence committed against slaves" (6). This was the case as well in the project called the United States of America, as revealed in a key primary source: Harriet Jacobs' 1861 autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Enslaved in North Carolina, Jacobs' account is harrowing; she recalls that, "My master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves. But did the mothers dare to tell who was the father of their children? Did the other slaves dare to allude to it, except in whispers among themselves? No, indeed! They knew too well the terrible consequences" (55).

paragraph about her physical attributes, in the same descriptive manner that he only employs to refer to the girls he problematically calls "m[——]" (68).[129] This painstaking description of Mary Wiggins' physical appearance is reminiscent of Clara's description of Carwin when she first meets him in Brown's novel, *Wieland*, which I discussed in the previous chapter. The differences here are that this text has given readers a racial referent to classify the girl; that she is, in fact, a real person and not a Gothic fantasy; and that, perhaps most alarmingly, Lewis proclaims that "Mary Wiggins is still my slave" (68). It is no accident but a direct result of whiteness as a mobilizing force in Lewis's writing that Lewis's compliments of this kind are almost exclusively reserved for mixed-race enslaved women, while he refers to darker-skinned, Black women as "devils" (87).

Taking these observations into consideration, I contend that "The Isle of Devils" is the point in Lewis's *Journal* where colonial and imperial concerns converge.[130] It relates the tale of a young, white maiden by the name of Irza, who is traveling with her betrothed Rosalvo when they become tragically shipwrecked on an unnamed island off the coast of Africa. Irza, who is not yet fourteen years of age, is stereotypically fair,

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[129] As seen elsewhere in this document, I have chosen to redact this term as well, borrowing methodologies from and thinking alongside Afro-Dominican scholar Lorgia García Peña. In her text, *Translating Blackness: Latinx Colonialities in Global Perspective* (2022), she writes that this term denoted "A category of privilege within the racial hierarchies of the nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean. The term refers to a mixed-race Afro-descendant person of light, medium, of dark-brown skin. I use this term only when speaking about nineteenth-century subjects who self-identified as such" (x), and since Lewis's *Journal* does not expend any energy in telling readers whether Mary Wiggins identified as such, I have chosen not to write this term out.

[130] I would like to clarify that I designate the colonial in the text as primarily revolving around Lewis's management of his plantations, his treatment of Black and mixed-race enslaved peoples, and the way in which he records everyday operations and interactions in Jamaica. On the other hand, when I refer to imperial concerns, I mean the broader themes in the text that pertain to British (and, as I have mentioned elsewhere in this document when discussing broader topics, also Spanish and French) imperial influence, socio-political, economic, and cultural impact, as well as trade and expansion in the Americas—the region that includes locales in North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

beautiful, and virginal. Upon first passing the island, Irza marvels at its beauty, admiring

its lush, Eden-like landscapes, and wishing aloud that she could spend the rest of her life

with Rosalvo in such a paradise. When the captain of the ship realizes the place to which

she is referring, he hastens to tell the present company that the island is accursed,

explaining:

> That isle is one, where every leaf's a spell,
> Where no good thing e'er dwelt, nor e'er shall dwell.
> No fisher, forced from home by adverse breeze,
> Would slake his thirst from yon infernal trees:
> No shipwrecked sailor from the following waves
> Would seek a shelter in those haunted caves. (191-196)

This type of gothic imagery is one that Lewis favors throughout the *Journal,* as he often

contrasts the beauty of the scenery and landscapes with depictions of perilous, somber

moods or events—there some early examples found in the text, one dated "November 19.

(Sunday.)" (8) in which he writes that, "The wind roaring, the waves dashing against the

stern, till at last they beat in the quarter gallery; the ship, too, rolling from side to side, as

if every moment she were going to roll over and over!" (9), another other dated

"November 26" (12), in which he records that, "A screech-owl flew on board this

morning; I am sure we have no need of birds of ill omen; I could supply the place of a

whole aviary of them myself" (14). In short, even the "wind," for Lewis, "blows so

perversely" (31); as MacDonald has explained, "Considering Lewis's Gothic background,

however, it is not surprising that only the concepts of death, damnation, and the demonic

are invoked frequently and methodically enough to create the coherent network of

symbols, characteristic of allegory proper. Lewis can conceptualize even the most

pleasant experiences in terms of death (193-194). In "The Isle of Devils," as the captain

of the ship expresses after having issued that first warning, it is the island's native

inhabitants that make it so "infernal" and "unlivable"—a paradox crucial to the colonial

frame of mind that cannot imagine human life separate from white settlement.[131] He goes

on to explain that the evidently racialized people who live on the island are "damned!"

and that "Satan reigns, and revels" there, as the epigraph to this section shows. Lewis's

ventriloquistic authorial hand compels the captain to refer to the island's Black

inhabitants as "monstrous" (line 74), calling to mind Brennan's description of the Gothic

as "evok[ing] the monstrous" (Brennan 4). Perhaps more generatively, however, I return

to Sharpe's use of the term, to consider the "monstrous" in this context as a means "to

clarify the use of blackness over time as well as the connections between representations

and performances of blackness, the primal scenes of slavery, and the all too often

unaccounted-for structures that propel us into the present and the future" (4-5). In this

sense, Lewis's Gothic use of "the monstrous" highlights the historical and ongoing use of

Blackness as a source of "Otherness," fear(fulness), and terror/horror, pointing to the

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[131] As I note in Chapter 1, by delving into the writings of Sylvia Wynter alongside critical analyses from thinkers and scholars who are in conversation with her, including Katherine McKittrick and S. Trimble, I have gained a deeper understanding of her ideas. Here, I pause to recall Wynter's reading of *The Tempest* and the racialized character of Caliban, which I mentioned in a footnote in Chapter 1 of this study. Adding to her analysis, I find that S. Trimble's chapter, "Myth and Metamorphosis: *Beasts of the Southern Wild*," appearing in the text, *Undead Ends: Stories of Apocalypse* (2019), offers an insightful discussion of Wynter's engagement with Shakespeare's play; writing about the film's southern Louisiana insular landscape, Trimble makes the following connection: "Th[e] narration of the island as simply, passively 'peopled' obscures the histories of reproductive labor that index what Wynter calls 'demonic grounds,' a concept that arises from her reading of the contested island space at the center of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. 'Demonic ground' is Wynter's name for a foreclosed narrative 'slot' in the play: the absent presence of a potential mate for Caliban, Prospero's racialized servant, whom Wynter reads as simultaneously Arawak and African" (125). As my analysis in this section shows, this island Lewis has imagined is precisely this kind of contested space, but it far from "passively peopled"; it is "infernal," "unliveable" and "damned" because it is *actively* "peopled"—or inhabited, as might be more fitting to say in the context of Lewis's own bigoted, prejudiced views—by Black(ened) figures. Rather than "obscure the histories of reproductive labor that index what Wynter calls 'demonic grounds,'" Lewis's Gothic fantasy seems to be both revealing and reveling in them.

ways in which representations of Blackness have been manipulated by whiteness to maintain oppressive structures. In this colonial nightmare Lewis has imagined, Gothic monstrosity takes on a fully racialized reality. By bedeviling Blackness, the poem presupposes that whiteness is the mark of humanity.

Lewis's journal entry immediately preceding the poem reveals that he wrote it when he was en route to Jamaica for the first time, as MacDonald explains in the quotation above. Lewis writes, "During the early part of my outward-bound voyage I was extremely afflicted with sea-sickness; and between eight o'clock on a Monday morning, and twelve on the following Thursday, I actually brought up almost a thousand lines, with rhymes at the end of them. Having nothing better to do at present, I may as well copy them into this book" (260). Lewis's flippant framing of his verse interlude belies the deliberate political work they perform; it is not only outrageous but irresponsible, if not unexpected, that a well-known author and member of Parliament—a friend to the British abolitionist cause prior to this first voyage—should include such racist assertions in a text meant for publication, even encoded as an idle Gothic fantasy. As MacDonald further notes, "Lewis claimed to have a low opinion of 'The Isle of Devils', but he evidently felt it was worth preserving" (191). The episode in his *Journal* in which Lewis writes about writing the poem demonstrates that his dual status as both enslaver and Gothic author is no coincidence; on the contrary, his turn to half-conscious Gothic dream-writing during his Transatlantic journey shows how the vocabularies and syntaxes of Gothic storytelling served as a colonial technique for making sense of English imperial power abroad as it placed itself in racialized landscapes of its own making.

