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Introduction

Arguments for a book based on the Nature/Culture divide can easily be reduced to its main tenet: the persistence of patriarchal culture's strategies to cast femininity into the realm of Nature and thus eliminate it from Culture by Othering it. Philosopher Judith Butler phrases the concern accurately in *Gender Trouble*: "The binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture "freely" imposes meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an "Other" to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the reality of the signifier and the structure of signification on the model of domination." (50) The American Gothic texts which were chosen as relevant for the completion of such an endeavor offered an unique opportunity: united by genre, but pinpointing different stages in the genre's development, they reunite literary celebrities and lesser-known authors, male and female writers. It is, unsurprisingly, the latter who are the lesser-known, and among these, the one who was also a housewife, Shirley Jackson, only enjoys stardom in her own subcategory genre, the domestic gothic. It is not, however, the "celebrity status" of either the selected authors or of the genre that the present book concerns itself with. As a research sample claiming its stakes from cultural and gender studies, whether the American gothic is categorized as a minor genre[1] or not, its cultural prestige, is irrelevant to the goal of this – its aim is to showcase the social shifts in the sex-gender system at various moments in time. As Teresa Goddu (the author of *Gothic America*) has shown, the American gothic is not merely escapist fiction, but it offers an X-ray into the nation's hidden ailments: the more popular a genre is, the richer its potential to unearth the far-ranging concerns of its time and age.

[1] For the evolution of scholarly interest in the American gothic, see Jerrold E. Hogle's article, in which he remarks that not much attention was paid to the genre up until Leslie Fiedler's 1963 study, which identifies American literature itself as gothic *(The Progress of Theory and the Study of the American Gothic* 3).

Ellen Moers coins the phrase "female gothic" in 1976, defining it as any gothic text produced by a woman (in *Literary Women*), Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith offer a comprehensive survey of what the term has come to mean from the 1970s onwards *(The Female Gothic. New Directions*), while Roberta Rubenstein reads Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) as a sample of female gothic in which the traditional gothic house of the nineteenth century (*Rubenstein*)[2], cyphered male, is recast as feminine, as a reflection of deviant mother-daughter relationship. Despite these twentieth century developments and the canonical male writers' influence, such as Poe, the origins of the genre are female. Intriguing as the new female gothic is, I maintain that canonical texts are still relevant to the gender implications of hysterical narrative, and perhaps even more so, as the gothic commences as defined by the female (Anne Radcliffe), is appropriated by the masculine (Poe), and then returns to its female origins (Jackson).

In the first chapter, I will use Elaine Showalter's definition of the term and subsequent analysis of Freud's discursive practice to show that not only "cut and dried", established narratives can be gothic, but also texts that do not openly declare themselves/are perceived as such. Furthermore, even texts that are already interpreted as gothic "vertically", at the level of imagery can still have their Gothicism explored "horizontally", at the level of "the writing subject and its addressee", according to the Kristevan model (qtd in Cancalon 103).The latter I will attempt to evince in the readings of James and Gilman's texts as being constricted by/escaping the authorial confines of their male engenderers, applying Foucalt's concepts of discursivity and author function to tease out the narrative's inherent gothicism.

Following David Punter's statement that "there are very few actual literary texts which are "Gothic"; that the Gothic is more to do with particular moments, tropes, repeated motifs that can be found scattered, or disseminated, through the modern western literary tradition" (xviii), I argue that these generic features of ambiguity and mutability are the very ones that allow for the genre's versatility, which also incorporates the excess and hidability of the hysteric's speech; the more replete with the possibility of hiding, the more gothic/hysterical a text. The classic eighteenth century gothic text resorts to a topography distinct in anxiety-producing vastness and inscrutability which poses a threat to the vulnerable and the exposed, but it can become such a space itself: the hysteric uses the narrative to hide herself (and, as I will claim in the sections about male hysterics, himself)

[2] According to Roberta Rubenstein and Richard Pascal *(Walking Alone Together: Family Monsters in 'The Haunting of Hill House'*). The latter also identifies the classic gothic theme of escape in Jackson's fiction (Pascal, "Farther than Samarkand": The Escape Theme in Shirley Jackson's "The Tooth").

inside the texts of her/his own making, creating a narrative of excess in which he/she has ample room to hide, to preserve its identity which is constructed as "Other" by the hegemonic patriarchal superscript. Dora and Freud's are competing narratives, each with their own discursive strategies: the patient produces speech, the therapist cuts to the essence of that speech; the anonymous Gilman narrator writes and John her husband overrides her opinions; James's governess produces a complete manuscript, but it passes through many hands and is seen by several eyes before it is narrated by a man, who already has already introduced her as an unrealible source whose point of view is apriorically flawed; Roderick Usher's hysteria contaminates the narrator, the reader and the house itself.

