

POSTMODERN POETICS OF THE GOTHIC: REPETITION IN GOTHIC MUSIC AS
HAUNTED EMPOWERMENT

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2019
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A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts
In
English: Literature

by
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San Francisco, California
May, 2019

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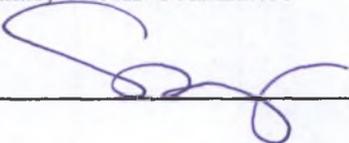
POSTMODERN POETICS OF THE GOTHIC: REPETITION IN GOTHIC MUSIC AS
HAUNTED EMPOWERMENT

Daniela M. Price
San Francisco, California
2019

In my exploration of the Gothic genre—as poetry, community and practice—I analyze how Gothic musical compositions use repetition to haunt their readers. In doing so, I reveal the ways in which these texts and their audience use repeated encounters with pain—hauntings—as a means to access agency in everyday life. I argue that Gothic music’s characteristic preoccupation with painful affects and self-conscious production demonstrates to willing subjects the power possible in a haunted existence. I carry out my investigation in three parts: first, I put forth the aims of my investigation and outline the theoretical frameworks I use to accomplish said aims. The following chapters then focus on an analysis of two songs that exemplify the emotional extremes that Gothic music frequently uses to bring about Gothic agency.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Chair, Thesis Committee

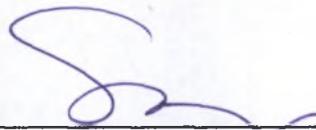


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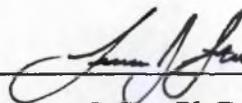
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Postmodern Poetics of the Gothic: Repetition in Gothic Music as Haunted Empowerment* by Daniela M. Price, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts: English Literature at San Francisco State University.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not be here without the overwhelming support and guidance that I have received from my mentors, family and friends.

My mentors, Professor Sara Hackenberg and Professor Summer Star, you never once allowed me to grow complacent, but you also never let me forget that I had two brilliant, compassionate professors helping me evolve as a student, teacher and human being.

My friends, this work would not have come into being without the laughter and lessons I've had in your company. May we aim for more of both.

I miei nonni, Anna and Antonio Lorenzoni, mi avete educato l'importanza della famiglia e l'apprezzamento per tutto ciò che la vita offre. Grazie, dal profondo del mio cuore.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, Diana and Timothy Price. All I have is because of all you gave. Thank you.

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I. Far from Eden: The Gothic Practice

Gothic music and ways of life look back in order to move forward, and that pervasive backwards look coupled with self-conscious (re)production serves as a means of adaptation—survival. The genre’s longevity and the fact that its popularity perseveres proves the Gothic’s intrinsic link to survival. In this thesis, I propose the existence of a “Gothic Practice” that is suggested not only by the repetition inherent in the genre’s texts, but by the (hau)ontology of the genre itself. The repetition and distortion that haunt Gothic art are emblematic of the Gothic Practitioner in that this continual use of the past in the present allows both genre and disciples alike to live well into the future.

In proposing this practice, I necessarily explore the Gothic genre—as poetry, community and practice. To do this, I invoke the deconstructing specter of Derrida along with his “hauntology.” I also call on the Thich Nhat Hanh’s interpretations of Buddhist suffering and “true learning;” Gilles’ Deleuze’s conceptions of pain and masochism; and Edmund Burke’s ideas on pain, terror, delight and the sublime to illustrate the Gothic Practice. Taking these theories as foundation, I analyze how Gothic musical compositions haunt their readers through the repeated interplay of hyper-referentiality, intense feeling and music’s always-already haunted existence. Gothic music invites us to submit to repetition so we may be granted a terrifying, transcendental, Burkean encounter as

reward, and in investigating this, I reveal the ways in which these texts and their audience use repeated encounters with pain as a means to access agency in everyday life. In essence, Gothic music's characteristic preoccupation with painful affects and self-conscious production demonstrates to willing subjects the power possible in a haunted existence.

II. Space and Time: The Postmodern Gothic

Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.

—Mary Shelley, 1831 “Author’s Introduction” to

Frankenstein

The Gothic is inherently a genre of repetition. Gothic texts reproduce—reinvigorate and reinvent—tropes from their past, and Gothic people are haunted by both the genre’s canon and their own personal histories.¹ Moreover, the genre is itself “twisted romance”

¹My exploration focuses primarily on music, but it is impossible to understand Gothic music in isolation from the Gothic in other mediums and from gothic culture. I do not intend to create a chronology of texts, but I will touch on examples of formative texts in the genre in order to further situate my definition of “Gothic.” Additionally, when I use the word “Gothic,” I refer to the genre at large, the Practice and the Practitioners. When I use the word “gothic,” I refer to the goth subculture—specifically, gothic or goth music.

and “twisted Romanticism;” tales of chivalry made frightening and Romantic ideals of transcendence and the individual’s ensuing “return transformed” are still present in the Gothic. For example, John Keats’ 1819 poem, “La Belle Dame sans Merci,” evokes medieval tales of romance and Romantic transcendence, but equally evokes the terrifying. As with many tales of romance, readers follow a knight’s encounter with the fantastical. Here, the fantastical element is a fairy, introduced as “Full beautiful—a faery’s child” (14). The Gothic twist soon rears its ugly head, however, as the fairy proves *femme fatale*. After the two make love, the knight falls asleep and comes face-to-face with visions of his conquest’s victims—“death-pale” warriors who cry the warning, “La Belle Dame sans Merci/ Hath thee in thrall!” (39-40). Though the hero’s nightmare occurs in the last third of the poem, formally, the audience is positioned on unstable ground before the poem even begins.

Keats afflicts us with Gothic disquietude by means of ambiguous language and formal distortion. First, he breeds ambiguity through equivocation. The poem’s title contains the word “merci,” which potentially suggests two different meanings: the first connotes gratitude, and the second—what sounds like the English word, “mercy”—connotes pity.² Though we cannot infer with certainty Keats’ initial preference, both

² Keats took his title from a romantic ballad written by Alain Chartier in 1424: *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*. (Hult, David. *Le Cycle de la Belle Dame sans Mercy*. Paris: Champion Classiques. xiv. 2003). This adds yet another layer of romance to Keats’ poem.

definitions tell us that the ensuing encounter will not be pleasant because we are either dealing with the absence of gratitude or mercy. As we know, the narrative quickly proves this assumption true. Keats disquiets us further by twisting the traditional romantic ballad. “La Belle Dame” adheres to ballad form in that it is comprised of quatrains and primarily written in iambic tetrameter with an ABCB rhyme scheme. However, disruption haunts the text in that the piece is formally “twisted” by leaden final lines in every stanza. Keats Gothicizes his ballad by adding spondaic endings to each stanza: for example, the spondaic lines, “And no birds sing” (4) and “On the cold hill’s side” (36), succeed three lines of lilting tetrameter. This consequently encumbers readers with an unexpected leaden weight. At points in the narrative that have yet to reveal La Belle’s true nature, the unsettling metrical disruption tells a different story. The fairy is not the light and airy presence we expect: she is instead a darker, heavier—Gothic—presence.

Such conscious disruption is a hallmark of Gothic evolution. Just as the tradition borrows fairies from chivalric romance, so, too, does it borrow ideas from the Romantic. The Gothic genre is “based in psychological awakening... a dark aesthetic form that crystallizes within the Romantic tradition through an arousal of the past in the present,” much as it “perverts and preserves” its own ontology (Akant 3). In other words, the Gothic is the *alteration* of the Romantic rather than its undoing. One could think of the relationship between traditions as some would think of a difference between a focus on

life, (R/romance), and death, (the Gothic). In truth, the Gothic is *undeath*. It is a disruption of life, yes, but very much also its continuation. As Isabella van Elferen declares in her influential *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, the Gothic “does not just reproduce history but rather conjures up a version of the past that is distorted by our own memories” (5-6). The Gothic Practice embraces such distortion, for example calling into question the idea of “creator as Romantic genius” and assuming the position that he is instead a “consciously creative agent... a collective ‘voice,’ more controlled than controlling, the intersection of other voices, other texts, ultimately dependent upon possibilities dictated by language systems, conventions, and institutionalized power structures” (Brooklyn College). The people who produce Gothic texts are as equally aware of and responsible for the genre’s eternal life as the tropes by which they remain inspired. All that black clothing, humor and eyeliner signals a collection of individuals who plunder the canon and then pervert it so it can be enjoyed by like-minded disciples for years to come (Du Plessis 164). This is a genre meant to endure—to be immortal—but not in the way other genres persist. The Gothic survives through adaptation, looking at its literary and cultural histories and twisting them to create. More specifically, it is a genre that adapts by way of emphasis and distortion.

In *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Maggie Kilgour uses Mary Shelley’s experience writing *Frankenstein* (1818) to exemplify the Gothic’s obsession with the convergence of

generic and personal histories. Not only was Shelley aware of the influence literary ancestors have on acts of creation in general, she was likewise influenced by her own family's works. Her husband was Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and her parents were Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, the latter two having been literary and philosophical influences in their own rights. Kilgour draws on Shelley's own acknowledgement of this in *Frankenstein's* preface, concluding from Shelley's words that "creation is not origination, but combination, a bringing together of diverse elements that [we have] inherited from . . . [our] literary ancestors" (192). Towards the end of her book, Kilgour goes so far as to allegorize this genealogy of Gothic composition through Shelley's father and several contemporaries:

Like Godwinians, we tend to view everything as constructs we can take apart and remake in our own image. Unlike Godwin, however, we no longer believe that truth is under the veil, as, like [Ann] Radcliffe, we know that all we will find is more art, constructs that we have made. (222)

The self-aware quality of Gothic creation allows creators an agency not necessarily present in more formally-restrictive genres. The Gothic is a genre that lives on through a

perversion of its own ontology—not living in god-like immortality, but in a vampiric undeath wherein the genre feeds off its past and the people influenced by it.

Because of the Gothic's cyclical, self-conscious reinvention, I argue that the genre is a markedly postmodern one. Postmodernism is about recognizing uncertainties—rather, it is about recognizing that *nothing* can possibly be certain. In submitting to this idea, we are able to shape life's uncertainties as we please. Repetition is inescapable in acts of creation; generic tropes or symbols are proof of this. However, in postmodernism, process takes precedence over principle because there is no such thing as "principle;" nothing exists "in and of itself."³ Therefore, *how* these elements are repeated becomes more important than the elements themselves. For example, genre as a conception stakes a claim in the delightful abyss of a postmodern, deconstruct(ed/ing) world because each genre consists of a fluid constellation of signifiers, thereby constructing a useful fiction that readers can use to organize texts. Like Derrida says in "The Law of Genre," genre is first and foremost an organizational tool that is forever subject to change:

³ In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Gary Aylesworth expands on the claim that process takes precedence: "postmodernism is indefinable as a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning" ("Postmodernism").

[Every] text has a mark, and that mark marks the text's genre—which is the thing that makes a text a text. But the mark itself does not belong to the genre, and is only supplementary to the text itself (even though it's also constitutive). (65)

“Marks”—signifiers—do help us categorize a text, but it is how these marks are *combined* that determines its generic classification. We need only look at how I use “postmodern” as a codifier to see this arbitrary meaning-making in action.

In “The Gothic as Practice,” Timothy Graham Stanford Jones offers a postmodern definition of genre best by invoking Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*: “Understanding genre as *habitus*, and the reading and writing of texts as practice, gives us a sense of how tradition interfaces with the individual talent, which is useful in a field as repetitive as the Gothic” (38). An integral means by which this undead constellation persists is apparent in Gothic texts' *habitual* repetition. These texts *haunt* their readers, and often do so to excess. Repeated elements include hyper self-referentiality, the use of intense affect and the presence of painful encounters—with specters born of subject and circumstance, reader and composition.

The first repeated element, “hyper self-referentiality,” alludes to the Gothic text's pervasive acknowledgement of—and consistent homage to—the tropes, traditions and tales of the genre's past. Though the Gothic has come from the past to the present, like a

ghost, it does not, as Jacques Derrida would say, entirely belong to the present (*Specters* 11). In “Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,” Colin Davis elaborates Derrida’s “hauntology,” defining it as that which “supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive” (373). This definition goes hand-in-hand with the Gothic’s self-referentiality because a Gothic text is never entirely of the past or present; it is a product of temporal collapse, always speaking *with* and *through* the voices that came before.

In the beginning of *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida’s Ghost Writing*, Carla Jodey Castricano expands on Gothic temporal collapse by saying that “the logic of haunting and the notion of the return of the living-dead are implied in ‘individual’ being—the so-called subject—as well as in historical, social and cultural realms” (14). In other words, meaning in a Gothic text is created hauntologically—i.e. via the interplay between a composition’s form; content; artistic, critical, and scientific influences; and the audience’s reactions *to* said form, content and influences. The reactions evoked are largely due to the interactions between text and audience memory because, as Jones asserts when talking about Bourdieu’s *habitus*, “neither habitus nor individual agents are wholly responsible for the Gothic text, but both are essential to its creation” (38). Like a human being, a text is a composite born from chaos. At the same

time, texts are inevitably influenced by others' attempts to control that chaos.⁴ (After all, influences cannot exist without having been influenced themselves.) The creation of a composite is equally dependent on repetition in that repetition binds meaning from chaos. Not only does a person "remain . . . in a strange state of indeterminacy except where [one] receive blows" (Deleuze 26), so, too, does a text. The *Gothic* text is preoccupied with manipulating such blows. Authors like Edgar Allan Poe, for example, are crucial to an understanding of Gothic manipulation.