"The Isle of Devils" illustrates that British fantasies of colonial conquest did not only take the triumphant form of what Suvir Kaul has called "anthems of empire";[132] Gothic tales of uncertainty and trepidation contribute in their own way to imperial worldmaking. Although the ship in Lewis's poem initially avoids the island, a severe storm causes a disastrous shipwreck, which then sees Irza waking up alone on the island's shores. As she realizes her location, a Gothic terror grips her:

> Then flashed the dreadful truth on Irza's view!
> That cave–those trees–that giant palm she knew!
> Then from her lips for ever fled the smile:
> –"Mother of God!" she shrieked, "the Demon-Isle!" (305-308)

Irza's fears are legitimized by her first interaction with the island's inhabitants, an encounter marked by (her) dread and (their) brutality. Incorporating tropes from early modern travel narratives that, as Kim F. Hall and others have shown, employed techniques of the grotesque to represent the inhabitants of Africa as inhuman, Lewis draws these exotified curiosities into the Gothic tale of imperilled femininity.[133] A host of "monstrous dwarfs" (line 345) seems to want to tear Irza to pieces, evoking fears of cannibalism and sexual assault. When she is saved from the "imps" by another unnamed "creature," whose strangled sigh scares them away, she is grateful for a brief moment, until she gazes upon her rescuer, "a form, / Gigantic as the palm, black as the storm, / All shagged with hair, wild, strange in shape and show" (lines 365-367). Again, Irza's fear proves a site of reliable knowledge: this is none other than the "demon-king" (line 414).

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[132] Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (University of Virginia Press, 2000).
[133] Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Cornell University Press, 1995).

This figure belongs firmly within the genealogy of Blackness Hall traces from sixteenth-century travelogues through seventeenth-century colonial portraiture. "At first only a culminating sign of physical oddity and natural disorderliness," she writes, "blackness begins to represent the destructive power of strangeness, disorder, and variety, particularly when intertwined with the familiar, and familiarly threatening, unruliness of gender."[134] Through the racialized Black man—or "demon-king"—who "saves" Irza, the poem rehearses something of a seduction narrative in which he escorts her to his dwelling in a cave, but for the distinct purpose of imagining a monstrous distortion of heterosexual encounter. Animated by Lewis's white ventriloquism, the Black "demon-king" has neither voice, nor name, nor selfhood—he is relegated to a sub-human status in a text that paradoxically identifies him as "the master-fiend" (line 378), who is only capable of communicating through the unnervingly eroticized animal noises of "moan[ing]" and "breath[ing]" (line 359).

I would be remiss if I did not draw the obvious parallels between this poem and Matthew Lewis's first Gothic work, *The Monk*, which he wrote nineteen years prior to inheriting the Cornwall and Hordley estates in Jamaica. There is in the novel a scene in which young Lorenzo falls asleep inside a cathedral, and in "the Gothic obscurity of the church" (54) dreams that his beloved, the equally young and "virginal" (54) Antonia, is at the altar waiting to be married. Since she awaits the appearance of her "bridegroom" (54), this prompts Lorenzo to "advance a few steps from his concealment" (54), but before they can be united in matrimony, calamity strikes: "an unknown rushed between them: his

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[134] Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 28.

form was gigantic; his complexion was swarthy, his eyes fierce and terrible; his mouth breathed out volumes of fire, and on his forehead was written in legible characters—'Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!'" (54). The descriptions of this imaginary dark-complexioned man mirror the descriptors Lewis uses years later in his "Isle of Devils" poem to (re)present the Black inhabitant of the island he has dreamed up, whose form is both "gigantic" and "black as the storm" (line 366).

In *The Monk*, Lorenzo's fanciful dream sequence devolves into absolute chaos, as the "monster" (55) attempts to steal the fair Antonia away, but not before he has "tortured her with his odious caresses" (55). Years later, "The Isle of Devils" mirrors these scenes of violation almost exactly, as a looming "unknown" in the shape of a nameless, racialized "monarch-demon" (line 427) rushes into the sexual scene of feminine vulnerability that white heteropatriarchy has scripted for its own possession. Much like Antonia in *The Monk*, Irza is depicted in the poem as being so naïve, innocent, and chaste that she does not even come to realize that the poem's "demon-king" (line 414) has sexually violated her, only understanding the events that took place on that first night nine months later when she has given birth to a "hideous stranger" (line 516), a "monster-brat" (line 566). Irza's child, who looks like its sire, repulses her, but she also feels the pull of "maternal love" (line 551). As readers might expect from the author of *The Monk*, Lewis's descriptions of this visceral domestic scene are teeming with elements of eighteenth-century "horror"; the act of breastfeeding, for instance, is depicted as particularly grotesque, even as it flirts with unexpected sentimentality:

> Loathing its sight she melts to hear its cries,
> And while she yields the breast, averts her eyes.

> Not so the Daemon sire, the child he raised,
> He danced it, kissed it, nursed it, knelt and gazed,
> Till joyful tears gushed forth, and dimmed his sight;
> Nor Irza's self was viewed with more delight.
> He held it towards her; horror seemed to thrill
> Her frame—he sighed, and clasped it closer still;
> Once, and but once, his features wrath expressed,
> He saw her shudder as it drained her breast:
> And while reproach half mingled with his moan,
> Snatched it from her's, and pressed it his own. (lines 554–565)

Torn by the conflicting forces of "disgust" and "maternal love" (line 551), Irza lies "languid and lost," "in silent, senseless woe" (line 545) while the "Daemon sire" exercises parental joy and the soft pleasures of nurturing an infant. Lewis is careful to anchor this detailed scene of care with Irza's unrelenting "horror," lest it humanize the delighted "sire." The emphasis here is on the unnatural quality of love channeled through the wrong bodies (via the sire's "own" breast, for example) and showered upon the wrong objects. The infant repeats its sire's devouring violations of Irza: "The monster pined for want, and claim'd its food" (line 549).

These locations of terror/horror as part of a poem which is in turn embedded in the *Journal* situate Gothic modes of feeling and understanding at the heart of Transatlantic colonial endeavor, particularly the institution and practice of slavery. The consequences of this structure of feeling are illuminated by the poem's tragic conclusion, in which Irza is incapable of reconciling her divided feelings for her erstwhile "family," ultimately leading to their demise. By the end of her "residence" on the island, to borrow the terminology Lewis applies to himself, Irza has delivered two children fathered by the unnamed Black man: one "monstrous" (line 566) and terrifying, one "fair," a "cherub-boy" (line 821), from whom she cannot bear to be parted. But, when part X of the poem

finds Irza being rescued and taken off the island "on a barge… by friars" (line 769), she

lets herself be persuaded by an abbot that even her white child is evil and that he must be

discarded as well. When she "Described how fair he look'd, how sweet he smiled, / And

fear'd her flight might quite destroy her child" (lines 823-824), the abbot's immediate

response, uttered in "ire" (line 825) is quite alarming; he exclaims:

> Fair is the imp! and shall he therefore breathe,
> To win new subjects for the realms beneath?
> The fiends most dangerous are those spirits bright,
> Who toil for hell, and show like sons of light;
> And still when Satan spreads his subtlest snares,
> The baits are azure eyes, the lines are golden hairs. (lines 827-832)

Ultimately, believing the abbot's racist ideologies in a fictive Gothic world that offers "a

glimpse into the horrors not only of monsters, but of miscegenation, resulting in hybrid

children" (5), as Lisa Nevárez has pointed out, Irza abandons her family. The poem's

conclusion following Irza's flight is deeply evocative of Gothic terror/horror: her

"demon-husband" (line 847), standing on a rock and watching the barge depart, grows

increasingly desperate and attempts to "woo her to return" (line 853) by showing her "Her

beauteous babe" (line 848), illustrating his knowledge of her preference for this white

child. When the barge does not stop or turn around, he then "Whirl'd the boy wildly

round and round his head, / Dash'd it against the rocks, and howling fled" (lines 860-

861), provoking "Loud shrieks [from] the mother!" (line 862). What happens next is as

horrifying as it is revelatory, amid an already too dreadful scene; the "demon" (line 867)

returns, only this time holding their Black child:

> "Look! look!" he seem'd to say, with action wild,
> "Look, mother, look! this babe is still your child!
> With him as me all social bonds you break,

> Scorn'd and detested for his father's sake:
> My love, my service only wrought disdain,
> And nature fed his heart from yours in vain!
> Then go, Ingrate, far o'er the ocean go,
> Consign your friend, your child to endless woe!
> Renounce us! hate us! pleased, your course pursue,
> And break their hearts who lived alone for you!"
> His eyes, which flash'd red fire—his arms spread wide,
> Her child raised high to heaven—too plain implied,
> Such were his thoughts, though nature speech denied.
> And now with eager glance the deep he view'd,
> And now the barge with savage howl pursued;
> Then to his lips his infant wildly press'd,
> And fondly, fiercely, clasp'd it to his breast:
> Three piteous moans, three hideous yells he gave,
> Plunged headlong from the rock, and made the sea his
> grave. (lines 879-898).

This piece of the poem is evidently filled with aspects of Transatlantic, colonial Gothic

terror/horror, what with its gruesome, appalling imagery as a direct consequence of

"sexual abuse of women by nonwhites, fear of miscegenation, and fascination with

'perverse' practices such as sodomy" (231), as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert has written to

describe colonial Gothic in the Caribbean. Paravisini-Gebert also offers an analysis of the

anonymous text, *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827), set in Jamaica as well. Writing about the

character of Roland, the critic explains that "The novel, in its attempt to denounce

Roland's unnatural desire to overthrow the legitimate social order represented by the

plantation, turns him into a villain of Gothic dimensions, whose fevered mind twists

increasingly towards violence as the tale progresses, culminating in nightmare

desperation" (231), mirroring the fate of Lewis's imagined "master-fiend" (line 385)

almost exactly. The difference is that the roles of race are reversed, since Roland is a

white preacher who becomes obsessed with a local Jamaican woman, but the end-result or

the consequence of miscegenation in these settings generates a similarly disastrous outcome, revealing something disconcerting about Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts. Lewis's "fiend's" desperation toward the end of "The Isle of Devils" is made exceedingly more complex when we pay close attention to the fact that it is during this scene that readers are (finally) given access to this Black(ened) man's internal life, thoughts, and feelings, as Lewis's narrative voice attempts to illustrate and decipher what his actions "seem'd to say," as in the passage cited above. Here, the white narrative voice confers the racialized man's inner speech with an eloquence that comes across as denoting near-mockery, since up to this point this Gothic metrical tale has obstructed and restricted his intellectual capacity. In the end, perhaps the voiceless representation of the man, following this brief yet astounding glimpse into "his thoughts, though nature speech denied" (line 891), is one of the most grotesque aspects of this scene, since its author cannot escape Enlightenment philosophical racist attitudes that seem to consign Black and racialized people to a naturally mindless state. The gory ending of the poem—in which Irza chooses to abandon her children nonetheless, and readers are presented with a "demon" family annihilator—raises many questions that Lewis leaves unanswered. On the one hand, the Black(ened) figure's death by suicide calls to mind Lewis's own callous observations about Black African spiritual beliefs in the afterlife, at the same time as it suggests, from the perspective of a white enslaver, "that the slave, however savage and rebellious, cannot survive without his master" (MacDonald 192); on the other hand, the text's intense focus on death and the violent last scenes underscore Lewis's anxieties

about maintaining the enslaved populations on his estates amidst significant mortality rates, as I mention earlier in this chapter.

If Irza enacts the part of the colonizer, making her an analogue for Lewis himself in Jamaica, and the racialized father of her children that of the colonized, then the abandonment of her family as she departs the island effectively marks the annihilation not only of the unstable family unit she is compelled into forming, but more broadly whatever sense of community, law, and order might have existed in the place before her intrusive arrival.[135] The poem offers an insightful look at the dynamics of the colonial interchanges that occur in what Mary Louise Pratt has termed "contact zones" (6), the places that constitute colonial frontiers. The "accursed" island is precisely one of the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). Lewis's poem imbues the

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[135] Here, I would like to revisit Wynter's ideas discussed by S. Trimble, as I mention in an earlier footnote, regarding "demonic grounds," or the sites of marginalization and dehumanization that maintain racial hierarchies and hegemonic orders. For this purpose, I turn to McKittrick's aptly titled, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006), in which she writes that: "In developing a second, but related, use of demonic, Wynter describes 'the grounds' as the absented presence of black womanhood… For those familiar with William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the demonic here connotes a geographical, ontological, and historical lack, the missing racial-sexual character in the play: Caliban's potential mate through whom the reproduction of his race might occur, who Wynter suggests is absent, and demonic, precisely because she is outside the bounds of reason, 'too alien to comprehend,' as Audre Lorde wrote. Wynter asks, then, what would happen to our understanding and conception of race and humanness if black women legitimately inhabited our world and made their needs known? And how does her silence, absence, and missing desired and desirable body, figure into the production of selfhood? What does her nondeterministic impossibility add to our conceptualization of humanness?" (xxv). That the portrayal of racialized characters in Lewis's Gothic poem revolves mainly around the interactions of whiteness (i.e., Irza, the ship's company, and later the monks) with the nameless, silenced, Black "demon-king" prompts me to consider the "demonic" in McKittrick's—and Wynter's—terms, since the glaring absence of Black women (whom with, as we will recall, Lewis has varying and worrying degrees of interaction throughout his *Journal*) reinforces how Lewis is denying them agency, voice, humanity, and yes, a presence at all. In short, the Black woman is reduced to a spectral figure in the colonial Gothic imaginary. The work of the Gothic here, then, is to note and notice this absence, of a Black woman's legitimate existence, troubling and fraying the construction of white selfhood through which Black women become a (demonic) site of negation and contestation.

island contact zone with some of the most frightening aspects of a Transatlantic, colonial

Gothic modality, especially the disavowal of Black identity and the distorting of the

perspective of racialized subjects—the very people who experience the most material,

existential, and spiritual forms of violence, brutality, displacement, and disorientation in

the long eighteenth century— into spectacles of violence that threaten white people. I

propose that it is important to read "The Isle of Devils" as a sibling piece to the more

famous *The Monk*, not only because both texts rehearse British fantasies of monstrosity

that gained momentum during the centuries of imperial conquest, but also because, by

showing that Lewis's colonial Gothic fantasy was years in the making, even before he

inherited the position of enslaver, these two texts offer evidence that Gothic imagination

nursed the British capacity for historical atrocity in the name of empire.[136]

To conclude this chapter, I find it fitting to bring into view one final key scene in

Matthew Lewis's *Journal*, in which he attends a judicial proceeding in what he calls "the

Slave Court" (178), where "a black servant girl [was tried] for attempting to poison her

master" (178). This moment in the text, where Lewis attempts to act the part of chronicler

and impartial observer, serves multiple purposes which disrupt the narrative of the journal

entries; as he records it, the accused on trial:

> was a girl of fifteen, called Minetta: she acknowledged the having infused
> corrosive sublimate in some brandy and water; but asserted that she had taken it
> from the medicine chest without knowing it to be poison, and had given it to her

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[136] As far as I can tell based on my research, no critical pieces—other than D. L. MacDonald's chapter on the *Journal*, published in 1998—have yet been published making any overt connections between that dream scene in *The Monk* and this poem, "The Isle of Devils: A Metrical Tale." Of this link between the texts, MacDonald solely writes that, "For the 'demon-king' of the poem is clearly a black slave, as re-created by the guilty and fearful fantasy of a white slave-owner. He recalls the devil who appears at the climax of *The Monk*, who is doubly black" (192), before quickly turning to an examination of how the poem's Black(ened) figure is reminiscent as well of Robinson Crusoe's Friday.

> master at her grandmother's desire. This account was evidently a fabrication: there was no doubt of the grandmother's innocence… but as to the girl herself, nothing could be more hardened than her conduct through the whole transaction. She stood by the bed to see her master drink the poison; witnessed his agonies without one expression of surprise or pity; and when she was ordered to leave the room, she pretended to be fast asleep, and not to hear what was said to her. Even since her imprisonment, she could never be prevailed upon to say that she was sorry for her master's having been poisoned… She was condemned to die on Thursday next, the day after to-morrow: she heard the sentence pronounced without the least emotion; and I am told, that when she went down the steps of the courthouse, she was seen to laugh. (178-179)

This passage, filtered through Lewis's perspective as a white enslaver visiting the island for the first time, is fraught with meaning. While the text insists on being astonished and dismayed at the girl's purported lack of empathy or remorse, it nonetheless points to a white imaginary which is constructing and informing white apprehension through scenes of colonial terror/horror. How should we interpret the girl's actions or, more importantly, her laughter, in a text that is haunted by slavery and the ambiguous laughter of the enslaved, at every turn, but which is guided by a narrative voice belonging to a full English subject? As it (barely) stands, the *Journal* is here unable to bear the pressure which the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode is applying to it. This is a central moment in this text that works in favor of whiteness, since a court of white colonizers—all of whom are "respectable persons" (179) according to Lewis—are panicked by a Black girl's act of defiance and resistance. The passage points to the ways in which white, English Enlightenment subjects are at a loss when trying to rationalize non-subjects, or Black persons, ultimately rendering Enlightenment reason as vacuous and inadequate, since it cannot fully dissect Blackness even as a subject of dissection. Thus, this act of opposition of Minetta's, made even more eerie by her unsettling laughter, finds Lewis and

his peers at a loss for words, as it were, and severely frightened as well, because they are incapable of understanding that one of the results of colonial oppression is what Hartman has described as "the sheer unrepresentability of terror" (3). Under colonial and imperial systems, whiteness does not confer humanity to the people it has racialized, unless it is in its political and economic interests; this results in a passage such as the one above, where the text falls short of registering or recognizing Minetta as either subject or object.

Through a consideration of these aspects of Lewis's *Journal,* including his explicit and implicit commentaries about slavery, plantation life, and its sweeping ramifications, we may infer the insidious nature of reigning, contemporary eighteenth-century ideologies, while we are afforded an intimate view of how deeply entrenched colonialism and imperialism were in the minds of those involved in it. If, as MacDonald has stated, "the *Journal* is one of the most revealing documents of the Romantic period" (191), Lewis's contradictions within his own writing constitute a compelling subject of analysis, since while presenting himself as a humane reformer, his written entries ultimately betray a hegemonic mentality, leaving behind this journal that albeit powerful, still seems to be at odds with itself. In this sense, it becomes possible to understand Transatlantic, colonial Gothic as a modality that reminds us in powerful ways that "the Gothic, especially in the Caribbean, has become a part of the language of the colonized, appropriated, reinvented, and in that way very much alive in worlds far beyond western Europe and the continental United States" (Paravisini-Gebert 254-255). Acting the part of spectator and chronicler, Matthew Lewis seems to rationalize his part in the institution of slavery, and deflects the recognition of its oppressive nature, while simultaneously absolving himself of the guilt

and shame that are irrevocably attached to a white, Anglo-American worldview that still

haunts us to this day.

Coda – Beyond Closure: Black Feminist Reflections on Colonial, Transatlantic Gothic in Theory and Praxis

> Somehow, I haven't been able to make myself clear when it comes to certain things but I feel like it's probably not my fault. I don't know that it's possible to be clear when it comes to these kinds of things.
>
> Fred Moten, in conversation with Saidiya Hartman[137]

> [T]here have always been an endless number of beautiful models of living otherwise. But that encounter: defeat and then we must reemerge again. So it's not like you're insufficiently accounting for the terror but I think that maybe we're at this kind of shift. Like my own thinking right now is that we just have to be involved in that unceasing labour, producing these new experiments in living even as defeat continues to be the outcome… but we're not stopped by that defeat.
>
> Saidiya Hartman, in conversation with Fred Moten[138]

After completing the necessary year of doctoral coursework at McMaster University, in 2017, I devoted myself to imagining and crafting this thesis, through project proposals, as well as through conducting research to eventually draft and compose two comprehensive examination papers, as per departmental requirements and expectations. Naturally, when I first envisioned this project's scope and outcome—what it would convey, how it would move and operate, and its reasons for doing so—I had supposed that this final piece would provide a neat summary of the study, but I now find myself resisting the urge to rehearse or summarize, to add up results, in a conventional way.[139] Taking up some of the ideas about writing and scholarship from the introduction

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[137] From the edited transcript of a conversation between Fred Moten and Saidiya Hartman, which took place in 2016 as part of a series titled, "Black Outdoors: Humanities Futures After Property and Possession," 2.

[138] Ibid, 3.

[139] Besides conducting research about the topics treated in this study, my writing process has also included a sustained engagement with texts that provide descriptions and guidance around the genre of dissertation

to this study, in which I describe my commitment to producing scholarship that moves beyond enacting customary patterns of academic rigor, I find it more meaningful to structure this section of the thesis as a coda, or an extension of the ideas I have treated up to this point. I finish this dissertation in 2023, and, borrowing methodologies from Black Feminist thinker Jennifer C. Nash, whose critical text *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (2019) also ends with a coda aptly titled, "some of us are tired" (133), I am writing, too, in a moment of wreckage, or, as Nash terms it, in "an era marked by rapidly proliferating forms of racist, Islamophobic, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic terror" (133). Considering these ongoing crises, which continue to target persons of color, and more specifically Black peoples across the Americas, using this section not to "wrap up" my argument but to extend its lines of thought, however provisionally, into anticolonial discourses of the present seems fitting to the overall project of Black Feminist scholarship to which this project, and indeed my academic, pedagogical, and professional praxes, subscribe.

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writing, since I am interested in form and structure, in the fields of writing, and in pedagogy. Hence, I read texts such as Alan Durant and Nigel Fabb's *How to Write Essays and Dissertations: A Guide for English Literature Students* (2005), in which the authors assert that, "arguments should lead towards a conclusion, which follows the arguments you have offered, and matches the balance for and against different possibilities that you argued for" (13); following this recommendation, they remind students that "it will be [the conclusion] that is most likely to influence your mark" (15). An additional resource is Rita S. Brause's text, *Writing Your Doctoral Dissertation: Invisible Rules for Success* (2012), in which she explains that an effective concluding section to such a project must include a summary, describe implications, and spell out recommendations; she writes that through a successful conclusion is one through which the writer uses "the trends which were evident in their findings as a basis for potential theory building. This section states the researcher's sense of how the study's findings contribute to the knowledge in a discipline" (130). I find this second source to be more in keeping with the kind of scholarship I would like to put forth, particularly as I move away from conventional, or "traditional" writing that serves a rote function of going through the motions, as it were, to meet with approval following the completion, submission, and oral defense of a doctoral thesis.

Given my engagements and preoccupations with the long eighteenth-century Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, I do not think that bringing a sense of closure to my ideas laid out in this document is at all fitting. I pause to consider how this phrase, "a sense of closure," speaks to the ineffable quality of the Gothic. Putting it differently, I think about "closure" in relation to the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic, which, in its ineffability, "refuses the closure of happy (or even sad) endings" (Cooksey and Thomas 11). If, as I have illustrated in this study, the essence of this mode of writing extends beyond literary, aesthetic, discursive, and cultural confines, becoming intertwined with the legacy of slavery and its still unfolding aftermaths, then, in a project such as this, "there is no such thing as closure" (52), as Kobina Mercer has expressed when discussing the Afro-Gothic modality. Linguistically, this noun phrase, "a sense of closure," is employed to convey the subjective perception of closure; rhetorically, it can be used as a figure of speech that necessarily evokes an emotional response as it engages listening and reading audiences in their own understanding of closure; and semantically, the phrase connotes a feeling of finality, completion, or neat resolution. I turn here to what I have set forth as Transatlantic, colonial Gothic to engage with this phrase on a deeper, more nuanced level, since in the context of this project "closure" becomes something that needs to be "sensed" more generatively. Given the readings I have laid out in this project, "a sense of closure" emerges as a particular, historically conditioned ability through which we can "sense" that "closure" is an operation of power that often includes violent forms of enclosure. If by engaging with decolonial thought, the Gothic becomes a site for challenging dominant narratives, questioning established hierarchies, and examining the often-inexpressible,

brutal aspects of whiteness, then my readings of it in the Transatlantic context "produce forms of liberation through bodily acts that resist the corporeal and epistemological enclosures of coloniality" (35), to borrow these words from Afro-Puerto Rican scholar Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez. The scholarship I have produced in this thesis points to how the notion of "closure" can be viewed skeptically as an attempt to neatly deal with or discard the ongoing experiences of racialized peoples. I thus articulate and engage with "a sense of closure," provisionally, in this study now by fully acknowledging the ways in which "closure" can undermine the need for socio-political and historical reckoning. In other words, it is not my aim to produce a forced conclusion to unresolved thinking, ideas, or issues, since I am not interested in engaging with the pursuit of closure in the context of the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic. After all, perhaps achieving "a sense of closure" is not possible in the context of a Gothic mode of writing that contends with the ways in which whiteness instigates the specific forms of colonial terror/horror I have examined—which, to invoke Nordius once again, include "confinement… lethal violence, and uncanny terrors" (631). These forms of terror/horror I have presented here defy conclusive resolution, making any attempt to definitively "close" them impossible, given the subject matter of this thesis and my approach to it.

An important aspect of this project, in which I have discussed texts that show how the Gothic mode behaves when it encounters colonial brutality—in non-fiction biographical writing, in fictive prose narrative, and in original journal entries and poetry alike—has been predicated upon the crises that emerge when writers or readers attempt to classify, contain, or elucidate the characteristic mysteriousness of the Gothic. Rather than

offer a conclusive definition of what the Gothic mode *is*, I have instead illustrated what it *does* when it comes across the experiences of racialized peoples within and outside of the bounds of textual representation(s). The analyses I have offered have not supplied definitive answers as to the exact definition of a (de)limited Gothic genre, on purpose. Instead, I have aimed to demonstrate through my readings of both primary and secondary material, to cite Fred Moten, that "I don't know that it's possible to be clear when it comes to these kinds of things" (2). To demystify the Gothic is to neutralize its capacity to think through aspects of human experience that refuse the kinds of moral, political, or epistemological clarity Enlightenment discourses demand.

I have spent some time underscoring the most notable characteristics of Gothic writing of the long eighteenth century, and have illustrated its political inception and capabilities, as it makes use of themes of terror/horror, decay, atrocity, and purported "barbarism" to rattle and unsettle emergent racial orders under Transatlantic colonialism. Through my readings, I have attempted to highlight how the Gothic collapses in on itself when it grapples with the material and spectral legacies of colonialism; I link this implosion of the Gothic to "the context of the horror, persecution, and death that defined colonial slavery throughout the Americas" (28), as David Edwin Aponte has expressed about what I have termed the terror/horror that pervades the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America. To carry out this aim, I have weaved in and out of literary and critical texts to signal the potential of the long eighteenth-century Transatlantic, colonial Gothic mode to deploy neither terror nor horror, but terror/horror, a category that does not exist in the British literary taxonomy of Gothic genres. As a term of analysis, terror/horror is

grounded instead in Black Feminist refusals of the Cartesian distinction of mind from body, a distinction crucial to the generation of whiteness as part of a colonial sociopolitical order. Recognizing how the Gothic mobilizes terror/horror thus enables us to read Gothic writing for what it suggests is harrowing about Black(ened) life and living in colonial and colonized spaces—from West Africa, in the present-day Federal Republic of Nigeria, whence Olaudah Equiano was forcibly taken by enslavers; to the United Kingdom, where Matthew Lewis was born on English soil and which Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* mentions tangentially through the character of Carwin, whose wanderings take him to Ireland; to the region of the Caribbean, where Lewis proves to be the inheritor and ineffectual owner of two sizable slave plantations on the island of Jamaica, and to where Equiano travels in the service of Captain Pascal; and to the United States, where Brown's fictional Gothic nightmare is enacted. In order to present a generative—and meaningful—engagement with the three primary texts featured in this study, Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), and Matthew Lewis's *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (written between 1815-1818, and published posthumously in 1834), I think alongside contemporary Black Feminist writers whose works attend to the embodied knowledge, lived experiences, and perspectives of Black peoples in the eighteenth century and beyond, who are made to struggle against multiple forms of oppression, entrapment, and displacement due to processes of racialization which were mutually dependent on major strains of

Enlightenment philosophy—namely the privileging of reason over embodiment, the categorization of race, and the perpetuation of colonial structures.

As I have discussed in the preceding chapters, Transatlantic, colonial Gothic writing is particularly well-suited to call attention to the harmfully violent, racist, and xenophobic ideas promoted by Western European Enlightenment thinkers who did not only contribute to the enactments of colonial terror/horror by virtue of producing works that justified the enslavement of Black Africans, but whose ideologies also (re)theorized the "mind-body problem" (Kim 439) in ways that continue to negatively impact Black and racialized peoples. If, as I have articulated as a supporting argument throughout this thesis, the Gothic is a literary response to the eighteenth-century mind-body problem, it is precisely because colonial Gothic can disrupt the presupposition that mental processes and reasoning should be ascribed to whiteness, while bodily processes and fleshliness are solely located in Blackness. Indeed, Olaudah Equiano, Brown's fictive Francis Carwin, and the Black and mixed-race peoples Matthew Lewis oppresses in Jamaica, as well as the ones he creates as figments of his authorial imaginings, continuously challenge these discursive distinctions by existing in the world—real and imaginary alike—as human beings whose minds do not exist as independent agents from their physical manifestations or embodiments. The Gothic mode of writing emerged in the middle of the eighteenth century in Anglo-American literature, at around the time when the relationship between the mind and the body reappeared in philosophical and scientific tracts.[140] Although, as I

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[140] Critics like John Beloff suggest that during the eighteenth century, there was a renewed interest in the mind-body debate in Western Europe (and eventually in North America), since the Age of Reason brought with it a fascination with seventeenth-century European philosophy. See, for example, Beloff's essay, "The Mind-Body Problem as it Now Stands" (1973), in which he writes that, "As everyone knows, Descartes

demonstrate in Chapter 1, literary criticism on the Gothic has tried to render it consistent with the age's dominant philosophies by theorizing terror and horror as distinct affective states, I have argued that the Gothic consistently problematizes the distinctions that structure Enlightenment models of human experience, indicating the entangled nature of Enlightenment thought with coloniality and its legacies. As Fred Botting has argued, the Gothic also "appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality" (qtd. in Nordius 164), which suggests that this type of writing does not locate sources of fright in a distant past but shows how it accrues around forms of colonial modernity. Indeed, Teresa A. Goddu explains that "the rise of the Gothic in England at the end of the eighteenth century… coincided with the debate over the abolition of the slave trade" (71), and additionally that "in the United States, the height of American Gothic fiction occurred during the antebellum period, which also saw the rise of abolition" (72). Following these connections, a crucial part of this project has been to articulate and examine the ways in which the Gothic addresses not only the mind-body problem, but also an Enlightenment culture which upholds theories of rationality and individualism while ultimately failing to account for the socio-political and historical contexts in which these ideas were generated and how they operate to marginalize and exclude "Othered," non-European, non-white peoples and cultures. Consequently, the readings presented in this thesis have argued for a Transatlantic, colonial Gothic tradition, which, as Janina Nordius terms it, is one "within Gothic literature that locates the source

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espoused a peculiarly absolute form of dualism whereby, since it is the nature of mind to think and the nature of matter to be extended, the two can have nothing whatever in common" (254).

of fear and horror to the contradiction between, on the one hand, enlightened humanist values and, on the other, the cultural and racial oppression that has come to form an integral part of the eurocentric political and economic agenda" (164-65). What Equiano, Brown, and Lewis are producing in common are a variety of wayward subjects, to borrow Hartman's phrase, that trouble this plan, through stories of racialized people whose existence this agenda attempts to restrict, control, and codify unsuccessfully, generating ontological and epistemological uncertainties. In other words, in the three primary texts I have analyzed, the Gothic becomes a site through which "body and mind [and horror and terror] are twisted and contorted in a manner indifferent to structures of form, their integrity, and their limits" (71), as Zakiyyah Iman Jackson has observed in the context of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987).

I want to close this brief explanatory review section by returning to the idea of the coda as a form of writing that allows me to unravel some of the threads of my argument to make them available to present and future bodies of thought. Specifically, I want to emphasize how contemporary Black Feminist methodologies intervene in Enlightenment temporo-spatial arrangements that relegate the Gothic's uncertainties to either an inaccessible, obscure past or a realm of pure fantasy. In this regard, I cannot overstate how profoundly the work of Christina Sharpe has impacted every stage of this project. Her text, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, which I cite throughout this document, arrived in my life to challenge, invite, and provoke me in equal measures at a critical juncture when I was mapping out this thesis. I have written about the tensions the Gothic mode generates between past, present, and future, making them inform one another in

unexpected ways. Certainly, works of Anglo-American literature which bear the Gothic appellative display a fascination with the legacies of a feudal, monarchical past in its British setting, and with the legacies of displacement, frontier life, genocide, and uncertainty in its American setting. At the same time, these works are preoccupied with concerns contemporary to their present; they evince socio-political, cultural, and metaphysical anxieties in Transatlantic settings during times of upheaval, change, and shifting national and global perspectives. The Gothic, in other words, has always turned to the past in order to grapple with the most pressing uncertainties of the present. Additionally, these works consistently dramatize concerns for the future: by taking up the relationship between apprehensions of the past and misgivings of the present, they implicitly invite readers to imagine the present world as that which already haunts dreadful, (im)possible futures marked by social, racial, cultural, and political wreckage.

By focusing on these aspects of the Gothic, in writing that addresses the complex convergences between different temporalities, I had initially intended to engage with critics like David Garland, who trace "how contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts, alliances, and exercises of power," and whose work highlights "the erratic and discontinuous process whereby the past became the present: an often aleatory path of descent and emergence that suggests the contingency of the present and the openness of the future" (372). While Garland's scholarship is compelling in its unsettling of the relationships between past, present, and future, it was not until I became immersed in the project and methodologies of Black Studies and Black Feminism(s) that I was able to redirect my thinking to how conventional critical

approaches sometimes fail to grasp the material and spectral circumstances that (continue to) produce distinct processes of inequality, racialization, and terror/horror that upend linear models of time as a way of organizing human life as progressive. Enter the work of Sharpe. Through her scholarship, meditations, and reflections, Sharpe became a fundamental part of this project, one which prompted and guided me to reimagine colonial terror/horror as Gothic and ongoing: conditions that have not ended but which have, since the eighteenth century, contoured, dictated, and outlined specific forms of oppression, violence, and inequality.[141] Sharpe's examinations of the many legacies of the colonial project, which produce "the contemporary conditions of Black life as it is lived near death, as deathliness, in the wake of slavery" (7-8), model a more nuanced and more direct approach to understanding the roots of our current moment(s) of catastrophe (2), to borrow this phrase once again from Afro-Dominican scholar Dixa Ramírez D'Oleo. At the same time, this methodology insists that we begin to "imagine futurities or worlds/otherwise" (184), as Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez has stated, and as Saidiya Hartman declares when she refers to the great "number of beautiful models of living otherwise" (3) that are possible.

Crucial to my framework has been Sharpe's use of the terms that define Gothicism. She writes that:

> Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies while even as that terror is visited on our bodies

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[141] In *In the Wake*, Sharpe cites Saidiya Hartman when she describes what these specific forms of violence look like for Black(ened) people living in North America; Hartman's quotation via Sharpe enumerates these as "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (qtd. in Sharpe 15).

> the realities of that terror are erased. Put another way, living in the wake means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse about terror we, Black people, become the carriers of terror, terror's embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror's multiple enactments; the ground of terror's possibility globally. (15)

This astounding and harrowing passage does much to dispel the eighteenth-century notion that terror is of the mind and horror is of the body. Sharpe succinctly directs us to consider "terror's embodiment" and locates it at the intersections of violence and fear. Working through these ideas and applying them to the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic texts I have examined further suggests that the mind and body are not separate entities but rather are closely interrelated and perhaps even mutually constitutive in the face of racial brutality. The specific forms of racialized terror/horror with which Black(ened) people have always been made to contend are Gothic, I have argued, in their capacity to disrupt classification, to challenge hegemonic discourse, to subvert racial logics, and to produce hauntings. In the hands of Black Feminist thinkers, then, the experiences of terror/horror cannot be neatly taxonomized or categorized as static affective states, as they reflect the dynamic, multivalent interrelations that exist between the condition of living, and the socio-political and economic conditions that texture lived experience.

It is important to note how Black Feminist thought draws from the vocabulary of terror/horror and fright to challenge the Eurocentric conventions, tropes, themes, and motifs on which traditional Gothic criticism has focused. In this regard, I return to Saidiya Hartman's works, which have animated this study from start to finish, and whose *Scenes of Subjection* was recently revised and re-published with a new prefatory essay entitled, "The Hold of Slavery" (2022). In it, Hartman further unravels the ideas she originally

presented in her text when it was first published in 1997, specifically her discussions around the "terrible spectacle… [of] slavery" (3) through which Gothic images of brutality are pervasive, and her argument that racialized forms of terror/horror cannot possibly be represented. I use terror/horror as my guiding term because Hartman's work has helped me to understand the interconnectedness of these terms, and to see that they operate differently in Black Feminist (re)theorizations than they do in the literary critical discourse descended from the eighteenth century, opening up new avenues of critical inquiry guided by the methods practiced in the field of Black Studies. For Hartman, terror is not the sublime expansive that resides in and operates solely through intellectual and/or affective states; instead, she associates it with the subjection or crisis "of human flesh… [that] defined the existence of the enslaved and… would shadow their descendants, the blackened and the dispossessed" (xxix). Hartman's use of "horror," in both its singular and plural forms, is equally disruptive: she uses it to give a name to the sensations a person feels "induced by the sight of shackled and manacled bodies" (36); to refer to the cruelty attached to the transactional value of Black African lives, when she writes about "the litany of horrors that characterized the commercial deportation of Africans" (75); and to more broadly refer to "the horrors of slavery" (17), evoking the phrase from formerly enslaved writers like Mary Prince and Olaudah Equiano.

What is exciting about Hartman's and Sharpe's work for the study of the Gothic mode is how they crumble the concrete if tenuous Enlightenment distinction between these two terms that have long informed how the Gothic was read and written. Black Feminist theory and praxis, as a mode of grappling with the forms of violence that wed

past, present, and future, directs us to reconsider Gothicism as a literary mode that dwells with these violences instead of dispelling them. I gather Hartman and other Black thinkers together in my coda not only to emphasize "the ongoing and structural dimensions of violence and slavery's idioms of power" (Hartman xxx), but also to model the importance of thinking with knowledge communities that inspirit, rather than explain, the effects of writing like the Gothic.

What I have proposed is that we pause to consider the Gothic as a product of coloniality, and therefore a record of the ways in which Black and racialized peoples are subjected to multiple forms of oppression under colonial orders. Such a critical turn serves the purpose of highlighting the exhausted (and exhausting, to again evoke Nash's "some of us are tired" lamentation) criticism and scholarship that have presupposed that Gothic themes of ghostly apparitions, ancient curses, spirits, fugitivity, confinements, or threats of violation are somehow disconnected from the horrors attached to the violent colonial project produced by whiteness. This critical shift also emphasizes the ways in which Black peoples inhabiting Transatlantic spaces which continue to rehash and rehearse this horror and violence have always "challenged, refused, defied, and resisted the condition of enslavement and its ordering and negation of life, its extraction and destruction of capacity" (Hartman xxx). I have demonstrated through my readings of Equiano's, Brown's, and Lewis's texts how such refusals and defiance emerge within the Gothic mode, sometimes despite the text's overt intentions. My extended meditations below continue to emphasize this ongoing movement of Black refusal by placing myself in its genealogy.

Moving "Towards the Vision Beyond Terror"[142]

> The coda… is a brief reflection on how decoloniality and radical relationality in diasporic contexts open a space for further relational, archipelagic, and transatlantic projects. I… examine how writers and artists imagine possibilities for racialized subjects… I offer methodological interventions at the intersections of Black, Latinx, and Hispanic studies, with radical women of color and decolonial feminist thought at the fore.
>
> Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez[143]

When I set out to write this section of the dissertation, I had originally intended to reach as far back as 1688 to begin articulating a timeline of what I understand as Gothicness in Transatlantic settings, following the definition of "Gothic" offered by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as "of or relating to a style of fiction characterized by the use of desolate or remote settings and macabre, mysterious, or violent incidents" ("Gothic"). Presenting a kind of survey mapping out key instances of the macabre, mysterious, and/or violent in a Transatlantic world, starting with Aphra Behn's prose fiction *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave* and ending with readings of contemporary media seemed important to establishing the value of this project: I would offer a concluding set of close readings that would, in no uncertain terms, provide further proof that racialized terror/horror has haunted the Transatlantic world since the long eighteenth century. If I had written that conclusion, I would have presented brief re-readings of early British texts, from Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771), to Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures*

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[142] Dionne Brand, "*A Map to the Door of No Return* At 20: A Gathering." *YouTube*, November 6, 2021. During her talk, Brand asserted that, "to live in the Black diaspora is to move towards the vision beyond terror."

[143] Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature*, 28.

of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands (1857) and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), all of which touch on aspects of race and racialization in Africa, England, and/or the Americas, or on imagined far-away lands in which racialized characters live. Then, I would have offered brief re-readings of early American texts, from Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), and William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy: or, The Triumph of Nature* (1789), to Uriah Derick D'Arcy's *The Black Vampyre; A Legend of St. Domingo* (1819), Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" (1843), Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" (1843), and Herman Melville's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), all of which present articulations of colonial racial terror/horror in the Americas. Following this survey, it was my aim to show how the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic manifests in contemporary multi-modal texts, from the works of writers like H.P. Lovecraft and Stephen King, to series like Amazon Prime Video's *Carnival Row* (2019), and films like Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017), *Us* (2019), and *Candyman* (2021), which treat racialization as terror/horror in the twentieth-and-twenty-first centuries. This was my plan to conclude this study.

However, I find that my ongoing engagement with Black Studies and Black Feminist thinking has opened up a different path for me to continue attending to instances of terror/horror, fright, and fearfulness—to past, present, and future hauntings produced by whiteness and coloniality. Here, I am once again borrowing methodologies from Hartman, who explains that her work presents:

> a politics of refusal against capitalism and the conditions of work, even as it is so much more than that… I feel like I'm involved in a much more humble labour. I think I'm trying to describe belatedly, the things people have fought and have done and I'm just attending to them. So it's this labour of regard, it is tripped up

or struggling with how to illuminate that and it's not that it isn't a resource we work with and in some way know, but it's an intimate labour in regard to what others have done and have thought, so, I'm a describer. (4)

In understanding and undertaking this praxis to produce scholarship and pedagogy that reject (racial) "capitalism and the conditions of work," I would rather inhabit and enact the role of "describer" as well, specifically by making use of these final pages to note "how decoloniality and radical relationality in diasporic contexts open a space for further relational, archipelagic, and transatlantic projects" (28), as Figueroa-Vásquez has explained with regard to her own coda.

Thus, I pause here to consider what and who my work and labor are for. I have just finished teaching a course on Black Latin America at McMaster University, in the Winter 2023 term, a class that attends to the interconnectedness, synergies, and intersections that exist between Black Studies, Caribbean Studies, Black Latin American/Afro-Latinx Studies, and, yes, even Gothic Studies. All of my course offerings—including The Black Caribbean and its Diasporas, and Even Stranger Things: The Early Gothic—make use of anti- and de-colonial approaches in interdisciplinary and experiential ways to invite students to consider what thinking and work(ing) beyond disciplinary boundaries looks like; to use their voices to empower marginalized and racialized peoples and communities; to think through the haunted nature of a Transatlantic world in which the dominant narratives continue to perpetuate oppression, inequality, and terror/horror for racialized peoples; and to bridge theory and practice by thinking about their positionality as members of broader communities of knowledge and care in which they can advocate for equality and effect change. This is the work to which

I am deeply committed, even as I am indebted to the communities of care and relationality which have sustained me throughout my time in Canada as a Ph.D. student and candidate, and as a sessional instructor at the university.

In this pedagogical context, I would like to briefly describe how some of the texts in my course reading lists—texts produced by "radical women of color" and featuring "decolonial feminist thought at the fore," as Figueroa-Vásquez states in the epigraph to this section—illustrate how Transatlantic, colonial Gothic is grappling with and/or registering racialized peoples as an inherent if often disavowed presence in colonial worlds. In describing these texts and how I make use of them in teaching-learning spaces, it is important that I note how students respond to them, as they invariably elicit meaningful, rigorous, and critical discussions, inciting students to produce generative work. A crucial part of my pedagogical praxis hinges on inviting students into interdisciplinary spaces—to consider the multi-modal cultural productions by Black and African-descended creators, from various and often disparate fields of study—since, as Katherine McKittrick warns us, "in academic settings, identity-disciplines function to uphold misery and empire and the segregation of ideas and idea makers precisely because all disciplines are differently enfleshed and classified and hierarchized" (40). In this sense, working through the Transatlantic, colonial Gothic modality with students is a way to approach the wreckage and catastrophe of our own times—the reality that, as Gwendolyn Kiste aptly observes in her timely piece, "The Gothic Horror of a Post-Roe America" (2022), "In [the] America[s], our lives have become a horror story" (1). Black Studies' insistence on (re)formulating the world passed down from eighteenth-century

colonialism, and applying more holistic understandings to how our present world came to be, (re)animates the fields of Eighteenth-Century Studies and especially Gothic Studies in promising ways. McKittrick has expressed that:

> black methodology and method-making (which are academic and extra-academic), offer rebellious and disobedient and promising ways of undoing discipline. And those of us who work in these places that weigh us down can carve out surprising and generous spaces that challenge existing political visions, allow us to fight against inequity and racism, work against racial violence, and collaborate. (41)

Certainly, my discussions about the Gothic mode emphasize its adeptness at existing in "rebellious and disobedient and promising ways," especially when it engages coloniality and grapples with the terrifying effects of whiteness. Here, I want to propose that any meaningful study of the Gothic affects that descend to us from the Enlightenment period must attend to and even center the diasporic texts, and critical works and scholarship of Black and racialized women, since, while treating what Lorgia García Peña has described as "the horror of living the afterlife of colonialism as a Black immigrant and a Black citizen" (179), such works also suggest "a fuller history of freedom, black humanity, and resistance to empire" (Johnson 4) in the face of terror/horror.[144]

A relevant contemporary piece of poetry included as part of my course reading lists is *Inheritance: A Visual Poem* (2022) by Afro-Dominican writer Elizabeth Acevedo. The poem abounds in Transatlantic Gothic imagery, as it recounts the speaker's

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[144] The direction of my research and critical work once I complete the PhD program is fully steeped and invested in these considerations; I plan to continue generating scholarship that engages directly with primary texts, multi-modal artworks (e.g., film and video, visual art, music), and critical works by women, with a focus on the productions of Black and racialized women. Some examples include Mary Prince and Phillis Wheatley Peters, as I mention earlier in this thesis, but also contemporary works by Latinx and Caribbean authors like Afro-Puerto Rican poet Mayra Santos-Febres, Mexican-Canadian writer Silvia Moreno-Garcia, Afro-Dominican writer Naima Coster, among others.

experiences of terror/horror and violence which coloniality and whiteness have imposed

on her. Writing as a Black Dominican, she opens by saying: "Some people tell me to 'fix'

my hair / and by fix, they mean straighten; they mean whiten" (lines 1-2), immediately

alluding to the effects of colonial brutality and its impact on cultural identity. Then, the

speaker offers up a series of urgent, charged commentaries that take a colonial Gothic

approach to the horrors of the slave trade and slavery. She writes:

> But how do you fix this shipwrecked history of hair?
> The true meaning of stranded.
> When tresses hug tight like African cousins in ship bellies.
> Did our ancestors imagine that their great-grandchildren would look like us?
> And would try to escape them how we do?
> Finding ways to erase them out from our skin,
> To iron them out of our hair. (lines 3-9)

These lines bespeak the devastatingly violent aftermath of whiteness as the desired

standard in Transatlantic spaces. The poet calls attention to the violent colonial rendering

of Black African physicality and embodiment by interweaving images of "shipwreck,"

the "bellies" of slave ships, and enslaved persons' production of offspring. This last

category evokes a Gothic perspective on living descendants from the perspective of

ancestors; by imagining that people of the past might view their great-grandchildren with

the kind of terror/horror with which characters in Gothic fictions encounter ghosts of the

past, the poem invites readers to reckon with the conditions under which reproduction and

childbearing occurred in colonial contexts, and how these conditions violently disrupt

intergenerational bonds. At the same time, the poet is through her speaker indicating

Black peoples' mental processes, which defy such historical disruptions: she can imagine

what her "ancestors [would] imagine," as well as how they would feel about dominant

narratives that promote their erasure, still, so many generations later. If, as Wendy Fall

has stated, when Gothic tradition contends with coloniality it can "present alternative

versions of history, accentuate otherness, challenge accepted ontology and epistemology,

blur boundaries and explore liminal spaces" (1), then the poem's turn toward racial,

ethnic, and cultural reclamation, healing, and empowerment enacts these subversions of

colonial history. The speaker rejects notions of "swallowing amnesia" (line 14) and

"whiteness" (line 17). The poem concludes on a note of refusal:

> Some people tell me to fix my hair:
> And so many words remain unspoken,
> Because all I can reply is,
> You can't fix what was never broken. (lines 29-32)

Through this examination of the impacts of colonial atrocities that shape collective

perceptions of what kind of embodiment is valued, desired, or even possible, this piece

emphasizes how Transatlantic, colonial Gothic symbolism can be mobilized to illustrate

the resistance and refusal necessary to reclaim ancestral connections with Black peoples

who were made to endure the horrors of the slave trade.

This line of critical engagement with the Gothic consistently points to its

capabilities to expose the ways in which colonial, "Enlightened" whiteness continues to

haunt Black and racialized peoples. The critical work of contemporary Black Feminists

articulates these tensions and reconceptualizes a moribund field that has missed, or not

sufficiently addressed, the point of this pressure. I also place Black St. Lucian poet

Canisia Lubrin in this genealogy, whose work joins the anticolonial tradition of playing

recklessly, we might say, with traditional form and structure to reclaim and remake

literary poetic tradition(s) into discourses capable of approaching race and racialization

differently. Here, I am thinking of Lubrin's latest collection of poetry, *The Dyzgraphxst* (2020), which, through the figure of the Black diasporic speaker, Jejune, points to forms of Black resistance which are not rendered legible by the still-animated specters of whiteness. Jejune's "Dream #5," for instance, reads in seven lines:

> If I could just leave the old things to their trembling
> If I could leave you to your monuments, too. No innocence
> I've shown the sharp world and it is imagined and gerund
> big enough for all of us, imagined a tattoo up close
> on Trappist-I, and I am more than one way to see
> the world-world, sizing up the moment by worth of a return
> How rude of me to force you on the thing that springs blood. (lines 1-7)

Through this dense lyrical style, Lubrin weaves beautifully in and out of poetic meter; the first two lines here establish a graceful dactylic rhythm that is slightly set off by the initial "If" of each line, and is disrupted more forcefully by the caesura of the period, followed by an assertive "No." The anaphora of "If I could," and repetition of "imagined," lend an urgency of purpose to the poetic work of (re)imagining the inherited world. The colonial Gothic past here is "old" and "trembling," and Blackness is "imagined" as emerging from this world full, embodied, and transcendent through a poem in which Lubrin acknowledges and breaks the rhythms of the established white canon.

These are but two examples of how contemporary Black Feminist writers are presently engaged in projects which are conscious of the haunted quality of the world they are written into. Writing poetically haunted stories in which history sometimes coils, sometimes curves, and sometimes defies conventional chronological sequence altogether, these works gesture backward and forward simultaneously through a Gothic modality that reveals and refuses the racial hierarchies and binaristic frameworks that structure Anglo-

American literary traditions. As I have shown through these brief readings of the afterlives of Acevedo's speaker's Black African ancestors and Lubrin's inquiries through Jejune, the work I am doing, this labor, is taking place within the teaching-learning communities I carve out with my students, and perhaps this is how I practice the Black Feminist theory that has guided this doctoral thesis. In other words, perhaps by continuing to bring attention to the convergence of the Gothic mode and Blackness, a person like me can embody the intersection between theory and praxis. When Brand asserts that "to live in the Black diaspora is to move towards the vision beyond terror," she evokes the wrecked world of socio-political instability, environmental crises, inequality, injustice, recognizable and ineffable threats, and racialized terror/horror, but also trains our focus on the possibility of perceiving the world otherwise as a way of orienting ourselves beyond colonial realities.

I have argued that the Gothic mode is an important technique for envisioning not only the horror/terror of colonial worlds, but also the possibility of moving through it to decolonized futures. In doing so, I have made a case for expanding the insights of what Maisha L. Wester calls "Black Gothic" back onto the Anglo-American Gothic tradition as a whole. Like Wester's Black Gothic texts, I argue, all Transatlantic, colonial Gothic cultural productions "shudder at the fragmentation required to maintain rigid, monolithic cultural identity and its reproduction of brutal racial dynamics" (254), as my readings of Equiano, Brown, and Lewis illustrate how, in their texts, this shuddering manifests in distinct and even divergent ways. In *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* (2012), Wester writes that, "Invariably, investigations into black revisions of the

gothic genre prove to be an invaluable project. Such interrogations effectively remedy reductive readings of the gothic genre, which tend to obscure the appearance of racial prejudice and the function of racialisms" (256). While she is focusing on primary texts in which Black authors revise Gothic narratives, I have performed my own Black revision of the Gothic by insisting on a Black Feminist–centered critical apparatus for reading all instances of colonial terror/horror as they surface in Transatlantic writing. I believe this approach provides a crucial critical framework for understanding how colonial Gothic writing reflects what is frightening, still, about tangible and spectral iterations of whiteness.

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