The gothic heroine who paradoxically "triumphs" in death (her own or someone else's – Miles' in the case of James's novella) or madness (Gilman) also needs to assert herself "horizontally", by subverting the male-controlled narrative. Hers will be framed by the man's, in the case of both James and Gilman. Hysteria's definition as "excessive femininity" is, again, a male-issued definition, equally plural as the many shapes of the gothic. What does it mean to be "excessively" feminine? What are femininity's boundaries and who defines them? If the emancipated bike-riding, suffrage-supporting New Women of the turn of the century were decried as "masculine" and hysterical women as overly feminine, it follows that any variation from the theory of the separate spheres[3], however slight, would then promptly be rejected as improper; hysteria, thus, just as the gothic, functions as an umbrella-term for all that is socially forbidden.

Fred Botting defines the gothic as the "writing of excess" (*Gothic* 1); the male will attempt to control and "cure" the woman/narrative of that excess, by reducing the female speaking Subject to the role of patient, thus delegitimizing her speech, even if the "cure" results in her obliteration. In *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-siècle*, Andrew Smith's discussion of late nineteenth century degeneration theory in relation to the formation of imperial masculinity inevitably leads towards readings of seminal Victorian gothic texts as connected to the issue of class, in fact, of the emerging middles class, represented by paragorns of trustworthy masculinity such as the doctor.[4] Smith's contention is that Gothic fiction in which the doctor himself is gothicized is destabilizing for

[3] The theory of separate spheres. For details, see Deborah Rotman's article ("Separate Spheres? Beyond the Dichotomies of Domesticity").

[44] See Galia Benziman's 2006 article (Challenging the Biological: The Fantasy of Male Birth as a Nineteenth-Century Narrative of Ethical Failure), Gale M. Temple's 2014 analysis on the medical science of the day on Hawthorne's short stories ("'Affrighted at the eager enjoyment': Hawthorne, Nymphomania, and Medical Manhood").

the notion of manhood and nationhood, which would indicate a shift in perception from recent gothic scholarship that focuses on the place of the woman as Other to theories of masculinity *(Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-siècle)*. If American gothic is said to be purged of the "class war" and replaced by the "sex war", in the esteemed opinion of Leslie Fiedler (*Love and Death in the American Novel* 63*)*, it is not, however, free of anxieties about masculinity: the decadent culture deplored by Max Nordau in Europe has its expression, in America, in the unrestrained compulsion to buy *(Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature Against the American Grain*). Socially denounced vices such as alcohol, leading to increased criminality in cities, are sources of degeneracy, and representatives of the American gothic such as Poe are further feminized in their dalliances with the consciousness-altering substances.[5]

Chapter I begins with the definitions of hysterical narrative and the connections with the gothic heroine, taking Freud's Dora case as the guiding character, drawing on the scholarly work of Shoshana Felman, Elaine Showalter and Michelle Massé who established parallels between the gothic mode and the language of hysteria. Just as the terms that define the gothic can be vague, so is the definition of hysteria, a blanket-term for an array of symptoms medicalized as a pathology with no other etiology besides the feminine gender itself. The euphemism contained in the phrase "feminine excess" is, of course, sexuality, identified as repressed by James's governess in the psychoanalytic readings of Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson and properly diagnosed, according to the diagnoses of the day and age, by Stanley Renner (""Red hair, very red, close-curling": Sexual Hysteria, Physiognomical Bogeymen, and the "Ghosts" in The Turn of the Screw"). As a merger of two narratives that compete with each other within the same text, a hegemonically dominant one (Connell and Messerschmid), and a repressed, marginal one, both the gothic and the hysterical triumph in their exposure of hidden social illnesses. The hysterical narrative I focus on here, the prologue to Henry James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), emerges in the American consciousness of last decade of the nineteenth century as reflective of a *Zeitgeist* fraught with *fin-de-siècle* anxiety made manifest in the revival of the Gothic genre percolated by Darwinian, homosexual and imperialistic fears.[6]

[5] For a discussion of Poe's stance towards the temperance movement, see David S. Reynolds' article from Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Views* edition ("Poe's Art of Transformation:"The Cask of Amontillado" in Its Cultural Context").