Poe is foundational to our modern conception of Gothic texts, but he is likewise influenced by foundations laid before him—others' attempts to manipulate tradition. "The Raven" (1845) is one of the best-known Gothic poems in the world, and Poe's continued influence over the Gothic is as inexorable as his raven's cries of "Nevermore!". However, despite Poe's status as an originator of the contemporary Gothic, Poe is equally haunted by Gothic specters. We see this represented strongest in "The Raven"'s imagery. For example, there is a "curious volume of forgotten lore," and a "grim . . . [and] ghastly . . . ominous bird of yore" whose "eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming." It is largely accepted that the Gothic as a literary genre began in 1764 with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*.⁵ Naturally, countless texts contributed to the corpus

⁴ Generic labelling is a ubiquitous attempt at such control.

⁵ In *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830*, James Watt notes that the term "Gothic" as a literary designation began in the second edition of *Otranto*'s preface, wherein Walpole called the novel "A Gothic Story."

of Gothic tradition between 1764 and 1845's "The Raven." In addition to *Frankenstein* (1818) and "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819), texts like Ann Radcliffe's archetypal *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1764), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1797) all left their marks on the genre and Poe himself. Literal or figurative, forgotten lore, ominous specters and demons pervade today's Gothic texts.

Case in point, Alex Proyas' 1994 film adaptation of James O'Barr's 1989 comic book series, *The Crow*, uses both Poe's titular animal—ravens and crows often (falsely) considered one in the same—and lines from the poem itself to pay Gothic homage. The film's protagonist, Eric Draven, is brutally murdered, but soon rises from the dead once a crow taps his gravestone, echoing the events in the first stanza of Poe's poem: "While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,/ As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door./ 'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door—'." (It should also be noted that the name "Draven" is mostly comprised of "raven" and sounds like "Eric the Raven.") This symbol of Gothic past calls to us, evoking the foreboding powers possessed by Poe's raven; the crow's act of revitalization parallels the undying presence of Poe's imagery in contemporary Gothic texts. Guided by this crow, Eric seeks vengeance for the death of his fiancée, Shelly, by killing each of the criminals who beat, raped and eventually murdered her; in the process Eric essentially becomes the crow, literally breaking down the door that stands between him and the last connection to

his dearly departed—her engagement ring.⁶ Eric bellows, "Suddenly, I heard a tapping, as of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.' You heard me rapping, right?" (*The Crow*). He takes the raven of Gothic past and becomes the crow of Gothic future, embodying a twisted incarnation of Poe's creature in the process. After each of the first two killings, Eric leaves behind the symbol of a crow by means of blood, then fire—death and potential rebirth. From then on, the symbol's presence terrifies the criminals, thereby further calling to mind Poe's own terrifying, inescapable presence in Gothic literature. Though every genre borrows from and is influenced by its past, the Gothic celebrates it—protects and perverts the preexisting in order to reinvent.

In the Gothic, specifically, awareness of the genre's preexisting formulas haunts the audience, but not without the intrusion of personal experience serving to color the perception of these formulas. Just as the boundaries between text and reader become blurred, the memories of other texts also bleed into this meaning-making: as Castricano claims, writing such texts "invites interminable analysis in that it is a kind of writing that is self-referential yet co-exists in a relation of correspondence with other writing" (42). Again, some would counter that this dialogism is true of any genre, with which I would agree. Fantasy and science fiction are good examples of genres that borrow from their past because their characteristics are easily identifiable. When we think of fantasy novels,

⁶ "Shelly" may be yet another nod to the Gothic tradition, referring to both Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley.

works like JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy comes to mind: the presence of elves, magic and flowery prose readily signify the work's generic classification. Science fiction likewise distinguishes itself, but with aliens and a great deal of scientific exposition. The Gothic, too, has such signifiers—the supernatural, terror and twisted romance, for example—but attention paid to how these signifiers came to be is what sets the genre apart. What differentiates the Gothic from traditions such as fantasy and science fiction is its preoccupation with its own ontology. The genre's remarkable degree of repetitive intratextual, intertextual and extratextual referential awareness, intensity of affect and frequency of painful encounters in form and content firmly situate it in a position that grants agency to its readers in ways other genres do not. "Agency," in the postmodern Gothic, is the ability to move forward: we acknowledge structures, emotions and pain—hauntings—in order to continue to "play" with them and therefore persist. This characteristically postmodern awareness is what allows us to move—to continue to make and remake meaning as we see fit.

The second haunting I investigate, intensity of emotion, effect and affect, speaks to the Gothic text's heavy reliance on extreme emotion. More to the point, the Gothic seeks to use and evoke the extreme altogether. Significant attention to affect—specifically, attention to the painful varieties thereof—is a hallmark of the Gothic in accordance with the 18th century's cult of sensibility and Edmund Burke's "sublime."

The sublime is known for the ways in which it intensely affects its subjects by means of mind and body. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke makes a point to affirm mind and body's indivisibility when he reminds readers that "affectations of the mind produce . . . emotions of the body [and] distinct feelings and qualities of the body . . . produce determinate passions in the mind" (186). Specifically, pain and terror—extreme fear—are the sublime's prerequisite affects: "things which cause pain operate on the mind, by intervention of the body; whereas things that cause terror, generally affect the bodily organs by operation of the mind suggesting the danger; but both agreeing . . . in producing a tension, contraction, or violent emotion" (190-191). In short, pain and terror are the Gothic's affective weapons of choice.

The third haunting on which I focus, "the frequent presence of painful experience," is the most apparent haunting the Gothic has to offer. In form and content alike, the Gothic forces its audience to acknowledge pain; most often, that pain is allegorized by means of specter—some examples being repeated lines of poetry or apparitions made manifest. Reading Poe's "The Raven" exemplifies this acknowledgement twofold: the speaker is haunted by his long-lost Lenore along with the raven's shouts of "Nevermore!" However, in Poe's poem the speaker does not fully realize the Gothic Practice that I am proposing. The speaker thinks he understands the

situation in which he finds himself—plagued by memory and a bird crying nonsense—and willfully resists looking deeper into his suffering. In resisting, he is continually tormented. If he were aware of being in a Gothic text, perhaps he might feel empowered instead of horrified—mobilized instead of paralyzed by the bird’s increasingly sinister cries of ill omen. Poe’s raven, repeating incessantly a word that suggests the impossibility of repetition—“nevermore”—points to the paradoxical but productive process of Gothic haunting.

The word “nevermore” at the end of stanza eight makes its return at the end of every stanza that follows, all the way to the end of the poem; though initially croaked by the raven in stanza eight, until stanza 11, the speaker and raven alternate in uttering “Nevermore!”s—vocalized internally and externally. This alternation nicely allegorizes the process of creating a Gothic text and the simultaneous emphasis and distortion—the variations of “utterance”—of Gothic canon necessary for such creation. Author and canon feed into one another, as evident in the poem’s last stanza: though the final “nevermore” belongs to the speaker, it is used in admission of the fact that we will always be haunted by the inescapability of Gothic past. The speaker will always be haunted by the raven—“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting”—the harbinger of a cruel reality wherein Lenore, along with the speaker’s sanity, is nevermore. Neither the raven’s victim nor the poem’s reader can completely free

themselves from the “shadow” of their hauntings. Readers feel a similar haunting because of “Lenore”’s presence in the couplets near the end of every few stanzas: “From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—/ For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—” (10-11); “And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, ‘Lenore?’/ This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, ‘Lenore!’—” (28-29). The presence of m-dashes at the ends of many lines focused on Lenore augments this formal haunting. Each dash is a breath held in hope that the love may return, and the fear that she will not. Every time she fails to appear marks another failure to avoid pain, which in turn evokes in the audience a new fear—a fear of pain. Burke believes that fear “operates in a manner that resembles actual pain” (74). Because fear belongs to “self-preservation . . . it is therefore one of the most affecting [affects] we have” (122). That the Gothic focuses on both pain and extreme feeling proves it is inherently a genre of the sublime.

i. Never Enough Ritual Noise and Phantasmagoria: Gothic Music

Listening to music is a paradoxical experience. While we grow aware of patterns as songs progress, we simultaneously come to anticipate the reappearance of these patterns under certain conditions established in said progression. In other words, as we listen to a

composition, we are gathering new information while aware that information just gathered shapes our expectations of the song's progression. As with generic forms, familiarity with musical forms influences how we perceive sonic data, therefore rendering music another medium subject to intertextual specters. What places music in a position conducive to the sublime, however, is its tendency to generate temporal overlap. The Gothic finds a home in music's "capacity to stretch time and space and to dissolve subjectivity" because it "ties in with [the] Gothic's distortions of reality and the self" (van Elferen 7-8). Stretching time and space to alter subjectivity is simply another articulation of the Gothic's obsession with self-conscious production—and therefore temporal collapse. As with most mediums, music can offer a metaphysical experience—a series of disruptions and distortions analogous to the ones that characterize a Gothic text. van Elferen reminds us that "the act of hearing a song transcends time and space because listeners can lose themselves in lyrical and sonic signification, a "temporar[y] occlu[sion of] the ordinary world [that] renders musical time, space and being the only reality at hand" (189). Temporal collapse offers transcendence. This potential is maximized in the Gothic, a genre inherently aligned with the sublime, through repetition.

A primary reason I choose to explore Gothic repetition in music is because of the medium's existential dependence on repetition. The formal and lyrical structures of a musical composition are necessarily organized around patterns—patterns perhaps more

acutely obvious than those in other mediums.⁷ For example, the refrain by its nature haunts listeners. Even more affecting is its tendency to be the piece of song forever embedded in our brains. Regardless of whether a refrain's reemergence during one's seminar or workout is a welcome one, the effect speaks volumes about music's spectrality. Through the excessive repetition of elements that emphasize temporal collapse, Gothic music amplifies a song's intrinsic spectral power. However, the Gothic is even more intimately connected to music because "memories [and] emotions inevitably overlay listening experiences, thus allowing past, present and future to overlap. As these connotations are always-already present in music, Gothic hauntology is inherent in music" (van Elferen 173). I am in no way claiming that all music is Gothic, but I am in accordance with the assertion that recognizing hauntology is a more holistic approach to understanding the medium overall.⁸ Though not all music is Gothic, music itself is as haunted and haunting as any Gothic text.

There is one crucial distinction that makes Gothic texts stand apart from others, and this holds true for its music: all music is haunted, but goth music emphasizes that it is haunted. The genre's reverence of and preoccupation with its own history reflects the

⁷ It is important to note that I talk about "music" here as "songs with lyrics." The medium's "dependence on repetition" is therefore talking about the dependence present in a song and a poem.

⁸ Additionally, the goth subculture is considered by many to be a music-based scene (Amy Wilkins, *Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status*. University of Chicago Press, 2008). Because attending nightclubs is a main means of congregation for goths, it stands to reason that Gothic perspectives can develop and evolve here as well as in literature and the media.

haunting inevitable in any act of creation. Gothic music in particular elevates and intensifies this reverence and preoccupation through generic and affective repetition. As we have discussed, music “emphatically exploits the destabilising and violating power that music has over time” (van Elferen 180). Such destabilization working in tandem with the Gothic’s repeated use of painful affect and dark subject matter sets the scene for sublime experience. From post-punk harbinger of modern goth music, Bauhaus, to Aesthetic Perfection and VNV Nation—sometimes-inhabitants of contradictory subgenres “industrial pop”⁹ and “dark electro”—each band huddled under the Gothic’s umbrella actively wields foregrounded bass lines, references to the canon and unsettling lyrics in order to cultivate a haunting immersion. Bauhaus’s 1979 goth anthem, “Bela Lugosi’s Dead,” is considered by many to be the first goth song¹⁰ because it possesses all of the above in addition to other requisite Gothic qualities: it simultaneously preserves and perverts tradition, embraces visual and sonic extremes and subjects its audience to painful experiences.

First and foremost, calling “Bela Lugosi’s Dead” “excessive” is an understatement. The song averages around nine-and-a-half minutes long, contains 19 utterances of “undead” and devotes entire blocks of the composition to heavily-textured,

⁹ Kimmi Thomas, “Aesthetic Perfection ‘Into The Black’: Interview.” *Exit Life Press*. 2/25/2019.

¹⁰Alexander Carpenter, “The ‘Ground Zero’ of Goth: Bauhaus, ‘Bela Lugosi’s Dead’ and the Origins of Gothic Rock.” *Popular Music and Society*. Routledge. 35 (1): 25–52. 2012.

ominous instrumental experimentation.¹¹ The repetition of these elements preserves and celebrates Gothic characteristics such as excess, but “Bela” also proves Gothic in its perversions of such preservations. For example, the song’s degree of excess in one area is thwarted by the degree of lack in another: the extreme emotion in Peter Murphy’s ghostly wails from 6:47-7:46 is contrasted by the complete absence of vocalized emotion from 8:29 to “Bela”’s end.

The song further haunts its listeners by emphasizing and playing with canonical imagery. This haunting becomes most apparent when Peter Murphy conjures images of bats, blood, a bell tower, tomb, “dead flowers,” and being “alone in a darkened room” because each image calls to mind scenes from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and its various film adaptations. However, the song accompanies these images with an image outside the Gothic text it references: Bela Lugosi. If the audience had been thinking of the novel’s vampire, by the third line audience expectations—regarding the song’s adherence to Gothic canon—are subverted. Though we could argue Lugosi was part of the Gothic canon by 1979 because he portrayed Dracula, “Bela Lugosi” is not a character in Bram Stoker’s novel nor in Tod Browning’s 1931 film. Therefore, “Bela” flaunts its self-conscious production most flagrantly in referencing not only Dracula, but—even more

¹¹ It is difficult to make out whether Murphy says “dead” or “undead” at 4:44, but this ambiguity only serves to further blur the lines between life and death.

postmodern in its adding another layer of repetition—the actor who played Dracula.¹² Lugosi could never be Bela Lugosi and Dracula at the same time; he, and in turn his portrayal of Dracula, were always absent and present, dead and alive—*undead*. In this liminal space, we can decide which canonical element we want present; as we listen to the song, we can choose which character to reanimate. Bauhaus referring to Dracula without actually saying the vampire's name also parallels the Gothic's self-conscious construction and the narrative agency possible that results from such attention: that it is an actor being added to the mix of canonical elements compounds this claim because actors pay particular attention to what they hide or convey to their audience, just as Bauhaus chooses to not explicitly invoke Dracula.

As they do with vampiric imagery, Bauhaus also upholds and reshapes Gothic tradition through lyrical and sonic repetition. By repeatedly subjecting listeners to unsettling periods of suspense, uncertainty and dizzying alternation, “Bela” proves a painful experience. For example, the absence of a concrete bass line in the beginning of the song holds listeners in suspense until the line is established at 1:21. Although we might think the bass line's entrance is a respite, the established line unsettles us further with a dirge-like descent comprised of three listless thrums per measure. At each refrain,

¹² Not only did Lugosi play Dracula in Browning's adaptation, he played Dracula onstage. That Lugosi repeated this performance many times before his cinematic appearance makes us wonder if the specter of Lugosi's “theatrical Dracula” at all haunted its filmic counterpart.

the bassist's transition to feverish rocking exacerbates our discomfort, the rapid bass strokes evoking a child rocking back-and-forth in fetal position. Listeners' disquietude is made all the more dizzying from the accompanying lyrical cries of "undead."

"Bela"'s vocals hold us in suspended animation as well. Only after over two-and-a-half minutes of delay-affected sliding guitar screeches and sporadic bass plucks is the audience made painfully aware of the presence of absent vocals. However, once Peter Murphy's vocals do make their entrance, the slight echo, while not enough to overpower the clarity of Murphy's words, interferes just enough to produce an uncanny effect—as though the singer is haunted by a sonic specter. The echoed sliding guitar notes provoke a similarly chilling effect, their sound enough like scurrying spiders to send shivers down our spines. Further suspense and ambiguity ensue with the "Undead, Undead, Undead" from the first refrain haunting us at "Bela"'s lyrical end; "undead" is repeated so frequently that the utterances blur together or bring about semantic satiation: is the singer saying "undead," or "I'm dead?" Has the line devolved into meaningless sound? The confusion is disorienting and represents the disorientation that results from an acknowledgement of the liminality of life and death, that one state is always haunted by the other.

This disorientation holds listeners hostage after the song's lyrical end at 7:46. We grow unsure if or when Peter Murphy will punctuate the remaining instrumental

measures with “Undead” after his first post-lyrical punctuation at 8:12. (He does, only once more, at 8:35.) Once the song has ended, listeners feel relief; the relentlessness of feverish strokes and “undead” triplets remind us that the undead is inescapable—and that the Gothic’s present will always recognize and play with its past. Therefore, it is fitting that “Bela Lugosi’s Dead” is considered the first modern goth song. As soon as we think the Gothic has gone quiet, it cries, “Undead!”, thereby drawing attention to its history in order to better prophesize its future. In addition to acknowledging the past, the first step to Gothic agency is submitting to the pain of the past made present.

ii. Get Your Body Beat: Pain, Submission and the Sublime

Gothic Practitioners willingly return to pain in order to access the sublime—Practitioners’ aims revolving less around a cessation of suffering, and more around a submission *to* or wielding *of* it. Edmund Burke says that “pain and pleasure, in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of a positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence” (33), but an understanding of submission in the Practice requires that we look beyond pain and pleasure as “simple.” As Paul Guyer notes in his introduction to the Oxford edition of *Enquiry* (2015), Burke argues “that our pleasure in the sublime is simply our delight at pain threatened but

avoided” (xv). The Practitioner and postmodern goth would disagree with avoiding pain altogether; they would argue that pain and pleasure are intrinsically-linked, one always haunted by the present absence of the other. Overall, however, the Practitioner focuses less on cultivating pleasure and more on making pain meaningful; this starts with submission.

In *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze says, that “pain only acquires significance in relation to the forms of repetition which condition its use” (119). Both pain and pleasure require repetition to become sublime. Therefore, we could argue that the Gothic Practitioner is masochistic because a masochist needs pain as the primary condition that ensures the advent of meaning. For example, a lot of Gothic music is characterized by waiting—“expect[ing] . . . the pain which will make gratification possible” (71). In many Gothic compositions, the speaker awaits the return of the deceased, times past, or memories that refuse to be silenced. In listening to such songs, Gothic Practitioners subject themselves to pain, which “fulfills what is expected,” therefore creating the “possib[ility] for pleasure to fulfill what is awaited” (71). Submission is an agential act. Though Deleuze articulates that the masochist is more commonly associated with passivity—adopting the mentality, “I am punished, I am beaten” (105-106)—we must understand the participatory nature of a masochistic experience.

Even Burke indirectly confirms that a certain degree of submission is required for pain to become sublime because “in this . . . inactive state [of submission], the nerves are more liable to the most horrid convulsions, than when they are braced or strengthened” (195). The Practitioner submits to extreme emotion, lets affect ravish mind and body in order to render an experience sublime. So long as

the [mental or physical pain] is not conversant about the present destruction of the person . . . [it] is capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which, as it belongs to self-preservation, is one of the strongest of all the passions [because its] object is sublime. (197)

Granted that we are not destroyed by the pain encountered, we are allowed a transcendent experience otherwise impossible were we only seeking pleasure. Though Burke posits that “we never submit to pain willingly” (86), he certainly implies that we will to the degree that allows for delight. Listening to Gothic compositions is an excellent example of such encounters with pain.

In Gothic music, many experiences are situated in the body because of music’s typical visceral evocations and the Gothic’s self-conscious submission to (and reshaping

of) forms past. We need only listen to the harsh, gritty distortions in the progression of a gothic industrial composition to feel these sensations.¹³ The song's progression simultaneously reflects an acknowledgement of what has passed—the established patterns, or melody, if there is one—along with the established's (d)evolution into an indecipherable noise that tears its way into our skin. Belgian EBM industrial group Front 242's earlier work demonstrates this movement especially well. "Electronic body music"'s effect on listeners is apparent in the name, and Front 242's 1988 song "Until Death (Us Do Part)" takes the band's already-hyper-somatic stylings and amplifies their effects with a distinctly Gothic turn in subject matter.¹⁴

As the song beats its incessant bassline into listeners via synthesizer, the vocals drone, "Now I'm feeding myself with you/ And the more I grow, the more you decline/ Now we're tied . . . Until death us do part." "Feeding" and the parasitic relationship between speaker and subject are unequivocally vampiric. Analogously the song itself feeds off its listeners by means of sonic assault, demanding sensory response from the audience: the unrelenting beat of a synthesized snare drum steadily hammers its way into

¹³ "The specific stylistic characteristics produced by early industrial bands varied from one group to the next but they were generally harsh and abrasive . . . frequently with the purpose of causing physical pain to audience members" (Hanley 11).

¹⁴ Like "La Belle Dame sans Merci," "Until Death (Us Do Part)" first uses its title to unsettle the audience. The phrase appears in *The Book of Common Prayer* in varying iterations: "Till Death Do Us Part," "Til Death Do Us Part," "Till Death Us Do Part." However, across variations, there are no parentheses to interrupt the vow. We could say the pause forced by the parentheses represents the imposition of an unnatural caesura on a natural one: it amplifies the break between the end of one life and the beginning of another.

our ears; a single keyboard pattern repeats itself ad nauseum, lulling us into a false sense of security while the song simultaneously attacks us with jarring, industrial noise. "Until Death" is a piece that plays with distances—the distance between vampire and victim, man and machine, pattern and disruption. The key to this piece's sublime potential is submitting to this distance.

One example of such submission is in the numerous ways the song produces an uncanny affect. The vague, difficult-to-discern voice samples that disappear as quickly as they appear exemplify this production: when a sample is used, we are uncertain as to whether we heard a voice in the song or in the next room. We are further unsettled by the presence of a recording within the recording to which we are listening. Another unsettling vocal factor is that the singer is a man who drones each verse like a robot. In addition to the blurred lines between man and machine, the repeated imposition of "Until death us do part" over the end of almost every "line" makes it so listeners grow unsure of when one line ends and the other begins.

To add to the song's Gothic quality, the last verse of "Until Death" points to its self-conscious production in its last verse, urging listeners to continue both being haunted and haunting: "Now it's time for you to be sure/ That the life we share will be long/ That what can't be cured has to be endured." The phrases "time for you to be sure" and "the life we share" connote choice; the speaker is asking his victim prior to total commitment.

However, immediately after proposing this “shared” life, the speaker adds a caveat that reminds listeners, “what can’t be cured has to be endured.” Additionally, at this point in the narrative, the victim has twice already been made a meal—the song’s “vampire” having “ma[de his] way inside”—so it seems that nothing but submission is possible. We, the audience, have little choice in ignoring the Gothic influence in this composition, but, more importantly, these lines are a nod to the Gothic Practice in the realization that healing is not always possible—that we must accept pain in order to “endure.”

iii. Time to Be Alive: Buddhism’s Place in the Gothic Practice

Associating Buddhism with postmodernism, deconstruction and the Gothic may seem like a logical leap. I am offering more than a critical or philosophical lens: I am offering a possible way of life. Therefore, it has felt necessary to conduct research in the field where many of us go in the absence of certainty: religion. I am neither religious nor an expert in any faith, but because I am proposing a sort of Gothic “mindfulness”—really more a mindful *practice*—I find that Buddhism has the most in common with the Gothic Practice. This is because many of the cycles proposed by the Buddha resemble the ways in which Gothic conventions and the Gothic mindset are characterized by their haunted

(non-)origins and *haunting* affects and effects.¹⁵ For example, according to monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh in his critical work, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, we are supposed to repeatedly “engage . . . [with] the world” by continually acknowledging that “suffering is holy [only] if we embrace it and look deeply into it” (8-9), which is exactly what I propose Gothic Practitioners do with both their personal hauntings and the (hau)ontology of the genre itself.¹⁶ Highlighting the overlap of Buddhism and the Gothic Practice makes the latter’s practical applications more explicit.

Another tangible connection between these practices is the importance of mind-body interplay in the formation of our conceptual associations. In *Enquiry*, Burke tells us that we apprehend reality and form taste by means of sense, imagination and judgment (5). Though it seems that all experiential input is first accessible primarily through the senses, the interactions amongst the three faculties are what ultimately shape our experiential associations. Buddhism makes similar claims: in his translation of “The Greater Discourse on Cause,” John J. Holder explains the Buddhist belief that “all things

¹⁵ Though the idea of “mindfulness” has also become something used to sell yoga paraphernalia, I justify its use here because the term most accurately conveys a self-awareness outside the metacognitive awareness we use in academia. In *Early Buddhist Discourses*, John J. Holder translates my intended use of the term best: in his words, “mindfulness” is “being fully aware of the arising and passing of each factor or object in one’s experience” (207). Whether that experience is reading tragic poetry or taking a blow to the face, “full awareness” is requisite for survival.

¹⁶ I use “suffering” and “pain” interchangeably here. A common misconception in Buddhism, Hanh says, is that many people misunderstand what is meant by “suffering.” In a Buddhist context, the word can mean pain, but it also means that all things are in an ongoing state of decay: “whatever comes together eventually has to come apart; therefore, all composite things are described as suffering” (19). This definition possibly shows another way Buddhism and the Gothic coincide. Entropy is life’s default. Recognizing this is both Buddhist and Gothic.

arise, evolve, and eventually dissipate, because of complex causal conditions” (26). These conditions are the result of natural occurrences and “psycho-physicality and consciousness mutually condition[ing] one another” (27).¹⁷ As Deleuze reminds us, sensory input—bodily pleasure or pain, in his case—only acquires significance in relation to the forms of repetition which condition its use.

Further speaking to the repetition that dominates Buddhism, Hanh tells us that Buddhists place immense importance on their “true learning,” which is rather deconstructionist in its adherence to the inseparability of practice from reflection and the primacy of process over principle. In order to truly learn something, we must “*practice* this path. This is realized by learning, reflecting, and practicing. As we learn, whether by reading, listening, or discussing, we need to be open so we can see ways to put what we learn into practice” (Hanh 43). Because this cycle harbors a hyper-awareness of reflection and adaptation, being haunted and haunting—for Hanh says we must practice “in a way that [our] suffering is transformed” (44)—it draws a distinct parallel to the Gothic Practice.

Though definitions of paradise and well-being may vary between the paths of a Buddhist and Goth, the kinds of repetition, cycles, and self-conscious transformation

¹⁷ Holder translates “psycho-physicality” as “the combination of mental and physical aspects of a person and of reality generally,” wherein “the mental is not a distinct substance from the material, nor do material things have independent ‘essences’” (209).

prevalent in each link them closer together than we might think. However, the Gothic Practitioner's path diverges from the Buddhist's in that paradise to a Buddhist is frequently tied to the cessation of suffering—mainly, the cessation of “physical pain, psychological distress . . . and spiritual [and] existential anxieties” (Holder xiii). The Gothic Practice implies an acknowledgement of or willing return to—a wielding of—pain in order to achieve a sort of sublime experience. The sublime both moves us and moves us to action; in submitting to extreme pain, we create the possibility for awesome, terrifying and ultimately agency-producing experience.

III. Shoulder to the Wheel: Structure, Methodologies and Desires

Temporal collapse abounds in my investigation and is likewise evident in the choice of texts I investigate. Though I note the inaugural literary use of the term “Gothic” as having taken place in the 18th century, my exploration does not follow the genre chronologically. In the previous sections, I laid generic and theoretical foundations by introducing Gothic poems from 1819 and 1845. I then built on those foundations by analyzing a film from 1994 that was based on a comic book series from 1989, which was inspired by said poem from 1845. Afterwards, we looked at what is considered the first modern goth song: though composed in 1979, the opus drew on imagery from a 1931 film adaptation of a

novel from 1897. Simply put, the progression of my exploration is as chronologically-recursive and multimedial as the Gothic as a whole. Music still assumes center stage, but we will eventually see that the Gothic Practice is applicable to many different mediums.

I enter the heart of my exploration by analyzing two songs that exemplify the Gothic Practice in that they deconstruct the most prominent binaries characteristic of the genre: submission and resistance, movement and stasis, and pleasure and pain. Each of these compositions is forged from two of goth music's typical emotional preoccupations—anger and sadness. The first work is “Came Back Haunted” by industrial group Nine Inch Nails, and the second is “Rhapsody” by gothic rock pioneers Siouxsie and the Banshees; each composition represents one of the two emotional focuses. The chosen songs are not the artists' most typical works, instead representing stylistic evolutions, thereby illuminating Gothic adaptation on a larger scale.

After providing background on the bands' positions in the genre, and offering context for the songs themselves, I investigate the ways in which repetition of references, structures, intense affect and painful experience—hauntings—allegorize or even beget the production of continued “play”—agency. Once I have performed these close-readings, I again apply the Gothic Practice to a different medium—the novel. Because the Practice is meant to assist in the navigation of pain, uncertainty and the ubiquity of memory, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is an ideal Gothic selection. In form

and content, Brontë's masterpiece offers myriad examples of the different ways humans contend with—and make meaning from—chaos.

Throughout this exploration, I desire to observe how each text acknowledges and submits to hauntings, a process that I argue engenders the survival of genre and Practitioner alike. Through analysis of these works' structural, sonic and visual elements, I unearth a possible path to Gothic agency. In doing so, I share an empowering process that I hope can help people render a haunted existence sublime.

IV. Came Back Haunted: Surrendering to Specters through Suffocation

Goth clubs are usually divided into two areas. In one room, there plays what goths affectionately call “stompy” music, which usually includes hard and fast beats accompanied by an angst that promises the violent dancing to match. In the other room there is “swirly” music, wherein one can get lost on dark waves of sound, dreamier scores guiding listeners along varying undercurrents of melancholy.¹⁸ We have already established that the Gothic's primary affects revolve around pain; more specifically, however, these affects revolve around the most common bifurcation of this pain—its

¹⁸ Wilkins describes goth music as “lend[ing] itself to dancing styles not found in mainstream clubs; depending on the song's style, dancing is either ‘stompy’ . . . or highly-stylized, flowing, and balletic.” Earlier in the text, Wilkins refers to the latter style as “swirly” (28).

resulting products being anger and sadness. What characterizes these emotions is indeed generally understood but often we need reminding that they can take many forms, manifesting as acute or chronic, ache or evisceration, rage or despair.

Nine Inch Nails (NIN) has its home in the swirly *and* stompy rooms, providing plenty of attendant ache and evisceration. Industrial music tends to be harsh, gritty and provocative, but it is not always fast-paced and full of rage. Blended the right way, mechanical sound effects can slither along one's spine as easily as the notes from darkwave synthesizers. Such versatility is part of what makes NIN's Trent Reznor so successful. Though the auteur is hesitant to accept the "goth" label, his lasting presence in gothic culture is irrefutable: goth clubs put on entire theme nights devoted to Nine Inch Nails, and at one point Reznor explicitly says he was lyrically-influenced by goth rock staple, The Cure.¹⁹ The embrace of darker subject matter, reference to literal and figurative dominance and submission, and the extreme anger or sadness that drives each composition firmly situate Reznor in the realm of the Gothic Practice. As he screams in *Hesitation Marks*' "In Two," when faced with pain, we "Split into/ Something else/ Shed/ [our] precious skin/ [to] Save . . . oursel[ves]/ [and] Bleed/ [because we] Have to purge/ What [we] were/ Yes/ Yes of course/ This is going to hurt." He is correct, to an extent. In purging, "shedding our skin," we leave some of the old behind. Though, whether we like

¹⁹ VidMag Media, "Trent Reznor Interview 8 4 1990." Fun fact: Like Bauhaus's Peter Murphy, The Cure's Robert Smith hates being labelled "goth."

it or not, much of the blood beneath that skin remains. Regardless, it is often the only way to “save ourselves.” Adaptation is painful, but survival demands we bleed.

While 2013’s *Hesitation Marks* carries this embittered edge in sound and narrative, the album remains an overall departure from Nine Inch Nails’ preestablished expressions of anger. It takes Reznor’s typical “lacerating self-examination” and renders it more playful than in past compositions by means of smoother electronic loops and narrative sighs of resignation (Fricke). The title of the album itself refers to “hesitation wounds,” which are cuts made as preamble to a suicidal act. That in mind, we can interpret the title as implying an attempt to experiment with a new sound prior to initiating termination of the old one. However, the “scars” will remain, and Reznor’s new sound cannot help but be shaded with NIN’s earliest angst: NIN’s first album, *Pretty Hate Machine*, provides some of Reznor’s most danceable music—“Down in It” and “Head Like a Hole” the paradigmatic pieces—but the anger and frustration present in the 1989 release is permeated by an active “raging against the status quo.”²⁰ The 2013 release is by degrees more submissive, subverting the status quo in a way that more closely resembles a “rolling-with-the-punches” mentality. In addition to Reznor’s self-conscious construction of *Hesitation Marks*, we are stricken by the album’s tonal shift more than

²⁰ This “raging” is against several systemic and socionormative status quos—such as the economic state of the union and organized religion—but Reznor comments that *Pretty Hate Machine* was primarily an “introspective, small-scale, personal record” focused on “things that bug[ged him]” in particular (VidMag Media).

anything else. As evidenced in the second paragraph of Stuart Berman's *Pitchfork* review,

Hesitation Marks is stuffed with . . . knowing resurrection references . . . [F]or an artist whose every second lyric has begun with the word 'I,' this could be Reznor's most intensely self-reflexive work yet. But unlike the themes of depression, madness, and addiction that defined his most enduring works, the skeletal *Hesitation Marks* chronicles a more existential crisis . . . Accordingly, its sound is skeletal and spare . . . with Reznor's usual adrenalized aggression replaced with jagged digital tics and queasy atmospheres.

In his adherence to sonic staples of industrial music, Reznor establishes awareness of genre, but in his departure from "adrenalized aggression," for example, he simultaneously *twists* generic expectation. His works are made Gothic through the ways he negotiates adherence to and deviation from his older sound. "Copy of A" demonstrates this negotiation by maintaining a "motorik beat that remains coolly resolute in the face of all the intensifying textural disorder mounting overtop of it" (Berman). In implementing a steady beat in the face of the song's textural chaos, Reznor allegorizes what it is to evolve as a musical artist and Gothic Practitioner. There will always be hauntings beneath life's

“mounting disorder.” While we can use hauntings to achieve sublimity, to survive, we can also look to them for familiarity. Though hauntings are often interpreted as disruptive forces, the persistence thereof can offer continuity and, possibly, cool resolution.

A song that mirrors the self-awareness in *Hesitation Marks*' creation is “Came Back Haunted” because it allegorizes the Gothic Practice in action. As with other Gothic texts, “Came Back Haunted” best shows us how to survive our hauntings through self-conscious construction, excessive repetition and potential sublimity. In analyzing the overlap of these elements with the narrative, orchestration and other structural hauntings, we see a key example of Nine Inch Nails' Gothic adaptation. From the introductory line, we encounter the speaker pointing to—and perhaps laughing at—the futility of attempting to completely move beyond a past experience: “Ha-ha-haunted.” As Berman notes, “The all-too-aptly titled single ‘Came Back Haunted’ is just that, a ghost of Nine Inch Nails' more convincing ragers.” Although Berman offers his comment as criticism, I believe the song's familiar quality underlines what the title of the album implies—that we cannot help but be scarred and therefore influenced by our histories.

While we could read the piece as Reznor relaying his own experience returning to Nine Inch Nails after spending a few years focusing on film composition, or as Reznor recognizing NIN's stylistic evolution, the song more generally expresses what it is to be irrevocably altered—and subsequently haunted—by certain events in our lives. Whether

these hauntings change us for better or worse is a meditation echoed in form and content, especially throughout the composition's latter half. The "laughter" of the first line evokes Gothic self-awareness but, more importantly, it serves as a reminder to submit, which increases in frequency as the song progresses—culminating in the possibility that the speaker is laughing at, (or along with), the listener. The "ha-ha-haunting" is inescapable; speaker and audience alike "just can't stop," seeing that "Everywhere now remind[s us that we are] not who [we] used to be," and are "afraid . . . the consequences for what [we've] done [have] just begun."

Similar to Reznor's process while creating *Hesitation Marks*, the narrative and orchestration of "Came Back Haunted" also allegorize the Gothic Practitioner's return from a life-changing experience. In this narrative, the speaker tells us that he "said goodbye but... had to try" whatever endeavor it was that called to him. One of the ways this allegory is achieved is through repetitions that evoke temporal collapse. After the beginning laughter, a minimal percussive pattern stands alone until 00:05, when snare beats are interrupted by the pinpricks of six hurried notes from a synthesizer on repeat. At 00:09, the synth notes retreat upon entrance of the slurred, listless line of bass notes that, while foregrounded, feel as though they are lurking just beneath the song's surface. By 00:21 the speaker's disorientation grows—the notes trying to find some stability in this narrative as desperately as the speaker is. This disorientation is expressed through

looping patterns, effectively making us temporally-unsteady: in the temporal confusion it produces, “Came Back Haunted” is especially Gothic. The song uses repetition to, as Deleuze would say, collapse past, present and future.²¹ The disruption of linear time disrupts “the solidity of being, rendering both ontological categories unstable and necessarily haunted” (Castricano 10). Echoing this thought, ominous chimes enter (00:39), casting a sinister, mystical pall over the revelatory lines, “They put something inside of me/ The smile is red and its eyes are black/ I don’t think I’ll be coming back”—as though this is the precise moment when the speaker begins to understand that he is never going to be the same.

Derrida argues that we cannot control hauntings, “revenants,” because they “begin by coming back” (*Specters* 11). Though hauntings happen within someone’s perception of time, they simultaneously exist outside of it. Like a revenant mocking us, the looped pinpricks return and persist (00:57), oscillating in aural prominence every other measure. However, the revenant temporarily abates with the first refrain. Powerful, exultant chords envelop all the sounds that came before it (1:08), suggesting that, while these past “notes” remain, they play in the periphery and are now muffled and outside the emerging, dominant sound. The speaker has entered a new reality—has “c[o]me back haunted”—

²¹ Deleuze proposes three temporal dimensions repetition can engender. They are “before,” “during,” and “the possib[le] future,” though each dimension is rarely alone for long. He elaborates on “Freud’s genius” regarding the idea that “repetition... is in and of itself a synthesis of time—a ‘transcendental synthesis’” (115) by saying that repetition and the circumstances in which it occurs are how we make pleasure out of pain (112-113)—bind signification to the *un-* or *already-*bound.

though, by nature of hauntings, not a reality distinctly separate from the past. With this, the speaker begins to see what his new, haunted existence entails. Through Gothic temporal collapse, we are reminded of the inevitability of hauntings.

The path of a Gothic Practitioner is further illustrated with the use of certain phonetic patterns to overwhelm listeners. Like the refrain's exultant chords that envelop all prior instrumentation, certain sounds repeated to excess assault and unsettle. For example, the first appearance of "c-" in the song's repeats of "came" is void of the "c-c-c" phonetic triplet present in later appearances of the word, implying that we are coming into contact with the *initial* haunting by said transformative experience. Because we only realize its deviation after encountering the later "hauntings," we do not necessarily have the power to discern as much until we reflect on it, just as the speaker only understands the impact of the transformative event after it has passed. Pinpricks persisting, by 1:38 the dizzying swirl returns, now more audible yet simultaneously obscured by the chimes circling the synthesized spiral as a vulture circles prey—"Everywhere now reminding [him that he is not who he] used to be." Pain and terror are "always the cause of the sublime" (Burke 197). Because of this, the encroaching spirals of sound prime the speaker for sublime submission.

Such priming is most evident when Reznor combines events in the narrative with sonic repetition in order to amplify their impact. In doing so, he highlights the song's

potential for Gothic sublimity. This amplified impact happens most frequently in the excessive repetition and variation of the refrain. Despite the 20 “stanzas,” (and introductory line of “laughter”), “Came Back Haunted” possesses only three verses, whereas the refrain and variations thereof are shoved down our throats with mechanical regularity. However, this only serves to provide a stark contrast for—and therefore emphasis on—the lyrical significance of these lines. In third and final verse, the speaker remembers reaching the point of no return, as indicated by his, “I am not who I used to be.” The stanza ends with “Consequences,” which are indeed all that remain after such a metamorphic experience. Additionally, this is the only stanza in “Came Back Haunted” in which there are three- and four-syllable words; this deviation alone catches listeners’ attention. It not only forces us to linger and therefore be subject to a state of Deleuzian “waiting,” but also intensifies the song’s building tension by adding a layer of lyrical claustrophobia. This claustrophobia then compounds: from 2:44 to 2:50, Reznor breathes, “Hau-hau-hau-hau” with mounting intensity until 2:54 brings a guitar riff that, while dizzying like the synthesized pattern at 00:21 and 1:38, descends sharply and slightly askew, listeners expecting a descent in one direction but taken by surprise as the guitar stumbles off-key and starts again. Until 3:20, the speaker moves forward, thinking he has a handle on his “consequences” until startled and thrown off-balance by a haunting.

Another way Reznor builds tension is in the frequency of several words and phrases. "Came back" and the word "haunted" are the most ubiquitous examples. By song's end, the 27 and 24 returns of these two elements have given birth to a sort of post-traumatic stress, visceral and exigent. Less obvious is the part played by the line, "I said goodbye," which is exclusively followed by, "I came back haunted." Appearing three times, this pattern possibly represents the Romantic notion of embarkation, confrontation, and a return transformed. The typical *twisted* Romantic arrives, however, in that the line "I don't believe it" appears an equal number of times. This, in turn, provides an equal number of counters to the "goodbye," the counterbalance implying the speaker acknowledges the futility of escape. Additionally, frequent exposure to this acknowledgement, "combined with agreeable effect [makes] the taste itself at last agreeable" (Burke 10). The repetition of certain phonetic patterns along with the repetition of certain words and phrases shows Gothic Practitioners how to navigate their hauntings. We should allow hauntings to overwhelm us. Submission to chaos proves that we acknowledge the futility of a complete escape from pain. In recognizing this, we are able to render pain sublime.

Repeat exposure makes the sublime delightful in that the speaker-Practitioner again begins to laugh. This is evident when "Ha-ha-ha" reappears and "C-c-c" disappears in the last part of the song, which is comprised of the repeating lines, "Just can't/ Stop/

Came back ha-ha-haunted.” Essentially, the stutter is now laughter—the fear, submission. At this point the speaker has submit: he is either laughing at the absurdity of it all or is just plain hysterical. To be honest, so may be the audience. The song’s final lines happen nine more times before the terminal “Stop” is accompanied by an abrupt ceasing of all sound. In other words, “Came Back Haunted” captures yet another essential component of the Gothic Practice. Castricano declares that to be is to be haunted (39). Try as we might, haunting will only end once all noise—being—follows suit.

“Came Back Haunted” shows us Nine Inch Nails’ Gothic Practice in action because *Hesitation Marks*’ creation was one of self-conscious production. In terms of the genre’s history as well as Reznor’s own, “Came Back Haunted” adheres to and deviates from industrial tradition. The song itself allegorizes and begets the Gothic Practice by using temporal collapse to highlight the inevitability of hauntings, be they synthesized or spoken. Reznor also employs an overwhelming repetition of the synthesized and spoken, thereby priming us for submission by means of painful affect *and* temporal collapse. NIN concretizes its Gothic stance in weaving a twisted Romantic narrative. In its speaker’s pained, reflective journey, “Came Back Haunted” valorizes a crucial realization: the impossibility of living in a present unencumbered by the past.

V. Rhapsody: Rewriting Pain with Contradiction

Siouxsie and the Banshees is synonymous with the pop culture Gothic. Originally post-punk, the Banshees is a band that unequivocally helped originate—and summarily dominate—goth music. A person cannot step foot inside a goth club without seeing at least one Siouxsie lookalike. If by some aberration of nature that should not come to be, I guarantee that a clubgoer will at the very least catch sight of the dramatically-winged eyeliner and intense, dark lipstick—goth aesthetic staples—the singer popularized.

More importantly, Siouxsie and the Banshees represents the Gothic Practice as employed over time: while cultivating a morose energy that came to characterize the band, they also personified Gothic adaptation. Case in point, 1981's classic, *Juju* "sees Siouxsie and the Banshees operating in a squalid wall of sound dominated by tribal drums, swirling and piercing guitars, and Siouxsie Sioux's fractured art-attack vocals [that i]f not for . . . high-pitched guitars . . . the album would rank as the band's most gothic release" (DiGravina). Swirling, piercing guitars echo goth contemporaries, but the prominence of *Juju*'s tribal drums provides a welcome aesthetic development. In 1988's *Peepshow*, however, the Banshees take such radical inclusion to a fever pitch. The band had composed songs that pillaged and reshaped not only their own sound, but sound from several disparate genres. In his review, music critic Ned Raggett encapsulates this marriage of extra-canonical adventure and Gothic reanimation:

Heralded by the spectacular 'Peek-A-Boo,' interpolating what sounded like the Charleston into hip-hop rhythms with a brilliant, choppy arrangement, *Peepshow* proved the band's best album in years... Siouxsie's... star turns throughout the album all deserve notice, especially with the bravura . . . conclusion of . . . the dramatic, lives-up-to-the-title 'Rhapsody.' [Martin] McCarrick's cello work is excellently integrated into the music, adding a purring extra bite on songs . . . The band's knack for a combination of title, lyric, and atmosphere remains strong—'Carousel' sounds indeed like a slightly demented version of such a thing, while 'Rawhead and Bloodybones,' appropriately [named] for two English bogeyman characters, is quiet, creepy, and very much sneaking-up-on-you-in-the-night. 'Scarecrow' is a secret highlight, ominous guitar and bass tones and swirling arrangements supporting a great Siouxsie turn, while [there are] hints of flamenco on 'Turn to Stone.'"

Amongst the new, non-gothic elements incorporated include, "the Charleston," "hip-hop rhythms," and "flamenco." Nevertheless, the Banshees do not fail to exhume the "slightly demented," as manifested through, for example, "ominous guitar and bass tones." As Raggett also notes in his review, the group survived through "the ability to always

provide an accomplished variety of sound and approach while still recognizably maintaining a uniquely Banshees style.” The group’s versatility, coupled with their stylistic fidelity and innovative spirit, cements their status as an exemplar of the Gothic Practice. With a necromantic wail, the album’s finale, “Rhapsody,” breathes life into the Banshees by means of emphasizing the Gothic anew.

According to Siouxsie Sioux, “Rhapsody” is about modernist classical composer, “[Dmitri] Shostakovich, a really sad man who was victimised . . . then broken by the Stalin regime . . . The song’s about wishing you could have been a consolation to him” (qtd. in Wilson 154). At the same time, Steven Severin claims it is more generally “about the human spirit,” speaking to how we deal with existential crises and trauma altogether. Samantha Bennett says in her book, titled after *Peepshow*, that “‘Rhapsody’ traces the plight of two characters . . . in existential crisis, considering their past, ‘a time of rapture,’ and hopeless future with nothing but their dreams to hold on to . . . [They] are desperate, attempting to draw upon the last trace of their fast-fading hope” (qtd. in Bennett 148). My reading agrees with this interpretation but takes the characters’ desperate course to a Practitioner’s conclusion. To do so, I focus on and dissect the thought processes and feelings—the ambivalence and vacillation—that the lyrics and orchestration evoke. I also identify repeated elements to reveal how this crisis unfolds. Much of “Rhapsody” is spent in vacillation: is it better to retreat to the sanctuary of

sorrow—"lament"—or attempt to escape death—the "hammer of the Soviet sun?" Does the speaker choose the bittersweet liberation afforded by submission, or a potentially futile path of resistance?

"Came Back Haunted" maximizes its effects with sonic evocations of temporal collapse, suffocation and extreme phonetic repetition. The lyrical narrative is subordinate to the sonic one. "Rhapsody," on the other hand, sees its sonic elements play accompaniment to its lyrical ones. This text's narrative is more explicit than that of our industrial case study. Though the song's music provides requisite emotional augmentation, thematic repetition assumes center stage. Instead of tracing one Practitioner's journey to embrace his haunted condition, "Rhapsody" delivers a comprehensive account of the thoughts and feelings one encounters on that journey. "Rhapsody" is the experience of reconciling the ambivalence we face when employing the Gothic Practice. Like the speaker, we must ask ourselves, "When is it better to submit than resist?" "Rhapsody" walks us through the tension that leads us to our answer. Through the repetition of contradictory sonic and lyrical pairings in the presentation of the speaker's evolving relationship with pain, "Rhapsody" allegorizes the Practitioner's ongoing struggle with submission and resistance. In complementing these pairings with levels of Gothic evolution reflected in the narrative, Siouxsie and the Banshees illuminate a path the Practitioner carves from discord.

Existential tension haunts “Rhapsody,” and nowhere is this tension more apparent than in the repeated pairings of darkness and light, which traditionally represent pain and pleasure. Characteristic of the Gothic Practice, this composition challenges our definitions of pleasure and pain based on when and how darkness and light are presented. We encounter such an example at the song’s outset. Contrary to symbolic expectation, we begin the song safe in *darkness*: the composition begins both *piano* and *adagio*, which provides listeners a gentle entrance. However, this sense of peace is challenged by a foreboding duo—the drawn-out rumble of a cello accompanied by the whisper of wind, sonic omens of a storm to come. We are not yet in active conflict, but we are unsettled. Throughout the piece, the cello persists as an ominous undercurrent of anxiety, threading through composition and listeners alike. In other words, this undercurrent represents the song’s unyielding oscillation between comfort and disquietude.

Another example of “Rhapsody” complicating our symbolic understanding of darkness and light—pain and pleasure—occurs with the pairing of “crooked man” and “sun,” the discord accentuated by an echoing synth motif. At 1:27, hits on the high-hat increase in frequency, becoming hissing, incessant pinpricks. Here, we are introduced to the villain, the “crooked man,” who is responsible for the deaths of “our loved ones.” Like the one that preceded it, this stanza ends with darkness and light. However, while this “Soviet sun” is a light, it is simultaneously the crooked man, showing us that light—

the sun—can cause pain as readily as darkness—which, in this instance, would have provided refuge from the sunlight. After “sun” at 1:57, the thought lingers like a shadow: seven “chimes” play, perhaps to emphasize the heroes’ recognition of light’s potential to burn. As Bennett remarks, this “synth motif [provides] a clear demarcation between what the protagonists have witnessed and the realization of their own impending fate” (151). In other words, no light is safe save for the one within them; and even then, their despair may extinguish it yet. Conversely, neither is their sadness—a lament, a refuge—safe from this light—wherein “our loved ones die under [its] hammer.” Regardless of perspective, the constant in these parallel perceptions is pain. Throughout the song, we along with the speaker are repeatedly exposed to pain in form and content, and this is possibly acknowledged by the song’s four repetitions of, “there’s still light with you.” An even number of repetitions suggests that in equal measure there is pain, but still hope—that there is hope, but still pain. Again, regardless of perspective, pain is the constant.

The succeeding, “Nothing can erase this night” provides another instance of symbolic complication. The line speaks to the protagonists’ despair, yet Sioux insists, “But there’s still light with you, rhapsody.” Given the palpable ambiguity of illumination’s capacity to heal or harm, the lines could also be read as, “Nothing can destroy this sanctuary”—a lament both having been established as a “refuge” and being more closely associated with “night”—or as “there’s still hurt with you.” However, Sioux

begins to shift from her initial stance of resistance when she follows with, "And we, we can never see the sun/ There's still light with you, rhapsody." Her initial perception is in its death throes. She realizes in "we can never see the sun" that the heroes can neither remain in the Soviet sun, nor find the light they originally sought. The stanza's ending, "There's still light with you, rhapsody," is at once Sioux's last attempt to recover her previous perspective, and an indication that the phrase is beginning to take on new meaning: the only aspect of illumination they have a hope of reshaping lies within them.

"Rhapsody"'s juxtaposition of the "man-made" and "natural" further illustrates the *chiaroscuro* inherent in a Practitioner's relationship with pain. The Gothic is a genre of extremes working together to produce pain, fear and possibly delight. To acknowledge a Gothic text as generative of the sublime is to grasp the genre's elevation of the connection between mind and body: the Banshees model this paradoxical interconnectedness with words that root the abstract in the corporeal and lend embodied experience to natural occurrence. For example, in the second stanza, singer and composer look up from their sadness through the "blood of the twinkling sky:" the stars still shine despite the blood, and the blood still flows despite the light. For the speaker neither existence seems superior. But, as we discover upon entrance of the song's villain, "the crooked man," being "shined upon" may not be preferable if it stops the blood in your veins. The middle and end of every line in the stanza is punctuated by five rapid

“chimes” from a synthesizer, effectively “binding” (Deleuze 114) the words “blood” and “sky,” and “crooked man” and “crooked land.” Though this “bell” chimes, it is soft and muted; its notes are not as assured as they could be, highlighting pain’s complexity and the conflicted states of speaker and listener alike.

Ambiguity compounds as listeners vacillate in their understanding of the lines themselves: the use of “Blood” with “sky” represents the difficulty of apprehending fixed understandings of pleasure and pain. “Blood” is immediate: we can see and touch it. “Blood” connotes the finite—humans only have so much of it, after all. Without vehicular assistance, “sky” is accessible only through sight. In lacking the possibility for more versatile sensory interaction, our imaginations attempt to fill the gaps. In other words, “sky” connotes the infinite. However, which term offers more *linguistic* possibility? Literally, blood flows through our veins. Figuratively, “blood” can also refer to “bloodlines,” kin, or a vampiric necessity.

“Rhapsody” exploits these lyrically-deceptive relationships in order to allegorize Practitioners finding a home in the haunted. At 00:11, Sioux—the speaker²²—enters, telling Shostakovich, herself, and the audience of the sadness they share, the sadness being a “soil” out of which “[their] hearts bell a serenade.” Together, they are a “faint choir tenderly shaping/ A lament, a hollow refuge.” Sadness is a potential sanctuary—

²² “Sioux is placed in this history as a protagonist that, presumably with Shostakovich, continues with fading optimism, hanging on to their dreams against a backdrop of brutality” (Bennett 146).

submitting to this creates a soil out of which they may grow. In this case, the blossom is bittersweet. The words “sadness” and “serenade” recall darkness and light, but their pairing emphasizes the complicated relationship between pain and the absence thereof. For example, the pairing of “lament” and “hollow refuge” recalls Burke’s supposition regarding taste: repeated exposure to a disagreeable element can render it agreeable. Though the characters’ voices are faint, they have found some reprieve. Even if that reprieve only takes the form of a lament, repeated exposure has rendered it home. The speakers are not actively fighting, instead tentatively clinging to the chimes sounded by their hearts.

Words that connote degrees also emphasize the speaker’s extreme vacillation. The uncertainty of light’s status as an agent of violence repeats in the second stanza’s closing, “All is lost a pale gleaming.” The phrase “all is lost” is extreme, absolute, yet the latter half of the line muddles this conviction: on the spectrums of color and emotion, “all” and “lost” are poles, whereas, “pale” is a shade: perhaps all is not lost, if there remains a gleam of hope. Although, it is still light and therefore dangerous. This is an example of the oscillation that takes place throughout the composition: on the heroes’ part, this ambiguity provokes efforts to resign to the unknown or rage against it. For the time being, Sioux chooses to rage. On her first step as Gothic Practitioner, she will learn that seeking freedom from pain may only cause more of it. Her vocals hold the line’s last note

to mirror the contemplation holding her hostage; the vocals take a sudden drop, then rise at the end of “gleaming,” almost as though the speaker decides in that moment to forget that “all is lost” and start running.

i. The Denouement: “Rhapsody” Resists and Finally Succumbs

“Rhapsody”’s listeners are prompted to surrender themselves to that which characterizes Gothic submission: the acceptance of chaos. As van Elferen says, “[The] Gothic holds [our conceptions of] being out into the abyss . . . [in the hopes that our] eyes get used to the darkness and [our] ears relax into silence” (185). The beginning of the heroes’ journey to “get used to darkness” is signaled by the entrance of an *allegro* tempo at 1:14, guitar picks on repeat like the pounding of footsteps. The picks’ pattern of six-six-four conjures an image of our speaker and her partner—two people, four feet—running together, then made to stop—echoed in the deviant four-pick end to the pattern—before they can start running again. There is almost no room between the ending of one set and the beginning of the next; there is no time for the protagonists to catch their breath. Underscored by slight, echoing screeches and a nerve-wracking high-hat, the protagonists are being pursued—by external forces or their own doubts and despair.

At 2:27, the speaker grows increasingly surrounded by sound, Sioux's vocals now "battling for prominence" (Bennett 153). Militant snare drums and subdued acoustic guitar chords accent the bittersweet revelation, "And I have seen all I want to/ And I have felt all I want to, rhapsody, rhapsody/ But we can dream all we want to/ We can dream all we want to, rhapsody, oh, rhapsody." In the word "dream," we recognize that we can only hope for complete freedom from pain; in reality, such an idea is illusory. Only recognized in memory, a dream is neither wholly absent nor present—just as this particular hope is like a ghost in that it can never fully materialize. By 3:13, the strength of this revelation reaches a fever pitch as the stanza repeats. Strings stab their ascent and symbols crash to reflect the mounting tension, the "storm" hinted in the beginning landing in full force. Sioux wails the stanza's last syllable in ghostly glissando from 3:37 until 3:48, by which point her cries of "Rhapsody!" suffer the same treatment. At last, the delivery matches the definition: an overwhelming, rapturous outpouring of emotion.

ii. Same Pairs, Different Perceptions

"Rhapsody" concludes with the return of its pairings, but reflects how the speaker has changed by altering the pairings' delivery. Sioux's perceptions are altered, and the musical accompaniment reflects this shift by using echo and overlap. The lines now

sound as haunted as the speaker has always been. At 4:05, a six-second guitar riff provides a bridge to the beginning: once more, Sioux looks at the “soil of [her] sadness” and hears her heart’s serenade toll the refuge of lament. This lament, however, is *allegro*: Sioux has returned to her sanctuary changed—truly *seeing* it as sanctuary—and belts an even more haunting glissando while all instrumental layers converge, forcing submission to a storm of sound. At 5:21, she pierces listeners with six operatic thrusts—the highest notes in the song—before leaving us alone with the storm from 5:27 until 5:34. Now echoed and obscured, we hear the speaker’s voice one last time: “There’s still light with you, rhapsody/ We can dream all we want to/ Yes, we can dream all we want to/Rhapsody, oh, rhapsody/ Rhapsody.” In this final utterance, the lines overlap; like a specter, this last refrain is a faint, haunting presence. As Sioux retreats from the sonic and narrative foregrounds, her final, “rhapsody” is barely audible. The speaker finally submits to the pain that plagues her, and drifts into an open-ended silence. The guitar picks stop as the vocals do (6:05): the heroes have stopped running; the storm has begun to subside, and eventually fades into a solemn, poignant farewell. While “Came Back Haunted” ends with violent cessation, “Rhapsody” gently carries us to shore. By carefully removing each layer of sound, “Rhapsody”’s conclusion demonstrates that even after loud resistance there always exists the promise of sublimity.

VI. Dead Man's Party: The Gothic Practice as Critical Reanimation

Like many of the songs heard in goth clubs, “Came Back Haunted” and “Rhapsody” exemplify the Gothic Practice on narrative and formal levels alike, but can we truly apply this process to other mediums? To life? Many people seek the cessation of suffering, but it is rare that the endeavor is wholly successful. Hanh says we must look deeply at our pain for it to “bring us insight and liberate us from suffering and afflictions” (24), but I believe liberation comes from reorientation. Instead of trying to stop the suffering or move past it, make it sublime. Any “association of pleasure and pain must take into account certain specific formal conditions” (Deleuze 74), so why not shape those conditions to reshape your suffering? Most ideas regarding peace—an end to suffering—concern silence, stillness.²³ However, like the ongoing ache of a chronic illness, some people’s pain will never be silent. As we have discovered, hauntings seldom disappear, and an effective way to coexist with such pain revolves around adaptation. Taking this perspective as a critical approach allows an alternative to stillness. The Gothic Practice

²³ Hanh asserts, “If we have wounds in our body and mind, we have to rest so they can heal themselves.” He also claims, “Stopping, calming, and resting are preconditions for healing. If we cannot stop, the course of our destruction will just continue” (27). As explained in the introduction, the Gothic Practice is less about stopping completely, and more about waiting—holding oneself in a sort of suspended animation: we are still waiting for the future while “reiterating” the past—and past pain—for it to hold new meaning in the present (Deleuze 119).

proposes a way to read against narratives that demand characters strive for closure and humans strive for silence.

To demonstrate the Practitioner's reaction to the absence of stillness—the absence of readings replete with closure—I apply the Practice to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, a text that teases us with the possibility of resolution while haunting us with its elusion. As J. Hillis Miller observes in "*Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the 'Uncanny,'*" "*Wuthering Heights* produces [this] effect on its reader through the way it is made up of repetitions of the same in the other which permanently resist rational reduction to some satisfying principle of explanation" (369). Like Lockwood and Nelly, readers must piece together fragments of an incomplete, recursive and temporally-disorienting narrative. "Came Back Haunted" and "Rhapsody" likewise tease us with possible resolution but eventually do seem to offer some closure. (Often, it is the speakers' and listeners' acceptance of the lack thereof.) Each song demonstrates the Gothic Practice through the speakers' narrative journeys, but the Practice is predominantly exemplified in analyzing the listeners' holistic experience of these compositions. *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, primarily demonstrates the Practice through its characters. Like the speaker in "The Raven," we are shown the potential for the Gothic Practice, but neither he, Catherine nor Heathcliff are able to entirely actualize it. Even if they complete several steps on their Gothic journeys, their fates are the same—

death.²⁴ Though the three characters are unable to successfully apply the Practice in their stories, the stories *about* their attempts provide readers an opportunity to use the Practice. On the other hand, in *Wuthering Heights* those same characters are perhaps the ones who live their lives with the most agency. Such contradiction throws into relief the experience of reading this novel, in that any lens taken to it will inevitably grow clouded by narrative or structural inconsistency. In true Gothic fashion, the story's most stable elements are the ones that serve to continuously destabilize.

i. *Wuthering Heights*' Generic Misdirection

The first way Brontë's novel manages this effect is in its immediate and pervasive subversions of generic expectation. When Lockwood first approaches *Wuthering Heights*, he notes "a carving lavished . . . above the principal door; above which . . . [he] detected the date '1500' and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw'" (4); he then proceeds to spend the next several scenes collecting further data, the act of which resembles a detective uncovering clues. Furthermore, Lockwood first encounters Catherine and Heathcliff's chronicle by means of *uncovering*—finding Catherine's diary. This discovery offers the possibility that we have a chance to learn the origins of *Wuthering Heights*.

²⁴Technically, the speaker in "The Raven" ends the poem entering the final stages of madness, wherein he inhabits a sort of living death. Physical death seems imminent.

The successive appearance of these “clues” and the promise of solving “the mystery” of the Heights suggests that we may be in a tale akin to Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841).

Our initial generic expectation is disrupted when Catherine’s ghost appears, (though it is ambiguous whether she manifests in Lockwood’s dream or in reality.) We now suspect we are in both a mystery and a ghost story. As Lockwood listens to the lovers’ story unfold, there comes a point when Nelly notes the late hour and chastises herself for “chattering on at such a rate . . . [when she] could have told Heathcliff’s history, all that [Lockwood] need hear, in a half-a-dozen words.” Lockwood hastily pleads with her: ““Sit still, Mrs. Dean’ [. . .] ‘do sit still, another half hour!’” (48). Not only does Nelly’s admission evoke the uncanny by highlighting how much we are at the mercy of *her* interpretation of events, Lockwood’s frustrated exclamation mirrors readers’ reactions. Like Lockwood, we are at the mercy of Nelly’s pacing and Nelly’s selection of the perceptions she chooses to convey. We settle into one narrative—framed by narrator and generic expectation—and are abruptly thrust into another. *Wuthering Heights* implies the possibility of a definitive reading, but also subjects us to hauntings as soon as we attempt such readings. Formal elements like experiencing part of the narrative through a letter, recounted by a person who did not write the letter, exacerbate the novel’s

affective misdirection. Generic fluctuation and unreliable narration render us as much subject to structural whiplash as we are to Catherine Earnshaw's emotional volatility.

**ii. Destroy Me: The Inescapable Influence of Catherine and Heathcliff's
Obsession**

The novel's other main weapon of repetition lies with the Gothic Practitioners *within* the text, and how their circuitous, tragic journey defies subversion itself. Heathcliff and Catherine haunt each other's lives just as the many layers of fragmented narrative haunt the reader. On the one hand, the novel primes us to interpret the story as a Gothic Practitioner because we are immediately dealt the pain of ambiguity, the unknown. We are positioned to frame the novel's contents according to unreliable narration and generic discontinuity in order to submit to that pain. Conversely, the novel's characters present an expectation of resistance: characters are seldom willing to submit—to expectation and to their mistakes. Whenever they do attempt to change—subvert expectation or take responsibility for the pain they cause—their vengeful natures resurface, thereby causing the majority of the tale's tragedy. The novel's great irony is that the very obsession which causes Catherine and Heathcliff's refusal to acknowledge mistakes—and for changes to take root—is the force to which they submit throughout their lives. In always embracing

the intensity of their obsession, emotional growth may be limited, but pain is always sublime.

Therefore, the most affecting Gothic content in the novel is the haunted, sublime existence of its principle lovers—not only because of the intensity of this existence, but because of the widespread effects it has on anyone unfortunate enough to be in its proximity. In life and after death, the lovers exist to torture both themselves and others. Perhaps the most extreme example of an external casualty is the chaos born of Heathcliff's involvement with Isabella Linton. The only reasons for Heathcliff's marriage to Edgar's sister are to solidify a place in line for Linton inheritance, and—more diabolical—to have her serve as “Edgar's proxy in suffering, till he could get hold of him” (114). As a victim enthralled by her vampire, Isabella falls prey to “a sudden and irresistible attraction” towards Heathcliff (79). The girl is a victim of circumstance and naivety—caught between two obsessive, vengeful lovers, but also blinded by her romantic misconceptions. Isabella “pictur[es] in [Heathcliff] a hero of romance, and expect[s] unlimited indulgences from [his] chivalrous devotion.” Case in point, even though she sees him hang her dog from a tree, Isabella absconds with Heathcliff the very same night (118). Isabella is an example of what happens when we cling too tightly to a single narrative. Just as clinging to one interpretative lens robs from us a richer reading of *Wuthering Heights*, life spent clinging to one reality robs us of survival.

However, Isabella's tale is not entirely hopeless. Ultimately, she shows us that it is possible to survive such internal and external torment, delusion and abuse. Her distorted image of Heathcliff does not last long, but she suffers greatly before mustering the courage to flee. She endures ceaseless verbal abuse and eventually has knives thrown at her (141). As with the protagonists of "Rhapsody," Isabella's suffering reminds us that the path to submission rarely linear. Her tumultuous journey to submission is brought to light when she escapes from the Heights in that both her maturation and lingering ambivalence are on display when she shares her revelations with Nelly:

I'd rather [Heathcliff] kill himself! He has extinguished my love effectually . . . I can recollect yet how I loved him; and can dimly imagine that I could still be loving him, if—no, no! Even if he had doted on me, the devilish nature would have revealed its existence somehow . . . Monster! would that he could be blotted out of creation, and out of my memory! (134)

The ferocity with which she spits her disdain proves that her perception of Heathcliff has changed. However, her momentary vacillation of "—no, no!" reflects the lingering ambivalence we experience when we submit to painful truths. Though she is not one of the characters who receives a pleasant conclusion—she dies—Isabella does live twelve

years free of the delusion that Heathcliff could have been her “happy ending.” Isabella’s tragic tale serves as representation for the ways both *Wuthering Heights* and life treats its readers: we may expect one narrative, but that expectation is inevitably upended.

Despite being plagued by hauntings figurative and possibly literal, the novel’s most pervading spectral force is the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. On first reading *Wuthering Heights*, one could perceive Catherine and Heathcliff as symbols of defiance and resistance, literally and figuratively striking at those who hold them to societal expectation. In investigating each of these alleged “metamorphoses,” we see that, ultimately, Catherine and Heathcliff’s natures remain as unchanged as the intensity of Catherine and Heathcliff’s connection. For example, Heathcliff enters Catherine’s life a dark-skinned orphan of nebulous origin and is treated by her brother Hindley Earnshaw accordingly. With the passing of Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley treats the boy as less than a servant.²⁵ The “gipsy[’s]” origin is non-origin (32), and this defining absence haunts his every human interaction: no one expects him to be anything but Mr. Earnshaw’s “strange acquisition” (40), forever ineligible for a romantic future with Catherine. When Heathcliff is older, he seeks to subvert this expectation, creating for himself an origin story in the present while fueled by the feelings of his past. As a young man, Heathcliff

²⁵ We could say that the first person whose expectations Heathcliff subverts is Catherine: she wanted Mr. Earnshaw to bring home a riding whip (43) but gets saddled with him; desiring a tool meant to control, she instead receives a “gift” who will be the controlling force for the rest of her life. Her childhood desire aptly foreshadows her masochistic future.

departs for three years and returns a changed person, but that we remain ignorant as to what he did to engender the change causes us to question the transformation's validity. Though he appears a "well-formed" and "intelligent" man (75) with money gained by mysterious means (27), he ultimately proves his vengeful nature unchanged, preying on Hindley's gambling addiction to the point that his one-time tormentor—already a widower and alcoholic—nears bankruptcy.

His boyhood enemy already suffering, Heathcliff does not hesitate to exact the vengeance he swore to Nelly when he vowed, "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (48). In this vow he seemingly sows the seeds of transformation; but, notice the catalyst for this declaration: Hindley and Edgar push Heathcliff to the point of violence and revenge only when they remind him that he will never be a proper socioeconomic match for Catherine. With Nelly's help, Heathcliff tries to make himself look presentable. Still, the boys mock his appearance, Edgar exclaiming, "I wonder [that his locks] don't make his head ache. It's like a colt's mane over his eyes!" (46). Heathcliff *does* change, in that he finds wealth and appears more gentlemanly, but this "evolution" is skin-deep. Be they plans for revenge or acts of love, everything he thinks or does is in service to his monomania.

Catherine is a similarly feral child who undergoes a similarly superficial transformation. Shortly before Heathcliff swears his revenge on Hindley, Catherine spends five weeks recovering from an injury at Thrushcross Grange. Before the injury and throughout her childhood, Nelly calls her a “wild, wick slip” of a girl with the mischievous, manipulative nature to match (33).²⁶ After her time with the Lintons, Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights with “her ankle... thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved . . . [so much so] that, instead of a wild hatless little savage jumping into the house... there lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person.” Yet, upon seeing Heathcliff only moments after her “dignified” dismount, she “fl[ies] to embrace him . . . [and] bestow[s] seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second” (41-42). This behavioral switch foreshadows the double-life that contributes to her eventual demise, wherein Heathcliff establishes once and for all that he is as haunted by Catherine as she is him. By the time Heathcliff screams, “Catherine, you know I could as soon forget you as my existence!” (124), it is likely that readers have little choice but to feel the same. Regardless of whether those feelings for Catherine are positive, the extremity of the character’s actions almost guarantees that readers will react in kind. Those who bear the worst of this intense connection, however, are still the lovers

²⁶ “Wick” is a “North England variant of quick (lively)” (Bronte 33 fn 1). Arguably, this vivacity is what empowers Catherine to reach the emotional heights that she does. At the same time, she is even more damaged by the falls that inevitably accompany such heights.

themselves. Whenever she seems softer or more refined, Catherine's wild, willful nature prevails. Therefore, so, too, does her underlying obsession: her love for Heathcliff.

iii. Suffer Well: The *Wuthering* Practitioners' Sickness Made Sublime

The degree to which Catherine and Heathcliff's obsession destabilizes the lives of everyone in its path proves to be one of the novel's most stable elements. Though Heathcliff returns outwardly changed, "str[iking] a stranger as a born and bred gentleman" (115), he still hangs a dog, tortures an innocent woman and salts the wounds of his enemies. Though Catherine is a lady, she "would not be persuaded into tranquility" (66) and subjects Nelly to fits of hysteria whenever Heathcliff is even tangentially involved. We could argue that the lovers' unyielding fixation and blinding narcissism render them ineffectual—or even *ineligible* as—Practitioners. Instead, their most unlikable dimensions contribute to a realistic—if more perverted—attempt at the Practice.²⁷ In other words, Catherine and Heathcliff—at times "no better than a wailing child" (97) and an "evil beast" (85)—are more human in their flawed attempts at adaptation *because* of their inhumanity.²⁸ The two certainly fail to achieve true learning,

²⁷ Perhaps they are Gothicizing the Gothic Practice.

²⁸ Catherine's belated attempt comes when she decides to speed her illness to its conclusion in acknowledging the incompatibility of existing as Edgar's wife and Heathcliff's "soul." Heathcliff's

but perhaps willful indulgence in their fixation is what allows them to live the novel's most agential lives.

Instead of exercising restraint and resisting their feelings, Catherine and Heathcliff consciously submit to whatever emotions course through them, indulging regardless of consequence. Bearing in mind the protagonists' unwavering intensity, Catherine and Heathcliff appear sentinels of resistance and—in desiring to preserve their childhood bond—enemies of change, but they ultimately come to represent Gothic submission: they are Gothic in that they preserve the intensity of their bond but likewise pervert it with spiteful manipulation; they are submissive—agential—because they welcome their pain and, eventually, the inevitability of their haunted existence. Neither Catherine nor Heathcliff can help what they feel, but they *do* amplify and exacerbate those feelings—see them sublime—at every opportunity.

Wuthering Heights' hauntings-made-sublime are best illuminated by instances of illness and delirium. Between Catherine's recurring fevers and Heathcliff's self-emaciation, sickness of mind and body make the lovers' painful obsession a transcendental experience. The most potent examples of such transcendence involve "brain fever." As Lakshmi Krishnan notes in "It has Devoured My Existence": the Power of the Will and Illness in *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *Wuthering Heights*,

reflection manifests in the decision that his desire for Catherine—and therefore death—is greater than his desire for revenge.

‘[brain fever’s] “combination of emotional cause and physical effect” [. . .] [makes it] . . . such a compelling concept.’ Presenting physical symptoms based in psychological causes, brain fever is indeed an ideal psychosomatic sickness, and its presence allows us to scrutinize how mental exertion can generate physical illness. (34)

Catherine accepts the affliction three times, and the appearance of each directly corresponds to an experience with Heathcliff.²⁹ Its first appearance results from Heathcliff’s departure from *Wuthering Heights*: Catherine gets “fully drenched for her obstinacy in refusing to take shelter . . . standing bonnetless and shawlless to catch as much water as she could with her hair and clothes” (67). Shortly after, Nelly remarks that Catherine is not only fevered, but frighteningly hysterical: “I shall never forget what a scene she acted . . . It terrified me. I thought she was going mad” (69). Catherine is so overtaken by grief at the perceived loss of Heathcliff that she subjects herself to conditions that could prove fatal. Once the conditions take their toll in the form of fever, she lets the sickness drive her to delirium.

²⁹ The second and third time may technically be the same iteration of the illness, but she is better for a period of time between the fever’s appearances.

Deleuze comes to mind with his assertion that “the masochist needs to believe that [s]he is dreaming even when [s]he is not” (72). Rather than “dreaming” in ignorance and delusion as Isabella does, Catherine consciously submits to her grief. In willing the grief to wreak bodily havoc, she cultivates hysteria. The ensuing delirium—masochistic “dream”—propels Catherine to heights wherein Nelly is charged with keeping the patient safe from falling. The threat of falling is both physical, in the sense that the girl might “throw herself downstairs, or out of the window” (69), and emotional in that Nelly is one of the only characters who can withstand Catherine’s abuse as she “falls” from her rages. Most of such abuse, of course, is provoked or compounded by Heathcliff. It seems that Catherine has the ability to will her sickness, but, as with her romantic obsession, it only lies dormant.

When Catherine surrenders her body to extreme emotion, her final encounter with brain fever reaches its climax. In allowing this, Catherine’s final encounter becomes her most sublime. While she cannot control her feelings for Heathcliff, though worsened by Heathcliff’s past misdeeds and toxic presence, she continuously chooses to amplify their effects by allowing them complete rein. As she grows wild and raving in her last fit of consciousness—for, indeed, every waking moment for the lovers seems one, prolonged fit—Catherine’s last words serve as decree. She wills it, so it shall be: “Oh, don’t, don’t go. It is the last time! . . . Heathcliff, I shall die! I shall die!” (127). Catherine realizes she

will forever be haunted by the truth that she admits years earlier: "He[athcliff]'s always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being" (64). Though her obsession is relentless, it is more like a lurking presence—an undercurrent that threatens to drown her at any moment. Whenever Catherine interacts with the undercurrent directly, it does indeed swell, but not before she dives headfirst to meet it. In other words, the revelation that she will always be haunted "impels Cath[erine] into an intense will for sickness, and eventually death" (Krishnan 35-36). The revelation positions her to accept Burke's "most horrid convulsions" (195), therefore allowing her to become what she has always been: a ghost. Throughout the novel, she is at once Heathcliff's inescapable specter and personal spirit of a possible future past. We do not always have the choice to, as Hanh would suggest, "move past afflictions" like romantic monomania, but we can shape such hauntings with sublime light. Just as the returns of Catherine's fever coincide with her life's most intense experiences, the ferocity of the fever's last appearance mirrors the ferocity of her bond with Heathcliff. Heathcliff is the catalyst for Catherine rendering sickness sublime.

As he is catalyst for her, so is she catalyst for him: Heathcliff's final days unfold similarly to Catherine's final hours. In the penultimate chapter, Heathcliff makes a confession to Nelly: "I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly . . . [that] it has

devoured my existence” (248). Catherine’s last coherent interaction is characterized by that same, singular desire, in that her last words are both *to* and *about* Heathcliff. Having been starving himself, Heathcliff achieves his own delirium. Nelly marks his restless step and unintelligible mutterings, telling us, “the only [word] I could catch was the name of Catherine, coupled with some wild term of endearment or suffering . . . [speaking] low and earnest, [the utterance] wrung from the depth of his soul” (253-254). Like Catherine, Heathcliff approaches the end of his life devoting all remaining energy to his obsession.

Though starvation often conjures images of emaciation, the mania generated by Heathcliff’s starvation-bred delirium seems to revivify the walking corpse. His frame is weak, but, as Nelly observes, the shivering characteristic of such frailty is replaced by a “strong thrilling, rather than trembling” (250). It seems that the more Heathcliff abstains from food and rest, the wilder he becomes. Similar to his soulmate, he willfully subjects himself to sickness. Nelly repeatedly chastises him, which alerts us to the fact that his “cheeks are hollow, and [his] eyes blood-shot, like a person starving with hunger” (254). However, despite his appearance, Heathcliff’s energy has become frighteningly manic. The starvation consuming his body creates a psychological exhilaration. The mania reaches its zenith when its wielder exclaims, “I have nearly attained *my* heaven . . . !” (255). His discussion with Nelly regarding his burial arrangements immediately prior to

this exclamation further establishes that his “heaven”—his “single wish”—is the end of an existence without Catherine.

Even after death, his mania seemingly persists. When Nelly discovers Heathcliff dead, his eyes are open, “keen and fierce,” possessing a “frightful, life-like gaze of exultation” while refusing to close (256). Heathcliff’s resignation to the restless wandering and incoherent rants leading up to his death provides the fuel necessary for sublime experience. The resignation, wailing and senseless wandering all bind meaning to this pain—make his grief sublime. In other words, repetition of these actions makes meaning out of his suffering. The most explicit reminder of this pain is Catherine’s ghost—as specter or thought. As Derrida claims, ghosts and memories do not recognize borders like life and death; regardless of intent, these specters “trick consciousness” and influence our existence whether we like it or not (*Specters* 36). Heathcliff submits to violent emotion with every haunting, but by the novel’s end he also surrenders to the knowledge that his desire to be with Catherine overpowers his desire for revenge. In doing so, Heathcliff finally realizes that it is impossible to completely control our ghosts.

Wuthering Heights primes us to seek patterns of submission because it demands repetition from narrators and readers alike. We are forced to repeatedly piece together reiterations of reiterations—multiple narratives in multiple frames—so we can uncover the “truth” behind the tale. However, this forced reinterpretation amplifies a Gothic

formal quality that is as haunted as the genre itself: the “truth” of *Wuthering Heights* lies in its lack thereof. As Miller asserts—and as deconstructionists would agree—the narration of the novel “creates both the intuition of unitary origin and the clues . . . to the fact that the origin may be an effect of language, not some preexisting state” (376). As in everyday life, just as we think we have a key to ultimate understanding, a rogue element arrives to change the lock. Akin to the appropriately-named Lockwood still lingering over the graves of Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar, we are haunted by the absence of “the whole story.” The Gothic Practitioner submits to this lack of knowledge, lack of resolution. Grieving the loss of absolute comprehension, Practitioners propose a thesis and push their “schematic hypothesis . . . to the point where it fails” (372) over and over again. They submit to the pain of failure and let it ravish them so they may forever invoke its sublimity at will.

VII. Turn Off the Light: Conclusion

As an instructor, I often wonder how to breathe life into old texts—how to be as much an edificatory necromancer in the classroom as I try to be outside of it. Considering how frequently we academics dig through dusty tomes, shaping our findings into something “new,” is not academia inherently necromantic? A Gothic text is hauntological, saturated

with emotional extremes and reliant on pain as its primary affect; hauntings typical of such a text are repeated experiences with and various manifestations of this pain. In addition to *Wuthering Heights*' violent, twisted "romance," the novel's chronologically-confusing narration told through numerous, unreliable frames proves that the text is nothing if not painfully Gothic. I believe that is why Emily Brontë's ghoulish masterpiece is an excellent site for Gothic resurrection: this well-tread text is as sorely in need of reverential perversion as the likes of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.³⁰ Whether you experience such perversion in class or at club,³¹ the Gothic Practice can empower necromancy of your own. The Practice is meant to be a process employed in everyday life, and, as in everyday life, *Wuthering Heights* provides little in the ways of rest and restoration. However, that does not mean Practitioners will themselves never feel restored.

To elaborate, I have spent many years obsessed with the valorization of pain. To exist is to exist shadowed by memories—spectral harbingers of pains past. We live our lives taunted by possible futures past while maintaining grim appreciation for a tumultuous present. If there truly is a "human condition," it is undoubtedly a haunted and

³⁰ Miller says, "Even more than some other great works of literature this novel seems to have an inexhaustible power to call forth commentary and more commentary" (368).

³¹ Catherine and Heathcliff have inspired many compositions. One such example is a song we might at first be surprised to hear in a goth club: "Wuthering Heights" by Kate Bush; (on the other hand, the artist's heavy reliance on literary allusion and Gothic motifs may prove "Heights"'s appearance surprisingly appropriate.) For better or worse, this song occasionally makes an appearance on the setlist, which means I make an appearance anywhere else.

therefore painful one. Buddhists would agree: “all life is suffering,” but people often misconstrue this Noble Truth, which means the Buddhist practice is perceived as pessimism (Holder xiv). The Gothic’s recognition of pain’s perpetuity is subject to similar misconceptions.³² Acknowledging the presence of pain does not mean we ignore the presence of joy. These extremes may initially exist, as Deleuze would say, in oscillation, but granting acknowledgement to both paints a starker and more affecting contrast. Submitting to such contrast opens ourselves to a Burkean delight. This cycle repeats, and embracing the variations of these repetitions gives birth to the possibility of ongoing sublimity, adaptation and survival.

In reading and in life I continue to explore hauntings’ ubiquity and the ways we should welcome it. After all, as Derrida asserts, experiencing time is always-already the experience of temporal collapse. It would prove pointless to attempt an existence exclusively “mindful” of the present because to have a present is to know a past. Resigning ourselves to hauntology allows us to welcome our specters. I have likewise discovered that suffering can be made meaningful through submission—how, in being mindful of pain as affect and effect, we can render it sublime. I am not at all surprised by how many people are drawn to the Gothic, students flocking in droves to courses on

³²It does not help that there are those who dismiss the Gothic solely because of their encounters with teens experimenting with the infamous “goth phase.” (I do not blame them.) Needless to say, the genre and lifestyle signify more than wearing the scariest clothing you found at Hot Topic.

vampires, the Shelleys and Poe. In its self-conscious intensity and celebration of ghosts, the Gothic is a genre both born from and generative of survival. The Gothic makes meaning *because* of a haunted existence, not *in spite* of it.

However, I do realize that we do not always have the option to reorient our pain. Sometimes a wound is so great that using any practice could not suffice; there is not always the time or vitality available for us to recognize, submit and reshape. I do not offer a panacea or infallible literary lens. What I do offer is a mode of being that breeds agency through strategic submission. In using the Gothic Practice, as a haunting returns, so, too, do the associations you made to see it sublime. Like the speaker in "Came Back Haunted," cultivate a self-awareness that lets you laugh and use pain for metamorphosis. Like the heroes in "Rhapsody," surrender to the violent extremes of ambivalence; reassign meaning to the bitter and sweet, the blood and the stars. Even if you fail, at least, like Catherine and Heathcliff, you will have felt all passions to the fullest. In other words, do not live life enduring pain. Submit, and wield this submission to render life's inexorable specters sublime. By living with our ghosts instead of running from them, we embrace our hauntological narratives. We welcome temporal collapse and all the terrors that entails. If we allow ourselves an existence that celebrates such pain—such chaos—we are granted the power to help others find a home in haunted stories of their own.

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Appendix A: "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819) by John Keats

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her Elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Thee hath in thrall!'

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Appendix B: "The Raven" (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
 Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
 Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
 Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
 Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
 Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
 Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
 What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
 Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
 To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
 This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
 On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
 But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
 Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
 "Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
 Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
 Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
 Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
 On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
 Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
 By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
 Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
 Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

Appendix C: Lyrics to "Bela Lugosi's Dead" (1979) by Bauhaus

White on white translucent black capes
Back on the rack
Bela Lugosi's dead
The bats have left the bell tower
The victims have been bled
Red velvet lines the black box

Bela Lugosi's dead
Bela Lugosi's dead
Undead, undead, undead
Undead undead undead (Louder)

The virginal brides file past his tomb
Strewn with time's dead flowers
Bereft in deathly bloom
Alone in a darkened room
The count

(Un)dead

Bela Lugosi's dead
Bela Lugosi's dead
Bela Lugosi's dead
Undead, undead, undead
Undead, undead, undead

Oh, Bela
Bela's undead

Oh, Bela
Bela's undead

Bela's undead
Oh, Bela

Bela's undead
Oh, Bela

Appendix D: Lyrics to "Until Death (Us Do Part)" (1988) by Front 242

Now you have me
Now I'm there
Now I have you
Now you care

Now I got you
Now you care
Now you have me and
Now I'm there

Now we're tied //Until death us do part
Now we're tied //Until death us do part

Now I'm making my way inside
Now I'm feeding myself with you
And the more I grow, the more you decline
Now we're tied
Now we're tied

Now I'm making my way Inside
Now I'm feeding myself with you
And the more I grow, the more you decline
Now we're tied

Now we're tied //Until death us do part
Now we're tied //Until death us do part
Now we're tied

L-O-C-K
L-O-C-K-space-T-H-E-space-D-O-O-R-space-F-O-R-E-V-E-R

Now it's time for you to be sure
That the life we share will be long
That what can't be cured has to be endured

So we're tied//Until death us do part
So we're tied //Until death us do part

L-O-C-K
L-O-C-K-space
Until death us do part
Until death us do part

L-O-C-K-space-T-H-E-space-D-O-O-R-space-F-O-R-E-V-E-R// F-O-R-E-V-E-R
L-O-C-K-space-T-H-E-space-D-O-O-R-space-F-O-R-E-V-E-R

Appendix E: Lyrics to "Came Back Haunted" (2013) by Nine Inch Nails

Ha-ha-haunted

The throat is deep, and the mouth is wide
Saw some things on the other side
Made me promise to never tell
But you know me, I can't help myself

Now I've got something you have to see
They put something inside of me
The smile is red, and its eyes are black
I don't think I'll be coming back

I don't believe it
I had to see it
I came back haunted
I came back haunted

I said goodbye but I
I had to try
I came back haunted
C-C-C-came back haunted

Everywhere now reminding me
I am not who I used to be
I'm afraid this has just begun
Consequences for what I've done, yeah

I don't believe it
I had to see it
I came back, I came back haunted
C-C-C-came back haunted

I said goodbye but I
I had to try

Came back ha-ha-haunted
Just can't
Stop
Came back ha-ha-haunted
Just can't
Stop
Came back ha-ha-haunted
Just can't
Stop

Appendix F: Lyrics to "Rhapsody" (1988) by Siouxsie and the Banshees

In the soil of our sadness
Hear our hearts bell a serenade
A faint choir tenderly shaping
A lament a hollow refuge

In the blood of the twinkling sky
Breathing in air drunk dry
There was once a time of rapture
All is lost a pale gleaming

Across this crooked land
Runs a crooked man
Our loved ones die under the hammer
Of the Soviet sun

Nothing can erase this night
But there's still light with you, rhapsody
And we, we can never see the sun
There's still light with you, rhapsody

And I have seen all I want to
And I have felt all I want to, rhapsody, rhapsody
But we can dream all we want to
We can dream all we want to, rhapsody, oh, rhapsody

And I have seen all I want to
And I have felt all I want to
But we can dream all we want to
Yes, we can dream all we want to
Rhapsody, rhapsody

In the soil of our sadness
Hear our hearts bell a serenade
A faint choir tenderly shaping

A lament a hollow refuge

Rhapsody, oh rhapsody
Rhapsody, oh rhapsody

There's still light with you
There's still light with you, rhapsody
We can dream all we want to, yes, we can dream all we want to
Rhapsody, oh, rhapsody
Rhapsody