[6] See the many critical interpretations of *Dracula*, for instance, as "the enemy from the East", sexual predator that targets the Empire's "pure women" (Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra) in order to plunge it into degeneracy and decadence. For a comprehensive survey of the

The well-known fact that the gothic gets its name from a Germanic tribe of the many that migrated to Europe following the dissolution of the Roman Empire is a historical event which is still retold as a catastrophe for civilization. The collapse of the Roman empire under the invasion of "hordes of barbarians" is rendered through the Western eyes of the generations which are the result of that same "colonization in reverse" of an exploitative empire with a policy of domination and conquest which reached its chronological and geographical limits. The terms that are used, "barbaric" and "fall" of the "decadent" Empire, which translated to the fall of civilization, present the genre as "the symbolic site of a culture's discursive struggle to define and claim possession of the civilized, and to abject, or throw off, what is seen as other to that civilized self." (Punter 5). In certain instances, however, the gothic re-gothicizes that which is already othered. Freud's findings in the Dora case, published in 1905 under the title "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria", are both distinctively modern *and* gothic: the genre which developed and evolved from late eighteenth century fears of the past which comes back to haunt one is revived a hundred years later as the return of the repressed. In his discussion of the Dora case, Freud notes that perversion is a term relative to the cultural boundaries of social acceptability, the pure, unconscious drive unchecked by sublimation: "When someone has *become* coarse and clearly perverse, we can more correctly say that he has *remained* so, he represents a state of *arrested development.*" (*A Case…* 42). Whichever guises it assumes, the "barbaric" always finds a way of returning to haunt the "civilized", whether it be in the form of Nature, Woman or the Colonial Other; it only does so, however, to reveal those aspects of the social or individual body that sublimation has failed to morph into respectability.

Following the definition of hysterical narrative and the connections between the language of psychoanalysis and masculine domination,[7] Chapter I also includes hysterical definitions of masculinity as they appear in the late nineteenth century narrative and the connections between the language of psychoanalysis and masculine domination. I read the effeminate

critical history, see Jean Paul Riquelme's excellent annotated 2002 edition (*Dracula (Case Studies in Contemporary Fiction)*). For a useful discussion of the Darwinian influence on the turn of the century gothic, see Kelly Hurley's 1996 book *(The Gothic Body. Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle*).

[7] I use the term as it is defined by Pierre Bourdieu in the eponymous book (*Masculine Domination*): "an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence imperceptible and invisible even to its victims. I exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling." (1-2)

men of Decadence, foreshadowed by Poe's Montresor and Roderick Usher, as male hysterics, especially due to their hyper-sensitivity and irrational behaviour. Starting with the exploration of hysterical narrative defined as fragmentary, unreliable and ultimately controlled by the male, I then take Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" as a representative example, focusing on the story's Prologue and its discursive strategies in further filtering the governess' manuscript through several male gazes[8].The equivalence between the discursive modes of the gothic and hysterical is based on an incursion into the narrative strategies of "The Turn of the Screw". The story's prologue, in particular, is useful in identifying the strategies by which the governess' hysterical narrative is again, by a process of male re-appropriation, in fact co-opted by the plurality of voices represented by Douglas and the narrative "I", retraceable to James himself. The story thus appears to be an edited hysterical narrative; a male-curated, male-approved version of what a hysterical narrative should be like, a revised manuscript having been subjected to the scrutiny and gaze of several editors until embedded in a frame narrative which, like Gilman's room/page, consigns the hysteric to a closed environment. Like Flaubert's exploitation of the figure of the hysteric, James's hysterical governess, despite being given the opportunity of relaying her own account, does so by resorting to an inescapably male cultural frame.

My incursion into hysterical narrative was engendered, in the beginning of the first chapter, by outlining the similarities between the gothic and the hysterical, taking Freud's Dora as my guiding heroine – the purpose was to show that the typically Gothic narrative of entrapment is to be found in texts that, though not Gothic *per se*, but belonging to the field of "medical discourse" by dint of their authority, can still trap a secondary, unwilling, female script within its textual architecture. Consequently, the Doras scrutinized, censored and kept prisoner in gothic narratives controlled and curated by the male characters' "medical gaze" have more easily yielded their charge. Hysterical narrative, however, births itself not solely by virtue of its labyrinthine style and fragmentariness, but also through its narrative perspective. The authoritative voice of the psychoanalyst is to order and retrace Dora's hysterical ramblings, whose purpose is to hide her trauma, the trigger of her disease; underneath, the patient's story remains untold, rendered useless by the therapist's accusation of transference, but the seasoned reader of gothic narratives recognizes in this the villain's attempt to cover his tracks.

[8] The role of the male gaze in constructing femininity in film was described by Laura Mulvey in her seminal essay 1975 ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema").