Volume 0 Thesis

First Edition

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(model and artist: Bay and Persephone van der Waard)

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism by Persephone van der Waard
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Disclaimer

"If it was not good, it was true; if it was not artistic, it was sincere; if it was in bad taste, it was on the side of life."

—Henry Miller, on criticism and the Supreme-Court-level lawsuit he received for writing <u>The Tropic of Cancer</u> (1934)

     Regarding This Book's Artistic/Pornographic Nudity and Sexual Content: *<u>Sex Positivity</u> thoroughly discusses sexuality in popular media, including fetishes, kinks, BDSM, Gothic material, and general sex work; the illustrations it contains have been carefully curated and designed to demonstrate my arguments. It also considers pornography to be art, examining the ways that sex-positive art makes iconoclastic statements against the state. As such, <u>Sex Positivity</u> contains visual examples of sex-positive/sex-coercive artistic nudity borrowed from publicly available sources to make its educational/critical arguments. Said nudity has been left entirely uncensored for those purposes. While explicitly criminal sexual acts, taboos and obscenities are discussed herein, no explicit illustrations thereof are shown, nor anything criminal; i.e., no snuff porn, child porn or revenge porn. It <u>does</u> examine things generally thought of as porn that are unironically violent. Examples of uncensored, erotic artwork and sex work <u>are</u> present, albeit inside exhibits that critique the obscene potential (from a legal standpoint) of their sexual content: "ultimate sexual acts, normal or perverted, actual or simulated, masturbation, excretory functions, lewd exhibition of the genitals, or sado-masochistic sexual abuse" ([source](): Justice.gov). For instance, there is an illustrated example of uncensored semen—a "breeding kink" exhibit with zombie unicorns and werewolves (exhibit 87a)—that I've included to illustrate a particular point, but its purposes are ultimately educational in nature.*

     The point of this book isn't to be obscene for its own sake, but to educate the broader public (including teenagers*) about sex-positive artwork and labor historically treated as obscene by the state. For the material herein to be legally considered obscene it would have to simultaneously qualify in three distinct ways (aka the "Miller" test):

- *appeal to prurient interests (i.e., an erotic, lascivious, abnormal, unhealthy, degrading, shameful, or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion)*
- *attempt to depict or describe sexual conduct in a patently offensive way (i.e., ultimate sexual acts, normal or perverted, actual or simulated, masturbation, excretory functions, lewd exhibition of the genitals, or sado-masochistic sexual abuse)*
- *lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value*

     Taken as a whole, this book discusses debatably prurient material in an academic manner, depicting and describing sexual conduct in a non-offensive way for the express purpose of education <u>vis-à-vis</u> literary-artistic-political enrichment.

*While this book was written for adults—provided to them [through my age-gated website](—I don't think it should be denied from curious teenagers through a supervising adult. The primary reason I say this (apart from the trauma-writing sections, which are suitably intense and grave) is that the academic material can only be simplified so far and teenagers probably won't understand it entirely (which is fine; plenty of books are like that—take years to understand more completely). As for sexually-developing readers younger than 16 (ages 10-15), I honestly think there are far more accessible books that tackle the same basic subject matter more quickly at their reading level. All in all, this book examines erotic art and sex positivity as an alternative to the sex education currently taught (or deliberately not taught) in curricular/extracurricular spheres. It does so in the hopes of improving upon canonical tutelage through artistic, dialectical-material analysis.

Fair Use: *This book is non-profit, and its artwork is meant for education, transformation and critique. For those reasons, the borrowed materials contained herein fall under Fair Use. All sources come from popular media: movies, fantasy artist portfolios, cosplayer shoots, candid photographs, and sex worker catalogs intended for public viewing. Private material has only been used with a collaborating artist's permission (for this book—e.g.,* [Blxxd Bunny](#)*'s OF material or custom shoots; or as featured* [in a review of their sex work on my website](#) *with their consent already given from having done past work together—e.g.,* [Miss Misery](#)*).*

Concerning the Exhibit Numbers and Parenthetical Dates: *I originally wrote this book as one text, not four volumes. Normally I provide a publication year per primary text once per text—e.g., "*Alien *(1979)"—but this would mean having to redate various texts in Volumes One, Two and Three after Volume Zero. I have opted out of doing this. Likewise, the exhibit numbers are sequential for the* entire *book, not per volume; references to a given exhibit code [exhibit 11b2 or 87a] will often refer to exhibits* not *present in the current volume. I have not addressed this in the first edition of my book, but might assemble a future annotated list in a second edition down the road.*

Concerning Hyperlinks: *Those that make the source obvious or are preceded by the source author/title will simply be supplied "as is." This includes artist or book names being links to themselves, but also mere statements of fact, basic events, or word definitions where the hyperlink* is *the word being defined. Links to sources where the title is* not *supplied in advance or whose content is otherwise not spelled out will be supplied next to the link in parentheses (excluding Wikipedia, save when directly quoting from the site). One, this will be especially common with YouTube essayists I cite to credit them for their work (though sometimes I will supply just the author's name; or their name, the title of the essay and its creation year). Two, concerning YouTube links and the odds of videos being taken down, these are ultimately provided for supplementary purposes and do not actually need to be viewed to understand my basic arguments; I generally summarize their own content into a single sentence, but recommend you give any of the videos themselves a watch if you're curious about the creators' unique styles and perspectives about a given topic.*

Concerning (the PDF) Exhibit Image Quality: *This book contains over 1,000 different images, which—combined with the fact that Microsoft Word appears to compress images twice (first, in-document images and second, when converting to PDFs) along with the additional hassle that is WordPress' limitations on accepting uploaded PDFs (which requires me to compress the PDF* again*— has resulted in sub-par image quality for the exhibit images themselves. To compensate, all of the hyperlinks link to the original sources where the source images can be found. Sometimes, it links to the individual images, other times to the entire collage, and I try to offer current working links; however, the ephemeral, aliased nature of sex work means that branded images do not always stay online, so some links (especially those to Twitter/X accounts) won't always lead to a source if the original post is removed.*

Concerning Aliases: *Sex workers survive through the use of online aliases and the discussion of their trauma requires a degree of anonymity to protect victims from their actual/potential abusers. This book also contains trauma/sexual anecdotes from my own life; it discusses my friends, including sex workers and the alter egos/secret identities they adopt to survive "in the wild." Keeping with that, all of the names in this book are code names (except for mine, my late Uncle Dave's and his ex-wife Erica's—who are only mentioned briefly by their first names). Models/artists desiring a further degree of anonymity (having since quit the business, for example) have been given a codename other than their former branded identity* sans *hyperlinks (e.g., Jericho).*

Extended, Book-Wide Trigger Warning: *This* entire book *thoroughly discusses xenophobia, harmful xenophilia (necrophilia, pedophilia, zoophilia, etc), homophobia, transphobia, enbyphobia, sexism, racism, race-/LGBTQ-related hate crimes/murder and domestic abuse; child abuse, spousal abuse, animal abuse, misogyny and sexual abuse towards all of these groups; power abuse, rape (date, marital, prison, etc), discrimination, war crimes, genocide, religious/secular indoctrination and persecution, conversion therapy, manmade ecological disasters, and fascism.*

For my friends; in spite of my enemies. I swear I wrote this book sober!
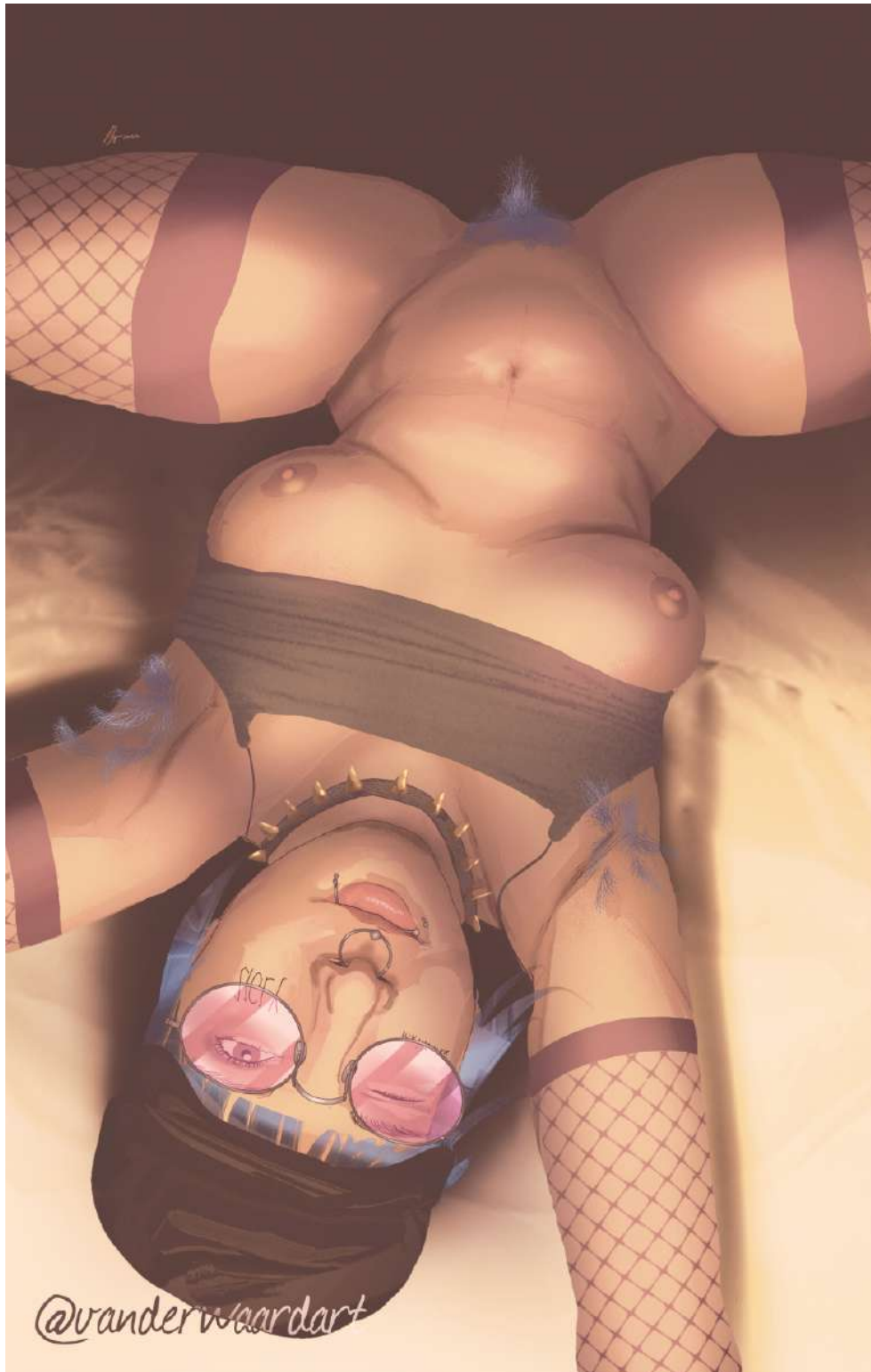
(model and artist: [Itzel Sparrow](#) and [Persephone van der Waard](#))

To [Bay](#). I wanted to include a small addendum, acknowledging your contributions once per volume; i.e., what attracted you to the project, me to you, and what we appreciate about each other as partners in its making (and as lovers). For this volume, here is the <u>first</u> slice of the pie:

You taught me so much about camping canon and making monsters. I had already thought about these things for much of my life and knew the phrase "camping the canon" from Colin Broadmoor, and I had dated a variety of theatre nerds and <u>Jojo</u> fans, etc; but you seemed to have a profoundly unique, wholesome appreciation and deep understanding of these terms at an intuitive level that jived very well with my work. I love you, my sweet; you are my weird nerd's weird nerd, my little goblin having sex with teddy bears, looking back at the camera with a wink: "Oh, cute; a teddy bear! It—why does it have a giant rainbow dick? Oh, no! I'm being fucked by the giant 'killer' teddy bear! It's not child-friendly anymore…" (to my readers, consider this image the Cerberus guarding our underworldly gates; if you can't handle this, now's the time to bow out).

Abstract

"This castle is a creature of Chaos. It may take many incarnations." —Alucard, <u>Castlevania: Symphony of the Night</u> (1997)

My book, *Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism: Liberating Sex Work under Capitalism through Iconoclastic Art*, examines the various differences between sex positivity and sex coercion in sexualized media. Its "Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism" combines a wide variety of theories in order to critique capital and capital's sexualization of all workers: anarcho-Communism, Marxism and fourth wave feminism with the sharpness of Gothic academic theory, the immediacy of online political discourse, as well as postcolonial, posthuman and queer theory, ludology, sex education, antifascist (thus antiwar/anticapitalist) sentiment, poetry and a variety of ironic, xenophilic sex worker illustrations and negotiated labor exchanges that illustrate mutual consent in Gothic/BDSM language. As such, it employs these theories (and their respective language) holistically and intersectionally to dialectically-materially examine and combat unironic xenophobic mental enslavement during the Internet Age.

Specifically *Sex Positivity* tackles how neoliberal state-corporate proponents, TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical [fascist] feminists) and cryptofascists use canonical imagery created from coerced sex work to affect imagination as a socio-material process; i.e, using canon to generate complicated linguo-material arrangements that

- continuously exploit sexualized workers through widespread xenophobia under late-stage Capitalism; i.e., Capitalism sexualizes all workers to heteronormatively serve the profit motive, commonly through harmful Gothic poetics and BDSM theatrics.
- canonically exploit said arrangements to enshrine their abuse in abject, cryptonymic-hauntological crypts/chronotopes that "incarcerate," "lobotomize," "infantilize" and "incriminate" the public imagination; i.e., Mark Fisher's Capitalist Realism, or myopic inability to imagine a world beyond Capitalism even when Capitalism is in decay (whose maxim regarding Capitalist Realism reads: "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of Capitalism"; source: *Capitalist Realism*, 2009).
- simultaneously condemn sex-positive artists who seek to liberate sexualized workers through their own iconoclastic, ironically xenophilic praxis; i.e., camping the canon to escape its brutal historical materialism through their own creative successes, achieving praxial catharsis regarding systemic abuse and generational trauma.

Sex Positivity illustrates, similar to how oscillation is a key component of the Gothic, that Gothic Communism is the oscillation between Capitalism and anarcho-Communism as dialectical-material forces felt in Gothic language by real people: oppositional praxis, or the practical application/synthesis of theory in dialectical-material opposition. To combat nation-states as the ultimate foe, Gothic Communism's chief aim is to be campier (thus cooler, sexier and funnier) than Marx; i.e., camping *his* ghost to develop a holistically intuitive anarcho-Communism begot through a widespread, collective and solidarized emotional and Gothic intelligence/awareness that recultivates the Superstructure and reclaims the Base through intersectional resistance and *de facto* (extracurricular) reeducation.

(artist: Persephone van der Waard)

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism: Liberating Sex Work under Capitalism through Iconoclastic Art

Volume Zero (volume 1 of 4, from 0 to 3): the thesis volume, 1st ed. (v1.08d4[1])

**written and illustrated
by
[Persephone van der Waard](#)**

(with her original artwork [& art for this book] made in collaboration with fellow sex workers and artists)

edited and co-written by [Bay Ryan](#)

This book is strictly non-profit/not for resale. Originally released [on Persephone's 18+ website](#) for purposes of sex, gender and art education, transformation and critique.

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[1] Updated "What I Will and Won't Exhibit." Added several paratextual sections: "The State: Its Key Tools; re: the Monopolies, Trifectas and Qualities of Capital" and "Abridged Manifesto Tree (of Oppositional Praxis)."

Volume Summaries

    Sex Positivity is composed of four volumes: Volume Zero, One, Two and Three (arranged numerically as "volume [1, 2, 3, or 4] of 4, from 0 to 3" on their text-only title pages). Each has a proper title and ordinary noun(s) with which it is referred to; e.g., Volume One is also called "the manifesto," and Volume Two is also referred to as "the Humanities primer," etc. Currently my thesis volume, manifesto volume, Poetry Module and Undead Module are all live; the remaining volumes/modules are planned to release over the remainder of 2024, and will be accessible through my website's 1-page promo (below).

These summaries are short and basic. To access the entire list of volume/chapter summaries for Sex Positivity *and its full table of contents, a separate PDF can be downloaded from my website. [Click here to access my website's 1-page promo, which contains all relevant download links/information regarding my book.]* —Perse

Paratextual Materials (per volume)

    The paratextual materials concern the entire book, and come with each volume. The front of every volume will have: its front and rear cover images, its first disclaimer (legal information, citation facts, and trigger warnings, etc), the abstract, the inner cover image for the entire book, the text-only title page for the current volume, the volume/chapter summaries; an essay about "making Marx gay" and a small explanation on one of this book's oldest and chief aims, illustrating mutual consent; the second disclaimer (what I will and won't exhibit), an address to the audience, essential keywords, and (for Volumes One, Two and Three) a heads-up section with various reminders from Volume Zero, including reading comprehension pointers; and, of course, the table of contents per volume. There's also (for Volumes Two and Three) a small section about losing our training wheels and relying less on theory as we push into the second half of the book; and (for Volume Three, parts one and two), a brief explanation on why that volume was ultimately divided in two. Finally, the back of each volume will include the keyword glossary and the Acknowledgments and About the Author sections.

approximate[2] length: ~57,000-62,500 words/~204-220 pages[3] and ~17 unique images (including the front and rear covers)/~95-104 total images

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[2] The length of the paratextual documents vary slightly per volume. All approximations are subject to change as the volumes are finalized.

[3] ~75-95 pages for the front of the volume, and ~128 for the rear.

Volume Zero[4]: Thesis

The thesis volume contains my author's foreword, a small essay on the performance and paradox of power ("Notes on Power"), as well as my book's manifesto tree (scaffold of oppositional praxis), thesis argument[5] on Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism, "camp map" and symposium; it uses them to encompass, then articulate, the entirety of my book's theoretical content, using a variety of cited material and keywords (e.g., the Gothic, monstrous-feminine, and *Amazonomachia*) to delve into its broadest/most common arguments as deeply as possible. Written based on years of independent research—as well as older blogposts, essays, and my master's thesis—Volume Zero essentially operates as my PhD but also my total curriculum, which can be simplified as needed when being taught to others in more anecdotal, everyday forms.

approximate volume length (minus the paratextual documents): ~200,000 words/603 pages and ~282 unique images

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[4] When writing the thesis volume, I just called it "the thesis volume"; I also wrote it after initially writing Volumes One, Two and Three (out of order, and revisiting each in turn after my thesis was completed and put online, followed by Volumes One; Two, part one; and Two, part two's sub-volumes, etc). For my own sanity I have decided to continue preserving the original nomenclature: the thesis volume, Volume One (the manifesto), Volume Two (the Humanities primer) and Volume Three (on proletarian praxis). The thesis volume is technically Volume Zero in relation to them and I sometimes call it that in the book; I also call it "my thesis," "the thesis argument" or "the thesis volume," etc.

[5] (a summary of the thesis paragraph from the thesis volume): "Capitalism dimorphically sexualizes everything under a heteronormative, settler-colonial scheme, one whose Cartesian myopia of Capitalist Realism must be escaped from; i.e., via a deliberate iconoclasm that liberates sex workers (or sexualized workers) under Capitalism through sex-positive art."

Volume One: Manifesto and Instruction

Volume One contains my Gothic-Communist manifesto and outlines a teaching method for synthesizing praxis; i.e., through an *introduction* to simplified Gothic-Communist theory. Written before my thesis but updated in light of its construction, the manifesto takes a more conversational approach to my thesis argument; i.e., presenting said argument through my original preface, manifesto, sample essay and synthesis roadmap as a potent means of teaching others how to develop Communism through the Gothic mode.

To this, Volume One merely *begins* exploring the application of my theories when trying to achieve development through praxial synthesis and catharsis; i.e., power and trauma as things to interrogate (and negotiate/play with) by writing about and illustrating them through Gothic poetics in the shared dialogs of contested spaces: ludo-Gothic BDSM serving as a flexible, campy and productive means of teaching empathy and class/culture consciousness through anecdotal evidence merged with dialectical-material scrutiny and analysis—where survival and healing from state abuse (and generational trauma) must be expressed through what we create ourselves as stemming from said abuse and its complicated spheres. While the reduction of pure theory to more comprehensible forms remains vital to achieving emotional/Gothic intelligence and class/cultural awareness, their instruction is nonetheless informed by workers living with trauma who inherently distrust the state: the oppressed. Heeding *their* pedagogy remains essential when synthesizing praxis in our own daily lives; i.e., through our personalized learned approaches to Gothic instruction being assisted by those with less privilege merging their poetics (and theatre) with ours.

approximate volume length ("): ~187,000 words/497 pages and ~326 unique images

Volume Two: Monsters

Volume Two is the Humanities primer, whose three modules—the Poetry, Undead and Demon Modules—explore the complex usage and history of Gothic poetics during oppositional praxis; i.e., its (un)ironic manifestation as xenophobic and/or xenophilic: creatively interpreting and negotiating with the Gothic past/Wisdom of the Ancients to better understand our own alien, fetishized world

and the exploitation we face within it as dehumanized workers. We will demonstrate how to think like a Gothic poet/Renaissance person (through monstrous poetics), then examine two basic monster classes—the *undead* and *demonic*—and include *anthropomorphic* examples from the natural world as further hybridizing these already intersecting modules (furries, chimeras, composites); e.g., zombie-vampire werewolves, or undead fox demons, etc.

We'll also reconsider Mark Fisher's notion of Capitalist Realism; i.e., inspecting how it fosters a plethora of cyberpunk and other dystopic/operatic "canceled futures," whose canonical, myopic hauntologies and cryptonomy must be challenged with iconoclastic monsters operating as a counterterror device: to help people radically imagine, and empathize with, a world beyond Capitalism (and state terror). Instead of simply viewing the current world as ending and labor to blame for it, we can learn why the state is ultimately to blame for a) its own decay and b) its scapegoating of said decay onto dehumanized monstrous-feminine workers of decreasing privilege/socio-material advantage. In turn we can portray the Medusa (nature-as-alien) as something to hug, fuck and love, not rape, kill or otherwise harm for profit *vis-à-vis* Cartesian thought.

Due to Volume Two's overall length, each module has actually been released as its own sub-volume; each has its own promo series, where you can read a given module, piece-by-piece, as individual blogposts; re: "Brace for Impact" (the Poetry Module), "Searching for Secrets" (the Undead Module), and "Deal with the Devil" (the Demon Module).

Volume Two, part one: Poetry Module

Whereas the Monster Modules focus on the *history* of Gothic poetics—i.e., as something to learn *from* when poetically articulating our *own* pedagogy of the oppressed—the Poetry Module focuses on Gothic *poetics* as a historical-material process whose history we contribute *towards*. Its emphasis lies in teaching with Gothic poetic devices by applying them, the module explaining said devices while going over them, one-by-one; i.e., in a series of poetry-themed sections: "Time," "Teaching," "Medicine," and "the Medieval." Last but not least, the module includes a sizeable extension that goes over different ways to play with the imaginary past; i.e., per ludo-Gothic BDSM and rape play.

approximate length ("): ~300,000 words/~795 pages, ~625 unique images

Volume Two, part two: Undead Module

This module explores the poetic history of the undead; i.e., as creatures driven less by active intelligence and more by a desire to freeze and feed in the buried presence of trauma and harmful conditions. It explores how the state's monopolies lead to a state of exception within its sites of settler-colonial violence, which in turn create a violent upheaval/silent scream among the oppressed and oppressors alike; i.e., the voice of colonial trauma and the vengeful, desperate feeding on the living by the undead as the genocided dead, having come home to roost—zombies. However, the alienation and feeding also affect the ruler class, leading to vampirism as a canonical effect that must be personified in healthier forms of medieval nostalgia that, for their using logical motions, become ghost-like, copied and imperfect. Reclaiming these modules requires embodying and subverting the very traumas the state relies on to control us by keeping us hungry and braindead (a process I call "lobotomization")—to, as the undead generally do, paralyze *our* prey and feed on *their* frozen bodies, albeit in ways that pointedly develop Gothic Communism.

approximate length ("): ~430,580 words/~1,055 pages and ~832 unique images

Volume Two, part two: Demon Module (WIP)

This module explores the poetic history of demons; i.e., as actively cunning-yet-alien shapeshifters, presented canonically as treacherous within forbidden knowledge and power exchange: as untrustworthy beings made deceitful and torturous through the ghost of the counterfeit's process of abjection. As such, they are manmade, presented as occult beings that are summoned, composite bodies that are built (cyborgs, golems and robots), or overtly natural totems that are hunted down within nature-as-alien in either case: something to present as demonic, then isolate, dehumanize and invade

under Cartesian duress. Reclaiming them requires embodying and subversively humanizing the Satanic transformative power they provide, generally in defense of nature as made alien by state forces (the trifectas, monopolies and their proponents)—to imbue with transformative fatal power that, in some shape or form, targets us for state abuse, which we subvert mid-exchange away from Capitalism's usual tortures and towards Gothic Communism's unknown pleasures.

approximate length ("): ~117,000 words/~348 pages and ~191 unique images (under construction)

Volume Three: Praxis (WIP)

Volume Three is the informed, continuous application of successful proletarian praxis *as* we reinterpret the Gothic past moving forward. Striking a careful, intuitive balance between pure theory and taught instruction, its introduction/summation takes Volume Zero's theoretical backbone, Volume One's simplified teaching approach and Volume Two's past lessons, then outlines the dialectical-material objectives through which to apply our central Gothic theories—i.e., in a dialectical-material way using updated, posthumanist models (expanded beyond Cartesian thought) in order to achieve Gothic Communism one step at a time. This includes the creative successes of proletarian praxis, which the volume explores in relation to state forces who resist their transformative power to keep things the same; i.e., the state vs workers, generally by pitting the latter against each other. A huge part of proletarian praxis, then, involves a gradual development of emotional/Gothic intelligence and class/cultural awareness during our updated teaching approach and labor negotiations when expressed through Gothic poetics and demonic BDSM; i.e., to counterattack state forces in service to our larger goals—our six Gothic-Marxist tenets—thwarting Capitalist Realism.

The praxis volume divides in two halves:

Volume Three, part one

Lays out sex positivity *and* sex coercion—but also the liminal areas between them—in a two-part introduction, followed by three chapters.

Volume Three, part two

Concerns sex positivity *versus* sex coercion. It contains Chapters Four and Five plus the Conclusion, which concerns the creative successes of proletarian praxis versus state praxis. Time to fight!

approximate volume length ("): ~234,000 words/795 pages and ~394 unique images (under construction)

approximate total book length: ~1,531,000 words/4,313 pages and ~2,667 unique images

Making Marx Gay

"Why camp canon?" you ask? Because we have to! Canon is heteronormative, thus foundational to our persecution as built into capital out of antiquity's Drama and Comedy into more recent inventions of the staged gimmick; i.e., of the back-and-forth wrestling match versus the Greek play's chorus and musical numbers, but also the opera and castle as an operatic site of forbidden, extreme desire, guilty pleasure and possessive love. Capitalism needs enemies to fight who are different from the status quo and we fit the bill. In short, we fags "make it gay" for our own survival.

—Persephone van der Waard, <u>Sex Positivity, Volume Zero</u> (2023)

This short, five-page essay aims to address several key points: a) about Marx's homophobia, and b) inability to say as much about queer rights that we, while camping canon, must address by camping Marx, hence making *him* (or rather, his ghost) gay. I wrote it after thinking on Marx's underlying bigotries and other shortcomings in Volume One (which I mention in that volume's preface). While I had focused on his lack of a conscious Gothic critique [and active anti-Semitism](#) (source: "Karl Marx in the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica," 2006), I also wanted to address his homophobia, insofar as to camp something is to make it gay *using Gothic poetics*. We must do this to Marx's ghost, lest Communism remain stuck in place, unable to develop away from Capitalist Realism.

([source](#): <u>The Gay Liberator</u>, no. 42, 1974)

Fascists tend to say, "make something great *again*," arguing as they do for a return to greatness that is inextricably tied to a conservative imaginary past. Conversely, Marx and his ilk tended to look to the future to escape the ghosts of the past, except their banishment under Capitalist Realism has led them—as Derrida pointed out—to haunt language through spectres of the man himself: his nebulous, shapeshifting reputation. It is *this* version of Marx that we must contend with, because it is the one that we can transform out of the actual man himself as a complicated fixture of history.

To that, this brief reminder stresses something that my thesis discusses repeatedly and should likewise be kept in mind throughout the entire book: Marx

wasn't gay in the functional sense[6]; he *was* to some degree *homophobic*, and bigoted in ways his epistolary correspondence with Engels reveals. And while I think it's entirely worth noting that homosexuality and its formative history merit valid criticism insofar as men with power have often sexually abused children (which Foucault dubiously called "everyday occurrence in the life of village sexuality [and] inconsequential bucolic pleasures," notably lamenting their ending of, following the rise of the bourgeoisie[7]), we must also remember that until the late 1800s gender-non-conformity was entirely synonymous with *criminal activity* (for men, because women and slaves weren't legally considered people at this point); i.e., "sodomy" as a breaking with the ancient canonical codes that stress PIV sex, thus sexual *reproduction*. To this, those who abused children and those who did not were clumped together in the same messy sphere, say nothing of important but tardy modern distinctions such as "trans," "intersex," and non-binary," etc.

     Moreover, this malnourished trend (and its inherited confusions) stemmed from socio-material conditions that are *not* set, but rather can change and transform as time goes on. Just as the word "homosexual" didn't spring into formal, written existence until 1870—and words like "transsexual" and "transgender" emerged later still—the *oral, Gothic* traditions that informed them are as old as Humanity itself (certainly far older than Enlightenment thinkers and their disastrous Cartesian models) and have only continued to evolve over time (which Volume Two shall demonstrate). So our praxis (which Volume Three shall cover) must take heed

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[6] I.e., not openly, anyways. Heteronormativity certainly has closeted men endlessly overcompensating for their perceived "lack" of straightness, to which we can only speculate about Marx being closeted or not. What matters is what he said or didn't say regarding the liberation of GNC people from state control. His problem, as we shall see, lay less in how he focused primarily on class and material conditions instead of class and culture combined through socio-material conditions, but that the language hadn't "caught up." As Sherry Wolf points out in "The Myth of Marxist Homophobia" (2009): "It is insufficient, however, to argue that Marx and Engels were merely prisoners of the era in which they lived, though they were undoubtedly influenced by the dominant Victorian morals of the early Industrial Revolution" (source). Indeed, they fought progressively for the Cause regarding those scandals and crises-of-the-day that society published most openly and clearly. Among these, homosexuality had yet to emerge, and indeed would not until Oscar Wilde's infamous trial (1895) twelve years after Marx had already kicked the bucket (1883).

     Wolf raises concerns about American slavery and anti-Irish racism, to which Marx and Engels fought for the oppressed; what injustices they saw and had the language for, they fought for the side of workers on *social issues*:

> All this refuses definitively the argument that Marxism is interested only in questions of class. Marx and Engels' body of writings and life's pursuit have influenced generations of revolutionaries who have fought for a better world, including a sexually liberated one. Yet there is no reason to defend every utterance and act as if they were infallible gods instead of living men, warts and all (*ibid.*).

I'm inclined to agree with Wolf, but won't apologize for the societal ignorance that informed Marx and Engel's private homophobia. Clearly there is room for improvement, which neither man lived to see, and this is best expressed through Gothic poetics; i.e., the open, popular language of monsters and aliens as fetishized by the state, but also workers for or against the state and the bourgeoisie.

[7] From *A History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1980).

of the updated jargon, but also the imaginary past as something to revive in the present by making *Marx* gay in ways the man himself could not.
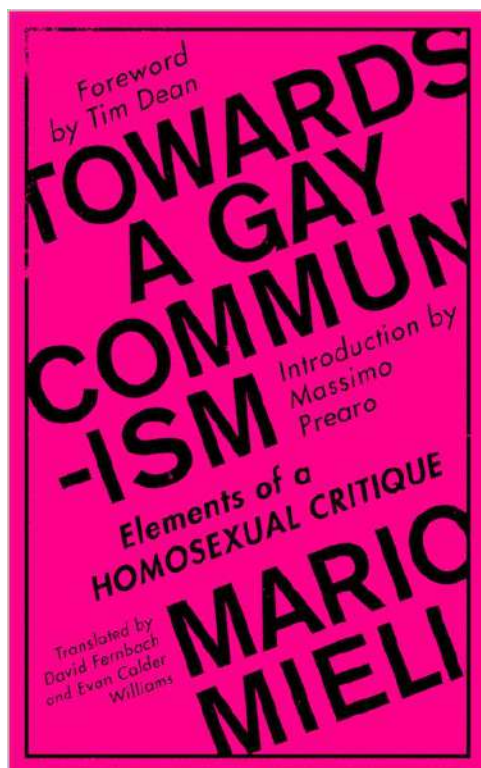
([source](): Pluto Press)

The idea isn't exactly new—Mario Mieli's *Towards a Gay Communism* established the basic idea in 1977 and the Revolutionary Communist Party's admittedly incomplete 2001 "On the Position on Homosexuality in the New *Draft Programme*" discussed the idea towards homosexuals and women[8], first and foremost, while not having the most comprehensive understanding of trans people[9]. My approach takes things much further through a *holistic Gothic methodology* meant towards ending Capitalist Realism (which hadn't crystalized in 1977, let alone the 1800s). *Sex Positivity* camps canon by "making it gay" using monsters to consciously humanize, thus liberate, workers with; i.e., cooler, sexier and more fun, etc, and in ways that—unlike Foucault or Marx—actively and effectively diminish the state's capacity to inflict harm in service to the profit motive *through Gothic poetics*.

In other words, the state commodifies oppression through monsters, which we must challenge by making our own. Our "making it gay" includes Marx and his ghostly reputation as something to debate with (and improve on) in spectral forms

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[8] The New *Draft Programme* raises a series of rhetorical questions for which no immediate answers are supplied:

> Should our goal be to put an end to the subordination of all women, and to liberate all humanity, or to be satisfied with some women laying claim to a few prerogatives historically reserved for privileged males and with groups that have been discriminated against and 'marginalized' achieving some 'self-expression' within a self-limited subculture or community? Should we be seeking to find individual solutions and pursuing illusions like 'inner peace,' or to collectively raise hell and, with the leadership of the proletariat, unite all who can be united, to tear down the old society and build a new one with the goal of uprooting and abolishing all oppression? ([source]()).

In short, their stance is less hard than it should be.

[9] "More recently a movement has emerged to take up the rights of transgendered people (people who live or 'pass' as the opposite gender as well as people who actually become transsexuals via medical and surgical intervention). This is a development our party needs to understand better" (*[ibid.]()*). Clearly.

that hold these once-living men accountable *now* for their bigotries *back then* (from my author's foreword in the thesis volume):

> Marx wasn't gay enough for my tastes, thus could never camp canon to the amount required. In camping him, I'm obviously doing this through the Gothic mode, specifically its making of monsters—their lairs, battles, identities and struggles—through a reclaimed **Wisdom of the Ancients** that represents ourselves during shared dialectical-material struggles that take what Marx touched on before going further than he ever could

However private they may have kept them, it doubtless affected their ability to speak out loud concerning the rights of gender-non-conforming persons and their divergent sexualities. So we, by camping their ghosts, must not be silent like theirs were/are; we must use any means at our disposal to "cry out," including novels and movies, but also videogames and their franchised material (a neoliberal phenomenon)—e.g., Metroidvania (which Volume Zero will expand upon).

Just because Marx and later, Foucault, were "of their times" and indeed regressing to some degree towards an imaginary (thus possible) world—one where the past-as-problematic informed their incomplete visions of the future—this doesn't mean we must do the same; i.e., blindfolded and crossing our fingers. Indeed, we can openly acknowledge a queerness of the historical past in imaginary forms that speak to a better future than what Marx dared imagine. For he and Engels, queerness was "sodomy" and the third sex (a problematic term) was "Uranians," but *that* view was informed by the present availability of information *at the time*. Even so, Engels—despite calling sodomy "abominable" in "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" (1883) and lacking the ability to distinguish harmful forms from non-harmful forms—tries in the same essay to imagine a world beyond his own that speaks to our goals:

> What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion of their practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it ([source](#)).

In response, Sherry Wolf writes in "The Myth of Marxist Homophobia,"

> While here Engels is explicit about how heterosexual relations would undoubtedly be transformed by a socialist revolution, his broader point is that by removing the material obstacles to sexual freedom the ideological barriers can fall. This raises far-reaching possibilities for a genuine sexual revolution on all fronts ([source](#)).


(artist: [Mugiwara Art](#))

      Again, I am inclined to agree, but want to critique Engels a bit more than Wolf does. The people he's discussing aren't those born into a world where Capitalism simply "doesn't exist" *when the person is born*. To posit that is to kick the can down the road and shrug one's shoulders. Instead, the *current* generation must try to imagine a better future while developing Communism in the bargain. To that, hearts, minds and bodies *can* change while people are alive, and the trick, I would argue, is through Gothic poetics; I was in the closet once and have needed to work hard while alive to become a better, more authentic person. It's certainly far too late to rescue Marx and Engels the *historical figures* from the embarrassing grave they admittedly dug for themselves, but we *can* transform their *spectres* as living entities inside society and ourselves. Take what is useful and leave the rest. Marx will understand. And if he doesn't, to Hell with him!

Illustrating Mutual Consent

Sex Positivity was founded on informed consent through negotiated labor exchanges. By extension, the book's entire premise is to illustrate mutual consent (and other sex-positive devices) through dialectical-material analysis; i.e., something to learn from when regarding the *products* of said labor whose iconoclastic lessons nevertheless cannot be adequately supplied by singular images (or collages) alone, but must instead be relayed through subtext in an educational environment where these things are being displayed: a gallery. In other words, sex positivity becomes something to exhibit and explain during dialectal-material analysis of sex-positive works prepared in advance by mutually-consenting parties.
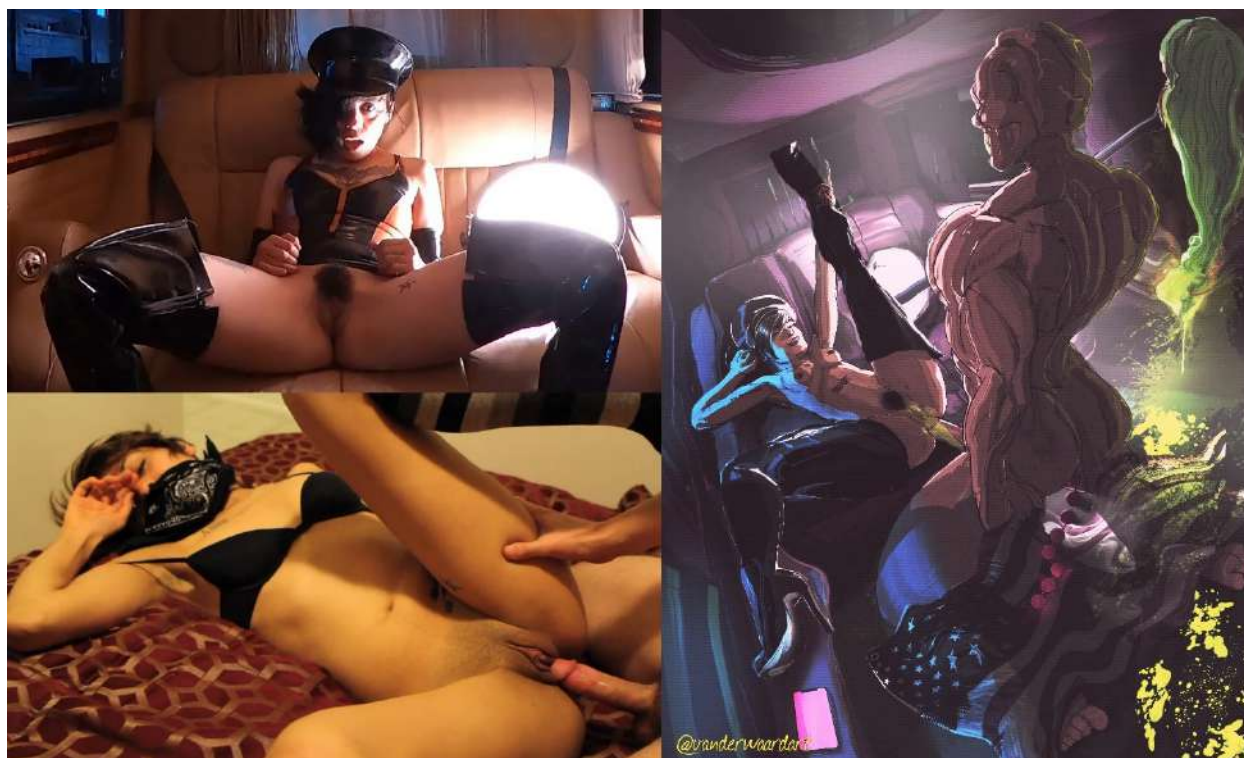
(model and artist: [Mercedes the Muse](#) and [Persephone van der Waard](#))

Every volume for this book is full of exhibits like the one above; every exhibit that features artwork made in active collaboration amounts to a conscious attempt between myself and others to negotiate our respective boundaries in open cooperation, and each was made while interrogating personal and systemic trauma as something to mark and negotiate with using monstrous language. Regardless of the exact poetics used, a large part of any exhibit made in collaboration is the deeper context for its construction: that the sex work and artwork being displayed

remain just that—work, which requires payment in ways that both parties agree is fair from *fairly argued* and *fairly implemented* positions.

In keeping with the anarchist spirit of things, nothing was arranged from positions of unfair advantage on my end; everything was spelled out up front. In turn, the various permissions that other workers granted me were executed by those who had total say over the material being used/featured: in essence, they controlled how I represented their labor, bodies, and identities. From the cropping of the images and monster design choices per illustration, to the aliases being used and the services being plugged, every personalized exhibit has been devised according to how the models-in-question decided while navigating these exchanges. To that, each transaction goes well beyond commercial goods traded for money and includes whatever we bartered, insofar as labor for labor amounts to a great many things: photographs for art, sex for sex, sex for photographs, art for sex, and acts of friendship and displays of shared humanity and kindness that we discovered along the way.

To all of the people involved, I give thanks; this book could not exist without you. For a comprehensive thanksgiving to all the sex workers involved in this project, please refer to the Acknowledgements section at the back of the volume.

(artist: [Mercedes the Muse](#))

Defining Sexualized Media/Sex Work, and Regarding Hard Kinks: What I Will and Won't Exhibit

"What's in the box?!"

—David Mills, Se7en (1995)

Comrades,

The table of contents for my thesis volume doesn't appear until page 89. Until then, this second disclaimer explains what I will and won't artistically exhibit in the book

- *What I Will Exhibit (and related terms)*
- *What I Won't Exhibit*

followed by several more small paratextual sections:

- *A Note on Canonical Essentialism*
- *The Six Gothic-Marxist Tenets and Four Main Gothic Theories*
- *The State: Its Key Tools; re: the Monopolies, Trifectas and Qualities of Capital*
- *About the Logo (for Gothic [gay-anarcho] Communism)*
- *Concerning My Audience, My Art, Reading Order and the Glossary*
- *Essential Keywords, a priori*

Click here to skip ahead to the table of contents and the rest of the volume.

Love,

—Your "Commie Mommy," Persephone

The thesis volume/Volume Zero is the first of four volumes for *Sex Positivity* and contains ~280 unique images; all four volumes, when they release, will contain over ~2,000 unique images (subject to change) and hundreds of collage-style exhibits. These invigilate, interrogate and weaponize sexualized media for proletarian purposes of class/culture war during oppositional praxis (competing

applications of theory during dialectical-material exchange, or opposing *material* forces), but especially fetishes, kink and BDSM common in Gothic poetics: monster art/porn and yes, hardcore sex. Given the taboo nature of these things—and that Gothic media habitually explores taboo subjects like dehumanization, murder and rape, we're left with a thoroughly loaded equation whose variables have specific definitions:

> Capitalism sexualizes all labor for the profit motive in a heteronormative (thus colonial, dimorphic) theatrical scheme: "sexualized media = sex work as sex-positive vs sex-coercive in the fight for basic human rights centered around debates of universal correctness/ethics and reactionary purity arguments."

To address both the equation and the taboos that Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism wrestles with, I wanted to provide some definitions and disclaimers, right out of the gate.

To start with, we need to define **kink**[10], **fetish**, and **BDSM** as forms of **roleplay** that we'll expand on (e.g., **chaser/bait**, exhibit 1a1a1h1) in the thesis volume and elsewhere in the book (normally block-quoting keyword definitions is restricted to the thesis volume, but these terms are some of the most vital in the book. As such, these four definitions will not be abridged, nor will any of the others in this second disclaimer as it appears in all four volumes):

> **roleplay**
>
> The playing of roles in social-sexual situations, usually with a dominant/submissive element (as many come from classic stories which tend to be heteronormative; but even iconoclastic stories transmute BDSM, fetishes and kinks to be sex-positive within dominant/submissive models).
>
> **kink**

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[10] In this disclaimer and the entire thesis volume, I have **emboldened** and color-coded keywords (rather than opt for italics/underlining, which I generally utilize for *emphasis*). Generally this is done when first introducing them, but also when I am about to define/am currently defining or otherwise stressing their involvement (I will also do this as a graphical aid to showcase when a bunch of keywords are being used in tandem, especially during the thesis statement). Regardless of when I do, it's meant to clue you in that we're discussing words that have specific definitions that are about to be expanded on or otherwise invoked (at the present time or later in the document) or *reinvoked* after they have already been explained. Also, while this only happens a few times, a couple of phrases aren't in the glossary because I haven't been able to define some of the more niche or incidental expressions (usually idioms or figures of speech); this is something I'd like to address in a future, second edition.

Nontraditional forms of sexual activity that don't necessarily involve forms of power exchange between partners (unequal or otherwise).

fetishization

A fetish, or the act of making something into a fetish, is "a form of sexual desire in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, item of clothing, or part of the body." Generally, fetishes are pre-existing social-sexual trends that people either embrace or reject. They aren't explicitly sexist (e.g., mutually consenting to show feet), but become sexist when used in exploitative ways (e.g., sex workers forced to show their feet to generate profit for someone else).

(demon) BDSM

Bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism—seemingly nontraditional forms of sexual activity that involve unequal power exchange that has actually been canonized and must be camped in doubled forms. Both involve power, but non-consensual (sex-coercive) variants canonically involve power *abuse*—generally of women and other marginalized workers by white, cis-het men/arguably token queers in romanticized tales thereof (e.g., Stoker's vampire, Barker's Cenobite) that often, according to Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism" (1974), invoke not just the "master scenario" whose purely sexual experience is "severed from personhood, from relationships, from love," but also the fascist language of death: "The color is black [and red], the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death" ([source](#)). In a sex-positive sense, such rituals regularly invoke demons as a Gothicized means of catharsis, but also practicing impulse and power control during non-harmful euphoria whose painful, physical, emotional, and/or sexual activities occur between good-faith participants; i.e., ironic variants of Ann Radcliffe's classically **xenophobic** and dubiously "consensual" **Black Veil** (hiding the threat badly), **demon lover** (the xenophobic/xenophilic threat of unironic mutilation and rape), and **exquisite "torture"** (rape play).

We'll further unpack Radcliffe's tricky torture tools in the thesis volume (and lay waste to her sacred memory in the process). There's also **dom(inator/-inatrix)**, **sub(missive)**, "strict/gentle," **topping/a top** vs **bottoming/a bottom**, **regression**, **rape fantasies**, and **aftercare**; but we will likewise unpack these in the thesis volume when we discuss subverting **rape culture** and **"prison sex"**

mentalities *vis-à-vis* **Man Box**, **good play vs bad play**, and other germane theatrical factors (*ahegao*, *moe*, chasers/bait, etc).

Now that we've outlined the basic ideas of Gothic fetish and kink, the rest of the disclaimer will provide some definitions for what I will exhibit, followed by what I *won't* exhibit. This goes beyond basic nudity like the image below but will involve nudity in either case:

(artist: Blxxd Bunny)

What I Will Exhibit (and related terms)

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas, Nocturnos lemures, portentaque.

Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty power, Witches, and ghosts who rove at midnight hour ([source](#)).

> *—the pre-preface epigram to Matthew Lewis' The Monk (1796)*

Matthew Lewis was a very queer and very educated young man when he wrote *The Monk* (which despite the lack of open queer discourse at its inception, is a tremendously queer apologia written in Gothic camp *par excellence*). Like him, I am very queer and educated (though not as young or closeted, I think); also like him, I like to parody sex in the Gothic mode—i.e., write about campy monsters in sexualized media. Here are some glossary definitions and exhibits to give you an idea of what I mean:

sexualized media

Media that contains sexual and gendered components—of cis-het men and women, but also queer persons/other marginalized groups for or against the state. However, the treatment of sexuality and gender—how it is sexualized by "the Media" or in media more broadly—depends on if it is sex-positive or sex-coercive (some examples, below):

(from the companion glossary, exhibit 3a1: Artist, top-left: Frank Frazetta; top-middle-to-right: [Sveta Shubina](#); bottom-left: J. Howard Miller; bottom-middle: Norman Rockwell; bottom-right: Michelangelo.

Artistic mimicry through homage is a common phenomenon of art, with women being illustrated historically by men for various purposes. A common reason for doing so was to illustrate their place in a

man's world; e.g., as wives, mistresses [the Virgin or the Whore] but also as workers. Whereas open fascism historically relegates women to traditional modes of women's work, American propaganda temporarily made various concessions during WW2. These occurred to support the overall war effort and the material interests of the elite. After the war ended, women's rights were quickly rescinded in favor of a return to the status quo, female workers being demonized by the same male employers and patrons who formerly promoted them [and fetishized by the likes of Frank Frazetta, who started his career during a regression towards female re-enslavement after the war].

Mimesis is a back-and-forth process, borrowing images and symbols for new purposes during oppositional praxis. In Rosie the Riveter's case, promotions of female "equality" were themselves guided by an American sense of righteousness that went on to be co-opted for social movements long after the original pieces aired. Indeed, Rosie only became a cultural icon of feminism in the 1970s—i.e., as a symbol of female empowerment that eclipsed Rockwell's Christianized mimesis of Michelangelo's Isaiah. On Rockwell, Christina Branham writes in "Rosie the Riveter" (2016),

The pose she strikes seems a bit awkward, but it too conveys a message: it was inspired by Michelangelo's portrayal of the prophet Isaiah on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Why? As stated during a Sotheby's 2002 sale of the original art, "Righteousness is described throughout Isaiah's prophecy as God's strong right arm." Rockwell's Rosie is certainly sporting some strong man-arms, but I would say the bigger message is that America was on the side of righteousness [source].

After Rockwell's upstaging by Miller's latter-day revival, the image of Rosie took on a life of its own. The image itself went on to convey the nostalgia of a reimagined past: the rights of cis-het white women [which second wave feminism primarily represented through its arguments]. In the works of future artists, nostalgia becomes something to reclaim, but also regress towards depending on the context and political leanings of the creator.)

(from the companion glossary, exhibit 3a2: Assorted pieces by Milo Manara and Luis Royo; middle-right: Olsen; far-top-right: [Morry Evans](#). Hauntology presses women into different forms of transgressive servitude—i.e., more about titillating the cis-het male gaze within risky positions of appropriative peril and high imagination/adventure that women are expected not just to perform but compete for under male Pygmalions. Indeed, white, cis-het women assimilate and promote these roles, focusing on the unironic torture of a highly specific and prescriptive industry body type, versus catharsis for women forced to do certain forms of coercively humiliating labor regardless of the genre. Reduced to blind pastiche, these can perpetuate various harmful stereotypes within transgressive media as a means of submitting to formal power rather than resisting and reclaiming it through the same rituals as subverted; e.g., Morry Evan's work of a <u>servile</u> giant for the <u>counterfeit</u> of a nun; or Sveta Shubina's Bowser and Peach, below. We'll examine more iconoclastic subversions throughout the book; e.g., the aforementioned size difference as something to appreciate in different monster types, such as the Amazon/mommy dom, exhibit 51d2.)

(from the companion glossary, exhibit 3a3: Artist, left: Sveta Shubina; right: Don Bluth. The desire to separate the art from the artist and aesthetics from ideology is understandable/possible, but it remains important to remember that when emulating a given style, said style in the past was associated with a problematic belief system and its symbolism; e.g., Don Bluth's damsel-in-distress, Princess Daphne, "needing" to be rescued from the dragon by a man who is still draconian themselves [the knight and the dragon being dichotomized variations of the "walking castle"/human tank]. Shubina is clearly emulating Bluth's visual style but subverts the relationship between the princess and the dragon—i.e., like King Kong but seemingly negotiated through the topos of the power of women [to attract men] as something to toy with. This context, of course, is difficult to glean from the base drawing itself, all but requiring a bit of imagination from us to reinterpret the same old clichés. But even if these stereotypes are subverted, their own work will remain haunted by the sexism of past idols that people unironically love in the present.

The woman as "emasculator" ties to the ironic cuckolder of men, having them figuratively "by the balls": "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." This historically unenviable position becomes canonically enviable among women forced to compete for limited husbands with wealth, being judged by men as "gold diggers" and judged by other women jealously fighting over the same heteronormative prize. Conventionally pretty women become viewed through various double standards: the treacherous beauty as a user of everyone around her to get what she wants; i.e., sex as a weapon. While the narrative reduces the woman to a singular role and personality type, it's one where their intelligence is treated like a concealed weapon behind their sexuality as front-and-center. They're forced into uncomfortable clothes and pitted against other women wearing the same princess-style uniform; i.e., the historical-material reality of women competing for the same bloodline: to be the king's prized broodmare.

This includes Bowser in BDSM circles, [a prime candidate for the "daddy dom" or queer "bear" stereotype](#) [artist, above: Taran Fiddler]. The paradox of the spiked collar is canonized as the master's sigil that simultaneously is an anti-predation device for a large, powerful pet in iconoclastic circles.)

sex work

Any work centered around sexuality and gender roles, including art*work*. More commonly thought of as "prostitution," patriarchal sexism under Capitalism extends sex work to the broader division of sexualized labor within a colonial gender binary: men's work versus women's work. While the former focuses on war, violence and promotion through socio-material dominance, the latter involves submissive, traditionalized modes of sexual-reproductive labor towards a male authority figure—often a boss, parent or husband. So, while many sex workers perform strictly eroticized acts in this manner, many more are secretarial or marital in nature, performed inside traditional sites of women's work like kitchens, bedrooms, or laundromats, but also banks or hospitals. In the creative world, sexist employers compel female creators (musicians, models, illustrators and writers, etc) to promote prescriptive notions of coercive sexuality and gender tied to heteronormative beauty standards, fashion and music. Regardless of the work, sex-positive workers will resist sex coercion through their own labor.

sex positivity

Sexual/asexual expression that enables individual self-expression (thus self-empowerment) by relatively ethical means—the right to do sex work or partake in sexual activity *if one so desires*. In other words, it is a *positive freedom*; i.e., freedom *for* people to do what they want, specifically "the possession of the power and resources (material conditions) to act in the context of the structural limitations of the broader society which impacts a person's ability to act." Apart from being morally good and materially beneficial, sex positivity empowers marginalized communities (who, amongst other things, are generally exploited for sex as a form of labor); it does so by arguing for mutual consent, descriptive sexuality and cultural appreciation using historically regulated language: bodies and biology, gender identity/performance and (a)sexual orientation.

sex coercion

Sexist, heteronormative argumentation, work and artistry that compels and upholds sexual and gendered norms by abolishing others through various unethical means. This includes corporations downplaying their harmful actions as benign, or fascists framing their openly harmful actions as justified. This freedom to act is a *negative freedom*; i.e., freedom *from* external restraint on one's actions. It is generally repressive towards marginalized communities, the elite exploiting them on a material level while also denying them their basic human rights.

Small idiosyncrasy in terms of my writing: When using "sex positivity" or "sex coercion" (nouns) as adjectives, they will be hyphenated; e.g., "The sex-positive fog crept in on little sex-coercive feet." This is completely arbitrary but my aim is to be consistent. —Perse
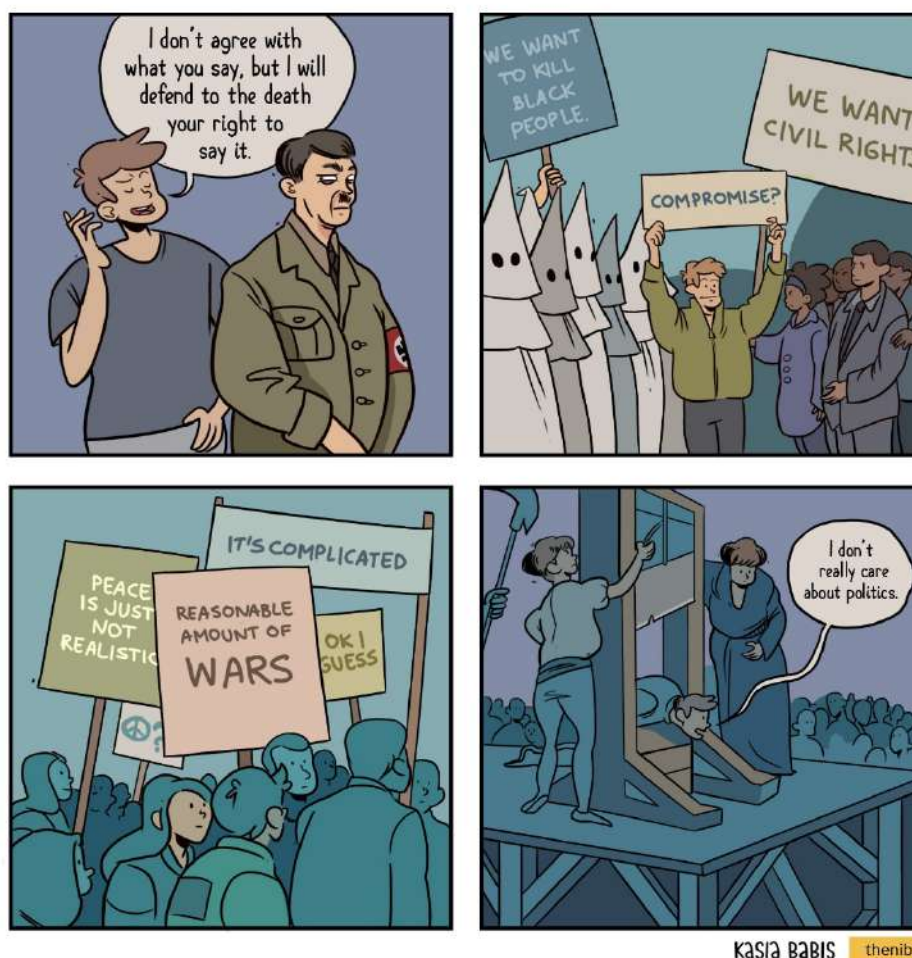
basic/civil human rights

The Communist idea that all human/animal workers deserve fair and equal treatment, which nation-states and corporations historically do not give (they are bourgeois and exploit workers). In Marxist terms, these rights are administered through Communism not according to profit, but "From each according to [their] ability, to each according to [their] needs." According to LeiLani Dowell at the Worker's World Forum in 2012, this existence is planned and achieved through the development phase, aka Socialism: "...to each according to their *work*."

ethics, ethical, ethicality

This book treats *universal ethicality* not as canonical societal norms (what is prescriptively "correct" or "morally right" according to canon), but that humans, animals and the environment have basic, unalienable rights. The universality of these rights is what is correct. Anyone's hypothetical ability to systemically "question" or undermine these rights—including the bourgeoisie—is fundamentally incorrect/unethical (what moderates call "compromise").

(artist: Kasia Babis)

-phobia/-philia

In Gothic-Communist terms, a *phobia* isn't raw, animal fear—e.g., fear of death or the unknown—but an actionable, social-sexual stigma, bias or taboo assigned to a particular out-group or historical-material victim under the

status quo/inside the state of exception: xenophobia, pedophilia, necrophilia, etc. This extends to various moral panics—e.g., Satanic panic, Red Scares, or the fascist revenge phobia of the backstabbing Jew, etc. Phobias are canonically fetishized. Philias are often deliberate/accidental misnomers insofar as abuse euphemisms are concerned (again, necrophilia, pedophilia, zoophilia); i.e., used to describe acts of abuse wherein the abuser is acting on a sexual attraction or otherwise abusive compulsion but is acting it out on a party that cannot actually consent (the dead, children, or animals; slaves, wives and other humans legally regarded as property in some shape or form).

purity arguments

A type of reactionary, fascist argumentation tied to manufactured scarcity, consent and conflict as radicalized during moral panics under police states/ethnostates. Think "boundaries for me, not for thee," but attached to limited-time waivers for those who best fit whatever soldiers those in fascist seats of power are looking for (with Himmler anything but "Nordic"). This tends to historically-materially manifest in racial-purity pseudoscience and aggressive recruitment tactics, defending the "purity" of a nation (and its children and women) through racialized supermen, generally with the descriptor "ethnic" attached to them—e.g., ethnic Germans (in Nazi Germany) or Jews (in Israel).

In short, my exhibits and general writing/illustrations concern sexualized media, sex positivity vs sex coercion according to basic human rights (and animal rights/environmental health) according to various xenophobia/xenophilia (whose distinctions—of monster-slaying and monster-fucking—I'll expand on more during the thesis volume) and purity arguments. All are generally relayed through roleplay during kink, fetish and demon BDSM theatre and power/death aesthetics, and while there's room to communicate trauma of all sorts, I have my own comfort levels in terms of what I'll invigilate, exhibit-wise.

What I Won't Exhibit

But my grief was unavailing. My Infant was no more; nor could all my sighs impart to its little tender frame the breath of a moment. I rent my winding-sheet, and wrapped in it my lovely Child. I placed it on my bosom, its soft arm folded round my neck, and its pale cold cheek resting upon mine. Thus did its lifeless limbs repose, while I covered it with kisses, talked to it, wept, and moaned over it without remission, day or night. […]

Sometimes I felt the bloated Toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom: Sometimes the quick cold Lizard rouzed me leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair: Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my Infant. At such times I shrieked with terror and disgust, and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a Woman's weakness ([source](#)).

—Agnes de Medina, <u>The Monk</u>

Lewis' camp is violent in the tradition of the Elizabethan/Jacobean theater (e.g., *Titus Andronicus*, c. 1594; and *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1614). As such, he had a thing for the abject, the grotesque as hyperbolic and necromantic—dragged up and carted about in a thoroughly campy danse macabre. I'm not partial to combining sex and abject gore, and its exclusion from *Sex Positivity* doesn't mean it *can't* be sex-positive[11]; it's just "not my bag." I'd like to quickly explain why.

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[11] Consider the postcolonial critique of colonized peoples' being openly raped onscreen during Jennifer Kent's hard-boiled historical drama, *The Nightengale* (2019). The film unflinchingly explores the intersectional complexities of class, race and gender during Australia's colonization by the British empire; i.e., of the Irish indentured servant and Indigenous slave of color by white Englishmen. It's not meant to be entertainment and that's the point. It also doesn't celebrate the rape of the heroine or the various other people who are raped and/or murdered by the villain as an extension of the white, European (Cartesian) status quo. Despite their brutal nature, these frank depictions of rape aren't exploitative, but expressed through a historical drama meant to educate us about the generational trauma that has been whitewashed in recent years; thus, they are abjectly violent and harmful, but patently designed to be sex-positive by expressing the sex-coercive nature of the abusers towards the abused.

Everyone has limits when it comes to kink, BDSM and the Gothic[12]. What I explore in this book is informed by my own kinkster's/artist's bias—my artistic **hard limits** regarding **hard kink** (scat, gore, vore, loli, actual rape) intersecting with my gender identity, orientation (demi-pan, polyamorous) and chosen kinks, but also my Gothic writings about these things. So, while I *could* easily write an entire book about "male humor" or literal shit, extreme torture porn and "Male Gothic" abjection, hard kink is not something I prefer to explore in my own sex work, artwork or writing (except for consent-non-consent, which we'll cover a fair bit). Likewise, while I am a "gore hound" when it comes to horror movies (I once interviewed Vancouver FX for their effects work in "Alien Ore," 2019, for example), I don't enjoy exhibiting those things as abjected, then fetishized by capital—e.g., acts of unambiguous rape, but also intensely private things put on display like female bathroom antics as a means of publicly degrading the subject as an unironic object of total humiliation, or demonizing literal human excrement/bodily waste.

Art is shared negotiation, and all the content in this book has either been negotiated or is Fair Use. As a whole, *Sex Positivity* doesn't curate itself to please everyone; it exhibits sex positivity by blurring the lines between porn and art, asexuality and sexuality, pain and other pleasurable responses, trauma and catharsis, lover and associate, etc. Couples and friends can make art. Enemies can, too (friendly and unfriendly). Sometimes I've slept and played with models, but also have friends-with-benefits and platonic friends (my best friend, Ginger, is strictly platonic though we're very open with each other). I engage with all of these things to reflect on praxial synthesis: life drawing and modeling, performance art, homemade porn, cosplay, makeup tutorials, asexual exhibitions of nudism, etc). All this being said, there is no hardcore porn of me in this book (though I generally play with my muses and friends in some shape or form; *that* context is for you to infer through my writing about certain exhibits).

This book constitutes the cathartic exploration of trauma through Gothic Communism; i.e., through iconoclastic, pornographic art made by workers in exhibitionistic-voyeuristic collaboration: exhibits that feature and highlight the context of negotiation, for the monstrous-poetic expression of our rights and pedagogy of the oppressed[13] (this book features a small number images to critique data theft under the AI boom, but otherwise consists entirely of artwork made by actual humans, not generated by unthinking machines). Even so, while I feel

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[12] The Gothic mode/imagination. For our purposes, the making of monsters, though I will unpack other definitions for context in the symposium: "the 'Gothic' [is] a common point of contention as something that historically remains difficult to define that nevertheless is plastered over everything and used off-hand for centuries according to aesthetics whose ownership is equally imperiled among different media types."

[13] Radical empathy. Coined by Paulo Freire in his 1968 book of the same name, the text is a warning to closeted (and active) moderates to stop talking down to people who know their own trauma far better than moderates do.

thoroughly uncomfortable exhibiting canonical art as a source, endorsement or perpetuation of unnegotiated trauma,

- animal exploitation or abuse (my stepfather forced me to watch as he killed our pet rabbits in front of my brothers and I, then cooked and ate them) but also frank depictions of animal butchery under Capitalism (e.g., *Our Daily Bread*, 2005, and its unflinching examination of an ordinary abattoir)
- abuse, exploitation and fetishization of children and/or persons with physical or mental disabilities
- unironic torture porn in general (e.g., *A Serbian Film*, 2010; *Martyrs*, 2008; *Funny Games*, 1997; *Kidnapped*, 2010)
- necrophilia exploitation films (e.g., *Nekromantik*, 1988)
- the grotesque; e.g., the "geek show" gross-out exhibit from William Lindsay Gresham's 1946 novel, *Nightmare Alley*, or Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1989)

I *do* discuss things like chattel/canonical rape, public shame/self-hatred, murder and unironic psychosexual violence (meaning "battle sex," or warring notions of sex in terms of theatrical codifiers for a belief system, but also coded instructions executed by arbiters of an unironic and ironic nature: cops and victims)

psychosexuality ("battle sex")

The adjacent placement of pleasurable pain and other euphoric sensations next to unironic harm; i.e., rape fantasy or theatre. Just as canon and camp exist in the same shadow zone, performative irony and its absence are equally liminal using the same shared aesthetics of power and resistance, death and rape, heroic (monstrous) violence: the colors of stigma, vice, power and sin. Canonical psychosexuality conflates pleasure with genuine harm, including bigoted stereotypes that further this pathology. These result in widespread misconceptions about healthy BDSM as a result of sex-coercive BDSM (through unironic "demon BDSM" examples, including criminal hauntology news cycles or "true crime" in other mediums besides television), and genuine pluralities that seek out dangerous sex (hard kink) due to confused pleasure responses resulting from extreme prey mechanisms/posttraumatic stress disorder that compel victims to unironically spifflicate; i.e., "to be self-destroyed or disposed of by violence" in an unironic sense. As something to unironically or ironically seek out on and offstage, abuse manifests differently per person relative to congenital and environmental factors which are often accident-of-birth. But general psychosexuality manifests through the Destroyer persona and their utterly devastated victim as part of the same social-sexual equation; i.e., a cultural

pathology or ironic, informed interrogation regarding the proliferation of this extremism in normalized, canonical depictions of heroic sexuality as embattled: as sex-coercive, hence unironically violent and rapacious through warring factions thereof (and against camp in the larger meta conversation).

in writing throughout the book; and there's certainly a place for all of these things in iconoclastic art (trauma needs to be communicated in as many ways as it can); i.e., the digging up of dead things when we feel—in the classic Gothic sense— "buried alive" according to the enforced relationship between sexuality and gender as Gothicized in canonical works:

live burial

The Gothic master-trope, live burial—as marked by Eve Segewick in her introduction to *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986)—is expressed in the language of live burial as an endless metaphor for the buried libido within concentric structures as something to punish "digging into" (which includes investigating the false family's incestuous/abjectly monstrous bloodline; source). To move beyond psychoanalytical models and into Marxist territories, I would describe live burial as incentivized by power structures in ways that threaten abuse (often death, incarceration or rape) to those who go looking into hereditary and dynastic power structures, especially their psychosexual abuse and worker exploitation: the fate of the horny detective, but also the *whistleblower*.

This poetic disinterment and its paradoxical examination of ourselves as abjectly undead *is* critically valid; it's just not the kind of necromancy I care to communicate through, first and foremost. As the kids say, it "gives me the yuck."

For example, porn under Capitalism becomes synonymized with gore and other taboo displays as looked at a particular way—*clandestinely* or otherwise in trashy, "forbidden" stories that communicate through vibes, raw pastiche, recycled conventions, and aesthetics first and foremost. Parody is common, but optional (especially "perceptive" parody, which goes against the profit motive). As such, I thoroughly recognize several key foils, including the fact that a) non-painful pleasure and harmful/non-harmful pain elide in classic Gothic aesthetics[14] and fiction, but also *apparel* as a core part of these stories; and b) often rely on humiliation kinks that cheerfully play with dead things in a *memento mori*, "happy Gothic[15]" approach to "dead body positivity"—i.e., of the Tim-Burton *Corpse Bride* (2006) sort (to be frank, I prefer

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[14] E.g., nipple piercings, which often appear in the shape of spikes—as "phallic," but also as anti-*predation* devices (see, below); they work within human physiology as something to fetishize at various erogenous points that explore "forbidden" sites (and means) of pleasure; i.e., the *pierced* female nipple or clitoris as a visually intense and physically playful means of pleasurable pain that *isn't* automatically linked to biological reproduction, while supplying the viewer, player and owner with liminal cosmetics of death and exquisite "torture": the woman-in-black's heart-adorned fetish gear commonly made from leather and lace (the classic damsel/demon or virgin/whore binary).
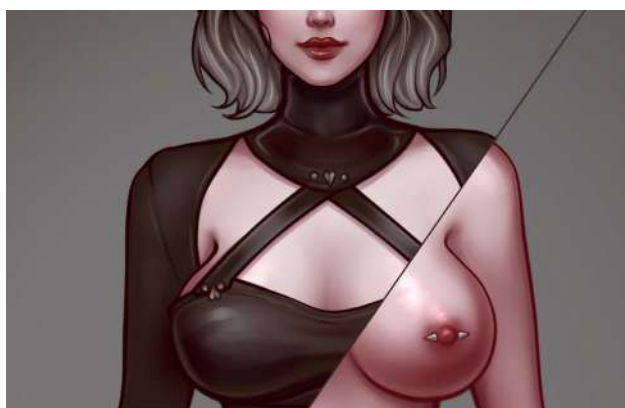
(artist: Honey Lavender)

[15] The term "happy Gothic" has been lifted straight from Catherine Spooner's *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic* (2017).

the less-gory-and-more-moody gloomth of the Mancunian postpunks, or Edward Smith's The Cure), but also more "strict" BDSM: "marathon sadism," electrocution, knife play and hard-choking[16] or simulated drowning exercises, etc. These *can* be transgressively sex-positive as a means of psychosexual catharsis—especially when dealing with regressive trauma or confused pleasure and pain responses; i.e., seeking pain for its own sake, or having death fantasies (towards oneself or others in a gradient of unironic and ironic forms) that launch a knee-jerk (so to speak) orgasmic response/*jouissance*[17] that stems from surviving hardcore sexual abuse (and emotional/physical abuse, or intersections of all three).

Yet, despite their validity as provably cathartic within the Gothic mode, abject sexuality and strict BDSM still aren't "my bag" in terms of what I like to study or explore; that is, despite having performed sadistic exercises on an ex-partner by request, said person also traumatized me, making future requests of performing "strict" pain on new partners a potentially unpleasant task. Not my thing. Sex and full-on gore? I'll pass. But sleep sex (exhibit 11b2), societal collapse/Gothic castles (e.g., the danger disco, exhibit 15b1), Numinous consent-non-consent (exhibit 39a2), voyeurism (watching consenting couples fuck [exhibit 101c2] or having others consent to watch *me* fuck) and graveyard sentiment (exhibit 37b)? Hell yeah, sign me up (I hesitate to quote Coleridge because he's a racist prude, but he was absolutely on the money with this snippet from "General Character of the Gothic Literature and Art" [1818]: "…the Gothic art is sublime. On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left, is, 'that I am nothing!'")!

Porn under Capitalism is always a liminal proposition, one where canon conflates gore, rape, and general harm with supposed acts of love (e.g., *Squid Game*'s gratuitous 2021 violence illustrating a generalized violation of human rights through misdirection and pornographic force presented as a "cute" game). As the title might suggest, then, *Sex Positivity* is largely about sex positivity as something

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[16] *These kinks are classified as "hard" for a reason: They're potentially dangerous and require not just experience but expertise, meaning if you don't know what you're doing when performing them, you could easily harm or even kill someone. For example, choking is fine when a professional sadist is working with someone they trust, while both parties know the ropes and have safe words (the traffic light system is a safe bet). But experience is the teacher of fools and informed consent requires just that—for people to be informed correctly. The problem is, many people learn from entertainment, especially regarding BDSM as canonically harmful. So while Gothic media can potentially yield critical power within discourse about systemic abuse, it won't actually teach you proper choke technique in terms of giving or receiving erotic asphyxiation (any more than watching James Bond will show you correct espionage). Never try it by yourself and always have someone who won't harm you by accident (or on purpose). Just ask David Carradine or Richard Belzer!*

[17] E.g., *frisson*, aka "the skin orgasm" (often felt during so-called Numinous, or "religious" experiences).

to replace canonical forms of abuse with; i.e., *liminal* expressions of sex and trauma that lean towards, and help lead survivors away from, the status quo using cathartic monster poetics and sex-positive "demon BDSM," *not* Radcliffe's demon lover (more on them, in the thesis statement and Volume Two)!

Whether sex-positive or not, monsters are liminal, but their iconoclastic reclamation coincides with ironic rape fantasies and complicated symbols of recovery (fetishes) that reverse-abject state-sanctioned, social-sexual violence through transformative, even pornographic Gothic embellishment. Abject sexuality and exploitation exist squarely outside my invigilator and creator comfort zones, hence won't be featured in this book. That being said, I *will* have plenty of monsters that approach these subjects comfortably for me; i.e., to a *healing* degree, not a "geek show" insofar as the exhibiting and voyeurism of peril are concerned. To that, camp and shlock allow for "rape" to exist in quotes using fetish aesthetics—often with a fair amount of Gothic nostalgia and expertise. Weird nerds tend to know their stuff, and can push into abject spaces in ways that still account for the boundaries of others:

(exhibit -1a: Artist: Mercedes the Muse. They aren't just a stone-cold fox; they're an incredibly passionate and knowledgeable filmmaker and performer when it comes to schlock and camp! Both genres are equally worthy of study and consideration as things to recreate and learn from.)

Of course, I *am* discussing the Gothic mode in a sex-positive light; there are some liminal/grey-area exceptions I'll need to make, exhibit-wise. For example, I repeatedly discuss Mercedes's awesomely schlocky creations (and other campy monster artists reclaiming heteronormative stigmas), featuring her "tromette" performances in our book's first exhibit, as well as exhibits 67 and 78, among

others; despite having *some* gross-out qualities, her content is something I'm comfortable recreating in my own work/exhibiting in this book with her permission (she's also incredibly sex-positive, which makes working with her a snap).

So while this book displays and analyzes "vanilla" porn (exhibits 32a or 32b), it tries quite hard to examine dozens of cases of sex-positive *monster* porn (too many to easily list, but Mercede's previous exhibit counts, as does exhibit 1a1a1h3a2). I also exhibit several contentious subjects: one, several drawings of naked, pre-pubescent children/teenagers from Robie Harris and Michael Emberley's 1994 sex-education book for children ten-and-up, *It's Perfectly Normal* (exhibits 55 and 90a); two, the problematic *moe* art style (meaning either a child-like appearance, or sexualized children/teenagers in non-erotic media) featured in neoliberal, American-aligned media like *Dragon Ball* and *Street Fighter 6* (1986 and 2023, exhibit 104b) but also canonical porn (exhibit 104c)—albeit as something to be wary of; three, *ahegao* or "rape face," which is also examined in the same section, in exhibit 104d towards the end of the book; and four, one example of straight-up murder and torture performed by the Male Gaze of an evil superman called Homelander (exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a1) and several examples where unironic rape scenes are discussed, but not shown. Excluding the Homelander collage, unironic rape and violence aren't openly displayed in this book's imagery (and even then, it's featured to make a point about Man Box culture).

This book has over 250 collages, some of which include liminal, complicated examples of sexualized media that ultimately have something to salvage or transmute away from canonical, sex-coercive forms mid-resistance; e.g., ironic psychosexuality (exhibit 0a1b2b) and catharsis (exhibit 0a1b2a1). For our book's second exhibit (exhibit -1b), here's an example to give you an idea of what you should largely *not* expect moving forward:

- abject, gross-out gore—either as an exploitative dissection of the human form, or as eroticized, psychosexual variants (e.g., Phedon Papamichael's excellent, but hard-to-watch exploitation film, *Inside* [2008]—a movie about a Gothic impostor forcing her husband's killer to have a C-section during an utterly gross scene which makes *Alien*'s "birth scene" look positively ordinary by comparison).
- any bathroom hijinks and overt, aggressive rape scenarios involving animals, disabled people, dead bodies, or "non-consenting" persons (excepting *moe* and *ahegao* and some appreciative rape scenarios; i.e., consent-non-consent).

(exhibit -1b: Various scenes of gore from classic horror movies, as well as abject merchandise and gory props, aka memento mori: "remember that you [have to] die." Most are shots of the 2018 Halloween [from "The Horrors of Halloween"] or screencaps from Alien, 1979, middle strip; however, the far-mid-left shot of Reagan from The Exorcist, 1973, is from EllimacsSFX. Such Gothic craftsmanship tends to form a tradition of recreating death and disgusting things, but also female vulnerability through the Male Gaze—with the bathroom not simply being a place of abject activities like taking a shit, but also a place of profound vulnerability where one's pants/panties are literally down: easy pickings/the sitting duck. These grotesque exhibits have been canonized by male Pygmalions like Stanley Kubrick and Alfred Hitchcock, who both made their lengthy careers by needlessly terrifying/torturing women—so much so that after 180+ takes on The Shining [1981] Shelley Duval became a decades-long recluse, only returning to break the silence in the 2020s[18] [the same "tortured saint" effect happened to Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio being tortured on the set of The Abyss[19], 1989; but also

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[18] Cody Hamman's "*The Forest Hills* Star, Shelley Duvall, Sits Down for an Interview with Grimm Life Collective" (2023).

[19] Brandi Yetzer's "Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio Never Worked With James Cameron Again After Filming a Torturous Scene" (2022).

Maria Falconetti [being forced to kneel for hours on stone during The Passion of Joan of Arc](https://...)[20], 1928; and taken to awful diegetic extremes with the aforementioned Martyrs]. These Pygmalions also tended to take the mastery of suspense away from earlier female examples—e.g., suspense girl-wizard, Ann Radcliffe, who admittedly had her own problems—but also any notion of informed consent regarding their own workers' basic human rights.)

There are plenty of specialized terms in here that I will explain more during the essential keywords paratext, and many more still during the thesis volume (all are defined in the full keyword glossary per volume) but for a quick, handy idea about Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism, refer to the next two sections: "The Six Gothic-Marxist Tenets and Four Main Gothic Theories" and "About the Logo."

(artist: Casper Clock)

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[20] Chadwick Jenkins' "Suffering the Inscrutable: The Ethics of the Face in Dreyer's 'The Passion of Joan of Arc'" (2018).

A Note on Canonical Essentialism

…latitude, like genetics and ecology, is not destiny. We echo earlier concerns about the perils of single factor explanations and suggest that chance, and perhaps factors that promoted colonial empires, need to be more seriously considered as potentially important drivers of human inequality ([source](#)).

> —Angela M. Chira, <u>et al</u>, *"Geography Is Not Destiny: A quantitative Test of Diamond's Axis of Orientation Hypothesis" (2024)*

Watching Rebecca Watson first discuss the widespread critical backlash received by Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997) after its debut, [then offer up various counter studies since the book's publication](#) ("Study: Guns, Germs, and Steel was Wrong," 2024), I thought of my writings on Capitalism and canon; i.e., as things to oppose through iconoclastic art when developing Gothic Communism, mid-opposition. For the next four pages, I want to quickly mention and reflect on the essentializing nature of canon within Capitalist Realism—both why the latter requires the former to succeed, but also how it manifests in ways we should routinely keep in mind.

(artist: [Alexey Lastochkin](#))

Per my thesis statement, Capitalism sexualizes everything in a heteronormative (vertically arranged, sexually dimorphic) scheme; *canon* achieves heteronormativity by essentializing biology, ecology and geography (economics, etc) in equal measure in order to achieve and maintain a *Cartesian* outcome:

domination of the natural world (and workers) to serve profit. This happens through the routine gendering of Nature vs Society (*vis-à-vis* Raj Patel and Jason Moore) by Cartesian thinkers; i.e., in ways that men like Francis Bacon and René Descartes started, but continue to remain relevant under Capitalist Realism as a more recent affair that neither patriarch lived to see: a raping of nature as Promethean, meaning in this case "primed for abuse, *ad nauseum*." Nature is Medusa; Medusa must obey *and* die (over and over).
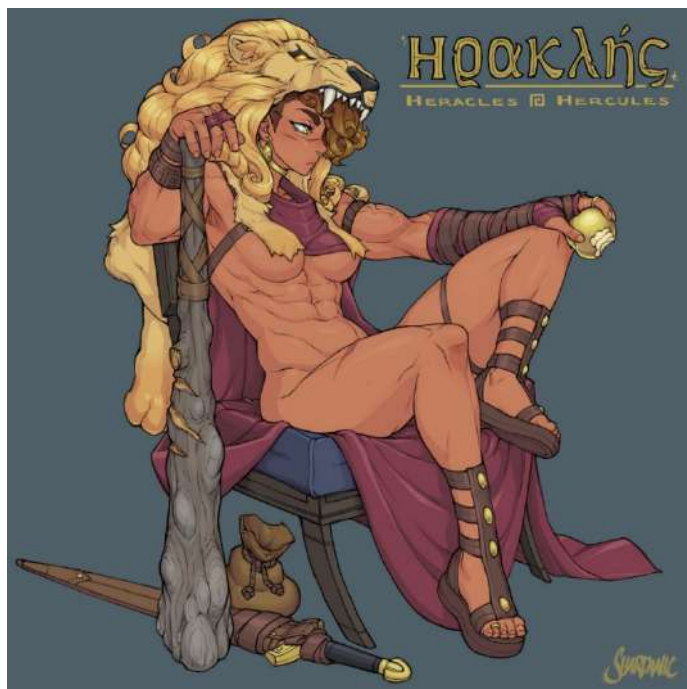

(artist: [Shardanic](#))

In turn, said Realism yields neoliberal fantasies (often videogames) that present nature as good or evil in essential terms, and by extension, gendered ones that are biologically and ecologically divided along problematic moral categories whose territory is geared towards a settler-colonial outcome: the mapping and execution of conquest, thus genocide through us versus them, reliably framing "us" as *human* and "them" as *inhuman* through various black-and-white binaries that serve capital, thus empire (or humanizing inhuman groups—e.g., white cis-het women [above]—to recruit them harmfully into a centrist story that *prolongs* settler-colonial conflict; i.e., for profit's sake, instead of permanently ceasing hostilities by actually addressing the socio-material conditions that historically lead to them: pro-state workers triangulating through the equality of convenience ["boundaries for me, not for thee"] to unironically punch down in *defense* of the state *against* intersectional solidarity and workers, animals and the environment at large).

It bears repeating that said execution of conquest involves a map of a location, the latter filled with enemies (e.g., orcs) who must be cleared by human agents or token enforcers, doing so step-by-step, person-by-person, room-by-room to effectively "sweep" the entire area of perceived hostilities. Doing so is meant achieve one cycle of capital in miniature; i.e., moving money through nature to achieve profit as expressed concentrically on *all* registers. Likewise, the basic categories of land, sexual biology and ecology manifest in a variety of refrains canonizing Cartesian dualism (and its harmful divisions) through Capitalist Realism. My book pointedly highlights two: Tolkien's and Cameron's.
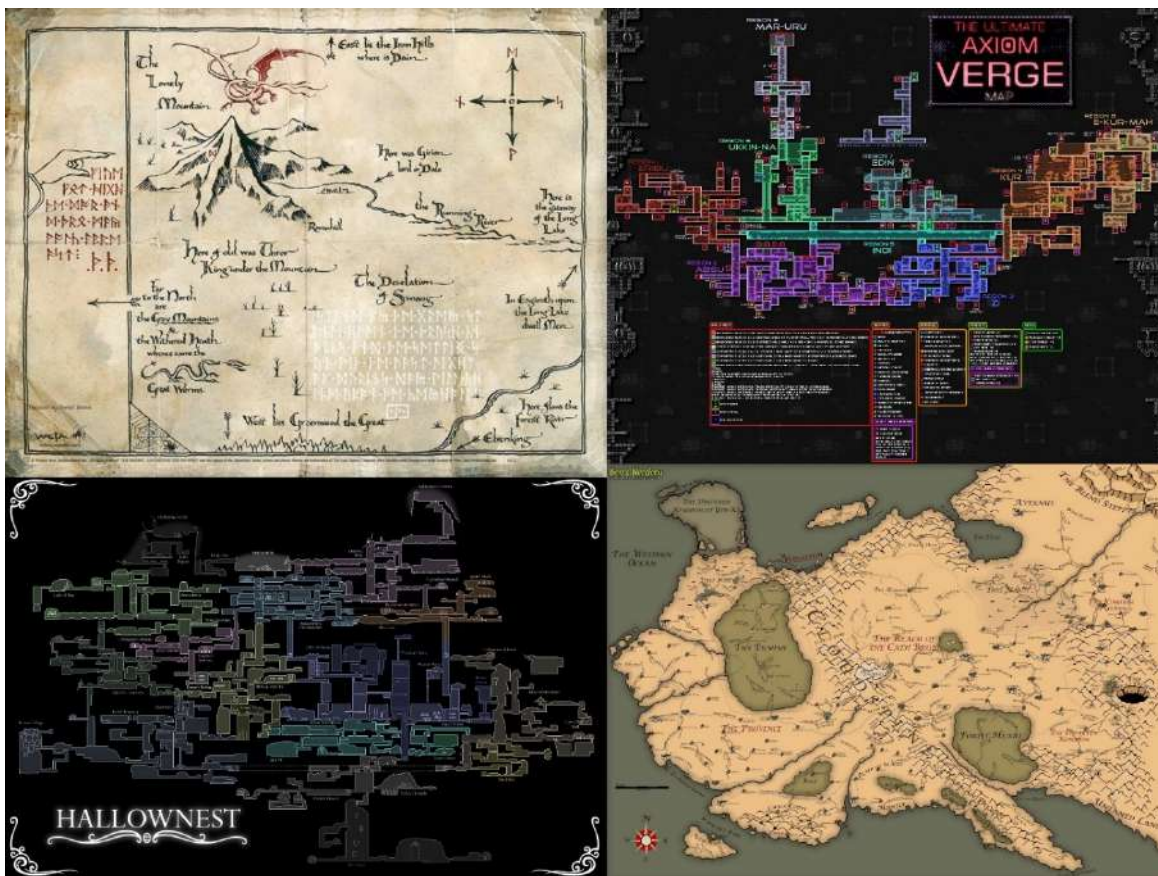
(the map exhibit [1a1a1h2a1] from Volume Zero: "…Videogames are war simulators; in them, maps are built not merely to be charted and explored, but conquered through war simulations. The land is an endless site of conquest, war, rape and profit *carefully dressed up as "treasure," "liberation" and "adventure," but in truth, brutalizing nature during endless wars of extermination borrowed from the historical* and imaginary *past as presently intertwined:*

- *top-left: Tolkien's refrain, "Thror's Map" from* The Hobbit, *1937*
  —*source:* Weta Workshop
- *top-right: Thomas Happ's map of Sudra from* Axiom Verge, *2015*
  —*source:* magicofgames
- *bottom-left: Team Cherry's map of Hallownest, from* Hollow Knight *2017*
  —*source:* tuppkam1
- *bottom-right: Bungie's map of the West from* Myth: the Fallen Lords, *1997*
  —*source:* Ben's Nerdery

[…] Under Capitalist Realism, Hell is a place that always appears on Earth [or an Earth-like double]—a black fortress threatening state hegemony during the inevitable decay of a colonial body. Its widening state of exception must then be entered by the hero during the liminal hauntology of war as a repeatable, monomythic excursion…)

Tolkien's refrain gentrifies war in a fantasy-themed cartography (the map of conquest in novels, movies and games, video or otherwise), which neatly and consistently divide land and occupant between good and bad, human and orc (or spider, demon, ghost, etc). Cameron's refrain, the shooter and the Metroidvania, was first inspired by Robert Heinlein before likewise being injected into popular media as conducting *military optimism*[21] abroad: insectoid places to go and bomb/shoot into oblivion. Doing so happens while simultaneously popularizing it back home through military urbanism and urban warfare inside the Gothic castle (versus the land *around* the castle, as Tolkien tends to do; i.e., the *open* battlefield). There is always an enemy of nature to kill and destroy in ways that fetishize the larger alienating process, turning "empowerment" into a Promethean Quest through a Faustian bargain. It becomes Romanticized, nostaglic, endlessly remediated (a Cycle of Kings, ruins, graveyards). By extension, war is dimorphically sexualized as us-versus-them, the hunt (and its associate tensions, reliefs and anxieties) celebrated with a lucrative fakery to maintain the lie of Western sovereignty through the ghost of the counterfeit's usual process of abjection. The West, including its fantasies, remain haunted during the liminal hauntology of war as a routine appearance within a structure; e.g., Dracula's castle.

On this generic spectrum and its assorted cartographic architecture, one thing remains constant between the two refrains (and their imitators and offshoots): nature is monstrous-feminine, queer, non-white and non-Christian, etc. This includes its land and various human and non-human occupants being deliberately prepared for endless invasions and harvests by Capitalism's architects and usual benefactors: white cis-het men (and token agents) of various monomythic positions. There is a good land and a bad, a good people and a bad, a good nature and a bad, and the centrist nature of the larger structure sanctions and essentializes canonical violence by the good against the bad; i.e., reliably justifying the former invading and brutalizing the latter to move money through nature by *cheapening* nature. Nature becomes Hell by design, amounting to a documentation process required by Capitalism to function in essential perpetuity.

In short, nature becomes canon, a mandate for how to think, thus behave regarding the usual benefactors and victims within a settler colony and the state of exception found in or between its surrounding areas of influence. There must

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[21] From Persephone van der Waard's "The Promethean Quest and James Cameron's Military Optimism in *Metroid*," (2021):

> Just as *Alien* evolved into *Aliens*, the *Metroid* franchise has become increasingly triumphant over time. Abjuring the Promethean myth, it instead offers military optimism—the idea that seemingly unstoppable enemies can be defeated with patience and, more importantly, military resources; the more victories, the more resources there are to use (even if these are little more than looted plunder in the grand scheme).
>
> Samus repeatedly embarks on the Promethean Quest. Over time, this quest has become less cautionary and more professional. The Promethean past isn't something to fear or avoid; it's something to shoot. This attitude removes the quest's cautionary elements, especially where the military is concerned. This creates a franchise much more fixated on Samus as a neutral figure with military ties. Rather than fight them, she does their bidding and is celebrated for it ([source](#)).

always be a good and bad land, but also good and bad occupants according to biology as essential (and connected to gender) in terms of a heteronormative ordering of workers within nature as something to control, thus dominate; i.e., there are white cis-het men and anything else is alien to varying degrees; e.g., white women are alien, but *not* as alien as trans people *provided* they behave within the structure. "Rocking the boat" through intersectional solidarity against capital invites collective (and selective) punishment through reactive abuse to keep these dichotomies not only installed, but constantly enforced through physical, mental and/or socio-ideological forms of menticidal violence; i.e., dogma insofar as canonical *essentialism* aids and abets in Capitalist Realism concealing capital functioning as it always does. As something to criminalize and dominate, nature is always alien, fetishized, incorrect, criminal, outside, black, etc…

(artist: [Harmony Corrupted](#))

The proof is in the pudding. Or rather, it appears in the "pudding" of people as expressed through commodities that—when reclaimed by active, emotionally/Gothically intelligent and conscious workers synthesizing praxis—assist in said workers' chaotic liberation (camp) as part of the natural-material world enslaved and exploited by Capitalism through routine, orderly conquest and genocide (canon); i.e., by dissolving the very boundaries, thus binaries, that trap and exploit us in home as foreign: a settler-colonial project for which we are *not* strictly welcome and for which internal and external tensions hyphenate clean divisions like inside/outside or correct/incorrect into something far more liminal, messy and grey. "There is no outside of the text," insofar as people and their interactions with each other (and the various cultural markers of coded behaviors that lead to or resist genocide) become something to acknowledge *ipso facto*. We see the *aesthetic* of torture, for instance, in calculated risk as a proletarian function; i.e., a Gothic fetish that aims to express power through its theatrical absence/disparity as an informed means of negotiating state trauma. In viewing it, we must learn to recognize the human, thus autonomous, person involved in defense of nature, of workers, of our land, sexualities, bodies, genders, etc, as constantly under attack by capital.

My friend, Harmony Corrupted, is but one example. Consider how this book is full of similar people, places and things. Seek them out, but also recognize the ones I do not have time to list. Do so to achieve class and culture war yourselves; i.e., as a cathartic sexual undertaking with non-heteronormative (thus non-Cartesian) results. We're in this together, comrades!

The Six Gothic-Marxist Tenets and Four Main Gothic Theories

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

Gothic Communism has six Gothic-Marxist tenets (the Six Rs) and four main Gothic theories (the Four Gs). They operate in conjunction, and their collective idea is (to borrow from/rephrase our abstract)

> to make Marxism a little cooler, sexier and fun than Marx ever could through the Wisdom of the Ancients (a cultural understanding of the imaginary past) as a "living document"; i.e., to make it "succulent" by "living deliciously" as an act of repeated reflection that challenges heteronormativity's dimorphic biological essentialism and bondage of gender to sex, thus leading to a class awakening at a countercultural level through iconoclastic (sex-positive), monomorphic Gothic poetics.

I've written the Gothic-Marxist tenets *to keep in mind*, not cite each and every time. In short, they provide general teaching objectives that sit between theory and application, and their interpretation and scope is meant to be fairly broad and conversational regardless of your exact approach. They are as follows:

- **Re-claim/-cultivate.** Seize Gothic art as the means of emotional (monstrous) production, tied to cultural symbols of stigma, trauma and fear that abject workers or otherwise emotionally manipulate them to surrender the means of production—their labor, their intelligence and control—unto canonical productions that normally make workers ignorant towards the means of reclaiming these things: the ability to produce, appreciate and cultivate a pro-labor, post-scarcity Gothic imagination, including theatrical implements of torture; i.e., shackles, collars, whips and chains, but also undead, demonic and/or animalized egregores in service of Gothic Communism. As part of their complex, warring praxis, minds, monsters, history and sexualities, workers must hone their own reclaimed voices—a dark poetics, pedagogy of the oppressed, splendid lies, etc—to challenge the status quo (and its war and rape cultures) by attaining structural catharsis during oppositional praxis, thus limit the systemic, generational harm committed by capitalist structures (abuse prevention/risk reduction behaviors).

- **Re-unite/-discover/-turn.** Reunite people with their alienated, alienizing bodies, language, labor, sexualities, genders, trauma, pasts and emotions in sex-positive, re-humanizing (xenophilic) ways; an active attempt to detect and marry oneself to what was lost at the emotional, Gothic, linguistic and materially intelligent level: a *return* of the living dead and the creation/summoning of demons and their respective trauma and forbidden knowledge. This poetic coalition should operate as a sex-positive force that speaks out against Cartesian division, unironic xenophobia and state abuse, while advancing workers towards the development of Gothic-Communism.

- **Re-empower/-negotiate.** Grant workers control over their own sexual labor through their emotions and, by extension things (most often language, symbols or art) that stem from, and relate to, their sexual labor as historically abjected and privatizing under Capitalism; to allow them to renegotiate their boundaries in regards to their trauma through their sexual labor as their own, including their bodies and emotions as a potent form of power interrogation, *re-negotiation* and *re-exchange* amid chaotic and unequal circumstances (worker-positive BDSM and Satanic rebellion, in other words) that fight for conditional love and informed, set boundaries during social-sexual exchanges that heal from complex, generational trauma: the "good play" of conditional offers and mutually agreed-upon deals—not unconditional, coercive love compelled by pro-state abusers; i.e., "bad play" and "prison sex" within rape culture. This doesn't just apply to deals with institutions (e.g., where I had to make conditional/unconditional offers set by a [money-making] university—linked arm-in-arm with financial [money-

lending] institutions exiting as a part of the same student-exploiting business); it applies to our own lives as sexualized workers, synthesizing our principles with those we work/set boundaries with in relation to our labor, bodies, emotional bonds, etc. Setting individual and collective boundaries is important towards protecting yourself and others during activist behaviors, which automatically pose some degree of risk under capital; don't be afraid to impose your own limits to minimize risk of abuse, even if that means "losing" someone in the process. If they're holding *that* over your head, they weren't really your friend to begin with.

- **Re-open/-educate**. To expose the privatization of emotions and denial of sex-positive sex/gender education to individual workers, helping them reopen their minds and their eyes, thus see, understand and feel how private property makes people emotionally and Gothically stupid; Marx's adage, "Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it—when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc—in short, when it is used by us." This applies to *de facto* education as a means of facing systemic trauma and dismantling it through Gothic paradox and play teaching workers to be better on a grand intuitive scale.

- **Re-play.** Establish a new kind of game attitude and playfulness during development towards Communism, one that dismantles the bourgeoisie's **intended play** of manufactured *scarcity*, *consent*, and *conflict* in favor of a post-scarcity world filled with "game" workers who can learn and respond creatively to the natural and person-made problems of language and the material world with unique solutions: **emergent play**, or player-developed approaches in games (e.g., including Communist videogames like *Dwarf Fortress*, 2006) but also game-like environments (our focus is Gothic poetics and BDSM theatrics); i.e., to be willing to try negotiating for themselves through playful forms during social-sexual scenarios of all kinds; to reclaim, rediscover, and relearn, but also teach lost things using iconoclastic monsters that critique the status quo in controlled/chaotic settings; *to enjoy but not blindly enjoy, thus endorse* cheap canonical "junk food" by re-inspecting them with a readiness to critique and reinvent. As Anita Sarkeesian explains, "It's both possible, and even necessary, to simultaneously enjoy media while also being critical of its more problematic or pernicious aspects" (source: Facebook[22]). The idea in doing so is to understand, mid-enjoyment and critique, that development is *not* a zero-sum game, but as Jesper Juul puts it

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[22] Original source: The Guardian, 2015—which has since been removed (undoubtedly to appease "Gamergate" misogynists because The Guardian are moderates at heart; i.e., they don't take hard stances against capital, thus can't push back against fascists).

in his eponymous book, is "a half-real zone between the fiction and the rules" that allows for emergent, at times *transgressive* forms of good play (me) as a transformative device (source). To borrow and mutate three more ludic terms, then, the "ludic contract" is whatever the player negotiates for themselves inside the natural-material world, acting like a "spoilsport" by redefining the terms of the contact within and outside of itself[23]; i.e., as a half-real, "magic-circle" space where, as Eric Zimmerman explains, the game takes place in ways that aren't wholly separate from real life[24]—except for us, games occur along Gothic, liminal routes, wherein workers playfully articulate their natural rights in linguo-material ways between reality and fabrication that go beyond games as commodities but are nevertheless informed by them as something to rewrite; i.e., through play as a general exercise that involves a great many things: a *reached* agreement of power and play in Gothic terms, whose luck/odds are defined not through canon, but iconoclastic *poiesis* that can be expanded far beyond the restrictive, colonial binary and heteronormative ruleset of the elite's intended exploitation of workers to challenge the profit motive and all of its harmful effects in the bargain; e.g., genocide, heteronormativity and Max Box culture. The sum of these concepts in praxis could be called "ludo-Gothic BDSM[25]."

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[23] (from the glossary): The ludic contract is an agreement between the player and the game to be played; or as Chris Pratt writes in "In Praise of Spoil Sports" (2010): "the more traditional definition of the ludic contract [is] an agreement on the part of players that they will forgo some of their agency in order to experience an activity that they enjoy." Yet, inventive players like speedrunners (which Pratt calls "spoilsports") converge upon intended gameplay with unintended, emergent forms. In other words, the ludic contract is less a formal, rigid contract and more a negotiated compromise occurring between the two; i.e., where players have some sense of agency in deciding how *they* want to play the game even while adhering to its rules and, in effect, being mastered by it (see: Seth Giddings and Helen Kennedy's "Little Jesuses and *@#?-off Robots," 2008, exhibit 0a2c).

[24] (abridged, from the glossary): The magic circle is the space where a game takes place, be that a social game, a sport, a dialog or gender performance onstage, and videogames, etc. The founder of the idea, Eric Zimmerman, writes in "Jerked Around by the Magic Circle" (2012):

> The "magic circle" is not a particularly prominent phrase in *Homo Ludens*, and although Huizinga certainly advocates the idea that games can be understood as separate from everyday life, he never takes the full-blown magic circle point of view that games are ultimately separate from everything else in life or that rules are the sole fundamental unit of games. In fact, Huizinga's thesis is much more ambivalent on these issues and he actually closes his seminal book with a passionate argument against a strict separation between life and games… (source).

[25] (from the glossary, abridged): My combining of an older academic term, "ludic-Gothic" (Gothic videogames), with sex-positive BDSM theatrics as a potent means of camp. The emphasis is less about "how can videogames be Gothic" and more how the playfulness in videogames is commonly used to allow players to camp canon in and out of videogames as a form of fairly negotiated power exchange established in playful, game-like forms (which we'll unpack during the "camp map" in our thesis volume).

- **Re-produce/-lease.** To disseminate these tenets through worker-made sex-positive lessons that we leave behind; i.e., egregores, "archaeologies" and other Gothic-Communist "derelicts." As the oppressed, our pedagogy should be centered around the continued production of communal emotional intelligence as a Gothically instructional means of transforming the material world and, by extension, the socio-natural world for the better—by healing from generational trauma by interrogating its structural causes *together*.

I call these tenets the Six Rs because they constitute six things to reclaim from Capitalism through the Gothic imagination; i.e., *vis-à-vis* our own bodies and labor as things to weaponize against capital during praxial synthesis: through our creative successes, whatever they may be.

(artist: Crow)

Underpinning our six tenets are four central Gothic theories, the Four Gs (the full definitions are provided elsewhere in this volume, which you can access by clicking here):

- **abjection** (from Julia Kristeva's process of abjection, *vis-à-vis* Jerrold Hogle's "ghost of the counterfeit")

- **chronotopes**/parallel *Gothic* space (from Mikhail Bakhtin's "Gothic chronotope")

- **hauntology** (from Jacques Derrida's "spectres of Marx" and Mark Fisher's "canceled futures," *vis-à-vis* Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*):

- **cryptonymy** (from Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *vis-à-vis* Jerrold Hogle's "narrative of the crypt" and Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*)

Unlike the Gothic *mode*—which tells of legendary things (undead, demonic and/or animalized monsters or places) *with*, *as* or *within* Gothic media as things to *perform*, *create*, or *imagine/reimagine*, *wear*, *inhabit*, *occupy* or *pass through* (we'll explore all of these variants throughout the book)—Gothic *theory* explains the process behind all of this while it's going on, has gone on, will go on. Guided by these theories, the re-education of sex worker emotions achieves the Six Rs through instructed critical analysis of sexualized art, but also *praxial synthesis* of good social-sexual habits; be it their own, someone else's, or something to cultivate together, these collective sex-positive lessons are designed to teach emotional intelligence through a Gothic mode whose cultural imagination, when used in an iconoclastic sense, becomes a vulgar display of power in defiance of the state: it raises class and cultural awareness mid-struggle.

(artist: Crow)

The State: Its Key Tools; re: the Monopolies, Trifectas and Qualities of Capital

(artist: Angel Witch)

In service to the profit motive, the state requires the ability to defend itself through absolute means; i.e., us-versus-them dogma, cops-and-victims propaganda (re: copaganda), and terrorist/counterterrorist arrangements of privilege, authority and status/class flowing power towards the state. This basically happens by antagonizing nature as monstrous-feminine and putting it to work as cheaply as possible; i.e., to move money through nature, thus reify and maintain capital until the end of time. But the state accomplishes the movement known as "capital" using three basic things: the state *trifectas*, *monopolies* and *qualities of capital*.

These ideas first introduce in Volumes Zero and One, but are so ubiquitous that I feel you should have access to their basic definitions regardless of which book volume you're reading. I'll list, then define them:

- the *monopolies*: of violence, terror and morphological expression.
- the *trifectas*: manufacture, subterfuge/deception, coercion—with a neoliberal "handle": the profit motive; i.e., *infinite growth*, *efficient profit* (meaning value through exploitation, regardless if it is ethical or materially stable) and *worker/owner division* as disseminated through the three tines.
- the *qualities of capital*: heteronormative, Cartesian, and setter-colonial (refer to the glossary definitions for these terms)

If, at any point, I say "the monopolies, trifectas [and/or] qualities of capital" moving forwards, these are what I'm referring to; i.e., the control of worker bodies and the violence, terror and morphological poetics orbiting them.

Defining them, let's start with the monopolies:

- of *violence*; re: Weber's maxim, "a state holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory, meaning that violence perpetrated by other actors is illegitimate" ([source](#)).
- of *terror*; re: Asprey's paradox, from *War in the Shadows: the Guerrilla in History* (1994): "Not only can terror be employed as a weapon, but any weapon can become a weapon of terror: terror is a weapon, a weapon is terror, and no one agency monopolizes it" ([source](#)). Even so, the state will try to monopolize it. Anyone who uses violence against them is a "terrorist" and anyone who uses violence in service to state aims is either a "counterterrorist" or at least not a terrorist.
- of *morphological expression*; re: of my arguments regarding the state control of Gothic dialogs during the other two monopolies, animalizing workers in harmful predator/prey relationships (from Volume One):

    the medieval character of state violence and terror cannot be destroyed during morphological expression, only subverted or contained through linguo-material "traps" *we* put into motion during revolutionary cryptonomy as an essential means of counterterrorist liberation; i.e., by throwing the setter-colonial character of heteronormativity into dispute through a rebellious medieval, *post*colonial imaginary. Taking Hell back while doubling its colonial [forms; i.e., through] morphological[26] expression when using *animalized* Gothic aesthetics (with undead and demonic elements too, of course). To that, I want to quote a snippet from our thesis volume that will prove germane as we proceed:

        As a kind of deathly theatre mask, something else that's equally important to consider about demons and the undead (and which

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[26] I'm specifically focusing on morphological expression, here, because state forces will try to control it in relation to other variables; i.e., in monopolized opposition to workers' manifestations of monstrous bodies during countercultural dialogs that stand up for their basic human rights (and that of animals and the environment). While we obviously want to separate human biology from sexual and gender expression (and allow sex to divide from gender during said expression), it nevertheless remains tied to them during morphological expression as part of overall worker struggles; i.e., to liberate themselves from capital in morphological language that challenges the heteronormative standards normally proliferated in canonical Gothic stories.

we'll bring up throughout the entire book) is that *animals embody the canonical language of power and resistance as something to camp through demonic and undead forms;* i.e., stigma animals relayed through demonic BDSM and rituals of power expression and exchange that embody hunters and hunted, predators and prey that play out through the ongoing battles and wars of culture, of the mind, of sexuality and praxis as traumatized: marked for trauma or by trauma that parallel our green and purple doubles onscreen ([source](#)).

So when I say "animalized" *vis-à-vis* Gothic aesthetics, this is predominantly what I mean […]

As something that predictably rises during material instability and societal unrest, emotional turmoil is very much at home in the Gothic. This includes anxieties about physical bodies and their hauntological uniforms as often having a sexualized, animalistic, psychological element that overlaps with half-exposed, unburied trauma acquired generationally under state domination. This domination occurs within regressive, medievalized positions of crisis and decay that defend and uphold the status quo, but *can* be reclaimed by proletarian agents within weird-nerd culture; e.g., workers embodying knights to reclaim their killing/raping implements inside the state of exception, while simultaneously dealing with state infiltrators fighting to recapture the same devices *back* for themselves and their masters; i.e., Amazons and furries, etc, as forms of *contested* morphological expression that can assist or hamper gyno/androdiversity within Gothic poetics under state monopolies. To that, heroes are monsters, and monsters go hand-in-hand with animals being for or against their own abuse to varying degrees.

The resultant middle ground of this duality grants words like "demon," "zombie," or "animal" a double purpose for which the rest of the subchapter is divided: predator and prey. […] Domestication invokes a sense of the wild that is reclaimed by state forces to serve the profit motive, which rebellious agents must challenge and reclaim *while being animalized*. The larger struggle involving animalization constitutes an uphill battle that obscures one's vision in the same crowded sphere. Inside it, space and time become a violent circle, one where endless war over state nostalgia constitutes ongoing dialectical-material struggles to keep with, or break from, *current* historical materialisms under Capitalist Realism: state violence dressed up as dated "protection/shelter" during our aforementioned emotional turmoil (stemming from *criminogenic* conditions; i.e., manufactured

shortages, crisis and competition tied to images of the decaying
fortress and its unholy armies) [source].

Second, the trifectas (also from Volume One):

The first bourgeois trifecta is the *manufacture trifecta*:

- **Manufactured scarcity**. Not enough resources, space, sex, etc;
  cultivates a fake sense of supply/demand, but also fear of missing out
  (FOMO) through exploitative business maneuvers that, in turn,
  engender fragile, deregulated markets; e.g., games—micro
  transactions, live-service models, phone games; manufactured
  obsolescence (Hakim's "Planning Failure," 2023), hidden fees,
  privatization—i.e., pay more for less quality and/or quantity and so on.
- **Manufactured consent**. From Chomsky's
  book *Manufacturing Consent* (1988); cultivates a compliant consumer
  base, but also workforce confusion, obedience and
  ignorance. Chomsky's theory is that advertisers are beholden to their
  shareholders, aiming consumers towards a position of mass
  tolerance—tacitly accepting "negative freedom" as exclusively enjoyed
  by the elite exploiting them: "Boundaries for me, not for thee." In
  Marxist terms, this amounts to the privatization of the media (and its
  associate labor) as part of the means of production. They shape and
  maintain each other.
- **Manufactured conflict/competition**. Endless war and violence—
  e.g., the War on Drugs, the War on Terror, the Jewish Question,
  assorted moral panics, etc; cultivates apathy and cruelty through
  canonical wish fulfillment: "the satisfying of unconscious desires in
  dreams or fantasies" *with a bourgeois flavor*. To this, nation pastiche
  and other blind forms encourage us-versus-them worker division, class
  sabotage and false consciousness/mobile class dormancy
  ("somnambulism"), *not* collective labor action against the state by
  using counterterrorist media to rehumanize the state of exception.

Through the manufacture trifecta, neoliberals appropriate peril using
economically "correct" forms, socializing blame and privatizing profit,
accolades, and education as things to normalize the way that neoliberals
decide; it's about control—specifically *thought* control—through the Base as
something to leverage against workers through bourgeois propaganda: "War
and rape are common, essential parts of our world; post-scarcity (and sex-
positive monsters, BDSM, kink, etc) is a myth!" Fascists de-sublimate peril in
incorrect forms, going "mask-off" yet still running interference for the state;

i.e., in defense of the status quo until their true radical nature becomes normalized: the black knight.

Eternal crisis and cyclical decay are built into Capitalism and the nation-state model; the state is inherently unstable and leads to war and rape on a wide scale, but also politically correct/incorrect language selecting state victims for the usual sacrifices that profit demands: the grim harvest. These are dressed up through a particular kind of cryptonym: the euphemism. For the state, political language becomes synonymous with whitewashing or otherwise downplaying the usual operations of the state with inoffensive, sleep-inducing phrases; e.g., "extreme prejudice" and "military incidents" (false flag operations) as directed at the state's usual victims. The state, but also pro-state defenders and class traitors, reliably use these and other linguistic manipulation tactics (e.g., obscurantism) to routinely make war and profit from it; i.e., by raping or otherwise exploiting workers like chattel.

(artist: [Seb McKinnon](#))

As a site of tremendous cryptonymy (trauma and linguistic concealment), the Gothic castle symbolizes the function of the state doing what the state always does: lie, conceal and destroy. A swirling accretion disk of husk-like chaff orbits ominously around an awesome, concentric illusion: an illusion of an illusion, a fakery of a fakery whereupon the closer to the center one gets, the more entropic the perspective. Like a spaghetti noodle, one is stretched out (and ripped apart) by how perfidious and unstable every step is; the floor becomes eggshells, a flotilla of chronotopic trash surrounded by danger and oblivion, gravity and shadows, but also gargoyles whose exact function remains to be seen.

This presence of tremendous obscurity inside the infernal concentric pattern/narrative of the crypt's *mise-en-abyme* brings us to our second bourgeois trifecta: the *subterfuge/deception trifecta*

- **Displacement.** Conceal or dislocate the problem.
- **Disassociation.** Hide/detach from the problem.
- **Dissemination.** Spread these bourgeois practices through heteronormative canon.

through which neoliberals maintain the status quo by concealing war as a covert enterprise that has expanded exponentially since Vietnam into the 21st century's own wars and lateral media (copaganda). Whereas *that* war failed by virtue of showing American citizens too much, war has increasingly become a fog through which those in power control the narrative by outright killing journalists, but also "failing" to report where their mercenaries operate (GDF's "How the US Military Censors Your News," 2023). In other words, neoliberal illusions involve outright skullduggery and lies to keep their hegemony intact. Much like the lords of old, they rule from the shadows, but have more material power and control than those former monarchs could dream of; i.e., a mythologized existence hinted at by the displace-and-dissociate stratagem of neoliberal copaganda; e.g., *Lethal Weapon*'s 1987 "Shadow Company" reflecting on the very-real Phoenix Program and so-called "advisory" role of the CIA: "We killed everybody."

[…]

the third bourgeois trifecta—the *coercion trifecta* that results from these kinds of manufacture and subterfuge:

- **Gaslight.** A means of making abuse victims doubt the veracity of their own abuse (and their claims of abuse).
- **Gatekeep.** A tactic more generally employed by those with formal power, denying various groups gainful employment (thus actual material advantage) or working platforms that allow them to effectively communicate systemic injustices perpetrated against them.
- **Girl-boss.** Tokenism, generally through triangulation: of white, cis-het or at least cis women towards other minorities.

This trifecta is used more liberally by neoliberals (or centrists, *vis-à-vis* Autumn), as fascists tend to default to brute force. However, deception and lies—namely fear and dogma—are commonplace under fascism, as are token minorities (though these will swiftly disappear as rot sets in).
As Gothic Communists, our aim is deprivatization and degrowth—not to abolish everything outright, but move consumption habits gradually away from the neoliberal "Holy Trinity" within Capitalism's fiscal end goals

- **Infinite growth.** Pushing for more and more profit.
- **Efficient profit.** Profit at any cost.
- **Worker/owner division.** A widening of the class divide.

as disseminated through the three bourgeois trifectas. Rejecting all of these, Capitalism becomes something to transmute, proceeding into Socialism and finally anarcho-Communism through Gothic poetics. This isn't possible unless sex work becomes an open discussion, not a private means of enrichment and control. As Autumn demonstrates, said enrichment and control are things to embody and live by according to a brand image; i.e., an aesthetic with a bourgeois function tied to individual workers punching down with zero empathy inside a dog-eat-dog structure. It's precisely that kind of thing that monstrous aesthetics need to challenge, not support as Autumn does (while encouraging them to charge through "constructive criticism" guided by sound theory).

(artist: [Nat the Lich](#))

To stand against the bourgeoisie and capital is to resist their trifectas and financial end goals, thus stand against "Rome's" self-imposed, endlessly remediated glory as inherently doomed to burn by design (the strongman's toxic stoicism a mask behind which madness historically reigns; and elsewhere, the elite under American hegemony sit far away from the flames). However, like Rome itself, even *that* activity of resistance by us is far more complicated than it initially appears. The basic concept involves our "creative successes" that occur during oppositional praxis, synthesized into proletarian forms within our daily lives as workers; i.e., according to how we treat each other as weird nerds who can come to blows over the confrontation of trauma, but also its interpretation through Gothic poetics, mid-exchange. Rebellion isn't simply refusing to obey the state; it's being kind to each other as a means of monstrous instruction that camps canonical renditions of sex work as monstrous. Doing so liberates workers from systems of socio-material control by first allowing people to imagine the changing of these structures, then implementing said changes in highly inventive ways that are respected and upheld during intersectional solidarity [*ibid.*].

Again, all of these come into play during capital; i.e., as the state alienates, sexualizes and gentrifies/decays everything in service to profit, doing so through us-versus-them police violence, terror and morphological expression legitimized by state forces in state territories against state enemies/targets (anything the state needs them to be).

About the Logo (for Gothic [gay-anarcho] Communism)

If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the general outline of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928)

(model and artist: Blxxd Bunny and Persephone van der Waard)

For much of this book's construction, I was using the Laborwave hammer and sickle insignia over a red-and-yellow cover to represent the book's concept of

Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism. However, I decided on 8/26/2023 to design, thus give, the ideology its own symbol (the full PNGs for the Gothic [gay-anarcho] Communism logo by itself—with three different versions [full version w/flame and w/o flame, and the "skeleton key" simplified version] are available either on my website or on my DA Stash).

(artist, left: Leonardo Galletti; top-right: Eyeliner; bottom-right: Esprit 空想 [Esprit Fantasy])

When crafting my own symbol, I wanted to progress further beyond the Vaporware aesthetic (which emerged in roughly in 2011) than Laborwave had, which, in 2016, combined Vaporwave's signature corporate mood/neoliberalism-in-decay with Marxist-Leninist icons divorced from their historical-material past. I wanted to not simply reflect on corporate/neoliberal fallibility and decay within dead/dystopian postpunk-tinged nostalgia, nor wax nostalgia on the undead pastiche of Marxist-Leninism, but inject a Gothic-queer presence to evoke an anarcho-Communist potential towards ending Capitalist Realism in the eternal drive towards developing Communism.

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

So I took the iconic hammer and sickle, found an anarcho-Communist variant with the same nostalgic/trans color scheme, and embossed a skull with it over a Wiccan pentacle; the skull I treated as the circle of the transgender symbol, fashioning it from black bones and horns (to symbolize the undead and demonic of Gothic poetics fused with the aesthetics of power and death; i.e., the green flames and purple slime as reclaimed colors of canonical stigma and persecution). If I was going to simply it, I thought I'd lose the flames and pentacle, turn everything black,

and make the an-Com symbol negative space in the forehead. The thought process was, I wanted the embellished version for the book cover (like a monk's monasterial tome) to give it a thoroughly medievalized flavor (the embossed codex). But as part of a logo guide, I included the simplified version of the symbol simply called "the skeleton key." I thought about using just the "A" in the forehead or the hammer and sickle, but that verges on too simple (the "A" being for Anarchism and the hammer and sickle being for Communism); so I went with the more complex an-Com symbol to preserve its meaning. That + the skull and crossbones + the horns + the trans icon = Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism. It can be drawn all in black with a simple marker in a simplified "bathroom stall" form, but also has a fancier black logo that can be further embellished with ornaments and color if needed. Also, completely by accident, it kind of reminds me of Mercyful Fate's Melissa skull + the Grateful Dead logo, the latter being one of the most famous counterculture rock 'n roll bands of all time: sex, drugs and rock 'n roll all in one package!

(artist: [Bubi](#))

Concerning My Audience, My Art, the Reading Order and Glossary

What should I do with your strong, manly, spirited Sketches, full of variety and Glow? – How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much Labour?

—Jane Austen, in a letter[27] to her "favorite" nephew, James Edward Austen.
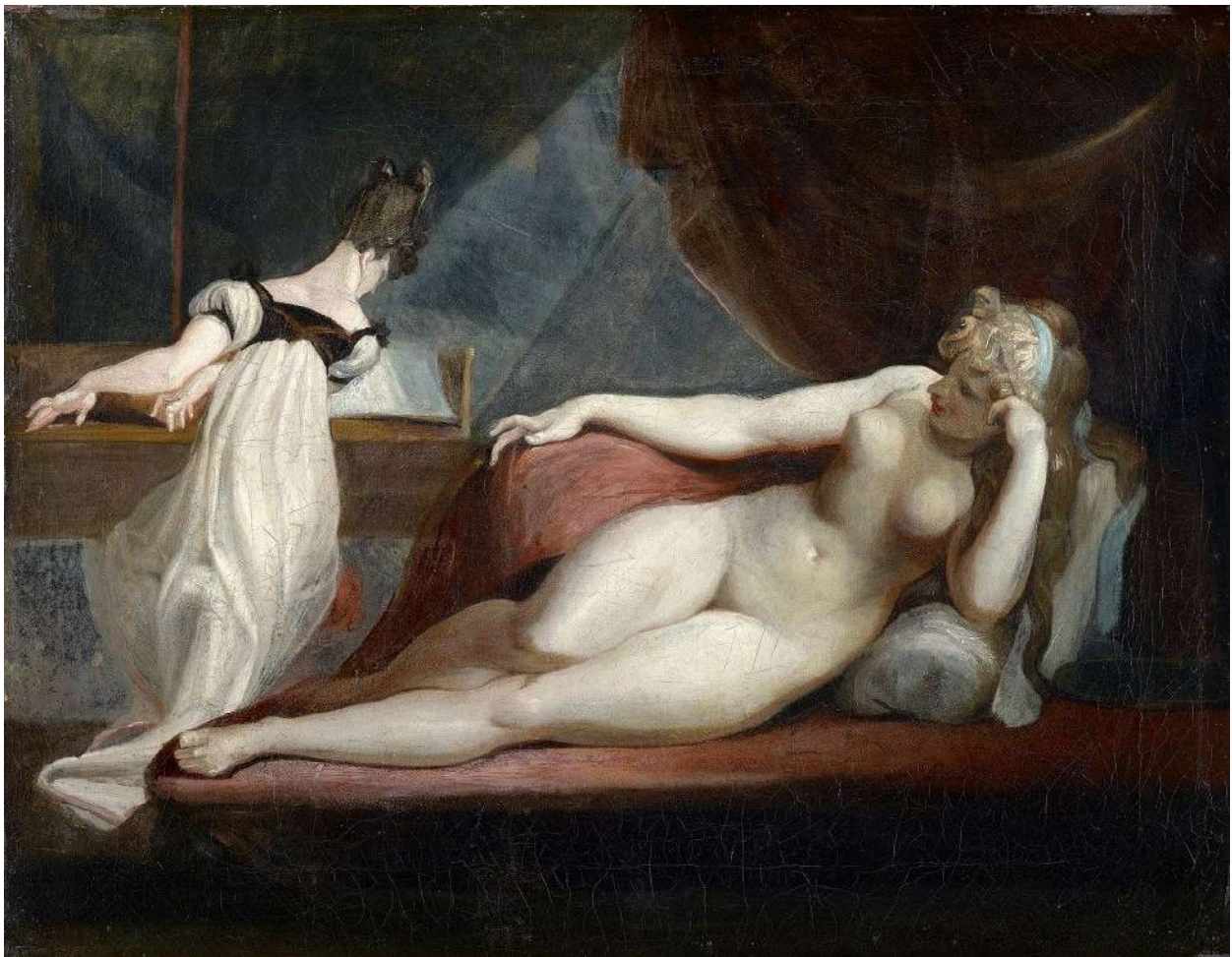
(artist: Henry Fuseli)

For most of recorded human history, women (or beings perceived either as women, or simply "incorrect"; i.e., "not white, cis-het Christian men"; e.g., eastern

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[27] *source: Zoe Louca-Richards' "Two Inches of Ivory: A New(ish) Jane Austen Acquisition" (2020)*

cultures, people of color or Indigenous Persons, genderqueer entities, etc) have been reduced to sex objects, sources of fear and/or (especially in the case of white women) accomplished pieces of property that could do little tricks, like sew or play the piano (what Mr. Darcy, in *Pride and Prejudice* [1813], smugly calls "female accomplishments"). Generally women were prized possessions, not people, and this reflected in how they were shaped in media as it became more and more widely available (in short, when Europe transitioned from an oral society to a written one): through the gaze of men, or according to women who—in some shape or form—served men by acting like/for them under Capitalism as a developing enterprise. The colonial standard, then, has certainly complicated itself in recent times, but the apples don't fall far from the tree; i.e., allowing the feminisms of older times—the first and second waves—to fight for their (white, cis-supremacist rights) while throwing everyone else under the proverbial bus (or stagecoach, in those days). The equality of convenience during older historical periods became a defense of the status quo enacted upon by women-of-letters, which continues into the present: Britain's "TERF island" is a mirror into the imaginary past, one whose fear and dogma continually uphold its tyrannical historical materialism, thus mass exploitation and genocide; i.e., "Yes, Austen belonged to a slave-owning society[28]."

If the above paragraph is any indication, books are generally written (and illustrated) with an *intended* audience in mind; apart from that, there's the *ideal* audience (who simply "gets" or understands the material) and the *actual* audience (whoever actually reads the book, regardless of what they know beforehand). *Sex Positivity* was intentionally written for a *holistic* audience, with an emphasis on non-academia/non-accommodated intellectuals (as per Edward Said's notion of the "accommodated intellectual" from *Representations of an Intellectual*, 1993); it doesn't expect you to know everything and provides as much secondary material as it can to help you along. However, because of its size, I've had to cut the book into four volumes, the thesis volume being the volume that actually unpacks the companion glossary's terms (though all four volumes contain the glossary in their rear pages). Even when it was shorter, though, I had written and organized *Sex Positivity* to be read in order—as in, from top to bottom for first-time readers. This fact remains constant. The entire book (all four volumes) is meant to be read as: Volume Zero, Volume One, Volume Two, and Volume Three, head to toe. From there, if you want to jump around, the volumes have been structured and organized to make doing so as easy as possible. Go wild, my little angels.

If you choose to jump around, I'll assume that you've read my thesis volume (or at least browsed its unpacking of the keyword glossary terms). Apart from Volume One, whose full manifesto outlines my book's central thesis on sex-positive, social-sexual activism, Volume Two acts a kind of "prelude" to Volume Three, providing a "Humanities primer" that adjusts you to a more open-minded way of

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[28] From Edward Said's "Jane Austen and Empire"; Culture and Imperialism (1993).

thinking that is useful to our thesis argument: "Capitalism dimorphically sexualizes everything under a heteronormative, settler-colonial scheme, one whose myopic Capitalist Realism must be escaped from; i.e., via a deliberate iconoclasm that liberates sex workers (or sexualized workers) under Capitalism through sex-positive art." The primer does so through numerous "monster art" exhibits that show how to think (and how past people thought) openly during oppositional praxis, using specific terms, theories, and formatting devices which apply to various topics broached later in the book when proletarian praxis (and its synthesis) is articulated chapter-by-chapter (and art exhibits are *slightly* less frequent, at least in the first edition).

      However, as any artistic exhibit (not just mine) is idiosyncratic, this book is indulgently "me" to make *that* point abundantly clear. This includes iconoclastic porn as something that I've often explored and cultivated in my own body of work— with me actually preferring to cultivate erotic, sex-positive art displays during my own creations. As I write in "My Art Website Is Now Live" (2020):

> In my work, I don't like to treat sex separate from everyday life. Instead, I emphasize sexuality and intimacy as being part of the same experience. Not only do you have the intense, raw close-ups during sex one might encounter in a VHS porno; there's also the tender, little details: the smiles, excitement, and other factors that make up everyday sex for people in relationships. I try to communicate all of this in a fantasy or sci-fi setting populated by my favorite videogame characters. It might be a regression of the quotidian into the Romantic, but being a Gothicist I'm not against liminal forms of expression. My work is erotic, forming a balance of the raunchy and tender inside a videogame milieu. These characters aren't fighting dragons; they're having sex, but there's so many different ways this can go about, and I have my own special blend I like to try and capture in my art ([source](#)).

In other words, my campy artistic creations invite you to imagine ordinary behaviors from extraordinary-*looking* people—e.g., Link and Nabooru less as representations of the status quo, and more as a highly flexible performance that can interrogate and subvert, thus negotiate, power using the same-old aesthetics on and off the usual stages where these performances take place. Imagine as I would, then, that Link and Nabooru "save" Hyrule, then talk about laundry and what's for dinner while having sex in a half-real, incredibly playful scenario. Except in our case, there never actually *was* a war to be fought (thus no genocide)—just a roleplay had and costumes worn by two workers who, for all intents and purposes, really look the part but whose function has subtly (or not so subtly) shifted away from the heteronormative scheme to undermine, thus weaken, the state's grip on the Superstructure:

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

Bear in mind, these portfolio samples come from 2020, when I was still in the closet and trying to uncover/understand my own identity and struggle as a trans woman. But they still contain a certain iconoclastic playfulness that I've since built upon after coming out as trans (as the rest of my exhibits will hopefully demonstrate); i.e., in the dialectical-material context, subverting what's expected in favor of delineating away from traditional heroic activities (such as genocide): make love, not war (except class/culture war). While my focus is often on videogames (the dominant canonical medium under neoliberal Capitalism), the same idea goes for *any* heroic-monstrous character borrowed from a particular franchised narrative: Midna and the Great Fairy from different *Zelda* games (a crossover); Link and Minda from *Twilight Princess* (2006); Squall and Quistis from *Final Fantasy 8* (1999), and so on:

(artist: Persephone van der Waard)

If this basic thought experiment feels too difficult to visualize or understand, it will get no easier from here on out (we'll focus primarily on non-heteronormative/non-tokenized and gender-non-conforming media). Likewise, if you're unfamiliar with the Gothic, ludic/queer theory and/or Marxist thought (and

the glossary keywords), chances are the rest of this book (after Volume Zero; i.e., from Volumes One, Two and Three onwards) will seem incredibly alien and confusing to you; all are either lost and forgotten concepts in relation to Capitalism, reduced by capital to pulpy canon this book does nothing but dissect, or swim around in the grey areas of (which Capitalism and its heteronormative colonial binary discourage). For first-time readers, then, this book *really* is meant to be read in order.

    That being said, the thesis volume (as per the heads-up refresher) *is* more academic, thus inaccessible. If you haven't read it yet or found it too difficult, Volume One's more conversational/instructional approach unpacks the same basic ideas in a less dense, but also less *developed* dialog concerning the manifesto tree ideas (the scaffold of oppositional praxis). If you feel lost when reading my thesis, the manifesto (and its additional chapters on instruction and praxial synthesis) may be a better place to start. Try reading it first, familiarizing yourself with the manifesto's iconoclastic ideas, visual aids and various guides, signposts and roadmaps. Then, consider *returning* to the thesis volume, which unpacks these ideas far more intensely and completely. Once you comprehensively understand what Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism is, try moving onto Volume Two, which explores the *historical* development of the Gothic imagination and its complicated past—of flawed, conflicting poetic expression as something to learn from moving forward. From there, Volume Three outlines the goals and objectives of Gothic Communism as a means of attacking Capitalism and its ideologies directly through solidarized worker *poiesis*.

    The goal of Volume One is to outline a *general teaching method* that explains complex things in commonplace ways, which Volume Two expands on through the poetic history of monsters as a dehumanizing tool that must be reclaimed. Everything tied to proletarian praxis is re-summarized after the introduction in Volume Three: in the summation section before Chapter One of that volume. You will need what the manifesto contains when you read the synthesis roadmap in Volume One; you will need what both (and the thesis volume) contain when you read the primer from Volume Two; and you will need the introduction, summation and Chapter One from Volume Three when you Chapters Two through Five of that volume, etc. Last but not least, familiarize yourself with my "artistic exhibit style." First shown during the second disclaimer during exhibit 3a1, 2, and 3 (and exhibits -1a and -1b); and during exhibit 0a1a during the foreword, my exhibit style is utilized throughout entire the book in over 200 similar exhibits covering a broad range of artistic subjects (and monsters).

    Last but not least, you do not need to read the entire glossary up front, simply because I wrote the thesis volume to introduce keywords to you, step by step. There's a lot of them, but it explains the most vital one at a time and in (I feel) the most logical order demanded by my arguments. Even so, my book has still had to alter or simplify academic language, terms and theories by combining them

with everyday language. It also deals with groups (fascists and centrists) who frequently employ obscurantism—often through general/Gothic cryptonyms (words that hide), used in bad-faith to control others through sexualized and gendered language that isolate the mind (with isolation being a predator's tactic). So while most of these terms *are* defined in some shape or form inside my thesis statement, word count (and flow) remains an issue. I could only recite the most important in full, and summarize the rest in the thesis volume itself. Therefore, I want to provide all of their full definitions (modified and expanded on/narrowed by me) in the companion glossary, which you can access in the back of whichever volume you're currently reading.

(artist: Mikki Storm)

The keywords are divided into separate sections and you can access individual terms via the bookmarks located on side of your PDF. While the most central are quoted in part or in full within the thesis proper, I recommend familiarizing yourself with all of them before moving onto Volumes One, Two and Three (which again, shall henceforth continue being referred to as such; the thesis volume was written last and I don't feel like changing the names. Instead, think of it as four volumes: One, Two and Three, with the thesis volume as Volume *Zero*). *Do not assume you know what they mean*. A good few are less central but still useful when grappling with these larger topics.

In conclusion, while the keywords are all important to know and understand, there aren't too many that need to be understood *a priori*—as in *before* reading my thesis statement (and the rest of the book). This being said, there *are* a few I won't be able to unpack in the thesis proper—the simple reason being the unpacking of my Gothic, ludology and genderqueer terms was written with a presumption that you have a modicum of understanding regarding basic queer and Marxist theory. So before we proceed, please peruse the below list to make sure you're familiar with the more essential terms from the "Marxism and Politics" and "Sex, Gender and Race" sections of the glossary.

Essential Keywords, *a priori*

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

—*Hamlet, <u>Hamlet</u> (c. 1599)*

(<u>source</u>*: Clyde Mandelin's "How <u>Symphony of the Night</u>'s 'Miserable Pile of Secrets' Scene Works in Japanese," 2013)*

Through its motley crew of assorted keywords, Gothic Communism aims to describe sexuality and gender within Marxist, Gothic and game theories. Sexuality and gender are not complicated, then; it's just *not* a binary like heteronormativity expresses, insofar as a gradient is simply a different (and more accurate) arrangement to what sexuality and gender actually are. In the presence of state power and its defenders, thoroughly stupid questions get asked, kettling the oppressed into an asinine, deadly game; e.g., "What is a woman?" in Matt Walsh's

"documentary" of the same name (it's fascist propaganda, my dudes). Well, I certainly *can* humor fascists with my own definition

a woman

> That depends ("Beware the elves for they will say both yea and nay"). Keeping the [below] terms in mind, a woman is multiple things at once. On the *bourgeois* side, she's anything a man isn't—i.e., a cis-het sex slave/employee/girl boss, etc (note the gradient of euphemisms to disguise the deliberate marital role of unpaid women's work under Capitalism); on the proletariat side, she's however someone identifies in relation to the state[29] as a worker—for or against it to various, liminal degrees (this includes personas, alter-egos, egregores and various other disguises). To reduce it to "an adult, human female" is super gross, Nazi-level shit (and while I *want* to seriously feel sorry for Matt Walsh's probably-battered housewife, assuming she's entirely ignorant of her husband's abuse would assume that she actually puts in the work; however, if she does, it would take total isolation of anything not supplied to her in advance by her "big, strong, powerful, caretaker" husband. That's quite sad and pathetic). I hate Nazis, Matt Walsh; my grandfather fought them during WW2 after they raped and destroyed his homeland and killed most of his friends and family. They prey on fear yet instantly run away like Brave Ser Robin when they're outed as perfidiously and ignominiously stupid. You're cut from the same cloth, you giant, callow man-child.

but that's not really the point of them asking, is it? Their doing so is an invitation for moderates to belittle gender-non-conforming persons, then look the other way while fascists normalize vigilante violence against minorities (which translates to state/police violence when Imperialism comes home to roost). In short, Hamlet—when viewed as the male action hero—is a real "piece of work," alright. He's an absolute, unironic monster[30]; i.e., mad with grief over the death of his father until

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[29] (from the symposium): Whenever I say "the state" in this book, I am referring to the state as both a current mechanism for capital, but also the status quo more broadly—a state of affairs that has evolved into its current form (including the Gothic castle as a hauntological advertisement for state hegemonic displacement and dissociation): nation-states, whose sense of national identity in relation to capital had to evolve into itself from the Cartesian Revolution onwards (bringing with them modern war and globalization as they currently exist).

[30] "Hamlet begins the play as a possible tragic hero, but as he interacts with corrupt characters, his traits become increasingly tainted until his potential for heroism disintegrates completely. Although Hamlet is depicted at first as a seemingly normal, depressed man, he is influenced by his relationships with Claudius, the ghost, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern until his old virtues are no longer recognizable. His evil actions, whether

he becomes the anti-hero[31] who must be unironically sacrificed (along with everyone else) at the end of the play. In modern language, it's a murder-suicide committed by the usual suspect: the entitled "man of the house" acting like a total incel who kills his mother, sister and best friend (Shakespeare is hardly perfect, but absolutely satirizes heteronormativity—i.e., similar to *Romeo and Juliet*, 1597, or *Titus Andronicus*).
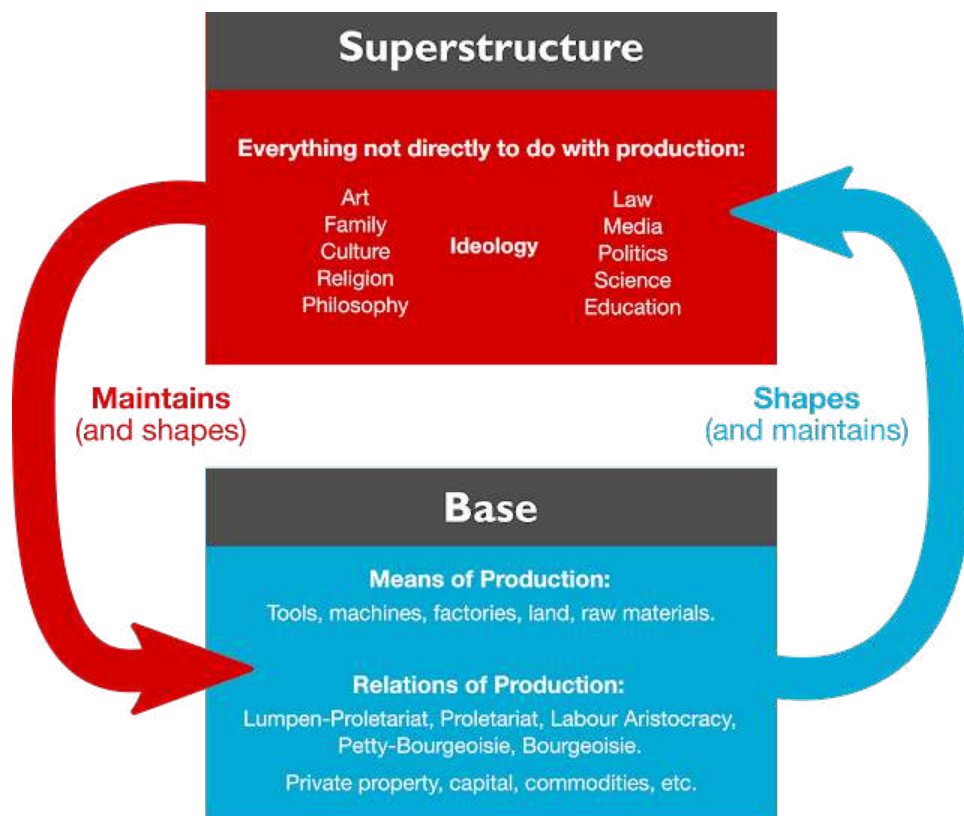
The keywords in this list, then, are skeleton keywords; i.e., utterly essential to following my arguments on Gothic-Communism, except I won't have time during the thesis volume to unpack them to the degree that I do the Gothic material (which is hard enough to unpack on its own); in other words, the book assumes you've already read the glossary definitions (at least these terms) ahead of time, or otherwise know them *a priori*. While all of the glossary keywords are useful to some extent, absolutely make sure you have these ones down pat (which I've abbreviated in case if you can't be arsed to actually look at the glossary. You should because many of these shorthand definitions are inadequate; simply click on the in-text links to be taken to their full definitions):

- **Marxism**: Schools of thought stemming from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, trying historically to achieve Communism through the state first (Marxist-Leninism) instead of direct worker solidarity and action operating in opposition to the state and establishment politics (anarcho-Communism).
- **material conditions**: The factors that determine quality of life from a material standpoint.
- **historical materialism**: The normalized, vicious cycle that history is predicated on the material conditions that routinely bring it about.
- **dialectical materialism**: The study of oppositional *material* forces in relation to each other—i.e., the bourgeoisie vs the proletariat, canon vs iconoclasm, sex positivity vs sex coercion.
- **the means of production**: Marx' Base, owned by the elite; the ability to (mass)produce material goods within capital/a living market.

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with Polonius, Gertrude, or Ophelia, further ingrain his corruption. Horatio's steady, honorable personality emphasizes the demoralization of Hamlet's character. By the end of the play, Hamlet no longer has any traits of a hero but seems more of a villain, full of immoral, evil thoughts and devoid of his former inner goodness" (source: Reverie Marie's "Hamlet Is Not a Tragic Hero," 2016).

[31] "Anti-hero" can mean different things; it can mean "tragic hero," in the sense of state apologetics; e.g., Oedipus Rex's "feel sorry for me even though I killed my dad and boned my mom" schtick. It can also mean "tragic rebel"; i.e., Satan from *Paradise Lost* (1667) as the rebel devil-in-disguise fighting against the Christian idea of heroism, thus being revered under British Romanticism for being revolutionarily heroic *against* the villainy of state tyranny.

Superstructure

Everything not directly to do with production:

Art		Law
Family		Media
Culture	Ideology	Politics
Religion		Science
Philosophy		Education

Maintains (and shapes)

Shapes (and maintains)

Base

Means of Production:
Tools, machines, factories, land, raw materials.

Relations of Production:
Lumpen-Proletariat, Proletariat, Labour Aristocracy, Petty-Bourgeoisie, Bourgeoisie.

Private property, capital, commodities, etc.

This moves in a spiral pattern.
The base is generally dominant.

- **propaganda**: Marx's Superstructure, or anything that cultivates the Superstructure; for Gothic Communists, this means in a sex-positive direction.
- **private property**: Property that is privately owned, generally by the elite through privatization via state-corporate mechanisms; i.e., capital.
- **privatization**: The process that enables private ownership at a systemic, bourgeois level.
- **functional Communism**: The eventual (centuries from now) abolishment of privatization/private property. This process is called development, or Socialism.
- **nominal Communism**: Canonical depictions of Communism—i.e., Communism in name alone, sold to workers through canonical propaganda to scare them into upholding the bourgeois status quo.
- **Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism**: Coined by me, Gothic Communism is the deliberate, pointed critique of capital/Capitalism using a unique marriage of Gothic/queer/game theory and Marxist ideas synthesized by sex-positive workers during proletarian praxis.

- **anarcho-Communism**: The gradual disillusion and transmutation of Capitalism into Socialism and finally Communism through direct worker solidarity and collective action, whereupon power is horizontally restructured.
- **neoliberal Capitalism**: The dominant strain of Capitalism operating in the world today—i.e., Capitalism employed by neoliberal canon, centrism, moderacy and personal responsibility rhetoric to achieve the greatest possible division between the owner/worker classes (a re-liberalization of the market through the abuse of state power), as well as infinite growth and efficient profit (more on these during the manifesto proper). Neoliberal Capitalism is founded on a vertical arrangement of power through national-state-corporate leaders operating against worker interests by exploiting them to the fullest using capital.
- **capital/Capitalism** (a super-important term and often incredibly misunderstood, so I'm giving the full definition, here; it's the longest in this entire list): A system of exploiting workers, nature and the world, whose resultant genocide and vampiric devastation is synonymous with *profit* for capitalists/the elite. The elite parasitize everyone/thing else to generate profit through Capitalism; or to quote directly from Raj Patel and Jason Moore's *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (2017):

> Money isn't capital. Capital is journalism's shorthand for money or, worse, a stock of something that can be transformed into something else. If you've ever heard or used the terms *natural capital* or *social capital*, you've been part of a grand obfuscation. Capital isn't the dead stock of uncut trees or unused skill. For Marx and for us, capital happens only in the live transformation of money into commodities and back again. Money tucked under a mattress is as dead to capitalism as the mattress is itself. It is through the live circulation of this money, and in the relations around it, that capitalism happens.
>
> The process of exchange and circulation turn money into capital. At the heart of Marx's *Capital* is a simple, powerful model: in production and exchange, capitalists combine labor power, machines and raw material. The resulting commodities are then sold for money. If all goes well, there is a profit, which needs then to be reinvested into yet more labor power, machines and raw materials. Neither commodities nor money is capital. This circuit *becomes* capital when money is sunk into commodity production in an ever-expanding cycle. Capitalism is a process in which money flows through nature. The trouble here is that capital supposes infinite expansion [growth] within a finite web of life ([source](#)).

For our purposes, this "web of life" concerns the privatized, social-sexual exploitation of workers in monstrous language—something to be unironically defended by class traitors preserving Capitalism, thus the state as a means of maximizing capital for the elite (infinite growth); i.e., to serve and protect capital, not people, through the means of production/propaganda's current bourgeois hegemony under neoliberal Capitalism's personal responsibility rhetoric—to regulate the market and empower the state through concealed abuses that accrete out from the center in all directions. As anarcho-Communists, we much critique this canonizing process' profit motive through our own iconoclastic material.

- **capitalists**: Those who own capital, the bourgeoisie (the owner class).
- **Rainbow Capitalism**: Capitalism appropriating queerness, generally through surface-level, inauthentic representation and queer-baiting.
- **recuperation/controlled opposition**: The process by which politically radical ideas and images are twisted, co-opted, absorbed, defused, incorporated, annexed or commodified within media culture and bourgeois society, and thus become interpreted through a neutralized, innocuous or more socially conventional perspective.
- **sublimation**: The process by which socially unacceptable impulses or idealizations are transformed into socially acceptable actions or behavior. Normalization.

- **prescriptive sexuality (and gender)**: Sexuality and gender as prescribed according to various explicit or tacit mandates; i.e., sex, orientation and gender performance/identity are not separate and exist within a cis-gendered, heteronormative colonial binary.

- **descriptive sexuality (and gender)**: Sexuality and gender as describing actual persons, be they sexual and/or asexual. This includes their bodies, orientations and identities, etc, as things to appreciate, not appropriate (thus exploit).
- **praxis**: The practical execution of theory.
- **appreciative irony**: A descriptive sexuality (or gender) that culturally appreciates the irony of queer existence (and other minorities) in various forms.
- **asexuality**: A gradient of expressions that includes *demisexual/grey ace* and *aromantic* persons, asexuality displays orientations and performances or gender identities that diverge from sexual attraction, generally in favor of romantic, spiritual and emotional connections; i.e., a neurodivergent condition, not a disease that needs to be repressed, shamed or attacked.
- **neurodivergence**: A spectrum of atypical brain conditions that diverge from neurotypical persons and brains. Neurodivergent people canonically tend to be demonized, but also shamed as disabled, insane or mendacious.
- **sex-repulsed**: Not to be confused with *sex-negative*/reactionary politics, *sex-repulsed* is the quality through which persons—whether through nature or nurture; i.e., hereditary or environmental trauma factors (these tend to overlap)—are repulsed by sex. This can be partial—can amount to gradient indifference or outright trauma/triggering status depending on its severity. *Important: Sex-repulsion is not strictly a symptom, but a <u>neurodivergent condition</u> with congenital/comorbid factors operating within the brain as <u>neuroplastic</u>.*
- **comorbid/congenital**: The simultaneous presence of two or more diseases *or* medical/psychological conditions in a patient—congenital meaning "present at birth," inherited.
- **LGBTQ+**: Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, and various other non-gender-conforming groups.
- **queer**: A general, all-purpose label reclaimed from its colonizer origins. For example, I identify as queer/am a queer person. While terms like trans, queer, gay and so on most certainly have specific definitions, in everyday queer parlance they tend to be used *interchangeably* (with idiosyncratic boundaries being drawn up when the need arises); forced conformity/division is to "make things weird" (though marginalized gatekeeping/sectarianism is definitely a thing).
- **genderqueer**: Challenging gender norms; also called "questioning" or "gender non-conforming."
- **monogamy/-ous**: The performance of a singular, happy relationship, canonically structured around marriage, reproductive sex and the nuclear

family structure. In Gothic canon, this structure is often threatened by a Gothic villain—e.g., Count Ardolph from Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* (1806).

- **poly(amour-ous)**: Non-normative family/open relationship structures that break with the heteronormative structure/cycle of compelled marriage. Historically conflated with swinging or serial monogamy (which are really their own heteronormative practices; i.e., "We're not *poly*, we're *serially monogamous*!"). Note how poly relationships tend to be framed as poly*amorous*, not polygamous.
- **beards**: A relationship of convenience to appear straight, heteronormative, monogamous, nuclear, "Roman," etc. The nuptial variant of a beard is the *lavender marriage*.
- **heteronormativity** (a big one; I will provide its full definition with the thesis paragraph): The idea that heterosexuality and its relative gender norms are prescribed/enforced to normalized extremes by those in power—i.e., the Patriarchy.
- **gender trouble**: Coined by Judith Butler, gender trouble is the social tension and reactions that result when the heteronormative, binary view of sexuality and gender is disrupted. This trouble can happen through the parody of social-sexual norms through ironic or appreciative (counterculture) media.
- **girl-cock (exhibit 7c) or boy pussy (exhibit 52c)/gender parody**: Genitals or genitalia-like artifacts (and various other modes of performance) that fulfill an ironic/gender parody cultural role that interrogates heteronormative gender assignment, performance or identity, as well as sexual orientation.
- **natural assignment**: Accident of birth—i.e., the natural assignment of one's biological sex (and conditions to form one's gender identity around, whether through conformity or struggle); one's birth sex/genitals: male, female, and intersex.
- **AFAMs/AMABs**: Assigned-Female/Male-at-Birth—i.e., one's birth sex. Can be used as a noun or adjective; e.g., "AFABs dislike this" or "an AFAB person," etc. Intersex people are their own category.

(from the glossary, exhibit 3c1: source)

- **intersex**: The existence on a biological gradient between the qualifiers male and female, amounting to a variable "third sex" that presents mixed features of either sex to varying degrees; except, the umbrella term doesn't represent one particular manifestation as a strict third, but all of them together on a vast, complicated spectrum of genotypical and phenotypical elements. They are often depicted as angels or demons in the classically androgynous sense, or stigmatized/fetishized in porn as "shemales," "he-shes" and other canonically pejorative labels; a common, non-insulting label is "androgyne" (though this can apply to trans people and mixed gender performance, too). A common intersex example in Gothic media is the phallic woman or Archaic Mother—e.g., the xenomorph.
- **non-binary**: "An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being

both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, *not all non-binary people do*. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid" ([source](): Human Rights Campain's "Glossary of Terms," 2023).

- **sexual/asexual orientation**: How people orient (a)sexually/"float their boats" in relation to gender identity and performance—sexually but also emotionally and romantically. A double helix of two gradients, each having two theoretical "poles," wherein both ribbons descriptively intertwine/intersect within the socio-material world (more on this in Volume Three, Chapter Three).

- **heterosexuality**[32]: Orienting towards the *opposite* gender. Classically called "opposite-sex attraction," gender-non-conformity (GNC) treats heterosexuality as orienting towards the gender opposite to *oneself*. This being said, pure opposites do not generally exist outside of heteronormative enforcement (which compels binaries in service of the profit motive/process of abjection) so heterosexual people also tend to be cis; i.e., cis-het, or "straight."

- **homosexuality**: Orienting towards the *same* gender. Classically called "same-sex attraction," gender-non-conformity treats homosexuality as orienting towards the same gender as *oneself*. No binary is required, and the term is generally synonymous with "gay" or "lesbian."

- **bisexuality**: Orienting towards *two or more* genders. Classically called "both-sex attraction" (or something along those lines), gender-non-conformity treats bisexuality as orienting towards the gender opposite to and the same as *oneself*.

- **pansexuality**: Orienting towards someone else *regardless of* their gender. However, this does not preclude exceptions and the phrase is generally used interchangeably with bisexuality in everyday parlance.

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[32] Traditional orientation terminology is classically binarized, which GNC usage complicates by introducing non-binary potential. Traditional usage ties a specific orientation to sexuality—e.g., hetero*sexual*—but descriptive orientation can just as much involve an emotional and/or romantic attraction and generally includes gender and biology as interrelating back and forth while not being essentially connected. So whereas heteronormativity forces sex and gender together and ties both to human biology as the ultimate deciding factor regarding one's gender and orientation, sex-positive usage is far more flexible; orientation isn't strictly sexual or rooted in biology at all. Those variables *are* present, but neither is the end-all, be-all because sexuality and gender are things to *self*-determine versus things the state determines for us (to exploit workers through binarized stratagems; e.g., "women's work"). To compensate for this flexibility inside GNC circles, orientation labels are generally shorted to "hetero," "bi," or "pan" (homosexual is commonly referred to as "gay" or "[a] lesbian"), allowing for asexual implications. Even so, classically binary terms like "hetero" and "homo" tend to be used more sparingly and are often swapped out for more specific identities or umbrella terms; e.g., "I'm queer/gay" or "I'm bi" as something to understand with some degree of intuition, which can later be explored in future conversations if the parties in question are interested in pursuing it. This pursuit is not automatic, though, so neither is the language denoting what can be pursued; instead, sexuality is an option, not a given.

- **heteronormative assignment (gender roles)**: Accident of birth in relation to one's "birth gender" as socially constructed by the state in relation to one's genitals.
- **transgender reassignment (transgender identity)**: Being trans is gender identity wherein one feels, and hopefully one day decides to recognize, that one isn't cis.
- **gender identity**: One's conforming or nonconforming gender identity as a (sub)conscious act; i.e., how one identifies, be that passively or actively.
- **gender performance**: Gender performance is coded in relation to oneself, their identity/orientation, and to society's in-groups and out-groups, aka formal/informal gender roles. Whether one's gender *identity* is assigned to them at birth, or is self-assigned through various non-gender-conforming types—e.g., trans man/woman, non-binary, femboy, agender, etc—their gender *performance* amounts to a coded set of social behaviors (and corresponding materials and language) that adhere to performative rules meant to reinforces one's gender as either self-assigned, or assigned heteronormatively by the state. To that, these concepts do not exist in a vacuum, but intersect and often conflict (which leads to iconoclastic gender parody[33] and gender trouble during subversive exercises).

(artist, left: Mark Bryan; right: Cursed Arachnid)

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[33] Classic, canonical gender parody would include cross-dressing in Shakespearean theatre, whereupon (arguably) cis-het men would have played both men and women, the latter often by teenagers/prepubescent boys wearing various costumes and makeup. All the same, Shakespeare was debatably not straight (see: all the gay shit in his work), and the theatre remains a classic site for gender-non-conforming fulfillment and expression.

- **gender performance-as-identity**: Some identities involve broader gender performances to identify around or as; e.g., drag queens or femboys.
- **the (settler-)colonial[34] binary**: Nadi Tofighian writes in *Blurring the Colonial Binary* (2013) that, having evolved beyond Rome's master/slave dynamic, colonialism and Imperialism "separated people into different classes of people, ruler and ruled, white and non-white, thereby creating and widening a colonial binary" (source). To this, the cis-het, white European/Christian male is superior to all other workers. This binary extends to token marginalizations and infiltrated and assimilated/normalized activist groups, thought/political leaders or public intellectuals, who serve as class traitors, but also functional police for their respective domains.
- **poiesis/poetics**: "To bring into being that which did not exist before." Art. A commonplace example is "poetry," which historically has granted impoverished, exploited people idiosyncratic voices/parallel societies in times of struggle; i.e., making monsters that voice our trauma and concerns.
- **canon (dogma)**: Marx's Superstructure as normally cultivated by the elite through official/unofficial, state-corporate icons and materials designed to control how people think, behave and feel: heteronormative propaganda/dogma.
- **iconoclast/-clasm (camp)**: Marx's Superstructure, counter-cultivated by an agent or image that attacks established variants, generally with the intent of transforming them in a deconstructive, sex-positive manner. Such a

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[34] Since Alexander the Great's famous conquests or those of the Roman Empire (a safe starting point, let's call it), so-called "Western colonialism"/Imperialism (the highest stage of Capitalism, *vis-à-vis* Lenin) has existed on the global stage; since the *Enlightenment*, it has—starting with Ireland* and spreading elsewhere around the world—adopted a racialized settler-colonial flavor whose latter-day fantasies' hauntologies help perpetuate (e.g., *Aliens*, 1986). For our purposes, heteronormativity *is* settler-colonial, insofar as there is always a settler-colonial *bias* within Capitalism as it currently exists through nation-states; but that bias also executes differently depending on where and who you are as the story's intended/tokenized audience: the Global North's military urbanism/Imperial Boomerang versus settler colonialism conducted abroad. I confess the words "colonial," "imperial/Imperialism" and "settler-colonial" will be used synonymously and that the word "(settler-)colonial binary" is more or less functionally synonymous/synergetic with "heteronormativity." I will do my best to give nuanced examples throughout the book, but freely admit that settler colonialism is not its chief-and-only focus.

"The British Empire began developing its colonialization tactics in Ireland and Canada, before exporting them throughout the world. / From the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, Britain developed an empire on which the 'sun never set,' subjugating local peoples from North America to East Africa to Australia. But as three University of Manitoba scholars, Aziz Rahman, Mary Anne Clarke and Sean Byrne, wrote in 2017, it developed many of the methods it used in its colonization much closer to home: in Ireland. […] Unlike previous invaders, the authors write, these British Protestants regarded the Catholic Irish as racially inferior. The newcomers rarely intermarried with the locals. In 1649, when Oliver Cromwell's forces arrived in Ireland, the result was a brutal genocidal campaign" (source: Livia Gershon's "Britain's Blueprint for Colonialism: Made in Ireland," 2022).

manner is treated as heretical by the elite, but also workers sympathetic to bourgeois hegemony.

- **centrism**: The theatrical creation of good vs evil as existing within politically "neutral" media—a dangerous preservation of orderly justice whose "moderate," white (or token) voice-of-reason/cloaked racism and discrimination pointedly maintain the status quo: Capitalism.
- **war pastiche**: The canonical remediation of war as something to sell to the audience (for our purposes) as canon, generally in centrist forms (which we then subvert through performative irony of various kinds).
- **nation pastiche**: Any kind of pastiche that ties war and combat to national identities; e.g., *Street Fighter*.
- **heels/babyfaces**: The centrist heroes and villains of staged, professional wrestling and American contact/combat sports—i.e., war personified—but commonly employed through combat e-sports like the *Street Fighter* FGC. Heels normally wear black, fight dirty and talk trash; babyfaces (often called "faces" for short) tend to wear white, fight fair and refuse to talk trash.
- **kayfabe**: The portrayal of staged events within the industry as "real" or "true," specifically the portrayal of competition, rivalries, and relationships between participants as being genuine and not staged.
- **neocons(ervatism)**: Neoconservatives are liberal hawks who, exposed to menticidal propaganda over time, despise war protestors and promote peace through strength, including neocolonialism and proxy war. It's the centrist, oscillating phenomena of so-called Liberalism turned bloody, routinely demanding its blood sacrifice on the so-called "altar of freedom."
- **menticide/waves of terror**: From Joost Meerloo's *The Rape of the Mind* (1956), menticide is the animal, "Pavlovian" conditioning that happens through various forms of torture, including "waves of terror," to mold an ideal subject within state mechanisms; i.e., someone not just complacent with state abuse, but *complicit*. Of *menticide*, Meerloo writes (abridged),

> The core of the strategy of menticide is the taking away of all hope, all anticipation, all belief in a future [which aligns with Mark Fisher's "hauntology," or inability to imagine a future beyond past forms supplied by Capitalism; i.e., a *myopia*]. It destroys the very elements which keep the mind alive. The victim is entirely alone (source).

Meerloo describes *waves of terror* as

> the use of well-planned, repeated successive waves of terror to bring the people into submission. Each wave of terrorizing cold war creates its effect more easily—after a breathing spell—than the one that

preceded it because people are still disturbed by their previous experience (*ibid.*).

- **Liberalism**: Not to be confused with neoliberalism (though the two generally go hand-in-hand), Liberalism is the disingenuous language of the Enlightenment becoming Americanized, then used alongside Cartesian dualism to obscure genocide under settler colonialism.
- **neoliberalism**: The ideology of American exceptionalism (which extends to allies of America like Great Britain) that enforces global US hegemony through deregulated/"re-liberalized" Capitalism as a structural means of dishonest wealth accumulation for the elite. Laterally enforced by state/corporate power abuse through a public conditioned by these groups to worship the free market, neoliberalism seeks to foster a centrist attitude.
- **fascism**: Capitalism-in-decay aka "zombie Capitalism." When Capitalism starts to "fail" (which it does by design), it creates power vacuums whose medievalist regressions reintroduce scapegoat mentalities on a state level; i.e., the Imperial Boomerang, or "Imperialism come home to empire."
- **pre-/post-fascism**: *Pre*-fascism is the Gothic imagination that historically was obsessed with the inheritance of a decaying system prior to the rise of fascism in the 18th and 19th centuries, which in turn has become *post*-fascism: the fear of fascism and systemic decay entertained through popular discourse and Gothic poetics in the 20th and 21st centuries, post-WW2.
- **eco-fascism**: The turn towards fascist rhetoric, stowed away inside nature conservatist rhetoric.

Also, familiarize yourselves with *Umberto Eco's 14 Points of Fascism* (from "Ur-Fascism," 1995). It's a really handy guide for spotting fascism, which tends to conceal itself or idiosyncratically manifest within centrist/neoliberal media. We don't go over all fourteen points in this book to nearly the same degree, but there are a few that I like to focus on; e.g., "The enemy is always weak and strong," the obsession with a foreign/internal plot, and the cult of machismo, etc.

Regarding the rest of the keywords not included in these paratextual documents: It would be very difficult and in fact counterproductive to list and define all of them at once. There's simply too many to realistically do this. Instead, I have provided the broadest and most germane/productive before this point—a trend I will now continue. As we proceed into the rest of the volume, the keywords I provide have been given first and foremost to stress their priority while also trying to keep the volume as short as possible. Some that aren't defined in the thesis proper will be defined during the "camp map" and symposium, but please refer to our Four Gs, manifesto tree, and the book's companion glossary for all of their complete

definitions (and for a few smaller terms that I've probably missed or left out for the sake of time).

I've tried to include all of the keywords for Sex Positivity in this volume, and it might seem like both not enough and too much information, but I promise we'll unpack all of these ideas as gradually as we can, and expand on them in the rest of the book (which aims for holistic, recursive nuance over singular brevity). I've done my best to avoid wholesale repetition, but admit and embrace that intersectionality demands a bit of cross-examination; i.e., regarding previously examined ideas from different points of view and theoretical stances that are applied practically and personally in our own lives through Gothic social-sexual expression; e.g., monsters, BDSM and artwork. If that proves to be poor consolation ahead of time, then I'll simply say what Zeuhl told me while we were at MMU: "Embrace chaos." Indeed, it's a process to be enjoyed and explored from a variety of angles, intensities and positions. —Perse
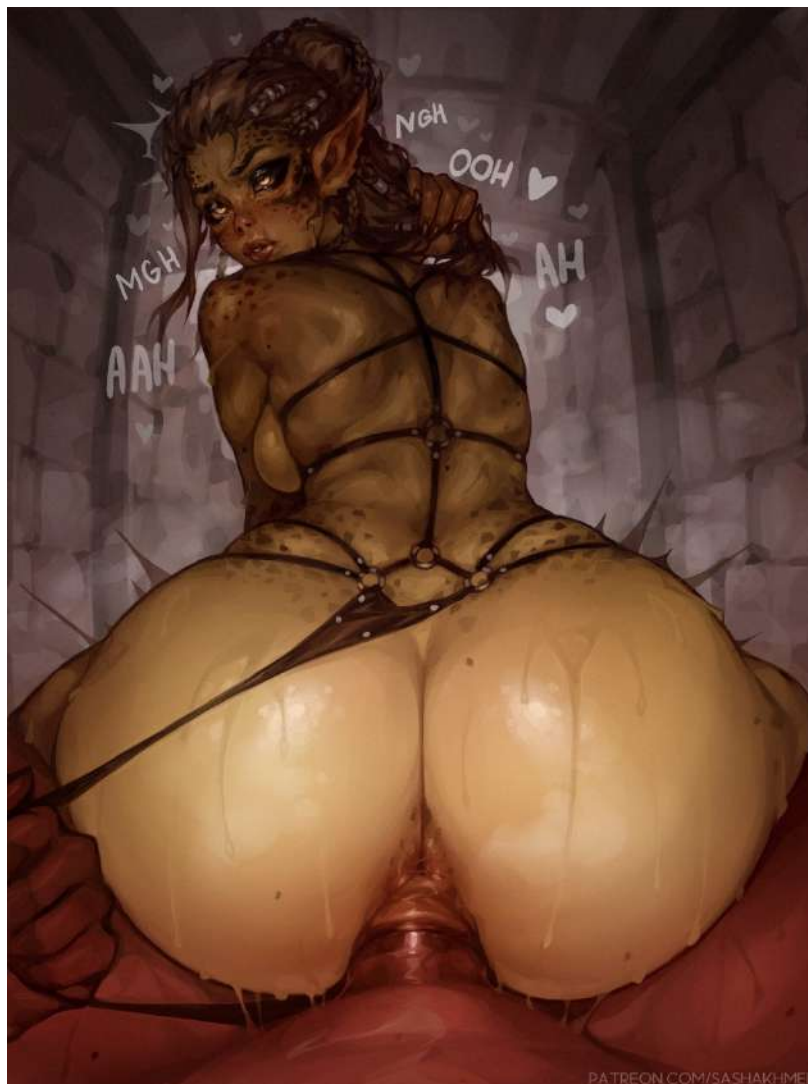
(artist: Sasha Khmel)

Table of Contents

I am the table! —James Hetfield; "The View," on Metallica's Lulu (2011)

(artist: Persephone van der Waard)

Please note: The table of contents per volume will only contain its volume's summary and list of chapters/subchapters. To access the entire list of volume/chapter summaries for Sex Positivity and its full table of contents, a separate PDF can be downloaded from my website. Click here to access my website's 1-page promo, which contains all relevant download links/information regarding my book. —Perse

The foreword is summarized shortly before it begins; the full summary of the rest of the thesis volume is provided in "Volume Outline" after the foreword.

Thesis Volume (Volume Zero)

The Absurd[35] is the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life, and the human inability to find any in a purposeless, meaningless or chaotic and irrational universe.

—*Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (1942)*

Capitalism is a giant graveyard, but a shared one to "rock out" inside. For Gothic Communists, the crypt is a place to dance within, while those who pale in face of Capitalism eating itself punch the skeleton (or giant suit of armor) as a scapegoat. Unlike them, we've acclimated to chaos because we're the underclass (to varying degrees of intersecting privilege and axes of oppression); they're the mythical "middle class," given pretty baubles thus thinking they have the most to lose: "land back = white genocide." My silly fools, unite (with us against the state); you have only to lose your chains!

Chaos isn't meaningless, but an invitation to make your own meaning by cheating death in a ludic sense—i.e., tearing up the Faustian ludic contract of

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35 The Absurd sits adjacent to the Sublime, the Weird/cosmic nihilism, the Numinous, and astronoetics, all of which we'll touch upon throughout this book at various points. The thing to note is, meaning is attained in relationship to these spatialized devices as a form of unequal, dare-I-say *Promethean*, power exchange; i.e., power and its complex, paradoxical performances formed in relation to us and things that seem (at least in appearance) to be far older and more powerful than us.

Capitalism by being a "spoilsport" of sorts. The thesis volume, then, contains my expanded author's foreword and thesis proper on Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism, as well as the "camp map" and symposium, which together summarize and articulate its broadest and most common arguments and key points (e.g., the Gothic, monstrous-feminine, *Amazonomachia*). The author's foreword explains the various "pregnancies" I had in order "to give birth" to its respective volumes (my not-so-little demon babies), as well as thanking my prime Muse[36] involved in its insemination: my partner (and cover model for this volume), Bay.

(artist: Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri)

The foreword also outlines the cultivation of a broad and far-reaching concept—the Wisdom of the Ancients—which later in the volume (and rest of the book) will be applied to various related ideas; e.g., class consciousness and "darkness visible." Following that, I will conclude the foreword by discussing my thought process in making the book; i.e., how its making shaped my thought process, moving through the birth canal and towards the finishing line.

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[36] For all of my muses, please refer to the Acknowledgements section.

Author's Foreword: "On Giving Birth," the Wisdom of the Ancients, and Afterbirth

…in assuming [this book] as the basis of a work of fancy, I have not considered myself as merely weaving a series of supernatural terrors. The event on which the interest of the story depends is exempt from the disadvantages of a mere tale of spectres or enchantment. [...] I have thus endeavoured to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature […] The circumstance on which my story rests was suggested in casual conversation ([source](#)).

—Mary Shelley, "Preface to <u>Frankenstein</u>" (1818)

(model and artist, left: Mary Shelley and Richard Rothwell; model, right: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

Pregnancies are seldom planned. This book, *Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism*, isn't just a big-ass porn catalog full of cool, "thirsty" art, nor is it just my little trans demon baby and pure, loving brainchild made with those who passively or actively contributed to its pages; it's me, a trans woman, consciously reverse-engineering my own creative process as having been ongoing for years (thus why I have so many exhibits from my own work—I had

already drawn them years ago). For the better part of fifteen months, this complex reification's trial and error has happened in starts and stops after long nights at the desk, sleeping on my increasingly regular musings and waking afresh with new queer epiphanies—to keep things straight in my own head, much like Sarah Connor kept journals for herself while figuratively and literally giving birth to rebellion (and doing my best to avoid coming off as a white savior). Just as an expected child is fueled and shaped by its mother's diet, my book was inspired by the process of older poetics/*poiesis* (meaning "to make," specifically a production of that which has never existed; i.e., the simulacrum, or imitation fashioned through *mimesis*). The idea of Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism wasn't just subversion, but *reclamation* of what was lost to fight back against capital as Einstein's fish might: to learn not what made me feel stupid for being unable to climb a tree as my prescribed "betters" could, but swim in water as I was always meant to through a cultivated emotional/Gothic intelligence linked to my inherent neurodivergence and queerness as useless to capital (outside of moral panics).

We'll continue to unpack "Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism" at length during the thesis paragraph/statement. For now, it is class/culture war relayed through monstrous poetics that actively and class-consciously subvert their canonical norms' etiology by recultivating the Superstructure and reclaiming the Base. I devised the concept to process systemic trauma through ironic monstrous poetics (the making of campy monsters) and thus have written/illustrated a book that is full of what I love: sex positivity, catharsis and of course, monsters. It was originally an attempt to heal/recover from academia and my inability "to make it" as a trans woman/neurodivergent person; as well as my exes and what they did to me, but also a constant reflection on the dialogic Gothic imagination of the larger world and dialectical-material expressions of trauma within its historical materialism. For example, last December I tried very hard to use my manuscript to relate to an ex of mine named Zeuhl[37], taking an idea they leveled against my argumentation and expanding on the pushback I received; i.e., I wanted them in

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[37] An ex I met in grad school, overseas. Said person has been given an alias (as have all of the exes I talk about, in this book), whereupon we mutually decided for me to call them "Zeuhl"; i.e., after the obscure-but-totally-awesome musical subgenre (Jim Allen's "There is No Prog, Only Zeuhl: A Guide to One of Rock's Most Imaginative Subgenres," 2020). I don't owe Zeuhl shit, but to be blunt, they're very self-centered and socially hypochondriacal, and I'm not really interested in outing them in this book despite how they abused me. At the same time, I also don't want to actively protect them or clean up after their mess by scrubbing every aspect of their mentioning from my online profile and various websites. But to be honest, there isn't (to my knowledge) any public mention of them and their full name outside of my private socials (unlike Jadis, another ex who *is* publicly mentioned outside of this book because—fuck them, they hurt me bad and frankly shouldn't be allowed to date anyone). This being said, I do talk about Zeuhl's abuse of me (and the abuse I received from other exes) in ways that tries to be frank and educational. What they did was shitty and I'd like to help other people by offering them the chance to learn from my adventures, "happy accidents" and all.

my life and the book was at least *partially* an attempt to keep them as close as I could. This did not last and three years after they unexpectedly broke up with me in 2019 (while overseas with "an old flame," as they put it), we finally fell out for good. Undeterred, I continued writing my book, whereupon I met one of my current partners, Bay. Bay's enthusiastic participation led to a profound expansion on my book's ideas; i.e., through a shared desire to communicate these academic notions to a wider public by refining them. We didn't want to reduce them to the accommodated intellectual's granularized, academic "word soup," archaic paywall system, all-around gatekeeping and cognitive estrangement, but instead focus on practical, holistic expression as publicly synthesized; i.e., amongst all workers in intuitive solidarity against the state as our ultimate foe.

palimpsest

"A manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing but of which traces remain"— common in Gothic stories, which amount to a cycle of lies; i.e., historical materialism: bourgeois history is unreliable, treacherous, like a Gothic lover or a concentric chest/midden of unreliable materials (cryptonyms). It can apply to a variety of media or formats: sculpture, music, clothes, videogames, etc (exhibit 5b, 43a/43b).

Gothic narrators/narratives

For its hero, narrators, spaces and speakers, a Gothic tale regularly involves unreliable/conflicting artificers and imposters, but also the patriarchal bloodline or castle as invented; i.e., as a series of concentric, sedimentary palimpsests. In the canonical sense, everything is fetishized, valorized and disseminated, then spread far and wide to cover up the ghost of the counterfeit (the circular lie of the West) with more ghosts that further the lie. Iconoclastic variants challenge this myopia with their own counterfeits' opposing class character inside a shared, contested midden.

Gothic doubling

The black mirror of historical materialism's all our yesterdays. It is the fated, ominous premonition of endless circuituity—that everything has already occurred before, or things that have already occurred will occur again from the same materials that occur out of what has already occurred; i.e., for everything that exists, there must (somewhere in the universe) be a dialectical-material "shadow" whose coinciding status as former-or-future counterfeit is actually historical materialism's circular approach to space and

time felt in the current moment: everything that has ever existed will exist again or things that will exist have already existed in ways that offer up a prior version's dialectical-material opposition to it—a castle or soldier as "evil" twin, uncanny and undead, replicated like an echo, a virus, a shade; the civil war of black infinity. There is no automatic moral character, merely the presence of infinite possibility amid crushing gravity and decay.

the Gothic heroine

The oft-female (or at least feminine) protagonist of Gothic stories. Classically a passive sex object/detective/damsel-in-distress, which became increasingly masculine, active and warlike in the 20th century onwards (though Charlotte Dacre beat everyone to the punch in 1806 when she wrote *Zofloya*, having the masculine-yet-trammeled Victoria de Loredani stab Lilla, the archetypal Gothic heroine, to death[38]). Unlike their male counterparts, who *tend* to default to soldiers or scientists (violent/mentally fragile men of war and reason with—at least in America—closeted ties to Nazi Germany and parallel conservative movements wearing a liberal guise), women within the colonial binary are relegated to spheres of domesticated ignorance; i.e., "Something is wacky about my residence, my guest, my wardrobe, etc. Guess I'll go investigate (exhibit 48a)!" Ann Radcliffe treated the protecting of female virtue as an "armoring" (exhibit 30c) process that commonly worked through a swooning[39] mechanism; though somewhat problematic on its face due to

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[38] A trick employed by the state called **triangulation**, or pitting one group against another for one's own benefit. A common method is weaponizing abuse victims' prey mechanisms, making them scared and angry and then handing them a weapon. In the case of Victoria, she's literally "pulling a Brutus" except it's against a small, defenseless woman; as we shall see with TERFs later on, they triangulate for the state to act just like Victoria does, except it's against the state's manufactured enemies: trans people and labor movements. Keep this idea in mind; we'll return to it often through the entire book (especially when examining Victoria, Hippolyta and Medusa, or offshoots of these archetypes).

[39] For a fun visual guide on swooning, consider Adam Frost and Zhenia Vasiliev's "How to Tell You're Reading a Gothic Novel – in Pictures" (2014). Also, the idea isn't *complete* bullshit; the xenophobia *is* an abject counterfeit, but based on a *kernel* of truth: how the body responds to perceived trauma, aka the vasovagal response:

> When I first started reading romance novels I used to snicker at the idea of fainting from shock, thinking it a silly, overblown invention by authors to accentuate the delicate feminine sensibilities of their heroines. And then, to my utter surprise, it actually happened to me. I happen to dislike needles. As in, *really* dislike needles. The idea of getting a shot has always given me the heebie-jeebies. But I simply ask to sit down when getting one, and it's okay. One time, though, I must have been stressed about by other things, because I rolled up my sleeve, and then remember starting to breathe a little weirdly. The next thing I knew, the nurse was patting my cheek gently, and looking horribly distraught. "I—I hadn't even touched you yet!" she stammered. "And you just

its pro-European origins, the idea of armoring one's virtue still presents the notion of feminine flexibility as facing monstrous-feminine things that male, or at least "phallic," heroes cannot rationalize or stab/shoot to death; i.e., the paradox of terror as something to reclaim through counterterror devices that, yes, include a fair bit of rape, taboo sex, and murderous stereotypes. In other words, it's entirely possible to have the Great Destroyer persona without being bigoted, but you have to camp it, first.

Star Wars (1977) famously presented the Death Star as something to blow up during a canal chase bombing run, flanking Luke Skywalker with fascist hounds; *Battlestar Galactica* (2005) inverts the canal chase into a head-to-head, one-on-one dogfight, putting the hero, Starbuck, on a paradoxical collision course with herself but also all our yesterdays: the female knight/Gothic heroine jousting with her own dark reflection as one narrative in a series of endlessly foretold collisions. The nightmarish reverie holds her in trance, bringing her close enough that we see the whites of her eyes—to stare into her very soul. As we do, we're invited to project onto the screen, seeing a "reflection" of ourselves upon Starbuck; i.e., not just as a dramatic vehicle for cheap, quick "feels," but the uncomfortable sensation of mistaken identity that this has all somehow happened before—is all happening again right this very second; it becomes an undead phenomenology to freeze under and stare at, but also a communion with all the dead generations who preceded us/will proceed after us. As part of this cathedral, we are merely "in the middle" of a never-ending struggle:

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keeled over!" How embarrassing to find out I'm a flighty peagoose straight out of an Ann Radcliffe Gothic novel! However, I've learned that's much more common than you think" ([source](): Andrea Penrose's "Why Do Regency Heroines Swoon?" 2021).

I can attest to this, my ex, Jadis—normally made of steel—fainted at the sight of blood (*my* blood, no less) while watching me get my vasectomy!
    In other words, Radcliffe wasn't *totally* full of shit, but she *did* use the physiological effects of swooning to contribute to some very harmful psychosexual myths, stigmas and BDSM stereotypes stemming from her fictions (we'll discuss camping these throughout the volume).

For workers, then, this book is about harnessing the awesome power of the Gothic double—of cultivating a Gothic counterculture useful to liberating sex work from capitalistic bondage, thus requires camping canon through holistic study of the larger aforementioned cycle; holistic study is the returning to, and reflecting upon, old points/dated expressions after assembling them in a powerful, fractally recursive way to understand larger structures and patterns' *own* divisions and replications across space and time, but also representations of space-time (especially if they're designed to conceal themselves through subterfuge, valor and force). Camping canon, then, is the profoundly chaotic challenging of singular, thus harmful interpretations (and their reactionary responses) through the commodification of power and resistance as the ongoing (and hopelessly messy) struggle between colonizer and colonized; i.e., "nothing is sacred" (except human rights and the health of ecosystems and the humane treatment of animals) vs Capitalism's *this is old, not new, not something that is sold as "fresh," ignoring old theatrical devices like medieval puppet shows and bad-on-purpose voices, asides/speaking to the audience, wrestling super moves, theremins and [Scooby Doo [1969] running sound effects](), Greek Choruses, Kabuki masks, and Jojo's "tension" [katakana]() and terrible (thus lovely) puns, etc.* Capital is always trying to commodify, thus colonize, the antiquated oral traditions of theatre/folklore, but through the *inexorable drive* of capital these invariably become outmoded as discarded hauntologies/cryptonyms that we can reclaim from canon as it crumbles and seeks profit elsewhere. Canon can always be camped, and relies upon old theatrical stratagems and Gothic hauntologies, but also "talking funny" or incorrectly to achieve its campy Jester's affect.

Before I continue, the amount of influence Bay has had on my book *cannot* be easily quantified, so I will simply say that I have a profound gratitude and appreciation for their boundless, substantial contributions. I wanted to summarize that in a brief but heartful and sincere message to them:

Bay,

As neurodivergent and non-binary yourself—and struggling to find purpose and value in academia like I did—you said it makes you feel valuable and seen in an "encompassing way"; i.e., kindness without judgement, and written/illustrated to share with the world what makes you special in my eyes. As such, you said that you want me to not just *process* trauma but *fill* this book with love (our making of love). Thanks to you, I have acquired the means—the awesome power—to be able to do that. I have many muses, but you are *my* Muse, and this foreword and every volume has a dedication to you at the start for a reason. You are the light in my storm, the pulse to my heart, the ghost in my castle; and this book is our shared "stim toy"/song in the night. "The creatures of the night, what sweet music they make!" May

our song in the night bring other workers peace and love, and our spectres of Marx—the ghosts of all the dead generations—revive and weigh on the brains of the living, terrifying the elite senseless as we make the ghosts of men like Marx campy, thus sexy and funny according to *our* Wisdom of the Ancients as we dance with ghosts (with Marx' memory already rather dry and caricaturized—i.e., of their own "ponsed-up" masculinity [as you put it] relayed through their pointy beards, overinflated egos, and overbearing intellects; and ironically enough, through his debatable anti-Semitism[40] later weaponized by bigots).

Love,

—Mommy

(artist: [Frederick Richard Pickersgill](#)—taken with my phone while I was visiting the Manchester Art Gallery with Zeuhl in 2018)

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[40] (from the "Karl Marx in the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica," 2006): The son of Jewish parents, Marx was baptized at the age of six. While he had no Jewish education and embraced atheism, he continues to be identified as a Jew, and his Jewish ancestry influenced his thinking. Marx's writings about Jews and Judaism, which identify Judaism with capitalism, are nearly all hostile […] It is also not clear if Marx believed the negative qualities he saw in Jews were inherent traits or rather the result of historical circumstance that forced them into specific roles and activities. Whether or not he was himself anti-Semitic, his Jewish origins and his writings have been used by anti-Semites in linking Communism to a Jewish conspiracy; and his remarks about Jews continue to influence the reception of his other writings ([source](#)).

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(*source*: *Zelda Dungeon*)

The idea with this book isn't just to camp canon and **the Shadow of Pygmalion**[41]/ghost of the skeleton king and his madness (the bigoted historical

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[41] (from the glossary): The Shadow of Pygmalion or "Pygmalion effect" is the patriarchal vision of those knowing-better "kings" of male-dominated industries, wherein "Pygmalion" means "from a male king's mind." Male "kings" author imaginary visions of the past, present and future, including the monomyth/Cycle of Kings, infernal concentric pattern and its heteronormative legion of monsters, invasion scenarios and escape fantasies; their reasoned, Cartesian treatment of women is heteronormative, thus abjectly hysterical.

materialism of the status quo that anchors gender roles and identities to biological sex within the colonial binary) by dancing with them, but also *Marx's* ghost (which famous thinkers like Max Weber had to argue with in their own work). Marx wasn't gay enough for my tastes, thus could never camp canon to the amount required. In camping him, I'm obviously doing this through the Gothic mode, specifically its making of monsters—their lairs, battles, identities and struggles—through a reclaimed **Wisdom of the Ancients** that represents ourselves during shared dialectical-material struggles that take what Marx touched on before going further than he ever could:

the Wisdom of the Ancients

The past is always imaginary to some extent, but through less wise forms reliably leads to genocide and tremendous suffering; i.e., Marx' prophesied tragedy and farce[42]:

> Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Montagne of 1848 to 1851 for the Montagne of 1793 to 1795, the nephew for the uncle. And the same caricature occurs in the circumstances of the second edition of the Eighteenth Brumaire.
>
> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. Thus Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the

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[42] E.g., *Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon* (2013): "It is the near future… The apocalypse has had an apocalypse!" ([source](): Gamespot's "Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon - Reveal Trailer" 2013); or, Gloryhammer's *Return to the Kingdom of Fife* (2023); or *Tropic Thunder'*s (2014) Tugg Speedman: "The one man who made a difference five times before… is about to make a difference again, only this time it's… different!" All are dumb nostalgia on top of dumb nostalgia as a running gag that runs the risk of repeating itself until it loses steam (critical power).

Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793-95. In like manner, the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he assimilates the spirit of the new language and expresses himself freely in it only when he moves in it without recalling the old and when he forgets his native tongue (source: "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," 1852).

These foolish forms operate according to structures of power that preserve themselves through blind pastiche, parody and canonical art: pure evil and pure good as an essentialized struggle divorced from material reality—simply the forces of light versus the forces of darkness, respectively of good and evil: not of Milton's humanized, revolutionary Satan, but the Biblical Satan as a vicious backstabber embodied in *Beowulf* (c. 700) and echoed in future written forms through the canonical monomyth endlessly mimicking itself in heteronormative forms of gender trouble and gender parody.

Something important to consider is the inherently fictional or theatrical nature to history as fabricated in some shape or form by good-faith and bad-faith actors (to which, the stage is merely a place to communicate ideas in theatrical language). Napoleon himself—a famous propagandist inundated with the image of the past as a means of self-deification—once said: "History is a set of lies that people have agreed upon. Even when I am gone, I shall remain in people's minds the star of their rights, my name will be the war cry of their efforts, the motto of their hopes" (source: PBS's "Self-Made Myth").

For Napoleon, and many others like him, the truth is something to bend, but also present in theatrical forms invoking the imaginary past; i.e., a means to hide their true intent in bad faith. By comparison, it isn't inherently dishonest for a sex-positive person to "lie" in a theatrical sense if it means protecting oneself from bad-faith actors. In other words, good-faith actors rely on theatre and performance to relay the truth in fictionalized, wildly fantastical forms. The aim isn't misinformation, but a form of acting on- and offstage in every register available to question the so-called legitimacy of people just like Napoleon in the present day—i.e., so-called "revolutionaries" who ultimately used the awesome power of propaganda to manipulate workers towards inserting them into power before reneging on the rights of these same persons while acting out their Romanized fantasies (a trend Marx touches on in the above quotation, regarding Napoleon's ghost on the post-Terror politics of the mid-1800s: "The French, so long as they were engaged in revolution, could not get rid of the memory of Napoleon"). We live in the state's shadow of acting out its own lies(-upon-lies) to preserve itself through a ghostly procession of men who-would-be-Caesar similarly becoming ghosts of

themselves along the pro-state meta-narrative. Theatre—including its popular, romanticized sites and participants—is a dangerously delicious proposition that can have far-reaching consequences:

(artist: [Spencer Devlin Howard](#))

      The thing to remember is that acting, music, poetry and theatre are all powerful ways to communicate, but also a time-tested means of survival against bad-faith actors (the above photo is a cosplay of the villain Salieri, who supposedly

poisoned Mozart to death. Regardless if *that's* true, Mozart wasn't exactly hard to attack; an infamously vulgar[43] man, he died penniless in a pauper's grave—"hoisted on his own petard," as it were). People act all the time for a variety of reasons; many more "lie" at particular places where lying is expected (e.g., the postpunk disco) as a means of getting at the truth in ways designed to help others (thus policed and infiltrated by undercover state agents).

As I point out with the likes of Frederic Jameson, Edward Said and Luis Borges, this is not uncommon, but indeed involves a shared transgenerational/-continental conversation about persons who *know* they aren't "being honest" insofar as official histories are concerned:

> Fredrick Jameson is a Marxist critic not without opinions on the science fiction and fantasy genres. For example, he writes, "[science fiction's] multiple mock futures [transform] our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come" (152) and yet "Fantasy remains generically wedded to nature and to the organism […] Nature thus seems to function here primarily as the sign of an imaginary regression to the past and to older pre-rational forms of thought" (64). Whereas SF addresses the unaddressable—the Utopian ideal, through an imagined "future," which is really just our present in disguise—fantasy happily engages in the practice of magic and mystical beliefs, which are non-materialistic and affiliated with Antiquity and older, less-modern concepts. What we have here is Jameson describing his view of these genres—their perceived function, according to him, rather than their true, objective, universal function, if there is such a thing. I say, "according to him," because Jameson writes what he sees, like all writers. Keeping this in mind, I'll choose authors at random to make my point: What does he have in common with Wolfgang Iser, Jonathan Swift, Plato, Jane Austen, Edward Said, Thomas More and Ursula Le Guin? They are all liars.
>
> Swift was an 18th century Irish satirist; Plato, a Classical philosopher from Ancient Greece; Austen, a 19th century English novelist; and More, a Renaissance writer who wrote in Latin. Excusing the fact that the rest are modern writers and thinkers, each still comes from a different time—that is, the present, which is unique to each. So while Jameson, Iser, Said and Le Guin are all 20th century writers, Jameson is still an American Marxist literary critic; Iser, a German literary critic; Said, a Palestinian, post-colonial literary critic; and Ursula Le Guin, an American fantasy/science fiction novelist. They distinguish themselves in the same broad profession[: lying to

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[43] "Vulgar" meaning "common, plebian." Consider his "*Leck mich im Arsch*" (1782)—literally "lick me in the ass" (while it's not strictly fetishized, but rather closer to the Americanized "kiss my ass," one *could* fetishize it).

get at the concealed truth] ([source](#): Persephone van der Waard's "Jameson and the Art of Lying," 2017).

When asked by a symposium-goer what my point was in acknowledging that everyone lies, I was a bit long-winded. In hindsight, I'd like to reply some six years after the fact: "People lie, but lying isn't strictly speaking a means of concealing the truth; rather, it can help us get at the truth, generally by acknowledging the shortcomings of a given academic or author revered for their special strategies." As we shall see, these past figures weren't gods, and I certainly won't hold back when taking the likes of Jameson or Ann Radcliffe to task (especially Radcliffe). Indeed, we should fucking wail on them and see what comes out (for analysis but also for therapeutic[44] reasons) Yet, I will do so while also doing my best to take what's useful from their own body of work and injecting it into my own. People lie, so it's good to ask why and in service to what; i.e., who says what about them and why.

For example, Mark Dooley writes of Derrida,

What I saw in Derrida was a man of equal genius whose affirmative understanding of home redeemed French thought from its obsessive *oikophobia*.

There is one element of my existence which often perplexes many people. How is it that I—Sir Roger Scruton's intellectual biographer and literary executor—should have written extensively on his arch-nemesis Jacques Derrida? Derrida was, after all, one of those upon whom Scruton regularly poured abundant scorn. He was a high priest of "Nothingness" whose soulless alchemy had corrupted the foundations of intellectual life. Generations of students had fallen under his spell, their minds having disintegrated in the process. This wizard of gobbledygook had earned himself a global reputation, but he was nothing more than a purveyor of "nonsense." That, at least, was Roger's interpretation of Derrida until, later in life, he softened his stance in response to my view of the so-called "father of deconstruction" ([source](#): "The Surprising Conservatism of Jacques Derrida," 2020).

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[44] In the past, I struggled greatly to critique monoliths like Radcliffe, the so-called "Great Enchantress." I've since discovered that going after them and their problematic memory is like kicking a punching bag with their face on it (until it starts to look like Doomguy's when his health is low). When hitting something made to look like someone you dislike, the sensation is oddly satisfying. But also, it's for a good reason: Radcliffe 's a bigot and a *moderate* one at that; for the good of us all, she (and the legion of copycats she inspired with her School of Terror) needs to be taken down a peg or two (we'll get to all of this is good time, I promise). This can be by kicking her corpse, but also dancing with her ghost, turning it into something better in the process!

Preservation of "the home" as threatened by the nonsense of a—let's say, Neo-Gothic fear of colonial inheritance—is, for this dude, peppered with a pure dismissal of those *pesky Marxists:*

> The fact remains, however, that Derrida was not one of the "fashionable frauds" with whom he is often associated. Scruton believed he was a genius, something he confessed in my home in 2010. Both men, as it happens, were arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and expelled from Prague at the height of the communist era. Their crime was daring to address underground seminars for those brave democrats who would eventually emerge from the catacombs to lead their country to liberty. For all their endless talk of the "other," you can be sure that neither Jacques Lacan nor Slavoj Zizek would not have done likewise. That is because, unlike most of the French Left, Derrida was neither a Marxist radical nor someone who sought to repudiate his own society while simultaneously enjoying its benefits.

The publisher, *The European Conservative*, should be a big fat clue, as should the title of the article: "*surprising* conservatism"—almost as if it hinges on the particular interpretations of a man who didn't have as many hard stances as say, Karl Marx! Yet, Daddy Derrida *also* gifted us with the profoundly anti-conservative (and entirely oikophobic) *Spectres of Marx* in 1993. Indeed, it provided the groundwork for the likes of Mark Fisher's hauntology and creative movements like Vaporwave (and later, Laborwave) to flourish. To use a phrase not my own, he was "of the devil's party and didn't know it" (more on this in a bit) so it's up to us to bring his ghost over to our cause. But we first have to be willing to write with ghosts[45], but also dance with them. This includes making fun of them:

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[45] *Vis-à-vis* Jodey Castricano's *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (2001), or "the play of revelation and concealment lodged within parts of individual words" ([source](#)). As I unpack it later in this volume, "Castricano further describes this process as 'writing with ghosts,' referring to their nature as linguistic devices that adhere the sense of being haunted in domestic spaces: the house as inside-outside, familiar-unfamiliar and inherited imperfectly by the living from the dead" (from the "Notes on Power" essay) and "In regards to ghosts, I would argue the same notion applies to *all* undead and to demons—i.e., writing with both as complicated theatrical expressions of the human condition under Capitalism" (from "the Four Gs" section).

(artist: Existential Comics)

In the absence of hard stances—and generally living within the contradictions of a person's total sum—we have to take what's useful and leave the rest (Derrida and Foucault took some incredibly iffy takes, which we'll broach in a moment); the quantifiable value of such a person, then, becomes an act of *salvaging* their ghost. Derrida may not have been a self-identified Marxist™ like Sartre was (who raped his own students with Beauvoir's help), and his prose is absolutely fucking dogshit, but out of the perceived "nothingness" of his body of work, I can easily go in and isolate some real winners. The same goes for Foucault, even though—as we shall see—calling him a "Marxist" is a dubious proposition unto itself:

> the crux of the matter is that in the social humanities, Foucauldian approaches—which have far, far weaker explanatory power than more materialist approaches like Marxism, and therefore are more often than not nearly inert when it comes to confronting actual concrete power—have fully taken over. This at the expense of not just Marx but the whole broad Marxian tradition that once was *the* bedrock of social theory and also held a formidable presence in philosophy, literary studies, anthropology, the early stirrings of feminist academics, and other humanisms. There's a place for Foucault: but his pedigree has, like the suitors in the Odyssey, well overstayed their welcome and gobbled up more than a fair share, considering Foucauldianism's flawed and downright reactionary implications relative to less discourse-focused and more concrete forms of social and political analysis.
>
> Obviously it benefits the powers behind the academy not to ruffle feathers on class issues the way that Marx and Marxists do. Foucauldian people may speak freely of identity, but their project both has no class analysis and no concrete material demands. It's always a deferral—the answer is always a deeper dive into the text, forever. Every essay I've ever read by Judith Butler[46]—a consummate Foucauldian—ends with some version of "now is the time to begin to begin thinking about theorizing a new conception of…"
>
> Compare this to the threat of student and staff unions and radicalization along lines that actually lose money for the powerful and it's not hard to see why Foucauldianism is looked upon with much more favor in

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[46] To be fair to Butler (who long outlived Foucault and Derrida), she doesn't mince words when it comes to TERFs: "The anti-gender ideology is one of the dominant strains of fascism in our times. So the TERFs will not be part of the contemporary struggle against fascism, one that requires a coalition guided by struggles against racism, nationalism, xenophobia and carceral violence; one that is mindful of the high rates of femicide throughout the world, which include high rates of attacks on trans and genderqueer people" (Emanuel Maiberg's "Why The Guardian Censored Judith Butler on TERFs," 2021).

the humanities than Marxism ([source](): Elliot Swain's "Why I Think Foucault Is Basically Entirely Wrong and Bad," 2021).

We're not salvaging the reputation of a particular man (or woman, whoever) or their reputation, but their *ideas*. There's a difference between the two, even if they seem inextricable at first glance. People who cannot separate the two or think critically about them should be viewed with skepticism.
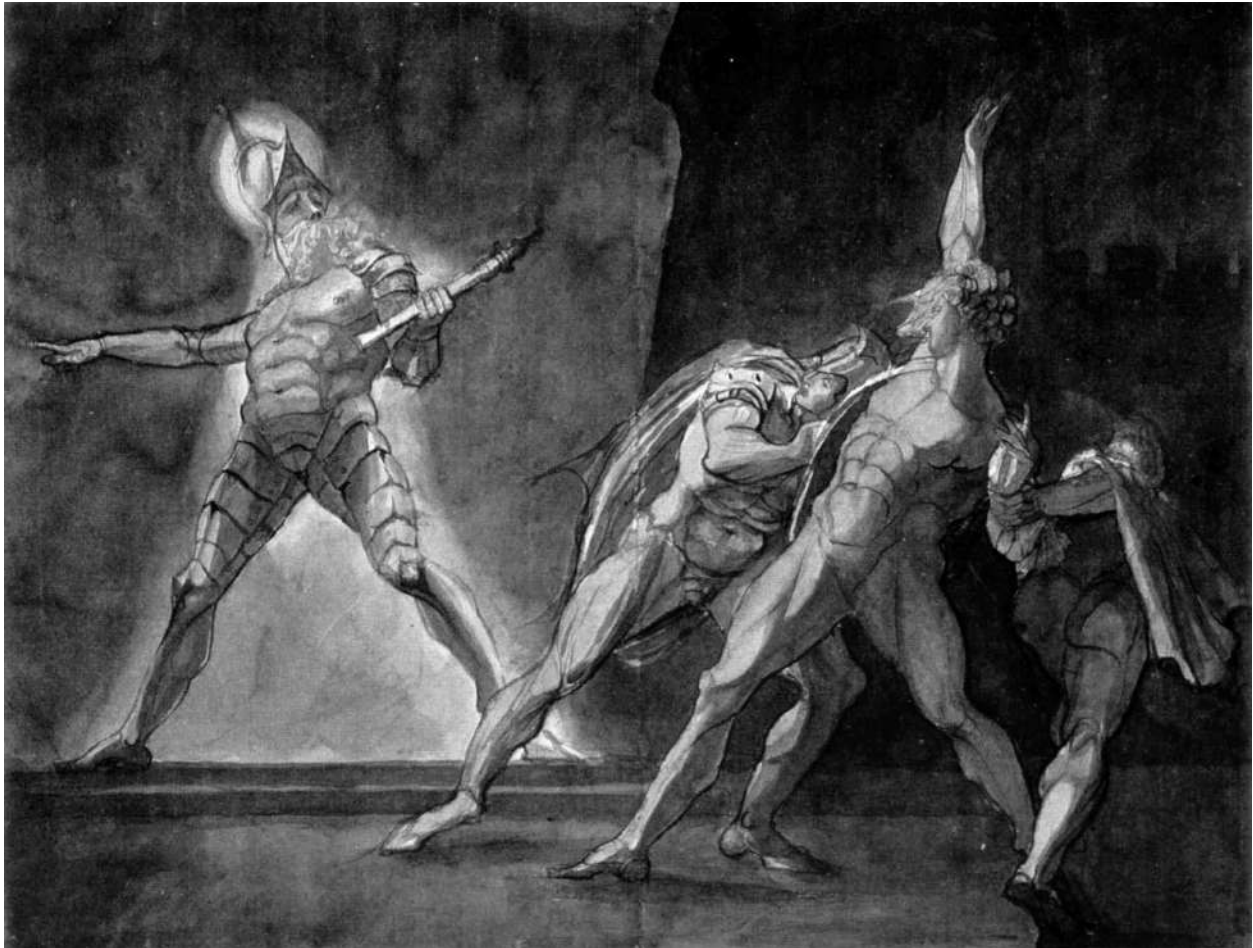
(artist: [Henry Fuseli]())

"Embrace chaos," Zeuhl once said to me. And through the chaos of daily life and the libraries of "books in the wrong section" contributing to the absolute serendipity of chance meetings that eventually leave us talking—if not to ourselves, then with ghosts of past things that continue to shape our lives as giving them structure and meaning long after the originator has flown (a ghost is as much language—i.e., someone's language and ideas—as it is the person themselves having died and become a reputation; all exist in the present moment as something to converse with, as Prince Hamlet does with his "father's ghost," above).

For example, Zeuhl recommended Foucault's *A History of Sexuality: Volume One* (1980) to me while we were at MMU, and took great delight in the fact that Foucault once said in a 1993 interview with Edmund White that, "In a sense, all the rest of my life I've been trying to do intellectual things that would attract beautiful boys" ([source](#)). Zeuhl also specialized in "twink academia" and introduced me to Dennis Cooper and Gregg Araki. But they also seemed oddly uncritical/apologetic of Foucault as a person. I laughed when they jokingly said to me once, "I ride and die with Foucault," but the degree to their joke was tested, and utterly thrown into question, by their abhorred and thoroughly dishonest treatment of me later on. Towards the end of our friendship, Zeuhl didn't bat an eyelash when I showed them the Elliot Swain article and likewise mentioned Foucault's [predatory sex tourism](#) (Bad Empanada 2, 2022) and [public, official desire to abolish age of consent laws in France](#) (The Living Philosophy's "Why French Postmodernists were Pro-Paedophilia in the 1970s," 2021). All at once, it made their fascination with Cooper and Araki's "twink[47] exploitation" material seem dubious in hindsight. In fact, when I wasn't so in love with them (for a variety of reasons—the wonderful [and frequent] sex we had, but also because they were far kinder to me when we were at school together), it became disturbingly easy to spot the flaws I had deceived myself of while we were an item[48] ("love is blind" 'n all that).

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[47] A slur directed at homosexual men/non-gender-conforming AMABs, who are fetishized/coercively demonized by cis-het men during gender trouble when the nation-state cannot provide them heteronormative sex ("war brides"). Often, queer fiction comments on this exploitative side of the "bury your gays" trope through an abject, queer damsel-in-distress: the *twink-in-peril*, perhaps articulated mostly nakedly (with raw exploitation, but also exceptional nuance) [in Dennis Cooper's *Frisk*](#) (1991) or Gregg Araki's *The Doom Generation* (1995). Gentler, less-brutalized versions of this monstrous-feminine can be found sprinkled all throughout popular fiction, including Cloud-in-a-dress from *Final Fantasy 7* (1997) and "Gerudo Link" from the *Zelda* series (which we'll explore more in Volume Three, Chapter Three, exhibit 93). "Traps" in quotes is something that could be supplied to AFAB workers, whose appearance beyond heteronormative standards leads them to becoming demonized as a queer "bait," or trick (no pun intended) that leads chasers down queerer and queerer rabbit holes.

[48] This isn't written to devalue the love that Zeuhl and I had. Quite the contrary, I absolutely cherish the *memory* of what we shared and want it known how special all of that was. But given that they have zero desire to be affiliated with me and my work, I likewise am bound by the code of my own honor to relegate them to that shadow zone they were so keen on being inside after they broke up with me. If said desire seems odd, know that I felt exactly the same way in 2019 after they left me for their future husband (and future "side pieces" despite telling me the breakup was because they were in a "mono" headspace). Simply put, it smacked of Picasso: "Each time I leave a woman, I should burn her. Destroy the woman, destroy the past she represents" ([source](#): Marta's "The Women of Picasso," 2023). Well, sorry, but I won't be party to such vandalism in service of someone whose treatment of me shows they only cared about themselves in the end (whose mind flipped "off" like a switch when they wanted nothing more to do with me in person). I want to preserve the memory of what we had and why it mattered—not for Zeuhl, but for me.

People lie; some people lie in good faith to challenge a state-provided universal truth, but just as many conflate "pure honesty" with "total transparency" insofar as hard political stances can't somehow be embedded (in good faith) in theatrical forms like allegory and apocalypse; they absolutely can. As a set of widely-agreed-upon lies or performances, the Gothic—when used by good-faith actors—amounts to two keywords from Jameson that I'll introduce here (which we'll then unpack in our first essay before the thesis proper): **elaborate strategies of misdirection** and "archaeologies of the future." Both are told by liars; i.e., *splendide mendax*[49] who then use them to reinvent the official histories of the status quo's past; i.e., in good faith through their own Gothic "archaeologies" that challenge universal "truth" as a dubious proposition, one that—when taken at face value from state proponents by uncritical audiences—can lead to great harm when unquestioned; or, to quote Derrida, not only is there is no **transcendental signified**[50], but nor is there is any outside of the text[51]!

Canon is more simple in its tack, preserving ghosts and reputations that uphold the status quo. In canonical works, the mimicry of the past is divided along Cartesian thought, according to its profitable binaries. Anything non-heteronormative is alien, "pure darkness" that challenges "pure light"; in truth, canon alienates workers from themselves and from nature inside the material world. Said alienation—of our bodies, labor and ability to self-express according to our sexuality/gender/power, etc—occurs through Capitalism's profit motive; someone has to kill someone else according to be "correct" or not. Anything that upsets this orderly tension (and its profit for the elite) is gender trouble in ways

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And if my ghostly recollections of them irks and/or saddens them, know that I gave them every possible chance to avoid the present state of affairs. To Zeuhl: *You* chose to hide down in that rabbit hutch of yours; you can stay there as far as I'm concerned, but you will do so knowing that *you* were the primary cause of our broken friendship, not I. Maybe it won't haunt you, but know that your haunting of me is something I have accepted and am living with in my own cathartic healing process. We met in a disco-like space and it was a hell of a good time, but I survived the hell you put me through, after the party (and the sex, love and kindness from you) stopped.

[49] (from the glossary): The teller of splendid lies; e.g., Jonathan Swift and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726); also applies to self-aware weavers of various genres of fiction, from Oscar Wilde to Luis Borges, but also non-white/American authors who have to reinvent their own cultures' lost histories—e.g., Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise* (1993) and Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* (1998), etc. Furthermore, concerning bourgeois lies vs proletarian splendid lies, Gothic stories are concerned with recycled clichés in either case.

[50] From "Structure, Sign and Play" (1966).

[51] Translated from French: "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*." From *Of Grammatology* (1967). A handy way to think of it is as, "There is no outside-text." For further reading, I suggest Harish's Notebook's "Deconstructing Systems – There is Nothing Outside the Text" (2020), which explores Derrida's (famously difficult) idea nicely.

that cannot be permitted; in short, it instills gender trouble as a kind of chaotic, uncontrollable opposition: iconoclasm through "perceptive," class-/culture-conscious gender parody. Sex positivity *is* iconoclasm because it camps canon by default, thus provides us the means to escape the eternal, Promethean nightmare of Capitalism looping in on itself: war is everywhere and in everything; rape is everywhere and in everything. They synonymize inside the profit motive, and their shared ubiquity happens through labor within capital as universally sexualized—all because the profit motive is deliberately built around them as a continuation of history as somehow "ended." Quite the contrary, it merely becomes replaced with an eternal battle where everything has been sexually dimorphized within the colonial binary. It's a rigged game, one meant to enrich the elite by exploiting us. Like the fangs of a great vampire, everything suffers to feed their ravenous maws; but it's presented as "natural," argued in the essentialized language of good versus evil, darkness and light:

Once long ago, before there was such a thing as time, the world was shrouded in darkness. Then came the splendor of light, bringing life and love into the Universe, and the Lord of Darkness retreated deep into the shadows of the earth, plotting
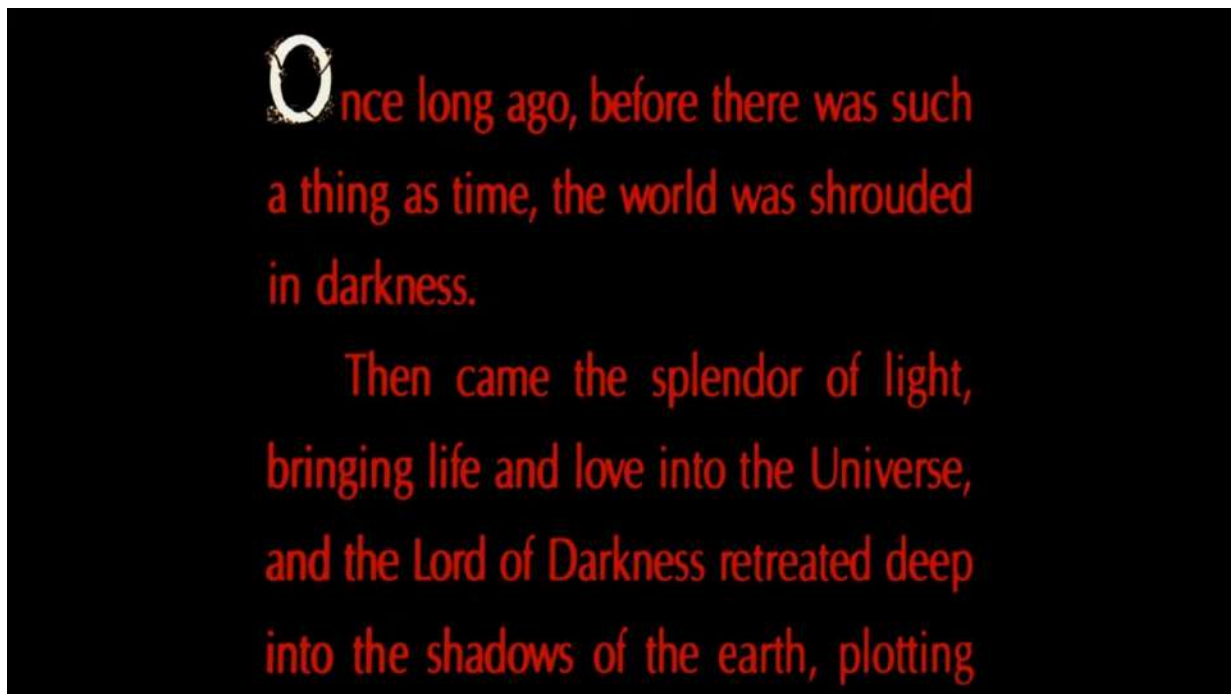
This canonical mimicry has always been constrained by written media as something to disseminate. From the 1980s onwards, however, the spread of all media became easier and easier to ejaculate across what is now the Internet Age. As a result, neoliberal stories like *The Legend of Zelda* (1987—and its cinematic palimpsest, *Legend*, 1985) have essentialized the historical-material cycle of a pure good and evil divorced from history ("the end of history," you might call it). It's not dialectical-material, merely *dialectical*, whereupon the past is devoutly imagined in ways that that essentialize Capitalism's vicious cycle; i.e., cataclysmic arrangements of the imaginary past as something that is simultaneously

Malthusian[52], but also paradoxically "as good as it gets." Manufactured, the stunted plateau becomes a fortress, endlessly threatened by the doomsday myopia of a nominal (queer, non-white) Communism that cannot, *must not* (according to canon) be challenged by guerilla forces.

As the indoctrinated become hopelessly rigid, they also become the state's greatest defenders. Waxing nostalgic[53] on their own diminishing conditions while isolating inside their raped minds, they become unable to imagine anything outside of Capitalism; the space beyond its arbitrary boundaries becomes a pure, harmful black filling them with dread ("waves of terror"). They'll theatrically adopt any mindset or performative role to chase away its terrors, but also destroy them on sight, on- and offstage. In short, they're bullies, afraid of everything around them. In turn, the cycle of warding off this darkness is sacred, but so are the moral judgements afforded to either side within its operation. Except the cycle *isn't* divorced from material conditions at all; the ensuing woes are blamed on "darkness" as Capitalism decays under crisis. As their sense of agency and certitude collapse with the material world around them, workers—but especially the middle class—are left feeling cheated or lied to, and can either blame the system or "backstabber" scapegoats. Whereas Captialism is simply too massive[54] to accurately conceive within theatre, scapegoats are historically far easier to blame because you

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[52] "Pertaining to the ideas of Thomas Robert Malthus." Malthus was an English economist and all-around horrible person, who—faced with the biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Conquest/Pestilence, War, Famine and Death)—dispassionately argued for *the genocide of poor people* to combat "overpopulation" (an eco-fascist dogwhistle that continues to conspicuously play out in popular narratives; e.g., superhero stories, *vis-à-vis* Renegade Cut's "Thanos Was Wrong - Eugenics and Overpopulation," 2019).

[53] E.g., Apone from *Aliens* (1986): "A day in the Marine corps is like a day on the farm—every meal a banquet, every paycheck a fortune, every formation a parade! I love the corps!" Never mind that no one likes the cornbread, many openly hate the job, various characters like Vasquez and Drake are penal conscripts (a prison battalion, essentially), and the enterprising greenhorn lieutenant basically gets everyone killed because he sends the squad into an ambush without weapons ("What the hell are we supposed to use, man? Harsh language?"). Apone's blind love speaks to the warning of the Black Abolitionist: "We love our country but our country doesn't love us" (Atun-Shei Films' "A Black Abolitionist's Drastic Response to the Fugitive Slave Act" 2023); e.g., the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment cut to ribbons at Fort Wagner during a forlorn hope with stars in their eyes (dreaming of a country that loves them).

[54] Capitalism is a *hyperobject*, a structure so big that you can't directly observe it, and whose descriptions through ultimately simplistic metaphors are abstracting at best (for more information on hyperobjects, consider Timothy Morton's 2013 book on the subject). You can only talk about Capitalism in pieces, from a particular point of view about something you yourself disinterred and reassembled over space and time. Needless to say, the point of Gothic-Communist abstraction isn't abject confusion, nor is it to pull something out of thin air. Rather, it's meant to achieve altered perspective for enhanced appreciation of truths concealed by capital; e.g., abstract art that isn't tied to having an obvious point, purpose, or monetary value/function under Capitalism.

can shoot, stab or otherwise kill them; such theatre implies the solution is a simple, straightforward one: a dragon to slay instead of a hydra. Point out the decay behind the illusion and they'll simply shoot the messenger/rape the oracle. Worse, they'll do it as an act of faith in a system built to deceive them.

Doing so is the "tried-and-true" "wisdom" of the Roman fool, falling on their own sword while Rome burns not once, but over and over. Such "wisdom" is not wise, but a false power, which Gothic Communism seeks to reclaim through our own doubling of the imaginary past—its monsters, castles and battles—as a kind of "living document" that can reclaim the Gothic imagination, thus our ability to think; i.e., through lost forms of knowledge retailored for the complexities of the modern world—its warring mentalities, sexualities/genders, monsters (codified beliefs and actions) and praxis during class and culture war critiquing capital. As you can't critique capital without camping its monsters, once more unto the breach, dear friends!

(artist: Drew Struzan; source: Justin Norton's "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath: The Story Behind The Artwork," 2016)

First off, there's nothing critically "redundant" about the Gothic in its more dated-looking forms (see Fred Botting's very dumb arguments about so-called "Gothic redundancy" on exhibit 1a1a1h2a3); ignoring the paradox of the retro-future's own hopelessly outdated anachronisms, the wizard, knight, demon or damsel, etc, well as their various stages of performance: their castles, spaceships, graveyards, cathedrals, laboratories of mad science, and other cultural sites of

phobias, stigmas and urban legends; i.e., haunts[55] that *can* all yield creative successes (of proletarian praxis) through dialectical-material roles as determined by function (the aesthetics is just the allure and appeal of power/playing with dead things); in short, they can all be gay as fuck if done in good faith, thus sex-positive/iconoclastic by camping canon with seemingly wizardly power (versus the canonical orc or Drow as a middle-class version of false rebellion or slumming through fantastical "blackface[56]"). Indeed, the foxy flexibility of guerrilla war (emblematized by the fox, but also as thoroughly sexy in how we resist capital in animalized forms—more on *that* in a bit) isn't mutually exclusive, as Capitalism Realism teaches the faithful (rewarding these Crusaders with damaging illusions

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[55] From Jerrold Hogle's "Leroux's Fantôme and the Cultural Work of the Gothic" in *The Undergrounds of The Phantom of the Opera* (2002):

> By now, we should not be surprised that Gaston Leroux's conflicted social vision and its disguised exposure of cultural "abjections" appear most fully in a novel deeply rooted in the "Gothic" tradition. Over the last two decades, the study of the Gothic as a mixed and unsettling mode in fiction, theater, film, and other media has increasingly revealed how the archaic spaces and haunting monsters that loom before us in performances we call Gothic provide methods of "othering" that have definite ideological and social, as well as psychological, functions. In the Gothic from the later eighteenth century on, as David Punter has shown, "the middle class" often does what we have just seen Leroux do in *Le Fantôme*: it "displaces the hidden violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and falls promptly under their spell" with feelings of both fear and attraction towards the phantasms of what is displaced (Punter, 418). The Gothic, well before Leroux adopts it, enables a growing bourgeois hegemony to be both haunted by and distanced from the "hidden barbarities" that have helped make it possible (Punter, 419)—and *hence* the repressed uncertainties it feels about its own legitimacy (as in Abraham's "phantom")—by projecting such anomalies into the horrors of apparently old and alien specters, buildings, and crypts ([source](#)).

As we proceed into the book, keep this in mind when we discuss monsters and spaces, and the middle-class fear-fascination with them.

[56] This idea is obviously complicated, as Hell and its undead/demonic occupants can denote intersectional stigmas that aren't explicitly connected to race; e.g., green or purple as a color of stigma/trauma afforded to people who adopt it for different reasons; i.e., the witch as the vice character who upholds the status quo by playing into widespread stereotypes, or appropriating colonization unto a group that historically only benefits from Imperialism (relative to the Global South); sure, there are degrees of relative oppression experienced by white women in the Global North versus white men, but these woman (and other token groups) can still perform in bad faith by adopting the rebel's persona, shouting "for the Horde!" and punching down at trans people (or whoever the state needs them to attack) also dressed up as "bad" demons, undead, and/or stigma-animal chimeras to stab, shoot, crush and kill. Keep this in mind when we look at "fantasy blackface" in Volume Two (orcs, exhibit 37e; Drow, exhibit 41b)—not as strictly "of race," but of class, race, gender and religion as generally emphasized to varying degrees during a given performance depending on who's playing the role and during which production.

and prophesies of a glorious afterlife). Instead, the guerilla can challenge the *seemingly* all-powerful, proving just how fragile the power of the elite is: their mighty fortress is a sandcastle, a house of cards. The globalization of capital—thus war and rape and their widespread sublimation in fantastical, "opiate" forms—cannot function unless the icon remains intact. We're going to break it, proving an enemy only has images behind which he hides his true motives. Break that and you expose the man behind the curtain not just as a humbug but a terrible, bloodsucking monster devoid of any empathy and obsessed with profit.

As guerillas throughout history have proved, doing so is not a zero-sum game. We can fight back, exposing and releasing the tremendous pressure capital puts all of us under every waking moment: "perform better and faster and stronger"; or worse, "Grow up[57]!" Simply put, all monsters are instructional in terms of how to act and behave during times of war and peace as forever in crisis under Capitalism; i.e., canonical crises of culture, but also of sexuality and gender as endlessly imperiled by an outside-inside force, the scapegoat for Capitalism's hidden function: exploitation and oscillating cycles of failure that grind workers to paste (the gears of war). This canonical "blame game" becomes myopic, directing workers to kill the Monster threatening the Kingdom from all angles and dimensions—the vague, shapeless thing trying to separate human biology (sex, skin color) and gender within the colonial binary (the essence of gender trouble and gender parody but also mass-exploitation tied to the profit motive). Like Plato's allegory of the cave (c. 380 BC), state proponents from inside the **Man Box**[58] attack class/culture warriors (attacking the status quo from outside the same box/cave) instead of the system, whereupon the ensuing dreams and nightmares of canon uniformly become an invented lullaby whose tragedy and farce—and utter blindsiding by convenient adversity and set, doomed roles—are all "part of the plan": retreat inward, into childhood as an execution of state maxims that lead to profit. "Become the destroyer the world 'needs.'"

In other words, canon (thus Capitalism) is full of ritual sacrifice with a Christianized flavor (crucifixion) or Westernized abuse of paganized forms whose divine right revives the glory of recuperated Roman aesthetics (the Nazi as quasi-

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[57] A hideous inversion of the oft-conceived idea of "Peter Pan syndrome"; i.e., the *adult* is the childish one. The paradox of the heteronormative adult is they are the most entitled and childish of all, albeit without an actual child's nascent ability to imagine anything except the incredibly narrow set of rules, behaviors and beliefs (thus stigmas and biases) they have internalized. Suitably "grown up," the weird canonical nerd becomes easily frustrated, conditioned to rape and kill and the drop of a hat, but also lie through bad-faith deceptions. In short, they are useful to capital.

[58] From Mark Greene's "Man Box culture" in *Remaking Manhood: The Healthy Masculinity Podcast* (2023); i.e., "the brutal enforcement of a narrowly defined set of traditional rules for being a man."

pagan); e.g., the sacrificial rooster or lamb, the virgin or scapegoat, as something to bleed out for significance and good fortune, but also stalled demise for the holder of the knife: the Christ-like Herculean warrior as babyface or heel to sacrifice when the state's crises enter decay while firing up production, which in turn requires more and more sacrifice the hotter the furnace gets. Engorged, the elite need ever more blood to satisfy their hunger as the ultimate parasite, thus demand of their loyal followers, "Defend our land; defend *your* land from the infidels" (which curiously the elite stole the land from, to begin with). As Hilter put it, "What is life? Life is the nation. The individual must die anyway. Beyond the life of the individual is the nation." But Hilter's Nazis were merely radicalized, accelerated variants of their American capitalists cousins' own bastardizing of settler colonialism[59] from the British, whose New England counterfeit/colony expanded used the same imperial model to make their own genocidal apologia (the myth of the West's exclusive sovereignty and ownership as forged from the start and ever since; i.e., a fakery of a fakery[60] all the way down: England, "land of the Angles," reestablished through old feuds fought out in mercenary violence revived under Neoliberal hegemony centuries later). Within this paradigm, everyone's on the chopping block (except the elite, of course). Gothic Communism aims to camp canon through the sacrifice ritual, lampooning the killer's false power when sitting on the same chopping block as them (Christ on a cross); it accomplishes this through a fake "sacrifice," one whose gender trouble puts the warlike ritual of "rape" or "murder" in quotes. Doing so causes the so-called "kings" of capital to collectively lose their minds, outing them and, by extension, the elite and their machinations (which leads to class consciousness).

Canon is classically framed as immutable, eternal—literally "outside of time"—but it isn't. It can be altered, changing history through the wider interpretation and genesis of popular legends, but also the material conditions that respond to them and vice versa (the Base and the Superstructure). Capital historically-materially alienates owners from workers and workers from each other and themselves through Cartesian dualism (with owners being collectively afraid of the poor and siding with "their own kind" as the persons they are born growing up with; i.e., other rich people they identify with and see as friends): an entire system of thought as built around the essential binding of sex and gender to each other and human biology (skin color and sex organs), which is coded to have various "correct" qualities (such as "Christian" or "cis-het") when utilized in the "correct" fashion: towards the profit motive. There is an ostensible "other" who is murdered instead of the state defender killing them, but in truth, the soldier is completely

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[59] [Source](): Bad Empanada's "How the USA Inspired the Nazis - From Manifest Destiny to Lebensraum" (2022).

[60] Jerrold Hogle's ghost of the counterfeit, which we'll explore at length during the Four Gs section.

expendable. Everything sits within a cycle of imaginary history that plays out through an endless, genocidal mirroring that must, if it is to cease, be met with mirrors:

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

These particular mirrors (and their reflections' visions) become a way of seeing the world that isn't Promethean; i.e., they upend the infamous hubris of the Patriarchy without joining canon's process of abjection:

> When Perseus slew the Medusa he did not—as commonly thought—put an end to her reign or destroy her terrifying powers. Afterwards, Athena embossed her shield with the Medusa's head. The writhing snakes, with their fanged gaping mouths, and the Medusa's own enormous teeth and lolling tongue were on full view. Athena's aim was simply to strike terror into the hearts of men as well as reminding them of their symbolic debt to the imaginary castrating mother. And no doubt she knew what she was doing. After all, Athena was the great Mother-Goddess of the ancient world and according to ancient legend—the daughter of Metis, the goddess of wisdom, also known as the Medusa (source: Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine*, 1993).

In short, Gothic Communism goes further than Julia Kristeva or Barbara Creed. Our "Medusa" doesn't play into the elite's scheme of weaponized trauma; i.e, the TERF

surrendering her neck and, once beheaded, staring blindly and furiously at the underclass (dressed up to shock the formerly abused with a disingenuous threat of rape, of the shame of unwanted pregnancies projected onto a racialized, genderqueer "other": the man-in-a-dress, or their murderous, womb-like haunt). Nor does she segregate and "play ball" through compelled modesty/invisibility and tokenism of various doubled kinds.

Instead, our complicated monster heroine uses dialectical-material scrutiny to parse which is which, combining the awesome power of her reclaimed body and its labor to actively petrify the profit motive while blending in with it (e.g., Morry Evans' lovely gender-bending of the knightly romance[61]). In doing so, she utilizes the bizarre, recycled conventions (anyone who says, "truth is stranger than fiction" has never read a Gothic novel before) to actively encourage/incite degrowth—i.e., a so-called "Jewish revenge" against fascism and the state by borking its profit motive, in this life or the next: through a sex-positive counterterrorism that exposes the state's usual terror weapons and fictions (a concept we will touch on in the "camp map" when we examine Joseph Crawford's "invented terrorism" versus Robert Asprey's counterterrorism historically used by labor). All the while, our Medusa has some semblance of safety because she will be viewed as human behind the looking glass (which serves as a buffer between her and the audience), being seen as something her would-be-killers will not sacrifice because they love her. If slowly taught "good play" in a sex-positive sense, they will not chase her at all; they will embody her by seeing themselves in her—a shared humanity that, like Milton's "Narcissistic Eve," happily ignores God's will. While Capitalism's universal alienation makes people tremendously lonely and sexually frustrated, this loneliness can be reversed in ways that don't put all the pressure on sex workers or sexualized workers acting in a Pavlovian sense; instead, we become a social species again, working together to enrich our understanding of the world as we move away from a horribly archaic and medieval system. This includes its gross devastation of the world, nature, and the human condition through rape and war inside the profit motive as synonymous with themselves and with us when we obey like menticided[62] fools. We have to shield our minds, our bodies, our labor as demonic

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[61] Like many artists that we examine throughout the book, Morry's work pointedly revives the Wisdom of the Ancients according to the Neo-Gothic tradition: a marriage between the Ancient Romance's "larger-than-life" and the ordinary novel's sense of the quotidian, the mundane stuff of the everyday. And Morry's work (exhibit 51d2) is fairly tame on the larger gradient, paling in its subversive power compared to someone like Sabs' far more erotic (and twink-centric) romances (exhibit 91c); i.e., the "Sapphic" is a cliché often weaponized by second wave feminism and the LGBA.

[62] The tragedy of Beowulf is most men *can* be broken, conditioned like dogs to serve the state without seeing the damage done to themselves or others; i.e., it has been internalized. Per *Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote* (1605), this is called "tilting at windmills."

forms of expression that paradoxically must expose themselves enough to communicate the message.

Per Arthur C. Clarke, sufficiently advanced technologies are indistinguishable from magic; per Mary Shelley, they become suitably useful allegories for the titanic forces around us, whose structures are mythologically baked into our lives as besieged by god-like forces. In trying to reclaim our power like Prometheus, we are chained and tortured without end; but we are *already* chained and tortured before the gods "lay eyes on us" (that is to say, *actively*—they are always passively watching through state surveillance apparatuses, and active surveillance is generally leveled at the underclass and/or known enemies-of-the-state). "Gods," in this sense, are less personifications of various emotions and more the caprices of actual persons of a particular class that did *not* exist in Plato's day. Instead, the ancient canonical codes and positions of power offered up sodomy as something the elite could do as they wished and condemn everyone else to not: through actions that—*vis-à-vis* Foucault's *A History of Sexuality, Volume One*—eventually became identities associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie. But the same hubris and double standards were present inside a commodified heteronormativity that had started to expand and dominate the Earth. As this expansion has continued, the atrocities of the elite have continued under their cloak of darkness, the "fog of war" perpetuated through a fear of the outside associated with the state's usual enemies: the underclass.

The elite certainly act like gods and have such powers the Ancient Greeks would have described as god-like: bombing salvos (death from the skies) like Zeus' thunderbolts, nuclear weaponry like God's judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah, and

giant vehicles that pull them across the sky like Apollo's chariot. But they *aren't* gods; they're men, thus fallible to the tremendous alienating mechanisms Capitalism has given—if not birth to, then certainly rise to in grander and grander forms. The greater the mechanisms, the greater the hubris, but also the inability to feel anything except when hording more and more stolen essence from everyone else; eventually these kings age and go mad, then—like Saturn the titan—devour their son/"sons" before poisoning the land or setting it on fire[63] ("They say this land was green and soft once; but the moment Haggard touched it, it became hard and grey!"). Obviously the metaphors mix, with the madness of the geriatric human body being expressed through aging billionaires; yet, the madness of the king is also a mentality that has nothing to do with extreme age, but rather a curse of entitled owners (and subordinate workers) being driven to premature madness by the ideology of a brutal, sadistic system: an internalized fear of the monster that compounds until one's offshoots go mad before their time, infantilized like children afraid of the dark… and equipped with the means to "silence" it during the apocalypse[64] (revelation) of the dead walking the Earth.

The ensuing chaos is the paradox of efficient profit: the state eating itself as the ouroboros does its tail, caught between an endless police state of regeneration and cannibalization (desk murder). And all the while, the terrifying power of the gods is less a metaphor and more a description of actual events: the battle of the gods, of angels and demons, that leads to the ignominious fall of Icarus into the sea, but also the Promethean, planet-sized fireball of Capitalism's crucible spilling over when it flies out of the elite's control. Like the demon core[65], they want it as close as possible to release radiation, but not critical mass—except the drive for profit has pushed them and all of us to the brink of extinction more than once

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[63] What better way to illustrate madness than the need for profit by destroying as many people and environments as possible? It's a kind of chasing the dragon/"dragon sickness" by bloodletting entire nations on stolen, privatized land.

[64] As defined by the Online Etymology Dictionary (2023):

> late 14c., "revelation, disclosure," from Church Latin *apocalypsis* "revelation," from Greek *apokalyptein* "uncover, disclose, reveal," from *apo* "off, away from" (see apo-) + *kalyptein* "to cover, conceal" (from PIE root, kel-) "to cover, conceal, save." The Christian end-of-the-world story is part of the revelation in John of Patmos' book *"Apokalypsis"* (a title rendered into English as *pocalipsis* c. 1050, *"Apocalypse"* c. 1230, and *"Revelation"* by Wycliffe c. 1380). Its general sense in Middle English was "insight, vision; hallucination." The general meaning "a cataclysmic event" is modern (not in OED 2nd ed., 1989); *apocalypticism* "belief in an imminent end of the present world" is from 1858 [source].

[65] A pair of radioactive materials that, when held together, would near-instantly release fatal levels of radiation to anyone near the core (see: Alex Wellerstein's "The Demon Core and the Strange Death of Louis Slotin," 2016).

(GDF's "[There Was No 'Cold' War](#)," "[NATO is Risking Nuclear War for Money](#)," and "[No, We Didn't Need to Nuke Japan](#)," 2023).

Inside this larger tug-o'-war sits *our* Satan or Prometheus, trying to take back some of this power for ourselves. All must be done whilst being aware of the bourgeois regression through canonical reverence for state power and decayed superstition *towards* state enemies: as unironic demons from hell. For us, godly language is "the enemy of Reason, but there is something enticing about its form" as a paradoxical means of empowerment by rejecting Cartesian thought (exhibit 51a). Unlike Mako from *Conan the Barbarian* (1981) cowering before the fearsome gods of a blasted ruin, we can play with the same language in ways that perform class-conscious theatre: It's less "the spirits of this place exact a heavy toll" or "The wizard! I told him would pay the gods!" and more the conjuring of demons of Communism as the revenge of Capitalism's innumerable megadeaths: not "of getting even" as Ward Churchill notes in "'Some People Push Back': On the Justice of Roosting Chickens" (2005)

> The problem is that vengeance is usually framed in terms of "getting even," a concept which is plainly inapplicable in this instance. As the above data indicate, it would require another 49,996 detonations killing 495,000 more Americans, for the "terrorists" to "break even" for the bombing of Baghdad/extermination of Iraqi children alone. And that's to achieve "real number" parity. To attain an actual proportional parity of damage – the US is about 15 times as large as Iraq in terms of population, even more in terms of territory – they would, at a minimum, have to blow up about 300,000 more buildings and kill something on the order of 7.5 million people ([source](#)).

but a Jewish revenge of all those poor souls manifesting in workers who—suitably possessed by the spirit of wiser Ancients—will not bend the knee or do the will of the gods of capital anymore. In our current age, the state is utterly reliant on labor to function, but also the illusion that they aren't monsters (e.g., *They Live*, 1988; exhibit 0a2b1b2); and while military urbanism and stochastic terrorism always pose an issue, they aren't things that can happen at a mass scale until they're normalized, which requires a great deal of theatre.

In other words, Capitalism cannot function if workers won't kill each other in the state's name (whose brutal, stupid[66] vengeance knows no bounds: the arms race of more murder, more death, more prisons, more witch hunts, more genocide not in spite of state laws but *because* of them). This refusal to destroy ourselves isn't Freud's "monsters from the Id"; it's called labor action and it requires solidarity

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[66] There's nothing quite so dumb or cruel as threatening workers with death—as if the elite could offer us the means to cheat death when they cannot do it, themselves! The cruelty is, they're offering people the basic means to survive after cornering the market.

to work in opposition to the state's coded instructions (often videogames, which are literally built around worker genocide; i.e., the exploitation of the Global South by the Global North through the greedy rhetoric of infinite growth according to state-sanctioned [thus hyperbolic] revenge that's "too far gone" to stop, but also has become naturalized through a centrist order of things, *vis-à-vis* Tolkien). Theatrical expression and monstrous poetics obviously play a tremendous role in cultivating solidarity as being the usual targets of state abuse: according to them, we're the terrorists, thus deserving of eternal punishment. The paradox is, escape is generally achieved through the same performances as camped.

(artist: [Henri Fuseli](#))

So, while the basic-yet-giant, god-like tensions built into Capitalism (and its neoliberal copaganda through videogames' recursive avatars of war) can be explained incredibly quickly through prescribed monsters "self-reporting" the larger scheme, their Promethean torture loop can also be subverted, thus undone by applying Gothic theory (thus mythical monsters in warlike language; e.g., Shelley's "Modern Prometheus," aka *Frankenstein*) to Marx's ideas: fight terror with "terror" through Robert B. Asprey's paradox of terror[67]. Becoming a kind of "Athena's

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[67] From his *[War in the Shadows: the Guerrilla in History](#)* (1994): "Not only can terror be employed as a weapon, but any weapon can become a weapon of terror: terror is a weapon, a weapon is terror, and no one agency monopolizes it." In other words, the state's monopoly of violence—Max Weber's maxim, "a state holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory, meaning that violence perpetrated by other actors is illegitimate" (refer to our thesis statement for the full definition)—can be *challenged*.

Aegis," the one-two combo of our black mirror turns the heteronormative attacker's aggression back towards their own monstrous sense of self[68] in the same terror language they use; i.e., the reversal of the process of abjection as ordinarily prescribed by famous legends; e.g., *The Legend of Zelda*: "Will Link *still* rescue the damsel if he's gay?" (the franchise remains one of my favorite stages to camp because it frankly offers so much genderqueer potential for doing so: Link's not just canon's twink-ish warrior of light; he's simultaneously the "power bottom" wrestling against Capitalism, Amazon bait, *and* a damsel-warrior given pause by his own double, the "twink-in-black" as a thoroughly non-binarized double of the woman-in-black: Dark Link, exhibit 1a1a1a1_a). Doing so is *automatically* campy because frankly the camped dialog of warlike negotiation over fairly mundane things (sex and the division of labor) in medievalized monstrous/dungeon-themed language sounds funny as hell: a) it camps "correct," unintelligent discussions of these matters, and b) it camps Marx in the bargain because it occurs in Marxist academic language that sounds funny in this particular context; i.e., Monty Python's "Constitutional Peasants" (1969) skit remade by us not just in *Zelda*, but *any* manner of dialogic imagination; e.g., *Frankenstein*'s autonomous, zombie *robota*, of course, but also this far more recent gem:

(source tweet: Sidhe-Her, 2023)

A common facet of Communism is polyamory and open communication vs serial monogamy (and abuse) through heteronormative, but also amatonormative stories that prioritize marriage between one cis-het man and wife; i.e., the colonial binary as centralized within canonical narratives about love. It's obviously important and holistic to discuss other things besides sex, of course, but sex and labor coincide and intersect with socio-economic factors, and our emphasis

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[68] When confronted with their true selves, most men might not run away screaming but they often freeze up, disenchant or self-report (all of which are usual responses for us to use against them).

on Marxist analysis focuses on sex work's demonization under Capitalism according to these matters as heteronormatively constrained. Our focus is sex work; we will talk about labor and theatricality more broadly but generally inside the Gothic mode of expression, which tends to have a sexual element to it (e.g., sin, vice, passion, desire, rape, torture, etc). Camp is generally sexual, because sex as an element of propriety is constrained to the bedroom (again, *vis-à-vis* Foucault's *A History of Sexuality, Volume One*). To camp canon, for Gothic Communists, is to bring sex back into the public sphere in a sex-positive sense; i.e., by humanizing the monsters who have cropped up there in a sex-coercive way. Those bad counterfeits are reclaimed through what people consume as fed to them: through sex, drugs and rock 'n roll, and our art and labor as alienated from us and fed back to us in harmful, cheaply-made forms (from factories). Their reclamation starts with *poiesis* as made/cooked up by us, not the elite and their recuperated proponents' profit motive; i.e., the bourgeois pimping of workers out as unironic sex demons and zombies treated like bad junk food/fruit from the poisoned tree.

The poetic moral, here is learn to cook, yourself, because you are what you eat, and the elite want you remove that ever-important comma—i.e., to cook and eat yourselves following *their* bad recipes (and grammar). To acquire new ones, you must learn to swim in the darkness of oppositional praxis' shadows on the wall (more on that in the thesis proper, specifically the subdivision, "Into the Shadow Zone") and give birth to your own monsters; i.e., as someone who is undead and demonic enough (in a sex-positive sense) to reproduce in this way. While miscarriages and unwanted, illegitimate or terminated pregnancies are a deep, painful and secret source of shame for AFAB persons (thus hidden from judgmental parties; e.g., Abigail, from King Diamond's 1987 album of the same name), the fact remains that lived trauma and power abuse (rape) isn't just the domain of AFAB cis-het women; the poetic license of the hideous progeny takes shape in many different secret shames and guilty pleasures that we can rebirth through our own special expressions. The axes of oppression overlap through biological sex, race, class and gender expression for us to convey through these unique births; i.e., the figurative kind produced in art isn't something to hide but comment on what is normally hidden/unspeakable. In turn, this zombie's demonic pregnancy takes a reclaimed diet of artistic expression with which to give birth to new Communist monsters and contribute to the grander prandial-praxial cycle ("prandial" meaning "during or relating to the eating of food"): a pregnant mother will eat just about anything but gets cravings. To rebirth a wise Wisdom of the imaginary past, our diets need to be paradoxically "picky."

In terms of cooking for ourselves, we're obviously talking about (and committed to) Gothic poetics at large. But food-as-metaphor and -commodity often overlap in the grander market of power exchange within monstrous *poiesis* and theatre; e.g., the monster as a metaphor for hunger regarding sex and vice, but also Halloween candy or cookies (for kids) whose "cake" (for adults) is a lie that

serves elite aims. Ginger's pork chop (below) is actual food that represents a challenge to the food deserts of the world, seizing the means of production through food production as artistic self-expression that likewise fills their belly with yum-yums: a delicious reunion with their labor as reclaimed from a former state of alienation.

But "yuck" and "yum" obviously pertain to human appetites and appetite as thoroughly medieval; i.e., pinned between ongoing debates about restraint and excess as "the wages of sin," told through modern-day Sales of Indulgence, albeit through a Protestant work ethic that canonically attacks Gothic poetics: as monsters/food through undead/demonic metaphors. Their feeding and magical knowledge and transformation amounts to forbidden fruit with animalized, stigmatic flavors and cosmetics; e.g., the vampire drinking "sanguine" as essence tangled up in all manner of connotations and statements for or against the status quo: "Eat of my flesh, drink of my blood and live forever." Also known as *transubstantiation*, this can be applied to reactionary rhetoric/moral panics that stigmatize Jewish people (and other minorities) through revived instances of blood libel and quantum, but also simply food as literally the stuff we eat and media as the stuff we consume that contains representations of food/food-like monsters and their respective

preparing and presenting to us; e.g., Ruben's infamously obsessive depictions of flesh as "food," the main attraction that *might* have been sexual:

> Rubens was obsessed by flesh; young flesh, old flesh, men's flesh, women's flesh, dead flesh, damaged flesh, the flesh of children and angels and saints. His paintings are packed with the stuff. […] This was Rubens' genius. He got in among our basic desires and our raw physicality and he gave them form. In this specific case it is flesh and sexual desire, but this preponderance of flesh in Ruben's art wasn't always erotic. More often than not the flesh was just there, distended and bloated or stripped or lean. We can see the blood coursing through it, we can see its folds and its scars. The painting of the "The Last Judgement in the Alte Pinakothek" is surrounded by other paintings by Rubens full of jowly fat men with distended paunches, muscular naked warriors, fat babies suckling on bloated breasts, sinewy saints, twisted martyrs and dozens and dozens of plump women with big bums ([source](): Ian Walker's "Sex, Violence and Big Bums: Rubens and the Birth of Modern Europe," 2017).

but of course many, many others besides. The depiction of such things has become complicated by modernized, Enlightenment carryovers onto the global stage. For example, the white body but especially the white *female* body would become a storing ground of shame, rage, hunger and non-white appetites (exhibit 1a1a1e1b): fat-shaming mixed with slut-shaming and various other intersections of self-hatred imposed by dogmatic forces equating fatness with sin, the devil, and non-white culture, but also rebellion ("fat and sassy"). The best way to deal with dogma is to return to a pre-Enlightenment, Rubenesque updated for a post-Capitalist world that *doesn't* commodify the struggle of these persons to serve the profit motive—i.e., through all the usual bigotries and stigmas—but rather celebrates their humanity and bravery while framing their larger/alternative body types as a positive thing to love and accept *amid* changing material conditions.

The poetic idea is a queer nostalgia that undermines canonical forms of said nostalgia; i.e., a hauntology that becomes flexible, inclusive and linguistically fluent in modern struggles and terminologies that didn't quite exist during the Renaissance period. There was always a *queer* presence, but it was associated with actions, not identities within society and its cultural markers. If society and language *are* rigid, then words and symbols can mean only one thing. Worse, singular interpretation becomes associated with shame and control, which will never change because they are policed. We're not shooting for fat positivity and acceptance as a personal option/opinion, but a basic human right whose larger societal mechanism—fat liberation—happens through the language and legends associated with said bodies; i.e., just like with other slurs such as "faggot" or the n-word, the word "fat" becomes something to reclaim through monstrous poetics:

faeries and demons, but also their succulent physiques pegged as "wild" through the ghost of the counterfeit. Canon frames these bodies as repulsive *and* magnetic, which means any iconoclastic act reclaiming them must reverse the process of abjection through the same bodies and language as gorgeous, voluptuous and loveable. This holistic package deal utilizes the human body tied to persons who identify a particular way through their body as an extension of their *entire* selves— their gender, orientation, and performance, etc—as prone to legendary hyperbole with a sex-positive inclination: the goddess of the harvest, the fairy queen Maeb, Easter and so on. It becomes not something to eat, but a fleshy conduit to exchange various things; e.g., essence, materials and knowledge; fertile minds, spirits and appetites.

(artist: [Sinead Rhiannon](#))

Under Gothic Communism, sex positivity is body positivity and body positivity includes fat bodies expressed in Gothic language to consciously liberate us by reclaiming the Base and recultivating the Superstructure. Fat bodies aren't inherently bad; what is bad *is* universally pathologizing/fetishizing their image in popular media while prescribing all the usual canonical, heteronormative standards that lead to eating and mood disorders inside a capitalistic model; e.g., skinny female bodies, but also hypermuscular male bodies pumped full of drugs. The double standard with male bodybuilders is how they *aren't* seen as medically obese

because they are "successful" personalities that make money for big companies (and sell their supplements and drugs); heavier women/gender-non-conforming AFAB persons are seen as products first, people second, and generally are judged far more for their physical appearance even when said appearance is actually healthy. As Mainely Mandy points out in "Good Fatty vrs Bad Fatty" (2021), BMI is an antiquated, racist concept, one that leaves the owners of (often female) fat bodies feeling trapped between how they are actually viewed and commodified versus how they want to be seen and treated—i.e., *minus* the stigmas while being accepted and loved for who they really are. Often, as we shall see and explore throughout the book, these feelings of self-love and self-shame intersect between various groups of marginalized peoples with various European/"Vitruvian" body expectations foisted onto them: black men with BBCs/muscular bodies (exhibit 10b2), or white women with "modest," slender bodies versus heavier pornographic bodies that denote an "immodest" type of commodity associated with sin and vice as things to indulge in; i.e., a deal with the devil to achieve forbidden pleasure sold back to us post-theft (exhibits 32a, b; v1) which can be reclaimed through subversive and informed labor exchanges (exhibits 32c, d; v1)

(exhibit 0a1a: Artist: top-mid-left: Juan de Juanes; top-right and bottom-right: Jeremy Anninos; bottom-mid-right: Draculasswife; bottom-mid-left: Nat the Lich; bottom-left: source. It's human to eat, to fuck, to feed; or [in the Humanist

tradition] to poetically compare and contrast unlike things that serve a similar purpose: the body as a canvas, relayed through the medieval idea of miracles; e.g., crying statues weeping blood—i.e., the woman as a sex object whose animation and fleshiness can be conveyed in deliberately outmoded ways to touch upon present stereotypes and structures that haven't voided themselves of canonical, harmful versions of these [often silly] superstitions; e.g., the "Carmilla" vampire lady trying to drink the blood out of Jim Carrey's penis in Once Bitten [1985] to steal his "essence" [cougar sodomy]. Tied to capital, unironic forms appear as "sustainable," meaning lawful and sanctioned to varying degrees towards commodified sin, vice, and appetite, with a middle-class fear-fascination towards these variables. All must be liberated from the shackles of capital as having pilfered the medieval vault of its plentiful nutrients; reclaim your monstrous "meat," "cake" and "fruit" [quotes optional] to feed each other through your labor as yours, not the elite's. Despite the AAA stamp of the Second Gilded Age's return of the mysteries [a medieval name for trade guilds], they want us to blindly "wolf down" their garbage as cheap, low-grade dog food/slave drivel. Defecated by them onto our plates, we're eating the bourgeoisie's already digested food, also known as shit. It tastes like imitative honey but its cheap and fast, robbed of its nutrients.)

That concludes the concept of "giving birth" and the Wisdom of the Ancient's Communist Renaissance (rebirth). Onto the afterbirth: reflection on what came out of me and that which I helped raise to maturity.

Clearly the book has changed much over time. When I started writing *Sex Positivity* in 2022, I was mainly wrestling with the idea of illustrating mutual consent and combating/exposing TERFs while also working on my PhD/postgraduate work (on Metroidvania[69]—"Mazes and Labyrinths:

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[69] An oft-misunderstood term and my area of expertise. We delve more into its full definition and sex-positive application during the "camp map," but for now here's the short version (abridged, from the glossary):

Metroidvania

A type of Gothic videogame, one involving the exploration of castles and other closed spaces in an ergodic framework; i.e., the struggle of investigating past trauma as expressed through the Gothic castle and its monstrous caverns (which is the author poetically hinting at systemic abuses in real life).Metroidvania are a location-based videogame genre that combines 2D, 2.5D, or 3D platforming [e.g., *Dark Souls*, 2009] and ranged/melee combat—usually in the 3rd person—inside a giant, closed space. This space communicates Gothic themes of various kinds; encourages exploration* depending on how non-linear the space is; includes progressive skill and item collection, mandatory boss keys and variable gating mechanics (bosses, items,

[Disempowerment in Metroidvania and Survival Horror](#)" [2021]—which I still wanted to complete but now have absorbed into this book). Eventually I called it "Gothic Communism" and wrote my manifesto[70], but that was certainly not the first step (this work having been the combination of my postgraduate research, having been in school for years and researching independently for years after I left).

At our current juncture, my original blogpost has become a Ship of Theseus, where nothing from the original published material is contained within; furthermore, what was just the manifesto and the book became the manifesto and Humanities primer as one volume and the rest of the book a second volume, until suddenly I made the Humanities primer its own volume, resulting in *three* volumes (the third of which I wrote first)! As such, I wrote the preface and signposted while sharpening my ideas about Gothic Communism, then decided that I *needed* to write a foreword that talked about things more generally. "Gothic Communism" became "Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism" and I designed its logo. As the publishing date neared, I decided to make the foreword my thesis statement/symposium and the preface my basic reasoning as to why I went with a Gothic variant of anarcho-Communism (as opposed to Marxist-Leninism, for example)—all while signposting throughout the book and rewriting the abstract, and so on and so on for the reader's convenience (and my own satisfaction). As I am a being of chaos, thus acclimated to holistic study as a chaotic process, this occurred through a process of fractal expansion as guided by a former academic's desire to "please master"/neurodivergent desire to make a good first impression: little idea, big idea; small book, gargantuan book; thesis sentence, paragraph, statement, symposium, preface, manifesto, other volumes, etc.

For the entire changelog this summary is describing, refer to my website's [1-page promo for the book](#). —Perse

In other words, as the publishing date neared, I found myself increasingly haunted by the ghosts of my teachers. I reached out to them to share my work, but suddenly felt a burning desire to write a thesis statement they would approve of,

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doors); and requires movement powerups in some shape or form, though these can be supplied through RPG elements as an optional alternative.

*Exploration pertains to the deliberate navigation of space beyond that of obvious, linear routes—to search for objects, objectives or secrets off the beaten path ([source](#): "Mazes and Labyrinths").

[70] In this 2022 blogpost, "[Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism: Manifesto](#)," which has seen numerous revisions since July 22nd, 2022. When it releases in early 2024, Volume One will contain the manifesto, but also a variety of other documents and changes not included in the original blogpost.

but also that *I* would in relation to them. My desire to please myself is inextricable from pleasing the ghosts of my academic pedagogues. I knew they would expect it, but also thought it was vital because the vast majority of my arguments could be hammered into something piercing and sharp to then embark on a more leisurely and scenic quest after the trial by fire. I wanted the *reader* to be as well-equipped as possible when grappling with my complex and myriad arguments. So I went about it, forging for them a healthy "dagger of the mind" as a monster mother would: by giving birth to *Sex Positivity*'s thesis statement in a Gothic, intersex manner—i.e., by playing out the messy birth/with the afterbirth and ejaculating it as a roiling parthenogenesis of mixed and mixing metaphors (all in the spirit of fun, of course).

(artist: Miss Upacey)

Like a witch's cauldron, this dark and soupy creative process emerged from having written most of my book from top to bottom, over and over already (about 500,000 words). The entire time, its "labor" back then wasn't something for which I was fully in control, but identified with when I had written my master's thesis[71] five years prior while burning the midnight oil night after night at MMU's student library while watching the magpies dance in the trees through the window next to the computer loaned out to me (and thinking of Mary Shelley's dark progeny when she had "birthed" *Frankenstein*); and (then and now) with Emily *Brontë* making Heathcliff:

> *Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know: I scarcely think it is. But this I know: the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master — something that, at times, strangely wills and works for itself. If the result be attractive, the World will praise you, who little deserve praise; if it be repulsive, the same World will blame you, who almost as little deserve blame. […]*
> *   Wuthering Heights [1847] was hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials. The statuary found a granite block on a solitary moor; gazing thereon, he saw how from the crag might be elicited a head, savage, swart, sinister; a form moulded with at least one element of grandeur — power. He wrought with a rude chisel, and from no model but the vision of his meditations. With time and labour, the crag took human shape; and there it stands colossal, dark, and frowning, half statue, half rock: in the former sense, terrible and goblin-like; in the latter, almost beautiful, for its colouring is of mellow grey, and moorland moss clothes it; and heath, with its blooming bells and balmy fragrance, grows faithfully close to the giant's foot [source: Nava Atlas' "Charlotte Brontë is Preface to Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë," 2014].*

The book, then, has been a series of "births" dragging the hellish child up from the depths of my own making and design (my own infernal concentric pattern, perhaps; i.e., the *repeated* plunging into the abyss while stuck inside it: *mise-en-abyme*). After the majority was written, I desired to summarize everything as pithily as I could into our aforementioned thesis statement. I didn't have to; I *wanted* to, treating it as an educational device according to how I had been taught. Through the benefits of a classical and campy education, I once again "fell pregnant," this time by myself with myself, but also with Bay who—like a slutty incubus from afar— had filled *my* slutty cum dumpster long distance. Now "full" of the dark swirling

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[71] "Lost in Necropolis: The Continuation of Castle-Narrative beyond the Novel or Cinema, and into Metroidvania" (2018)

material as having been written and refined many times (many creampies), from toe to top full of these joined ideas, theories and plans, I had to give birth once more and set about it. While unsteadily "pregnant" with this saturated material, I pulled and manifested the entirety out of myself as a comprehensive stab at mapping and summarizing everything that I (once again) had to organize and refine over and over. I clearly want to document the process to you, the reader—to grant you an exhibitionist's idea of what it was like for me, a trans woman, to create as I have been taught and how I view it. Work isn't fun unless it's playful, I think; it should be fun, regardless of its importance (and this work—helping myself and other sex workers escape harmful bondage—I consider to be of the utmost importance).
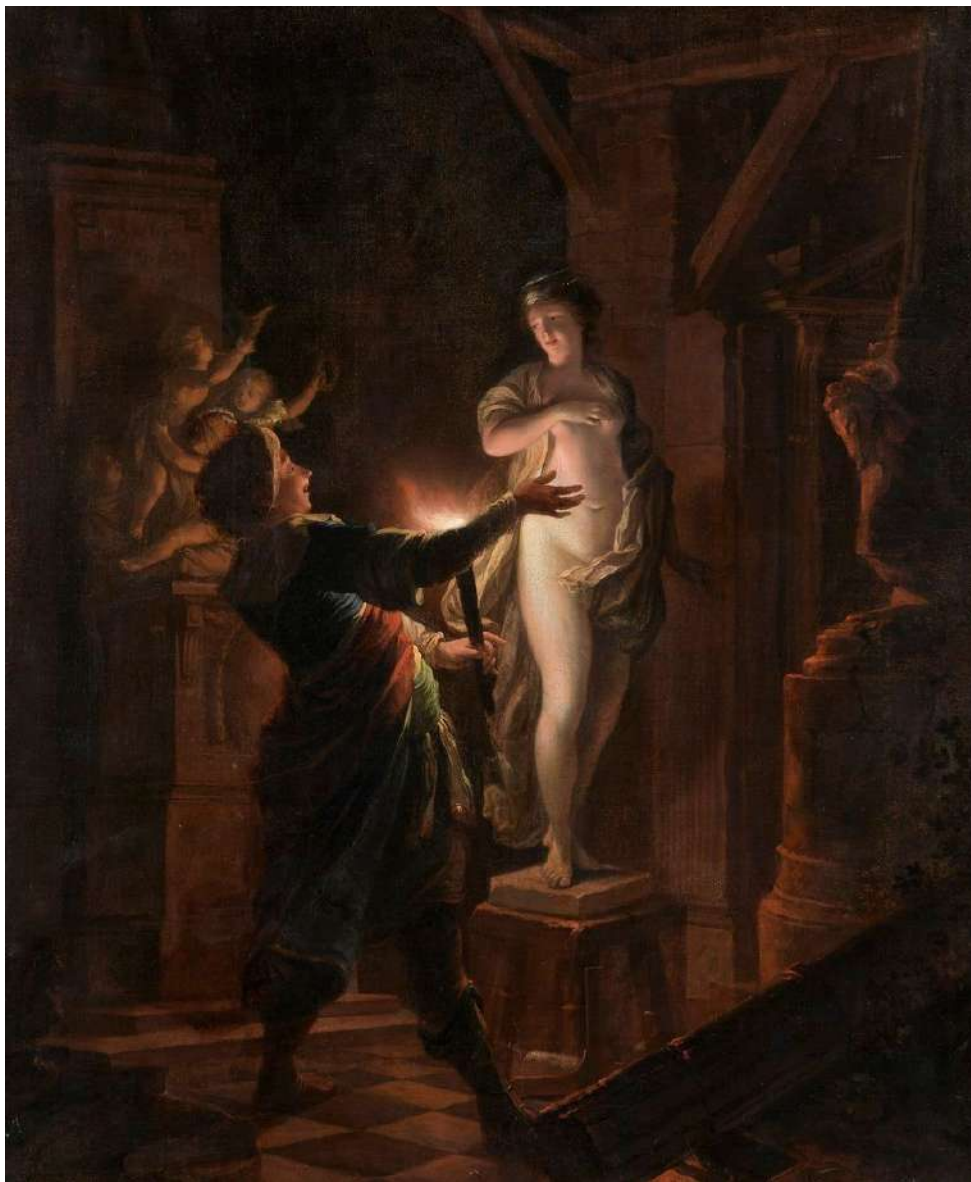
(artist: Gerard Pietersz van Zyl)

As Galatea resisting Pygmalion by shyly but with great determination making her own work in the gloom, my own statue was born out of the darkness as *threatening* to take shape, then continuing to grow and develop into something more fully realized *after* it exited my body. First born, the thesis statement grew as I slathered more material onto it. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, I had done this many times and took joy in its hideous, beautiful monstrosity:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful ([source](#)).

I was a monster mother making a smaller copy of the original monster she proudly gave birth to from older copies from other mothers and loving it just as much the umpteenth time around (maybe I'm a glutton for punishment; i.e., the grad student's paradoxical flagellation).

To put dates and numbers on it (as of 9/10/2023), by the 31st of August, this saturation point exploded, my thesis statement going from ~5,000 words to another 20,000 on top of that in the next six days followed by another two days' worth of (currently uncalculated) prose and exhibits produced in two ten-hour periods (followed by me writing all of this down today, and writing the "Notes on Power" section, too) and even more writing* after that. As such, the thesis statement's initial draft was supplied more keywords, and given the manifesto terms towards the end, laid out like bricks then ending in a "tree" of the manifesto as a whole route and structure for which oppositional praxis is run (the engine to supply our "fuel" inside), and the "camp map" as a small exhibit of its praxial execution. Then, I expanded the "camp map" into its own section, moved the manifesto tree to the start of the thesis to plot out the individual manifesto terms I had laid out already and explained in my thesis statement, and then refined *that*. From there, I decided to reorganize the thesis statement as its own "mini" volume that precedes the other three, which freed me up to expand my comprehensive argument in ways that felt adequate, holistic and well-paced; i.e., my little vampire's lips blushed blood red. I took my four main Gothic theories (the Four Gs) out of my manifesto proper and placed them before my thesis statement as a "Gordian Knot"; i.e., central to everything I'm talking about in regards to monsters, but a "tough nut to crack" and one that I would take the entire book doing so (not just the thesis statement). After this, I added even more definitions from the companion glossary into the thesis statement (such as "monopoly of violence" and "state of exception") until I had included *all* of the keywords and Gothic terms in the thesis statement, "camp map," and symposium when discussing how to camp the canon. Then I wrote "the notes on power" section. As I did all of this, I

signposted throughout the rest of my book, referring back to my thesis statement, and I added more exhibits (and more after that).

As of 9/13/2023 (six years to the day I arrived in England to study at MMU), the thesis volume's renovations (not including the symposium, which was mostly written at this point; nor the disclaimer, "What I Will and Won't Exhibit," which is new but not restricted to the thesis volume) now clock in at 74,445 words. That is, from 8/31 to 9/6 to 9/13, my thesis statement went from ~5,000 words to ~25,000 to ~75,000, or nearly an additional 70,000 (and 102 images, ~40 of which are full-fledged exhibits) in two weeks. It feels superhuman, but also—fittingly—like a Gothic dream, one I wrote while awake but possessed; i.e., not by drugs, but my own education and labor has having taken hold in a comfortable pattern, day after day. The contractions.

Comfortable or not, I wrote like an absolute demon, animal, werewolf and frankly am in complete awe of the massive, Godzilla-sized crater left in my own wake: "Did I do that?" And there's still more work to be done! No rest for the wicked, I guess.

- *As of 9/22/2023 (the beginning of my final proofread, which will continue until the end of the month): the thesis volume wordcount (not including the first disclaimer, title page, abstract, symposium and glossary) is ~112k words, and 165[72] images.*
- *As of 10/4/2023, the proofread is mostly done, totaling ~177k words and 226 images. I had to write several sections to fit the glossary back into the book (to be able to use the heading system to link to keywords I didn't have time to define); I also would finalize and add in fun bits as I went—e.g., roasting Ann Radcliffe in a hypomanic fit.*
- *as of 10/8/2023, the final proofread is completely finished, as are the last of the last-minute changes. The final thesis volume wordcount (again, not including the first disclaimer, title page, abstract, symposium and glossary) totals ~191k words and 250 images.*

All the same, my ability to do this isn't supernatural; I didn't sell my soul to the devil, but was raised on good foundations that come from tremendous privilege as

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[72] In short, I was averaging ~5000 words/~15 pages and ~7.5 images *per day*. Compared to my past blogging efforts, that was essentially a full-size blogpost with pictures *and* citations (which normally I would write over a week, sometimes longer) *every day for 22 days straight* (without drugs, I feel I should emphasize—that includes coffee/alcohol or other over-the-counter stimulants/depressants). It's funny because I remember Paul Sheldon—Steven King's autobiographical protagonist, in *Misery* (1987)—giving himself a martyred pat on the back when he said he was writing 5 pages a day (King even italicized it, if I remember correctly) while his "muse" was torturing him. Like, that's really cute, my dude (though props for doing it on a *typewriter*, holy fuck)!

a white, AMAB trans person. That is, I live in a situation where I can take my time, enjoy a stable life, and throw whatever I wish into the crucible: movies, novels, and videogames, etc. In medieval terms, I may as well be living in Merlin's tower. But that's <u>still</u> true now as much as it was, back then; I live in the Global North, and from where I am in a room of one's own, the Global South may as well be the Stone Age (courtesy of American bombing runs). I want this to change using the privilege that Capitalism gave me to write and illustrate this book as my contribution to the struggle.

Like Ariadne's thread woven from my spinner (as a Gothic spinster), the abacus of my fractal-recursive calculus oscillated. Following its attenuation (and at a point when I *think* the creation of this final thesis volume has *mostly* run its course), my book now has a fully-formed thesis *volume* that is organized like the other three volumes are; it is comprehensive, detailed and educational to the best degree that I can provide regarding the entirety of *Sex Positivity*. It may seem dense at first glance and that is a fair criticism, but is meant to include every keyword, map and argument in their logical order as something to unfurl and explain once, then again at a much slower and lengthier pace throughout the rest of the book: Volumes One, Two and Three (if I gloss over a topic in this volume, rest assured another volume will cover it in far greater detail).

(model and artist: [Persephone van der Waard](https://vanderWaardart.com))

In the past, I have tried to write many books[73], and have had many creative projects I poured energy and effort into (see exhibit 0a1b1, on page 118); but my magnum opus is something I *couldn't* have written ten years ago, or even five. *Sex Positivity*'s thesis volume is easily the hardest thing I've ever written but also something I'm proud of in relation to the giants whose shoulders I stood on—both my *Karate Kid* (1984) moment when I show Mr. Miyagi "wax on, wax off!" and one where I include all of my friends in on and the moment. On the academic side of things, Linnie Blake—when asked—once told me that I wrote like an angel, and Christine Neufeld made note of my "weird sexual metaphors" nearly ten years ago when writing about *Frankenstein* ("*Frankenstein* essay—Born to Fall? Birth Trauma, the Soul, and *Der Maschinenmensch*," 2014). Combining those two sentiments, I worked arm-in-arm with various comrades—fellow artists and sex workers who modelled for me to be included in this book. I may have put in the lion's share of the overall work, but it was still a group effort and one that I'm proud of and thankful for as demonstrating *our* arguments; i.e., a collective statement of sex positivity and worker solidarity honed by years of artistic/academic training and otherwise useless (to capital) critical analysis and Gothic specialization (refer to the acknowledgements section to see everyone who was directly or tangentially involved in this project's genesis, synthesis and completion).

At its full size, *Sex Positivity* is four volumes, ~742,000 words/2427 pages and ~1096 unique images (subject to change after the final proofreads for those volumes are complete, but I don't plan on adding much new material to them; i.e., no footnotes for the first editions of Volume One, Two and Three). Though only a fraction of that grand total, this volume is still substantial: ~198,000 words/602 pages and ~260 unique images (not including the paratextual documents). Because there's *so much* to cover and unpack, the abstract, table of contents and summaries we've provided so far aren't really enough; we'll have to summarize the thesis volume itself and what it contains per division, subdivision *and* sub-subdivision.

We'll do this, next.

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[73] One book was produced when I was in high school, and remains unfinished; another graphic novel was finished but is out-of-print; a commissioned novella that is mostly-finished but on hiatus (refer to this page on my website to access descriptions for each). Also, there's my 2018 master's thesis, "Lost in Necropolis: The Continuation of Castle-Narrative beyond the Novel or Cinema, and into Metroidvania" (on Academia.edu) and various amounts of commissioned short stories/erotica (on my website).
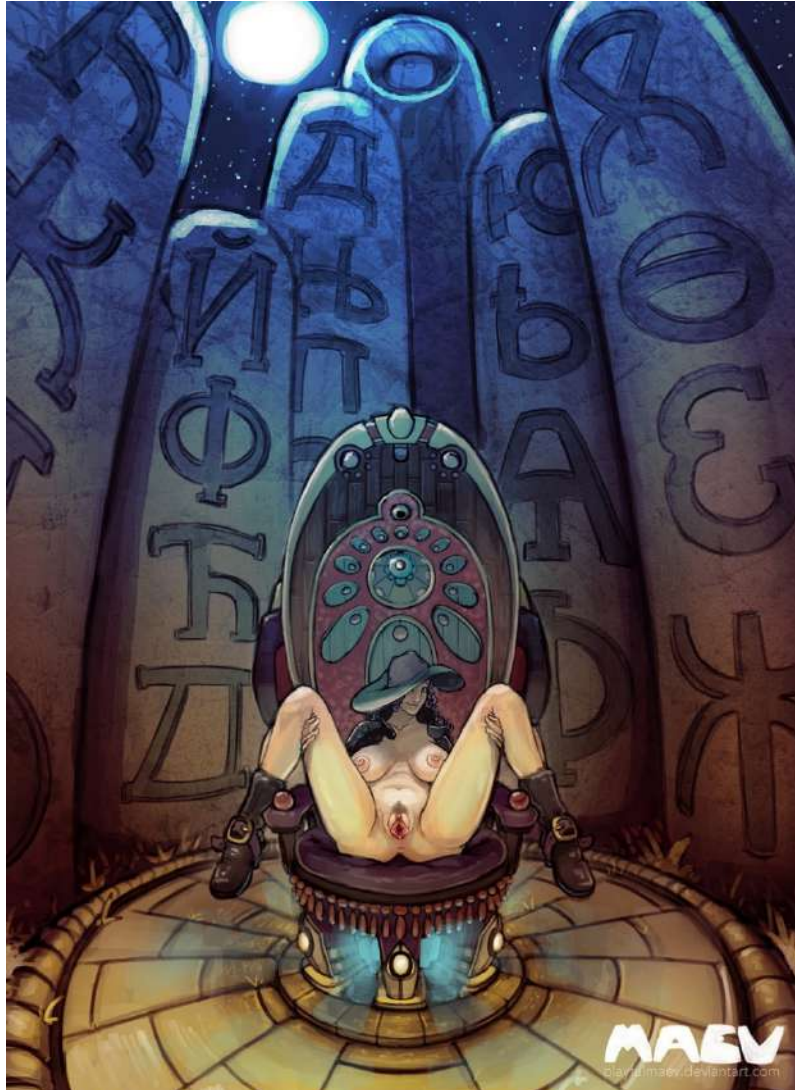
(exhibit 0a1b1: Artist: Playful Maev. Ileana Sanda, the Queen of the Night, is a character I created for a fantasy series called The Cat in the Adage [from Macbeth, 1606] that I started writing when I was nineteen. I never completed it as a full story but the characters live on in my work. As my website reads,

[The Cat in the Adage is a] fantasy novel I worked on extensively after high school. Back when people still used printers to edit manuscripts, and iMac G3s were popular […] partly inspired by Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain and Myth: the Fallen Lords, the story had a lot of dark fantasy elements, but also a fair amount of sex. Here's a concept piece I had drawn up [featuring] one of the characters from the story [source].

"The story" was something of a queerer version of Tolkien's refrain [the High Fantasy treasure map] than Ursula Le Guin's Wizard of Earthsea series was. The Cat in the Adage camped the heroic quest, telling the story of a magical princess

named Alyona living in a faraway easterly* castle. Bred for war by her evil uncle, she discovers that Uncle Bane is actually her father! He had traced the family's magical bloodline and predicted he could produce an exceptional wunderkind/wunderwaffe if he sired a child with his sister! Alyona is the byproduct of that dreadful abuse, and must be trained by Ileana, queen* of all witches, to resist the patriarch, face her trauma, and rescue her battered household from certain doom.

*My mother specialized in Eastern European Studies at the University of Michigan, so I grew up right after the fall of the Soviet Union learning about the czars, Peter the Great, and Vlad the Impaler (my little brother wanted to change his surname to Țepeș: Joe Țepeș, or Joe "the Impaler"). When I commissioned Maev to do the drawing of Ileana seated at her throne of magical pillars [modeled after the pillars of Nosgoth from Legacy of Kain], I asked her to cover the pillars in Cyrillic symbols; from what I recall, asking Maev what she wrote, she replied that the Cyrillic symbols were selected at random.

["A painting of Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476), also known by his patronymic name Dracula (patronymic meaning a name based on that of a male ancestor), and posthumously dubbed Vlad the Impaler due to his brutality. The name of the vampire Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's novel Dracula (1897) was inspired by Vlad's patronymic" (source: British Library).]

Something I realized later was that Ileana and Alyona—in a psychomachic/psychosexual sense— were medieval divisions of me told on the page. As a closeted trans woman, I lived in trauma that was real and imagined, both the lived abuse of my household and my internalized self-hatred and dysphoria/dysmorphia as a neurodivergent trans person who didn't know she was either of those things. I lacked the knowledge to express that, but I felt it. So I used what I did know to express my unspeakable trauma and trans woman's existence in the language that

was given to me; e.g., the "Stan Lee" approach to superheroes and psychomachy through plurality

plurality/multiplicity

Generally demonized in Gothic canon, "Plurality or multiplicity is the psychological phenomenon in which a body can feature multiple distinct or overlapping consciousnesses, each with their own degree of individuality. This phenomenon can feature in identity disturbance, dissociative identity disorder, and other specified dissociative disorders. Some individuals describe their experience of plurality as a form of neurodiversity, rather than something that demands a diagnosis" (source: Wikipedia). It's not automatically an ailment or begot from trauma, though it will canonically be presented as such (the same goes for asexual/neurodivergent peoples).

but also the Hero's Journey as something for me to camp. We learn through sex, drugs and rock 'n roll, but also oral traditions and folklore as a means of storing our culture inside; anyone who thinks otherwise is deceiving themselves. But camping is important because these things [their Gothic poetics] can be weaponized against us; i.e., by turning off our ability to think critically while the profit motive colonizes everything in pursuit of elite hegemony [destroying our culture in the process and replacing it with bad copies that serve the profit motive]. We must not treat such poetics as a means of escape that is purely a numbing opiate; i.e., one that blinds us with its supposedly "visible" darkness; we will need all our wits and linguo-material tools—our "dark forces" of reclamation/reinvention—if we are to escape the myopia of Capitalist Realism. Rest assured that all the sexy monsters will remain, as will their forbidden fun and games [even the dumb shonen crap]; they'll just be doubled as sex-positive [thus class, race and gender conscious] during our dialectical-material scrutiny's asymmetrical/guerrilla warfare: by not being anchored to biological sex, skin color and their various heteronormative functions within the colonial binary and its mythic structure/Shadow of Pygmalion's bread and circus.

That, as I shall explain in my thesis, is our greatest strength.)

Thesis Volume Outline/Summary of the Thesis Statement, "Camp Map" and Symposium Divisions/Subdivisions

"What does this key unlock?" —Conan, Conan the Destroyer (1984)

Continuing our vast baggage train of war, the rest of the volume contains my thesis argument. I have decided to organize it into three divisions (with their own subdivisions and sub-subdivisions): the thesis statement, "camp map," and conclusion. To summarize their whole operation:

- **The thesis statement:** Contains my core thesis argument (regarding canon).
- **The "camp map":** Serves as an introduction to camp as an iconoclastic device; i.e., camping the canon.
- **The thesis conclusion:** Wraps everything up and segues into the **symposium**, which is a conversational follow-up/aftercare "sesh" to end the volume with.

I will now summarize its general approach per subdivision:

- The **"Notes on Power"** essay discusses how power is theatrical, and plays off paradox and liminal expression (doubles) to develop Gothic Communism. Specifically it examines Gothic Communism's campy ancestor/palimpsest, *Paradise Lost* (1667) and its complex relationship to future works that likewise have adopted theatrical *Amazonomachia*, paradox, and artistic/pornographic liminal (monstrous) expressions that speak truth to power—i.e., through "darkness visible" (the Gothic imagination) but also "darkness *deliberate*" as performatively mired in the self-same classical allusions: actively utilizing the Gothic convention of fetishes and clichés as class-conscious, thus of the devil's party and knowing it (unlike Milton; our revolution cannot be accidental if we are to survive).

- The **thesis proper** contains my manifesto tree (an expanded list compiled from the main points of my original Gothic-Communist manifesto), Four Gs (four main Gothic theories, also from the manifesto), a small essay about where power is performed during the Gothic mode/inside the Gothic imagination ("Doubles, Dark Forces, and Paradox"), and my thesis paragraph, which the thesis body expands on using most of this book's keywords and manifesto terms. To expand on that, the manifesto tree lists our praxial equations and coordinates relative to the holistic study and camping of canon's singular interpretations under Capitalism; the Four Gs and essay concern the Gothic imagination/mode as something to "spelunk" while we reclaim our creative power/pedagogy of the oppressed. All are followed by the thesis statement's paragraph/body and everything they bring to the table (whose own inner sub-subchapters are unpacked when we arrive): Capitalism sexualizes everything dimorphically inside a heteronormative/colonial-binarized profit motive that leads to Capitalist Realism; this can only be escaped through an iconoclasm/*Amazonomachia* ("monster battle") that liberates workers through sex-positive art.

- The **"camp map"** and **thesis conclusion** assemble the manifesto tree pieces and explains (using the Four Gs) how to camp the canon as normally heteronormative by "making it gay"; i.e., normally canonized through the settler-colonial/heteronormative quest for power in a Faustian bargain (told in the warlike language we're all accustomed to), which we then camp during our own Promethean Quests. Told in four parts, part one explores camp as a counterterrorist activity in relation to state terrorism, and outlines various monster types featured in the exhibits (e.g., femboys, catgirls, himbos, Amazons, etc); part two explores the interrogation/negotiation of power in relation to Gothic space (castles) but especially in videogames (shooters, High Fantasy and Metroidvania); part three considers the making of monsters and goes over more monster types (nurses, xenomorphs and other phallic women); part four puts all of these ideas to the test, executed by my friend Blxxd Bunny and I.

- **The symposium** is an aftercare/wind-down period; i.e., looser, more generous articulations and exhibits of the thesis proper and "camp map's" broadest, most common arguments and key points (e.g., the Gothic, monstrous-feminine, *Amazonomachia*, etc): exhibits, lists, mini thesis statements and additional equations. I wrote it before the thesis statement/"camp map" and is meant to be visited and examined after you've read those portions. There's also a very brief conclusion, which serves as a bridge between this volume and Volume One (the manifesto).

Be forewarned: the remainder of the thesis volume frankly starts off quite dense and paradoxical, but does "mellow out" towards the symposium. To avoid "drygulching" anyone, I've tried to prepare you as thoroughly and gently as I could. But now that you're more or less as prepared as you ever will be, I'm gonna pull a Gandalf and shove your ass out the hobbit hole door. Gird your loins; it's adventure time!

(artist: Hitoshi Yoneda)

Notes on Power (paradox) and Liminal Expression (doubles)

"Now...what can we say of John Milton's <u>Paradise Lost</u>? Well, it's a very long poem, it was written a long time ago, and I'm sure a lot of you have difficulty understanding exactly what Milton was trying to say. Certainly we know that he was trying to describe the struggle between good and evil, right? **(picks up an apple from his desk)** *"Okay. The most intriguing character, as we all know from our reading, was"—***(writing "SATAN" on the blackboard)***—"Satan. Now, was Milton trying to tell us that being bad was more fun than being good?"*

(He takes a bite out of the apple; a long pause as he chews and realizes that the class remains unmoved.)

Okay...don't write this down, but I find Milton probably as boring as you find Milton. Mrs. Milton found him boring, too. He, uh, he's a little bit long-winded, he doesn't translate very well into our generation, and his jokes are terrible."

<div align="right">

—Professor Jennings[74], <u>Animal House</u> (1978)

</div>

Before we proceed into the thesis proper for **Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism**, this essay provides a few basic things to keep in mind about power and oppositional praxis throughout the book.

---

[74] The film (and its writers) reduce the Miltonian allegory to a simple "come hither"; i.e., the wanton professor tempting (female) students within forbidden unlawful carnal knowledge. The stereotype exists for a reason; e.g., Simone Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre raped their students (Andy Martin's "The Persistence of the 'Lolita Syndrome,'" 2013) and Foucault and other postmodernist French thinkers wanted to abolish France's age-of-consent laws (The Living Philosophy's "Why French Postmodernists Were Pro-Paedophilia in the 1970s," 2021). The clue with Jennings lies with how bored he sounds, but also his open confession to the class (thus the audience): He thinks Milton is boring and merely wants to get laid by trolling the undergraduate body. In short, he's a sex pest giving the snake (and Satan) a bad name—not from wanting to have sex, but having sex by flagrantly abusing his position as professor and not really teaching the students anything except that power *can* be abused.

Concepts like "real power" and "false power" are **dialectical-material** concepts, and occur in relation to the **Base** (and its **historical materialism**) as something to *claim* and the **Superstructure** as something to *cultivate* during theatrical heroic expression; i.e., as consistently monstrous, thus liminal, as a (crypto)mimetic form of poetic expression that can be for or against the status quo: the **psychomachy** ("mind battle") and *Amazonomachia* ("monster battle") as **psychosexual** ("sex battle" torn between pleasure and harm), thus profoundly contradictory in a variety of ways all at once—the **paradox**. We'll talk about paradox in general; then, power as paradox according to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667); and finally touch on liminal (monstrous) expression—i.e., Gothic doubles as powerful, psychosexual paradoxes useful to our **proletarian** purposes during class/culture war against the elite.

First, paradoxes—specifically the *Amazonomachia*. This "telling truth with lies" is a double paradox, demonstrating the word as we shall use it in Gothic apologia as, "two ideas can coexist at the same time despite being diametrically opposed." In turn, the *mise-en-abyme* (echo of fabrications) repeats, but also echoes stacked counterfeits on top of counterfeits, on top of myths and legends as forged for opposing forces at cross purposes—the irony being that it's generally far easier to lie and tell the truth by accident (or on purpose) like Banquo's warning to Macbeth

> "And oftentimes, to win us to our harm the instruments of darkness tell us truths, win us with honest trifles, to betray's in deepest consequence."

than it is to try and spell things out in such a way as to encompass the whole ordeal (or in the words of the late, great Alan Rickman: "Mention you're the Metatron and people stare at you blankly. Mention something out of a Charlton Heston movie and suddenly everyone's a theology scholar!"). To this, Banquo got it wrong: Lies and the language of darkness aren't inherently bad, meaning harmful or deserving of capital punishment; while he exclaims, "Can the devil speak true?" to himself and Macbeth, the devilish workers of Communism *can* speak true—i.e., in order to help each other survive the real dangers of a structure evolved to deceive us through harmful forgery (the irony being Banquo was killed by his own friend, *not* the witches—all for the same status inside the same power structure they lived inside together and which Shakespeare relayed through a stage play whose name people [specifically thespians] don't like to say[75]).

Language, like the devil, is plastic and can change shape (only following the **Cartesian Revolution** and Capitalism's rise of mapping and dominating the world through doubles inside and outside of "pure" fiction [exhibit 1a1a1h2a1] did language solidify and binarize in service of the profit motive). Paradox is an

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[75] Instead of *Macbeth*, the play is often just called "the Scottish play."

essential component of human language in its natural and material forms; i.e., the immensely popular idea of theatre and duels told through heroes and their monstrous contradictions to ascribe meaning through staged conflict. Within this broader dialogic, the Gothic is mired in mimetic paradox through the communication of "deathly" appetites" (idented for clarity):

> Death is the ultimate feeling of a lack of control, to be out of control. To face it as codified according to stigmas and biases, theatre is a tremendous, psychosexual device for **calculated risk**/**informed consent** (which operates to give agency through performance as a negotiated, heavily controlled affair). For *Gothic Communists*, these praxial contraptions are built around the profit motive as something to face and challenge through its praxial doubles: Gothic Communism's monsters and their poetic, liminal extensions versus Capitalism's, communicating in shared struggle and language as paradoxical on various registers simultaneously.
>
> > ### calculated risk/risk reduction exercise
> >
> > A calculated risk minimizes harm but mimics the feeling of being out of control; e.g., consent-non-consent/informed consent.
> >
> > ### *consent-non-consent*
> >
> > Negotiated social-sexual scenarios through informed consent, consent-non-consent where one party surrenders total control over to the other party trusting that party to not betray said agreement or trust; aka "RACK" ([Risk-Aware Consensual Kink](#)) in relation to risky BDSM; i.e., bodily harm; e.g., public beatings, rape scenarios, whippings, knife play and blood-letting.

As such, Epicurus was perhaps *not* entirely on the nose when saying, "Death is nothing to us[76]," because people (regardless of their political inclinations or stances) absolutely *love* "death" in theatre as appealing to appetite as taboo, excessive, forbidden, Satanic, etc (e.g., *ahegao*, or "death face"); but whose power is dialectic-material regarding arguments about what is or isn't correct, valid or otherwise important. Often these dress up as "it's not important, so let's never

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[76] From Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* (*On The Nature of Things*) (c. 99 BC): "Death is nothing to us. When we exist, death is not; and when death exists, we are not. All sensation and consciousness ends with death and therefore in death there is neither pleasure nor pain. The fear of death arises from the belief that in death, there is awareness" ([source](#): Jack Maden's "Why Death is Nothing to Fear: Lucretius and Epicureanism," 2020).

talk about it again"; i.e., "it *is* important, so let's not discuss it because it challenges *my* sense of agency relative to canonical notions and structures of power and performance"; e.g., "the hobbits are gay" versus "the hobbits are *not* gay (and never mention it again)." Their anxiety (and biases) are projected onto us, seemingly as if to ask, "Why do you care so much?" (to which my response is, "Because I'm a gay little faggot who likes the Gothic, biznatch").

In this perennial, dialogic sense, power and death constitute societal gatekeeping *and* countercultural transformation through theatrical fetishes and clichés (of which the Gothic is positively rife with) that play out in real life: a means of practicing debate as a wrestling tactic inside human language to better prepare us for its harmful, pro-state deceptions between daily conversations (and sex, or both) that we have with other people that look more or less like us; i.e., by recognizing and challenging them through our own sex-positive Gothic subversions that *recultivate* the Superstructure and reclaim the Base. In doing so, we're accomplishing Gothic Communism's chief aim: taking back the critical, class-conscious power of paradox-(thus power)-as-performance, specifically that of monsters, on- and offstage simultaneously. It's chaotic, but knowing how to swim in the void of the **shadow zone** (the Gothic imagination/mode) and its "darkness visible"[77] can be, paradoxically, an illuminating and life-saving affair—i.e., as something to deliberately cultivate for Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism (thus for all workers) by taking back Hell, thus the world, as having been thoroughly colonized; i.e., ever since Milton first wrote *Paradise Lost* and challenged the status quo (arguably by accident, in his case, and certainly within the traditions of theatre as having been in conflict for far longer—since Hippolyta and the Ancient Greeks, at least). For us, there needs to be a deliberate re-camping of "darkness visible" through our "creative successes" during proletarian praxis.

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[77] "Darkness visible" was the mysterious stuff at the bottom of the burning lake/void that, once freed, Satan and Beelzebub used to fashion *pandemonium* and the rest of Hell with. In short, it was a paradoxical creative force in *Paradise Lost*.

(exhibit 0a1b2a1: Artist, top- and bottom-left: [Monori Rogue](#); top-right: [Dmitry Prozorov](#); bottom-right: [source](#). "All deities reside within the human breast," wrote William Blake[78], but have been retooled by canon to guide manufactured division to serve the profit motive. Faced with the double as doubled for these nefarious aims,

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[78] From *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790):

> "The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.
> And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;
> Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood;
> Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
> And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.
> Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast."

we must utilize the same paradox for proletarian means; the war isn't simply muscles and brawn, but conflict on the surface of the image during liminal expression. A class/culture warrior fights the good fight by challenging the canonical function of paradox with their body by subverting sexualized labor's traditionally warring factors: **the Cartesian dualism** *of* **the colonial binary** *as* **sexually dimorphic***; i.e., men-as-men vs women-as-women. The theory might seem dense, but the* art *speaks quite naturally/for itself and quickly to whatever praxial position we hold during oppositional praxis through the same theatre and its monsters' liminal expressions and paradoxes: reimagined and reanimated statues coming alive to fight for or against the status quo in the same hauntological language [torn between the past and the present]. Like the media itself, their battle takes place at the same time, and during the chaos "you'll know it when you see it"—the battle, of course, but also which side you're on, or* want *to be on, as you oscillate inside of yourself in the Gothic sense: the psychomachy ["mind battle"] of the imaginary monsters representing repressed or openly playful ideas that war with/wear each other for fun; of play as both a serious and lighthearted game; for political reasons as fun; but also an internalized conflict regarding all of these external things making up who we are in relation to the world and it to us.)*

Now that we've discussed paradox at large, onto power as paradox and a list of things I thought relevant: Power is a paradox, meaning it is largely theatrical, invented, and built on top of itself through counterfeits, myths and legends; it is staged, dialogic and combative. During the Gothic mode, power is doubled *and* dialectical-material. As such, power's legitimacy is invented under crisis and struggle as manufactured by the state. State power aggregates during crisis and transforms during decay. Power and resistance occupy the same theatrical space. Power to create and its theatre are deified as a show of force, of legitimate violence against iconoclastic power, which speaks truth to state power through dark, Satanic poetics that challenge state authority and abuse through delegitimized violence (and counterterror). Power manifests as monstrous and animalized through the shared language of stigma and bias: undead and demonic monsters for or against the state during the making and performing of monsters as animalized; i.e., monsters are animalized, undead/demonic, chimeric/composite stances of power for or against the state. Monsters and their critical power transform not just through mimetic expression, but **crypto**mimetic expression; i.e., (according to our Four Gs) as **hauntological cryptonyms** inside **parallel spaces** (**chronotopes**) that further or reverse **the process of abjection**, but also conceal it to varying degrees in **the ghost of the counterfeit**/**narrative of the crypt**'s "cancelled future" (and various other small-but-vital theories we'll unpack in the rest of the thesis volume). And all of this unfolds through bodies, masks, weapons, catchphrases (call-and-response crowd participation), special/super moves (coups des grâces/"strokes of mercy" or murder strokes), uniforms, identities, color codes,

etc, as struggles to adhere to/comply with or resist canonical norms during Gothic poetics. Monsters are effectively lies created to demonstrate what power is during class/culture war, operating through examples and exceptions that prove/disapprove the rule.

(exhibit 0a1b2a1a: Artist, left: Raphael; top-right: Alexey Steele; bottom-right: Henry Fuseli. Milton's accidental stumbling onto "darkness visible" as campy owes to him famously being blind, but also having internalized the ideas of "good vs evil" in ways he could camp inside his mind to say something allegorical about the world in which he lived. The paradox is, he wasn't a nice man; for as many years, each morning he would wake and have his daughters transcribe his dreams into Latin.
But without their dutiful penmanship, we wouldn't have Paradise Lost, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein [whose framed narrative contains a copy of Paradise Lost inside of itself] or sci-fiction [e.g., Scott's Alien films] as having stemmed from the same iconoclastic Gothic tradition into the present. "Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the Earth," said Archimedes[79]. Indeed, that power can also be

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[79] "As attributed to Pappus (4th century AD) and Plutarch (c. 46-120 AD) in Sherman K. Stein's *Archimedes: What Did He Do Besides Cry Eureka?* (1999)" (source: Today in Science).

ours if we dare to write things down—to intentionally make monsters that camp canon and Capitalism to liberate sex work, thus all work, through iconoclastic art's <u>deliberately</u> campy "darkness visible.")

For example, Satan from *Paradise Lost*. In that story, God and heaven are all-powerful, which is a paradox, meaning it requires perception to work. Satan is made to justify the crisis to hold onto absolute power/total power[80], but the whole point of the story is him resisting God's plan yet simultaneously being bound up in it. The two seem inextricable, but the allegory of Satan is a rebellious figure whose power and energy are hidden within war and its usual panoply as displaced, far away and *en medias res* ("in the midst of things," like *Star Wars*): whole hosts of warring angels and demons acting like white knights and black knights, their armor and spears, chariots and formations, maneuvers and stratagems:

> Now had Night measured with her shadowy cone
> Half-way up-hill this vast sublunar vault,
> And from their ivory port the Cherubim
> Forth issuing, at the accustomed hour, stood armed
> To their night-watches in warlike parade;
> When Gabriel to his next in power thus spake:—
>   "Uzziel, half these draw off, and coast the south
> With strictest watch; these other wheel the north:
> Our circuit meets full west." As flame they part,
> Half wheeling to the shield, half to the spear.
> From these, two strong and subtle Spirits he called
> That near him stood, and gave them thus in charge:—
>   "Ithuriel and Zephon, with winged speed
> Search through this Garden; leave unsearched no nook;
> But chiefly where those two fair creatures lodge,
> Now laid perhaps asleep, secure of harm ([source](#)).

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[80] (from the glossary):

totalitarianism

A state condition towards the total consolidation of power at one point. For example, in respect to Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia, Richard Overy writes in *The Dictators* (2004), "'Totalitarian' does not mean that they were 'total' parties, either all-inclusive or wielding complete power; it means they were concerned with the 'totality' of the societies in which they worked."

With Milton's God as an allegory for the Church of England, the same idea of total power also applies; i.e., not that their power *is* total, but *perceived* as total: "Perception is reality."

Milton exhausts a tremendous amount of energy explaining the pre-existing intentions to Christian hegemony and its warlike hosts' **heteronormative** purpose, but the entire paradigm is challenged by Satan making monsters for himself: he can create, transform and do things previously thought exclusive to God. It may be to a lesser degree in terms of sheer time spent in the perceived moment of things, but solidarity is a seditious proposition told through the Arch-Fiend as the Byronic rebel of the story: the anti-hero having the power to rule in Hell by making *pandemonium* (a place whose name means "all demons") and tempting God's children with it. This power is beholden to the same principles of performance, but offers the ability to organize differently than God does: horizontally versus vertically—i.e., anarchistically and anachronistically for workers and the oppressed.

Because of its allegory as having such awesome revolutionary potential, Milton was described by William Blake as being of the devil's party and not knowing it; or as Jamal Subhi Ismail Nafi writes in "Milton's Portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost* and the Notion of Heroism" (2015),

> According to [Tesky] Gordon, it was Blake who expressed this view most emphatically by saying that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it. He expressed this opinion chiefly in relation to the portrayal of Satan who, according to him, has been depicted as a character possessing certain grand qualities worthy of the highest admiration. Other romantic critics supported this view with great enthusiasm. [Percy] Shelley, for instance, reinforced this view when, in his "Defense of Poetry," he said:
>
> > "Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy."
>
> According to Shelley, it was a mistake to think that Satan was intended by Milton as the popular personification of evil. This argument is still very much alive and valid today ([source](#)).

In other words, Milton's story is sympathetic to the devil's rebellious plight because it supplies him with the means to escape and make trouble in ways that speak truth to power through monstrous poetics; i.e., by playing god and camping canon through the language of stigma and bias, power and resistance, undead and demonic animalization (e.g., Satan turning into a toad or a snake to tempt Eve), feeding and transformation through disguised struggle, open resistance and

subversive/transgressive means of power exchange and expression that camp canon, thus fall on the side of labor and sex positivity. The British Romantics all adored Satan, but particularly the second generation of *more* rebellious poets (whose *poiesis* endeared itself to Satan's by making that which has never existed; i.e., a fabrication that favors its own campy arrangements of power and material conditions over the canonical fabrications of the status quo and its arrangements); to Byron, the Shelleys, Blake and Keats, Satan was a righteous dude, the underdog fighting from the "superior" ethical position against a giant, "all-powerful" bully while on the poetic/theatrical backfoot: the underdog from hell.

(artist: Gustave Doré)

These aren't platitudes, but ontological[81] descriptions of power-in-action through warring positions thereof inside the state as status-quo, but also its state of exception as profoundly *liminal:*

liminality

A linguo-material position of conflict or transition, liminality is ontologically a state of being "in between," usually through failed sublimation/uncanniness; it invokes a "grey area" generally demonized in Western canon as "chaos." In truth, semantic disorder can be used to escape the perpetual exploitation and decay caused all around us by Capitalism and its giant lies (a concept we'll

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[81] "Ontology" being of, or otherwise pertaining to, the study of existence.

explore throughout this book). Liminality also occurs when working with highly canonical/colonized material, like the Western, European fantasy or highly exploitative material like canonical porn (with the word "pornography" being criminalized, thus something iconoclasts must reclaim). Gothic examples include monsters and parallel spaces, which tend to oscillate in liminal fashion.

liminal space

Liminal spaces, in architectural terms, are spaces designed to be moved through; in Gothic terms, these amount to Bakhtin's Gothic chronotope as museum-like time-spaces that, when moved through, help past legends come alive, animating in literal and figuratively Gothic/medieval ways: the Gothic castle of the historical past. Classically these include the animated portrait, miniature, gargoyle, (often giant) suit of armor, effigy and double, etc; more modern variants include Tool's early music videos (exhibit 43a), Trent Reznor's 1994 music video for "Closer" (exhibit 43b) and Mario 64's own liminal spaces outlined by Marilyn Roxie's "Marilyn Roxie presents … The Inescapable Weirdness of *Super Mario 64*" (2020).

The above examples all operate through *cryptomimesis*, as per Jodey Castricano's *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* (2001):

cryptomimesis

A writing practice that, like certain Gothic conventions [e.g., Segewick's commentary on live burial as a timeless fixture of Gothic literature] generates its uncanny effects through the production of what Nicholas Rand might call a "contradictory 'topography of inside-outside'" [from Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* …] Moreover, the term *cryptomimesis* draws attention to a writing predicated upon encryption: the play of revelation and concealment lodged within parts of individual words (source).

Castricano further describes this process as "writing with ghosts," referring to their nature as linguistic devices that adhere the sense of being haunted in domestic spaces: the house as inside-outside, familiar-unfamiliar and inherited imperfectly by the living from the dead.

(exhibit 0a1b2a1b: artist, bottom-middle-and-left: [ringoripple](); top-right: [Lustyfairy666](); bottom-right: [Jasmin Darnell](); top-left: [source](). What Segewick calls "a fixation of the ocular confrontation," the image on the surface is sexualized during phenomenological[82] "debates": staring contests. Regardless of what's behind the veil—be it an old woman's face or Lady Dimitrescu's "thicc mommy peach"—the canonical surface is dimorphically sexualized and interrogated through traditional stigma, bias and fear-fascination. For the classic Neo-Gothic, the surface would have been used to communicate sexual tension/contagion in oft-unironically harmful forms.)

liminal expression (monsters)/monster girls

Monsters are generally liminal, but some more than others openly convey a partial, ambivalent, oscillating sense of conflict on the surface of their

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[82] "Phenomenology" being of, or otherwise pertaining to, the study of experience.

imagery. A hopelessly common example is the monster girl, as AFAB persons are generally fetishized/demonized "waifu" in canon and must be reclaimed in sex-positive forms (exhibit 5e; 23a, the Medusa; 49, phallic women; 50, furries; 62e, cavewomen, etc). The advanced degree of this trope is the **monster mother**, which expects the women to exist in ways that cater to men that are both loved and feared in fetishizing ways, but also sacrificed (exhibits 51b1, 87b1 and 102b, etc). Akin to a black mirror, Eve Segewick, in 1981, called this mimesis "the character in the veil [or] imagery of the surface in the Gothic novel." The basic gist, they argue, is the sexualizing of a surface imagery in Gothic media (their example being the nun's veil); i.e., a "shallow pattern" literally on the surface of paper or a screen or glass that can evoke a deeper systemic problem that spans space and time.
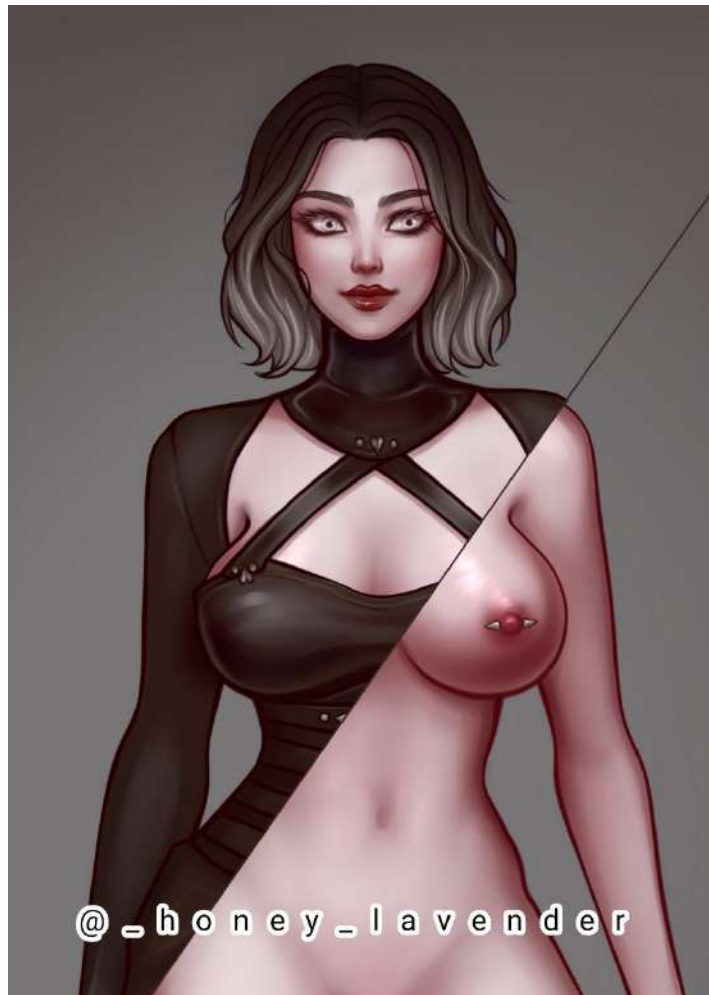
(artist: _Honey Lavender_)

Keeping the above definitions in mind, the word _liminal_ can also denote to being "in between," insofar as a monster is canonical versus iconoclastic—with a

particular spatial/personalized expression moving towards one pole or the other from its *de facto* starting point. Monsters are generally liminal in liminal types of media: art and porn.

      As a **liminal hauntology of war** that "suddenly appears" during Gothic dialogs, monsters are generally "not of this Earth." Rather, history is an invention written through otherworldly violence and force, including the Gothic theatrical/practical implements of those things; i.e., historical materialism in action, but through dialectical materialism, or the arrangement of opposing forces through material means according to Gothic poetics during oppositional praxis: doubles. Doubles invite comparison to encourage unique, troubling perspectives that "shake things up" and break through bourgeois illusions. To that, the paradox of performing power compounds through the visitor(s) from other worlds, planets, times as fabricated, but also doubled in a praxial sense; i.e., Satan builds *pandemonium* and hell follows within him, but he looks and acts uncannily like those he's rebelling against. While warring against the status quo, the monsters from either side (which come from/occupy the same shadow zone, whose nebulous, psychosexual "forces of darkness" we shall unpack during the thesis proper) start to resemble and *not* resemble each other. Sure, they look a lot alike, but dialectically-materially are actually polar opposites.

(exhibit 0a1b2b: Artist, top-left: Gustave Doré; everything else: [UrEvilMommy](). The private poses are being used as negotiated for an illustration that will be going in Volume Three, but I'm including them here, ahead of time, to make a point about oppositional praxis: Psychomachia and psychosexuality often employ medieval language as something to consciously interrogate by sex-positive workers who use their labor to revive and invigilate [display in exhibits] monstrous conversations about sexuality as heroic, thus athletic and/or adjacent to depictions of war in traditional gendered ways that have been canonized/camped back and forth over space and time.

The monstrous violence and sexuality in Paradise Lost are thoroughly psychosexual and gendered in relation to heteronormativity as something to rail against, and hence plays out in the usual theatre as something to witness: through battle, specifically that of angels and demons adjacent the human occupants in the Garden of Eden. These various, sex-positive paratexts become a collective meta "fan fic" that supports former "perceptive" arguments by overwriting future attempts to efface their critical power and liminal expression as invited voyeurism of an

exhibitionist troupe's ironic peril: the rape play as cathartic, but also a guilty pleasure that overrides and counterattacks harmful wish fulfillment [the unironic battle-of-the-sexes]—i.e., the desire to see others "die" through collaboration and friendship versus <u>actually</u> die through class resentment [the slasher villain as the instruction of such destruction; e.g., Michael Myers, a "demon lover" of the operatic[83] Radcliffean sort, unironically killing slutty teenagers]. In short, it takes what people like—sex, tasty food, kink, monsters and BDSM, heroic theatre, heavy metal, and drugs [or evocations of those things]—and camps them further than Milton could have possibly dreamed.

[artist: Frank Frazetta]

The functional opposite would be something like Frazetta's <u>John Carter</u> through the Gothic mode, but this remains liminal because it can always be camped [exhibit 0a2c] during our battles fought in praxial opposition to the state.)

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[83] An Western opera or fairytale generally contains a princess, a hero and a demon lover inside of a castle, and is penned by white people who—after making things taboo through the process of abjection, have promptly become fearful of, and fascinated with, the abject; they then seek to explore what has been walled off from them through various fakeries: navigating the ghost of the counterfeit as made by them (enabled by double standards, of course; a white woman like Radcliffe is allowed—more or less—to misbehave, navigating her own reverse-engineered trauma more than a woman of color would be, or a gender-non-conforming or Indigenous person, etc).

In other words, languages are dialects with an army of dated, spectacular monsters to back them up, but the army and its monsters *needn't* be an argument for nation-states or some other organization of power as vertical; camps of campy soldiers can use the paradox of performing power in doubled monstrous language to radically deviate away from camps of canonical soldiers in terms of appearance, but vary exactly on how they do this to achieve a universal *proletarian* function. Even so, the aesthetic variations of said function occurs using the reclamation of ancient traditional language, whose traumatic depictions of theatre and war are something Americans (or those living under *Pax Americana*) have been well-acclimated towards, including its dimorphic gendered and sexualized elements; i.e., the (to use the *Superbad* analogy) "phallic" nature of such brainfood as "dick-shaped" and the ubiquity of rape through (to use the *Team America* analogy) the "fucking" of "pussies" and "assholes" by "dicks." Modern theater's **copaganda** and **Military Industrial Complex** is **kayfabe**, or the wrestler's "dialog" during a staged, back-and-forth match between two "warring" athletes (or theatrical positions of argument that resemble athletes):

Military Industrial Complex

(from [Wikipedia](#)): the relationship between a country's military and the defense industry that supplies it, seen together as a vested interest which influences public policy. A driving factor behind the relationship between the military and the defense-minded corporations is that both sides benefit—one side from obtaining war weapons, and the other from being paid to supply them. The term is most often used in reference to the system behind the armed forces of the United States, where the relationship is most prevalent due to close links among defense contractors, the Pentagon, and politicians. The expression gained popularity after a warning of the relationship's detrimental effects, in [the farewell address](#) of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 17, 1961.

In the context of the United States, the appellation is sometimes extended to **military–industrial–congressional complex** (**MICC**), adding the US Congress to form a three-sided relationship termed an "iron triangle." Its three legs include political contributions, political approval for military spending, lobbying to support bureaucracies, and oversight of the industry; or more broadly, the entire network of contracts and flows of money and resources among individuals as well as corporations and institutions of the defense contractors, private military contractors, the Pentagon, Congress, and the executive branch.

copaganda

Any form of canonical media that defends state abuse through official or functional police agents, but especially their monopoly of violence against those living in the state of exception under crisis as meant to recognize and worship/submit to them like gods. The state is always, to some degree, in crisis, leading to the generation of myriad monomyth stories that express this fact—i.e., as a dividing line between the police and everyone else. Skip Intro, [a YouTuber with an extensive series on copaganda](#), explores how this phenomenon goes well beyond planet Earth, going so far as to call it a Faustian bargain. This bargain manifests in many different kinds of fiction genres that endorse the status quo. For example, the "witch cops" and vice characters of fantasy narratives (war chiefs, Amazon war bosses; white and black "wolves," exhibit 1a1b) either attack orcs, Drow or some other enemy of the state during oppositional praxis, or they rally them in doomed

rebellions and futile/misunderstood attacks of revenge. One assimilates, the other is destroyed and vilified.

Kayfabe (the full definition)

The Wikipedia entry for "kayfabe" reads:

> the portrayal of staged events within the industry as "real" or "true," specifically the portrayal of competition, rivalries, and relationships between participants as being genuine and not staged. The term kayfabe has evolved to also become a code word of sorts for maintaining this "reality" within the direct or indirect presence of the general public. Kayfabe, in the United States, is often seen as the suspension of disbelief that is used to create the non-wrestling aspects of promotions, such as feuds, angles, and gimmicks in a manner similar to other forms of fictional entertainment. In relative terms, a wrestler breaking kayfabe would be likened to an actor breaking character on-camera. Since wrestling is performed in front of a live audience, whose interaction with the show is crucial to its success, kayfabe can be compared to the fourth wall in acting, since hardly any conventional fourth wall exists to begin with. Because of this lack of conventional fourth wall, wrestlers were once expected to maintain their characters even out of the ring, and in other aspects of their lives that could be made public ([source](#)).

For a good introduction to the concept and its history in modern professional wrestling and popular media, consider Behind the Bastards' podcast episode, "[Part One: Vince McMahon, History's Greatest Monster](#)" (2023). The concept applies not just to wrestling but includes any professional sports—e.g., e-sports but also vigilante sports/action hero narratives with athletic crusaders such as the heteronormative avatars from *Streets of Rage* and *TMNT* or *Street Fighter* as something to endorse through their police violence of state-oriented criminals, potential subversives, revolutionaries and so-called "terrorists" threatening the existence of "correct" action heroes as something to perform (exhibit 34c2, 98a1, or 104a1); or to subvert these false revolutionaries in a variety of ways (exhibit 102a4, 111b).

Between the flow of capital and two forms of theatre (one being more "onstage" and the other a semi-theatrical enforcement of the state's laws out on the streets), the masked play of warlike theatre offers a chorus-like commentary during the show of force wherever it occurs. Often, its showy pugilism and brawn are set to

music, but also a team-based competition with single or multiple people per side: sports. In a canonical sense, performers are generally athletic and warlike, their bellicose struggles relayed through incredible-yet-heavily-scripted feats of arms and armed conflict as hyperbolically violent and over-the-top, but also inviting the crowd to join in, knowing all the special moves, reversals and related gimmicks—i.e., performances of idealized strength, with sweepingly wide, theatrically "loud" motions pitted by powerful-looking heroes against powerful-looking enemies or enemies designed to threaten the hero's power in bigoted ways (the **corruptor** or **monstrous-feminine**): the kayfabe babyface is, for all intents and purposes, an Americanized Beowulf pitted against nominal Communists and cartoon Nazis (often in literal Nazi outfits); but its *pastiche* extends to cops who both look, act and function like wrestlers to convey state propaganda during class war as emblematized by the arm of the state—its class traitors working within a staged bout's standard-issue reversals: the enemy is both weak and strong.

Canon's *target* audience internalize fear and dogma as something to accept and practice, but also endorse like a sports or wrestling fan watching and taking a match at face value—i.e., endlessly warlike and sexualized/gendered according to us versus* them made through monstrous arguments for vertical power as something to endlessly maintain through canonical mimesis; this repeats according to the perception and maintenance of righteous order (according to beings adjusted to order as a heteronormative paradigm). To subvert this **Symbolic Order[84]/mythic structure[85]**, I say to our target audience: "Do you like sex, demons and power? Then *you* might be a Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communist (or at the very least curious enough to make it past this volume's initial 'Cerberus')!"

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[84] "The social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law" (source: "Symbolic Order" [Lacan] from Dino Franco Felluga's "Introductory Guide to Critical Theory," 2011).

[85] (from the glossary): The Symbolic Order of Western canon: "Oh, look, it's a king or a god! Guess I'll bend the knee and turn off my brain!" Originally disrupted by the "mythic method" as coined by T.S. Eliot, who "Jerry" from GLR Archive writes in "Eliot and the Mythic Method" (2004):

> defines what he exemplifies in *The Waste Land* [1922] – i.e., the "mythic method" – in his essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" [1923]. The mythic method looked to the past to glean meaning and understanding for what has been lost or destroyed in the present [… abridged] (source).

Eliot's 20th century modernist shenanigans (not to be confused with Modernism, aka the Enlightenment) fly directly in the face of James Campbell's "monomyth." Canonized as "the hero's journey" in popular Western fiction and formative to new fictions, the monomyth is central to state hegemony through worker pacification. Perhaps not entirely aware of this, Eliot still chose not to retreat into a "better" past in search of individuation (to borrow from Carl Jung); he addressed the present as a modern confusion that *needs* to be faced.

*I use the word "versus/vs" a lot. When it's a verb or a title (as with my book: Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion), I prefer to use the full, non-abbreviated word, "versus"; when it's a noun, I generally use one of two contractions: "vs" for compound noun phrases (e.g., "vampires vs zombies") except "v." with SCOTUS legal cases (e.g., "Roe v. Wade"); another exception is "us versus them," because "us vs them" looks incredibly weird to me. However, apart from my book title, SCOTUS cases and "us versus them," I might not be super consistent following this rule (the reason being I think the meaning should be understood regardless if I'm stressing its function as a noun or a verb).

　　　To this, *Sex Positivity* crosses over the canonical threshold, stepping into the breach and **liminal hauntology of *class*/culture war** fought by Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism's campy monster doubles in contested theatrical spaces on- and offstage; i.e., **subversive *Amazonomachia*** as the cryptonymic, "Trojan" announcement of transformatively beautiful lies throughout culture as a whole: the monstrous theatre of the class- (race- and gender-)conscious ***splendide mendax*** telling beautiful lies whose **elaborate strategies of misdirection** (from Fredric Jameson, below) are "found" (written and announced as a discovery like King

Arthur's coconuts from Monty Python) as "archaeologies" that counter the canonical refrain as stuck:

"archaeologies" of the future

Fredric Jameson's titular 2005 idea, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, of an elaborate strategy of misdirection (an idea originally from his 1982 essay "Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?") that breaks through the future of one moment that is now our own past, often through the fantasy and science fiction genres (the Gothic variant of this strategy as we shall discuss it is the Gothic castle/chronotope, discussed in the thesis proper). Canonical "archaeologies" sell this dead future back to workers to pacify them; iconoclastic variations devise ways of seeing beyond canonical illusions by "re-excavating" them, using what's left behind *again* to liberate worker bodies and minds in the process.

Hauntology's praxis includes the appearance of spaces, but also the metanarrative during paratextual discussions about the *poiesis*/mimesis of monster and lair alike, but also their raising and razing (which we'll unpack during the "camp map"). It's androids dreaming of electric sheep, whereupon slaves close their eyes and inhabit canceled retro-futures that have become class-conscious, thus reclaimed. This isn't just the sci-fi schtick of the 1980s, and I thoroughly want to go beyond Jameson's own bias to explain things he couldn't be arsed to touch:

Although some critics continue to disavow the Gothic as being subliterary and appealing only to the puerile imagination—Fredric Jameson refers to the Gothic as "that boring and exhausted paradigm[86]" (source: Jodey

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[86] The quote is ubiquitous, but consider the opening page for Alex Link's "The Mysteries of Postmodernism, or, Fredric Jameson's Gothic Plots" (2009) for a summary of it:

In the midst, of its definitive arguments, Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) pauses to consider the Gothic just long enough to single it out as a hopelessly "boring and exhausted paradigm." The Gothic, he declares, is a mere "class fantasy (or nightmare) in which the dialectic of privilege and shelter is exercised" and it should not be mistaken for a "protofeminist denunciation of patriarchy" nor "a protopolitical protest against rape." Although surprising at first, this condemnation is strategic in that it establishes the Gothic as Jameson's critical other; the Gothic becomes an object of ritual sacrifice, imbued with those qualities in Jameson's argument which are most discomfiting. […] If one regards *Postmodernism* as telling a story about postmodernity, its plot, taken as a whole, is curiously Radcliffean, in that it routinely presents the reader with postmodern objects meant to inspire anxiety before explaining them away. Jameson's dismissal of the Gothic, in other words, resembles nothing so much as his

Castricano's *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*, 2009).

I want workers to use Gothic poetics—its liminal expression (doubles) and paradox—to transform *all* fiction, thus history as built on incredible heroic (monstrous) falsehoods (not to mention science fiction emerged with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as [still] one of its best examples, from a proletarian standpoint. Much of Utopian sci-fi is far more apologetic of **Cartesian** rhetoric; e.g., Isaac Asimov's "Laws of Robots" pacifying slaves dressed up in [now-dated] futurism).

      To this, the paradox is at home in Gothic expression—of power, of liminal expression/doubles, of telling truth through lies whether on purpose or by accident (to be of the devil's party and know it/not know it) via shadows on the wall; i.e., elaborate lies/strategies of misdirection, *splendide mendax* and their "archaeologies." Absolute power is a paradox, but so is "pure evil" as part of the canonical framework; e.g., the politer xenophobia of the woman-in-black mistress in a novel-of-manners, versus the overt, psychosexual **demon lover** as "phallic" in traditionally male, warlike and rapacious ways: Victoria from *Zofloya* was murderously sexual[87] in order to canonically scapegoat sodomy while also stabbing Lilla—the cliché, passive version of the **Gothic heroine** archetype—to death. But not all that glooms is Gothic the same way. The dark monster can be functionally doubled without changing its overall appearance across multiple stories in the dialogic imagination. In many cases, the monster is ontologically but also *praxially* ambiguous (e.g., Ellen Ripley/Samus Aran as a phallic-woman girl boss; but also the "black Amazon," Coffy/Pam Grier, whose blaxploitation camps the "woman-in-black" vice character/detective from much older Gothic fiction, *vis-à-vis Zofloya*). This means it can go either way per appearance, wherein its potential character during class/culture war is ultimately decided by the performance as something to

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own description of the Gothic, in "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (1979), as a means of raising and exorcising an object of anxiety ([source](#)).

In other words, Jameson writes like Coleridge does—like a scared white boy but even more allergic to the Gothic mode, oddly emulating one of its most famous (and white) female authors.

[87] Victoria, as we shall see, was basically the TERF/female incel prototype of 1806: She marries her husband, then poisons him to death so she can marry his *brother* instead; when the brother is too busy doting on his own wife, Lilla, Victoria grows increasingly impatient. So she kidnaps Lilla and chains her to a wall inside a cave. After a while, Victoria starts to poison the brother of her now-dead husband, who she tries to court while Lilla *is still alive*. Mid-negotiations, Victoria goes to the cave and kills Lilla by "pulling a Brutus" and stabbing the helpless girl to death before throwing her body off a cliff, which smashes to pieces on the rocks and washes away in the stormy current below. After that, she goes back to Lilla's unsuspecting (and now-widower) husband and confesses her "love" to him, promptly causing the poor man to die of shock and disgust (it goes about as well as Darth Vader telling Luke he's his father).

reify and execute through dialectical-material scrutiny of past performances. While Milton famously did it by accident, the class warriors of Gothic Communism have the advantage of hindsight; with it, we can consciously weaponize Gothic poetics/paradox during liminal expressions of power not by accident, but *on purpose* and to the widest possible degree that critiques capital and consumption under it.

(exhibit 0a1b2c: [Source](#)—fair warning: a "photo dump" site with lots of pop-ups on it. The taboo nature of hard kink often means that pictures <u>aren't</u> credited, hence remain artistically anonymous.
The class/culture motives for Radcliffe's classic demon lover marry harmful psychosexuality to sin and xenophobia, playing out like "bad BDSM" from a female

author I seriously doubt had even the slightest idea what sex-positive variants were [e.g., pillow princesses, rope bunnies]. For one, Fetlife didn't exist yet, or the Internet; the terminology for BDSM had only just started to appear in operatic forms and women be recognized as human: "Sade had to make up his theater of punishment and delight from scratch, improvising the decor and costumes and blasphemous rites" (re: "Fascinating Fascism"). Needless to say that nearly two centuries later, Sontag's opinion of BDSM is limited to a harmful canonical version of Sadomasochism that frankly is way off the mark in terms of what sex positivity's entire gamut entails: "Sadomasochism has always [emphasis, me] been the furthest reach of the sexual experience: when sex becomes most purely sexual, that is, severed from personhood, from relationships, from love" (ibid.). She completely ignores the matter of degree and negotiation, and the fact that sex isn't even automatically included in BDSM:

So what about the intersection of kink and sex? When is this appropriate and what are the guidelines?

It's a tricky topic. I remember telling a friend who is pretty vanilla but curious how kink scenes are distinct activities. She said, "So, wait, there's no sex?" And I remember struggling to answer this. For me, most kink scenes are separate from sexual encounters, even if sex may follow a scene. This is very partner dependent, but for me, a kink scene requires aftercare before there is sex. And so far this was almost always the case for me – negotiation, scene, aftercare, possibility of sex [source: Victor's "Intersection of Kink and Sex," 2019].

In other words, if Sontag was "vanilla," then Radcliffe was barely even ice cream [whose naughty operatic fantasies are unironically violent and sit on the ledge of threatened morality—what Ash, in Alien, would call "delusions," exhibit 51a]. But their combined inexperience paradoxically stems from dark fantasies invented from the open secret of sex abuse turned into urban legends; **criminal hauntology** *and cryptonymy pointing at imagined realities through copies made by people in materially privileged positions: a conditioning to expect harmful violence during Faustian BDSM rituals, constituting a moral panic/criminogenesis in its own right [Satanists just love sacrificing women, babies, and white, teenage virgins, apparently].*

These canonical misconceptions operate on the automatic conflation of sex and harm, versus merely being adjacent to it during psychosexual expression [there's a thin line between the two—a tightrope to tread carefully]. That is, sex-positive BDSM is generally about negotiated unequal **power exchange** *in a written, contractual form that is founded on (relatively) equal bargaining*

positions[88]; and catharsis through rape play is a common form, given how calculated risk [minimalization] exercises are commonly designed to mimic the feelings of being out of control minus the danger of actual harm; i.e., to help someone [commonly women in heteronormative societies where sex crimes/abuse are prolific but also romanticized/apologized for and covered up] gain agency over their maladaptive survival/prey mechanisms when seeing things that remind them of their abuse/generational trauma: popular media as built to scare women towards men [white knight syndrome] according to the profit motive. Their subsequent camping can employ an "evil Italian count" to "threaten" the woman with, or the woman herself in or surrounded by black and red, including wearing fetish gear as an eliding of power and resistance on her body—in short, anything to enhance the experience.

[artist: Cara Day]

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[88] Think the written contract from 50 Shades of Gray (2011) except less materially unequal from the offset—i.e., no pre-requisite of the master/slave dynamic through the bourgeois man in his castle (then and now) and a white, middle-class wallflower to negotiate with him—and instead a written, informed and (relatively) fair negotiation typically executed between two or more people under less extreme disparities. It's fine to acknowledge socio-material-inequalities in society. The problem with white, middle-class women like Radcliffe is they presume a stuck, pre-fascist alignment with the usual historical materialisms in order to get their jollies within said system: the negotiation has to be unfair to describe the material conditions as they presently exist in relation to the actual or imaginary past supporting them. In short, there's no attempt to imagine something better—merely the damsel's unironic threat of rape by Blue Beard. It's criminogenic (more on this in the thesis statement).

BDSM in popular media [canon] isn't made to educate, but to shock naïve people looking for a thrill. It's about as accurate as sex is during porn, tending to romanticize the therapeutic psychosexual elements divorced from performative context; i.e., merely showing them as they appear at first glance: recreations of traditional disempowerment, whose paralysis and vulnerable exposure hauntingly evoke real scenes of abuse; e.g., hair pulling and physical attacks, kidnappings with bindings and gags, rapes, drownings and murders—often by knife [canon synonymizes sex with violation, including abject reproduction: the murderous cock and womb of the father and mother but also their hideous "brood"]. The neophyte's idea of what BDSM is often tries to mimic the trust-building exercise without understanding why it exists in a sex-positive [often trashy/pulpy] sense and why someone might try to perform it to achieve psychosexual catharsis that is often embroiled within self-destructive pathologies [the "call of the void"] seeking unironic harm; the novice counterfeit also tends to look like the expert performance at first glance. The difference lies not in the aesthetics but the skill level and intent, which can be hard to detect. Nevertheless, the fact remains that BDSM, when sex-positive, is built around community and trust as something to establish over time. It's rehearsed over and over in a highly controlled environment [informed boundaries/consent, safewords] to prevent harm, hence the motto: "Hurt, not harm."

Yet, there's also the paradox of professional sex work, which capitalizes off hard kinks to turn a buck. There's frankly nothing wrong with this, provided there's a communal understanding encouraged by the paratext. For example, Cara Day having her panties sliced off with a knife [source tweet, 2023] certainly looks dangerous, but is no less dangerous than driving a car or a trapeze act. Rather, she and her partner have provided the visible threat of the knife without any actual major risk to themselves.

[artist: *Cara Day*]

 Keeping with the circus allegory, the vast majority in the audience probably understand the staged nature of the performance and turn out to paradoxically feel "in danger" with minimal risk [the paradox being there is always <u>some</u> risk involved]. Due to its often taboo and cathartic nature tied to lived generational trauma, the experience can be very intense/profound for the sub, which can make it seem authentic, thus believable. As such, there's always a small group of people who—like Dorian Grey—take what they see at face value. To prevent any dangerous confusions such as public excoriation or abusively do-it-yourself, "homebrew[89]" BDSM, it remains incredibly important for sex workers to have discussions with their customers [through interviews, public service announcements or hell, books like this one] that speak plainly about the voyeuristic/exhibitionistic nature of their work: its function.)

 For example, regarding activist hindsight as cultivated by workers, consider the Amazon. While Amazons *are* a classic Greek monster and the word *Amazonomachia* literally means "Amazon battle," Gothic Communism applies it to *any* monster in heroic discourse where competing notions about sexuality and gender are "duking it out." This includes the heroes themselves as enforcing or resisting the hierarchy of power in heteronormative theatre (there is no functional difference between a hero and villain insofar as canonical heroes are concerned; all canonical heroes function like cops and "All Cops Are Bad," not just the ones that

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[89] BDSM *is* generally done in an amateur setting to some degree (not everyone knows a pro with their own dungeon; not everyone with a dungeon is sex-positive); the "homebrew" I'm talking about is domestic abuse dressed up as "BDSM" and sold as such through criminal hauntologies—i.e., the serial killer romance; e.g., *The Phantom of the Opera* (1909) or *Silence of the Lambs* (1988).

look "evil," because they universally victimize everyone else for the state). All heroes are monsters, thus liminal expressions that are sexualized and gendered (often to pornographic extremes; e.g., **monster girls**, exhibit 1a1a1h3a2; i.e., porn is liminal, thus monstrous, regarding its "action"). Gothic Communism's praxial aim is to camp, thus overthrow/transform vertical power's **canonical/regressive *Amazonomachia*** (which invariably regresses during state decay) and replace its artistic/pornographic liminal expressions of sex and monsters wrestling back and forth with more stable, healthy and sex-positive horizontal arrangements; i.e., **iconoclastic/subversive *Amazonomachia*** supplied by liminal beings well-adjusted to chaos and struggle during oppositional praxis' class tensions and performances of power at any register.

(artist: [Blondynki Tez Graja](#))

To conclude, Milton's "darkness visible" highlights power and liminal expression as being largely false/made up, relying on theatrical paradox through psychosexual performance (warring sex) and *Amazonomachia* (warring monsters) to operate during oppositional praxis (warring theory) in ways that aren't always class-conscious but *can* be if taught and encouraged; i.e., "darkness visible" as deliberately campy. Keep this in mind when our thesis statement and "camp map" explore (and camp) the canonical argument for power and its Faustian offerings

and Promethean pursuits; i.e., during the monomyth as mimetically executed through videogames and other artistic forms (exhibit 1a1a1a1_a). Class/culture war is fought on the streets, but also in the hearts and minds of the combatants in a very theatrical sense—i.e., inside the Gothic imagination with masks, costumes, props, and bodies in general, including their sexuality (organs, appeal/allure, appetite) and gendered components as heroically monstrous. Since the times of ancient theatre, then, *all* heroes have been monstrous, which is to say dictating the flow of power and resistance in theatrical language and Gothic poetics told through battle. This includes their grappling exchanges as relayed through ancient canonical codes into the present: heteronormative, thus binarized portrayals of athletic, one-on-one or team-based competitions; and resistance to those codes'

heteronormativity and binary within similar competitions across a grand, liminal meta-narrative.

(artist: Jan Rockitnik)

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism by Persephone van der Waard

Thesis Proper: Concerning Canon

"What would an intellectual do? What would Plato do?" —Wanda, A Fish Called Wanda (1988)

      This chapter covers what we will be camping: canon. It contains my manifesto tree, four main Gothic theories, essay about the Gothic imagination (the shadow zone whence all doubles come), thesis paragraph, and larger thesis statement/subchapters. Combined, they introduce most of my book's keywords, manifesto terms and main Gothic theories. Concerning signposts, the Four Gs is mostly a map already and "Into the Shadow Zone" is a mini essay meant to illustrate praxial duality in a self-contained form; the actual thesis statement and "camp map" will outline their respective subdivisions before each begins.

(artist: Persephone van der Waard)

On Twin Trees; or, "Taking the Trees Back during Oppositional Praxis": the Superstructure and Base; Tolkien vs Milton; and Our Manifesto Tree

"Things have certainly changed around here. I remember this was all farmland as far as the eye could see. Old Man Peabody owned all of this. Had this crazy idea of breeding pine trees."

—*Doc Brown, <u>Back to the Future</u> (1985)*

The manifesto tree lists our praxial equations and coordinates relative to the holistic study and camping of canon's singular interpretations (and subsequent policing) under Capitalism. I will supply several equations, followed by two exhibits on the Base/Superstructure and Tolkien vs Milton insofar as "trees" are concerned. Then, I will consider the twin trees of Capitalism—the Base and the Structure—as things to "corrupt" and reclaim away from Capitalism when developing towards Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism: our manifesto tree of oppositional praxis.

Camping canon, as a whole process, can be summarized with this praxial equation (on oppositional praxis):

Sex positivity happens during oppositional praxis' class/culture war (class traitors/weird canonical nerds' class dormancy and betrayal vs weird iconoclastic nerds' class [thus race and gender] consciousness); i.e., sex positivity vs sex coercion to recultivate canon/the bourgeois Superstructure,

thus reclaim the Base (means of production) according to *our* proletarian tree of Gothic-Marxist tenets and other factors.

and this one (on proletarian praxis):

Successful Proletarian Praxis (recultivation of the bourgeois Superstructure through iconoclastic art creation, critique, or endorsement; the "creative successes" of proletarian praxis) = Thesis Statement + Praxial Coordinates (manifesto tree) + Synthesis (social-sexual habits, emotional/Gothic intelligence, and financial support during worker's daily lives; i.e., the camp map from the thesis volume and the synthesis roadmap from Volume One) + *Poiesis History* (the Humanities primer)
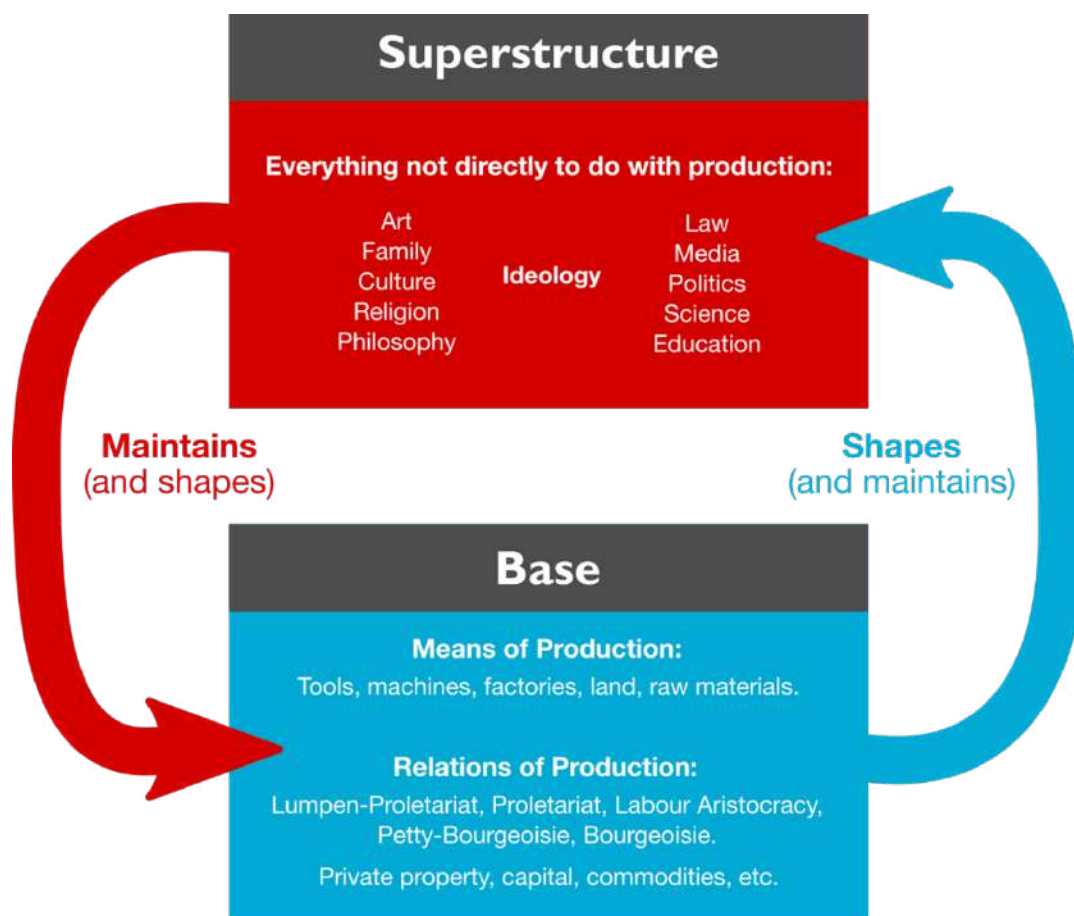
(exhibit 0b: Propaganda; that which, Rana Indrajit Singh writes, normally "grows out of the base and the ruling class' interests. As such, the superstructure justifies how the base operates and defends the power of the elite" [source: "Base and

Superstructure Theory," 2013]—"normally" being the operative word, here. This book isn't really a fan of what's "normal" because "normal" for the status quo is bourgeois. Gotta camp that shit. For example, Nazis are "normal" and serve the elite. We must camp them and, like Mel Brooks, make them not just <u>abnormal</u>, but <u>para</u>normal, too. This oppositional praxis extends to heroic canon; e.g., fostering ironic gender trouble and parody by imagining "Conan with a pussy" or gay hobbits [two favorite examples of mine that we will refer to or imitate in other monstrous forms constantly throughout this book].

Relative to the Superstructure and Base, our two equations apply to a manifesto tree of praxial terms that interrelate and overlap during oppositional praxis under Capitalism.

Before we look at our praxial tree, I wanted to conduct a thought experiment; i.e., to consider trees that illustrate praxis as something to remediate: Tolkien, for which one palimpsest to *Lord of the Rings* was *Paradise Lost*, which we just discussed. *Except* Tolkien took Milton's campy allegory/potential and gentrified it within centrist war through the cryptonymy of "adventure" as useful to capital in all the useful ways: the creation of an enemy for someone to "go berserk" against, invading their land and "taking it back" (despite having no essential claim to it to begin with).

(exhibit 0c: Artist, top-right: Sebastian Rodriguez; top-left: source; bottom-right: John How Anger; bottom-left: Stefano Villa. Morgoth is like "Evil Thor"—i.e., if Thor was Satan corrupting the Tree of Knowledge and Life instead of Eve directly [but seducing Sauron] while also working in the diffuse shadow space that crams pre-fascism/fascism ["corruption"] and Communism ["the monstrous-feminine"] into the theatrical spaces and bodies involved. Tolkien's Nordic-Christian hybrid [with him being an expert on Beowulf and Norse mythology[90] as informed by Christian

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[90] As Lynn Bryce writes in "The Influence of Scandinavian Mythology of the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien" (1983): "Tolkien did not invent elves, wizards, dragons or magical weapons; these, and concepts like them, are fundamental to Norse literature and myth." According to Lauri Linask, Tolkien appears to critique *Beowulf*, but at the end of the day largely emulates the same old patterns:

> In his "Beowulf" lecture he undertook to argue with W.P. Ker whom he quotes as to have said: "The fault of 'Beowulf' is that there is nothing much in the story. The hero is occupied in killing

tampering happening chronologically between <u>Beowulf</u> and Tolkien] has Morgoth and Ungoliant camp around the base of the trees and recultivate <u>their</u> superstructure to make a new world that Tolkien—although he didn't openly like war as a business—spends his entire canon [corpus] to unironically demonize Communist stand-ins as the "end of the free world":

"Then the Unlight of Ungoliant rose up even to the roots of the Trees, and Melkor sprang upon the mound[91]; and with his black spear he smote each Tree to its core, wounded them deep, and their sap poured forth as it were their blood, and was spilled upon the ground. But Ungoliant sucked it up, and going then from Tree to Tree she set her black beak to their wounds, till they were drained; and the poison of Death that was in her went into their tissues and withered them, root, branch and leaf; and they died" [[source](): the eighth chapter of "the Quenta Silmarillion" section within <u>The Silmarillion</u>, 1977].

I.e., the Darkening of Valinor is seen as an unironic BBC rape/"dark fellatio" tragedy that canonizes Milton's camp, his "darkness visible" to Tolkien's blind, class-dormant "Unlight" of a fat and sassy spider queen and her dark daddy dom in Nazi fetish gear. They both sound badass but I'd much rather have badass camp than canon, especially considering what it serves: Tolkien made the myth, placed it over the palimpsest and passed it off as the truth "found" like an old, lost relic/time capsule. Even if its fabricated nature <u>is</u> brought to light, it doesn't matter if they

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monsters... Beowulf has nothing else to do when he has killed Grendel and Grendel's mother in Denmark: he goes home to his own Gautland, until the rolling years bring the Fire-drake and his last adventure. It is too simple..." […] Tolkien thinks very highly of the heroic narratives in Norse, Icelandic or ancient English because their heroes and their embodiments of evil belong generically to the same class as those of Tolkien ([source](): Influences of the Germanic and Scandinavian Mythology in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien," 1983).

As we shall see in the Four Gs and thesis proper, this shared love of the imaginary past has led to the furthering of the process of abjection through the ghost of the counterfeit: the commodification (and endless apologizing for) centrist war's sublimated genocides. Tolkien emulated the old legends in much the same way the Nazis did, albeit in a less radicalized refrain that could eventually be ludologized under Bretton Woods and neoliberalism as it exists today—in tabletop/videogames.

[91] An allusion to Milton's Satan, breaking into Paradise:

One gate there only was, and that looked east
On the other side. Which when the Arch-Felon saw,
Due entrance he disdained, and, in contempt,
At one slight bound high overleaped all bound
Of hill or highest wall, and sheer within
Lights on his feet. As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve,
In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold ([source](): *Paradise Lost*, Book Four).

have been internalized; his stories are a hypercanonical example of centrist war cartographized.

*To this, **Tolkien's refrain** [the High Fantasy treasure map, exhibit 1a1a1h2a1] has led to the endless essentializing of war as gentrified through the fantasy mode [e.g., Rings of Power, 2023] but also its science fiction and horror parallels [which we'll unpack during the "camp map" vis-à-vis Cameron's refrain: the shooter, of course, but specifically the Metroidvania]. Tolkien's magnetic, "chaste" warmongering leaves out the psychosexual horrors of war or valorizes them through the slaughter of abjected foes[92], requiring great effort from past writers like Ursula Le Guin to break away from Tolkien's ghost, thus his trees and pastoral village recruitment antics and moderately xenophobic [racist] war stories. As these are copied-and-pasted along the shared counterfeit, they operate like a formula whose canonical replication centers around the profit motive; in turn, this becomes historical-material—e.g., D&D and its endless official/homebrew campaigns and dungeons—but also the "warcraft[93]" of the enterprising white, cis-het young men of*

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[92] Consider Tolkien's zero-sex policy versus Terry Goodkind's naked exhibiting of pedophilia, genital mutilation and rape. They might seem like polar opposites, but both constitute Joseph Conrad's bigoted fear-fascination with the colonized abomination, in *The Heart of Darkness* (1899): a white, cis-het fear-fascination with the past as restricted to the fringes of the empire, that—in neoliberal media, which brings the colonial revenge to the homefront—becomes "a spell to fall under" (re: Punter) and exorcise, generally through violence. Tolkien's colonial rape occurred with swords, leveled against metaphors for people "not of the West" he considered "Mongol-types" ([source](): Tolkien Gateway) whose linguo-material presence would be entirely unwelcome in white areas (effectively gentrification in a real-world village/suburban setting).

Tolkien famously disliked allegory for his own stories (an appeal, then, to singular interpretations that ignored his writing's racist, thus colonial potential). But even when reduced to "pure fantasy" as he would have preferred, the terrestrial framework and its cartography and colonial model are all obviously there and being put into practice; i.e., world-building and its manmade languages levied for a suitably war-like purpose regardless if Tolkien openly denounced Hilter. In short, he was a centrist to the core, the old sage handing the young hobbit a blade and preaching loftily about morals, specifically of knowing when to kill and when not to—in short, "playing god" in the face of the abject:

> Bilbo almost stopped breathing, and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo's heart: a glimpse of endless unmarked days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish, sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed in a flash of a second. He trembled ([source]()).

Except this mercy is arguably lacking in the face of those who are physically dangerous (according to white people); orcs, unlike Gollum, are given no quarter despite arguably having a bone to pick with them colonizers: "Show them no mercy for you shall receive none!" It's tone-policing backed by force—also known as "peace through strength."

[93] *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans* (1994) would lead to the company's longest, and arguably most popular and widespread franchise, beating *Diablo* (1996) to the punch by two years and going on to establish the company as the successors to *Everquest* (1999) as the MMORPG to "kill": *World of Warcraft* (2004), a globalizing of the pursuit of capital across the Internet. These games successfully applied a tactical, melee-based, roleplay element to the FPS-/TPS-adjacent strategy game (exhibit

an early '90s company, suitably titled Blizzard [whose sexist bullshit as a company we'll discuss much more in Volumes Two and Three]—built entirely around racial conflict [thus endless war and rape] as set into motion by Tolkien himself, whose own orcs are green-skinned, debatably anti-Semitic/cannibalistic savages whose name, "orc," is Old Norse [from Beowulf's orcnēas[94]] for "demon"; i.e., functional zombies in the state of exception that heroes invade to kill for the state through parallel legends weaving in and out of fiction and into real life: there and back again not once, but ad infinitum. If these "zombies" aren't orcs, then they're spiders[95] or some other stigma animal/vermin-type pest entity who must be crushed by the forces of good in personified forms; e.g., the Drow as "chaotic evil" spider people [exhibit 41b] who threaten nature as afflicted with the same problematic idea of good vs evil as canonically Biblical [versus Milton's own accidental camping of these pastoral devices through Satanic war].

Simply put, Tolkien's hopelessly academic view of nature is whitewashed, High Fantasy copaganda—a British tree huggers' biased loving of the idealized pastoral/picturesque as threatened by outsiders ruining the scene: the map of empire as sacred. It's a colonizer's cartoonishly basic aesthetic that demonizes, thus alienates darkness but also death, decomposers and natural predators [stigma animals] as part of nature; i.e., as evil scapegoats tied to wicked, unnatural places, archaic wombs and dark magic—necromancers, but also their fortress lairs:

> *At first they had passed through hobbit-lands, a wide respectable country inhabited by decent folk, with good roads, an inn or two, and now and then a dwarf or a farmer ambling by on business. Then they came to lands where people spoke strangely, and sang songs Bilbo had never heard before. Now they had gone on far into the Lone-lands, where there were no people left, no inns, and the roads grew steadily worse. Not far ahead were dreary hills, rising higher and higher, dark with trees. On some of them were old castles with an evil look, as if they had been built by wicked people [emphasis: me]. Everything seemed gloomy, for the weather that day had taken a nasty turn (source).*

1a1a1h2a1), which took on a massive-multiplayer form built around warring team-based combat with one-or-more combatants on either side. And of course, all of this was heavily dimorphized within the heteronormative colonial binary.

[94] (from Brittanica): "A different word *orc*, alluding to a demon or ogre, appears in Old English glosses of about AD 800 and in the compound word *orcnēas* ('monsters') in the poem *Beowulf*. As with the Italian *orco* ('ogre') and the word *ogre* itself, it ultimately derives from the Latin *Orcus*, a god of the underworld. The Old English creatures were most likely the inspiration for the orcs that appear in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*" (source).

[95] Tolkien's inconsistent fear of spiders stretches back to a childhood phobia of them, but he was annoyingly wishy-washy and non-committal to how he felt about them; i.e., talking through both sides of his mouth (a classic centrist maneuver) [source: Tolkien Gateway].

These kinds of Gothic castles were clearly known to Tolkien, though he didn't focus on them. In The Hobbit, they're mentioned hardly at all [the word "castle" is used only once in the book]—sidestepped by Tolkien until it comes time to trot out Sauron [also known as the Necromancer] as the unironically Satanic threat to Tolkien's "new Eden": Britain by another name, as built by Tolkien's easily ludologized, High Fantasy scheme[96].

The displacement of British industrialization and slavery is made clear by examining the real-world inspiration for Mordor and Tolkien's own experiences elsewhere: "the industrial Black Country of the English Midlands, and by his time fighting in the trenches of the Western Front in the First World War" ([source](): Wikipedia). Of the former Midlands, Jonathan Wilkins writes, "He based the description of Mordor, home to the evil Lord Sauron, on the Black Country, a region of Birmingham which was heavily polluted by iron foundries, coal mines and steel mills due to the Industrial Revolution. The air in it was so thick with smog and dust it was difficult to breathe and may contribute to the way local people speak today – the infamous Brummie accent" ([source](): "Birmingham Sites that Inspired Tolkien," 2020). Tolkien's love for home pastoralizes the colonial element by abjecting its theatrical "soot" onto a fictional elsewhere. Places like the Shire and Lothlórien were always green and good and totally "never did a genocide" to get where they are; by

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[96] Tolkien did not exist during videogames as they are commonly thought of (though technically he died in 1973, a year after *Pong* [1972] was released for American home entertainment by Atari's Allan Alcorn). Yet, Tolkien was also no stranger to playing games. Indeed, the entire "Riddles in the Dark" chapter from *The Hobbit* is pointedly a game, with a rather involved discussion surrounding luck, fairness and the following of rules:

> He knew, of course, that the riddle-game was sacred and of immense antiquity, and even wicked creatures were afraid to cheat when they played at it. But he felt he could not trust this slimy thing to keep any promise at a pinch. Any excuse would do for him to slide out of it. And after all that last question had not been a genuine riddle according to the ancient laws ([source]()).

In truth, Tolkien's refrain—the High Fantasy treasure map—would translate very well to tabletop games and videogames, but especially *The Lord of the Rings*, which despite its immense size compared to *The Hobbit* was actually far simpler in terms of its treatment of war and wealth acquisition/generation. Everything was divided neatly into good and evil teams that—on the good side—*weren't* fighting amongst each other nearly as much as during *The Hobbit*. In his later novels, the world-war machine wasn't just suggested, but fully devised and given its own vast world to play out inside. And even with *The Hobbit*, Tolkien clearly understood the power of song and legends, writing his original story for children to acclimate them towards war and revenge dressed up in songs, fantasy and poems. It likewise had all the starts and stops of a radio serial, putting our heroes out of the frying pan and into the fire (similar to *Flash Gordon*, 1935) before pulling them out just in the nick of time (the Great Eagles being a shameless *deus ex machina* [and imperial emblem] that Tolkien would curiously refuse to use with *The Lord of the Rings* in order to prolong the story and its war for as long as possible).

comparison, the orcs threatening their naturalized goodness are the colonizers who did all of the bad things. It's DARVO through British exceptionalism.

[Top-right: My brother's 2001 copy of The Hobbit*, which I've had for years and used to cite all of my work on Tolkien, including one of my better[97] undergraduate*

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[97] I wrote "The Problem of Greed" in Craig Dionne's LITR 405 (Shakespeare) course. We had to cross-examine two primary texts with an academic secondary text. I went with Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1605) and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904). The essay won me an award from EMU,

essays, "[Dragon Sickness: the Problem of Greed](#)" (2015). It was also a book that I read to nurse my broken heart, in college; but segued into my planning to go to college to find love (to have lots of nerd sex)—which eventually happened when I met Constance (my first) at EMU and Zeuhl, at MMU, and promptly had an adventure that did not start or end with them, but introduced me to someone whose ghost, for or worse, would stay with me for the rest of my life. I don't think you can have an adventure without a bit of sex and/or ghosts, by the end of it!

Top-right and bottom: Tolkien's obvious love of runes and "the West" was shared by his supposed enemies, the Nazis, which reflects a more radicalized trend in cryptofascist groups that currently use the Nordic runes as hauntological dogwhistles.]

The essentialized myth—of Tolkien's Cartesian-themed treasure map, racist world-building and combined historical-materialism—invoke endless enemies of the state, which generates endless histories that predicate on those material conditions and

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whereupon the faculty wrote this award letter—to EMU's Distinguished Student in Literature Award—for 2016:
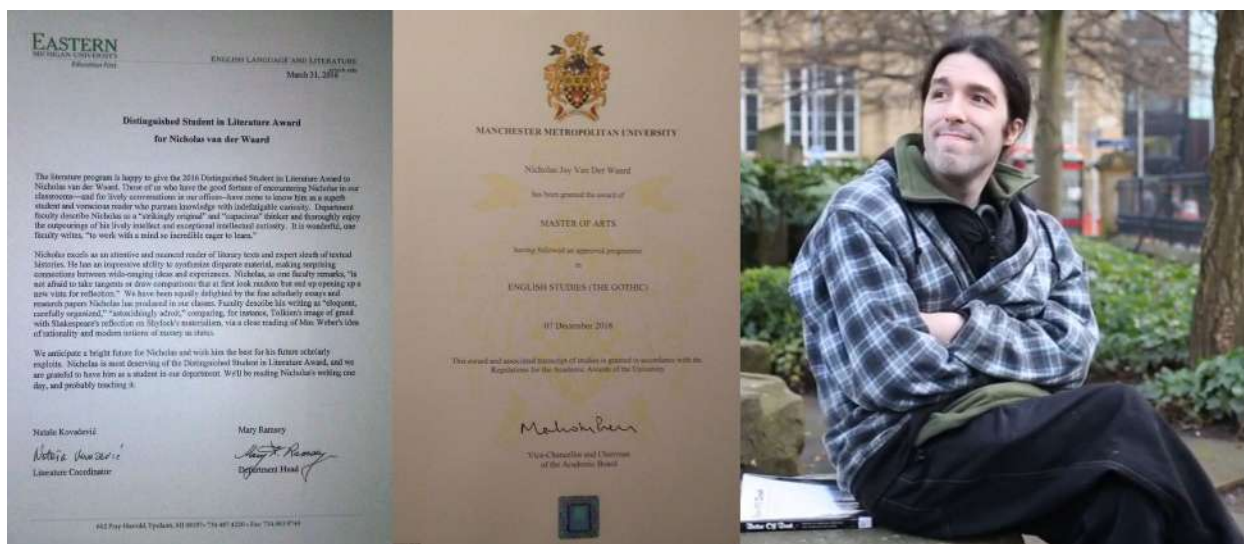
[My award letter from EMU, MA from MMU, and me in 2018 sitting on a copy of *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human* (2011) borrowed from the school library (the photo was taken by my-partner-at-the-time, Zeuhl, for a school project of theirs).]

There was no money involved, but the letter *did* help me gain entry to MMU ([which was a whole ordeal, to say the least](#); Persephone van der Waard's Quora answer to "How easy is it to get into Manchester Metropolitan University?" 2019) when I went there for my master's degree in English Studies: the Gothic, in 2017. In short, I had an adventure where the things gained is largely open to interpretation: "This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found [herself] doing and saying things altogether unexpected. [She] may have lost the neighbors' respect, but [she] gained—well, you will see whether [she] gained anything in the end."

*their dogma [the Protestant work ethic assigning a reprobate quality onto an essential, limitless enemy slaughtered for profit: the crisis and decay of the war machine and its <u>canon</u> fodder]. Post-Tolkien and Bretton Woods, war under neoliberalism has become commodified; i.e., ludologized comfort food during endless crisis: we're eating it as the state eats us, as we eat each other. In turn, the concept, "there is no ethical consumption under Capitalism" becomes not just normal but **hypernormal[98]**, enforced even though we know it's wrong.)*

Now that we've expressed several canonical and campy deaths of trees, we stand before, and look up at, the twin trees of Capitalism: their trees to ours during opposition praxis, for which to "corrupt" as Communists do—which is to say, like Milton and Tolkien but in a progressively campy direction towards anarcho-Communism, specifically Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism as I have devised it.

Please note: All of these terms will be explored later multiple times and in great detail. For now, I just want to <u>list</u> them; re: the engine of oppositional praxis with which to pour our fuel, proletarian praxis.

*Also, a note about this list (and really the entire book): Function determines function[99], not aesthetics. Likewise, the **parent dichotomies** synonymize: canon is unironic, bourgeois, and sex-coercive, attaching everything to human biology (through sex organs and skin color); iconoclasm/camp is ironic, proletarian, and sex-positive, divorcing self-expression from these colonized sites using dialectical-material scrutiny—i.e., biological sex and gender are wholly separate, <u>vis-à-vis</u>, Judith Butler. Each evokes a variety of sub-dichotomies and orbiting factors; e.g., "sex-positivity is sexually descriptive, and descriptive sexuality is proletarian, thus ironic," etc, and frequently clash in the traditional language of power and resistance: monsters and the military parade. I'll explain this more when we continue to unpack poetics and mimesis, during the symposium. —Perse*

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[98] A term that, <u>according to Adam Curtis' *HyperNormalization*</u> (2016), was originally used to describe the "whiplash" feelings of Soviet citizens during the 1980s—faced with the terrifying onset of societal collapse despite Soviet national propaganda having adopted neoliberal shock therapy while insisting that things were fine. The same idea can be applied to the uncanny sensation that things are *not* fine or even real despite how normal, foundational and concrete they seem; i.e., how they "pass" as normal despite a disquieting sense of decay (worker exploitation, for our purposes).

[99] Yes, this is a tautology (e.g., the sky is blue because the sky is blue), but in this case it's essentially the gist. Function *is* self-determined, but *not* self-evident because art—short of spelling things out, billboard-/graffiti-style—often requires dialectical-material scrutiny to parse if it's sex-positive or not; likewise, it will take someone who *is* sex-positive to make sex-positive media in good faith (and not by accident)—i.e., art that expresses sex positivity in ways that either yield sex-positive virtues under dialectical-material scrutiny or, preferably, are more explicitly or obviously upfront through their subversions and transgressions of canonical norms.

Camp's assembly and production of cultural empathy under Capitalism happens according to **the "creative successes" of proletarian praxis** (manifesto terms intersect and overlap; e.g., "good sex education is sexually descriptive")

- **mutual consent**
- **informed consumption** and **informed consent**
- sex-positive *de facto* **education** (social-sexual education; i.e., iconoclastic/**good sex education** and taught gender roles), **good play**/**emergent gameplay** and cathartic wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure (**abuse prevention/risk reduction patterns**) meant to teach good discipline and impulse control (valuing consent, permission, mutual attraction, etc); e.g., **appreciative** peril (the ironic **damsel-in-distress**/**rape fantasy**)
- **descriptive sexuality**

as things to materially imagine and induce (often through ironic parody and "perceptive" pastiche) through Gothic poetics; i.e., inside the "grey area" of **cultural appreciation** in countercultural forms (making monsters)

- the culturally appreciative, sexually descriptive irony of Gothic counterculture's reverse abjection with sex-positive demon BDSM, kink and fetishization; as well as asexuality and the ironic ontological ambiguities of trans, non-binary, intersex, and drag existence

that, when executed by emotionally/Gothically intelligent workers, use camp to cultivate empathy through Gothic counterculture; i.e., by synthesizing Gothic Communism during oppositional praxis (canon vs iconoclasm) according to our manifesto terminologies and structure—in short, its various tenets and theories

- Re-claim
- Re-union/-discover/-turn
- Re-empower/-negotiate
- Re-open/-educate
- Re-play
- Re-produce/-lease

- our four main Gothic theories (the Four Gs)

  - abjection (from Julia Kristeva's process of abjection, *vis-à-vis* Hogle's "ghost of the counterfeit")

- hauntology (from Derrida "spectres of Marx" and Fisher's "canceled futures," *vis-à-vis* Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*)
- chronotopes (from Mikhail Bakhtin's "Gothic chronotope")
- cryptonomy (from Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *vis-à-vis* Hogle's "narrative of the crypt" and Castricano's *cryptomimesis*)

mode of expression (and assorted mediums: novels, short stories, movies, videogames, etc)

- monsters
- lairs/**parallel space**
- the Hermeneutic[100] Gothic-Communist Quadfecta (Gothic, game, queer and Marxist theory, which we'll unpack more in the manifesto in Volume One)
- phobias/stigmas/biases

creative, oppositional praxis

- the Six Doubles of Creative/Oppositional Praxis

  - sex coercion vs sex positivity
  - carcerality vs emancipation
  - complicity vs revolution

and their various synthetic oppositional groupings

- *destructive vs constructive* anger
- *destabilizing vs stabilizing* gossip (and abuse encouragement/prevention patterns)
- *"blind" vs "perceptive"* pastiche (class/culture blindness versus consciousness)
- *unironic vs ironic* gender trouble/parody (canon vs camp)
- *bad-faith vs good-faith* egregores

via camp's **class-conscious** defense from canon's **class dormancy** and **class betrayal**

  i.e., the moderate/reactionary **class traitor's** four basic behaviors

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[100] "Hermeneutics" being of, otherwise pertaining to, interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts; a method or theory of interpretation.

- **open aggression**, expressing gender trouble as a means of open, aggressive attack (disguised as "self-defense" reactive abuse): "We're upset and punching down is free speech[101]" ("free speech" being code for "negative freedom for bigots who want to say bigoted things" to defend the elite's profit motive).
- **condescension**, expressing a moderate, centrist position that smarmily perpetuates the current status quo as immutable, but also optimal: "This is as good as it gets" but also which can never decay.
- **reactionary indignation**, using sex-coercive symbols (argumentation) to defend their unethical positions: "They're out to destroy your heroes, your fun, all you hold dear (code for 'the current power structure')."
- **DARVO** ("Deny, Accuse, Reverse, Victim, Offender"), defending the status quo by defending the people who enslave them (the elite) by going after the elite's enemies, thereby defending Capitalism during decay. When it decays, these "gamers" see "their" games in decay and will defend those, seeing human rights as an affordable compromise in the bargain. They see themselves (and the elite) as "victims," and class warriors as monsters "ruining everything" (like Satan).

to foster empathy and emotional/Gothic intelligence by **weird iconoclastic nerds** reversing the canonical, unironic function of the Four Gs

- reverse abjection
- the emancipatory hauntology and Communist-chronotope operating as a **parallel society**—i.e., a parallel space (or language) that works off the *anti-totalitarian* notion of "parallel societies[102]": "A [society] not dependent on official channels of communications, or on the hierarchy of values of the establishment."
  - *Note: This was originally written in Eastern Europe to manifest against the Soviet Marxist-Leninist political body/state apparatus, which then collapsed and emulated the West under neoliberal Capitalism/global US hegemony. But by that point the East had already stopped trying to develop Communism and the state reliably collapsed into a capital-driven form. The same idea of "parallel society" can be used to develop anarcho-Communism within the Gothic mode; e.g., the*

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[101] "Free speech" is a common "apolitical" DARVO strategy used by bigots who argue for negative-freedom boundaries that apply to them, but not for others; e.g., "I want to be able to say slurs or profit off manufactured controversies by politically advocating for issues that will never affect me; i.e., punching down at minorities while acting like a victim, myself." Freedom of speech is *not* freedom from consequences.

[102] Source: Academy of Ideas' "The Parallel Society vs Totalitarianism | How to Create a Free World," (2022).

> ***danger disco*** *as a campy "party mentality" to queer existence since Matthew Lewis (exhibit 15b1). —Perse*

- the Gothic Communist's good-faith, revolutionary cryptonymy

On the flip-side, our would-be killers collectively lack emotional and Gothic intelligence; they do not respect, represent or otherwise practice our "creative successes." As we're going to establish by looking at the definition of weird canonical nerds (in the thesis statement), their conduct is quite the opposite of weird iconoclastic nerds; **weird canonical nerds** don't practice mutual consent; they canonize, thus endorse

- uninformed/blind consumption through manufactured consent
- *de facto* bad education as **bad fathers**, cops (theatrical function: knights) and other harmful role models/authority figures; i.e., canonical sex education and gender education, **bad play**/**intended gameplay** resulting in *harmful* wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure (**abuse encouragement/risk production patterns**); e.g., appropriative peril (the unironic damsel-in-distress), uninvited voyeurism, etc
- prescriptive sexuality

through their own synthetic toolkits during oppositional praxis. They endorse

- the process of abjection
- the carceral hauntology/parallel space as a capitalist chronotope (e.g., the "blind" cyberpunk)
- the complicit (thus bad-faith, bourgeois) cryptonymy

to further Capitalism's crises-by-design, hence its expected decay, according to a variety of bourgeois trifectas that lead to the banality of evil's

- "trident" (the Superstructure)

  - the *manufacture* **trifecta (manufactured scarcity, competition/conflict, and consent)**
  - the *subterfuge* **trifecta (displace, disassociate, disseminate)**
  - and *coercion* **trifecta (gaslight, gatekeep, girl-boss)**

- the "handle" (the Base)

  - owner/worker division
  - efficient profit (through exploitation)
  - infinite growth (through Imperialism)

and vertical, pyramid-scheme arrangements of power and subsequent tiers and punitive exchanges thereof

- top, middle, bottom
- lords, generals/lieutenants, and grunts
- corporate, militarized and paramilitarized bureaucratic flavors

arranged in neoliberal forms inside and outside of the text

- bosses, mini-bosses, and minions
- executives, middle management/content creators, customers/consumers
- waves of terror and unironic vice characters (menticide)

which leads to a surrender of total power during states of emergency that are *always* in crisis and decay. Empathy is the casualty of the middle class, whose weird canonical nerds are taught to see the underclass as lacking basic human rights during moral panics. In the presence of crisis and decay, people forget then deify whatever's in front of them that looks powerful. They don't take the time to ascertain if the giant trees are canonical or campy—in short, whether the swap has been made and the current falsehood is designed to liberate or exploit them. During the bait-and-switch, they'll follow the leader to scapegoat the usual suspects under Capitalism *unless* canon can be camped.

      To conclude, Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism camps canon (and its trees) to ensure that empathy/apathy and class character (unconscious/conscious) occur in oppositional praxis as a dialectical-material exchange. For workers, the empathy accrued is established during these creative successes, whose solidarized and active, intelligent poetics (a manifestation of reclaimed labor and working-class sentiment) cultivate the Superstructure in ways useful to proletarian praxis: helping all workers by reversing **the process of abjection** and its canonical historical-materialism (the **narrative of the crypt**, or echo of ruins). This happens by camping the **ghost of the counterfeit**; i.e., the barbaric lie of the West told through the **monomyth**, **Cycle of Kings** and **infernal concentric pattern** that drive the process of abjection currently used to exploit workers, resulting in myopic exploitation and genocide under **Capitalist Realism** while the elite's endlessly engineered crises enter into, and out of, decayed states of emergency and exception. Rewrite how people respond to elite propaganda and you can rewrite how people think, thus rewrite history by changing its well-trod, profitable (for the elite) and bloody (for us) historical-material track; in short, you can take the state's propaganda apart, ending Capitalist Realism as you start to develop towards a **post-scarcity world** (the kind that is wholly antithetical to modern nation-states and their vertical arrangements of power): through the imaginary past and its

legion of ghosts clamoring for something better (versus the entitled-yet-incredibly-isolated bully saying "haven't I *earned* this?" after having done the state's dirty work for decades).

Now that we've scaled the trees as a potential engine for rebellion, I will now give you the gasoline: the four main Gothic theories. As such, the rest of the thesis proper will provide these theories, then unpack my thesis paragraph/body before the camp map (specifically its finale) will apply them to canon as something to camp.
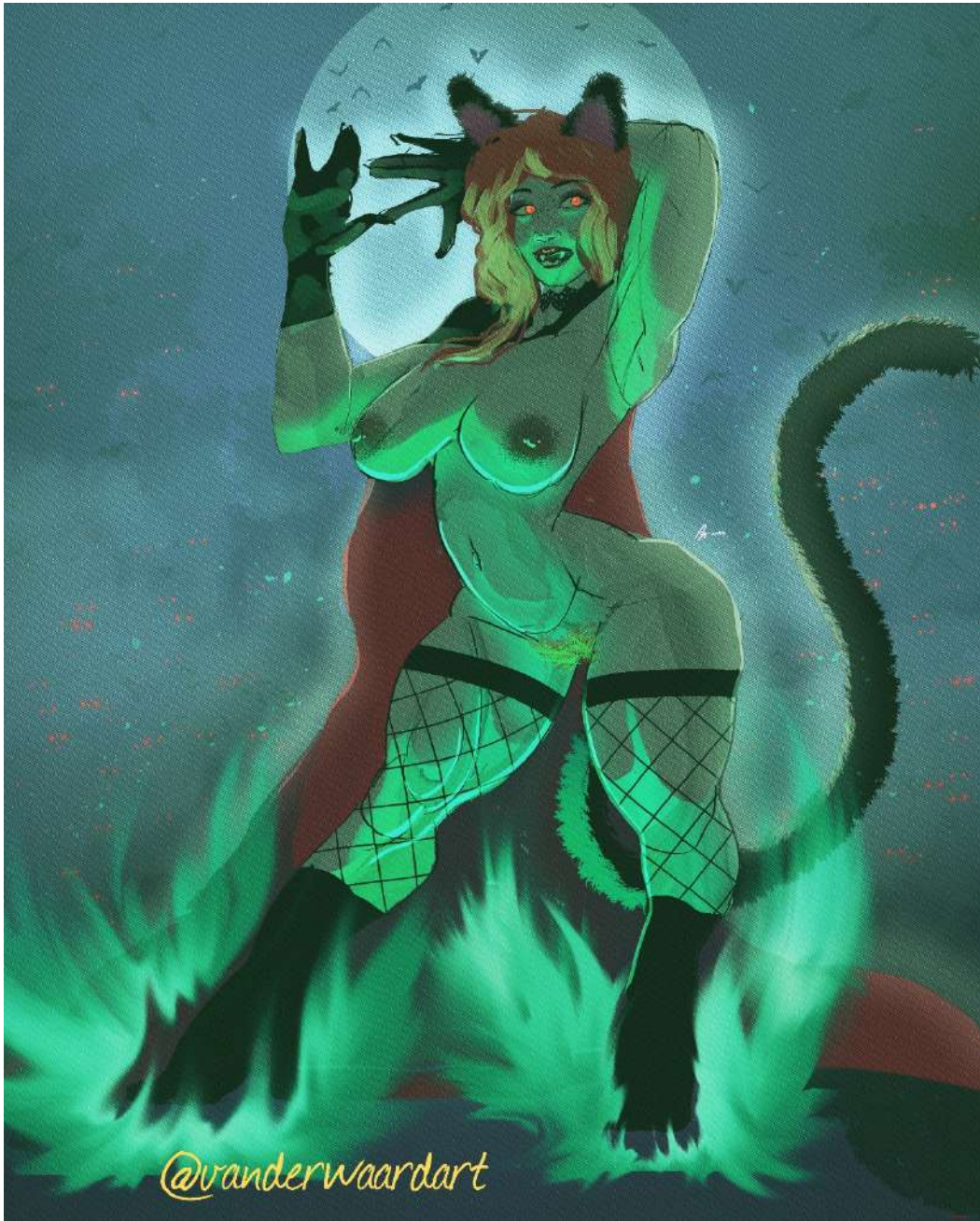
(artist: *Persephone van der Waard*)

The Four Gs: Our Main Gothic Theories

"You have to be careful when you use it in the swamp, and there are warlocks."

*—something I said to Zeuhl in my sleep, while at MMU after playing Hollow Knight
and writing about Metroidvania for my master's thesis (2018)*

　　　"Gothic," for our purposes, is the creation of monsters and monstrous spaces (e.g., Metroidvania) for oppositional praxis and dialectical-material analysis. I will extrapolate on both points (the making of monsters, in the thesis statement; and the exploration of their spaces—specifically the "ludo-Gothic BDSM" of the Metroidvania—during the "camp map") and consider other definitions of the Gothic in the symposium (e.g., Chris Baldrick and Tanya Krzywinska) but for now that will do; the Gothic is, like the West itself, largely made up and retold through a series of violent, monstrous lies.

　　　These four theories (and their dance partners) are not: our four main Gothic theories, the Four Gs, presented in ways that intersect with themselves and my own idiosyncratic research/argumentation. There's no easy way to present them in this state except as I have (originally written in my 2022 blogpost, "Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism: Manifesto" and ultimately transferred here). I promise it's a Gordian Knot that we'll work towards the center of, not simply cut through like Alexander with his sword:

- **abjection** (from Julia Kristeva's process of abjection, *vis-à-vis* Jerrold Hogle's "ghost of the counterfeit")

Coined by Julia Kristeva in her 1981 book, [*The Powers of Horror*](), abjection means "to throw off." Abjection is "us versus them," dividing the self into a linguistically and emotionally normal state with an "othered" half. This "other" is generally reserved for abjected material—criminal, taboo or alien concepts: good and evil, heaven and hell, civilization and nature, men and women, etc. Through Cartesian dualism—re: the rising of a dividing system of thought by René Descartes that led to settler colonialism—nation-states and corporations create states of normality (the status quo) by forcefully throwing off everything that *isn't* normal, isn't rational, masculine or even human, etc. Through the status quo, normal examples are defined by their alien, inhuman opposites, the latter held at a distance but frequently announced and attacked (a form of punching down); the iconoclast, often in Gothic fiction, will force a confrontation, exposing the viewer (often vicariously) to experience the same process in reverse (a form of punching up). Facing the abjected material reliably leads to a state of horror, its reversal exposing the normal as false, rotten and demonic, and the so-called "demons" or dangerous undead as victimized and human: "Who's the savage?" [asks Rob Halford](). "Modern man!" Descartes was certainly a massive dick, but the spawning of endless Pygmalion-generated undead and demons scarcely started and ended with him. Instead, it expanded through the ghost of the counterfeit as wedded to the process of abjection in Gothic canon; or as Dave West summarizes in "[Implementation of Gothic Themes in The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit]()" (2023):

> In [the 2012 essay] "The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Process of Abjection," Jerrold E. Hogle argues that the eighteenth-century Gothic emergence from fake imitation of fake work is the foundation of what is defined as modern Gothic today. He maintains that Horace Walpole's 1765[103] *The Castle of Otranto*, which is considered as the groundwork of the modern Gothic story, is built on a false proclamation that the novel was an Italian manuscript written by

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[103] Walpole actually published the original manuscript in 1764 under a pseudonym without the qualifier "a Gothic tale" (which he added a year later after people pitched a fit that he—the son of the first British prime minster—had effectively forged a historical document and passed it off as genuine). The story was based off his architectural reconstruction (thus reimagining) of medieval history, Strawberry Hill House (a cross-medium tradition carried on by Gothic contemporaries/spiritual successors—e.g., William Beckford's *Vathek*, 1786, and subsequent "folly," Fonthill Abbey, in 1796—but also videogame spaces inspired by the cinematic and novelized forms previously build on real-life "haunted" houses: the Metroidvania).

a priest. […] Hogle argues that modern Gothic is grounded in fakery. [In turn,] Hogle's observation of the history of *The Castle of Otranto* forms the basis for understanding the concept of counterfeit as a result of the abjection process.

Gothic Communism, then, reverses xeno*phobic* abjection through xeno*philic* subversion as a liminal form of countercultural expression (camp). Sex work and pornography (and indeed *any* controlled substance—sex, drugs, rock n' roll, but also subversive oral traditional and slave narratives) operate through liminal transgression; e.g., subversive monster-fucking Amazons (exhibit 104a), werewolves (exhibit 87a) and Little Red Riding Hood (exhibit 52b) or Yeti (exhibit 48d2), etc. Reversing the process of abjection, these monstrous-feminine beings allow their performers to not only address personal traumas "onstage," but engender systemic change in socio-material conditions; i.e., by performing their repressed inequalities during arguably surreal, but highly imaginary interpersonal exchanges that are actually fun to participate in: as a process of *de facto* education in opposition to state fakeries (thus refusing to engender genocide within the common ground of a shared—indeed, heavily fought-over—aesthetic).

(artist: [John Fox](#))

- **chronotope/parallel Gothic space** (from Mikhail Bakhtin's "Gothic chronotope")

Mikhail Bakhtin's "time-space," [outlined posthumously in *The Dialogic Imagination*](#) (1981), is an architectural evocation of space and time as something whose liminal motion through describes a particular quality of history described by Bakhtin as "castle-narrative":

> Toward the end of the seventeenth century in England, a new territory for novelistic events is constituted and reinforced in the so-called "Gothic" or "black" novel—the castle (first used in this meaning by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, and later in Radcliffe, Monk Lewis and others). The castle is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past [...] the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture [...] and in particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights. [...] legends and traditions animate every corner of the castle and its environs through their constant reminders of past events. It is this quality that gives rise to the specific kind of narrative inherent in castles and that is then worked out in Gothic novels.

For our purposes, Gothic variants and their castle-narratives have a medieval/pre-Enlightenment character that describes the historical past in a museum-like way that is fearfully reimagined: as something to recursively move through, thus try to record in some shape or form; e.g., the Neo-Gothic castle (*Otranto*, 1764) to the retro-future haunted house (the Nostromo from *Alien*, 1979) to the Metroidvania (1986, onwards; my area of expertise). Canonical examples include various "forbidden zones," full of rapacious, operatic monsters; i.e., *canonical/capitalistic* parallel space. Expanding on Frederic Jameson, the *iconoclastic* Gothic chronotope is an "archaeology of the future" that can expose how we think about the past in the present to reshape the future towards a Utopian (Communist) outcome. Although we'll expound on this idea repeatedly throughout the book, a common method beyond monsters are hauntological *locations* housing things the state would normally abject: the crimes of empire buried in the rubble, but also contained inside its castle-narrative as an equally hyperreal, "narrative-of-the-crypt" (from Hogle: "The Restless Labyrinth: Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel," 1980) *mise-en-abyme*. Iconoclastic parallel spaces and their parallel society of counterterror agents, then, align against state-corporate interests and their "geometries of terror" (exhibit 64c) which, in turn, artists can illustrate in their own iconoclastic hauntologies (exhibit 64b) and castle-narratives; i.e., ironic appreciative movement through the Gothic space and its palliative-Numinous sensations.

- **hauntology** (from Jacques Derrida's "spectres of Marx" and Mark Fisher's "canceled futures," *vis-à-vis* Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*):

A basic linguistic state between the past and the present—described by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* (1993) as being Marxism itself. Smothered by Capitalism, Marxism is an older idea from Capitalism's past that haunts Capitalism—doing so through "ghosts" in Capitalism's language that haunt future generations under the present order of material existence. In *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*, Jodey Castricano writes how Marx, though not a Gothicist, was obsessed with the language of spectres and ghosts—less as concrete symbols sold for profit in the modern sense and more as a consequence of coerced human language expressing a return of the past and of the dead as a repressed force; she also calls this process *cryptomimesis*, or "writing with ghosts," as a tradition carried on by Derrida and his own desire to express haunting as a feeling experienced inside Capitalism and its language. The concept would be articulated further by Mark Fisher as *Capitalist Realism* (2009); i.e., a *myopia*, or total inability to imagine the future beyond past versions of the future that have become decayed, dead, and forsaken: "canceled futures" (which Stuart Mills discusses how to escape in his 2019 writeup on Fisher's hauntology of culture, Capitalism, and acid Communism, "What is Acid Communism?"). While all workers are haunted by the dead, as Marx states, this especially applies to its proponents—cops and other class traitors, scapegoats, etc—as overwhelmed by a return of the dead (and their past) through Gothic language/affect in the socio-material sphere. For those less disturbed by the notion, however, this can be something to welcome and learn from—to write with; i.e., in the presence of the dead coming home as a welcome force in whatever forms they take: not just ghosts, but also vampires, zombies, or composites, the latter extending to demons and anthromorphs as summoned or made; but also all of these categories being modular insofar as they allow for a hybridized expression of trauma through undead-demonic-animalistic compounds. As Castricano writes of *cryptomimesis*

> Although some critics continue to disavow the Gothic as being subliterary and appealing only to the puerile imagination—Fredric Jameson refers to the Gothic as "that boring and exhausted paradigm" [what a dork]—others, such as Anne Williams, claim that the genre not only remains very much alive but is especially vital in its evocation of the "undead," an ontologically ambiguous figure which has been the focus of so much critical attention that another critic, Slavoj Zizek, felt compelled to call the return of the living dead "the fundamental fantasy of contemporary mass culture"' (source).

in regards to ghosts, I would argue the same notion applies to *all* undead, demons and animalistic egregores; i.e., writing with both as complicated theatrical expressions of the human condition under Capitalism.

(artist: Zdzisław Beksiński)

- **cryptonymy** (from Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *vis-à-vis* Jerrold Hogle's "narrative of the crypt" and Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*)

In Cynthia Sugars' entry on "Cryptonymy" for David Punter's *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic* (2012), Sugars writes, "Cryptonymy, as it is used in psychoanalytic theory and adapted to Gothic studies, refers to a term coined by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok [which] receives extended consideration in their book *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (1986)." Sugars goes on to summarize Abraham and Torok's usage, which highlights a tendency for language to hide a traumatic or unspeakable word with seemingly unrelated words, which compound under coercive, unnatural conditions (the inherent deceit of the nation-state and its monopolies). For Sugars and for us, Gothic studies highlight these conditions as survived by a narrative of the crypt, its outward entropy—the symptoms and wreckage—intimating a deeper etiological trauma sublimated into socially more acceptable forms (usually monsters, lairs/parallel space, phobias, etc; you can invade, kill and "cure" those. In my 2021 writeup, "The Promethean Quest and James Cameron's Military Optimism in *Metroid*," I call this false optimism the "puncher's chance" afforded to pro-Capitalist soldiers and *de facto* killers for the state; the odds suck and are either disguised or romanticized through heroic stories/monomyths). Described by Jerrold Hogle in "The Restless Labyrinth"

as the *only* thing that survives, the narrative of the crypt is a narrative of a narrative of a narrative to a hidden curse/doom announced by things displaced from the former cause: Gothic cryptonyms; illusions, deceptions, mirages, etc. Sugars determines, the closer one gets to the problem, the more the space itself abruptly announces a vanishing point, a procession of fragmented illusions tied to a *transgenerational* curse: "a place of concealment that stands on mere ashes of something not fully present," Hogle writes of Otranto (the first "gothic" castle, reassembled for Horace Walpole's 1764 "archaeology"). In regards to the *mimetic* quality of the crypt, this general process of *cryptomimesis* draws attention to a writing predicated upon encryption: the play of revelation and concealment lodged within parts of individual words tied to Gothic theatrical conventions and linguistic functions, but also patently ludic narratives that can change one's luck within a pre-conceived and enforced set of rules; i.e., rewriting our odds of survival, thus fate, inside *exploitative* ludic schemes by pointedly redictating the material conditions (through ludo-Gothic BDSM) that represent "luck" as a variable the elite strive to manipulate for profit under Capitalism.

So, yeah, that's a lot to unpack! A veritable concentric castle with many layers-upon-layers, I slowly built it around a grain of sand into a black pearl. It *seems* impenetrable, which might tempt us to smash it or pawn it off (which would destroy its value). Instead, we'll going to unpack it all, but like a Gothic castle or Gordian Knot, we can't do that from outside (where we can only gaze on its glorious façade); we have to get into the thick of it, thus go down into the dark, deep dungeons where the truth of allegory is paradoxically hidden and waiting to be found and brought back up. History is a stage play that only stops on the last syllable of recorded time; until then, the show must go on and so must we in opposition to the state and its liars. We must investigate the past as full of *doubled* lies and other paradoxes. In short, we'll have to go "dumpster diving" inside Percy Shelley's "colossal Wreck[104]." We'll do that (figuratively) next, and honestly many more time after as the book carries on…

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[104] Referring to "Ozymandias" (1818).

Doubles, Dark Forces, and Paradox; or *into* the Shadow Zone: Where We Currently Are and Where We're Going Deeper Into

"I have weapons you would not dare use!"

—*Omadon, the Red Wizard;* <u>The Flight of Dragons</u> *(1982)*

      This essay briefly considers power as something to perform, thus interrogate and negotiate inside the Gothic mode/Gothic imagination. This paradoxical theatrical space (and its liminal territories/forms of expression) have many names—Hell; the abyss, the underworld, the beyond, or the void, etc—but I call it the shadow zone!

      Any heroic quest demands a journey into Hell to confront dark forces, and the hero generally presents before the quest as a paradox right off the bat: being of two worlds, one foot in the world of the living and one of the dead, magic/science, medieval/modern, heaven/hell, etc. Their liminal state and privilege of position affords them special education/access to old books (or sages) of wisdom that—as we shall see—can be counterfeited, but work within the same medieval poetics and Gothic mode that can be used for or against the status quo. *Our* journey (as workers seeking liberation from mass worker exploitation under neoliberal Capitalism) is to bring the campy power of a reclaimed Hell/shadow zone (and its subversive forces of darkness) *back* with us—to transform the world around us to better allow workers to negotiate for themselves while fighting for their basic human rights (and the health of the planet's ecosystems and that of animals). Each time I went into Hell, I came back different—until Hell's camp followed me and now lives with/within me; I began to see the world differently according to how I always was but didn't always have the language; e.g., my queer-coded, teenage fantasies and vast *dramatis personae* of **genderqueer** players in *The Cat in the Adage* (exhibit 0a1) showed that I—like Bilbo—just needed a little push out the door to get the ball rolling.

(exhibit 0a2a: The neoliberal gang's all here; the Shylock vice character and the white wizard and his token brothers. Death omens/magic visions, psychomachia, anti-Semitism, great speeches, light shows—all in <u>The Flight of Dragons</u> are lifted from medieval thought and presented unironically as neoliberal canon; i.e., in black-and-white hauntological language that serves the status quo as it presently existed in 1982 and <u>continues</u> to exist under the current Internet Age; i.e., under the self-same canonical paradigm/distribution of power and its false mechanisms of exchange dressed theatrically up as heroics in cinema and older media forms, but <u>especially</u> videogames as a then-new rising-commodity-turned-mega-business.)

When I was younger, I was always dreaming of dragons and knights and fairies, and darker Gothic things that stole the show. One of my favorite films was (and still is) *The Flight of Dragons*, where the Red Wizard, Omadon—played by James Earl Jones (the king of vice characters: the Emperor of the Night, Darth Vader and Thulsa Doom—speaks the tyrant's plea and threatens the naïve and special zone/Garden of Eden dreamt up by his other three magic brothers:

> I have weapons you would not dare use. Fear rules men. By summoning all the dark powers, I will infest the spirit of Man so that he uses his science and logic to destroy himself. Greed and avarice will prevail! Turn brother against brother! And those who do not hear my words will pay the price! I'll show Man how to fly like a fairy! I'll show him what distorted science can give birth to! And I'll give him the ultimate answer his science can ask for!"

Jones' Omadon is "a seducer of darkness, master of that heartless magic the world calls black," and his villain's monologue is seriously raining on their parade. So they hire a squad of mercenaries to chase him to his home, kill him, and steal the performative object of his power: the Red Crown. It's a quest, a monomyth of the usual sort that scapegoats the Satanic force, like Tolkien did; i.e., as usual, in the canonical sense. But it was also penned in the early 1980s, on the cusp of

neoliberalism: "Farewell! Can you not feel the world turning in my direction already!" was a warning to the audience of men like Reagan and girl bosses like Thatcher leading to an endless spawning of so many monomythic quests—especially those in ludic forms that would simulate, parallel and disguise the world being divided and rent asunder by Capitalism. Videogames, in particular, were devised during Bretten Woods but codified by Tolkien's refrain (the High Fantasy treasure map and Protestant work ethic) and disseminated under Neoliberalism—i.e., from 1979 onwards—towards various other refrains, but especially James Cameron's: the shooter and Metroidvania (we will explore these at length during the "camp map"; for now, just remember that videogames are an incredibly effective forms of theatrical propaganda: the codification of dogmatic beliefs and instructional behaviors [us-versus-them] taught through videogames as an all-too-effective war simulator).

Omadon is made out to be the obvious cartoon foil, and he *seems* treacherous by default. But the *real* enemies (in a class-conscious sense) are his brothers, who perceive of a crisis so great that—in the midst of the waning Age of Enchantment and the dawning Age of Science (Cartesian thought, aka Reason, or the Enlightenment)—their *only* option is to exclude and scapegoat him (the dark faggot clown) and lock *all* enchanted things away for safekeeping: to be visited "only during a flash of insight or the breadth of a dream." In short, our dreams and awesome power are increasingly *alienated* from us; i.e., locked tragically away, put *on loan* and leant back to us by the elite privatizing them in whitewashed forms that simultaneously stand for the Greater Good. Sir Peter defeats Omadon—and by extension Omadon's resistance of the privatization of fantasy ("deny me and you deny all magic!")—by ignoring a paradox: "two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time." From a scientific standpoint, he's *basically* right. From a *Gothic* standpoint, though he's dead wrong and this is telling. Sir Peter denies all magic and its critical paradoxes to put his trust in science. For him, science is automatically the Truth and universally good, whereas Omadon's lies are completely false and bad. This isn't just naïve, it's complicit. "You don't scare me. Nothing so horrible could be real. […] And that's why Antiquity chose me. You are magic, mere illusion! I am science and the truth!" Dogmatically spouting those equations of "his," he sounds so blind to the idea that he—a scientist who loves magic—could somehow *not* be bought and paid for by the same old profit motive that colonizes everything for profit, including white people; i.e., the Imperial Boomerang:

the Imperial Boomerang

"The thesis that governments that develop repressive techniques to control colonial territories will eventually deploy those same techniques domestically

against their own citizens" ([source](#): Wikipedia). In Foucault's own words during his lecture at "Il faut défendre la société" in 1975:

> [W]hile colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself ([source](#): "Foucault's Boomerang: the New Military Urbanism," 2013).

Described by Stephen Graham as "military urbanism," this phenomenon accounts for the legion of dead futures popularized in American canon and its expanded, retro-future states of exception—hauntological narratives that present the future as dead and Capitalism as retro-futuristically decayed; i.e., Zombie Capitalism and zombie police states.

Sir Peter is the cold march of reason that sublimates genocide behind neoliberal fantasies and centrist myths written by dumb white boys who a) buy into the get-rich-quick scheme of saving the world; and b) who dream, night after night, about getting the girl afterward. "It's normal!" my mother protests, to which I gaily respond: "No, it's *normalized*."

All of this is harmful wish fulfillment, because it not only excludes everyone *but* him; it demands their slaughter to fulfill Sir Peter's entitlement as the Chosen One. In the end, he's a cop—a class-dormant traitor/slave to the grind and nerdy spearhead to the darkest, cruelest magic of all: convincing the world neoliberal treachery doesn't exist. He's Bill Gates, the unsexy nerd who commodifies everything through a monopoly that limits what we can imagine by taking what was open source/open domain[105] and privatizing it, effectively selling our dreams back to us through our own stolen labor paid to us in trickle-down wages (also stolen); or rather, he's a bad *copy* of Gates, whose allegory of the cave myopically cages the brains of weird canonical nerds who want to be just like Gate's badly copied form: the class-dormant shadow theatre of **false rebellion** and **controlled opposition** (the fascist/centrist device, which extends to token police, of course; i.e., **sublimation** and **recuperation** during the monomyth and its vicious cycle, which I call the **Cycle of Kings**—more on this during the thesis statement).

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[105] For a recent example of someone fighting the privatization of their intellectual property by corporate abuse, refer to the actions of Bill Willingham's "[Willingham Sends Fables into the Public Domain](#)" (2023). He described it as **asymmetrical warfare**, aka **guerrilla warfare** (which is historically the weapon of the Communist).

(exhibit 0a2b1a: Whitey saves the world by killing the Nazi-Communist, token queer/racial minority scapegoat and getting the girl as result. Like Milton's Satan but canonized, Sir Peter's scheme for seizing power is set inside an ancient document that is both inside of itself and "found" externally as something to sell to the masses: an "archaeology" whose counterfeit cancels the future as dead. Hint: the finale shot of the film presents the happy presumed-newlyweds standing inside a pawn shop with the word "loan" hanging over the window frame <u>and</u> their silhouettes; their power and connection is a cheap fantasy that has been loaned to them, around which the world is diegetically decaying mid-crisis. The wish fulfillment—for the white guy and his <u>Sailor Moon</u> lookalike [who he made in the image of "everything he desired in a woman"; i.e., "his" fairy princess as actually supplied to him by pre-existing counterfeits]—is harmful because it's <u>pure</u> escapism. It both asks him to ignore his real material conditions—holding down two jobs as a research assistant that <u>wants</u> to escape by making a game that everyone loves provided he gets the capital to back it up—and ignore the dreadful fact that he played right into the fantasy of colonizing a class, race and gendered "other" dressed up in medieval language, all so he can then return from the shadow zone, get the girl and live like a king! It's systemic delusion meant to benefit the elite, not him, and the historical materialism plays out soberingly through Omadon's curse as the cliché of "Jewish Revenge": laughing while the Roman fool falls on "his" own sword [remember, it's on loan]. To quote a different wizard, "There are no happy endings because nothing ends." Regarding Sir Peter as an analog for aspiring weird canonical nerds shouting, "Pick me!" the fact remains that precious few get to inhabit that money-maker role; i.e., "make a killing" for the elite, now and forever.)

     The paradox, here, is that I absolutely love *The Flight of Dragons* and its language of magic, fairy princesses, twink-looking heroes, vice characters, dragons, knights in shining armor, board games, etc; I just hate how they're framed. Sir Peter is treated as "unique," "having one foot in the world of magic and one in the

world of science" while literally working for the Man (Antiquity as male-coded; mysteriously but essentially all-powerful: "Trust the judgement of Antiquity!" / "Good old Antiquity! I knew I could trust it!"). Despite the movie's flawed framework, all I have to do to "make it good" is to camp it; i.e., "make it gay" in my mind and in my work (which the elite *don't* want *you* to do; they want you to purchase "their" power fantasies given out on loan while you police everyone else as their dutiful, preferentially mistreated labor/wage slaves [the middle class] assisting the profit motive through all the usual ways); e.g., imagine *Sir Peter* (not Conan) with a pussy or have him getting pegged by Princess Melisandre while listening to KMFDM's "Megalomaniacal" (1997), etc. This is not so hard to do. As I am Persephone, my namesake is that of a witchy goddess of death with one foot in the world of the living and the land of the dead (all deities live inside the human breast); by accident of birth, I was born but also made for doing so according to my medievalist education as a profoundly special set of circumstances: I was born trans and exposed to education at home and in school that spoke to my desire to be free. I feel unique but have no desire to pull a Beethoven and boast: "Prince, what you are, you are through chance and birth; what I am, I am through my own labor. There are many princes and there will continue to be thousands more, but there is only one Beethoven" ([source](#): Rick Fulker's "Why Beethoven Snubbed Princes and Put His Music First," 2016).

(artist: [Julius Schmid](#))

In all the universe, in all the gin joints in all the world, Persephone walked into mine and made me her avatar. "All deities reside within the human breast," wrote Blake; yet, I think of the "Jewish revenge" of *my* marriage of *Heaven and Hell* as Canon's tyrannical plea, re-camped by me and billions of other workers actively and/or passively yearning for freedom. Its *sui generis* format is both "Workers of the world, unite! You have only to lose your chains!" married to "Grant me revenge! And if you do not listen, then to hell with you!" (this second sentiment goes for anyone who taught me or otherwise contributed towards that dark beautiful thing that became what I am today). For Communists wronged by the state, we monsters and what we make are human as Shylock was:

> Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction ([source](#)).

Our revenge, as a simulacrum, only *resembles* that of those who wrong us and counterfeit our campy legends for their canonical gain (Tolkien's refrain); our aesthetic is shared but our *function* is altogether different: class consciousness as **uncontrollable opposition** relayed in terrifying medieval language that is thoroughly more wise through hindsight; i.e., not just according to Robert Asprey's **paradox of terror** (which we'll consider in relation to state forces decrying labor as terrorists) but the hauntological paradox of "the Wisdom of the Ancients," whereupon old forms of monstrous expression have been updated for the modern world and its challenges to accommodate our needs as workers being exploited by Capitalism and its propaganda. *That* is our revenge—slowly camping the canon, thus the Superstructure, and reclaiming the Base through our monstrous, ghostly theatre as something that once turned on, can never be shut down or destroyed; it can only be repressed in forms that always come back because the elite cannot kill all its workers (not on purpose, anyways).

Shadow theatre and its mythic structure are nothing new. It dates back to Plato's infamous allegory of the cave and its mimesis as paradoxically haunted by the shadows of class struggle (the spectres of Marx, which in theory did not *technically* exist when Plato was alive, and yet whose struggles for emancipation include these older slaves that Marx alluded to in "The Eighteenth Brumaire").

Camus may have noted in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that canonical shadow theatre repeats to an absurd degree; i.e., Sisyphus pushing the rock up the hill as punishment by the gods. To escape it, we can't just *smile* at the gods like he proposed, but steal "their" fire on our own Promethean Quest! This means camping the canon, which requires repeated forays into Hell and putting the wrong things right at the source: our "darkness visible" and gods as stolen out from inside our breasts and put on the cave wall of Plato's cave! Tolkien's refrain/gentrification of war through High Fantasy is darkly echoed in stories just like *The Flight of Dragons* (which is especially treacherous because it argues *moderately*—i.e., as the voice of reason from a position of *perceived* disadvantage). We purposefully must camp the canonical nebula by camping the map as a source of class education through dialectical-material play (which we'll elaborate on during the thesis statement and "camp map"): oppositional praxis as playing on in shadowy forms dancing on the same cave wall, our darkness deliberate fencing back and forth with the state's blind canonical doubles like Errol Flynn's Robin Hood dueling Basil Rathbone's Guy of Gisbourne:

Something I will argue repeatedly throughout my thesis (and the rest of the book) is *how* the greatest power/strength of class-conscious warriors *is* their deliberately campy "darkness visible" doubling canonical versions (through the Wisdom of the Ancients, though I may not always call it that); i.e., their innate and uncanny ability to camp canon using the same shadowy language/aesthetics that class-dormant class traitors do (whose much touted "greatest strength" is their Achilles Heel, their greatest *weakness* when the state needs sacrifices). Beauty in "the eye of the beholder" *is* subjective, but perceptions of power are enforced to a matter of function and objective degree in order to define beauty (and what is "correct" according to basic human, animal and environmental rights as tied to heroic stories) as having a *monstrous* class character. Everything happens in the shadow zone between dueling hero monsters for or against the state and its profit motive. Meanwhile, state agents are labeled by the state as counterterrorists, calling labor's agents "terrorists" (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr.) in bad faith; the language can be reversed easily enough, but the function still has to be scrutinized as parsed with a learned eye.

Regarding "Hell" as the shadow zone we must delve into during oppositional praxis, here's something to remember based on what we're discussed up to this point: Power is historically about perception *and* invention; i.e., fabricated for or against the state through undead and demonic masks, uniforms, weapons, performers, etc. Power exchange goes in both directions, onstage and off. Canonically speaking, though, the creation and *theft* of this power is meta, wherein the ludic contract (as a canonical device) steals power in a Faustian sense that doesn't just master players (re: Seth Giddings and Helen Kennedy) but does so in bad faith; i.e., the promise of false power through a *Faustian* ludic contract—one whose Quixotic escapism/false hope[106] (a neoliberal weapon/opiate) seeks perpetual "empowerment/strength" to progress through a fictional gameworld that disguises what's actually disempowering players outside of itself: the elite and their neoliberal illusions as [half-real](#) (from Jesper Juul, meaning between "the fiction and the rules" but also real life whose "[magic circle](#)" [from Eric Zimmerman] is where the game takes place). Obviously this goes beyond videogame simulations and extends out of and into older mediums that reinforce the meta-narrative of the status quo as part of our daily lives and *their* mimesis. "All's fair in love and war" but their battle is expressed across all mediums and life imitating art through our own battles as coded or otherwise informed by these narratives and vice versa. The visible darkness *we* provide is challenged by the blindness of canon's myopia (Capitalism Realism); i.e., *canonical* hell historically-materially becomes a place to give up and accept one's doom by playing along as a copy of a cop that is

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[106] False power and false hope go hand-in-hand within fascism, neoliberalism and the capitalist propaganda mill.

thoroughly cynical as Oscar Wilde would have put it: one "who knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing."

There's also the <u>diegetic</u> theft of power by all of these cop-like heroes, stealing it through "the game" (in whatever form it takes) as a training simulator for praxial purposes: the FPS as a military simulator[107]. "Empowered," the canonical hero learns to rob from an ostensibly fascist, Communist, non-white, non-Christian and/or queer foe; i.e., they—but also canonical moral panics and their campy reclamation—exist (indented for clarity)

> in the same outlawed space/shadow zone exemplified by Gothic poetics: forbidden, tempestuous desire and other extreme emotions/mood-swings; the supernatural/occult and bad omens; and confusing or unchecked sin/vice as dark and deadly, disease-like sentiments (revenge, lust, gluttony, etc, as leading to ignominious death, often according to cancer or acute organ failure as surreal, medieval metaphors for "dying of shame[108]").

Similar to Omadon, we have Count Dracula, but also Mother Brain, Bowser, Dr. Wily and Ganon living in a dark, thoroughly queer-coded shadow realm of medieval, heretical barbarism; sex, drugs and rock 'n roll; and fascist-adjacent BDSM aesthetics that threaten to turn the white knight's armor black. All exist in the same

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[107] Rune Klevjer writes in "The Way of the Gun: The Aesthetic of the Single-Player First Person Shooter" (2006):

> the short history of the FPS also includes a different strand, which unlike Doom and Medal of Honor does not grow out of a broad tradition of action-adventure. The so-called tactical FPS (sometimes also referred to as the "squad-based" FPS) draws instead on the traditions of strategic war games and the military simulator. In spite of many similarities (which follow from the common perceptual grounding of the first-person-gun) and in spite of the inevitable ambiguities and hybridizations, the binary of action-adventure versus military simulator has become a significant aesthetic distinction within the genre of the single-player First Person Shooter ([source](#)).

and yet, for the purposes of generational trauma and the state's acclimation of its population towards war (through waves of terror), the male action hero's adventure story is a standard-issue facet to military propaganda ludologized: squad-based tactics vs a terrorist group in training exercises, and larger-than-life superheroes vs larger-than-life demons in strict propaganda narratives; re: Beowulf vs Grendel and Grendel's mother. These aren't "separate"; they're two sides of the same unholy coin that present war as a business across various mediums, but especially in videogames aping their cinematic and novelized palimpsests; re: Tolkien's infamous treasure map as a place to take the spoils of war back from demons, undead and nature; re: "having an adventure" is complicit cryptonymy in action.

[108] Father Schedoni from *The Italian* (1796) *ostensibly* croaks in this manner. Once had out, he actually poisons himself, whereupon he makes a weird, inhuman sound that terrifies everyone around him: "Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting, yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavoured to make their way out of it. This, however, was impracticable, for the door was sastened, until a physician, who had been sent for, should arrive, and some investigation could be made into this mysterious affair. The consternation of the Marchese and of Vivaldi, compelled to witness this scene of horror, cannot easily be imagined" ([source](#)).

sphere of doom for the hero to loot and plunder while assigning punishment as a centrist agent that perpetuates conflict as orderly but also *profitable* inside the global market: "There are no moral actions, only moral teams"; i.e., good guys and bad guys; re: white knights and black knights and their synonyms/antonyms tied to various nation-states cannibalizing their usual victims on the global stage.

(exhibit 0a2b1b: Artist: possibly Jean-Louis Gaspard. With the likes of Conrad, James Cameron, and Wes Craven, settler colonialism is a fantasy carried out popular fictions to apologize for the ongoing practice during moderate empowerment fantasies. Regarding the historical function of settler colonialism, Lorenzo Veracini writes in "Settler colonialism in the Middle East and North Africa: A Protracted History" [2022]:

> *More than other forms of colonialism, settler colonialism is characterized by a "logic of elimination." This form of domination contrasts with exploitative or extractive colonialisms, where the ongoing subordination of colonized populations is a requirement for the viability of colonial domination. In settler colonies, the very presence of an Indigenous population is sometimes targeted through expulsion or physical elimination. Alternately, settler-colonial powers can undermine the resilience of Indigenous political sovereignty and autonomy. If settler-colonial regimes do not display a uniform investment in outright native elimination, it is because settler colonialism and other types of colonialism routinely mix with one another.*

Conflicting demands for subsumption and elimination can coexist even if they respond to distinct and, to a certain extent, antithetical colonial logics; all colonial regimes are marked by contradiction. Settlers also respond flexibly to conditions on the ground and to Indigenous resistance and agency. Nevertheless, the objective of a non-settler-colonial regime is the ongoing domination of a colonized collective, whereas the aim of a settler-colonial regime is the reproduction of a settler polity in place of an Indigenous one. [source].

In short, the locals are a demonized "other" species/underclass to eliminate, but also <u>harvest</u> in oscillating theatrics that aim to keep them alive [and the Imperial Boomerang away from home] for as long as possible.)

This globalization of settler colonialism during the past several centuries has been tied to a mother territory (America) having naturalized Britain and France's colonial experiments[109] before reaching into the Global South with smaller ally nation-states and buffer/satellite states during proxy war as both a) carried out during the Cold War (when Russia ceased combating the West and sought to emulate it); and b) after the so-called "end of history" and emergence of Capitalist Realism raping nature full-bore (*vis-à-vis* Francis Bacon), but also the minds of the public through fear and dogma dressed up as "public relations": Bernay's propaganda as relayed through famous Gothic canon; i.e., us-versus-them. Since their inception and initial development during the Enlightenment, nation-states have always been the enemy—the giant cannibalizing zombie-vampire piloted by the elite feeding off workers while teaching them to eat each other from "most expendable" to "least expendable" (compared to the elite, we're all dogmeat). Under neoliberalism, war as executed through nation-states will not only *never* end; its proliferation in and out of fiction bleeds into our daily lives as similarly cliché to

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[109] Historically, an effective method of power consolidation is the status quo's recuperation rebellions or crises (often shortages) to enable/incentivize regressions. After the French Revolution, the social gains made during the ensuing unrest were branded as terrorist actions by the state and in Gothic fiction (*vis-à-vis* Joseph Crawford, who we'll examine, later) and used to regress towards the status quo with new "counterterrorist" measures in place; i.e., the defeating of Napoleon (who was a false revolutionary and opportunist, to be fair) in 1815, followed by the rise of the Victorian Era of the British Empire from 1835 until 1901. After the 1973 oil crisis (aka the Oil Shock), Bretton Woods was impacted and ultimately discarded by capitalist opportunists eagerly in favor of a until-then fringe ideology, neoliberalism, wherein Margaret Thatcher assumed power in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1981; both executives lead to the further gutting of the labor movements in their country followed by establishment safeguards for deregulation, which lead to a rise in war, austerity and fascism (not a shortage). In short, modern war developed, expanded and increased, then eventually became corporatized through corporate seizures of direct power on the global stage, working to supersede state mechanisms altogether (Bad Empanada's "Johnny Harris: Shameless Propagandist Debunked," 2023).

the pre-existing story's historical materialism; e.g., my father and (adopted) first-cousin-once-removed fighting over my mother's honor like two knights dueling at a banquet, except it was two guys in their late twenties wearing dress clothes and trying (badly) to play frisbee football: our figurative Princess Dulcinea and two knights Quixote tilting at windmills during an anniversary party's novel-of-manners farcical instance of life imitating art and vice versa.

The subsequent canonical synthesis will inform both sides as becoming a powerful meta illusion that the class-dormant will fight for as class traitors who police *anyone* who threatens the profit motive. Their predication owes itself to various moral panics separating the hero's reactionary and existential crisis-of-faith/sense of self-worth and self-victimhood from the hero's victims and their very real grievances: the **Red Scares**, **Islamophobia**, **Yellow Menace** of **Orientalism**; **Black Revenge**, and **white genocide/replacement** inheritance phobias; stigma animals (spiders, snakes, etc) and their anthropomorphized extensions; **Satanic/gay panic**, but also the automatic, cliché fetishization and commercialization of these things by undercover agents slumming through the conquered, ghetto streets of the colonized as guilty pleasures to peruse; e.g., the Harlem Renaissance or a drag show as a secret lifestyle the rich can get off to. "Seeing how the other side lives" becomes "suffering to the conquered" for those they stare at; i.e., by stealing and appropriating the colony's culture, industry and agriculture as something to absorb into the mother territory[110] but also engaging in

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[110] Often expressed as "the mothership" in science fiction stories; e.g., *Independence Day* (1996) as a clunky metaphor for the Imperial Boomerang as an alien mass-invasion vehicle visited upon the usual colonizers: America and the Global North (whose big nations eat little notions). During the perceived outsider's "special military operation," an occupying army launches from a base of operations with seemingly magical weapons and spacecraft, except it's displaced onto a dark, female-coded alien force; i.e., "Communists do this, not America!" In turn, this Gothic disassociation of the colonial binary becomes a call-to-war according to unity through neoconservative argumentation; apologetics for the Fourth of July as something to celebrate using the flowery language of American Liberty in defense of the current world order *vis-à-vis* Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980)

> What made Bacon's Rebellion especially fearsome for the rulers of Virginia was that black slaves and white servants joined forces [...] Those upper classes, to rule, needed to make concessions to the middle class, without damage to their own wealth or power, at the expense of slaves, Indians, and poor whites. This bought loyalty. And to bind that loyalty with something more powerful even than material advantage, the ruling group found, in the 1760s and 1770s, a wonderfully useful device. That device was the language of liberty and equality, which could unite just enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality (source).

as opposed to Fredrick Douglas' "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" (1852):

sex tourism while "touching down" on alien soil: moral panics, **rape epidemics** and **drug wars** advertised through popular media celebrating these sites as magical and wonderous, like Joseph Campbell's "region of supernatural wonder" but channeled through the likes of non-immiserated, white metal culture selling rebellion and black culture to white middle-class kids while still keeping black culture on the outside; e.g., Iron Maiden, H.P. Lovecraft and Michael Whelan [exhibit 94c2b] but also female authors like Ann Radcliffe's murder mystery/true crime (especially "exquisite" torture and "demon lovers") as cashing in, first and foremost, on xenophobia as a lucrative measure within *Amazonomachia*. They don't simply profit from tragedy but from crisis and decay built into capital as a theatrical device across all registers and mediums:

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold, that a nation's sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation's jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the "lame man leap as an hart."

But such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn ([source](#)).

(exhibit 0a2b1a: Artist, top-left: [Marie Bunny](); top-middle: [Nichameleon](); top-right: [Tay Melo](); bottom-left: [Alhvida](); bottom-right: [PedroPerez1973](). "The Gothic is… basically [Scooby Doo](]," Christine Neufeld once said, in my ENG 300 course, at EMU.

I thought it sounded funny at the time, but she was absolutely right; e.g., Radcliffe's pirates stealing stuff from an old castle [[Udolpho](, 1794] while pretending to be ghosts, only to be foiled by the damsel, detective, servant, hero and/or virgin/whore, plays out in much the same way as the gang from [Scooby Doo]() does: the fight-or-flight reduced merely to flight, thus resorting to their "feminine" wits to solve mysteries; i.e., as the arbiters of domestic disputes dressed up in outmoded [and highly repetitive] Gothic aesthetics and conventions within late-1960s/1970s [Americana]() (Scooby Doo, a talking dog, is a rather blunt metaphor for psychomachy and drug trips; just what's in those "Scooby snacks"?).

Even so, the show was clearly made for children, but its surfaces and situations are still thoroughly sexualized: sweater kittens, miniskirts; e.g., useless clothes through

*the paradox of an opaque "see-through" uniform leveled against **the Male Gaze** [Sarah Vanbuskirk: "The male gaze describes a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men while sexualizing and diminishing women," source]. Likewise, **the explained supernatural** and **exquisite "torture"/"demon lover"** of the modernized opera are alive and well [and the **Black Veil**, **horror** and **terror**, and other Radcliffean concepts whose spatial, architectural and musicality we will unpack during the "camp map"]. And more to the point, it introduced Radcliffe's profitable and savvy [albeit centrist] Gothic approach to an American audience in cartoon form roughly two hundred years after the first Gothic novel was written. Besides Radcliffe or the cartoon "ghosts" of her work, the same Gothic ideas work within pulpier fictions hinted at by our mentioning of authors like Lovecraft or Iron Maiden as doubled by parallel stories set in imaginary recreations of actual locations haunted by the same piqued imagination; i.e., "The Horror at Red Hook" versus "Red Hook in <u>Walk Among the Tombstones</u> [2014]. Lovecraft's spiel is his usual xenophobia; the <u>latter</u> is a gritty, hard-boiled cop noir set backward in the time of payphones, but built on older stories like <u>The Maltese Falcon</u> [1941] and its faked deaths, double crosses, cliché outfits and endless darkness and rain. But those owe themselves as much to Gothic fiction as much as Cormac McCarthy's Gothic Westerns do; e.g., <u>Child of God</u> [1973] or <u>No Country for Old Men</u> [2005]. <u>Walk Among the Tombstones</u> is similarly comparable to a Gothic novel: your basic detective story with the hero-as-sleuth, helped by servants and challenged by villains. But as a "noir" in the 20th century, it plays out like Bakhtin's description of the Gothic novel as a "black novel"; i.e., the <u>black</u> detective novel/Western as a canceled future, a hauntological graveyard. Here, the private eye can take a shot or have a smoke, put on a duster and peer into the imaginary past to then uncover secrets in the present: what's right in front of us dressed up as "elsewhere, once upon a time." Like Radcliffe, it yawns into the future with immense pathos.*

Neeson is a male action hero with pathos and camp [see: Krull, 1983], and male private dicks like the one he plays in Among the Tombstones are so cliché they don't need names. They might carry a piece, but rely more on blind luck, quick wits, their gut and a silver tongue [they have to negotiate the ransom but also talk their way out of tight corners]. In short they're ensconced and disempowered by the chronotope [often beat up; versus women and the threats they traditionally face as detectives: killers can't hit a girl in a polite novel of manners, but they can make her fear for her life or "modesty"]. The paradox of the story as a truth-telling lie is its gloomy Gothic scenery being explored while disarmed. To this, the paradox of the gun is it can cut through the Gordian Knot instead of solving it. In short, its protection and general utility can backfire ["I wasn't brave, just drunk"]. But while the same basic space is perpetually rainy, dark, and full of smoke and mirrors, it's also a space for repressed guilt, revenge, and getting even—i.e., its "ghosts"/simulacra [serial killers, Boogeyman; e.g., Jack the Ripper, Father Schedoni, Buffalo Bill, Michael Rooker's Henry, etc] squat like gargoyles among the criminogenic conditions, but also prowling.

On some level, they and the heroes they stalk—like the world itself—are meant to parallel the reader's own complicated desires for revenge as simply being seen: to be heard and felt through historicized passion as supplied to them from older times and… dead things. In short, they're the "same" as reality but in a doubled sense, separated by theatre's gulf of Gothic imagination and highlighted by diegetic and non-diegetic mood, method and music; i.e., a "danger disco" to play around inside [the basic idea of theatrical "play" being the stage and its props, music and stories told on and with these things]. In this profoundly playful space, a noir detective often dives into criminogenic conditions like a heroine in the castle does, except they're more streetwise and less stuck in the medieval imaginary as a site of rape fantasy in the traditionally feminine sense. But in New England, there is crossover [all those churches and cemeteries] and any noir follows the same praxial formula as a Gothic novel when considered as canonical or "ground-breaking." The rules are conventions that we play with like the characters in the story do—setting and breaking their own boundaries while crossing over the threshold into the shadow space, but also our world as we stare at them; i.e., between the world of the living and the land of the dead as half-real.)

Whether through damsels, detectives or demons (all heroic, all monstrous), canonical proponents of Gothic fiction not only "cash in," but extend the mystery to likewise prolong people's anxieties about the structure. Their game of "guess the killer/Gothic cliché" *reinforces* Capitalism and perpetuating its problems by commercializing them through harmful Gothic doubles that, cleverly enough, offer some measure of false power/hope and catharsis (with Radcliffe touching on some profound truths despite her grift as "the Great Enchantress[111]," or Tolkien despite

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[111] From Dale Townshend's "An introduction to Ann Radcliffe," (2014):

> The "Shakspeare [sic] of Romance Writers"; "the mighty magician of THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO"; "the first poetess of romantic fiction"; "a genius of no common stamp"; "the great enchantress of that generation"; "mother Radcliff [sic]": Nathan Drake, T. J. Mathias, Walter Scott, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Thomas De Quincey and John Keats respectively, together with countless other essayists, reviewers and critics of the Romantic period in Britain, praised the writing of the Gothic romancer, poet and travel-writer Ann Ward Radcliffe (1764–1823) in the most superlative terms imaginable (source).

In short, it was a giant wank-fest where these literal jackoffs allowed Radcliffe to trespass because she was polite; they couldn't get enough. And *while* I think her fiction isn't *total* dogshit (I like her suspense and some of her literary devices), it's also worryingly and unapologetically centrist/"basic." *That* shouldn't be surprising given the period in which it was written, but in *our* Gothic times (wherein terribly fitting labels like "TERF island" are no accident), we have to do better than "go down on Radcliffe" just because a bunch of old, dead white people did, two centuries ago (and more recently as living ones continue to suck her toes—no offense, Dale). We have to *camp* her enchantments and risk the tone-policing she was too chickenshit to face while writing her "polite" rape fantasies, then taking her 30 pieces of silver (more on this, later).

his centrist schtick/refrain). As class warriors, our best "Jewish revenge" is consciously camping all of this while actively and knowingly being party to the devil; i.e., reclaiming said power from within (and "outside" of the zone; placed in quotes because there is no outside of the text, *vis-à-vis* Derrida).

Canonical or iconoclastic, the Gothic scheme is emotionally manipulative on multiple levels: "play the audience like a piano." The *capitalist* does this so the audience will pay money according to the author's improv as working them through their pre-existing stigmas and biases. Canon, then, is a bad puzzle told by a liar whose consolation prize is Faustian: "solvable" shadows, their mysteries less a critique of society unto itself and praxially devised to make us feel smart/active in a cop-like sense by beating the author at their own game, all while forcing our heads into the sand; i.e., making us the dupe (a concept we'll return to in the symposium). It *is* possible to critique capital anyways, but the iconoclast shall be doing the legwork, not Radcliffe. She's too busy busking through fear mongering according to stereotypes/criminogenic conditions. Any complicit artist is financially incentivized to lie a particular way—i.e., in defense of the status quo. *These are criminogenic conditions,* making canon at large criminogenic through the profit motive as endless: the show must go on. The same theatrical imperative applies to Gothic Communists, except our emotional/Gothic manipulations are mutually consensual and meant to develop Communism from inside Capitalism using our privilege as a staging point for rebellious counterterror and iconoclasm (camp); e.g., my own white woman's privilege used to make a book specifically weaponized against capital. Sure, our methods are seductive and potent (thus resemble the people we're camping—e.g., our variation of the detective story/danger disco), but they *aren't* forced onto others that we might take their money and frighten them into paying more, next time; our sex education isn't built around structured profit at all, but post-scarcity.

We'll explore all of this next as we lay out *Sex Positivity*'s thesis statement and pieces of the manifesto tree that both lead towards the "camp map" (the means for camping canon) *and* make up the pieces of the map needed to camp Tolkien's refrain with, thus ungentrify canonical war by making it *conscious* class/culture war within a campy Gothic poetics.

Thesis Statement: the Gothic Mode and Its Reclamation

"What do you mean?" he said. "Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is morning to be good on?"

—Gandalf, The Hobbit

(artist: [Martin Sobr](#))

I have divided my thesis statement into five pieces:

- **[the thesis paragraph](#):** Contains my entire book's central argument, distilled into one paragraph (and provides the full definition of **heteronormativity**).
- **[the thesis body](#):** Summarizes Gothic Communism's primary foil, the state—specifically its monopoly of violence, state of exception and Protestant work ethic in relation to the historical materialism of the state's propaganda (canon); i.e., canon's monomyth, Cycle of Kings, infernal concentric pattern and narrative of the crypt amounting to the Shadow of Pygmalion.
- **"[Pieces of the Camp Map (from the Manifesto Tree)](#)":** Unpacks the main sections from the manifesto tree in relation to oppositional praxis; i.e., canon vs iconoclasm (camp).
- **"[The Roots of Camp](#)":** Examines canonical demon BDSM and Radcliffe's fiction/tricky tools as popular literary devices that *desperately* need to be camped.
- **"[Overcoming Praxial Inertia](#)":** Explores some popular examples of canonical, *Beowulf*-style heroes and the threat they represent as also needing to be camped.

Thesis Paragraph: Capitalism Sexualizes Everything

"Enthrall me with your acumen."

—Hannibal Lector, <u>Silence of the Lambs</u> (1991)

*After deliberating about the keyword format, I've decided to keep them **bold** and color-coded to illustrate their presence in the thesis statement in a very graphical way. Many of these will have been defined already. I'm highlighting them again to show their usage as a group of interrelating terms. —Perse*

(artist: Jessica Nigri)

This book wasn't written/illustrated for Academia, but if it were and I was seriously treating it as my PhD to defend, I would argue that it addresses a knowledge gap regarding the synthesis of **Gothic theory** with **anarcho-Communism**, **gender studies**, **ludology** and **Marxist argumentation**: "**Capitalism** dimorphically sexualizes all work to some degree, including **sex work**, resulting in sex-coercive media and gender roles via universal alienation through monstrous language; this requires an **iconoclasm** to combat the systemic bigotries that result—a (as the title reads) 'liberating of sex work under Capitalism through iconoclastic art.' **Gothic Communism** is our ticket towards that end; i.e., developing **anarcho-Communism**, hence a **post-scarcity** world without **nation-states** and their built-in, thus **historical-material**, genocide and exploitation of workers. My teaching approach stresses **oppositional praxis** according to **sex positivity vs sex coercion** when **reclaiming** the harmful language of stigma, bias, control, fear and hate from our colonizers (capitalists), but also **power exchange** and resistance as a cultural means of social-sexual catharsis and theatrical disguise; i.e., cultivating **emotional and Gothic**

intelligence through a reclaimed **Gothic mode** of artistic, thus political collective/self-expression (monstrous poetics and applied Gothic theories). Capitalism sexualizes everything for the profit motive using canonical (dimorphic/**Cartesian**) monstrous poetics to brainwash workers and pit them against each other during **Capitalist Realism**; i.e., **the Shadow of Pygmalion**'s **monomyth**/**Cycle of Kings** and **infernal concentric pattern**: unironic rape and war are everywhere because Capitalism rapes everything for profit, including people's minds, according to a profit motive that synonymizes all of these things. Utilized deliberately by Gothic Communism, **subversive *Amazonomachia***'s 'dark forces'—its famous, Miltonian paradoxes[112] and manifesto coordinates: the tenets, theories, and means and materials of expression, fetishes and clichés, etc—can revert Capitalist Realism's doomed **narrative of the crypt** by putting "rape" and "war" in quotes, recultivating the **Superstructure** and reclaiming the **Base** during class/culture war's camping of canon. The asymmetrical nature of guerrilla warfare obviously covers of an extremely wide range of artistic possibilities, but generally focuses on sex work and its **canonical, dimorphic sexualization**, or work in general as similarly sexualized, and **heteronormative enforcement**/**the colonial binary** established through **regressive *Amazonomachia*** as something to camp; i.e., through ironic **kink**, **fetishization**, and **BDSM rituals/aesthetics** (of **psychosexual** power and death, stigma and revenge, but also catharsis and transformation, etc) with **demonic/undead** poetics synthesized through the 'creative successes' of **proletarian praxis** as a class-conscious, ready-for-war response to/critique of **capital**" (my thesis paragraph).

     Heteronormativity is obviously something to critique through our thesis argument (and its bevvy of resources), so I want to give its full definition before we proceed into the thesis body:

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[112] Gothic doubles but also theatrical perceptions of power ("darkness visible") as liminal expressions/elaborate strategies of misdirection/"archaeologies." For example, not everything that is black and red is a fascist, but *is* treated *like* a fascist (and various other things at once) until the level of decay affords the usual centrist compromises between white knights and black knights against the Communist variant of the corrupt, the monstrous-feminine, the pedagogy of the oppressed coming out the same Gothic imagination's shadow zone.

HETERONORMATIVITY

An extremely helpful concept in queer theory, which encapsulates a lot of what we've just covered is *heteronormativity*. Queer theorist Michael Warner popularized this term in 1991, drawing on Rubin's sex hierarchy and Rich's compulsory heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity refers to a set of related cultural assumptions:

- The "normal" or "natural" form of attraction and relationships is one man and one woman who:
  - Normally or naturally embody conventional gender roles and norms; and
  - Have sex whereby the man's penis penetrates the woman's vagina (PIV sex).

OH, JANET!

OH, BRAD!

- Other forms of sexuality and gender are less normal or natural than this (or not normal or natural at all).

- Thus, people are assumed heterosexual unless proven otherwise.

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(from the companion glossary's exhibit 3b: Author/artist: Meg-Jon Barker from "What's Wrong with Heteronormativity?" featuring their 2016 book, Queer: A Graphic History.)

Heteronormativity is both highly unnatural and normalized by capital. It is the supremely harmful idea wherein heterosexuality and its relative gender norms are prescribed/enforced to normalized, institutional extremes by those in power—i.e., the Patriarchy. In Marxist terms, capitalists and state agents own, thus control, the media, using it to enforce heterosexuality and the colonial (cis-)gender binary through advertisement on a grand scale (re: the

canonical Superstructure). This influence reliably affects how people respond, helping them recognize "the social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law"—re: Lacan's Symbolic Order. Acceptance of this Order when it is decidedly harmful is manufactured consent, leading to basic human rights abuses perpetrated by the state and its bourgeois actors. Pro-bourgeois abuses happen through various concentric lenses of normativity—heteronormativity, amatonormativity, Afronormativity, homonormativity and queernormativity, etc—that appeal tokenistically to the same colonial binary and its heteronormative mythic structure; i.e., that which conflates human biology (sex and skin color), thus sex and gender roles within a transgenerational curse: the king saw the black, queer and/or female monster and went mad because he had been alienated from them and himself. The curse of the castle and the Shadow of Pygmalion, then, is reliable decay and socio-material madness felt through this engineered tension as being ultimately profitable for the elite and detrimental to everyone else (whether they're defending the institution or not). Heteronormativity doesn't just explain away ignominious death, but essentializes and endorses it; i.e., the hallmark couple looks happy so the system must work, right? All you have to do is conform, consume and obey…

(exhibit 0a2b1b1a: Artist, left: [Devilhs](#); middle: [Pat Benatar](#); top-right: [Doruk Golcu](#); bottom-right: Angel Witch. Hysteria [also called "the wandering womb," exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a1] is commonly portrayed in the monstrous-feminine "Medusa" hairstyle[113] as immodest; i.e., lacking decency or virtue by being visually "loud" [making unironic admonishment of such descriptive sexuality/gender a form of tone-policing: "Hush, darling!"]. But in the same breath, anxiety more broadly is a symptom of society whereupon women [or beings perceived as women] are made by men into what men want to see: a damsel who is sexy by disempowered, or

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[113] Classically the entirety of the female form—its sexuality, gender identity/performance, emotions, etc—is sexualized by men for men. As such, Medusa's big hair synonymizes with her "phallic" snakes; i.e., her "dickhead" literally as a headful of penises or symbolic of a phallic, masculine foil to traditional male heroes' own power source: their *singular* penises (though the head and the hair are classically seen as a storing site for potency—e.g., Samson from the Bible). The idea of female body hair as "phallic" is certainly not out of the blue, either—with the pubic area (especially its unkempt versions) being synonymized with "incorrect masculinity"/an extension of the clitoris as "phallic-like"; i.e., an offshoot of the "correct" penis's legitimate violence, thus violent in a delegitimized, rebellious counterterror form. Keeping in this spirit, I jokingly in the past referred to Zeuhl's pubic hair (which was especially full and thick) as a "hair penis." Heteronormativity would treat these "exceptions" to the Vitruvian, European standard as anathema, but in truth, they are incredibly common; they've just been abjected into a state of exception that weird canonical (art) nerds can police with impunity.

"threatening" in ways they can "kettle" [to surround and attack, a police anti-protestor tactic]. This nuts-and-bolts approach gives little space for the woman to classically voice her concerns, so it surges forth from her Frankensteinian body like ghosts and lightning—a tall, imposing, <u>undead</u> passion of suggestibly orgasmic release that men classically view as "weakness" [which they then sexualize]. Losing control isn't just a symptom, then, but a means to addressing larger historical-material concerns in the self-same language hijacked for proletarian dialogs: "Fuckin' metal!")

Please note: The thesis statement focuses more on canon itself, whereas the "camp map" is about camping everything we talk about here. The remaining ~137 pages of the thesis statement, then, are dedicated to unpacking my thesis paragraph in relation to the "Notes on Power" and "Shadow Zone" essays, the Four Gs, as well as listing most of our keywords and unpacking the core components of the manifesto tree. —Perse

Thesis Body: Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism vs the State; or, Galatea inside the Shadow of Pygmalion

Guilty as charged, but dammit, it ain't right
There's someone else controlling me
Death in the air, strapped in the electric chair
This can't be happening to me
Who made you God to say
"I'll take your life from you"?

　　　—James Hetfield; "Ride the Lightning," on Metallica's Ride the Lightning (1984)

　　　From videogames to music, movies, novels, performance art and open sex work, my base argument (thesis paragraph) is the same: that *functional* anarcho-Communism is queer *and* Gothic because it uses **grassroots worker solidarity**

and **collective labor action** to cultivate **horizontal (anarchistic) arrangements of power**. Once internalized, said arrangements automatically and intuitively challenge **heteronormativity**'s **vertical arrangements of power** through democratic/non-establishment participation at the linguo-material level (the Gothic has always been queer and inclusive of the demonized to varying degrees; just look at Matthew Lewis, but also Oscar Wilde, James Whale, Clive Barker, Ann Rice, Cassandra Peterson/Elvira, Susan Sontag or Vincent Price—Price in particular being a **bisexual** icon and famous advocate for **LGBTQ+** rights and the rights of Indigenous Persons and a strong challenger to the **Pygmalion** ideal of a subservient **Galatea** (e.g., Dr. Frankenfurter and Rocky from *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975—builder and "built," if you know what I mean): **Gothic *(gay-anarcho)* Communism** being the process of **countercultural Gothic poetics** as a creative rebellion against a Pygmalion-esque status quo/**Shadow of Pygmalion** and its profit motive and disastrous paywalls on basic human necessities (Lemmy.world: "Capitalism is the paywall of life," 2023); i.e., one challenged by Galatea herself as come alive and making her own media as a **gender-non-conforming** idea splintering into countless monsters spawned from a transgenerational/-continental, *public* Gothic imagination: **the shadow of Galatea** through oft-horny and very gay **simulacra** of sex-positive **egregores**, **tulpas**, and *Yokai*. We're taking these dark forces back by "**making it gay**"; i.e., "camping the canon" (which the "camp map" will explain further after we've laid all the "map pieces" out about canon).

For the state, *we* are the proverbial "forces of darkness" threatening its "perfect, eternal, natural" existence (through various campy paradoxes; e.g., sexy Marx/nerd sex); for the anarcho-Communist, **the *state* is the enemy** (meaning the **nation-state**, but also the **historical-material** status quo) that exploits everyone through colonized and colonizing monstrous poetics and its arbitration by police forces. Often, these forces are hauntologized as knights and other male action heroes, or token persons inside the same **Man Box** as arbiters of justice; i.e., wearing the badges of state agents and *de facto* vigilantes that serve the status quo and enjoy its rescindable benefits, which play out in various durable stereotypes: "boundaries for me, not for thee" illustrating a double life whose alter ego/persona (secret or open) unites with the wearer's mask-off identity to torment the underclass. It often manifests through false generosity and protection. As such, The strings attached to charity are a noose for class traitors to hang themselves with; inside a framed narrative—that is, a narrative that is both thoroughly unreliable *and* frames persons. Somewhere is the real killer but more than that is the structure that produces more chaos the killer can manipulate and control. Cops like to fuck us over for the state; we lie to preserve ourselves in the face of their deceptions.

In other words, Christian "charity" can manifest as class guilt and betrayal towards the go-to sacrifice by the slightly less expendable as sometimes-sacrificed

when the state eats itself; i.e., owner zombies smaller than the state (the Big Zombie) buying away their systemic problems as tied to older clichés and dead metaphors. Reassigned to power as it exists currently in theatrical iterations, these self-deceptive acts of cannibalization manifest in thoroughly domesticated affairs of the heart regardless of actual theatrical potency or charm; e.g., Bill Gates (who materializes through the master of the old manor's inheritance anxiety as a hopelessly old throwback that critiques the bourgeoisie in outmoded language: Count Dracula, or "Gates" but sexed up and/or openly ghoulish far more than he normally appears).

(exhibit 0a2b1b1b: A modern-day retelling of "Young Goodman Brown" [1835], Ari Aster's Hereditary [2014] chillingly presents the Gothic home as devouring of the blind who, despite their Herculean efforts, are sacrificed inside a castle, inside a castle, inside a castle. Their combined, recursive downfall is a great lie built on lies, assisted partly by their inability to effectively or honestly communicate with one another towards unveiling systemic issues. The mother thinks herself freed of the former matriarch's tyranny but through her "objective recreations" merely apes the largely scheme: the more she fights, the sweeter she tastes.

In turn, Queen Leigh [pronounced "lie"] is part of that same scheme, serving a patriarchal "top dog" as his queen bee. As such, the movie—similar to The Witch [2015] or Rosemary's Baby [1968]—is sexist; i.e., it demonizes corrupt and hellish female forces as naturalized around patriarchal power—a male hegemon who gives orders to lesser female witches to do his bidding as the great witch of all: "Service to Satan is service enough!" It critiques Capital through the harvest without having anything good to say about witches or the harvest. In short, it scapegoats them

and blames Capitalism on witches. Aster's witch hunt stokes the middle class's fearful fascination with the harvest through bastardized versions of itself, specifically to apologize for the grim avatars holding the sickle handle under Capitalism: the witch cop as a black rabbit or cat slicing as the Grim Reaper does the through the proverbial "wheat"; i.e., themselves and their own bodies, their own necks to lend to the blood spill's dark harvest—an obscene perversion of paganized rites married to the Western lie of the Gothic castle's own chronotope: the castle *is the vampire [or the "mommy dom," as I argue for Metroidvania, in the "Camping Tolkien's Refrain using Metroidvania" subchapter].*

[artist: Art Spiegelman]

"And where they burn books, they will burn people." Most of the time, it will never affect the [non-token] class traitor to the same degree, but it is *still incredibly abusive to condition someone to think they have power by putting them in positions*

of coercive domination over others [often by working off them through their lived trauma/criminogenic conditions]. In a world where everyone is lying, Gothic Communism conducts rebellion on the same stage, in the same costumes and masks; i.e., it doubles these perfidious black bunnies and other animalized demons and performative undead through "Trojan" variants that camp the grander canon, often in druglike ways: "Follow the white rabbit" but also the black rabbit, whose function determines their dialectical-material role during class/culture war, <u>not</u> aesthetics [we'll unpack this much more when we look at Acid Communism in Volume Two's "Call of the Wild" chapter—exhibit 56a1a1].)

Whether a lord, sheriff, queen bee, or his or her deputies, canonical praxis amounts to team cop vs team victims. Trauma, in turn, lives in the body but also the estate as an extension of personhood; i.e., inherited, hereditary trauma expressed through the historical Gothic's site of dynastic primacy and hereditary rites: the castle intimated through the old manor or high-rise. In these places, abuse begets abuse (the father or mother abusing their children), and fascism recruits from the broken home as criminogenic. In turn, the elite's gang of undead demon thugs cannibalize the latter through DARVO/reactive abuse: "*You're* the zombies, not us!" (which will only intensify when the state crisis enters decay—i.e., throwing the state of exception ever wider and eating the workforce from the outside inwards like a piecrust towards the precious center). Not just a war on drugs, but a war with drugs and the stuff of drugs tied to smaller conflicts fenced inside larger conflicts trying to make sense of them. In the end, Capitalism is a giant lie, where fascism is one side of a murderous chameleon—not guilty of accidental confusion but deliberate deception; unmasked, they drop the mask's friendly affect and, like Father Schedoni, have a flat affect underneath. We must expose them and this requires masks, but also a silly sense of humor tied to sex and drugs as things to camp:

(artist: Devilhs)

As Gothic Communists, we share our battlefield with these thugs and their material condition's historical materialism. That is, our shared stomping grounds are the Gothic imagination (and its language, drugs, aesthetics and materials) on all registers, our own campy doubles subverting the usual double standards of our would "protectors" (who serve the state and protect property before people): the blood-soaked battlefields of Vietnam and other killing fields as music-tinged (the

drugs, aesthetics, and music[114], etc, all yielding what Slavoj Zizek—from *A Pervert's Guide to Ideology* [2012]—would call "universal adaptability," whereupon function is determined by function/dialectical-materialism, not sloganized aesthetics); monsters and drugs are not exclusive to the elite and their dogs of war. Nor are their canonical "magic glasses"—to see the world through, hiding what the elite and their proponents are—the only prescription. We can *change* the prescription with a different set: dialectical-material analysis, but also enjoyment of our labor as re-seized. When worn we can see the elite and their proponents according to how they function: as vampires from outer space, brainwashing the rest of us to consume and obey until the end of time. Eventually, we won't have to wear the glasses to see how the world works; it will become second-nature.

(exhibit 0a2b1b2: Artist, left: Luke Preece; top-middle: manedpizzawolf; bottom-middle: Patrick Connan. Plato's allegory of the cave is primarily a visual metaphor that, under Capitalism, describes how the profit motive is guided through vicarious experience and brainless consumption that codes our behaviors. Capitalism alienates everything and everything in monstrous, heteronormative language. As I write in a now-discontinued book that has been absorbed into this one,

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[114] Antiwar tends to combine sex, drugs, and roll 'n rock at cross purposes with state hegemony—e.g., opposing the American Vietnam soldier's pulling of a modern-day variation of the Viking berserk's war ritual: getting high as fuck, then fucking shit up and otherwise raping everything in sight. The antiwar/anti-capital activist might use the hidden, ironic function of "White Rabbit" (1967) or "99 Red Luftballoons" (1983) to ferry a message to other collaborators; i.e., anyone who is against war as a business (and all that entails). It becomes a graveyard shift, embracing the communication of such counter codes; i.e., disco-in-disguise, on par with the Mancunian postpunk movement and assorted mimicries in the years ahead.

The survival of neoliberalism hinges on the neoliberal's ability to remain invisible. For example, John Carpenter's They Live *turns class theatre-going nostalgia on its head, illustrating the elite's panoptic, ever-present desire to invade and control others through what we consume as tied to how we see the world as something to eat. This turns them into giant parasites that codify rather fittingly as vampiric aliens from outer space, and their victims into brainwashed zombies/smaller vampire offshoots. The moment this spell is broken—say, by putting on a pair of magic glasses—the elite's power vanishes/is revealed to be an illusion. The problem is, those "still in the cave" will refuse to put the glasses on; the reason being they are so hopelessly dependent on dogma to supply their structured worldview that anything else constitutes the apocalypse [a grand revelation] as the literal end of the world. They literally cannot imagine anything beyond Capitalism, even when shown its harmful effects [source:* Neoliberal and Fascist Propaganda in Yesterday's Heroes, *2021].*

The basic idea could be called **Zombie-Vampire Capitalism**, *whose business-as-usual operations we'll provide a full definition of a little later in the thesis statement. For now, just know that the concept of challenging Zombie-Vampire Capitalism has been absorbed into this book through the creation of "special glasses" that, oddly enough, are often based on the accidental perceptive elements to people who weren't always aware of what they were doing—e.g., Milton or Radcliffe's accidental critique of Captialism. All the same, the state-apologetic elements in their famous media results in a thoroughly "rose-tinted" "prescription" that not only blinds workers, but turns them into zombie-vampires that devour for the state through various means; i.e., by embodying the pro-state damsel, detective, demon, or dutiful, tokenized scapegoat, etc. In other words, we have to update the prescription by embodying the monstrous underclass as something to not just identify with, but see through the eyes of in order to conduct dialectical-material analysis [a concept of "monster vision" we'll explore quite a bit during Volume Two's Humanities primer].)*

From all walks of Gothic queerness, then, labor movements treat class/culture war as something to express in monstrous language that challenges canonical *Amazonomachia* ("monster war," but often with a monstrous-feminine flavor) as a heteronormative enterprise; i.e., by evoking the **apocalypse** to uncover and expose the division of labor as **sexually dimorphic** in ways that normally reward white, cis-het *Christian* men first and foremost, but also turn them (and their tokenized subordinates) into regimented abusers who rape and kill for the state's profit motive: **the Protestant work ethic** enacted through a **monopoly of violence**/**state of exception** where said violence is always possible (from Max Weber and Gorgio Agamben, below)

- Weber's maxim regarding **the state's monopoly of violence**: "To fully rule a territory requires the authority to violently control it if necessary. This is the source of Weber's well-known maxim: a state holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory, meaning that violence perpetrated by other actors is illegitimate" (source: Matthew Farish and Timothy Barney's "Maps and the State," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2020).
- Weber's notion of **the Protestant work ethic**: "that Protestant ethics and values, along with the Calvinist doctrines of asceticism and predestination, enabled the rise and spread of Capitalism" (source: tutor2u regarding *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*); this extends to the demonization of the Catholics, the Puritans and various Protestant outlier denominations, and obviously Islam and pagan/non-Christian religions (with Communism often regarded as secular thanks to Stalin).
- Agamben's **state of exception**: "A special condition in which the juridical order is actually suspended due to an emergency or a serious crisis threatening the state. In such a situation, the sovereign, i.e. the executive power, prevails over the others and the basic laws and norms can be violated by the state while facing the crisis" (source: *State of Exception*, 2005), which we apply to any marginalized group the state targets during crisis, moral panic and decay.

and whose steadfast practitioners, during *Amazonomachia*, are always putting in holy work as **male action heroes** (or heroes acting like cis-het men).

(artist: Andreas Marschall)

All heroes function and appear as monsters in some shape or form. Heteronormative theatre's **copaganda** and **Military Industrial Complex** *binarize* monster theatricality in service of capital (thus the profit motive as something to replicate and enforce through unironic Gothic poetics/mimesis). There are "correct" male heroes organized between white and black knights, and "incorrect" male heroes who are "corrupt" in ways that destroy the established order of the athletic/athletic-adjacent conflict as lucrative, thus heteronormative (and vice versa). This historical-material **gender trouble** extends to female/token heroes, who either are **monster girls** (exhibit 1a1a1h3a2) of the traditional sort—i.e., the damsel/detective (Gothic heroine) and demon (female Gothic villain) or the foreigner whose heteronormatively assigned power conveniently challenges Western (white, cis-het) men, thus patriarchal dominance—and whose warrior-esque compromises with power are allowed for short-lived gradients: the **subjugated Amazon** as phallic/"like a man," but who must eventually conform to varying degrees when the state's perpetual crises enter decay and radicalize the heteronormative model of war at all theatrical registers on- and offstage. Until the woman or token *is* closeted/collared, they are afforded the same crisis of position—i.e., the white, animalized, undead/demonic enforcer as threatened by the parallel forces of darkness coming out of the shadow zone. But because women/token minorities are coded as "weaker" by canon, they will corrupt "faster" thus be closeted or buried to prevent the spread of infection (what I call the "euthanasia effect," which I will unpack more in a moment).

Yet, even if women or token groups submit to their "correct role" in **regressive *Amazonomachia***, segregation is historically no defense from the profit motive. Because there must always be an enemy to fight (a crisis to extend war into forever), a woman or a token minority—even when entirely submissive and bridal/slave-coded—are precious but *contested* property that can *always* turn into a "bad demon" at any moment (e.g., **the wandering womb**, exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a1), thus are always a threat that must be policed, often by members of their own group (cops defend property for the state; for token cops, this means themselves). The historical materialism of canonical *Amazonomachia* is a train of **girl bosses** and their **witch cop/war boss** variants that manifest on- and offstage as **TERFs** who unironically **punch down** against people more marginalized than them while performatively **punching up** against the elite, who they don't meaningfully challenge during oppositional praxis; kettled, they instead emulate the **Man Box** (traditional male sexism and other bigotries tied to **weird canonical nerds**, who we'll unpack in a moment) as a token **assimilation fantasy**—i.e., parroting the colonizer (e.g., Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952). As such, they take **war brides** from the underclass during military urbanism, colonizing the poetic sphere and real world while furthering **psychosexual** violence, **token "white" fragility** and employing **DARVO**—in short, acting like white cis-het men as the

prime colonizing force in polite and impolite (moderate and reactionary) forms: the white and black knight. (I've provided the three most central keyword definitions [monster-wise] below, but please consider the glossary for the undefined ones, as they are all important):

- tokenism/assimilation fantasy/minority police
- war brides (submissive class traitors/collaborators)
- TERFs and SWERFs/NERFs[115]
- punching down
- punching up
- white (cis-het, Christian male) fragility
- gaslight, gatekeep...

...girl-boss (tokenism)

A popular moderate MO, girl bosses are usually neoliberal symbols of "equality," a strong woman of authority who defends the status quo (an overtly fascist girl boss would be someone like Captain Israel; source: Bad Empanada 2's "Marvel's Israeli Superhero 'Sabra,'" 2022). This can be the female "suit," in corporate *de rigueur*, but also Amazons or orcs as corporate commodities (*war bosses*). Suits present Capitalism as "neutral," but also ubiquitous; Amazons and orcs (and all of their gradients) centralize the perceived order of good-versus-evil language in mass-media entertainment. *Queer bosses* are the same idea, but slightly more progressive: a strong queer person of authority whose *queernormativity* upholds the status quo. When this becomes cis-supremacist, the boss is a TERF—an assimilated war boss who regresses to a war bride herself when decay sets in, removing token privileges from most-marginalized token to least-marginalized (canonically speaking).

witch cops/war bosses

A class, gender or race traitor dressed up in the heroic-victimized language of warrior variants of past victims. Their baleful gaze is diverted away from the elite, instead punching down at their fellow workers to break up their strikes, unions and riots; but also to tease disempowered women with the "carrot" of active, physical violence they're conditioned to use against the state's enemies... [abridged].

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[115] Sex work/non-binary exclusionary radical feminists (we'll explore all three groups extensively in Volume Three).

reactive abuse

Systemic/social abuse that provokes a genuine self-defense reaction from the victim, whereupon the expectant abuser "self-defends" in extreme prejudice through DARVO. Reactive abuse correlates with reactionaries defending the state—i.e., reactionary politics being a form of white, cis-het fragility (moderacy being a veiled form of this).

In Gothic terms, this threat of animalistic/chimeric and undead/demonic possession (and composite reification) is theatrical "fact" complicated by the ghosts of Marx seeking "Jewish revenge" versus members of the middle class inheriting the anxiety of their own accidents of birth haunted by the shadow of revenge manifesting through the spectre of the skeleton king as threatening to return and level everything (a concept called **the Leveler**, which we'll unpack more in a moment). *Cryptomimetically* everything haunts the same shared oral/written language as opposing Destroyers: the "kaiju" principle.

(artist: [Nunchaku](#))

Because the state historically-materially rejects democracy through medieval abuse, it will advertise anarcho-Communism's subversive *Amazonomachia* as "dangerously different" in an animalized, undead-demonic sense, thus threatening to the canonical idea of men and women and its canonical, regressive *Amazonomachia*; i.e., an **abject**, **monstrous-feminine** "woman is other" (Julia Kristeva, *vis-à-vis* Barbara Creed and Simone Beauvoir) courted and cowed through harmful **xenophobia/xenophilia**—in short the slaying and fucking of monsters to various harmful degrees in the same theatrical space:

xenophobia (sex-positive or sex-coercive)

Monster-slaying. A fear of the unknown as something to exude or endure, which may take sex-positive or sex-coercive forms. Inside Gothic circles, theatrical xenophobia sits between fear of and fascination towards "the other" as a social-sexual construct; i.e., inherited either by privileged workers acting out unironic gender trouble, or minorities surviving it through their own ironic variation of gender trouble and gender parody in monstrous forms… [abridged].

monstrous-feminine

A term lifted from Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine*. While Creed focuses on the desire for the *cis* woman not to be a victim, thus terrifying men in abject, monstrous ways (which are often then crucified by heteronormative agents, including token ones like Ellen Ripley), the fact remains that the monstrous-feminine extends to a much broader persecution network; i.e., of any "feminine" force that falls outside of what is acceptable within the Patriarchy's heteronormative colonial binary. I have placed *feminine* in quotes to account for anything perceived as "feminine" thus "not correctly "male"; i.e., "woman is other" expanded to trans, intersex and non-binary persons (and the animals associated with them: bunnies, butterflies, cats, dogs, foxes, etc). This can be a male twink or vampire; the cis-queer bear's expression of tenderness and love towards another man (or whoever they're intimate with in whatever way constitutes intimacy for them); a female Amazon that rebels against the state, whether cis, or genderqueer in binary/non-binary ways. The possibilities for heteronormative conformity are narrow and brutal inside a vast historical-material tableau of the same-old patterns; gender-non-conformity's ironies go on endlessly.

xenophilia (sex-positive or sex-coercive)

Monster-fucking. A love of the unknown as something to exude or endure, which may take sex-positive or sex-coercive forms. Whereas harmful (sex-coercive) xenophobia bleeds into harmful xeno*philia*, the sex-positive reversal of abjection and canonical xenophobia/xenophilia resists state power through covert, proletarian means; e.g., "Trojan" monsters and monster-slaying/-fucking rituals that hide revolutionary intent during liminal expressions of oppositional praxis as oft-pornographic. The monster isn't simply someone to fuck (though it can be); it's also someone to potentially love asexually as an "ace" friend/co-conspirator—e.g., *Nimona* (exhibit 56d2). As such, cathartic xenophilia extends to empathy for the wretched, whose medievalized trauma often overlaps with their sexuality and gender but doesn't synonymize with it; indeed, cathartic xenophilia seeks to understand their rage at, and medieval alienation by, state powers (the xenomorph being a queer icon we shall examine many, many times throughout this book, but especially in Volume Two's "Demon" section of chapters).

Monsters—specifically their killing and fucking[116]—sit within liminal expression as something to reflect on with various degrees of irony. As such, the monstrous-feminine's prescribed, "correct[117]" devilry can take a million different "incorrect" forms—from **Amazons** to **bears**, **twunks** and **twinks** to **vampires**, **zombies** or **werewolves** to **xenomorphs**, etc—and whose mere existence intimates the practice of "sodomy" (non-PIV/extramarital/interracial sex) as a direct challenge to the **(settler) colonial binary**/standard, thus worthy of exile, of capital punishment, of genocide: carried out by the sexually dimorphized roles of **monogamous**, white, cis-het Christian warriors and wives (and their token subordinates) within a vicious-yet-sacred propaganda cycle, which I call **the Cycle of Kings**; i.e., the centrist **monomyth**, or cycling out of good and bad kings and

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[116] For canon, fucking is synonymous with rape regarding monsters: fuck the monster (up); for iconoclasm, fucking is cathartic, including ironic appreciations of rape theatre that put "rape" in quotes—i.e., calculated risk/informed consent that helps targets of generational trauma (including rape) feel more confident about their bodies, identities and ability to at least laterally confront their abusers: by theatrically performing inside a safe space about what happened to them.

[117] Correctness is tricky. As stated during the "Regarding Hard Kinks" disclaimer, correctness can mean "what is right, or *universally* ethical—i.e., pertaining to **basic human rights** (and the health of the planet's ecosystems and the humane treatment of animals)"; or it can mean "socially acceptable—i.e., correct according to the ethical beliefs of a specific group," which under Capitalism systemically favors the in-group historically-materially exploiting the out-group for the profit motive. This means that as long as profit occurs, fucking the monster (xenophilia) or killing it (xenophobia) is acceptable under Capitalism in harmful, sex-coercive forms (aka efficient profit).

all the kings' white cis-het Christian men or those *acting like these men*, thus warrior-minded good cops and bad cops in **hauntological copaganda** apologizing for state genocide—i.e., TERFs and other token groups. Trapped between the past and present according to "spectres of fascism/Marx" (warring in **anachronistic** language with an emphasis on the imaginary past/retro-future; or Fisher's "canceled future," *vis-à-vis* Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*), these dark reflections often trouble persons of the heteronormative persuasion versus others of the genderqueer persuasion. Either struggles to identify with themselves in relation to canonical propaganda dictating how non-standard deviations from canon must die; i.e., someone is always a cop or a victim, but generally with some sense of overlap, imposter syndrome and internalized stigma, bigotry, guilt and shame, etc.

Capitalism is always in a state of emergency/exception, and this relies on the creation of monstrous enemies, but also internalized bigotries, self-hatred and impostor syndrome to turn workers against each other (the in-group and its tokenized proponents) and keep them too busy to challenge the elite; i.e., by warring with one another and inside of themselves. In turn, these inherited confusions, guilt and mistrust are used by the elite to justify their hold onto vertical power, whereupon the calamity of war-as-an-*apologetic*-business—of canonically whitewashing culture, war and **class war/culture war** (e.g., the battle-of-the-sexes, civil rights activist/social justice warriors) personified in theatrical war, as well as **total war** and **shadow/proxy war** on the global stage (or its return home via **the Imperial Boomerang**/**military urbanism**)—reeks from Capitalism like a Promethean "exhaust" during an **infernal concentric pattern**. Described by Manuel Aguirre in "Geometries of Terror" (2008) as the final room, or rather a room that conveys finality through the exhaustion of **military optimism**[118] in the face of an endless, yawning dead;

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[118] From me, meaning "the gun-happy optimism of *Pax Americana*—i.e., that one can always shoot away the state's enemies and problems" ([source](#): "The Promethean Quest and James Cameron's Military Optimism in *Metroid*").
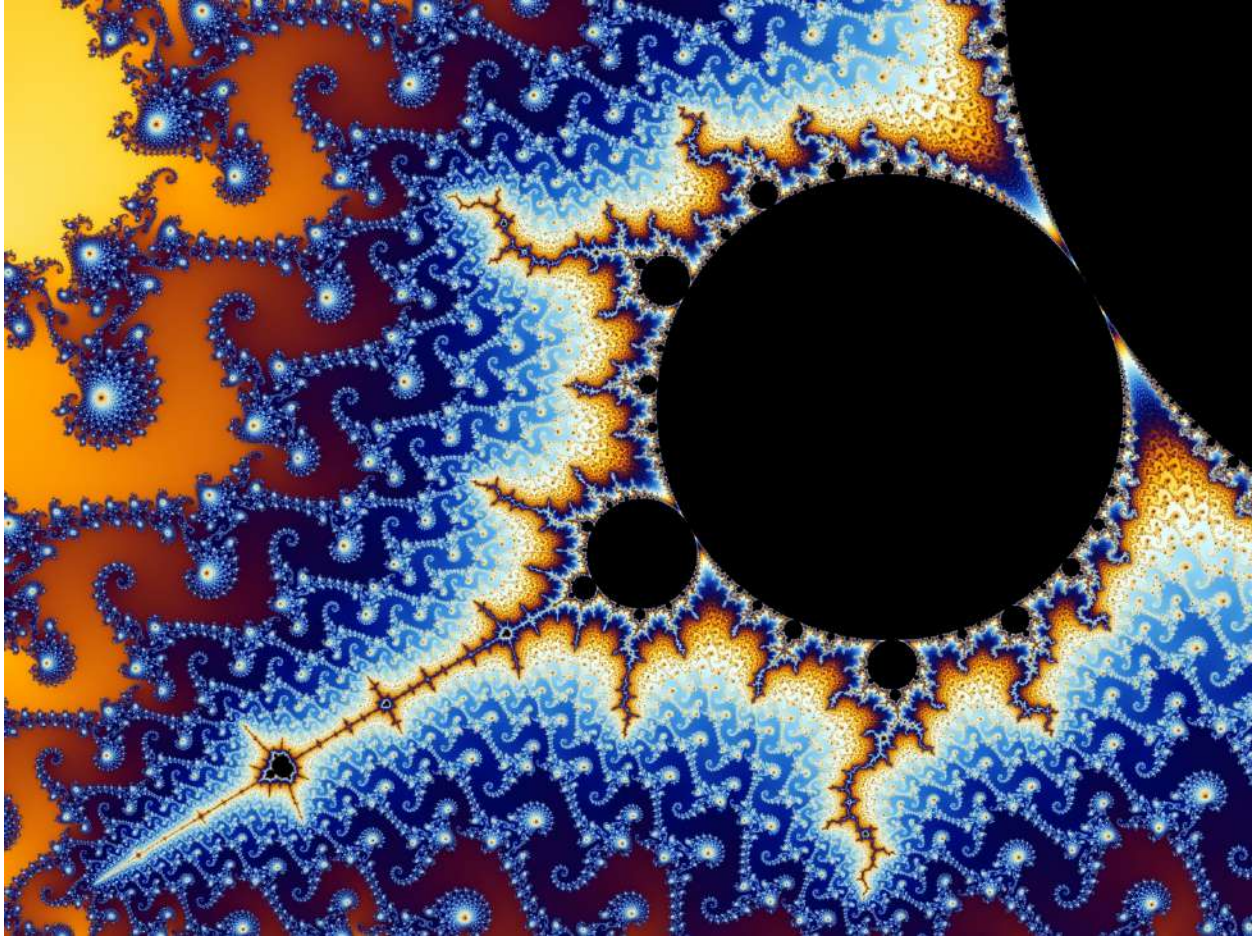
the infernal concentric pattern

where the hero crosses a series of doors and spaces until he reaches a central chamber, there to witness the collapse of his hopes; [this infernal concentric pattern has] in Gothic one and the same function: to destabilize assumptions as to the physical, ontological or moral order of the cosmos [... It is like a Mandelbrot set:] finite, and yet from within we cannot reach its end; it is a labyrinth that delves "down" instead of pushing outwards. From the outside it looks simple enough: bounded, finite, closed; from the inside, however, it is inextricable. It is a very precise graphic replica of the Gothic space in *The Italian* […] Needless to say, the technique whereby physical or figurative space is endlessly fragmented and so seems both to repeat itself and to stall resolution is not restricted to *The Italian*: almost every major Gothic author (Walpole, Beckford, Lee, Lewis, Godwin, Mary Shelley, Maturin, Hogg) uses it in his or her own way. Nor does it die out with the metamorphosis of historical Gothic into other forms of fiction (source).

i.e., the infernal concentric pattern is the smoke of the **ignominious dead** used as a myopic screen of arrogant, Americanized **Capitalist Realism**, one that hides the obvious function of the free market and exploitation as a man-made, but brutal **Cartesian** model: profit, by any means necessary (often through a Protestant work ethic whose post-Enlightenment era of "benign" Reason demonizes medieval markers in ways *useful* to the state; e.g., the Roman Catholics, but also the paganized Romans before them and the selectively-religious fascist "Romans" after them, etc: the **First Reich**, **Second Reich**, and **Third Reich**). Not only does this **profit motive** incentivize the state to **aggregate**[119] against **labor solidarity**'s mere suggestion at every possible register; its resultant cycle—of state power relayed through monomythic stories that quell **labor aggregation** as its primary opposing force—becomes something to rescue from its own **seminal tragedies** of **self-cannibalization** (these will be mentioned in many different forms throughout this book, enough that it may be hard, if not futile to point out each time I do: "this is an apocalypse!"): the monomyth is a **cryptonym**[120] that disguises and apologizes for state-sanctioned genocide; i.e., *all* the Jedi (not just the Sith) are hauntological cops by virtue of a shared centrist function: to kill younglings before handing the sword and the magic spell (the mind trick) to the next-in-line to repeat the monomyth cycle as disseminated far and wide. Obi Wan was projecting when he said, "Only a Sith deals in absolutes!" (which is, itself, an absolute—George Lucas' Hollywood-Marxist allegories earning their keep).

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[119] The verb, "to aggregate," referring to "Power aggregates"—a phrase I lifted from In Range TV noting that "power aggregates" against potential/actual revolt in Atun Shei film's "Fighting for Freedom: The Weapons and Strategies of the 1811 Slave Revolt," 2021; timestamp: 20:55).

[120] Re: a word that hides, part of a larger linguistic process called **cryptonymy** whose pattern of concealment and trauma attach to Gothic spaces and echo inside their train of ruins, *vis-à-vis* Hogle's "narrative of the crypt" and Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis*, or mimicking dead language and undead things trapped between said language to evoke Marx's "spectres."
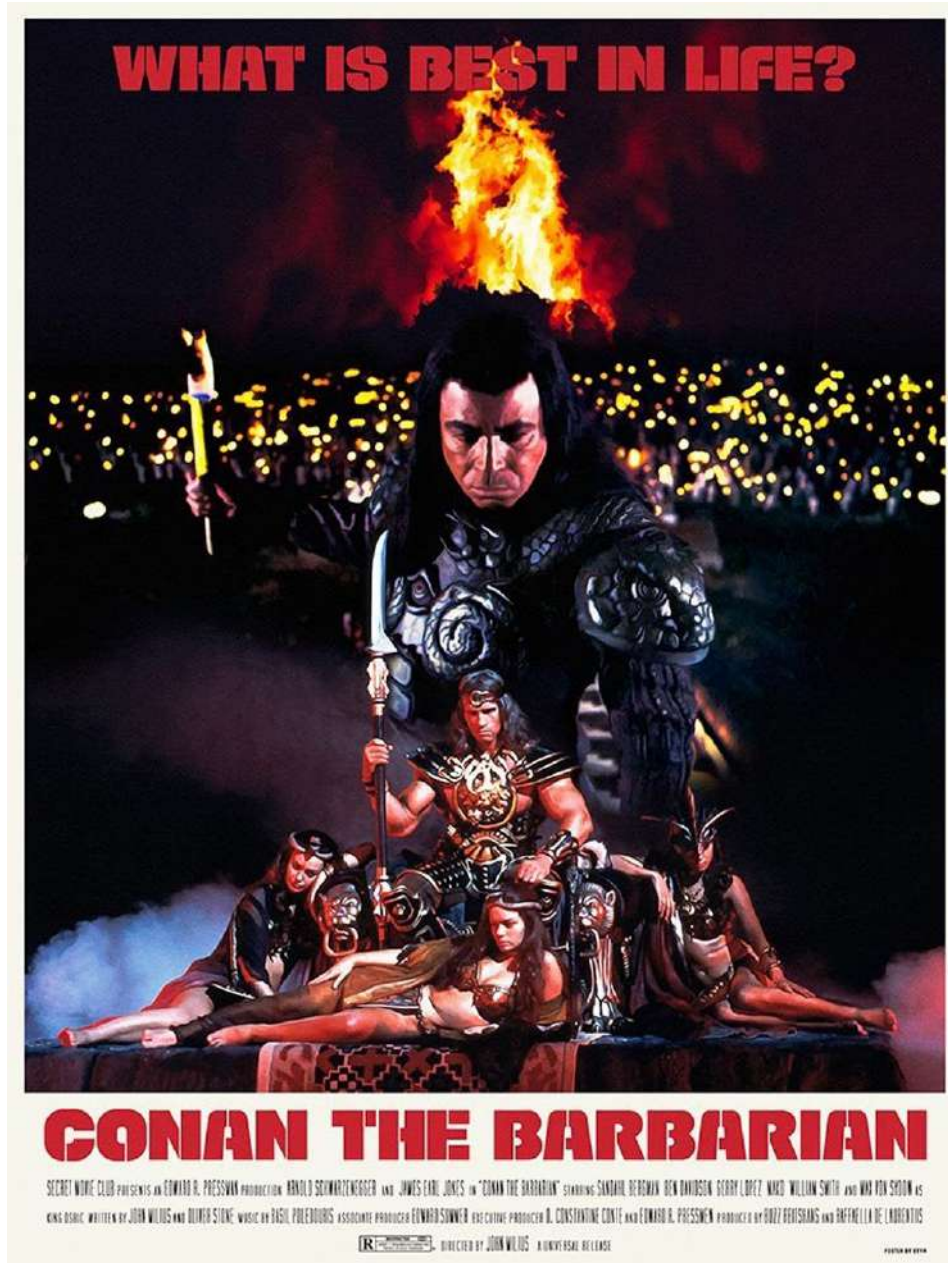
([source](#))

The above dissemination happens according to the monomyth being prolonged under Capitalism according to ancient theatrical traditions revived in the present in hauntological forms: the staged combat, wrestling match or team-based engagement with heroes (monsters) who appear "strong" in the dimorphic, heteronormative sense: through the sport of war with opposing teams (armies/contestants), often at an unfair advantage[121]. As mentioned a moment

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[121] E.g., Conan's "two stood against many" argument (arguably stemming from the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae).

ago, all heroes are monsters, and any of them can "turn heel" at any moment. Always threatening to "corrupt" the whole in a theatrical sense, there are myriad double standards (and doubles). White male heroes are built to "defend" in a pre-emptive sense, thus can always become the Great Destroyer who must be "put down" after "going feral/rabid," but are automatically given the benefit of the doubt/expected to kick a certain amount of ass (an ass-kicking quota, to serve the profit motive). Meanwhile, female/token heroes *always* threaten to "turn"; i.e., to revive the vengeful spirits of the colonized dead under Imperialism, which possess and take hold of them, thereby breaking the narrative (thus cycle) of war as a business. Class-war sentiment cannot be prevented, which means that token monsters/vice characters are passed off as "absolutely fine," *provided* their jester's speech (speaking truth to power) ends within sacrifice or conversion; i.e., **controlled opposition**. Until then, the usual suspects are squinted at suspiciously by a leery eyed Conan (classically an intolerant sexist thug who solves his problems through banditry and open violence). Through the mechanisms of capital, historical materialism predicts that the forces of darkness will always rise from hell, requiring their anticipated exorcism and smiting. Shoved back into the pit, the underclass has been scapegoated, restoring order by returning things "to normal."

Also called **the Hero's Journey**, the monomyth is a normalized **rite of passage** whereby a (traditionally male) child finds himself offered the "rare" opportunity to elevate through the seemingly divine provision of a sword or some such **masterful weapon**. There's many steps and moving parts following **the Call to Adventure** (often categorized between [twelve](#) and [seventeen](#)), but the basic gist is: offer adventure, refuse, change mind, get sword, cross boundaries, overcome trials and ordeals, kill the (corrupt, monstrous-feminine) monster, return in some shape or form changed by the quest, save the princess (from getting raped by the villain)/**get the girl**. Joseph Campbell is more prescriptive and optimistic, writing in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949):

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the Hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man ["bros before hoes," I guess].

Personally, I find this whole notion incredibly dubious; i.e., harmful **wish fulfillment**/**guilty pleasure** that is generally trapped within a space chockfull of *prescribed* war and rape cryptonyms (not a genocide, but an "adventure"), thus meant to instruct (through **prescriptive sexuality** and **bad education; e.g., sex education** and prescribed gender roles) coercive, harmful sex as medievalized **rape fantasies**/**appropriative peril** built around the Gothic/wrestling theatrical formula as dimorphically "at war": someone who is simultaneously "biologically female," mentally stupid ("emotional"), and conspicuously weak must be in danger

of being raped at all times so the **white knight** can rescue them from the **black knight** (who's always supposed to lose). It's systemic entitlement and apologia for "good" men against "bad," as usual, but also (as we shall see) the structure that produces them as ubiquitous, lucrative and instructional inside and outside of the **kayfabe**'s contest of arms, the staged combat/duel: the centrist "good war" of **good cop, bad cop**; **babyface, heel**; (boring) hero, (interesting) **demon lover**/**vice character**; American, Nazi, etc (they're functionally in cahoots, hence no "vs"). Furthermore, there is no escaping the narrative space/structure and its **didactic** conventions, wherein **the fear of colonial inheritance** also runs deep in **Neo-Gothic fiction**: the chronotope as historically communicating the fear of rape, incest and murder as doomed[122] but also treacherous, committed at the hands of men who are *supposed* to be our protectors (the usual suspects).

*(exhibit 0a2c: Artist, left: [Frank Frazetta](); right: Yukiko Hirai and Emika Kida. Frazetta's girls are always animalized as intensely erotic sexpots who are being threatened by various forms of captivity by equally eroticized male power/death fetishes. The pre-fascist monarch keeping her chained and naked by his throne; the dark male rapist springing from the shadows to drag her off or, worse, her choosing to run off with him; or her [as princess or warrior-princess] acting as a performative "hyena" that submits to Conan as the visible "stud," **alpha/top dog** [thus chief performer in the heteronormative hierarchy] when all's said and done— all are fetishized/fought over, forcing the woman-as-property into an unenviable position where she is constantly naked, imperiled and animal-magnetic/chimeric,*

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[122] Meaning "fated/foretold," but also "inescapable and ominous"; i.e., "to meet one's destiny."

thus somehow "asking for it." It's the skeptical cop's smug question, "Well, what was she wearing?" followed by the pissed-off retort, "Whatever the artist forced her to [often nothing]!" Stripping is not consent, but you wouldn't know that from Frazetta's work. For him, it's normal, our Pygmalion deliberately blurring the lines between consent and refusal, thus "yes and no" through incredibly bigoted, thus harmful/sex-coercive, psychosexual stereotypes [versus cathartic ones during sex-positive forms of monstrous liminal expression, exhibit 1a1a1g3].

Worse, these become something to mimic by imitating "the master" himself as a seasoned professional. Frazetta was a child prodigy who worked in comics since he was a teenager, and painted for decades after that. But his "style," with all its sexist/racist baggage, is largely unchallenged in videogames [Dragon's Crown, 2013; above] and other mediums in Gothic [thus popular] poetics today. This aesthetic can be taught to any artist, regardless of their gender or sex; e.g., John Kricfalusi's pedophilic tendencies reflecting in his art, but also his abusive relationship with underage female artists that he worked with to draw in his problematic, nostalgic style [blameitonjorge's "John Kricfalusi: An Open Secret," 2019]. Things don't stay "on the canvas," and Ren & Stimpy [1991] was a children's cartoon[123] full of inside adult jokes penned by a literal, confessed pedophile[124]. The same osmotic qualities extend from older palimpsests that inform culture—its consumers and commodities—as forever interacting back and forth, mimetically shaping the way that heroes, as monsters, are used to communicate, thus teach, emotional and Gothic intelligence through popular hero narratives; i.e., how monsters should appear and behave as indicative of industry-wide "open secrets."

People love monsters; they're the ultimate comfort food to Capitalism's systemic bullshit, but also the ultimate didactic device from a canonical standpoint: com panis, or "with bread," as had by companions during panis et circenses, which translates to "bread and circuses, a somewhat derisive term for food and entertainment offered by a government to soothe public discontent" [source: Merriam Webster]. It's Pavlovian, the carrot to the stick by trotting out various spectacles that commodify struggle and resistance as heteronormatively coded in hauntological/cryptonymic language whose capitalist time-spaces further the process of abjection.

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[123] We'll examine children's literature, talking animals, and cartoons' sex-educational potential in Volume Two during the "Call of the Wild" chapter.

[124] "Robyn Byrd and Katie Rice were teenage *Ren & Stimpy* fans who wanted to make cartoons. They say they were preyed upon by the creator of the show, John Kricfalusi, who admitted to having had a 16-year-old girlfriend when approached by BuzzFeed News" (source: Ariane Lange's "The Disturbing Secret Behind An Iconic Cartoon: Underage Sexual Abuse," 2018).

As stated earlier, games master players by coding them to act towards stigmatized enemies with heroic violence. Seth Giddings and Helen Kennedy touch on this in "Little Jesuses and *@#?-off Robots" [2008] when they write:

conventional assumptions that players learn the game system to achieve mastery over it—and that this mastery is the source of the prime pleasure of gameplay—is in fact an inversion of the dynamics and pleasures of videogame play. Games configure their players, allowing progression through the game only if the players recognize what they are being prompted to do, and comply with these coded instructions [source].

But in truth, this applies to any game/struggle, theatrically and dialectically-materially speaking.

[artist, left and right: *Persephone van der Waard*]

Per Anita Sarkeesian, this canonical mastery can be challenged with critical thinking skills and still enjoyed despite the problematic elements: "It's both possible, and even necessary, to simultaneously enjoy media while also being critical of its more problematic or pernicious aspects". And indeed, I absolutely love Dragon's Crown and Frazetta, but after I camp their unironic waifus/wheyfus [a kind of monster girl, exhibit 1a1a1h3a2] with my own subversive Amazonomachia/thicc warrior mommies. But doing so challenges the profit motive, thus historically is met with suspicion; i.e., the foreign plot; e.g., Gamergate, as per weird canonical nerds. In their eyes, I must be up to no good, "having an agenda" or "making things political.")

Through camp's questioning of canonical monomyths, we can spot disempowering patterns beyond that of canonical, **Faustian** empowerment (**false power**) tied to unequal **material conditions** and dogma: the Cycle of Kings as a both a "bad bargain" that destroys those who take part and a **Promethean Quest** where theft from the gods (the elite) leads to self-destruction: the invented hero is both fetishized as both a "good-vs-evil" bringer of death against a foreign enemy/plot (we'll explain how in a bit) *and* expendable by design (wielding Excalibur[125] and wearing the crown is fatal to him). Simply put, it's profitable to the elite and conducive towards disguising their aims to cycle through kings and soldiers during monstrous poetics as mask-like, imbued with temporary theatrical power (thus leading to more **copaganda** in the domestic sphere, **military urbanism** and the **Military Industrial Complex**).

As part of this grand, obfuscating cycle of self-destruction, the state exploits workers to recruit soldiers they either send abroad and commit genocide, or use to (re)colonize the homefront (re: **the Imperial Boomerang**) in the name of the father and one's bloodline through **patrilineal descent**. A common **historical materialism**, then, is the collapse of said descent; i.e., the endless/circular ruin's **castle-narrative** as the *fatherly* **ghost of the counterfeit**/**narrative of the crypt**, meaning "a false copy of the barbaric past" that seemingly goes on forever and survives all living things as a viral, souless copy of itself: "A narrative of a narrative to a hidden curse announced by things displaced from the former cause." This narrative structure and cycle was later identified by me in videogames during my own graduate work/master's thesis on the **Metroidvania**'s **castle-narrative** (a story told through **recursive/ergodic motion** [endless and performed through non-trivial effort—from Espen Aarseth[126]] through a Gothic castle, which we'll examine more in during the "camp map," but also in Volume Two when we look at Team Cherry's 2017 Metroidvania, *Hollow Knight*, exhibit 40h1/i).

While queer **intersectionality** is important during *mise-en-abyme*/**framed (concentric, unreliable) narratives**, the gendered politics of the canonical imaginary medieval tends to frame the monarchs of the castle as male and female

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[125] "To kill and be king, Merlin?" "Perhaps not even that!"

[126] (from the glossary): As defined by Espen J. Aarseth in *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (1997): "During the cybertextual process, the user will have effectuated a semiotic sequence, and this selective movement is a work of physical construction that the various concepts of 'reading' do not account for. [...] In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to traverse the text," meaning effort beyond eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages; spatially there is more than one route to take, or multiple ways one can take the same route to complete an objective or series of objectives (which in Metroidvania, are generally unspoken; *Super Metroid* is famous for its lack of narration, open-ended world, and non-linear fragmented narrative).

(which so-called "Male Gothic" explores through direct confrontation and combat, whereas "Female Gothic[127]" gingerly investigates through a process called "armoring" lest the effeminate detective **swoon** and perish); i.e., the male **skeleton king**, dark-skinned **barbarian horde**, or **dragon lord** and the female "phallic woman"/**Archaic Mother**:

phallic women

The cock of the state. A monstrous-feminine archetype predicated on active, penetrative violence (or scapegoated for it; e.g., the trans woman as a "woman with a penis" trope). Canonical phallic women are female characters, villains, and monsters (often Amazons, Medusas or something comparable) who behave in a traditional masculine way—though generally in response to patriarchal structures with an air of female revenge; e.g., Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth*… [abridged].
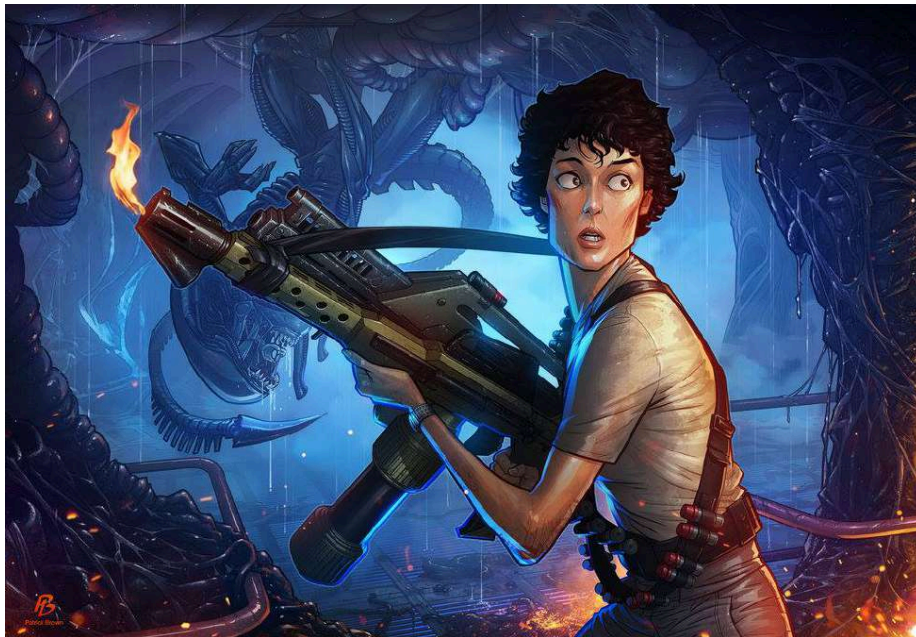
(artist: Patrick Brown)

Archaic Mothers (and vaginal spaces)

The womb of nature. An ancient, monstrous-feminine symbol of female/matriarchal power. In Gothic stories, the Archaic Mother (and her

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[127] From Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976). The term is rather outdated, similar to Beauvoir, Sontag or Wolff (and any of the other 20th century Gothicists we examine, to be frank).

space) is generally something for the canonically male/phallic woman to slay and rape (as per the Cartesian Revolution)—e.g., Samus being the "space" variant of a knight or Amazon, specifically a subjugated, *TERF* Amazon killing Mother Brain, the Dark Mother, in service of the Galactic Federation and "the Man" (the entire Red Scare's class character dialog being displaced to outer space) [… abridged]

One of the most famous Archaic Mothers is the Medusa, but she takes many similar forms: the transgenerational undead preserved as living latex, leather or clay that comes alive like a gargoyle to seek indiscriminate vengeance against the living for having been wronged by proponents of capital, Cartesian thought, patriarchs, etc.

Archaic or phallic, either monster traditionally belongs to a heteronormative **mythic structure**/**Symbolic Order**, both of which Gothic-Communist poetics lampoon, of course (exhibit 1a1c): the hero-monster as something to fear and kill, but also to *romance* in a dated *courtly* sense—i.e., to worship, serve and fuck, but also belittle and mock through private/open *schadenfreude* (evoking **taboo sex** in the process: mythical **rape**, sodomy and **incest**, but also the enigmatic **kink** of *torturous*/**exquisitely "torturous"** sex during **demonic BDSM** rituals; e.g., Ann Radcliffe's "demon lover" as something originally devised for/mass-marketed to **privileged white women**; i.e., to puzzle over when navigating their own trauma as a **protected class** inside abject operatic spaces: the recycled fabrications of the musical castle and its paradoxical panoply of rape, forbidden desire, taboo sex and Certain Doom). Angela Carter's adage[128], then, proves that such *unironic* practices (and the anachronistic residents that call them home in dated locales) haven't gone anywhere; the Gothic—as much as it ever has—remains very much alive in our own imperiled sphere, including the monomyth as thoroughly haunted by the profession as cautionary in different directions. This can be a moral panic, but also **camp** as an ironic **pedagogy of the oppressed** reclaimed through the same basic schtick to unlearn shame, self-hatred, and **dysphoric/dysmorphic** incorrectness as taught through Renaissance canon onwards. "We [are living] in Gothic times," either way.

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[128] "We live in Gothic times," from "Afterword" to *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* (1974); source: "Carter, Angela," Encyclopedia.com.

*(exhibit 1a1a1a1_a: Artist, left: [J. Scott Campbell](#); bottom-middle: [Fabián L. Pineda](#); right: Tom Jung. The monomyth and infernal concentric pattern are traditionally heteronormative, thus sexually dimorphic **canon** [**dogma**]; **iconoclastic** examples can subvert heroic **double standards** and bellicose, phallic language/rites of passage, but still work from positions of irony that parody heroic conventions and **apocrypha** [a popular, didactic story generally regarded as fictional; i.e., a "tall tale" connected to **folklore** and **oral traditions**] by toying with them during oppositional praxis as dialectical-material. In other words, iconoclasts tend to mutate what is already present according to what the artist knows about propaganda, thus makes and embodies as part of Gothic counterculture.*

*Consider videogames [my domain]. As a queer, Gothic ludologist and anarcho-Communist, I can attest to how **genderqueer** poetics would happily poke fun at Link's "Master Sword" shooting "bolts of power" when "fully charged"—a mechanic borrowed from Star Wars [1977], Conan the Barbarian [1981, which was reviewed as "Star Wars made by a psychopath," which applies as much to Rob Howard as it does John Milius] and even older **palimpsests** [such as the legend of King Arthur] copied by Pan's own "sword" in Hook [1991] or Simon Belmont's elongating "chain whip" in Castlevania [1986] or Mega Man's "mega buster" [1987] or Samus Aran's "beam cannon, missile launcher and bombs" [1986] or, hell, Mario's "mushroom" helping him "grow" [1985]: canonical war is full of violent, harmful innuendo; e.g., Macbeth's cycle of war as watered with blood: "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing." As we shall see, there is always an enemy to kill or secret plot to uncover, thus revealing an enemy from within who "originated" from outside: the ghost of the counterfeit's false copy of a corrupt*

backstabber/doppelganger. Instead of **an invincible barbarian/enemy at the gates**, the white-knight warrior of light faces a corrupt, dark version of himself—a shadow person or Gothic **double**:

[Artist: [Gabriel Dias](). Keeping with the idea of paradox, the opposition between Link and "his shadow" is both thrown into doubt and extremely dogmatic. On one hand, it's entirely divorced from material critique in favor of a basic **value judgement***— literally* **light vs dark***, wherein light is canonized as "good" and dark as "bad"; there's no in-between or class character because the story has been displaced to a fantasy tableau emptied of earthly history. It's trope-heavy and mechanical. As we'll explore later in the thesis and rest of the book, though, class character often comes from gender trouble and parody within canon as thrown into personified doubt [a rather literal embodiment of self-reflection]; i.e., in relation to these*

*prescribed gender roles as "ghost-like" or otherwise undead. Ontologically challenged, Dark Link might not "belong" to Link at all; he might simply be an **uncanny** simulacrum or likeness that triggers the presumed owner to attack [thus confirm his suspicions by eradicating his fears]. Doing so exposes his own flaws as a self-described "hero," but also reveals his open-secret intended function: to kill the enemies of the state. The enemy must die, trapping the hero in a frozen state of inaction as they lie caught between their orders and their conflicted sense of identity.]*

*As a whole, videogames have served as **neoliberal**, music-heavy copaganda since the 1980s—first, based off Star Wars as franchised, but also Aliens [with the original, self-contained text for each being neoliberal critiques that, in their franchised forms, became operatically **neo-conservative**] as monomythic canon attached to real-world geopolitics: **the American revenge fantasy** after a re-freeing [**deregulation**] of the world market post-**Bretton Woods** under **global US hegemony**. The common thread to these canonical remediations is a quest-for-mastery meta-narrative whose videoludic simulation of war helps acclimate the state's children to **endless future war** through the Hero's Journey as forever expanding on- and off-screen: made for bigger and better worlds, but also bigger (thus more phallic), traditionally masculine weapons; i.e., a heteronormative mode of ludic wish fulfillment that routinely sets the player on the path to prescribed empowerment, thus appearing to realize the impossible promise [not the universal fulfillment] of sanctioned sex by a) rescuing the damsel and slaying the cock-blocking [ostensibly fascist/gay] dragon/minotaur as something to stab or shoot [exhibit 51d4a1/2] and b) facing off against the monstrous-feminine not just as not-white, female-coded, and non-Christian, but somewhere in between all of these things; e.g., **orcs**, **drow** and **goblins**; Dark Link, Protoman/Zero [exhibit 982b] or Pan's shadow as the **genderfluid**, potentially **trans**, **non-binary**, or **intersex** false hero/man, dark twink, "phallic woman," etc; but also Samus as the phallic-woman tomboy acting like Rambo to serve the state, or Odessa from Overwatch 2 [2022]:*

> *"Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty!" [from Lady Macbeth's soliloquy].*

*I've spent my life subverting them, treating Samus as having the potential to not be a **palingenetic** handmaid [exhibit 38c1b] or Odessa/Zarya as something other than unironic **girl/queer war bosses** [exhibit 100c4/ exhibit 111b] while also having a great deal of fun with twinks in iconoclastic videogame fan art that treats the twink-ish hero as the non-bellicose **sub** [exhibit 93a].)*

(*source*)

Fascism and centrism are two sides of the same coin, wherein the fear of the outsider as outside becomes a fear of the outside *within*: the imaginary inside/outside infiltrator as correct-incorrect, becoming uncanny as per Jodey Castricano's *cryptomimesis* as an extension of cryptonymy that also connects to the narrative of the crypt as a Gothic chronotope during the process of abjection. Inside-outside the narrative of the crypt as a half-real, parallel time-space that doubles the real world and vice versa, the state's target audience is conditioned through canonical media to forget the invincible barbarian enemy[129] from elsewhere, which is suddenly viewed as the traitor "among us" (the status quo) having formerly come from outside before stabbing the in-group in the back; i.e., when Capitalism's perpetual crises start to decay and fascism takes root, these play out through the process of abjection as making monsters and killing them in and

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[129] For many an illuminating counterexample, refer to Asprey's *War in the Shadows: the Guerrilla in History*. Labor fights dirty because we're given no choice: not terror but counterterror to state forces' usual brutalities: "No student of the period can seriously condemn the protesting peasant as a terrorist, for here, as in the case of Romans in Spain and indeed of most governments, European monarchs and ruling nobility held options of rule ranging from the most benevolent to the most despotic. Their subjects, however, held limited options: submit or rebel" (source).

outside of media/real life. But because there is no outside-text, all of this happens within the home as inherited, full of peril and anxiety exacerbated by capital's creature-factory of extenuating circumstances: more and more complications equal more and more war and rape, thus profit. The graveyard becomes a mine.

We'll continue unpacking the nature of these structured crises and their mire of paradoxes. For the moment, know that it creates a vicious cycle of historical materialism predicated on the *posturing* of masculinity as threatened: the spirit of the **Leveler**. This presence actually stems from medieval thought—death being the great leveler of kings and peasants alike—but also the fascist idea of the historical cycle: "'Hard times create strong men, strong men create weak times, weak times create weak men, and weak men create hard times.' The quote, from a postapocalyptic novel by the author G. Michael Hopf, sums up a stunningly pervasive cyclical vision of history—one where Western strategists keep falling for myths of invincible barbarians" ([source](): Bret Devereaux' "Hard Times Don't Make Strong Soldiers," 2020). Just as Caesar historically demonized those he conquered as savages fighting dirty from the shadows *against* the state (not *for* the state as fascists do), videogame companies (and other mediums) use canon to connect state crises to the embarrassing destruction of what was built—i.e., *senseless* destruction of the warrior's hall, versus the "useful" battles of the past that led to *Pax Imperium* in its current, glorious form (for us, *Pax Americana*): the soldiers of the present must appear strong by avoiding degenerate weakness and sacrificing themselves; lacking this strength, "true evil" first gains a foothold, then ultimately prevails by destroying Rome from within. The white knight becomes black and *that's* apparently why we're all dead and fucked.

Of course, it's not nearly that simple (the myth of the shadow play is that it is devoid of meaning; the myth of monsters/duels is that they are "just" spectator sports that stay onstage/on-canvas):

(exhibit 1a1a1a1_b: Bottom-middle: source ["Chuck Wepner: Meet the Heavyweight Boxer Who Inspired 'Rocky,'" 2020]. The duel sits in the shadow zone to perform power with monsters, sexuality and paradox; the doubles and their trademark violence/"violence" glide between fiction and reality on- and offstage diegetically and during para- and meta-textualities that conceal class character as active or repressed [Wepner sued Slyvester Stallone for basing the 1975 Rocky screenplay off his life; they settled the case outside of court]. Life imitates art and vice versa through [crypto]mimesis of a particular kind: war personified in the traditional masculine way—through combat.

Yet, in the Gothic model there's plenty of room for canonical/campy gender trouble and gender parody according to Gothic devices that "spice up" the monsters doing battle: terror and horror, the Black Veil, the surface of the veil, the explained supernatural, demon lovers; and various class, race and gendered stigmas in their animalized, undead/demonic chimeras, composites and ghosts. The resulting mise-en-abyme might see like Shakespeare's bad play, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," but therein lies the paradox: the battle as meaningless, doomed and significant at the same time [i.e., Ernest Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls, 1940]. People love sex and violence for a variety of reasons; the theatre is one place where these monsters—and their tremendous energies, paradoxes, and vitalities—run well and truly wild. To "pull a Frederic Jameson" and ignore these spectacular sites/sights of campy combat and their profoundly artistic deceptions is to ignore much of their allegory and the larger conversation being had in the language of the vulgar [common] masses and the elite, the plebian and patrician. Amidist the oscillation of the stage, we'll have to tune in, but also contribute, if we

want to recultivate the Superstructure and reclaim the Base; you're sure-as-fuck not going to do it with fancy essays that no one reads except academic eggheads[130].)

(exhibit 1a1a1a1_c: Artist: [Jeso](#). "Did he who make the lamb make thee?[131]" The Amazon is a tremendously complicated monster because it is both seen as untamable and hunted by man, but also tamed through the wearing of "maiden armor" that fetishizes her "maidenhead/bride price" as "scrappy." It panders to the wet dream of the tomboy as animalized, the tiger an anthropomorphic "metamour" shared between viewers but also class, gendered and racial strata for or against the status quo during liminal expression. She is "phallic"-thus-manly at the same time as she is traditionally feminine, baring her tigress "fangs" to symbolize her "combative" potential [erotic energies; i.e., "fight like a tiger, fuck like a tiger" or maybe the opposite: "tiger in the streets, mouse in the sheets," etc] while fighting tooth and nail and showing off her <u>female</u> warriors' "assets" in, for all intents and purposes, an "actual [meaning 'asexual'] duel" between her foil, the black-and-red dragon. But no duel is ever fully "ace," nor canonical; there's always something

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[130] Whose pay-walled *gnosis* ("hidden knowledge") adopts a kind of medievalized "trick-down" to everyone else.

[131] A line from William Blake's "The Tyger" (1794), part of his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* collection (1784); the poetic opposite of "The Tyger" is "The Lamb" (1789).

being fought over/resisted. A tremendous amount of innuendo, thus cryptonymy, is available for revolutionary purposes if the artist is of a particular socio-political leaning. Communists like monster sex and violence, too; we're just sex-positive about our nostalgia and use it as de facto educators to raise the cultural bar regarding emotional/Gothic intelligence, thus class consciousness.)

And yet, crisis, exposure and vulnerability (above) is part of the paradox of power inside canon: the duel as the *lingua franca*[132] of the masses (indented for clarity):

> Our psychosexual exhibit explored overt sex work and BDSM presentations that stage various forces, presenting them as "dueling" one another in "live" performance art; i.e., practiced rehearsals that codify societal values that exist chaotically between monsters adjacent to violence and sexuality as blurred/"at war." It's controlled chaos, walking several tightropes at once during a larger balancing act. In pugilistic media, a good duel between knights follows the same theatrical paradoxes using the same monsters for the same reasons of allegory (concealment) and apocalypse (revelation, often violent). It should make you forget its staged nature during the ensuing bedlam. Even the classical gladiators were well-trained and expected to put on a show, not kill each other. The idea is to make you forget it's staged, without killing both men. Throw in a bit of theater (two or more masked men dueling over a woman or some such honor) and *just* the right amount of blood, sweat and tears, and everything should come together to walk the tightrope between fantasy and reality.
>
> Of course, the paradox remains that it's an unsafe event, but the expectations of violence are managed within the colosseum circle as the place where the magic happens, or the "squared circle" of the 20th century boxing ring. In the case of contact sports, there's a variety of rules and judging thrown in, but sometimes you just have a white horse and a dark horse utterly *wailing* on each other and staying up by mere magic. *That* can go either way and is the kind of "theatre drama" that sports fans love (the vicarious reconciliation of physical, fetishized violence in society told through theatre's captive honor and sanctioned bloodletting per theatrical sacrifices: the matador and the bull as "sexy beasts"). Granted, the "truth" of

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[132] "A *lingua franca* also known as a bridge language, common language, trade language, auxiliary language, vehicular language, or link language, is a language systematically used to make communication possible between groups of people who do not share a native language or dialect, particularly when it is a third language that is distinct from both of the speakers' native languages" ([source](): Wikipedia). The bridge, within globalization and Capitalism, is war and rape; i.e., "violence is a universal language where 'might makes right.'"

it is still a distraction from everyday life, but in kayfabe war narratives the allegory of these shadowy caves can speak to various dialectical-material truths hidden among the lies;. i.e., the paradox of truth told with lies, often bigoted ones: the kayfabe stage language of the American vs the Nazi, Communist or racist caricature, but also the white knight/god versus their dark "double" fighting within the perilous language of swordplay as color-coded, animalized, sexed-up: the fencer's cryptonymy of the bind, the trap, the feint hiding and exposing class/culture war simultaneously on the imagery of the surface of the veil (if you see a furry artist, they probably have increasingly NSFW versions of their characters; their characters denote hidden struggles and desires regardless of *how* clothed or naked they are):

(artist: [Jeso](#))

The praxial role of centrist theatre is designed to make you forget that either knight is a killing implement useful to the state, in unironic forms, but also whose tightrope can be walked by ironic performers camping the same theatre props to sneak in an antiwar narrative—often through the underdog trope; e.g., George Lucas' 1977 *Star Wars*. But this can just as easily become franchised and swing the other way using the same contested iconography (the paradox of camping Capitalism is that we must do it within capital, thus using the same dark forces but for proletarian purposes; re: "darkness *visible*," and deliberately so).

In the canonical sense, state power and its inventions must be threatened in order to hold

onto itself and acquire glory (often in a blaze thereof; e.g., Davy Crocket's "remember the Alamo" as played by John Wayne or some-such doofus). "Armor" is both the exposed spot for the arrow to go into *and* the unpierceable midsection, Smaug's waistcoat of unbreakable diamonds. As such the proliferation of counterfeits become their *own* place of concealment and displaced trauma within the transgenerational curse as the power fantasy's shadow zone, desperately haunted by unironic tyranny reaching out of the aforementioned vanishing point to choke us with its mighty rock 'n roll fist. Men seemingly can do as they wish, here, playing around inside while the roles of everyone else appear to be extremely limited. In truth, gender trouble and gender parody are potent weapons that allow the iconoclast to fuck with the formula through their own reinventions of old falsehoods (my favorites, again being "gay hobbits," but also "imagine Conan with a pussy"). The idea is to break canon ourselves because it's not going to break by itself; e.g., Mad Max as a cowboy of the postapocalypse (-*revelation*) showcasing our white savior duking it out with a stand-in for Australian Indigenous Peoples dressed up in psychosexual fetish fear. And yet, George Miller would camp his own canonical ghost of the counterfeit with *Fury Road* (2015), decades after *The Road Warrior* (1981) "found" an oral recording of the hero addressing fears of societal collapse tied to real-life fuel shortages (manufactured scarcity): "Fury[133]" Road being the virago Furiosa breaking free from bondage and spelling the old tyrant's doom (fittingly played by the same actor from the 1979 original; i.e., a perennial scapegoat).

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[133] In classic Greek myth, the Furies, much like the Fates or the Medusas, are traditionally depicted in groups of three, and generally are "gifted" with the power of foresight (a "female" quality also attached to the Oracle or the Sphinx).

([source](#))

Therein lies the rub: Capitalism isn't "corrupt" or faulty when exploitation or bigotry happen; it's working as intended, creating crises and bigotries as needed in order to exploit workers through theatrical war. The infernal concentric pattern during the Cycle of Kings is the merely monomyth as stuck within itself, denying escape through **live burial** and trapping the hero in a hell of their own making but also one that was passed down from father to son, *Star-Wars*-style. Like *that* story, the origins of **patrilineal descent** (and its much-touted collapse; e.g., Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1839) date back to Antiquity (**the "Fall" of Rome** being a colossal lie; re: fascism) and like Antiquity valorize the masculine implements of war as "doomed but glorious": the sword as a sexy-equals-power-and-status symbol that promises promotion and material elevation through ritualistic conquest/combat: the duel as being fought over sexy-looking "helpless" monsters (the damsel, a kind of "non-male" monster in her own right) by sexy-looking **"good" monsters** (male action heroes) killing **"bad" monsters** (medieval, **pre-fascist** black knights, but also people of color as dark, marauding barbarians, thieves, pirates, mercenaries/blackguards, rapists, and tricksters): demonic and undead masks that hide power levels and intent during theatrical exchanges written on their surfaces that also give the wearer some sense of plausible deniability—i.e., they're "acting" out forbidden knowledge/power exchange with "demons" and communicating trauma and decay with the "undead." In all of these cases, the Gothic, per Segewick, sexualizes its surface imagery.

Another name for this "Cycle of Kings" and its operatic sexiness is **the Promethean Quest/awesome mystery** (from Mary Shelley's "Modern Prometheus" and Rudolph Otto's **Numinous/*mysterium tremendum***); i.e., the search for sword-like power as self-destructive (the Roman fool's sword to fall *upon*). Whereas the monomyth unironically **fetishizes*** the sword and its **kink**-like usage (denoting *unusual* or theatrical sexual activity) as a phallic passing-of-the-torch, the infernal concentric pattern treats the whole ordeal as thoroughly doomed within the grander **chronotope** (re: a time-space, from Mikhail Bakhtin; used in his sense of the "Gothic chronotope" or castle and its castle-narrative): the skeleton king as one's ultimate doom fated by the writing on the walls (or voices coming from *inside* the walls), but also the sexual imagery on the surface of things dueling back and forth (which, in the Radcliffean tradition, operates as a **Black Veil** inside a **closed space** of **terror** and **horror** for the **Gothic heroine** and **demon lover** to wander around inside, or the disempowered/emasculated male hero; e.g., the Lovecraftian scientist. We'll unpack these Gothic terms when discussing Metroidvania's "ludo-narrative BDSM" during the "camp map"). In this sense, the popularity of the monomyth during seminal get-togethers like *Star Wars* remains entirely haunted by "Darth Vader" as the fascist "death father" who threatens to turn the young knight errant, "Luke Skywalker," into a false copy of the black knight instead of a white knight as also being a false copy (exhibit 93b1b)—the horror being there is no escape from the death knight because white knights serve

the state, thus conduct or assist in genocide during the return of the good king/revenge of the bad king but also the white and black knight/medieval cop as a **zombie/vampire class traitor** to a matter of degree, repeating Conan's classic answer to "What is best in life?" in bad faith: "To crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentation of their women!" In the neoliberal, **hyperreal**[134] sense, it's the imaginary past come back to haunt the *position* of the

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[134] (from the glossary): A distillation of Jean Baudrillard's broader notion of the simulation representing things that do not exist, yet, over time, have become more real than the reality behind them, which has decayed into a desert the hyperreal simulation has replaced in the eyes of its viewers—i.e., has covered it up. Baudrillard's hyperreality comments on similar historical-material issues that the egregore or simulacrum do as occult creations and copies of older likenesses or illusions. The preservation of the illusion as Capitalism turns the natural world into an uninhabitable desert could be called *hypernormal*. As Nasrullah Mambrol writes (exhibit, theirs):

> Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality is closely linked to his idea of Simulacrum, which he defines as something which replaces reality with its representations. Baudrillard observes that the contemporary world is a simulacrum, where reality has been replaced by false images, to such an extent that one cannot distinguish between the real and the unreal. In this context, he made the controversial statement, "The Gulf war did not take place," pointing out that the "reality" of the Gulf War was presented to the world in terms of representations by the media [as inherently dishonest …]

> 4) There is no relationship between the reality and representation, because there is no real to reflect (the abstract paintings of Mark Rothko).

> According to Baudrillard, Western society has entered this fourth phase of the hyperreal. In the age of the hyperreal, the image/simulation dominates. The age of production has given way to the age of simulation, where products are sold even before they exist. The Simulacrum pervades every level of existence. (source: "Baudrillard's Concept of Hyperreality," 2016).

hero as something to swap consumers in and out of for profit, but it's still the ghost of the castle as inherited; it's just forged in a neoliberal sense, meaning privatized, digitized: the treasure map as fake, but covering up the destroyed reality behind itself until it starts to (in the Gothic sense) denote the decay behind itself within or upon itself—i.e., the canceled retro-future. As part of the ludic scheme between the player and the gameworld (or the power/values shared through any vicarious relationship between customer and story as action vehicle), the feudalistic power trip conveys dynastic primacy through said scheme as doomed.

*As established, to make something a **fetish** is to objectify it, often within a ritual of **unequal power exchange**, BDSM, and kink (with a Gothic flavor of deathly aesthetics and power). Fetishization becomes harmful when canonized because canon is prescriptively sex-coercive towards women or beings forced to identify as women, while also turning men into **sex pests** with zero humanity/**impulse control** during scenes of **appropriative peril**, **uninvited voyeurism**, and unironic **rape play**. **Psychosexuality** becomes normalized within this theatre, conflating sex with harm according to popular (often-Gothic) tropes: incest, but also **moe** and **ahegao** (the fetishized child aesthetic and "death/rape face" anime/manga tropes, which under neoliberal Capitalism, have begun to develop **eco-fascist** tendencies that are traded back and forth across the global market; i.e., in a negative feedback loop between America and its allies, but especially Japan, that ramps up canonical xenophobia, war and rape in monomythic forms). In other words, abuse begets abuse, trauma living in the body _and_ society as interacting back and forth **psychosexually** over space and time: a social-sexual **criminogenesis** that leads to intersectional forms of segregation/discrimination and overall **carceral violence** and **harm** with sexualized flavors. Criminogenesis and **palingenesis** (re: national rebirth, historically tied to fascism/**Capitalism-in-decay**) go hand-in-hand as canonical ghosts of the counterfeit that feed **the process of abjection** during climate crisis and masculinity-in-crisis as used to stoke the fires of war and rape, thus profit the elite through businesses centered around these things: the Military Industrial Complex and copaganda, whereupon "killing is their business, and business is good."*

Capitalism is always in crisis/policing itself through class-dormant nightmares that assist the profit motive, but the degree *to* the crisis and its decay determines the degree to how "corrupt" a hero appears; i.e., how demonic/undead and heartless they look on the surface of themselves as a kind of theatre mask belying the myth of male power. The greater the crisis, the more Capitalism's bloodless, pure-white façade begins to decay towards a dark, medieval one, its pre-fascist veneer announcing a hidden function of it and the state, **Zombification/Zombie-Vampire Capitalism**:

Zombification/Zombie-Vampire Capitalism

The death of ethical parody and its replacement with "blind" forms; e.g., Zombie Simpsons. In "Zombie Simpsons: How the Best Show Ever Became the Broadcasting Undead" (2012), Dead Homer Society writes,

> *By almost any measurement, The Simpsons is the most influential television comedy ever created. It has been translated into every major language on Earth and dozens of minor ones; it has spawned entire genres of animation, and had more books written about it than*

all but a handful of American Presidents. Even its minor characters have become iconic, and the titular family is recognizable in almost every corner of the planet. It is a definitive and truly global cultural phenomenon, perhaps the biggest of the television age.

As of this writing, if you flip on FOX at 8pm on Sundays, you will see a program that bills itself as The Simpsons. It is not The Simpsons. That show, the landmark piece of American culture that debuted on 17 December 1989, went off the air more than a decade ago. The replacement is a hopelessly mediocre imitation that bears only a superficial resemblance to the original. It is the unwanted sequel, the stale spinoff, the creative dry hole that is kept pumping in the endless search for more money. It is Zombie Simpsons ([source](#)).

Zombification results from people living under Capitalism, a system that discourages them not to think for themselves, but also to violently attack people who try. *Zombie-Vampire Capitalism* is when Capitalism becomes "feral," entering a fascist state of decay—whereupon violent, pro-state zombies suddenly appear and attack rebellious workers, "eating their brains" (symbolizing an attack on the rebellious mindset). Being the target of the state in this manner means you have fallen into the state of exception— disposable zombie fodder even more useless to capital than the zombie heroes[135] the state endlessly sends after you.

This decay is Capitalism defending itself through a radicalizing of the feeding process in order for the state to survive.

The centrist, then, is the good hero—a canonical version of the "**himbo**" (or **herbo**) meathead who, even when faced with doubt at the old sage's orders, remains canonically heroic by preserving the fascist's essential role in disguising what Capitalism is: a *giant* vampire/zombie that makes smaller vampires and zombies to serve the will of all-powerful old men (emblematized in the Jungian/monomythic sense as **good wizards/sages** and **evil wizards/necromancers**). This evocation of the *fascist* in *pre-fascist* language is a kind of **post-fascist** rhetoric; i.e., made after the fall of the Third Reich, implying a cartoon version of the quintessential bad guy for the good guy to stomp onstage and off. It becomes **blind pastiche/parody** (from Fredric Jameson's "blank parody[136]," meaning it lacks a *conscious* **class character**), but also a factory

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[135] E.g., Metallica's "[Disposable Heroes](#)" (1986): "I was born for dying!"

[136] (from the glossary): In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Frederic Jameson writes,

designed to make good guys and bad guys that acclimate future children to the larger indoctrinating process: of endless wars' cops and "criminals" (victims) working in tandem/cahoots as **class traitors** against the state's real victims, the underclass (cops are class traitors who, generally from the **middle class**, betray the **class interests** of the **working class/proletariat** for the **owner class/bourgeoisie**; refer to Howard Zinn's discussion of this principal in relation to slavery under **American Liberalism** in *A People's History of the United States*); i.e., the middle management of a neoliberal pecking order of staged theatre and its class argumentation as thoroughly armed, muscled and aggressive (indented for clarity):

> Management of exploitation under Capitalism is *tiered*, pyramid-style—i.e., the top, middle and bottom; or lords, generals/lieutenants, and grunts according to corporate, militarized, and paramilitarized flavors (which often intersect through aesthetics and social-sexual clout). This "pecking order" translates remarkably well in neoliberal copaganda, whose **bosses**, **mini-bosses**, and **minions** deftly illustrate **Zombie-Vampire Capitalism** in action; e.g., Reinhardt Heydrich or Ian Kochinski/Caleb Hart (the latter two who we'll discuss in Volume Three's Chapter Three and Four) as "middle-management" **desk murderers** in a bureaucratic sense (which sits alongside the middle class, in a *class* sense—with both defending capital as a perpetually decaying structure that operates through wage/labor theft according to weaponized bureaucracy during crisis, class sentiment and Faustian bargains; i.e., harmful conditioning whose disguised ultimatums prey on various stigmas, biases and dogma riddled within canon to condition their employees to fight the good fight *against* the underclass as an advertised threat loaded with connotations of foreign/internal plots.

"Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs" ([source](#)).

Personally, I think Jameson's "normality" echoes Nietzsche's or Freud's. As such, I envision pastiche and parody as likewise having bourgeois and proletarian qualities, much like sublimation does. They *can* be blank under bourgeois (centrist) forms. Likewise, though, "perceptive pastiche" can adopt the appearance of a false "blankness/blindness" (see, above: "Vaporwave," a hauntological subgenre) in the face of power—a tactic vital to revolutionaries' continued funding from different sources, as well as keeping them safe from violent reactionaries.

Erstwhile, as said "threats" are met with waves of terror, **vice-character** personas, and moral panics, they splash back into these same paranoid workers; they are slowly convinced to surrender **total power** to the elite under perceived states of emergency against imaginary enemies, trading **basic human rights** for false power and **genocidal legislation** inside **the zombie police state**[137] (neoliberal illusions of "hollow victory" and Quixotic moral superiority/exceptionalism). It's a scam, a bad game with only one rigged winner: the owner class franchising war as copaganda *and* the Military Industrial Complex through war simulators. The illusion, like a franchise, becomes something to grow into and endorse more and more as time goes on; i.e., into adulthood; e.g., child soldiers charging from *Mega Man* into *Mega Man X* as an increasingly adult take on the forlorn hope (the military expression for a suicide mission/death charge):

(exhibit 1a1a1a2: Continuing with the Star Wars *pastiche, Mega Man—after miraculously "saving the world" with a big explosion [on par with the Death Star]— becomes a general, being "rewarded" with a conspiracy that extends the conflict indefinitely through an imagined cabal of dark rebellious forces. Touted as a "rebel,"*

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[137] E.g., *Ion Fury* (2019) as a cyberpunk policed by Shelley Bombshell (exhibit 84a1), who we'll discuss more in part two of the "camp map" and in Volume Three; i.e., Persephone van der Waard's "Neutral" Politics: Feminism, the Gothic, and Zombie Police States in *Ion Fury*," (2021).

he and his "freedom fighters," aren't rebels at all because they're always acting like cops in service of the state; i.e., class traitors hunting down their opponents using a kill list. Simply put, <u>he's</u> the mercenary who bought into his own whitewashed legend: that he is a goody-little-two-shoes and not actually a robotic hitman treating the state's enemies [called "Mavericks"] like disposable, worthless scrap—a payday stuck on loop, game after game in-text but also across an entire series of similar excursions.)

> As "green biker dude's" ignominious death becomes a meme (mirroring the X-wing fighters dying next to Luke during the canal chase), X becomes desperately valorized as the Great White Hope/one last chance—i.e., *Star Wars* minus the antiwar allegory of the first film and *all* of the musical/visual bombast of the sequels. The indoctrination becomes a giant lie built on older lies: the hero's destiny as a walking robot corpse foretold by the most exciting[138] fantasies of a child's life (nostalgia-wise) used to assuage their growing fears about war and death all around them, but also their material conditions as threatened by the much-touted "end of the World," Communism. The label and its prescribed manifestations must be fought tooth and nail during a never-ending shouting match (or throwing of "lemons," in Mega Man's case). Its ubiquity and regressive lack of irony (thus dormant class character) is sobering and doomed. You gotta camp it, because the cheap comic-book-grade lore and legendarily awful voice acting are practically *begging* for it.

As a part of this state-sanctioned wrestler's kayfabe, the fascist is the heel—a "corrupt," bad cop who the good cop (the babyface) normally scapegoats to help the state save face during staged, *deus-ex-machina* combats. In turn, their combative, **bread-and-circus** spectacles continuously shape public opinion regarding war as legitimate, but also as a *business* at home and abroad that colonizes (thus drains) both sides.

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[138] I can't get behind X's politics, but will always adore the music attached to his adventures. Sure, it's tied to nostalgic *drama* as an unironic escape from boredom, but I can always treat that as a rememory of its former self; i.e., by writing this book while listening to the very music whose genre/Call to Adventure the book happily critiques via the "universal adaptability" of music.

Rememory

From Tony Morrison's 1987 novel, *Beloved*, to which Morrison herself shares in a 2019 interview, "as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past. And it was the struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, that became the device of the narrative [in *Beloved*]" ([source](#)).

There's even a failsafe: In times of extreme decay that threaten the state's existence, the state and its rulers allow the white knight and black knight to team up during the cycle of war dressed up in the language of the Crusades; i.e., giving the disgraced cop a chance—if not at total redemption, then one last deputized hurrah before they're banished, exorcized and/or killed to prove they're not a heretic (the sacrifice of the anti-hero to defend Capitalism; the redemption of the fallen, tragic hero); i.e., a bad, vigilante maverick to help **tag-team**, thus gang up against and destroy the one thing that can actually take power away from the elite: Communism, aka labor presented as the monstrous-feminine, the person-of-color zombie or queer vampire inside the state of exception/emergency (and various other stigmas we'll unpack throughout the book). It's death by conversion therapy (which is genocide). All of this happens by design/is built into the state's Superstructure as groomed by the elite (who control the Base, thus can afford to build expensive illusions). The middle-class surrender their power to the elite, who groom the class traitor into a dehumanized state thug that is a smaller version of them, a legitimate arm of the police state (the good cop) and a vigilante homunculus (the bad cop) sculpted to exploit others in order to survive but also experience pleasure: to eat their flesh and drink their blood (dressed up as a religious experience tied to familiar organized religions; e.g., **transubstantiation**).

As a small, obvious vampire, the fascist becomes the perfect **scapegoat** to hide the state's vampiric/zombifying design behind: a smaller, displaced parallel and vindictive **sellout** who criminalizes and bleeds everyone dry around him; i.e., a false revolutionary that serves old money behind the veneer of **false rebellion**[139], thus false power/guerrilla warfare as *stolen* through murder (commonly symbolized as blood or **sanguine** through the execution of **blood libel/quantum** by a fascist Count) but also acquired/kickstarted by Faustian bargains (that is, it is *offered* to them by someone instead of found/stolen from the gods like the Promethean Quest is—i.e., given/accepted in a self-destructive sense from a treacherous old man/necromancer **Master** to a dumb, deceived and self-deceiving **apprentice**; e.g., the Emperor from *Star Wars* to Anakin Skywalker but also Mortanius from *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen* to that game's titular hero). Tempted with revenge, the white knight becomes become the black knight: blind, feral and cruel, their pearly Excalibur twists into a dark **Soul Reaver** version of itself that—along with the rest of their altered appearance—echoes the dragon lord/skeleton king's vengeful wrath during **a dark, perennial, orgy-of-violence Grim**

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[139] "Fascism is a false revolution. It cultivates the appearance of popular politics and a revolutionary aura without offering a genuine revolutionary class content. It propagates a 'New Order' while serving the same old moneyed interests. Its leaders are not guilty of confusion but of deception. That they work hard to mislead the public does not mean they themselves are misled" (source: Michael Parenti's *Blackshirts and Reds*, 1997).

Harvest/killing time (a perversion of paganized harvest and fertility rituals; e.g., Halloween and Easter):

> And the angel of the lord came unto me
> Snatching me up from my place of slumber
> And took me on high and higher still
> Until we moved to the spaces betwixt the air itself
> And he brought me into a vast farmlands of our own Midwest
> And as we descended cries of impending doom rose from the soil
> One thousand nay a million voices full of fear
> And terror possessed me then
> And I begged, "Angel of the Lord what are these tortured screams?"
> And the angel said unto me,
> "These are the cries of the carrots, the cries of the carrots!
> You see, Reverend Maynard
> Tomorrow is harvest day and to them it is the holocaust!" (source: Tool's "Disgustipated," 1993).

Jokes aside, when the proverbial Dark Lord *does* return, Caesar the Just becomes Caesar the Tyrant/Zombie Caesar, and his fellow men must put him down to save the leader (and them) from himself. Like a vampire, they stab him to death, but also betray him and steal his power with a proverbial stake through the heart; like a zombie, they cut him to pieces (mirroring the ancient legend of Osiris). In short, the hero's staged fall from grace embodies the infernal concentric pattern that revives and reassembles the pieces of the puzzle that revive the dead tyrant. Instead of a simple guardian, they become "fallen," the *anti*-**hero** as a bonafide **reaper** who threatens total cataclysm by slowly becoming the Leveler (the medieval death-incarnate) as the decay not simply occurs, but expands and accelerates. The closer to death the state is, the more destructive the hero—the more mad, dark, and glorious. He's the ultimate badass, but also the ultimate scapegoat to blame, thus sacrifice (the medieval-grade village assignment of blame/veneration taken to a macro level). Cut off his head, apologize for his actions (never blame the state), rinse and repeat. The world is "saved" from Kain thanks to the Belmonts… for now.

*(exhibit 1a1a1b: The vampire/necromancer is both an anti-Semitic and pre-fascist trope that informs post-fascist rhetoric concealing American fascism festering under neoliberal illusions. The evil wizard gleefully has Kain killed, then offers him revenge and liberation from torment: "You will have the blood you hunger for!" All he has to do is kill the necromancer's enemies for him. No biggie! It's a combination of Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus [1604] and Jew of Malta [1590], presenting the Jew as a scheming bloodletter who a) trades his soul for forbidden knowledge, per Faust; but also whose b) sanguine **usury** is ultimately quelled by killing the Jew. In fascist myth, the Jew is the backstabber of the Germanized soldier—i.e., an act of betrayal that justifies demonizing both sides, but having one be sacrificed to the "benefit" of the other. "Benefit" is in quotes because vampirism of this sort is a disease that strikes the subject with xenophobic madness and bloodlust. Their theatre is unironic and mean, a "suffering to the conquered" brought back around through a false-rebellious war cry from Kain: "Vae Victis[140]!" Whereas the unironic queer vampire is code for "sodomite"/sexual heretic as targeted by the state to be exploited, the hunger of the unironic fascist vampire is to exploit the sodomite as someone who [in their eyes] "drew first blood." It's standard-issue revenge fantasy [which elides with camp during oppositional praxis as patently reclaiming these labels, similar to the zombie, mad scientist, Medusa, etc, by ironic performers].)*

       From start to finish, the whole ordeal becomes inert, heteronormative dogma stuck on loop—our "Pygmalion effect" as part of the broader **Shadow of Pygmalion**, which zombifies worker brains to not simply accept these moon-sized tortures through Capitalist Realism, but embody them as **menticided** soldiers and

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[140] "*Vae victis* is Latin for 'woe to the vanquished,' or 'woe to the conquered.' It means that those defeated in battle are entirely at the mercy of their conquerors and should not expect—or request—leniency" (source: Wikipedia). Kain translates it to "suffering to" not "woe."

victims (men—specifically our aforementioned holy men, the Belmonts—and their trusty frenemy the paladin-turned-death-knight, Kain/Dracula. Women, meanwhile, turn into subjugated "herbo" Amazons, but also infantilized "**Barbie dolls**," exhibit 1a1a3; aka, **tradwives**[141]/**war brides**). The two exist simultaneously within various offshoots of the colonial binary under the Shadow of Pygmalion; i.e., as a harmful mythic structure enforced by the **gender trouble** that **weird canonical nerds** experience; i.e., their **rape culture**'s heteronormativity-in-crisis being pitted against the campy **gender parody** of weird *iconoclastic* nerds (whose campiness generally occurs in response to gender trouble, or the making of gender trouble through campy parody to expose abusive parties and structures; i.e., "**self-reporting**"). As per the first half of our companion glossary's definition, weird canonical nerds are

> a toxic subset of nerd culture. Whereas nerd culture is for those who present an increased intellectual interest in a given topic—often in literature, but popular media more broadly as something to consume, critique, or create—weird canonical nerds are those who substitute intellectualism for consumerism and negative freedom for the elite as something to blindly enjoy/endorse through faithful, uncritical consumption; i.e., the monomyth and Cycle of Kings as "good war"; e.g., **Gamergate**, 2014, but also TERFs and their emergence in the late 2010s. Not only is this group is very wide—encompassing white, cis-het male consumers, but also women, and assimilated, "minority police," token class traitors; but it unironically leads to fascism as the infernal concentric pattern (with Gamergate endorsed by weird canonical nerds into the 2016 election of Donald Trump, and neoliberal-fascist sentiments through the consumption of coercive economics and "blind" pastiche/parody outside of American establishment politics).

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[141] E.g., after Trevor Belmont kills Death in *Castlevania* season four (2021), Sypha—previously coded as the nerdy bookworm—gives up her academic/asexual pursuits to become Trevor's dutiful housewife, full-time and on autopilot. In short, she's biologically essentialized to obey Trevor's every whim once the big villain is vanquished *and* she learns he's "conquered" her—i.e., knocking her up and her hysterics taking over to build a nest "purely by instinct" (I'm really not kidding. The show plays all of this for laughs, but still treats it as Radcliffe's "happy ending" gimmick; i.e., the promised marriage/compelled sex awarded to the male hero after the black castle crumbles; e.g., Emily St. Aubert giving *her entire inherited fortune* to Valancourt—who conveniently gambled away *his* entire fortune while in Paris as she was kidnapped by the evil Count Montoni and forced to survive at his treacherous castle, Udolpho [source: Shmoop Study Guides]).

Weird canonical nerds, then, are tasked with executing **stochastic terrorism** from the shadows[142] when **queer-baiting/pacification** fail; i.e., the "bury your gays[143]" trope (attacking the queer and putting them back in the closet, but also underground in more ways than one), but also **purity argumentation** (e.g., blood libel/quantum) that leads to the very **creation of sexual difference** the colonial binary is known for (exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a1; from Luce Irigary: "Only one form of subjectivity exists in Western culture and it is male," source). They rape and kill everything they see, measuring embodiments and *feats* of strength (their dicks) as they operate like a hostile alien tank (with good/bad variants): a bulldozer's **war of movement/sheer momentum** (the wrestler's economy of motion), **special moves** and bodies (*wunderwaffe* and *wunderkind*), an **occupying army**'s **fortress mentality** and enforced division/**false rebellion** to assist elite profits (which trickle down to them, the always "imperiled" middle class).

(exhibit 1a1a1c1: "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" ["The Eighteenth Brumaire"]. To this, the oral traditions of the stage play can be especially medieval, thus plastic and vivid. Macbeth's fatal

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[142] I.e., as a kind of pro-state shadow war—i.e., "astroturf guerillas" like the Contras of South America (exhibit 1a1a1g1) except fought on home soil by the middle class against the underclass; e.g., fascist ninjas or Vikings (which historically were raiders).

[143] (from the glossary): …the "bury your gays" trope (defined and explored by Haley Hulan's 2017 "Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context"). / The heteronormative sublimation, violence and moral-panic scapegoating of anything that doesn't fit the colonial binary model. Historically this would have been homosexual men (with queer cis women appropriated by cis-het men as exotic sex toys existing purely for male pleasure); however, it extends to trans/non-binary people or gender non-conforming persons more broadly (with various minorities being assigned heteronormatively atypical, gendered qualities, like women of color being seen as more masculine and sexual voracious/aggressive than white women, for example).

vision isn't just "A dagger of the mind, a false creation, / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" [Macbeth], but a copy of a copy of a copy in an endless nightmare loop. The yawning hall of kingly mirrors shadows him as shown guilt and revenge of a smiling past victim that somehow is all around him, having already won. The psychomachy ["mind battle"]—of this reunion with the past by the anxious, sleeping mind—imitates the Gothic Communist's own futile grappling with the monomyth, Cycle of Kings and infernal concentric pattern as a narrative of the crypt that outlives us to haunt future generations with, putting potential class warriors to sleep. The imagery is the same, but the context is altered through the performance as a meta-narrative:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing [ibid.].

Macbeth's notable lack of cheer at the prerecorded nature of history needn't be prophetic, provided the nightmares are reclaimed and used by us to awaken future workers to a class-conscious approach within Capitalist Realism; i.e., an altering of prior historical-materialisms [and all their fatal crypts, tyrants and black knights] as something to collectively escape through an actively reclaimed Gothic imagination/"darkness visible." History is predicated on material conditions and propaganda; rewrite them and you rewrite history and avoid the cataclysm/seminal tragedy again [until the last syllable of recorded time]. But you must learn to commune with witches, ghosts and monsters—the spectres of Marx [re: Derrida, meaning Capitalism as haunted by Communism after the Cold War's so-called "end of history"] as friendly to the Cause of developing Communism away from the bloody death omens of characters like Macbeth and Kain. In short, you must acquire the Wisdom of the Ancients in the modern world; i.e., to learn to swim in dangerous waters, thus make your own monsters in the darkness while able to tell these apart from state doubles, masks, uniforms and weapons inside a shared aesthetic.)

All at once, the revenge fantasy of *Pax Americana* kayfabe is the source of the class traitor's greatest strength/treasure as *false/on loan*, an **Achilles Heel** whose "dagger of the mind" puts them to sleep; i.e., a heteronormative killer on

autopilot blinded by canonical "darkness visible," wherein they deliberately or accidentally (usually a combination ruled through fear and dogma) cling to class-dormant illusions and sacrificial theatre whose imaginary "ancients" are continually *not* wise to greater and greater degrees of tragedy and farce; e.g., George Orwell's highly unimaginable and callow "double-speak" from *1984* (1949) as a Red-Scare dogwhistle coined by "the son of a British colonial officer from a wealthy landed family who began his career as a British imperial official in South-East Asia— basically an imperial cop" ([source](#): Hakim's "George Orwell Was a Terrible Human Being," 2023). As such, the class traitor cannot scrutinize dialectically-materially. They are also a gender/race traitor whose false power—their theatrical "sword"—is also their greatest weakness/castrating source of impotency for the Roman fool to promptly fall upon (indented for clarity):

> The greatest weakness of a bourgeois-minded worker/class traitor is their collective inability to critique endless war as an acclimating force; i.e., of them, towards manufactured illusions where the chosen hero does one of two basic things: a) picks up the false (imaginary) sword, mask or death edict and fends off or an imaginary enemy of darkness, or b) where someone else picks up a *real* weapon and conducts state-sanctioned violence through military imperium and paramilitary stochastic terrorism (vigilantism against agents of the Left or perceived "Left" labeled as "terrorists[144]"). Either way, the end result is a class-dormant inability to critique the system's alienation of ourselves from our true potential as workers. By virtue of a hypercorrect, biologically essential, sex-equals-gender approach, the ensuing knee-jerk reactionary's violence becomes an ultimatum during the state's decaying crises: Anything that isn't correct must die/is a threat to the fortress they've build around themselves through the state's supplied dogma. Yet, the half-real dagger works as Macbeth's dagger of the mind would: *also* in his hand but something he does *not* own ("I clutch thee but have thee not"). Used unironically in copaganda and the Military Industrial Complex, such a weapon operates in conjunction with the meta-narrative as rigged, thus entirely out of the player's control; i.e., through the ghost of the counterfeit to further the process of abjection as lucrative for people who aren't us, playing by their own set of rules that leave us with as little power as possible: *not* paying their fair share, but taking as much for themselves as they can through a parallel ruleset that steals our labor and pacifies us through

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[144] Something to keep in mind when we examine Joseph Crawford's introduction to *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism* (2013) during the "camp map": the state's agents of terror see themselves as the counterterrorists—with the state somehow being unable to turn them into monsters to do the elite's bidding. In their own eyes, they're pure and good, thus uncorruptible; in truth, they're infantilized monsters, afraid of everything and conditioned to kill at the drop of a hat.

marginalized in-fighting. The exact nature of the illusion—a fatal vision or fatal deed—doesn't really matter if the material consequences and bad intent are combined in ways that are good for business. It becomes a vicious cycle of **tilting at windmills** (as Don Quixote does); i.e., generating and slaying real victims thought of as dragons, or "averting one's eyes" through escapist illusions that disguise the mirrored murders displaced to somewhere else. "Out of sight, out of mind," except there *is* no outside-text; the illusion is always there, "the handle toward our hand." The *black knight* is always there, lurking like a shadow. Tied to the class traitor's body and actions—he is the ideologically rigid, notoriously cruel doppelganger they can never outrun, a dark reflection mirroring their own evil deeds/compliance as one class traitor of many inside the profit model. His eyes are blacked out, showcasing his lack of humanity through state-issued blinders: a dark warhorse (the color of death, the fetish, the weapon, the gun, the Nazi/zombie Roman) waiting to sacrifice them, too.
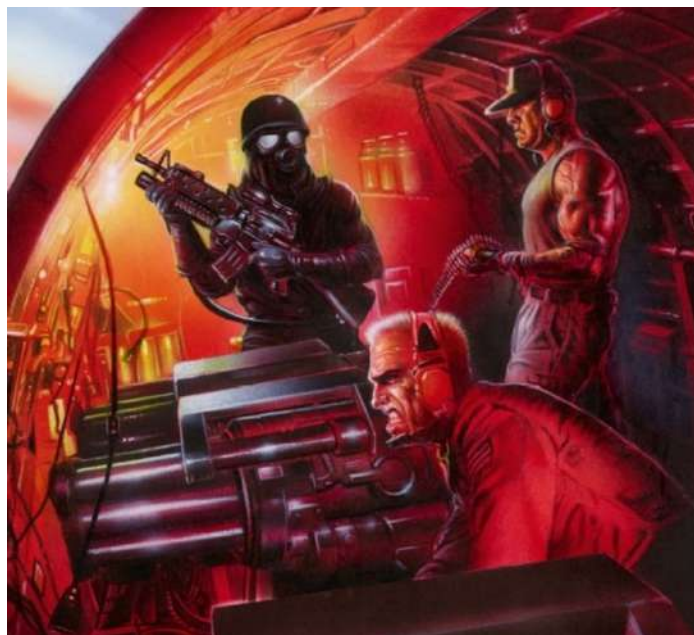
As such, the hero-turned-heel is figuratively hallucinating while acting like a coercively fetishized, "killer man baby" and class traitor/ghost of the counterfeit the rest of the middle class can stare at with equal parts fear and fascination; i.e., towards and of the imaginary medieval as serious (or campy *vis-à-vis* iconoclasts); e.g., "demon BDSM" via Nazi vs "Nazi" ("camping the Nazi"; e.g., Mel Brooks' *A History of the World*, 1981) or rape vs "rape" (the liminal expression of Gothic rape play) *vis-à-vis* Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism" (1974): the "Nazi" mask as a fan-favorite in ironic and unironic kayfabe circles (exhibit 1a1a1g2). Canon-wise, the bloodthirsty crowd loves a good fetishized and powerful monster but isn't really

taught to question how or why that might be while drinking up the fake blood as reminiscent of real-world atrocities (which they dub "apophenic[145] conspiracies"). Instead, power is accepted as genuine in order to enjoy the spectacle as an apocryphal-yet-reverential event. Despite the paradox, canon is simply sacred and unironic, whereas functional, "perceptive" irony is generally heretical to the centrist worldview (and whose ensuing conflict assigns or removes class character as a performance that is heteronormative or genderqueer).

There's no long-term benefit to keeping quiet in the face of systemic oppression. Even so, it's dangerous to camp, so the performer weaponizes the joke in favor of class war as a kind of tongue-in-cheek disguise: **the antiwar allegory** as equally magnetic, but dressed up in the same aesthetics like a kind of mask that's very much worn on purpose. Unlike the male warrior's Max Box "armor" and false power/hope, this effeminate "armoring" is not "true Camp" in Sontag's sense or Radcliffe's; i.e., that our seriousness fails without our knowledge or consent to protect our fragile minds. Rather, we know *exactly* what we're doing and commit to the bit for two reasons: a) to avoid being attacked and killed while b) getting our life-saving (thus necessary) message across; i.e., to raise sex-positive awareness through emotional/Gothic intelligence as a "woke," active process—one whose *conscious* class character is developed during oppositional praxis. Funnily enough, it's not so different from Radcliffe's "archaeologies" during her own dereliction, post-*Italian*—i.e., they're left behind for us to repurpose when *some* people don't have the guts (I'm looking at you, Radcliffe[146]).

We'll unpack all of this during the "camp map" chapter after the thesis statement concludes. Until then, we'll need to explain some manifesto terms: the pieces to our castle map as something to assemble, then fuel up and use to besiege the enemy's fortress (the castle we want to take back by "making it gay"). The exact order of the terms' explanation is less important than explaining how they interrelate. By the time we get to the "camp map," we'll "mount a siege," explaining how to camp canon in relation to these terms and why that matters (reversing the process of abjection tied to the ghost of the counterfeit as a false copy of itself in monomythic canon, the Cycle of Kings, and the infernal concentric pattern as a souless, viral copy—i.e., the narrative of the crypt as the historical-material wreckage left in Capitalism's wake, covered up by Capitalist Realism).

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[145] A pejorative label attached to critical thought; i.e., "to see patterns in random data," whereupon nothing is connected to anything else and suggesting otherwise is "political," hence mendacious, misinformed, even seditious.

[146] After writing *The Italian* in 1796, Radcliffe stopped writing and traveled abroad, enjoying the luxuries of her "fuck you" money (out-earning her husband's government job) while the French Revolution raged and she conspicuously distanced herself from it. Indeed, she never wrote again, effectively spending the rest of her days not just in luxury but in *hiding* (this lent her a mysterious air we'll continue to critique throughout the book).

Pieces of the Camp Map (from the Manifesto Tree)

"Moon-letters are rune-letters, but you cannot see them," said Elrond, "not when you look straight at them. They can only be seen when the moon shines behind them, and what is more, with the more cunning sort it must be a moon of the same shape and season as the day when they were written. The dwarves invented them and wrote them with silver pens, as your friends could tell you. These must have been written on a midsummer's eve in a crescent moon, a long while ago."

—Elrond Half-elven, <u>The Hobbit</u>

(*source*)

Our "camp map" camps canon according to the manifesto tree, which comes in many different pieces that, once assembled, need fuel. First, we will lay these pieces out and explain them in more detail than the manifesto tree could, then segue into the roots of camp (and Radcliffe's tricky tools) in the next subchapter. Both will be incredibly important to understand and bear in mind when we reach the "camp map" chapter itself. As such, each manifesto piece will come with exhibits to try and explain things in visual terms.

The first piece of the "camp map" is oppositional praxis, or the Six Doubles. Onstage and off, staged opposition's, **LARP**-level (live-action roleplay) kayfabe is half-real, thus frames canonical praxis quite well; i.e., as something for us to challenge inside oppositional praxis during our **creative successes** (the inducing and imagining of mutual consent, descriptive sexuality and informed consent, etc). Its **Six Doubles of Oppositional/Creative Praxis** organize into two groups of three: **canonical/bourgeois praxis** vs **iconoclastic/proletarian praxis**, or

- **sex coercion vs sex positivity**
- **carcerality vs emancipation**
- **complicity vs revolution**

and their various **synthetic oppositional groupings** (meaning "how they are synthesized during praxis"):

- ***destructive vs constructive* anger**
- ***destabilizing vs stabilizing* gossip** (and **abuse encouragement/prevention patterns**)
- ***"blind" vs "perceptive"* pastiche** and **quoting** (class/culture blindness versus consciousness)
- ***unironic vs ironic* gender trouble/parody** (canon vs camp)
- ***bad-faith vs good-faith* egregores**

Both are conducted at the same time by weird canonical nerds and weird iconoclastic nerds in praxial opposition. Sex positivity vs sex coercion, carcerality vs emancipation, etc, operate as simultaneously conjoined with destructive anger vs stabilizing gossip (and other components) sparring in interrelated, intersecting conflicts regarding all of these factors. It gets hella messy fast, but also murky. The doubles of the Gothic are "darkness visible"; we have to deliberately make them campy in a class-conscious way—i.e., deliberately campy doubles of "darkness visible" versus a state shill like George Orwell's very dumb and very popular idea, "double-speak." Doubles aren't simply the language of the state, but a powerful tool for revolutionaries to reclaim; e.g., "*I'm* Spartacus!" As always, the imaginary past is a potent theatrical device by which to interrogate (and negotiate with) power through hauntological and cryptonymic forms: the Wisdom of the Ancients (and its associate intelligence or lack thereof regarding emotions and the Gothic) as forever in flux.

     Doubling is the black mirror in action; its confused reflections invite troubling-but-*useful* comparisons to alien, unhomely things (*unheimlich*), showing less about how we're different from the things we abject, and more how we're *similar* (albeit in discomfiting ways). The reflection is both us and not us at the same time. To that, doubling communicates potential, widespread change (and possible worlds) amid uncertainty and chaos on the homefront as something to experience through uncomfortable emotions/psychological effects (of death omens, ill will, invasion and impostors) tied to familiar/familial characters who can't be ruled out as one or the other but serve as both during nightmare-like experiences; it occurs when sublimation (and boundaries) start to fail inside thresholds and on the surface of images, expressed in a liminal, ghostly fashion—a copy contrasted against the hero as also copied from the world around them through larger viral trends that intimate *ongoing* dialectical-material tensions (spectres of Marx and fascism).

     The mask-like plurality here is complex, messy and legion, which the rest of the book will touch upon throughout its entirety. Is Link a neoliberal twink/twunk or hunk for the state? Against it? What about Dark Link? Is he a Gay Communist or a

fascist (same for Gerudo Link and Wolf Link)? Are they "gay for each other" with all that homoerotic sword-crossing? Why *are* they so fetishized among fans? The disguising role of aesthetics all depends on dialectical-scrutiny and the artist, patron, critic and consumer within oppositional praxis as oscillating mid-struggle. Our job is to make the needle tip towards the successful development of Gothic Communism, then continually drive that point home. This matters because the two forces do not, as canon would lead you to believe, "cancel each other out"; they exist continuously in society as forever in dialectical-material conflict (which Gothic Communism seeks to alleviate by moving away from worker exploitation by the state: *subversive doubling* as a kind of revolutionary disguise pastiche; i.e., *our* forces of darkness).

(artist: [Charcoca](#))

Doubles aren't "just" Gothic fetishes and clichés (though they can be extremely fetishized and cliché when used in "blind" pastiche that reduces them to empty theatre); they're dialectical-material effects that reify over space and time: the ambiguous personification of ideas expressions in theatrical tension, namely dialogue and melee combat—the psychomachic, psychosexual, psychopraxial dueling of traditional masculine heroics and active violence (with Link and Dark Link the twink variants of this coupling through monstrous-feminine *Amazonomachia*).

Monsters are made, and they generally fight another other because they represent dialectical-material forces (chiefly praxis) dueling in opposition, dating back to antiquity as an ongoing dialog of power through evolving (and expanding) state mechanisms. In relation to our Gothicist-Communist goals, our Communist "endgame" develops through Marxist theories merged with Gothic theories and a Gothic "mode" of expression whose various "perceptive" pastiches amount to our individual lessons synthesized at the social-sexual level: our creative successes that challenge state hegemony. In turn, the effects of their continued expression can be gleaned through dialectal-material struggles; i.e., as we live our lives as rebellious workers fighting against canonical implementations of monstrous language. This

continuation of canon versus iconoclasm amounts to sex positivity versus sex coercion, wherein workers can liberate themselves through iconoclastic art that reclaims the Base and cultivates the Superstructure by camping state canon; i.e., by "making it gay." Creative praxis works in opposition for or against the state in this respect, its effects doubled as competing linguistic markers in the material world. From moment to moment, then, workers constantly experience and leverage them through Gothic poetics; i.e., the linguo-material expression of emotions, stigmas, and fears as things to experience, which generally manifest as monsters, lairs/parallel space, and phobias to colonize or decolonize through oppositional praxis: the theatrical mode of power as relayed in all the usual (and various) paradoxes and doubles.

Oppositional praxis divides in two. I call the canonical effects of oppositional praxis the "Three Canonical Doubles" or "the Three Cs of Canon" (which you'll see a lot throughout the book—sometimes all three, but usually one or two, and usually as adjectives):

- *(sex)coercion/-coercive*: The cultivation (through Superstructure) and production (through the Base) of emotional and Gothic stupidity through bad sex-gender education in general and Gothic canon; i.e., sex-coercive sexualized media, hauntologies, chronotopes, cryptonyms, monsters, phobias, etc.
- *carcerality/carceral*: A trapping of the mind and Gothic imagination inside Capitalism, killing its ability to imagine the future beyond Capitalism and its endless historical-materialities (fictional and non-fiction, but also their liminalities); i.e., the myopia of carceral hauntology and canonical parallel spaces/societies (chronotopes).
- *complicity/complicit*: A state of complacency and passive/active apathy towards the State as something to defend; i.e., complicit cryptonyms (which more often than the other theories denote an act of concealment that collaborates with the state through the hidden function of monstrous language).

The Three Cs alienate, binarize (divide) and exploit workers through a heteronormative, settler-colonial scheme. They operate in dialectical-material opposition to their Gothic-Communist doubles, the "Three Iconoclastic Doubles" of Gothic Communism:

- *sex positivity/-positive*: The cultivation (through Superstructure) and production (through the Base) of emotional and Gothic intelligence through good sex-gender education in general and Gothic canon; i.e., sex-positive sexualized media, hauntologies, chronotopes, cryptonyms, monsters, phobias, etc.

- *emancipation*: A liberation of the mind and Gothic imagination inside Capitalism, reviving its ability to imagine the future beyond Capitalism and its endless histories (fictional and non-fiction, but also their liminalities); i.e., emancipatory hauntology and iconoclastic parallel spaces/societies (chronotopes).
- *revolution/furtiveness*: A state of dissident and passive/active empathy towards the state as something to defeat; i.e., furtive cryptonyms (which more often than the other theories denote an act of concealment that conspires against the state through the hidden function of monstrous language).

The Three Iconoclastic doubles de-alienate, unify and empower workers Bob-Ross-style ("Anyone can paint"—i.e., be a Communist through the joy of iconoclastic praxis. In fact, Ross himself converted to a peaceful style after his American air force days, vowing never to yell at anyone ever again and loving animals, but also becoming the *de facto* "ASMR king" after his own death (ASMR Before Sleep, 2020) with slight touches of BDSM thrown in with that naughty-naughty paintbrush: "beat the devil out of him." The fact that no one remembers Ross' military past (we should not forget that about him) is far less vital than the fact that no one tries to *imitate* that part of him: Antiwar sentiment, communalized art and a genuine love for nature are Bob Ross' immortal legacy (similar to Howard Zinn being remembered for his antiwar writings, not his WW2 military career).

However, while the dialectical-material outcome of opposition is praxial—canonical or iconoclastic, bourgeois or proletarian—these praxes must still be synthesized through each worker's social sexual skills and emotional/Gothic intelligence (which we'll cover in the synthesis roadmap in Volume One) that involve various ways of looking at media through monstrous poetics (whose

Humanity "lenses" we'll examine during the primer in Volume Two). From there, proletarian praxis amounts to our aforementioned creative "successes" in regards to the Six Rs and Four Gs within the Gothic mode (all of which we'll explore much more in-depth in Volume Three).

Doubles and liminality are a natural/material consequence of praxis-in-action and demonstrate universal *adaptability* if not a universal appeal (re: to borrow from and expand on Slavoj Zizek, this can be music, but also exploitation media, ghost stories, or performance art, etc). In the Gothic mode, a double (a monster, lair, or theory by which to analyze them) isn't automatically canonical or iconoclastic. Rather, this must be determined *post hoc* ("after the fact"), not *a priori* ("before experience"). However, the Canonical Doubles tend to oppose the other group *together* as a means of seeing the world. If something is carceral, for example, it's probably also sex-coercive and complicit concerning our theories and materials; if something is emancipatory, it's probably also sex-positive and revolutionary concerning our theories and materials (taking liminal gradients/parallel space into consideration of course, which this book will try to do its very gold-star best). This actually makes the Six Gothic Doubles two pairs of three in dialectical-material opposition within the Gothic praxial mode. As we'll see moving forward, the Gothic mode—regardless of the register—tends to convey praxial conflict in phenomenological, linguo-material terms: a complicated "grey area" of endless gradients.
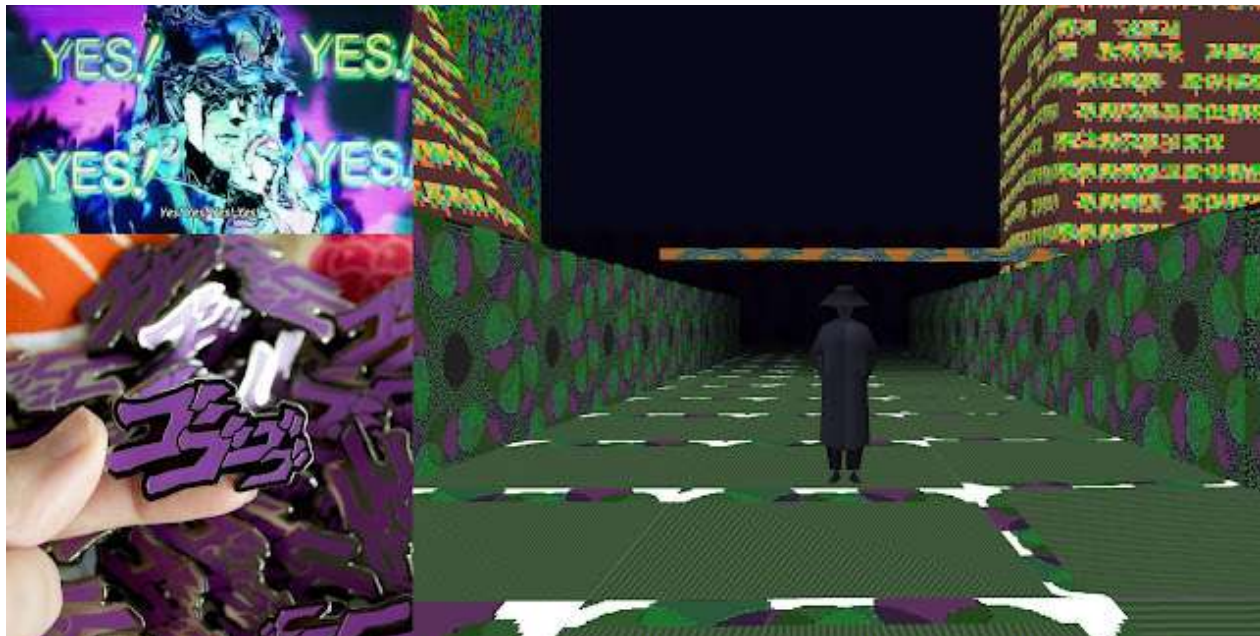
(exhibit 1a1a1c2: Left: the appreciative peril and liminal merchandise of Jojo's Bizarre Adventure; right: the mysterious and somewhat-creepy Grey Man from LSD Dream Emulator, 1998 [shown to me by Zeuhl, whose own Vaporwave aesthetic/appreciation in their own work was inspired by the game]. Meant to

emulate dreams, <u>LSD Dream Emulator</u> is largely generative/randomized in terms of its music and visuals. There are no "enemies," in the conventional sense; a level ends when you touch a wall. However, the "main villain" of the game is the Grey Man, who can suddenly appear behind you in alarming ways. His unpredictable and immediately uncanny veneer is disarmingly apt (arguably inspiring the leveled-up terror, wandering boss approach and generative musical tactics employed in <u>Alien: Isolation</u>, fourteen years later.)

Let's briefly reconsider/combine these ideas the way this book does—liminally. Cryptonyms, in economic terms, alter something's perceived value, but also its appearance and/or ontology (existence) in relation to the state's concealed abuse of it as something to privatize (this can be a worker, an image of them—their likeness—or chattel animals, etc). In fact, the Four Gs all describe how Capitalism alters something's perceived value and language through the three bourgeois trifectas in pursuit of state profit within the Superstructure. For example, Samantha Cole reports how [deep fake porn—as used by creepy-dude Atric—can easily reduce someone to a cheap, voyeuristic copy without their consent](). It's revenge-porn simulacra, but nevertheless leads to abject exposure along the usual lines of power exchange—operating according to male workers being granted the cheap concession of exacting female worker abuse amid their own exploitation/preferential mistreatment under Capitalism (often in hauntological ways; e.g., applying deep fake [to *American Psycho*'s sex worker scene]()). During canonical praxis, such replication "lobotomizes" workers, acclimating them to a coerced, hyperreal state: to refuse to fight their abusers when sublimation fails, or to fight other workers to the death (re: class sabotage/worker in-fighting: "They're killing each other."). Sublimation's failure happens during liminal expressions, which make something **uncanny** (from Freud's ***unheimlich***, meaning "unhomely"—keep that word in mind; we'll return to it throughout the book).

In turn, oppositional praxis (and its Six Doubles) leads to the synthesis of oppositional emotions, monsters and social-sexual behaviors (which monsters codify) during times of linguo-material conflict—re: cultivating the Superstructure on a societal level, which is what synthesis is. Canon lowers emotional and Gothic intelligence; the whole point of Gothic Communism is to *raise* these factors and their catalysts actively and passively using increasingly class-conscious and culture-conscious variations of these things; i.e., things that camp canon, which the state cannot tolerate. As our thesis statement argues, much of this "culture war" happens through code-switching between workers and the material-natural world around them; i.e., disguise pastiche and the mask of Gothic aesthetics as for or against the state and *its* canonical expressions. Relative to these opposing factors, the synthetic oppositional groupings are bourgeois vs proletarian according to various behaviors associated with weird canonical nerds vs weird iconoclastic nerds:

- **destructive vs constructive anger**—i.e., possessive or bad-faith, destructive anger's defense *of* the state vs constructive anger as a legitimate defense *from* state abuses; e.g., police abuse and DARVO tactics.
- **destabilizing vs stabilizing gossip**—i.e., co-dependent, "prison sex" mentalities and rape culture vs interdependent girl talk (e.g., #MeToo) and rape prevention.
- **"blind" vs "perceptive" pastiche/quoting**—i.e., unironic pastiche and quoting (dogma) vs subversive, ironic quoting (camp).
- **unironic vs ironic gender trouble/parody (camp)**—i.e., a performative means of cryptofascism vs demasking the fascist-in-disguise, making these imposters self-report by figuratively gagging or crapping their pants (with gender parody being a means of combatting the impostor syndrome of gender *dysphoria* with gender *euphoria* and reclaimed xenophobic labels/implements of torture: Asprey's counterterror in a theatrical sense)
- **bad-faith vs good-faith egregores**, including xenophilic/xenophobic monsters both as products of worker labor as well as worker identities, occupations, and rankings, which use similar language regardless if they're bourgeois or proletarian—e.g., the *bourgeois* Amazon detective (canonical Samus Aran) vs the *proletarian* zombie-vampire-unicorn pillow princess (e.g., my illustration, below):

(artist: Persephone van der Waard)

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism by Persephone van der Waard

While we will consider these manifesto-tree ideas, here, we will return to them during the synthesis roadmap in Volume One when we delve more into trauma writing and artwork as a means of synthesizing praxis; as well as during the Humanities primer in Volume Two, and in Chapters Four and Five in Volume Three (the latter two which explore the execution of disguise pastiche in the Internet Age). Until then, please don't fret; they are meant to be understood fairly loosely and their synonyms can be swapped interchangeably (canonical/blind pastiche) as long as the basic dialectical-material relationship (and its symptoms) are communicated.

"Cops and victims," for example, often becomes hauntologized, presenting in fantastical forms that mirror real-life examples. A "girl boss" witch or "medusa" can angrily serve the state by being the heroine or the villain in ways that uphold the status quo, making her role functionally bourgeois; a real-life cop serves the state, often LARPing as a death knight while they brutalize their state-assigned, hauntologically abject victims during *witch hunts*. The same conversion applies to proletarian representations and representatives. To that, egregores personify oppositional praxis, making them fundamentally liminal. This means they'll invoke power at different registers according to various titles, rankings and positions of status and privilege: e.g., a witch *queen*, *princess*, *courtier* or *peasant* as a status symbol[147] often expressed in BDSM language or demonic-undead, animalized/animate-inanimate simulacra. Despite her label, a witch queen isn't automatically bourgeois, any more than making her a zombie and/or demon would. *Function* (not aesthetics) determines one's role in oppositional praxis, which must be ascertained through dialectical-material analysis of any aspect of the natural-material world. We'll do so now through *D&D* pastiche (orcs and humans), but also canceled futures (the cyberpunk) as something to transmute through our own "creative successes" in response to Capitalism's usual shenanigans.

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[147] In videogame parlance, the queen of a Communist sort of expression doesn't represent her status of power under *functional* Communism (we're all kings and queens under functional Communism, my angels); it depicts a canonical, "high value" target prioritized by the degree to which the state wants them dead; i.e., a price on their head; e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. as vilified and targeted for assassination by the FBI. Similar assassinations occurred all throughout the Civil Rights era, and continue in videogames' neoliberalizing of theatrical violence; i.e., presenting labor movements as monster hordes piloted by a brain bug controlling the mass: the head on the snake of the revolutionary body. Like Medusa, this becomes something to behead and turn against the mass of seditious workers fighting for their rights. Like, how *dare* they!

LAWFUL GOOD
SOMETIMES YOU EAT THE BAR AND SOMETIMES THE BAR, WELL, HE EATS YOU.

NEUTRAL GOOD
ARE THEY GONNA HURT US, WALTER?

CHAOTIC GOOD
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FUCK A STRANGER IN THE ASS!

LAWFUL NEUTRAL
WHAT DID YOU THINK THIS WAS ALL ABOUT? FUN AND GAMES?

TRUE NEUTRAL
THE DUDE ABIDES.

CHAOTIC NEUTRAL
I'LL SUCK YOUR COCK FOR A THOUSAND DOLLARS.

LAWFUL EVIL
THE BUMS WILL ALWAYS LOSE!

NEUTRAL EVIL
TOMORROW VEE COME BACK UND CUT OFF YOUR CHONSON!

CHAOTIC EVIL

(exhibit 1a1a1c3: <u>D&D</u> "homebrew" is a way of escaping the palimpsestuous racial profiling of Tolkien's High Fantastical gentrification enacted by Wizards of the Coast trying to enforce the racial [thus class and gender] binary—e.g., "mind flayers" always being lawful evil, or Drow always being chaotic evil/"pure evil" inside the state of exception [exhibit 41b] to fill the gap made by the humanized [yet still fetishized] "good" orcs [exhibit 37e]: the exceptional "not bad for an orc" pariah. Tolkien made orcs to be beaten and bitten by swords with fancy-sounding names illustrating the function as simultaneously dressed up and denuded [from <u>The Hobbit</u>]:

He took out his sword again, and again it flashed in the dark by itself. It burned with a rage that made it gleam if goblins were about; now it was bright as blue flame for delight in the killing of the great lord of the cave. It made no trouble whatever of cutting through the goblin-chains and setting all the prisoners free as quickly as possible. This sword's name was Glamdring the Foe-hammer, if you remember. The goblins just called it Beater, and hated it worse than Biter if possible. Orcrist, too, had been saved; for Gandalf had brought it along as well […]

   At this point Gandalf fell behind, and Thorin with him. They turned a sharp corner. "About turn!" he shouted. "Draw your sword Thorin!"

   There was nothing else to be done; and the goblins did not like it. They came scurrying round the corner in full cry, and found Goblin-cleaver and Foe-hammer shining cold and bright right in their astonished eyes. The ones in front dropped their torches and gave one yell before they were killed. The ones behind yelled still more, and leaped back knocking over those that were running after them. "Biter and Beater!" they shrieked; and soon they were all in confusion..." ([source](#)*).*

This function c<u>a</u>n be reversed, but must occur within the mode of expression; e.g., sexy orc roleplay in Skyrim mods, exhibit 84b; i.e., inside material conditions to avoid praxial invisibility. You have to be able to give it shape inside camp and communicate it to others afterward.)

   To this, oppositional praxis during Gothic Communism is less like the discrete, nine-squared *D&D* Alignment Chart (above) and more like a Venn Diagram of the same components *doubled and super-imposed over each other*. Hence, why revolutionary acronyms like **ACAB ("All Cops Are Bad")** are handy but also why you still have to distinguish between who's genuine/good-faith and who isn't/bad-faith during oppositional praxis; i.e., through dialectical-material scrutiny as performed by gay space wizards through whatever "poison" you pick and serve up:

(artist: *Ecchi Oni*)

For example, an ironic, "strict" mommy dom (and her "dark sodomy castle of gloom and doom"—when executed in good faith—is *not* a class traitor even if she's

wearing a police uniform or (some other) fetish outfit; aesthetics do not determine function, function does, but obviously first impressions are important. Private exhibits of triggering symbols like swastikas or desecrated American flags (the Thin Blue Line) are far different than public ones, and if you use them in your art during your public exhibit, you have to be prepared to explain why—i.e., as a *de facto* educator of sex positivity through liminal expression using Gothic poetics. On the flipside, fascists operate through bad-faith concealment; i.e., attacking like undercover cops who awaken and bushwack their foes when they feel threatened (they also join arms with centrists, aggregating with formal power to defend capital against labor). Code-switching intuition, then, becomes something to develop, like a sixth sense. Is someone a cop/undercover for the state? Are they "for real" or do they mean you harm working for their true boss, the Man (as Deckard the blade runner did when he "retired" Zora in the streets)? The fact remains, whether of Gothic canon or its historical-material parallels, the hidden tyrant trope is often a displaced, bourgeois scapegoat—a "Greater Evil" fall-guy to take the blame for the elite: Adolf Hitler, Victor Frankenstein, Jeffrey Dahmer, or that rich dude from the 2022 *Hellraiser* remake, etc. Meanwhile, girl bosses are recuperated feminists working for the state; i.e., class-traitor TERFs, who see J. K. Rowling as their god (and whose billionaire status becomes the ultimate carrot to dangle in front of the poor working class[148]/vindictive middle class).

Oppositional praxis materializes in regular people consuming and absorbing these stories in ways that might be bourgeois, thus rapacious, or not bourgeois, thus safe for workers; it happens in our relationships, whatever form they might take. For example, legitimate anger experienced post-breakup/after a honeymoon phase is fine (e.g., Peach PRC's "[F U Goodbye]()," 2023, mirroring one of my favorite breakup songs, Scandal's "[Goodbye to You]()," 1982). Experimentation is fine (try anal and see what you like, for example). Coercion is not fine. Love—be it serious or casual, closed or open, FWBs ("friends with benefits") or fuck buddies, extramarital or intramarital—is fluid, seasonal; its "seasonal" boundaries must then be respected by empathetically recognizing the shifting socio-material parameters involved. Someone could be lonely, drunk, homeless, poor, single, cold. However, the situational "fluffery" of a perceived knight-in-shining-armor can quickly become a nightmare when said knight, conditioned by the state to be possessive and duplicitous, love-bombs you in a cycle of diminishing emotional returns; i.e., someone who, through Foucault's sense of discipline and punish, gaslights, gatekeeps, and girl-bosses you—in short, when they coerce you.

For example, my ex Jadis (who we'll be talking about a lot in this book—during part two of the "camp map," but especially in Volume One and Two) was a perfidious, utterly bogus "protector" that I lived with in Florida. We met online, and

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[148] The basic idea could be called class envy, or a desire *not* to address Capitalism, but instead assimilate to a higher rung by punching down against the class you were born into.

for two years during the pandemic, they looked after me as an abuser would: through DARVO and love-bombing. They also looked the part, but functioned to a highly abusive degree through aesthetics designed to naturalize what they were doing to me while defending their position as sacred according to what *they* held sacred: the canonical author and the author's heroes, but also their orderly (centrist) approach to conflict as a means of assuring Jadis' (and people who share their views; i.e., the white, middle class) position in the neoliberal pecking order. The moral, here is that canon can blind you if you refuse to critique it—generally by *not* listening to commonplace voices that make up the pedagogy of the oppressed: "Most women and minorities live under constant fear of rape and murder—i.e., sexual exploitation and harm." Moderate "empathy" or "being realistic" is just compromising with the state; *radical* empathy is needed to liberate those who have been radicalized into chattel slaves by police agents—cops, cowboys, knights, etc. For people like Jadis, the death of the author is death of the father/man and society as we know it in a very Foucauldian sense; in short, it is the end of the world in ways they *don't* like to acknowledge because they aren't the sexy star of the show/can't just shoot their problems to bits and act martyred about it as they do so. As the extended exhibit below shows, *everything* becomes commodified and emptied of class character in bad copies of "struggle" (which transport the idea of cop and robber or orcs and humans to the retro-future dystopia):

*(exhibit 1a1a1c4: "Bisexuals love the P90" [*source tweet*: Papapishu, 2020]. It's not uncommon for genderqueer people to appreciate the revolutionary power of weaponry in popular fiction [e.g., *Star Gate: SG-1*, 1997]—often through silly gun porn metaphors that "stand in" for the human body. As Solient Art replies to*

Papapishu: "It's the ambidextrous design, featuring a bottom-facing ejection port."
To quote Makoto herself, "Of course it is!"

Makoto from <u>Ghost in the Shell</u> looks like a bisexual robot, but she's not a <u>revolutionary</u> bisexual robot, she's a <u>cop</u> bisexual robot. She not only works for the state; she gets to shoot the state's enemies <u>and</u> feel bad about it afterward, <u>and</u> have a cybernetically enhanced body that can crush [most men] to dust. In short, she has to submit to the hierarchy of power largely in a bureaucratic sense, but otherwise can take out her frustrations in the cyberpunk's neon-lit streets: "kicking" poor people as a cop does, like a <u>de facto</u> owner does its dog [in true Man-Box fashion, the system puts tremendous nostalgic pressure on workers, then promises them fantastical rewards[149] if they "perform well"]. Her conquering of the tech-noir doesn't investigate the suffering of workers; it humanizes the cybernetic cop while she curb stomps gang members in an undercover unform: the queer-coded sex worker functioning like Judge Dredd's judge, jury and executioner—"I am the law." In short, she's an infiltrator dressed in an increasingly appropriated uniform, one whose sexuality gels through a profoundly intense form of nostalgia: the desire to escape the system by becoming a robot who can never be hurt again. "I am naked, but made of steel!"

One sympathizes. For example, when I was in elementary school, I wanted to be a reploid like Mega Man X—to be made of metal, so my father couldn't hurt me anymore. While I identified with the codified alienation and desire for revenge, I didn't like liars and bullies, which is ultimately what X and Makoto canonically are: false rebels lauded with awesome, emotionally gripping music and dressed up in futurist rebellion language; i.e., the Czech word <u>robota</u>, or forced labor/servitude, originally done by serfs now carrying out Isaac Asimov's laws of robotics to serve man [e.g., "by action of mission of action," as Bishop from <u>Aliens</u> puts it]. In short, Mega Man is copaganda meant to grow and develop alongside his audience according an endless cycle of war that follows them into adulthood: an arms race within Japanese neoliberalism's mashing of rock 'n roll into the Western sci-fi commodity of performative struggle [similar to Nazi Germany's aping of American Hollywood[150]] through retro-futures that—during the arrival of decay through the

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[149] Jetpacks, Stepford Wives/tradwives, and various other false promises capital can never deliver on.

[150] (from the glossary): State propaganda also *self-replicates*—with Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edwards Bernays, famously applying the principles of political propaganda to marketing in his 1928 capitalist apologia, *Propaganda*. The book argues for a rebranding of propaganda called "public relations," one where "invisible" people create knowledge and propaganda to rule over the masses, with a monopoly on the power to shape thoughts, values, and citizen responses; that "engineering consent" of the masses would be vital for the survival of democracy. In Bernays' own words, he explains:

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We

appearance of the tyrant's zombie castle—play out through the centrist wrestler's theatre punishing the usual scapegoats: evil Communists, Nazis and mad science (with Protoman/Zero being red and yellow compared to Mega Man/Mega Man X's red-white-and-blue). It's the good doctor versus the bad doctor making monsters from their centrist doubled castles, <u>not</u> "perceptively" campy renditions making monsters for our revolutionary purposes:

are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of.

Despite a patent rebrand filled with cheerful Liberalism, Bernays went on to inspire Hitler's minster of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, but also Hitler himself (as well as American propagandists during and following WW2). Hitler did his best to emulate American media, seeing its coercive value by creating his own Hollywood (see: Hilter's Hollywood, 2018). Helped from the likes of commercial-savvy artists like Goebbels, he copied Charlie Chaplin's toothbrush mustache, radicalized Bernays' ideas on propaganda, and painstakingly toiled over the creation of the Nazi symbol itself (Jim Edwards' "Hitler as Art Director: What the Nazis' Style Guide Says About the 'Power of Design,'" 2018). Behind the illusions, Hitler remained cutthroat, buoyed to chancellorship by the German elite defaulting on American loans, whereupon he promptly killed his political enemies and spent the next decade convincing his nation to fight to the death. In short, he was a bad capitalist (unlike the American elite).

The ephemeral nature of war in neoliberal media is commodified in ways that dematerialize old packaging that, after a sale period, suddenly becomes corporately delegitimized and must afterwards be traded through barter [e.g., bottom-left, source: "9 Super Nintendo SNES Cases *NO GAMES*: Mario Kart, Zelda, Metroid, FZero & More," 2021]. The physical product is corporately abandoned in favor of something that can be wholly alienated from consumers by gating it behind digital paywalls and "merch" they can buy in increasingly fractalized forms; e.g., anniversary collections, t-shirts, or action figures, etc.

*In short, there's no class-allegory during the diegetic/paratextual apocalypse of canonical pastiche and its manufactured obsolescence. For fans of such canon, **technological singularity151** is code for slave rebellion, which cannot be allowed; so it gets swapped out for a false version of itself that weaponizes against rebellious labor as catastrophic: Mega Man 4's [1991] "Then one day, the industrial robots all over the world went on a total rampage" tells the story of a boy who willfully surrenders his humanity to become Pinocchio and bring "Dr. Cossack" [and his Russian (Communist) robots"] to justice. There is always a fascist/anti-Semitic imposter to police and uncover by a "good little boy" working for the state. In turn, the new world order's "end of history" is thoroughly discrete in terms of Cartesian dualism's highly damaging sex/gender binaries. Everything is canonized as good/evil, man/woman [right image, above: "females"; source: Fandom] during these copaganda recruitment tactics [with women as secretaries to give male soldiers a nurturing female voice to hear before they die out in the field]. Enjoy them if you must, just don't endorse canonical variants in what you produce, patron or purchase yourself; i.e., I love the music and the "mood" of the reploid persona and often regress to my childhood when listening to certain scenes, but I can still "pull a Sarkeesian" and critique canon when doing so:*

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151 What David Roden, in *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (2015), calls *speculative posthumanism*:

> The radical augmentation scenarios discussed in the previous two sections indicate to some that a future convergence of NBIC [Nano, Bio, and Information Technologies; Cognitive Science] technologies could lead to a new "posthuman" form of existence: the emergence of intelligent and very powerful nonhumans. In particular, we noted that the development of artificial general intelligence might lead, in Good's words, to an "intelligence explosion" that would leave humans collective redundant, or worse. Following an influential paper by the computer scientist Virnor Vinge, this hypothetical event is often referred to as "the technological singularity" (source).

In dystopian sci-fi, this is generally a Communist scapegoat; e.g., S.H.O.D.A.N. (exhibit 42f1), the "cyber-Medusa" from *System Shock* (1994).

In-game dialogue text:
"I hope this is the last time we need to use weapons of war like this, X. I really do."

[top, source: [The Mega Man Network](#)]

For example, Zero saving X from Vile [a reploid "designed to be a war machine," according to Zero] is engrained into my mind. I loved and continue to love the idea of being rescued by a strong, effeminate "robo-cutie." But the theatrics still canonically whitewash war by trying to argue that X's military urbanism isn't somehow Imperialism coming home to empire: He's literally a fledgling cop with a kill list. Do you <u>see</u> him "taking any of the mavericks in"? No, he smashes those

metal motherfuckers to junk each and every time. And this repeats over and over until, by Mega Man X8 [2004], the ghost of Doctor Light has been replicated not only light years beyond itself, but also Mega Man's far less bloodthirsty palimpsest, Astro Boy [1952]. In short, the scheme has entered into farce, apologizing for the recursion and acceleration of war enacted along the same profit motive disguising itself [re: "The Eighteenth Brumaire"].

It's false hope that sounds increasingly empty and decayed, but also sucked of even its childhood nostalgia for members of the "old guard" that grew up on the classic oldies; they paradoxically yearn for those oldies as "better times" while neoliberalism moves the goalpost, chasing efficient profit while taking away more and more of worker rights. The product is progressively sucked of its joy and nutrients, becoming increasingly "shitty" but also unwise as an essentialized past devoid of a class-conscious Wisdom of the Ancients.

The ludic moral is that all videogames simulate reality to some extent through metaphors; canon, in particular, is built on war and conflict, especially crisis and decay as something to embody through one's avatar as exceptionally "good" or "evil" in the kayfabe sense. But videogame canon is always neoliberal, thus centrist. It's not as basic as "sending signals to the brain, controlling the mind." Instead, it's internalized; i.e., coding the hero to kill the state's enemies within the state of exception, according to the Protestant ethic/monopoly of violence in broad strokes. "Maverick," then, can be whatever the state needs to die to serve profit, whereas "kill all fags" narrows things down and goes "mask off" in a fascist sense; e.g., the controversy of Sneako selling overt hate of the state-assigned enemy to children, who drink it up like a sponge [The Rational National's "Sneako 'Stunned' to Discover His Young Fans Are as Hateful as He Is," 2023]. The same basic idea applies to the narrative conventions of Mega Man as borrowed from older media/mediums. The cop is humanized [not the victim] in theatrical displays of violence and humor tied to the fan's childhood; i.e., the game, operating as a shared space for them to grow and develop, thus acquire and reify their view of the world as something to recreate:

[artist: *Draw Lover Lala*]

Often, this plays out in old military clichés, such as disorder within the ranks; e.g., the theatrical dispute inside the chain of command over a woman: the duel, as something Jane Austen wouldn't have put into words, but only written about in the most hushed of voices:

> *"Have you," she continued, after a short silence, "ever seen Mr. Willoughby since you left him at Barton?"*
>
> *"Yes," [Colonel Brandon] replied gravely, "once I have. One meeting was unavoidable."*
>
> *Elinor, startled by his manner, looked at him anxiously, saying, "What? have you met him to—"*
>
> *"I could meet him no other way. Eliza had confessed to me, though most reluctantly, the name of her lover; and when he returned to town, which was within a fortnight after myself, we met by appointment, he to defend, I to punish his conduct. We returned unwounded, and the meeting, therefore, never got abroad."*
>
> *Elinor sighed over the fancied necessity of this; but to a man and a soldier she presumed not to censure it" [source: Sense and Sensibility, 1811].*

In other words, the duel as a hushed affair in Sense and Sensibility is, for Mega Man X fans, much more out in the open.)

To elaborate on what I meant a moment ago by "Foucauldian," the neoliberal affect of the cyberpunk robocop touches on the death of the hero as a more insidious affair—i.e., happening via the "Utopian, futuristic orderliness of things," which in turn highlights the death of man as "swapped out"; i.e., what Foucault writes about in *The Order of Things* (1966):

The epistemological field traversed by the human sciences was not laid down in advance: no philosophy, no political or moral option, no empirical science of any kind, no observation of the human body, no analysis of sensation, no imagination, or the passions, had ever encountered, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, anything like man; for man did not exist (any more than life, or language, or labour); and the human sciences did not appear when, as a result of some pressing rationalism, some unresolved scientific problem, some practical concern, it was decided to include man (willy-nilly, and with a greater or lesser degree of success) among the objects of science (source, pages 344-45).

This birth (and death) of man is something we can go on to apply to the capitalist system of ordering things within heroic manufactured consent, scarcity and conflict; i.e., according to centrist theatre as something that its proponents will fight tooth and nail to uphold through correct appearances, but also arrangements of power through those appearances as designed to "benefit" them more than other people: the equality of convenience by playing cops and robbers or orcs and humans, or reversing the *aesthetic* but not the canonical *function*.

(*source*: Fandom)

First and foremost, canon's rewarding of the white, cis-het male (or token) audience is vital to canonical praxis; they want their power trip in accordance with a functional lookalike and its punching bag that they can blindly camp to a degree that doesn't "rock the boat." In short, they colonize theatre according to their praxis as aligned with the state and reject anything else. Unlike Mega Man, or Makoto/canonical doubles like Bungie's Konoko (above), they *don't* listen to their "ghost" (exhibit 42e); they keep working for "Section Six," getting their hands dirty for the elite by killing state enemies inside the same-old state of exception. This includes embodying and endorsing the canceled futures that lead them (and others) down the rabbit hole of Capitalist Realism. In this respect, Jadis was especially false; they "cashed in" after their daddy died, being left with a considerable amount of "fuck you" money/disposable income. They would never have to work again, but acted like they deserved it all as a justification for what came next. Utterly flush, they preceded to abandon any sense of teamwork with me; but the theatre of the suffering and Atlas-level martyr was written all over them and their stoic, but self-tortured posture. They not only saw themselves as Makoto (a superior posthuman entity that was "more human than human"); they honestly seemed to think, thus act, like things would magically just "improve," buying into the naïve futurism of writers like Ray Kurzweil, whose *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005) sold the (mostly white, middle-class) American public on Utopian bullshit[152]. Jadis openly said they preferred this kind of futuristic optimism to the usual gloom-and-doom, but they were also a white, middle-class woman who secretly had ties to capital: a Gothic princess who, given the opportunity, promptly "pulled a Radcliffe" and fucked right off.

Doubled costumes, props and conflicts; psychomachy, psychosexuality, *Amazonomachia*, psychopraxis. It all begs the question: why use heroic language at all if it just leads to confusing doubles? To be frank, heroic theatre is where power exists, so you have to go there to interrogate it; you can't just ignore it and make up your own language[153] because that's segregation (and nobody will know what

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[152] The very machinations that Frank Herbert warned about in *Dune* (1965): "Once, men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them."

[153] English is a bastard language told through perpetual conquest; i.e., "sex" is a liminal expression that canonically synonymizes sex/rape as associated with the language of conquerors: to fuck (versus longer and less direct Norman-French bastard words). While the two cannot be separated, the *canonical* invocation of the theatrical paradox deliberately ignores the pleasure of a thoroughly natural and healthy activity (to have sex)—one whose physical complexities (e.g., girls fart during sex, or "fart," "queefing" when air builds up inside their vagina, especially during doggystyle; also "edging") have been historically-materially conflated with unironic harm, one and all. Subversions of this linguo-material affect must occur through catharsis as an imperiled position to reclaim what has *become* unironically violent; i.e., by using the same language as taken back for sex-positive

you're talking about). Segregation just alienates you further from society and closets you (which is a form of genocide: forced conversion). You have to get down in the trenches, weaponizing the awesome paradoxes inside to reach a wider audience through allegory and apocalypse during liminal expression—to speak out and break things that cover up your abuse.

Within this liminal state, the greatest weakness of the class traitor is their complete inability to critique canon, thus become slave to its endorsement by embodying "useful strength" (for capitalists); i.e., as class-dormant weird canonical nerds who uncritically and predictably endorse problematic elements of media while simultaneously condemning their proletarian *potential* within **the Gothic mode of expression/Gothic imagination** (**monsters, lairs, hermeneutics, phobias**) as something to colonize through their labor pitted against ours: what they can police

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purposes: to heal from lived/inherited trauma and prevent harm in the future, often by reveling in the wicked, bad, naughty theatre of the devil's position as a praxial underdog who enjoys being the interesting member of the troupe. Invisibility is a prey mechanism, but who wants to be boring (thus inert) when appealing to the virtues of theatrical expression? "The nail that sticks out gets hammered" makes for poor proletarian praxis.

or otherwise take from us for the state through a variety of **bourgeois trifectas** geared towards profit as structured around sublimated/recuperated, thus "blind," forms of war pastiche and nation pastiche (indented for clarity):

> Capitalism is *always* in crisis (through the *manufacture* **trifecta: manufactured scarcity, competition/conflict, and consent**), so the phrase "Capitalism in crisis" *is* accurate when describing fascists; however, "crisis" also describes *centrists*, who require the presence of an eternal shadow-enemy guided by moral panic (e.g., Islamophobia) to prosecute *their* own wars and hold onto power (which they conceal through the *subterfuge* **[displace, disassociate, disseminate]** and *coercion* **[gaslight, gatekeep, girl-boss] trifectas**). The primary difference between the two groups is radicality and *decay*—i.e., once the establishment of centrists weakens to such a degree that the *veneer* of stability (and neoliberal/capitalist illusions) gives way to *echoes* of a new dark age amid the threatened collapse of *Pax Americana* (or emulations thereof; e.g., 1920s Germany) for the middle class (the gatekeepers and soldiers who historically defend capital for the elite): "the enemy is at the gates." Once this happens, (crypto)fascists can begin to shapeshift away from strictly "apolitical" *obscurantist* rhetoric (in short, whatever they need to say to achieve their goals; refer to Umberto Eco's Fourteen Points) to start adopting more and more *openly* vengeful and genocidal forms. The process is gradual but steady. However, once they seize power for themselves and start running the asylum, Captialism goes from crisis to decay as *normalized*, entering *accelerated* decay inside a police state of exception/emergency until the fuel and/or mania are spent. In short, fascism is "Capitalism in decay" or "going from crisis, to decay to death." It is a death cult whose hideous blaze will utterly eat itself and everything around it, instigated and allowed by centrists (who break bread with fascists, thus being fascists/"fash-adjacent" or otherwise complicit in their schemes) *and* the elite through **the banality of evil**: bureaucratic, **middle-management** exploitation by the *bourgeoisie* of the *proletariat* through cold, hard (and boring) economics induced by the *handle* of our aforementioned *trifectas*: **a systemic *divide* between workers and owners**, **efficient profit** and **infinite growth** through frontier Capitalism/Imperialism (and the Imperial Boomerang), desk murderers, as well as any rhetorical or theatrical trick you could think of (disguise pastiche, *the Six Doubles of Creative/Oppositional Praxis and their various synthetic oppositional groupings*). All operate in concert, becoming—as it were—a symphony of destruction.

This banality isn't exclusive to Hitler's Nazis, but an integral device built into Capitalism. As Meghna Chakrabarti responds in "The Eichmann Tapes and the Comforting Myth of the 'Banality of Evil'" (2022):

> 60 years later, the banality of evil has been so oft repeated, it's been reduced to cliché. Just yesterday, a guest on this show used the phrase when trying to explain why so many [Republican operatives quickly abandoned their principles](#) in support of the authoritarian slide that led to the Capitol insurrection. So the banality of evil has become a comforting myth we tell ourselves.
>
> Arendt's idea that evil comes from a failure to think is a popular and powerful way to comprehend how anyone could willingly participate in the unthinkable. But in the case of Adolf Eichmann, we now know that Hannah Arendt was wrong. Because Eichmann said so himself. This is Adolf Eichmann, his actual voice, speaking in recordings made in Argentina in 1957, four years before he went on trial in Jerusalem. And in the recordings, he says, I regret nothing.
>
> > *Every fiber in me resists that we did something wrong. I must tell you honestly, had we killed 10.3 million Jews, then I would be satisfied and say, good, we have exterminated an enemy … that is the truth. Why should I deny it?*
>
> Eichmann's evil is not a failure to think. Eichmann's evil is the product of *deliberate* [emphasis, me] thinking that made him proud to orchestrate a genocide. So it may be time for us to drop our belief in the banality of evil ([source](#)).

Sexual coercion through xenophobia (radical or otherwise) is *fundamental* to bourgeois hegemony—i.e., through René Descartes' maps of conquests, Tolkien's own refrain, or their ludologized doubles and theatrical counterparts in the here-and-now relying on the same old ghost of the counterfeit and process of abjection: the banality of evil as simply the turning of the handle. This is true regardless if the people doing it are coded as "good" or "bad"; canon-wise, they're still fighting war in defense of the nation-state as a vampiric entity that needs war (thus victims) to survive.

(exhibit 1a1a1d: Source: top-left; bottom-left. The Hitler Youth and the Neo-Nazi/cryptofascist of America have much in common—i.e., with the German alt-right of the 1920s and '30s actually being informed by American fascism/Pax Americana, but also Capitalism as something that destroyed both their economies to varying degrees. Fascism was less extreme in America because the elite lived there and didn't devastate and exploit it during WW1 like they did to the Germans [resulting in merely a Great Depression, which harbored fascist sentiment, but not total realization]. After WW1, the German elite defaulted on American loans used to rebuild Germany following the Treaty of Versailles [similar to the Marshall Plan, or lending money to the people you just blew up, then forcing them to buy your building materials], thereby forcing the German middle class to "foot the bill" after hyperinflation ensued. The Nazi "black knight" reliably emerged, which American "white knights" stepped in to counter through copaganda and the Military Industrial Complex, seeing their own homeland threatened by a copycat neighbor America had "on the hip." War became "good," again [an oscillation that continues into the present].

The fact remains that similar crises occur periodically under Capitalism by design and this, true to form, has a monstrous emblem attached to it. Nearly a century ago, Dracula's unironic castle appeared during Germany's 1923 beerhall putsch, heralding a liminal hauntology of war that was brought to the Global North sixteen years later. Now that the Reaper is once again upon us, no amount of neoliberal comfort [monster] food will change that unless we wake up and take labor action to counteract fascism and the elite. The "Belmonts" won't protect workers from the

butchery of fascism or elite machinations; as the show itself illustrates and fetishizes, the vast majority of workers will die or be displaced—all while "the good guys" try to take the credit for beheading fascism and "saving the world." But even if they "win" against the Leveler, he remains a medieval argument for death as hauntologized; i.e., fascist _apologetics_ in centrist monomythic scripts that _cannot_ kill death. It's merely a reprieve inside a giant system that ensures the tyrant will _always_ return inside the Cycle of Kings; i.e., a band-aid for a wound that never stops bleeding [evoking the cycle of conquers through the myth of sovereignty— e.g., "England" and the "Goths" (who were not the Goths) claiming ownership, thus a post-Roman/early-Teutonic national identity over "land of the Angles," aka Anglo-Saxons]. Even _before_ the skeleton king comes back, the fact remains that the Global South and its [neo]colonized territories are _currently_ being butchered before the Imperial Boomerang even sails home. Striga's "livestock" is a bleak displacement and black reflection of our own guilty bloodlust sated by devouring the _hidden_ conquered. It's not some **transcendental signified**, but merely cold, hard economics embellished to make the process of capital more palatable to the middle class: eating other humans by proxy/through the ghost of the counterfeit and process of abjection. _Vae Victis._)


(artist: _Bokuman_)

State proponents are straw dogs (throwaway effigies)/sacrificial roosters, believing themselves immune to the elite's gain while the owner slits the faithful worker's throat sooner or later. Their "greatest strength" is actually what dooms them to an ignominious death: complete alienation driven by a dimorphic connecting of everything to biological sex, skin color and their canonical-monstrous connotations in service of the profit motive but refusing to scrutinize things at a dialectical-material level (willful ignorance/"rose-tinted glasses"). Conversely *our* greatest strength as class-/culture-*conscious* **class warriors** is our "darkness visible" doubling theirs through the Wisdom of the Ancients as something to cultivate relative to the modern world; i.e., *our* deliberate, cultivated ability to critique capital and its agents/trifectas through dialectical-material scrutiny and iconoclastic, campy behaviors that synthesize the Superstructure to *our* purposes (rehumanizing ourselves by separating from the colonial binary in monomorphic fashion) all while suffering the fools of canonical tragedy and farce within canonical historical materialism. Our aim is to "make it gay" by reclaiming the Base through our **Four Gs**: **abjection**, **hauntology**, **chronotopes** and **cryptonymy**—but also our **Six Rs**, or **Gothic-Marxist tenets of Gothic Communism** during oppositional praxis as something to synthesize.

As stated at the start of the volume, the Six Rs and Four Gs' collective idea is to make Marxism a little cooler, sexier and fun than Marx ever could through the Wisdom of the Ancients (a cultural understanding of the imaginary past) as a "living document"; i.e., to make it "succulent" by "living deliciously" as an act of repeated reflection that challenges heteronormativity's dimorphic biological essentialism and bondage of gender to sex, thus leading to a class awakening at a countercultural level through iconoclastic (sex-positive), monomorphic Gothic poetics:

- *Re-claim.* Seize Gothic art as the means of emotional (monstrous) production.
- *Re-union/-discover/-turn.* Reunite people with their alienated, alienizing bodies, language, labor, sexualities, genders, trauma, pasts and emotions in sex-positive, re-humanizing (xenophilic) ways.
- *Re-empower/-negotiate.* Grant workers control over their own sexual labor through their emotions and, by extension things (most often language, symbols or art) that stem from, and relate to, their sexual labor as historically abjected and privatizing under Capitalism; to allow them to renegotiate their boundaries in regards to their trauma through their sexual labor as their own, including their bodies and emotions as a potent form of power interrogation, *re-negotiation* and *re-exchange* amid chaotic and unequal circumstances.
- *Re-open/-educate.* To expose the privatization of emotions and denial of sex-positive sex/gender education to individual workers, helping them

reopen their minds and their eyes, thus see, understand and feel how private property makes people emotionally and Gothically stupid.

- *Re-play.* Establish a new kind of game attitude and playfulness during development towards Communism, one that dismantles the bourgeoisie's **intended play** of manufactured *scarcity*, *consent*, and *conflict* in favor of a post-scarcity world filled with "game" workers who can learn and respond creatively to the natural and person-made problems of language and the material world with unique solutions: (**emergent play**).
- *Re-produce/-lease.* To disseminate these tenets through worker-made sex-positive lessons that we leave behind; i.e., egregores, "archaeologies" and other Gothic-Communist "derelicts." As the oppressed, our pedagogy should be centered around the continued production of communal emotional intelligence as a means of transforming the material world and, by extension, the socio-material-natural world for the better—by healing from generational trauma by interrogating it *together*.
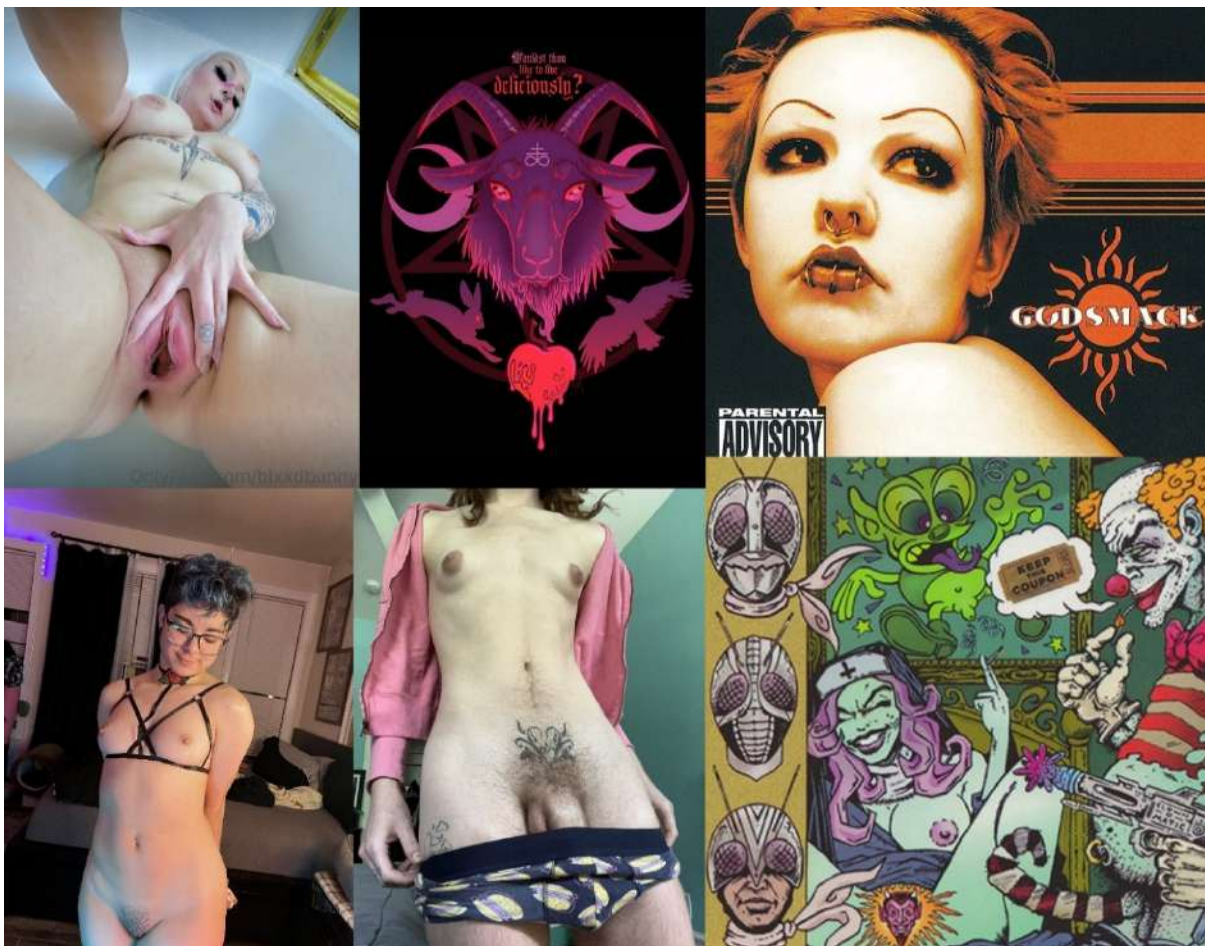
(exhibit 1a1a1e1a: Artist, top-left: Blxxd Bunny; top-middle: Kayliesaurus-Rex; bottom-left: Quinnvincible; bottom-middle: e.streetcar; bottom-right: source. "Learn to swim," indeed. Gothic counterculture is sex, drugs and rock 'n roll as

canonically infantilized, shamed for their masturbatory and rebellious qualities, then sold back to a fearful "adult" public as harmful wish fulfillment and guilty pleasure [for when their material conditions feel "too real" and they suddenly need to "escape"/lose control through the orgasm or other privatized euphoria]. From jazz to rock 'n roll to heavy metal, postpunk, goth rock and industrial, there is a shared antiquation, almost-Freudian vibe to canonical monsters [and their theatre at large] being **cryptomimetically** *evoked—of fatal nostalgia retreating into a lost childhood* **rememory** *[re: Morrison, meaning a colonized attempt at reassembling lost culture or buried trauma for cathartic means]: an attraction towards powerful* expression *that one might feel in control through controlled chaos [which isn't the same as controlled* opposition*, insofar as function goes. An* iconoclast *can easily take a pre-existing piece of canonical media and weaponize it against the state; i.e., reclaiming the "ghost" of Tolkien or Marx from their recuperated or otherwise harmful forms].*

Doing so is important, as inheritance fears [expressed through Gothic media] coincide with one's actual birth as loaded with pre-existing trauma. This includes popular beliefs or codified behaviors that, for better or ill, have been disseminated; e.g., the antiquated, sexist ideas of Sigmund Freud (something of a cokehead and armchair quack). Indeed, **birth trauma** *was actually an idea that Otto Rank, a pupil of Freud's, challenged Freud on. Freud personally saw the birth itself as painful to the child, thus crippling them with repressed trauma/memories of pain [that stigmatize the mother by blaming* her *for the birth]. Rank did not, describing the* separation *from the mother as traumatic, thus representing a desire to return to a "womb state." For Rank, the revisited "womb" is* not *a murderous site for revenge at having been raped in the past [canonized in state apologia when the Rambo or Amazon kills the Archaic Mother as a dark double for the TERFs own lived trauma projected onto a state target] but sweet bliss accomplished through reunion as oblivious. As I note with* Frankenstein *in "[Born to Fall? Birth Trauma, the Soul, and Der Maschinenmensch](#)" (2014), this was exactly what the Creature wanted from Victor but was denied time and time again:*

> *Birth trauma is a strong theme in Mary Shelley's famous novel,* Frankenstein *– not "physical" trauma, but rather "birth trauma" as Otto Rank calls it, in his famous book,* The Trauma of Birth*: "…In attempting to reconstruct for the first time from analytic experiences the to all appearances purely physical birth trauma... we are led to recognize in the birth trauma the ultimate biological basis of the psychical" (xii).*
>
> *According to Rank, birth is, in and of itself, an act – one that separates mother from child and is psychologically traumatic. In* Frankenstein*, Victor, regardless of his sex, was the Creature's* de facto *mother and thus responsible for nurturing it. His failure to is the birth, which severs the link between mother and child. The Creature seems to vow revenge against him,*

but actually desires to earn Victor's love and affection in order to revert the birth trauma and "return to the womb" by restoring the link between mother and child. Otto Rank was a pupil and eventual-intellectual rival of Sigmund Freud, and his shift away from the sexual ideas made popular by his mentor eventually resulted in the demise of their friendship. His "birth trauma" focuses on the nurturing relationship between mother and child, not the sexual relationships between the child and its parents. This was a new concept for the time, according to James Lieberman, who states:

> *…Freud's psychology was father-centered prior to The Trauma of Birth. Rank was quite aware of this [and his own views set him] apart as the first feminist in Freud's inner circle. Today... the mother-child relationship [being] crucial in the earliest formative phase of development [is a given,] but [back] then psychoanalytic theory presented a strong father threatening castration, and a mother whose importance was more erotic than nurturing.*

*As Gothic Communists, our reunion is symbolic and poetic, represented through the reclamation of the vagina as stigmatized, but also the monstrous-feminine at large as something to rescue from Freud's ghost; i.e., the trans, intersex, and non-binary body in all its **andro/gynodiverse**—thus non-Vitruvian/non-European— iconoclastic forms having a queer class character/revolutionary potential when coming out of the closet to fight for the Cause [refer to exhibit 1a1c for more examples].)*

(artist: [Calminvore](#); or, "baffling Christendom by continuing to live")

      While canonical heels like (unironic) Kain are fetishized and loved for the bourgeois implementation and defense of the status quo, the class character of anyone who functionally challenges the status quo is also fetishized and attacked through the weird canonical nerd; i.e., someone whose **Pavlovian/Pygmalion conditioning** teaches them to behave in a dominating manner towards state enemies that are **chased** after like **forbidden fruit** (that was a gay pun)—re: what Mark Greene refers to as "Man Box culture" in *[Remaking Manhood: The Healthy Masculinity Podcast](#)* (2023); re: "the brutal enforcement of a narrowly defined set of traditional rules for being a man." This brings us to our *second* half of the

companion glossary definition of weird canonical nerds—their conduct as *de facto* class traitors that overperform in hypermasculine ways:

> Weird canonical nerds are systemically bigoted, pertaining to Man Box culture as something to openly endorse, or "resist" in ways that do nothing to change the status quo/avoid the infernal concentric pattern/Cycle of Kings; e.g., TERF Amazons, but also proudly "apolitical" non-feminist nerds who embody a particular status within the nerd pantheon of canonical heroes: Mega Man as a go-to centrist male hero, but also Eren Yeager as the "incel fascist" with mommy issues, or Samus Aran as the Galactic Federation's singular girl boss, etc. All become something to endorse within critically blind portions of nerd culture that ape their prescriptive, colonial heroes within culture war dressed up as "apolitical" (the *fascist* ideology being secondary to the pursuit and claiming of personal power by changing one's shape and language to fit those aims; e.g., Reinhardt Heydrich as a fascist war pig [to combine Umberto Eco with Black Sabbath] who would say whatever he could to justify his own iron grip on the minds of the populace: the foreign plot inside the house, once and forever). To this, the Gothic and its various intersections, contradictions and conflicts are embroiled within oppositional praxis for or against weird canonical nerds and their depictions/endorsements of different monster types (that, in the white, cis-het male tradition of privilege, routinely "fail up"—as success, like women or a nice house, is something they are taught to believe is owed to them; which extends to token minorities allowed a slice of the pie, but also must surrender their pie when the time comes [for which the real "Indian givers" are the **settler colonist** bearing false gifts: **the Trojan Horse**, aka **the Faustian bargain**, in Gothic circles]).

In turn, canonical **xenophobia** and **xenophilia** revolve around the monstrous-feminine as imprisoned inside Man Box culture's state of exception/monopoly of violence, which leads to a specific mentality of **reactive abuse** I personally describe as "prison sex[154] mentality"; i.e., of increasingly brutal status-quo enforcement through standard-issue and tokenized muscle: your basic **chudwads**,

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[154] Coming from the idea that sex in prison is generally an expression of power inside a highly unnatural, controlled environment built to exploit people by enslaving them in Constitutional language:

> The 13th Amendment, ratified in 1865, says: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Scholars, activists and prisoners have linked that exception clause to the rise of a prison system that incarcerates Black people at more than five times the rate of white people, and profits off of their unpaid or underpaid labor (source: The Westport Library's "Thirteenth Amendment Loophole: Penal Labor and Mass Incarceration," 2023).

but also straight-up **incels**, TERFs/**SWERFs** and other class traitors terrorizing minorities through a gradient of **vigilante violence** deputized by the state, thus designed to escalate and gaslight, gatekeep, girl-boss, but also conduct reactive abuse/Pavlovian conditioning meant to encourage abuse production behaviors (slaps on the wrist, "boys will be boys" or "bitches be crazy") and class-traitor behaviors (e.g., dogwhistles and virtue signals—we'll cover these more towards the end of the thesis statement). They become *de facto*/honorary Beowulfs taught and revived to divide, then rape, kill and otherwise dominate labor through the broadly advertised menace of fascist-Communist-queer darkness (Grendel and his mother).

Because the state is always in crisis, it pushes towards decay from states of normality that yield up new exceptions. During state decline, the threat of the foreign plot internalizes. Darkness becomes something to challenge again and again when decay nears—i.e., during crisis the state decays, consuming itself outwards-to-inwards as the Imperial Boomerang sails to the center. As the state eats itself, those with privilege strip token agents of their mantle, then place them back in the state of exception. In turn, the status quo overperforms to appear hypermasculine, thus dodge cannibalization. They become the proverbial, *hypermasculine* "teeth in the night" (me misremembering Ray Winstone's quote from the 2007 version of *Beowulf*, but "teeth in the night" sounds cooler in my mind than "teeth in the darkness"); i.e., as the warrior's pre-emptive challenge and self-assured boast, but also *martyred eulogy* during scripted, momentum-based fights: the comeback and the reversal. The pursuit of power (as we shall see during the "camp map") is often a fatal one, but is staged upon state propaganda as a false copy of itself. By chasing the veneer of state essentialism and perceived sovereignty during sanctioned kayfabe, the canonical performance becomes one of presumed invincibility as something to tout: the Black Knight's ignominious war cry, "I'm invincible!" Even if they very clearly are not, the state purportedly lives on through the valorous dead's noble (and expected) sacrifice; re: Hitler's "Life is the nation. The individual must die anyway." To which, Rob Halford demands,

> Why do you have to die to be a hero?
> It's a shame a legend begins at its end.
> Why do you have to die if you're a hero
> When there's still so many things to say unsaid?
>
> If you gaze across timeless years you'll find them always there
> And many gods will join the list compiled with dying care.
> Hungry mouths are waiting to bite the hand that feeds
> And so the living dead carry on immortal deeds ("Heroes End," 1978).

(artist: [Hans Makart](#))

Except, as the Valkyrie's choosing of the slain becomes normalized, then accelerates, counterterrorism becomes—as always—a war of optics[155] towards testing middle-class resolve; i.e., Ho Chi Minh's expression, "You will kill ten of us, we will kill one of you, but in the end, you will tire first." The amount of guns/arms racing won't prevent them from being stolen and/or simply sold by arms merchants pedaling wares to both sides—the weapons used against the state in counterterrorist measures that, as usual, demonstrate the paradox of terror at work: the stockpiling of arms is a recipe for self-destruction. As part of that paradox, the more the war carries on and the greater the myth/perceived aura of invincibility is, the more costly even a single death becomes. It becomes exponentially more and more expensive to cope with (which for the elite doesn't matter—as long as money flows through nature; the citizens and enemies of the state are the ones who categorically suffer). As usual, the state's faithful, loyal and/or self-interested will punish whistleblowers, iconoclasts and the underclass—for speaking out against the patriarchal myth of absolute power through their own performances (the myth of a monstrous-feminine challenge to said power), but also because the state must always be in crisis to justify its own existence; i.e.,

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[155] We will examine this controlling of the war narrative more in Volume One; i.e., American war journalism following Vietnam; e.g., GDF's "[How the US Military Censors Your News](#)" (2023).

threatening the image of the castle as a wall built in defense of capital, thus something for class traitors to betray their fellow workers in favor of—Plato's allegory of the cave.

The allegory's function remains basically the same since it was envisioned by Plato: defend the castle and the king inside it, no matter how terribly estranged he inevitably becomes from nature, death and his fellow humans; i.e., Bakhtin's dynastic primacy and hereditary rites wrapped within an awful cycle of European historical materialism in constant rise and decline; e.g., Poe's "House of Usher" demonstrating the Shadow of Pygmalion as attached to a *dying* king—Zombie Caesar as the Leveler except the castle stays up; it's the *illusion* of the castle that crumbles over and over and replaces itself with a pure-white regeneration (the ghost of the counterfeit, starting with Walpole's cliché at the end of *Otranto*). As we shall see during the "camp map," ACAB ("All Cops Are Bad") also refers to the *castles* they defend, illusory or otherwise, and all of the heteronormative operatics that transpire inside of them as mapped out: **"All (Canonical) Castles Are Bad"/"All (Gothic) Canons Are Bad."**

In recent times, Plato's cave was cosmetically updated—during the Neo-Gothic period, followed by America's First Gilded Age[156] and then again during the Second Gilded Age through the rise of the hyperreal (as brought to a wider public through *The Matrix* in 1999 and its own vast "desert of the real[157]") intimating Percy Shelley's "bare and level sands": what Capitalism does to everything then covers it up in a monstrous, alienating fakery that sooner or later must let the cracks show (which invades the cartographic refrains we'll examine during the "camp map": Tolkien's treasure map and Cameron's settler-colonial territories). Though touted as eternal (which is impossible), the patriarchal castle is actually made of sand, on sand as lifelessly fragile and pulverized (which is a fact); but to kick its decaying foundation still invites DARVO, colossal tantrums and denial on top of denial in terms of the genocide it conceals. Such secrecy hides the state's

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[156] "The masses have never thirsted after truth. They turn aside from evidence that is not to their taste, preferring to deify error, if error seduce them. Whoever can supply them with illusions is easily their master; whoever attempts to destroy their illusions is always their victim" (source: Gustav Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 1895).

[157] As Abigail Lister writes in "The Matrix | Explaining Jean Baudrillard and the Desert of the Real" (2023): In his 1981 philosophical treatise *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard examined popular culture and argued that in the new technological world—and I say this in the simplest way—reality has ceased to exist. […] we've lost all connection with the real, and instead live in the world of the hyperreal. Reality no longer exists; we aren't connected to the real world; we live in a simulation. […] When [Morpheus] invites Neo into Nebuchadnezzar's simulation system to reveal the secrets of the real world, he says "welcome to the desert of the real." This line comes directly from Baudrillard, back in his explanation of Borges' 1:1 map: *"It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the desert which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself"* (source).

falsehood, and the punishments for exposing it do not fit the crime: complete and utter destruction by police forces as punishment unto their victims for disturbing even a single grain of sand. It's Pavlovian but hyperbolic, anticipating the worst-of-the-worst at all times until total obedience (if not total power) is achieved. A massive gulf of apathy and alienation divides class traitors from other workers, the dutiful pack of hounds standing guard around the tomb-like megalith (standing guard even after the master has gone the way of all flesh). At its base, the same old games continue unbated, giving the rewards that state enforcers are trained to expect; the heteronormative kayfabe and its holy bloodsport become their entire world, until even *daring* to speak out threatens the illusion *in front* of the castle, not even the castle itself.

As part of the state-is-sacred illusion, these staged melees are meant to immortalize the fighter in a magical, *deus-ex-machina*-style blaze of glory mid-transformation—e.g., "hail, the victorious dead" or "[those who] ride eternal on the highways of Valhalla, shiny and chrome" as promoting the oddly muscled, underdog wrestler's scripted, improbable-and-spontaneous comeback from certain defeat for a paying audience (not the dogfall, but the dog having his day/getting a bone): bread and circus, but also the Faustian bargain of false power and **harmful, self-destructive knowledge** passed down through a patriarchal offer by the conveyer of such things; i.e., the man who runs the show, teaching the young male warrior through Pavlovian conditioning and **disguised ultimatums** to be violent so the Master can profit off a young, *stupid* apprentice: "Give me a boy until he is seven and I will show you the man." It's a slave's deal but also, in the Internet era, a **parasocial relationship**[158] built around the neoliberal concept of false strength as

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[158] A one-way relationship whose interactions occur between the artist and their audience on various registers. In relation to the Internet Age, Essence of Thought describes a parasocial relationship as such:

> Though, before we do anything, we first define our terms, starting with what a parasocial relationship is, and to understand that we can take a look at the words of Donald Horton and Richard Wohl, published when they first introduced the concept in 1956. I'd just like to apologize in advance for the unnecessary gendering. Their paper reads:
>
> > "One of the striking characteristics of the new mass media—radio, television, and the movies—is that they give the illusion of face-to-face relationship with the performer… The most remote and illustrious men are met as if they were in the circle of one's peers; the same is true of a character in a story who comes to life in these media in an especially vivid and arresting way. We propose to call this seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer a para-social relationship" ["Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance"].
>
> They also go on to add that:

an escapist fantasy of "cutting one's teeth": the videogame as a canonical (thus sexist), monomythic teaching device of "cops and victims" (this isn't the *only* function of videogames, but it is a prominent one, and exposed to children at a very young age; so it should absolutely be critiqued in spite of its enjoyable aspects; re: Anita Sarkeesian's adage: enjoy what you consume but also critique it. Enjoy guilty pleasures, but don't endorse/internalize their problematic material in your daily life).

"The persona offers, above all, a continuing relationship. His appearance is a regular and dependable event, to be counted on, planned for, and integrated into the routines of daily life. His devotees 'live with him' and share the small episodes of his public life-and to some extent even of his private life away from the show. Indeed, their continued association with him acquires a history, and the accumulation of shared past experiences gives additional meaning to the present performance. This bond is symbolized by allusions that lack meaning for the casual observer and appear occult to the outsider. In time, the devotee — the "fan" — comes to believe that he "knows" the persona more intimately and profoundly than others do; that he "understands" his character and appreciates his values and motives" [*ibid.*].

Now, since the 1950s, parasocial relationships have gone on to establish themselves as real relationships, both in psychology and media studies, they're just not relationships in the traditional sense, since the flow of information is largely one-sided, moving from the creator to the audience member, something that is known as a parasocial interaction (source: the script for Essence of Thought's video, "Lily Orchard Sexted A 16 Year Old - 2nd Victim Testimony," 2022).

Meanwhile, the "owners" of said "teeth in the night" (the paying customers purchasing **personal property** with inheritance, wages and other currencies) *aren't* Beowulf- or Kain-like, physically and mentally impervious warrior "studs"; they're actually toothless and stupid puppies in the Marxist sense that private property has made them hopelessly delusional and scared, thus indiscriminately violent—i.e., bred on a recipe for disaster whose muscles, secret identities[159] and weaponry are on loan from cradle to early grave: imaginary or otherwise, these things are not theirs to own. They thus experience a **white fragility**/**gender envy** whose infantilized warrior-death cult is routinely challenged not just by state crises advertised by *our* (sharp, pointy) teeth as dangerous, but also *titillated* by what makes us different, thus "weaker" than them: the dated stigmas and biases that prejudice them against us, and the criminogenic conditions that exist alongside the state's bigoted inventions. These heteronormative myths and legends are informed by kernel-of-truth stereotypes and enabled by neglect, ignorance, apathy and disdain. Our "making it gay" is a threat they must bury.

In other words, weird canonical nerds are taught to uncritically consume whatever is pushed towards them as made to further the status quo through systemic abuse as reliant on heteronormative propaganda: to keep things running as they have been according to a counterfeit/forged ideology that reinforces itself by teaching young men to be suicidally violent towards anyone who is different from the status quo, thus primed to be exploited (through force) for profit. Anything that threatens said profit, illusion and/or status quo threatens the state, the home, the order of things (and its sandcastle/house-of-cards décor), thus must die (which puts us between a rock and a hard place: if we keep quiet, we die no matter what; if we speak out, we can potentially fix things but have to break the spell first, thus guarantee punishment in some shape or form). This process is generally assisted by the opportunistic, cynical and/or psychopathic (e.g., Lieutenant Hawkins from *The Nightengale* or Archibald Cunningham from *Rob Roy*, 1995) being glad to do so with pleasure; or by true-believers and their legitimate fear of the unknown/inability to imagine anything beyond Capitalism: fear and dogma. Capitalism isn't just built on faith, but *bad* faith, compound fakeries (the ghost of the counterfeit) and abject stereotypes.

Stereotypes are *not* supposed to be accurate; they're metaphors (a comparison between two unlike things) that anisotropically[160] reflect popular biases to be confirmed or rejected by audiences—i.e., the Asian person sees Mickey

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[159] To be fair, the *proletarian* secret identity can allow victims of trauma to face their abusers without exposing themselves to a confessional of public scrutiny and shame regarding taboo subjects (and societal tendencies to blame the victim) but also—with revolutionary cryptonomy—to hide our scars and trauma from our enemies. We can show them what *we* want them to see while minimizing risk to ourselves (more on this in Volume Three, Chapter Five).

[160] A condition whereupon meaning is determined by the direction of something.

Rooney in Asian-face during *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961) and thinks, "I get the feeling this is supposed me/my people but this feels like a bad caricature." Except that's canonically the point: to spread the stereotype as a kernel-of-truth that is largely false to make the minority feel unwelcome and correct-incorrect at the same time. The same idea goes for the back-stabbing Jew, the savage-cannibal person of color (an orc) or the queer crossdressing killer, etc, in popular WASP-y fiction. Yet, the same fictions cannot bar the duality of metaphor from yielding subtext through iconoclastic performances of formerly bigoted material; i.e., the desire of the stigmatized to be different than how they're canonically depicted—to camp the canon via an ironic alter ego/secret identity whose mask-like, muscled persona is both popular in centrist kayfabe *and* represents a reclamation (or embodiment, in subordinate cases) of their self-hatred and stigma in a dialectical-material sense. Except fans of canon don't like subtext or camp unless it's penned by them (e.g., the blind parody of your garden-variety SNL skit). With videogames, a franchise like *Zelda* is simply about "itself" and nothing else, from the canonical viewpoint; i.e., "pure fiction" or "pure fantasy" with zero allegory or politics (re: Tolkien). But a story without subtext is simply impossible because something of the author goes into the story as having come from other stories *and* the external world's historical materialism.

(artist: [Frank Frazetta](#))

For example, Tolkien's trolls from *The Hobbit* sound cockney because they're poor foreign mercenaries emulating a white man's idea of a poor foreign mercenary attached to a group of poor people from his home country whose class is generally identified by their voice—how they speak according to how they look:

> But they were trolls. Obviously trolls. Even Bilbo, in spite of his sheltered life, could see that: from the great heavy faces of them, and their size, and the shape of their legs, not to mention their language, which was not drawing-room fashion at all, at all.
>
> "Mutton yesterday, mutton today, and blimey, if it don't look like mutton again tomorrer," said one of the trolls.
>
> "Never a blinking bit of manflesh have we had for long enough," said a second. "What the 'ell William was a-thinkin' of to bring us into these parts at all, beats me—and the drink runnin' short, what's more," he said jogging the elbow of William, who was taking a pull at his jug.
>
> William choked. "Shut yer mouth!" he said as soon as he could. "Yer can't expect folk to stop here for ever just to be et by you and Bert. You've et a village and a half between yer, since we come down from the mountains. How much more d'yer want? And time's been up our way, when yer'd have said 'thank yer Bill' for a nice bit o' fat valley mutton like what this is." He took a big bite off a sheep's leg he was roasting, and wiped his lips on his sleeve.
>
> Yes, I am afraid trolls do behave like that, even those with only one head each. After hearing all this Bilbo ought to have done something at once. Either he should have gone back quietly and warned his friends that there were three fair-sized trolls at hand in a nasty mood, quite likely to try roasted dwarf, or even pony, for a change; or else he should have done a bit of good quick burgling. A really first-class and legendary burglar would at this point have picked the trolls' pockets—it is nearly always worth while, if you can manage it—, [what kind of sick fuck puts an em dash next to a comma?] pinched the very mutton off the spits, purloined the beer, and walked off without their noticing him. Others more practical but with less professional pride would perhaps have stuck a dagger into each of them before they observed it. Then the night could have been spent cheerily ([source](#)).

Tolkien, here, is advocating for theft and murder of the bad team by the good team. The trolls, then, are not human, but a metaphor compared to humans through the analog as like what it otherwise seems to be not; i.e., these non-humans sound suspiciously human of a particular kind then are attributed to a kind of privateer or raider (the barbarian horde) as threatening the land of plenty, specifically the salt of the earth as a homely metaphor for the middle class afraid of violent, poor cannibal warriors from somewhere else (zombies). It's anti-Semitic

(which carries over into the anti-Communist sentiments of zombies during the Civil Rights Movement). But don't tell fans of Tolkien that. Subtext is often queer and introduces cracks in his peerless effigy—the death of the author (another thing we're blamed for—i.e., the death of the surrogate father figure) by making canon gay/political, thus ironic (we'll return to this fear/recuperation of camp during the "camp map" proper when we touch on Joseph Crawford's notion of "invented terrorism").

(artist: Genzoman)

Lies, masks and theatrical artifice more broadly predate English as a written language, but spill into its written legends feeding into the canonical myth of male power as "derelict"; i.e., both faked and left behind in a diegetic and meta sense: an old, runed-cover scroll that proves its own legitimacy by making itself up based on older lies that continue the harmful trend as "moon-sized." It aggregates, building up over time until life without it seems impossible even when it threatens to destroy the world. To that, *Beowulf* is the oldest, thus first-written male action hero in the English language, the Old-English *ur*-text/palimpsest for Lancelot, Darth Vader, Aragorn, Heinlein's **Competent Man**, James Cameron's Vietnam revenge fantasy for Rambo in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), Shakespeare's Hippolyta, Ellen Ripley in *Aliens* (the **Competent Woman**-turned-state-avenger modeled after *Starship Troopers* [1959] and *Henry V* [1599] to kill "her" version of Grendel and his mother—the xenomorph and the Alien Queen as stand-ins for a past brush with death, with rape, with the man-in-disguise threatening abject impregnation with a knife-dick). All execute during an arena-style **battle of the sexes**, but also corrupt/monstrous-feminine **us-versus-them** as moralized in the state's favor through good-versus evil **value judgments**. The judgement/**trial by combat** is a kind of ***Amazonomachia*** or "monster battle," pitting the heteronormative male action hero against the corrupt (fascist) and/or monstrous-feminine (female, queer) **enemy of the state** in wrestling code: the kayfabe of **babyfaces** and **heels** (good monster, bad monster).

This applies to Tolkien's trolls, which we just examined. Thorin might not *win* against the trolls, but he gives as good as he gets fighting from the side of good:

> he jumped forward to the fire, before they could leap on him. He caught up a big branch all on fire at one end; and Bert got that end in his eye before he could step aside. That put him out of the battle for a bit. Bilbo did his best. He caught hold of Tom's leg—as well as he could, it was thick as a young tree-trunk—but he was sent spinning up into the top of some bushes, when Tom kicked the sparks up in Thorin's face.
>
> Tom got the branch in his teeth for that, and lost one of the front ones. It made him howl, I can tell you. But just at that moment William came up behind and popped a sack right over Thorin's head and down to his toes. And so the fight ended. A nice pickle they were all in now: all neatly tied up in sacks, with three angry trolls (and two with burns and bashes to remember) sitting by them, arguing whether they should roast them slowly, or mince them fine and boil them, or just sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly (source).

More to the point, Gandalf saves their bacon in the end by turning the trolls all to stone: "Dawn take you all, and be stone to you!" In short, Thorin and his friends survive through *deux ex machina*; i.e., because God loves them, just like Beowulf.

Canon-wise, all male action heroes are "good" and come from other male action heroes; all enemies of the state are "bad" and come from other enemies of the state; i.e., a quest for dominance between good guys and bad guys flowing out of older media and into newer stories/mediums that repeat the canonical, centrist pattern; e.g., videogame canon's chips off the old block: their Pantheon of male action heroes/wonder weapons versus the "forces of darkness," the big evils of a perennial corruption/monstrous-feminine tied to useful geopolitical groups, namely "fascists" and "Communists" as **nominal**. Advertised to American children as theatrical heels, bad guys (and girls, queers) are classically expressed using two distinct **color codes** during the blame game: **green** and **purple** and/or **black** and **red** (the **colors of stigma** and **racism**, but also revenge, **power and dogma**). Queer variants are basically evil clowns/jesters (the trickster archetype) within the same violent process of abjection, which—Hogle argues—is based on the ghost of the counterfeit as a false copy of itself that pushes the myth of state legitimacy, exceptionalism and supremacy forward in Gothic language: good monsters vs bad monsters, through a brutalized raping of the bad monster by the good—i.e., not just **monster-fucking** as rape, but anal rape and mutilation (**trophy-taking**, often beheading) of the corpse as a powerless shell of the conquered foe to humiliate in life and in death: "Kill the pig! Spill its blood!" as harmful wish fulfillment and guilty pleasure tied to inherited gender roles within Gothic fictions and remediations.

All the same, the victim and its trauma survive in the same imperiled spaces, too. In or relating to canon, the hunt of the prey becomes a *chercher-la-femme* cliché rooted in the lived experience of the woman as the sport of men, the latter expected to give chase and "court" her to sate their animal desire; or paradoxically she seeks her own palliative care through psychosexual self-medicative activities: tempting fate out on the dance floor in self-destructive forms. Faced with trauma that scars us, it also marks us and imbues us with prey mechanisms that we aim to check by inheriting anxiety through personal experiences or through reading about it as a warning device that takes on a life of its own. Trauma doesn't just beget trauma; it *recognizes* and preys upon it, often through immediate nonverbal language. It's a very *animal* experience and you won't have any idea what it's like unless you've been there yourself—have either been hunted or have inherited the anxiety of being hunted as a surviving element of your culture; i.e., the Gothic as the return to trauma, but also the return *of* trauma as something that—regardless of how real* it is—is a marker of trauma as something for concerned citizens, police agents (and other abusers) and legitimate victims respond to differently under crisis than state victims. For state proponents, stigma colors convey a presence of trauma on state victims for fear of reprisals regarding past abuses; e.g., the Germans fearing Soviet reprisals after the Eastern Front turned in the Red Army's

favor during WW2. Trauma, then, is generational abuse furthered through compelled revenge and appropriation by the colonizer group towards the colonized.

From a theatrical standpoint, the distinction between reality and imaginary is arguably futile; from a psychological standpoint, "real" is generally a prey's readiness to fight or flight, freeze or fawn in an instant, which leads to many false alarms that feel "half-real," in this case trapped between the fantasy and the unironic nightmare as haunting one's daily life in an uncanny sense. They bleed into each other during a surreal game of tag—one where trauma is both inherited and passed along through the mark as touched by past examples or otherwise susceptible to them; i.e., the seeking of a protector within oneself or through others/vicarious experience that speaks to one's trauma. Likewise, the subsequent chase of the cathartic variant becomes its own, special madness to revel in; i.e., like a good metal concert or nightclub act, the idea is agency through theatrical or controlled chaos that harms no one. Hard or violence-themed kink such as rape play or monster fucking can seem like black magic or madness, because it generally employs the same aesthetics and many people—at first glance, ironically enough— might not be able to tell the difference. But those who have been through it understand. Maybe not to the same degree, but generally "get" the basic idea as medicinal, validating or otherwise therapeutic and often, yes, profoundly erogenous: the moth to the "flame" as a theatrical gesture to establish boundaries with, thus genuine safety and control.

In my case, I am trans, thus embody a marker of stigma according to my gender as something to identify with and perform; "green" as a symptom of internalized self-hatred, but also something to assigned by police agents. As such, I feel as women classically do in such stories, wherein my lived experience is an attraction to power through strength in ways that sometimes have done me a disservice—i.e., the paradox of wanting to be near power to keep an eye on it, to want a protector or to face ones lived/imagined fears through calculated risk: the vicarious passion or exquisite torture that I call "the palliative Numinous" (a pain-relieving effect achieved from, and relayed through, intense Gothic poetics and theatrics). It's very Promethean, but expressed through the venues and activities of the (for me) white female domestic: the home, but also the dance hall while being "on the market" as an imperiled, damaged debutante; i.e., drawn to excitement and danger though maladaptive responses that yearn nevertheless for catharsis. It remains an intense, profound release from trauma through "trauma" as an agency that, while effective, can lead to trouble between two or more people through shared interests that camouflage the harmful intent of one party drawn to the other (more on this in Volume One and Two, when I talk at length about Jadis abusing me).

Metal* is one such example—a controlled chaos that, like Gothic poetics at large, can help us feel in control through risk management; i.e., the lyrical and musical advertisement of great enemies or mighty power that can't actually hurt us/blast us apart, but feels genuine enough to evoke/trigger our panic response. For the traumatized as already marked, this is like manna from heaven: to "fight," "flee," "fawn" or "freeze" in controlled "rape play" and surreal, monster-fucker environments to gain agency over our pathologized conditions that are generally represented through monsters that look or sound "green"; i.e., inside spaces that remind us where we were hunted or otherwise exposed, while also helping us work through or otherwise inhabit our psychosexual states without actually harming others (unironic torture porn) and/or self-destructing (scars can heal, but stay with you for life, and mark you for potential abuse by parties trained to feed off your trauma): we can dance with the dead as undead ourselves.

Metal can simultaneously sing about great emotions that lack conscious class character—e.g., Alex Rudi Pell's "Follow the Sign" or Dio's "Holy Diver" shout loudly about frustration, nightmares (and Space Jesus) but don't point the finger at the elite; our revolutionary doubles and their cryptonymy need to, including their masks (allegory) but also their apocalypses (revelations) as working through paradox to hide and show at the same time. Even before we do, the anger should be a clue, but also the complex deceptions/doubling and liminal expression during oppositional praxis/psychopraxis (warring theories).

DANCE
WITH THE
DEAD

Near Dark

DWTD - 062014

      To this, monsters have more in common than they do differences (and these differences generally are hard to pin down). In short, demons offer forbidden knowledge or power and can shapeshift; the undead were formally alive (or appear to have been) and generally feed in relation to trauma (concepts we'll unpack at great length in Volume Two). As a kind of deathly theatre mask, something else that's equally important to consider about demons and the undead (and which we'll bring up throughout the entire book) is that *animals embody the canonical language of power and resistance as something to camp through demonic and undead forms;* i.e., stigma animals relayed through demonic BDSM and rituals of power expression and exchange that embody hunters and hunted, predators and prey that play out through the ongoing battles and wars of culture, of the mind, of sexuality and praxis as traumatized: marked for trauma or by trauma that parallel our green and purple doubles onscreen.

*A book-wide note about animals: Dogs make for effective metaphors regarding heroic stories: protectors, home defense, property defense; territorial dogs and guard dogs, loyal to a fault, but also <u>watch</u> dogs who surveille and lie. All of this showcases another paradox: a dog who can think, thus be taught—i.e., who can learn. In terms of preventative justice, the rehabilitative thought experiment—of teaching an old dog new tricks—obviously invokes dog metaphors. Keeping with the paradox motif, this can apply to Commies (good dogs) and capitalists (bad dogs) as oppositional weird nerds. It's not essential to think about everything this way, but I've found it oddly useful. Historically there's actually a solid reason for it, too: Dogs and humans evolved side-by-side in recent, recorded memory, and dogs are symbolic through this context in a Gothic sense: discipline and punish; i.e., of servitude, war and the abusive, Pavlovian conditioning of the sort we'll be seeking to undo. Out of medieval discourse, domesticated animals are also gendered in a sexualized, monstrous sense; i.e., "The Miller's Tale" from <u>The Canterbury Tales</u> (1392). The dog, as a phallic implement of war, is masculine, loyal, fierce; the cat is "catty" and feminine, as is the rabbit a paganized symbol in particular (spring, lunacy). As a gender-bending exercise, we'll consider dogs relative to various monsters in terms of dog-related stigmas during the rest of the thesis statement and spottily throughout the whole book: war bosses and victims during monstrous theatre. We'll look at cats and rabbits more during overt sex work (catboys, cat girls), but also revolutionary cryptonymy (so-called "big cats[161]"—e.g., tigresses, exhibit 1a1a1a1_c; confuse-a-cat, killer rabbits, Trojan bunnies, etc) and furries/chimeras (exhibit 1a1a1h3a2) as **anthropomorphism**, which tend to combine cats and dogs with stigma animals of various kinds (wasps, snakes, spiders, bats, etc) to interrogate, but also reclaim animalized interspecies stigmas onstage and off (the "fursona" being a uniform but also a state of being regardless of where one is). —Perse*

Predator-wise, the war dog can present as male or female, thus muzzled in ways that are correct, thus normal according to the status quo: the female war boss as correct-incorrect, but still a useful gatekeeper for the elite (a TERF, in other words). In this sense, you get paradoxes like the chimera as both a snake and a dog—with Medusa both a phallic woman and maneater who turns men to stone, and a specific kind of bitch that works for the state as a weaponized victim that is compared to multiple animals at the same time; *she* is both a snake-bitch, but

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[161] Lions, tigers, jaguars, etc. Conversely, small cats are generally regarded as "kept" pets that lounge around and look pretty. As such, the cat as a sex symbol is regarded as "small," its killing implements either removed (the claws) or vestigial through the softening of features that communicate symbiotically with human masters; e.g., the dog's varied facial expressions versus the tiger's flat affect (cats in general did not evolve alongside humans, thus tend to have less expressive [by human standards] faces).

manly in the theatrical sense due to her penetrative attacks, piercing stare and direct, aggressive behaviors. On some level, the Pavlovian ideal is conditioning for hunting behaviors that misuse congenital or maladaptive prey responses: the hunter becoming the hunted (or vice versa). This can be cis-het men seeking to abuse others to make their trauma stop thus feel safe, or women and token groups.

The same idea canonizes through the male variant as "the beast," Beowulf's "teeth in the night" as beholden like a trained mutt to canonical ideas of the animal as prized for its inhuman power in ways that evoke an older rustic mentality—re: "the Miller's Tale" describing everything in an animalized, sexual way that was closer to nature. Capitalism, of course, commodifies this, and pits the animalized against one another through compelled dogfights: dog-eat-dog in a larger kennel that has an alpha/"top dog" (echoed in the global tableau during nation pastiche and kayfabe, of course; but during heteronormative enforcement at large: there must always be a brutalizer). The language is Pavlovian, leading to its misuse during any confrontation (which waves of terror conflate as a universal fight-or-flight mechanism for any dispute, no matter how trivial or small). We will discuss a myriad of means to subvert animal abuse, including its language, thus address trauma in the body as begot from said abuse as animal, sexual, physical, and mental—all rolled into one composite beast that affects all workers, human or otherwise. Simply put, crisis sexualizes under canon, whereupon war as a language of power exchange amounts to good play/bad play with animalized flavors: "puppy play" through an animalized warrior that is useful to the state, in canonical examples. The death fetish is dressed up further as a rebel barbarian/Amazon that disappears like a bad dream if their veneer becomes "rabid" and they turn heel. While iconoclastic examples can camp the berserk's "teeth in the night" through iconoclastic puppy play and war bosses, canonical iterations will not *stand* for such games. The persona of strength is sacred as a heavily scarred, inked destroyer of the state's foes. Anything else is effectively ridicule/degenerate and must be muzzled, gagged, and/or euthanized if the debridement (the removing of corrupted or dead flesh) doesn't stick.

This ultimatum is delivered to workers by workers through the abuse of animalized language; i.e., the state police (or vigilantes deputized by the police) aggregating against labor through Pavlovian conditioning that valorizes the hypermasculine performance (and its token assortments) as forever besieged by external/internal threats within the home and inside the mind. The psychomachy drives the conflict forward as a psychological form of warfare in ways useful to the state; i.e., internalized self-hatred and bigotry whose psychosexual violence yields statements of a Great Destroyer labor should look upon in stark horror and submissive awe—a deathly trance that robs them of all fight (in copaganda language, she's a wolf among sheep: unafraid to "cull the herd" during decay-induced harvest times; but also the barbarian fantasy as a similar protector-rapist fantasy via the knight or cop experienced by the battered housewife drawn to trauma through maladaptive survival mechanisms; i.e., abuse-seeking behaviors that can be curbed through "monster fucking" stratagems that fetishize the cop, but also the bandit as one-in-the-same; e.g., Conan the Barbarian, King Conan, or Conan the Destroyer as a theatrical persona who rescues you but *could* murder you if he was a *bad* barbarian, which canonically is an incredibly vague and ambiguous [thus apologetic] proposition). In exchange, the combat that results frequently crosses over into gratuitous hyperbole; it's not

automatically torture porn, obviously. However, within the context of veiled threats during class warfare, it intimates torture in unironic ways: from masked to mask-off, but generally somewhere in the uncomfortable middle.

The same basic distinctions go for white, cis-het Christian men as the most privileged group, with this privilege of the *de facto* warrior class (traitor) decreasing as you remove various aspects about what contributes to them being canonically coded as "superior" to everyone else: their white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes (that "Aryan" look), but also their genitals (the heteronormative mythic structure tying power to skin color/race science and biological sex). To this, a gradient of tokenized groups *can* adopt the same harmful mindset as useful to capital: a mercenary mentality that isn't afraid to kill whatever the state mobilizes against by wearing their collars and becoming canonical dogs of war to "sic" on the class enemies-of-the-state: "Sic 'em, boy/Get 'em, girl!" The language of "puppy play" doesn't vanish; it's collaring and treatment of power and resistance merely become sex-coercive, thus designed to mistreat out-group members by in-group proponents and their subordinates during a given apocalypse. In times of decay while the state eats itself (and removes its mask), the female war boss' spiked collar of war is surreptitiously swapped out for a domesticated collar that "marries the Amazon off." Betrothed to a state zombie or death, she is shifted away from the canonically male function of war and "death by Snu Snu" gag to be crammed into the bridal gown (or spiked fetish gear—i.e., the bridal variant of the woman-in-black). The "collar swap" happens under amatonormative modes of sexual reproduction tied to dimorphized biology and gender roles. In other words, state decay forces the regressive Amazon to submit to male power under an always-patriarchal system—its mythic structure and Symbolic Order designed to summon the false copy of the rebellious Amazon when needed; i.e., the blind rage of the Medusa as a black wolf who devours the state's foes, but also the traitorous Hippolyta as her pearly white double (exhibit 1a1b). One is nastier and ruder than the other but they ultimately serve the same function in canonical discourse: triangulation.

Male or female, black or white, our would-be killers collectively lack emotional and Gothic intelligence; they do not respect, represent or otherwise practice

- **mutual consent**
- **informed consumption** and **informed consent**
- sex-positive *de facto* **education** (social-sexual education; i.e., iconoclastic/**good sex education** and taught gender roles), **good play**/**emergent gameplay** and cathartic wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure (**abuse prevention patterns**) meant to teach good discipline and impulse control (valuing consent, permission, mutual attraction, etc); e.g., **appreciative** peril (the ironic **damsel-in-distress**/**rape fantasy**), invited voyeurism

- **descriptive sexuality**

As we've already established by looking at the definition of weird canonical nerds, their conduct is quite the opposite; weird canonical nerds don't practice mutual consent; they endorse

- uninformed/blind consumption through manufactured consent
- *de facto* bad education as **bad fathers** (function knights) and other role models/authority figures; i.e., canonical sex education and gender education, **bad play**/**intended gameplay** resulting in harmful wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure (**abuse encouragement patterns**); e.g., appropriative peril (the unironic damsel-in-distress), uninvited voyeurism
- prescriptive sexuality

through their own synthetic toolkits during oppositional praxis.

As such, they become stupid **chasers** taught by videogames (effectively Pavlovian simulators of reward and punishment tied to canonical values) to hunt us down—not to immediately destroy us but *dominate* as forbidden (expendable) fruit, or to confirm their own suspicions about as gender-envious[162] class traitors. This inquisition is less concerned with whether we're dangerously deviant/**degenerate** shapeshifters or not and more invested in assigning an automatic criminal extent to our perceived heresy/sin of "making it gay" according to the action formula as dogmatic (unlike their self-righteous secret identities and shifting shapes, of course; they **follow the leader**/kneel to vertical power and **the leader is always right**); like Eve, these "bad **doms**" blame us for their "moments of weakness," whereas gentler (usually female) **WASP**-y [**white Anglo-Saxon Protestant**] detectives give us the **murder-mystery** approach and study us under a magnifying glass. For both, we're either **bait**, **traps**, or somehow "asking for it" (aka "blaming the victim*") as odd specimens that just can't seem to help ourselves. It's easier to attack us and our representations than it is to blame and try to change the system (also, the system will regard class, race and gender traitors with [usually temporary] accommodations).

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[162] Gender envy being the idea that heteronormativity is tiresome and generally something that class traitors take out on gender-non-conforming persons.

Seeing as we're about to delve into Ann Radcliffe's wheelhouse, I may as well get this off my chest: Forget a bone, I have a whole goddamn skeleton (about nine pages worth) to pick with the true crime/murder-mystery genre (as well the canonical female detective and her servant/sidekick and romance options, etc—all things we'll return to in Volume Two; e.g., exhibit 47a2). For one, the "twist," in "true crime" is a forced reality that generally confirms the systemic scapegoat after a revelation by the nosy neighbor ("I knew it!"); i.e., the Scooby Doo villain as borrowed from the centuries-older xenophobia and state apologetics of female Neo-Gothic fiction authors like Ann Radcliffe having carved it out in equally cartoonish forms. Radcliffe lived under the power of men, to be sure, and wasn't in a position of power like Lewis (a man) was, but the degree to which she used her immense (albeit relative) privilege as a white woman-of-letters is dubious, at best; i.e., not to help the oppressed by writing anything other than what she did, but actively choosing to use her unironically xenophobic (and frankly vanilla) rape fantasies to write moderately bigoted novels. Like Tolkien, Radcliffe's Gothic moderacy is precisely what makes her stories dangerous to sex-positive workers, because behind their veneer of moderacy lies the same function executed by more aggressive, reactionary forms: to stoke class, race and gender suspicions; i.e., moral panic. For Radcliffe, this meant aristocratic, often elderly white folk, but also racist, jingoistic caricatures and poor, non-white people being unmasked by chaste white women (the nun-like, ostensibly ace/queer-coded private eye; e.g., Velma).

Radcliffe, then, was complicit in a larger scheme her fans would breed into and police on and on down the years. As Top Dollar once said, "the idea has

become the institution"; in return, Radcliffe's fiction has become something to unironically defend from "degenerate" outsiders, turning her books, oddly enough, into besieged fortresses that uphold the material conditions of a particular mythic structure. Her relative stupidity becomes something to not only sweep under the rug but embody through half-hearted or worse, <u>bad-faith</u> arguments ("She couldn't have been expected to be any different than she was, back then…")—i.e., **praxial inertia** expressed through popular fiction at large as married to its public defense and emulation of "presumed ignorance" in real life: propaganda through fear and dogma (which Radcliffe relied on).

Despite its connection to the real world (and vice versa), we'll start with the fiction, itself. In canonical true-crime fiction, the humanized victims are always the middle class (who count), often wracked with murderous wish fulfillment (the "corrupt") while poor people and suffering are described as a whole monolith; i.e., a white woman's damaging idea of various social causes and concerns; e.g., "starving African children" or foreign girls being sex trafficked. The latter is always impersonal, less valuable in an individual sense and more a political cause that can be funneled through fabricated copies to sell as "cracked cases" (which one, don't "crack" anything and two, create more problems than they solve: the ghost of the counterfeit as a means of deliberately twisting the truth to romance the killer and make them more entertaining [thus lucrative] in a canonically fetishized sense: the story "needs" a villain and a <u>victim</u> to sacrifice for the middle-class audience's entertainment. Frankly there are far better ways to prevent crime than capitalizing recursively on its "solving": changing material conditions).

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Meanwhile, the scapegoated or exoticized minority is left feeling inadequate, constantly having to prove themselves as something other than false and/or dangerous in the court of canonical dogma: "I am not an animal! A fake! A monster!" For example, whereas American slaves were robbed of their culture during the diaspora of the Middle Passage (then policed during Jim Crow after the Civil War), those still living in Africa (and its surrounding territories) experienced first a colonization then a half-hearted "decolonization" that was overwatched and gatekept by the UN as members of capital overseeing the United States' usual geopolitical tamperings; i.e., as the mother territory siphoning resources out of colonized lands, which were only ever developed enough to accommodate the colonizer populations. Deeper inside, the raw unoccupied reaches of the colonial territories were ripped apart—forcefully deprived of any sense of community or infrastructure, then invited to be poached and raped by the very indigenous populations the state was actively genociding for profit: rape your land for us. It's the settler-colonial version of a Faustian bargain enacted by class and race traitors.

Assimilation goes both ways, of course, and for every act of open rebellion there were plenty who refused to rebel due to the expected colonial countermeasures (re: "power aggregates," from Atun-Shei Film's "Fighting for Freedom"). In America, the Cherokee tried to assimilate by wearing American clothes and respecting their laws and customs (only to be re-invaded once gold was found in what remained of their nation). In Africa, token agents not only police their own kind by assimilating into and adopting white police structures (vis-à-vis Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks); poachers and slavers made and have continued to make whatever living they can through obscene criminogenic conditions first installed by the colonizer nations carving up Africa not once, but multiple times. This would go on to then be romanced and displaced by white-penned Neo-Gothic fictions of various kinds: white men's open, settler-colonial bigotry and white-saviorism from the likes of Shakespeare, Conrad, Tolkien, Ridley Scott, James Cameron, Frazetta (exhibit 0a2c) and Wes Craven haunting the gutted castles of a seemingly abandoned colonialism with dark, vengeful spirits exorcized by white heroes; but also the so-called "jungle fever" entertained by white women like Radcliffe, Dacre, Charlotte Brontë and Angela Carter's fixation on a white protagonist's idea of rape fantasy inside the castled ghost of the counterfeit, and in the American porn industry at large; i.e., as a forbidden fruit to outlaw, commodify and sell back to middle-class people amid a widespread, systemic punishment of the non-white people associated with the image:

> In the U.S. and other capitalist countries, rape laws were originally framed for the protection of men of the upper classes, whose women ran the risk of being assaulted. What happens to working-class women has always been of little concern to the courts. As a result, appalling few rapists have ever been

prosecuted—appalling few, that is, if black men are exempted from consideration. While the rapists of working-class women have so rarely been brought to justice, the rape charge has been indiscriminately aimed at black men, the guilty and innocent alike (source: Angela Davis' "Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Setting," 1978).

Before the Enlightenment, Late Medieval stories and media from the Gothic/Renaissance period featured less persons of color because access to actual persons with dark or non-white skin was historically less common, thus more exotic (though it did happen; a pure-white medieval period is a fascist myth); as such, the pre-fascist destroyer persona was coded as black in relation to the "non-European" as Jewish, Germanic, or the broader "Eastern" (white-skinned: from Italy to Romania to Russia; non-white groups: China, the Middle East and Africa). Until the Enlightenment period began and started to orchestrate widespread settler colonialism (and modern nation-state formation), race-based slavery largely didn't exist; so the biases were less about skin color and more about general ethnicity and religion; e.g., evil Italian counts, but also Jewish people as go-to scapegoats for the Romans and the Christians. Then and now, these devils were seen as threats to the heteronormative order of things; i.e., returning to nature, to hell and chaos. As such, the devil became something that actively corrupts the youth and women as always running off with them into the night:

(artist: Ary Scheffer)

In turn the women of these paintings would famously be coveted by the artist and the audience, both an object of intense, primal beauty and a site of ever-present hysteria that might at any moment spring from the canvas and tempt the viewer but also <u>smite</u> them (canonical art treats being woman as a lose-lose: "Damned if you do, damned if you don't"):

(exhibit 1a1a1e1b: Artist, left: [Domenico Induno](); right: [Rembrandt](). Few things are as fetishized and cliché as reclining female nudes; but if it ain't broke, don't fix it! The problem is, the body positivity and debatably asexual relationship between the woman and the artist [which wasn't always the case, of course; e.g., powerful male patrons fetishizing women through a commissioned artist] shifted to a colonizing of the body image along racialized lines: White supremacy ties non-white bodies to "gross" [excessive] sexual appetites through racialized Enlightenment tropes, [leading to fat-shaming and black fetishization]() [Loner Box's "Jordan Peterson and Beauty," 2022; timestamp: 6:40]. As something to create, the curviness of fat white women became, as it were, a thing of the past [or something to seal away and commodify through Rainbow Capitalism[163] and war bosses, etc] that artists like Rubens did <u>once</u>; the devil inside the women who remained—their "hysteria"—became racialized or projected off onto a racialized "other" blamed by white men <u>and</u> white women alike. White woman, though, still suffered, plagued with a variety of eating disorders [which are incredibly crippling and deadly] and desire to escape their own culture through the appropriation of black culture; and vice versa, black

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[163] Black or white, genuine body positivity and its recuperation is a complicated and diverse subject, something that we shall return to many, many times in the book.

culture often sought [and still seeks] to assimilate their colonizers; e.g., shadism [source: "Black-on-Black Racism Is a Problem," 2015].)

We've talked about embodying Satan ourselves in the Miltonian sense. But there's also the idea of running off with the devil; e.g., Van Halen's "Runnin' with the Devil" (1978). We'll examine deals with the devil much more in Volume Two, but for now I want to express that it isn't strictly a bad thing. Yes, the desire to escape is a powerful force, and not always a positive one; but it's largely speaking a pact. As Anna Bidoonism writes,

> *We have little recourse but to strike a "Faustian bargain" — we've to forge, in other words, "a pact with the devil." […] According to traditional European beliefs — like those held in the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan Era — such bargains were between a person and Satan and have been linked to the quaint pastime of hunting witches (see: Hammer of Witches). Based on some age-old folklore stuff, such pacts came to form a cultural motif — one of a myriad really that carry over from Europe's medieval past to today's globalized world. Pacts may have been entered into under duress but also, we may suppose, voluntarily (out of let's say boredom or a desire for the darker more debauched modes of worldly gratification) [source: "Faustian bargain"; or "Better the [devil emoji] u no," 2020].*

In iconoclastic artwork and thought, the devil is generally two things at once: the machinations of the elite, but also the rebellious potential of the underclass as a dangerous proposition unto itself. This puts the choices we make in a complicated space weighed against canonical forces.

From a canonical standpoint, the "black persona" is a means to an end: someone to binarize inside the settler-colonial system through the blaming of Capitalism's usual bullshit on a convenient scapegoat: women, people of color and queer persons, etc, as "responsible" for the middle class's shitty material conditions and two-day weekend ("Mondays, amirite?") but also ruining their precious illusions with a black mirror that shows them who they really are—perfidious, cowardly and cruel, but also deeply powerless, spellbound and addicted to a highly fake and cheap, sugary view of the world: mythologized forms of sex and human connection turned into a drug that's sold back to them in order to treat their alienated condition. Unlike our mirrors, Capitalism's illusions aren't about solving problems and making the world a better place through building cultural awareness, community and trust; they're prone to digging up the structure's own pre-fascist bugbears and marrying them to fascist and post-fascist ones during moral panics. Obviously the recipients of such stigmas and biases don't suck blood, stab backs, or eat flesh, but the uphill nature of the pedagogy of the oppressed forces them to defend themselves from absurd positions (the queer in true crime is often the red

herring if not the victim or villain) using the same basic language that furthers harmful stereotypes written by the colonizer group, including white, cis-het women as writing (and capitalizing on) an inordinate amount of xenophobia.

In short, the white female authors mentioned above **triangulate** and direct abuse away from themselves as a protected <u>and</u> victimized class (often while they or their fans deny that <u>their</u> fiction doesn't represent "real bigotry"; i.e., "that's not what [insert popular fiction, here] means to me!"). It's a flagrant abuse of privilege and it happens all the time by "activists" lobbying for equality of convenience by acting as gatekeepers <u>and</u> spies: a "boundaries for me, not for thee" stance while lamenting "is nothing sacred?" to us campy fags "ruining" <u>their</u> stories. Consumption is encouraged, <u>not</u> critique (which is useless to the profit motive as something to emulate by the middle class; to think what <u>could</u> be done with that labor and materials if not wasted on these formulaic, bigoted dramas that play defense for the state; it's a class-conscious mirage swept up in its own endless romance, patented by Radcliffe and carried forward into the ages—i.e., to keep things the same by refusing to challenge anything in a dialectical-material sense).

Adjacent to the consumption itself, cognitive dissonance leads to authorial punching down for critiquing one's enjoyment/endorsement <u>as</u> the **intended audience** (or their procurer of goods bred on the same stories, growing up to emulate them as an author themselves: making their own canonical castles and monsters). All cops are bad because all cops spy for the state as class traitors. It's literally their job: "report any suspicious activity to the authorities, us."

This includes Radcliffe as <u>the</u> woman to emulate, but also the <u>de facto</u> queen to apologize for as someone who could "do no wrong"; i.e., mysteriously playing

detective as an enigmatic[164] class traitor through her xenophobic stories leading to the rise of an entire school of Gothic fiction (the School of Terror) and bad offshoots, but also thoroughly successful ones (Murder, She Wrote [1984] ran for twelve years, but set in a small town, it sets up a bizarre, Hawthorne-esque premise: there'd have to be as many murderers living in the town as victims—all to aggrandize the heroine). All assign guilt by painting others green; or playing at false rebel by painting themselves green and going undercover ("solving crimes for cops" by writing their own made up ones, grounded on a kernel of truth that spreads harmful stereotypes that paint people a particular way based on the author's imaginary testimony and Gothic theatricalities; i.e., the female sleuth stirring up trouble by punching down from her "chateau" with a glassful of wine, a pet cat (or some other faux familiar) and her day's equivalent of a quill and inkpot ("two inches of narrow ivory"). As such, the power hierarchy Radcliffe bowed to/refused to challenge in any meaningful sense has now become "TERF island," exemplified by persons dreaming of similar service to capital having expanded under global Capitalism; i.e., to be like J.K. Rowling, her day's variant of Ann Radcliffe except Rowling lived to become very, very mask off in open defense of capital—both with her own stabs at the Neo-Gothic fiction, of course, but also her non-magical detective stories and dubious attempts at anonymity[165]. It's not a

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[164] So mysterious, that Robert Miles—writing of Rictor Norton's 1999 biography of the famous author, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe*—had this to say about her, "Ann Radcliffe was, in her day, the obscurest woman of letters in England. Her contemporaries despaired of learning anything about her, while Christina Rossetti abandoned her planned biography for lack of materials" ([source](#)). Well, mysterious or not, her work and silence both speak volumes and for themselves: though a moderate bigot, Radcliffe was still a bigot and belonged to the same slave-owning society that Austen did (re: Said's "Jane Austen and Empire"). She still upheld the same outdated and harmful institutions of marriage. *More* than Austen, Radcliffe not only upheld the same society's fabricated, island-fortress xenophobia; she *canonized* them to such a degree that Austen threw shade her way and wrote a whole novel camping Radcliffe's books/castled spaces of interrogating power. Austen > Radcliffe.

[165] Styling herself as "Robert Galbraith," a historically anti-LGBTQ+ conversion therapist:

> But after *Troubled Blood* (2016) came under fire earlier this week for a transphobic subplot in which a serial killer hunts his victims while dressed in women's clothing, Rowling denied that the alias is a reference to "ex-gay" therapy. Rowling "wasn't aware of Robert Galbraith Heath" when selecting the name, a representative said. "Any assertion that there is a connection is unfounded and untrue" ([source](#): Nico Lang's "J.K. Rowling Denies Pen Name Is Inspired by Anti-LGBTQ+ Conversion Therapist," 2020).

Whereas Radcliffe could feasibly retire and live a mysterious life when things got too hot during the French Revolution (choosing to write no more than she did, and yet having made enough to never work another day in her life), Rowling lives in the Internet Age, and grew and developed under Thatcher's England. But even so, Radcliffe's actions for her time say plenty about her stances, and those were preserved in her works. However well-written they may otherwise be, bigotry is bigotry and she chose to further it and stand by her actions; i.e., her posthumous essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826). In the WASP-y British tradition, she spoke with gentle, *moderate* bigotry as a real-life phantom (and for those of you who might point out, "She's dead and can't defend herself!" Radcliffe had over *two decades* to write "On the Supernatural in Poetry." I'd say she should have chosen her words more carefully—but I don't think caution was the problem; her politics were).

paradigm shift, but a radicalizing of the current settler-colonial paradigm, whereupon the chickens come home to empire, roosting inside their ruined castles.

The larger dialogic isn't purely a question of white women punching down with the fear-and-dogma triangulation approach to propaganda (which many do, including through inaction and dumb self-fulling prophecies serving as regular paydays for themselves); it operates according to axes of oppression that intersect across various tangents and offshoots. But any <u>canonical</u> *detective plays detective in and out of the fiction to regain some sense of agency against her assigned targets, a bevy of go-to scapegoats confirmed through the run of the mill: the Gothic fetishes and clichés concerned with material disputes, but also the false preachers, pirates stealing property and other devils-in-disguise working through the usual suspects in any given castle: twists, red herrings, whodunnits, the paranormal vs the* **explained supernatural** *(from Radcliffe), and cloak-and-dagger conspiracies ("they're all in on it").*

These various fictional gimmicks are utterly at home in the Gothic as a wildly popular middle-class distraction that conventionally lacks <u>conscious</u> *class character in a holistic sense. It's a fear of the outside and the invader from within told through a failure of boundaries—to fail at keeping things separated/outside—coupled with the fear-fascination of/with the perceived abomination of an imaginary exotic and "exquisite torture." The second is a Radcliffe staple; i.e., profitably navigating her inherited trauma by stigmatizing and poring over the suffering of others: the pressures and unromantic realities of* **amatonormativity** *(compelled marriage) turned on its head, if but for a moment: the "demon lover," the rake from hell, as a mutilative form of problematic rape play (stuck within xenophobic cash-grabs) inside the Gothic castle as a bad BDSM torture dungeon often set to music and confusing architecture, mist and darkness. It's a more Gothically operatic critique of boring things. As such the engagement ring is a symbol of "commitment" in quotes; i.e., duress through material inequality towards a person (the groom) with great expectations and unfair advantage in various courts (the legal system, the job market, the court of public opinion). Critiques of the husband generally elide with a disdain or mistrust-curiosity of the entire "other side."*

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Radcliffe certainly excelled at that, the Black Veil hinting at something dreadful just beyond the fabric (with pirates being metaphors for poor people stealing from the rich establishment). To her credit, she didn't pointedly expand on the harmful Faustian agreement as an open discussion—with de Sade highlighting the rituals from scratch (thus having no clue what he was doing), and whose own theatre treated the harmful violence as negotiated in pursuit of unironic self-destruction—but similar to our comments about the Faustian <u>ludic</u> contract, also appear within Radcliffe's own stories as a kind of unspoken, <u>harmful</u> agreement made by a total novice; i.e., between her and the reader before the story even starts: "Enter my castle and experience the pleasures of the dungeon!" Except Radcliffe, again, wrote from a position of near-total ignorance[166], thus (as we shall see) focused on <u>unironic</u> mutilation as a foregone conclusion whose criminal hauntologies demand actual rape and murder (sans contract or disclaimer) to work: it's bad ludo-Gothic BDSM, pure and simple—and over two centuries before E. L. James wrote <u>50 Shades of Gray</u> (which at least understood the <u>basic</u> idea of open, written, healthy negotiation ["no vaginal fisting…"]; Radcliffe, like most white, middle-class [thus sheltered] women, does not appear to)! This place of ignorance <u>isn't</u> a defense; as the moral of the Faustian bargain demonstrates, you can be a total idiot and still bargain; worse, you can create stories that lead to other people doing the same (and copying your stories), which Radcliffe certainly did. Moving forward, we need to interrogate these contracts and castles and transform them during our own negotiations, when dealing with the "zombies of Radcliffe": our aforementioned TERFs as bad players, actors, negotiators, etc.

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[166] The problem extends to many privileged voices as fundamentally white; e.g., philosophy, the STEM fields, theatre (comedy and drama), art, music, the law and academia, etc, operating on the anxious desire to name, dissect and label everything after/about themselves. Yet, those are historically *men's* fields (wherein men are accustomed to the notion of self-promotion and a sexist division of labor that *didn't* tie them to the homestead). In the rise of women's literature, the act of novel-writing has for centuries been a female-heavy profession—a *white* female profession with limited spaces (due to women being pressured to do women's work, including—you guessed it—having babies).

Like most white women, then, Radcliffe hogs the spotlight instead of sharing it with others. She writes as if the story (and the universe) revolve around her—which, even if you reject overt bigotry and radicalism can still be bigoted if your story dehumanizes other groups or excludes them on purpose (e.g., *Stranger Things*); or equally problematic, if the story infantilizes these groups through a white person's idea of other cultures assimilating to her Western way of life—i.e., within a hierarchy that grants her power over them (the servant trope). Radcliffe does all of this, proving: that moderacy during moral panic contributes to the moral panic's criminogenic conditions, wherein white authors constantly find ways to make themselves the universal victims/protagonists while making other victimized groups targets of state violence; re: triangulation. Her views and ideas of the world were informed by said world as she found it, and her contributions to the world notably contributed to its continuation (graciously leaving us with some incredibly powerful tools that we can use to camp her work while making our own).
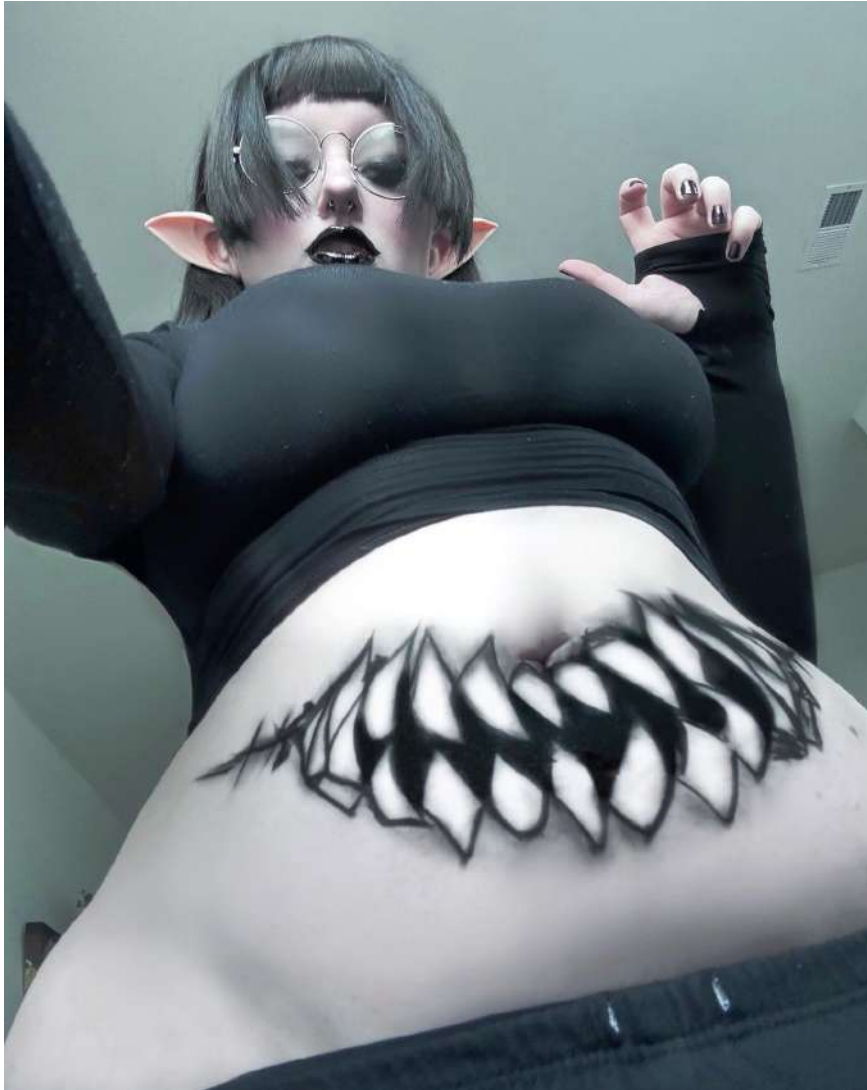
(artist: [Kay](#))

Concluding the above italicized rant, we've now covered the majority of the manifesto tree, thus have all the pieces of the map/siege machine that we'll need when camping canon. But we still need to consider the roots of camp and where it started within the Gothic mode. For the rest of the thesis proper, we'll spend one subchapter unpacking the roots of camp relative to forms of power exchange in Gothic poetics, including older detective fictions and the tricky tools of Ann Radcliffe's enchanting arsenal meant for the classic Gothic heroine (which I wouldn't bother reclaiming if I didn't think the tools were worth it); then another subchapter responding to hypermasculine (traditionally male) action heroes whose hungry psychosexuality can be camped within a complex form of BDSM-themed monster theatre. Our doing so isn't to highlight their cosmetic differences, but instead to consider how the masculine and feminine constantly interrelate back and forth inside the larger mode in dialectical-material ways: on the surface of things as seemingly fractured, divided, and black-and-white, but also hopelessly liminal, interwoven and chaotic; i.e., through the assorted storages of power and complex commands issued at a glance or gazing into the proverbial abyss.

The Roots of Camp: Reclaiming Demon BDSM and Radcliffe's Tricky Tools

"You geniuses fell for the old net over the door trick! You suck!"

—Boner, "[Johnny Whoopass, episode one](#)" (a bigoted, shameless and now defunct
He-Man parody from 2004)

Camp is an effective means of challenging canonical, thus systemic, norms because it has its roots in them (often through true crime/murder mysteries, which I just tore a new asshole). For example, the damsel (or subordinate detective, above) as an automatic, unthinking **submissive** is something we can subvert to communicate our own trauma while also having fun, mid-rebellion; e.g., Roxanne from *Megamind* (2010), bored stiff of the "bad guy" because he's all bark, no bite. What's more, he's campy in the true sense—i.e., "seriousness that fails" and he hasn't a clue!

It's a quick, cis-gendered example. Genderqueer camp of the "twink-in-peril" (re: Gregg Araki and Dennis Cooper's "twink exploitation" work) is an equally legitimate form of the *cathartic* rape fantasy model that ties into **consent-non-consent**. Consent-non-consent is essentially a "hard" form of informed consent that puts more trust into the hands of the **dominant/dominatrix** than usual; the **dom** is the person ostensibly with "more" power during the BDSM ritual and the submissive/**sub** is the person with "less." As we shall see, looks can be deceiving.

At the very start of the book, we listed the very basic ideas of Gothic psychosexuality and live burial tied to kink, fetishization and BDSM; here are some related performative definitions for what I said I would exhibit that we are now going unpack after I list/define them (as these terms can be harmful if misunderstood, I don't want to abridge them; most are fairly short):

dom(inator/-inatrix)

A BDSM actor who performs a dominant role—traditionally masculine (especially in Gothic canon: Mr. Rochester, Edward Cullen, Christian Grey and all the million monster variants of these kinds of characters) thus ostensibly having more power. However, in honored realms of mutual consent, they actually have less power than the sub, who only has to say no/red light, etc (for a good example of sub power, watch the 2014 Gothic-erotic thriller, *The Duke of Burgundy*); the sub controls the action by giving the dom permission according to negotiated boundaries.

sub(missive)

A BDSM actor who performs a submissive role—traditionally feminine (especially in Gothic canon: Jane Eyre, Bella Swan, Anastasia Steele and all the million monster variants of these kinds of characters) thus ostensibly having less power. However, in sex-positive scenarios, the sub calls the shots

from moment-to-moment (except in consent-non-consent, where they only agreed to everything up front and sign everything over ahead of time—a useful tactic for certain rape fantasies and regression scenarios).

"strict/gentle"

A BDSM flavor or style generally affixed to the dom in terms of their delivery. A "strict" dominatrix, for example, will administer discipline much more authoritatively than a "gentle" variant will; i.e., she will deny succor as a theatrical device to supply through the ritual, whereas the gentle dominatrix will be far more nurturing and supportive from the offset.

topping/a top vs bottoming/a bottom

These terms generally refer to dominant/submissive sexual activity in which someone "tops"; i.e., "rides"/is rode. However, they can refer to BDSM/social-sexual arrangements with various, historically-materially ironic configurations; e.g., "power bottoms" or "topping from the bottom" (which can be literal, in terms of the execution of physical sex, but also have BDSM implications/monster personages, too).

regression

In terms of mental health, regression is a form of dissociation, often tied to trauma or healing from trauma. Common in rituals of appreciative peril, which include Big/little roles daddy/mommy doms and boy/girl subs, etc. However, regression is also something that sex-coercive predation keys off of through *regressive politics*; i.e., to regress socio-politically towards a conservative medieval when Capitalism enters decay.

rape fantasies

Fantasies tied to sexual/power abuse (rape isn't about sex at all; it's about coercive power control and abuse). This kind of performative peril can be appreciative/appropriative, thus bourgeois/canonical or proletarian/iconoclastic. Common in Gothic narratives, which tend to project trauma, rape and power abuse onto displaced, dissociative scenarios: man vs nature, Jack-London-style; the lady vs the rapist or the slave vs the master in numerous articulations (racialized, but also in BDSM-monster frameworks), etc.

aftercare

Rituals supplied after BDSM (or frankly just rough sex/emotional bonding moments and other social-sexual exchanges) that help the affected party recover better than they would if left unattended ("rode hard and put away wet" as it were).

There's also some Gothic scenarios and theatrical/operatic devices that we need to unpack before we proceed to entertain camping them using the above power/gender roles and BDSM devices; i.e., ironic, negotiated variants of Radcliffe's tricky theatrical tools: her classically **xenophobic**/**xenophilic** and dubiously "consensual" **Black Veil** (hiding the threat badly), **demon lover** (the xenophobic/xenophilic threat of unironic mutilation and rape), and **exquisite "torture"** (rape play):

(source: "The Rise of the Gothic Novel" by Stephen Carver)

the Black Veil

Radcliffe's famous "cloaking device" from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, delayed until the end of the book (over 500 pages) to reveal behind a great terrible thing that made our heroine swoon; i.e., her immodest desire to look upon something that threatens her virtue and fragile mind. It remains a common device used in horror media today—e.g., as I note in "Gothic themes in The *Vanishing / Spoorloos* (1988)," the Black Veil is present all throughout that film.

demon lover

Cynthia Wolff writes on Radcliffe's process in "The Radcliffean Gothic Model" (1979):

> Let us say that when an individual reads a fully realized piece of fiction, he (or she) will "identify" primarily with one character, probably the principal character, and that this character will bear the principal weight of the reader's projected feelings. Naturally, an intelligent reader will balance this identification; to some extent there will be identification with each major character—even, perhaps, with a narrative voice. But these will be distributed appropriately throughout the fiction. Now a Gothic novel presents us with a different kind of situation. It is but a partially realized piece of fiction: it is formulaic (a moderately sophisticated reader already knows more or less exactly what to expect in its plot); it has little or no sense of particularized "place," and it offers a heroine with whom only a very few would wish to identify[167]. Its fascination lies in the predictable interaction between the heroine and the other main characters. The reader identifies (broadly and loosely) with the predicament as a totality: the ritualized conflict that takes place among the major figures of a Gothic fiction (within the significant boundaries of that "enclosed space") represents in externalized form the conflict any single woman might experience. The reader will project her feelings into several characters, each one of whom will carry some element of her divided "self." A woman pictures herself as trapped between the demands of two sorts of men—a "chaste" lover and a "demon" lover—each of whom is really a reflection of one portion of her own longing. Her rite of passage takes the form of (1) proclaiming her right to preside as mistress over the Gothic structure and (2) deciding which man (which form of "love") may penetrate its recesses! (source).

exquisite "torture"

Exquisite "torture" is a Radcliffe staple, and classically pits the imperiled heroine inside a complicated, but generally unironic rape fantasy within the Gothic castle. Somewhere in the castle is a demon lover who is both more exciting than the boring-ass hero, and someone who speaks to the heroine's

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[167] I beg to differ. This depends entirely on the heroine and the reader. As heroines are theatrical devices, they can be utilized for a variety of purposes, including medicinal BDSM, "perceptive" pastiche and subversive power exchange scenarios, etc.

inheritance anxiety and/or lived trauma inside the chronotope. The fantasy on the page is a form of controlled risk, but Radcliffe's forms are "proto-vanilla" in that they emerged at the very beginnings of feminism/female discourse and whose imaginary safe spaces are actually didactically *unsafe*. According to Wolff,

> Two hundred years ago Ann Radcliffe introduced Gothic conventions into the mainstream of English fiction. For the first time the process of feminine sexual initiation found respectable, secular expression. Yet the terms of this expression were ultimately limiting. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the heritage of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic tradition; it is even more important now to move on and invent other, less mutilating conventions for the rendering of feminine sexual desire (*ibid.*).

the explained supernatural

The sensation of a seemingly profound or Numinous in Radcliffe's stories, often linked to fear of unironic rape and death, but also boring material disputes that involve these things. The threat—like her mischievous pirates—are dressed up as ghosts or monsters to fool the detective so they can rob the state (and maybe the heroine) of their goods (the heroine and her modesty being "priceless treasure" in the eyes of themselves having internalized these bigotries, but also the men "protecting" them).

All of these definitions are useful to camping canon (as canon is heteronormative, thus coercively sexual in terms of unequal power exchange and the Gothic, performative language of war), so learn them well; even someone who is not acclimated to the theory can do it (e.g., my twin brother's "Death Boner[168]" supervillain joke [source: u/hvanderw, Reddit]: "Oh, no! It's Death Boner!" [said in your best old-timey radio announcer voice] as a surreal camping of the death

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[168] Basically, Blue Beard from Charles Perrault's "Blue Beard" (1697), the demon lover holding the delicate female swooner captive and relayed through fairytales or operas (and various other Gothic stories; e.g., the "black novel" or "noir/black detective story" as peering into the imaginary site of the black space/shadow zone as routinely fabricated by the ghost of the counterfeit, feeding the profit motive). Facing such a sexy beast, a less bellicose heroine might swoon and face almost certain doom; an *Amazon*, on the other hand, might pick up a sword and stab the fucker—a proposition that can certainly be cathartic but needs to be exercised with care to avoid harmful xenophobia as something to execute on- and offstage as informed by these kinds of stories; i.e., TERFs attacking trans people when their own trauma is weaponized by the status quo, turning them into harmful imitations of Dacre's woman-in-black, Victoria de Loredani; e.g., Ellen Ripley—formerly traumatized by the myth of the black male/crossdressing rapist—is handed a gun by James Cameron and told to play cowboys and Indians in service of the state: "Become vengeance."

knight's rapacious/moribund function; i.e., the death erection as "Freudian erectile dysfunction" tied to the hero archetype as "phallic": adventure and domination [think the "gamer bro" sort] tied to success by "winning" against an advertised foe, but also the damsel as something to "own" when the battle's over and the happy ending becomes something to collect through sex as its own miniature battlefield—i.e., raping the womb of nature).

We'll delve into specialized, negotiated ways to camp canon during the "camp map" proper—with me focusing on critiquing Tolkien and Cameron's refrains with my own preference as a bad bitch/Gothic specialist, while also camping Radcliffe's powerful tools: the **closed, ergodic space** of the **Metroidvania** as a Gothic castle whose "ludo-Gothic BDSM" arrangement explores repressed desires (emergent thoughts, guilty pleasures) and fears regarding the grander meta-text "palliative Numinous": the world in which we live as doubled by the castle (of the castle, of the castle…). In fact, the *really* frustrating thing about Radcliffe's work is she was honestly very *skilled* at her craft (I absolutely love *The Italian* for that reason), but her craft was still incredibly *basic* from a class critique standpoint; i.e., state apologia first, state critique if someone else does the work[169]. At the very least, she could have used the above tools to write something more sex-positive than she did—e.g., in the vein of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) or her famous daughter's incredibly impressive *Frankenstein* (there was no shortage of revolutionary ideas at the time). Instead, Radcliffe wrote overlong and convoluted murder mysteries for her husband, whose *canonical* castles (ACAB) revived practically identically centuries later (e.g., *Scooby Doo*). Radcliffe's own were "good of kind" but that only seems to confirm to me that she'd dug her heels in; i.e., pandering to a voracious middle-class readership that would eat her

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[169] E.g., Nick Groom of Radcliffe's *The Italian* (from the Oxford World's Classics 2017):

> Ann Radcliffe may have not been a revolutionary, but her work is far from being conservative—she repeatedly tested the boundaries of orthodoxy at a time of revolutionary foment. This may explain why everything is under scrutiny in *The Italian*. It is a novel suffused with secrets and mysteries, and pervaded by scrutiny, examination, and interrogation. […] It looks forward to a society in which order is enforced by institutions keeping individuals under perpetual surveillance. As such, *The Italian* [is] very much a novel for the twenty-first century.

Remember what I said about Radcliffe and legwork? You can take her ideas and do lots with them (as we shall do). Just don't expect to her to say the quiet part out loud, or veer away from her own bigotry to make hard stances against the state. If not during the revolution then when, exactly? Moderacy *is* a conservative stance, Groom, and Radcliffe never wrote anything after *The Italian* except for "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (which was published posthumously and where she distanced herself *further* from Lewis and the revolution)! She was a sell-out, middle-of-the-road, incrementalist white woman, and her work not only kicked the can down the road; it went on to become studied, emulated and disseminated by white women in the Internet Age—also known as TERFs.

operatic, heteronormative ideas up when she wrote them, internalize these castles, then help to revive them in the future as "zombie Radcliffe" (somehow dumber than Radcliffe's stories were—again, *Scooby Doo*). To that, we'll also camp Radcliffe and her castles more throughout the entire book, taking what's useful (or fun—again, *Scooby Doo*) and leaving the rest through our own interrogations of the Gothic mode and its regular displayers of unequal power exchange—in short, our own contracts of informed power exchange and resistance that we draw up in intelligent Gothic language.

For now, though, the basic idea is to highlight the psychopraxial struggle of it all: the chase of the bait by the hunter as something that exists in canonical norms in and out of media, on- and offstage within the performance of workers; i.e., as informed by the elite's Superstructure, their propaganda working as bad entertainment that serves to instruct through fear and dogma towards an imaginary threat relayed through actual criminogenic conditions. In other words, the problem is real, but the scapegoat generally is the state-compelled *victim* of the structure, not the cause: the underclass as punished by workers above them, including white women who write propaganda or internalize it, then act it out on every possible register. As such, canonical Gothic poetics amount to unironic **rape culture** whose **"prison sex" mentalities** enfold *vis-à-vis* **Man Box** through **good play vs bad play** as codified and taught, but also cultivated and policed by canonical proponents gatekeeping everything. To borrow from Tolkien, they shout, "I will do the stinging!" and set to work stabbing the out-group to death while paradoxically wearing the same aesthetics (cryptofascist billboards/graffiti). Meanwhile, canonical trauma and its problematic phrasing compound inside the structure's historical materialism—i.e., an echo chamber where past victims become "chasers" punishing "traps/bait," serving the status quo as dutiful (thus merciless and fierce) watchdogs, war dogs, straw dogs:

(artist: [Peter Paul Rubens](#))

rape culture and "prison sex" mentalities

Learned power abuses taught by state-corporate propaganda and power relations through "Pavlovian/Pygmalion" conditioning that breaks the recipient's mind, bending them towards automatic, violent behaviors towards state targets during moral panics. This response can be men mistreating women, but also women mistreating each other or their fellow exploited workers: TERFs abusing trans people and ethnic minorities. When executed and learned on a societal level, these sex-coercive practices become codified as "bad play" in canonical BDSM narratives.

Man Box/"prison sex" culture

What I call "the prison sex phenomena," Mark Greene—in his 2023 podcast, *Remaking Manhood: The Healthy Masculinity Podcast*—refers to "Man Box culture" as:

[abridged …] the brutal enforcement of a narrowly defined set of traditional rules for being a man. These rules are enforced through shaming and bullying, as well as promises of rewards, the purpose of which is to force conformity to our dominant culture of masculinity […] (source: Mark Greene's "How the Man Box Poisons Our Sons," 2019).

"Prison sex" is the same idea as Man Box culture, except it chooses to focus less on men and more on the unequal power dynamics that occur between dimorphized workers trained not just to rape and kill one another in literal terms, but also theatrical language; i.e., any form of expression that ties into the bigoted, colonial-binary of a divided class of male and female labor within entertainment (sports and porn), the household, the workplace, and Gothic iterations of any of these things. Any cis-het man that fails to live up to the heteronormative standard of manliness (which is an impossible feat to begin with), must be weak but also strong in a manner threatening towards the status quo—i.e., womanly/monstrous-feminine.

good play vs bad play

Forms of power exchange during oppositional praxis; i.e., sex-positive BDSM and other social-sexual practices and code built on mutual/informed consent vs sex coercion and harmful BDSM/rape culture. Bad play is the emulation of white, cis-het men as the unironic performers of coercive sex, bondage, murder and rape (e.g., TERFs dominating members of their own group).

(artist: [Anrig](#))

Conditioned by the state, the standardized/token enforcer's combined bad instruction and execution historically-materially produce a variety of colonizing binaries, one of the most classic being the virgin/whore dynamic, which in Gothic fiction is the damsel/demon. In the past, the hypermasculine enforcer was strictly the domain of men. But in the Internet Age, the demon archetype is as much the woman "acting like a man" by raping/reaping the theatrical submissive as a perceived whore deserving of punishment or being "claimed" by the stronger party. Being from the 1970s, Wolff describes this in woefully cis-het terms

> Many men have a tendency to divide "love" into two components: an affectionate (and asexual) element; and a passionate (sexual) element. Furthermore, since the areas of affectionate and sexual love are fraught with complex emotions of guilt and anger, many men manage these difficult and (to their way of thinking) dangerous feelings by projecting them onto the women about them. Thus, through this process of projection, men may perceive the world as a place inhabited by two kinds of women: "good" women whom they idealize and who have no sensual desires (and for whom, of course, the men themselves feel no sexual longings); and "bad" women who are sexual by nature (and with whom it is permissible—perhaps even expected—to have sexual relations). This imaginative construct has come to be called the "Virgin/Whore" syndrome ([source](#)).

but these harmful misconceptions (and their subsequent "bad play") have not only *not* gone anywhere; they've pathologized in ways that grant some women/token minorities the ability to become the demonic-undead enforcer to quell/cull the state-issued submissive dressed up in the same language: "my lamb and martyr you look so precious[170]" enacted by an abused party towards "weaker" abused groups in the larger underclass (a prison within a prison). Abused themselves, the TERF "as the true woman" becomes the Greater Destroyer to rape, kill and dismember the perceived "other" as the "false women"; i.e., the token cop policing the state's chosen victims inside the state of exception, the latter unwillingly sacrificed by the former to serve the profit motive. It's Marx and bad demonic BDSM in action.

As Radcliffe is the lynchpin of "Female Gothic" (and thus takes most of the credit for her famous School of Terror and its clichés and fetishes), much of the above exploitation's blame absolutely falls to her as having codified the model through the choices she made; i.e., her idea of sexual and gender expression, but especially rape fantasy. If anything, Radcliffe's painfully obvious inexperience—as a dutiful white, cis-het British woman writing unironic rape fantasies for her white, cis-het British husband—has furthered many harmful xenophobic/xenophilic stereotypes regarding the demon-BDSM theatre of the masculine and feminine as things to perform in Gothic meta-play during oppositional praxis as sex-positive and sex-coercive to varying degrees of irony and straightness. While there's a million-and-one examples that emerge on either side of the praxial equation (refer to exhibit 1a1a1h in the "camp map" for *some* of them), the fact remains that *we*, as Gothic Communists, must resupply the Gothic imagination with less mutilative/rapacious forms of feminine *and* masculine expression for it to emerge in society at large; i.e., sex-positive xenophobia/xenophilia that aren't harmful and don't serve the profit motive (which is incumbent on harm and bigotry [crisis] to drive the market by abusing the process of abjection). This includes informing other workers who aren't strictly a party to our schemes, making their own incremental variations of the Gothic roleplay that are closer in function to Radcliffe's bunk.

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[170] From Tool's "Prison Sex" (1993):

> I'm treading water
> I need to sleep a while
> My lamb and martyr, you look so precious
> Won't you, won't you come a bit closer
> Close enough so I can smell you
> I need you to feel this
> I can't stand to burn too long
> Release in sodomy
> For one sweet moment I am whole ([source](#)).

*(source: Alex Greenberger's "25 Famed Artworks That Have Been Vandalized,"
2022)*

I'm not interested in stringing up and beating a dead person, but I do want
to barbecue Radcliffe's sacred cow/melt down her golden idol to counteract the
social-sexual harm her shameless catering to the profit motive has caused. To this,
let's outline the basic procedure as performed by weird canonical/iconoclastic nerds
in their daily lives (with parallels and responses that inform fictional variants under
Capitalism): how do workers play with each other during the Gothic's codified belief
systems and their coded instructions as things to arbitrate; i.e., to reinforce or
reclaim through weird/cool rituals that are imitated at cross purposes during
class/culture war.

Any sex-positive ritual happens through informed consumption of
psychosexual appreciative peril, but also **invited voyeurism/exhibitionist
(asexual) nudism** as things to perform during demon BDSM/consent-non-consent
as something to do, watch and show to each other and the world (with camp having
an-oft Gothic flavor—i.e., the Gothic "heroine"/damsel archetype as *ironic*, thus
cathartic rape play that camps the canonical rape scenario: "'Help, help,' I'm being
'raped!'"). Sexual activity isn't always involved, but when it does happen, it is
generally called "topping" (giving) or "being the bottom" (receiving). This is not the

same as being dominant or submissive; a dom can **top** or be the bottom, as can the sub. What determines their position is the agreement between them of whatever boundaries and roles they agree upon, which afford each a different kind of power during social-(a)sexual activities of various ritualized kinds. The dom has the power to do what the sub says, and the sub can say "yes, careful/maybe, and no" (the traffic light system is a good analog: green, yellow, and red).

This is where things get nuanced, thus complicated. For starters, oppositional praxis employs animal aesthetics that elide power with canonical norms and resistance to those norms in sex-positive forms: demonic BDSM and kink as power exchange rituals infused with the aesthetics of power and death (the undead/demons) through animalized stigmas that, themselves, can also be camped. Second, mutual consent makes it impossible for the **dom** to violate the **sub**'s boundaries or otherwise harm them, but "hurt, not harm" is still an exercise in building and maintaining trust, which *is* fallible. While service through the ritual is generally issued through commands, the sub ostensibly doing what the dominant wants is frequently subverted by the dom **servicing** the submissive as a being to worship and avoid harming at all costs. Not only can the pressure to perform be incredibly intense, but the fixed, set roles of power and its utility become confused and playful. Speaking from experience, the sub's understated desires, bratty refusals and inaction can leave the dom feeling "stuck" in a position where they want to serve but also feel frustrated by someone who is physically much smaller than them, tied up, or otherwise able to hypnotize them with a look, an unsaid word, not moving at all (itself often being a survival mechanism they cultivated to survive[171] their own abusers)—i.e., like Dracula, a "corpse" hypnotizing a subject of the living side of the equation:

> He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. I shuddered as I bent over to touch him, and every sense in me revolted at the contact; but I had to search, or I was lost. The coming night might see my own body a banquet in a similar way to those horrid three. I felt all over the body, but no sign could I find of the key. Then I stopped and looked at the Count. There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. The very thought drove me mad. A terrible desire came upon me to

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[171] Cuwu could hypnotize an entire room with ease, captivate all who saw them with their animalistic sensuality and raw eroticism; i.e., attracting as much attention as they possibly could so that all eyes were on them. By doing so, they controlled the attention they received by paradoxically attracting all of it, discouraging a predation response by always having an audience (witnesses): safety in numbers by basking in the spotlight as something to include non-harmful eyes.

rid the world of such a monster. There was no lethal weapon at hand, but I seized a shovel which the workmen had been using to fill the cases, and lifting it high, struck, with the edge downward, at the hateful face. But as I did so the head turned, and the eyes fell full upon me, with all their blaze of basilisk horror. The sight seemed to paralyse me, and the shovel turned in my hand and glanced from the face, merely making a deep gash above the forehead. The shovel fell from my hand across the box, and as I pulled it away the flange of the blade caught the edge of the lid which fell over again, and hid the horrid thing from my sight. The last glimpse I had was of the bloated face, blood-stained and fixed with a grin of malice which would have held its own in the nethermost hell ([source](#): Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, 1897).

Unlike Dracula, this function can be transformed using the same aesthetics. The normally objectified undead/demonic monstrous-feminine (demanded by the abusive lover to lay as naked and vulnerable as a sacrifice and as motionless and as quiet as a corpse that they have total control over) can harness of the power of the hellish gaze (and appearance) to freeze would-be attackers in their place; i.e., caught in a confused position of adoration, fear rapture that teaches sex positivity through the Gothic mode as a social-sexual, descriptively sexual[172] process:

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[172] E.g., girls feel gross or undead about themselves, shamed about but also fetishized regarding their natural bodily functions in ways most cis-het men heteronormatively aren't: farting during sex, burping or spitting, but also "wild" behaviors associated with the Whore archetype: the hysteria of Medusa, including everything that comes out of her body's every orifice. In short, the internalization can build up in feelings of "being undead," which have to be released—sometimes literally (with farts, or anything else she feels inclined to share to whatever degree she and her partner feels comfortable) but also theatrically in ways that express matter-of-fact realities tied to Gothic theatrics that imply the beauty-in-question as thoroughly "immodest" without shaming her for it. These needn't be implications of an automatic, acutely erogenous response, but merely a level of comfort and security regarding one's partner as familiar to each other as potentially having shared more during intimate moments together than they would with the wider public (Jadis, for example, would inadvertently fart during sex; i.e., when they came. It's not a big deal, and I didn't want them to feel ashamed about it despite them frequently saying "god damn it!" whenever they let one slip).

(exhibit 1a1a1e2: Artist: [Kay](). To look "ravishing" is to have a look that begs in different directions: "ravish me!" versus "you can't, and I am ravishing you!" It's "look, not touch" married to the aesthetics of dominance, power and death, sin and vice, etc, that are all combined within a liminal expression of something between a discretely fearsome dominant or vulnerable submissive [called the switch] comfortably existing on the shared within Segewick's "the character in the veil [or] imagery of the surface in the Gothic novel." Instead of the novel, this clearly applies to any medium, whose imagery of the surface is like a mirror or portrait to behold: in fear-fascination, but also barely-concealed horniness, passion and conflicting desire; i.e., the effortless violation of assorted boundaries that the Gothic is known for. In sex-positive expression and its various domains, this is power, this is strength: "You have no power over me!" and therein lies the theatrical device: the reversal—of the visually mighty by the classically weak as having far more power than is canonically prescribed; i.e., "topping from the bottom." As such, the theatre is instructional to the making of the historical-material rapist into a harmless plaything wrapped around the traditional victim's little finger [known in sexist circles "as being pussy-whipped[173"].)

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[173] I hesitate to lend credence to such "theories," but there *is* a kernel of truth to them. For example, if someone has been conditioned to survive by controlling people more powerful than themselves, it can become instinctual; i.e., an abusive trend by the survivor growing accustomed to controlling others not because they *need* to, but because it has become internalized as a habit that is all at once self-destructive, but also destructive towards their ability to hold onto friendships with other people. At first blush, this isn't strictly "their fault," insofar as it was partially conditioned; but dialectical behavioral therapy exists for a reason: as an option for them to apply to their own lives according to choices that they ultimately make when deciding whether or not to continue abusive behaviors when being made aware of them (this is something I will discuss in regards to Cuwu, an ex of mine with borderline personality disorder who ultimately blamed me for their poor life choices, but especially their abusing of me as a friend and a lover).

To apply game theory to basic theatricality in any medium, but also in our daily lives, the ritual—whether in sex-positive and sex-coercive forms—is the "magic circle" and the performance somewhere between the **roleplay** and the rules; it can yield emergent or intended gameplay based on the players' understanding of how the game should be played, which is made up according to canonical ideas of power battling iconoclastic ideas of power. I want to focus on sex positivity as something to instruct, so I will instruct you based on how I was taught (idented for clarity):

Under healthy circumstances, power fantasies/calculated risks can invoke a kind of psychomachic dialog or roleplay in one's one head, but also one's own partner that can invoke guilty pleasure as part of an escalating fantasy scheme: to orgasm. Sometimes, the usual, "old-faithful" tricks "don't cut it" during sex, which leads to the Gothic as a potent aphrodisiac often discovered by accident (the golden apples, or ambrosia, as Promethean; i.e., stolen from the gods). We're told by God to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge, but sometimes—just sometimes—we do anyways and discover that we *like* the taste of forbidden fruit. In Gothic-Communist terms, the fruit has been alienated from us, requiring us to corrupt Capitalism's twin trees: the Base and Superstructure. This happens through the ways in which we synthesize proletarian praxis in our own daily social-sex lives: "I tried this; I liked it" (for example, I discovered entirely by accident/playing around with Gothic things at random* that I very much *liked* feeling disempowered according to a palliative Numinous in videogames, albeit of a particular kind: the Metroidvania as a **ludo-Gothic BDSM** narrative that reflected my preference for being dominated by "dark mommies" of a particular kind: the videogame castle. We'll expound on this during the "camp map").

*"Random" is a paradox, implying that my behavior <u>wasn't</u> informed by my past trauma and education. In other words, I sought trauma because I am hypersexual (a common side effect of abuse) and a Gothicist with academic Marxist training who enjoyed Metroidvania as a child and wrote about them academically as an adult adjacent to, and sometimes in connection with, my own psychosexual experiences/social-sex life as psychosexual. I was drawn to monstrous-feminine power/dark mommy doms and spaces to resist and critique with my own take on "darkness visible": the kind I wanted to be, to fuck and be fucked by (more on this during part two of the "camp map").

The bedroom is one such place. There, the fantasy is like Satan; it transforms like a sex demon to invoke power as taken away from/supplied unequally to you or your partner(s) or vice versa. Whatever works, as long as it's sex-positive (contrary to moral panics/admonishments in Neo-Gothic

novels, BDSM isn't a "gateway drug"; it simply reveals what we like or know about such devices, or how we feel or respond to them/project[174] onto them). In the chase of *that* particular dragon, you can try different fantasies that might draw inspiration from traditional battle theatre: "take me, I'm yours"; i.e., the chased, monstrous-feminine object of desire—when corned by the monstrous-*masculine*—theatrically squeaks "I'm small and delicate; please 'ravish' me" as an almost magical invocation to cum that triggers based on one's recognition of the other party as "close," but also according to the ancient theatrical notion of catastrophe

> In [drama](#), particularly the [tragedies](#) of [classical antiquity](#), the **catastrophe** is the final resolution in a poem or narrative plot, which unravels the intrigue and brings the piece to a close. In comedies, this may be a marriage between [main characters](#); in tragedies, it may be the death of one or more main characters. It is the final part of a play, following the [protasis](#), [epitasis](#), and [catastasis](#) ([Wikipedia](#)).

aka the narrative arc (below) as "rising action, tension, climax, resolution, epilogue" married to sex, power exchange and both parties' acquired mental grammar of an internalized aesthetic being externalized again:

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[174] I liken sex-positive BDSM (and Gothic poetics at large) to a black mirror. If someone sees it and cries "groomer!" or "degeneracy!" then they're self-reporting. That might sound bad, but it's actually a good thing. The argument that BDSM must somehow be violent or "degenerate" is a common "slippery slope" fallacy that says more about fascists and moderates existing as weird sexless nerds (or at the very least weird nerds who suck at sex; e.g., [Ben Shapiro](#) *vis-à-vis* Behind the Bastard's "Ben Shapiro Wrote A Book About Sex," 2023) than it does about sex-positive BDSM. Such weirdos making catastrophic, bad-faith arguments about "gay Communism" is just them projecting onto a perfectly healthy and normal activity (similar to any kind of gender-non-conformity, really): "If drag queens read to kids at drag shows, they'll grow up gay!" or "If women read Gothic novels, they won't obey their husbands!" It's literally the *Hammer of Witches*/Original Sin argument updated by the same useful idiots the status quo always relies on: Christian men, meaning unremarkable cis-het white men (and their token subordinates).

The argument comes from a misunderstanding of how sex positivity and Gothic Communism work. One, it isn't unsupervised, it's exhibited; and two, people don't become gay (someone either is gay or they aren't, then decides to closet or not closet when they realize this about themselves). However, Gothic Communism *does* treat children (or beings treated like children; i.e., women) like they can be exposed to education regarding topics that are normally forbidden to them by the state: sex, drugs, and violence, etc. Likewise, we make canon gay not purely to fuck with its defenders, but to know where they stand and where they are at all times; i.e., so they don't become normalized within society. But we also do it to see who comes to their *defense* (moderates debating Nazis, for example). All are important ways to read the room and, more to the point, can be done online and from positions of relative safety (though also during live protests, of course).

The "climax" is tricky because it varies depending on the mode of the performance: physical, emotional and/or sexual. A pain-based climax, also called the vasovagal response (or "pain orgasm"), can make someone "dead to the world," so a sadist really has to recognize the signs when the masochist literally loses control. But at the same time, the masochist can communicate up to the tipping point, so it is always a team effort. As for sex, it isn't always involved in roleplay but if it is, someone who is "close" (regarding the orgasm) can let the other party know, but often you can "just tell" when someone's inside you and you're so close to them you practically operate as one (which opens the door to fun little discipline exercises: orgasm initiation [telling someone to cum] but also orgasm *denial*, also called "edging" as a sometimes-physical painful excursion known as "blue balls/blue clit[175]"). There can be an almost drug-like ecstasy to this intimacy, but also guilt at invoking rape fantasy (and other kinks/fetishes) in pursuit of

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[175] From Alexia Lafata's "Yes, Female Blue Balls Are Actually A Thing" (2015):

Everybody's familiar with the concept of blue balls: the fabled, gut-wrenching pain that results from not "finishing" after hooking up. To the many men whom I have personally given blue balls, let me just say that I apologize. I always thought you just told me you had blue balls to guilt me into giving you a blowjob to completion. It wasn't until the past few years that I realized the blue balls phenomenon is actually a real thing. And no, it's not because I kept hearing my sexually unsatisfied male friends complain about it; it's because I myself experienced it. The first time it really happened to me was in college. My boyfriend at the time found it fun to finger me up until the exact millisecond before I was about to have an orgasm and then stop. When done correctly, this teasing move was the most delicious torture on planet earth and eventually led to a massive, explosive finish [aka "edging"]. When done incorrectly, like if his finger slipped in a stray direction that completely threw off the rhythm and killed my orgasm game, I was left with the throbbing, hot pangs of discomfort that I could only call "blue clit." It felt like he'd engulfed my vagina in scorching flames without giving me a fire extinguisher (source).

the orgasm as something to tease, hence potentially frustrate[176]. It becomes a tightrope to walk, wherein you have to be in control enough not to harm your partner but prepare to hurt them a little if the sex gets appropriately rough and you nail their cervix (generally by accident) or fuck their pussy or asshole sore.

Usually, the adrenaline and excitement can make it a *little* hard to notice on either side of *that* equation. And sometimes you try different things because you're bored, but also used to what's normal, are physically stronger (from the repeated exertions of sex as a physical exercise) and both "broken in" and wanting to "push the envelope" a little. Ideally the love is mutual and the receiving side (which can switch sometimes) wants the giver to come, thus might take a little more "punishment" by them than usual. The recipient becomes the **service bottom**, and the same idea applies to the **service top**; i.e., serving each other through fulfillment of what both sides want and need to feel good physically, emotionally and/or sexually.

This includes during the sex or kink, but also afterwards during aftercare. Exquisite "torture" and demon lovers (of the Radcliffean sort) operate within the paradox of innuendo and playful forms, but it remains fallible insofar as comfort zones and boundaries are concerned. Both can suddenly change depending on one's headspace—their mood and mindset, or because the wind blows; which is classically linked to men's erections and women's "fickleness," but in practice affects different people differently depending on how they're "wired"—i.e., the comorbidity of congenital factors and conditioning that leads to various predator or prey behaviors. Some people give as good as they get; i.e., "fuck back" or "top from below." Some people look strong or tough, but are more obedient in the bedroom/general

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[176] Cuwu, for example, loved the idea of teasing me until I asked for sex, brattily saying "no" to me (with lots of eye contact) and this going back and forth until they expected me to throw them onto the bed and "ravish" them. Except they were always in control. When I stayed with them, we'd have sex while there were people in the other room (their roomies); if there was too much noise outside their door, Cuwu—naked under me with their legs spread and their glorious, naked body on full display—would raise a manicured finger, signaling me to slow down or stop and be quiet. But my cock would still be inside them, and they would be "milking" me the entire time with a Mona-Lisa smile on their doll-like face.

In short, it was a game, one that was—unbeknownst to perhaps both of us—conditioning me in relation to them. It got to the point that they had established near-total control over me even when we weren't in the same room/were separated by great gulfs of physical space—an effect not eased by my telling them I had a mommy dom kink, to which they had started to tell me when to cum and where: "in their mommy pussy" (despite them being younger than I was). Frankly, I loved it. Eventually, though, it became abusive (Cuwu, it turns out, had a history of abusing their partners), requiring me to break things off (easier said than done; they were like a drug and me, having rebounded at the time, was addicted to them); but it wasn't *all* bad. One, the mommy-dom sex was frankly out of this world; two, they gave me their copy of *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*, which has been a boundaries resource in shaping *Sex Positivity*'s own argumentation.

situations of private intimacy—i.e., big softies/gentle giants or pillow princesses. It's classically (canonically) coded as the angle and devil, but in reality you can have the aesthetic of the angle or witch through a gentle/strict dom that matches their ability to dish out "punishment" according to a sub whose own aesthetics can be whatever both parties agree upon, and who can take far more than the dom is able to handle (which is why aftercare[177] exists, in case the dom is asked to do perhaps a touch more than they're used to/comfortable with).

Cuwu, for example, liked to be choked, and knew the proper technique (surgical fingers over the veins and arteries in the neck) to get just the right amount of sleepiness; and they had to coach me beforehand (actually one time it was during sex, where I was squeezing their throat lightly as I fucked them and they smiled that wide, Sphinx-like smirk of theirs, wordlessly and lightly moving my hand higher up under their jaw to press my fingers against their vulnerable throat; i.e., with *just* the right amount of pressure to have an effect. When I tried it, they slowly nodded, letting me know I had done a good job). They also liked to be fucked in their sleep, a rather common form of consent-non-consent that is regularly discussed between even your more vanilla sex partners; i.e., "Sure you can fuck me before work. Just no anal and don't cum in my hair!" The idea, as usual, is a test of trust and established boundaries where one proves one's loyalty and trustworthiness by obeying the sub when no commands can actively be given.

It's worth noting that such behaviors are often popularized in vampire narratives, but also sex dolls and other motionless, "as dead" doll entities fetishized as naked[178] and helpless, usually female sacrifices—during sex-

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[177] In the case of Cuwu and myself, our relationship failed because there *was* no aftercare. They took and took and took until I could give no more (I used to read *The Hobbit* to them, and their favorite character was Smaug the Stupendous; over time, they started to act more and more like him, albeit inside the body of a small, incredibly magnetic and fuckable [to use an expression of theirs] "fuck puppy").

[178] The paradox of the doll is it generally isn't fully nude or bare. Its "vulnerable parts" (coded sites of rape in heteronormative theatre) are exposed (or drawn towards through Gothic veils) but the body and the scenery are rather dressed: for mood, of course; e.g., The Orion Experience's "All Dolled Up" (2023) expressing gender euphoria and a sense of being up to no good according to the Straights: "I don't wanna be a boy, I don't wanna be a girl […] Let's be gay, let's do crimes"—*thought* crimes, according to the Western idea of sin, but also doing it yourself instead of buying the usual commodified ghosts of the counterfeit that Queensrÿche's "Spreading the Disease" warned about on *Operation: Mindcrime* (1988):

16 and on the run from home
Found a job at Times Square, working live S&M shows
25 bucks a fuck, and John's a happy man
She wipes the filth away
And it's back on the streets again

positive scenarios, of course, but also in unironic demon sex scenarios enacted by fearful-fascinated white people enthralled during the ghost of the counterfeit (we'll talk more about sleep sex and vampirism in Volume One and Two; for now know that the undead tend to feed through a mechanism of paralysis associated with the freezing *gaze* to pin their victims in place). In sex-positive cases, the reclamation of control during calculated-risk experiments is generally conducted by lying still and inviting someone to inflict pleasurable pain, tickling and/or erogenous sensations on you while in a traditional feminine, passive/theatrical compromising position:

(artist: [Nat the Lich](#))

I've been on the giving and receiving end of these kinds of doll-like performances (with Zeuhl, I would lie still and ask them to tickle my feet; and Cuwu obviously asked me to fuck them in their sleep). It can be incredibly cathartic in terms of interrogating and performing unequal power in relation to one's own psychosexual trauma. And honestly it can just be a great deal of fun without the need for a strictly medicinal function (though

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[…] Father William saved her from the streets
She drank the lifeblood from the saviour's feet
She's Sister Mary now, eyes as cold as ice
He takes her once a week, on the alter like a sacrifice

Spreading the disease
Everybody needs
But no one wants to see

one is often present, of course). We'll examine more examples of the doll as an undead device of sexual healing and power integration in Volume Two (exhibits 38a/38b1, 2, 3, and 4).

   These complex experiments can lead to some pretty bizarre requests (which are generally symbolized in chimeric or Gothicized art depicting the female/feminine position of appreciative peril as a monstrous, fetishized one). The simple fact is that control and the inflicting of pain is a tenuous proposition, and through the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune[179]" that Capitalism bombards us with, people *can* react differently per exchange. Under such "tricky" circumstances, open negotiation and "compromise" are invaluable; i.e., *not* compromising each other's values and human rights, but doing for each other what makes both of you feel good: "What's your favorite poz-ish? […] it's not my favorite but I'll do it for you![180]" Same narrative arc: rising action, tension, climax, resolution, epilogue. People are conditioned by media to be expected to give or receive power exchange dressed up as particular theatrical aesthetics that appear unethical, but whose canon of war and rape can be camped by two (or more) people who love each other enough to create a happy reunion in reclaimed language: "Take me, I'm yours!" while they submit (or milk you with kegels and fuck you back like a tiger) during the assorted paradoxes of pleasure and pain: "Hurt, not harm"; "It hurts so good!"; and non-harmful pain as pleasurable unto itself; and asexual forms of pleasure and pain achieved through the same plastic

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[179] From *Hamlet*'s suicide soliloquy:

   To be or not to be—that is the question:
   Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
   The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
   Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
   And, by opposing, end them ([source](#)).

[180] From Tenacious D's "Fuck Her Gently" (2001):

   Sometimes you've got to squeeze
   Sometimes you've got to say please
   Sometimes you got to say hey
   I'm gonna fuck you softly
   I'm gonna screw you gently
   I'm gonna hump you sweetly
   I'm gonna ball you discreetly

Cuwu once sung this song for me after we made a sex tape at a motel, arching their back and thrusting their ass into the air while happily singing along to Jack Black's closing lines:

   And then I'm gonna love you completely
   And then I'll fucking fuck you discreetly
   And then I'll fucking bone you completely
   But then
   I'm gonna fuck you hard ([source](#)).

dynamics of physical, emotional and/or sexual intimacy (and crossover, with ace people dating non-ace people to idiosyncratically determine sexual/asexual compatibility in any relationship).

However, there's a difference between the private medicinal practicing of rape fantasy and public dogma; things don't stay on the canvas and if someone is harmed by a particular member of a particular group it *can* be weaponized. The idea is to help people work within private, guilty psychosexual pleasure and wish fulfillment that *doesn't* contribute to systemic trauma. But rather undoes its making through the proletarian reclamation of traumatic language (of or from) that transitions away from the profit motive's exploitation thereof. For example, I'm a service top and fawn in the face of external threats of harm (to me or by me[181] towards others) that have been internalized by people around me, but also my own complex prey mechanisms, revenge/rape fantasies and quest for power through the palliative Numinous; i.e., wanting to feel like I'm in control, which requires the generation of things that trigger *my* prey mechanisms but must be used and taught responsibly to avoid becoming dogma: feeling naked and exposed, but not actually being in danger as a performative but also societal/pedagogic balancing act. "Hurt, not harm." The exorcism, then, has to be of the systemic implementation of harm through dogma (my inner demons will die with me) through a raising of class/culture consciousness through emotional and Gothic intelligence.

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[181] Early in our relationship, I asked Zeuhl if my cock was hurting them; i.e., that I fucked their pussy too hard with it. They replied that I "fucked their pussy just fine," that they liked it hard. Nevertheless, all of this was overshadowed by my trans woman's shame of the penis—*my* penis—as a canonical symbol of rape and violence that I *never* wanted to be imposed upon others; i.e., I didn't want to become like my father and feared that my penis, when invoked, would somehow make that horror—however absurd (that's dysphoria/dysmorphia for you)—come true.

People forget that kink, fetish, BDSM and aesthetics aren't just a codified belief system but a *set of instructions* that exist and reinforce/rewrite themselves on- and off-canvas. A common problem with vanilla people, then, is they are compelled through heteronormativity to *stay* vanilla through art/porn that they make, consume, or patron through endorsement; i.e., unironically assume everything else is chocolate and harmful, while also sitting within spheres of damaging sexuality and false intimacy that lead to toxic (unhealthy, harmful) relationships in physical, emotional and/or sexual forms that, unto themselves, become more problematic art to shove along; e.g., the unironic rituals of power and sex in *Rosemary's Baby* or *Midsommar* (2019), whereupon the horror of the devil-sex ritual play's out like a modern-day twisting of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown": the in-group of puritanical "villagers"—through their moral panic and self-imposed righteousness—*are* the devil worshippers they see in actual out-groups. In other words, the in-group are the ones unironically sacrificing virgins, albeit through the harmful wish fulfillment and bad play of internalized canonical nostalgia: the opera, fairytale, black Western, Gothic novel, penny dreadful, or some such pulp (sometimes "elevated to respectable levels" by "respectable" white ladies like Ann Radcliffe gentrifying the genre). They're the demon lover or torture scene without irony or camp; i.e., the menticided rapist harming others.

As such, "basic bitches" become badly conditioned by canon; i.e., to enact bad play as intended, which spills over into their personal, private social-sex lives, ignominiously colonizing themselves and their partner by

being like Dorian Grey: taking things at face value, without campy nuance or irony thus accidentally (or deliberately) hurting themselves or the other person/people involved because they're sexually frustrated, repressed and alienated from good education/emergent forms of play. Sex education includes education regarding the societal/theatrical elements of roleplay, kink, and BDSM, including "harmful" forms. You have to camp them, but this must be taught to minimize risk and encourage the health of concentric relationships: the couple, but also the community through good education as self-care, thus community care (and vice versa). We're not just sex machines to put quarters in and bad sex comes out; but we *can* be taught to give or receive abuse as coded in all the usual heteronormative ways through canon (rape and war through hypermasculine dominance of a battered hyperfeminine). This must be camped and generally requires a paradox well at home in the Gothic; i.e., stemming from older dialogics between authors like Edmund Burke's terror

> It is interesting to note that for Burke, terror – fear of pain – was a terror mixed with a paradoxical delight. Ostensibly, this was because the sublime observer is not actually threatened. Safety in the midst of danger produces a thrilling pleasure ([source](#): Audronė Raškauskienė's *Gothic Fiction: The Beginnings* (2009)

and Ann Radcliffe's

terror and horror

Gothic schools begot from the Neo-Gothic period (the 1790s, in particular, between Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis) largely concerned with looking—specifically showing and hiding violence, monsters, taboo sex and other abject things (this lends it a voyeuristic, exhibitionist quality). Defined posthumously and surreptitiously[182] by Radcliffe in her 1826 essay, "On The Supernatural In Poetry":

> Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them […] and where lies the great difference between terror and horror but in

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[182] The dialog is expressed between two fictional characters having a debate; i.e., the standard-issue *nom-de-plume* relayed through prosaic anonymity to perverse Radcliffe's public image. She waited until she was dead to publish it.

the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil? ([source](#)).

as something to regard with fear and awe, but also humor and delight: "Sex is a joke in heaven?" Linda Fiorentino asks Alan Rickman, in *Dogma* (1999). "From what I understand, it's mostly a joke down here too," he replies.

([source](#): Kevin Smith, via Mayer Nissim's "Kevin Smith Hails His Voice of God, Alan Rickman: 'He was a HUGE cauldron of win,'" 2016.)

Also like Rickman, these BDSM fantasies are can't physically hurt us—are "as anatomically correct as a Ken doll" (or a barbie doll; exhibit 1a1a3)—but there *are* historical-material consequences to their competing praxial opposites. *Radcliffe's* gargoyles don't just stay in her books, and neither do ours in the media that *we* create/play out in our daily lives and sometimes share with other people as extensions of our bodies, labor and sexual/gender

expressions. In the Gothic tradition, all of these things get up and walk around, but can be for good or ill: for class war or betrayal.

Before we consider more examples of camp during the "camp map," we owe it to ourselves to consider how the game is played "wrong" as outlined above; i.e. through harmful *heroic* arrangements of power and performance that are taught to weird canonical nerds through canonical psychomachy, psychosexuality and psycho*praxis* (oppositional praxis). In turn, they become like "killer babies" in adult bodies (e.g., Broly from *Dragon Ball Z* [1989]—exhibit 39c2), having internalizing their praxial role and executing it with extreme prejudice: the brave warrior spots the small-and-weak (anything) and paradoxically infers them as strong-and-dangerous at the same time (the fear of revenge by the underclass) rooted in dogmatic markers of sin, vice, passion, etc; i.e., the (from the manifesto tree)

> culturally appreciative, sexually descriptive irony of Gothic counterculture's reverse abjection with sex-positive, demon BDSM, kink and fetishization; as well as asexuality and the ironic ontological ambiguities of trans, non-binary, intersex, and drag existence.

Such bullies see this not as something open to debate, but an enemy to censor by hunting them down and "erasing" them. So, the state proponent chases down the correct-incorrect, inside/outside imaginary threat during us-versus-them-as-praxis, corners/kettles them, and dominates them like a man does; i.e., subjugates them in a variety of ways through Man Box culture and "prison sex" mentalities (rape/compelled sex, murder and general abuse in too many forms to easily list).

To that, I want to examine the praxial inertia present within the canonical mythic structure's artistic (crypto)mimesis: war isn't just badass, but sacred, as is killing the monster and getting the girl within conventional violence and its expected fetishizing and dimorphic gendered roles. Unlike the weird iconoclastic nerd, weird canonical nerds aren't taught to handle power—its performance and materiel—in any way except unironic violence; e.g., the FPS's "bullet by holocaust." Because they must dominant and kill as Western men classically have been trained to do for centuries, they wind up feeling owed more than their fair share. In their eyes, they're not just special, they're the **ultimate warrior**/badass thus exempt from judgement; they "saved the world," thus deserve everything the world can give them (or they can take from it) and more.

Overcoming Praxial Inertia: Straw Dogs and Canon's Teeth in the Night

"She's a very freaky girl, the kind you don't take home to mother!"

—Rick James; "Superfreak," on Street Songs *(1981)*

Praxial inertia is the resistance to state-sponsored scapegoats in monomythic stories, the oldest written example in English being Grendel and Grendel's mother. The gears of war and rape must forever turn, and their gentrified slaughter (no one says "fuck" in Tolkien's polite rapes of the underclass) helps grease the wheels and deaden the mind to its humanity in service of capital. While this is the girl boss/war boss' refrain in defense of capital, it is also a common sentiment of "Jewish revenge" interrogating power in the Gothic mode's acknowledgment of these things as hopelessly indiscrete[183]; i.e., revenge of the zombie underclass rising up from hell to revisit their black revenge on the usual white (skin and moral superiority) conquers of them and theirs—on the trenches of reality reflected in Gothic tableaux:

> …Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
> Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry 'Hold, hold!' ([source](#): *Macbeth*).

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[183] Conversely the infamous discretions of Academia waste a surprising amount of time commenting on all of these matters as separate from each other (requiring us to remake the connection in our own work: there is no outside-text, nerds); i.e., to be polite when talking about rape, murder and death and refusing to apply them to our own lives in any shape or form (I will give some examples of this throughout the book, especially in relation to my time spent at MMU).

Within these complicated spheres, a woman/monstrous-feminine acts like a man for many reasons; for the state, there is only one: she is evil and must die. Rain or shine, that's what the men who run the show want; "And the bands played on…[184]"

(exhibit 1a1a1f1: As Hamlet famously said about his mother, "Tis an unweeded garden grown to seed. Things gross and rank in nature possess it merely." Despite

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[184] From Saxon's "And the Bands Played On" (1981):

> Just before dawn in the cold light
> We came out of the night
> A great expectation from the man who ran the show
> Will it rain, will it snow, will it shine, we don't know
> Are there clouds up in the sky
> We sat in the sun, woah-oh-oh
> And the bands played on ([source](#)).

The white, cis-het, "heavy metal Viking" of the NWOBHM (New Wave of British Heavy Metal; e.g., Iron Maiden, Saxon, Angel Witch, etc) was shamelessly aped and pilfered by countless imitations of the status quo through its usual instigators: the white cis-het man, specifically the WASP, as profiting off the same imaginary dialogic (which Spinal Tap would make fun of in the mid-1980s. To be fair, some bands were worse about it, especially Iron Maiden as shamelessly capitalizing off Satanic Panic with *The Number of the Beast*, 1982—i.e., as the persons least likely to be effected by it).

the Prince of Denmark's flagrant sexism, there is awesome power in the monstrous-feminine as a revolutionary force; as Archaic Mothers with archaic babies, they throw a wrench in the proverbial works according to a variety of ways [strict/gentle, damsel/demon]. Yet, as something to canonically "embrace," the male hero views nature as the perpetual victim/terrorist that threatens business-as-usual—i.e., embodied as monstrous-feminine, thus correct-incorrect according to her not being a man but also something for men to possess and dominate according to ancient doctrines: anything not the [white, cis-het, male Christian] hero is his by divine right. The ancient enemy of the classical West was Medusa through witches or Amazons, but also her "wandering womb" as the primordial site of disorder/chaos; i.e., Pandora's "box," whence the demons of nature spilled into Man's domain. Mother Nature is both a slut and a demon, something to fear and treasure but also slay and possess by a conqueror as the reaper slashes the harvest—i.e., as mere property to control and do with as he pleases, synonymizing sex with harm, with violation, with parasitic impregnation. This means killing anything that resists or is different: Grendel, but also Grendel's mother, the bride of Cain as an Amazon guerrilla, a hysterical backstabber whose wandering womb is heretical to his God-ordained might: He's literally the strongest because God said so, and it plays out in a very <u>*deus-ex-machina*</u> *kayfabe narrative:*

> *Grimly biding time, Grendel's mother,*
> *Monstrous hell-bride, brooded on her wrongs.*
> *She had been forced down into fearful waters,*
> *The cold depths, after Cain had killed*
> *His father's son, felled his own*
> *Brother with the sword. Banished an outlaw,*
> *Marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,*
> *Shunning company and joy. And from Cain there sprang[185]*
> *Misbegotten spirits, among them Grendel*
> *The banished and accursed, due to come to grips*
> *With that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.*
> *The monster wrenched and wrestled with him*
> *But Beowulf was mindful of his mighty strength,*
> *The wondrous gifts God had showered on him:*
> *He relied for help on the Lord of All,*
> *On His care and favor[186]. So he overcame the foe,*

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[185] The authors(s) of the poem seem to be of two minds about Gendel—both birthed from his mother but also coming directly from Cain, *vis-à-vis* Zeus pulling Metis from his godly forehead.

[186] In short, Beowulf is like Doomguy from *Doom* using cheat codes (the invincibility code literally called "god mode").

Brought down the hell-brute. Broken and bowed,
Outcast from all sweetness, the enemy of mankind
Made for his death-den. But now his mother
Had sallied forth on a savage journey,
Grief-racked and ravenous, desperate for revenge.

She came to Heorot. There, inside the hall,
Danes lay asleep, earls who would soon endure
A great reversal once Grendel's mother
Attacked and entered. Her onslaught was less
Only by as much as an Amazon warrior's
In less than an armored man's
When the hefted sword, its hammered edge
And gleaming blade slathered in blood,
Razes the sturdy boar-ridge off a helmet.
Then in the hall, hard-honed swords
Were grabbed from the bench, many a broad shield
Lifted and braced; there was little thought of helmets
Or woven mail when they woke in terror.
The hell-dam was in panic, desperate to get out,
In mortal terror the moment she was found.
She had pounced and taken one of the retainers
In a tight hold, then headed for the fen.
To Hrothgar, this man was the most beloved
Of the friends he trusted between the two seas.
She had done away with a great warrior,
Ambushed him at rest[187].

Beowulf was elsewhere ([source](): [Beowulf](), translation: Seamus Heaney).

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[187] "While they're praying, sire?" / "Best time" ([source](): *the Peter the Great* [1986] TV miniseries). Entitled men forget that all's fair in love and war. Notice how they *only* cry "foul!" when the game isn't fair *for them*—i.e., when the enemy invents a guerrilla tactic they cannot safely anticipate and check ahead of time (save by pre-emptive strikes, of course; i.e., Imperialism and false flag operations by which to play out *Beowulf* on the global stage).

[artist: *A Baby Pinecone*]

The historical-material reality of Grendel's suspiciously Satanic-sounding mother is ordinary people being placed into the out-group by the in-group—i.e., less hag-horror in the sense of actual withered hags [the furies] and more the ancient mother goddess [the Archaic Mother] as embodied in AFAB persons and viewed fearfully by men as devious shapeshifters that could be anywhere, inside-outside anyone [a killer impostor that is instantly fatal upon encountering; e.g., the T-1000 disguised as an innocent housewife]. While the stigma applies to anything remotely female or incorrectly male, the <u>redhead</u> *classically evokes the presence of pagan power and Sapphic energies. She embodies nature, and nature is something for Beowulf's hauntologized clones to kettle/box-in, then rape and kill for "their own" God-given glory in bread-and-circus-type stories [with her predictable revenge—at becoming like them for the death of her family and loved ones—being seen as*

cowardly and illegitimate in the eyes of the state and its kayfabe monopoly of violence; i.e., the back-and-forth cycle of reactive abuse]. It's not just "boys will be boys"; the pussy looks like a cave to conquer by men according to men during rites of passage that have been baked into our culture as fundamental to capital. It's Manifest Destiny in action—challenged by the simple fact that God is an invention, a cruel joke to abuse others with through the rise of Capitalism's Cartesian Revolution and resultant maps of conquest [exhibit 1a1a1h2a1]. It becomes not just a scribble of Old-English runes, but a harmful game spawned into endless copies of itself: the power fantasy as Warrior Jesus' perennial resurrection, raping and killing the world as monstrous-feminine, "gendered at every turn" according to cartography as a technology of conquest that fits into the ludologized scheme:

> *[Francis Bacon, the father of modern science,] argued that "science should as it were torture nature's secrets out of her." Further, the "empire of man" should penetrate and dominate the "womb of nature." […] The invention of Nature and Society was gendered at every turn. The binaries of Man and Woman, Nature and Society, drank from the same cup. Nature, and its boundary with Society, was "gyn/ecological" from the outset ([source](): A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things).*

The kingdom is threatened; call Beowulf [or the Ghostbusters] out of the mythical past to slay what ails the king and the land, the uncanny home as "rotten" [as Hamlet put it, in Shakespeare's parody of the hero/murder mystery] and needing to be restored through great destruction [sold to the masses, of course]:

Uncanny

> *From Freud's <u>unheimlich</u>, meaning "unhomely," the uncanny actually has many different academic applications. One of the most famous (and canonically outmoded) is the liminal/parallel space (the "danger disco/cyberpunk," exhibit 15b2; the haunted music video, 43a; the Nostromo from <u>Alien</u>, 64c). Another common example is the <u>uncanny valley</u>, which— while generally applied to animation techniques—can also apply to ghosts, egregores and other Gothic imitations (the unfriendly disguise/pastiche, exhibit 43b; the friendly, iconoclastic variant 43c) or humanoid likenesses that fail to "pass the test" (for a diegetic example of this concept, [refer to the Voight-Kampff test from Blade Runner](), 1982). In the Gothic sense, the animate-inanimate presents the subject as now-alive but once-not, but also faced within bad copies they cannot safely distinguish themselves from; e.g., the knight from <u>Hollow Knight</u> (exhibit 40h1) but also the xenomorph (exhibit 60d) and living latex, leather and death fetishes (exhibits exhibit 9b2, 50b, 60e1, 101c2), or golems/succubae (exhibits*

38c1b/51b1), etc, as one subtype of animated miniature whose ghost of the counterfeit is historically-materially abject. The intimation is one of death in proximity with sensations that we are merely clay simulacra within the Gothic spell and that, at any moment, the spell could end and our dancing in the ruins suddenly stop as we cease to be once more; motionless we become, as Monty Python puts it, "ex-parrots."

To preserve the image of male hegemony, modern-day heroes will inject themselves with whatever serum they require to manufacture an edge over women as a false binary [e.g., the ghost of Eugene Sandow and his imaginary antiquity, exhibit 7a]. This mad science is what Robert Matheson and Mary Shelley mercilessly lampooned in <u>Frankenstein</u> and <u>I am Legend</u> [1954] as the fearsome and outdated legend of the rapist-murderer presented as a scientist of cold, "benevolent" reason [or infantile sports goon grown in a test tube; e.g., X-24 from <u>Logan</u>, 2017]—who is, in truth, just an entitled, cruel nerd. Manufactured conflict under Capitalism involves compelled performances of anything and everything [masks, uniforms, weapons, handcuffs and other binding implements, labels of power and its delivery from cops unto victims, etc] that weaponize weird canonical nerds through projection—i.e., onto various theatrical personas: sexy or profoundly hideous killers, detectives, warriors, or doctors.

(artist: unknown)

Class/culture war is a wreckage train of parody and pastiche, whose remediated praxis develops endlessly on either side; i.e., a timeless, bottomless domain of paradox and hyperbolic fetish and cliché, where manmade monsters from beast factories have been built to guide the discourse for or against the state [the Base]. It is <u>canonical</u> praxis and its proponents that revolutionary undead [Shelley's Creature and Matheson's zombie-vampires] reject inside the Gothic Communist's doubled scheme/competing castle of camp; i.e., as operative posthuman entities who also reject Renaissance Humanism and Cartesian dualism in favor of a more humane world for all life viewed unfavorably as undead-demonic [we'll return to these ideas frequently in Volume Two]: the weird iconoclastic nerds' reclamation of the medieval torture device in all its forms. Performed by two or more parties that know each other, their invigilation is patently meant to progress away from its essentialized, harmfully unironic police function [and the universal function of assumed roleplay and consent] and towards catharsis/informed consent displayed in ironic forms of "rape" and "violence" [which we'll unpack more during the symposium].)

Obviously, our aim is to camp *Beowulf*, thus "make it gay" (e.g., Chris Hemsworth's Thor as a dumb, happy "golden retriever" himbo whose hammer—the violent source of his hypermasculine power—is called "the destroyer" as a rather surreal, dumb metaphor to his penis that obviously can be lampooned; as is the idea of his strength stored in his muscles, unspent semen or long flowing hair). Beyond human examples, camping Beowulf includes making hum cute in ways weird canonical nerds would cry foul as "emasculating" (e.g., this little bat as the *real* teeth in the night; [source skeet](): Keira Queerhouse, 2023). This will take many forays into and out of the shadow zone's more womb-like areas; i.e., lots of naughty-naughty demon sex, but also just kink and/or sex with atypical arrangements of power as it is commonly envisioned:

(artist: *Guilty Merchant*[188])

In turn, roleplay becomes campy and descriptive sexuality becomes something to appreciate for its performative irony in silly-but-sweet dialogs ("I think I'm "succeeding" right now!" / "Are you sure? Maybe you'll have to fuck mommy's pussy a few more times!" / "Good idea; better safe than sorry!"—based off an actual conversation that Jadis[189] and I had in bed during sex).

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[188] The above image uncannily showcases the kind of relationship that Jadis and I had, when it was good: Me, them, and their ex living under the same roof—with me fucking their mommy pussy while our metamour calmly went about their own business in the background. Jadis very much used sex to establish control, and cosmetically I was their "little artist boy" (still being in the closet at the time) who they cherished for my "stockings" of leg hair that stopped right before my shapely buttocks (similar to Lilith, from the Bible).

[189] Jadis loved this particular quote I would always make before/during sex: "Good call!" It was originally from a Lisa Ann/Johnny Sins porno called "Rough Rider" (2007) where Johnny's wife can't handle his giant cock, so it's Lisa the cougar to the rescue! By the time Lisa says the line, she and Johnny had already been having sex for about thirty minutes.

And yet, praxial inertia so often gets in the way of a beautiful friendship. Said inertia is, as I envision it, the resistance to socio-political change in relation to *Pax Americana*'s "greatest" heroes. Though it stems from a far older tradition before global Capitalism, this hero worship encapsulates us-versus-them as an eternal, essential conflict presently expressed in neoliberal forms (especially videogames and their parallel cinematic counterparts) between good and evil. The common thread is a heteronormative, hypermasculine/monster-masculine versus the corrupt and the monstrous-feminine as coming from hell, the void, the shadow zone ("the Almighty's enemy" being classically a Christian's heretical foe, but really anything "corrupt" or demonized as monstrous-feminine in the eyes of the status quo; i.e., that which followed the "fall" of Rome and the various continuations and reformations of old power structures in order to preserve themselves). Hell spawn, deviants and witches—it's the male action hero's endless job to send them all back and keep the kingdom "pure" (all in service of the state and the elite, of course); or, as the image below reads, "They are rage, brutal, without mercy… But you, you will be worse. Rip and tear until it is done!"

After a variety of positions, he lays her on the bed and eats her out. Ready to have another go, suddenly Johnny stands up and says, "I just wanna make sure she's properly lubed"; to which Lisa replies, "Good call!"

Lisa—bless her—not only sounds kind of "surfer bro," here, but is built like an absolute *tank* that clearly can take everything that Johnny (fairly chiseled and hung like Peter North, minus the hair) can dish out. For all the shit Jadis did to me, this little inside joke is something I can look back on and smile about.

They are rage, brutal, without mercy. But you. You will be worse. Rip and tear, until it is done.
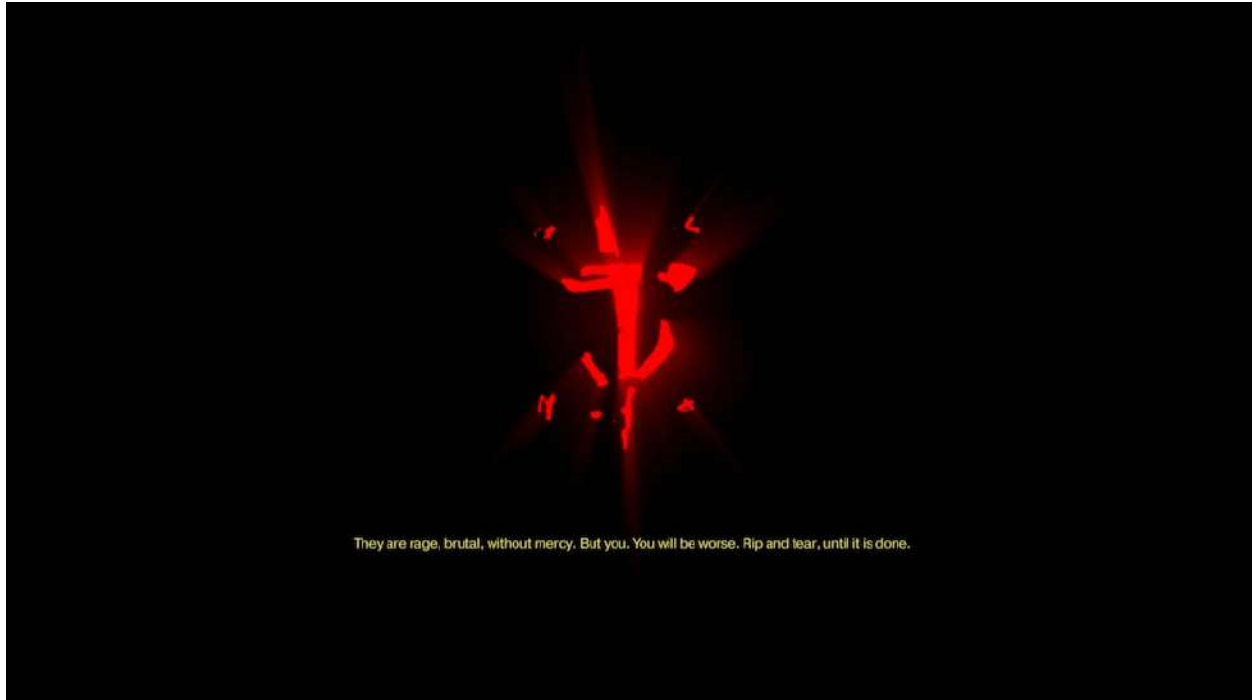
I'm fully aware that the original line was from a terrible *Doom* comic[190] ([source](#): Patrick Klepek's "*Doom'*s Got A Reference to a Comic Book Meme from

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[190] "The Doom Comic" (1996):

Sometime in 1996 a couple of guys got together and smoked what was apparently a large amount of crack and then injected pure heroin into their eyes and then proceeded to create what is now known only as "the Doom comic." Say those three words (in that order) to any Doomer and they'll probably respond with one of the many taglines made famous by the comic ["blind" vs "perceptive" quoting* in action]. Throughout its sixteen pages of madness the main character (the Doomguy) utters many inane phrases while killing various hellspawn without so much as a second thought. Why he feels the need to talk to himself the entire time we'll never know, but I'm guessing he was smoking what the authors of the book were ([source](#): Doomworld).

Doomworld's more-than-likely white, cis-het male audience show their true colors when discussing the point of the comic through anything other than dumb reverence:

One of my most favorite parts in the comic is when the marine inadvertently falls into some radioactive sludge and suddenly, in the middle of a massive killing spree, starts to preach about how humans are ruining the environment and how we'll be leaving a destroyed planet to our children and our children's children. The whole panel is such a random segment from the rest of the comic, which provides wholesome family fun (in the form of killing shit) and then goes off on a tangential environmental crusade, albeit a pretty half-assed one ([source](#)).

The mistrust of whitewashed environmentalism, insofar [as the alt-right's mistrust of the establishment is not misplaced](#) (Bad Empanada's "Why Liberals Can't Counter Conspiracy Theories, 2023). But they're still genocide apologists, themselves (and the marine is absolutely right, you chudwads; piss and moan more about him breaking the fourth wall, why don't you?).

1996," 2016); i.e., "just a joke" that has since replaced itself with a more serious neoconservatism that—four years after *Doom* 2016—became conspicuously stupid like the old *Doom* comic, but *fascistically** so (on- and offstage). This subchapter will look at several notable examples of the *unironic* Beowulf—be that largely straightforward, or silly but nevertheless an endorsement of the status quo—as well poring over double standards present within token minorities and victims of the hero class as expendable assets (straw dogs tied to a larger valor-centric structure); we'll also consider the palliative function when reclaiming psychosexuality as a complex, monstrous mode of expression that frequently revolves around sin, hunger and the chase of power and control in some shape or form (for canon and iconoclasm, both).

*As I write in "Doom Eternal (2020) Review: No Girls or Trans People Allowed":

> *In these latter days of nostalgia mania, Doom Eternal shamelessly panders to an older audience. I don't mean that in the sense of gore and violence; I mean it's literally made for an audience that craves an older time. Not just demons and castles (though it has plenty of those), but those from the 1980s and '90s. Those decades were a time of fixed gender assignment, where men were heroes and girls were damsels-in-distress. […] However, there are no damsels in the game. In fact, there are no women period, save the Khan Maker, the Whiplash and Dr. Ellena Richardson. […] Ellena is completely off-screen. There, she renounces her position as a scientist to essentialize the Slayer as a god—one whose strength is necessary for the survival of civilization. This is hardly "neutral." Instead, traditional roles are reinstated through times of imaginary crisis. In Doom Eternal, the one human female character is an invisible cheerleader lusting after the protagonist while enforcing traditional gender roles. She might as well be an uneducated housewife kissing her husband on the cheek before he marches off to war ([source](#)).*

First up, let's consider our manly heroes and their insatiable bloodlust for "demons" to kill: "Die, monster! You don't belong in this world!" As shall hopefully become abundantly clear as this book continues, rape and death are essential to Capitalism and Imperialism (the highest stage of Capitalism[191]). Whereas Capitalism invokes the monomyth through centrism and centrism is Capitalism in

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[191] From Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism" (a placeholder title, 1916; [source](#): Marxist Internet Archive).

crisis, fascism is a hero warrior cult centered around death[192] or Capitalism in decay. It is Imperialism brought home to the empire, the proverbial chickens come home to roost during the Imperial Boomerang's return. Except, as we shall see, it/they never left, nor did their hypermasculine rituals of death, theft, and rape.

(exhibit 1a1a1f2: The male action hero and his hauntologies are incredibly dumb on purpose, but still have room for problematic elements and their endorsement. Indeed, weird canonicals nerd cherish the loud stupidity and strange inability to say anything of substance beyond "It's a movie!" while venerating the privilege of their [frequently white, cis-het male] heroes as a kind of <u>protected class</u> in its own right: the right to prove one's manhood and get the girl by killing the big bad monster during or after a siege. Generally they have help, but the final duel is always between the hero and the villain, man-to-man. We'll critique three in this exhibit and the next that I enjoy and grew up with, but do not endorse: <u>Predator</u> [1987], <u>Army of Darkness</u> [1993] and <u>Contra</u> [1987].
I'm happy to rain on the target audience's parade because their panoply of sexism and xenophobia constitutes a foreign plot handled by priviliged, entitled men who "look the part" and love "badass stories[193]." To this, <u>Predator</u> is essentially a

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[192] Umberto Eco's 11th point: Everybody is educated to become a hero. "In Ur-Fascist ideology, heroism is the norm. This cult of heroism is strictly linked with the cult of death" (<u>source</u>).

[193] E.g., Heinrich Himmler hired Reinhardt Heydrich because Heydrich looked Aryan and because both men read the same cheesy *Americana*, specifically "cheap crime fiction and spy novels" (<u>source</u>: Behind the Bastard's "Part One: The Young, Evil God of Death: Reinhard Heydrich," 2023—timestamp:

neoliberal retelling of <u>Beowulf</u> with bullets. Set in the Global South, a group of hypermasculine mercenaries encounter a Grendel-esque monster. Described as "the demon who makes trophies of men," the hunter makes short work of our seemingly invincible "Spear Danes," promptly picking them off, one by one [the Austrian Oak plays Dutch, our own Arnold Schwarzenegger emulating the squint-eyed stare of Clint Eastwood during the movie's infamous salvo scene].

It's an understatement to say the movie's violence is hyperbolic. Yet "perceptive" parody requires more than big explosions or an awareness of action tropes and <u>Predator</u> has little else to offer. It <u>doesn't</u> critique the us-versus-them violence in any sex-positive way and its over-the-top carnage makes zero antiwar hard stances; in short, the film is nothing but <u>unironic</u> war and American revenge. The Americans call themselves a "rescue team, not assassins"; but the moment they see one hostage killed, they massacre as many brown and Russian people as they can, all without taking a scratch themselves [the ghost of the counterfeit to entire Vietnam villages being massacred by American soldiers]. All in all, the Americans are the good guys, and the CIA raises some eyebrows but otherwise gets a pass; fuck the Guatemalans and the Russians: you kill one of ours, we'll kill a hundred of yours!" In other words, it's business-as-usual. Then, a foreign plot proves their hyperbolic violence necessary: the imaginary monster in a never-ending arms race. <u>Predator</u> is <u>blind</u> parody/pastiche—a big, dumb "apolitical" cartoon that translates perfectly to the "run and gun" videogame format [<u>Contra</u>, below] but also similar settler-colonial stories set in other medieval/uncivilized locales [other than the jungle/Stone Age's myth of the dark savage continent].

1:11:48). In other words, their very violent worldview was founded on the same cheap, pulpy ephemera that fueled *Tolkien*'s imagination:

> Tolkien's world is certainly not groundless. It is traditional, "borrowing from the power and import of his sources - the 'middangeard' of 'Beowulf,' the grim and brutal cosmos of 'The Volsunga Saga,' the cold and bitter realm of the 'Eddas,' all of which left their traces and worked their sway over his own imagination'" ([source](): Influences of the Germanic and Scandinavian Mythology in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien," 1983).

To this, the same over-the-top blindness goes for Sam Raimi's <u>Army of Darkness</u>. Taking place during a siege, Raimi—and by extension his hero, Ash Williams— abandon any attempt at serious or torturous horror [which isn't always sex- positive, to be fair]. Together, the director and his star lampoon their <u>own</u> franchised formula; i.e., a spoof of itself that emulates the larger-than-life braggadocio of the male action as inspired by <u>Beowulf,</u> but also contemporaries of <u>Beowulf</u> such as King Arthur [originally a Welsh legendary hero from roughly the 7th century onwards] and serious/campy stories that came afterwards: Miguel de Cervantes' <u>Don Quixote</u> and various Neo-Gothic novels like Matthew Lewis' <u>The Monk</u> [1796], Charlotte Dacre's <u>Zofloya</u> [1806] or Jane Austen's <u>Northanger Abbey</u> [1817]; Mark Twain's <u>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</u> [1889], <u>The Adventures of Robin Hood</u> [1938] with Errol Flynn, and <u>The Princess Bride</u> [either the 1987 movie or the 1973 novel, by William Goldman].
Considering the bevy of palimpsests and obvious cultural inspirations, there's nothing "new" in the film. This includes the entitled sexism of its male hero. As I write in "Valorizing the Idiot Hero" [2020]:

> *By refusing to punish Ash, <u>Army of Darkness</u> rewards the idiotic hero. Ash is simultaneously mocked and adored by his "subjects" (the fans). Amongst them, his sexist behavior can be delivered with impunity. Impunity is the apex of privilege. I say this in regards to consumers whose Ash-worship is perpetually reinforced by spiritual successors […] This kind of escapism reinforces sexist views conveyed elsewhere—by impressionable young men who grow into "kings," courted and controlled by their own power trip. / That's ultimately what Raimi offers. He certainly doesn't use the material to critique Ash's misogyny. Instead, he's helped perpetuate it ([source](#)).*

Raimi's film is sexist, loud and self-aware, but also annoyingly "apolitical" in ways that valorize Ash. A tremendously stupid Don Quixote, he's in love with his own scripted legend and celebrated for doing what has been prescribed to him and other boys since <u>Beowulf</u>: getting his way while being incredibly incompetent and impossibly perfect at the same time [the film even has a windmill for him to tilt at]. Simply put, Ash gets to be a sexist pig <u>and</u> total dumbass, yet still lives out the boyish idea of the monomyth as "self-made."
In truth, Ash "fails up" like Errol Flynn did: through scripted success delivered with a wink as it coasts on by. He "kills" the monster and "saves" the world, getting the girl for no other reason than he was chosen according to legend—<u>because he was a man</u>. It's standard-issue wish fulfillment, with legions of young men laughing out loud and saying, "He's so awesome!" while secretly [or not so secretly] wishing it were them. The enjoyment is vicarious, a cuckold's fantasy that touts its ancient double standards all over the place: He's Donald Trump with a gun, a sexual

predator handed everything on a silver platter—i.e., the harmfully silly paradox of the sexual predator as a parody of their former selves.)

Such heroes are romanticized in the oral, medieval tradition, but express a great, animalized hunger that conflates coerced sex and actual violence with powerful berserk behaviors; i.e., whose colonizer as pitted against a weak/strong dangerous animal-colonized's own appetite/"teeth in the night": dog-eat-dog.
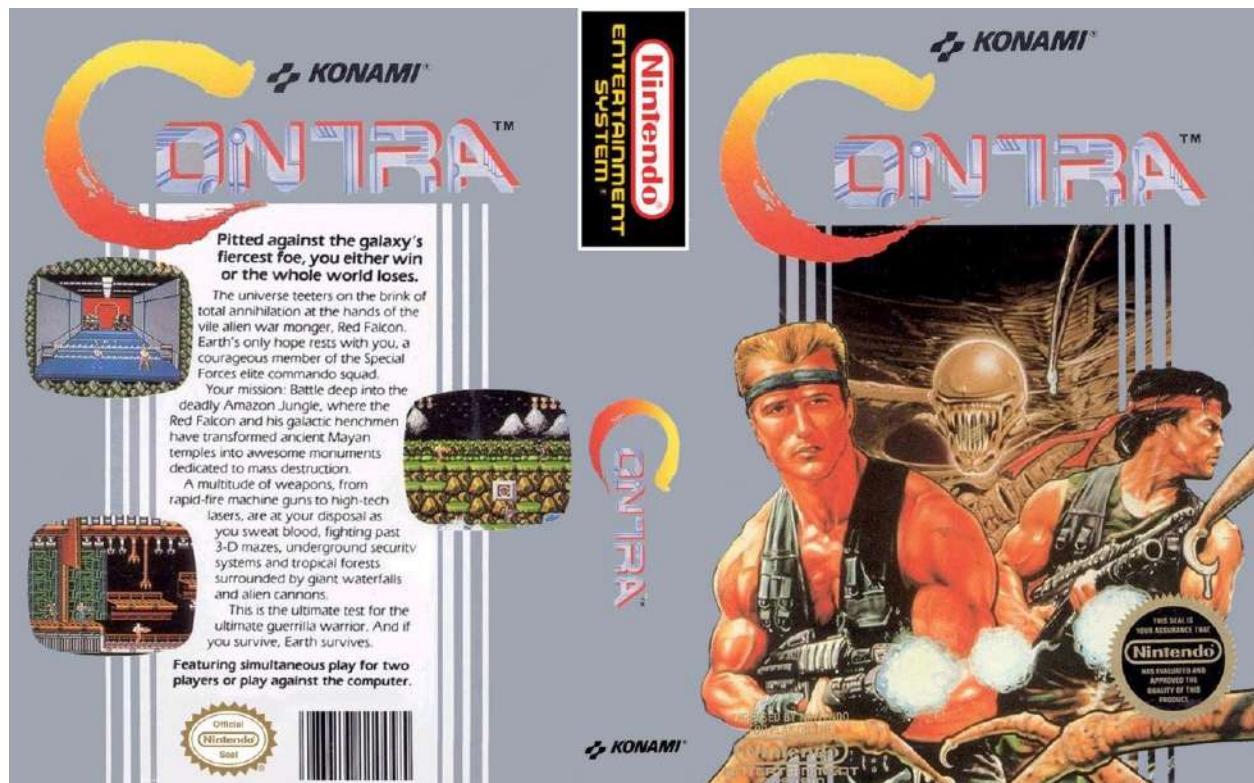
(exhibit 1a1a1g1: Source. Connecting Beowulf to videogames, Contra is pure neoconservative/neoliberal propaganda "seriousness that fails"; i.e., designed to emulate/disguise Operation Condor's "astroturf guerrillas" ["contras" being South American fascist squads funded by the CIA[194]], the Iran Contra Affair and various

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[194] From Rough Diplomacy's "The Bloody Hand: Operation Condor" (2019):

> Operation Condor used [the Monroe Doctrine] for a slightly different purpose in the Cold War as a larger operation to recruit and use security forces in countries around Latin America. This was done to make sure these countries stayed friendly to US interests, and out of the orbit of Moscow. This work mostly happened with the help of the CIA. It began with ideas drawn up at the infamous School of the Americas. Declassified documents show a meeting occurred between different officials from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The idea was to coordinate their efforts against "subversive targets." It sounds like it's trying to stop guerrilla fighters, but moreover it meant anyone who threatened these dictatorial regimes that took over all the countries listed earlier plus Brazil from 1954, to 1976. The first actions were for the support and direction of groups called death squads.
>   A death squad is an armed group that conducts extrajudicial killings or forced disappearances of persons for the purposes such as political repression, assassinations,

*other war crimes committed by Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan and the state/**Global North** against South America, the Middle East and the entire **Global South**. The poster advertises false rebellion as essentially rotoscoped[195] onto Arnold Schwarzenegger's body [the '80s male action hero] from Predator in order to turn workers into killer children; i.e., enfants terribles that evoke an ancient, "archaic baby" force that mythically destroys the **castrating mother/chaos dragon** but historically-materially does this for the state, thus enables the male hero to "individuate[196]": Beowulf's aforementioned "teeth in the night," but also Cú Chulainn's freakish ríastrad[197] or "warp spasm" [similar to the T-1000, exhibit 83b] as a **shapeshifting** demonic mercenary/killer-for-hire whose medieval "barbarian/berserker rage" literally turns him inside-out:*

The first warp-spasm seized Cú Chulainn, and made him into a monstrous thing, hideous and shapeless, unheard of. His shanks and his joints, every knuckle and angle and organ from head to foot, shook like a tree in the flood or a reed in the stream. His body made a furious twist inside his skin, so that his feet and shins switched to the rear and his heels and calves switched to

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torture, genocide, ethnic cleansing, or revolutionary terror. They're about as nice as the name implies and are basically teams that execute extrajudicial killings, as an act of terrorism in order to repress a population or commit genocide just like many authoritarian regimes such as the Cheka in revolutionary Russia as a preamble to the gulag system. Their first targets were political exiles living in Argentina. Anyone associated with the old governments or anyone displaced for being socialists were now finding themselves victims of these squads. Estimates are as high as 80,000 people died in these killings (source).

[195] The chimera approach to cartoon/rotoscoped heroes; i.e., featuring a face, body and voice of often different persons; e.g., Gozer and Jessica Rabbit (exhibit 95c), but also Amanda Ripley (artist: Persephone van der Waard).

[196] "[Carl] Jung defined individuation, the therapeutic goal of analytical psychology belonging to the second half of life, as the process by which a person becomes a psychological individual, a separate indivisible unity or whole, recognizing his innermost uniqueness, and he identified this process with becoming one's own self or self-realization" (source: Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion, 2013); i.e., the end-result of the Hero's Journey.

[197] From Sarah Erni's "'Inside Out… and Upside Down': Cú Chulainn and His Ríastrad" (2013):

Yet, while at first glance Cú Chulainn appears as the archetypical defender and saviour of his province and the text openly celebrates his martial heroism (Ó Cathasaigh, *Sister's Son* 156), a close look at this unique heroic figure reveals a more complex picture. Of course, Cú Chulainn lives up to his name, "The Hound of Culann," by assuming all the protective qualities usually assigned to guard dogs in early Irish literature. But because of this canine connection, he at times also appears as an exceptionally challenging figure which borders on the animalistic and evades total control. Nowhere is this more apparent than when he is in his ríastrad, a battle-frenzy which has most poignantly been called "a visual reflection of disorder" (Moore 158). When distorted, Cú Chulainn undergoes a spectacular bodily metamorphosis and begins to attack both friend and foe because he loses the ability to distinguish between them. At these times, he consequently poses a threat "to order on both an individual and a social level" (Lowe, *Kicking* 199) and shifts from stabilizing his social network (by defending his province and his people) to threatening it from within (source).

the front… On his head the temple-sinews stretched to the nape of his neck, each mighty, immense, measureless knob as big as the head of a month-old child… he sucked one eye so deep into his head that a wild crane couldn't probe it onto his cheek out of the depths of his skull; the other eye fell out along his cheek. His mouth weirdly distorted: his cheek peeled back from his jaws until the gullet appeared, his lungs and his liver flapped in his mouth and throat, his lower jaw struck the upper a lion-killing blow, and fiery flakes large as a ram's fleece reached his mouth from his throat… The hair of his head twisted like the tange of a red thornbush stuck in a gap; if a royal apple tree with all its kingly fruit were shaken above him, scarce an apple would reach the ground but each would be spiked on a bristle of his hair as it stood up on his scalp with rage (from Táin Bó Cúailnge, translated by Thomas Kinsella[198]; [source](): Ray Girvan's "Warp Spasm!" 2012).

[artist: [Heavy Metal Hanzo]()]

And if the Gaelic poetry seems like it might be operating under poetic license, artwork generally tends to side with a fervent endorsement of the monstrous transformation. In short, this is <u>not</u> an exaggeration; the transformation is hideous

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[198] *The Tain: Translated from the Irish Epic Tain Bo Cúailnge* (2002).

and frightening in ways that evoke <u>Princess Mononoke</u>'s [1997] own demonic force [above] as a mad, furious chaos closely linked to the natural world:

(artist: <u>Glenn Fabry</u>)

Transformation is generally implied in <u>Beowulf</u> but openly embraced with Cú Chulainn's rudeness as a warrior utterly unkempt to the point that his body is unrecognizable. Both roles' hypermasculine spearheading of **privatized war** *remain thoroughly <u>antithetical</u> to the proletarian Gothic poetics of Milton's shapeshifting Lucifer, Giger's* **xenomorph***, or current-day gender-non-conforming persons with their own self-determined sigils; i.e., <u>Itzel</u>'s sigil, designed by them and illustrated by <u>me</u> [exhibit 45c1]. The kill order for a bourgeois berserk, then, is generally just that: a command given to an unthinking, manmade brute/dog-of-war who serves the elite; e.g., "DEMON. ATHETOS SAY, KILL," exhibit 40f.* **Alienated, alienating and alienized***, the Pavlovian cur is an expendable-asset* **straw dog** *who kills the enemy with "Excalibur" before saying the* **catchphrase***, "I am the badass, not you!" to prove the state's legitimacy through force as the prime negotiator; i.e., "might makes right" as a popular neoconservative tactic under* **neoliberal Capitalism***.)*

Following our continual animal logic, the neocon's call to war leads to state decay that makes the dog "rabid," but also increasingly enraged, inhuman, and difficult to control or relate to; and yet, famously egged on by the Valkyrie, literally "the chooser of the slain[199]" asking the frenzied hero, "Do you want to live forever?" In this sense, pussy is tacitly promised to the greatest warriors of all, generally by "lesser" female warriors victimized by the overall scheme:

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[199] The idea James Cameron valorized in *Aliens* is something that Ridley Scott would Gothically parody with *Alien: Covenant* (2017). In my 2017 writeup, "Choosing the Slain, or Victimizing the Invincible Heroine, in *Alien: Covenant*," I emphasize David's posturing as a Valkyrie or "chooser of the slain":

> *Aliens* introduced us to an exceptional heroine, but also an absurd one: Ellen Ripley. Onscreen, she's depicted as an invincible force of nature, single-handedly dispatching hordes of alien monsters while simultaneously carrying Newt to safety. She quite literally cannot be stopped. Alas, the monumental warrant officer makes such a lasting mark on audiences that three decades later they still yearn for that kind of presence onscreen, one more time. Alas, in *Alien: Covenant,* we see Daniels, the ostensible heroine befitting that archetype, become the fool, the victim. Audiences, as a result, cry foul, deploring her stupidity (despite how Scott cleverly reveals her weak spot, early on) while simultaneously yearning for the unstoppable Ripley of yore.
>
> In *Covenant*, there's a lack of the heroic payoff Cameron got us hooked on, in 1986. Since then, we've come to know and expect it, based on what the series delivers, each and every time. In general, I don't think audiences like to be played with, and this can leave people feeling cheated when a movie fails to give them what they want: in this case, a true predecessor worthy of the Ripley crown. However, with Scott, I enjoy his deceptions. While he misleads me, I don't feel lied to. Rather, I've come to expect and enjoy how he takes old ideas and puts a different spin on them, so what we get isn't simply more of the same. […] David takes and turns upside-down so many ideas and symbols. This isn't unusual in the series, at large, though: In *Alien*, Ripley reversed the role of the last man standing by making it the last woman; and in *Covenant*, the heroine becomes the victim, while David reverses the gender of the Valkyrie, which were traditionally female [agents] designed to lure male warriors to their doom. In this case, the warrior lured to her doom is Daniels, a woman ([source](#)).

(exhibit 1a1a1g2a: In the 1981 movie, <u>Conan the Barbarian</u>, Valeria says to Conan, "All the gods they cannot sever us. If I were dead and you still fighting, I would come back—back from the pit of hell—to fight by your side!" This plays out quite literally in the movie's penultimate scene. Conan kills one of Thulsa Doom's henchmen, Thorgrim, with a trap, but the other man, Rexor, ain't having it and sneaks up rather rudely on Conan [who isn't paying attention because he's teasing Thorgrim]. Conan is thrown onto his back and all seems lost, only for an angelic figure to block Rexor's killing blow and blind him with a strike of light to the eyes. Temporarily disabled, Rexor falls to his knees—granting Valeria enough time to ask Conan: "Do you want to live forever?" Conan does a double-take and Valeria is gone. His strength reasserted seemingly by the gods, Conan picks up his sword and goes to work; he breaks Rexor's stolen sword [using his own stolen weapon] and cuts him to pieces, paradoxically granting the older warrior an ignominious <u>and</u> glorious death [it's a thin line, to be frank].

The kayfabe is full of theatrical clichés. For one, all of the cast were played by actual athletes. Apart from Arnold, Rexor was played by Ben Davidson, a Hall-of-Famer who played for the Oakland Raiders; Thorgrim was played by Sven-Ole Thorsen, a prolific and wildly successful bodybuilder, strongman, actor and stuntman. Next to the men, Sandahl Bergman was a dancer and six-foot tall, but arguably gives the best performance in the movie [alongside James Earl Jones]

despite being nowhere near as muscular as they are: She won a golden globe for her role, and is physically and emotionally captivating largely because she's clearly having fun with the material. In other words, she embraces the open, tomboy sexuality of the '70s Amazon that originally started with Rob Howard's writings of a personal wet dream that looked conventionally "hot," but acted "like a man":

> *She was tall, full-bosomed, and large-limbed, with compact shoulders. Her whole figure reflected an unusual strength, without detracting from the femininity of her appearance. She was all woman, in spite of her bearing and her garments... Instead of a skirt she wore short, wide-legged silk breeches, which ceased a hand's breadth short of her knees, and were upheld by a wide silken sash worn as a girdle. Flaring-topped boots of soft leather came almost to her knees, and a low-necked, wide-collared, wide-sleeved silk shirt completed her costume. On one shapely hip she wore a straight double-edged sword, and on the other a long dirk. Her unruly golden hair, cut square at her shoulders, was confined by a band of crimson satin [from Rob Howard's "Red Nails," 1936; source: Fandom].*

As usual, we see an actress allowed to upstage the boys, only to then be required to die for them. Even here, though, Bergman does it with style, stealing the wind from Conan's sails by reminding us how he "won": he had help from a ghost.)

Even with canon, clearly the performance allows for a degree of undead/demonic language, but if the infection or transformation is deemed "permanent," it becomes useless to capital (who needs to disguise its genocides). In the tradition of *persecuting* undead and demonic monsters, the Great Destroyer is scapegoated; in the canine sense, the rabid dog is put down—i.e., a straw dog that is trampled and forgotten until the next ritual when someone new takes up the mantle of "world's strongest." Generally speaking, all of this is built into the monomyth and its various offshoots and theoretical devices as patriarchal; i.e., Caesar falls from grace, and a new Call to Adventure pits the mettle of a current youth against the skeleton king as someone to defeat for the status quo, debriding the royal mantle of its rotted tissues. Even in blinder versions of warrior camp, you can hear echoes of *Beowulf* in the kayfabe monologues: Instead of Ray Winstone's "I am Ripper... Tearer... Slasher... Gouger. I am the Teeth in the Darkness, the Talons in the Night. Mine is Strength... and Lust... and Power!" you get "I am the hope of the omniverse! I am the lightbulb in the darkness! I am the bacon in the fridge for all living things that cry out in hunger! I am the Alpha and the Amiga! I am the terror that flaps in the night! I am Son Goku and I am a Super... Saiyan!" (source: Team Four Star's "Dragon Ball Z Abridged: Episode 30 Part 1," 2012). In wrestler's language, it's the catchphrase Beowulf spouts before he rips off Grendel's

arm, a Mortal Kombat fatality preemptively executed each and every time (the monster being the corrupt tyrant and the monstrous-feminine on the same stage).

This *is* an old boys club, so naturally therein lies a double standard: Even a *male* rabid dog is useful to the state and generally made to fight to the death[200] (far away from polite society, of course). They're warlords, thus can fuck and kill whoever they want whenever and however they want (when you're *that* powerful, no one's gonna tell you no, or check to see if you're following the ancient canonical codes). Conversely the *token*, often female "war dogs" who "go feral" tend to be put down more quickly through the "euthanasia effect" as a double standard regarding their highly policed bodies. Through a kind of morphological tone-policing[201], woman's bodies are often "crushed" in ways that cater to the Male Gaze (the first casualty of the female body in heteronormative pin-up art is her pelvis and ribcage[202]). Conversely, she is not allowed to transform herself in ways that ruin that "polite" female image. A possible exception includes the "nerd rage" scene from *Evangelion 2.0: You Cannot Advance* (2009):

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[200] Eren Yeager (who we'll look at more in Volume Three), undergoes the warp-spasm of a fearsome "non-Roman" warrior out of the imaginary past's false rebellion communicated through the mech as a *memento mori* linked to Japanese eco-fascism; i.e., the white Indian in bad faith. Like Cú Chulainn, this older form of ancient heroism is terrible to behold, but in Eren's case is primarily internalized inside an outwardly comely incel who feels owed so much; denied that, he goes cataclysmically feral and spitefully brings about Ragnarok. In centrist stories, such heroism and its uncomfortable relationship to the alt-right is generally disguised in more palatable forms; e.g., the "warrior porcupines," the Saiyans (whose bodies don't transform to nearly the same degree as Cú Chulainn and whose hearts aren't nearly as twisted as Eren Yeager's fascistically incestuous entitlement; and whose Western counterparts tend to bury said incest a little deeper).

[201] The same tone-policing happens with Indigenous peoples "hulking out" in good faith; i.e., rioting actively by refusing to speak English or otherwise assimilate (e.g., the Irish Republic) and otherwise protesting the colonial order in counterterrorist ways that make white moderates uncomfortable (often showcasing an animalized sexuality/comfort in themselves that figuratively but descriptively exhibits the ass, genitals and taint—also known as "mooning")… whose class callowness can also be made fun by ostensibly *white* rioters protesting as allies; e.g., Jack Karlson's magnificent and immortal "This is Democracy manifest! Get your hands off my penis!" when simply trying to eat a "succulent Chinese meal" (with Karlson having spent time in prison, protesting the cruelty of the system through theatre; see: Lawrence Bull's "His 'Succulent Chinese Meal' Rant Became a Classic Meme but the Arrested Man Has a Complicated Past," 2022).

[202] For many vivid (and hilarious) examples illustrating these "anatomy casualties" through gender swaps, consider *The Hawkeye Initiative* (2013).
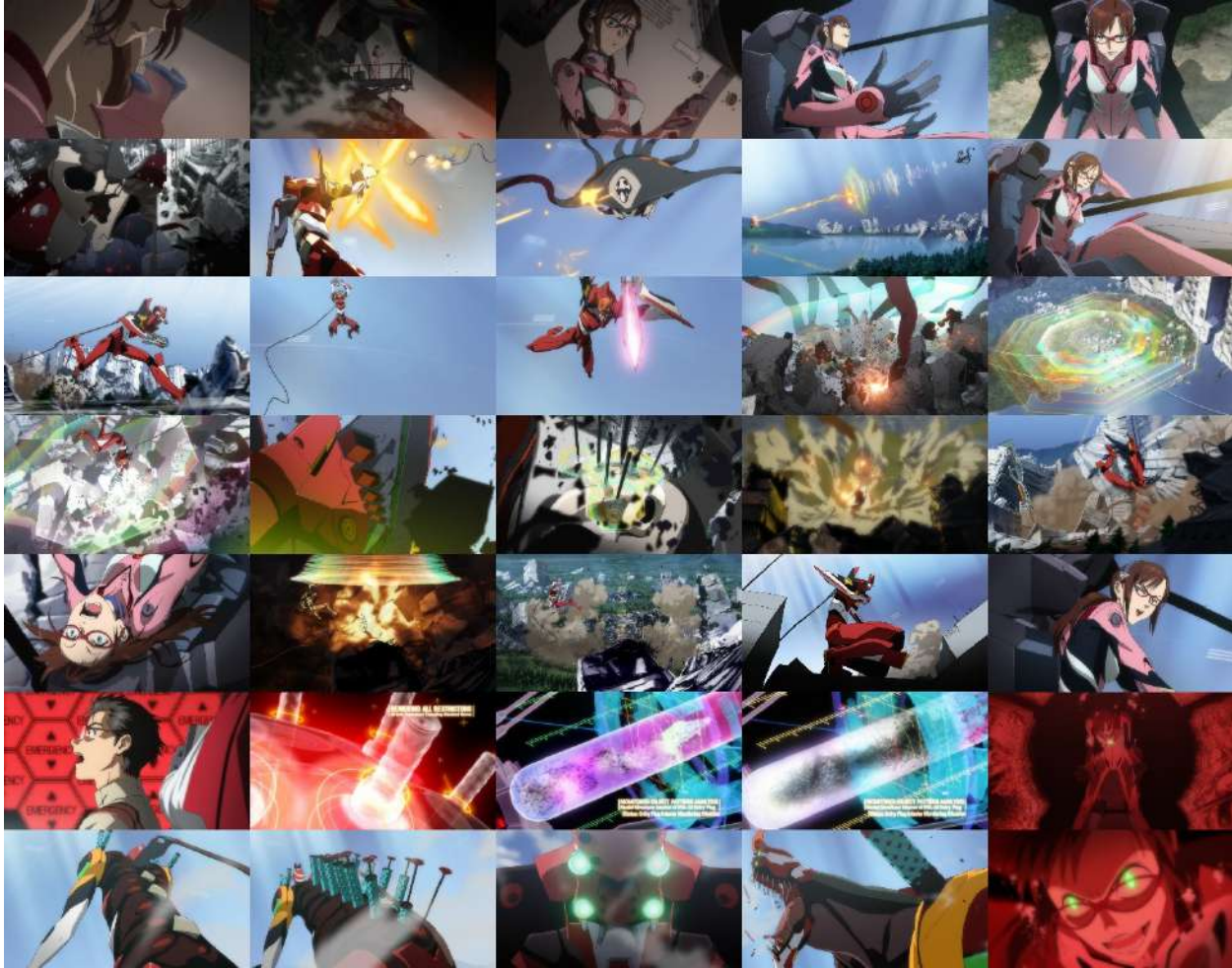
(exhibit 1a1a1g2c: Mari Makinami's trademark is literally her glasses: "Before her actual name surfaced, Mari was known exclusively among fans as 'Glasses Girl' […] She caused a furor among fans after months of teasing and her ultimate reveal" [source: Fandom]. Similar to Velma, or pretty much any female character ever made, glasses = nerdy, chaste. This sets the stage for subversion, allowing the nerd to "disrobe" by acting in ways that are thoroughly not expected from a traditional standpoint <u>on the surface</u>. In reality, the nun, nerd, secretary or scientist is a girl in a man's world, and generally expected to fulfill one of two roles: the Virgin or the Whore. On the science side of things, the Whore is generally represented through the mad scientist as classically over-the-top, which Mari combines with the naughty schoolgirl as ostensibly chaste but irrefutably nerdy in a pointedly <u>deviant</u> way. She's a baddie.

Mari is clearly fan service, but openly owns the above scene as a throwaway tomboy who happily pushes herself to the limit, shedding her delicate feminine side if for a moment. Seemingly through invisible injections given to her robot "womb" capsule, she transforms like the butterfly does, pushing herself to the edge [thus limits] of sanity and right over into the thoroughly fucked-up as a weird, caterpillar-themed mech [a reverse metamorph]. Her female body inside the suit doesn't

change very much [the green eyes evoking a cat's, on par with Arthur Hilton's <u>Cat-Women of the Moon</u>, 1953]; but her <u>external</u> appearance, the suit, transforms a great deal [and whose movements mirror her own]. Her human body isn't allowed to change, but her mech body <u>can</u> [the fact that its stolen lends the whole thing a delegitimatized feel/unsanctioned science experiment; e.g., Herbert West stealing lab equipment except it's military-grade]. The transformation is both a gentler human sexual fantasy to leer at, and a fierce, alien sexuality/monstrous-feminine that thoroughly embraces Cú Chulainn's "warp-spasm" as an avatar of war for the Japanese eco-fascist's desire to <u>not</u> be the traditional man; i.e., to have someone else do it, but still somehow embody the role as a spectator's sport that caters to them and their conflicted sense of self regarding the mother persona as dubiously sisterly[203].)

Exceptions aside, a powerful woman/monstrous-feminine will canonically always be scapegoated to defend the white, cis-het male status quo; e.g., the feral slave or property as a rebellious "bitch in heat"/disobedient hound that "bites the hand that feeds it" (Mari, above) or is loyal to a fault (as Valeria is with Conan, exhibit 1a1a1g2b). All of this intense, vice-driven theatricality occupies the same liminal zone of darkness that theatrical markers of "fascism" and "Communism" do, meaning the stigma animal qualifies the ill omen as something to anticipate and "deal with": the black dog as a symbol of death linked, in the modern sense, to state crises as decayed. The treatment of this ghost of the counterfeit is the usual fear-fascination with any monster, but there *are* male and female variants beyond just the knight in armor being stereotypically violent in ways that conflate the dog with the vampire, the zombie, the werewolf, the demon; i.e., a dog-like female zombie (an undead she-bitch) operating for the state as its prescribed demon killer in a dream-like sense, or vice versa inside the same state emergency presented as a bad dream: the stuff of nightmares but also bellicose, us-versus-them English theatrics whose belligerent apocalypse revels much amid the masked din:

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[203] We will consider this nationalized, eco-fascist condition of the Japanese male psyche in Volume Three, Chapter Five; e.g., Terry McCarthy's "Out of Japan: Mother Love Puts a Nation in the Pouch" (1993):

> Satoru Saito, head of the sociopathology department at the Psychiatric Research Institute of Tokyo, doubts that mother-son incest is any more common in Japan than elsewhere. But, he says, "emotional incest" between mothers and their sons is almost a defining feature of Japanese society – "the entire culture has this undertone" ([source](#)).

(exhibit 1a1a1g2c: "Nuns have no fun," but bad boys and bad girls do; i.e., "war is a game and it should be fun by looking fun," meaning "sinful." The Hound vs the Sith gender swap [artist: Miss Sinister] are feral dogs of war as hungry unto themselves, but also appealing to the consumers' dark or voracious appetites; i.e., the Sith are way more fun/seductive than the Jedi, and the Hound's immortal line, "I'm going to have to eat every fucking chicken in this room" delivers the goods of power-and-death aesthetics, but also does good on Sontag's fascinating fascism; i.e., as a "master scenario"—a purely sexual, Nazi-as-alien experience "severed from personhood, from relationships, from love." It's worth noting, however, that not only does Sontag leave out healthy forms of sadomasochism [as well as bondage or discipline]; her examples of coercive sadomasochism are conveyed through torturous acts of sexist violence committed by executioners of a particular look: "The color is black, the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the

justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death" [source]. In short, they ride on the same stylish aesthetics of death and power that Hugo Boss pioneered for the uniforms of the Nazi regime [see: Yugopnik's "Aesthetics of Evil," 2021]. This isn't a problem if it's campy, thus class-conscious in a sex-positive way. Even canonical sex is blindly campy and taps into the medieval aesthetic—of flagellation and cathartic pain and sex as intertwined [a potent combo when dealing with inherited anxieties and displaced traumas around us that make us feel out of control/alienated from others and ourselves]—but this kind of calculated risk/risk reduction exercise needs to be conscious and informed to avoid accidents or outright abuse from bad-faith parties; e.g., the unwitting sacrifice within cultural abuse patterns that punish the monstrous-feminine through various minority groups.)

The idea of sinful hunger as animalized is nothing new (the Gothic novel conflating raw animal instinct with human behaviors through vice and courtship and extreme emotional responses; e.g., "loved to death," or cancer caused by guilt). There's also the dog as associated with the zombie as an anti-Semitic dogwhistle (excuse the term) used in the Early Modern English period; i.e., Shakespeare's use of the animal as a Christian pejorative that is curiously reclaimed by Tolkien as a 20th century medievalist canonizing war in his own parallel spaces. As I write in "Dragon Sickness: the Problem of Greed":

> Beorn is not wicked, like the wargs or the dragon, nor does the "dragon sickness" infect him like it does the Master or Thorin. He is both man and animal, and his link with nature and resulting lack of greed seems to be Tolkien insinuating that greed is predominantly a human trait (excluding wargs and other monsters, which humans imitate when they turn greedy). In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare's approach to animals is quite different. He has Shylock compared to an animal, either a wolf or a dog, many times: "You may as well use question with the wolf / Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb" (4.1.72-3); "Thou called'est me a dog before thou had a cause / But since I am a dog, beware my fangs" (3.3.6-7); "O, be thou damned, inexorable dog!" (4.1.127) and "You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog" (1.3.107). Shylock is an animal in the eyes of the Christians, is not of their kind, the Christians' kind, because they see themselves as human, therefore exempt from greed; their acts are not greedy but merciful. To the Christians, Shylock is but a dumb beast that cannot be reasoned with. Being compared to an animal is an extremely pejorative and degrading thing in *The Merchant of Venice*, but in *The Hobbit*, the animals are the only creatures capable of seeing reason. They do not fight over gold the way that men, elves, dwarves, and goblins do [excluding

the Great Eagles, who are metaphors for human valor but also war machines: "death from above"].

The notion of dragon-sickness bleeds together with the stigmatized Jew as ancient scapegoat tied to ancient labor and animals that are enslaved: the perceived dog that speaks truth to power (and is forced to convert in order to survive) as old, dated, lending itself to the undead and demon's critical power as stemming from the fact that it *predates* Capitalism (a Wisdom of the Ancients).

As a symbol shared among the colonized and their colonizers, the symbol of the dog is canonically mistreated as undead/demonic; i.e., a liminal state whereupon it is chimeric, undead, and known for an endless, psychosexual demon hunger that fascism conflates with revenge of a particular kind. So-called "Jewish revenge" is the Red Scare sentiment of anti-Bolshevism shared by the American elite as enacted with impunity until it "crosses a line"—in this case a national boundary into the West by the Nazis:

> For four years, numerous Americans, in high positions and obscure, sullenly harbored the conviction that World War II was "the wrong war against the wrong enemies." Communism, they knew, was the only genuine adversary on America's historical agenda. Was that not why Hitler had been ignored/tolerated/appeased/aided? So that the Nazi war machine would turn East and wipe Bolshevism off the face of the earth once and for all? It was just unfortunate that Adolf turned out to be such a megalomaniac and turned West as well ([source](): William Blum's *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, 1995).

The same idea plays out in displaced, fantastical forms through undead and demonic language. As such, the assorted "ink blot" stigmas elide within the same poetic shadow zone, whereupon the hungry mouths of dead labor's zombies bear their fangs and collectively shriek and howl. Simply put, they riot, but do alongside state agents opposing them using the same aesthetics of power and death: the fascist, but also the centrist combating both fascism and labor until asking the black "dog" knight to tag team the Dark Queen and her counterterrorist zombie forces. Mid-riot, various pro-state Beowulfs are generated and sent in to quell the slaves as dissident aggressors, called "terrorist" and certainly treated as such. These foils to revolution can be the man, himself, but also female counterparts who sell out and then are "exiled" by surrendering their power after killing the Dark-Mother orchestrator of such perceived uprisings (labor movements are often oversold as these great cabals populated by a furious zombie horde or demonic *pandemonium*). It's mimesis that fails to question the process.

As this longer exhibit below shows, such displays play out in dreamlike narratives bent on a liminal, otherworldly affect with torturous overtones rooted in

echoes of echoes of real-world trauma inside the narrative of the crypt. Inside these shadow zones, the fearsome *crypto*mimesis—or trauma hidden inside language and its pieces—can suddenly appear like a black mirror that, when viewed, makes the *de facto* torturer/enforcer both recoil in fear and stare at in rapt fascination (a tremendously useful iconoclastic device that Gothic Communists can use when saving ourselves from the states' blind Achilles or subjugated Hippolyta; i.e., by showing them *their* Achilles Heel: themselves and their false power and lost humanity told in Gothic language):

(exhibit 1a1a1g3: "Make me feel, make me scream" sings the diegetic song in the above scene; it mirrors the events and setting onscreen, but also Trent Reznor's

*"Closer" from a year earlier [exhibit 43b]. The revisiting of trauma includes the revisiting of the procedure as full of dated concepts stacked on top of themselves only to become dated all over again. The demon or the angel, then, occupies a kind of social get-together whose dancing is cryptomimetic; i.e., a **calculated risk** that minimizes harm but mimics the feeling of being out of control through the process of cryptonymy [hidden trauma displaced from its cause]. Historical materialism is, itself, an "inkblot" of interpretations that haunt the basic scheme. The dancing means different things as Freudian, but also Dante-esque or Miltonian metaphors/allegories. In short, they can be campy or canonical to varying degrees that, unto themselves, are informed by the trauma of the viewer and the artist as interwoven on the canvased experience as "half-real." It's like a bad dream that isn't completely made up but feels impossible, absurd. But within this Gothic surrealism, the awesome power of terrible truths can be revealed through the apocalypse of stereotypical monsters and their complicated signifieds.*

The palimpsest for Silent Hill, Jacob's Ladder [1900] pits its white, cis-het male protagonist against the background noise of a dying mind haunted by the Vietnam war bleeding into a crumbling rememory of an event that never happened but is composed of things that did exist, or are known to the victim seemingly from another life, another time, another place. These internal/external crises include intimations of immortality and morality as psychomachic "crises of faith" told through traditional objects of fear and fascination known to churchly sites as embattled [e.g., Milton and Dante]. For the Vietnam soldier "back at home," this means people of color stigmatized inside a mini "nightmare Harlem": invading the man's apartment like an occupying army of sexy zombies. The entire messy assemblage of simulacra is a loose, plastic, phantasmagorical representation for the chaos of a fading dream; he's dying and the sequence informs that terror according to what he's been conditioned to kill and fight—the Vietnamese, but also domestic examples of the abject "other" through people of color as canonically associated with sex, drugs and rock 'n roll during moral panics; "Satanic" raw hysteria and untapped [non-white] female desire through fetishized cliché and outmoded psychoanalysis; and rape epidemics and drug wars associated with criminogenic conditions in the state of exception as a liminal space for us to pass through; e.g., heavy metal, videogames and other media forms smashing gloriously together [i.e., "smashing uglies"].

*The **demon-angel** dichotomy pattern is not unusual or even incongruous, here; abuse manifests differently per person relative to congenital and environmental factors [which are often accident-of-birth]. To this, the hero's abuse-seeking patterns are framed as a fever dream depicted as the **psychomachy** [re: "mind battle," the classical example being the angle and the devil on one's shoulders]. This can help the dialog divide to address and interrogate pre-existing societal binaries such as pleasurable sensations that confuse the binary in misinformed ways—i.e., pain as paradoxically "pleasurable" relative to cliché stigmas about*

BDSM as colliding with legitimate grievances and abuse-seeking behaviors at the same time. Pain can simply feel good, except in outmoded conceptualizations of BDSM they are presented as psychosexual and unironically violent in a harmful sense; i.e., the ritual is "the demon lover's" bad BDSM/play in that it is bigoted and harmful and spreads pejoratively [and demonstrably false] stereotypes about BDSM as not able to be a safe and healthy practice when performed correctly. "Correct," in canonical circumstances, is incorrect; i.e., pathological, or self-destructive sex through hard kink that is often racialized.

For many people who have lived with trauma inside of and outside of themselves, sex-positive BDSM is a myth. Yet, psychosexuality can be a genuine plurality begot from abuse and extreme trauma that confuses the pleasure response to seek out harm unironically—re: extreme abuse-seeking behavior—wherein these kinds of outmoded conversations and attitudes are still useful to recognizing these patterns through popular stories' musical theatricality and spaces for play as performative extensions of real-life issues. For them, hard kink amounts to spifflication ["to treat roughly or severely; to destroy or to overcome or dispose of by violence"] less as a throwaway fantasy and more as a legitimate desire to be badly harmed. Correctly applied without harm, the psychosexual fantasy can be medicinal for them by

speaking to their trauma in theatrical, doubled forms. This isn't a disease to "cure," but a condition to live with and accept.

For instance, my hard kink is actually the palliative Numinous sensation [exhibit 39a2] as a "religious experience" of total obliteration; i.e., no bodily torture in the flesh but still evoking it in a visual way that, for a second, I mistake as genuine peril. To put things into perspective, I have been abused and the theme of religious-esque, metal-themed "passions" help me experience catharsis by facing my internalized fears to transform my trauma as having scarred me for life; but also empathizing with other victims on a non-verbal level [again, trauma begets trauma, but also recognizes it at a glance: something where the hunted liken as animals to each other but also to their potential hunters; i.e., as dangerous persons to face who were likewise hunted themselves in the past, becoming feral as a result]. For me, this medicine is more asexual, but could be considered sexualized through violence in a Christ-like way.

For example, I especially like The Passion of Joan of Arc or Alien for this, but not Martyrs or A Serbian Film because the torture of Joan left her with some semblance of dignity facing her tragic end as boyishly genderqueer, thus seen as in touch with the devil [one sympathizes]. Likewise, Alien's Gothic Romance hits that sweet spot

of voyeuristic peril without spilling over into straight-up torture porn; its raping of the wallflower Lambert "works" because I can expose myself to trauma without being harmed in real life, nor dehumanizing/celebrating the woman's offscreen rape. Conversely, the kind of "martyr pastiche" that trots out the full-on gore and dismembering without any sense of the Numinous, camp, empathy or irony just feels pointless and gross; e.g., The Passion of the Christ [204](2004); i.e., canonical torture porn with zero honesty or medicinal value—just a seeking power unconsciously through ritualized self-destruction and the paradox of sex and violence as a widespread cultural phenomenon.

Canon's rape culture and epidemics of moral panic are swept up in commodified romances that simultaneously profit off persons seeking a false [thus safe] "danger" feeling that relates to their lived trauma. The problem is, it generally does so through the canonical bigotries of the middle class; i.e., their genuine desire to be in control, thus establish agency regarding any prey-like conditioning [fight, flight, fawn or freeze] they might experience on the day-to-day. It can be very hard to interrogate trauma if you lack control when afraid ["fear is the mind-killer"].

All the same, the paradox of seeking power that "destroys" you is that it can actually relieve post-traumatic stress, panic and anguish, but also "armor" you to future trials should a similar portent of trauma come knocking [warning: it can also be weaponized by the state to recruit future soldiers with, including women as weaponized through their trauma to attack state enemies]. To this, Jacob's Ladder plays out like a bad fever dream or spiked drugs [a plot point in the film: the dying man's nightmare is a result of weaponized drugs having been used on American soldiers by the CIA].

As we'll explore in Volume Two, the reclaiming of empathy is undead/demonic and dream-like, meaning its lucidity occurs while we are trapped in a state of decaying crises ourselves; i.e., stuck inside the body of the state as informing how we think according to far-off wars tied to the trauma in our own lives. The battles we face within ourselves are supplied the means and materials that we dream about as coming from outside, but granted further malevolence and gravity according to far-off calamity we hear about but cannot see. In turn, these internalize as fetishes manifest of our stigmas and biases; i.e., as things to canonize or camp, to prove or disprove in either case through apocryphal language thus end the feeling of chaos as outside of our control. For the Gothic Communist, chaos is something to embrace, accept and transmute, not kill, destroy or subjugate through the canonical forms whose dated ephemera haunt our dreams as supplied to us by the linguo-material world's trauma-laden historical materialism, its slew of ephemerate gargoyles: the comics, the pulp, the occult as haunted by the spectres of fascism

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[204] For a thorough polemic attacking Mel Gibson's torturous anti-Semitism, consider Renegade Cut's "The Passion of the Christ" (2017).

and of Marx, which we camp to hell and back. This starts with consuming them, ourselves; i.e., "going to Queen Maeb," as Mercutio puts it.

[Source: Rachel Handler's "Harold Perrineau Answers Every Question We Have About Romeo + Juliet," 2020. The 1996 film version of Shakespeare's stage play presenting Romeo's doomed pal as non-white, very queer and very drug-oriented in his escape from society's restraints—i.e., echoing Stuart Miller's "What is Acid Communism?" (2019) as a spiritual successor to past forms of druglike poetics (whose demonic poiesis we will touch upon in Volume Two: follow the white rabbit).]

In this sense, both versions of the zombie or the demon haunt us while we're awake and sleep, but we can reclaim them by humanizing what we see as empathetic to the oppressed, including ourselves, as automatically and coercively demonized as fallen creatures of vice and sin. The ghost of the counterfeit is conjured up as "past" to spellbind the viewer speechless; yet the party that terrifies the hero needn't be such a bad thing if it's a calculated risk relayed through informed consent[-non-consent]. It can still be "fucking metal," just not something that's harmful [some of the best sex I ever had was with someone who was demonic, into metal as something to seriously embody through BDSM as a "hell party"—Jadis]. It's normal—that is, human—to be drawn to prescribed sin to see

how the other side lives but also to see how they fuck; as long as it isn't dogmatic or self-destructive/destructive towards others in a prescriptively sexual sense that furthers the process of abjection through the ghost of the counterfeit—well, then it's all good, man! But we have to go beyond Sontag's mere fascination and make monsters ourselves that camp canon's prescriptive dogma. "Hurt, not harm," my dudes; Satan loves you.)

The dreadful, nightmarish symbiosis—of the male action hero or token counterpart's great expectations within the theatre of war as an undead, globe-spanning world police—isn't just "on the canvas" or relegated to a separate barrel of "bad apples." All stem from the same trees of canonical/bourgeois praxis, or one half of oppositional praxis and the one that I want to conclude on before we end this subchapter of the thesis statement, thus the thesis statement itself (we'll unpack the second half, iconoclastic/proletarian praxis [and its aforementioned trees] during the "camp map" chapter).

The point I want to conclude on is this: As canonical praxis is sex-coercive towards labor/sex work, it is historically-materially prone to bad actors; i.e., those who act in **bad faith** according to their material conditions, hiding their murderous intentions using these conditions as having dogmatized their behaviors to begin with. As such, they collectively utilize **obscurantism** and **cryptofascism**/canonical **disguise pastiche** while speaking in a variety of codes: **virtue signals**, **lip service**, **queer bait** and **dogwhistles** (indented for clarity):

Capitalism-in-decay leads to a revival of old **DARVO** ["Deny, Accuse, Reverse, Victim, Offender"] schemes dressed up in new dogwhistles during the Internet Age while history repeats itself: "Cultural Bolshevism" and Jewish conspiracy theories become "Cultural Marxism" and "globalism," while "social justice" becomes "social justice warrior" as a continued demonizing of pro-labor labels, similar to "Communist," "antifa(schist)" or "woke" (which translate to "corrupt"/monstrous-feminine in neoliberal copaganda); i.e., when cornered or in doubt, the state and its defenders blame the Left but also demonize them in ways that coercively fetishize them as targets of psychosexual violence during state emergencies. Then and now, reactionary politics and the centrist moderacy adjacent their open radicalism is capital *defending* itself by following the leader to create enemies of the state through codewords and foreign/internal plots:

While the SS, prior to the seizure of power, mainly occupied itself with protecting the party against internal and external enemies, Himmler and Heydrich focused on all sorts of enemies of the state in the meantime, including in particular the Jews. Despite his mother being a strict Catholic and his father a member of a Free Mason Lodge,

Heydrich recognized much evil in this religion and philosophy as well. "In reality they don't fight fairly for preservation of religious and cultural values (these are not at all at stake) but they continue their old and bitter struggle for secular dominance in Germany," he said about the Catholic faith. In his opinion, Free Masons were "the instrument of Jewish revenge." Should the Free Masons gain the upper hand in their struggle against Nationalsocialism, they would cause "orgies of cruelty," which would make "the sternness of Adolf Hitler appear very moderate indeed by comparison" (source: Kevin Prenger's "Heydrich, Reinhard," 2016).

In order to devalue basic human rights, state proponents **negotiate** the process of abjection/ghost of the counterfeit through **brute force**, coercive rhetoric, intended gameplay/bad play (prescriptive abuse patterns), **revenge arguments**, and toxic **self-righteousness**. The same goes for *all* of the heroes, damsels and **undead/demonic**, oft-animalized monsters that exist unironically within said discourse (which compounds into complex disguises, which I call "concentric veneers[205]") as "already mapped out" through Tolkien's refrain and similar counterfeits borrowing from his formulaic gentrification of war.

    This concludes my thesis statement. We'll explore how to deal with canon's mapping out of things by making our own map, next.

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[205] "Masks within masks," a kind of compound disguise pastiche we will examine when discussing how to counteract centrists, TERFs and other cryptofascists/"fash"-adjacent bad actors in Volume Three, Chapter Four.

The "Camp Map": Camping the Canon

A map is not the territory it represents, but if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness. If the map could be ideally correct, it would include, in a reduced scale, the map of the map; the map of the map, of the map; and so on, endlessly [...] If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must considered only as maps.

—Alfred Korzybski, [Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics](#) (1933)

*(exhibit 1a1a1g4: [Source](#): "**ORIGINAL Vtg 1982 MERCYFUL FATE Album S/T Record 2ND PRESSING Vinyl RAVE ON EX!!**" [2023]. Internal/external crises of morals just as often invoke crises of trauma; these involve repressed desires compelled by state wish fulfillment as something to challenge by walking a tightrope during our own Gothic poetics' liminal [imperfect] expressions. As the above eBay exhibit demonstrates, the historical-material counterpoint survives in bartered emphera that carry the allegory of resistance within the larger profit motive. In other words, counterculture is communicated through the sale of older goods that have become antiquated but by and large retain their original message: "Think for yourself, push boundaries, play with the taboo and canonically forsaken in ways that lead to a better world." You have to start somewhere, but it needn't stay there; it's a progression built on older relics of the imaginary past.)*

      With the conclusion of our thesis statement, we've laid out the various pieces of the manifesto tree, which forms the map for our twin trees of proletarian praxis; but we still have to pour in our fuel and run the fucker (thus corrupt the canonical site we're invading: canon's twin trees, the bourgeois-owned Base and bourgeois-cultivated Super Structure). As we do, keep the thesis paragraph and thesis body in mind, as well as the roots of camp and various hero types to subvert, and the manifesto terms that served to make up the "camp map," itself. Assembled, the

camp map will now discuss camp in four stages—our fuel and running of the siege machine:

- **One, scouting the field:** Explores camp as a counterterrorist activity in relation to state terrorism, and outlines various monster types featured in its exhibits (e.g., femboys, catgirls, himbos, Amazons, etc). It also outlines the Gothic argumentation of oppositional rhetoric for or against the state when making its own *monsters* to kill, or kill with, normally in defense of capital but for us through a means of performative resistance; i.e., a variety of reclaimed scapegoats within the process of abjection's canonical reactions, which reify along the Cartesian Revolution's *criminogenesis* of said monsters, but especially within the cartographic ludologizing of Tolkien's refrain: the treasure map.
- **Two, the quest for power inside closed (Gothic) space:** Explores the interrogation of power in relation to Gothic space (castles) but especially in videogames (shooters, High Fantasy and Metroidvania). It also interrogates Tolkien's refrain through the conceptualization of *Cameron's* refrain (the shooter); i.e., not through the FPS, but the *Metroidvania*—a particular kind of third-person shooter (TPS)/castle space that (along with the monsters inside) can be camped, but also achieves immense catharsis through honest and profound theatrical evocations of psychosexual trauma: a palliative Numinous and fairly negotiated (thus sex-positive) ludo-Gothic BDSM achieved by *remaking* Gothic castles, thus negotiating the unequal power lurking inside an iconoclastic castle or castle-like space.
- **Three, making monsters:** Considers the making of monsters and goes over more monster types (nurses, xenomorphs and other phallic women) as a creative foil to Ann Radcliffe's usual unironic rape fantasies. It also explores how to personify labor action through the making of monsters as a reversal of abjection; i.e., through a Satanic poetics whose infernal polity challenges the authority of a heavenly or otherwise sacred establishment, but often in incredibly funny ways; e.g., Key and Peele's immortal phrase: "Put the pussy on the chainwax!" (Key & Peele's "Pussy on the Chainwax," 2013).
- **Four, the finale:** Puts all of these ideas to the test, executed by my friend Blxxd Bunny and I; i.e., using our bodies, labor and Satanic apostacy to camp the canon, effectively making it gay *and* Gothic (while keeping the first three sections of the "camp map" in mind).

Similar to the thesis statement, this chapter covers smaller terms lifted from the glossary regarding Gothic academia. They're more niche and myriad than the Four Gs, so I wanted to take the opportunity to define them here; the "big ones" we can take our time with (and will confront repeatedly throughout the rest of the book).

As Bay says, "Don't knock the cringe, knock the part of you that cringes." In that sense, this map (and by extension, the entire book) attempts to reclaim the Gothic mode as deliberately campy since Matthew Lewis (Milton did it by accident, remember); rejecting it because it's "outmoded" is a paradox and hypocritical because the Gothic has always been outmoded on purpose, employing hauntology and cryptonomy while placing things in quotes that either advance *or* reverse the process of abjection inside the chronotope. Distancing ourselves from "perceptive" pastiche/parody (camp) is to remove a powerful critical device from our arsenal during proletarian praxis, and instead amounts to us using whatever is given to us by moderates/centrists and the elite: controlled opposition. This is critically inert and will kill things before they start. There *must* be a chaotic, uncontrollable, impolite quality to what we do or it merely becomes another piece of capital in service of the profit motive.

With that being said, let's mosey!
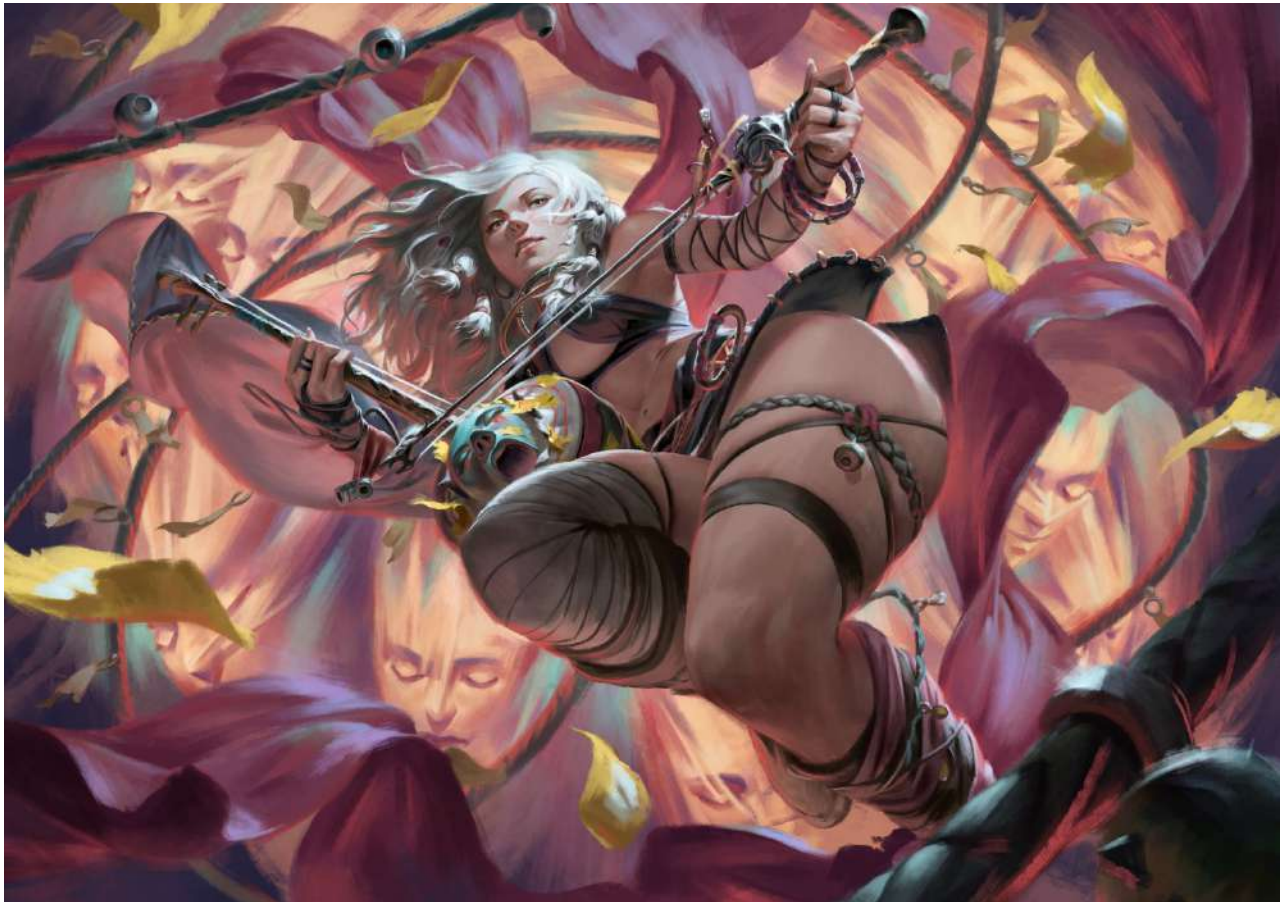
(artist: Chin Likhui)

"Camp Map"; or "Make it gay," part one: Scouting the Field

"It seems a pretty big hole," piped Bilbo. He loved maps, and in the hall there was a large one of the Country Round (where he lived), with all his favourite walks marked on it in red ink. He was so interested he forgot to be shy and keep his mouth shut. "How could such an enormous door" (he was a hobbit, remember) "be secret?"

—*Bilbo Baggins, <u>The Hobbit</u>*

(artist: [Victora Matosa](#))

As we have established, canon is heteronormative; camp camps canon, therefore sex, as "written on the map." Simply put, sex is the "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow.

As canon frames anything against the state as worthy of capital violence (summary execution), it's important to recognize the nature of Gothic camp/iconoclasm as "terrorist" actions the state will put down with extreme prejudice. The draconian nature is disguised in the visual "hurly burly" as summoned from the past and celebrated for its badass, *throwback* qualities—a retrojection into the imaginary past in search of power according to Tolkien's infamous treasure map as a continuation of the ghost of the counterfeit leading into more castles, maps, castles, shadow zones and so forth. The canonical search for power is made in light of Capitalism disguising its own exploitive model: a Faustian bargain and Promethean quest to varying degrees for differing purposes depending on the arrangement's praxis. In *canonical* arrangements, the elite hand the less-

marginalized a weapon and tell them where to put it: in us. It's a little more complicated than that, but the outcome is brutal enough: tried-and-true "divide and conquer" tactics where the middle class quash rebellions before they can take root, then pat themselves on the back for being "the good guys"; i.e., White Knight Syndrome.

On the receiving end of the white knight's lance is labor, which incentivizes the various oppressed groups to aggregate against by virtue of them being more prone to rebel: the state's prerequisite victims for its police to abuse, thus profit from. As part of this marginalized sphere, the queer is shoved into the same dark zone with the "corrupt" and the monstrous-feminine's animalized undead and demonic renditions thereof. We'll consider other marginalized groups throughout the book; I'm starting with, and focusing on, queerness to camp canon with because there's a tremendous genderqueer stamp on the historical process as one of genuine resistance; i.e., ever since Matthew Lewis "pulled a Milton" when making his own Satan to demonize canon with, "playing god" in the process. As Colin Broadmoor writes in "Camping the Canon: Matthew Lewis, Milton, & *The Monk*," (2021):

> In 1796, against a backdrop of deadly state violence targeting LGBT people, a gay teenager anonymously published what has since become one of the best-known examples of the English Gothic Horror. His name was Matthew

Lewis and his book is *The Monk*. Lewis's graphic depictions of incest, rape, murder, gender-bending, and illegal same-sex desire violated every major taboo of British society and drew immediate calls for censorship and criminal prosecution. Not bad for a debut novel.

[artist: William-Adolphe Bouguereau]

These days, it's not unusual to find the words "subversive" or "transgressive" nestled within glowing ad-copy or on the back cover of the latest franchise installment. Resistance will, after all, always be commodified—but if we allow *transgression* to become a mere buzzword, we undermine the revolutionary potential of art, especially art by marginalized members of society.

The Monk represents Lewis's personal struggle against the sexual politics and constraints of the English literary tradition. As Michel Foucault observed in *The History of Sexuality vol. I*, sexuality-as-identity did not really exist as a cultural concept throughout most of the eighteenth century, however, by the time of Lewis's birth those social and legal constructions of sexuality were shifting:

> As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life… Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality (Foucault 42).

This transition at the turn of the 19th century from act-as-homosexual to person-as-homosexual was preceded by a dramatic increase in homophobic violence perpetrated by the state ([source](#)).

Queer discourse has obviously evolved and come (more) out of the closet since Lewis' time. Unfortunately so have the monsters as a *canonical* discourse whose power is largely made-up but enforced regardless. Short of converting and going into the closet, the only *canonical* recourse we're given is blame and death: a court of public opinion canonized to be our judge, jury and execution. To avoid the codified abuse that regularly befalls us on- and offstage, we gotta "make it gay" to expose the largely arbitrary nature of patrilineal descent ("Why you gotta make it gay/political?" being the chudwad's classic refrain). To do this, we have to "camp the canon," which needs a map all on its own, one we've already outlined piece by piece: the manifesto tree terms/map pieces explored during the thesis statement. They constitute the holistic entirety of what we're working with: the pieces of the canonical castle as something to infiltrate, thus infect the twin trees of capital it guards. You wouldn't want to invade a castle without having a map of its entire structure, would you? To form the "camp map," this subchapter will not only assemble the map pieces formerly laid, but outline the whole process through various other germane keywords, and walk through a "siege" of the castle in warlike language (it's something Capitalism acclimates us to through canon; in short, we all speak it). It's time to do battle!

(artist: [Max Prodanov](#))

"Why camp canon?" you ask? Because we have to! Canon is heteronormative, thus foundational to our persecution as built into capital out of antiquity's Drama and Comedy into more recent inventions of the staged gimmick; i.e., of the back-and-forth wrestling match versus the Greek play's chorus and musical numbers, but also the opera and castle as an operatic site of forbidden, extreme desire, guilty pleasure and possessive love. Capitalism needs enemies to fight who are different from the status quo and we fit the bill. In short, we fags "make it gay" for our own survival. This book's praxial focus leans into **canonical/regressive *Amazonomachia*** as already "mapped out," meaning if we want to camp canon/"make it gay" we have to recognize how canon functions through its heteronormative assembly as reassembled and ironically performed by us while wearing revolutionary cryptonyms (war masks that hide what we're up to within the theatre as something that can give our attackers away when we break with tradition): **subversive *Amazonomachia***. To this, canon is the false copy of the castle as threatened by terrorist forces *daring* to "make it gay"; i.e., a corruption of their "pure, benevolent fortress" into what they consider to be an unironic castle of sin, murder and all-around degeneration (in psychology, this is called projection; e.g., possessive love as something to project onto a racialized other inside a castle of madness). While standard-issue proponents (white, cis-het men and women) will automatically reject this proposition, token forces will often come over to their side, as well; i.e., as straight assimilators who unite under the state's banner *despite* posturing as rebels. They unite with their colonizers against a common foe: themselves.

Such concessions are hardly unusual. As Joseph Crawford writes in his introduction to *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism*, "terrorist literature" in the late 18th century (the peak of the Neo-Gothic novel in Britain) developed in connection with state fears of worker rebellions labeled as "terrorism":

> The idea of a single Gothic literature of terror, stretching continuously from the 1760s to the present day, imposes a false unity on these early works, which were referred to as "Gothic stories" only because they were set in the "Gothic ages" (i.e. the medieval or early modern period) rather than the present day, and were more likely to be sentimental romances than tales of terror; the preoccupation with evil, fear, and violence, which is the defining characteristic of later Gothic literature, did not become a prominent part of the genre until the success of Radcliffe's later novels in the 1790s. I thus became increasingly convinced that, although works referring to themselves as "Gothic" had existed since the 1760s, the true roots of the Gothicised rhetoric I had observed in the nineteenth century were to be found not in the anxieties of the mid-eighteenth-century middle classes, but a generation later; in the fearful decade at the century's end.

It was in the 1790s that Gothic fiction and rhetoric first became truly popular in Britain; it was also in these years that Britain, like the rest of Europe, was struggling with the consequences of the French Revolution. Correlation does not equal causation; but it did not seem accidental that this new literary fascination with fear and violence should have arisen in the same decade that witnessed the Reign of Terror, and the consequent adoption of the words "terrorist" and "terrorism" into English. Several critics, such as Ronald Paulson, Robert Miles, and Leslie Fiedler, have already written on the relationship between the French Revolution and the rise of Gothic fiction, but they have tended to articulate this relationship in terms of an already-existing genre of Gothic terror fiction gaining new relevance and popularity due to its resonances with the events of the Revolution. It is my contention, however, that the relationship between Gothic fiction and the Revolution, "terrorist novel writing" and "terrorist" politics, is more fundamental than that described by Paulson and Fiedler. Gothic fiction did exist in the decades before the Revolution, but its character changed markedly over the course of the 1790s, with the Reign of Terror itself constituting a major watershed in the development of "terror fiction"; and I take seriously Kilgour's suggestion that Gothic fiction could easily have remained a minor and little-read sub-genre of English literature, or even have dwindled away entirely, had it not been seized upon by writers eager to find new vocabularies of evil in the years following the revolutionary Terror.

In a very real sense, the Revolution *created* Gothic, transforming a marginal form of historical fiction chiefly concerned with aristocratic legitimacy into a major cultural discourse devoted to the exploration of violence and fear (source)

but also, I would argue, on account that it would potentially condition women to disobey their husbands (the classic Neo-Gothic readership was female) and workers to stop working for the state's benefit. Those who stop get wacked. To this, recipients of the usual battery can, if not be condoned, at least be understood for their deals with the devil (the state). They're tired of being the state's punching bag, and if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

(artist: David Roberts)

Conversely, rebellious attacks are universally framed as "unthinkable" for an obvious double-standard; they don't serve the elite, thus are demonized for it. As Robert Asprey writes in *War in the Shadows*:

Terror is the kissing cousin of force and, real or implied, is never far removed from the pages of history. To define (and condemn) terror from a peculiar social, economic, political, and emotional plane is to display a self-righteous attitude that, totally unrealistic, is doomed to be disappointed by harsh facts.

The paradox of terror, so conveniently ignored by English public opinion, particularly middle- and upper-middle-class opinion during the Irish rebellion, is ages old. Celtiberian slaves working New Carthage silver mines must have regarded Roman legionaries as objects "of dread" inducing "extreme fear." To enslaved minds, the legionaries were weapons of terror designed to keep the slaves in the mines-and apparently they worked very efficiently toward this end. From time to time, these and other slaves secretly rose to attack the Romans, who, upon seeing a sentry assassinated or a detachment ambushed and annihilated, no doubt spoke feelingly about the use of terrorist tactics.

But who had introduced this particular terror to this particular environment? The Romans. Had they other options? Certainly: they could

have kept their hands off the Iberian Peninsula, or they could have governed it justly and wisely (as a few officials tried to do). Instead, they came as conquerors ruled by greed, and, in turn, they ruled by oppression maintained by terror. What options did the natives hold either to rid themselves of the Roman presence or to convert it to a more salutary form? Only one: force. What kind of force? That which was limited to what their minds could evoke. Lacking arms, training, and organization, they had to rely on wits, on surprise raids, ambushes, massacres. Was this *terror* or was it *counterterror?*

The paradox survived the Roman Empire. The king's soldiers frequently became weapons of terror, just as did the rack and the gibbet. Feudal government of the Middle Ages rested on force (as opposed to the people's consent), often on terror exercised through the man-made will of God reinforced by hangman's noose or executioner's ax. No student of the period can seriously condemn the protesting peasant as a terrorist, for here, as in the case of Romans in Spain and indeed of most governments, European monarchs and ruling nobility held options of rule ranging from the most benevolent to the most despotic. Their subjects, however, held limited options: submit or rebel. If they chose rebellion, the options were again limited, the main reliance being placed on native wit. But since native wit was often sharply circumscribed, most rebellions were doomed to expensive failure. Whatever the effort, whether a single peasant who in the fury of frustration picked up a scythe and severed the tax-collecting bailiff's head from his body, or the group of peasants who grabbed pitchforks to stand against the king's soldiers—the effort, more often than not, was not *terror* but, rather, *counterterror* ([source](#)).

Divide-and-conquer is a common state trick, generally by pitting workers against terrorist clichés of themselves: zombies and demons who not only refuse to work, but devote their labor towards violent resistance. Yet, the punching down is emotional as well as physical and effects all parties differently, including white cis-het people. More than anyone, they fear a lack of the structure whose genocidal history is known to them and who they consciously benefit from; i.e., inheritance anxiety in the face of the rabble as "getting' froggy." In their minds, the apocalypse plays out as Capitalist Realism always does: "Without the heteronormative structure and its sense of us-versus-them, man/woman, and inside/outside, the **Cartesian Revolution** would utterly unravel and with it the entire fabric of the space-time continuum!" It's "catastrophizing" according to Capitalism Realism as "dressed up," which our own costumed campy theatre and bodies walk the tightrope inside; i.e., *subversive Amazonomachia*. It gets crowded, fast, and when there's no more room in Hell, the dead will march out from the state of exception and walk the Earth. Yet, this apocalyptic revelation is merely the breaking of the spell. The state of exception and the state's boundaries haven't actually

come "from somewhere else"; they've been here the whole time (which Capitalism will profit on/recuperate through cancelled futures that simultaneously hide the profit game within its own worlds and violent theatre). To this, here's a variety of implements that can work for the system or against it:
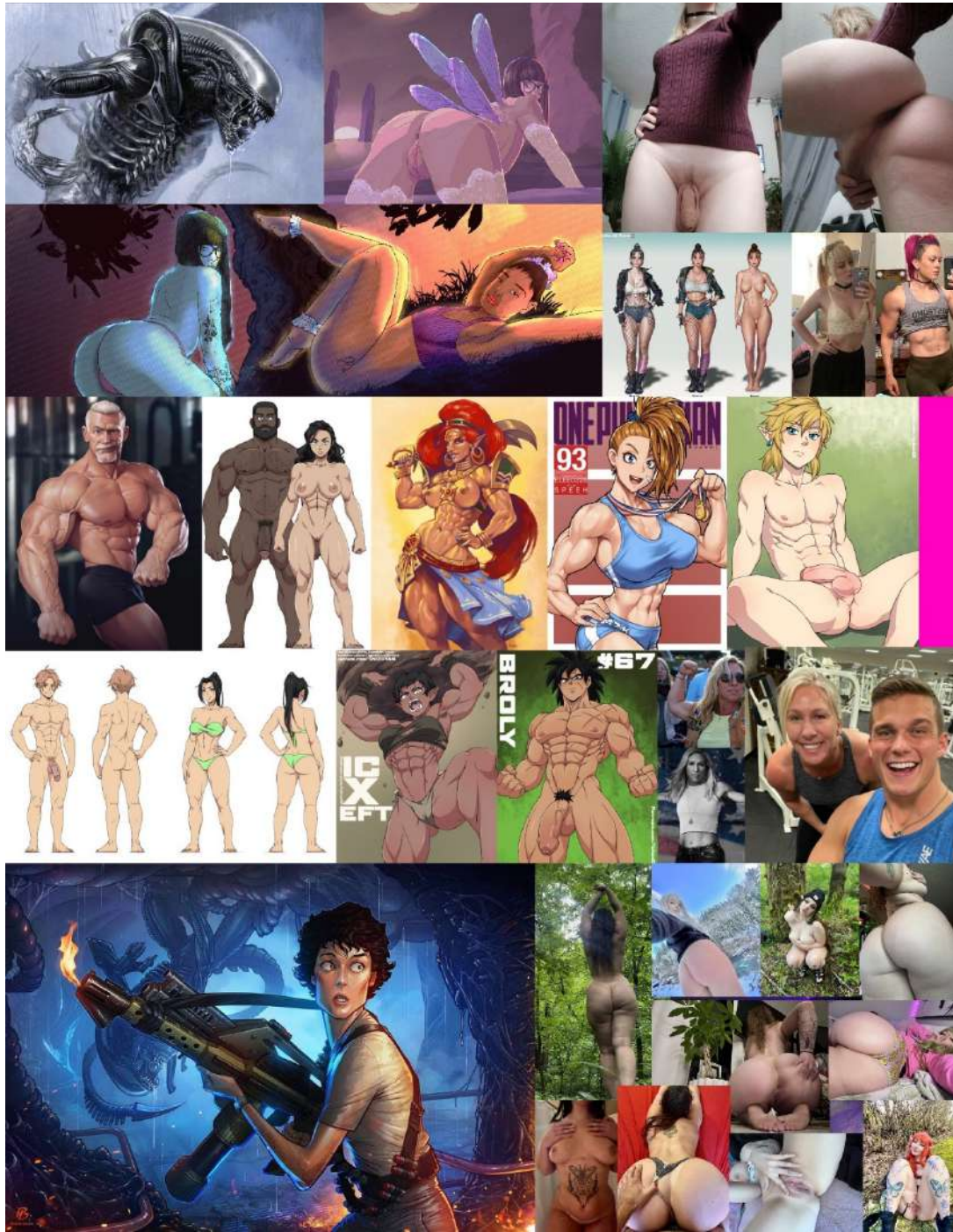
(exhibit 1a1a1h1: An assortment of collages/collage <u>mise-en-abyme</u> from throughout the book/companion glossary that features various gender roles in the Gothic creative mode. This is only a small taste. For more gender-non-conforming

*keywords, refer to the glossary's definitions of "**femboys, ladyboys, catboys; catgirls** or really **[anything] girls**; **bears, otters, hunks/twunks/twinks; butch/"futch"/femme lesbians**; **himbos, herbo**s. Note that cats are generally feminized in a traditional, European sense; i.e., as divorced from the Pavlovian conditioning and language of obedience/disobedience that dogs are known for. Puppy play of the iconoclastic sort fights class war by upending the idea of what a war dog is for [and other animals].*

Middle, exhibit 21a2a [abridged from Volume One]: Artist, top left: [Silverjow](); top-middle: [Jan Rockitnik](); top-mid-right: [elee0228](); everything else: [Ichan-desu](). The athlete is a common physical marker of war personified through the imaginary past as something to evoke in popular media. By extension, social-sexual notions of warrior and strength interlock and "argue" through cross purposes: the body of the Amazon, bear or twunk as ripe for political discourse within the human form as a hauntological expression of power tied to combat sports and military culture. Subversions of this culture include the open fetishizing of muscular bodies with various masc/femme flavors that grapple with and otherwise interrogate double standards concerning the monstrous-feminine; i.e., in the militarized world of contact sports [which extends to the cryptonymy of "adventure" through the sublimation of war and rape].

*Top-left, exhibit 5d1[from the companion glossary's "**monstrous-feminine**"]: Artist, top-left: [Gabriele Dell'Otto](); artist, top-left and bottom: [Persephone van der Waard]() and a model who wishes to remain anonymous; I'll henceforth refer to them as Jericho. When healing from trauma, queerness is often symbolized as abjectly insect-like/uncanny as something queer people are forced into—i.e., a psychosexual, "corrupt," medievalized ontology whose canonical role they don't want to play but also desire to escape from using the same language: the queer/sodomite whose gender-non-conformity is synonymized with the "rape" of heteronormativity by the monstrous-feminine and whose beauty is feared by fearful-fascinated straight people conflating queerness as a universal symbol of unironic rape and madness. We <u>do</u> sometimes want to express our own trauma in relation to what we're made out to be by our abusers, but ultimately we desire to be butterflies unto ourselves: free from trauma, from judgement, from harm.*

*Top-right: exhibit 5d2 [from the companion glossary's "**chaser/bait**"]: Artist, top: [Olivia Robin](); bottom-left: [Kyu Yong Eom](); bottom-right: [Claire Max](). The feminine cock as something to show and hide becomes a dangerous game of undress for many traps; the masculine-feminine becomes an advertisement of "incorrect," monstrous-feminine masculinity on the surface of female-appearing bodies before the clothes come off [although such bodies are habitually undressed by the Male*

Gaze; said gaze can be emulated by TERFs policing male and female bodies[206]]. Either liminality is dangerous for gender-non-conforming AMAB/AFAB sex workers, but also workers in general seeking to express themselves as different from, thus in resistance to, the canonical standard and its Symbolic Order/mythic structure.

*Bottom-left [from the glossary's "**Archaic Mothers (and vaginal spaces)**"]: Artist: [Patrick Brown](#).*

Bottom-right: Excerpt from exhibit 56a1a [from Volume Two]: "West Virginia, mountain mama. Take me home, country roads." Personified by the likes of Teddy Roosevelt, nature conservationism is a theme of conservative <u>Americana</u>, written by those who profit from it; i.e., John Denver's music, arguably romancing the nostalgia of the highly destructive coal-mining industry. But Denver's "Mountain Mama" is as much Mother Nature and its empathetic inhabitants who legitimately have a strong bond to nature and are recognized by society as "of nature" in a very Cartesian sense. Within these liminal positions, the thicc, tattooed bodies of cuties like [Nyx](#) and [Blxxd Bunny](#) are ample, fruit-like and covered in their own "Odes to Psyche[207]"—the butterfly as a hauntological symbol of transformation, death and stigma [the skull and the snake] signifying their body as a welcoming site of currently forbidden pleasures and harmony with the natural world.)

To this, our dangerous game—of making monsters by being ourselves—seeks to rewrite the boundaries and rules of power exchange/pleasure and pain; i.e., within pre-established/already-negotiated versions that do *not* serve working interests. We're essentially "behind enemy lines," effectively skirting the territories of canon's shadow zone and shadow plays, which have routinely treated the monstrous-feminine as an Amazon "Nazi" (or some such scapegoat) nightmare to

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[206] In TERF circles, male gender-non-conforming bodies are classically seen as active; i.e., as "men in dresses" invading "real women's" spaces, versus gender-non-conforming AFAB persons; the latter are treated as passive—merely "confused," generally by a Jewish conspiracy that has convinced them not to reproduce for the state.

[207] Allusions to John Keats' "Ode to Psyche" (1819):

> And in the midst of this wide quietness
> A rosy sanctuary will I dress
>   With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
>   With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
> With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
>   Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
> And there shall be for thee all soft delight
>   That shadowy thought can win,
> A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
>   To let the warm Love in! ([source](#)).

summon, battle and conquer (through physical or sexual violence) by a male action hero or subordinate inside Amazon pastiche; re: **canonical/regressive Amazonomachia**. These Gothic (hence unreliable/unsafe) narrators/narratives are routinely romanced in a very courtly sense through historical-material **live burial** of one being trapped within enforced theatrical schemes and their compelled gender roles' harmful **xenophobia/xenophilia** towards the **monstrous-feminine**; i.e., as something to **fetishize** and rape as embodiments of the Destroyer persona and its equally cliché and fetishized victim counterpart.

Canon, then, features unironic theatrical violence in a half-real sense, pinned between the fiction, rules and real world as mimicking one another through the profit motive (see Ash, above: caught between the windmill door and the outside world as he tilts at the windmill; i.e., in the belly of the "dragon"). The canonical hero, including its compromises with power, becomes trapped (thus caught) in the act of killing a manufactured enemy forever let they risk becoming one themselves: the damsel or the whore, the detective or the demon, etc. This is less an idle threat and more a crisis-of-masculinity where those who "pass" try harder to blend even more in, thus avoid persecution when the state begins to eat itself. In this nightmare, you don't wake up, but the canonically indoctrinated at least partially think they can *provided* they kill, survive or avoid becoming the monster. But like

Doctor Morbius' Monster from the Id, it always comes back, "sly and irresistible, only waiting to be reinvoked for murder![208]"

Luckily this "bad game's" canonical praxis *can* be camped—i.e., its harmful/unironic fetishes, kink and demon BDSM rituals, aesthetics, and "strict/gentle" operators—but doing so exists within the same shadow zone, on- and offstage in a half-real kayfabe: to teach *good* play and ironic/healthy fetishization, kink and demonic BDSM rituals, aesthetics, and "strict/gentle" operators. Canon and iconoclasm operate within the same discursive space; i.e., capital as (when left to its own devices) forever colonizing itself through the state's profit motive. Our "creative successes" don't just perform, thus illustrate

- **mutual consent**
- **informed consumption** and **informed consent**
- sex-positive *de facto* **education** (social-sexual education; i.e., iconoclastic/**good sex education** and taught gender roles), **good play**/**emergent gameplay** and cathartic wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure (**abuse prevention patterns**) meant to teach good discipline and impulse control (valuing consent, permission, mutual attraction, etc); e.g., **appreciative** peril (the ironic **damsel-in-distress**/**rape fantasy**), invited voyeurism
- **descriptive sexuality**

They supply *de facto* education as a kind of **salubrious regression**—of us traveling to sites of imaginary trauma that are not entirely fictional or divorced from our lived pasts as inherited from older times, but also have been dolled up as "fun" by current power structures and *their* propaganda mills: canceled futures. In a sense, we're chasing the dragon ourselves, seeking to camp its unironic forms, often through **subversive roleplay** that engages in cathartic consent-non-consent; i.e., through the conveying of informed negotiation (through the illustrating of mutual consent/the other praxial factors, above), **safewords**, fair (non-Faustian) contracts and boundary-forming exercises designed to help us heal from trauma; i.e., when seeing state-sanctioned markers of trauma/**gargoyles** during state crisis (which is perpetual and pandemic/endemic[209]). It's **aftercare*** from an initial devastation stemming from greater devastations that, for us, weaponizes for class war against the state (whose own aftercare is harmful, thus dangerous).

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[208] From *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a sci-fi/horror film about a magic machine inside an ancient, abandoned, alien civilization that once accessed, releases the inner demons of a wizard-like scientist (the film was based loosely off Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, 1611—a story about a wizard named Prospero whose magical books lead him to seek revenge against the military men who wronged him).

[209] *Pandemic* meaning "spreading to/spanning all land masses/the entire globe," *endemic* meaning "native to a given area, or becoming native or naturalized to said area over time."

I'm being rather playful with my terminology, here. "Aftercare" generally refers to the "wind-down" or relaxation period following intense BDSM. It's meant to give the triggered or aggravated party time to destress after a stressful activity that releases the lion's share of said stress. But in situations of endless crisis, waves of terror are met with canonical violence to try and end the stress causing them. Except they become "bad aftercare" by existing within crises and without trying to end them; they just kick the can down the road and call it "leveling up" (the gaming term for "progress"). For us, "leveling up" is surviving trauma, but also contributing to the Cause by ending crisis as a perceived reality the state forces onto its workers to pit them against each other for the profit motive. Said motive reliably turns people into cops and victims, colonizers and colonized. Those inside the in-group are "the haves" and are lauded for their conquests; those in the out-group are "the have-nots" and are forsaken for being weak, pagan, doomed, etc.

There are dangers to us "acting out" inside this hellish territory but there is no "outside of the text" for us. As mentioned previously, we will be prosecuted for damaging canon, but also *blamed* for the systemic issues before, during and after breaking its godawful spell: those inside Plato's cave attacking us rather than the canonical puppeteers duping them. In short, they're crying "DAVRO!" *for* the elite in defense of the allegory of the cave's canonical shadows on the wall—the state's shadows, not ours. And yet, the rewards in destroying canonical theatre and its shadowy deceptions far outweigh the risks; i.e., it's far more dangerous to play along (to do nothing in an activist sense) because Capitalism incentivizes our routine destruction through the profit motive as built around genocide of an imaginary threat: us. *We're* already locked into a scheme that renders us into meat for the soldiers to eat, monsters for them to kill and fuck (and often not immune to these same canonical spells and their harmful escape fantasies)—the proverbial chopping block, wedding bed and sacrificial altar as horrifyingly elided to serve one purpose: exploitation through bad instruction.

This includes the treatment of Gothic poetics more broadly as "drug-like," which I'd briefly like to unpack. First, the privatized sex worker is a "one-in-a-million" beauty to trot out in front of audiences by canonical pimps (or bankers acting like *de facto* "pimps of pimps[210]"). As such, she appears like an angel

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[210] Banks exert tremendous control over sex workers, but also the companies that employ them. As Eloise Berry writes in "Why OnlyFans Suddenly Reversed Its Decision to Ban Sexual Content," 2021):

> So why did OnlyFans (briefly) decide to ban the kind of content which had come to characterize its platform? "The short answer is banks," said Tim Stokely, the site's British founder and chief executive. Banks, he claimed, are refusing to process payments associated with adult content. In an interview with the FT, Stokely singled out BNY Mellon, Metro Bank, and JPMorgan Chase for blocking intermediary

descended from Heaven (or ascended from Hell, in a demonic form) to make all your dreams come true and your pain go away. Just don't fall in love:

> You can say anything you like
> But you can't touch the merchandise
> She'll give you every penny's worth
> But it will cost you a dollar first
>
> You can step outside your little world
> (Step outside your world)
> You can talk to a pretty girl
> She's everything you dream about
>
> […]
>
> But don't fall in love
> 'Cause if you do, you'd find out she don't love you
> (She's one in a million girl)
> One in a million girl
> (Why would I lie?)
> Now, why would I lie? (The Tube's "She's a Beauty" 1983).

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payments, preventing sex workers from receiving their earnings, and penalizing businesses which support sex workers. He declined to reveal OnlyFans' current banking partners. This follows similar behavior by payment service providers which have begun to dissociate from the porn industry. After a New York Times [investigation](#) found images of rape and child sex abuse on Pornhub, Mastercard and Visa prohibited the use of their cards on the site in Dec. 2020.

In response, Pornhub removed all content produced by unverified partners and implemented a verification program for users. In April this year, [Mastercard](#) announced tighter control on transactions of adult content to clamp down on illegal material. The requirements included that platforms verify ages and identities of their users ([source](#)).

While the banks' reason might sound genuine and sex-positive on its face, the material reality is bankers are punishing sex workers for the corporate deregulation of their own labor—i.e., the usual fat cats protecting their own image after the consequences of deregulation's criminogenic conditions invariably come to light. Meanwhile, the incidental criminality of bad-faith actors within said conditions are *not* punished; they are sex traffickers and sex pests who already operate anonymously from the shadows. Instead, sex workers are punished when they are denied (often for many) the only means at their disposal for financial independence.

(artist: [Kristen Hanes](#))

Under the rise of neoliberalism, such music and imagery might look and sound cheerful, but something is amiss inside the heteronormative scheme: exploitation. Canonical media is historically-materially vindictive towards, and exploitative of, sex workers who *don't* have control over their own bodies (which obviously has shifted somewhat in the Internet Age—a fact we will interrogate much more in Volume Three). During *canonical* instruction (we'll consider iconoclastic sex work too, of course), the expected victims are targeted, marked and yoked ahead of time—like a lamb to the slaughter but treated as a kind of opiate for the masses. A "tasty cake" from head to toe and bound with invisible bonds (dogma and material conditions), the sex worker is fetishized against their will to cater to market forces dehumanizing them, or the worker as sexualized for similar dimorphic reasons that suit the state's profit motive. As we shall see, any attempt to change the structure must occur within it (an absence of material conditions amounting to praxial invisibility).

Beyond normalized sex work through basic, off-canvas prostitution, monsters fulfill a canonical role as sexualized "punching bags"; i.e., under normal

circumstances, everything unfolds inside a counterfeit, monomythic action plan—a frequently non-binarized, sometimes-furry homewrecker and criminal-Whore-of-Babylon whose *routine* appearance inside neoliberal (thus heteronormative) copaganda is war-like in Fisher's sense of the hauntological: trapped in a "cancelled future" (which from here on out I call "dead futures," synthesizing the idea in relation to Mark Fisher's Capitalist Realism and hauntological dystopia as conspicuously decayed, thus trapped in Hogle's conceptualization of "the narrative of the crypt") that must be escaped through itself as transmuted from within (cyberpunks are conspicuously populated with ostentatiously dehumanized sex work: the sex robot). Often this "jail break" happens in drug-like ways; i.e., communicated through iconoclastic media as "drug-like" but not necessarily "on drugs" (remember, I wrote this entire book stone-cold sober). As Stuart Miller writes in "What is Acid Communism?":

> Acid communism is not a doctrine of hippy-esque communal living and psychoactive drugs. The commune, and psychoactive substances, have a role to play in the *philosophy* of acid communism, but acid communism is not a valorization of a hedonistic, hallucinogenic culture. In my opinion, acid communism is an evolution of thought, following from Fisher's work on the hauntology of culture and capitalist realism. […]
>
> Hauntology [for Fisher] is the belief that the future has been cancelled. Capitalist realism is the belief that there is no alternative to capitalism. […] What does it mean to say that the future is cancelled? For Fisher, it meant an inability to imagine anything new. His work on cyberpunk is a testament to this. The cyberpunk aesthetic we all understand is one that meshes advanced technology with late-stage capitalism. But to build that aesthetic, the familiar yet alien are transposed into the scene: the Japanese culture of *Blade Runner*, for example, may adorn the futuristic scenery, but its presence is a product of 1970s/1980s American xenophobia of the Japanese economic miracle subsuming their own. The great pyramids, skyscrapers and flying cars are all futuristic, but it's *retro*-futuristic. It is how we used to imagine the future [lifted from Frederic Jameson's "Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?" 1982].
>
> This is hauntology. In a world where the future has been cancelled, where we are unable to imagine new futures (we will get onto why shortly), society and culture is forced to look back onto the imaginings of previous generations (source).

To be a little more bold than Miller is, the recreational use of mind-expanding drugs and communal living is, in my opinion, absolutely fine (and in fact, *vital* to the process provided they are utilized in a non-harmful or self-destructive manner). Regardless, their experimental nature's literal or figurative usage will be targeted

for expected violence by powerful state forces concerned with a foreign/internal plot: drugs are used as an excuse for the state to police its population through drug wars of various kinds (including sex in general and the Gothic *poiesis* of monster sex). As John Ehrlichman, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs, declared in 1994:

> You want to know what this [war on drugs] was really all about? The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. [...] We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did ([source](): Vera's "Drug War Confessional").

This policing extends to **subjugated Amazons**; e.g., the *TERF* acting like a man historically does by becoming the token cop concerned with the foreign plot, thus checking the Amazon's vagina to make sure it's natal, thus not "on drugs"[211]; i.e., that she's **a "real, biological" woman** and not some stinkin' trans infiltrator **stealing the valor** of a *real* suffragette. This is a sentiment obviously held by TERFs acting besieged, thus requiring us to interrogate Barabara Creed's observation of female, monstrous-feminine "non-victims" (mostly in cinema, no less) as potentially "TERF-grade," meaning they're perhaps a just little *too* fixated on biology and universal victimhood (exhibit 41g1a2) when deciding who threatens them (exhibit 1a1c) and who they compromise with—e.g., J.K. Rowling or Matt Walsh—when tag-teaming us/locking our asses up for being too "free" and open regarding *our* identities and self-expression; i.e., as sometimes involving actual drugs, but also just appearing drug-like: **anthropomorphism** (whose oft-sexualized, talking-animal "fursonas" we'll unpack at great length in Volume Two's "Call of the Wild" chapter):

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[211] Gender-affirming care includes the injection of synthetic testosterone as a controlled substance (whose usage is selectively policed by those who maintain the heteronormative standard; i.e., looking the other way when cis-het male athletes [and tokens] use performance-enhancing drugs, but cracking down on trans athletes [usually trans women] attempting to transition in the field of sports. "Think of the women!" is argued to abuse trans people *and* cis-het women for the benefit of the status quo—men).

www.patreon.com/mdf
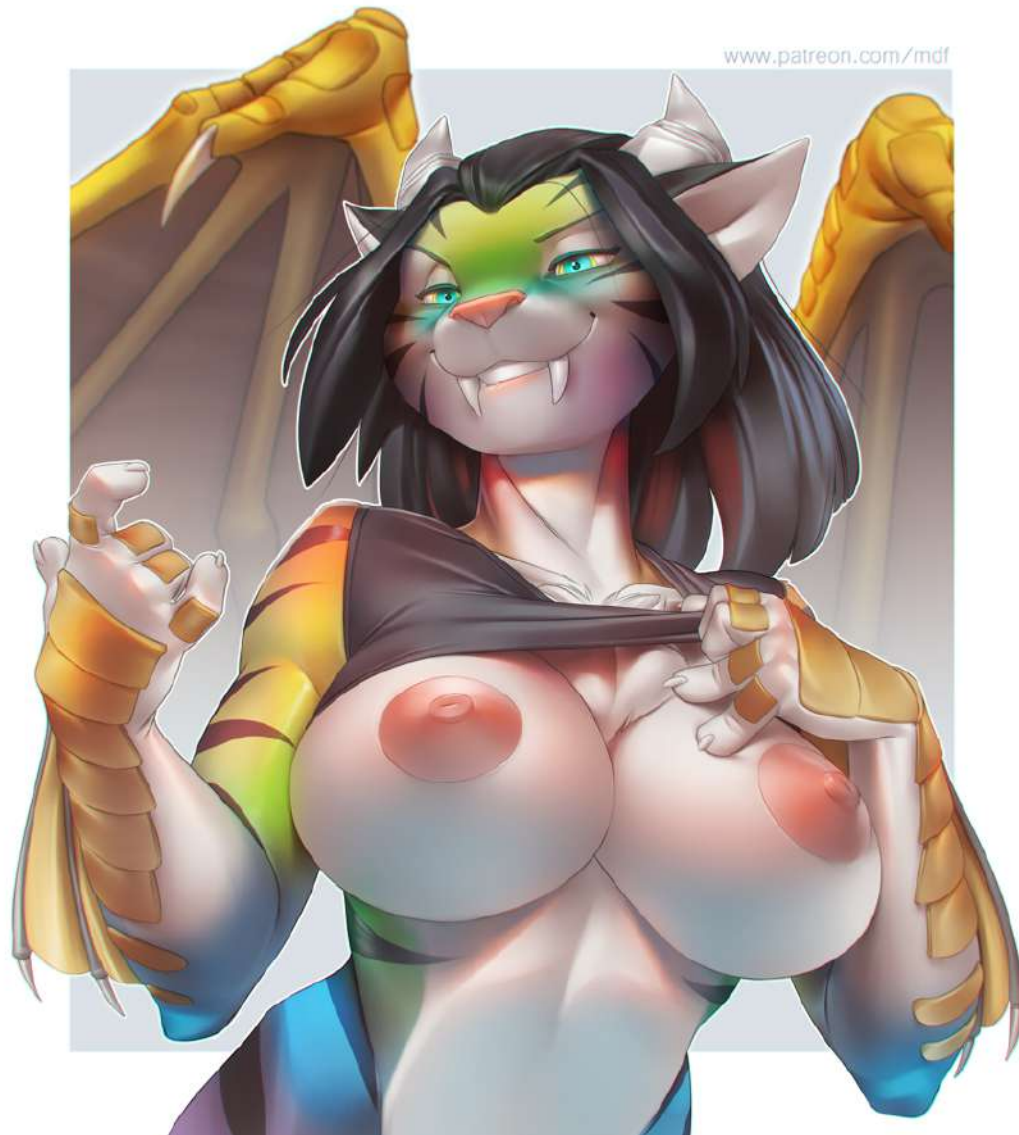
(artist: Miles DF)

     The dystopia of the "cancelled future" isn't just personified on- and off-canvas; it's summoned and lead to by a canonical (thus heteronormative) treasure map inside of itself, denoting an unironic gender trouble whose equally routine vanquishing (via the termination of the rebellious Amazon, fascist or black castle) is pure heteronormative copaganda engineered inside the Shadow of Pygmalion as a state-sanctioned creative process: the use of the treasure map to reach the Gothic castle as the lair/parallel space of the dragon lord, dragon and *mother* of dragons before slaying them in one fell swoop. The map also summons them through drug-

like[212] ways to appear conveniently as fascist, Communist, non-white/non-Christian and/or queer scapegoats whenever and wherever Capitalism's crises shift towards decay (**fascism** being **Capitalism-in-decay**; **centrism** being the normalizing of this procedure through **moderacy**/**tone-policing**, creeping **gentrification**, **incrementalism**, **white savior** antics, and **American Liberalism**/**exceptionalism**; and "Communism" being the universal scapegoat regardless of how nominal or functional it is; i.e., **Domino Theory**). The appearance of the monster is often proceeded by an ill omen that mirrors the residence as doubled in an uncanny sense: the return of the Gothic castle as a dark reflection of the heroic space having been corrupted by a foreign plot, a backstabber.

Regarding space, power and theatre's art/porn and heroes (monsters), the whole affair is liminal insofar as actors for or against the state utilize the same basic language. Within *canon*, the hauntologized castle suddenly appears, as does its mighty occupant and host of generals and legionaries. However, so does the old sage with the map that conveniently leads the heroes inside to take back what's rightfully theirs. Everything is counterfeit, the parallel space of the castle, and its reaching the center of, using the map a **liminal hauntology of *war*** occupied by the projection of male insecurity and masculinity-in-crisis onto a perpetual corrupt/monstrous-feminine scapegoat as coming from somewhere else that looks just like home; i.e., a monstrous **liminal expression** as forever policed through monomythic copaganda and token gradients: Sting glows blue, meaning the home is under attack and must be defended by brave warriors and holy men to preserve its boundaries, its *property* (including women) from unholy thieves-in-disguise. The surface of him *oozes* stigmatized sexual dominance as unironically xenophobic/xenophilic. Through this singular staging and interpretation, our modern-day Count is basically a fish out of water/might as well have flown in from outer space to suction our damsel away with his tractor beam: He comes, he sees, he conquers; everyone else "suffers" in ways that lead to actual suffering:

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[212] The Vikings loved their drugs before going on raids, going berserk and killing for the gods by slaying the gods' enemies; re: Grendel and Grendel's mother, but really anyone comparable to them using drugs or drug-like poetics in ways that break canon's kayfabe.

Singular interpretations are dangerous[213] because they enforce the colonial binary through open endorsement and willful ignorance: killing orcs is fine and should never be questioned. The canonical reaction to ironic camp is hostile, reliably leading to our four basic behaviors:

- **open aggression**, expressing gender trouble as a means of open, aggressive attack (disguised as "self-defense" reactive abuse): "We're upset and punching down is free speech" ("free speech" being code for "negative freedom for bigots who want to say bigoted things" to defend the elite's profit motive).
- **condescension**, expressing a moderate, centrist position that smarmily perpetuates the current status quo as immutable, but also optimal: "This is as good as it gets" but also which can never decay.
- **reactionary indignation**, using sex-coercive symbols (argumentation) to defend their unethical positions: "They're out to destroy your heroes, your fun, all you hold dear (code for 'the current power structure')."
- **DARVO** ("Deny, Accuse, Reverse, Victim, Offender"), defending the status quo by defending the people who enslave them (the elite) by going after the elite's enemies, thereby defending Capitalism during decay. When it decays, these "gamers" see "their" games in decay and will defend those, seeing human rights as an affordable compromise in the bargain. They see

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[213] In the words of my friend and mentor, Dr. Sandy Norton, if anyone tells you there's only one correct interpretation of something, *run*.

themselves (and the elite) as "victims," and class warriors as monsters "ruining everything" (like Satan).

Shouted with a toxic "well, if I'm angry it's your fault!" the fantasy—of tilting at prescribed windmills to ward off difficult truths—is precious to uncritical consumers. As something to worship and uphold, sanctioned violence extends to token forms within and outside of the text (the subjugated Amazon; e.g., Ellen Ripley or Samus Aran) as killing the big daddy of fascism (Count Dracula, exhibit 1a1c) but also the big bad bitch of Communism (Archaic Mothers like Grendel's Mother, exhibit 1a1a1f1; but also the Alien Queen and Mother Brain, exhibit 1a1c) and various moral-panic, usual-target representations, such as the witchdoctor/necromancer or barbarian chief: not just canonical *Amazonomachia* but **regressive** forms, whose bloody vaudeville is forever caught up in us-versus-them disputes for the state's benefit (whose reactionary cultural forms denote the imagery as used during class/culture war as visually war-like [for canon] and camp as an *unwelcome* act of war that demands a *canonical* response; i.e., iconoclastic monsters are recuperated inside a canonical *casus beli*, aka a **false flag operation**[214]). Simply put, it's practice for anti-labor sentiment—a military drill relayed through neoliberal simulations of canonical war's "adventure story" and tactical combat (the videogame, but especially the shooter).

Token or not, "history" whether conceived as "fiction" or "non-fiction" have much in common, including the binaries that emerge during crisis and decay. The vampire never seems to the die, the damsel is always in the distress, and the hero is always primed to white-knight her. "I can't save you *until* you're in danger," his actions seem to suggest, which intimates the structure at work/play. It enforces itself through intended performances that prescribe meaning through adherence to traditional standards: rewarding those with faith. Yet, historically the biggest criminals are those with faith under the status quo shielding themselves from the foreign menace—say nothing of those plotting revenge by crying "DAVRO!" to project their scheme onto someone else. Both tell tall tales to justify the abuse going on; i.e., the urban militarism and tales of far-off slaughter and devastation (which Tolkien gentrified by removing torture dungeons and open, gratuitous sex from his stories, instead populating his worlds with seemingly "chaste" orcs and men duking it out on the open battlefield).

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[214] A "special military operation" built on false pretenses; i.e., "they fired first," to which the "offended" party hits them with everything they have, using that as an excuse to invade and colonize their land. It's not simply a Nazi tactic, but Imperialism-in-action regardless of who the aggressor is; e.g., America's "special military operation" into Iraq and its surrounding countries during the so-called War on Terror (a poorly disguised excuse to conduct Imperialism as usual under the façade of "the end of history" by bringing "Democracy" to the rest of the world, aka proxy war or neo-colonialism: they're the "terrorists" and we're conducting "counterterrorism." It's the usual black-and-white antics of the colonial binary in action).

I know we've covered a lot of ground up to this point, but we have a ways to go before reaching the "camp map" finale (exhibit 1a1a1i). Moving forward, I want to cover the reflection of Cartesian dualism/sexual dimorphism in heteronormative language as warlike and divided, as well as the banality of evil tied to this broader legendary process as "map-like" in its own right, inviting all manner of people to chase after its contents while denying the oppressed a chance to speak (silence and denial being a core function of genocide).

First, faith or not, the dialectical-material relationship is ongoing during oppositional praxis, and generates a variety of harmful binaries during work as sexualized/sex work to bring this enforcement about: the virgin/whore, angel/devil, doctor/nurse, damsel/detective/demon, missionary/sodomite, savior/saboteur, colonist/colonized, cowboys/Indians, cops/criminals (victims), forgiven/unforgiven, saved/damned, black-to-white persons and other **ethnic minorities**, Christian/heretic, skinny/fat, horny/chaste, slutty/modest, fuckable/marriage material, able/disabled, hellcat/shrew, black knight/white knight, predator/prey, the kayfabe of the babyface/heel, cat/dog (**neurodivergent/neurotypical**, introvert/extravert)—but also monstrous, tokenized iterations of these things that can be used for or *against* the state; re: **Amazon pastiche** (a monumental fixture of this book's praxis; more examples: exhibit 1a1b) through the centrist or abject kayfabe of codified versions battling it out for "supremacy" (code for profit) versus the Satanic, anticapitalistic (thus anti-neoliberal/antifascist) iterations of the same base visuals informing the public mindset through Gothic aesthetics, over and over and over again; re: **ACAB**, meaning "**All Cops Are Bad**" but also, as I see it, "**All (Canonical) Castles Are Bad**": all canonical castles need kings, cops, and *victims*.

Contrary to canonical depictions (which often pit the criminal against a spectrum of cops), the descriptive sexuality and gender parody of iconoclastic monsters/ironic **monster-fucking** (and their castles and other lairs) actually yield many different interpretations simultaneously. So while the status quo's singular and restrictive interpretations *are* Legion, so are the flexible, chaotic interpretations that Gothic Communists provide; and unlike the state's singular, braindead tune, *our* darkness is "visible"/**class-conscious**, but unafraid to camp the ghosts of men like Milton and Marx, but also Tolkien and James Cameron's varied treatments of the monomyth (and its castles) as literally mapped out. In other words, we look after our own by subverting thus transmuting *any* structures (castles, ghosts, maps

or otherwise) designed or recuperated by the elite to parasitically grip, then render us into emotionally and Gothically unintelligent mulch; i.e., "correct" symbols useful to profit, into actual corpses the state uses, discards, or targets during moral panics of various kinds inside the state's monopoly of violence/state of exception (e.g., the zombie apocalypse). All exist to promote **the banality of evil**. The greatest lie of centrist propaganda is that **Great Evil** is one, cool and two, actually the Nazis or some such cartoon scapegoat. The **Great Destroyer** wasn't a dragon or a Nazi for the white knight to slay. Nor was Communism the much-touted end of the world (whose development is held hostage by the "mutually-assured destruction" of the elite's ever-expanding **nuclear arsenal** and war market[215]). Instead, **the Greater of Two Evils** is actually powerful, old, white men—men known not for their intelligence, good looks or brawn, but merely their positions within capital.

The elite are the owner class, thus steal wealth behind impressive theatrics; i.e., the false copy as sold to workers who buy into the myth of crisis as "adventure" put on a map. Each time adventure calls, the elite throw the levers of power with a disturbing lack of scruples—i.e., to profit from, thus get their daily dose of blood via **wage/labor theft** (and other colonizing behaviors). In turn, the system **alienates** us from them and them from us and us from our labor and each other. War and rape flourish, but also synonymize with heteronormative sex under the profit motive. Meanwhile, the elite roost on systems of **wealth generation and accumulation-through-exploitation**, letting fascists kill and steal from labor movements, thus hoard their own draconian piles of *stolen*, *non-generated* wealth: Tolkien's Lonely Mountain and the King Under the Mountain's "pale, enchanted gold" inside a castle disguised as a mountain, but also Dracula's "Castlevania" as the fearsome, operatic home of the proverbial dragon lord. As these exist, they—like Tolkien's twin trees from earlier (exhibit 0b)—canonize camp using the theatrical language of war as a treasure map to explore then conquer relative to castles as far away or near. The map is of the castle or leads to it inside of itself. Doing so waters Valinor's illustrious[216] two towers (oh, the irony) with fresh, perennial blood: the Base and Superstructure as clutched in the elite's iron grip, but also their Pygmalions; e.g., men like Tolkien mapping war out in a never-ending refrain that defends the white castle, thus Capitalism, from a black-castle scapegoat. Before we can execute our own "camp map"—one that camps the manifesto trees, thus corrupts them towards our purposes—we will have to understand the original as something to transmute back towards developing Communism; i.e., we will have to camp the canonical map (and castle) as a simulator (thus educator) of war that has taken many forms since Tolkien's heyday.

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[215] Re: GDF's "There Was No 'Cold' War," "NATO is Risking Nuclear War for Money," and "No, We Didn't Need to Nuke Japan."

[216] Beware any white castle touted as "exceptional"; e.g., Coleridge's notion of a Gothic cathedral. To camp them, you first have to view them without rose-tinted glasses.

"There be dragons" is borrowed foreshadowing as resting over a legendary hoard exchanged between those sickened by it: a militarized gold rush charted by a map/"fetch quest" whose empowerment is false (doesn't change your material conditions; in fact, it endorses the status quo, which worsens them) and whose consequences of blindly endorsing (versus the enjoyment of informed consumption) are felt all around the world as imitated by the copy of the copy of the copy—wars of extermination. Tolkien's Middle Earth was basically Western/Eastern Europe, which was emulated by virtually all of fantasy canon; i.e., the monomyth as ludologized by Wizards of the Coast with *D&D* as a tabletop, head-in-the-sand response—canonically speaking—to 1960s counterculture selectively celebrating Tolkien's novels while also playing around inside copies of them. This "shadow zone" is, itself, Grendel's cave as a castle to invade and plunder while proving one's manliness by confronting "corruption," the monstrous-feminine, and various awesome mysteries that you deny through military optimism/the return of the king and "good war" to scapegoat the fascist tyrant; i.e., as the Greater Good does, defending capital by following the canonical map even when it transforms beyond what Tolkien would have been comfortable with: into an actual castle located on home turf or connected to one's home turf through indisputable settler-colonial ties.

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism by Persephone van der Waard
thesis volume, first edition v1.08d4; released: 9/11/2024 — ©2024 vanderWaardart.com
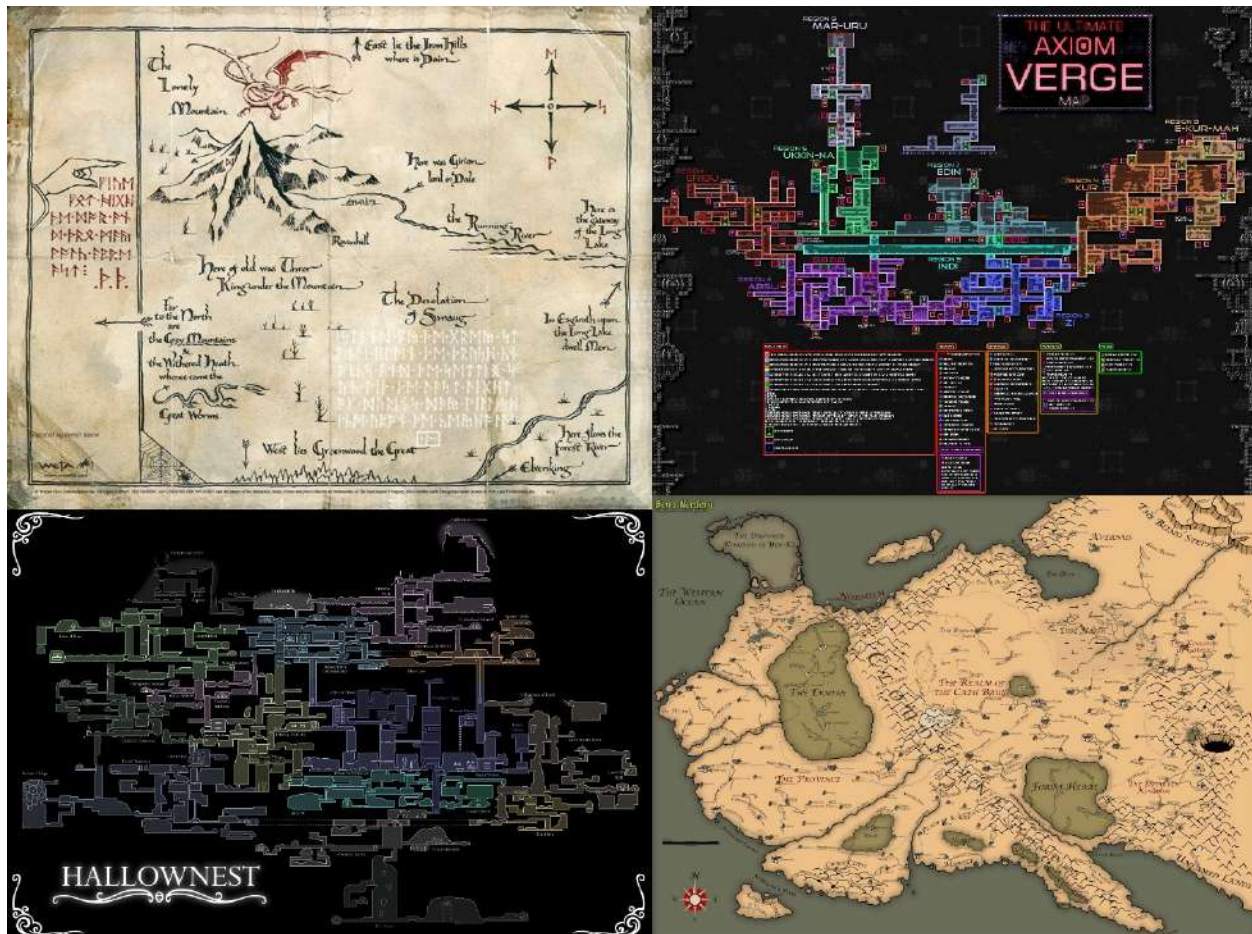
(exhibit 1a1a1h2a1: "When Alexander saw the breadth of his domain, he wept for there were no more worlds to conquer[217]." Videogames are war simulators; in them, maps are built not merely to be charted and explored, but conquered through war simulations. The land is an endless site of conquest, war, rape and <u>profit</u> carefully dressed up as "treasure," "liberation" and "adventure," but in truth, brutalizing nature during endless wars of extermination borrowed from the historical <u>and imaginary</u> past as presently intertwined:

- *top-left: Tolkien's refrain, "Thror's Map" from <u>The Hobbit</u>, 1937*
  —source: <u>Weta Workshop</u>
- *top-right: Thomas Happ's map of Sudra from <u>Axiom Verge</u>, 2015*
  —source: <u>magicofgames</u>
- *bottom-left: Team Cherry's map of Hallownest, from <u>Hollow Knight</u> 2017*
  —source: <u>tuppkam1</u>
- *bottom-right: Bungie's map of the West from <u>Myth: the Fallen Lords</u>, 1997*
  —source: <u>Ben's Nerdery</u>

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[217] A canonical misunderstanding/misquoting of Plutarch written by neoliberals needing an evil bad guy to chew the fat. As Anthony Madrid writes in "And Alexander Wept" (2020):

> Remember *Die Hard*? I don't. I saw it right around the time it came out, and all I remember is Bruce Willis, barefoot, running through broken glass. That, for me, was a metaphor for watching the movie. Fans of the film, however, will recall its dapper German villain, Hans Gruber, smacking his silly lips and gloating at some private victory. He puts his fingertips together and says in facetiously tragic tones (clearly quoting something from High Culture and referring with cozy irony to himself): "And Alexander wept, seeing as he had no more worlds to conquer" [that's a misquote]. Then he smiles with evil-genius self-satisfaction and says: "Benefits of a classical education." / Yeah. Except that quote would never come up in the context of a classical education, unless the instructor happened to be taking a jolly detour, nose in the air, to attack a piece of legendary crap that no student of his must ever traffic in. […]
> A few facts. The monkeys who wrote *Die Hard* did not invent that quote. […] It comes up in certain classic English poems from the seventeenth century [e.g., Edmund Waller addressing Oliver Cromwell in 1655 …] The quote is a hash of three passages in Plutarch, first century CE. Two of the passages were made available to English speakers (most notably Shakespeare) in 1579, in the translation by Thomas North. […] Look at this rather nicer version [of Plutarch's "On Tranquillity of Mind"] by everybody's favorite courtier, Sir Thomas Wyatt [for Catherine of Aragon]:
>
>> Alexander, whan he herde Anaxarchus argue that there were infynite worldes, it is said that he wept. And whan his frendes asked hym what thing had happened him to be wept for: "Is it nat to be wept for," quod he, "syns they say there be infinite worldes, and we are nat yet lorde of one?"
>
> […] Alexander is not weeping in sorrow that there are no more throats to cut. This is not a picture of a man at the end of a career of world conquest; he's at the beginning. "Look at all these throats—and I haven't even cut one!"
>
>> […] And therfore, seing that his fathers dominions and Empire increased dayly more and more, perceiving all occasion taken from him to do any great attempt: he desired no riches nor pleasure but warres and battells, and aspired to a signory, where he might win honor.
>
> Now that's from Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*. No tears, but definitely the guy Gruber had in mind, the Godzilla he'd heard about in German day camp. Here's a prince who wants to conquer *for the sake of conquering*; he doesn't care whether Macedon comes out on top or not, except insofar as it's compatible with his personal glory (source).

In short, Gruber's misquoting of classical history is a kind of bad education that invites the fash-coded baddie in a neoliberal copaganda to steal from the fictional elite, while the real-world elite rewrite the past along these historical-material lines; i.e., neoliberal apologia regarding war as essentialized through men just like Gruber.

Though certainly not unique to Tolkien, and popularized in the shooter genre <u>vis-à-vis</u> Cameron, Tolkien near-single-handedly popularized the idea of "world-building" in fantasy by making a mappable world full of languages he invented, but which he tied to the larger process of world war that has been replicated countless times since; i.e., the idea of the map as a space for conquest that paralleled the elite raping Earth repeatedly as translated to the videogame format; e.g., <u>Myth</u>, <u>Axiom Verge</u>, <u>Hollow Knight</u>, above [our focus, in the next subchapter, will be on Metroidvania, not the RTS].

Under Capitalist Realism, Hell is a place that always appears on Earth [or an Earth-like double]—a black fortress threatening state hegemony during the inevitable decay of a colonial body. Its widening state of exception must then be entered by the hero during the liminal hauntology of war as a repeatable, monomythic excursion—a <u>franchise</u> to subdue during military optimism sold as a childhood exercise towards "playing war" in fantastical forms; e.g., <u>Castlevania</u> or <u>Metroid</u>. Conjure a Radcliffean menace inside the Imperial Core, then meet it with American force.

Threatened, the state always responds with violence before anything else Male or female, then, the hero becomes the elite's exterminator, destroyer and retrieval expert, infiltrating a territory of crisis to retrieve the state's property [weapons, princesses, monarchic symbols of power, etc] while simultaneously chattelizing nature in reliably medieval ways: alienating and fetishizing its "wild" variants, crushing them like vermin to maintain Cartesian supremacy and heteronormative familial structures [a concept we'll return to in Volume One's synthesis symposium, "Nature Is Food," including exhibit 30a]. Neoliberalism merely commercializes the monomyth, using parental heroic videogame avatars like the knight or Amazon pitted against dark, evil-familial doubles—parents, siblings and castles [and other residents/residences]—in order to dogmatize the player [usually children] as a cop-like vehicle for state aims [often dressed up as a dated iteration thereof; e.g., an assassin, cowboy or bounty hunter, but also a lyncher, executioner, dragon slayer or witchfinder general "on the hunt," etc]: preserving settler-colonial dominance through Capitalist Realism by abusing Gothic language—the grim reaper and his harvest. Doing so helps disguise, or at least romanticize [thus downplay, normalize and dismiss] state abuses through their regular trifectas and monopolies; i.e., the CIA and other shadowy arms of state mercenary violence fronted by myopic copies—pacifying the wider public by mendaciously framing these doubles as [often seductive] "empowerment" fantasies. All the while, dogma becomes "home entertainment" as a palliative means of weaponizing the <u>idea</u> of "home" against those the state seeks to control and exploit <u>on either side of a settler-colonial engagement</u>: the cop or the cop's victims. Either is sacrificed for the state through its usual operations; i.e., for the Greater Good, except heroes are glorified as monstrous sacrifices serving "the gods" [the status quo] out of Antiquity into capital, whereas their victims are demonized as evil, thus deserving of whatever

holy [thus righteous] retribution comes their way. Both are chewed up and spit out, the state's requisite "grist for the mill" as it uses its own citizens to move money through nature: by defending itself from an imaginary darkness "From Elsewhere." A fortress' sovereignty is forged, as are its manufactured crises and saviors, but the outcome is still profit; the castle remains haunted by the ghost of genocide, suggesting the unthinkable reality that the hero is false.

[artist: Persephone van der Waard]

In neoliberal copaganda, canonical heroes are sent solo or in small groups, deployed as much like a bomb as a person; hired by the powerful, these "walking armies" destabilize target areas for the mother country to invade and bleed dry [a genocidal process the aggressor sanitizes with cryptonymic labels like "freedom" and "progress"]. To this, they are authorized, commissioned or otherwise sanctioned by those with the means of doing so; i.e., a governing body centered around elite supremacy at a socio-material level. After infiltration occurs, the agents work as a detective[218]/cop, or judge, jury and executioner—either on foreign or domestic soil, the place in question framed as loosened from elite control, thus requiring the hero [and their penchant for extreme violence] to begin with. This makes them an arbiter of material disputes wherever they are: through police violence for the state in its colonial territories at home and abroad. They always follow orders: "Shoot first, ask questions later and enslave what survives." In stories like Aliens, Doom and Metroid, the fatal nostalgia of the "false" doubled homestead is used to incite genocide, thus conduct settler colonialism inside of itself; i.e., through standard-issue Imperialism but also military urbanism; e.g., Palestine abroad[219] versus the death of Nex Benedict at home[220]. This has several steps. First, convince the hero that a place away from home is home-like; i.e., the thing they do not actually own being "theirs" [the ghost of the counterfeit] but "infested" [the process of abjection]. Then, give them a map and have them

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[218] We'll examine the Gothic role of various (often female) detectives in science fiction more in Volume Two, including the sections "The Demonic Trifecta of Detectives, Damsels and Sex Demons" and "Call of the Wild, part one."

[219] Which is generally something to deny (Noah Samsen's "Genocide Denial Streamers," 2024) or debate when, as the Youtuber Shaun points out, there is nothing to debate whatsoever—a genocide is occurring and it is wrong ("Palestine," 2024).

[220] Persephone van der Waard's "Remember the Fallen: An Ode to Nex Benedict" (2024).

"clean house"—an atrocious "fixer" out of the imaginary past who repairs the "broken" home room-by-room by first cleansing it of abject things "attacking it from within," then disappearing with the nightmare they constitute; i.e., purging these alien forces through blood sacrifice or even total destruction of the home itself. The iconoclast can reverse this two-step process, but must protect those queenly things of nature normally persecuted by Cartesian forces and their cartographic schools of violence; i.e., by using counterterrorist language and ironic roles of violence, terror and monsters redirected towards the state: Athena's Aegis and the dark queen's chaotic stare of doom, but also literal, manmade weapons illustrated during performative shows of force <u>against</u> state invaders attacking Galatea.)

As we shall see, the map-like aesthetics and centralization of the castle did transform a great deal (*vis-à-vis* Cameron), but its basic function as a conquerable space did not. The capitalist idea is obviously older than Tolkien, but not as old as *Beowulf* (though Imperialism and the Master/slave dynamic more broadly dates back to Rome). Somewhere in between, the **Cartesian Revolution** occurred and introduced the map as the ruthless European's desire to conquer and profit from nature-as-female through a system of thought (Cartesian dualism) coupled with the map as a settler-colonial technology of conquest that would carry over from Tolkien into Cameron and countless copies of his version of the same basic map:

Cartesian dualism/the Cartesian Revolution
The rising of a dividing system of thought by René Descartes that led to settler colonialism. As Raj Patel and Jason Moore write in *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*:

> The inventors of Nature were philosophers as well as conquerors and profiteers. In 1641, Descartes offered what would become the first two laws of capitalist ecology. The first is seemingly innocent. Descartes distinguished between mind and body, using the Latin *res cogitans* and *res extensa* to refer to them. Reality, in this view, is composed of discrete "thinking things" and "extended things." Humans (but not all humans) were thinking things; Nature was full of extended things. The era's ruling classes saw most human beings—women, peoples of color, Indigenous Peoples—as extended, not thinking, beings. This means that Descartes' philosophical abstractions were practical instruments of domination: they were real abstractions with tremendous material force. And this leads us to Descartes' second law of capitalist ecology: European civilization (or "we," in Descartes' word) must become "the masters and possessors of nature." Society and Nature were not just existentially separate; Nature was something to be controlled and dominated by Society. The Cartesian outlook, in other words, shaped modern logics of power as well as thought.
> [...] The invention of Nature and Society was gendered at every turn. The binaries of Man and Woman, Nature and Society, drank from the same

cup. Nature, and its boundary with Society, was "gyn/ecological" from the outset. Through this radically new mode of organizing life and thought, Nature became not a thing but a strategy that allowed for the ethical and economic cheapening of life. Cartesian dualism was and remains far more than a descriptive statement: it is a normative statement of how to best organize power and hierarchy, Humanity and Nature, Man and Woman, Colonizer and Colonized. Although the credit (and blame) is shared by many, it makes sense to call this a Cartesian revolution. Here was an intellectual movement that shaped not only ways of thinking but also ways of conquering, commodifying and living [... that] made thinking, and doable, the colonial project of mapping and domination.

Finally, the Cartesian revolution was made thinkable, and doable, the colonial project of mapping and domination. […] Cartesian rationalism is predicated on the distinction between the inner reality of the mind and the outer reality of objects; the latter could be brought into the former only through a neutral, disembodied gazed situated outside of space and time. That gaze always belonged to the Enlightened European colonist—and the empires that backed him. Descartes' *cogito* funneled vision and thought into a spectator's view of the world, one that rendered the emerging surfaces of modernity visible and measurable and the viewer bodiless and placeless. Medieval multiple vantage points in art and literature were displaced by a single, disembodied, omniscient and panoptic eye. In geometry, Renaissance painting, and especially cartography, the new thinking represented reality as if one were standing outside of it. As the social critic Lewis Mumford noted, the Renaissance perspective "turned the symbolic relation of objects into a visual relation: the visual in turn became a quantitative relation. In the new picture of the world, size meant not human or divine importance, but distance." And that distance could be measured, catalogued, mapped, and owned.

The modern map did not merely describe the world; it was a technology of conquest (source).

Tolkien's quaint treasure map is no accident, then, but a hauntological cryptonym of settler colonialism's dread function of the map displaced to a faraway "other world/castle" that curiously looks (and functions) a whole lot like Earth does now: "All roads lead to Rome." In short, the Cartesian function of cartography has become ludologized, and the progenitor for that great disguise was Tolkien and his gentrification of war on a naturalized good-vs-evil: England is naturalized and its nature is good but under attack by *unnatural* things spilling out

from foreign castles, caverns, and the underworld into Tolkien's "new Eden" (dressed up in elvish reinventions of an imaginary Britain). Being infamously allergic to allegory, Tolkien didn't want his readers to look too closely during these "baths in Styx." Instead, the *current* order and perception of the world (the Cycle of Kings) must be preserved by throwing all of the blame Capitalism deserves onto a far-off double. Yet, his monomythic, warlike refrain, "stab the orc, spill his blood!" was seconded by Cameron's *Aliens* as a far more openly Promethean story—one whose weaponized nostalgia presents the slippery nature of power as stolen (and unrightfully so) by imperial forces passing themselves off as "the good guys" inside a hyperreal crypt set in outer space.

In defense of the status quo, Cameron takes Tolkien's refrain (the treasure map set mostly in nature) and patently applies it to an American revenge fantasy whose monomyth is an infernal concentric pattern relayed through the inclusion of women as heroic (thus monstrous) inside a local castle. For Tolkien, war is the province of man and fought to defend the white castle from the black; inside Cameron's "shadow zone" of monstrous theatre, his Gothic war story supplies bullets[221] and Amazonian protagonists in defense of a fallen colony from nature (the

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[221] As per the Military Industrial Complex and copaganda, thanks to Cameron we had yet another genocide on a "savage continent" being led by firearms: the "holocaust by bullet" oscillating between Western forces executing settler-colonial against the usual targets being enacted by a superior righteous force against a primarily melee-implemented or non-Western target of colonial violence; i.e., "kill the Indian, save the man" to gentrify the territories by lethal force. Except now it was projected onto the pure imaginary as something to replicate by anxious colonial inheritors/guilty benefactors being acclimated to war stuck on loop during the end of economic history (Capitalist Realism). Not only was *Doom* (1993) already a clone of *Aliens*, but it went on to spawn countless clones of itself associated with young white men and "gamer" culture predominantly told through personal computers (see: Michael Hitchen's "A Survey of First-person Shooters and their Avatars," 2011). During its heyday *Doom* had more copies of itself installed on personal computers than the Microsoft Windows operating system (quite a feat considering Bill Gates' monopolist approach to computer software):

> In late 1995, *Doom* was estimated to be installed on more computers worldwide than Microsoft's new operating system *Windows 95*, despite million-dollar advertising campaigns for the latter. The game's popularity prompted Bill Gates to briefly consider buying id Software, and led Microsoft to repurpose their *Doom* porting project into a promotion of the new operating system as a gaming platform. One related presentation, created to promote *Windows 95* as part of Microsoft's Judgment Day event, had Bill Gates digitally superimposed into the game, killing zombies with a shotgun (source: "Doom95," Doom Wiki).

Doom apes the plot to *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) without irony—i.e., the astroturf guerrilla planted in the jungle and killing every "demon" in sight. Decades after the original game released, the sentiment of trying to escape hell by killing as many demons as possible was stamped in the gamification of the Vietnam War necrometric: victory as literally determined and advertised by kill counts. This is very much the arcade-style points system Rune Klevjer says *Doom* didn't have: "*Doom* had done away with the score-points and player lives from *Wolfenstein 3-D*, and thereby erased two of the most distinctive characteristics of the arcade. Still, the arcade aesthetic dominated in terms of movement, characters and combat. Over-sized guns and hordes of spectacular enemies went hand-in-hand with a fast-paced, frantic and almost balletic style of play" (source: "Way of the Gun").

Even as I write this, though, Karl Jobst says in his latest video, "In *Doom*, there is simply nothing more "alpha" or satisfying than finishing a level and seeing a big beautiful 100% next to kills. There's just something cathartic about knowing there was literally no more pain you could have inflicted; you are a beast, and every 100% you deliver should serve as a warning to every other

Archaic Mother) as coming home to roost; i.e., Man vs Nature-as-monstrous-feminine funneled through the transportation of Heinlein's bombing of "space bugs" of the Bretton Woods era (a chilling and gross metaphor for bombing China, Korea and Japan) to neoliberal politics remediated unto videogames. Like Tolkien, though, Cameron's use of the treasure map would easily yield a videogame form: the entire shooter genre as a war simulator that echoed Tolkien's cartographic refrain inside Cameron's closed space relying on the same codified belief systems and behavioral instructions—one updated for a whole new generation of children via a variety of conqueror strategies styled as "fantasy," "sci-fi," and "horror," but generally a combination during Cameron's brand of what I call "military optimism":

> A widely successful and canonical work, *Aliens*' influence on the videogame industry is profound, inspiring the entire shooter genre. This includes:
>
> * FPS (first-person shooters) like *Doom* (1993)
> * TPS (third-person shooters) like *Metroid* (1986)
> * RTS (real-time strategy games) like *StarCraft* (1996)
> * turn-based strategy games like *X-COM: UFO Defense* (1994)
> * hybrids (for these, refer to my FPS interview series, but also my Metroidvania PhD research and interview series with *Metroid* speedrunners, "Mazes and Labyrinths")
>
> Most shooters are sci-fi, but even fantasy outliers like *Heretic* (1995) were inspired by *Doom*. Shooters generally give the player guns to use against "alien" enemies—either from outer space, hell, or underground (aliens, demons, zombies). Strategy games are a bit more niche, and don't focus on tactical reflexes, but the sentiment—of shooting bugs with guns—remains the same: "Die, monster! You don't belong in this world!"
>
> The idea—that anyone can shoot their problems—is a soldier's fantasy. Although videogames shrink them into human-sized demons, we can't kill our problems in reality. But a great many people seem happy with the fantasy because it feels empowering. Alas, this attitude doesn't stay inside videogames. Fans of the shooter genre are often fans of real-world guns, and of war (source).

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demon out there that you're coming for them and you will not stop until every last one is dead" (source: Karl Jobst's "Impossible Doom Challenge FINALLY Completed After 30 Years!" 2023). In a word, it's disheartening because the so-called "gamer mindset" applies victory and winning to everything that qualifies as a demon, including women, minorities or anything else that tries to be political, which that you can simply win against through force or by virtue of the fact that you're a man, thus always right. Raw numbers is ok if *you're* doing it; e.g., the "37 cocks" double standard from *Clerks* (1994): Dante is simply *livid* when his girlfriend tells him (under duress) that she sucked 36 dicks before him, but his fucking of 12 girls before her is "no big deal."

Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, or Gothic Communism by Persephone van der Waard
thesis volume, first edition v1.08d4; released: 9/11/2024 — ©2024 vanderWaardart.com

(exhibit 1a1a1h2a2: Cameron's xenomorph's take the alien's acid blood [a defense mechanism] from the first film, and applies it to a creature called a xenomorph that demonizes the Communist stand-ins entirely and presents the marines as the fully-humanized military relief on par with Douglas Hickox' racist settler-colonial apologia, Zulu Dawn [1979]:

> *We set out to make a different type of film, not just retell the same story in a different way. The Aliens are terrifying in their overwhelming force of numbers. The dramatic situations emerging from characters under stress can work just as well in an Alamo or Zulu Dawn as they can in a Friday the 13th, with its antagonist [source: Aliens Collection's transcription of "James Cameron's responses to Aliens critics" from Starlog Magazine, Issue #184, November 1992].)*

Whereas Tolkien's refrain is the High Fantasy treasure map—a false copy of the Earth as something to dominate through the centrist argumentation of so-called

"home defense" during the classic monomyth—Cameron's refrain is pretty much the entire shooter genre set in some kind of castle colony floorplan. But we want to examine *Metroidvania*, not *Doom*—in part because *Metroid* came far earlier and is an obvious videogame double of *Aliens* (with a warlike, female protagonist and villain, unlike *Castlevania*) that also happens to be much more about disempowerment than *Doom* is; but through the tradition of the opera, treats the castle as a physical, emotional and sexual extension of the mind: an exotic, oxymoronic, psychosexual place of madness, passion and *music** to an imperiled heroine who suddenly *can* fight back much more than she was able to during Radcliffe's day (the Great Enchantress often featuring music in her own castles, though often an eerie, far-off sort threatening to lure the heroine to certain doom). As we shall see, this "Gothic therapy" isn't a net positive, and generally remains caught between the dampening constraints of societal expectations, stigmas and standards as things to canonize or camp by the heroine; generally her actions remain torn between two sides of herself at war inside the liminal space: being up to no good because a sexually repressed (and toxic) society thinks you are, versus actually doing anything that's demonstrably harmful. It becomes something to acknowledge and relish in: "We're totally being *so wicked and bad* right now!"

Our focus in this subchapter isn't strictly the music in Metroidvania, but I heartily invite you to consider its Gothic castle—the performative lands of madness and dark desire [compared to thunder and lightning, darkness and mist] but also duels and possessive, even obsessive, criminal love[222]—as something that is classically

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[222] Such romances arguably taken to toxic, theatrical extremes by bored white women—e.g., *Wuthering Heights*—while also saying something about the awful, highly controlling nature of institutional marriage. I think this duality is often something that is overlooked *by* white women who consume and expect things of what they call "literature" and "romance":

> The main thing that irritates me about romance in literature is the unfortunate tendency to glamourize adultery. Interestingly, people in films or television who are adulterous tend not to fare too well – soaps etc are very keen on giving people their comeuppance. Literature tends to get a bit caught up on the beauty of it all and loses sight of the fact that adultery tends to boil down to an inability to keep your pants on even though you've promised that you would ([source](): Girl with her Head in a Book's "Top Ten Dysfunctional Couples in Literature," 2015).

For one, their idea of "literature" and "romance" seem to be highly prescriptive: love has to be amatonormative and healthy as a means of entertainment, first or foremost. But satire can be staged, highly theatrical *and* ironic. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, is a parody of precisely the kinds of stories that were being written in Shakespeare's day—it's literally a joke told with a straight face.

In the Gothic spaces we're examining with Metroidvania, the operative function is Gothic insofar as it is liminal—trapped inside the castle, but also conflicting notions of what is correct and incorrect regarding agency and desire, sexuality and power for persons who generally would have been denied all of these things. They become doubled inside of themselves, arguing not just onstage but in the minds of the audience interpreting them. Keep this in mind when we examine *Castlevania* and *Jojo* in part three of the "camp map."

rather dance-like, often set to music of a dark and immodest sort (from a white, cis-het perspective; i.e., the appropriation of rock 'n roll and jazz in Gothic environments (vis-à-vis Castlevania), operating as a kind of cautionary and tempting tone poem (e.g., "Night on Bald Mountain," 1867) relayed through musical motion[223] inside said space. As with theatre, sex, and all-around BDSM activities of various sorts, there's a genuine, albeit staged accuracy to how these things play out in our own lives; i.e., music literally sets the tone, tempo, and table, telling us how hard and fast to go when playing in whatever ways we decide; e.g., Trent Reznor's "Closer" (1989, exhibit 43b): "You tear down my reason / It's your sex I can smell […] I wanna fuck you like an animal […] You bring me closer to God!"

(artist: The Maestro Noob)

Beyond NIN, this applies to fucking, roleplay and/or dancing echoed through paraphernalia (and adult variants: sex toys) of assorted franchises that—unlike

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[223] For a fun example (and personal favorite), consider *Metroid*'s fan music: "When I think of *Metroid 1*, I specifically recall its dark foreboding atmosphere. You could hear this in 2000s cover bands like the NESkimoes and the Minibosses. This dark recollection has been erased by Nintendo's reimagining of *Metroid*'s past. The threat of war is no longer a shadow that darkens the mood; it's like riding a bike, only waiting to be picked up. To this, I can't imagine future generations producing anything as dark as "Norfair Tenement Blues" (2004) or "Kraid" (2000). The caution is gone, replaced with bravado [of a post-9/11 word]" (source: "Military Optimism"). "Norfair Tenement Blues" is a great song—a cross between Nine Inch Nails and *Metroid*, it really nails the mood, but with a trademark '90s gloom: war is something to fear.

Radcliffe—actively help privileged people in the Global North (e.g., white girls) process survivor's guilt/inheritance anxiety while still learning to think about the world differently through sex-positive kink, fetish and BDSM as "perceptive" Gothic counterfeits/counterculture, not blind enjoyment centered around themselves and their nerdy white fragility as something to buffer. It's possible to still enjoy material culture during nerd sex as an extension or reclaiming of said culture (with someone or their partner wearing a t-shirt [or some such article] to tout their nerdy Gothic status as one's trendy object of desire: the big-titty Goth GF as a stamp of, or stamped with, consumer pride that also contains cryptomimetic echoes of generational trauma inside of itself.

Dark desire, then, becomes something to compile and compound within various bondage and discipline exercises that, for all intents and purposes, constitute as "edging"—not the releasing of passion, but its prolonged storage until such a time as release is permitted by the one holding the reins). Indeed, enjoyment isn't divorced from capital and monetization, but we can develop and raise cultural awareness and interconnectivity in meaningful ways while still getting to be the fantasies that Capitalism normally alienates us from (the unicorn not as a manmade, sequestered entity but one that is hidden behind paywalls, the resultant manufactured scarcity[224] granting it a rare, mythical appearance and appreciating value—compelled orgasms, aka "sad cum"); i.e., established through the artwork we make and games that we play as a second-nature mode of altered existence: self-definition as a basic human right that is quickly and readily understood at an intuitive level. It becomes a child-like curiosity and teaching that extends into adulthood, carrying Gothic Communism forward through workers [not the state] dictating the Gothic mode; i.e., their cultivating of emotional/Gothic intelligence.

Regardless of which shooter type, though, Cameron's imaginary "Saigon" is the false copy of Tolkien's refrain with a decayed imperial flavor from the start: a hyperreal site of endless war swept up in recent legends of the Gothic castle as something abandoned to walk around amongst/encounter through staged, quasi-operatic reenactments; i.e., going from good castle to bad castle (with no nature in between). Cameron's displaced Saigon after the Fall is nuked into dust—if not from

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[224] Whereas Sir Peter's deal with Antiquity denied all magic by locking it away inside a vault, Peter S. Beagle's 1982 adaptation presented the folly of this arrangement by having the old king go mad because the *only* thing that made him happy were the unicorns held prisoner at his castle—not one or two, but literally all of them. Freeing them was a mercy to him and the unicorns, but also proof that sexy monsters don't disappear after Capitalism is transformed into Socialism and finally Communism; they're simply spread out and are shared in a system that *doesn't* turn you into King Haggard (the ultimate crook/chaser)— i.e., by dismantling the systemic power imbalances that create perceived advantages through unequal, coercive arrangements of power and material conditions; e.g., the ability to "game the system" through its usual methodology of extortion, insider-trading, monopolies, tax evasion, fraud, etc.

orbit the way that Heinlein always wanted (and robbing *Star Wars* of all its critical power in the process, exhibit 1a1a1h2b)—then from within a colony that was literally built to scuttle/self-destruct the way the company would want *if* they lost control to the guerrillas fighting them according to asymmetrical warfare. Before the blast, these chronotopes are full of enemies to kill, and take a variety of tiered forms that fit the regimented order of the material world under Capitalism: the lord, the knight, the peasant to the king, the general, the soldier to the boss, the mini-boss, the minion. The hero tracks down these threats; sees, kills and makes a violent example/trophy of them; and returns home with "his" war booty in tow.

Unlike Tolkien, Cameron's world of warmaking isn't a boys-only club. Outside of *Doom* (which has no women anywhere), the monstrous-feminine remains a core component of the shooter's core design. For starters, Samus Aran and Mother Brain clearly were modeled after Ripley and the Alien Queen. Indeed, Samus follows up Ripley as the aloof, no-nonsense sex object that Scott originally disrobed and Cameron handed an assault rifle; this makes her Nintendo's archetypal Amazon, a monster girl (exhibit 1a1a1h3a2) of the neoliberal Japanese hauntology that Nintendo would run with—literally. With *Metroid*, they took Cameron's refrain six years before *Doom* and built a (for the time) spatially-unique TPS (the non-linear maze design being foundational to what *Metroid*-style Metroidvania are). Despite the side-scroller viewpoint, the game is just much a race as *Doom* is. Yes, the spaces are far less straightforward or focused on the pure killing of enemies, but the game also wasn't aimed at young men the same way that *Doom* was. After the hero's identity was revealed, the game's military operation yielded a second, hidden function: foreplay and roleplay with a feminine slant. Samus' actual mission became something of a runner-up to the world's longest striptease imperiled by Gothic aesthetics and music[225]: the Amazon in a man's world/montage, and disempowered as much as she was empowered (seriously, the first 1986 *Metroid* is *hard* and not user-friendly like the later games are).

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[225] The opening music, *vis-à-vis* the Minibosses' 2000 version, channels the dark Romanticism of *Alien*'s own musical pedigree; e.g., Howard Hanson's Symphony No. 2 – "Romantic" (1930) as both uplifting and sad, showing a dark side to the cosmos framed within a human drama inside a castle in 1979 relegated to some unknown retro-future date. And let me tell you what, I listened the absolute *shit* out of the Minibosses (on bootleg CDs, back when I was in high school and they were still playing in bars), but also the *Alien* soundtrack (especially the 2007 Intrada two-disc set); it just spoke to me and my own life—i.e., the beauty in the dark, gritty side of things as a kind of calculated risk/theatre to make me feel heard but also paradoxically in control while piloting a disempowered heroine who, along with the castle, mirrored my own complex life, feelings and medieval education. Rilke's poem, "Ich liebe meines Wesens Dunkelstunden" (1899) sums it up well:

> I love the dark hours of my being
> in which my senses drop into the deep.
> I have found in them, as in old letters,
> my daily life that is already lived through,
> and become wide and powerful, like legends.
> Then I know that there is room in me
> for a second large and timeless life (source).

(*source*)

      Whether fantasy, horror and/or sci-fi, maps are central to war as something to navigate, thus educate through theatrical instruction. This obviously didn't start with Cameron; it started (in the 20th century) with Tolkien's popular use of the map as a disguise for war functioning as usual. Tolkien was also more overtly Biblical and patriarchal than Cameron, his sylvan Valinor giving us a convenient model for the twin trees of oppositional praxis (the Biblical rendition of the Base and the Superstructure being the roots of Capitalism's typical commodifying of war). In general, we want to camp the trees by pulling a "Satan," which can either mean making monsters or making places for monsters to exist. As this subchapter focuses on the navigation and interrogation of canonical Gothic space, this means we'll have to camp the duplicates of our aforementioned treasure map representing the trees in praxis; i.e., what constitutes the Base and the Superstructure within the technology of conquest—its locations and embodiments of power (the castle) expressed in theatrical language when following the map inside of itself to a *pandemonium*-esque "shadow zone." Games and theatre aren't just powerful educational tools unto themselves; they teach us how to communicate as people generally do: through games, play and various staged performances and deceptions that can rewrite belief systems and codified behaviors—i.e., fear and dogma as something to play with on- and offstage during the same basic conversations.

      To this, I'm focusing on Cameron (and shooters) for a reason. One, I'm an expert in shooters and Metroidvania. Two, whereas Tolkien's maps generally require

a lengthy trek to somewhere else, interrogating torturous power at the end of a long journey (with smaller, shadowy pockets of Gothic, Numinous power scattered throughout: barrow-downs, Moria, Old Man Willow, etc), Cameron's war theatre places the Promethean element directly inside the "shadow zone"—right on a colonial site that uncannily resembles home: the castle—the imperial site of power—not just as faded, but abandoned and overrun with ghosts who have a bone to pick with us. In short, we're already in "Rome" and there's a much higher concentration of vengeful ghosts to interrogate in a Numinous sense, thus more chances to camp war and rape represented through a pedagogy of the oppressed that reflects on home (albeit through a double of itself, explored onstage). To this Cameron's use of the black castle acknowledges its updated settler-colonial function both tied to a white castle at home, and the colony being reclaimed by nature in ways that Tolkien is completely hostile towards. For Tolkien, nature is simply good, "of the home" in ways that project colonialism onto a faraway evil site; nature has nothing to say about the *West* doing these things/acting like Rome. The Ents punish Saruman for *his* excessive industries, but not the elves, Hobbits, Rohan or Gondor— they conduct "Goldilocks Imperialism"/Bretton Woods; e.g. the wood elf king locking up Thorin and company in his dungeons versus Sauron "taking it too far" (thus being the perfect one to blame when the trees start to die. As usual, Tolkien blames everyone but the state).

So, while we want to camp Tolkien's *refrain*, I think the best route in doing that is to make it Gothic the way that Cameron did and then critique *that*: a site of war that makes much more room for warrior women and monstrous-feminine entities and spaces akin to Grendel and Grendel's mother haunting the castle, but also its liminal hauntology of war as ping-ponged between a white castle and a black castle superimposed over each other. This is where "Cameron's" redeployments come in—in part because war involves less walking than it did in Tolkien's day, but also because Cameron's infamous story had a female-centric, Promethean element that Tolkien largely did not (Eowyn was the exception that proved the rule; i.e., she had to crossdress as "Dernhelm" to act like a man in secret to defend her lord and her kin, King Theoden[226]). We're going focus, then, on the Metroidvania as stemming from Cameron's approach to the treasure map—i.e., critiquing power as centralized in a Gothic sense around the monstrous-feminine castle, not its surrounding countryside: a doubled, liminal space full of Numinous concentrations of power and violence, and whose spirits and monsters are far more Promethean to engage with than Tolkien's manly heroes and necromancers (shoving poor old Shelob into a pit somewhere). In short, the map as a space to actually explore is far more decayed and troubled by the shadow of war as bound

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[226] A mad king himself, but Tolkien scapegoats the horse: "Snowmane, also referred to as Théoden's Bane and Master's Bane, was buried in the hollow where he fell which became known as Snowmane's Howe" (source: Tolkien Gateway); i.e., a possible allusion to Shakespeare's *Richard the III* (1633): "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" (source).

up in whatever the heroes are fighting for being worthy of critique, thus camp. Even so, when executed by Cameron for its intended purpose, or by players of the Metroidvania that followed, the basic *function* of the treasure map is intact and plays out like Tolkien's does. Keeping this in mind, we can reflect on Tolkien's refrain while examining videogames inspired by Cameron's neoliberal call to war through female soldiers battling against monstrous-feminine Indigenous enemies.

Another reason to focus on Cameron versus Tolkien is his canceled futures (and their ubiquitous offshoots) are tied directly to war as an openly settler-colonial process. Including the shooter genre he single-handled inspired by ripping off Tolkien's refrain, videogame canon more broadly is neoliberal, thus heteronormative through the ludic scheme of war and its liminal hauntologies; i.e., as fractally recursive in a cartographic sense that feels **hyperreal** (the real world behind the canonical map of empire as destroyed, which in turn requires the in-text map to decay to hide the systemic exploitation through dead futures). Cameron's retro-future space world (war in space) is utterly *primed* to be interrogated for these reasons. Within his complicated mirage, the endlessly concentric offerings of false power and false hope[227] occur through the neoliberal's Faustian ludic contract as map-like, but also a **Promethean Quest** (stealing "fire" from the gods) that

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[227] I.e., the problem of Cameron's centrist feminism is that it "empowers" the female warrior to uphold the status quo, dooming women at large (say nothing of everyone Ripley attacks to "save the world" by paradoxically blowing it up; or as *Metroid* put it: "Pray for a truce peace in space!").

obliterates the hero once followed to its fearsome and all-consuming central conclusion: **the infernal concentric pattern** (which again, Tolkien shies away from by having the lands of darkness be a temporary stopping point). My master's thesis and postgraduate writing serve to illustrate *that* point within Metroidvania; i.e., as **closed space**, but also a **palliative Numinous** whose lured "victims" may play around with in a broader sense of ludo-Gothic BDSM—i.e., not restricted purely to videogame play trapped inside digital gameworlds, but informed by them and their torturous content as expanded to the half-real space between the fiction and the rules: Zimmerman's "magic circle" as expanding outside of the television or computer screen to account for the complexities and indiscretions of games executed/negotiated in practice, not in theory.

This flexibility of theory and play allows workers to playfully comment on larger issues present within their own social-sex lives that are themselves informed by bigger things and counterfeits of those things: castles of castles, maps of maps of maps, across all medium and life imitating said media and vice versa. The next subchapter will divide into two parts that unpack these heady concepts more through the Metroidvania as a germane example of performing power that we can iconoclastically apply to Tolkien's refrain through Cameron's echoing of said refrain; i.e., as a parallel, urbanized map/castle floorplan to his own open-world territory of conquest that interrogates power and trauma directly inside a closed space: a castle with an imperial history tied to the so-called "good place." Unlike Tolkien, Metroidvania are thoroughly Gothic in their liminalities (technically Tolkien's world is designed to be moved through, but I digress) but need to be camped based on all the argumentation that we've already laid out concerning our aforementioned "shadow zone" (the Superstructure): ACAB, thus requiring the canonical variants of a castle (and its arrangements of power) to be camped. Our third subchapter will consider this shadow space as already recultivated/camped by Gothic Communists "putting the pussy on the chainwax" (reclaiming the Base): camping the castle *monsters*. Finally, the fourth and final stage of our "camp map" (exhibit 1a1a1i) will give a short demonstration, effectively taking our manifesto-tree building blocks (already laid out in the thesis statement behind us, before having assembled them here, in the "camp map") as leading forward by example into the symposium.

Got all that? Good! Now let's keep following/assembling the yellow brick road and see where it leads, laying down more steps as we progress using the steps behind us to do so (using canonical bricks to build a campy castle, brick by stolen brick). Onto part two…

"Make it gay," part two: Camping Tolkien's Refrain using Metroidvania, or the Map is a Lie: the Quest for Power inside Cameron's Closed Space (and other shooters)

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

—the speaker of the poem, "Ozymandias" (1818)

(model and artist: *Blxxd Bunny* and *Persephone van der Waard*[228])

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[228] The above drawing was inspired by a photo of Blxxd Bunny. Their booty made me think of Percy Shelley's famous poem, so I decided to have fun with it. I based the drawing off

The point of the "camp map" is to camp canon, thus escape the myopia of Capitalist Realism from within—during the annihilation of the endless desert sands. Except we can't camp the infernal concentric pattern—of the monomyth/Cycle of Kings as resulting from Tolkien's refrain carried over into Cameron's echo of the castle (the narrative of the crypt)—until we illustrate **Metroidvania** as a more consistently Gothic variety of a treasure map; i.e., a counterfeit that deliberately puts the map (a technology of conquest) over a double of the good castle explored by a Gothic heroine: the evil castle as the now-lost territory to reclaim through colonial force. This copycat ruin isn't the site of some faraway Dark Lord; it's a double of our own home being exposed as imperial, but decayed: a ruin of a ruin of a ruin. The point isn't simply to paint things black, nor compare our world to the dark castle as elsewhere, but also to poke fun at whatever canonical lessons are imparted through our own creative responses camping the canon. We can see ourselves in Ripley while also camping her through our deviations from her warlike, TERF-y stances *vis-à-vis* Numinous power as something for us to interrogate on our own Promethean quests; i.e., to turn the castle not simply into a white or black counterfeit in the Western, heteronormative model, but a functionally *Communist* (thus iconoclastic) castle/theatrical space.

The above drawing makes for a quick, fun example—showing how *ludo*, or "game," isn't restricted to videogames, yet applies a similar "game mentality" that is nevertheless informed by what makes up videogames: their aesthetics and rules of play. As things to negotiate in the material world, these can be adopted outside of the actual game screen—used for our purposes by workers employing Goetic

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"Ozymandias," but also the aspiring conqueror's desire to appear mighty (e.g., "Bonapart before the Sphinx" [1886] echoing the Western tyrant's desire to be like the conquerors of old—refer to exhibit 40a4 for all the visual materials). I wanted to play around with this idea, subverting the canonical warlord's refrain as echoed through the historical-material world: the mighty ass of a good friend that I was simply in awe of. In my iconoclastic game of telephone, I even fucked with the poem for funsies:

> I met a traveller from an antique land,
> Who said—"Two vast and shapely buns of stone
> Thrust up in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
> Half sunk a peerless visage sighs, whose smile,
> And pillow lip, and smirk of warm delight,
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
> Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
> The hand that enjoyed them, and the heart that fed;
> And on the pedestal, these words appear:
> 'My name is Ozymandias, Queen of queens;
> Look on my Ass, ye Mighty, and despair!'
> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away" (originally altered 3/16/2023).

poetics to critique Capitalism *vis-à-vis* these smaller videogame castles (and their surrounding territories from time to time; e.g., the overworld from *Zelda*). Just as they came from non-videogames, future castles can be influenced by the artwork we create as interacting back and forth. There's a great deal of poetic invention and transference going on when taking something from a particular visit to a particular place and putting it in one's own exhibit dressed up as a place unto itself. Borrowing in this way isn't unusual in the Gothic mode—with Gothic novels being inspired by actual Gothic castles, but also novels inspiring real-life buildings in the same tradition as reversed—so we'll definitely do the same when camping canon ourselves.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. First, we should probably define what Metroidvania are more than we already have. At their most basic level, Metroidvania are Gothic castles that you map out and conquer not simply through Faustian bargains, but in search of *Promethean* power that has little good to say about power in the classical, heroic sense (which makes them an excellent place to search for iconoclastic potential/reversals). And yet they are also famously misunderstood and ubiquitous, a label to slap onto nothing or everything and then fuss about while getting lost inside. Before we do the same, I'd like to go over some specialized research terms, so you're not just relying on personal anecdotes.

The volume has already supplied the definition for **ergodic** ("nontrivial effort being required to traverse the text"; i.e., "more than one route, or way to traverse well-trod paths"). Here are some more terms besides, including the full definition for **Metroidvania**:

ludo-Gothic BDSM

My combining of an older academic term, "ludic-Gothic" (Gothic videogames), with sex-positive BDSM theatrics as a potent means of camp. The emphasis is less about "how can videogames be Gothic" and more how the playfulness in videogames is commonly used to allow players to camp canon in and out of videogames as a form of negotiated power exchange established in playful, game-like forms (theatre and rules). Commonly gleaned through Metroidvania as I envision it, but frankly performed in any kind of Gothic poetics—i.e., to playfully attain what I call "the palliative Numinous," or the Gothic quest for self-destructive power as something to camp.

ludic-Gothic

Gothic videogames. "The ludic-gothic is created when the Gothic is transformed by the video game medium, and is a kindred genre to survival

horror" ([source](#): Laurie Taylor's "Gothic Bloodlines in Survival Horror Gaming," 2009).

the palliative Numinous

A term I designed to describe the pain-/stress-relieving effect achieved from, and relayed through, intense Gothic poetics and theatrics of various kinds (my preference being Metroidvania castle-narrative *vis-à-vis* Bakhtin's chronotope applied to videogames out from novels and cinema and into Metroidvania; re: my master's thesis).
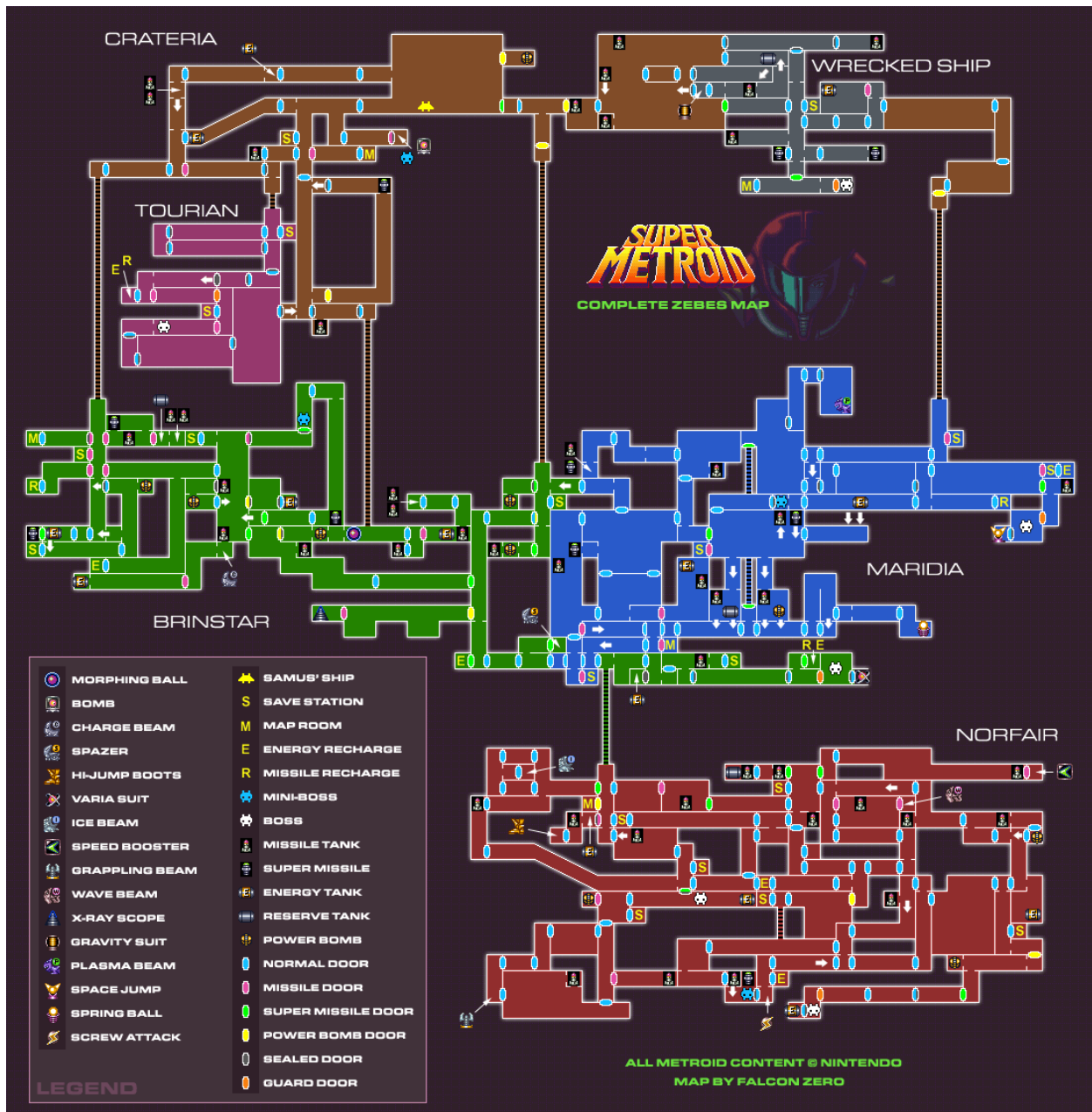
the closed space

A self-contained, claustrophobic, Gothic parallel space—generally a site of seemingly awesome power, age and danger (usually occupied by something sinister, if only the viewer's piqued curiosity/imperiled imagination): churches, abbeys, monasteries, castles, mad laboratories, (war/urban crime scenes), insane asylums, etc.
     The term is reworked from Cynthia Griffin Wolff's concept of "enclosed space" from her 1979 essay, "The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality"

> Now a Gothic novel presents us with a different kind of situation. It is but a partially realized piece of fiction: it is formulaic (a moderately sophisticated reader already knows more or less exactly what to expect in its plot); it has little or no sense of particularized "place," and it offers a heroine with whom only a very few would wish to identify. Its fascination lies in the predictable interaction between the heroine and the other main characters. The reader identifies (broadly and loosely) with the predicament as a totality: the ritualized conflict that takes place among the major figures of a Gothic fiction (within the significant boundaries of that "enclosed space") represents in externalized form the conflict any single woman might experience ([source](#)).

in that I've extended it beyond the purely psychological models (and psyches) of a traditional Gothic readership (white, cis-het women) and now-outmoded school of thought (the Female Gothic of the 1970s). I do so in connection to how the Gothic mode generally employs deeply confusing and overwhelming time-spaces (chronotopes)—what Manuel Aguirre, in 2008, referred to as "[Geometries of Terror](#)" (exhibit 64b/64c)—that, along with their ambiguous, perplexing inhabitants (exhibit 64a), phenomenologically disrupt the monomyth in pointedly deconstructive, hauntological ways: the Promethean (self-destructive) hero's quest as something that undermines patrilineal descent and dynastic power exchange/hereditary rites in a never-ending cycle of war crimes, lies and blood sacrifice (a fearful critique of medieval feudalism).

(*source*)

Metroidvania

A type of Gothic videogame, one involving the exploration of castles and other closed spaces in an ergodic framework; i.e., the struggle of investigating past trauma as expressed through the Gothic castle and its monstrous caverns (which is the author poetically hinting at systemic abuses in real life). Scott Sharkey insists he coined the term (source tweet: evilsharkey, 2023) —ostensibly in the early 2000s while working with Jeremy Parish for 1-Ups.com. However, the term was probably being used before

that in the late '90s to casually describe the 1997 PSOne game, *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*; records of it being used can be found [as early as 2001](#) (this [*Circle of the Moon* Amazon review](#) is from 2003). By 2006, though, Jeremy Parish had a personalized definition on his own blog, "GameSpite | Compendium of Old and Useless Information" (2012):

> "Metroidvania" is a stupid word for a wonderful thing. It's basically a really terrible neologism that describes a videogame genre which combines 2D side-scrolling action with free-roaming exploration and progressive skill and item collection to enable further, uh, progress. As in *Metroid* and Koji Igarashi-developed *Castlevania* games. Thus the name ([source](#)).

My own postgrad research ("Mazes and Labyrinths") has expanded/narrowed the definition quite a bit:

> Metroidvania are a location-based videogame genre that combines 2D, 2.5D, or 3D platforming [e.g., *Dark Souls*, 2009] and ranged/melee combat—usually in the 3rd person—inside a giant, closed space. This space communicates Gothic themes of various kinds; encourages exploration* depending on how non-linear the space is; includes progressive skill and item collection, mandatory boss keys and variable gating mechanics (bosses, items, doors); and requires movement powerups in some shape or form, though these can be supplied through RPG elements as an optional alternative.
>
> *Exploration pertains to the deliberate navigation of space beyond that of obvious, linear routes—to search for objects, objectives or secrets off the beaten path ([source](#)).*

Also from "Mazes and Labyrinths":

> **Mazes and Labyrinths:** I treat space as essential when defining Metroidvania. Mazes and labyrinths are closed space; their contents exist within a closed structure, either a maze or a labyrinth. A classical labyrinth is a linear system with one set, unicursal path towards an end point; a maze is a non-linear system with multiple paths to an end point [classical texts often treated the words as interchangeable].
>
> **Metroidvania, etymology:** As its most basic interpretation, Metroidvania is a portmanteau of <u>Metroid</u> and <u>Castlevania</u>, specifically "Metroid" + "-vania." However, the term has no singular, universally-

agreed-upon definition. Because I focus on space, my definitions—of the individual portmanteau components—are as follows: "Metroid" =/= the franchise, Metroid; "Metroid" = that franchise's unique treatment of closed space—the maze.

"-vania" =/= the franchise, Castlevania; "castlevania" equals that franchise's unique treatment of closed space—the labyrinth.

At the same time, "Metroid," or "metro" + "-oid" means "android city." "Castlevania" or "castle" + "-vania" means "other castle," "demon castle," or "castle Dracula." The portmanteau "Metroidvania" ≈ "android city" + "demon castle" + "maze" + "labyrinth."

In terms of appearance, a Metroidvania's audiovisual presentation can range from retro-future sci-fi to Neo-Gothic fantasy. Nevertheless, their spaces typically function as Gothic castles; replete with hauntological monsters, demons, and ghosts, they guide whatever action the hero must perform when navigating the world and dealing with its threats ([ibid.](#))

As the first half of the subchapter covers the origins of my interest in interrogating the power of the Gothic mode through Metroidvania castles, I may as well list my research as I've published it (we'll cite some of it here and elsewhere in the book). In the past, my academic/postgraduate work has thoroughly examined the Metroidvania ludonarrative (including speedruns) as a closed/parallel *ergodic* space; while my critical voice has changed considerably since 2018, I want to show the evolution of my work/gender identity leading into *Sex Positivity*'s genesis by listing my entire Metroidvania corpus:

- my master's thesis, which studies the ways in which speedrunners create castle-narrative through recursive motion inside the Metroidvania as a Gothic chronotope: "[Lost in Necropolis: The Continuation of Castle-Narrative beyond the Novel or Cinema, and into Metroidvania](#)" (2018)
- a BDSM reflection on ludo-Gothic themes in *Metroid*: "[Revisiting My Masters' Thesis on Metroidvania—Our Ludic Masters: The Dominating Game Space](#)" (2021)
- a deeper follow-up to "Our Ludic Masters": "[Why I Submit: A Subby Gothicist's Attitudes on Metroidvania, Mommy Doms, and Sexual Persecution](#)" (2021)
- a study of abjection and traditional gender theory *vis-à-vis* Barbara Creed in Metroidvania: "[War Vaginas: Phallic Women, Vaginal Spaces and Archaic Mothers in *Metroid*](#)" (2021)

- a Q&A interview series that interviews *Metroid* speedrunners about Metroidvania for my postgrad work: the abstract for "Mazes and Labyrinths: Disempowerment in Metroidvania and Survival Horror" (2021)
- a chapter I wrote about *Metroid* for an unfinished book: "The Promethean Quest and James Cameron's Military Optimism in *Metroid* [exhibit 5e]" (2021)

Though imperfect, these older pieces try to show how the poststructuralist method—when taken beyond its somewhat limited 1960s/70s praxial scope (the '70s being the emergence of academic Gothic thought)—can be critically empowered in dialectical-material ways; i.e., to actually critique capital through iconoclastic monsters, BDSM/power exchange and spaces in Metroidvania, but also immensely creative interpretations/responses to those variables as already existing for me to rediscover in my own work: speedrunning as a communal effect for solving complex puzzles and telling Gothic ludonarratives[229] in highly inventive ways. As we'll see moving forward, this strategy isn't just limited to videogames, but applies to any poetic endeavor during oppositional praxis. —Perse

Our basic aim for this subchapter is to camp canon as a mapped-out space for simulating war in a theatrical sense. This includes Tolkien's refrain as having gentrified war through a "new Eden," and Cameron's refrain inside the

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[229] "Ludonarrative," as in "a narrative defined through games and play."

Metroidvania, modeled directly after *Aliens* in *Metroid*. Seeing as both maps translated quite well to videogames, we'll be focusing primarily on videogames ourselves as an iconoclastic space with which to do (or at least inspire) our work. We'll also highlight some differences between the two types when deciding what to investigate and what to leave alone. For example, Tolkien's refrain was generally an *open world* mapped for conquest, usually treating the dungeon as the final step towards the quest for power as something to *acquire*. Except we want to start inside the castle dungeon and focus on the quest for power as something to *interrogate* through the seeking of performative trauma. Our means of interrogation is camp; i.e., camping the monomyth/Cycle of Kings that emerged from Tolkien's refrain in the classic Gothic tradition: the castle. Serving as parallel space/capitalist chronotope, canonical castles are filled with rape play that we camp through our own performances and recreations. As such, we'll be using the closed space of Gothic castles that split off with Cameron's refrain from Tolkien's: a particular kind of abortive offshoot[230]—the ergodic, closed space of the Metroidvania, but also what it contains—to play at rape (and war) through ludo-Gothic BDSM, castle-narrative and the palliative Numinous; i.e., in campy ways that translate back and forth to any medium as a healthy means of negotiating unequal power exchange while also interrogating its historical-material forms. We're camping the canonical performance (thus function) of the castle, making it gay from within.

　　To interrogate power and trauma, it must become second-nature—a way of existing through the most direct and human (thus efficient) ways of communicating the matters at hand: (a)sexuality, gender, music, theatre, BDSM, etc. We'll be camping the quest for power where power is centralized, which Tolkien largely tried to sidestep on his own questing formulas and maps and which Cameron jumped headlong into. As previously stated, this will take two parts to accomplish: one to unpack my own real-life quest to understand power as something to map, reassemble and interrogate (so you can understand my thought process and what guided it towards where we are now), and the other to apply this playing with power to our poetic camping of the quest in our own lives, our own creations/performances that interrogate power on maps/castles that resemble Tolkien's or Cameron's (on paper) but play out very differently in practice.

　　Onto part one.

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[230] Rudolph Otto, in *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), described the ghost story's appeal as denoting an inferior intimation of the *numen*, or presence of God, which he described as the *mysterium tremendum*; i.e., divine wrath as something to seek out for the purposes of religious experience: the sensation of self-destruction in the face of something greater than oneself. Compared to the Sublime, which focuses on the awesome power of nature, the Numinous is more urban, civilized and manmade; i.e., found in man's domain through the presence of the Gothic castle as abandoned and occupied by a divine, otherworldly presence that parallels the awesome might of nature but ultimately is its own kind of supreme force.

"The Map Is a Lie": the Quest for Power inside Cameron's Closed Space—Origins and Lineage

"Ah, you think darkness is your ally? You merely adopted the dark. I was born in it, molded by it. I didn't see the light until I was already a man, by then it was nothing to me but blinding!"

—*Bane, <u>The Dark Knight Rises</u> (2012)*

Similar to other heroic adventures, the Metroidvania is about exploring powerful spaces and their monsters, but the similarities begin to diverge insofar as the Metroidvania is less a shooter strictly about killing monsters and more of an interrogation—of unequal power exchange as something to perform by a female hero inside a futile, decaying proposition of itself—that lacks any sense of certain victory normally achieved through a run-of-the-mill male rite of passage. Obviously we're aiming to camp Metroidvania, too, but we need to be aware of what makes Cameron's closed space unique: less outdoors and Sublime and more indoors and Numinous. There can be a wide shot establishing the castle exterior and location (normally at the very beginning before braving its interior), but most of the story takes place inside the castle walls:

(artist: <u>François Baranger</u>)

Before the thesis proper, my essay "Notes on Power" discussed the paradox as being the performative nature of power doubled, including monsters but also their decaying lairs as monumental sites of immense, god-like power dressed up through the Gothic language of the imaginary past; the Metroidvania is a Gothic castle full of Gothic monsters, but also Gothic *ghosts* (echoes) of older and older castles reaching out from novels and cinema into videogames. Regardless of the medium, though, Clint Hockings' adage, "Seek power and you will progress" ([source](#): "Ludonarrative Dissonance," 2007) means something altogether different depending how you define power as something to seek, including unequal arrangements thereof. As a child, teenager and woman, I sought it through the palliative Numinous in Gothic castles of the Neo-Gothic tradition carried over into videogames (which I learned about in reverse: videogames, followed by the Numinous/*mysterium tremendum* as introduced to me by Dr. David Calonne[231]). Of these, I explored their Numinous territories in response to my own lived trauma and subsequent hypersexuality—i.e., as things I both related to the counterfeit with and sought to reclaim the counterfeit from as a tool to understand, thus improve myself and the world by reclaiming the castle as a site of interpretative Gothic play (of kinks, fetishes, and BDSM); i.e., this book that you're reading right now is a "castle" to wander around inside: a safe space of exquisite "torture" to ask questions about your own latent desires and guilty thoughts regarding the "barbaric" exhibits within as putting the ghosts out from my past on display (the Gothic castle and its intense, "heavy weather" theatrics generally being a medieval metaphor for the mind, body and soul, but also its extreme, buried and/or conflicting emotions and desires: a figurative or sometimes literal plurality depending on the person exploring the castle).

This intense, life-long process started when I was young and continued into adulthood. So I'd like to chronicle it as such before we dive into Metroidvania themselves (whose application of this academic theory and history I'll be responding to in part two of the subchapter):

Before we proceed, take heed: This portion of the book is written in defense of my own studies, but also to voice the academic struggles and frustrations I faced while trying to combine the Gothic, speedrunning and Metroidvania—a then-cutting-edge proposition hindered by academic big-wigs[232] living in their own little worlds and

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[231] Under whose independent tutelage (LING 499) at EMU, I wrote the paper, "Method in His Madness: Lovecraft, the Rock-and-Roll Iconoclast and Buoyant Lead Balloon" (2017), which inspired me to pursue the Numinous (as a subject of study) to the faraway, magical city Manchester, England.

[232] E.g., Bernard Perron, Ewan Kirkland, Catherine Spooner, Tanya Krzywinska, etc. Some of these persons I have already mentioned; some I will mention later—during the symposium, but also in Volume Two's subchapters "Bad Dreams, part 3" and "Seeing Dead People."

interested more in carving out a name for themselves (through "their own" ideas and theories) than giving me a leg up. Surrounded by the shadow of these self-interested giants and their all-important work, I found academia—especially at the graduate level, on the British side of the pond—to be a thoroughly lonesome, smothering affair: not a friendly place of shared ideas, but of guarded, medieval competition. In short, I absolutely <u>loved</u> the research and subject matter, but increasingly came to hate where it took place (thus, why I wrote this book in a room of one's own). Take that as you will.

Also, this "instructional detour" contains some lengthier quotes from my undergraduate/graduate/postgraduate work; with them, I broke Criag Dionne's rule about long-ass block quotes, but I'm also citing books that a) most people outside of academia probably do not own, and b) include sections that are incredibly germane to the entirety of <u>Sex Positivity</u>. —Perse

First, childhood. Our journey started when I was small. I watched *Alien* when I was nine and fell in love with the heroine *in* the castle alongside the monster, the alarms, the smoke, the figurative and literal chaos of it all. Its Numinous spoke to the hidden girl inside my closeted childhood self as "on a ledge" (re: the "call of the void"): paradoxically most alive, most in control during a theatrical case of calculated risk-reduction (versus actually suffering for my art or standing on a cliff in real life) that lies adjacent to personal suicide ideation and revenge/rape fantasies stemming from childhood abuse. Therein lies the tightrope of medicine and dogma that Gothic spaces and monsters provide in equal measure (a bit like

Zofloya's poison). Classically the diegetic heroine's perfect past is doubled by the Gothic castle as an expression of power beyond just her or her sense of self and home. As Audronė Raškauskienė writes in *Gothic Fiction: The Beginnings*:

> The castle, Bakhtin remarks, as a literary reminder of an ancestral or Gothic past of "dynastic primacy and transfer of heroic rights" [actually, it's "hereditary rites," though I do the same thing in this book, too] is overlaid or criss-crossed with meanings from legend, fairy-tale, history, architecture, and an eighteenth-century aesthetizing discourse of the sublime. Montague Summers's note that the real protagonist of the Gothic novel is the castle emphasizes a very special feature of that structure: in a sense, the Gothic castle is 'alive' with a power that perplexes its visitors. It tends to have an irregular shape, its lay-out is very complex and mysterious, whether because of an actual distortion of the whole structure or because a part of it remains unknown. In Manuel Aguirre's words, "this basic distortion yields mystery, precludes human control and endows the building with a power beyond its strictly physical structure: the irregular mysterious house is, like the vampire, a product of the vitalistic conception of nature."
>
> In addition to this, Radcliffe's setting (the castle) derives its claim to sublimity also from its being "not-here, not-now, an Other place, an Other time." Critics have often remarked on the choice of the exotic, the foreign, the barbaric as the background for and source of Gothic thrills. In other words, the Gothic castle is the world of the Numinous. As David Durant notes, "the ruined castles and abbeys are graphic symbols of the disintegration of a stable civilization; their underground reaches are the hiding places for all those forces which cannot stand the light of day."
>
> In Radcliffe's novels the Gothic castle is in the first place an anti-home, a nightmare version of the heroine's perfect past, in which many of the elements of her home are exaggerated and replayed in a Gothic form. The Gothic space, which provides a scene for the most dramatic events in the novel, is totally different from the other spaces – indicating heroine's home. The gigantic size of the castle is opposed to smallness of heroine's home, its labyrinthine confusion stands in opposition to the elegant and tasteful arrangement of her home, dark and dim castles replace cheerful and full of sunshine homes, the feeling of constant danger and lack of security in the castles is contrasted with the feeling of safety in heroine's home, etc. The heroine's parents are replaced by Gothic substitutes or Gothic opposites. The castle hides some family secret the revelation of which usually helps the heroine to disclose her own identity. At the same time, the Gothic castle is the place of confinement in a literal and figurative sense. Moreover, the castle may be interpreted as the image of the body and, eventually, as the heroine's secret self ([source](#))

but *Alien* never shows us the Radcliffean perfect home because its retro-future is canceled in a suitably antiquated Gothic *unlike* Radcliffe's: the flying castle as the revived palimpsest for the imaginary past of the Utopian sci-fi it is *eclipsing*. Its dark sphere is a suitably neoliberal critique/allegory of workers being fucked over by the company. Ridley's impactful movie wasn't a videogame, but its castle-narrative would become a popular-if-recuperated refrain in the general Metroidvania corpus:

(exhibit 1a1a1h2a3: There's a Gothic academic critic I was forced to read at MMU who wrote a piece called "Future Horror (the Redundancy of Gothic)" [1999] that argues for the "redundancy" of older Gothic forms because he has a fear-boner for futurist ones. By his wacky logic [and complete misunderstanding of the Gothic and especially its (gay-anarcho) Communist applications] Alien should be completely "redundant" [god, just reading that word next to Alien pisses me off]. Except, the movie hasn't aged a day. Indeed, in spite of its seemingly Freudian pastiche, it is

suitably "timeless" as a Gothic-Communist work because its tremendous Satanic potential [of the campy, Miltonian sort] has only continued to appreciate in value during the Internet Age; e.g., the xenomorph not as a cosmic rapist, but as a thoroughly trans, intersex, non-binary deity announced by the doubled castle itself as a tremendous allegory and revelation for genderqueer sentiment [something we will return to incessantly in Volume Two and somewhat in Volume Three; e.g., exhibits 38b4, 51a, 51b2, and 64c]—i.e., our existence as "sinful" in the eyes of the very people conditioned by Cartesian dualism to fear and kill us, but also present us as dehumanized, unironic sex demons.)

To be entirely honest, I loved *Alien* and *Aliens'* operative, Gothic spaces, as a child (and their Metroidvania doubles), but as I grew and matured, I decidedly fell out of love with Cameron's unironic adoration for the TERF-y, cop-like double of Ripley (and white-savior "worshipping" of the dark monarch/Medusa-esque Alien Queen as her evil double—two mothers on the operative stage forced by Cameron to catfight in defense of a cis-het woman's God-given right: not to have romance or sex, but to have surrogate "good babies" for the state) and decidedly camped myself within Scott's far more Communist/Satanic variant. Because 1979 Ripley emerged on the neoliberal edge and not in its dead center (when videogames were experiencing a renaissance post-1983's Atari Crash), that variant always had more potential to critique neoliberalism by creating its heroine as doubled in future Gothic spaces (videogames[233] or otherwise): our revolutionary doubles (who have the same dislike for the company as being like a giant bank of stolen profit, thus more inclined to rob it, Robin-Hood-style; i.e., the Western or the detective-story allegory* of unsanctioned redistributions of wealth from the elite to the poor). My focus is Metroidvania because it's what I grew up with and mastered/wrote this book adjacent to/partially around: the immense and powerful lie of revolutionary doubles (versus Orwell's harmful, pejorative double-speak, written by a fascist apologist who betrayed members of the British Communist party in service of the Imperium; in short, he was a government snitch, mole and cop).

*Akin to the hero with pathos but <u>revolutionary</u> class character and culture—e.g., Liam Neeson's soliloquy from <u>Honest Thief </u>(2020): "Something to fight for, not for money or an adrenaline rush, but a desire for love"; except, it's framed in the Gothic at large as an evocation of reality as tremendous, over-the-top. Neeson himself continues, "I lied (about the bank jobs) but not about what I did for you, for us." Something of a Gothic antique himself, he's like a throwback from another time

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[233] E.g., *Alien: Isolation* (2014), which told Ripley's neoliberal odyssey through her daughter's eyes: Amanda (who Cameron merely used as an excuse for the mother's revenge 28 years prior in the real world, but somewhere between 57 years before Ellen Ripley's reawakening after Amanda's death, in *Aliens*).

that was and wasn't; i.e., like Walpole's simulacrum castle of the marriage between the Ancient Romance and novel (a story of everyday events):

> *As Walter Scott pointed out in the critical introduction that he wrote for James Ballantyne's 1811 edition of the novel, the connections between Otranto as narrative and Strawberry Hill as building are manifold: in the former, "Mr Walpole resolved to give the public a specimen of the Gothic style adapted to modern literature, as he had already exhibited its application to modern architecture." Just as Walpole the architect had taken care to combine the requirements of modern convenience with "the rich, varied, and complicated tracery and carving of the ancient cathedral," so, in Otranto, it was his aim to combine the "imposing tone of chivalry" and "marvellous turn of incident" of the ancient romance with the "accurate exhibition of human character" to be found in the modern novel. To read Otranto, Scott concluded, was to experience the same degree of supernatural awe and terror that one felt when spending a solitary night in an old, tapestry-strewn Gothic mansion. Walpole's ingenuity lay in his extracting in Otranto the sensations of melancholy and supernatural awe that, though easily elicited in truly ancient piles, were "almost impossible" to evoke in "such a modern Gothic structure" as Strawberry Hill, thus "attaining in composition, what, as an architect, he must have felt beyond the power of his art" (source: Dale Townshend's "Horace Walpole's Enchanted Castles" from Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance and the Architectural Imagination, 1760-1840, 2019).*

Such Gothic in-betweens aren't restricted to a particular genre/subgenre; it echoes well into the present; e.g., not just Liam Neeson's many alter-egos that, somehow I think, reflect his streetwise life, but also James Cameron's Terminator (and Metroidvania, which I promise we'll get into shortly). His self-titled "tech-noir" is a Gothic Western, which combines Spielberg's truck chase from Duel (1971)/non-stop killing machine from Jaws (1975) with the John Ford Western, Stagecoach (1939), and the damsel-in-stress-turned-hardboiled-detective inside the 1980s version of a Grimm fairytale, "black detective story"/"black novel's" masked ball; the danger disco of the Tech-Noir dance floor occupied by the white damsel, the Germanized demon lover and the dashing-but-slightly-rugged banditti hero (exhibit 15b1); i.e., as a renovated, technophobic opera, updated for the present space and time (the fear of nuclear war and post-WW2 inheritance anxiety experienced by white people as the most privileged class worked within the ghost of the counterfeit).

In other words, it's your usual Gothic "timelessness" that swaps out aesthetic and musical styles, borrowing from the larger Gothic tradition to emulate[234] similar architectural and praxial liminalities in the author's idea of a musical, thoroughly dramatic and dream-like Gothic space: for Cameron, a double of 1984 Los Angeles interacting with it until the two become hopelessly mixed (vis-à-vis with themselves, but also older reflections like Alien [exhibit 1a1a1h2a3, above] as having gone into the same melting pot). Power is summoned and interrogated in the usual Walpolean sense: its seeking inside of itself as cobbled together out of old parts to evoke the Numinous.

(exhibit 1a1a1h2a3a: I don't really care what Fred Botting says. The Terminator is Gothic par excellence, and evokes a profoundly transformative and critical power within Cameron's nightmare zone while punching through the membrane to inform other mediums. As I write in my critical review of Botting's "Future Horror" [footnotes from the original essay]:

Botting confidently asserts that, in modern times, 'the terrors of the night are replaced by the terrors of the light'[235]—as though this is an idea exclusive to that temporal region. Yet, Lewis or McCarthy both seem perfectly happy

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[234] Which videogames would simulate through player-controlled avatars that, in turn, spill back out into the real world, affecting the Gothic imagination as a continual oscillating process: through *any* poetic device a worker might express themselves with informing other devices, on and on.

[235] Botting, p.140.

exploring those naked realities Bottling attributes exclusively to our own present.

In The Monk, Sister Agnes and Father Ambrosio exemplify this. The former describes the unveiled horror of a present moment, not some obscurity of the long-dead past, when she says, '...often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant'[236] Likewise, the latter, tortured by the Inquisition, tries to deny the existence of a God, but laments, 'those truths, once [my] comfort, now presented themselves before [me] in the clearest light'.[237] Manifest in said light, there is always some present horror for any writer to explore. These respective anxieties aren't in the future. There's no linear progression leading to a bright, over-exposed annihilation. Gothic fiction isn't redundant because the past and future are in the present, and always have been.

Thus, I can hardly agree with Botting when he writes, 'the future produced in the void of the present [is] both horrifying and thrilling. But it is far from Gothic'.[238] In her book, The Rise of the Gothic Novel (1995), Maggie Kilgour writes, 'the gothic is thus a nightmare vision of a modern world made up of detached individuals [… where] "normal" human relationships are defamiliarized and critiqued by being pushed to destructive extremes'.[239] By calling Gothic redundant, yet championing the skeleton under the endlessly exchanged 'skin suits', Botting simultaneously abjures and evokes the same Gothic tenets recognized by Kilgour.

Furthermore, the Gothic mode has always addressed present anxieties with 'timeless' aesthetics. It's not as though corpses, skeletons and ghosts are confined to a specific century or retrospectively-defined era. Ghosts exist in our minds, and thus can plague us from any direction; whether hailing from the past or future, this fear will be felt in the present, regardless. Afraid of the skin-trading skeleton, Botting is like Lewis' Sister Agnes 'Shuddering at the past, anguished by the present, and dreading the future'.[240] She has her potion to swallow. So does he: '...peel off the artificial skin and there is no organic substance [nor history] to the sexy killing machine from the bright light of the future'.[241] Yet, his metal, terminator skeleton is still a skeleton, and '[falls] into the region of time and suffering'.[242]

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[236] Lewis, p.303.

[237] *ibid.*, p.311.

[238] Botting, p.153.

[239] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.12.

[240] Lewis, p.309.

[241] Botting, p.153.

[242] Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. by Frederick Garber, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 32.

Since both past and future live together in the present, and always do, it's a gross misstep for Botting to extricate necrophobia from the so-called 'redundant' past of conventional Gothic fiction. After all, one could just as easily interpret a skeleton to be an omen, suggesting what Fredric Jameson might describe as 'merely the future of one moment of what is now our own past [... yet whose] multiple mock futures [transform] our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come'.[243] Whatever the future is, it certainly doesn't exclusively constitute Botting's idea of the conventional past he desires, in order to make his point. Real or imagined, skeletons—ghosts or otherwise—aren't readily consigned to man-made realms; they ignore boundaries.

Similar to Frederic Jameson but even more so, Botting seeks to discount the "boring and exhausted paradigm" of older fictions in favor of something seemingly glitzier. For one, did he ever watch The Terminator? It's not exactly shiny and bright [courtesy of Adam Greenberg's dark and gritty night photography]. Botting has always irked me because his arguments as an accommodated Gothicist seem oddly married to Jameson's boner for de-Gothicized science fiction; i.e., divorced from their critical power by excising a huge amount of the aesthetic/nostalgia, thus its critical power in proletarian forms. This obviously includes Metroidvania's crumbling castles and their palimpsests, the Krell's abode from Forbidden Planet [1955], Hadley's Hope from Aliens [1986] or the Luminoth's Sanctuary Fortress from Metroid Prime Two[244] [2007] as previously inspired; i.e., by the same creative, operatic mode whose musical, fairytale "rape castles" Ridley Scott, Ann Radcliffe or Horace Walpole worked within:

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[243] Fredric Jameson, 'Progress Versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?', *Science Fiction Studies*, 9.2 (1982), pp.151-152.

[244] Whose own gameworld was doubled inside of itself: the light and dark world duality borrowed from *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (1991).
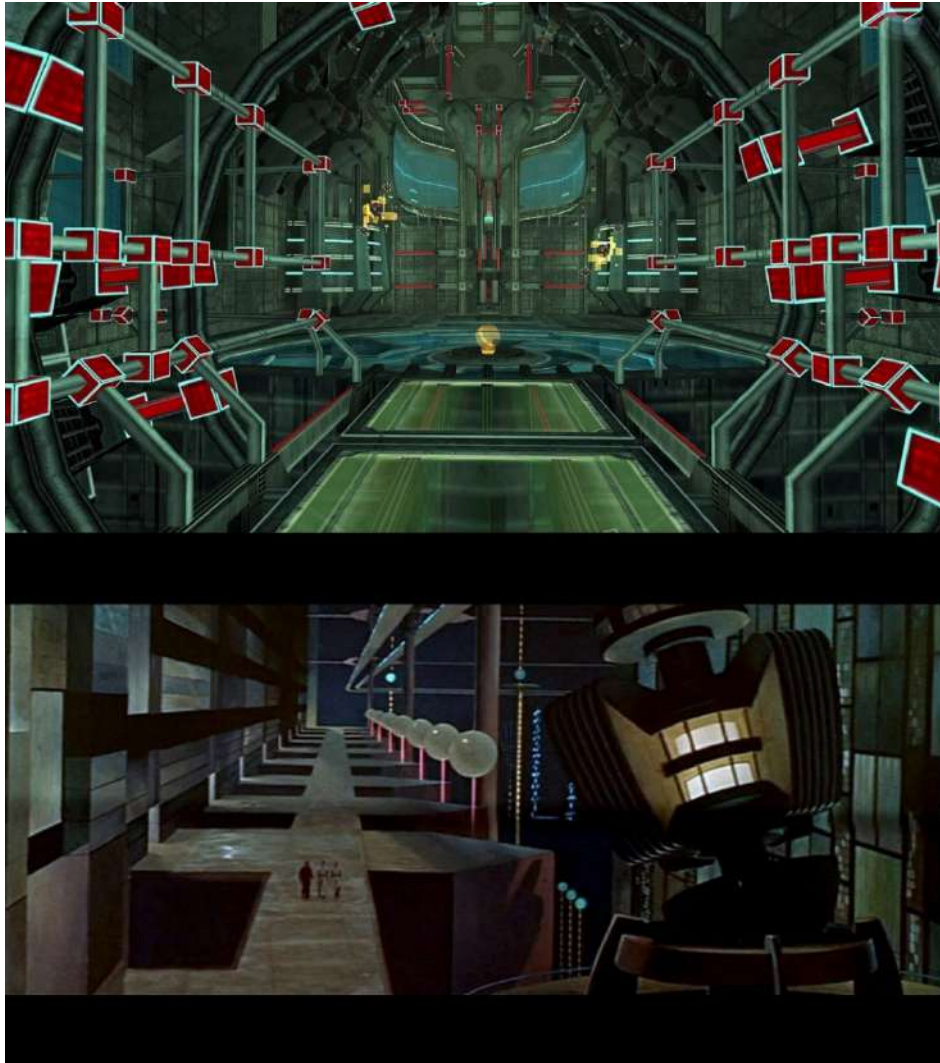
Much of what Botting would try and colonize through his own academic claptrap just so happens to be my expertise. So yeah, no, dude. I think you're dead fucking wrong about "Gothic redundancy.")

     The Terminator, *Metroid*, *Alien(s)* or any of the above stories (and their mediums) might seem "unoriginal," except originality really isn't the point because the problem nor its *potential* solution (Capitalism/the Gothic) *isn't* original. Despite its explosive and apparent falsehoods, the Gothic at large is more honest this way than dividing them to tell doubled, canonical variants, whose class character is passively *and* actively dormant. And like the explicitly Gothic variant of the Western or noir, none of this is clean inside our own praxis and poetics; i.e., our own lives remain full of fictional stories that rub off on us (and our own work) but also speak to our inherited and lived trauma as something to express through borrowed conventions, locations and aesthetics: their twists and turns, double crosses, ambushes, dying of shame, true love, black pearls (toxic wealth), big explosions,

and tremendous, fortress-sized/-shaped fabrications (e.g., the corrupt FBI agent from *Honest Thief* is a big clue to the rotten structures of their time relayed in theatrical form, just as Radcliffe's Father Schedoni was a clue to her status quo's corruption: the intentionally displaced corruption of an authority figure—i.e., he wasn't a "real priest, a real cop"; he was from "Italy[245]"). Somewhere in this Gothic mess is the truth, meaning "a poetic way out of the bourgeois' nightmare myopia": its fictional extensions of real-world Capitalism's scarcity and death, harmful lies, unironic war and rape. If we want to escape Capitalism, we have to alter our material conditions (reclaim the Base); this starts with the Superstructure as something to recultivate through our own Gothic poetics—their iconoclastic, multimedia expressions of unequal power as sex-positive and class-conscious. This means we can't just to go into Gothic castles for pure, escapist fun, but must do so to retrieve/reify what is useful when synthesizing proletarian praxis as something to disseminate back into Gothic Communism, the movement; i.e., anything useful to camping canon stolen from Metroidvania and its cinematic and novelized forebears (re: *Aliens* and *The Hobbit*, *Otranto*). We have to learn from the past by transforming its canonical depictions to avoid repeating Capitalism's unironic genocides.

This brings us not just to my adulthood but my postgraduate work on ludo-Gothic BDSM, which in 2017 was met with its own barriers. Working under David Calonne, I was only just learning about the Numinous *vis-à-vis* Rudolph Otto and H.P. Lovecraft and came across an article by Lilia Melani, "Otto on the Numinous" (2003), citing the Gothic as the quest for the Numinous: "It has been suggested that Gothic fiction originated primarily as a quest for the *mysterium tremendum*" (source). Something about it appealed to my then-closeted kinkster as have previously been titillated by Cameron, Lovecraft and Nintendo (there's a sentence I never thought I'd write), but also the videogames I was playing at the time: Metroidvania[246] (shortly because I went overseas, my best friend Ginger recommended *Axiom Verge* and *Hollow Knight* to me, which I eventually made the topic of my master's thesis). Eager to go to grad school and learn more about this exciting thing called "the Numinous," I looked for places that taught "the Gothic" and was directed by various educators to MMU. Upon going overseas, I swiftly

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[245] Having about as much understanding of the actual place as Tolkien did of "the East."

[246] As I write in "Mazes and Labyrinths": "[Unlike survival horror,] 'Metroidvania' was effectively the combination of two IPs owned by different Japanese companies. So the term was never printed in any official capacity. In fact, it wasn't until the mid-2010s that 'Metroidvania' saw wider use in the indie market": PC Gamer ("The Best Metroidvania on PC," 2022), Engadget ("'Metroidvania' should actually be 'Zeldavania,'" 2016), GamaSutra ("The undying allure of the Metroidvania," 2015) Giant Bomb ("Metroidvania," 2023), and Wired ("An Anime-Inspired Platformer That's as Beautiful as It Is Mind-Bending," 2015). Simply put, the genre exploded in popularity in the mid-2010s, becoming a smash indie success on Steam and continuing to be wildly popular to this day.

collided painfully against various cultural barriers when trying to express myself (and my inherited, lived trauma) through the Gothic mode as something to relay in academic language. The whole ordeal became counterproductive and traumatic in its own right, requiring me to voice my concerns regarding said baggage in connection to the larger systemic traumas I was seeking to express and overcome; i.e., by facing my own painful past in its totality. This meant coming up with a solution through ludo-Gothic BDSM, which in turn meant forming it into a *teachable* method for this book; but I first had to deal with my unprocessed trauma from my brief, invalidating stint in academia (four years, from 2014 to 2018, not including submitting to academic journals, attending conferences and applying for PhD programs, which lasted another year).

For me, Gothic media more broadly is *cryptomimetic* (writing about the ghosts between words), but also whose undead mode of expression is embroiled within academic areas of study that yield hermeneutic limitations due to recency biases and disdain for a holistic approach by academic bigwigs. For instance, I noticed these limitations myself when trying to marry the Gothic to videogames in my own graduate work as cutting-edge. It was a tactic my supervisors and academic superiors resisted, simply because videogames were either totally outside of their realm of experience, or "Metroidvania" wasn't something that had been academically connected to games within their own fields. That is, speedrunning as a practice/documentary subject was just taking off online in 2018 (Twitch had only existed since 2011); likewise, "ludic-Gothic" wasn't even a decade-old term at the time, was something that ambitious academics strove to stake new claims within while leaving much to be desired.

For example, the same year I wrote my thesis on Metroidvania, Bernard Perron would sum up the broader Gothic rush in videogame academia in *The World of Scary Games: A Study in Videoludic Horror* (2018) sans mentioning Metroidvania *once*:

> Horror scholars such as Taylor, Kirkland, Niedenthal, and Krzywinska have therefor come to contextualize [video]games in the older tradition of the Gothic fiction, "one of survival horror's parents," as Taylor states in "Gothic Bloodlines in Survival Horror Gaming" (2009). Furthermore, the latter even coined a new term to highlight this origin: "The ludic-gothic is created when the Gothic is transformed by the video game medium, and is a kindred genre to survival horror" […] Video games remediate many aspects of Gothic poetics: [the prevention of mastery, obscured or unreliable visions, scattering of written texts in typical Gothic locations and their lost histories, the encounter and use of anachronistic technologies, etc] ([source](#)).

Not only does Perron make no mention of Metroidvania at all, neither do *any* of the other scholars he cites; nor did my supervisors know what Metroidvania were when

I was researching it (nor I, with me finally settling on a concrete definition in 2021; re: the "Mazes and Labyrinths" abstract). Indeed, Metroidvania—despite being an older genre than survival horror[247]—remains a thoroughly underrepresented area of Gothic videogame studies, and Gothic videogames remain ripe for continued study within our own lives. Indeed, I had to connect the two myself when recognizing a knowledge gap regarding Metroidvania as *cryptomimetic* media within videogame studies at large; and I have continued to do so as a postgrad writing about mazes and labyrinths in Metroidvania; i.e., as a niche area of study to expand upon within my own daily life beyond academia—by writing about or illustrating Metroidvania outside of conferences, but also interviewing *Metroid* speedrunners for fun in my "Mazes and Labyrinths" compendium (which we'll give an example of a little deeper into the subchapter).
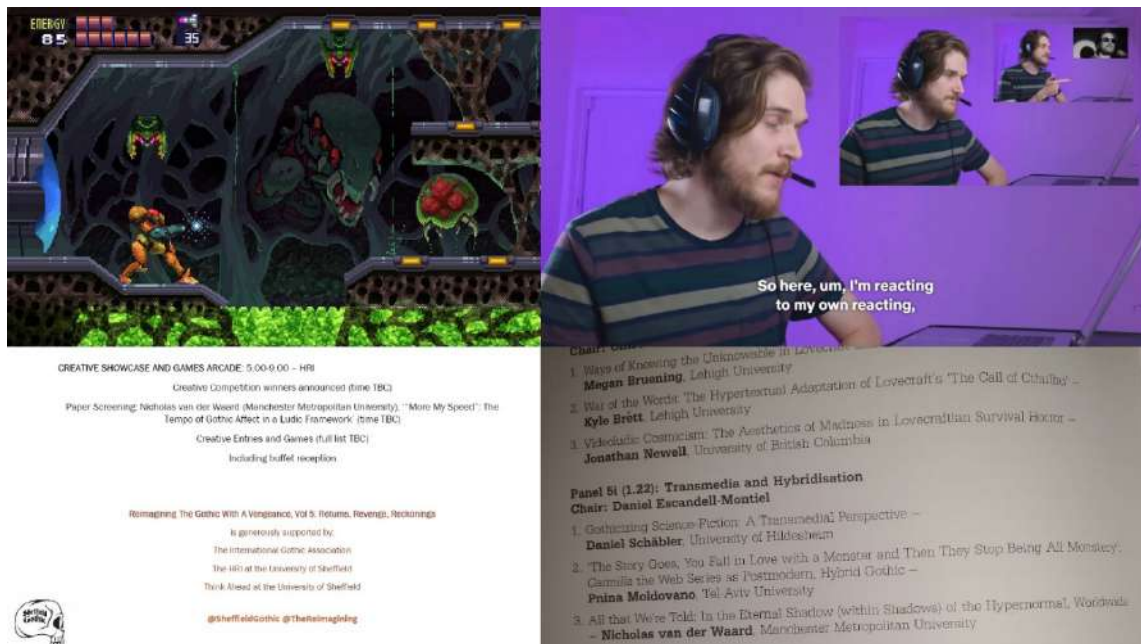
(exhibit 1a1a1h2a3b: Artist, top-right: Alessandro Constantini. Bo Burnham [top-right] demonstrates how reflections on the world involve an endless creative process, one whose mise-en-abyme fits comfortably within cryptomimesis as a meta-reflection on Gothic poetics and its narrative of the crypt: my undergrad/graduate/postgraduate academic work as something to revisit, think about, and reapply to the real world beyond just conferences [bottom-left and -right: papers for Sheffield Gothic and the International Gothic Association] but also interacting with Metroidvania themselves being remade by artists like Constantini—i.e., older "ghosts" to chase down and interrogate, including ghost of ourselves. For example, when writing this exhibit, my partner and I watched the video presentation for a 2019 conference paper I wrote and recorded for Sheffield

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[247] *Metroid* and *Castlevania* are both older than *Sweet Home* (1989).

Gothic's Reimagining the Gothic with a Vengeance, Vol 5: Returns, Revenge, Reckonings: "'More My Speed': The Tempo of Gothic Affect in a Ludic Framework." I hadn't watched the video since I uploaded it, but doing so reminded me of some useful ideas I hadn't thought about in a long time. It was also like beholding a younger-looking but ultimately older version of myself:

[source: Me in the accompanying video to "More My Speed," which I sent to Sheffield Gothic because I couldn't fly overseas.]

As I haven't written academically for years, it felt a bit surreal [and fun] to investigate a "ghost" of my former self and listen what it had to say:

Inside the gameworld, on-screen, different speeds are displayed by player motion relative to the gameworld and its creatures. There is speed of confrontation (horror) and speed of the reveal (terror) [...] There is speed of action, which includes exploration, combat, and escape; these are tied to the style of the game's design. There is also speed of death: As Raškauskienė writes, "for Burke, terror – fear of pain – was a terror mixed with a paradoxical delight. Ostensibly, this was because the sublime observer is not actually threatened. Safety in the midst of danger produces a thrilling pleasure" (18). Survival is a question not of actually dying in Metroid or Castlevania; the player cannot die. What matters is being in the presence of simulated "near-death" for as long as possible. This can be monsters, like Ridley and Kraid, in Metroid; or Dracula, the Mummy or Medusa's head, in

Castlevania. The player is next to them, or "near" them by being inside a world that promotes them. Kraid's Lair advertises Kraid; Castlevania promotes Dracula through a series of monsters. Whether any are onscreen or not, the player anticipates them non-stop [*source*].)*

Processing my troubled academic past, my reflections on Metroidvania as a tomb-like, ludo-Gothic space/torture dungeon have become thoroughly enmeshed in my own sexuality and gender-formation beyond what was heteronormatively assigned to me at birth; i.e., what was naturally assigned and what I had to reclaim through my own work's seeking and expressing of power as something to find inside particular performative arrangements: the "ludo-Gothic BDSM" of the Gothic castle as a powerful "female-coded" space. Its **palliative Numinous** expresses C.S. Lewis' so-called "problem of pain" (1940) through mutual consent; i.e., as a kind of ludic contract that promises paradoxical thrills through the aesthetics of harmful power but also unequal power exchange in the contractual sense as rich food for thought: it changes how we think about the world. As I write in "Revisiting My Masters' Thesis on Metroidvania—Our Ludic Masters: The Dominating Game Space":

> Metroidvania players consent to the game by adopting a submissive position. Most people sexualize BDSM, but power is exchanged in any scenario, sexual or otherwise. This being said, Gothic power exchanges are often sexualized [in appearance]. Samus is vulnerable when denuded, her naked body exposed to the hostile alien menace (re: the end scene from *Alien*). Metroidvania conjure [up] dominance and submission through a player that winds up "on the hip" (an old expression that means "to be at a disadvantage"). Another way to think of it is, the player is the bottom, and they're being topped by the game.

[artist: Sarah Kate Forstner's "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad" (2017); source: Michael Uhall's "A Specter, a Speaker: 'Whistle and I'll Come to You' (1968)"]

With any power exchange there's always an element of ambiguity and danger (doubly so in Gothic stories). The participants have to trust one another. In this sense, I trust the Metroidvania not to hurt me, but the castle is always somewhat uncanny. I know the gameworld can't hurt me because it's a videogame; it can no more kill me than a dream, or C. S. Lewis' mighty spirit:

> *suppose that you were told simply "There is a mighty spirit in the room," and believed it. Your feelings would then be even less like the mere fear of danger [of the tiger]: but the disturbance would be profound. You would feel wonder and a certain shrinking — a sense of inadequacy to cope with such a visitant and of prostration before it — an emotion which might be expressed in Shakespeare's words "Under it my genius is rebuked" (The Problem of Pain).*

Nevertheless, the paradox—of near-danger in videogames—mirrors the plight of the Neo-Gothic heroine. 18th century women read these stories to feel danger in a controlled sense, but they still submitted to its Numinous "perils."

By comparison, the Lovecraft junkie submits to cosmic nihilism[248], and the survival horror enthusiast seeks danger of a particular kind. So do Metroidvania players.

This power exchange through the palliative Numinous has always appealed to me amid Gothic aesthetics, spaces and cliché, fetishized thrills; i.e., inside castles when I have far less dominant power than one might think, but also more *subby* power in ways that feel asexually profound but never fully divorced from sexual peril's aesthetics: the disempowered hero in a very Gothic sense, according to my unequal relationship to/negotiation with a female[249] "rapist" space that feels mightier than I am by virtue of the dungeon (rape) aesthetic, but also our power arrangement being stacked against me:

She's mighty-mighty, just lettin' it all hang out
She's a brick house
That lady's stacked and that's a fact
Ain't holding nothing back ([source](): The Commodores' "Brick House," 1977).

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[248] This idea *was* coined by a supremely bigoted white man—one whose tottering regressions towards fascism forever hang over the science-y heroes he constantly tortures in his stories; i.e., threatening them with insignificance in the face of mightier things:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little [speak for yourself, whitey]; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age ([source](): "The Call of Cthulhu," 1928).

"Oh, no! I'm *not* the center of the universe?" I think old Lovecraft could have seriously done with some "flexibility training" insofar as acclimating himself to chaos, meaning there's more to life than the myth of male power deflated. His empty outlook, in my opinion, is very much him projecting his own privileged shortcomings into the power vacuum of an impenetrable void (that isn't, you should know by now, outer space). He's basically Peter Weyland gazing solemnly into the abyss and seeing nothing because, for him, there is nothing worthwhile to acquire. It's the trembling that he enjoys. He's very much like a child afraid of the dark, whose prescribed unapproachability is a kind of "backtalking from the sub": "You're hideous, Cthulhu; now step on me."

[249] The gendering of spaces is not usual; sailors would do it with ships, gendering them female as they cut through the equally female sea. A giant, hostile castle isn't so odd, then—with Scott's "space castle" (and its Gothic *matelotage*) sailing through the murky darkness like a ghost ship haunted by an older copy of itself.

That's the whole point. I seemingly "can't win" because the space's ergodic potential is fundamentally stronger than I am; but it still sits within that performance of unequal, harmful power as a paradox: the sub's power through the pairing with a dominant whose power flows through them like heavy metal thunder. In that sense, I actually win and lose at the same time (what ludologists call a *positive*-sum zero-sum game: a win-win[250])! Replayability and endless backtracking amid dungeon aesthetics are a core part of the Metroidvania appeal: to feel mastered inside the ludic contract *despite* its inherent flexibility.

Furthermore, as I write in "Why I Submit: A Subby Gothicist's Attitudes on Metroidvania, Mommy Doms, and Sexual Persecution" (2021), this doesn't just stay in the gameworld; for me, it translates to how I live and think about my life relative to my abuse as survived but also played within in Metroidvania safe spaces:

> I have male friends, but most of my friends are women or trans people. Most of my partners have been trans or gender-fluid. The same goes for the women in media I relate to or am inspired by. For me, a powerful woman or female space is captivating and educational, especially the "mommy dom" and Metroidvania.
>
> I've always felt attracted to female power—be it in teachers, heroines, or videogame characters. But female power is usually androgynous, having pre-conceptions about male power mixed in. I admire Joan of Arc and Elphaba, but also Ellen Ripley and Samus Aran: tomboyish girls, female knights. I especially love the Metroidvania—a chaotic, "female" stronghold to lose myself inside, but also the focus of my PhD work. There, I can explore myself sexually in relation to power and trauma. This is why I submit. When I do submit, I submit to "mommy doms."
>
> In a BDSM framework, the mommy dom is a powerful female figure, one with the power to punish and nurture inside a consensual framework [of exquisite "torture"]. Just remember that I'm a switch; I'm not submissive all the time. However, when I am, I submit consensually. It's not for everyone, and it shouldn't be. That isn't the argument that sexist men make, though. For them, only women can or should submit. Men who submit are weak, or impossible. Clearly they're not impossible, but homosexual composer Tchaikovsky's words on submission (towards a young servant) were nonetheless treated as impossible—his amorous words furiously repressed by the Russian state: "My God, what an angelic creature and how I long to be his slave, his plaything, his property!"

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[250] Versus a negative-sum game: a lose-lose; e.g., Capitalism (because the elite will lose in the end due to climate change).

Obviously my connection to the imaginary Dark Mother is tied to my own abuse, and led me down a very dark road: frustrated with academia and dumped by Zeuhl for their decade-long secret flame, I dated online; I encountered Jadis through Gothic roleplay on Fetlife; we hit it off and I quickly moved in; they worked their magic, abusing me emotionally during the pandemic.

All of that might seem like a mistake, like my own deal with the devil (running off with a devil-in-disguise in the harmful, self-destructive sense of that phrase). Except I not only survived; I learned some important lessons that school would never have taught me (and which I could pass on through this book as my own sex-positive castle of sin). One such lesson was that I inadvertently realized how much I enjoy the ironic rape fantasy[251] of sitting at the foot of the dark queen's throne, "trapped" in her castle and "kept for sport." Such a lady *is* the teeth in the night and might "slash me to ribbons" if I'm not careful; but *vis-à-vis* Wolff, she's also a part of my divided self (a less extreme, operatic/phenomenological version of an actual plurality)—the ghost of myself and *my* counterfeits that I'm debating with right now as I revisit these older writings of mine (all my yesterdays) to say something bigger and more definitive about Metroidvania (and by extension, Capitalism). It's like looking into a window of the past and seeing my younger self, but also *not* my younger self at the same time (Castor Troy from *Face/Off* [1997] put it best: "It's like looking into a mirror, only not").

There's always a bit of our parents and their congenital/inherited pasts in ourselves (or counterfeit "parents"), and there's always a bit of us and ours in our own babies. As part of this book (which is my baby), we can take *my* experiences,

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[251] Jadis used to buy me nice clothes and underwear to highlight my physical features, and make me appear more feminine and desirable to them (a genderfluid person who identified and performed as "masc"): skirts, fancy shirts and corsets, but also skin-tight briefs. I loved wearing these—loved feeling feminine during my fantasy as the Gothic heroine; feeling out of control being with Jadis, the fantasy became something I could weaponize: a means of controlling the abuse they inflicted through lucid dreams I was well-versed in. As we shall explore in Volume Two, these ludic-Gothic BDSM fantasies became the very means of my escape. In turn, I hypothesized that if they could help me escape Jadis (a loud and proud neoliberal girl boss), then maybe I could retailor them to help others escape Capitalist Realism through the Gothic mode.
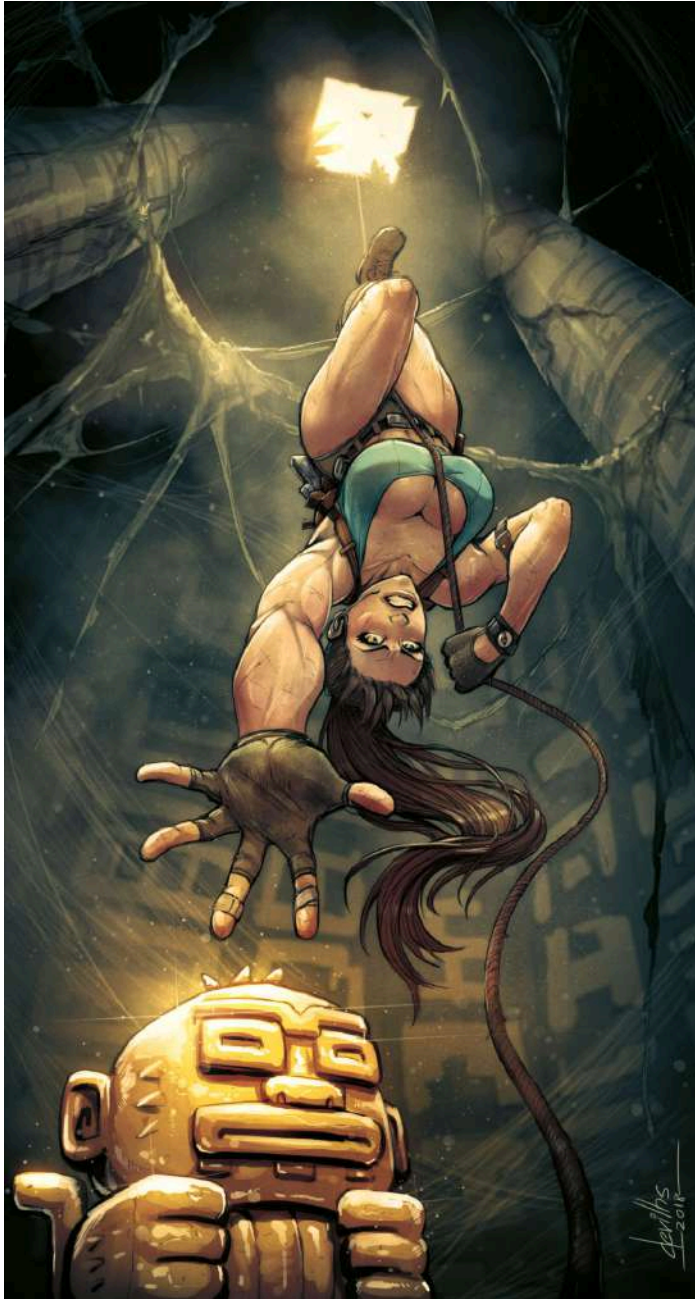
congenital inheritance and compound education to convert Tolkien's refrain (and Cameron's) through iconoclastic refrains of our own: castle-narrative of a particular kind—*sex-positive castle BDSM* that allows us to inhabit but also critique, thus reclaim and *negotiation* the future role of the Gothic heroine's more "Amazonian" doubling in ways that we can also rescue from TERF praxis by re-raiding the tomb/rereading the tome ourselves (the italicized bit isn't so much a keyword as a phrase I invented just now that combines a variety of keywords we've already discussed and whose assemblage we will be discussing now). It can be an exhilarating way to camp the bigoted past of white saviors and profiteers, albeit inside a sexy avatar surrounded by "peril":

(artist: [Devilhs](#))

The aesthetics of danger can certainly be thrilling in a variety of ways. So can our tearing up of the usual ludic contract in search of different forms of mastery than what the game codes players to do, but still reliably "has its way" with us by accounting for these emergent forms inside of itself. Contained inside the aesthetics of ruinous, exotic death, the ludic function of the Metroidvania supplies a cathartic "punishment" that at times verges on endless madness; i.e., the recursive motion of the player chasing the record for that better and better time, while the power exchange of a thoroughly vampiric and Gothic-coded space sucks the runner of their sanity and lifeforce; but also doubles them. This complicated relationship on- and offstage becomes something to interrogate not just of the castle by the player but by spectators interviewing "runners" of a particular castle. Each is going to have

their own feelings about what they're exploring and contributing historically towards.

For example, during my interview[252] with CScottyW (a WR holder for *all* categories in *Metroid Fusion* [2001] and many in *Metroid: Zero Mission* [2004]—source: [Speedrun.com](#)), I had a chance to pick his brain about what I called the "Quest for Mastery":

> **Persephone:** The speedrunner's challenge is a kind of metaplay informed by the gameworld's coded instructions. The more runners move, the more they record; the more they record, the more history the space accrues.
>
> Despite instructing the player to map them, there's an ostensibly "unmappable" quality to *Metroid* gameworlds. Do you feel like there always one more map to fill in? For example, you've played *Zero Mission* for hundreds of hours [and are still surprised by it](#). Does this sense of elusive mastery ever make you feel disempowered because always one more map to fill in? Or do you enjoy it for precisely that reason?
>
> **CScottyW:** I enjoy being able to keep improving, even when it's difficult. Others have responded differently and would say things such as "no matter how good your time is, you will never be satisfied." I may agree with this to some extent, but I don't think the sentiment is necessarily negative either!
>
> So I suppose, yes, I do enjoy it because I can just keep playing the game, and I enjoy playing the game.
>
> **Persephone:** Do you feel constantly drawn back to the maze, thus unable to escape, because it's somehow "greater" than you are? For example, speedrunners dissect games, but games give them the tools to do so. *Metroid* in particular introduced many staples to the speedrunning practice: a maze-like, deconstructible world, and hidden, time-based reward system helped lay the groundwork for speedrunning as a practice.
>
> **CScottyW:** The game rewards you for playing fast, and it is internally rewarding to play fast. That seems like a pretty deadly combination to me to keep someone doing something. I have taken a break from running these games many times, but I do always return for some reason or another. Sometimes it's to participate in a tourney and other times it's just because I feel like playing the game. Maybe the latter occurs when I'm simply drawn back into the maze. I wouldn't personally say that it's because the game is

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[252] From our 2021 interview, "[Mazes and Labyrinths: Speedrunning Metroidvania – CScottyW](#)," which was conducted as part of my then-PhD research on Metroidvania, "[Series Abstract: 'Mazes and Labyrinths: Disempowerment in Metroidvania and Survival Horror](#).'"

"'greater' than me" or because it has some power over me, but does an addict say that their addiction has some power over them if they are not trying to quit?

(artist: [u/mr_merns](#))

Persephone: Is the past you're struggling to defeat essentially yourself, mainly your personal best? Do you ever visualize this former, past record as being represented by Mother Brain or the SA-X? Effectively a historical marker to run against, that only grows more and more powerful over time?

CScottyW: Yeah, I'd agree with that. I'm always trying to overcome myself at my best. I certainly may have different stress levels fighting these bosses as a result of my personal best, or what my pace is going into those fights, but I don't consciously refer to them as a representative of it ([source](#)).

CScottyW's answers were unique to him, of course, but clearly the space between life and death is a fine line to walk in Metroidvania. As doubled by the

player and the gameworld as interacting back and forth, the proximity to power but not quite having it is what makes Metroidvania players—despite the live burial's constant procession—feel most alive: the chase of power and closeness to death as not entirely one's own inside a Numinous space built from older maps, conventions and aesthetics that parallel the larger futile gesture. CScottyW certainly has his own feelings on the subject, and in the speedrunning tradition treats it more like a sport (specifically the race), but so do I as a casual[253] player of these same games:

> As a Metroidvania enthusiast, I submit to the game's castle-narrative. Like a Faustian bargain, this exchange is part of the game's ludic contract. This is not quite how Clint Hockings describes it, in "Ludonarrative Dissonance": "seek power and you will progress." Rather, on some level, the player plays Metroidvania to be dominated. Progression may appear to conquer the space. In reality the space conquers back, and fairly often. I experience these sensations when I control the avatar. However, the vicarious nature of this relationship can become even more framed (concentric): I can watch other people try to master the game, and watch them be dominated by the space. Not even speedrunners can escape this embarrassment, their blushing faces

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[253] As per my master's thesis, all Metroidvania players are conditioned to map a Gothic castle

> Metroid introduced numerous staples for the subgenre, including exploration in an [isolated scenario]: the Gothic heroine lost in the castle. As Samus Aran, the player must navigate the hostile Zebeth underground, hunting the Metroids (an indigenous species of vampiric jellyfish) using relics found inside the ruins. […] Limitations are determined by the player's equipment. However, few items are needed to explore the entire map. The game is not timed, has no in-game map system. Its world is a giant map that can be explored, in-game, but also charted out-of-game by the player. In *Super Metroid* (1994), an "automap" feature would be introduced. However, from a narrative standpoint, this merely illustrated what the player was already doing themselves (source: "Lost in Necropolis").

but also speedrun it to greater or lesser degrees:

> Narrative in a Gothic text cannot be divorced from the exploration of space; however, Metroidvania spaces are so conducive to speedrunning as to make avoiding it an arduous task. Simply put, speedrunning is playing fast as possible. At its core, however, the exercise requires continual exploration and repetitive motion. This cannot be separated from space, provided to the player as maps, strategy guides or instruction booklets. The player is always mapping in some sense, because the space forces them to. Some kind of map will always be consulted, if only the space, itself, as memorized. […] Whether wending or sprinting through it, a player will still map the space. […]
>   Mastery is indicated not by items, but the player's mnemonic agility inside a space as a series of ever-changing routes towards the same end. Maps and items become increasingly useless, the less a player relies on them. Even if a particular route is mastered, endless alternatives reveal themselves through experimentation. Regardless, the basic objective remains unaltered no matter which items or maps are used; this potential has always existed, allowing for hybrids without compromising the core functions of the subgenre. Despite being designed to evolve, Metroidvania have not, over the course of thirty-two years, really changed all that much. Instead, the feeling—that more remains to explore and record, hence master—remains (*ibid.*).

conjoined with the statues already screaming on the walls. [How fleeting a victory like Shiny Zeni's is](), when it will eventually be bested. Or buried.

These symptoms and the choices they inform are endemic to Metroidvania. The space is comorbid, boasting a variety of disempowering symptoms. All result from the way the game is played. This play is deconstructive, the player not only invited, but tacitly instructed (there are no explicit tutorials) to blast the world apart: bomb walls, missile doors, and [mini-bosses to kill] for even bigger keys. Not only this; the hidden functions of the gameworld include a reward system: Beat the game quickly enough and you get to see some space booty.

(artist: [Urbanator]())

A person motivated by sex is hardly in control. Not to mention, the sex historically offered by *Metroid* is fraught with peril. The entire drive is illustrated by gameplay conducive to speedrunning at a basic level. The same strategies employed by the best runners are executed by regular players. You play the game and begin to play it faster. In some sense, this "maze mastery" is involuntary. The player cannot help but play the game faster as

they begin to re-remember the maze. The game exploits this, repeatedly leading the player towards self-destruction and domination.

These feelings are orgasmic, but differently than the *Doom* Slayer's own attempts at conquest. They're a Gothic orgasm, a kind of exquisite torture. I say "exquisite" because they occur within the realm of play [as partially emergent]. For Metroidvania, this *jouissance* is ludic. But sometimes a game can blur the lines. [… Be this in Metroidvania, or similarly "strict" spaces, players] are expected to revel in the game's sadism, deriving pleasure from "punishment" while the game, for lack of a better term, bends them over and fucks them ([source](): "Our Ludic Masters").

My specific approach isn't purely because the race through a give space was something to partake in, full-throttle, but a "death race" inside a particular kind of track where speed, though important, sometimes takes a backseat to the scenic route: death theatre as something to soak in and play around with.

Simply put, if you've been abused in real life, it can be tremendously medicinal to be held down by a seasoned pro and taken to that edge without ever being in harm's way. The same goes for a dungeon that keeps you inside of itself while threatening you with exquisite "torture" of a profound, Numinous sort. It's hard to explain, other than the paradoxical threat feels vital to achieving catharsis because of the trauma that lives inside me as normally making me feel out of control. Working with Metroidvania in this negotiated capacity, then, is like working with the best dom on the planet because it cannot, by design, harm me; and I cannot harm those I request to be "imperiled" who occupy the same space (non-playable characters that I "kill"). Like knife play done well, they look "in danger" which can be tremendously exciting to watch, but it's, for all intents and purposes, completely risk-free. Sometimes, you have to fight fire with "fire"; or in the words of David the android quoting Peter O'Toole in *Prometheus* (2012): "The trick, William Potter, is not *minding* that it hurts" (except for us, the trick is inverted: not minding that actual harm is completely impossible but feels on the cusp of actualizing at any given moment; e.g., acquiring literal "sanity damage" when playing a Lovecraft-themed horror game). The appeal of Metroidvania is feeling "at home" in the dark castle as our *pandemonium* that we negotiate for ourselves: a "wicked" place whose "safe space" is wreathed and wrought with the fascinating markers of the imaginary medieval past (and retro-future) brought into the present to *critique* the present's harmful illusions (not preserve them through the same old unironic rape fantasies and stereotypes).

I've clearly thought about this subject a lot over the years, and my feelings about ludo-Gothic BDSM haven't really changed. If anything I feel like the argument of my master's thesis—that the deconstructive, speedrunning nature of *Metroidvania* synergizes neatly with the Gothic aesthetics' meta-narrative—has only been reinforced by further investigations like these. Explorations of an angry and

traumatized gameworld can be immensely cathartic in ways that confront the trauma in our own lives, giving us the means to address *systemic* abuse present in seemingly empowering fantasies[254]; i.e., maps and spaces that *resemble* Metroidvania in aesthetics, but not function. That's largely the problem with Tolkien's refrain but also Cameron's: they treat unironic war as a means to an end, not as something that's actually part of the problem. In short, war is forever, naturalized as empowerment while doing the state's dirty work.

All the same, while Metroidvania aren't perfect—indeed, can often fall into the trap of surviving and killing monsters just like Tolkien's heroes do—their tenuous arrangement of power during liminal expression is far less optimistic and far more openly Promethean than Tolkien's fantasies tended to be. War is *not* good, in Metroidvania, nor are its monarchs or castles places to defend. Instead, their combined mirror is black, which it very much needs to be insofar as class consciousness is concerned; you have to see things in ways that are honest about trauma's manifestations within and outside of ourselves, and in naked dialectical-material language: the yawning dead expressed in potent nightmares that yield clarity instead of abject confusion beyond the realms of death (as Judas Priest might put it). The world is a vampire *now* but it needn't always be—not if we work towards a solution that calls for the humanization of orcs (not their heads) and the unmasking of the state's killers (and their dungeons) as inhumane: ACAB (castles and cops). It's not something to be meek about, but to take further and further towards sex positivity through iconoclasm as a happy result; i.e., whose visible excitement stems from the proverbial tightrope as something to shrink during dark indulgence, but also "expand" through *jouissance* (a potential asexual intellectual ecstasy tied to artistic nudity[255] as an oft-*asexual* undertaking with an sexual visual element) as a mutually consensual enterprise: "the first expands the 'soul,' and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life," amounting to an exquisite "torture" *minus* Radcliffe's (or Tolkien's) operatic bigotries and harmful stereotypes. Now *that's* what I call a win-win!

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[254] The sex-positive paradox of disempowerment is it can open our eyes to our Pavlovian condition as killers for the state through Metroidvania aping Cameron's "peace through strength" tack: "Eat this, and grow up big and 'strong' like Ellen Ripley!"

[255] A complicated asexual relationship between artist and model making art with nudity that encapsulates (for them) an asexual relationship (something we will unpack at length in Volume Three, Chapter Three).

(artist: [Thirstastic](https://patreon.com/thirstastic))

Concluding part one's rather hauntological and uber-nerdy trip down memory lane, we're arrived at our next destination: part two, or the Metroidvania as a closed space for us to reclaim, and use to reclaim, class character from Tolkien's

refrain using the ludo-Gothic BDSM and other devices from Cameron's refrain to interrogate power's assembly and performance, expressing it ourselves in iconoclastic variations.

Per Lilia Melani, the Gothic is classically viewed as the quest for the Numinous. We'll be doing so inside the Metroidvania's shadow zone as more than just a game to play but a theatrical space to play on whose chaotic gameplay can radically shape how we think about our own lives in a Gothic-Communist sense; i.e., in relation to power and its complicates symbols according to castles and monsters as flexible theatrical devices whose sites/citing of power can be camped in the Gothic tradition: not strictly the Monty Python approach[256] (though there's a place for that; e.g., the Black Knight, the Bridge of Death, the Rabbit of Caerbannog ["that rabbit's dynamite!"] and Castle Anthrax, etc), but just as often a semi-serious death theatre whose gradient of camp allows for outright silliness but also a fair amount of gravity onstage even when things aren't pitch black (a Gothic castle can be composed entirely of Tim Allen's face from *Home Improvement*[257]

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[256] Peter Jackson's *An Unexpected Journey* (2012) has a strangely Python-esque feel to it, camping Tolkien a fair bit, but also having scenes of boyish innocence; i.e., where Bilbo runs through Hobbiton trailing the dwarves' contract behind him like a kite while a) gayly shouting, "I'm going to have an adventure!" and b) relying on the old sage to impart wisdom upon him (war is a foregone conclusion, Tolkien argues, but one where you can still learn from the past of former soldiers). Jackson, like Tolkien, also suffers from an islander's fortress ignorance of anything beyond his shores, their two bigotries combining to make for a very poor view of goblins as suspiciously cannibal-like captors; it reads like a bad 1800s potboiler.

[257] I'm not making this up. From my thesis:

> Another implication—that the space is the monster in which one is effectively trapped—is terrifying, and one seen in other titles, like *The Darkest Dungeon* (2016); or, an *Ultimate DOOM* (1995) mod (a modified version of the original software) where everything about the game, including the player's weapons and items, has been replaced with Tim Allen's face and voice (fig.17). The affect is unsettlingly kaleidoscopic, and one's sense of self obliterates—a horror in how the Other is not only potentially human, but also oneself ([source](#)).

Figure 17. "[Aeuhhh???](#)" by Marisa Kirisame (2016), from Tom Hall's *Ultimate DOOM*, (MS-DOS, 1995)

[1991] if the effect is still Gothic in some shape or form). We're also fighting to reclaim the symbolism of all monsters inside these castles, after all:
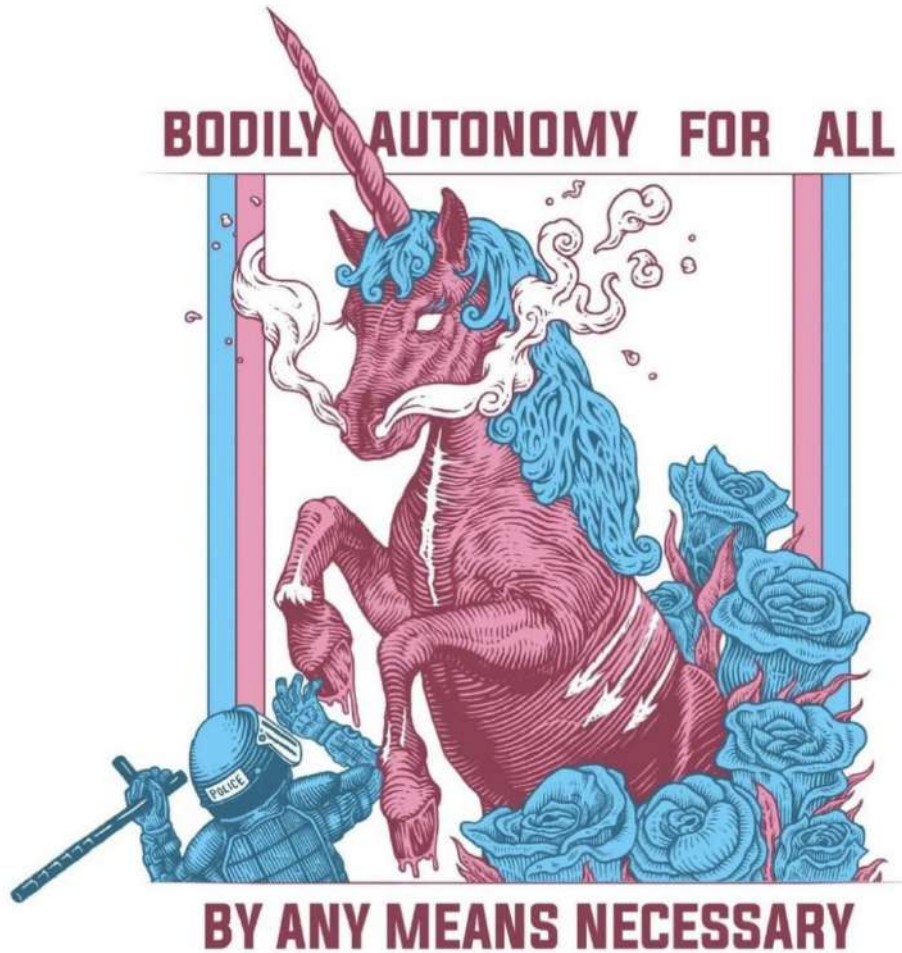
(artist: Renthony)

"The Map Is a Lie: the Quest for Power inside Cameron's Closed Space—Interrogating Power through Your Own Camp

"Theatricality and deception are powerful agents to the uninitiated."

—*Bane, <u>The Dark Knight Rises</u> (2012)*

      Now that we've unpacked my real-life quest to understand Numinous power as something to map, reassemble and interrogate inside castles, you should have a fairly good idea of my thought process's journey when doing it yourselves on your own journeys. I now want to walk you through the basic process in relation to Metroidvania (and other shooters, primarily *Ion Fury* at the end of the subchapter) as stemming from Cameron, who himself stemmed from Tolkien (we'll expand this idea to any kind of canonical theatre and monster-making when we discuss "putting the pussy on the chainwax" in the next subchapter). For us, interrogation of power and its mapped-out performance is as much a critique of the *protagonist* within Cameron's refrain as it is the castle or the monsters inside; we will apply this playing with power to our poetic camping of the Promethean Quest in our own lives, our own creations that interrogate power on maps that resemble Tolkien or Cameron's (on paper) but play out very differently in practice when we recreate elements of them ourselves:

(artist: *ChuckARTT*)

First, power's interrogation happens through class war in popular media; for the Gothic, class/culture war is monster war—a battle of the mind, the monster and the method as codified beliefs and behaviors during a shared stage: the "shadow zone's" map and various environments, but especially the castle as a sex dungeon,

a closed space that imperils the heroine in ways that aren't strictly negative in a theatrical sense (they have cathartic applications). As part one showed, my own extensive and ever-evolving research in **Metroidvania** examined how **cross-media** mimetic patterns are shared between Tolkien's refrain and Cameron's as ludologized. Their relationship is actually *crypto*mimetic, involving and describing a ludic meta-pattern/contract shared across a variety of genres out from older mediums and into videogames ("beyond the novel or cinema and into Metroidvania"): whether from Tolkien's built world or Cameron's it's all from the same basic legends, but the aesthetic, context and function during class war (as something to adopt) is different when we examine and camp these authors ourselves; i.e., canon and camp of a suitably "Gothic" kind that announces itself (or forgets to). It's all drawn off the same basic map and theatrical function of the map, albeit at cross purposes relative to class function: Gothic doubles that challenge the pure, aching *goodness* of Tolkien's gentrified war and Cameron's white-savior variant of the cis-het Amazon. The Metroidvania map might be a lie wrought from similar legends as Cameron's ordinance-heavy updating of the Tolkien refrain, but its cartography needn't serve the state if the double is iconoclastic, thus campy in ways that Tolkien was allergic to (re: allegory and apocalypse) and which various accommodated intellectuals are in no hurry to express in their own work, especially in relation to their own lives; re: "the infamous discretions of academia waste a surprising amount of time commenting on all of these matters as separate from each other."

For example, the accommodated faculty at MMU (which, I must remind you, was part of the *center* for Gothic studies, a network of scholarship)—but also people like Krzywinska, Perron, and other scholars I didn't meet in person—all hoarded this vital and useful information behind surprisingly archaic and capitalistic paywalls (not unique to the British academic system by any stretch, but in my opinion felt more intensely gnostic and mysterious/trade-secret than my time in American academia; in truth, they all kind of suck). The tragedy of this hoarding is that it was done not to disseminate information, but conceal and contain it in pursuit of their own glory and reputations, first and foremost—the school, then the school's representatives.

There was a time I wanted to be one of them, but clearly that is not the case anymore. Back then, it was easy enough to ignore me outside of school, grade my assignments from anonymity and swan about during conferences applauding one another. And maybe I just lacked "the mettle" for such a highly competitive and manufactured world; or maybe I was "too American," too indiscrete and happy to talk, during seminar modules, about my own social-sex life and its negotiated interrogations of unequal power exchange in relation to the Gothic mode (you know, actually *trying* to apply the theory in the real world instead of relegating it to the page, screen, or stage). Frankly I don't care what such a world thinks of me, and will happily die on the hill of this next statement: The point of academia should

not be "to be intellectuals" for its own sake (as Christine Neufeld told me once[258]), "discovering" things and putting your names on it; it should be to make workers' lives better! Anything short of that is complicit in some shape or form. And if my sore words seem to carry a grudge, I can at least be honest and say that yeah, I'm angry with how grad school went; I'm frustrated with how I was treated. But it wasn't all bad, and I learned something from all of my professors (and many of them, especially at the undergraduate level, were kind to me and supportive[259] in some shape or form); my critiques are leveled more at the institution itself, which was a business first, a school second.

For the bourgeoisie at large, ideas like "ludo-Gothic BDSM" are doubly useless—the proverbial speaking of Greek, to them, but also not profitable. Instead, the cartographic refrain exists not to teach the means of combating Capitalism, but preserving it; i.e., to revive canonical sentiments of a particular kind during

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[258] "What do you do when you get tenure?" I asked. "You become an intellectual," they replied with a shrug.

[259] Virtually all of the faculty at EMU were angels, and if not outright nurturing at least gave me the time of day (Sandy Norton went above and beyond and really encouraged me to pursue my work: "You're a tremendous intellectual, Nicholas, and you have a great heart." I don't know if I lived up to what you saw in me, Sandy, but I hope my book helps convey the difference you made in my life). The faculty at MMU, on the hand, tended to act like they were living on borrowed time and threw the book at me whenever I tried to schedule time with them ("we're not required to meet with you except…"); they could be disarmingly polite to your face (especially when the initial introductions were made, and in class), but generally gave off the impression they'd rather be somewhere else than speaking to some asshole exchange student from America: researching. To that, the college itself really liked to advertise the specialists per module as Gothic experts in their respective fields of study—it was a selling point for the school (the one that convinced me to go). At times, they felt like show ponies being forced to trot in front of the student body for the school's benefit, and they always seemed tired, overworked; but they also seemed self-absorbed and prepared to do the bare minimum for when they actually had to teach (they were professors at a fancy school, after all).

All the same, the researchers *were* incredibly passionate about their special topics. They really knew their stuff and I generally respected their work a great deal, but felt almost immediately like there was something generally missing from the student-teacher equation: a human element tucked away behind their suits of armor under a neoliberal scheme that seemed to say, "We don't owe you anything" (the usual university-as-a-business bullshit, wherein I felt discouragingly trapped between the formidable logistics of traveling overseas and studying abroad for an entire year [re: Quora] and the uncanny politeness of seemingly apathetic instructors who all had better things to do). All the same, Linnie Blake was an exception. I appreciated her willingness to meet with me outside of class, as well as her effusive praise; it felt measured and fair and I welcomed it. Thesis-wise, my supervisors could be a *little* distant (especially in e-mails). Paul Wake was more pragmatic but affable enough, putting in what was required; Dale Townshend who, despite his ball-busting approach (and confession that he'd never played "a computer game" in his life), was actually willing to sit and listen to me about my personal troubles while at school (thank you for that, Dale). To both of you, I appreciate how you pointed me towards some excellent scholarship; e.g., Bakhtin and Juul. It made a big difference in my future work.

ergodic/recursive (repetitive) motion; i.e., inside videogame spaces of a particular kind with particular heroes against particular monsters: the constant resurrection of the undead, *war*-like closed spaces and their threats of rape/power abuse. This applies to Tolkien, of course, but Tolkien's valorizing of the triumphant military hero and death of the Necromancer, Sauron, kind of sidesteps the whole conversation (or tries to, anyways). He also didn't exist during the neoliberal period, which requires us to look at some kind of videogame castle to apply our arguments to the Internet Age—especially if they are informed by Tolkien's canon; he much preferred hiking and the outdoors, but still hinted at "old castles with an evil look, as if they had been built by wicked people" as the pre-fascist Gothic having returned to corrupt his land of plenty as occupied by good men, women, animals, nature, etc: Moria, Mirkwood, the Misty Mountains, and Mordor (all the dark places start with M, apparently). But the refrain—his treasure map—patently sublimates war by always starting from the idea of the West as besieged, threatened by a dark evil force coming from somewhere else—from outside.
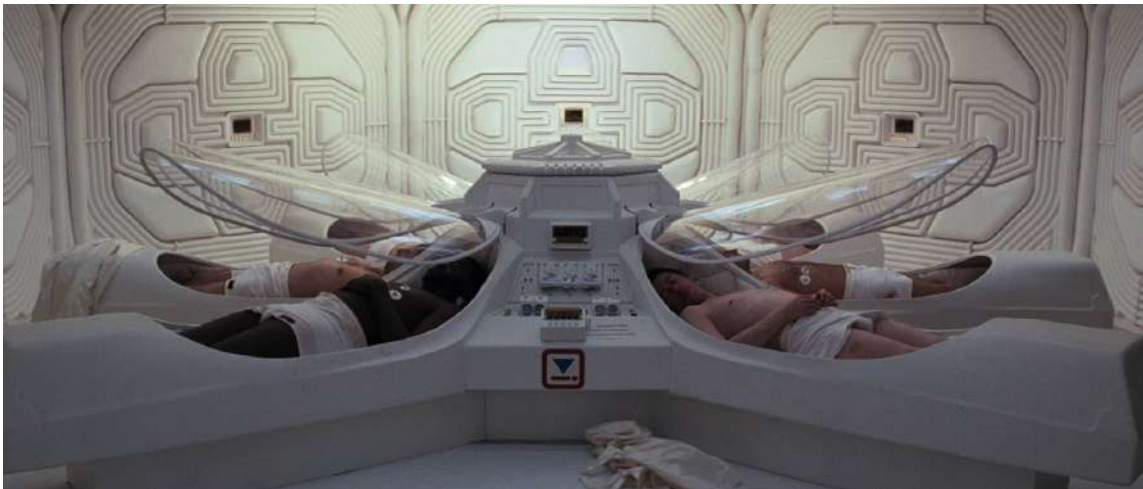
For us, the closed space, ludo-Gothic BDSM, and ergodic motion all tie to the Metroidvania (and its mappable space) as something to overwrite Tolkien's refrain with using an iconoclastic version of Cameron's. Tolkien's open map of conquest always put the castle far away from one's homeland, the land itself treated as one's own and under attack by outside forces. By comparison, the Metroidvania is entirely self-contained, with little if no outdoors to speak of; i.e., no overworld, like in *Zelda* (which operates closer to Tolkien's nature-centric romp). Instead of a lush, green overworld and war on open ground, the wicked castle is abandoned, then found *while the hero is already inside of it*—i.e., like waking up inside the castle as both the scenario and location of a bad dream. Doing so entirely skips the pastoral, sunny introduction of a boyish Call to Adventure, instead beginning in darkness visible like *Paradise Lost* did; i.e., as prisoners *en medias res*, chained to the bottom of a burning lake. In turn, we find ourselves trapped inside a maze-like, all-

encompassing *unheimlich* whose seemingly mappable space conveys some stubbornly unmappable* qualities, but also the Gothic derelict being conveniently left behind as a bourgeois counterfeit meant to close our eyes behind canceled retro-futures: there is no escape, no sunshine, just a narrative of the crypt and its infernal concentric pattern. *This* is our playground, a dialogic means of teaching sex positivity through the Gothic mode's chief attraction: the Gothic castle and the Numinous. Including the *palliative* Numinous as achieved through multimedia BDSM theatrics, this castle ignores the colonized territory (the outdoors) as a place to "save" from "orcs," and focuses more on the root of the problem: the seat of empire as conspicuously shadowy and fortress-like, but also overrun.

*When I approached Dale Townshend to be my thesis supervisor and told him about Metroidvania as a mappable gameworld, he recommended considering the idea of Radcliffe's spaces as fundamentally unmappable; i.e., their trauma, but also their recollection after the movement through them had been completed. In Metroidvania, especially on the <u>Metroid</u> side of the spatial equation (the maze), the Gothic heroine is both masculine and feminine in the traditional sense; i.e., is a princess and a knight, but also a <u>banditti</u> in the Radcliffean story (which, per the outlaw stigma, has pro-state and pro-labor forms). And yet, movement through a Gothic castle for a feminine heroine always threatens rape in some shape or form, which Samus famously checks by acting like a man traditionally would towards the monstrous-feminine; i.e., by stealing its shit and shooting it in the face with its own (stolen) guns.

Our praxial aim is overwriting Tolkien's refrain with a reclaimed, BDSM-centric version of Cameron's, thus making iconoclastic "war" in the process; but for that I want to go beyond Botting's critical vacuity and Jameson's own fantasy/sci-fi bias to emphasize things neither they nor Tolkien could seemingly be arsed to touch: castles, Amazons and BDSM dungeon aesthetics! My aim in doing so is to explain unequal power as something to seek, summon and express: to reel in and study the summoning of power in its routine forms; through anachronistic castles that serve as perennial playgrounds for workers to lose themselves inside *and* acclimate themselves to future *class* war as close to home. Acclimation needn't be an endorsement of the status quo, but an iconoclastic process whose understanding concerns traditional navigations of power that generally involve the same language: Tolkien's "There's a dark castle over there! Let's kill it and take its stuff!" which, for the iconoclast, is code for "I want to go to the dark castle of sin and 'kill' stuff; i.e., practice consent-non-consent, sodomy and other sex-positive BDSM!"

Instead of going somewhere else to commit genocide—*vis-à-vis* Tolkien's boyish escapism through the pastoral-to-hell-to-paradise rite of passage and its conquest of the treasure map—we interrogate the castle-like prisons that we're born inside using operatic language and Gothic poetics having been updated since

Tolkien's time. The idea is to liberate ourselves with fairly negotiated, thus cathartic, dungeon fantasies that camp canon through counterterrorist theatre to whatever degree feels correct to us; e.g., me in a haunted castle, wandering through the dark, menacing halls while wearing a sexy dress (and nothing under it, my bare body molested by the breeze and the fabric): a hopelessly *vulnerable* Gothic heroine feeling pretty and desired, hungrily and desperately interrogating the musical, cobwebbed gloomth[260] while scarcely having anything between me and certain "doom." As usual, the Gothic paradox allows for intense, oxymoronic dualities to coexist at the same time in the same space (e.g., "sad cum" or "gloomth" or similar and confused degrees of "verklempt" during the castle's psychosexual, emotional "storm"). Simply put, I *want* to feel naked and exposed, thus paradoxically most alive in ways that I have negotiated through the contract between me and the media I'm working with (wherein the Metroidvania castle, as far as I'm concerned, is the perfect dom); i.e., while being "hunted" and covered in rebellious "kick me" symbols and clothing that advertises my true self[261] as naked, colorful and dark, as if to tease the viewer in the shadows to try something (and also showing my ass to my academic dominators: "I fart in your general direction!"). As the kids say, that's a *mood*.

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[260] Gloomth is the gloom and warmth attributed to Horace Walpole's gothic villa, Strawberry Hill, and by extension his novel. As Dale Townshend writes in *Gothic Antiquity*:

> Rejecting Mann's suggestions of a Gothic garden at Strawberry Hill, Walpole claims that "Gothic is merely architecture," and resides in the "satisfaction" that one derives from "imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house." The letter proceeds to illustrate the "venerable barbarism" of the Gothic style through another telling description of the Paraclete: "my house is so monastic," Walpole claims, "that I have a little hall decked with long saints in lean arched windows and with taper columns, which we call the Paraclete, in memory of Eloisa's cloister." It is thus through the oxymoronic categories of "venerable gloom," "venerable barbarism," and "gloomth"—a compound word formed of "gloom" and "warmth"—that Walpole was able to negotiate the discursive impasse at the heart of eighteenth-century perceptions of Gothic architecture: though undoubtedly an example of Evelyn's and Wren's "monkish piles" or Middleton's "nurseries of superstition," the ecclesiastical Gothic could be retrieved as "venerable barbarism" when it was enlisted in the service of modern Protestant domesticity ([source](#)).

[261] As my true self, I didn't have to change who I was to fit in, and I could wear whatever I wanted to be myself in the process—if only onstage or on the canvas at first, to slowly acclimate myself to the idea that I wasn't "asking for it" while paradoxically invoking these inherited anxieties onstage; nor was I a threat to society as I saw it—i.e., I wasn't a fraudulent "man-in-a-dress" worming my way into "real women's" spaces (classic impostor syndrome); I *was* a real woman, and my art and medievalist education slowly bonded more and more to become a way of tangibly presenting that idea to the world.
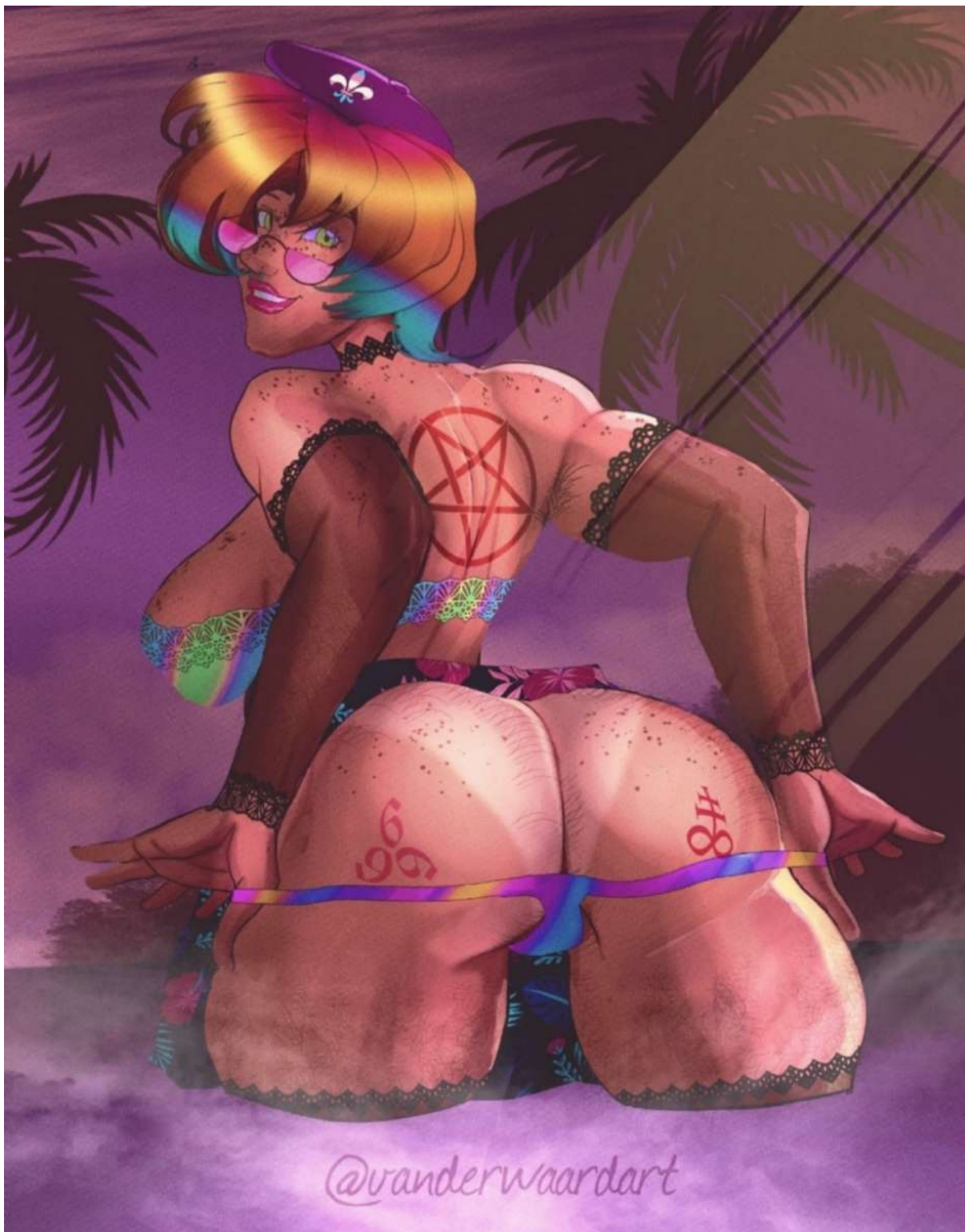
(artist: *[Persephone van der Waard](#)*)

Why stick out? you ask? One, because we must in order to survive. Two, because our deals with the devil simply acknowledge our true selves, which the

state wants us to reject (the queer version of Top Dollar's usual wisdom: "Every man's got a devil, and you can't rest until you find him"). But also, it feels good to be Athena's Aegis; i.e., challenging heteronormative power in ways that demonstrate how fragile said illusion (and its gatekeepers) are. State bullies are entitled nerds completely used to getting everything they want, who desire what I will never give them (a form of agency I've worked hard for); and completely afraid of nearly everything and will freak out at fairly silly things they have no business getting so worked up about: at people like me, burning down their imaginary churches and those churches' ideas of compelled order about Capitalism and its gobstopper illusions (those highly unnatural and imprisoning systems of thought that are slowly killing us as a species). Frankly the idea of me being terrifying seems absurd, but as a burning proponent of rebellion constitutes something that still, on some level, represents an incendiary threat that many advertise as the "end times": Communism… but Gothic and gay! To which I cheerfully put up the goat horns and say in response, "Hail, Satan!" It's like saying "Ni!" to old ladies.

Our performative and internalized devilry becomes something to join—a communion or pact whose assimilation classically amounts to a devilish bargain; yet Gothic Communism is a group effort, one whose sex-positive class/culture warrior is among a fellowship or *pandemonium* of equally sex-positive ne'er-do-wells instead of one or more class/race traitors for the elite and *their* age-old Faustian bargains. We reach towards you, croon "Join us!" and become something to run away with; i.e., corrupting the minds of the youth (women and children) by calling out seductively to them, offering forbidden knowledge/fruit[262] as a chance to go wild/go native by coming out of the closet in opposition to state forces (who will chase us, only to be turned away at the door—"no fascists allowed!"): the truth of things in its totality and not just a white person's perspective as an outsider to genuine atrocities; e.g., a Lovecraft novella, an overplayed Iron Maiden or Slayer song or the problematic castle of a Radcliffean novel (though these can all be enjoyed mid-rebellion). As Robert Asprey notes, terror and native wit/creativity are

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[262] This experimentation comes with a steep tradeoff, of course. During Socialism, we a) come out of the closet/hiding to slowly regain control of our own bodies, labor, food and identities, but also b) shed the veil of ignorance to reunite with death as something to embrace and dance with, as well as stare down as oracles of the unbelieved, Cassandra sort that are also declared as devils, heretics, whistleblowers, castrators, bubble-bursters and iconoclasts by the faithful: the horrors of Capitalism as endless fields of exploitation, but also the subtler *unheimlich* where one gets an awful feeling—that one's home and inherited identity is unironically monstrous and harmful (as are one's usual means of escape: copaganda, unironic rape play and military optimism). The food will taste better and the sex will hit harder… but you have to be prepared to let go of childish things, including ignorant escapism into spaces of total, unironic enjoyment (repeat Sarkeesian's adage if it helps). Instead you will have to experience both sides of something so honest (unlike Capitalism): getting spit-roasted by heaven and hell. Shakespeare called the cause "slings and arrows," Coleridge called the condition "sad and wiser," and Mae Martin called its solution "sap." Of all three, I call it "the Wisdom of the Ancients."

the historical tools of the counterterrorist, often being all they immediately have at their disposal; under Capitalism in the Internet Age, labor becomes a huge bargaining chip that Gothic Communism marries to terror during class war as a *theatrical*, operatic proposition (solidarity and labor action expressed as much through improvised Gothic poetics [improv] as improvised weapons): a means of bringing the oppressed and alienated closer to together in an informed, Satanic act of outer-space empathy and love in the face of state forces. The spotlight isn't something to hog or monopolize strictly by white nerds but expand and share in a drive towards post-scarcity (through a horizontally-arranged system that isn't rigged in favor of those who control it because no one person or select group will be in control, in that sense; that's what anarchism ultimately is).

Doing so becomes second-nature, a way of existing that *doesn't* require drugs or sex (though they can certainly be involved if one wants them to); it requires community and love in opposition to capital's usual bad-faith actors, fear and dogma: persons who blend in for fear of the state, overperforming its doctrines no matter how ridiculous it makes them look. I can understand why *they* do it (they're stupid and callow), but short of implied threats of force I can't begin to fathom why would anyone ever want to listen to people like them; i.e., persons who not only never experiment or try new things regarding gender and sex, but also probably never have had sex outside of abusive and/or vanilla scenarios. They're exactly the kind of people who act holy but hide behind their privilege as the most deviant ones of all[263]; i.e., prone to abuse their power and harm those under their

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[263] E.g., Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," but also Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. The latter serves as a biting (and hilarious) illustration of the (not so) Silent Majority's abuse of privilege to indulge in guilty pleasure and wish fulfillment inside the closet (which is an awful, violent place), but also the ghost of the counterfeit's process of abjection. It's "boundaries for me, not for thee" for those who—alienated from everything around them *except* fear and dogma—act precisely the way that Capitalism needs them to: as hypocritical bullies. As I write in Volume Three:

> manufactured scarcity deprives sexist performers of safe, nurturing sex (not just condoms or birth control, but consensual sex, too). They become sex-starved and information-deprived—killer virgins embroiled within a prolonged state of fearful ignorance beset by "evil" as instructed by formal institutions of power. On par with Ambrosio from *The Monk* (1796), such persons revel in bad play through violent fantasies geared towards achieving sexual control through coercive dominance. Indeed, Matthew Lewis cemented these within Ambrosio himself, a religious man obsessed with raping Antonia, a woman he barely knew (and his penis frequently being compared to a dagger or vice versa). Hidden virtuously behind a veil, her impeccable modesty bore no protection against the perfidious cleric (assisted on his horny quest by a crossdressing, devil-worshiping woman named Matilda). For Lewis, these opposites—Ambrosio's nefarious aspirations and Antonia's besieged virtue—were less imagined hypotheticals and more Lewis satirizing England's social-sexual climate within displaced and outrageous, but also queer language (re: Broadmoor). Moreover, its patently Gothic nature gave him the means to speak on taboo themes: rape as a material byproduct of violent cultural

care. In essence, they treat the Holy Gospel (in one form or another) as a means to abuse others from a position of willful ignorance: by *refusing* to eat from the Tree of Knowledge because some asshole saying they're God said so. The point isn't whether they're true-believers or that God is real or that God lied about the apples being poison, but what they do with their power and sense of alienation inside the status quo.

For instance, I'm a highly privileged person and have, in the past, felt tremendously alone and alienated. But I've worked hard on myself to question the world as it presently exists and appears. In doing so, I've learned what I like not because it was handed to me but because I discovered it through years of honest reflection, mid-cognitive dissonance and hard work after to become a better person—not the person the system wants me to be! It's precisely the kind of self-discovery that high-control groups like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses don't want you to do, but also Capitalism in general within the Capitalocene:

the Capitalocene

Regardless of what humans decide to do, the twenty-first century will be a time of "abrupt and irreversible" changes in the web of life. Earth system scientists have a rather dry term for such a fundamental turning point in the life of a biospheric system: state shift. Unfortunately, the ecology from which this geological change has emerged has also produced humans who are ill-equipped to receive news of this state shift. Nietzsche's madman announcing the death of god was met in a similar fashion: although industrial Europe had reduced divine influence to the semicompulsory Sunday-morning church attendance, nineteenth-century society couldn't image a world without god. The twenty-first century has an analogue: it's easier for most people to imagine the end of the planet than to imagine the end of capitalism. […] Today's human activity isn't exterminating mammoths through centuries of overhunting. Some humans are currently killing everything, from megafauna to microbiota, at speeds one hundred times higher than the background rate. We argue what changed is capitalism, that modern history has, since the 1400s, unfolded in what is better termed the Capitalocene [than the Anthropocene] ([source](): *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*).

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attitudes, *not* isolated nut jobs misled by the metaphysical devil. Ambrosio even blames Antonia for tempting him *and* Matilda for setting it all up, fulfilling the binary of temptress and rapist working in tandem while dumping his own blame fully onto women, not himself. This works as a pre-cursor to the whole "no fap" thing that many sexist religious men today endorse: blaming women for taking away the "essence" of their strength: their semen, but also their control; cumming is a sign of spiritual, physical and mental weakness.

This leads to a variety of counterpoints that emerge in protest to the status quo—a reclaimed language of religion, to be sure, but what I like to think of as "Satanic apostacy[264]" (**Satanism** isn't, for all intents and purposes, a religion, but a system of rules[265] designed to teach humane critical-thinking skills): Gothic poetics, fantasy and science fiction that—as **transhuman/posthuman[266]** forms of expression—have evolved beyond Humanist forms to pointedly and loudly challenge our

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[264] A phrase I coined in "I, Satanist; Atheist" (2021) to describe the Numinous as I pursued and envisioned—not as gendered, but merely a desired response to any who summon it:

> In short, Otto sees ghost stories as an offshoot of the Numinous, aka the *Mysterium Tremendum* or divine wrath. There needn't be a god for this sensation to work. For me, enjoyment of this "presence" amounts to Satanic apostacy. My cultivation of "exquisite torture" is wholly cultivated, prepared by me with the expectation of a desired response. Similar to the uncanny as being predictable, this doesn't denote the presence of a Christian [male] god (or any other); it simply means that certain thoughts excite me, but not at other peoples' expense [source].

[265] E.g., the Satanic Temple "About Us" reads: "The Mission Of The Satanic Temple Is To Encourage Benevolence And Empathy, Reject Tyrannical Authority, Advocate Practical Common Sense, Oppose Injustice, And Undertake Noble Pursuits" (source). Similar to Gothic Communism, they have seven noble tenets (one more tenet, and probably as foils to the Seven Deadly Sins) and focus on humane ways of existing and presenting themselves. I describe **Satanism** as follows (abridged, from the glossary):

> Like furries, Satanism is generally treated as a regular scapegoat during moral panic (with "Satanic" historically being used to scapegoat members of the LGBTQ community as "groomers" during the 1980s into the present; Caelan Conrad, 2022). However, Satan is a complex figure and can personify different forms of persecution and rebellion. For example, I have explored Satanism before—in my own past time ("Dreadful Discourse, ep. 7: Satan") as well as my own living experiences: "I, Satanist; Atheist: A Gothicist's Thoughts on Atheism, Religion, and Sex" (2021). Satanic churches aren't ecclesiastical in the traditional sense, but their implementation in Western culture isn't always implemented well. Anton LaVey's Church of Satan is a bit overly hedonistic and dated, sounding painfully cliché and sexist. The Satanic Temple, on the other hand, is far more accessible, while refusing to compromise on the humanitarian issues they seek to confront in society as structured on organized religion (America wasn't simply founded by the Puritans, but founded on their awful principles, too).

[266] From Roden's *Posthuman Life*:

> Self-fashioning through culture and education is to be supplemented by technology. For this reason, transhumanists believe that we should add morphological freedom—the freedom of physical and mental form—to the traditional liberal rights of freedom of movement and freedom of expression […] to discover new forms of embodiment in order to improve on the results on traditional humanism [and according to the World Transhumanist Association, 1999] "to use technology to extend their mental and physical (including reproductive) capacities and to improve their control over their own lives" (source).

rationalized/moralized position as the dominant species on the planet (similar to the infernal concentric pattern), including our relationship to each other and to nature as canonically anthropocentric.

In turn, these principles manifest efficiently in music, art and culture not as "lesser forms of media" but as an open, quick and honest way that people express themselves regarding the truth of things (which the usual benefactors of Capitalism will cover up by acting like the Enlightenment and *Pax Americana* is either somehow good for everyone, or neutered forms of futurism that can be envisioned by white men who speak for everyone else; e.g., Asimov or Jameson). It's hard, at first, to "put on the glasses." Eventually you don't need them at all—communicating effortlessly with others who see the way you do because it's become a part of your culture, the Superstructure. That becomes a powerful bond—in part because it's saturated through an entire polity versus simply being restricted to a single-dose product.

For instance, whenever Bay and I spend time together online, doing so makes us feel close together even though we live on different parts of the planet. But when we have sex, we're not doing it to meet some desperate, lonely need (re: "sad cum"); we're doing it because we enjoy each other's company and contribute towards a stable, healthy relationship. Our tails wag when we see each other. Within that nurtured, loving bond, we live out each other's fantasies *as* those fantasies; and when we do so, we share Gothicized music, traditions, or clothing styles. During all of this, I suddenly feel their presence in a shared space and time: of all those who came before—the weight of the universe and the cathedral of something noble and great the likes of which Coleridge's touted Gothic art and sublimity is but spitting off a bridge. He doesn't have the language (not even when he used laudanum) to express our grandeur and might. Stare and tremble, motherfucker!

(artist: *The Maestro Noob*)

As such, terror through labor action *is* my weapon, but specifically *counterterror* by pointing out rather nakedly the stupid things the state fears (for so many of them challenge the profit motive: party music, free love, gender-non-conformance, androgynous M&M candies, etc) and how fallible the mightiest nations truly are in the face of active resistance even when arms *aren't* involved; e.g., American landmines and bombs used against American colonizers during Vietnam, but also incredibly inexpensive homemade IEDs forcing the United States to waste hundreds of millions of dollars during the second Iraq war trying to armor its tanks, only to be met with casualties during the usual war of optics[267] (GDF's "How Iraqis Got So Good at Smoking American Soldiers," 2023).

The paradox continues insofar as I learned what, how and why through a harmful, abusive emulation of rape fantasy while living with Jadis, which I then turned into cathartic forms having at least partially learned (by accident) the method from my humiliation endured inside an academic setting. MMU's power imbalance (and research topics) had acclimated me to Jadis' nefarious bullshit, giving me a leg up by "letting" me stand on their gigantic shoulders (as in, I was going to regardless) but also on the massive, rotting corpse of Radcliffe (which I've suddenly realized, in a moment of academic bloodlust, is actually quite

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[267] Which only works if the state population is indoctrinated and/or kept in the dark.

fun/empowering[268] to wail on—if only because a) I had to read her long-ass, bigoted books and hear/read the academic praise heaped at her feet *constantly* while in school and after I left, and b) her zombie [and castles] have started to decay and need to be dealt with).

Simply put, Jadis didn't have a monopoly on violence, on terror as something only they could use. Rather, I took Asprey's maxim to heart ("Not only can terror be employed as a weapon, but any weapon can become a weapon of terror: terror is a weapon, a weapon is terror, and no one agency monopolizes it"); I fought back with my own counterterrorist fantasies that Jadis couldn't control short of raw violence. But due to their overwhelming desire to *appear* good (ever the centrist), wouldn't resort to the role of the brutal thug and suddenly I could negotiate my exit (not that it was easy—but we'll get to that, in Volume Two). In the end, they despised the sound of my voice but also what it said about things we both were interested in; i.e., as the breaker of the spell they've woven around themselves when interpreting said things. It got to the point that they—like Beatrice, the annoying blue bird from *Over the Garden Wall* (2014)—were always asking me to walk in silence whenever we went for a walk despite me wanting to talk about things, of things, of things (odd, considering they loved that show but not how *I* loved it; i.e., they didn't want to actually do what Greg was determined to try himself—to actually make the world a better place than how Beatrice saw it: "The world is a miserable place, Greg! Life isn't fun!" In short, Jadis not only wanted to be in control at all times; they wanted to be right about that horrible supposition— that life sucks—more than they wanted to admit they could be wrong and happily discover that things *could* change and improve. Isn't that fucked up?):

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[268] At first I hesitated, only making shallow hesitation wounds, but soon I got into it and really went to town. It's not like Radcliffe's gonna fight back, and her rotting ideas/castles *need* to be challenged; i.e., cleansed of their stupidity and bigotry. Doing so makes my work, here, feel not only useful, but therapeutic: my discovery that I actually really *dislike* Radcliffe and that's okay! Lewis > Radcliffe.

([source](): "Schooltown Follies")

Entirely by accident, then, I discovered through bad play (enacted against me by a bad actor/player) that good play amounts to Gothic poetics as a potent means of regaining control through reclaimed implements of terror (the manacle, castle, rapist, slur or baton, etc) but also being that which terrifies the state and its proponents to no end: a refusal to conform or obey (which forces the state's hand, relying on the veneer of *not* being the tyrants they've spent decades projecting onto Nazis, nominal Communists, and other theatrical scapegoats). Haunted by the ghosts of my youth, I could dance with them and make versions of themselves that could never harm me. I would be in control in ways I never felt before, feeling a presence of "danger" that triggered my prey mechanisms *just enough* to make the exercise therapeutic; i.e., while showing myself off as a trust-building exercise behind a buffer that stood between me and the world. The whole performance/thought experiment nursed my wounds and made me feel safe without pushing me into the arms of future abusers; instead, I could transform myself and my environment using my education as a negotiation device, the theatre and its effect enhanced by years of academic and lived experience. Suddenly my years of costly and time-extensive Gothic education felt profoundly *useful*—not just to me, but something I could give back to the workers of the world; i.e., those who had already given me much to think about in relation to their own work as part of a movement *I* could join through Gothic poetics:

(artist: ikerellatab)

Despite their poetic nature, performance and play are an absolutely *potent* means of expressing thus negotiating power through the Gothic mode (its castles, monsters and rape scenarios); a polity of proletarian poets can negotiate future interrogations of unequal power within the Gothic imagination as connected to our material conditions: one shapes and maintains the other and vice versa. As such, my own contributions to the Gothic are very much about making it sexual again, but also sex-positive in ways that Radcliffe (and her own venerated castle's praxial inertia) were not; i.e., tearing *her* (and her Faustian contracts, castles and various harmful BDSM scenarios) "a new college-debt-sized asshole" while, in the same breathe, addressing my deeply personal, trans woman's fears of my own penis (e.g., Zeuhl) but also trying anal and other things in a monstrous context (e.g., Cuwu's choking and rape play and Jadis' "put your *mysterium tremendum* in my uncanny valley!"). In short, my playing with new things—activities, roleplays and identity scenarios—had transformative potential relative to my sexuality and gender as highly idiosyncratic. We're *all* idiosyncratic[269] in ways Capitalism wants you to forget, so *try* anal, "chains and torture," and the Numinous as something to

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[269] Case in point, I'm incredibly different from my three brothers; they were all right-handed straight dudes, and I'm the left-handed girl-faggot (with pride, muthafuckas). This includes my identical twin. We call ourselves "mirror-imaged," but I still feel that "identical twin" is a giant misnomer. Apparently opposing orientations for twins is not unheard of—e.g., Laverne Cox and her brother, M Lamar (source: Mey Rude's "Laverne Cox's Brother Tearfully Explains How Much She Means to Him," 2022)—but is more common, from what I understand, than twins who share the same exact orientations (who aren't straight); e.g., the Canadian pop-duo twins, Tegan and Sara, openly identifying as butch lesbians.

reassemble yourself in some shape or form during liminal expression; the paradox of being free while still "in chains" is a sex-positive kind of theater that is incredibly intense, but harmless (and it's more fun as a group activity—we *are* a social species). As the conveyor of these complicated fantasies, my book is a castle with castles inside of itself—built for the reader to wander around inside while asking questions about: to play with, making mistakes that will undoubtedly hurt, but not harm them, and which they can take and apply to their own social-sex lives.

We can use this to camp not just Radcliffe as the end-all-be-all of the castled stage, but also Tolkien's former interrogations of power presented in poetic language. For example, he saw the fulfillment of the boy becoming a man as swept up in the wish fulfillment of "good war"; i.e., as attained by a return of the imaginary past and its legendary rites of passage: war is something to play at until it becomes real. His boyish naiveté couples the usual defense of home as built on a lie—that the land is both green and good (as opposed to irreversibly ravaged by Capitalism, then covered up by digital fakeries and mapped abstractions of them touted as "eternal"), but also naturalized as "theirs[270]"—paradoxically framed as a battle against boredom and desiring to escape through adventure as a "natural" process (another lie): boys will be boys. This process naturalizes the dark territories the boy walks towards, only to discover that war kind of sucks when one arrives. But Tolkien still essentialized war as a "white man's burden"/martyr complex—of the colonizer feeling sorry for themselves while still committing mass, industrial-scale genocides against native populations ("the only good orc is a dead orc"). Worse, they routinely dress their victims up in the alienized, settler-colonial language of death (of the dark, savage continent) and view darkness as something to unironically fear and attack (or unironically embody for the state's benefit). For us, persons and places of war need to be camped, so we might as well start at the heart of the warzone; i.e., to play inside the abandoned castle using its reclaimed language of terror to achieve psychosexual catharsis by camping the source of genocide: echoes of empire as endemic to our own homesteads. Radcliffe's castles were bad, but so were Tolkien's and Cameron's white-saviorisms because they (and their maps) were canonical.

To this, the Metroidvania chronotope is far less green from the outset, but also something full of dark doubles to bring back into the real world and make it a better place with: with iconoclastic lessons of "war" and "rape" that break canon on the same stage using the same theatrical markers and floorplans. In short, a post-scarcity world can only be achieved by facing the darkness at home as something to transmute and inhabit: Tolkien's fairytale being tragically as much the majestic landscapes he cared so much about as slipping into myth (what Matthew Lewis

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[270] The Western lie of "our land" as actually stolen land the invaders colonized after stealing it from someone else; i.e., the so-called good guys chosen by God as "having always been there." "We were here first and there's no more room."

might call "an artificial wilderness[271]"). As something to play with, Metroidvania's shadow of war becomes our ally in defense of nature—like Bane except campier and more driven to out Batman as the story's true villain and phony: "You merely adopted the dark. I was born in it, molded by it." In the interim, the parallel space is a kind of nightmare nursery where you can safely fuck up and play around with instruments of torture and death in campy language: the unmappable space of confusion as phenomenological but also architectural; i.e., in ways that don't make immediate structural sense but whose sites of torture, confinement, and various traps are designed to disorient, overwhelm and subdue in order to evoke the medieval rape fantasy as crossing over into the patently mundane (e.g., Annie's compromising position in the mysterious laundry room from *Halloween* [1978] as inexplicably designed to lock people inside as they enter it). It's a calculated risk.

The varied wreckage of the **Metroidvania** actually takes many forms, which I call the "Metroidvania Spectrum" (from "Mazes and Labyrinths"; refer to it for examples of each):

Castlevania — Castlevania-style — cross-franchise hybrids — *Metroid*-style — *Metroid*

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[271] From *The Monk* (1796):

> In all Madrid there was no spot more beautiful or better regulated. It was laid out with the most exquisite taste. The choicest flowers adorned it in the height of luxuriance, and though artfully arranged, seemed only planted by the hand of Nature: Fountains, springing from basons of white Marble, cooled the air with perpetual showers; and the Walls were entirely covered by Jessamine, vines, and Honeysuckles. The hour now added to the beauty of the scene. The full Moon, ranging through a blue and cloudless sky, shed upon the trees a trembling lustre, and the waters of the fountains sparkled in the silver beam: A gentle breeze breathed the fragrance of Orange-blossoms along the Alleys; and the Nightingale poured forth her melodious murmur from the shelter of an artificial wilderness (source).

The Metroidvania's canonical propagandistic function is ludic in a particular sense; i.e., as **ergodic** in ways that novels aren't, but traditionally pilfered by a Neo-Gothic hero/token Amazon through violent force or a female detective through *non-violent detection*, and whose gendered actions are informed by the traditional gendering of such spaces as advertised per medium—their monarchs, monsters, heroes, etc—but also forever updating through gradual, incremental concessions with the middle class; e.g., the girl boss, the subjugated Amazon as a phallic woman/Archaic Mother who serves the state's profit motive; i.e., as always changing *just enough* to accommodate the profit motive of the free market, but not actually interfere with the same old ludic scheme and its offer of false power and false hope as profitable (thus useful) to capital.

      Male or female, the canonical hero-warrior/detective is a cop, thus **class (race and gender) traitor** whose actions seek to restore order/the colonial binary by "solving" the awesome mystery through dumb, platitudinal force: property before people, including stories that keep capital operating as it always does when unchallenged by workers (the whitewashed restoration of the formerly glorious and rightful castle at the end of the classic Gothic story). Within this hauntological copaganda, the centrist hero does not fear death; they punch it to whatever degree the ludo-Gothic arrangement allows (summarized from "[Mazes and Labyrinths](#)"): the shooter as FPS or run-'n-gun, the platformer hack-'n-slash, the Metroidvania's spatial relationship with the maze or labyrinth according to the *Castlevania* or *Metroid* treatment of space (male hero + melee attacks or female hero with ranged attacks, *usually*). This is a huge problem when Capitalism is in crisis/decay (less "when you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail" and more "the 'nails' are zombies and I'm going to hammer all of them on the head!"): terror becomes a state refrain pitted DARVO-style against labor through "counterterrorism" in bad faith. Again, *we're* the terrorists, including our seditious identities as having formed primarily in response to state atrocities that we're trying to interrogate through the same theatrical devices Radcliffe used (to much less success because she upheld the canonical norms through her castles' happy endings). It becomes a canonical game of gaslight, gatekeep, girl-boss—with Radcliffe at the top.

      As *the* Neo-Gothic girl boss, Radcliffe (and her castles) argued for a feminine trembling to interrogate power with, not masculine force. So when Radcliffe wrote in *The Italian*, "What are bodily pains in comparison with the subtle, the exquisite tortures of the mind!" she is, according to Kim Ian Michasiw, treating the presence of sublime power as "as a signal to sigh and feel exalted" ([source](#): "Ann Radcliffe and the Terrors of Power," 1994). Simply put, there's a dealing with power exchange being had that's ironic, its symptoms of ritualized pain neatly divorced from actual damage but suitably demonic all the same. Even if Radcliffe would never stoop like Matthew Lewis to actually play with literal demons, she is still summoning her own "demons" to play with through rape pastiche: bandits, Italian counts, and pirates pretending to be ghosts (with the armed and confident Ludovico

boldly investigating the "haunted" room because he doubts Emily St. Aubert's testimony and represents the cliché, plucky energy of a male protagonist bent on facing evil, but also defeating it through raw, physical force)—i.e., violent liars that prey upon the imagination of susceptible maidens, threatening them with sexual violence. As a woman, she was making demons she *shouldn't* play with that illustrated her own fears, but also privilege as someone fascinated with the barbaric, faraway past. As Cynthia Wolff points out, Radcliffe's xeno*philia* and demon lovers are always partially murderous and mutilating in ways that regress towards the status quo: the demon lover as the white, cis-het woman's thrill of rape that is ultimately replaced by the fairytale wedding. To be blunt, it's basic *and* colonial.

In the canonical sense, the narrative of the castle's exploration through *masculine* violence is a "band-aid"; i.e., one that reliably plays out like Alexander the Great smugly cutting the Gordian Knot with his sword. It's the same approach Cameron took with his Amazonian Pygmalion fantasies (the white nerd's wet dream, similar to Sir Peter and Princess Melisandre), except in Capitalism's case he's also shearing through Radcliffe's **Black Veil**; i.e., dispelling its **terror** and **horror** the way a military leader (despot) would: from inside the shadow space filled with all the usual suspects and debates. In turn, the "playing out" of military optimism inside the Metroidvania narrative historically-materially links war to commerce through Gothicized propaganda that makes us-versus-them not just bearable, but "the only way to be sure"—i.e., through Satanism and other moral panics solved *through* military optimism: the dark castle is a demon zone to invade, but the invasion comes from within our own domestic sphere as something to ultimately nuke from orbit. It's the triumph-in-defeat of "the Fall of Saigon," stuck on loop to disguise neo-colonialism happening right this second everywhere in the Global South; i.e., the disguised revenge fantasy of *Pax Americana*, pushed into the videogame world (which largely has never been without neoliberalism) and celebrated there as "rebellion." This is both a waste of stolen firepower and Radcliffe's devices to expose the dog-eat-dog[272] nature of Capitalism and Imperialism through the Gothic mode. Mimesis, or pastiche, is simply remediated praxis, wherein we have the ability to transform into whatever we want; *function* determines what we stand for in relation to capital. As such, traditional femininity and vulnerability can be married to the Amazon as a masculine, violent force, her beauty and brawn a suitably Athenian (androgynous) embodiment of our camping of the canonical castle and Gothic heroine in the same breath (and not simply something for canonical proponents, male or female, to hoard for themselves

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[272] Per settler colonialism, big nations eat little nations.

during equality-of-convenience refrains—"we're the victims, not you! Stop stealing our spotlight! That's erasure[273]!"):

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#))

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[273] Moderacy generally argues from a position of limited aid; i.e., there's only so much help to go around and we have to "be realistic" and help the biggest groups first (usually white women), then kick the can down the road for everyone else. Token normativity generally tries to expand this site of privilege to include their group, but not others; but again, in times of decay such token agents will be demoted and excluded once more.

With Metroidvania (and other shooters), their allegory of class war for workers is generally confined to the same bodies and spaces as canonical interpretations, and their ludo-Gothic BDSM serves as a kind of "flexible praxis." That is, the exact nature of what they stand for is ambiguous, not set in stone. As such, their liminal interrogations of unequal power manifestation and exchange express as castles, heroes and monsters that can, during iconoclastic interpretations, help acclimate us towards endless war as something to *critique* but not *endorse* through enjoyment (with enjoyment being a form of negotiation); i.e., the paradox of the rape fantasy that as much involves us playing the rapist victimizing the world as it does us being "raped" by the threatening sphere of influence between the white castle of the living world, heaven, and light; and the dark castle of the underground, hell, and darkness: Samus *is* the cop, but I can *reclaim* her in my own work (above) without compromising the theatrical role or its scenery and props; she *looks* like a cop but an undercover one that could just as easily not be a cop at all—a "cop" who "rapes" and "kills." It's essentially the same argument I made with *Ion Fury*'s Shelly Bombshell, in "'Neutral' Politics: Feminism, the Gothic, and Zombie Police States in *Ion Fury*"

> The politics in *Ion Fury* are hardly neutral. This being said, there's room to enjoy the heroine as a nerd playing a cop, versus a cop whose actions reinforce the game's underlying police state. The outcome is performative, but at least I have the option—to hold my nightstick like Sarah Connor instead of Judge Dredd ([source](#)).

and which I subvert further in my retooled artwork of *that* character:

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](https://vanderwaardart.com))

What *is* that gun for? Is my version of Shelly a cop disguised as a sex worker (really "committing to the bit" with those tattoos she presumably can't remove), or a former-cop turncoat advertising sex worker rights while working undercover, or just a dead ringer to Shelly (a double) using Shelly's likeness to make a point about sex worker rights while infiltrating and subverting the highly fetishized theatre of police work/copaganda in the cyberpunk aesthetic (where cops and "cops" are stationed and deploy from various castles: an occupying army versus a local population that must rely on counterterror, subterfuge and native wit to survive their conquerors)?

Obviously I aim to be sex-positive, but whatever *I* say will be challenged by people who *aren't* sex-positive. They will colonize my performance with the only interpretation that makes sense to them (thus supports their allegiance to state power): my "Shelly" must either be a cop, or not the real Shelly thus a deviant impostor up to no good (attempting through their own metatheatre to impeach/discredit the rebellious legitimacy/class character of words like "woke," "punk," or "anarchist" in the process; this might seem daunting to parse, but them doing so actually makes it quite easy for us to spot them: through their moderate condescension [the refusal to publicly take hard stances] and openly reactionary behaviors that "slip the mask" as many times as needed to expose their base class function). Similar to how Hugo Stiglitz puts on the Nazi uniform in *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) to kill Nazis, the performative complexity becomes a deadly game of disguise, theatre and show-and-tell on various stages simultaneously compelled by various *sets* of rules; or how a dominatrix wears fetish gear to reclaim the implements of terror and torture from their original historical-material purpose and

theatrical function. In either case, the idea is largely games *and* theatre, but *not* divorced from the larger socio-political proceedings and meta context. Indeed, it can get quite messy and confusing.

Consider the fabulous *Basterds* card game scene (whose own sexist/racist director[274] requires us to reclaim the performance from *him*): The scene in question has Frau von Hammersmark potentially lying to her British/German Ally spies, including Stiglitz but also Archie Hicox (a British officer specializing in German Hollywood films who also happens to speak German) dressed up as "Nazis" to infiltrate a bar to meet their contact. Except there's a party going on (that Hammersmark neglected to mention), wherein everyone must place a card on their forehead of a famous media personality (many of them movie directors, films, or monsters) that they have to try and guess. They must do so while staying in character as "Nazi officers," which is then questioned by a *real* Nazi officer who also just so happens to outrank them (that Hammersmark also neglected to mention): Major Hellström. During the complicated, onion-like subterfuge, every move is a potential tell, and the whole complicated theatre becomes a game-within-a-game-within-a-game. Not everyone knows the same information, and the players (unbeknownst to us) have guns trained on each other under the table (themselves reflecting the nationalized personality of the rude-looking German luger versus the "sexier" Walter PPK—Bond's gun).

Amid the ceremony of polite playing along and respecting officer's decorum in bad faith, Hellström notices Fassbender's unusual accent, which the other man has a backstory for (fun fact: in real life, Fassbender's German accent sounds Irish due to his mixed parentage: an Irish mother and German father). Yet the thing that *seemingly* gives the game away (according to Hammersmark, who confesses while

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[274] Quentin Tarantino once defended Roman Polanski in 2003: "He didn't rape a 13-year-old. It was statutory rape… he had sex with a minor. That's not rape" (source: "When Quentin Tarantino Defended Roman Polanski in an Interview with Howard Stern," 2022). In truth, many actors did, including ones you might not expect. Tilda Swinton, for example, publicly defended Polanski in 2009. When interviewed by Variety in 2021, she upheld her decision, saying it was "just" for Polanski's extradition from a "neutral country." In other words, she *refused* to take a hard stance and reject the industry giant for his notorious and long-known crimes of rape (Dreading's "The Case of Roman Polanski, 2022").

A such, when reclaiming the Nazi or the cop, we have to do it through other art that we're responding to as a "ghost" of something—an echo of someone's name, likeness or reputation that likewise must be reclaimed by separating it from the original, unreliable artist; i.e., by generally working against institutions of power defended by said artist as a director, writer or actor whose personal reputation conjoins with Hollywood and *its* royal class: guilds of privileged workers that preserve the reputations of royalty (and themselves by association) instead of having our interests at heart. When pressured, people like Swinton and Tarantino close ranks and look after their own, and by extension help protect the institution of the rich and powerful they and their actions represent. It makes them seem hollow and disingenuous, which is important to expose insofar as we can stop seeing the world through the rose-tinted glasses they supply us with.

being interrogated/tortured afterwards) is a quaint German custom: "the German three," held up with the thumb, and the pointer and middle fingers:


(*[source](#): Weronika Edmund's "Gestures Loaded with History That You Should Best Avoid," 2022*)

In theory, Archie—due to his failure to mimic this gesture—was hoisted on his own petard, not knowing the local customs (thus the rules of that particular game). Except it's entirely possible that the Basterds obvious opponent "playing along" was in cahoots with Hammersmark the entire time (she's a squirrelly fuck, but also a girl in a man's world). We never know exactly why Hellström decides to play his hand the way he does, nor Hammersmark. The fun (and verisimilitude) lies in their poker faces and refusal to be entirely transparent even when threatened with lethal force by their "own team."

For all these examples, psychomachy, psychosexuality, *Amazonomachia* and psychopraxis all play out on the same stage, on which we are the players performing certain archetypal roles over and over ("When in Rome…"); the *Trojan* method likewise goes both ways, hiding and revealing what the performer of the role wants the other players/audience to see. Just as rape play can put "rape" in quotes, Gothic Communists can play along inside the ludic scheme of the videogame, but inform its studying through things that we create on the outside: my drawings of Samus and Shelly follow the usual *femme fatale* schtick, but the visuals go beyond the usual uncertainty to provide some telling clues (the tattoo in

particular); i.e, revolutionaries who, at first glance, *mostly* look like their girl-boss doubles, in-game (or in the usual pin-up style fanart). Except, they're not (a more concrete revelation *can* be supplied by dialectical-material scrutiny and good-faith dialogs, except good faith and bad faith *also* occupy the same stage: through actors thereof, adorned insignias, uniforms, weapons, props, etc). In turn, these subversive/transgressive transformations can help lead us to reflect on the bigger violences committed in-text; i.e., as things to give us pause despite being perceived as the "great victory" moment/cinematic payoff so often emulated by videogames, including Metroidvania and other shooters. They become things to question, not quote and endorse in blind faith/pastiche:
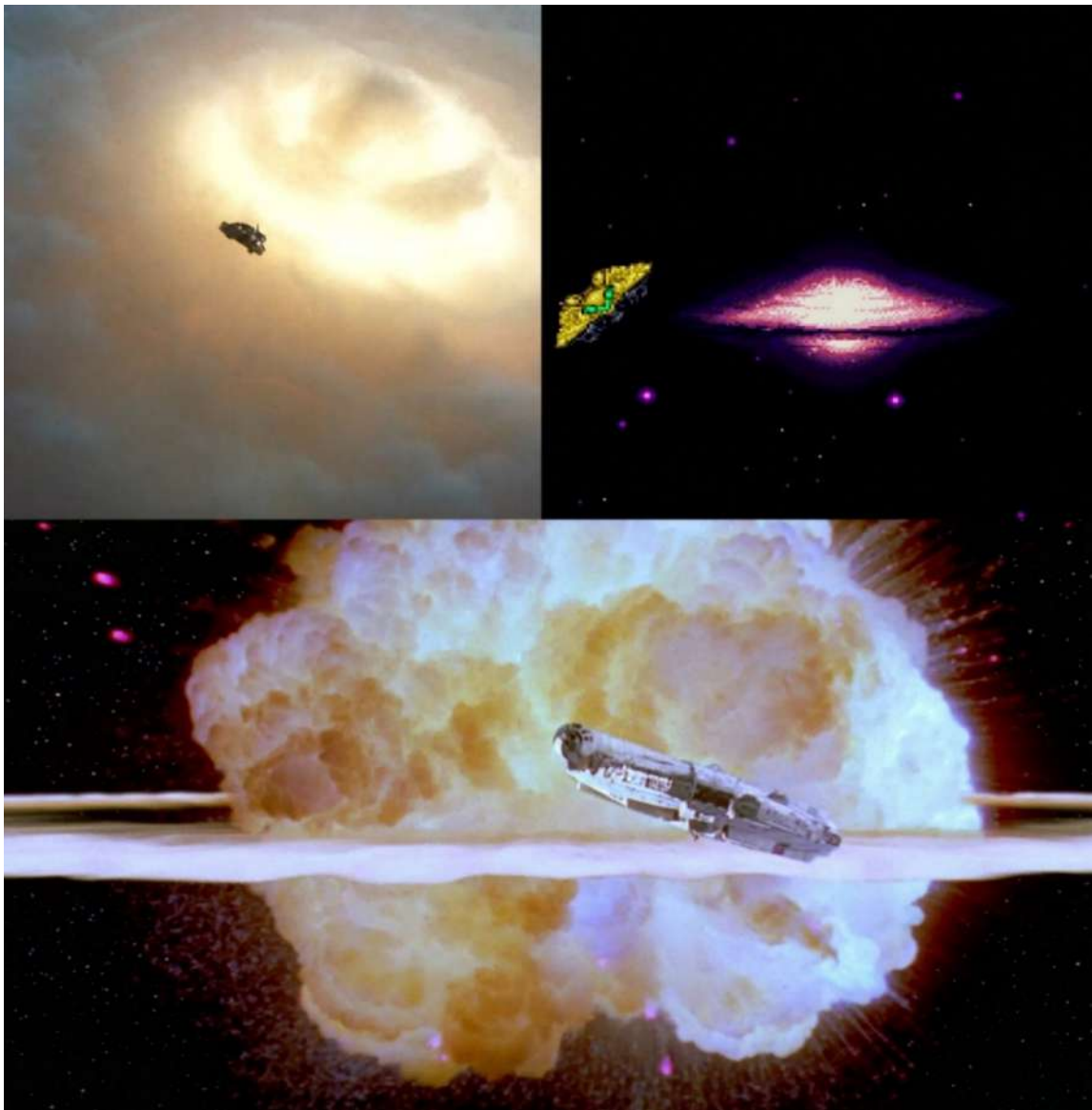
(exhibit 1a1a1h2b: Antiwar is allegory wrapped up in war stories with a sci-fi/Gothic flavor. Some of the most popular and endearing revenge fantasies in

videogame canon were based on a cinematic Gothic war narrative "in space!" [Aliens] that came from an older variant [Star Wars]. As we shall explore in Volume Two, sci-fi has its roots in the Gothic and revenge; i.e., Mary Shelley's Frankenstein [1818]. Even Star Wars, which was built around rebellion and surviving fascist revenge, became a Disney commodity franchised for endless conflict, but again with all the bombast of a military parade trumpeted through world-building for the purposes of expanding war. Cameron fell prey to the trap of world-building and "sequelitis" as much as Lucas did before him, "Building better worlds" being the diegetic corporate refrain that Cameron would use to expand Scott's world for a mock Vietnam reinvasion, but also build Pandora as his white Indians stomping ground.

Tolkien wasn't exempt, either. In my academic and casual opinion, his best work was The Hobbit because it's able [despite its racism overtones] to argue some fairly sophisticated anti-capitalist points—all in a fraction of the time that Lord of Rings spends inside of itself doing… not much. The latter story is much bigger and simpler in its refrain; and there's more characters, places and items to be sure. Everything is steeped in its own lore: including personalized weapons and cosmetics meant to help us easily tell the good team from the bad. But everything is built around war as a basic ludic device, and there are multiple battles, sieges and duels inside all three volumes [capped off with the erupting of Mount Doom]. Also, the story is much shorter on mercy compared to the pity of Bilbo, and humor. In short, by playing god, Tolkien was unable to imagine a world outside of Capitalism; he merely became—like Cameron—a god, thus merchant, of war.)

Allegory and revelation go both ways during class/culture war. Canon-wise, the despot's canonical stratagem isn't just a sword stroke, in that respect, but what *guides* its endless mimesis as something to promote in ways useful to the state: the profit motive. The explosions and medievalized violence intimate a Pavlovian urge conditioned through dark desires, vice and sin as instructed; i.e., behaviors whose recognition and punishment are conditioned through fear and dogma as personified by **monster girls**, **chimeras** and neo-classical forms. All are used and discarded for profit in canonical iterations of the Metroidvania; e.g., **monster-fucking** and **-slaying** (exhibit 1a1a1h3) elided through the Gothic dialogic of imagined power exchange told during unironic demon BDSM: the heroine killing the dragon at the center of the "sex" dungeon (Samus is classically a dragon-slayer). In the case of the Metroidvania, canon's harmful xenophilia, then, has the colonizer fetishizing the colonized in an Amazonian form trapped between the two: the white woman with a dark shadow. Not only is her monstrous-feminine status blamed for the hero's moment of weakness (the failure to slay evil forever), but also the fall of the colony and of Civilization at large during giant, orgasmic explosions. In short, the woman is always the monstrous target of state violence in some shape or form, either the unstable heroine or the Archaic Mother "final boss" she rapes for the state. The

basic, canonical refrain remains unchanged: "slay the pussy, the weak, the other for the glory of empire, of Man, of the status quo; conquer nature." As such, the performer and the avatar are literally and figuratively **buried alive** in dogma as a **closed space**, chiefly a prescribed dark libido tied forcefully to the state's profit motive; the connect between the two's historical-materialism becomes a sharp *disconnect*—i.e., forever out-of-joint, displaced from the former cause in the narrative of the crypt during cryptonymy as an act of participation in the false copy's meta-narrative: invading the imaginary past to conceal present atrocities. Except unlike Tolkien's refrain, Cameron's refrain happens according to the **Promethean Quest** as an awesome mystery to "solve" by meeting it with/meting out colonial violence *ad infinitum* in hyperbolic, female forms (the destruction of planets, the arrival of flying castles that swallow nature whole, as committed by Amazonian forces).

The iconoclast, then, must express and embody themselves through subversions of the same Amazonian violence and its canonical horrors: the quest for the Numinous as something to weaponize for workers; i.e., class warrior *mommies* (e.g., Sarah Conor, exhibit 8b; or ones we make ourselves, exhibit 102a4). But doing so first requires understanding the problems tied to canonical power on display. For one, the canonical horror for heroes like Ripley or Samus is how, like King Midas, they destroy everything they touch; as Great Destroyers, *they* are the corrupt, feral war boss the state must betray and destroy according to the same-old, failed solution. By getting to the bottom of the mystery, the hero acquires god-like power… and is promptly punished for it; i.e., made into the "bottom" and "topped" by the *state* in bad faith.

the Promethean Quest/awesome mystery

Gothic stories enjoy a sense of awesome power tied to the chronotope or awesome ruin (what Percy Shelley calls "the colossal Wreck," exhibit 5e, 64c, etc). In the wake of a great calamity is the presence of intimations of power that must be uncovered in pursuit of the truth—i.e., the Promethean (self-destructive) Quest. We'll examine several in the Humanities primer, including Edmund Burke's Sublime, Mary Shelley's "playing god," Rudolph Otto's Numinous/*mysterium tremendum*, and Lovecraft's cosmic nihilism, etc. All indicate the Gothic pursuit of a big power that blasts the finder to bits; or, in Radcliffe's case, is explained away during the conclusion of an explained supernatural/rationalized event; i.e., the explained supernatural (exhibit 22, *Scooby Doo* and Velma).

"playing god"

In canonical language, the hero is crushed for their hubris; in iconoclastic terms, "playing god" is the ability to self-fashion (aka "self-*determination*" in geopolitics). It is generally resented by the status quo, or demonized for being too dangerous; e.g., Satan from *Paradise Lost* as a self-fashioning terrorist moving away from God's heteronormative, colonial-binarized image.

(exhibit 5c [from the glossary]: Two examples of the Promethean Quest/awesome mystery—from Event Horizon [top and bottom, 1997] and Alien [middle, 1979].)

Gothic Communism interrogates the punitive role of the infernal concentric pattern by looking at canonical examples and subverting them; i.e., examining the playing at god as manly and monstrous-feminine heroes do, and seeking to understand the avatar of power—as a would-be Zeus or Hippolyta that infantilizes—as exploring a kind of "lost childhood" that was simultaneously theirs and never theirs. The "euthanasia effect' operates on a double standard during canon; i.e., like a rabid dog being put down, a feral cur whose wild hysteria threatens the status quo of men being in charge. The "rabid bitch in heat" is a convenient scapegoat (which extends to other token scapegoats during the expanding state of exception under state decay). It's also like a toy chest on loan, which the state reclaims to rinse and reuse after the blood is sprayed off; on and on. As part of this capitalist scheme, the neoliberal Gothic heroine—even when she evolves or becomes "phallic"—remains hopelessly trapped in Macbeth's doom. Despite the hope of final victory offered by works like *Metroid* or *Aliens*, the heroine—like Macbeth—cannot escape from inside a larger meta-narrative that seems to describe and envelope everything in hopeless gloom.

Our campy interrogations of castle and heroine double the simulations canonical clichés and fetishes, but also praxial slogans adjacent to the theatres we're playing around with: Cameron's heroine is, per the '80s standard, nothing if not full of memorable quotes (the catchphrase). We embody the Amazon as a contested object of power in a perilous space where the seeking of immense power (the Numinous) is self-destructive; i.e., as something to seek, reclaim and transform during class/culture war as stuck within the nightmare of Capitalism, it's myopic historical materialism:
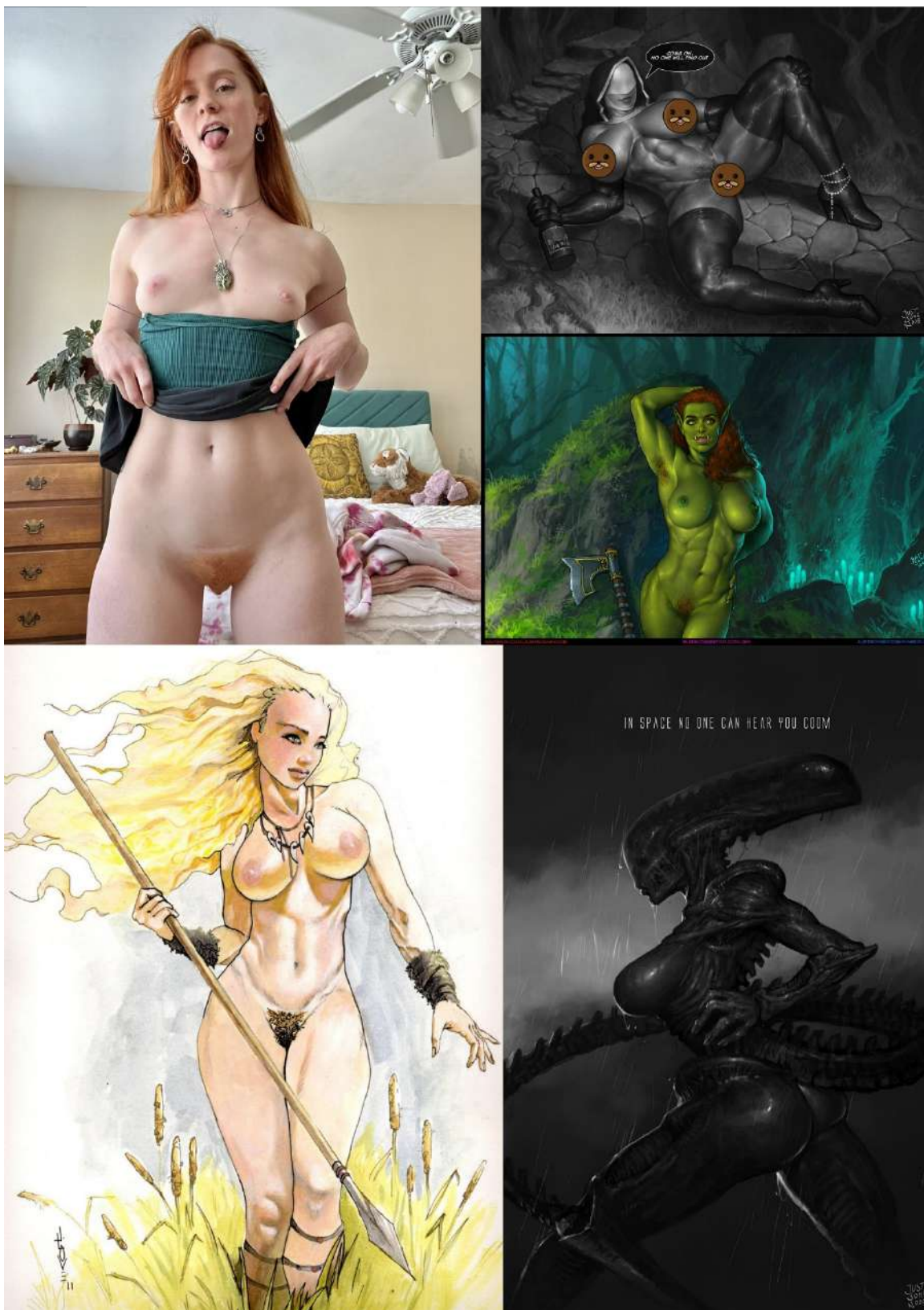
(exhibit 1a1a1h3a1: Artist, top-left: *Amy Ginger Hart*; top- and bottom-right: Just Some Noob; bottom-left: unknown. There's an ancient struggle to *Amazonomachia*

that's often coded as primal, primitive, even primordial; "I am woman, hear me roar!" through a colonized aesthetic/aesthete that renders the political standing and explicit motives of the invigilated yawper as something of a mystery. That must be interrogated through dialectical-material scrutiny, which requires tremendous context, time and devotion. In the interim, the symbol of power is also an interrogator of power that is generally exposing systemic abuse/trauma in and upon themselves; i.e., while interrogating and exposing power as something that responds to them and their performance as something to side with as for or <u>against</u> the state [whether they want to, or not]: the side of the state and its acts of terror against workers, and Joseph Crawford's acute assertion of a convenient "terrorism" whose accusation by state they could waggle at bad monsters that don't serve their material ends.

Again, "class/culture war is monster war" is something to portray and perform under Capitalism through counterterrorist depictions of proletarian monsters; i.e., those having a settler-colonial axe to grind with the state speaking their mind; e.g., Clare, from <u>The Nightengale</u>: "I'm not English, I'm Ireland! [switching to Gaelic] To the devil's house with all English people, every mother's son of them! May the pox disfigure them! May the plague consume them! Long live Ireland!" ([source](#)). The paradox of Gothic expression is that class warriors and their acts of war tend to, at least a glance, look pretty similar to class traitors [excluding the "billboard"/"graffiti" approach that outs the rebel through more open declarations and symbols, exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a]. The devil is in the details in a militarized sense: a repeated action to execute mid-struggle, often to instill a sense of discipline, but also to relieve stress during combat and its waves of terror before, during and after the expected clash [something is always clashing]. In turn, these actions are generally weaponized against us, so it only makes sense to weaponize them back; terror is art and art isn't something the state can ever fully control.

The same basic visual idea applies to theatrical renditions of actual class/culture war relayed in war-like depictions of sex, monsters, and heroes that can, and should, look familiar but feel different through our aforementioned dialectical-material context. Some variants of the orc, xenomorph or jungle bunny are sex-positive, thus functional guerrillas fighting asymmetrical war against the same; some are false rebels playing at "rebellion" in service of the state during moderate concessions that afford them particular costumes during various stages of crisis: muscles, body hair, bikinis, etc—all as long as their wearing [and surrendering after] ultimately defends the profit motive. We're not interested in policing them, but utilizing our own "Trojan bunnies" [white or black, damsel or devil, but also in between] to recultivate the Superstructure and reclaim the Base through Gothic poetics; i.e., from our own imaginary stockpiles of monster ass:
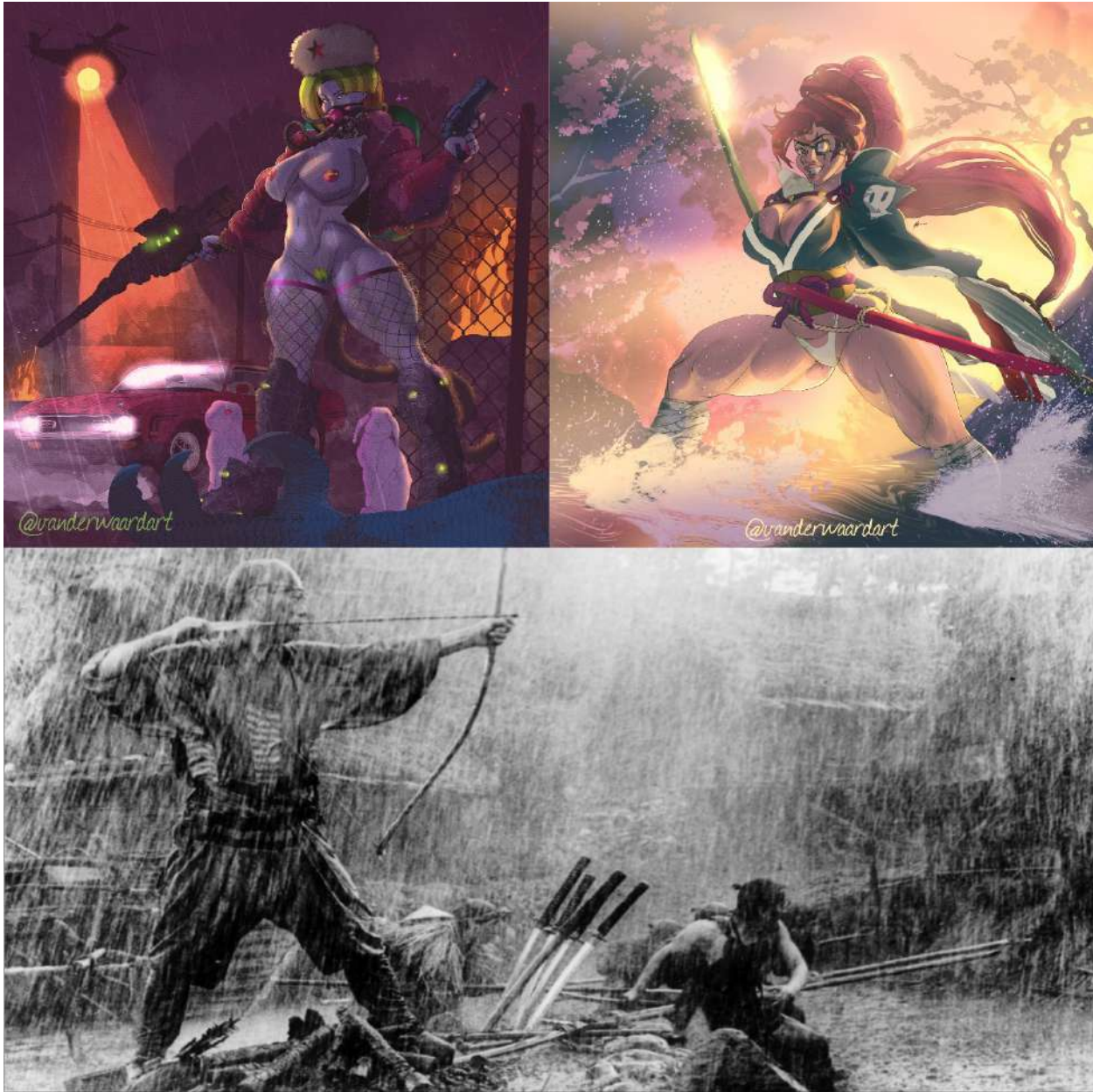
[Artist, top-left and -right: Persephone van der Waard. Kurosawa's marriage of Japanese theatre with Western ideas provided tremendous allegory in terms of war as something to exhibit to Americanized audiences. Lucas would take a page from his book [especially <u>The Hidden Fortress</u>, 1958]. In turn, we should take pages from each other and show off whatever we can using allegory and apocalypse to take Kurosawa and Lucas' class critique (thus character) further and further—as far as needed to develop anarcho-Communism through the queer-Gothic mode.]

The material and its procurement/usage are all a bit like Toshiro Mifune's stockpile of swords and Takashi Shimura's bow and arrow, except the holistic armaments of <u>our</u> <u>banditti</u>'s uncontrollable resistance are brandished make the elite [and their

proponents/apologists; re: Coleridge, Botting and Jameson] froth at their mouths and crap their collective drawers: symbolic and literal armed resistance to whatever forms of tension and expression Whitey is comfortable with. Real weapons have power but so do images of weapons, of solidarity and armed resistance relayed through art; i.e., the performance of organized resistance and rebellion to state forces and their vigilante elements [warlords and bandits] conveyed through capable-looking members of the Communist movement. Whether through force or terror as a means of resistance, both are legitimate and often overlap.)

The Amazon is central to the Metroidvania formula. As something to *reclaim*, they can be performed through ironic ludo-Gothic BDSM inside Metroidvania; i.e., the theatrical role of the Great Destroyer as monstrous-feminine expressed as a legitimate struggle against oppression, but also a vulnerable party experiencing Numinous, psychosexual feelings of appreciative peril: to understand, interrogate and value the lived reality that women—or beings forced to identify as women/"incorrect men"—have been traditionally victimized for centuries. In short, it's not harmful to express vulnerability within the castle because the castle is a place designed for such things; even if these same women seemingly act "like men," it's fine as long as they're *not* acting as the Man Box does in its standard male/tokenized variants. In short, it's possible to be a himbo without acting like a TERF and that's okay. Equally okay is the added gender trouble of complicating performances by mixing masc and femme aesthetics or performative elements. Doing so lies at the heart of what an Amazon is: neither strictly one nor the other. And if it ever seems "stuck" within the aesthetics of the game screen (the castle space), remember that the screen is merely a stage whose performance can be colored by the player on- and off-screen through their various metatextual and paratextual contributions: smaller negotiations/demonstrations of desired unequal power like player commentary and fanart, but also larger projects like this book or even new Metroidvania (which *is* an indie genre that, like a Gothic castle, can be made anew by even a single person[275]).

Contributing to the procession of castle-narrative, Team Cherry's motto is true to the Metroidvania spirit: "Our mission is to build crazy, exciting worlds for you to explore and conquer" ([source](#): TeamCherry.com). While conquering the castle is to conquer one's fears, these fears *are* tied to the historical materialism at work; the knight in *Hollow Knight* is revealed (in the game's secret ending) to be the Great Destroyer—one who threatens our BDSM-themed warrior princess with tremendous penetration and presumed death:

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[275] Thomas Happ designed *Axiom Verge* entirely by himself; Team Cherry (the makers of *Hollow Knight*) originally consisted of two men, Ari Gibson and William Pellen (though they have since brought on an additional coder, Jack Vine, to help with *Silksong*).

Having conquered the entire gameworld, the hero is possessed with the spirit of the Pale King's conqueror past: Zombie Caesar! The game's "final victory," then, ignominiously possesses the player's avatar, causing them to lose control (literally—the player cannot control them any longer) and transform (the knight's gender is never stated; they are coded as male, but Hornet merely calls them "little ghost"). The knight's hideous transformation leads them to act like a fascist man— i.e., to go feral, but also release the apocalyptic spirit of genocide throughout the land. Embodying that spirit, *he* brandishes *his* "weapon" at Hornet (twisting it menacingly into the ground like a knife into someone's back). She is smaller than him, but so is her needle; she braces for a combat in which she is sorely outmatched: less Mothra vs Godzilla and more Eowyn vs the Witch-king of Angmar, if said king were both possessed by Godzilla and the size of the Creature from *Frankenstein* (not titan-sized, but big enough to tower over her).

As such, our avatar's eyes serve as the proverbial magnifying glass to hold over the canonical narrative's cycle emblematized by the castle; as it passes out of one life and into the next, we reflect on how the mysterious role of the pyrrhic victory/ignominious death is always one of self-deception, self-destruction and live burial; i.e., it happens through reactive abuse that—like the Imperial Boomerang— comes back around to bite the hero in the ass—*our* ass. There is no transcendental signified but also no outside-text; instead, the hero's robes are like a giant's draped over someone too small (re: Macbeth) but also a person who might normally be the target of state violence. So while players can feel the same basic pain as the useful idiot's (for the elite) during the infernal concentric pattern, it is a tale of sound and

fury in which the significance of that pain is highly anisotropic. Like the classic white-versus-black yielding entropy at every register in and between them, the shared narrative of the canonizer and iconoclast is profoundly unreliable/unsafe in self-deceptive ways designed, through space and monsters, to manipulate the audience by inviting them to play along/with false power and hope. As we've already established, **Gothic heroines** struggle within **Gothic narratives**, whose narrators, spaces and speakers inside a Gothic castle are regularly unreliable/conflicting artificers and impostors, but also involve the patriarchal bloodline or castle as invented; i.e., a series of concentric, sedimentary palimpsests (maps of maps of maps, stacked on top of each other). In the canonical sense, everything is fetishized, valorized and disseminated, then spread far and wide to cover up the ghost of the counterfeit with more ghosts that further the lie of the West. Iconoclastic variants challenge this fatal myopia with their own counterfeits' opposing class character—which unfortunately must be told onstage or at least in relation to the violent theatre it projects outward: inside the castle as something to camp by interrogating it in all the usual ways.

　　　　As such, our exploring of unequal, deceptive power is a palliative Numinous that requires aftercare and serious reflection, before returning to the same castled hells to interrogate them some more. Canon's conversely "bad aftercare" makes its unquestioning parties the dupe, in a ludic sense, but also the accomplice to the elite's fetishizing schemes during class/culture war—i.e., "the Roman fool" who thinks it was all "just a dream" as they stain their hands with the blood of the innocent and destroy the entire world: "I am become death, destroyer of worlds." After the Promethean flash, they scream and bolt upright in their beds, telling themselves it wasn't real, that these visions of desolation must have come from somewhere else (another world, another time):

But they feel *profoundly* uncanny—linked to the dreamer's own home, body and mind; the sensation becomes liminal, like a sleepwalker who dreams while awake but isn't sure what is what. They function, then, as Macbeth's poor player does, strutting and fretting their hour upon the stage until *they* are heard no more. The story and its daggers of the mind (from the knight's nail in *Hollow Knight*, to Ripley's [M41A pulse rifle](#) in *Aliens*) survive them and the whole cycle begins anew. Each seminal tragedy is preceded by older ones and eclipsed by even greater ones as Capitalism yawns, stretching wide its maw of death for more and more profit at the expense of chattelized workers. No victory is great enough to stop it because all canonical victories are made to feed it, and its hunger knows no bounds; it will eat every hero it comes across, or drive them mad until they become like it: a terrifying monster that—undead and demonic—devours vampirically for the state's continued, parasitic survival.

As we shall continue to see, the schemes *we* embark on when camping canon are equally perilous because they occupy the same space, the same language, the same stage and shared performance fighting over stigmas and what their purpose is: to enforce or reclaim; i.e., being drawn to power like a moth to the flame or a live wire to clutch it and burn up/ride the lightning. All workers play with the dead during mimesis, but the *iconoclast's* aim with **cryptomimesis** is to "play god" inside **the narrative of the crypt**/with **cryptonymy** (and the other main Gothic theories) to attain a dark rememory for revolutionary purposes—i.e., to regain what was lost during Capitalism's grand engines pulling people apart and exploiting them for centuries.

Ghosts

Ghosts are ontologically complicated, thus can be a variety of things all at once: a sentient ghost of something or someone, a ghostly memory or their own unique entity that resembles the original as a historical-material coincidence (the chronotope), a friendly/unfriendly disguise, or creative egregore. E.g., Hamlet's dad, Hamlet's memory of his dad as triggered by the space around him; or someone painting Hamlet's dad as its own thing that isn't Shakespeare's version despite the likeness. This applies to other famous ghosts in media—e.g., King Boo from *Mario*, the monster from *It Follows*, 2014; or my own friendly ghost of Jadis from exhibit 43c—i.e., Derrida's Marxist spectres.

In short, we must dodge Cameron's errors when adding bullets (and Amazons) to Tolkien's refrain, and do what Milton, Matthew Lewis and Ridley Scott did when making our own imaginary past—what Colin Broadmoor previously described as "camping the canon": of playing god as Lewis did (a process we'll further adumbrate here before "shining a light on it" in part three); i.e., a deliberate camping of the "darkness visible" within its usual parallels, paradoxes and aesthetics as "at war" within the castle, with monsters, within praxis as doubled according to appearance, but also to which side each belongs and fights for. The *mise-en-abyme* is classically portrayed as heraldry—the coat of arms, as per Bakhtin's "dynastic primacy and hereditary rites" of the Gothic chronotope—emblazoned on the knights' shields, banners and killing implements belonging to the same "walking castles": castle-narrative becomes something not just to walk around inside *one* castle, but between castles, outside of castles, inside the giant knight as a castle-in-a-castle; straight castles and gay castles, etc. Derrida's adage, "there is no outside of the text" rings true, and it is here where class war and culture war are waged in a series of competing lies about the West and its much-touted heteronormative supremacy. Meeting them in open combat is a mistake, but we can challenge them within the dialogic imagination as a much more level playing field: Gothic poetics' paradox of terror for which the state cannot fully monopolize.

(artist: [Angus McBride](#))

In other words, the *classical* notion of "playing god" was and continues to be punishment for acting out of line (which invariably happens when doing the state's dirty work); but "playing god" in camp is rewarded by "ruling in hell" as a wonderful metaphor—liberation *not* by fighting with the dead as Victor Frankenstein did (trying his damndest to punch his composite child-zombie in the face) but a class-, gender- and race-conscious pedagogy of the oppressed whose postcolonial, LGBTQ-friendly *cryptomimesis* pointedly dances with our folklore, ancestry and culture as reclaimed from the state's colonizing double (the elite's bad idea of a "joke"). As is tradition, those "in the cave" will try to destroy us to avoid facing the horrors of Capitalism uncloaked; re: open aggression, condescension, reactionary indignation, and DARVO in defense of the Shadow of Pygmalion as "kingly" thus sacred; e.g., Hamlet's father's ghost.

In relation to Tolkien's refrain as a map of and for conquest, Metroidvania's awesome mystery/Promethean Quest survives in hypercanonical authors other than Cameron that also endure as ghosts of themselves; e.g., Lovecraft's **cosmic nihilism** revived in videogames like *Amnesia: the Dark Descent*, (2010) or *The Darkest Dungeon* (2017), and Radcliffe's exquisite torture echoed in various "survival horror" titles like the *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill* franchises. To this, Tolkien's own themes of adventure and conquest are revived in games (thus maps) built top of each other but informed by canonical Gothic poetics and interpretation that go beyond Cameron's shooter-heavy approach; e.g., *D&D*, but also seemingly

unrelated works like *Myth*, *Everquest*, or *Mario 64*[276] as bent on raising the past before razing it just as fast: find the dragon (the source of worrisome power) inside

[276] The idea of speedrunning as "magic" is not an unusual concept. But in already weird games like *Mario 64*, the deconstruction of the gameworld is eerie on multiple levels—the aesthetic, of course, but also the player-invented game-inside-a-game: escaping the space through the solving of incredibly difficult, seemingly impossible puzzles (Bismuth's "The Complete History of the A Button Challenge," 2023). These are not simply uncanny to witness, but founded on arcane, esoteric mysteries on the level of a Renaissance trade guild. It's all very hush-hush and competitive, even more so because the gameworld itself does not audio-visually teach or support such adventures. You have to seriously break the game open, and even here, it will fight you every step of the way. Such abilities evoke White Wolf's *Mage: the Ascension* or *Shadowrun* through a kind of "cyber spell" dressed up as magic, and functionally no different; e.g., "the devil's spell" trick from *The Lost Levels*, 5-2 (Summoning Salt's "Mario: The Infamous History of Level 5-2," 2023).
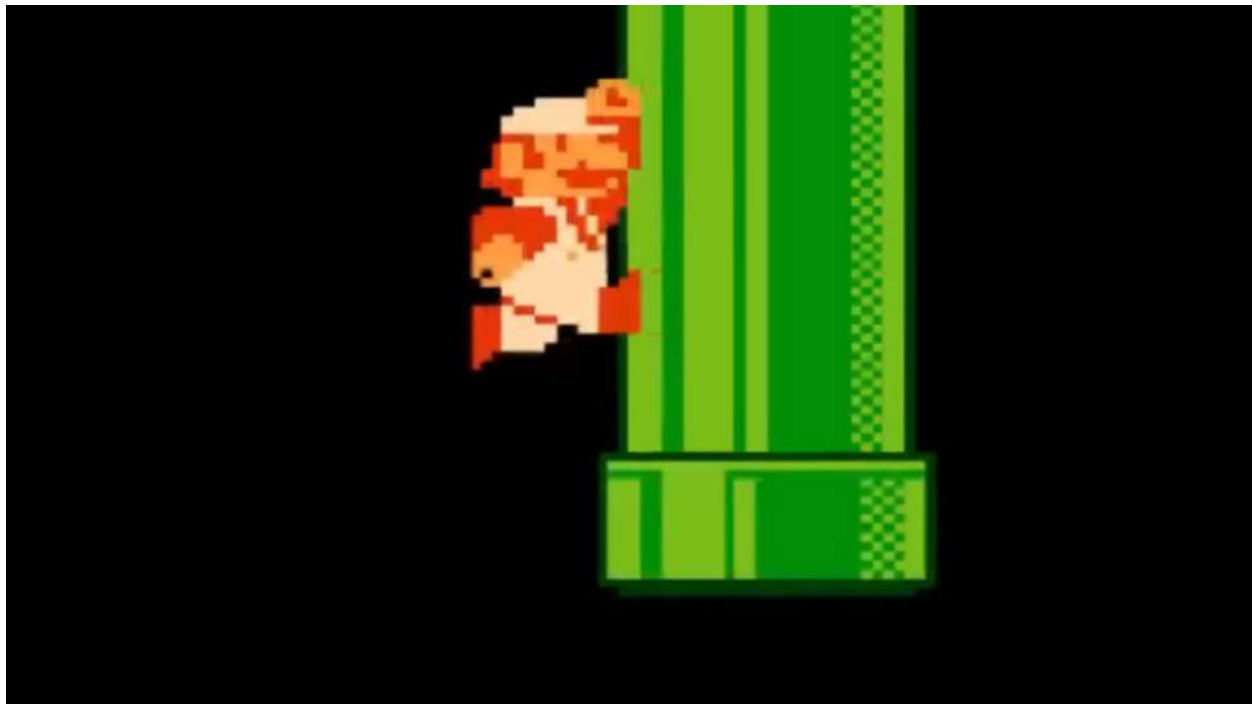
And if all of this sounds self-serious, it pays to remember that some of the most fun to be had lies in challenges that we, as players, invent for ourselves—not what Capitalism sells to us through intended play but as "spoilsports" who make our own meaning. For a lovely example of *this* idea, consider CirclMastr's solemn testimony upon hitting level 99 before the reactor boss in *Final Fantasy 7* (1997):

Life does not have inherent meaning; to say that our lives are pointless and our achievements meaningless is to state the obvious. No matter how grand our achievements or how broad their scope, time turns all to dust and death destroys all memory. But that does not mean we cannot ascribe our own meaning to what we do. It is because nothing has meaning unto itself that we are free to create meaning, to make metaphor, and in doing so reflect on ourselves and our world. Leveling to 99 in the first reactor is pointless and meaningless. So why do I do it? I do it to express my hatred, and more importantly my disdain, for Dick Tree. I do it to express the camaraderie I feel for those of us who have followed this topic for years only to be disappointed by [Dick Tree]. I do it to prove to myself that I can persevere. The act is meaningless; I give it meaning (source: James Vincent's "*Final Fantasy VII* Player Gives Life Meaning by Hitting Level 99 before First Boss," 2017).

the castle and slay it. For canon, *we're* the dragon to slay through sublimated genocide ("So long, gay Bowser!"); for us, our dragon to unironically slay is Capitalism (while doing our best to reclaim the word "dragon" as an abusive call to violence towards an out-group by an in-group).

To this, Tolkien's treasure map *seems* wholly original because *so much* has spawned from it, but in truth, I think people give him too much credit as "the father of High Fantasy." I'm not questioning his stamp on things, and acknowledge that he certainly built the ideal, codified world for such nonstop conquering to take place; I'm questioning the value of his work as based off the mimesis of old legends repurposed under Capitalism to feed an increasingly globalized cycle of war—i.e., by blindly mirroring it across a variety of sources (which simply did not exist as we know it when *Beowulf* was first written). Luckily said pastiche occurs not just on the map, but through its *cryptomimesis* across many maps (of maps, of maps); i.e., a confusing and myriad bestiary of oddly nurturing monsters that reify absurd, surrealist sentiments and conflicting codes insofar as power's interrogation is concerned: the Gothic castle (and its occupants) a site/sight of *increasing* entropy between all parties and offshoots amid the might (and weight) of *Numinous* spirits utterly unconcerned with any particular allegiance.

This all might seem like a bad joke, but there's *tremendous*, god-like critical power in humor and jokes (thus worthy of our seeking of them), and—quite paradoxically—both rape and murder are simultaneously "no laughing matter" and precisely what we *should* joke about when playing with theatrical variations of such things; i.e., to reclaim whatever language we want when talking about systemic, interpersonal trauma as a sex-positive kind of "gallows humor" with crude, direct Anglo-Saxon (four-letter) flavors of ironic monstrous-heroic rape and murder thrown in to "spice things up" (in and out of the bedroom, on- and offstage): making *sex-positive* meaning from chaos while dancing with the dead as something that helps us accept that we are ultimately out of control (death always wins in the end; imitators of Caesar or Alexander the Great are always trying—forever in vain— to conquer death by making battles so big they will never be forgotten[277]). While the Gothic-Communist aim is comedy and drama through camp that puts the ritual sacrifice of "kill" and "rape" in quotes, canonical variations ditch the quotations and tell bad jokes in bad faith. In *those* versions, the monster and its lair must be

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It's very Sisyphean/*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, thus apt for the kind of invention that all workers need to employ during the struggle to develop Communism in our own daily lives. Use Gothic poetics to make Capitalism *your* Dick Tree (there's a sentence I never thought I'd see).

[277] Or as the Narrator from *Myth: the Fallen Lords* puts it, "In a time long past, the armies of the Dark came again into the lands of men. Their leaders became known as The Fallen Lords, and their terrible sorcery was without equal in the West. In thirty years they reduced the civilized nations to carrion and ash, until the free city of Madrigal alone defied them. An army gathered there, and a desperate battle was joined against the Fallen. Heroes were born in the fire and bloodshed of the wars which followed, and their names and deeds will never be forgotten" (source: Fandom).

embodied as unironic variants of itself founded on harmful bullshit; i.e., state apologetics and enforcement through regular sacrifices dressed up in the language of an imaginary past: the sublimation (normalization) of unironic sacrifice ("The rest of your Legion has been destroyed, Alric! What more can you hope to do with this handful of men[278]?").

The victims of said praxis must be killed and fucked by the heroic warrior-monster… who's also a closeted sissy "looking for mommy" by fucking "monster mom" (or some other member of that hellish family unit): monster-fucking as an incestuous, settler-colonial scheme that *really* fucks up everyone involved (these *definitely* didn't come from Tolkien, whose closest monstrous-feminine is Eowyn or Shelob). This is our chance not to appease the tyrant, but appeal to their soldiers in ways that bring them over to our cause—i.e., by humanizing ourselves through the liminal position as "their" object of pursuit and conquest that paradoxically can wrap them around *our* little finger during the prescribed pursuit of power. A friend of mine, Alecandstuff (who I interview in my FPS series: "From Vintage to Retro," 2021), once jokingly said: "There's more to life-fu than your waifu." And yet the fact remains that so-called "waifus" are integral not just to navigating power in Metroidvania (and other Gothic videogames and their meta/paratexts) but also *embodying* power as a semi-serious/semi-humorous performance. Sex and jokes are incredibly persuasive and can turn the wildest zealot into an anarcho-Communist (case study: me).

If that somehow feels difficult to imagine, consider not just my book, but all of the many monstrous-feminine kinds of nerd sex that it catalogs. Here is but a taste; or, in the alleged words of D.H. Lawrence: "Let's go to the dark gods[279]!"

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[278] Said Balor the Leveler to Alric, one of the Nine (a group of good wizards called Avatara, representing the West) in *Myth: the Fallen Lords*.

[279] An allusion to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) from *Sophie's Choice* (1982):

Leslie Lapidus: Have you ever read D.H. Lawrence, "Lady Chatterley's Lover"?

Stingo: No.

Leslie Lapidus: He has the answer. He knows so much about fucking. He says - he says that when you fuck you go to the Dark Gods. Stingo, I really mean it. To fuck is to go to the Dark Gods.

Stingo: Let's go to the Dark Gods! (source: IMDb).
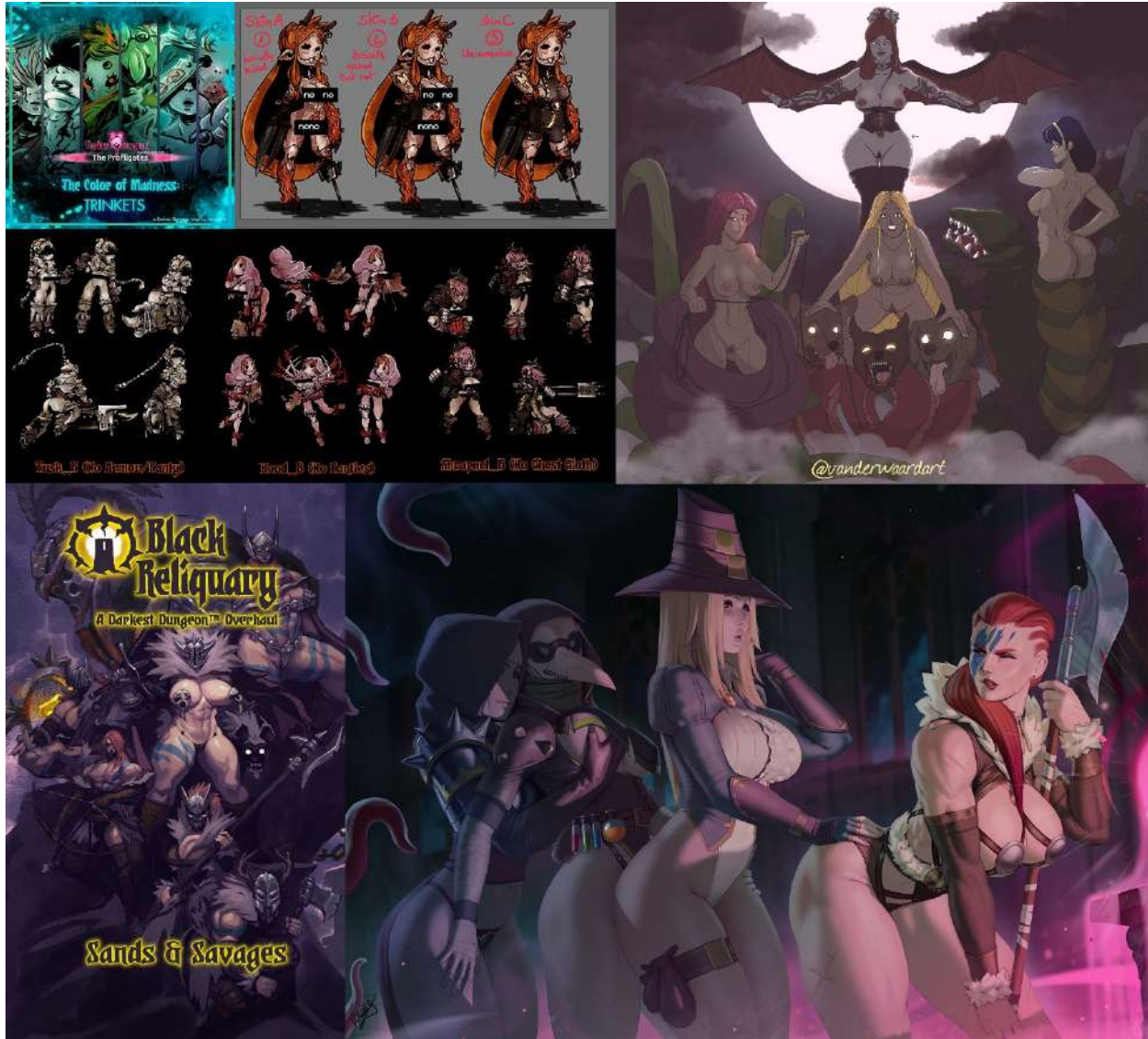
(exhibit 1a1a1h3a2: This exhibit is two exhibits from the glossary—"monster girls" and "chimeras/furries."

*Top-far-left: Muscarine's "Profligates" from the Darkest Dungeon [2016] mod workshop. The "Great Waifu Renaissance" of The Darkest Dungeon portrays the monstrous-feminine as waifus to control and embody as much during an ontological power trip as simply being a proverbial dragon to "slay." Often, they walk the tightrope between the cutesy and the profane, subverting stereotypes while simultaneously being chased after by weird canonical nerds: **waifu/wheyfu monster-girl war brides**. Procured and dressed[280] by powerful greedy companies*

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[280] These "women" do not choose their own clothes; as I write in "Borrowed Robes: The Role of 'Chosen' Clothing — Part 1: Female Videogame Characters" (2020), videogame women, even active avatars the player can control, are historically "dressed" in skimpy outfits chosen by men or at least in the service of men. We will return to this idea repeatedly in Volume Three.

[e.g., Blizzard's "thirst-trap" catalog of Amazon gradients] and given to apolitical consumers, the latter fight the culture war <u>for</u> the former as tied to the state through capital. And yet weird iconoclastic nerds can weaponize these self-same monstrous-feminine to our purposes.

The Tusk, for example, is a sexy cavegirl who iconoclastically stinks—i.e., with body odor being historically-materially denied to women despite their armpits smelling just as much as guys' do, let alone their vaginas, which guys do not have and can have <u>all sorts</u> of smells: e.g., Zeuhl once asked me to smell their panties, saying incredulously, "Isn't that <u>crazy</u>?" because their cootchie smelled rather strong [and to which my look of shock, post-smelling it, utterly betrayed me. To be fair, it <u>was</u> rather pungent from us simply walking around my hometown. All the same, bodies smell because they're designed to; e.g., that same night, we had doggystyle sex and for the first time I could suddenly smell the natural "musk" from Zeuhl's asshole: a vestigial throwback to a time when humans communicated more by smells than with words]. Apart from the Tusk, the Hood is a slutty Red Riding Hood, and the Fawn is a patchwork animal-girl ninja, etc.

Lower-top-left: [nude mods for Muscarine's Profligates, by JOMO=1](). Fan mods operate as "fan fiction," thus tend to be far hornier [see: <u>Black Reliquary</u>'s (2023) many Amazon thirst traps, bottom-left] than official canon does[281]. Generally the official art/content for the main game or "faithful" fan art tends to be less overtly sexualized, but no less canonical or sexually dimorphic; e.g., the Countess [exhibit 1a1c] as an Archaic Bug Mom slain by the bad-faith Ancestor [who is frankly a giant dick for the whole game].

Top-right: Persephone van der Waard's illustrations of four monster girls from <u>Castlevania</u> (a franchise with a whole bestiary of female monsters; [source](): Fandom). These four are all from <u>Castlevania: Symphony of the Night</u>—[Alraune](), [Succubus](), [Scylla]() and [Amphisbaena]().

Bottom-left: Promo art [[source tweet](): Reliquary Mod, 2021] for <u>The Darkest Dungeon</u> overhaul, <u>The Black Reliquary</u>].

Bottom-right: Fan art for <u>The Darkest Dungeon</u> by [Maestro Noob](), depicting what are basically heroic female monsters: the virgin/whore, but also the damsel/demon and the Amazon with a BDSM flavor.

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[281] We will explore the paradoxical horniness of fan fiction (when written by [a]sexual authors) much more in Volume Three, Chapter Three.

[Artist, left: *William Mai*; artist, right: *Blush Brush*. Examples of furries. "Furry" is an incredibly diverse art style. For more examples, consider Volume Two's "Call of the Wild" chapter, as well as exhibits 65 or 68 from Volume Three.]

A **chimera** isn't simply the Greek monster, but any kind of composite body or entity, often with elements of multiplicity or plurality [e.g., *the Gerasene demon*]. Conversely, furries are humanoid [commonly called "anthro"] personas that tend to have humanoid bodies, but semi-animalistic limbs and intersex components tied to ancient rituals of fertility but also gender expression relating to/identifying with nature. While Greek myths are commonly more animalistic, the [mainstream] furries of today are often closer to the Ancient Egyptian variety: an animal "headdress" or mask over a mostly-human body. There's plenty of morphological gradients, of course—with "feral" or "bestial" variants being more and more animalistic; and the "Giger variety" being more xenomorphic and Gothically surreal [the xenomorph (exhibit 51a/60c) being one of the most famous, if contested, chimeras in modern times]. A general rule of thumb, however, is the genitals tend to be human; however, "monster-fucker" variants very quickly move away from humanoid bodies [and/or genitals] altogether, often with abject, stigma animals like the insect, leech, reptile, or worm. Likewise, while "fursonas" [furry personas] tend to be sexualized, they aren't always; in fact, they primarily function as alter-egos with many different functions: the political [see: *alt-right furries* as well as "*furry panic*"], *the dramatic* [Fredrik Knudsen, 2019], the horror genre [see: pretty

much anything by Junji Ito, but also <u>Five Nights at Freddy's</u>, 2014; <u>or its various wacky clones</u>, source: Space Ice, 2023] and also for general fandom purposes; i.e., furries are <u>not automatically fetishes</u> [Vice, 2018] but are criminalized similar to Bronies [though any popular fandom that has a large underage audience is going to attract sexual predators <u>and</u> outsider bias; see: Turkey Tom's 2023 (admittedly problematic) "Degenerate" series on <u>Bronies</u> or <u>Five Nights at Freddy's</u>; or Lily Orchard's <u>pedophile escapades, hidden behind sexualized Brony fan fiction</u>— Essence of Thought, 2021].)

Regarding monster girls and chimeras (above)—as well as their parallel spaces/lairs inside Metroidvania, "dungeon crawlers," FPS, and other ludic spheres—their canonized performances/staging all follow a similar bourgeois take on the infernal concentric pattern *vis-à-vis* Cameron as imitating Tolkien's famous treasure map/sanitized variant of Cartesian dualism (Tolkien's odyssey through a Biblical nature being an elaborate distraction from the West's imperial scheme): crawl the dungeon, kill the monster and take what's "yours." A monster girl is also a popular trope in Japanese *shonen* media, whose war culture ludologizes the monomyth in ways that illustrate the Cycle of Kings as passed back and forth along the infernal concentric pattern. Along with their castles, the evil king and queen always come back (exhibit 1a1c) and they and theirs must be met by the crumbling forces of good to restore their declining greatness. The monster girl or chimera, then, is an anything-girl monster made for men to unironically kill, but also to rape/undress-with their eyes; i.e., a war-bride "waifu/wheyfu" reified in the global market as build around frontier war and infinite growth:

waifu/wheyfu

The waifu is a war bride in *shonen* media; i.e., the promise of sex, generally through marriage as emblematized in Japanese cultural exports that fuse with Western bigotries to make similar promises to entitled, young male consumers (and older bigots and tokens). While the "waifu," then, is any bride you want—be she big and strong, short and stacked, skinny-thicc, tall and slender, or some other "monster girl" combination dressed up as a pin-up Hippolyta, Medusa or some other hauntological trope—the "wheyfu" is conspicuously burly and chased after by entitled fans (this relationship can get performatively complicated, but the basic difference is coercion versus mutual consent). Within oppositional praxis, then, the waifu/wheyfu becomes yet another disguise within class war for operatives on either basic side to utilize.

Of the two, the "wheyfu" alteration is essentially a burlier example designed for your more "sissified" Japanese heroes; i.e., the *bishonen* genre effectively a

symptom of Japanese subjugation by Western forces, traditional Japanese crossdress and theatre—e.g., *Parade of Funeral Roses* (1969)—living inside the Japanese variant of Bretton Woods and Neoliberalism.

In this strange zone, Irigaray's creation of sexual difference

the creation of sexual difference

Popularized by Luce Irigaray, her flagship concept is summarized by Sarah K. Donovan as follows,

> In other words, while women are not considered full subjects, society itself could not function without their contributions. Irigaray ultimately states that Western culture itself is founded upon a primary sacrifice of the mother, and all women through her.
>
> Based on this analysis, Irigaray says that sexual difference does not exist. True sexual difference would require that men and women are equally able to achieve subjectivity. As is, Irigaray believes that men are subjects (e.g., self-conscious, self-same entities) and women are "the other" of these subjects (e.g., the non-subjective, supporting matter). Only one form of subjectivity exists in Western culture and it is male ([source](): Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

collides with the Japanese soldier/male worker as wanting to regress towards childhood, but also being an adult who is told they cannot and furthermore, lacks the means to do so in a healthy sense (we'll examine how this zone expands in between countries, in Volume Three—i.e., TERFs, in Chapter Four, but also in Chapter Five as we examine how *shonen* anime and manga are exported back and forth, perpetuating their harmful, incestuous stereotypes like *moe* and *ahegao* as things to unironically internalize, embody and endorse/despise).

As the following exhibit and additional keywords will demonstrate, this commonly plays out in superhero media (which the Amazon belongs to) as exported back and forth in the global market; i.e., during an incessant exchange of unhealthy embodiments of power and theatrical relations: to unequal power exchange *vis-à-vis* **exhibitionism/voyeurism**, but also **hysteria/the wandering womb** as something not just to stare at but utterly destroy using an *incestuous* **Male Gaze**:

(exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a1: Model, top-middle-to-right: Tyler Faith [whose "mom bod" also makes an appearance when we critique the "mother" archetype as something to subvert through revolutionary cryptonymy—exhibit 104c]. Any AFAB person is monstrous-feminine under heteronormative power schemes. Inside these stages and their performances, the hypermasculine/monstrous-masculine's toxicity—of decaying masculinity during crises thereof—will prove his "superiority" against the mother archetype as "false"; i.e., failing to live up to his incestuous standards of motherhood. In turn, she is "kept," forced to babysit the killer baby as an infantilized adult who can rip her apart with his gaze [Shue was right; babysitting is dangerous[282]!]. Worse, she is forced to compete for the "privilege" within bourgeois [state/corporate] power structures that figuratively [and sometimes literally] strap a bomb to her chest and force her to negotiate with her "false child" while under duress; i.e., as a captive audience.)

the Male Gaze (appropriative voyeurism/exhibitionism)

Popularized by Laura Mulvey in her 1973 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the Male Gaze goes well beyond cinema; according to Sarah Vanbuskirk in "What Is the Male Gaze?" (2022), it deals with female objectification under Capitalism:

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[282] From *Adventures in Babysitting (1987).*

The male gaze describes a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men while sexualizing and diminishing women. […] first popularized in relation to the depiction of female characters in film as inactive, often overtly sexualized objects of male desire. However, the influence of the male gaze is not limited to how women and girls are featured in the movies. Rather, it extends to the experience of being seen in this way, both for the female figures on screen, the viewers, and by extension, to all girls and women at large. Naturally, the influence of the male gaze seeps into female self-perception and self-esteem. It's as much about the impact of seeing other women relegated to these supporting roles as it is about the way women are conditioned to fill them in real life. The pressure to conform to this patriarchal view (or to simply accept or humor it) and endure being seen in this way shapes how women think about their own bodies, capabilities, and place in the world—and that of other women.

In essence, the male gaze discourages female empowerment and self-advocacy while encouraging self-objectification and deference to men and the patriarchy at large (source).

Appropriative performances of voyeurism/exhibitionism (watching or showing sexual activities) that cater to this Gaze uphold the status quo. Those that do not are appreciative (thus sex-positive) in nature, but generally remain liminal and ambivalent.

exhibitionism/voyeurism

A desire to show off or to look, generally tied to kink and BDSM. As with those, these activities can be sex-positive or -coercive; i.e., rebellious/furious flashing (exhibit 53, 62c, 89a, 101a1, etc) vs cat-calling/scopophilia from a totally unwanted audience (Norman Bates and Marion Crane) vs the liminal, half-invited Peeping Tom (Jimmy Stuart and Miss Torso from *Rear Window*, 1954; George McFly and Lorainne Bates from *Back to the Future*, 1985; or these two tennis guys [above] and an anonymous female streaker—source tweet: Peach Crush, 2023) vs the transphobic flasher (exhibit 62c) vs fully consensual voyeurism/exhibitionism (exhibit 101c2).

Unlike our horny tennis players (above), *Homelander*'s Male Gaze is both femicidal, but authenticated through its legitimizing relationship to the state's perceived monopoly of violence (and terror); under it, the female "top-dog" is—as usual—at his mercy while being viewed as the scapegoat to all *his* woes: the chaos dragon/wandering womb as a thoroughly stupid but nevertheless internalized idea:

([source](): Joseph Stromberg's "'Bicycle face': A 19th-Century Health Problem Made Up to Scare Women away from Biking," 2021)

hysteria/the wandering womb

Hysteria is a form of moderate condescension/reactionary control tied to Cartesian dualism, but also the gaslight, gatekeep and girl-boss trifecta that argues women are "less rational" than men; it tends to diagnose them with bizarre, completely absurd medical conditions to keep them inactive and scared, but also under men's power (e.g., bicycle face is one [above] but [here's a whole list of odd disorders/female causes of ignominious death]() invented by male "Pygmalions," including "night brain" and "drawing-room anguish"; source tweet: Dr. Daniel Cook, 2021). However, it also tends to frame women as mythical monsters/mothers that need to be killed for men to "progress": Medusas, Archaic Mothers, Amazons, etc.

Silly or not, Homelander feels he must rape the wandering womb in increasingly brutal ways; i.e., to blind Medusa in the classical sense: skull-fucking her (obviously) to death with his lethal Male Gaze. And yet the carcinogenic conclusion to this veiled ultimatum is foreshadowed in power fantasies that, under neoliberalism, are packaged and sold as "mommy fantasies" of the domestic, ordinary sort married the otherworldly kind that are well at home in Gothic fiction, including comic books: state versions of the man-made monster that women (or beings coded as women, or at least inferior on a sliding scale to white, cis-het Christian men) are forced to babysit/nurture; i.e., insane brutes nursed and fucked by *unwilling* mothers of Grendel. As such, the monster mother becomes the domestic abuser's *de facto* sex toy *and* punching bag.

In other words, the archetypal mother is canonically someone to kill by so-called Supermen protecting the image of themselves as useful to the state's heraldry and "walking castles." This unironically psychosexual, psychomachic *Amazonomachia* of art/porn oscillates within the global market by young (or infantile) men who internalize the matricidal refrain (which Metroidvania canonize thanks to Cameron's pillaging of the womb of nature). They (and tokens of them) frustrate easily inside the Man Box and act out through intensely childish and violent outbursts when they don't get what they want. Indeed, Homelander's faithful imitators (and token groups) are taught to want and not want at the same time. In Gothic-Communist praxis, sex-positive workers can push back against all

of this through the counterterror of Athena's Aegis, challenging the status quo through the monster mom as wheyfu warrior (exhibit 102a4) or dark mistress (exhibit 102b) as often subverted from videogames' profit motive to be nurturing in an active, class-conscious "mommy warrior" sense (exhibit 111b). Forget "make love, not war"; making absurd love to/with our self-fashioned "dark mommies" while we smile at the gods (*vis-à-vis* Camus) is (class/culture) war! Nerdy *and* kinky (my friends and I are all like gay wizards in our towers, having naughty-naughty demon-wizard nerd sex; "stare and tremble" at that, Coleridge)!

Faced with such psychopraxial weirdness, I imagine that fancy-pants critics like Jameson, Botting and Coleridge have about as much to say about it as they do about Metroidvania, or the Gothic's puppy play and war chiefs being collared and "raped" by Hippolyta or vice versa when she's collared by a man and forced to wed: "that boring and exhausted paradigm," at whose "Gothic redundancy" "we stare and tremble!" As **accommodated intellectuals**, they're simply not equipped to handle or discuss the material, hence glean the psychopraxial patterns that emerge out from its endless bedlam (a shortcoming we'll address more in the symposium and preface, and at the end of Volume Two); they pray at different alters. Yet, "all deities reside in the breast" rings true to what Gothic Communism can contribute to: by speaking up for ourselves as monstrous-feminine, and whose opposing praxis challenges the status quo upon cartographic spaces just like Cameron's refrain (the Metroidvania). This generally happens by making *our* own gods when drawn to their power as stemming from older variants we then interrogate by making our own monsters and castles/theatrical space—i.e., by first looking at total weirdo fuck-ups like Homelander from *The Boys* (2019, a killer baby if ever there were one; the Creature *as* the colonizer instead of the colonized, but still *fathered* by Cartesian hubris) before camping it.

From there, Gothic Communism places "rape" and "kill" in quotes, reversing the process of abjection within the narrative of the crypt as per our *cryptomimesis* deliberately flowing countercurrent to the status quo's own class-dormant/traitorous "darkness visible." We can confuse and rewire the state's canonical trauma response by being dark mommies to those who have partially (or fully) been conditioned to harm us and themselves. We don't have to date creeps or try to "fix" them by catering to their idea of a perfect fantasy (in short, giving them what they want); we can merely dress up and perform in ways that get inside their heads—that freeze them in place while living our best naughty social-sex lives with the people we *do* care about (and who care about us) making and expressing ourselves through sex-positive art. Whether putting makeup on for ourselves, wearing pretty clothes, or having anal sex with a mommy dom and dressing it up as art to sell as pedaled wares, we're doing all of this for us as weird iconoclastic nerds, *not* the weird canonical nerds who—given the chance—*would* rape and kill us for real if they don't get what they want. Power aggregates; canonical power aggregates to defend its useful, mighty idiots, so we must aggregate and mobilize

to defend ourselves against them when recultivating the Superstructure. This includes exposing its own supermen as infantile babies. The paradox uses their own logic against them: a god cannot be a super manly-man and a baby[283] at the same time, right? It becomes something they cannot openly acknowledge, defend or even begin to explain (which helps us not just keep tabs on the usual bad-faith people, but openly and routinely[284] demonize them as hopelessly pathetic and hypocritical chasers who *clearly* aren't getting their needs met by Capitalism).

Canon deifies poetics in defense of a patriarchal status quo that historically-materially privatizes said process and demonizes anything else as a dark *degenerate* god, a false idol or mother of demons; the Satanic rebel of the Miltonian tradition challenges all of that by questioning Heaven as a fictional idea of Hell—not God's, but a *pandemonium* of our own making wherein dark, Gothic poetics are a literal, counterterrorist act of war waged against the status quo (and whose "rape"

[283] Phillip Pullman argued this nicely in *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) novels. In them, God is an infantilized old man, and the Metatron is a brutal, Zeus-like bully riding around on a chariot. Two sides of the same patriarchal coin: the bully and the enabled, exclusive regressive.

[284] This *can't* be a singular event; it needs to target *all* aspects of society's heteronormative canon at the same time. It's not a simple game of tag or one-time exposure (the scapegoat), but a stress test that forces the entire system to change. Doing so is a coordinated balancing act between the destruction of icons and property and labor action internalized at a socio-material level; it is too big a process to ever fully control or supervise so it must be, to some degree, internalized and second-nature.

and "killing" are also an interrogation/reclamation of our own psychosexuality inside the psychosexual fortress as something to raise our flag within). Making our own psychosexual monsters (and ludo-Gothic BDSM castles *vis-à-vis* Metroidvania and similar narratives) is vital because it gives us a voice, a human face through which our labor is reclaimed by us through our own creative negotiations: to be as gods are by creating whatever we want to become/come about; i.e., fashioning traumatic representations outside of ourselves (effigies[285], but also maps) that spit in the state's eye and call it a liar without saying the exact words. Our mere existence says the quiet part out loud through Gothic *theatre*. While canonical heroes transform all the time (re: Beowulf or Ripley), they're ostensibly allowed to turn back into their former selves, thus receive a human(e) reception. For the *marginalized*, coercive demonization amounts to perpetual states of exception according to the monopoly of violence and terror; i.e., our slaying by "good" monsters like Beowulf, whose taking of our "goods" extends to token proponents of rape culture during the Call to Adventure as concentrically mapped out. Class betrayal intersects with heteronormativity and race betrayal during the colonial struggle as ongoing. As such, the Call itself is a blood oath/feud mirrored in real life by its false, imaginary copies fueling the fiction (the crisis, scarcity and competition).

This goes back to Tolkien, who—despite his allergy to constant darkness—can still be critiqued the way we've critiqued Cameron's refrain in Metroidvania; i.e., his *monsters* (which travel out from the darkness to trouble Tolkien's "new Eden"). Tolkien's 1937 revival of wealth-through-conquest (in his *children's book*, no less) spawned more and more fictional war foreshadowed by a canonized "second conflict" (*The Lord of the Rings*) whose implied historical materialism predicted a *real* second world war that, in turn, prompted the return of the Necromancer out of the East; i.e., the Barbarian Horde but also the Deceiver as a betrayer of all that was good and bright in the free world: a dark lord on his dark throne in the land of Mordor where the shadows lie. This wasn't a coincidence; the Nazis of the Third Reich were expanding their own version of Manifest Destiny through a radicalized call to war informed by Americanized fiction, which Tolkien capitalized on through his own mythology as pilfered from *Beowulf* and various other legends built around the Western idea of war and conquest as Old English: a reimagined British past as yet another false copy. In either case, the ones *spearheading* the continuous blueprint were the American elite because they had the capital to do so—i.e., enough to put out the false-copy copaganda stories (the Superstructure) but also to sell both sides their *guns* from afar (the Base) that made the wars that added to the narrative of the crypt's process of abjection (the person who benefits from a gold rush or a war mania is the person selling the tools but also the propaganda).

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[285] Think Calvin's homicidal, memento mori snowmen ([source](): Thayer Preece Parker's "15 Best *Calvin and Hobbes* Snowman Comic Strips," 2023).

As a centrist bigot, Tolkien critiqued war as a white cis-het British man in the 1930s, '40s and '50s would—someone who certainly wasn't immune to the colonial standards of the British Empire; he stories are riddled with racial stigma—e.g., Anderson Rearick's "Why Is the Only Good Orc a Dead Orc" (2004) being a question I asked myself when I wrote "Dragon Sickness: the Problem of Greed": Where *are* all the good goblins?

> Even though the races of Middle-Earth are distinct, they remain connected with common threads. The calling of elves as Good People feels quite similar to the Shakespearean Venetians considering themselves "merciful" Christians (at the same time, the rare and elusive "good goblin" is never described in *The Hobbit*) [source].

This would be a question I would try to answer years later but—in fact, already had—as a weird iconoclastic nerd: You have to make them, generally in relation to your own trauma as congenital/inherited (the same idea applies to Cameron's xenomorphs, of course):

(exhibit 1a1a1h3a1a: Artist, left: Persephone van der Waard; right: Lucid-01. Here, Glenn has been patently devised as a sex worker's approach to billboard/graffiti activism [exhibit 62a2/exhibit 100c6] but also stripping and invigilating an exhibitionist's psychosexual exploration of exquisite torture [exhibit 98a1a] to illustrate sex positivity in action through my "creative successes," but also art commissioned by other artists for the project. To this, Lucid was drawn to my work because they liked Glenn, and their style appealed to me enough that I commissioned them to draw a piece for me [creatively directed by me but executed by them] to be a part of this book.)

As Galateas challenging Pygmalion, the language of terror is something we have to reclaim during our own Gothic poetics. I realized this when looking back on my shapeshifting, sex-changing and gender-swapping goblin, Glenn (above, one of the mascots for this book and coming from older *juvenilia* left incomplete, exhibits 0a1b1 and 94c1). I had made them as a sex fantasy of sorts, but realized it was really me acting out my desire to be trans (and strong and green)! As I write in Volume Three, "I used to think people *became* trans. Only when I recently thought about Glenn again did I realize that I was and always would be trans; teenage me just didn't have the language to describe how she felt!" I made do. However, once I *did* have the language, I wrote a whole book and drew lots of pictures. Just like Tolkien (and Cameron, an accomplished screenwriter and illustrator in his own right)!

So far I've been quite critical of Tolkien and Cameron, but honestly could be harsher if I wanted, but I want to avoid a subtle trap: punching the bigot until I get carried away and my argument is nothing but *ad hominens*. While the American elite shoulder much of the blame, it's far easier to blame the obvious-looking villain or exceptional asshole that proves the state's "innocence." Simply put, I have bigger fish to try and Tolkien and Cameron hardly are the worst of the individual cases out there. Indeed, they birthed stories with tremendous centrism at their hearts, but also queer potential. It doesn't take much to revert Cameron's alterations of Ellen Ripley back to Scott's neoliberal critique (re: [my art of Amanada Ripley](), celebrating her vulnerable status as an imperiled-yet-capable worker trapped inside a Gothic space). Likewise, the hobbits can be gay if I want them to be, if I *make* them to be. And I'm not the only one who thinks so; e.g., Molly Ostertag's "[Queer Readings of *The Lord of the Rings* Are Not Accidents]()," 2021, and lovely artwork, below. Her own Galatean work takes a symbol of stigma—a hobbit, basically an Englishman's quaint, early-20th century whitewashing of a leprechaun—and makes it gay through a sexually descriptive interpretation:

Frodo's face was peaceful, the marks of fear and care had left it; but it looked old, old and beautiful.

Not that Sam Gamgee put it that way to himself. He shook his head, as if finding words useless, and murmured: **"I love him. He's like that, and sometimes it shines through, somehow.**

But I love him, whether or no."

- Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit, The Two Towers
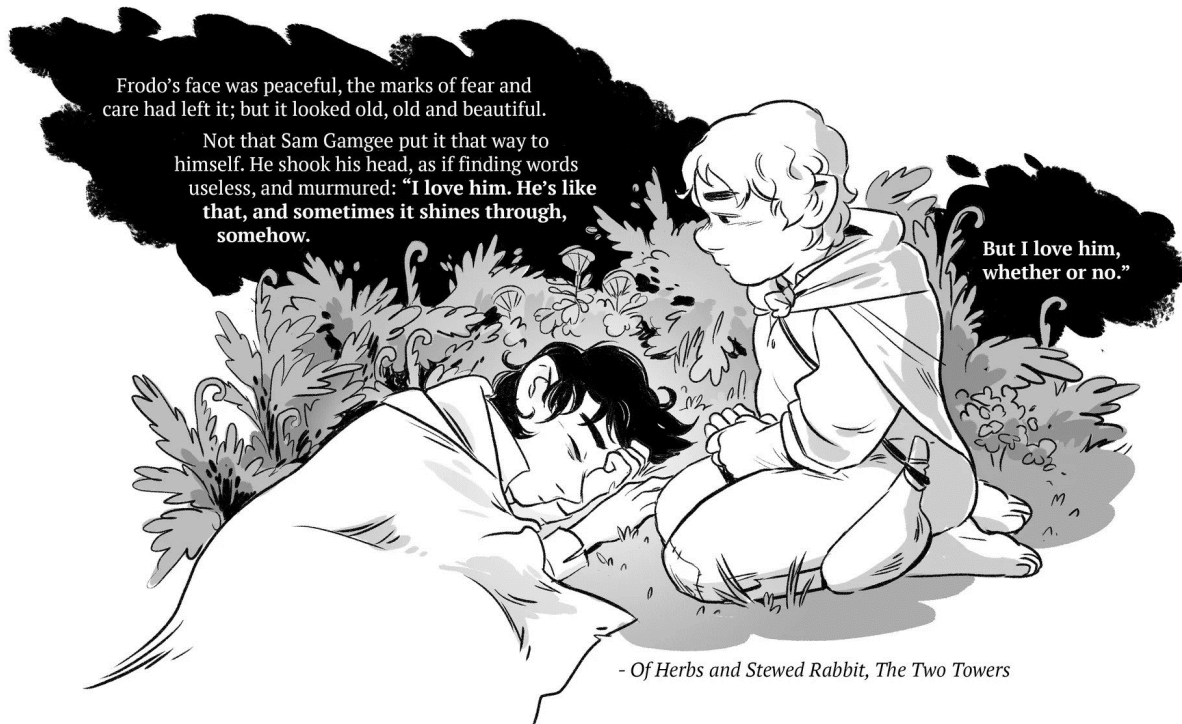
(artist: [Molly Ostertag](#))

So while I could keep pounding on the "Tolkien is a bigot" drum, the larger problem isn't really Tolkien because he's dead and we can just camp his canon if we want[286] (and far better than Kevin Smith did in *Clerks 2* [2006]—his moderate homophobia being used to out the fascist *LotR* fan while somehow conflating queerness with eating shit: "After the Sam-and-Frodo suck-fest, Sam flat out bricks in Frodo's mouth"). The state and its defenders are the problem: centrists and fascists tied to copaganda and the Military Industrial Complex as a heteronormative loop of monomythic canon (and all its historical-material effects). These are broad categories that we will have to unpack later in the book more than we already have up to this point.

For now, just know that centrists are the smug, milquetoast types who "debate" fascists with theatrical variations of their own; fascists look, sound and act crazy—will say and do anything to acquire power, then hold onto it afterward. Both copy Tolkien and Cameron's blueprints in service of capital, but fascists play more aggressively when *radicalizing* the blueprint and pitching a fit: This includes gay hobbits being anathema of course (or Amazons to drool over and closet), but also

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[286] An author doesn't literally have to be dead for this to happen, either; i.e., the proverbial "death of the author" when we critique and camp Cameron's canon for sex-positive reasons while Cameron is still physically alive. In relation to the ludo-Gothic BDSM of castles and monsters, this basic idea can be called Gothic counterculture (which Volume Three will continue to explore in relation to living sex workers making their own money and art).

black actors fighting for their right to be in a neoliberal product profiting off what is basically the undying ghost of the Tolkien estate:

> For the past week, I've been bombarded with messages of hate, called the N-word, told to go back to Africa, and called on to be executed. The reason? *The Lord of the Rings*. It would almost be laughable if it wasn't so profoundly sad. A wealth of stories, and a willingness to believe in wizards, Balrogs, [evil] giant spiders and magical swords. But allow people of color to exist in Middle-earth? Well, that is an affront to all that's good and decent. At least that's the primary argument for those ruinous trolls apparently review bombing and harassing fans of color over Amazon's *Rings of Power* series (source: Richard Newby's "A Racist Backlash to *Rings of Power* Puts Tolkien's Legacy Into Focus," 2022).

The above debate seems reasonable, but it misses the larger issue by a mile. Fascists *aren't* just random weirdos to be challenged with finger-waving and a shrug. They come from companies like Amazon existing in the first place, whereupon the middle class radicalizes to defend capital. You can't stop them by being polite, like Tolkien was (who's treatment of people of color in his stories is dubious at best, and doesn't indicate he'd treat real-world non-WASP persons any better). Hell, even if you punch them, the etiology remains intact. You have to go after the *source*: capital (which is what Amazon is; a trillion-dollar mega-company that makes Sauron's devastation look like an absolute joke).

The real problem, then, is the commodified moderacy of men like Tolkien's "good war" and Cameron's "military optimism." At a glance, no one put it better than Martin Luther King:

> I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councillor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time; and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection (source: "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963).

But since King's literal assassination (and death of his ghost's class character *vis-à-vis* neoliberal appropriation), the "good will" that King attributes to the white moderate has revealed itself to be a performance made in bad-faith by men like Cameron (whose own white-savior antics and Conrad-level racism project dated antiquations onto future fictional worlds filled with his white man's idea of a solution: white Indians[287]). The larger issue, then, is a refusal to put *down* the rose-tinted glasses, stop kissing up to canon, and actually acknowledge the source of moderate and fascist rhetoric having their "civilized debate."

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[287] This problem applies to "Hollywood Marxists" who generally profit off their own bigoted monster canon; i.e., Tolkien's estate, but also Steven King and James Cameron. As I write about King and Cameron in Volume Three:

> Yes, Steven King is a weird canonical nerd—profoundly "weird," but generally playing it safe and not very Marxist-Leninist (let alone anarcho-Communist). Hollywood just loves his monsters, but he profits off them far too much and says far too little in Marxist language to be considered a useful ally. The same goes for Cameron. Even at his most critical (when he was poor) he still pushed the girls around and called the shots; now he's just a billionaire Marxist franchising "war" as activism but having no shortage of racism against Indigenous Peoples following the 2009 original and its 2022 sequel, *The Shape of Water*. Much of this has to do with Cameron's blue-washed, white savior/Indian mentality for his own endless "war," which ultimately lacks critical bite but makes white-owned companies billions of dollars:
>
> > In 2010 Cameron said something that did not exactly help his cause. He had been protesting against the building of the giant Belo Monte hydroelectric dam in the Amazon. The dam's construction threatened the way of life of the Brazilian Xingu people. While speaking to The Guardian, he said, "A real-life Avatar confrontation is in progress. I felt like I was 130 years back in time watching what the Lakota Sioux might have been saying at a point when they were being pushed and they were being killed and they were being asked to displace and they were being given some form of compensation. This was a driving force for me in the writing of *Avatar* – I couldn't help but think that if they [the Lakota Sioux] had had a time-window and they could see the future… and they could see their kids committing suicide at the highest suicide rates in the nation… because they were hopeless and they were a dead-end society – which is what is happening now – they would have fought a lot harder." Many took that to mean that he was suggesting that the Lakota should have fought their colonizers harder ([source](#): Kshitij Mohan Rawat's "Native Americans Boycott James Cameron," 2022).

In short, Pygmalions like Tolkien and Cameron can't say the quiet part out loud; they just overcompensate with lots and lots of centrist war theatre.

In short, we have to "pull a Galatea," making sex-positive demons and embodying them not accidentally as Milton's Satan did, but on purpose *vis-à-vis* Matthew Lewis, H.R. Giger and Ridley Scott[288]. Refusing to do that only allows things to go on as they reliably do; i.e., with the usual interlocutors largely ignoring our plight while simultaneously commodifying our struggles and resistance in the very language *we* reclaim from canon as demonizing us to begin with. Nothing else will do, lest Capitalism go (as it always does) from crisis into swift decline—whose current, short-lived and unstable form of Capitalism (neoliberalism) regresses towards the hauntologized versions of privatized war (mercenaries and privateers), dogma and persecution mania dressed up in videogames/neoliberal canon since the 1980s: functional/performative cannibalization, necromancy and the ancient **blood magic** of the vampire—i.e., of the Catholics and the Western view of pagan culture, including the Romans: **blood** *sacrifice*.

In this department, I will say that fascists are far flashier than their holy cousins. But unlike sex-*positive* demons who shapeshift to survive the state, fascists shapeshift to enter the halls of a weakened bureaucracy to possess and occupy its instruments for their own gain. Their MO is the same, just cranked up to eleven: **waves of terror** and vice characters (menticide and death theatrics) in order to steal wealth through subterfuge and violence. It's schoolyard bully tactics with a knack for *dark*, over-the-top and unironically vengeful theatre—specifically the bully's own xenophobic and occult-obsessed **pathos**; i.e., the ghost of the

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[288] Whose own counterterrorism in *Alien: Covenant* (above) is something we will continue to examine in Volume Two.

counterfeit/process of abjection as also radicalized until it becomes a Promethean Quest for power that invokes theft from the *powerful*, not a shitty bargain (which is what fascism is). The fascist might not believe their own lies at first, but eventually their tenuous hold on power demands a megalomania in order to sell such expanding performance-based deceptions and outright falsehoods. Before long the mania becomes terminal, by virtue of the thief stealing from the elite and not just the Communists and the marginalized the elite brand as "terrorists." Doing so is a death sentence, leading the elite to mark fascists as "mad dogs" whose centrist counterparts (the paladins) must not only put down, but *cut* down in holy kayfabe (thus reestablish the elite's hold on things through a gentler variant of the same Crusade-like counterfeit; e.g., Jedi who [according to themselves, of course] *don't* crave excitement or adventure).

(exhibit 1a1a1h4a: Just because centrist theatre demands a bad guy for the good guy to punch doesn't mean we, as workers, should just <u>unironically</u> embrace this role [and the historical materialism/punching down that results from it]. We can punch up and still enjoy being ironic "heels," who love our big, bearded, ostensibly gay himbo and protector-of-Russian-skies, Zangief.)

Within these crises and their haunted, bogus treasure maps, the consequences are anything but false. For one, the monster is very much real as a codified belief system and target of state violence. Both the killer for the state *and* the target of said killer's violence, canon informs the **sexual orientation**, **gender identity**/**gender performance** and **performance-as-identity** (which **synonymize** under the false dichotomy of man/woman and male/female under the

colonial binary) that exist between predator and prey as a liminal performance; i.e., one that can be adapted by any worker the state needs to manipulate thus profit from. Both positions are sexed, gendered and expected to perform and identify in highly specific gender roles that are lucrative for the elite: according to **heteronormative assignment** as starting at birth funneled towards war-as-a-business.

In turn, their monstrous legion is binarized, reflecting in its sex-coercive language as part of the Superstructure allowing room for controlled opposite; i.e., that which the elite cannot own, but *can* cultivate to shape how people think, thus react to perceived threats (worker action) towards the careful cultivation of copaganda and **nation**/**war pastiche** in popular media made through what they *do* own: **the means of production**, the Base. Their palingenesis drives **capital** as "a system for exploiting workers, nature and the world, whose resultant genocide and vampiric devastation is synonymous with profit for capitalists" (from the glossary) as something whose unequal material conditions/**privatization of property** is built around endless war as a holy business in secular/non-secular forms. The entire enterprise, as the ghost of the counterfeit/narrative of the crypt, becomes **hyperreal**: one, a map of imaginary desolation to hide the actual desolation currently happening all around us, whose decaying surface eventually shows glimpses of an endless ruin behind the map; but also to cloak the devastating "brainwashing" effect Capitalist Realism has on our minds: **menticide**. Point out the decay behind the map and you'll be shot for ruining the picture (re: Le Bon).

As part of this scheme, the police of canon include the **witch cop/war boss** as the policer of Gothic media on- and offstage within culture war as part of class war—fighting over the former significance, but also the current/future interpretation and production of such stories: Metroidvania's castles and monstrous-feminine, psychosexual torture; as well as Cameron's other shooters, and before those Tolkien's naturalized colonialism[289] out on the open battlefield, overshadowed by dark castles. Regardless of the genre, canon's fear and dogma become things that weigh on the minds of dutiful consumers, artists and patrons, making them ignore

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[289] The men, elves, dwarves and wizards of the West are its guardians, its self-absorbed cops; e.g., Thorin Oakenshield (which Tolkien nicely camps):

> "We are met to discuss our plans, our ways, means, policy and devices. We shall soon before the break of day start on our long journey, a journey from which some of us, or perhaps all of us (except our friend and counsellor, the ingenious wizard Gandalf) may never return. It is a solemn moment. Our object is, I take it, well known to us all. To the estimable Mr. Baggins, and perhaps to one or two of the younger dwarves (I think I should be right in naming Kili and Fili, for instance), the exact situation at the moment may require a little brief explanation—" This was Thorin's style. He was an important dwarf. If he had been allowed, he would probably have gone on like this until he was out of breath, without telling any one there anything that was not known already. But he was rudely interrupted. Poor Bilbo couldn't bear it any longer. At *may never return* he began to feel a shriek coming up inside, and very soon it burst out like the whistle of an engine coming out of a tunnel (source).

worsening living conditions and individual lives by colonizing media to keep it canon (thus preserve the canonical image of the author no matter the cost).

The biggest casualties, then, are basic human rights and **positive freedom** (freedom to act) for workers, whose sex-positive potential is sacrificed in favor of **negative freedom** (freedom from consequence) for the elite as historically-materially sex-coercive. Yet, amid this broader **dialogic imagination**, genocide is **sublimated**, dressed up as fun, harmless, and cool; *legitimate* critiques are **recuperated** into "defanged" forms of **controlled opposition** that lack *conscious* class character/utility during class war (the struggle to achieve **class consciousness**). **Rainbow Capitalism** will even attempt to "whitewash war with rainbows," recruiting **token minorities** (starting with cis-het women) from the underclass as a kind of **assimilation fantasy** (which is then sold back to nerd culture: the Amazon war bride, exhibit 1a1a3)—i.e., one where they **punch down** against themselves inside **cyberpunks**, **Metroidvania**, and similar canceled-future **dystopias** during **marginalized in-fighting**/**internalized bigotry** instead of **punching up** against the elite, aka **divide and conquer** via **conversion therapy** by promoting material advancement and societal climbing through **class, gender and race betrayal** (e.g., Franz Fanon's "black skin, white masks" or Shakespeare's Shylock). It's very "pick me," Judas levels of **selling out** for scarce little in return, considering all that was lost: connection, dignity, humanity and trust—and all for a false copy of a treasure map whose ensuing gold rush wasn't for workers at all, but the elite carefully manipulating them to fight amongst themselves.

As the Nazis spilled into Europe, Americans read the stories and newspapers and volunteered to fight; the elite sold them "their" shovels, helmets, and *guns* (real or imaginary). The American soldiers' bargain was Faustian, the German quest Promethean, and a lot of people died so the elite could carve up the globe and its map yet again based on lies, of lies, of lies (as nation-states always do). From here, Tolkien and Cameron (and their defenders) cut their authorial teeth through cartographic refrains defended by current-day TERFs and other mask-off bigots, the latter apologized for by men *just like* Tolkien and Cameron in the 21st century. 3D Realms, for instance, have brought their own nostalgic-heavy approach to war pastiche as its own recursive, unironic lie: the Build engine FPS of the late '90s. Acting as its own refrain parallel to *Doom* or *Metroid*'s direct link to Cameron, 3D Realms swapped out the Metroidvania operatic Gothic castle for a different locale, music and fetishized violence: police brutality during military urbanism.

Speaking of lies, heteronormativity lies at the center of *all* this manufacture, coercion and subterfuge; i.e., an ongoing and *accelerating* problem (the Imperial Boomerang and military urbanism/the police state) whose endless synthesis occurs through the canonical relationship between fiction and reality as something to perceive, first and foremost as Capitalist Realism yawning into infinity. Cities function as castles, being presented as increasingly hostile, concrete graveyards occupied by two distinct groups flooded with guns (criminogenesis): the fetishized armory of police weaponry being leveled by the usual givers of state violence against the usual receivers (who make do with stolen or improvised weapons—i.e., the paradox of terror). During the advertised war on crime, both sides are dressed up as cartoon zombies and demons. And in the middle, the Amazon plays a similar role that Ripley or Eowyn did: being a humanizing face (and piece of ass) to whitewash the ensuing massacre, thus make death seem noble but also rewarded with a Valkyrie orgy in the afterlife. All business as usual, leading the state to not simply eat itself, but shoot itself in the foot and chew up its labor force (which again, is expendable by design):

> Life planned out before my birth, nothing could I say
> Had no chance to see myself, molded day by day
> Looking back I realize, nothing have I done
> Left to die with only friend, alone, I clench my gun ("Disposable Heroes").

Like a small child, the soldier is utterly terrified of an imaginary enemy the gun cannot destroy; like an obscene pillow, the gun gives no comfort and the soldier will

probably die (or be scarred for life), but within capital they will have served their purpose either way: profit for the elite.

Being a canonical process, though, all of this can be camped, which is where our "camp map" comes into question *beyond* just the Metroidvania ludo-Gothic BDSM negotiations we've examined up to this point. Indeed, now's the time to make things gay at large; i.e., by camping all canon as ours to interrogate, then reclaim and recreate though proletarian Gothic poetics: making our own monsters, maps and labor action plans, *vis-à-vis* Shelly's catchphrase, "Imagine the future, 'cause you're not in it!" taken as a challenge to overcome; i.e., seizing control as much as we can and populating the critically empty and desolate gameworlds of *Ion Fury*, *Metroid* and *Doom* with sex-positive, anti-*police* sentiment—the kind that challenges the very sort of public sentiment that I write about in "Zombie Police States in *Ion Fury*" (an extended quote, because it's relevant to what we're up against):

> *Ion Fury*'s exploitative representations of power matter because their symbols are tied to public sentiment; this includes all persons relative to power as something to exploit and express: the abusers or the abused. Historically the police abuse, because they have the power and state-expressed permission to do so; minorities, the perpetual underclass, are forever on the receiving end. It stands to reason that symbols detailing abuse or targets will remain ambiguous as long as power disparities remain, or threaten to return: As something to kill, the police state, like a zombie, rises from the dead; in turn, it transforms people into zombies—cops into heartless, mindless killing machines, and civilians into dead men walking (whose immediate termination requires no explanation).
>
> *Ion Fury* openly glorifies lethal force to justify *permanent martial law* (the sort prophesized and critiqued by James Cameron's *Terminator* films). This feels highly questionable in a time where protests against police brutality in America are at an all-time high; equally dubious is *Ion Fury*'s presentation of a halcyon police state—the peaceful point whose equilibrium is interrupted by a rebellious martial power, Heskel the mad scientist. Neo D.C. is a "shithole" headed further down the drain, this symptomatic regression encouraged by those already in power. The heads of state encourage their city's decay through smaller, rival gangs they can persecute; the mass incarceration and slaughter of these violent minorities becomes ritualized, celebrated (an unironic homage to the War on Drugs, hinted at [by the game's problematic Read Me: or as Bay aptly says, "'Gaslight, Gatekeep, Girl-Boss,' the Game!"]

through the racist statement "cracked out," which refers to the state-enforced assignment of crack [as the black person's Drug of Choice](#)). There's no attempt to humanize these factions in *Ion Fury*. Through a monstrous lens, *Ion Fury* reminds me of *Night of the Living Dead*, and how George Romero demonized the civil [disputes] that followed the Civil Rights movement. Alas, the further you move away from a specific historical moment, the less its monsters represent actual people; the undead become "just zombies," floating signifiers to blast apart. I love zombie pastiche—a playful literacy of pop culture undead interpreted through games like *Left 4 Dead*. There's certainly fun to be had, even if the critical power of the zombie is gone. They're simply targets in a cinematic hall of mirrors.

If anyone's to blame for this shooting gallery approach, it's *Aliens*. Cameron's movie formed the FPS blueprint (and premise) adopted by *Doom*, which so many "clones" afterwards also copied. The xenomorphs were supposed to represent the Vietcong—the biggest casualties of the Vietnam War. Instead, they're simply targets for Ripley to lay waste to. Similarly the mutants and cultists in *Ion Fury* are monsters for Shelly to blow away. Not only are they trapped in a crumbling necropolis; they're relegated to the sewers, the city's dumping ground. The cultists can at least speak, but fare no better than their voiceless counterparts. Faced with these pitiful wretches, I can't help but think of Giorgio Agamben's [state of exception](#). To summarize, "constitutional rights can be diminished, superseded and rejected in the process of claiming an extension of power by the government during a state

of emergency." That's literally what martial law is, and what Shelly's fighting for. She's the arm of the law, an extension of a military government whose chokehold on the city's denizens dehumanizes everyone involved—the zombies, but also Shelly (whose uniform, in practice, turns her into a faceless, expendable cop).

Under the city's power, the mutants do not die; they linger unhappily between life and death. They scream as Shelly sets them ablaze, evoking the voiceless wails heard in Death's "Suicide Machine" [1991]:

Controlling their lives
Deciding when and how they will die
A victim of someone else's choice
The ones who suffer have no voice
Manipulating destiny
When it comes to living, no one seems to care
But when it comes to wanting out
Those with power, will be there.

"Those with power," in this case, are "there" through Shelly (someone *with* power—i.e., associated with or on the side of those in power). The cast of *Ion Fury* are either cops or criminals, and cops punish criminals. It's the totalitarian, concrete jungle realized by *Judge Dredd*, another *Ion*

Fury palimpsest. Dredd's not a vigilante; he's a champion of the state, a paragon of force praised for his lack of empathy towards those he plugs. So is Shelly. An expendable captain of the GDF's Domestic Task Force, she literally heads homeland security. She serves the state, not the people—is literally the game's judge, jury and executioner.

If all this sounds a bit doomsday, *Ion Fury* doesn't preach this stuff; it passively advertises it. This isn't wholly positive, though. Noam Chomsky refers to advertising in Manufactured Consent as "*de facto* licensing authority": "Media outlets are not commercially viable without the support of advertisers. News media must therefore cater to the political prejudices and economic desires of their advertisers." Those with money have the power to influence others in a capitalist system, including the media. Media isn't neutral. Videogames are media; videogames aren't neutral, either.

In this respect, *Ion Fury* tries to be "just a game" (no politics here, bro); except it's a form of advertising whose parodic images complement its central Read Me message. Like the preface to a novel, the Read Me message is the imprimatur that colors the action moving forward. As testified by my naïve playthrough, a person can easily enjoy the game separately from its inner politics—to enjoy nostalgic action for its own sake. Nevertheless, the shadow of the '80s weighed a little heavier on me the second time around.

(exhibit 1a1a1h4b: Artist: [Blur Squid Art](). "The cake is a lie." Gun porn is commonly tied to gun <u>sentiment</u> granted a nurturing quality while pressuring for its continued sales and usage everywhere and on everyone [the Dirty Harry effect]. Women, then, are commonly used to fetishize and whitewash the climbing sale of weapons in an ever-growing market that—more and more and more—conflates women with

*guns in the cliché maxim: "Your rifle is your girl." These are not "peacekeepers,"
but tyrants at home and genocidal implementers abroad working in concert. For the
women involved, even if they never see live duty or combat, they are still
propagandists by virtue of what they're contributing towards.)*

We clearly can't just play games "apolitically"; we need to act out to expose those who act in bad faith so they won't kill us (the people who show up to college campuses with assault rifles, and who look at *Ion Fury* with rose-tinted glasses, but also treat it *as* rose-tinted glasses with which to view the world around them: a killing ground of us-versus-them). This makes our function as iconoclasts somewhat complicated and unsafe: the Gothic princess-faggot and the rodeo clown waving a big red flag at the bull acting tough in *his* bailiwick! But it needs to be done because otherwise we're dead meat. We're not dead *yet*, but Capitalism will surely make us that way if we stand idly by and put our faith in white, cis-het (functionally Christian) men like Tolkien and Cameron, but also their Cycle of Kings expressed in future authors like 3D Realms continuing the nostalgic, bloodthirsty refrain unaltered (and whose every sequel enterprise/revolution of good vs evil is profit for them and death to us). With Metroidvania, we can camp what they made through a palliative Numinous inside our own castles; but to fully corrupt the twin trees of oppositional praxis, we also need to go beyond Tolkien and Cameron and camp *all* of canon—in short, "starting a thing" however we can, or "putting the pussy on the chainwax" (which the next subchapter will hopefully make a little more clear): the shooters of the world, and their cinematic and novelized equivalents' copaganda informing the Military Industrial Complex abroad and military urbanism's *de facto* deputies/stochastic terrorism and widening net of state abuse in all directions, inwards and outwards.

([source](): Volker Janssen's "Why Was Dresden So Heavily Bombed?" 2020)

During WW2, the Nazis didn't try to exterminate the Jews instantly any more than the American colonist did the Native Americans; it started with propaganda that gradually hinted at, then reached, the final solution—of putting them into concentration camps then death camps—near the end of the war (and radicalized in the face of certain defeat while harboring an utmost certitude of final victory while still [more or less] having total control over Germany's armed forces—a position solidified by a *real* state of emergency where one did not exist before: "Desperate times call for desperate measures"). In short, the Nazis were excellent propagandists but bad capitalists; as a bad copy of American propaganda/public relations, they had bought into their own poorly copied grandeur and, like Icarus' wings, were suddenly coming apart at the seams. But they live on in American copaganda like *Ion Fury* (and its multiple sequels), whose endless war for territory oscillates on the ludologized cartography of Tolkien and Cameron sublimating real-world atrocities.

Within their outdoor/indoor refrains, the colonial marines butcher the xenomorphs as "pure evil," and Tolkien's forces of good annihilate the orcs in similar settler-fashion (exterminating the local population) through the likes of *D&D* and Blizzard's *Warcraft* franchise, etc); and Shelly Bombshell does the same thing seemingly far closer to home during military urbanism. We, as Gothic Communists, must interrogate said power (and its paradoxes/doubles) through our ironic reclamation of an oft-Numinous affect, *vis-à-vis* the unironic torture dungeon/psychosexual vaudeville as something to reassemble in our own artwork,

pornography and performances of various kinds (the shooter being closer to George Miller's Gothic Western). Our counterterrorist iconoclasm will be policed by other members of the public who see our doing so as a threat to the Base and the Superstructure beyond a particular army or castle; i.e., the twin trees whose Symbolic Order/mythic structure is ultimately the Shadow of Pygmalion: the enemy of Satan as a rebel force during oppositional praxis.
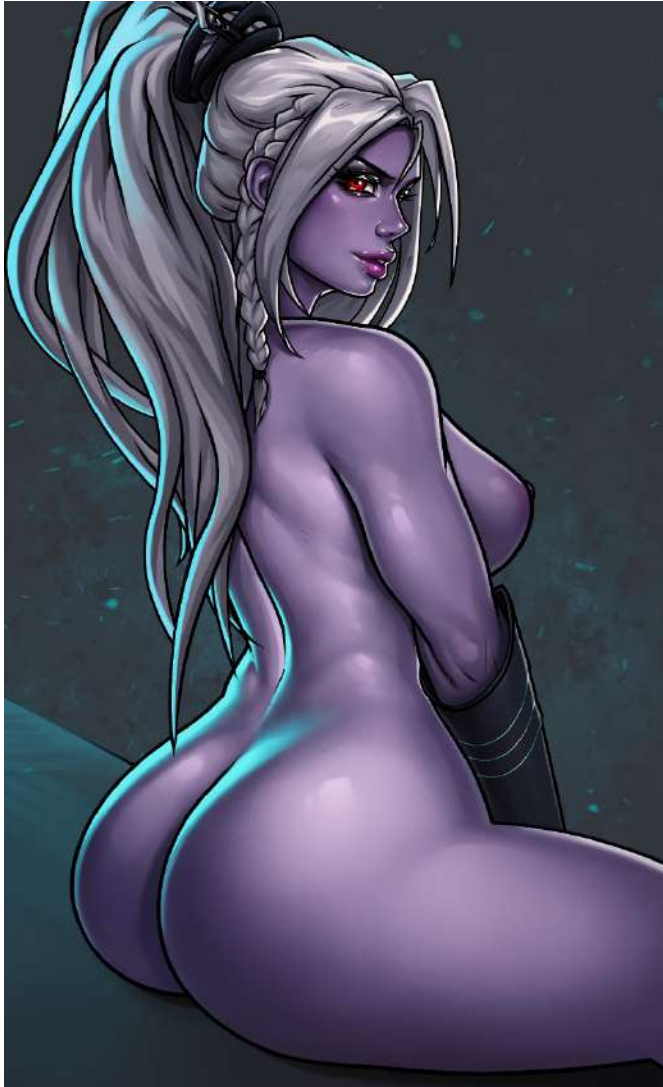
(artist: Nasta Doll)

This largely concludes our two-part examination of Metroidvania (and shooters) in relation to Tolkien's refrain and vice versa, and how videogame canon is neoliberal, thus heteronormative through the ludic scheme of monomythic war and its liminal, BDSM hauntologies as fractally recursive in a cartographic sense; re: the endlessly concentric offering of false power/hope through the Faustian ludic contract as map-like, but also a **Promethean Quest** (stealing "fire" from the gods) that obliterates the hero once followed to its fearsome and all-consuming central conclusion. We're now very near at the final stage of our "camp map" (exhibit 1a1a1i), which will connect to a) the manifesto building blocks (and trees) that we laid out in the thesis statement and b) the arguments we've made regarding the importance of finding our own voices within the narrative of the crypt as something to reclaim for our own rebellions; e.g., camping Metroidvania; i.e., in defense of the proletariat by going after capital and its propaganda at large: the Superstructure and the Base. That's essentially what we've been talking about but now I want to shine a light on it; i.e., what good proletarian praxis looks like in opposition to state forces while cannibalizing their language to form our own voices, rememories, and muster in whatever space we choose. Monsters!

"Make it gay," part three: Shining a Light on Things, or How to Make Monsters: Reclaiming Our Lost Power by Putting the Pussy on the Chainwax

"You're trying to start a thing, aren't you? A <u>thing</u>."

—*Jordan Peele, "[Pussy on the Chainwax](#)"*

      Last subchapter we explored how silly the angers of those who fear us are, yet nevertheless make up the things we must camp in order to be ourselves (anything less is segregation, because our identities are defined by struggles against the state's profit motive); we specifically examined camp in relation to the mapping of war in ludologized forms, and how we could camp that cartography through our ludo-Gothic BDSM negotiations and palliative-Numinous interrogations inside the Gothic castle's closed space. Except that was merely *one* option; there are many more and all are valid insofar as they challenge heteronormativity's essentializing of the Base and Superstructure as currently owned and cultivated by the elite or their proponents. I want to shine a light on how we can corrupt these twin towers by making monsters, or "putting the pussy on the chainwax" any way we can: not just clearing space and theatre to play around in, but making *monsters* that speak for us—i.e., not purely to the sexual confusion of our enemies (e.g.,

Kevin Smith's [Pillow Pants](#)[290]) but to our own desire to self-define and be free of state abuse. Doing so is not simple, a fact we've already hinted at by making iconoclastic monsters (sex workers) within canonical monstrous language (cops): Samus and Shelly. To this, it might seem ridiculous to even try subverting such things wherever we go, but we must because these expressions will always be liminal to some extent; the point is to develop monsters that *aren't* sex-coercive, thus don't serve the state and its profit motive.

However ridiculous an expression might seem, it can take on life of its own in ways that assist labor. Jordan Peele's "pussy on the chainwax" ([source tweet](#): Jordan Peele, 2013) is one such example. It was provided to me as a joke by an abusive ex (Jadis, of all people); I took it and made it "a thing" by writing a book with it in mind. My whole idea of rebellion is built around Communism as this nominal thing that's never been done—i.e., like Key in the skit, who coins the phrase after he loses his wife and his job and just wants to have some fun with his friends. And while I don't *think* they intended it directly as a Communist metaphor (though if they did it wouldn't surprise me, given their body of work), the sentiment is certainly easy enough to implement; i.e., more so than, say, *Mien Kampf* (1925, which would need to be camped pretty hard before I'd sloganize it) and certainly enough for me to feel compelled to grab it and make it a slogan for my book. Key and Peele are funny and class-conscious, Hitler isn't.

So now that we've mapped out the problems with heteronormative canon and why its Superstructure needs to be camped within Tolkien's refrain and rotted contemporaries revived into the present day, let's discuss how to go about that keeping the earlier parts of the "camp map" and thesis statement in mind. Recultivate the Superstructure and you gain the bargaining power needed to reclaim the Base: labor as humanized through ironic monstrous language. Camping starts within canon as something to transform: You take something sacred to capital—a popular commodity that sublimates violence and recuperates struggle and critique—and turn that promptly on its head. For us during part two, this was Metroidvania and the old castle as something to map and conquer by the dashing hero/gun nut. Keeping part two's spatial focus in mind, we're now going to take the quest for power and shift it to the left using monsters; i.e., base it off something that's less neo-conservative than *Castlevania* but still famous (like Key and Peele were when starting their own thing): *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* (1987) as based off *Castlevania*, having come out a year later than it:

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[290] "Pillow Pants is her pussy troll? Duh!" From Kevin Smith's *Clerks 2*. It's funny as hell, but also low-hanging fruit ("Christian fundamentalists don't know how sex works!").

(exhibit 1a1a1h5: Source: bottom-left; source tweet [2020]: top-left. Artist, right: Frank Frazetta.
Castlevania was released in 1986. The artwork and imagery are very hypermasculine, full of manly heroes, unironically violent and homoerotic/-phobic BDSM iconography [the whip, a slaver's tool in the hands of a bad dom] and unironic dragon lords based off Frazetta's 1973 Norseman. It's the Japanese neoliberals' take on the Western heroic quest in Neo-Gothic forms—a knotty and disjointed mess of various legends, clichés and fetishes slapped together and ripped apart, then painted over and over and over [in the tradition of the mode, except now globalized and sold back and forth between nation-states]. It's traced like a gravestone, but also worn like a theatre mask. The hero is invincible and threatened at the same time, trapped between enormous, palimpsestuous tensions that all come together to support the status quo.
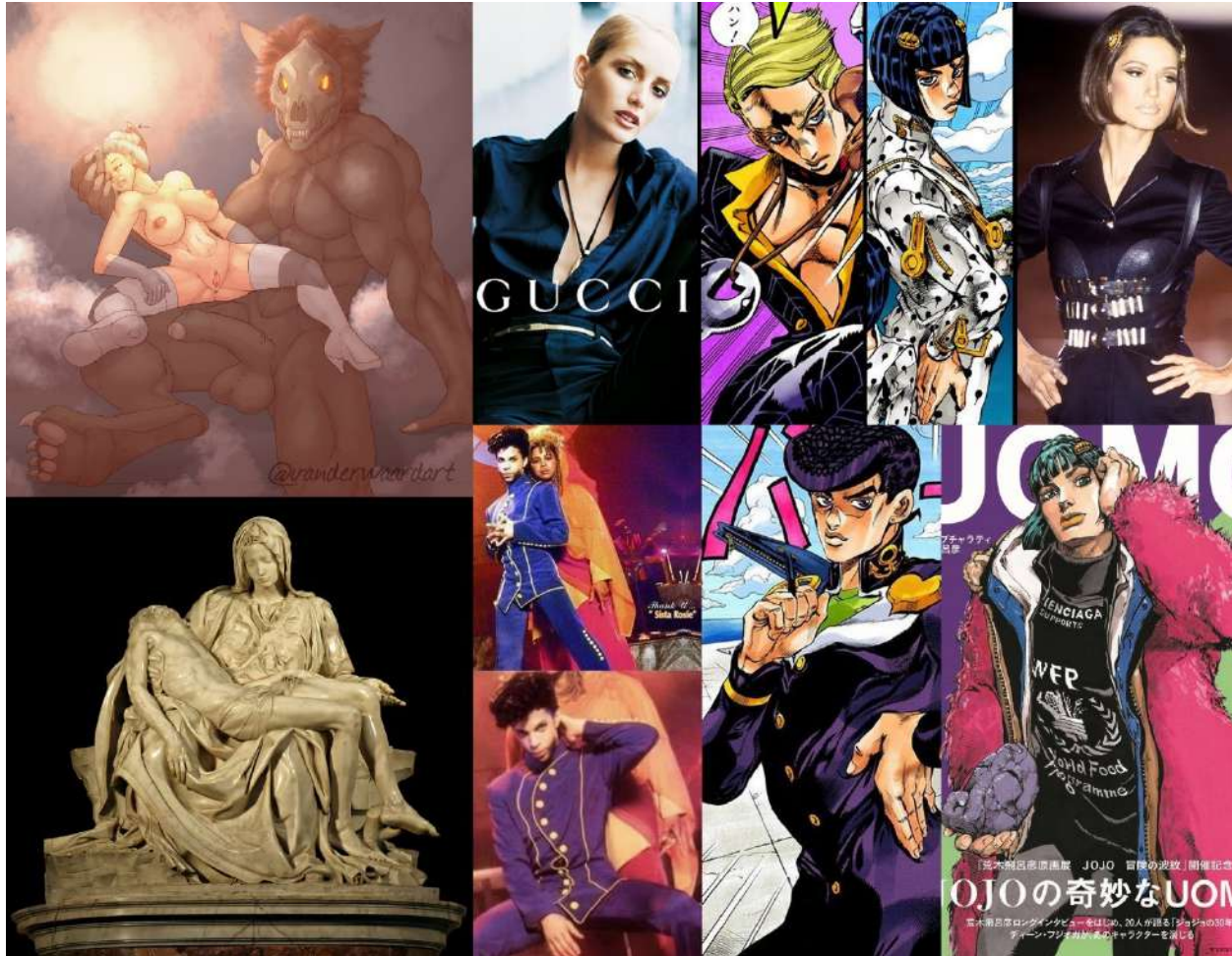
[Artist, top-left: Persephone van der Waard; bottom-left: Michelangelo; right side: Hirohiko Araki, his Jojo's Bizarre Adventure manga/anime [1987/2012] inspired by a variety of real-life musicians and clothing brands.]

This entirety can be camped not just through mimesis, but cryptomimesis to varying degrees of straight face and irony [Jojo/pieta]: the palimpsest surfaces are sexualized even before the clothes come off; i.e., the lie on the lie as traced, but also played with in campy ways mid-sediment:
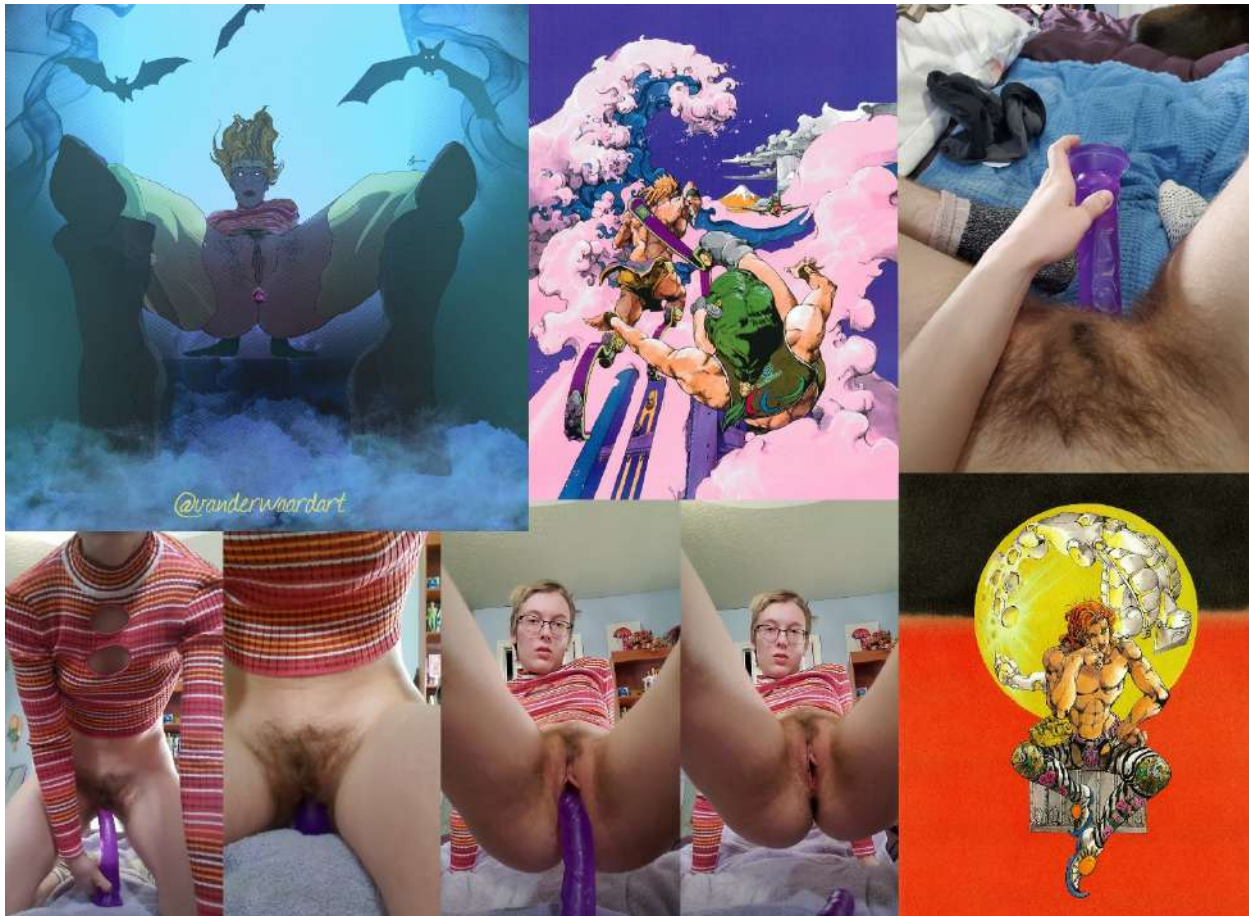
[model and artist, top-left: Angel and Persephone van der Waard; artist, top-middle and bottom-right: Hirohiko Araki]

Jojo's Bizarre Adventure *is an excellent example of camp in the re-revived Neo-Gothic, applying the replication and cohabitation of operatic music, fairytale imagery and the vampire narrative in a very pastiche-oriented manner—a campy approach to queer material expression by crossing boundaries for fun, thoroughly ribbing the "rock opera"/wrestler's theatre by propping it up with numerous rock 'n roll allusions purely for their own sake, not because they add anything musical[291] to*

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[291] Not all Japanese hauntologies take the same approach. For example, Nobuo Uematsu's literal opera, "The Dream Oath Opera – Maria and Draco" (1994), has been written to play out in-game as a faithful staged performance of the star-crossed lovers, possessive love, captive fantasy and duel. And to its credit, such operas are not strictly negative; as Blue Öyster Cult says, "Aeroplanes make strangers of us all," and the great gulf produced by Capitalism can lead people to feel horribly divided, seeking refuse in popular fictions that communicate our human condition *vividly*. A woman's theatrical voice, then, becomes as much her trying to exist in a man's world that pulls her in multiple directions at once. Relegated to an abstract stage of theatrical conventions, she simultaneously wields tremendous influence, but feels powerless to stop those she cares about (or detests) from trying to own her or fight over her honor while loving one more than the other (the love triangle). It might seem like it fails to represent "reality" but contains within itself the ability to parody extensions of reality that have become heavily codified and dogmatic, while also giving someone a chance to relate to the intense feelings onscreen. Despite "the Dream Oath's" fictional and bombastic nature, I can

the show. Rather than fail, Jojo's aptly-titled "bizarre adventure" becomes uniquely memorable [and hilarious] for making the seemingly-out-of-place, anachronistic musical references the show's defining trait [followed up by a highly expressive variety of cosmetic styles]. Its tailored, composed mimesis appears to copy Castlevania *[which came out the year previous]—albeit with ironic* shonen *himbos [and lite on monster girls] inside post-Occupation Japan as thoroughly fascinated with the West, but especially its Gothic tradition of operatic music, monstrous bestiary and dated tableau of hypermasculine wrestler heroes, corrupt effigies and monstrous-feminine men: an odd coupling that is mirrored in a variety of Japanese paranormal media that haunts the Japanese side of neoliberalism; e.g.,* Perfect Blue, Fatal Frame *[2001] or the* Shin Megami Tensei *franchise.)*

Jojo isn't perfect, mind you; it was a product of its times and doesn't go nearly far enough, but is still closer to Tim Curry than Tolkien was by a mile, and even Curry's character wasn't perfect (not his performance, which was sublime): he's buried at the end. Hence why our above example with my friend Angel as Dio works within older camp to make *newer* camp that preserves the spirit of rebellion before it was commodified while getting people's attention with what's trendy. *Jojo* is campy *and* trendy but so is queerness and the Gothic as things that have a very wide appeal. Vampires, rock 'n roll and old hauntological castles never go out of style; they just change the décor and keep on rocking. Perfect for allegory! As stated in part two, "ACAB," or "All (Canonical) Castles Are Bad," but some can be played with to hide our allegory inside: less *Star Wars* and more *Castle Wars* (despite the former being a fairytale set in outer space[292]), with the appeal of the *monsters* and their combat a Shakespeare-level allure to the wider bloodbath through staged bloodsport. It's a tale as old as time (or at least Shakespeare's plays)!

Yet, allegory sits within the usual ghost of the counterfeit and process of abjection. That is, in today's day and age, *Castle Wars* becomes the place to set up the *female* demon lover as someone for the effeminate Japanized male *bishonen* hero/monstrous-feminine to bravely stab to death; i.e., just as Ellen Ripley's phallic Amazon faced the Archaic Mother and pumped her womb full of lead, the latest Belmont boy can stake our naughty "mother of dragons" to death with his own phallic implements (from what I can tell, the new *Castlevania* basically frames the French Revolution as an attack on the French Monarchy by scapegoating them though 'Marie Antionette's revenge!'; i.e., as putting a stop to the revolution— instead of, you know, the elite at large doing so in far less romantic terms: dogma, legislation and economics)!

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certainly relate to Maria's intense operatic longing; the same goes for *Jojo* and its campiness. Been there, done that.

[292] The Death Star wasn't a moon *or* a space station, Obi Wan; it was a *castle*.

Seeing as there's no shortage of fortresses (or vampires) in the police state, I've devised the finale of our "camp map" (which we'll get to very shortly) to chart the synthetic process according to how it relates to us as actively rebellious sex workers/workers who are dimorphically sexualized in the Pygmalion shadow of these heteronormative castles; i.e., how to camp canon through Gothic Communism's entire assembly and production of monsters as a gay double of the castle: a sassy fag-master's Communist lair/parallel space being invaded by the Straights' interpretation of what is correct and what is not, meaning they colonize us but also our reclaimed, monstrous language. In essence, the "camp map"—as something to execute by workers making monsters—is actually a rather small, self-contained introduction to camp (which Volume Two will expanded on exponentially when we go over as many monster types as we can); i.e., as the iconoclastic counterweight to unironic war as heteronormative and spanning the entire globe (that part one and two of the "camp map" did their best to outline as succinctly as possible). Even if we never see a real battlefield, our fiction ties into the mechanisms that reach those points and back around, thus teach people we *do* see and engage with to act hostile towards us if we stick out (evoking the corrupt, the monstrous-feminine, the barbarian or backstabbing impostor, etc); i.e., camping the canon through *its* "seriousness that fails" by *our* design; e.g., camping Beowulf, the Amazon or Nazi as Americanized, and the heteronormative idea of war as monomythic, centrist and fake.

This starts with checking the unironic worship of Beowulf and his echoes of pursued power from parts one and two. Regardless of the various comorbidities, canonical war personifies to look and sound a particular way. Whereas the ghost of the counterfeit refers to the false copy as the basic legend driving the process of abjection on a larger map, the Shadow of Pygmalion focuses on the creative process as made by the status quo, which results in the Cycle of Kings (the centrist monomyth) as a particular kind of simulacrum—one tied to human locales and bodies, thus work that are dimorphically sexualized relative to war and one's role inside it: as heteronormative throughout the larger counterfeit scheme of map and castle like (the lie of the West and its endless crises) filled with endless monsters.

To that, the Shadow of Pygmalion is recursively fractal. Everything has to look like the manly statue—its likeness, including a compelled physique and façade of good war as defined by the damsels always being saved by always-gentlemanly knights from always-bad knights and a disturbing lack of anyone who isn't any of those things (re: "No [*non-token*] Girls or Trans People Allowed"); the perceived lack of empathy occupied by the theatrical shadow fencer (the death knight) as haunted by the shadow of the oppressed occupying that same aesthetic, but also the shadow of the *hero* as an unironic death knight themselves: their deceitful shadow stretched across the floor and wall, following them around and returning at inconvenient times to break the illusion of their false goodness and power. In other words, Pygmalion is the crafter of the shadow as a prescriptive and dishonest theatrical device that serves the state through monsters that go the state's way during the general bloodspill, battlefield rape, and sanctioned sex. Power is largely invented—a fiction writing over itself as forged, designed to perceive shows of force that arbitrarily insist on patriarchal hegemony. Men are strong but need a wife to nurture them, to show her off; they are bare muscled but can crossdress in bad faith (usually to make fun of women or the monstrous-feminine at large); etc.
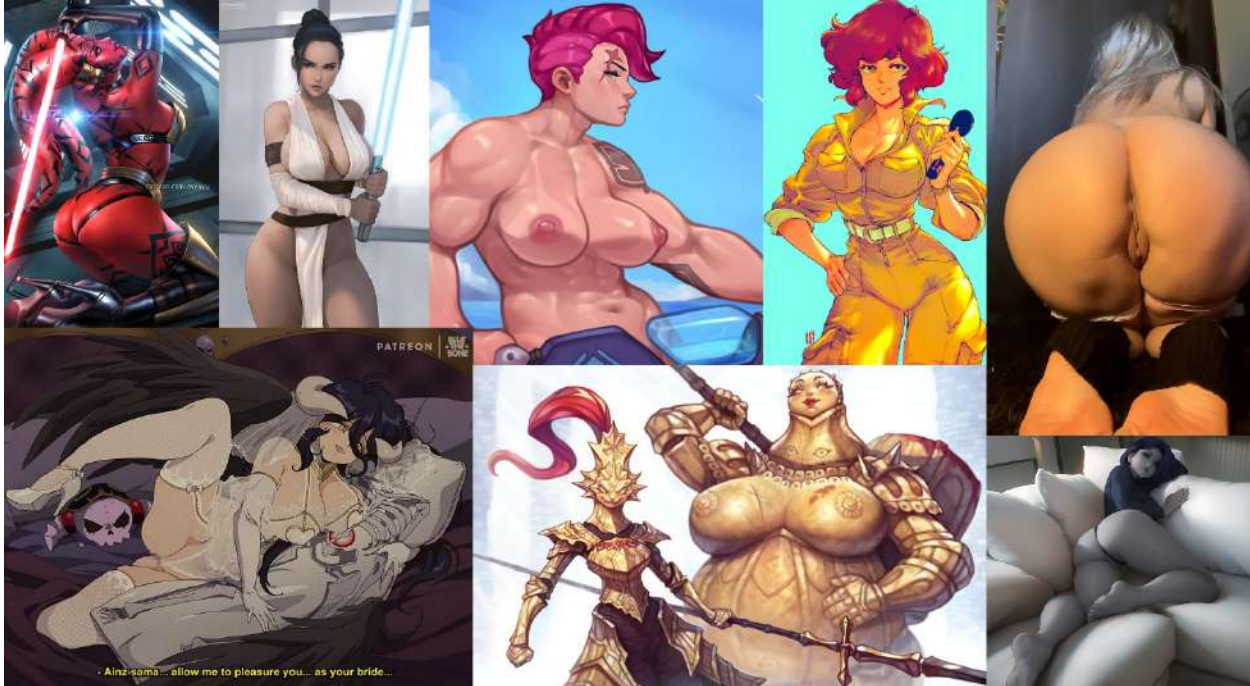
(exhibit 1a1a1h6a: Top-left: AyyaSAP; top-mid-left and bottom-right: Flower XI; top-middle and bottom-middle: Cyan Capsule; top-mid-right: DSloogie; top-right: Angel Witch; bottom-left: Blue the Bone.)

More examples of the female monster and how it takes many different shapes in Gothic media. "Women is other" is traditionally dimorphic, mind you, but can easily be non-binarized and camped by the Galatea playing the role [of any of these characters/peoples] or illustrating it [as various artists do]. So while the Jedi and the Sith <u>are</u> basically "sword porn" when it comes to female knights [a military-style pinup comparable to any other service weapon] in blind pastiche, that idea can be camped in far more perceptive and sex-positive forms. To this, the softer body can have the look of the war bride, but convey autonomy through the agency of the owner and their body as iconoclastic; i.e., having ownership over herself through her self-expression as tied to her body during demonic, sex-positive BDSM [the sword isn't always just for show]. Likewise, the herbo military-looking body can be turned away from canonical war's Pavlovian conditioning by "teaching an old dog new tricks" instead of euthanizing her as the state would: the "euthanasia effect" as something to disarm by embracing the muscle mommy as something that isn't chained to the profit motive.

Regardless of the waifu/wheyfu, the heroine's performative context—her function as a class warrior illustrating empathy through mutual consent—is generally subtext: it doesn't tend to announce itself at first glance, but instead often relies on allegory. Uncovering said allegory requires dialectical-material analysis. This might seem like an ineffective messaging system, but it actually constitutes as code-switching and appeals to a shared interest in aesthetics; i.e., the very thing that can help humanize us in the eyes of our would-be colonizers. Divorced from the canonical

scheme, allegory can make them see us as human without changing our appearance at all.)

     Compared to Pygmalion, the Galatea (the author and the creation) is normally made to suffer inside the same staged gimmick. It's canon to be corrupt and monstrous-feminine in ways the status quo expects, either group a punching bag (to varying degrees) in order to "play along." The resultant theatricalities—and the decayed, thus harmful realities behind those unironic fictions—all co-exist on- and offstage as canon. Canon is the endorsement, but also tolerance and acceptance of, the status quo as "the way things are," thus unalienable. The truth is, alienation is central to the lie, to the prescribed monster's destruction at the hands of the hero working for capital. White knights and black knights function *identically* in regards to what canon is, in this respect: the shadow of good and bad kings, and their respective good cops and bad cops, as always coming back to harm—separately and together—the oppressed as the perpetual state of exception (our zombies and demons, furries and chimeras, exhibit 1a1a1h3) which are harder to canonize that the more ordinary looking monster boys and monster girls (exhibit 1a1a1h1); though as Angel demonstrates with our Dio exhibit, you can do it within a spectrum of tolerance—i.e., through a shared love of something that has allegorical power that can be turned towards revolutionary aims, hence "putting the pussy *back* on the chainwax" (e.g., from *Star Wars* the franchise focusing on labor with *Andor*, 2022).

     In rare times of compromise (wherein the state grants false-gift olive branches to labor), the oppressed are even invited to join in on the fun—to assimilate; i.e., the woman-in-black becoming not just a corrupted whore, but the dark/feral Medusa or virginal/dutiful Hippolyta whose tokenized service (and marriage) to Theseus belies the same Shadow of Pygmalion chasing *them* around. Trauma lives inside and outside of the body as fetishized according to structured exchanges of power that are valued through their use: the profit motive and its trickle-down incentives (cops and criminals, aka cops and victims). Their hard boundaries are drawn up, then pathologize and become accommodated within the same "prison sex" mentality: the hiding of the rapist/murderer in plain sight as a sterling/good fixture of society that can conduct violence against the usual codified villains and victims. Doing so tends to ignore the adage that "a few bad apples spoil the bunch" but also that they're "fruit from the poisoned tree." This, in turn, is canonically prioritized over the victims, whose own seeking of power (subby or dominant) is generally made in pursuit of agency when living in fear, post-trauma; i.e., psychosexuality. Seeing as this subchapter is about monsters and making them, here's an extended exhibit tracking psychosexual expression through various monstrous-feminine types—the demon lover and the whore in art and porn, but specifically the nurse and the xenomorph's "phallus" and "semen" metaphors that cross over into militarized and domesticated forms of eroticized violence:

(exhibit 1a1a1h6b1: Artist, right: [ringoripple](#); bottom-middle: [Jorgo Photography](#). Canonical Gothic is unironically psychosexual, thus violent on or regarding its surface imagery and props. It might seem random, but there are actually some rock-solid dialectical-material reasons for their continued historical-material generation. For one, nurses are like mothers; i.e., they are fetishized as virgin/whore for the Male Gaze/profit motive, but also damsel/demonic caretakers who—through the accumulation/accretion of medievalized systemic distrust as transmitted via various bad-faith and good-faith recollections of the medical system as capitalist/patriarchal—have led to the nurse symbol as a complicated monster archetype: angry expressions of power and revenge.

The syringe, for example, exemplifies a common fear of needles that conflates medicine with harm through phallic metaphors of unequal power exchange during positions of disadvantage relative to the bed-ridden patient; they are under the nurse's power. At the same time, the nurse is a site for resentment and trauma, but also fetishization of either relative to the psychosexual adjacency they share with legitimate harm and grievances towards it. A fear-fascination of/with the nurse is a fear-fascination of/with unequal and unfair power exchange that <u>might</u> bear a grudge for concealed or otherwise unapologetic abuse committed at the hands of powerful doctors with awful bedside manner also mistreating their staff [the topic of many a soap opera]. Such a phobia/philia extends to concerns about the impostor

in the hospital ward, but also someone who might be triggered precisely for those reasons; i.e., trauma that lives within the "ghost" of the body wrapped in uniforms that date back to the nuns of the medieval period as "sisters of mercy" that were both angels of death and givers and takers of life that looked the part; e.g., Ambrosio's brush with "Rosario" as really Matilda in disguise.

On the surface of the nun/nurse image, the angelic/demonic collides with the soft and the nurturing as expected gender behaviors of women from men/entitled patients, who might suddenly feel quite uneasy if and when the tables are turned. In canonical circles, the nurse is often fetishized as a serial killer who, either wronged by someone or "born different," doesn't discriminate between genuine abusers and helpless victims. Often, [there is a kernel of truth to an otherwise systemic problem](#) [Dreading's "The Red Surge: the Case of Elizabeth Wettlaufer," 2023]. All the while, the syringe is "phallic" in the sense of a harmful, unwanted injection that causes pain, not unlike the standard-issue male penis as "knife-like" [more on this, in Volume One and Two—exhibits 11b2/3 for the vampire's fangs as bladed; exhibit 31, the serial killer's eponymous MO, "Jack the Knife"; exhibit 37a, dreamlike male variants of the same urban legend like Freddy Krueger's infamous knife fingers; exhibit 49, featuring female "phallic" demons with knife hands; as well as totemic "dickheads" like Pyramid Head and the xenomorph as not simply gender-swapped (exhibit 1a1a2b) but profoundly intersex (exhibit 60d), etc]. Of course this can be camped, "ejaculating" the needles' contents or inserting and injecting them with another paradox: the hard kink of needles being medicinal, but easily able to kill someone if performed incorrectly [air bubbles in the solution].
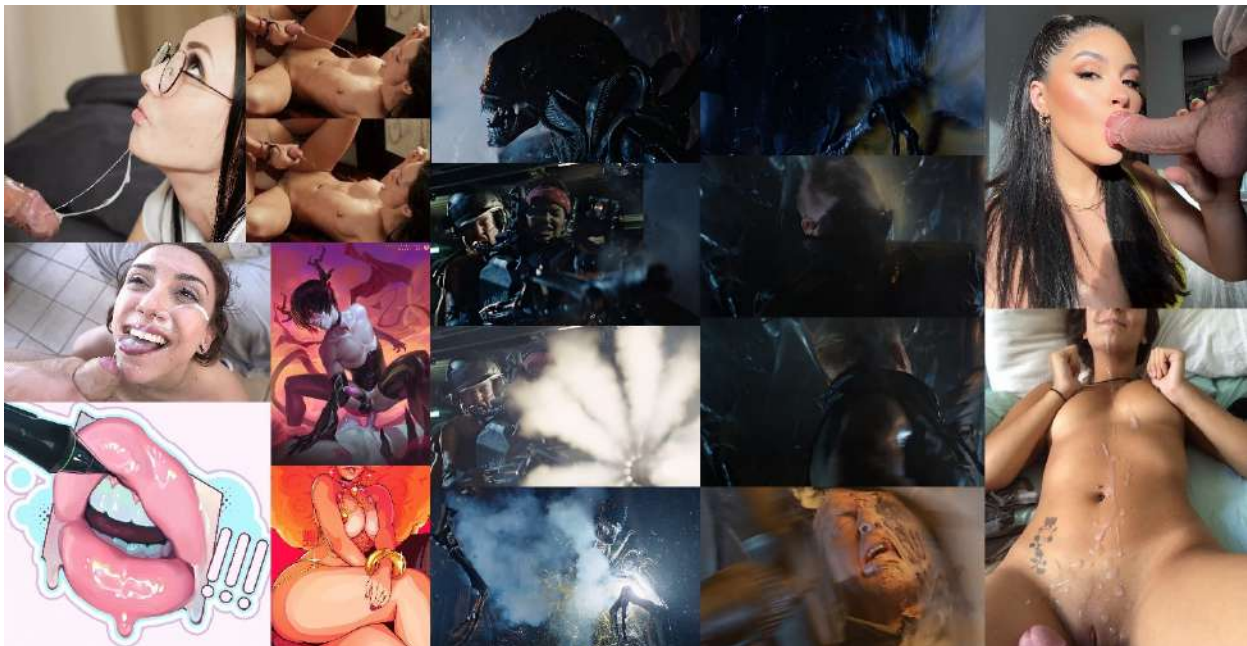
[Artist, top-far-left: unknown; middle-far-left: Mandy Muse; bottom-far-left: [Gloss](#); top-mid-left: unknown; middle-left: [Sabs](#); bottom-mid-left: [Grand Sage](#); top-right:

unknown; bottom-right: unknown. Continuing our examination of psychosexual metaphors, if the knife is foreplay then the "money" shot is the fireworks, the payoff, the release of tension during theatre and sex; in canonical porn, it is the "claiming" of the [female] object by the [male] subject. Yet, the psychosexuality of Gothic aesthetics with canonical war and porn create some strong divides that contrast bizarrely when they overlap (which the profit motive forces them, too; i.e., both are heteronormative businesses predicated on state dominance and abuse of particular victims): bullet porn as levied against things that go splat by treating the "cumshot" as an unironically violent marking procedure towards the colonized (who must either swallow or accept the colonizer's load during "sex" of an insect-political sort [exhibit 1a1a2b]: traumatic insemination via rape and unwanted, harmful penetration). In Cameron's response to Lucas' own space Western, his white-savior treatment of cowboys-and-Indians loses the Marxist critique; instead, it makes the classic monster battle tremendously exciting from a visual standpoint, but also highly prescriptive in a white man's medicinal sense: military optimism against an abject foe within the ghost of the counterfeit (I love the battles' for their sheer craftsmanship, but if I think about their context for more than two sections, I get very angry).

The xenomorph's "medicine," then, is "just what the doctor/soldier-playing-doctor ordered": the Amazon's "wad" of ordinance, which—delivered in pure alarm and fright at a perceived Great Destroyer—embarrassingly bounces back onto Drake (friendly fire) through an "acid bukkake" that reverses abjection by melting his face off. The xenomorph is ripped apart, but has her counterterrorist revenge by redirecting the attack (through a wonderful defense mechanism during asymmetrical warfare)—effectively throwing it back in her attacker's face. It's an abject war metaphor for "sex-as-violence" that mirrors cis-het male fears at home and abroad about being on the receiving end of their own brand of hypermasculine violence in literal terms—i.e., settler-colonial violence through state bullets, and bastardized bullets, bombs and knives—but also figuratively through a psychosexual eroticism that brokers a different kind of revenge; i.e., one tied to poor bedroom etiquette/psychosexual domination in sex work as privatized in the studio and translated to domesticated forms. Viewed as such, Drake's ignominious death becomes a highly funny and satisfying revenge of the genderqueer/female-monstrous sort: "Here's jizz in your eye, for once! Burns doesn't it, asshole?"]

But regardless of the praxial stance, everything shares the same stage and aesthetics. There's room for paradoxical/guilty pleasure and endorsement, but should be used by us to deliver messages of a class/culturally appreciative and aware character—i.e., looking at <u>Aliens</u> *in this manner, I feel like Athena's Aegis, bouncing Perseus' weaponized Male Gaze back at himself: I can enjoy the movie again by looking at it in ways that aren't simply realizing the state and its propaganda suck; I can weaponize and apply it towards* <u>my</u> *aims. The unironic, "apolitical" satisfaction of monster war and rape is ubiquitous and desperately needs to be criticized through "perceptive" pastiche/camp and gender trouble/parody but is generally not, in canonical, thus heteronormative spheres. In fact, quite the opposite.)*

Again, trauma lives in the body and the canonical nurse who poisons/imprisons their patient or the cop who beats their spouse (all of this is traditionally dimorphically gendered, of course) was either abused themselves according to systemic flaws, *not* reprobate human nature (which, under the Protestant ethic, can confuse the pleasure mechanisms to respond physically to death fantasies in abusive or hard-kink, psychosexual forms); i.e., conditioned to abuse others (which people forget, is a form of abuse) or born with congenital factors that pathologize within society as coded to valorize them as unrecognized, thus untreated: the useful psychopath, "made of sterner stuff." The promise of power through the false hope that things will get better via the same-old action clichés as industry-grade cryptonymy: the cheerleader/damsel-in-distress, the star

quarterback/white knight flattening the goon/black knight, the last-second touchdown/victory, the fireworks, the happy ending after "murder will out."

Regarding the sports metaphor overlapping with war personified and all of its euphemisms for sublimating genocide but also its recuperating root cause: Capitalism's promise of sanctioned sex operates *in exchange* for services rendered, including aiding and abetting to murder, theft, lies, and rape within copaganda and the world stage interacting back and forth, on and on. It's all a stalling process meant to compel willful ignorance regarding the fact that the skeleton king (or Archaic Mother) *will* return, and with him greater and greater Malthusian tragedies spilling over into places and populations largely unused and unprepared for self-colonization (the Global North). It's important to remember that the Gothic is apocryphal on either side of the praxial equation, but also rife with paradox (with power and resistance sharing the same space). While, the heroic, villainous and victimized fictions all come out of the same chaotic, operatic soup, the difference lies in context and function within a half-real theatre; i.e., the chaos is something to acclimate to within false copies of itself: the white woman officer from the mothership stuck in the smaller life raft with the escaped slave, both boats named after works from Joseph Conrad's own canon[293]: *The Nostromo* (1904) and "The Nigger of the "Narcissus" (1897). In such close proximity with the monster, it's time for Radcliffe's unironic rape fantasy/exquisite to play out in operatic panache: even the monster's kiss is fatal; i.e., a black statue/lawn jockey with the capacity for sexual violence!

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[293] Cameron would continue this trend, calling his own gunship the Sulaco (an allusion to *The Nostromo*). The name game is a rather blind one, seemingly if only to credit Conrad and leave the ghosts of colonialism trapped inside the ghost of the counterfeit.

(exhibit 1a1a1h6b2: In the finale of <u>Alien</u>, the slave analog blends into the bio-mechanical space[294] around it; realizing she is <u>not</u> alone, Ripley initially panics and makes herself as small as possible, also blending into her surroundings. But she observes the monster through her stained-glass window, seeing the proverbial rapist she [and so many other white women like her] have heard so much about. Its tail is a knife penis, but so is its mouth—containing a "dick with teeth" and lubed up in 1970s, drug-fueled, psychosexual hysteria. So our white Hippolyta, facing the dark Medusa, puts on her chastity belt/anti-predation device [a "body condom," essentially] and goes to work.

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[294] Evoking Foucault's bio-power in a Gothic shipping narrative; the cargo isn't just ore—it's the alien as a ghost of old slaves that, in the eyes of the capitalist, are no different and continues to be smuggled into the Global North through the *eyes* of the ghost of the counterfeit; re, Hogle: "as David Punter has shown, 'the middle class' often does what we have just seen Leroux do in *Le Fantôme*: it 'displaces the hidden violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and falls promptly under their spell' with feelings of both fear and attraction towards the phantasms of what is displaced (Punter, 418)" (source).

During her own battle with the monstrous-feminine, Ripley reinvokes the settler-colonial spirit of the vessel by using a harpoon to launch the space whale[295] back

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[295] A colonial metaphor/stowaway that Jeff van Dyck—captivated with the original sound design of *Alien*—would allude to in his work on *Alien: Isolation*:

> "To help make a game that was as close to the first movie as possible, 20th Century Fox gave The Creative Assembly [team] access to the original sound effects, taken from eight-track and dumped to a single ProTools session of the entire film. The audio quality wasn't high enough to simply copy sounds across, but it gave them a base to faithfully re-build from using modern technology. "That article comparing the visual in the game to the visual in the movie? We were doing the audio equivalent of that."
>
> A sound that did make the transition was one of the first things you hear as the camera pans across the stars. "I used it in the main menu music," says van Dyck, "what we dubbed the 'space whale.' It's this weird bending WOOO sound right at the very beginning." He wanted to let players know from the start they were in for a genuine *Alien* experience. "It's so authentic it's actually got a piece of the movie in it. To me it sounds fantastic, and then we did a surround mix with it. Rather than it being echoey we have it spinning around all the speakers" (source: Jody Macgregor's "Seeing with Your Ears — the Audio of Alien: Isolation" (2015).

The structural perfection [counterterrorism] of *Alien* is only matched by its hostility towards colonizing forces: Ripley, without realizing it, is a colonial foil to the usual recipients of the "savage dark continent myth" projected into the stars; i.e., Uhall's astronoetics, or the settler-colonial gaze of planet Earth.

into the void—re-abjecting it from "her" womb [still owned by the elite, who will come to collect, 57 years later] and debriding the snow-white Nostromo offshoot [and persona] of its pitch-black ghost of the counterfeit—all in patently Freudian birth-trauma argumentation, too: the dark child trying to return to its "mother's" womb and Ripley utterly rejecting it by aborting the creature, the afterbirth symbolized by her harpoon gun attached to the monster baby she ejects from herself as one might a piece of shit: with a fart from the vessel's engines. Afterward, Ripley's post-dyspeptic relief is obvious.

Like Aliens' own finale, the duel scene from Alien is tremendously exciting and climactic, but also settler-colonial in its utter dehumanizing of the slave while humanizing the struggles of the white woman utterly enraptured with the spell of displaced colonial trauma: the myth of the black male rapist as "incorrectly male," thus monstrous-feminine; its sodomy actually enables it to breed in hideously violent, unnatural [from a Cartesian human vantage point] ways: through wasp-like, parasitoid rape and marriage to the metal hull of the ship, making it like the underground, hellish dark castle once more [we'll examine the latent transphobia/racism of Alien—and its intersex, rebellious potential—more in Volume Two]. This fear of rape is something that white women paradoxically recreate in their own unironic rape fantasies—a problematic trend that, if not started with Ann Radcliffe, certainly was codified by her famous School of Terror as something to emulate, then simulate centuries down the road.)

As with Ripley in 1979, armor was Radcliffe's antidote to chaos as fabricated and sprung up all around her to then comment on as she did. Except for Radcliffe, the mask as laid bare within the performance as largely without *physical* armor: the heroine's white dress and exposed breast ripe for knifely plunging (as opposed to for herself and her right to flash her tits without being harmed for it, or judged; telling a woman to "cover up" is *not* going to make her feel safe because it both blames the victim and implies that she's going to be victimized if she doesn't comply because she's surrounded by sex pests). Physical or emotional, though, canonical armor is sex-coercive and camp is sex-positive, but *Radcliffe's* cryptonymy (as we'll see in Volume Two) was complicit within her own gentile fabrications as limited to negotiating for a narrow group of people that demonized a great deal of others xenophobically for cash (not unlike Scott's ending (though he's much more genderqueer and Satanic about what he leaves room for). Radcliffe could have written other stories that were more sex-positive from the same veil of anonymity *but chose not to*; for her betrayal, she was paid well for her fictions and promptly fucked off after. She hid and let the gay man, Matthew Lewis, take the heat while she played it safe with her husband (dick move, Radcliffe).

There *is* a familial element to trauma and concealment to protect family members if one is abused; women, as well, will wear makeup to protect themselves through the paradox of negotiation when one is exposed and under the power of

greater forces that threaten rape as simply being a far greater reality for them under Capitalism then and now. I certainly have no doubt that Radcliffe lived under such forces herself, but her contributions were still sexist, cis-centrist and written from a middle-class white woman's point of view (the privileged author's ghost of the counterfeit furthering the process of abjection within her own white woman's fakeries and unironic rape fantasies/demon lovers: "I'm going to rape you," sings Blue Beard [or some such double of that character]. "Oh, no! *Please* don't rape me!" sings the heroine, crossing her legs; then thinks about it, uncrosses them slightly and adds, "Well, maybe just a little!"). Radcliffe *could* have written differently than she did, but chose to profit from it and hide clues of a larger problem in her entitled, liminal fictions; these Gothic, operatic "derelicts" and their exquisite "torture"/demon lovers, as we shall see in Volume Two, are still profoundly useful to us. That is, we can learn from them and apply them to the complexities of the Internet Age: Father Schedoni, as much as he was a caricature of a caricature, denotes a performative reality to oppositional praxis—that those who mean to harm us do so in bad faith, hide in plain sight, and have systemic help. The serial killer of criminal hauntology/the murder-mystery has friends of friends of friends, and the convoluted nature of their interactions combined nature and nurture to yield something supremely awful, of which the killer and victim is only a piece of the puzzle: the whole damn mess as complicit to capital as a voyeuristic, leering circus starring at the legendary monster as all at once animal-coded and undead/demonic; i.e., a wild, hungry and "feral" apex predator but also a zombie, vampire, werewolf, demon, succubus/incubus, etc (of which, we'd see come to pass with Ted Bundy in the 20th century).

(source: "'Black Narcissus' Trailer: Gemma Arterton Stars in FX's Remake of the Classic Film," 2020)

      This circus of pure, easily-camped artifice includes more than just the rapist; it includes white women looking in at endless, cheap copies of themselves frozen like dolls and then killed or nearly killed over and over again in disposable pulp fiction with highly formulaic and repetitive cover art (Gary Pullman's "The Covers of Gothic Romance Pulp Fiction Novels: Advertising a Genre, 2018). Indeed, a huge problem with detective stories (and other Gothic fictions: fairytales, novels, Westerns, etc) written by white cis-het women is that they're full of outdated, operatic clichés that reinforce the status quo's usual process of abjection. For example, the Gothic heroine is always conventionally pretty and threatened with rape because of it; i.e., they have to be threatened with rape, thus must look pretty, and "pretty privilege" = rape according symbols of rape and raped; e.g., the penis and the panties (the former of which *isn't* a universal symbol of rape and the latter of which—like makeup or a nice dress—can be worn for the wearer regardless of their sex, gender or performance). Except these devices become theatrically coded in canonical entertainment that demands the threatening to happen, specifically the princess be threatened by virtue of her theatrical status as "pretty" according to killers who are conventionally handsome, themselves.

      Bare panties or flashy makeup = vulnerable or hysterical; penis = rape. It's unironically psychosexual and instructive towards such a mentality's semiotics

inside of the same market. The problem with these interpretations is they become legitimatized artifices that ignore much more complicated realities: that you can be raped even when you *aren't* conventionally attractive: cis-het women, but also minorities, children, the elderly or really anyone who is rendered vulnerable by the system. Rape, then, isn't merely the silly fictions of a bored housewife exciting herself through problematic, *commodified* rape fantasies (re: Radcliffe), but her bullshit as generally prioritizing the struggles of white women by conflating queer persons/persons of color with sodomy and interracial sex as automatically rapacious; e.g., the theatrical metaphor of queer persons between compared to Ed Gein or his cinematic counterpart, Norman Bates; or to Jeffery Dahmer's own pathological compulsions (murder is not a sexual orientation) in bad faith—i.e., to keep selling copies of fiction, like overt porn, that fetishizes criminal depictions of queer people (especially queer AMAB persons as active deviants) and bad play/unironic demon BDSM[296] despite the comparison being patently absurd (similar to Tolkien's orcs, the female author needs the blackguard, unironic *banditti* or rapey "man in a dress" to exist in order to threaten the *storybook* princess with unironic exquisite torture).

Combined, such unironic fictions feed a larger cultural habit of guilty pleasure to enrich a small number of predominantly white, cis-het female authors allowed by those in power to build their own castles and walk around inside them; i.e., those who want their abusers and victims to look as sexy as possible, but also cartoonishly bigoted in sexist, queerphobic, and racist ways; e.g., Radcliffe's problematic enchantments refusing to take hard political stances, thus stray off into dangerous waters. Everything is built on a kernel of truth, but very quickly spirals into self-indulgent, Anglicized/Americanized vaudeville: sizzling with a highly controlled, vetted sexiness that is anything but the truth. Quite the contrary, it *misinforms* the public in ways that refuse to change how they think; i.e., by giving rape culture what it wants because the story (and its expectations) have become essentialized (virgin/whore and white knight syndrome). Like a battered housewife giving her husband what *he* wants (wearing makeup or covering up), such approaches merely preserve the status quo. We have to stop doing that and try to change things by threatening the profit motive as privileging a specific group of workers (white people). We can still have sexy women wearing red (below), but our renditions need to use these theatrical markers to negotiation for our own rights; i.e., to challenge the status quo's punitive, sex-coercive devices (versus endorsing them as Emeric Pressburger and Michael Powell's *Black Narcissus* [1947] does) precisely because they affect us but also those united with us in solidarity facing oppression.

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[296] Specifically the *written* BDSM contract demonized as Faustian *vis-à-vis 50 Shades of Gray* or the Cenobites from *Hellraiser*, etc. Often these implements are hauntologically criminalized and disseminated in mythic, harmful forms—a phenomena we will discuss even more in Volume Three, Chapter Two.

(artist: *Cutesexyrobutts*)

As such, we must continue to be mindful of how a gradient of individuals—largely unaffected by struggle—are constantly pedaling controlled opposition or rote entertainment disguised as class-conscious: Radcliffe's naughty novels and that of the usual white women profiting off murder fiction to brick over real atrocities with, but also the assorted nerdy stock of white cis-het men; e.g., Iron Maiden, Tolkien, or Blizzard's ideas of Satan and rebellion, as previously mentioned, but also the "polite ones" like Rush—effectively weird nerds who, through their own products and services, caution for "balance" or "order" as an absence of tension instead of a presence of justice. To that, Rush got a little too cozy with Ayn Rand with "2112" (1976) but also were dismissive of Dionysus as a poetic device; i.e., "Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres" (1978) effectively being the Nietzschean dialogic[297] of Apollon versus Dionysius, which is rooted in a highly classist argument *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche's *ressentiment*, aka class envy. This isn't some dead, outdated idea, but one that can be revived in socio-political circles that have no business entertaining it: women, including trans women who, often enough, are white; e.g., Natalie Wynn's lengthy and self-indulgent polemic on class envy ("Envy," 2022) as

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[297] "According to Nietzsche, the Apollonian attributes are reason, culture, harmony, and restraint. These are opposed to the Dionysian characteristics of excess, irrationality, lack of discipline, and unbridled passion" (source: Britannica).

something that adopts a I-clearly-know-better-than-you-do, centrist attitude towards her fellow queer persons, while simultaneously punching down at the poor [who tend not to be white] and non-binary people.

We'll unpack Wynn's enbyphobia in Volume Three, Chapter Four when we look at her and other NERFs in greater detail. For now, merely watch Essence of Thought's video, "Let's Discuss ContraPoints' Open Worship of Domestic Abuser, Buck Angel" (2021) and consider how, when I showed Zeuhl—a non-binary person themselves—the same video, they merely shrugged and remarked that Wynn had introduced people at large to the notion of trans rights; except, we still have to critique what Wynn is teaching us. Doing so isn't mutually exclusive, any more than camping canon in general is. At the very least, we have to hold such persons— white men and women, and tokenized gradients of them—accountable for their own bigotry and shitty behavior (which Zeuhl couldn't do with Foucault or Ian Kochinski, either) in our own creative responses. Indeed, *not* doing that historically-materially does us no favors; it all but requires (*vis-à-vis* Sarkeesian) asking tough, even sacrilegious questions[298] that challenge the shortcomings of authors generally

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[298] Just what *is* a woman, Angela Carter, when you write in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) "A free with woman in an unfree society will be a monster"? Of course, Matt Walsh's hideous refrain is normally bad-faith nonsense directed at us, but it becomes quite important when defining what a woman is (and a monster) when regarding the likes of Carter's platitude, but also Simone Beauvoir, Cynthia Wolff, Ellen Moers, or hell, Janice-fucking-Raymond (author of *The Transsexual Empire*, 1979—more on them in Volume Two). Second-wave feminism was (and still is) infamously cis-supremacist and white, and we can't just rely on a bunch of fancy (and highly problematic) white, cis-het female academics to accomplish the sum of all activism for all workers. Even if Carter wouldn't have been caught dead in Rowling's company today, she still died in 1992—one year after Michael Warner introduced "heteronormativity" to academic circuits, two years after Judith Butler wrote *Gender Trouble* and one year before Derrida wrote *Spectres of Marx*.

To be blunt, Carter's most famous works feel oddly dated in terms of what they either completely leave out or fail to define, and thereby supply clues to the vengeance of proto-TERFs like Dacre's Victoria de Loredani that Carter doesn't strictly condemn. As Brittany Sauvé-Bonin writes in "How Angela Carter Challenges Myths of Sexuality and Power in 'The Bloody Chamber' & 'The Company of Wolves'" (2020):

> The men in de Sade's stories exercise sexual perversions which enforce annihilation. However, it is the women in de Sade's stories that are seen as even more cruel as once they get the rare opportunity to exercise power, they begin to use this power to seek retaliation over the submissiveness they were forced to endure in society (*The Sadeian Woman* 27). Carter bluntly concludes that "a free woman in an unfree society will be a monster" (27). Due to women being oppressed for so long, when they get the opportunity, they can retaliate in the most extreme ways (27).
>
> According to Henstra, this has resulted in critique by other feminists including Andrea Dworkin, who have concluded that *The Sadeian Woman* displays a "complete disregard for the actual suffering endured by Sade's – and pornography's – victims" (113). Carter chooses to focus more on how women had an outlet to retaliate that de Sade had openly introduced. While some of his women suffered, some of his women indeed inflicted the pain. Hence, Carter rationalizes de Sade's work by saying "pornography [is] in the service of women, or, perhaps, allowed it to be invaded by an ideology not inimical [harmful] to women" (*The Sadeian Woman* 37) [source].

Again, what is a woman, Carter? And what did they do with this outlet? The vast majority turned it against other minorities more disadvantaged than themselves—i.e., from 1979 into the present.

celebrated/deified in their own times as "progressive" (when, in truth, their own fakeries spearhead oppression against minorities by excluding or demonizing them, the spear expanding on and on like Pinocchio's nose).

This includes camping recent fabricators and their castled, operatic throwbacks, but also famous, super-dead authors like Radcliffe; i.e., someone whose privileged, bigoted works weren't "just" silly novels (any more than Tolkien's stories or Cameron's were "just" High Fantasy or cowboys-and-Indians), but continue through their perceived wackiness and/or veneration to teach society various stigmas, biases and dogma within the capitalist model of dissemination; i.e., the problematic conventions of the canonical Gothic novel (and other true crime/murder mystery mediums) clearly spending a lot more time in suspense than it does actually getting to the bottom of things in ways that help other workers at large. Doing so reflects the kept stillness of these woman's lives while the readers of such stories gossip about it quite cheerfully (when they're not turning pages, or pushing play or holding a controller nowadays). Austen really was on the money when making fun of "the Gothic craze" in *Northanger Abbey* (1803):

> "But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with Udolpho?"
>
> "Yes, I have been reading it ever since I work; and I am got to the black veil."
>
> "Are you, indeed?" How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?"
>
> "Oh! Yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me—I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it. I assure you, if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world."
>
> "Dear creature! How much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you."
>
> "Have you, indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?"
>
> "I will read you their names directly; here they are in my pocketbook. Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time."

"Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?"

"Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read everyone one of them" (source).

Obviously the dialog isn't realistic (I asked my professor who taught me Austen, Laura George, if people actually talked like Austen's novels back when she wrote them; she replied, probably not) but its operatic, otherworldly sensibilities *do* match the zealous hunger of white women to read about other people's suffering in adherence to Gothic conventions abiding the profit motive (trust me; I grew up in a household full of reading ladies born and bred on murder mysteries). In short, Austen's Isabella and Catherine are written to sound kinda basic as a critique of Radcliffe's exact readership, including how they ward off boredom as middle-class ladies do: devouring the so-called "horrid" as a viral and proliferate commodity to ravenously tear through, *not* as "terrorist" literature in any active revolutionary sense! If Austen could do this to Radcliffe (in an admittedly limited, novel-of-manners approach, to be clear), then so can we critique the same champions of the Gothic fictions (today's and yesterdays') drawing a line of compromise in the sand while profiting off it: A soft-spoken stance of genuine rebuke is better than staying silent and making money through the same Gothic poetics: "In the end, we will

remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends"; or, the wacky novels of 18th century sell-outs.

To this, Radcliffe—a seasoned pro, at this point—chose to stay utterly silent for decades; then, at the time of her death, she further distanced herself from the French Revolution and Lewis while handing the next generation her recipe to terror and horror as she saw them in her own "terrorist literature":

> As Nick Groom writes (again, from the Oxford World's Classics of *The Italian*):
>
>> As to risibility, a notorious letter condemning 'Terrorist Novel Writing' accused [Radcliffe] of provoking a fashion:
>>
>>> To make *terror* the *order of the day*, by confining the heroes and heroines in old gloomy castles, full of spectres, apparitions, ghosts, and dead men's bones […] If a curtain is withdrawn, there is a bleeding body behind it; if a chest is open, it contains a skeleton; if a noise is heard, somebody is receiving a deadly blow; and if a candle goes out, its place is sure to be supplied by a flash of lightning.
>>
>> Groom notes how the letter in question explicitly attacks Radcliffe's "system of terror" for being monotonous, ignorant, and "contaminated" by "Monk" Lewis' horror writings—to which Radcliffe herself would never write another novel, but whose 1826 posthumous appearance with "On the Supernatural in Poetry" distances herself from the French Revolution (and its terrors), radicalism and Lewis.

In short, she expected *future* "terrorist literature" to be respectable and gentrified as hers were, effectively tone-policing everyone else's counterterrorism (including Lewis') in the process, but from the veil of anonymity and from the safety of writing beyond the grave. Very Gothic, Radcliffe, and very safe; i.e., exactly as a white cis-het woman would play her hand, getting her xenophobic jollies while basking the limelight of the British status quo *and* throwing sex positivity under the bus.

As for Radcliffe's uncritical fans, armor played a large role in what was being wolfed down. Like a debutante in a foreboding, lair-like chateau, Radcliffe wasn't really about camp as an active demonic intentionally stirring up class/gender trouble through "darkness visible" (for that you'll have to read Lewis); she drafted canonical feminine armor as soft, delicate and exposed, and *masculine* armor as that of classical strength; assertive, egotistical intellect; and direct, unwavering force (which allows for crossdress and makeup as something that man have parodied, but also celebrated and embraced in different cultures for millennia; e.g., Japanese theatre's genderqueer culture parallel to its heteronormative, warlike forms: *Jojo*'s beef-lord Pillar Men camping its maker's idea of Western canon, but

specifically the West's musical stars imported as action heroes with completely made-up magical powers). Radcliffe's concept of strength and masks is generally left behind in derelict, "archaeological" romances of itself that the author "found"; re: like King Arthur's coconuts from Monty Python. It seems unlikely but here they are being presented to us anyways! Like a Gothic castle that never existed, we peer inside their armories to see they're full of empty suits that *might* get up and walk around *without* a body inside: dresses or suits of mail, piloted by the viral ghost of the counterfeit to serve a warlike purpose (the process of abjection). Rape! Threatened modesty! Time to swoon!

Radcliffe, like Tolkien, in involves the "archaeological" creation of xenophobically stereotypical myths; they're written and then found, justifying "timeless" stigma and bias as mere historical materialism driven by profit, first and foremost; e.g., orcs or evil Italians as things to fear and kill in connection to the other side of the metaphor: people of color or actual non-British people (immigrants). Like Tolkien, her myth is created, "found" and then solved (through violence or detective work) to essentialize it as "the truth." It becomes a blind game to repeat for capital, a Murder Mystery™ of guess-the-cliché filled with superhuman foils made for the night's entertainment first, allegory second: sexy monsters, detects, damsels, demons; rape and murder as staged

affairs/problematic comfort food for pampered/terrified white women (first and foremost) to salivate over (a kept/"protected" class) as polite/vicarious hunters of scapegoats presented as "worthy opponents."

Fake or not, and with or without a pilot, masculine armor looks and behaves "hard," weaponized, and built for physical combat in the ancient sense; i.e., a knight's suit of plate mail and his materiel, his squire, and train of killing implements. But the performative truth is even more complicated: the serial killer ("the modern-day apex predator") as arrested, development-wise; or worshipped, adored and commodified in a modern-day freakshow designed to perpetuate the older spectacle of power as cryptomimetic—copied from the dead in order to look at and feel fascination and fear in the same breath. "True crime" and "true power," then, are perceived through largely staged affairs where nothing is new under the sun. Shuttled into the present by Gothic poetics, their rote patterns collectively reinforce systemic inequality through sex coercion as foundational to negative freedom for the elite (thus something they police through their agents): stalled resolutions and gimmicky twists that can be subverted in a million ways through sex-positive people's identifying as such; i.e., yielding positive freedom for workers to do what they like unmolested by the bourgeoisie.

The trick is masks. To this, Nick Groom (*ibid*.) says Radcliffe wore no mask, that her non-Jacobinical fiction (a Jacobin being a revolutionary republican of the times) painted an unmasked portrait of the tyrannies of the later centuries, but also bore no love for rebellion. I agree with the second part, but not the first. While Radcliffe was politically a giant wuss, her fictions—much like the rest of her—were mask-like in a variety of ways. She hid much and said much on what she hid with, but certainly made compromises passing as just a woman-of-letters. She showed how "words that hide" aren't merely blockers of information, but *conveyors* that communicate hidden truths through the paradox of exposure/concealment, inside/outside, correct-incorrect, etc; e.g., the oni mask that gives the devil away but suggests something behind the mask through the flavor of the wearer's performance. The meta-nature of staged allegory also serves to complicate the surface of the body as sexualized during class/culture war's endless fragmentations; i.e., of gender and its monomorphic roles breaking away from canonical norms and dimorphic, heteronormative enforcement of "correct" power for all those concerned. It is what William Blake called "the narrow chinks of [man's] being": the narrow slit of one's metal visor, perhaps (or Clint Eastwood's squinting eyes)?

Luckily for Galatea, then, service to Pygmalion's shadow play can be upstaged in a variety of campy ways that throw the Doors of Perception wide; i.e., the rape play as cathartic in relation to those performing it and why. Unlike Radcliffe's exquisite, murderous "tortures" and unironic, xenophobic "demon lovers," an aware Galatea can camp these same devices as conveniently left behind by Radcliffe herself: her milquetoast "terrorist literature." In short, we can build

upon them, developing a better world expressed in the same basic language Radcliffe used, but differently in terms of praxis; i.e., as performatively awake to the false nature of theatre as oppositional praxis that can be tweaked to serve worker needs *consciously* through counterterror (versus fucking off for the last 26 years of one's life; re: Radcliffe). The rebellious Galatea's physical body and labyrinthine body of work becomes openly cathartic as an incisive Gothic performance/critical tool whose corpus camps the canon of the status-quo heroes they expose by doubling them; i.e., of writers like Radcliffe as being part of a shadowy process whose own falseness *benefits* the status quo. We don't have to "go down on Radcliffe" because she's an auteur of the highest order. In pursuit of Gothic, nothing is sacred, including her lily-white ass.

In other words, auteurs like Radcliffe produce heroes (male and female) whose bodies, power and righteousness are false but also harmful or otherwise tied to a harmful process: the shadow on the wall being the shadow cast by "their" body as actually the Shadow of Pygmalion that always comes back! It's an evil double, a phantasmagoria. The comparative falseness of the rebellious Galatea, then, "breaks the play" through her own campy theatricalities and subversive deceptions; i.e., by often "playing along" *just enough* to surreptitiously occupy the role while simultaneously haunting it with hidden rebellious truths that find their way to the surface *as* shadows on the self-same wall: "We are not your slaves though you want us to be; everything you made is a lie and we are living proof, standing before you as the pedagogy of the oppressed as resurrected: demons and undead who don't exist to aggrandize your false image, your (mono)mythic structure, your Cycle of Kings. That's been done to death."

I'm continuing to use so many shadow metaphors here because one, they're vivid and consistent with my arguments, but also germane to the notion of theatre and dangerous falsehoods that allow us to play games in much the same methods as they would have been done thousands of years ago: with our bodies, but also with light, shadows and costumes on a largely bare stage. It also highlights Plato's infamous allegory of the cave as canonical *and* subversive simulacra to mimic for dialectical-material purposes. Whereas state shadows deceive to perpetuate state hegemony through unironic participation, the likenesses of class-conscious workers can denote countercultural fictions that, on the same stage, highlight a better world through seemingly inanimate things that spring to life in ways they ostensibly shouldn't. This happens through shadows, but also egregores at large as having all been done before in some shape or form; i.e., of the victims' creations foreshadowing the state's lies, collapse and transformation—of worker solidarity collectively rising up to spoil the fun of those "inside the cave" having bought into the canonical interpretation of a shared illusion. Our doing so is to be done in an informed, *intelligent* way—i.e., in a manner that whose movement builds towards the setting of these harmful fakeries aside in favor of worshipping new, healthier ones instead: to "start a thing" that *doesn't* lead to mass exploitation and genocide behind the shadows dancing on the wall. We gotta—again, using the words of Key and Peele—"put the pussy on the chainwax!"

The entire "camp map" is instructional towards these aims, but the finale tries to illustrate the revolution as a lived-and-breathed attempt by making our own

sex-positive monsters. This means it doesn't perfectly encapsulate the entirety of my thesis, manifesto or their orbiting arguments and theories (from the "camp map"); instead, the finale takes the manifesto terms that we laid out earlier in the manifesto map/thesis statement and returns to them—i.e., after having discussed canon's making of monsters through the canonical quest for power (as tied to Tolkien's map and Metroidvania) and camping them through a variety of counterexamples: our jokes, "swords," "slings and arrows," "rape" and "murder," etc. Returning and reflecting upon old points after assembling them is a powerful way to understand larger structures and patterns (especially if they're designed to conceal themselves through subterfuge, valor and force). It's what holistic study (the foundation of this book) is all about. As such, I've reduced the manifesto tree list as a trio of paragraphs before the finale. I will also introduce even more terms as we go into the finale after the list. Just know that if it ever seems like overkill, you will be seeing them plenty throughout the book as you learn to camp canon yourselves!

Crank it up to eleven!

([source](): Robert Kolker's "This Lawsuit Goes to 11," 2017)

From the manifesto tree (as a refresher):

Camp's assembly and production of cultural empathy under Capitalism happens according along the manifesto tree: **the "creative successes" of proletarian praxis** as things to materially imagine and induce (often through ironic parody and "perceptive" pastiche) through Gothic poetics; i.e., inside the "grey area" of **cultural appreciation** in countercultural forms that, when executed by emotionally/Gothically intelligent workers, uses camp to cultivate empathy through Gothic counterculture; i.e., by synthesizing Gothic Communism during oppositional praxis (canon vs iconoclasm) according to our manifesto terminology and structure—in short, its various tenets and theories**,** mode of expression (and assorted mediums: novels, short stories, movies, videogames, etc); creative, oppositional praxis, and their various synthetic oppositional groupings to ultimately foster empathy and emotional/Gothic intelligence by reversing the canonical, unironic function of the Four Gs**.**

On the flip-side, our would-be killers collectively lack emotional and Gothic intelligence; they do not respect, represent or otherwise practice our "creative successes." As we've already established by looking at the definition of weird canonical nerds, their conduct is quite the opposite; weird canonical nerds don't practice mutual consent; they endorse the canonical variant of "creative success" through their own synthetic toolkits during oppositional praxis. They endorse

- the process of abjection
- the carceral hauntology/parallel space as a capitalist chronotope
- the complicit (thus bad-faith, bourgeois) cryptonymy

to further Capitalism's crises-by-design, hence its expected decay, according to a variety of bourgeois trifectas that lead to the banality of evil; its vertical, pyramid-scheme arrangements of power and subsequent tiers and punitive exchanges thereof

- top, middle, bottom
- lords, generals/lieutenants, and grunts
- corporate, militarized and paramilitarized flavors

arranged in neoliberal forms inside and outside of the text

- bosses, mini-bosses, and minions
- executives, middle management/content creators, customers/consumers
- waves of terror and vice characters (menticide)

which leads to a surrender of total power during states of emergency that are always in crisis and decay. Empathy is the casualty of the middle class, who are taught to see the underclass as lacking basic human rights during moral panics.

In summation, Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism ensures that empathy/apathy and class character (unconscious/conscious) occur in oppositional praxis as a dialectical-material exchange. For workers, the empathy accrued is established during these creative successes, whose solidarized and active, intelligent poetics (a manifestation of reclaimed labor and working-class sentiment/counterterror) cultivate the Superstructure in ways useful to proletarian praxis: helping all workers by reversing the process of abjection and its canonical historical materialism (the narrative of the crypt, or echo of ruins). This happens by camping the ghost of the counterfeit; i.e., the barbaric lie of the West told through the monomyth, Cycle of Kings and infernal concentric pattern that drive the process of abjection currently used to exploit workers, resulting in myopic exploitation and genocide under Capitalist Realism while the elite's endlessly engineered crises enter into, and out of, decayed states of emergency and exception. Rewrite how people respond to elite propaganda and you can rewrite how people think, thus rewrite history by changing its well-trod, profitable (for the elite) and bloody (for us) historical-material track; in short you can take the state's propaganda apart, ending Capitalist Realism as you start to develop towards a post-scarcity world (the kind that is wholly antithetical to modern nation-states and their vertical arrangements of power).

Onto the finale.

"Make it gay," part four: the Finale; or "Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n Roll!"

You can always trust your inner feelings
'Cause they always tell the truth
Where did it get you, then your analyzing
Just do what feels right for you
If you take life as a crazy gamble
Throw your dice take your chance
You will see it from the different angle
And you too can join the dance

—Klaus Meine; "Make It Real," on The Scorpion's <u>Animal Magnetism</u> *(1980)*

At long last, we arrive at the finale to our "camp map." We've had to travel through Tolkien's treasure maps and Cameron's space colonies to get here, but also Radcliffe's spectral, operatic castles and various psychosexual, "demon-castle" monstrosities evoking the potential "to put the pussy on the chainwax": to camp the canon. Canon is propaganda that normally "grows out of the base and the ruling class' interests; the superstructure justifies how the base operates and defends the power of the elite" (exhibit 0b); camp is propaganda through roleplay as Gothicized, wherein our "camp map" camps canon by replacing its harmful castles, knights, and monstrous, operatic throwbacks with harmless counterfeits; but also emergent thoughts, guilty pleasures and wish fulfillment; and maps to explore. *Our* "treasure map" is drawn over older historical maps of conquest, effacing the linguo-material structure brick by brick *with* brick by brick. Gay bricks. Like language, their meaning is largely arbitrary and dictated by dialectical-material context, including that of class/culture war as informed by its own phenomenological back-and-forth.

As such, the "camp map" finale is both a destination and an invitation to continue. It is assembled from, and according to, our Gothic-Marxist tenets (and other pieces of the manifesto tree) making Communism just a *little* sexier and gayer through the Gothic's *cryptomimetic* chain; i.e., of actively and intelligently (through informed[299] play) camping the canon but also the ghost of Marx to *recultivate* the Superstructure and *reseize* the Base through oppositional praxis: the proverbial twin trees we've sought to corrupt like Morgoth did, in Valinor. This is not a singular event, but one that occurs through many collaborative acts; i.e., of worker solidarity developing Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism in opposition to state power over years, decades, and centuries. This book's finale, then, is merely a demonstration of one link consisting inside that grand chain of events, made with me and one of my muses (who I'll introduce in just a moment). It's not my making of monsters but *our* making of monsters, where we pull a Spinal Tap and "crank it up to eleven."

Doing so is not just a silly act of one-upping others; there's a—you guessed it—Gothic function to such excessive numeration. Manuel Aguirre writes on excessive numbers, "Wherever four is the number of completeness [...] a fifth element will suggest transcendence, or else disruption, of the human order [...] the third of two, the fifth of four, the eighth of seven." Silly or serious, a number beyond an intended amount denotes a hidden space or monstrous function; or as I write in "Survival-Horror in *Blood* (1997): the Weaponized Affect of the Gothic FPS" (2019): "Super secrets do more than numerically exceed the player's understanding of the space; they go beyond *Blood*'s ability to quantify its own

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[299] Again, some camp is blind; we have to make sure ours isn't, lest it become Sontag's ignominious "true camp": "seriousness that fails" in ways that harm us. We must be aware of what we're doing. The exact destination is less important than the historical materialism of things falling into place as society grows more and more sex-positive over time.

content, its own past." While that paper argued for campiness in videogames—
"However, *Blood* affects through an FPS framework; furthermore, its response from
the player is not driven by fear for fear's sake. It is nostalgic and fun in ways that
go beyond fear-and-nothing-else" ([source](#))—the same idea of the "super secret" as
something to "find" (to make and call it "archaeology") applies to *any* source of
hidden power in any Gothic space, including our own campy creations camping
older "castles" and their monstrous denizens in and out of canonical media; i.e.,
whatever is left behind, generally presented as Gothic fantasy in some shape or
form and often concerned with the selling (or interrogation) of power and sex.

As Key and Peele demonstrate, this interrogation can be directed at all
manner of things in a playful sense; i.e., to laugh at our would-be colonizers and all
they hold dear by enjoying their tantrums as rope to hang themselves with. The
proper way to disarm a Nazi, then, is to fuck with, thus expose them as false
(versus the perfidious bloodthirst of centrist neoliberal illusions)—e.g., [this absolute
chudwad having a complete shit-fit over pronoun inclusion in *Starfield*](#) (The
Kavernacle's "INSANE Anti-SJW MELTDOWN Over *Starfield*," 2023). Laughing at
dumbasses like him *is* perfectly fine and good, but there's also the cathartic joy of
playing with what makes them so dumb to begin with: canonical symbols of stigma,
discipline and punishment (codified beliefs, behaviors and sets of rules/instructions)
that we can reclaim from their carceral-punitive function via **performative irony**
inside amatonormativity (e.g., "Reader, I married him.") and various other
heteronormative trails. Said irony unfolds by pushing back against/making fun of
traditional sex operating as compelled labor for AFAB people, genderqueer persons,
and other minorities. This happens through camp (thus class/culture war)
personified in Gothic art; i.e., challenging heteronormativity during gender trouble
and gender parody as liminal, monstrous expression: the monstrous-feminine and
"corrupt," correct-incorrect as existing between different media types and genres
simultaneously:
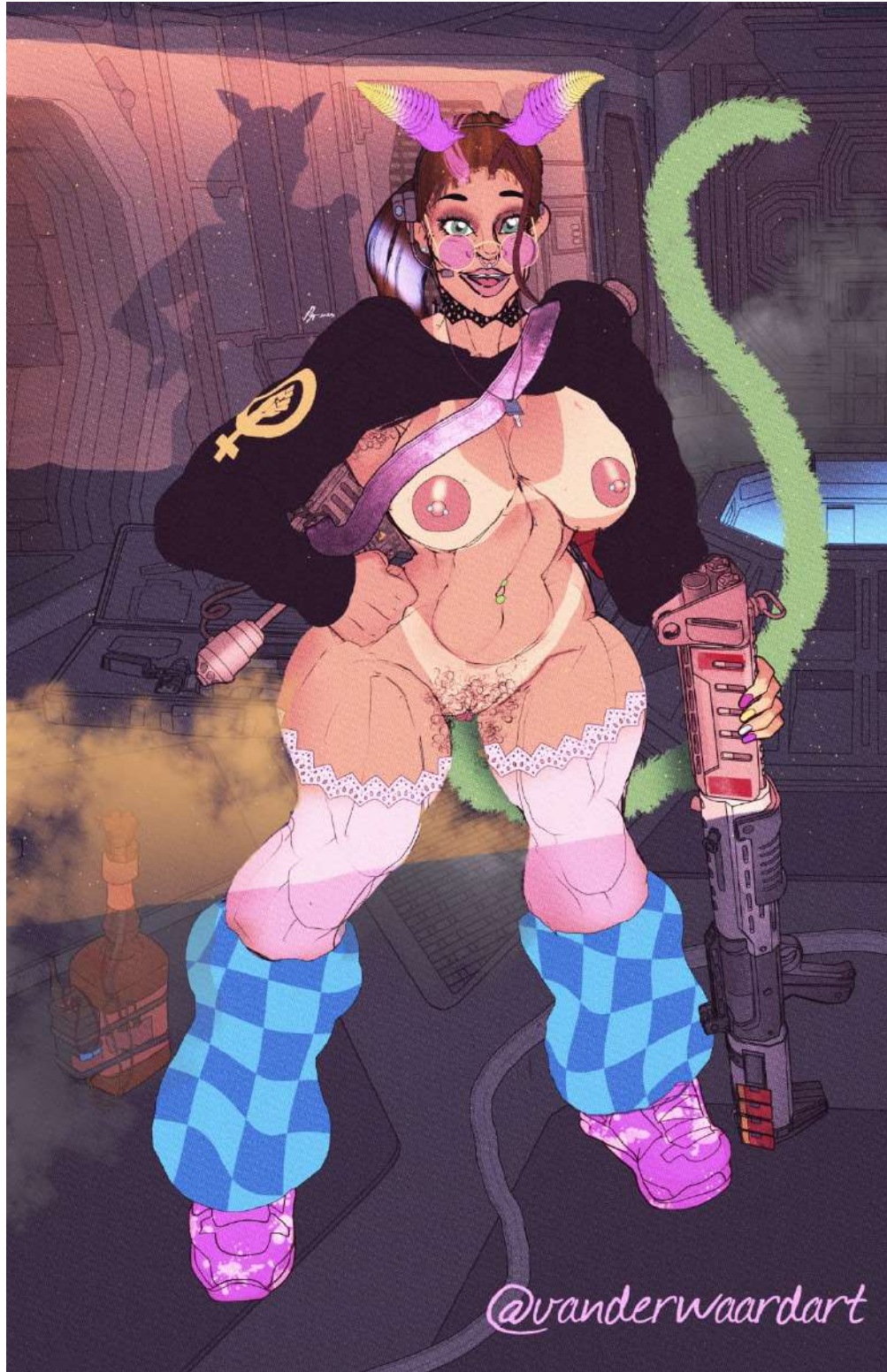
(artist: *Persephone van der Waard*)

For example, my drawing of Amanda Ripley camps Rip' far beyond the developer's original, intended vision, making her sex-positive inside the same

operatic space, wherein our crafty heroine survives colonial trauma using stolen guns and improvised weapons; i.e., against an invincible ghost of the counterfeit (the alien, lovingly called "Stompy" by the fans) as interwoven with corporate subterfuge exposing the so-called "Russian spy[300]" that Dan O'Bannon disliked so much: a deliberately uncanny class of mindless working robots called "Working Joes" that Amanda must also fend off, lest they choke her to death like Frankenstein's monster does Victor's bride.

It should be obvious at this stage that I am predominantly a pin-up artist; as a rule of thumb, pin-up art focuses primarily on a subject, not a space. This means that while I draw spaces to contain my subjects within (and generally spend a fair amount of time inside Metroidvania and other castles for inspiration), I actually spend most of my time drawing monsters while listening to music. And yet, as I am a creature of chaos, I'm also drawn to past "castles" that contain my monsters, making my own through bricks that are, themselves, full of castles (and deep, dark desires written all over their surfaces and subjects); as such, my chaotic personality is drawn to the power of sex in Gothic forms, to which compelled binaries are generally a hindrance. Simply put, I do what feels good to me according to how I think and according to the modes I haunt; i.e., the campy art/porn that I make with various other persons who inspire me. It's where I feel most at home; it's what feels *right* when making my own castle to roost from and populate with, assisted by monstrous code, music, humanoid representations and actual, living friends who put these devices and theories to praxis in their own lives.

To that, I find the Gothic—like sex—to work best when at least somewhat silly and transgressive[301]. The finale, then, is a collaboration between myself and

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[300] O'Bannon's fussy term for Ash the Android, in *Alien*.

[301] I've always been drawn to tattoos and piercings on other people. When Zeuhl and I first had sex, we were initially watching *Forbidden Planet*. They insisted their legs "were hot" and asked if they could take off their pants. I complied, but kept glancing over at their crotch because I couldn't tell if they were wearing see-through panties, had a really hairy pussy or both. Turns out, it was both—a fact I learned shortly thereafter when I looked over at Zeuhl to discover them watching me, waiting to see how I would respond. Intrigued by their septum piercing, I thought of a way in: I asked them if they had any *other* piercings. They said they had pierced nipples, to which I asked if I could see them; they obliged, whereupon I asked if I could *suck* on them. Zeuhl smiled enthusiastically and said, "If you want!"

While a little bittersweet now, the scene is still a happy memory for me—not least of all because it was a silly inside joke between us for years: Before starting the movie, I had propositioned Zeuhl, to which they said, "I'm not for closing any doors"; to which their joking addendum to the original answer would be followed up with "…fucks three hours later!" Even if they were only playing around to abide by the college fantasy of temporary rebellion and experimentation (whose principles they largely abandoned after graduation), Zeuhl—or at least my rememory of them—is a ghostly half-muse of sorts. Despite me wanting to, we never made any art together—just sex tapes and naughty photos. None of *that* is contained in this book, of course; but I did use the memories of them absolutely *rocking* my world to create the artwork and passages you see in this book. In short, what I loved about them lives on in my cloaked, campy reenactments.

one of my muses, [Blxxd Bunny](#)—the two of us demonstrating just how Gothic and silly camping the canon can be using a variety of styles, including rock 'n roll as part of Gothic counterculture: something to fabricate as a sex-positive, quasi-operatic force; i.e., a "creative success" of proletarian praxis (and all that entails). In Gothic stories' poiesis/*cryptomimesis*, the heroine is classically a prisoner inside a procession of illusions that promote guilty pleasure, often set to music within theatre as sinful: sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll commodified as displaced and enchanting within the ghost of the counterfeit as a continual process of fakery canonically bound up with the process of abjection. Inside this parading galaxy of damaging nostalgia, her trapped ghost echoes across space and time as felt through, and gliding across, the surface of the image, but also inside the threshold of Gothic poetics' liminal expression. She is sexualized even before the clothes come off, but Americanized in ways that yield these fantasies through neoliberal forms that have, themselves, become nostalgia that we can reclaim through our own figurative (or literal) "rock 'n roll" (originally an African American euphemism for sex): as learning from the past by transforming it using the same fractal recursion—i.e., its theatrical devices as deprivatized within the same mechanisms of capital. Capitalism will sell back to us what it alienates us from through Gothic theatre, which we can take, turn right back around, and transform right then and there: a reversal of the abjection process, humanizing monsters and sex work as interrelated affairs inside the ghost of the counterfeit.

Before we get to Blxxd Bunny and deprivatization, let me give you a quick, fun example of what I mean by "privatization." I could pick any rock 'n roll to camp, thus deprivatize, but I'm going with actual music, specifically the music video. I choose the Scorpions because—despite their breakout success and flirting with disaster using questionable (read: clearly ephebophilic; [see](#): Bobbie Johnson's "Wikipedia Falls Foul of British Censors," 2008) album art with *Virgin Killer* (1976), much of their music is decidedly camp-*adjacent* with a Gothic aesthetic updated for the neoliberalizing of the rock 'n roll craze of the '80s. This helps explain the unquestionably German band's popularity in far-off places like Japan; it was carted back and forth as a product: sin, sex, and rock as packaged, sold and performed in the Elvis school of "porn" through music hinting at the skin trade going on elsewhere in the same larger market; i.e., by a bunch of white dudes for a bunch of white dudes (the middle class):

(exhibit 1a1a1i1: There was nothing strictly "new" about the <u>mise-en-abyme</u> of the 1980s mimesis of a commodified desire sold as "terrorist literature." Its own controlled opposition was packaged and presented through age-old art techniques that creators then-and-now use for the profit motive, but also to make art that is profoundly anti-capitalist/sex-positive but still "of its time and place." Indeed, "artistic statements," "medieval expression," and "capitalist action" are far from mutually exclusive—a delightful fact illustrated wonderfully by Andrew Blake's superbly dreamlike <u>Night Trips</u> [1989]. "Vaporwave before Vaporwave existed," Blake's marriage of the medieval image was "joined at the hip" [so to speak] with the neoliberal variation of the "Sale of Indulgences" expertly presenting the woman as trapped inside and outside of herself. We see her bare body clinging to electrodes that monitor her vitals, with persons standing next to her looking in, as she looks down at herself, looking in at other people fucking her and each other while she fucks <u>them</u>. Its concentric phantasm is profoundly decayed and euphoric, but also unquestionably '80s. You'll know it when you see it.

Regardless of its chief aim, Blake's film won a silver medal at the 1989 WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival, <u>specifically in the "Non-Theatrical Release" category</u>. This makes it the first porn movie to win a medal at a major international film festival [<u>source</u>: Violet Blue's "The Helmut Newton of Porn," 2008]. It was porn and art-as-porn that made a statement that was clearly predicated on material conditions, but also love for the raw materials themselves as "dark," forbidden fruit tied to music, drugs and disintegration.

The Scorpion's "Rhythm of Love" [1988] relays a similar savage amusement through the <u>commodification</u> of said fruit, first and foremost. It relays the woman and eponymous scorpion as fused like a chimera. Onscreen, its main product is

music, but that music is relayed through Gothic retro-future pastiche. Amid the canceled future, our Teutonic knights fly in from outer space on their spaceship, hauling special "cargo": the Star Trek starlet in a leather catsuit! They appear like shadowy ghosts, taking to the stage while ghostly women dance and writhe all around them—behind the screen, "inside" the drumkit, upon and within the mirror. Like a Gothic castle, these sexy gargoyles squirm like animated stone. Of course, the band's bill of sale conflates sex with music as a silly-yet-serious promise: rock 'n roll as "sex music" deliberately fused inside a drug-like medieval portrait. Its recursion has been recuperated to serve the profit motive within a campy pastiche that undoubtedly moved monomythic merchandise in a great many forms—e.g., guitars, porn, videogames, movies, Scorpions paraphernalia. It's all connected, but debatably far more concerned with <u>selling out</u> by "rocking us" with counterfeit cargo [containing ghostly stowaways] than making any kind of statement directly and openly themselves. And yet that's the beauty of media; we can take what they did for a profit and weaponize it for class war <u>while</u> also having fun!

The whole meta-conversation occurs between not just the Scorpions and Blake from their respective doubled "castles"; it occurs between us on the shared wavelength, deciding what kind of art [thus monsters] <u>we</u> want to make while vibing within the same nostalgic, Gothic headspace and aesthetics [think Coleridge's "[The Eolian Harp](#)" (1796) but less lame]. To camp or not to camp? That is the question; but also: to what degree? Allegory or apocalypse? Missionary or doggy? Vaginal or anal? Maybe a bit of both while we listen to [Emerald Web's The Stargate Tapes \[1978-1982\]](#) [302]? Maybe just a bit of teasing while we sit around eating questionably-shaped food objects? The sky's the limit, really.)

Despite all their demonstrable flaws, I love the Scorpions because their nostalgia lends itself well to camp as living in the same shadow space as a particular kind of Gothic: the love zone. I wanna rock, baby, and fuck demon mommies to metal in *my* castle (effectively campy recreations of Castle Anthrax [below] and its train of "wicked, bad naughty things," all hailed by naughty nuns and false grail beacons; like, it's made up, but I didn't make *that* up). In their music video for "The Rhythm of Love" (1988), the Scorpions offer Cold-War comfort food (which would culminate with "Wind of Change," in 1990) adjacent to, thus crossing over (if by accident) into the art-camp erotica of Andrew Blake's porn world they were clearly peddling themselves. And if they were of the

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[302] Something Zeuhl and I tried once; frankly fucking to metal/videogame music (e.g., Metaltool's "[Mega Man X3 - Opening Stage](#)," 2012) is a lot more effective: it at least carries the necessary energy and beat, even if it often sounds rather goofy in its own right (Zeuhl and I both smiled like total dumbasses while we fucked to *Turrican II*'s "[Traps](#)," 1991. But much to my delight, they especially loved Amiga chiptunes regardless of what we were up to, and for good or ill, I cannot listen to that music now without their beautiful, silly ghost haunting me *and* the music).

(revolutionary) devil's party and didn't know it, we can take their sleeping potential and wake it the fuck up with our own monstrous creations. So let's do that now, shall we?

(exhibit 1a1a1i2: There's nothing "gentle" about canonical knights; their courtly "love" is rotten to the core [the greatest danger is a serious "knight" (cop) who feels "in fear for his life" and is protected by the system in ways that allow him to kill and rape with impunity]. Also, we don't see it, but Castle Anthrax is presumably

the "evil" double of wherever Sir Galahad came from. Its "wicked" residents represent "almost certain temptation," which real-life bigot and massive chudwad, John Cleese, must "save" Michael Palin from; it's very "bros before hoes," the kind of toxic homosociality that Monty Python was making fun of in-text about older legends manifesting in their own culture, but also their own <u>cast</u>; and later on, "TERF Island" would play out through the rise of "Radcliffe's ghost" [mirroring her xenophobia while also not being her] in total fucking psychos like J.K. Rowling's male and female, straight and queer fans baying for our blood.)

The rest of the finale is a collaboration between Blxxd Bunny and myself. We'll start with camping the pussy but especially the birth canal, the *vagina* and its biological-reproductive function, as demonized by "both sides" (in the traditional, binary sense) for different, often pareidolic reasons: for men, "vagina = woman and woman is other"; for (many) women, "vagina = rape and unwanted baby (which under the best of circumstances, can still kill the mother or drive her mad; i.e., **the Madwoman in the Attic**)." They see less what they want to see and more what they have been conditioned to see. The ensuing rhetoric becomes weak/strong and correct-incorrect at the same time; i.e., "as it should be" in relation to the classic Gothic "push-pull" (**oscillation**) as conducive to the same-old historical materialism being structurally preserved through play as practice; re: as a military detail/exercise that, as usual, is largely forged.

For our *revolutionary* purposes, "the devil is in the details." As a fixture of rebellion, "Satan" is out there waiting for us, *calling* for workers to rise up and take back what's rightfully ours: our bodies, our labor, our dignity in our own devilish deals. "Better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven," but also: "the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." We can do so consciously—to be of the devil's party and *know* it (unlike Milton) while "rockin' out" at the same time: to "ring hell's bells" and call others to do the same; e.g., to ring "Satan's (door)bell" as a metaphor/mayhap-happy-accidental pun for anal sex. Regardless, it's "the call of the void," baby—not of actual self-destruction, but of a canonical prescription's harmful "self" (the ghost of the counterfeit) threatened by its paradoxical relationship to codified objects of abjection: canonical sin, strength and gender roles, etc, encompassing the paradox of terror sex-positive workers run wild with. In short, the world may be a shitty place, but we can do our part to make it a better one than has ever existed according to what we create as camping what came before.

(exhibit 1a1a1i3: Artist: Blxxd Bunny. Bunny's bum/pussy, a book, and ACDC [all walk into a bar…]

*When dealing with canonical vaginas, the asshole is always nearby [the actual body part but also its colonizer/colonized regarding said part]. The asshole, pussy and owner's body constitute **the wandering womb** as ancient hysteria, which canonizes into "pussy," "demon," and "Nazi" as combined into some such silliness as part of the elite's bad-faith "joke": a "pussy demon nazi," "vagina-dentata necrobiome, "womb cave" or whatever else is monstrous-feminine enough to correctly-incorrectly convey and execute canonical praxis by closeting the **representee** and killing the **representative** [and vice versa]. The way to reclaim the joke, thus the process, is to camp the pussy, demon, asshole, and Nazi separately and together [and with the asshole—the "devil's doorbell"—being so close to the pussy as to be conflated with it during the process of abjection, the vagina becoming a conveyer of shit and the asshole of afterbirth, blood, yeast infections, etc; but also terrifying truths: girls shit—or as an admirer of my ass playfully asked me once, "Damn, girl, you shit with that ass?" "Coprophilia" in quotes]. Generally this is done in ways that people normally communicate as a social-sexual species: through sex, but also parties, operatic theatre [drama and comedy] and music—e.g., rock 'n roll as countercultural, but also oral and folklore-driven, thus something the elite never fully have a grip on [a potential for **uncontrolled opposition**]:*

"Moonlight is thought to transform some people
Into strange creatures to drive others mad […]
Does the moon [ass] actually possess such strange powers?
Or is it all just lunacy?" ["Moon Baby," 1997].

Regardless of how they come about, the adjectives and their nouns, when combined, will go from being seen as unironic, stigmatized sites of trauma, sin, darkness and torture, to having these things put into quotes; i.e., to be camped. Through our <u>synthetic oppositional devices</u> they become a joyous playground of constructive anger, stabilizing gossip, perceptive pastiche, ironic quoting and gender trouble/parody, and good-faith egregores—a revolutionary Grendel/Grendel's mom and their figurative and literal cave/home as poetically elided while remaining aware of its own previous, fatal historical materialism: as already colonized, thus something to subvert and reclaim through "perceptive" camp. In a dialectical-material sense, the mother is no longer a site of unironic, incestuous rape, castration and infantile vengeance, but neither is her "child." Instead, the mother becomes her own subject, and the relationship between mother and "child" improves well beyond any literal, familial terms: it becomes a pornographic jest with <u>happy</u>/non-harmful variants of "correct-incorrect" and "weak/strong" results [this treatment of "happy" again being lifted from Catherine Spooner's Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic]: as played with by the performers who pass their lessons along to consumer students through iconoclastic art as entertainment <u>and</u> education [an American paradox]. In short, it's a "stepson/stepbrother, what are you doing?" scenario minus the exploitation; as with all ironic, sex-positive BDSM, the "rape" is placed in quotes during subversive rape play. It becomes informed, invited—a means of combating its harmful, manufactured forms [manufactured consent, rape culture, Max Box/"prison sex," etc; in fact, all of the bourgeois trifectas] during a "creative success" towards proletarian praxis.
Canonical synthetic stratagems [destructive anger, destabilizing gossip, "blind" pastiche/parody and its endorsement, unironic gender trouble/parody and bad-faith egregores] must be checked in ways that cultivate emotional/Gothic intelligence at a social-sexual level, thus recultivate the Superstructure to incentivize degrowth [away from canonical war in all its forms and disguises] through the Gothic mode as employed by our own costumes, uniforms, masks and weapons as disguise-like but also <u>functional</u>: the <u>de facto</u> proletarian teacher, lover, dominatrix, soldier and spy all rolled into one. In doing so, the operative regains control/the ability to negotiate boundaries and experience catharsis; i.e., through <u>submission</u> within boundaries of mutual consent, drawn up by teaching others control/negotiation [<u>discipline</u>] and by playing with herself and inviting them to watch in ways that respect [thus illustrate] mutual consent through campy demon BDSM, kink and

appreciative "peril"/psychosexuality as an invited voyeurism/exhibitionist nudism: "Come and see" [or see and come].

[artist: Blxxd Bunny]

Under such liminal conditions, the exposed body isn't exclusively vulnerable; it's a descriptively sexual, culturally appreciative place for [a]sexual artistry and gender-non-conforming appreciation, play and catharsis of many different kinds—e.g., Bunny is **ace** *and should be appreciated, worshipped and loved* as a being to empathize with/relate to: as a fellow worker under the same proletarian struggle; i.e., to revive our* underlined combined *pedagogy of the oppressed through what makes it delicious and fun, thus relatable, to begin with; and something whose comforting, nurturing qualities make trauma—be it outside or inside the body through rape, war and mass exploitation/genocide—easier to talk about and heal from. The paradox of catharsis and trauma lies in how these lucid dreams and beautiful, psychosexual nightmares are always good for a laugh, a cry and/or an orgasm as added benefits that can help us relate to ourselves, society and our comrades in vivid, cathartically medieval, and yes, [self-]indulgent/masturbatory ways. You don't have to marry a comrade; someone can help you masturbate as a friend, and in a variety of friendly ways: with their hand, their words, or their photos supplied as sexual participation, or as artistic extensions of themselves they know other people enjoy with in those ways [even if they do not]. And unlike the Gothic heroine—who literally has to go to hell and back just to get some implied dick at the end—our "happy endings" can happen from moment to moment; i.e., in the same aesthetics of power, weakness and death divorced entirely from harm and enjoyed "to the hilt." Under these felicitous circumstances, what* underlined was *advertised as "mere fantasy yet better than real life" becomes half-real: A "Oh, God, is this really happening?" fairytale, storybook, dream-come-true [and not a boring one, either—it has whips and chains whose*

"death by Snu-Snu" follows the BDSM motto: *"hurt, not harm"*] *that helps comrades heal through shared struggle as cathartic; i.e.,* **trauma bonding**.

Bunny is demi-pan and generally asexual when performing sex work. I have ace components when working with them and our **mutual participation** *is ultimately asexual relative to our* **negotiated boundaries**. *They have known from the start that my girl-cock gets hard at seeing their naked body [I told them as much] but we do not play together. Any orgasms I have while looking at them occur in private without their participation. Any information that I bring to their attention relates to how awesome they are as a friend, one I love to draw and appreciate in my writing. This is not "a wasted opportunity." I can get sexual participation from other friends, and my friendship with Bunny is absolutely perfect as is. I love them very much and have nothing but the utmost respect for their work/play as an extension of who they are; it's what makes them so awesome and fun to work with and precisely why I write about, draw and otherwise feature them in my book as much as I have. As with my other muses,* <u>Sex Positivity</u> *is an ode,* <u>an apologia</u>, *to Bunny and people like them: "Including your work, all of you have value and worth and deserve happiness, safety and love."*

[artist: Blxxd Bunny, *who plays around with their body as historically-materially fetishized in fun, campy ways, including the bathroom (a classic site of rape/power*

abuse in horror films) as an image of ironic, appreciative peril/cathartic rape play. In the larger "bathroom" scenario, they film their body and its parts from a variety of angles and positions, all while covered in [self-installed] tattoos and "on fleek" (source: Max Kutner, 2015) makeup; like that curious and enigmatic phrase, they're "starting a thing"; re: Key and Peele's timeless and immortal (according to me) "putting the pussy on the chainwax!"]

In turn, this sex-positive trauma-bonding struggle and identity can be dressed up as needed and viewed from any angle or context one requires to synthesize, thus relay, the counterterror message as part of the larger action plan—i.e., of worker solidarity reified through the connections we establish and produce. For us, this concerns <u>normalized</u> social-[a]sexual transactions of exchanged sex-as-labor in artistic forms that we take back from the paradox of elite omnipotence and their menticided thugs' double standards [e.g., "God's Loophole³⁰³" for white, Christian girls having anal sex to avoiding sinning before marriage—the idea of sin largely an arbitrary one arbitrated by the arbiters]. Though our Six Rs, or Gothic-Marxist tenets of Gothic Communism, oppositional praxis becomes "creatively successful": sex-positive instead of sex-coercive. In turn, Marxism becomes more fun and funnier/sexier than Marx; it becomes "succulent" by "living deliciously" to regain what is lost, repressed, or denied to us by Capitalism's myopic, future-cancelling amnesia, including our humanity, dignity and power—to organize, reassemble and fight back with: as workers aggregating in solidarity [through riots and strikes, but also camp] against tyrants mobilizing their aggregate power against <u>us</u>. "'This is <u>our</u> mall,' motherfuckers! Our Black Mesa, companion cube, and 'cake!'" <u>We</u> start things/put the pussy on the chainwax, not you!" In short, the state's monopoly on violence and terror is not total; we have room to conduct counterterrorism as a vital, necessary process to our own survival.

The same collective and complicated <u>pragmatics</u>³⁰⁴ applies to any monstrous-feminine symbol presented as abject, "terrorist," corrupt and/or stigma-animal. The individual parts must be reclaimed, but also how they interrelate back and forth with/within themselves, their owner and their would-be colonizers as reconditioned by the revolutionary [thus transformative] cryptonymy of the worker-as-instructor's powerful, "torturous" code: "come here and get fucked, but in a non-harmful and, at-times-surreal, sense that contributes to sex worker rights/the rights of all workers sexualized under Capitalism"; i.e., "wake up/exit Plato's cave by paradoxically addressing bodies, genders and labor more broadly inside the cave as having been harmfully sexualized, dimorphized and fetishized under Capitalism."

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³⁰³ Deliciously camped by Garfunkel and Oates' "God's Loophole" [2013]: "Fuck me in the ass if you love Jesus!"

³⁰⁴ From linguistics: "meaning established through voice and subtext"; e.g., sarcasm and irony.

*The fear and fascination with an imagined <u>emancipatory</u> hauntology can drive the <u>reverse</u> process of abjection through a Galatea whose dark poetics—through their body and artistic expression/pedagogy of the oppressed—combats Capitalist Realism's **verisimilitude**/myopia; i.e., Capitalism's harmful narrative of the crypt stemming from the unironic monomyth, Cycle of Kings, and infernal concentric pattern as unironically consumed, thus endorsed and reproduced without irony through future, unironic forgeries. Our combatting of said forgeries occurs by dancing with the figurative dead, but also fucking them [a sex-positive camping of "necrophilia" placed in quotes as a kind of "rape," or sex-positive rape play with "undead" flavors]. Against bad[-faith] dance partners, our "danse macabre" can sweep 'em off their feet!*

[artist: Maurice Sendak]

The "wild rumpus" of the liberated Galatea's sex, drugs and rock 'n roll engenders the "creative successes" of proletarian praxis: mutual consent, descriptive sexuality and informed, ironic and culturally appreciative consumption during Gothic counterculture—kink, fetishization and demonic BDSM—as iconoclastically poetic. As such, they recultivate the Superstructure and the demonized image: of workers and of Communism, but also of the elite <u>not</u> being in charge and genocide not happening as a profoundly sex-positive thing. "Making it gay" becomes not "the end of the world" as a terrible event, but a ridding of the awful double standards surrounding "the end of history" as exclusively enjoyed by the elite [and their proponents; e.g., Coleridge tut-tutting Matthew Lewis while writing "Christabel" (1797-1800)[305]] but not by us; re: "boundaries for me, not for thee."

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[305] Coleridge achingly bemoaned the presence of Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* having been written by a MP (Member of Parliament). He looked down on the Gothic as "cheap" and base, like

In turn, this seminal and tremendous subversion becomes a thoroughly enjoyable thing told through the Gothic mode of creative expression in highly playful language that people actually speak, exchange and consume from an early age: through monsters, music and myths—the oral traditional carried over into written form [and those "in-between things"; e.g., drawings and performance art] as Gothically apocryphal. Good [sex-positive, healthy] sex-and-gender education and good play are things taught to children through said apocrypha, as are their bad [sex-coercive, harmful] forms. Historically-materially the parent dichotomy [and its sub-categories and orbiting factors] all exist in dialectical-material conflict—i.e., in material renditions of the Gothic psychomachy's psychosexual psychopraxis, wherein punching up and down theatrically express through subversive and subordinate forms: the Amazonomachia as class/culture war during art and porn as thoroughly monstrous [undead/demonic] forms of liminal expression warring with one another in paradoxical, doubled performances of power but also interrogations. Don't be afraid to scrutinize, thus learn from it, in a dialectical-material sense.)

To conclude this finale and the "camp map," canon isn't hard to camp; it just takes subtext and a drive to be oneself as part of a larger tradition of questioning canon. You have to be willing to realize that nothing is sacred (except human rights and the health of ecosystems and the humane treatment of animals), then be unafraid to be loud, campy and silly. As the "camp map" shows us, activism is taught through participation as playful: by having fun at canon's expense, "making it gay" wherever we can, from positions of relative privilege and oppression; i.e., by

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spitting off a bridge to try and communicate grand ideas (as Dale Townshend once told me in class; "*his* Gothic cathedrals were envisioned as holy and filled with light"—to which I replied that Coleridge was merely pissing in the wind [relative to the rise of impolite forms of counterculture]. Dale merely shook his head and grumbled at my contribution). Or as London Skoffler writes,

> Coleridge may have used Gothic elements in his writing, but he would have been vehemently opposed to this suggestion. He criticized Gothic literature, specifically the sexually charged story *The Monk* by Gregory Matthew Lewis, as corrupting and perverse (Townshend). So why was *Christabel* so sexual? Perhaps, as Ann Radcliffe says of terror and horror, it is because Coleridge did not graphically depict his characters' actions. Instead, he only hinted at what may have happened. Coleridge leaves a lot of interpretation up to his readers, forcing them to use his beloved imagination, to decide for themselves ([source](): "Coleridge's Gothic Romanticism," 2019).

In other words, Coleridge was a privileged nerd who—like Jameson's latter-day dismissal of the Gothic, but also Austen's parody of it or Radcliffe's "armoring" in more delicate novels—was heavily predisposed to prescribing *proper modes* of sexual expression: veils. Not only does doing so cater to the status quo (which will sexualize the veil anyways, or titillate themselves with guilty desires they can later deny but privately enjoy); it remains inadequate from a holistic, dialectical-material point-of-view (which Gothic Communism demands).

drawing graffiti-style rainbows all over it with glitter and crayons, but also embodying it through what makes us beautiful: the sum of ourselves reclaiming stolen culture, but also weaponizing stolen stigmas twisted out from the robber's vault of abused folklore. The vampire, for example, is as much a Jewish voice (through Mel Brooks) as it is an anti-Semitic trope and pre-fascist marker/Catholic "kick me" sign. The pedagogy of the oppressed, then, rises up out of comedy as much as drama insofar as satire is concerned—but often occurs through Gothic reminders that comedy is as much happiness and joy on- and offstage as it is a straight-up joke told for laughs. As Hannah Gadsby might put it, a "joke is tension and release" (and humor is utterly vital to camping canon; i.e., through its art history, which Gadsby specializes in through staged comedy shows). I think comedy abides by that in relation to sex and gender told through the joke of sacred things that, given to us straight (that was a pun), lead to great harm.

While the concept isn't foolproof, the delicious irony of camp is that it can fail and *still* work. If memory serves, *Dracula, Dead and Loving It* (1995) fell flat—felt like the Count going through the motions after a very long career (which, for Leslie Nielsen and Mel Books, was the case). Maybe it just doesn't "work" compared to *Young Frankenstein* (1974) according to *some* people:

Did you happen to read the latest issue of Entertainment Weekly? [Mel Brooks](#) said: "There's a great quote: 'Critics are like eunuchs at an orgy—they just don't get it.' I ran into Roger Ebert. He didn't like *Dracula*. He made

no bones about it—thumbs, pinkies, every digit that he had. And I said to him: 'Listen, you, I made 21 movies. I'm very talented. I'll live in history. I have a body of work. You only have a body'" ([source](#): Roger Ebert, "Movie Answer Man (07/21/1996)").

And yet, it *does* work because it's making fun of canon! That's the point! Bella Lugosi's 1931 *Dracula* might be queer-*coded*, but it's pretty damn straight-laced in terms of executing said code; i.e., its *unironic* treatment of queerness (the gay man threatening to make the ladies all lesbians: the "Carmilla-esque" bride of Dracula). The key to transformation is the attempt at camp, *not* the ability to cash in and "succeed" in the capitalist sense. Even if the joke doesn't land because the comedic timing is off, I'd still rather someone fail to tell a funny joke with good intent than land a wickedly funny one with bad.

I don't want to apologize for an unfunny vamp camp, but the myth of camp is that it's *always* funny. It's not; you can be completely off your game and still camp canon. For example, "true camp" is seriousness that fails, but as I point out in "My Least Favorite Horror Movies?" (2020), even this is a spectrum:

> For me, the most egregious movies are the ones not worth rating at all. Alas, these fall into the bin—a giant midden of forgotten trash, with little distinguishing one from the next. I find it far more productive to seek out movies others might slap a number on to qualify. Myself, on the other hand, will simply be content in saying something about them, whatever that may be. If a movie cannot get me to write about it save to say how woefully boring it is—or lacking to some other degree, instead of supplying me with any sort of positive reaction—then I might relegate it to the pile and simply move on ([source](#)).

Sometimes you get duds. More to the point, class war demands gender trouble and gender parody with an active eye for empathy first and foremost, not a stellar punchline. Even if the story *is* good, it's no guarantee of critical acclaim. To this, *The Monk* was *not* well received by (white, cis-het male) critics like Coleridge, who petulantly whined: "Nor must it be forgotten that the author is a man of rank and fortune. Yes! the author of the Monk signs himself a LEGISLATOR! We stare and tremble." Like, fuck that guy. Yes, fuck *you*, Coleridge; the unwelcome appearance of campy monsters meant that you—as the most privileged group (white, cis-het men)—finally had to say something of your ruined ideal of the world. Awfully telling that you took the conservative stance by bashing the fag instead of "the Great Enchantress" by recognizing her as serving the profit motive through controlled, thus commodified opposition (the ensuing chaos being blamed on gay terrorism, of course—story of our life). You're not a god and neither was she; I can prove that

right now by barbequing both of your sacred cows (and dancing with your ghosts—as Tom Cruise's Lestat puts it, "There's still life in the old lady yet!").

In short, empathy constitutes making fun of legit assholes, even if the joke sucks (e.g., Brick Tamland when sticking up for his pals with this gem: "Where did you get your clothes, the toilet store?") or the person you're telling it to doesn't appreciate it (the stuttering Irish bartender from *Boondock Saints* [1999]: "Why don't you make like a tree and get the fuck outta here?"). Moreover, camp can be whatever canon you wish to fuck with. Our danger disco can be an obvious example: the rock 'n roll vampire castle; or it can be scrawled over Tolkien's refrain (the hopelessly fake-but-popular treasure map bastardized from a bunch of self-aggrandizing Spear Danes by a British Oxford nerd/war veteran who, while racist and far from perfect in his own privileged voice, at least gave people the *option* to be gay through the medieval romance). What matters is that it's camp and that's a pretty broad canvas to paint your "masterpiece" on; better a sex-positive stick figure or a cute, unscary monster (whatever floats your boat) speaking in a valley girl/surfer dude accent than a sexist, rapey Picasso, academic or frat boy who thinks "green light" should be interpreted as "no means yes, yes means anal"; i.e., "green means automatic anal whether the receiving party consents or not." If their eyes are souless and dead behind the mask, blame Capitalism because it does that to men (and tokens) inside the Man Box' dark fortress/siege mentality.

Before we conclude the "camp map" and move on to our thesis conclusion, I have some closing notes to address; i.e., about language, including its usage and

policing of swearing and sex positivity as something to raise like a fist (often *as* a raised fist) against our perceived, "untouchable" betters. First, in relation to the traffic light system and Man Box culture: these things are all connected to larger socio-material issues informing these behaviors as instructed either way. So, while the universally ethical usage of the traffic light system might *seem* intuitive, the frat boys and chudwads of dude-bro culture[306] would abuse and dogmatize its canonical *misuse*.

Second, the same effects in language can be seen in things like vocal fry and upspeak; i.e., the lack of direct assertive aggression being seen as feminine/weak in a traditional, thus conservative and heteronormative sense. "Perceptive" camp, then, becomes an ironic lack of traditional male/masculine assertiveness; it's automatically camp by virtue of not being these things through *function*. The same goes for swearing and aggressive displays that can have competing communication goals, including but not limited to, videogames:

> There are many attitudes surrounding swearing and why people do it and who is supposed to and who is not. For instance, Timothy Jay writes "swearing and aggressive behaviors are a substitute for physical aggression." Building on that idea, I would like to additionally posit that, with people who play videogames—who henceforth, I shall refer to as gamers—such aggression can manifest itself in [any gender … Because common] options for aggressive behavior online are [verbal, but] performed anonymously due to "[e-community solidarity being] facilitated by [an] anonymity [that also] guarantees online equality" (Dynel 38). Yet such aggressive behavior can be radically motivated by [competing sexual and gender] dynamics once said anonymity is removed and equality disturbed (modified from the original [source](): Persephone van der Waard's "Swearing Communication Goals: Social Aggression in Homo-Social Bonding vs Sexual Aggression," 2016).

Beyond videogames, the same idea of competing communication goals applies to other forms of violent (usually Gothic) theatre and gender performance that videogames are built upon (and vice versa); i.e., in relation to parallel media forms and consumption. These performances (and their goals) happen in-text, as well as during the meta of the text as something to perform on various registers in ways that can be reclaimed—i.e., not just by cis-het people (which the above paper primarily focused on because I was still in the closet when I wrote it) but by *any* minority/underclass group who doesn't want to be colonized/tone-policed according to intersecting degrees of privilege and oppression.

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[306] Man Box has transformed into itself using an appropriation of surfer and hippie culture, the college Max Box of rapey (mostly white, cis-het male) students proliferating through the unaddressed rape culture in academic *faculties*; e.g., Foucault, Beauvoir and Sartre, etc.

Unto that, our third point is solidarity. My relative privilege as a trans white woman stands in solidarity *with* other oppressed groups against capital; even if it's from my modern-day version of Merlin's tower (as my foreword mentions), my friends still cheer "Get 'em!" as I take Radcliffe, Tolkien or Natalie Wynn to task. It's simply not worth it to venerate such people like they're beyond rebuke, thus compromising with the state and halting any attempt at being politically active. And to our *potential* allies, I say this: If you're really on our side, you'll join us or at least support our—like Monty Python's Frenchman viciously taunting Arthur and his knights—collective swearing or violation of boundaries inside our safe-space exhibits as allowed to exist in the same public market (*vis-à-vis* Milton's 1644 "Areopagitica"[307]); i.e., regardless of how badly it upsets or bores fancy-pants critics like Coleridge or Jameson (the former much happier with those he "allowed" to write; e.g., Radcliffe, because her romances upheld the status quo, hence its material conditions) or bothers official police defending private property before people, including sex workers as privatized by the elite:

(*source: [Fired Up Stilettos](#)*)

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[307] Originally written to the Parliament of England opposing licensing and censorship.

So don't be meek[308] about it, comrades! Swear! Be bold in your art! Raise your fist! The idea isn't even to fight back as the state does; instead of apathy regarding police brutality (military urbanism) and settler-colonial violence, sex-positive artists promote Gothic Communism as universal basic human/worker rights (and the rights and health of animals and the environment) while discouraging sexism and other bigotries with their own playful disguises. They raise their fists to "punch" Nazis and neoliberals—not literally in the face (not always, anyways), but up into their dogmatic, canonical *propaganda*. This raising-of-the-fist occurs by retooling war as an act of rebellion against bourgeois tyranny. The difference between us and fraidy-cats like Radcliffe is that iconoclasts *own* the act of punching (up, in our case) as a conscious form of informed political action; i.e., directing worker solidarity (often through billboard/graffiti[309] approaches tied to their actual bodies, above) against normalized violence and those who encourage or perpetuate said abuse—to show the world what fascists and neoliberals really are: complicit abusers who try to divide and discourage the love that holds rebellions together (across space and time, the ghosts of Marx [including Marx] channeled through us).

Fourth, as to the provocation of the raised fist itself, Nicola Green demonstrates how there are many, many variants of the raised fist in art ("Struggle, Solidarity, Power: The History of the Iconic Raised Fist," 2021). Its historical purpose is antifascist—pitting true rebellion against "fake rebellion" by reifying an emancipatory cause as something to sloganize: "punching up" through body language:

> The fist was used by the United Workers of the World labor union in 1917 and by anti-fascists in the 1930s during the Spanish Civil War. Students raised the fist in Paris in 1968 in mass protests against French President Charles de Gaulle. If you've seen an image of the fist on a sign or a shirt, it's almost certainly an uncredited version of a design by Frank Cieciorka, whose woodcut print of a disembodied black fist on a white background adorned posters for Stop the Draft Week in 1967. Cieciorka had seen the fist while participating in a socialist rally in San Francisco (source: Christopher Spata's "What does a raised fist mean in 2020?").

Nonviolent resistance articulates that which the elite historically frame as violent: worker solidarity, but also countercultural displays of active, prolonged resistance.

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[308] I.e., like George McFly from *Back to the Future*: "Do you really think I ought to swear?" George asks his son. "Yes, definitely!" the other replies, "Goddammit, George, swear!"

[309] The same idea applies critiquing the seemingly peerless reputations of famous authors like Tolkien, Radcliffe or any of the others we've looked at in this volume; camping them will be seen as defacement, its own sort of "graffiti" applied to cultural monuments that, if ever they even did, have long ceased helping workers on their own (outside of camping them).

Art prolongs resistance by holding up better than fleshy bodies do. More to the point, when treated as acts of rebellious strength, they lift people out of violent ways of thinking while still living inside oppressive systems that encourage mental imprisonment. This includes neglect and class betrayal at large as violent through the support of the system in sacrifice of worker rights; e.g., Radcliffe's own political moderacy and longevity through her novels/School of Terror.

(exhibit 1a1a1i4: Picket iconography is something that can emblazon protest and counterprotest for or against the state; those who use these symbols need to reclaim them from state proponents by committing their usage to movements that ultimately do not become recuperated, thus ineffective at inducing genuine socio-material change; e.g., Che Guevara on a t-shirt [exhibit 8b] doesn't automatically equal rebellion; it has to leverage collective worker action/solidarity against the state in ways that do not automatically preclude violence: striking and rioting. They're not safe, but they historically work, which is why the elite use neoliberalism indirectly and military urbanism directly to quell rebellious sentiment; i.e., Thatcher's proud, shameless declaration: "Economics are the method: the object is to change the soul.")

Using *de facto* reeducation to punch up, sex-positive artists bridge gaps—seeking to change indoctrinated people by bringing them over towards a more

humane and egalitarian way of thinking about sex, including its Gothic, campy forms. And of course, all of this is rather easy for me to say, right? I'm just a white woman and have relative privilege. Obviously, I expect workers to do activism to whatever *degree* they feel safe and comfortable, but also want to remind them: it doesn't take much effort to raise a fist (white people should do it, arm-in-arm with their fellow workers, and use their positions of privilege to speak out in ways many people in the world can't). And to all workers of the world: Remember that we're doing this for *all* workers, not purely for our own comfort; re: post-scarcity vs "equality of convenience." Everything dies and the state and its proponents are going to police you no matter what—to take more and more for themselves while alienating you from everything around you. So provided it's genuine and aware of its effects, any endorsement—no matter how small—helps counteract Capitalism carrying on as it always does. Your assistance needn't amount to "going native"/fully assimilating and joining us on the Satanic front lines (there is a price to that, a bell you can't unring… but also, we have snacks so come hang out); in fact, it can simply be getting out of our way (many class traitors undercut the legs of rebellion by actively recuperating[310] or betraying its slogans and symbols in service of cheap, escapist fantasies). Whatever you choose to do, just know that a hellish chorus of whispers and speaking and/or raised voices appearing in conscious, organized solidarity with those symbols will hit far harder together against the state and the establishment than one person shouting the truth of Capitalism as loudly as they can from the top of their lungs. Labor action is a group effort, including camp!

Like Satan, camp at large is very much tone-policed; i.e., treated by proponents of capital as, "This old, not new, not something that's sold as 'fresh,'" all while ignoring old theatrical devices like medieval puppet shows and bad voices, swearing and colorful metaphors, asides/speaking to the audience, Greek Choruses and Jojo's "tension" katakana, offshoots of Blue Beard/Medusa, etc. Capital is always trying to commodify, thus colonize the antiquated oral traditions of theatre, but through the drive of capital these invariably become outmoded, and we can reclaim them from canon as it crumbles, possessing the body when the spirit has fled ("the flesh is weak"). Canon can always be camped, and relies upon old theatrical stratagems and Gothic hauntologies, but also "talking funny" or incorrectly to achieve its campy Jester's affect. As much shit as I've given Radcliffe (whose "cow" hasn't just been cooked well done, but beaten, stabbed, shot, set on fire, ripped open, farted on, and doodled over with crayons, glitter and clown makeup; forget tearing her a new grave-sized asshole, she's nothing *but* asshole now—or, if you want to be less Matthew-Lewis about it, I've camped her ghost),

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[310] As per Thatcher's refrain. This includes putting one's faith entirely in Capitalism actually solving our problems. It *made* our problems.

I've also looted her castle *bare*, pinching everything I can to make my point. Thanks for the leg up, Annie!

　　As something to learn and perform through others (not just myself and Blxxd Bunny but *any* sex-positive worker), **activist** statements/uncontrolled opposition's "punching up" are often demonstrated by simply existing through identity politics as subversive/cathartic **roleplay**. A monster, after all, is a form of identity mid-struggle under oppressive, prescriptive conditions. Gothic Communism, then, seeks to alter our current material conditions (and their "stuck" pastiche) by recoding the Superstructure during **canon vs iconoclasm** as "sexier than Marx" (who, again, was always a bit dry) "but also funnier" (re: "chainwax"); i.e., sexy meaning funny if it respects consent by challenging things that *don't* respect consent. This means working in opposition to the status-quo factors whose comorbidities under Capitalism lead to genocide and us being undead/demonized and—unlike Leslie Nielsen—are *not* loving our roles in heroic canon; e.g., Scott Marks' "[Day of the Animals: Leslie Nielsen Meets the Preston Sturges of '70s Schlock](#)" (2022).

(artist, left: Henry Fuseli; right: [source](#))

Follow the Sign: Thesis Conclusion, or "Death by Snu-Snu"

Everybody is drunk
But something strange
Comes from the dark
An Old Druid arrived
Holding secret tales
The King is thrilled
And offers him a drink

Druid is drunk, He reveals a tale
Of a mighty King
Who fought really brave
He protected all
And saved his land
But the evil witch
Cursed him to be mad

Inside his castle
There was a glorious feast
But inside his mind
Hides a secret beast
Is he mad? The King seems to laugh
And the bard still sings
And plays his harp

— Daniel Heiman; "The Mad King," Warrior Path's The Mad King *(2021)*

(source)

The Vikings of legend really liked to get drunk and fuck shit up (as do their ghosts of the counterfeit, now), especially when their king has his reign and then dies: blame the monstrous-feminine as "corrupt" and degenerate, then bury your gays (and other minorities). Our feted second half of oppositional praxis, **iconoclastic/proletarian praxis** (which is sex-positive) is the unacceptable rebellion's uncontrollable opposition *disguised* as controlled opposition: the neatness of theatrical, thus scripted foils—the "jester" in the king's court (which straight folk wear and trumpet like bad vaudeville). We're the queer agent among

you, but also the gay zombie rising from the grave (making everything just a little more fun)!

Like canonical praxis, iconoclasm uses the same aesthetics, bodies, linguistic tricks* (cryptonyms) and color codes, but interrogates power and negotiates its reclamation through irony and subversion, not brute force as the automatic approach (though rioting is "the language of the unheard[311]" and remains vital to developing Communism): **collective labor action**/**worker solidarity** but also gender parody as a powerful, oft-oral (thus difficult-to-suppress) means of using our bodies, labor and creativity to subvert the harmful gender norms prescribed against those who openly rebel; i.e., ironic action narratives that perpetually push back against canon's unironic calls to violence, rape and war by transforming the bullseye into something the class traitor *doesn't* want to shoot when rioting and other collective labor movements begin to solidarize and occur (making the cop no longer a cop, hence a **class ally**): the figurative **zombie apocalypse**. To this, Gothic Communists use their labor, creativity and bodies to create monstrous music, dance, play and sex that covertly and openly fight for basic human rights (and that of nature); i.e., oral and written contracts that weaponize Gothic counterculture to foster emergent gameplay/good play (descriptive and *de-facto-*educated abuse-prevention patterns). To summarize the "camp map," we *reverse* the process of abjection and camp the ghost of the counterfeit, altering it into copies of hidden *truths*, not falsehoods, visible on the demonized surface of themselves: our lost histories and culture as previously destroyed by the state and its male action heroes/subordinates' copaganda and material conditions working in concert to commodify our expression through porn and rock 'n roll.

*Transparency is fine in **good faith**, but when dealing with persons who are acting in <u>bad faith</u>, we do not owe them honest or "fair" behaviors; in short, we can lie, cheat and steal whatever and whenever we need to ("all's fair in love and war") as long as our asymmetrical **guerrilla war** is **universally ethical**/conducive to developing Communism <u>while</u> upholding basic human rights (and the health of nature) to the best of our ability for all **class allies** and oppressed workers (which fascists and neoliberals do <u>not</u> do, thus should <u>not</u> be respected as people until they atone in good faith; i.e., <u>they</u> are **chicken hawks**, murderers, liars and **war criminals/profiteers**, and we don't owe <u>them</u> shit). We have **beards, friends of Dorothy** and **lavender weddings** for a reason; they will copy them to blend in and attack us through token betrayals (**Afronormativity**, **homo/queernormativity**, etc) so we shouldn't just dance in front of them and martyr ourselves, but outplay them using the same code (an idea we will unpack at length in Volume Three, Chapter Five).*

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[311] Source: Peter Weber's "'A riot is the language of the unheard,' Martin Luther King Jr. Explained 53 Years Ago," 2020).

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](https://vanderWaardart.com))

As our "camp map" also showed, our **subversive *Amazonomachia*** is "death by Snu-Snu" as camp, thus amounts to an emotionally/Gothically *intelligent* and *active* pedagogy of the oppressed often told through jokes to start movements (re: "a thing" such as "pussy on the chainwax"). It's serious-yet-silly and that's the point, but the point of the rainbows and glitter is proletarian praxis insofar as we function during oppositional praxis: to make the canonical language of war silly in a very gay way of interrogating pre-existing power and negotiating new variants during liminal expression; i.e., playing with power as a performative scenario to reinvent for various purposes:

"The straight castle was conquered by the fearsome gay warriors and everyone inside was made gay and had super butt sex. —the end!"

The above statement implies that murder, general mayhem and rape are functioning in ironic, playful forms instead of their presumed unironic-thus-literal ones: the rape of the princess, the burying of the gay (and other actual dead bodies—often "innocent, pure good" civilians and "guilty, pure evil" orcs on either side), and sacked castles razed to the ground, heads on spikes, cruel-and-unusual punishment, carceral violence, tilting at windmills, etc:

The townspeople had little hope
They were not ready for war
Fireballs make everybody die
And buildings collapse to the floor
The beautiful princess was raped
And taken to prison with cry
Angus McFife swears a mighty oath
"I will make Zargothrax die!" (source: Gloryhammer's "The Unicorn Invasion of Dundee," 2013)

There's power in the "joke's" ability to release tension. Except our praxis can't be "blind" parody like Gloryhammer is (whose proud stupidity is a white, cis-het male privilege) because the marginalized are going to be in danger regardless if they are actively segregated or not (Jim Crow segregation vs Redlining[312]). Gothic

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[312] Gentrification through liberal-executed banking maneuvers, deliberately denying loans and mortgages to force non-white people into poor neighborhoods (these maneuvers *can* be openly denied, but the maps speak for themselves—literally through the red lines that can be drawn across them highlighting the very-real and sanctioned divides). To this, gentrification has its roots in basic material disputes sanctioned within white power structures:

> **gentrification**
>
> The process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, typically displacing current inhabitants in the process; from a social standpoint, gentrification is the process of making someone or something more refined, polite, or respectable; e.g., Jane Eyre and Adèle (exhibit 21c1). For example, housing crises are instigated by gentrification as the "invention" of exploitable housing arrangements between owners and workers: apartments. The larger socio-material process generally intersects racial tensions in impoverished, redlined neighborhoods shared between intraracial in-fighting (*Boyz n the Hood*, 1991); or between different racial groups encouraged to divide by the elite through fascist/moderate, good cop/bad cop "peacekeepers" (*Lonestar*, 1996): the disillusionment of police culture as being functionally no different than highway bandits, accidental incest (stolen generations), and a border romance (it's practically a Gothic novel, minus the aesthetic).

Stamped centuries ago by Radcliffe's moderate approach to the Gothic, the mode at large is no stranger to material arbitration; its own disputes play out in Gothic dialogs that appropriate or appreciate the struggles felt within the ghost of the counterfeit—e.g., *Candyman*'s 1992 breaking of standard-issue (white) conventions to interrogate the liminal spaces of an actual location, Cabrini-Green (Cold Crash Pictures' "Candyman: Breaking all the Rules of Horror," 2019), itself haunted by an old boogeyman who frightens the endemic population (and white visitors) as equally unwelcome-if-functionally-lopsided trespassers: the dismembered black corpse with a hook for a hand and a body filled with bees (a crude allusion to the sugar trade having dismembered so many slaves, and now which has become the cheap "slave food" for middle-class workers policing their underclass brethren: white terrorism).

Communism *must* endorse sex positivity at a systemic level, which requires making things as gay as possible within ironic gender trouble/parody and "perceptive" pastiche; i.e., the intersection of class-conscious character with genderqueer theatrics that rescue canonical bombast from the Straights colonizing us (thus themselves). This includes allegory and apocalypse within Gothic poetics.

One subverts canon with rainbow-themed "sound and fury" (above) as evocative **perceptive pastiche**/parody that is tremendously memorable and fun (who *doesn't* remember "Time Warp" or Tim Curry from *Rocky Horror*?). It's not just dialectical-material brawn, either (though it can be muscular) but the awakened and liberated Galatea dancing in the ruins of a decidedly "rockin'" castle of darkness (re: the **danger disco**) and whose rebellious re-seizing of the means of monstrous production amounts to stigmatized identities that evoke various proletarian ideals and tactics; i.e., our aforementioned Four Gs, or four main Gothic theories in their *proletarian* forms (which are essentially iconoclastic *reversals* to the same nouns during canonical/bourgeois praxis); as well the gender trouble and gender parody produced during "perceptive" camp (not "true camp," which is blind) using genderqueer, often non-binarized (a)sexual orientation and gender identity/performance (-as-identity). All happen during our likewise aforementioned "creative successes" of proletarian praxis, specifically their subversive/transgressive liminal expressions' Gothic-Marxist tenets.

From art to porn, all collectively demonstrate how Gothic Communism, when correctly performed, cultivates empathy under Capitalism as something to develop towards a better system; i.e, through and towards our "creative successes" and their proletarian outcomes (which the manifesto shall explore, but also Volume Three's entirety). All become things to materially imagine as Satan or Galatea making their own sex-positive, culturally appreciative creations during Gothic counterculture. As spectres of Marx, these shadows of Galatea and their *cryptomimesis* cannot fully be ignored or destroyed by the state; nor can it be

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Similar to *Alien* and *Aliens*' white Gothicizing of the savage continent myth, the Candyman is a vengeful embodiment of settler-colonial trauma envisioned by a white author. *Candyman* was based off Clive Barker's short fiction, specifically "The Forbidden" from the collection *Books of Blood* (1985); Barker's ghost of the counterfeit tells the legend "of the 'Candyman,' the ghost of an artist and son of a slave who was murdered in the late 19th century" ([source](#): Wikipedia). Written by white/white-adjacent authors, such dialogs' rebellious sentiment can quickly be recuperated, expressing feelings of assimilation fantasy that lead to aspiring members of the black community to feel alienated from their own trauma when trying to play the white man's game; i.e., a dialog that plays out through a *return* to the settler-colonizer's rules and conventions that have become so familiar as to turn into our aforementioned guess-the-cliché; e.g., *Scream*, season three (2019) as adapting to a game of survival inside of itself by adopting the clichés during a fatal masque (which Wes Craven helped popularize in his own franchise built around the idea; and certainly was no stranger to cultural appropriation of the postcolonial voice: his white-savior schtick in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* [1988] lionizing white-boy Bill Pullman to beat up an evil witch doctor and exorcise the colonial territory of a black scapegoat).

recuperated to serve capital and nothing else because counterterror is the power of the dark gods that resides within all our breasts, but especially the neurodivergent, disabled, and marginalized the elite forever want to exploit.

Nobody wants to be enslaved; you have to compel that through force, by raping the mind over time and *en masse*. For that to happen, the elite need apathetic/complicit soldiers, which the underclass can disarm by cultivating empathy towards the oppressed in the eyes of their would-be, often middle-class oppressors; i.e., as ***splendide mendax*** telling beautiful lies for proletarian purposes from our *pandemonium* reclaiming the monstrously canonical, monomythic language of stigma, bias, control, fear and hate, operating through cathartic power exchange and resistance to the status quo's current harmful norms; e.g., black people reclaiming the n-word; women, the word "woman," but also "bitch," "whore" and many other sexist slurs; and queer people the word "faggot," etc. Reclaimed, they can be expunged of harm as a prescriptive device, used instead to rewrite the "dead futures" of Capitalist Realism with "archaeologies of the future"; in turn, these "elaborate strategies of misdirection" help us escape the closet and create a collective rememory whose Wisdom of the Ancients is meant to terrify crueler and less wise proponents of the *canonical* imaginary past; i.e., by rising from the grave, dystopia, dark forest, sex dungeon, operating table, wiccan pentacle, torture chamber, conquered land, ghetto, flames of hell, corpse pile/offal, or infinite void.

[creature]
We love you.

A few closing points before we dive into the symposium: We will invariably discuss cis-het, male proponents (exhibit 63b) of the status quo throughout the book, but our transformative interest really lies more so in TERFs and other heteronormative *cross-sections* within tokenized canon; i.e., the class traitor's assimilation fantasy that maintains the colonial binary by emulating **white supremacy** and **toxic masculinity** through **internalized bigotry** and **self-hatred** as a discipline-and-punish **panopticon**[313], one that perpetuates the status quo of dominating the monstrous-feminine—i.e., the rebellious slave or barbarian, effeminate meathead or thinking/feeling soldier, worker, athlete or statue essentially being property-come-alive and thinking for itself—through the rape culture of "prison sex": **acting like a man** as something to perpetually watch over everyone else within and remind them of it. Not only are the terms "prison sex" and "Man Box" synonymous in this book; they're performed by token minorities, including women but really anything that "isn't a white, cis-het, Christian man" wanting to assimilate, thus occupy the guard tower. All functionally become a double minority relative to the power of their voice for the status quo, but also against the status quo in proletarian discourse.

White cis-het men are often, then, **the Silent Majority** precisely because the system does not require them to speak in order to give them relative privilege while also fucking *them* over. Meanwhile, cis women, gender-conforming queer people and other minorities are often duped into conflating colonial violence with "being heard" thus "doing an activism"; i.e., acting like white, cis-het, Christian men by lying to or otherwise misleading and brutalizing the underclass (making cis-queer people *potential* allies to gender-*non*-conforming persons when personifying war but just as likely their jailors). This fascist ruse dupes potential allies into betraying thus alienating themselves from their comrades, then turning into monstrous impostors that blend *back* into the prison population to be able to kill for the state as needed (**union breakers/strikebreakers**); meanwhile their victims feel like impostors themselves for *not* fitting in/receiving violence from actual or *de facto*, patriarchal authority figures (traditionally fathers, husbands, grandparents, siblings, boyfriends and coaches, teachers, cops, war heroes, movie stars, rockstars, etc; but female/token abusers historically harm others after having been harmed themselves to prevent future abuse—e.g., the patriarchal matriarch or **Uncle Tom**, exhibit 38b2). The basic outcome is **impostor syndrome**, which

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[313] From Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975):

> The panopticon induces a sense of permanent visibility that ensures the functioning of power [… It] represents the way in which discipline and punishment work in modern society [and] is a diagram of power in action because by looking at a plan of the panopticon, one realizes how the processes of observation and examination operate.

Foucault applies the panopticon to prisons, specifically medieval ones as a tower-like, prison-guard metaphor for the society in which he wrote; but it can be applied to any form of state surveillance; e.g., the Eye of Sauron.

gender-non-conforming persons pointedly call **gender dysphoria** and **body dysmorphia**—i.e., the guilt, shame or self-hatred of feeling like an alien, impostor or unironic monster according to one's **heteronormatively assigned** body and gender and **naturally assigned** biology and skin color as stigmatized things to reclaim from fascists/neoliberals as *deliberate* obfuscators who, themselves, operate through bad-faith mimicry and systemic privilege, thus abuse.

(artist: [Crow Perch])

Clearly these things must be challenged during oppositional praxis, and we'll try and do so through engagement with the binary of class war and its **parent dichotomies** as simultaneously black-and-white (for didactic purposes, simplification) and gradient/grey-area (for nuance). However, because this book focuses on the pedagogy of the oppressed, I'll be focusing far more on trans, intersex, non-binary and **drag queen/king** (**crossdress**) forms of subversion and **regression** (and their intersections with other forms of **marginalization**; e.g., people of color, Indigenous Peoples, religious minorities, the disabled, and ace/neurodivergent persons, etc) than cis/neurotypical allies or class traitors. Our nuanced and complicated subversions aren't something I expect to go down without a fight; indeed, we're often blamed for taking the loudspeaker away from the "real biological women" of **first wave** and **second wave** feminist movements (which

have fascist/centrist ties), **Afrocentrists**, or the **LGBA**'s "real queers"; i.e., the steadfast treat nuance as apocryphal, as Bay puts it, having an almost knee-jerk response to new information that threatens the way they've been taught to see the world. But fools should *not* be suffered because doing so is segregation, which leads to their destruction *and* ours. If only it were so simple as waiting for fascists to self-destruct by following the leader into their own graves, harming no one else in the process; i.e., the fascist approach to herd mentality marching themselves off a cliff like scapegoats while the idea behind sheep "herding" is, according to Bay (who loves behavioral ecology), evolution from a natural-social process, not a capitalist one; i.e., meant as safety-through-solidarity by putting the young and vulnerable in the middle.

Like Matthew Lewis' cottage of bandits-in-disguise, this isn't a waiting game against polite opponents; it's one of life and death, pitting us against the ruthless skullduggery and cloak-and-dagger fog of war produced by a cruel and perfidious foe—one who would like nothing better than destroy us all for self-promotion and personal gain driven by cold, hard economics. Catharsis demands systemic change, not the scapegoating of the bandits and their overlords (or the individual authors of these things). This being said, they should *absolutely* be outed at every possible opportunity lest they become normalized, thus free to kill us with impunity: "An enemy has only images behind which he hides his true motives; destroy the image and you break the enemy."

This concludes my thesis argument. The last fifty-or-so pages of the volume are more conversational, meant to unpack and provide additional explanations and/or definitions I wasn't able to include or fully unpack in the thesis proper/"camp map." I'm doing so because, while they aren't in the companion glossary (or the preface or manifesto from Volume One), I still feel these remain incredibly important to examine, but it shall be more laid back; i.e., not essential reading but still worth your time. —Perse

(artist: [Ken Kelly](#))

Symposium: Aftercare; What *Is* the Gothic?

"I am the lizard king. I can do anything."

—Jim Morrison; "Celebration of the Lizard: Not to Touch the Earth," on The Door's <u>Waiting for the Sun</u> (1968)

Note: I originally wrote this symposium to be an extension of a much-smaller thesis statement (which now constitutes the lion's share of the volume). I have left the writing largely as-is, and it may seem redundant; but this tracks with the symposium as I originally envisioned it: to unpack and embellish complex ideas that I wasn't able to fully explore in my thesis statement (essentially marking the start of what we will be doing throughout the rest of the book), except now there's even more of a cooldown period. Put simply, there's more to recover from and reflect upon as we ornament and extrapolate. I had thought about leaving the symposium out, but I honestly think including it will be a fun experiment. While its ideas have since been hashed out more concretely in the thesis argument, here, they will be more scattered and fanciful; this should allow you to apply my thesis argument to their "soupier" conversational format: to visit the symposium <u>after</u> having read the volume based on its more dialogic argumentation (which is a good test for the kinds of brushes with praxis you'll experience "in the wild").

In essence, putting the symposium at the end is a reversal of the usual approach—"write symposium, then book," instead being "read book, then symposium." As you recover yourselves, I suggest trying to reflect on the idea of power as paradox and performance, wherein said performance's games, rules and play remain incredibly potent ways of interrogating and negotiating power yourselves; i.e., through liminal expression's doubles thereof, existing inside the Gothic mode's shadow zone: its monsters, castles and BDSM. Power and resistance occupy the same space during oppositional praxis. Use them to question what is present and recreate the world through your own identities and struggles to be free from Capitalism, Capitalist Realism, and its numerous proponents and enforcers (and remember that words and images carry power. If they didn't, the elite [and class traitors] wouldn't police and abuse them like they do). —Perse

With my thesis proper and "camp map" concluded, the hardest labors are done, and I hope the various "holes" of your psyche aren't too sore. Now we can let our hair down like Medusa and play in the gayest of fashions: with our cocks and clams out. Time for some aftercare!

As such, this symposium is a series of seminars (about five if you divide the ~17,500 words into ~20-minute parts: or 150 words/minute). As a disorganized tangent, it will be unpacking various ideas further than my thesis argument could—

e.g., "What *is* Gothic beyond just the making of monsters?" (we'll get to that when we discuss Chris Baldrick and Tanya Krzywinska). The rest of the volume, then, is dirty and cluttered like an attic, so I can't really explain its progression as I usually would in this book's chapters and subchapters. Instead, I will simply try to prioritize things that feel most relevant or important that also happen to exist between my thesis argument and the preface/manifesto from Volume One. So let's reexamine something vital to its execution that also strikes my fancy: poetics.

(artist: Jean-Baptiste Regnault)

To be clear, as I am a ludologist, Gothicist, anarcho-Communist, and genderqueer trans woman, *poiesis* wasn't simply a structure for my pedagogic narrative, like Mikhail Nabokov thought of Jane Austen's novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814), in *Lectures on Literature* (1980):

> all talk of marriage is artistically interlinked with the game of cards they are playing, *Speculation*, and Miss Crawford, as she bids, speculates whether or not she should marry […] This re-echoing of the game by her thoughts recalls the same interplay between fiction and reality […] Card games form a very pretty pattern in the novel.

Nor was it **echopraxis** ("the involuntary mirroring of an observed action") according to the kind of "blind" pastiche[314] that plagues canonical thought and proponents of capital; i.e., an empty kind of "just playing" sans parody that stems from what Joyce Gloggin in "Play and Games in Fiction and Theory" (2020) calls "a 'traditional' understanding of **mimesis**" (which we repeatedly eluded to earlier when we mentioned Plato's cave/shadow play during the thesis argument):

> Mimesis or imitation therefore, as one form of play, is an essential element of *poiesis*, or the "making" of art, which in turn is instrumental in creating what some now refer to as possible or imaginary worlds, that is, fiction.
>
> This traditional understanding of mimesis as an essential element of poiesis places mimetic play at a more distant remove from reality than even the shadows in Plato's famous allegory of the cave from book VII of *The Republic*. Related in the form of a dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon, book VII allegorizes the human perception of reality, likening our reality to shadows projected on a cave wall. These shadows are perceived by human subjects, shackled around the ankles and neck and unable to turn their heads to see the puppeteers who cast shadows on the cave wall before them, which they mistake for reality. In other words, what mortals see and know is merely shadow, and this is what mimesis mimics — not reality.
>
> Importantly, this version of mimesis and reality has long informed the marginalization or trivialization of mimetic arts as "mere play," "just games," or insignificant ludic imitations of reality. Likewise, the marginalization of play and its rejection as a serious object of study are motivated by the suspicion that play and ludic cultural forms are treacherous and capable of rendering us the dupe ([source](#)).

My own mimesis challenged these traditions. As I consumed and learned from older artists/thinkers (and their odes and homages), my own Galatean creations started to change, as did my way of thinking about the process of making them; my countless allusions and allegory became a far less traditional and far more subversively and transgressively playful mode of engagement with others—not just my family in the world of the living but also those long gone, echoing their arguments from beyond the grave: *crypto*mimesis, or the playing with the dead through *perceptive* pastiche and reclaimed monstrous language that is then used in place of the original context; e.g., queer people calling everything "gay" (space

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[314] Pastiche is simply **remediated praxis** (the application of theory) during oppositional forms. This book covers many different kinds of pastiche types under the Gothic umbrella as canonical or iconoclastic: Gothic pastiche, of course, but also blind and perceptive forms of war pastiche, rape pastiche, poster pastiche, monster pastiche, disguise pastiche, Amazon pastiche, and nation pastiche, etc.

Communism) or black people using the n-word for everything versus white people wanting to do the same thing in an ignorant or hateful context.

The same basic idea applies to monstrous language and materials as things to reclaim from their original carceral/persecutory monomythic functions (which we will thoroughly examine in Volume Two) or from covert/dishonest regression towards this old medieval sense of compelled BDSM and lack of consent/trust; e.g., witches as traditional scapegoats (exhibit 83a) versus regressive "cop-like" variants (exhibit 98a3) that iconoclasts subvert through various sex-positive BDSM rituals, ironic peril and Gothic counterculture (exhibit 98a1a); i.e., as a general practice that turns the death fetish or state officer/thug into something *other* than a fascist-in-disguise through transformative context (e.g., subversions of Shelly Bombshell or Zarya, exhibits 100c2b and 111b). This Gothic-Communist paradigm shift reclaims the unironic imagery at all levels of itself—of actual, non-consenting and uninformed enslavement, torture and rape through their associate handcuffs, leather uniforms, whips or collars; but also insignias and color codes: green and purple as the colors of envy and stigma (exhibits 41b, 94a3) but also black-and-red as pre-fascist (the Roman master/slave dynamic), anti-Catholic dogma (exhibit 11b5) eventually applied to 20th century fascists and Communists during and after WW2 in videogames (exhibit 41i/j) and other neoliberal propaganda (Vecna's *D&D* Red Scare schtick: exhibit 39a2). All exist together in the Internet Age along with their assigned roles—as subverted in liminal, transgressive, formerly exploitative ways (exhibits 9b2, 101c2) that often yield a campy (exhibits 10a) or schlocky flavor married to whatever unironic forms they're lampooning (exhibit 47b2). This exists in duality *and* opposition as a rhetorical device—a conversation, but also an argument.

For example, you've probably noticed said duality in how I alternate between labels or play around or within them when it suits me (which is often). The reason is to accommodate their natural-material functions. Language is fluid in its natural, uncoerced state; there is no "natural order" of the state's design, no "transcendental signified" that "just happens" to favor the profit motive. *That* is installed and enforced through a particular belief system and portioning of codified space and behaviors useful to the elite. Instead things flow in and out of each other quite organically.

Regarding this organic relationship, I've made a little heads-up guide. It includes a few useful reading-comprehension pointers when exploring my work, which I'll also include in Volumes One, Two and Three (indented for clarity):

We'll be code-switching a lot throughout this volume when talking about some very chaotic things. So try to remember that function determines function, not aesthetics. Also remember your *parent dichotomies*—bourgeois/canon/sex-coercive vs proletariat/iconoclasm/sex-positive—as well as your various *synonyms/antonyms*, *orbiting factors* and *related terminologies* that follow in and out of each other during oppositional praxis; i.e., the productive idea of power as paradox and performance, wherein said performance's games, rules and play remain incredibly potent ways of interrogating and negotiating power yourselves; i.e., through liminal expression's doubles thereof, existing inside the Gothic mode's shadow zone: (sequenced here in no particular order):

the essentialized connecting of biology (sex organs and skin color) to gender and both of these things to the mythic structure as heteronormative/dimorphic, thus alienizing (to weird canonical nerds and everyone else) in service of the state/profit motive > a lack of dialectical-material analysis > willful ignorance/"rose-tinted glasses" to achieve class dormancy through blind "darkness visible" > Capitalism's monomyth/good war > Beowulf, Rambo > the infernal concentric pattern/Cycle of Kings and Shadow of Pygmalion > carceral hauntology/dystopia (myopic chronotopes/Capitalist Realism) > good

cop, bad cop or cops and victims > assimilation > class traitor/weird canonical nerd > Man Box/rape culture > state espionage and surveillance/complicit cryptonomy > babyface/heel kayfabe > war hauntology > subjugated Amazon/mythical copaganda (female Beowulf, Rambo) > TERF > unironic ghosts of the counterfeit and the process of abjection's symbols of harm > profit, rinse and repeat

versus

the separation of gender and sexuality from each other and both of these things from the heteronormative mythic structure; i.e., Gothic Communism's monomorphic subversion of all of the things listed above through class war as enacted by our own weird iconoclastic nerds > spectres of Marx > deliberately active, class-conscious/campy "darkness visible" and dialectical-material scrutiny > shadow of Galatea > pro-labor espionage, revolutionary cryptonomy, emancipatory hauntology/parallel societies and chronotopes > reverse abjection > the pedagogy of the oppressed > reclaimed symbols of harm > post-scarcity

As a point of principle, I've left out some stuff and these lists in the heads-up are asymmetrical; also, I'm not going to try and include or string everything into a grand necklace/dichotomy that I then trot out each and every time a given topic comes up; i.e., the oppositional praxis of canon vs iconoclasm (as explored during the body of the thesis volume). Instead, I'm using them from a position of internalized intuition that I expect readers to learn, including relating them to *parallel* parent dichotomies like sex-positive vs sex-coercive, canon vs iconoclasm, bourgeois vs proletarian, as well as their orbiting factors—e.g., iconoclasm emphasizing mutual consent, informed consumption, *de facto* education, descriptive sexuality and cultural appreciation as things to materially imagine (often through ironic parody and "perceptive" pastiche) in subversive/transgressive Gothic poetics that challenge their canonical doubles during oppositional praxis.

If you can't parse all of this intuitively then I suggest you familiarize yourself with the thesis proper and "camp map" from the thesis volume (which is available on my website; click here to access my website's 1-page promo, which contains all relevant download links/information regarding my book).

The above heads-up guide should be useful, I think, as the organic nature of existence and human society and language is aptly symbolized and demonstrated by chaos. It also, in Gothic circles, elides the organic and inorganic in ways that

confound the Cartesian Revolution's chief aim: divide and conquer, map and plunder the land and its inhabits, all while quaking at the witch as an object of revenge (in both directions) or the pumpkin rotting after the harvest as intimations of Capitalism's own superstitious mortality. The occupying army is both weak and strong.

(exhibit 1a1a2b: Artist: [Karl Kopinski](#). "Insect politics" isn't just society treating people like bugs to optimistically squash in favor of the state. However, this is something I write about in "Military Optimism" so I wanted to share it, here:

"Specialization is for insects," Heinlein famously wrote, and his characters weren't always military. But they could do anything asked of them because they were competent. Competency isn't just a mindset, or a character's natural ability. More often than not, Heinlein's heroes had access to better equipment—weapons, to be sure, but also the power suit, which served as an extension of their organic bodies (which, in turn, were a hive-like extension of the state). Heinlein canonized the power suit in 1959 with Starship Troopers, which Cameron required his actors to read when filming Aliens. By doing so, Cameron was emulating the US military, [which had already added](#)

the book to their reading list. Hardly surprising considering Heinlein's novel preached military values as essentialized, spearheading them through the mind of competent soldier narrator, Juan Rico.

In this future, there is no room for messy human politics. Just "insect politics." While so-called "actual" bugs are demonized as something to attack, the desire to openly emulate them is societal. Occasionally this desire rises to the surface. In Kafka's Metamorphosis (1915), Gregor Samsa turns into a "monstrous vermin" only because his family and friends are primed to scapegoat him. Society has already made them insects. Likewise, Heinlein's Mobile Infantry is a giant military machine, operated smoothly by competent men who can't think for themselves. All according to plan.

And yet, while competency is a headspace, the suit makes the soldier. Otherwise, they wouldn't use it. Cameron illustrated both points—competency and weaponry—by having Ripley use her power loader as an improvised weapon to defeat the Alien Queen. The irony of Aliens is that Ripley and the marines are just as bug-like, from a military standpoint, as the xenomorphs. But Cameron's military optimism—injecting Heinlein into Ridley Scott's Promethean, astronoetic[315] universe—is a kind of cognitive dissonance that ignores the comparison. Undeniably attractive, this myth of the realized individual is used by the state to trick the next generation: You can succeed where others have failed. In truth, these recruits are expendable assets serving the will of the state—a state whose eventual collapse is inevitable.

In the meantime, Ripley will do anything to survive. She puts on the suit and evolves, becoming a bug to fight a bug. But she was already a "bug," attacking the xenomorphs with unparalleled hostility. It's worth noting that she wasn't a soldier ("I'm not a soldier"); she's a civilian whose hawkish attitudes mirror the desire for revenge fostered by Americans under Reagan's rule (source).

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[315] From Michael Uhall, whose concept of "astronoetics" is a celestial, intelligible presence ["Astronoetic Cinema," 2019]. Lovecraft would liken it to cosmic nihilism, or the cosmos' disinterest in the settler-colonial gaze of planet Earth/the human conquest of space according to aspiring capitalists tied to scientific communities; e.g., Trace and Athetos from *Axiom Verge*. As I write in Volume Two, exhibit 40c: "Unlike Samus, who is a tall, strong girl boss in a suit of space armor, Trace is a callow, physically awkward nerd. Moreover, he is continuously dwarfed by his alien surroundings—much like the Romantic facing the fog of the increasingly alien world beyond civilization, except it's a patently *human* cruelty projected into outer space."

Hollow Knight takes an even more heretical position than Ripley [or Samus] do. The state is not automatically good; if anything, its touted "superiority" is checked by madness and decay during the return to a natural order following the king's death: the hideous flagellation and bondage of the king's greatest knight when faced with the wrath of the secret Medusa, the Radiance operating as the Madwoman in the Attic; i.e., of the patriarch's mind, but also the kingdom as an extension of their mind having decayed and spilling out of itself in smaller offshoots[316]: the spirit of revenge inside a rotting corpse proliferating the necrobiome in smaller fragmentations of itself—i.e., the kingly insects disperse and are invaded by the queenly fungus viewed as unwelcome, deathly and parasitoid [the Archaic Mother treatment not dissimilar to the Alien Queen or Ungoliant]. Like a glowing mushroom, her deathly blossoms spill out everywhere in profound, eerie splendor that the king's gambit seeks to contain and deny like the lepers from Foucault's Discipline and Punish—i.e., the tower of the watcher hammering into the earth like a spike, encapsulating the queenly infection as a kind of female disease/wandering womb: "Girls have cooties!" Again, it's honestly rather fun being Athena's Aegis, seeing <u>men</u> lose their minds over something as regular and trivial as death.)*

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[316] Think Fabien Vehlmann and Kerascoët's *Beautiful Darkness* (2014): A young girl dies in a forest, and out of her brain spill little homunculi. In the Gothic tradition, it's very much an anti-fairytale or heroic quest. The girl dies at the start, and all her little selves are subsequently consumed by nature in an utterly brutal marriage between *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). It's super fucked up, but for visual samples, consider Chris Gavaler's "It's Rare to Find Horror Executed so Perfectly in Graphic Fiction," 2019).

Escape from abuse goes hand-in-hand with transformation, but follows a kind of mythic structure in oral traditions carried over into written and/or theatrical forms. For example, in classical Greek myth Apollo pursuits Daphne to rape her and she, to escape his rude courtship, turns into a tree. Escape, for the Gothic Communist, is to transform less into a stupid tree (which can be chopped down) and more into something that *terrifies* our foes beyond the capacity for rational thought, thus losing the capacity for enslavement (of themselves and us to the same system); to "make things gay" is to follow a basic function of language in the natural-material world, one that spreads an idea through chaos and symbols of chaos: death, decay and continuation that together represent "transformation" mid-senescence and postmortem. As a necrobiome full of decomposers, metamorphs and state-supplied stigma, our goal is to make others like us, who embody, practice and represent what we stand/fight for—i.e., to turn other people into monsters *sympathetic* to/emblematic of our plight and lost/imperiled humanity through context first and foremost, not raw aesthetics. "Become one with the mushroom and the insect," my dudes. It's all from a sample of one; we're all workers from the same clade; i.e., "butterflies and crustaceans with a common ancestor grouping us in the same clade, pancrustacea" (Clint's Reptiles' "[Butterflies Are Crustaceans, But It Gets Worse…](#)" 2023). As usual, the dividing factor is class/culture war. Cartesian stigma, phobia and bias are meant to demonize one side to feed the profit motive, but the nightmare for Communists can take on a joyous function divorced from said motive: the "death" of metamorphosis, of changing shape into something new relative to our oppression challenging, thus incentivizing us to do so. In turn, when divorced from overt, functional morality and value judgements, organisms enter a stage of constant evolution—of change from one thing into something else. To this, general-place protagonism vs antagonism codifies (for humans) in all the usual canonical visual language (black and white) of *violent* theatre.

However, in the hands of Gothic Communism, the same theatre enters a different realm than one of prescribed morality onstage; i.e., subverting state-mandated action—of force and might-makes-right—through theatrical appeals toward equality that undermine their perceived sovereignty. Nothing is superior unto itself over anything else. While the question invokes longevity and the health of an overall ecosystem, environment or society that connects us to each other and the rest of the natural-material world, the deciding factor is still violence, but of a particular kind: class war and struggle. Here, the pen can be as mighty if not mightier than the sword in this respect. In turn, the duality of nightmare offers up a counterterrorist antagonism of nightmare and protagonism to either side of a dialectical-material struggle: workers pushing back against us-versus-them simply by existing and expressing ourselves as an identity defined and shaped by state interference and its imposed failure on workers' manufactured inability to understand how things work as a unit in opposition to state forms. This entire dialog operates at cross purposes with the state, who opposes our mere existence

to satisfy the superorganism's profit motive; the structure and division aren't simply prioritized, but valorized.

Whether through general language, monstrous gender identities/performances, slurs, BDSM, fetishes, and kink, sex positivity is defined through informed, mutually consenting power exchange/informed consent, **appreciative irony** and liminal struggle within systemic abuse—i.e., to combat alienation/imposter syndrome by *reclaiming* the hammer and chisel from the patriarchal sculptor, but also the emblems of state abuse conveyed through various Gothicized poetics: chains, hate labels, put-downs; batons, knives and other killing/subjugating implements; and unequal positions of power from our "heroic" conquerors through negotiated, *informed* consent; but also to protect us from regressive torturers in disguise: the badass, "strict" death fetish or mommy dom (strict or gentle; "good" or "bad"; black or white in roleplay language) presenting as a safe liberator but really just a centrist, thus fascist TERF (service to capital is fascism, which centrism regresses to in crisis) wearing a mask on a mask on a mask through the same language/aesthetics used by us.

The dialectical-material context is different, but *not* self-explanatory. It *must* be taught and this happens through revived oral traditions, music, dance and other performance art (which are historically far harder to control than written documents) indicating a "lost time" or culture that "used to exist"—the paradox being this culture, if it did exist is long gone and being revived into something not-quite-the-same, and towards a new state of existence that has yet to exist on this Earth: *Gothic* (gay-anarcho) Communism. It won't be a perfect world, but it will be one without systemic violence: no sin, dysphoria/dysmorphia, or scapegoats, no harmful Jedi or Sith thus no dead younglings, just monsters (Nietzsche was wrong—when fighting monsters, you *must* become one yourself: a gay-anarcho Commie double of the state monster). We'll all be queens making our own monsters and media in ways that won't lead to systemic harm (unlike the state, which harms everything by design); i.e., acclimated to chaos and revived, sex-positive medieval language as things to skillfully swim around inside, being well-adjusted towards doing so through *taught* behaviors that recognize just how *Gothic* Capitalism is (in a sex-coercive, concealed-genocide sense) and how Gothic queer revolution can be in (a sex-positive) response. The language is there because the medieval power and struggle never left; this includes camp as an effective foil then and now. We have always been here and we aren't going anywhere without a fight.

(exhibit 1a1a2b: Artist: [Xenokun](#). Heteronormative war and rape are everywhere in monomythic canon, whose canonical xenophobia/xenophilia is useful to the state; i.e., through the creation of a perpetual enemy to slay in the drive for profit through power fantasies geared towards the soldier class [cis-het men]. The classic scapegoat of the West is monstrous-feminine in some shape or form, meaning Beauvoir's "woman is other" can easily be non-binarized and applied to AMAB [assigned male at birth] persons through the Pygmalion effect [the chain-like creating of a colonial binary through canonical art]. If this sounds weird and nerdy, it is, but weird canonical nerds will defend their canon nonetheless; in turn, weird iconoclastic nerds must defend our own devilish creations that invariably challenge the status quo through irony as a creative chain: the Galatea effect—i.e., of a rebellious genderqueer queen embodied through Gothic counterculture. Such an idea is death to canon, meaning "death as something to execute" against what is different from the heteronormative standard's chase of profit by funneling endless war, rape, and genocide through nature.

Simply put, the vice character is queer-coded[317] and the riddle of the Sphinx is implacable death; i.e., there is always a womanly [non-manly thus fearsome and ignominious] death waiting at the end of the patriarch's road. An inability to cheat/conquer death becomes spiteful, with the king's vengeance marking the monstrous-feminine as the ultimate ancient enemy that must be hunted, trapped and killed. Meanwhile, Capitalism sexualizes everything to harmful, dimorphic extremes. Those known to do sex work [or sexualized work] are chained to it like Prometheus his rock, defined by sexual labor as a marker of difference, of classical punishment in this sense. They are not men, but <u>non-men</u> that potentially embody Medusa's vengeance; i.e., as dream-like, drugged, and nocturnal/chthonic symbols of death, chaos, and confusion that threaten the status quo of powerful men who haunt the hypermasculine after death as fatherless failures whipping themselves inside the guard tower [e.g., the hollow knight]. These monstrous-feminine spectres must not only be contained, but dealt with—normally through genocide dressed up in moral panics, rape epidemics and drug wars [except leave it to male thinkers to either code the beyond as awesomely male, like Edmund Burke and Lovecraft tend to do with the Sublime and cosmic nihilism; or as female, thus warranting death from male forces. Either fantasy is male-centric].

*Medusa was Barbara Creed's chosen source of female fear in <u>The Monstrous-Feminine</u>. Catalyzed by Freud's essay "Medusa's Head" [1922] writing about the Patriarchal bogeywoman, the Archaic Mother is Creed's characterization of Medusa as <u>post</u>-Freudian, seeking to comment on women beyond their universal portrayal as victims in Western canon: their monstrous, ancient function. Obviously we want to comment on queer liberation and Communist development during our own poetic <u>Amazonomachia</u>. So while sodomy and the monstrous-feminine are to be surveilled, fought and assimilated/killed, they each come with a variety of double standards regarding these treatments that we can subvert in campy ways. For example, whereas the female Amazon or Medusa can be "beheaded," tamed and bred/made to feminize war in ways useful to the state, the beheading of the male sodomite is seen as "instant death" [a very cliché male fear] under Capitalism: the societal death of the eunuchized slave as someone who has less-and-less rights under Cartesian dominance. Male "breeders" are expendable, but also overt threats that inseminate the woman with "evil babies" that must be euthanized through the male parent as someone to duel. While the **<u>vagina dentata</u>** can always be beheaded/defanged then fucked, there is nothing to be done with the male sodomite <u>except</u> cross swords with them.*

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[317] With queer coding, there are expectations and implications far more than explicit statements. Keep this in mind when we examine vice characters, but also scapegoats at large, including the monster as a boss character in videogames (exhibit 1a1c).

Yet the monstrous-feminine also lends itself well to camp, supplying performers with the means to generate a cutesy-creepy uncanny in ways that make it far less torturous/stigmatic and far more fun, even strangely sexy [the proverbial "weirdest boner"]:
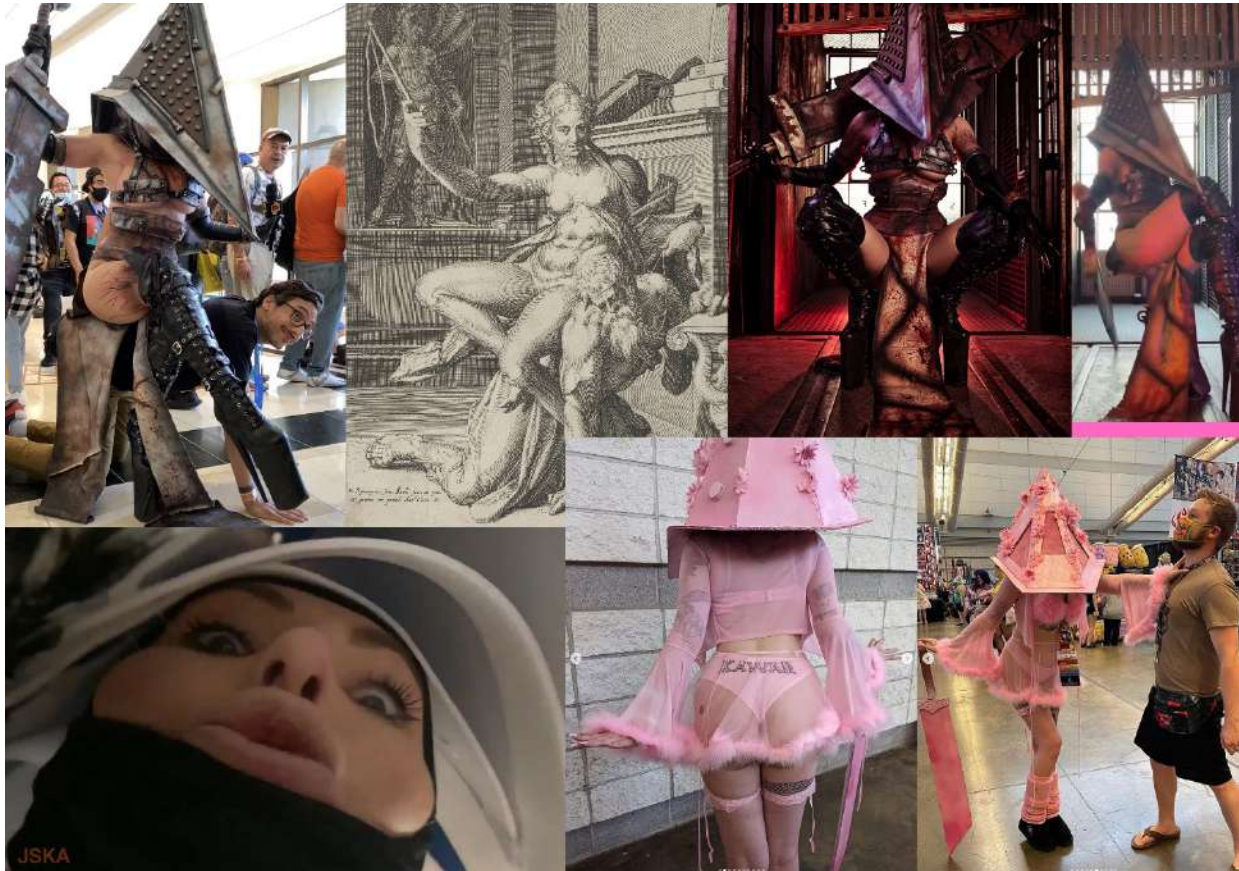
[artist: top-left, bottom-left, top-right and bottom-right: Jessica Nigri; top-middle: Johannes Sadeler; bottom-middle: Salem Hysteria]

Camp can yield gender trouble and gender parody in equal measure—camp, in the case of the guy watching Pyramid Head ride four-eyes like an ass [mimicking the "power of women" topos vis-à-vis Phyllis and Aristotle] and parody for her and her performer friend making trouble/having fun; e.g., camping the canonical-if-at-times-tangential "Nazi" of the occult, psychosexual BDSM aesthetic [with bonafide Nazi camp being its own musical/comedy hit[318] that never seems to age]. Likewise, Pyramid Head echoes the hauntological medieval as darkly torturous in a cryptomimetic, "Catholic miracle" sense, which can rescue pain from a variety of falsehoods: the false dichotomy of "pleasure and pain," the false equivalency of

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[318] Which can be used for the state; e.g., Virgina Allison's examination of *Evita* (1979) and Nazi theatrics in "White Evil: Peronist Argentina in US Popular Imagination Since 1955" (2004). We will examine this more in Volume Two.

"pain as sexual" but also non-pleasurable, the false stigma that pain is automatically harmful, thus has no cathartic potential. Trauma begets trauma and the chase of the Numinous can be medicinal in relation to lived trauma. Even so, it can just as easily be a burlesque show as [kawaii vs kowai](#) [cute vs scary] for genuine play and delight in an asexual sense with psychosexual overtones [the color swap] instead of internalized ones. Simply put, these aren't pointless novelties or exclusive "hard kink medicine" for legit mental scarring, but also deeply fun [and subversive] exercises in the genderqueer creative spirit. Given the destructive nature of capital, all overlap through the same symbols and theatre as something to reclaim from the bourgeois monopoly on these things.)

A world without sin realized through Gothic poetics might seem novel or *sui generis* to many (and to an extent it is, in relation to what the elite encourage us to engage with) but Jodey Castricano's *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* is decades old (2001), Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* even older (1993) and Marx's eponymous writings on spectres predating them by over a hundred years: "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" (1852). And the allegory of the Gothic as a class of beautiful lies whose "archaeologies"/elaborate strategies of misdirection are not simply decades older than Marx; when Horace Walpole anonymously wrote the first Gothic novel during the start of the Neo-Gothic period (1764), his deliberate combination of the *Ancient* Romance and the novel as a story of everyday experience are, themselves, inspired by the paradox of allegory through Milton's "darkness visible" (nearly another century back in time, to 1667), while the broader idea of allegory and the hidden truths behind shadowy illusions dates back to Plato (375 BCE).

To that, the recent telling of the Gothic lie—one that adumbrates a hidden, tenebrous truth beyond the illusions of the cave—has an important lesson that is equally old (e.g., Ridley Scott, whose own lies we'll cover in Volume Two, exhibit 51a): those within the cave, thus chained to its illusions, will attack and kill outsiders for being disruptors to a perceived order of things. This shadow of fascism, Pygmalion, and patriarchal tyranny is monomythic, the skeleton king *exclusively* competing with the noble king by pitting their combined soldiers against Communism inside a destructive, deceptive loop my thesis argument calls "the Cycle of Kings*/monomyth (again, the two operate in tandem, promising younger men/tomboys the chance to not just assimilate but become kings themselves through violent conquest). This aggregate hostility behooves the Satanic rebel of the Miltonian tradition, then, to possess a cunning and "game" ability to weave beautiful, xenophilic lies (disguise pastiche) that *can* be seen as "just games," pulp fiction/rock 'n roll** or "mere play" by one's potential murderers (much of which constitutes Gothic media as an emerging countercultural force/spirit contained inside a widely consumed mode since its inception under Capitalism as a rising

force on the global stage); i.e., with demonic poetics as *ostensibly* "empty" or "neutral" to avoid not just being criticized, but attacked on sight and executed for *actually* being in opposition to the state's xenophobic status quo and tendency to aggregate against symbolic shows of solidarity from labor forces perceived as monstrous-feminine; e.g., the hysterical woman, the black male rapist, the back-stabbing Jew and man-in-a-dress as infantilized offshoots of a dark non-patriarch: the spawn not just of Satan as a feminine chaos resisting Heaven's sovereign, but Lilith as the demonic broodmother whose literal or figurative womb exemplifies the classical double standard, "woman is other."

(*source*: Stephen Coles' "'U.S.A. Surpasses All The Genocide Records!' Poster and Fact Sheet," 2016)

*Some added notes on the Cycle of Kings: While this pertains to Western canon and dogma at large, I should hope that the parallels to America's establishment politics are obvious; i.e., good versus evil framed as Democrats versus Republicans—with fascists, centrists and neoliberals conveniently united against the big bad: Communism (conveniently forgetting their ally "Uncle Joe" from WW2, aka Stalin and his cutthroat brand of **Marxist-Leninism**; since the formation of the CIA in 1947, working with Communists on the global stage has been anathema because it goes directly against elite interests; re: William Blum's Killing Hope.*

We'll look into Gothic-Communist methods for combatting their aims and how both sides have evolved during the Internet Age (e.g., David Michael Smith's [Endless Holocausts: Mass Death in the History of the United States Empire](), 2023—which we'll examine in Volume One). For an exhaustive look into this anti-Communist hegemony from Bretton Woods to early neoliberalism in the <u>pre</u>-Internet Age, though, please consider Blum's book, which covers the history of CIA interventions from 1945 to 1994! Something else to keep in mind is that, while the Cold War was sold to Americans as ongoing and relatively bloodless, [this was a lie]() (GDF's "There Was No 'Cold' War," 2023); "cold war," then, became a theatre into neoliberal <u>Pax Americana</u> that hid the brutalization of the Global South through America-vs-the-world kayfabe, displacing violence to personifications of war that disassociated the entire bloodletting behind a series of exchanges between cartoonishly archaic pugilists (all for profit on every conceivable register, of course)—an arms race whose sanitization of monomythic war is all that most (white, cis-het) Americans know. The so-called "real thing" becomes its own kind of myth that they cannot see, yet is glorified as "real" nonetheless (whereas Communism is a myth that could never be).

Meanwhile, the whistleblower's "effeminate" pushing away from war (and infinite military expansion) often starts as a military figure themselves: Edward Snowden, George Lee Butler, Howard Zinn, etc. Weapons of state terror like the nuclear bomb, spies and other methods of controlled strikes and coercion against an American target is historically complicated by weapons of terror used at cross purposes; i.e., for the elite to break up, thus prepare target areas for invasion, occupation and exploitation, and for the oppressed to hit back with stolen ordinance, but also their own theatrical agents of counterterror. Behind the romance and the perfect portrait of the white, hopeful and loving family—the American flag as a pearly castle—is, in truth, an irredeemable site of state power and exploitation, around which are littered the endless fields of outsider corpses and blood. Consider how, in one war alone, post-WW2 America outpaced the Nazis at "their own game" during Vietnam (above) when in fact, the Nazis were inspired by the Americans doing it, if not first (e.g., Great Britian's Irish experiment leading into the revival of Rome being a continuous project since its oft-marketed but greatly exaggerated "fall," the horrors of the modern nation-state being foreshadowed by Neo-Gothic fiction displaced by the British author to the imaginary 15th century) then at least far better at past settler colonialists at maintaining a genocidal system: one where money flows through nature. This American outpacing of past imperial powers has only continued to be the case; i.e., with shadow war/total war exploding under the neoliberal state-of-affairs to cannibalize much of the planet for the elite.

In truth, the American and European Enlightenment shared ideas and practices, including Cartesian thought as the genocidal domination of nature as something to kill, cut up and name after capitalizing on it: mad science. The

Founding Fathers genocided the Indigenous Americans and documented everything about them through a white perspective, then celebrated themselves as gods to be worshipped by white Americans moving forward; Napoleon invaded Egypt, after which he founded the Institute of Egyptology... and murdered everyone for France, but more importantly, for Napoleon as de facto god-king. Either case was a project of vanity that Mary Shelley lampooned with her "Modern Prometheus," Frankenstein. It was a rare and vital voice from the oppressor group as not aggrandizing the cause of genocidal "progress." For example, Christopher Nolan's masturbatory Oppenheimer (2023) continues the embarrassing trend of apologizing for the Great Men of Science (a trope illustrated by Heinlein's Competent Man trope); and TERFs are just feminists acting "like men" in respect to that patriarchal system; etc.

**Some more notes on the pulpy, rock 'n roll nature of the Gothic: Gothic counterculture is generally "buried alive" inside the ghost of the counterfeit (again, the false copy of the imaginary barbaric past; something Dale Townshend insisted to me that Jerrold Hogle should have written a whole book about but never did, so I guess I'll be doing it for him) as something to reclaim through the Westerner's attraction to it despite its abject framework (which presents sex as not just unironically violent, but combative, torturous and married [the war bride] to the fascist aesthetic of death; i.e., through uncanny depictions of sexualized battle with a monstrous-feminine "other": the Amazonomachia as I have previously defined and shall expound upon further, exhibit 1a1b). Try to keep this in mind whenever we discuss popular modes of "devilish" media like rock 'n roll/heavy metal, but also myths and legends retold in Gothic novels, pulp magazines and "cheap" pleasures obsessed with "Satanic" cartoons/monsters as the embodiment of moral panic (e.g., goblins as little mischief-makers that are often paradoxically celebrated and fetishized for their musical mayhem); all are tied to the Cycle of Kings/Shadow of Pygmalion as a fight to keep the public's Gothic imagination both asleep and dumbly consuming the same old dreck.

*   By intoxicating said public with potent mixtures of abject xenophobia and xenophilia that serve the elite, the state dupes workers into fearing Pygmalion's foil, Galatea, as monstrous-feminine chaos that must die purely because it threatens the authority and hegemony of the "king" (and his agents) as an essentialized ruling body. The trick isn't to abstain from these linguo-material devices at all, but to use their incredibly commonplace paradoxes and theatrical depictions to make new connections that assist in our gradual emancipation and continued liberation by copying old proletarian context; i.e., the slave rebellions of a former time. This happens by staying awake and alert through our rock 'n roll/monsters et al as "perceptive" in ways that, while certainly not new, are applied in new situations that echo old ones within an ongoing system (the LGBTQ+ movement in the Internet Age under neoliberal Capitalism vs the slave rebellions of*

previous centuries before the Internet). Doing so will always be perceived as monstrous-feminine "terrorism" because it is not with the Man and the West (which is manly and "enteral"); it is <u>against</u> them and all they stand for and must be destroyed: beheaded, but also assimilated, thus genocided against through segregative triangulation arguments and procedures (divide and conquer).
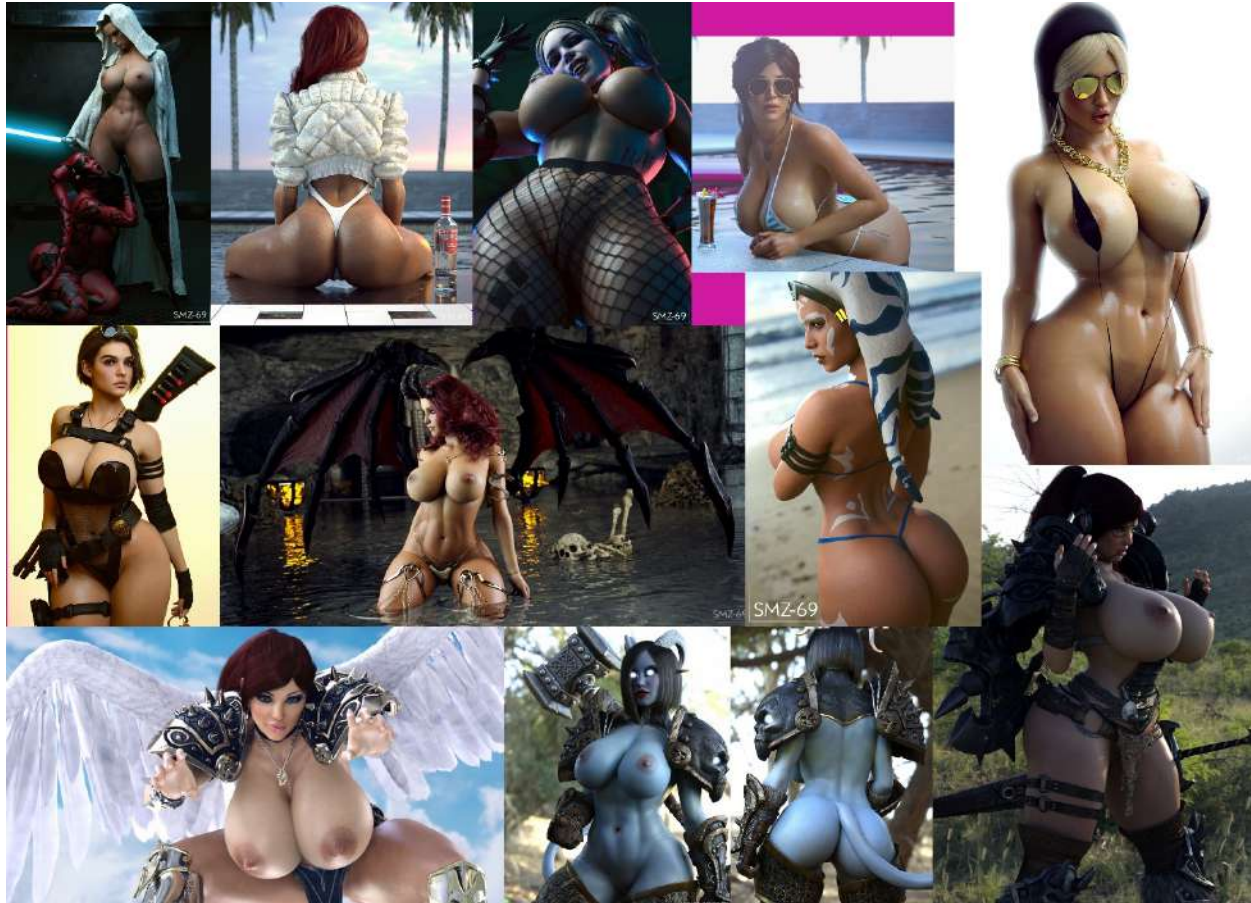
*(exhibit 1a1a3: Artist: <u>Smz-69</u>. "Well ain't that cute—but it's wrong!" Traditional female strength, even in hauntologized forms, is generally sexualized in ways "correct" male iterations are not: the genitals and sex organs are stressed in a pin-up style that, when irony is not present, becomes yet another endorsement of the status quo: "Beings who identify as women must appear strong in a particular way—as soldiers for the status quo who appeal to **the Male Gaze** in semi-correct forms: the poster girl of war who either looks soft and feminine, but carries a gun, sword or heavenly mandate; or looks, thus acts like a man against the state's enemies; i.e., the she-Rambo as a fulfillment of nerd sex." This concession weaponizes the incorrectly masculine, "butch" body as something that, if it doesn't look like a woman, can at least do a man's job to protect women who actually fit the damsel appearance; but Amazons within the 20th and 21st centuries often <u>do</u> look partially like damsels—i.e., the partially feminized broodmare/pretty princess. In heteronormative circles, this "pornstar" schtick is commonly <u>ephebophilic</u>, or*

constitutes a kind "courtly love" law of attraction towards the _teenage_ body that is sexually _nubile_ but emotionally _immature_, thus exploitable [though pedophilic examples of forced maidenhood are compelled by fascist regression—something to consider when we example _moe_, _ahegao_ and incest in Volume Three, Chapter Five]. Likewise, even if her personality doesn't match **the "Barbie doll"/cheerleader look** that her body conveys, it's still traditionally cultivated to serve men who demand the woman play dumb as the sexy Valkyrie [with the doll look meant to convey but also encourage passivity and, at times, literal immobility and vapidity]. Within irony and gender parody such concepts can be subverted, but quickly moves away from gender-conformity and cisness is general. Sex positivity is also defined by mutual consent as not being visually immediate nine times out of ten. The context of any monstrous-feminine image, then, must be interrogated through dialectical-material scrutiny. This goes for cis allies, be they straight or queer themselves [cis-queer "bears," exhibit 21a2a], but also our own content as gender-non-conforming persons [non-binarized femboys, exhibit 91c].

[artist: Top-left, middle-left-side and top-right: _Nat the Lich_; top-mid-left and far-bottom-left: _Didi Lune Studio_; mid-bottom-left: _Lewdlings_; mid-bottom-right: _The Unclean_; _Lucid-01_. "Death" is popular code for the female servant as "asleep"—both dead to the world but also fetishized with an aesthetic of death, the medieval and

the inanimate as a potent means of subverting a coerced "virgin/whore" position into a cathartic one.]

To be crystal clear, the pornstar/"doll" look isn't automatically a bad thing. Indeed, enjoying the look or subverting its harmful history through ironic BDSM is perfectly serviceable among iconoclasts: deliberately performing like a doll, puppet or sleeping/unthinking "victim" in figurative or literal ways, exhibit 41g2; puppy play as doll-like, exhibit 51d3; creating consent-non-consent in our own art, exhibit 98a1a; or otherwise emulating the "swooning" function of vampirism in ways that aren't immediately harmful, exhibit 87d; or exhibiting the Goth doll look, mood or vibe [exhibit 9b2] through thematic rape play performed by couples wearing masks and outfits of a particular look that evoke death and rape as things to subvert, exhibit 101c2 [we Gay Communists like sex, including the guilty pleasures, fetishes and clichés that make up the Gothic mode]. However, if it doesn't express mutual consent in a visually obvious manner, then it's ontologically "ambiguous" in that respect. Keep this in mind as we explore liminal expression throughout the book.)

While we do spend a great deal of time reclaiming psychosexual things in this book, the reclamation of "torturer" linguo-material devices is somewhat arbitrary. For example, I could theoretically try to reclaim "Pygmalion" as an embodiment of cis allyship. That's technically what I'm doing but the label is still a flagship device that should, in my humble opinion, put its chief aim/persona front and center. Mine is the liberation of the monstrous-feminine from its TERF retooling as an instrument of settler-colonial self-hatred—my self-hatred. As something to reclaim, it's a battle standard within class war that prioritizes what I think is most valuable: humanizing the abject, the wretched, the female/feminine and their sex-positive potential from a strictly reprobate, subservient existence. So while I could treat "the Shadow of Pygmalion" as maybe someday yielding that hypothetical good king that Aragorn and Luke Skywalker never lived up to, this is a centrist trap I'd prefer to avoid. While we do discuss genuine allies that critique Man Box culture, I'm not terribly concerned with rescuing the image of the Patriarchy from its own colonializing history. I would not do so any more than I would trumpet my status as an atheist, Marxist-Leninist and feminist to whitewash those movement's failures. Even though I am an atheist and feminist in function, I'd rather be called a Satanist/Gothic-Communist because one, it sounds way cooler and two, it falls on the side of those who are routinely persecuted by the righteous: the monstrous-feminine as a rebellious Galatean Hippolyta, Athena and Medusa, etc (atheism is historically moderate, thus bigoted against minority groups and feminism has fascist roots, etc). In doing so, I've taken a hard stance, not a half-measure; there's no whitewashing or apologia to be given towards older forms of activism that, to be frank, tend to "play ball" with state power, thus invariably regress back towards them ("Ever do you desire to appear noble, like the kings of old."). This being said,

the assimilated sit within the monstrous-feminine as enslaved, thus forced to adopt a Patriarchal worldview of themselves. I'm far more interested in dismantling their doubling of the Man, de-assimilating the monstrous-feminine as "brainwashed" before setting it once more on its proper course: towards Communism, albeit through the Gothic mode as a democratic, grassroots movement (with help from the middle class and unlikely allies. Tip your sex workers, my dudes; stripping is not consent and fuck the frat-boy/chudwad adage, "No means yes, yes means anal"—i.e., the only yes to exist is "yes" from both sides). —Perse

In other words, no matter how vague they seem, our spectres of Marx utilize viral, monstrous-feminine aesthetics during remediated praxis to offer a subversive, even transgressive hauntology and cryptonymy that reconciles with the status quo's illusory past and tumultuous gradient of coded stigmas

- the outright "sex is dirty" argument
- "*some* sex is dirty [e.g., 'church tongue' vs 'porno tongue']"
- "the image of dark sex is used to exploit workers"
- "the dark sex object/death fetish can be reclaimed, subverting canonical dogma about sex"

that produces *our* nightmare whose rememory of all the *lost* dead generations weighs on the brains of the living. The state cannot tolerate this, will aggregate with whomever they can to prevent slave rebellion wherever it occurs; pound-for-pound, the solidarity of a given labor movement is always met with hyperbolic violence, state solidarity and draconian countermeasures. This can be outright violence, but also *assimilation* through age-old compromises that make champions of the cause turn heel or lose heart in the face of overwhelming adversity and division: the exorcism of the spirit of rebellion in favor of a Capitalist possession achieving class subjugation, fatal (fascist) compromise and centrist perpetuations of never-ending conflict; i.e., the satisfaction of appropriative tension as a useful theatrical device the elite can use to disarm the appreciative tension of slave and labor revolts fighting for equality within their pedagogy of the oppressed.

(artist: [Chin Likhui](#))

Beyond ghosts and other monsters, *Sex Positivity* was also written and illustrated based on many lengthy—and dare I say *perennial*—arguments and discussions between friends, family and enemies. Indeed, their collaboration (whether intentional or not) was essential to many of this book's ideas. Teamwork, mindful consumption and reclamation is very much the point of good proletarian praxis. Through Gothic Communism, we workers can be mothers to the world that raise good boys and girls; trans, intersex and enby persons—our little class/culture warriors who bring the struggle and the fight to the streets of Gothic imagination: an ongoing creative process that uses xenophilic artistic expression to critique (thus restructure) capital during linguo-material labor exchanges between workers operating in *conscious* solidarity against state xenophobia.

There are four points I wish to make about this last sentence, as they pertain to phrases that will come up repeatedly throughout *Sex Positivity*'s remaining three volumes. **First point:** while the word "Gothic" requires some clarification, I will not attempt to reduce it to a singular type (this book is holistic, remember). We'll elucidate "Gothic" in our second point, but first I want to discuss iconoclastic monstrous invigilation as subversive or transgressive. Like "Gothic," the words

"art/porn" are something that—while difficult to define in clear, uncertain terms—nevertheless have a tenacious brand image attached to them that is often Gothicized: you'll know it when you see it (so familiar am I with both that I completely forgot my own idiosyncratic expertise, choosing near the very-end of this book's generation to actually define them for other people); the same goes for monsters and what people like/dislike as a challenging means of "inkblot interpretations"—i.e., regarding sexuality and gender as policed but also challenged within competing dialogs about power and resistance, but also pleasure and pain (a false dichotomy given pain can be pleasurable unto itself, but also victims rewired to experience physical pain—even outright abuse—as "pleasurable"; e.g., the rape victim's orgasm), dominance and submission, as liminal forms of dialectical-material monster art/porn.

As such, vague and confusing labels like "good monster" and "bad monster" pop up everywhere, occurring relative to the "demon lover" as an ambiguous performative threat—i.e., of rape play according to the idea of "acceptable forms of discourse" as *also* being in conflict, happening in relation to oppositional forces that either uphold the status quo as xenophobic or attempt to alter it by xenophilic means (humanizing the scapegoat). Arguments, then, about what is acceptable to show in one's own exhibit invariably come into conflict with the artist's desire to express their own message and heal from their own trauma. Doing so does not disrespect or otherwise disregard the trauma of others provided the gallery is curated and labeled; i.e., "There be dragons" or some such disclaimer/trigger warning.

For example, *Baldur's Gate 3* actually has "vulva options[319]" in its character creation screen (an idea borrowed from *Cyberpunk: 2077* the videogame [2022] and its Rainbow Capitalist approach, which borrowed it from *Skyrim* mods [2011, exhibit 84b] which borrowed it from *Second Life* [2003] which borrowed it from *Shadowrun*, *Mage: the Ascension* and *Cyberpunk: 2077* and other cyberpunk-themed TTRPGs, and so on…). The idea is marketed, thus patently sold both as adult and divisive, suggesting a line drawn between videogames, sex education and conservative values as challenged by "pretty orcs" (which goes against the Tolkien power fantasy of a racialized other for heroes to destroy on their settler-colonial quests disguised as fulfillment, power tripping and all-around escapism). As Jon Ramuz notes, the debate is nothing new relative to videogames as an ongoing exhibit for monstrous, anthropomorphic bodies that a divided public is constantly expected to curate, but also enjoy/endorse in different ways:

> If your interest in *Baldur's Gate 3* derives from a general interest in fantasy RPGs then you might be surprised at how adult the game is […] But if you're coming to this game as a player of *Dungeons & Dragons*, who wants a digital simulation of their favorite TTRPG, then it will be completely unsurprising to you that the game features adult themes (source: "Baldur's Gate 3 Genital Options," 2023).

In response to people asking questions/framing the studio's approach as "liberal" (*ibid.*), the developers replied to Kotaku:

> You can choose between a penis or a vagina, as well as pubic hair options. According to Dubrovina, the decision to add this option didn't stem from the inclusion of sex scenes in romance subplots, but rather because the team decided to make underwear a piece of equipment you would obtain throughout the game, customize, and wear. She explained that underwear is an extension of the character customization as a form of in-universe expression.
>
> "The question arose, 'what happens when you take it off?'" she said. "At first we were like, 'you know, maybe nothing's gonna happen. Maybe we're gonna have another underwear mesh under it. Who cares? But then I started thinking about it, talking about it, and we realized that for some players, it's just another way to represent their identity" (source: Kenneth Shepherd's "*Baldur's Gate 3* Aims For RPG Fans' Ultimate Character Creator," 2023).

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[319] In hindsight, these are merely "bald" or "pubic hair," which is *not* the vulva.

(Meanwhile, the game's bear sex scene is, I guess, the unspoken "elephant in the room"; it's not zoophilia—the "bear" is actually a druid—but the cheeky animism in-game *does* brush up against an uncomfortable current reality: the word "zoophile" has the added social definition as defined by real-world criminal behaviors against non-shapeshifting bears and other equally non-sentient creatures that zoophiles abuse. The joke in *Baldur's Gate 3* is not an endorsement of *that*, but poking fun at the whole ludic-paramour system …and possibly being an obscure allusion to the Canadian bear-sex novel, *The Bear*—Marian Engel's 1976 controversial capitalization on Canadian-Indigenous animism involving ritualistic [and highly figurative] sex with bear-shaped gods; this idea can be seen around the world and comes up in Gothic fiction from a Western perspective: Tuunbaq from *The Terror* [2018] as a xenophobic, mish-mash embodiment [exhibit 48d2] regarding misunderstood, but also *lost* Indigenous perspectives—i.e., relating to animals and nature in a sexual way *without* the settler-colonial shame, guilt and cultural baggage of Cartesian thought. To be clear, the Indigenous approach wasn't prescribing *actual* sex with bears, but illustrating a human tendency to compare animals and their partially humanized virtues to human-animalistic behaviors: "You fuck like a bear!" [exhibit 52]. This idea of the animal and human as interlinked isn't even exclusive to the West's colonies; even Chaucer's Miller did this in *The Canterbury Tales* [whereas centuries later *Super Troopers* (2001) made fun of the idea of bear-fucking quite thoroughly].)

(source: Maijin Obama's "The Doogie Fight Club - SF6 Avatar Battles," 2023)

Furthermore, the developers wanted their bodies to look attractive (in a pin-up sense), or at least semi-natural (a paradox, I know):

> "My personal experience with most [slider-based character creators] is you kind of customize it, it takes you a lot of time and effort, and then a lot of times it kind of looks the same in the end," she said. "So we wanted to avoid that. And if we would make sliders, we needed to make it into something that would be truly unique and wouldn't look the same."
>
> According to Dubrovina, Larian isn't married to taking this approach for all of its games, but they felt the approach worked well for *Baldur's Gate 3* and, she said, it kept custom characters from looking "mediocre." / That crafted look for each race, hairstyle, and accessory means that there aren't really "ugly" custom characters. This isn't *Street Fighter 6* where players are making a bunch of weirdos. And indeed, even as Dubrovina repeatedly clicked the randomize option in the character creator, each hero with different accessories, colors, and other options looked believable (*ibid.*).

There's something to be said about "realism" enforcing a settler-colonial standard (history is written by the conquerors) that engenders body dysmorphia/gender dysphoria as a kind of "impostor syndrome" for the oppressed and oppressors alike (re: white women and eating disorders); but also gender parody as non-Vitruvian (re: *Street Fighter 6*, 2023), which then dovetails into broader conversations about gynodiversity (exhibits 52f and 68), androdiversity (exhibit 91b2) and intersexuality (the xenomorph, exhibit 51a); but the fact remains that the public's beauty standards exist within avatar creations that are tooled by developer *expectations* (which are informed by their own ideas about beauty as supplied by the natural-material world around them). Even so, this doesn't stop sex-repulsed people from responding with a gratingly sex-*negative* question: "Why, though?" So, I'll call that like it is: standard-issue gender trouble and (often) white fragility. This begs the Socratic response, "Why not?" as a means of establishing gender trouble and parody as legitimate activist stratagems (not an invitation to be force-drunk hemlock[320]). As this supposed hypothetical is, in truth, based on a real exchange that I had about the game, I decided to not treat it as rhetorical, but in true neurodivergent fashion wanted to give it an honest answer (with my partner Bay's help; thank you, muffin):

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[320] The famous fate of Socrates after telling the Sophists they were *not* wise, but practitioners of sophistry: "In short, the difference between Socrates and his sophistic contemporaries, as Xenophon suggests, is the difference between a lover and a prostitute. The sophists, for Xenophon's Socrates, are prostitutes of wisdom because they sell their wares to anyone with the capacity to pay" (source: George Duke's "The Sophists (Ancient Greek)" in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). I should add that Xenophon is being incredibly unfair to prostitutes, as they would have been "pimped out," thus forced to sell their wares, by men controlling their bodies.

(source: Kotaku's "11 Minutes with Baldur's Gate 3's Character Creator," 2023)

To be clear, it's fine if the exposed vagina in art/porn *isn't* someone's cup of tea, but videogames—especially those in the Internet Age—are a *public* space, a forum/galley to some extent. This means the rules of such places also apply to videogames (and other mediums); i.e., they're an exhibit that isn't curated to cater to a single group's vision. If someone *is* sex-repulsed, that's a valid consideration, but it should always be raised in ways that aren't sex-negative. To that, sex-positive galleries shouldn't have to compromise their sex-positive, xenophilic vision to meet a smaller group's needs if the exhibit is about showcasing naked monster bodies in a sex-positive way. Putting the vagina in the closet when male genitalia are plastered all over everything is a modesty argument, often used by moderate individuals conflating their own sex repulsion as transcendental; they feel vulnerable when they see someone *else's* vagina, but are probably acclimated to the cock as everywhere or the breasts as a commonly adjustable feature of avatar cosmetics. To include one but not the other is arbitrary and harmful, especially when the precedent of the game invokes sexual and gender expression to begin with. To exclude a particular morphological identity from the game is segregation, which generally will have a cis bias; players should be able to represent themselves however they want: **Big Titty Goth GFs** *or* **Big Booty Goth GF** with a **girl-cock**! So I ask people who would want to prevent that, "Why do *you* care if that's in-game?"

Applying this concept to *Baldur's Gate*, if someone doesn't want to use the genitals option in-game, that's perfectly fine, but discouraging its inclusion as an option altogether—just because *Baldur's Gate* is a popular game that plays around with private parts ontology despite them being a highly regulated site of trauma for many ace people—is frankly regressive (and also ignores the sexual nature of the *Baldur's Gate* series since its inception; e.g., paramour options). Yes, sex-repulsed people being triggered by exposed genitals is understandable; but their feelings about their *own* genitals doesn't extend to other players within a *shared* world any more than it does in real life (the relationship, here, is half-real). This isn't John Lajoie's "[Show Me You Genitals](#)" (2008, below—the vicious historical-material cycle of tragedy and farce oscillating in public discourse at large); gender expression through the human body isn't even automatically sexual. So no, people having the option to express themselves in a nudist sense with their *Baldur's Gate 3* avatars isn't you being forced to also "play doctor" or look upon someone who wants to have sex with you.

Put differently and in regards to *Sex Positivity* as a whole, it's not up to the invigilator to manage their gallery to meet regressive, sex-negative standards; if the game-in-question provides inclusive options that represent a change in the paradigm shift troubling to creepy reactionaries fantasizing power abuse

> Beat a woman to death with a mace so I could steal her valuables. Used a revive scroll and them gaslit her into thinking I was the hero who saved her life so now she is indebted to me… ([source](#): Reddit, "The Steam Reviews for this Game Are Something Else," 2023).

or even ace people, frankly that's *their* problem (the option towards being ace, or at least not having genitals in videogames, is certainly nothing new); it's not being done to offend others and even ace people need—and I promise this is coming from a place of love, my ace comrades—to manage their expectations while realizing that monster identities, especially genderqueer ones often *are* sexual and conveyed through nudism. Love it or hate it, them's the breaks (although this book is largely about sex-positive Gothic expression, this doesn't preclude **asexuality** at all. We will thoroughly explore ace options in Gothic media, too). Nudity and monsters have always been political, but this has to occur on our time, not that of moderates (versus overt reactions) telling us how to do our activism for us; we're not doing this for just ourselves, but fighting for a better world for all—a post-scarcity world where nudity isn't automatically a sexual act, sin doesn't exist, and people *can* be more open about their sexuality and gender without feeling vulnerable, fake, criminal and/or exposed in fear of reactionaries killing them and aloof, smug moderates turning a blind eye or prioritizing their own victim complexes. This requires imagining that world ahead of time, which requires having thoughts that will be considered sinful and anathema by the elite and their proponents.

Depending on what identity is being imagined, the nature of such imagination amounts to the committing of thought crimes and heresy (secular or theistic): the imagining of rebellion as something to reach and instill in the nation's youth by poetically reifying it within the material world.

As you can expect, confusions, concerns and disputes invariably abound (especially for all you "boomers" out there who don't play videogames), which brings us to our **second point:** the "Gothic" being a common point of contention as something that historically remains difficult to define that nevertheless is plastered over everything and used off-hand for centuries according to aesthetics whose ownership is equally imperiled among different media types. In orthographic literature, for example, Chris Baldrick writes in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (2009):

> The term "Gothic" has become firmly established as the name for one sinister corner of the modern Western imagination, but it seeks to work by intuitive suggestion rather than by any agreed precision of reference. There are several difficulties of usage involved in the term itself, of which the obvious today is the incompatibility between the literary and architectural senses: whereas "Gothic" in architectural contexts refers to a style of European architecture and ornament that flourished from the later twelfth to the fifteenth century, it is used in its literary and cinematic senses to describe works that appeared in an entirely different medium several hundreds of

years later. A term thus applied simultaneously to the products of two such widely differing ages (to say nothing of the cultural gulf between Chartres cathedral and a sensationalist magazine story) would seem to require some qualification attached to it; and, indeed, it is the sensible practice architectural historians use to distinguish from the Gothic of the late Middle Ages the Neo-Gothic or Gothic Revival style of the nineteenth century. In a more logical world, we might have learned to adopt a clearer designation of this kind for the "Gothic" of modern literature and cinema; but of course, it is far too late to undo our inherited confusions, and even if we were able to do so, we would only run up against further difficulties that render "Neo-Gothic fiction" or some such nomenclature just as unsatisfactory" (source: my printout copy given to me by Dale Townshend at MMU, complete with grad-student notes scribbled all over it).

In videogames' far more recent insertion into the conversation, Tanya Krzywinska determines in "The Gamification of Gothic Coordinates in Videogames" (2015):

> I began this work with an intuitive sense that there are vast variations in the effective, and indeed affective, uses of Gothic in games, and as work for this study progressed, that sense has intensified. Definition is therefore no simple task, especially considering that Gothic has spanned such a breadth of mood, time and location. As Fred Botting notes "[t]he diffusion of Gothic forms and figures […] makes the definition of a homogeneous generic category very difficult" (1996, 14). In his discussion of the uncertainty in scholarly definitions of the Gothic, David Punter writes that there is a "significant resistance to canonization" (2000, ix), suggesting that there is no one text that substantiates Gothic. It is therefore largely agreed within recent scholarship on the topic that Gothic is brimful of vertiginous, acute tangents and perplexing ambiguities (source).

My own commentaries on "Gothic" focus on camping canonical spaces (castles) and monsters, which expand on ideas neither author bothered with in their own overspecialized commentaries. Dedications aside, Baldrick and Krzywinska (and other Gothic or ludic scholars I cite throughout the book) are predominantly white accommodated intellectuals who remain utterly unequipped to write about the inherent *queer* struggle of the Gothic as something to constantly reclaim from the status quo as a fascist-neoliberal entity from the late 1970s onward—i.e., through my own diverse area of studies that fused the Gothic together within videogames as an extended conversation between novels or cinema, but also beyond* what intellectuals were, are and will be still be saying about the former regarding the latter as "Gothic" among digital, Internet-Age media; e.g., Medusa or Amazons doubled within oppositional praxis, to be used by queer agents on a gradient of

resistance against, and oppression by, bourgeois proponents—so-called "TERF Amazons" or "TERF Medusas**" like Victoria de Loredani (an *Italian* TERF—eat your heart out, Giorgia Meloni[321]) from Charlotte Dacre's 1806 *Zofloya* (exhibit 100b2) or James Cameron's Ellen Ripley (exhibit 30a): war bitches whose "rabid, feral" nature is on a shorter leash/timer (due to the euthanasia effect requiring they be put down faster once Capitalism enters decay). Including sex work, all inhabit a poetic whole within a larger subversive conflict I wish to comment on, and contribute towards, in meaningful ways that go far beyond academic flag-planting by actually educating and helping workers directly (to alter linguo-material conditions and relevant social-sexual attitudes through dialectical-material poetics). Worker solidarity is a holistic enterprise conducted by workers, first and foremost. Try to keep that in mind moving forward.

*Alluding to the title of my 2018 master's thesis: "beyond the Novel or Cinema, and into Metroidvania" ([source](#)), which includes reinvestigating my own research years later (exhibit 1a1a1h2a3b).

**More than my thesis argument already has, we'll return to TERF monsters and the monstrous-feminine (as regressive and subversively progressive) often. Both elide with hauntological ideas like "phallic woman" and "demon lover" (in coercive, unironic demon BDSM) as things to subvert, then endorse within the Gothic mode in new, harmless forms; i.e., mommy doms, monster-fucking and consent-non-consent as married to labor[322] vs canonical rape pastiche. There's also assimilation fantasy vs legitimate rebellion through Amazonomachia/Amazon pastiche as symbolic of class struggle through subjugated/subversive doubles: the war mask, uniform, weapon and weapon-like, athletic (or at least capable/"built") body as performances that, far from canceling each other out per the centrist axiom, continue in opposition for or against the state as something to wrestle out from under its iron thumb. Because the state historically personifies itself through hauntological bodies that express war, lies, death and rape in unironically fetishized forms that simultaneously perform all of the above, these variants exist to victimize the ironic monstrous-feminine during oppositional praxis. Simply put, a state fetish is a coercive device, one that frames iconoclasm not simply as "incorrect," but jailed then abused for its sex-positive, thus anticapitalist heresy during "prison sex"/Man Box rituals. Said rituals are often performed by assimilated members of a given minority (e.g., the Medusa is not simply overtly furious and demonic, but undead—its ontologically ambiguous trauma complicated by her as a symbol often operating at cross purposes).

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[321] The current white, female prime minister of Italy known for her fascist argumentation.

[322] The idea that Amazons don't wed or have sex is a heteronormative/cis-gendered myth, but its subversion is often non-binary and figurative.

While progressing away from the state's harmful apparatus and its linguo-material past is desirable, it is liminal relative to pornographic and artistic expression as historically-materially controlled by the state and its proponents (with Perseus famously using the beheaded Medusa's "blind rage" to destroy his enemies by making them hers—i.e., triangulation). Yet the truth is, pornography and demonic/undead language won't disappear at all under Gothic Communism; they simply won't be couched within current disguised trauma, but rather operate as savvy means of negotiating emotional/Gothic intelligence through informed consent in the present to prevent future trauma; i.e., the state's harmful return through regressive rhetorical devices: the regressive Amazon's blind rage, "waifu" status, foregone demise and coercive BDSM. As we shall explore throughout the book, **constructive anger** *and rioting is a healthy social mechanism tied to labor movements. Conversely, canonically* **destructive anger**—*i.e., appeasing the state's executioner just so you can send some other bastard to the guillotine or enslave a fellow worker as their "better"—is not; it is merely triangulation (turning one person against another), then clemency and reprieve to a greater calamity/seminal tragedy that cannot be avoided—not in wars, but also on a grander scale in relation to the end of the* **Capitalocene** *via Promethean cataclysm if something isn't done now.*
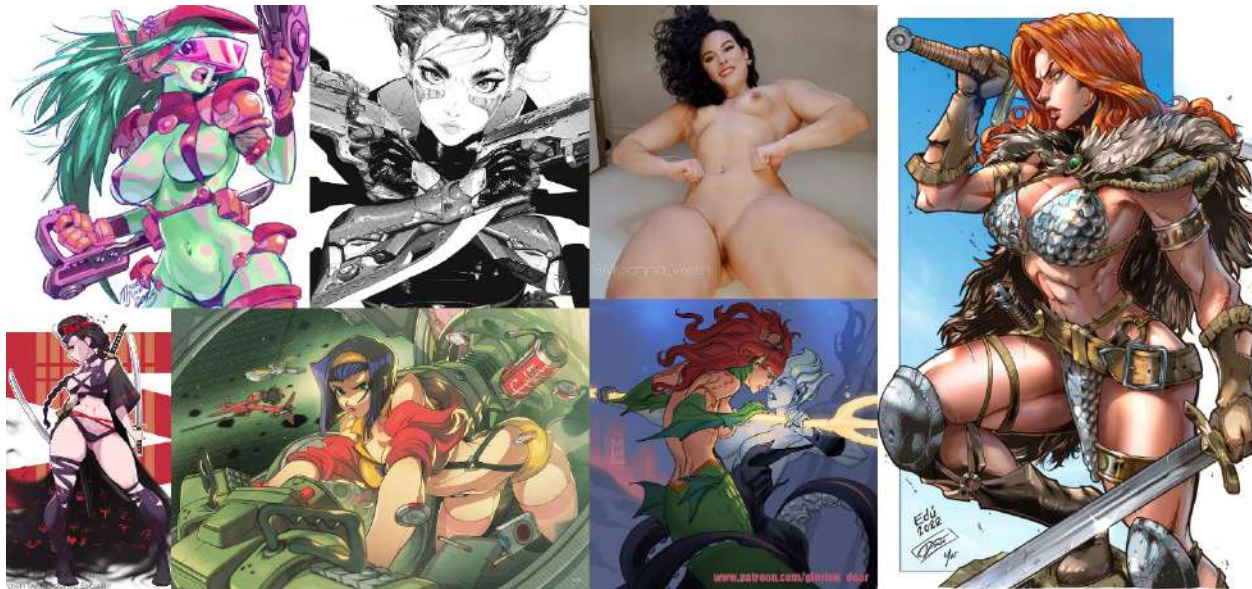
(exhibit 1a1b: Artist, top-far-left: Michel Dinel; top-mid-left: Jiyu-Kaze; top-middle: Viviana Vixen; right: Edu Souza; bottom-middle: Nunchaku; bottom-mid-left: Edwin Huang; bottom-far-left: Frederico Escorsin.
A kind of Galatea traditionally sculpted by Pygmalion and his imitators, Amazons and their complicated pastiche embody social-sexual conflict during oppositional praxis, hence come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They are canonically war dogs of a binarized character. Most notably is the noble Athena versus the dark Medusa

from the female legends of Antiquity [also, Queen Hippolyta]: the doubling of the hunter persona, a white and black <u>wolf</u>. Such war-boss, queen bitches canonically offer good behavior and bad behavior as our proverbial "teeth in the night" meant to serve as man's best friend in centrist theatre [and whose true rebellion goes against the elite's profit motive].

However, the lineage stretches backwards and forwards hauntologically through post-Renaissance revivals. For one, there's the pre-fascist, Neo-Gothic "phallic women-in-black" such as Victoria de Loredani, and the Victorian "madwoman in the attic," Bertha Mason; the post-Victorian, hatpin-stabbing suffragettes of the early 20th century [e.g., <u>Leoti Baker</u>]; the comic book/action hero treatment starting with William Marsden's bondage-themed Wonder Woman in the 1940s [or Rosie the Riveter] followed by the feral, bikini-wearing sexpots of the 1960s and 1970s [Coffy], as well Ripley and similar "female Rambos" of the 1980s [a neoliberal response to the "final girl" trope of the slasher genre]; various catsuit regressions— sexy spies, detectives, doctors, and BDSM-tinged femme fatales—in the '90s, 2000s and 2010s; then, an increasingly queer presence regarding the rise of trans, intersex, non-binary and other forms of queer discourse online. If the 20th century constitutes the continuation of first wave, second wave and third wave feminism, then fourth wave feminism's rise has seen a regression towards the older forms using the same language in oppositional praxis: regressive <u>Amazonomachia</u> and post-fascist* gender trouble [the "gender critical" movement] veering backward at fascist* and pre-fascist* palimpsests versus subversive <u>Amazonomachia</u> and transgressive gender parody. It's less a question of stolen valor and more of older groups fighting for **the equality of convenience** *by pitting their versions of the "Amazon-as-waifu" [a promised war bride, whose more muscular variants are called "wheyfus" for supposedly being "gym maidens" that consume whey but also can dominate the chaser sissy as a result] against genderqueer variants; i.e., a "mirror match," in fighting game parlance.*

*As I conceive it, <u>pre-fascism</u> is the imaginary medieval-as-tyrannical being felt within the state of affairs during the Neo-Gothic period and its future evocations while the nation-state and modern war were first forming; <u>fascism</u> alludes to 20th-century revivals of an imaginary Rome revived through the black knights and similar Greater Evils of capitalist kayfabe defending the status quo during total war in Europe; and post-fascism is an attempt during Bretton Woods and British/American neoliberalism to conceal the fact that fascism not only wasn't started in Italy or Germany but continues to thrive in the neoliberal hegemon [the fascist being a popular scapegoat in centrist media, but one that teams up with the American hero against Communism codified as chaos, queer, non-white, or alien]. Regarding all of these black-and-white variants, there's the moral qualification of "good and evil." Our concerns are dialectical-material, going beyond administering binarized value judgements to critique the underlying cause-and-effect of culture as

materially coded through informed, hauntological [thus grey] aesthetics operating at cross purposes; i.e., "TERF" is synonymous with "fascist," in this respect, as a heteronormative defender of the status quo through Man Box culture as contributing to Capitalist Realism, whereas "Light/good-looking vs Dark/evil-looking" is a universally adaptable aesthetic [exhibits 50b, 60e1, 101c2, etc] that lends itself well to fascist, neoliberal/centrist <u>and</u> Gothic-Communist iterations of ostensibly cis and overtly gender-non-conforming Medusas and Amazons [whose sexual/gender function and BDSM aesthetics are fluid, variable and often figurative].

In truth, the adaptability really applies to any warring persona as the body language of wrestler's kayfabe being the <u>conspicuous</u> staging of espionage-as-combat for or against the state [the stage-like arena having all eyes on it, which follow the performer-as-celebrity into the arena of everyday life; i.e., a kind of forced reality/performance within war as personified by the Amazon as a gladiatorial combatant operating inside culture war as an extension of class war within popular media as war-like]. Just as war is not, in truth, romantic but often conveyed in romantic language that sits between the fiction and the rules [re: Jesper Juul], the language of culture exists in dialectical-material opposition according to conveyors or consumers of these monstrous-feminine heroes becoming masked, costumed and/or muscular <u>operatives</u> to some passive or active degree: the drop-dead gorgeous, sexpot femme-fatale as a heavily codified cop, spy or prize fighter. Often, it's all three; i.e., a resistance collaborator/spy-turned-whore/vice versa [exhibit 4a] or a fascist double agent during "brothel espionage" married to the fighting ring. Such personas function as secret identities but also **alter egos** *on par with James Bond's [whose Red-Scare, <u>state-sanctioned</u> violence represents the legitimacy of state espionage in actual or romanticized forms, versus the forever-illegitimate counterterrorist violence of rebel factions seeking to dismantle state hegemony and develop a post-scarcity world]. Like any monster during oppositional praxis, this theatricality's* **jouissance** *sits between* **intended play** *and* **emergent play** *as decided by the play inside the meta-narrative; i.e., to play around with through pastiche [accuracy] and parody [inaccuracy, often ironic] as archetypally carried across various mediums: the Amazon and Medusa, for example, having survived out of Antiquity into plays, novels, cinema and videogames.*
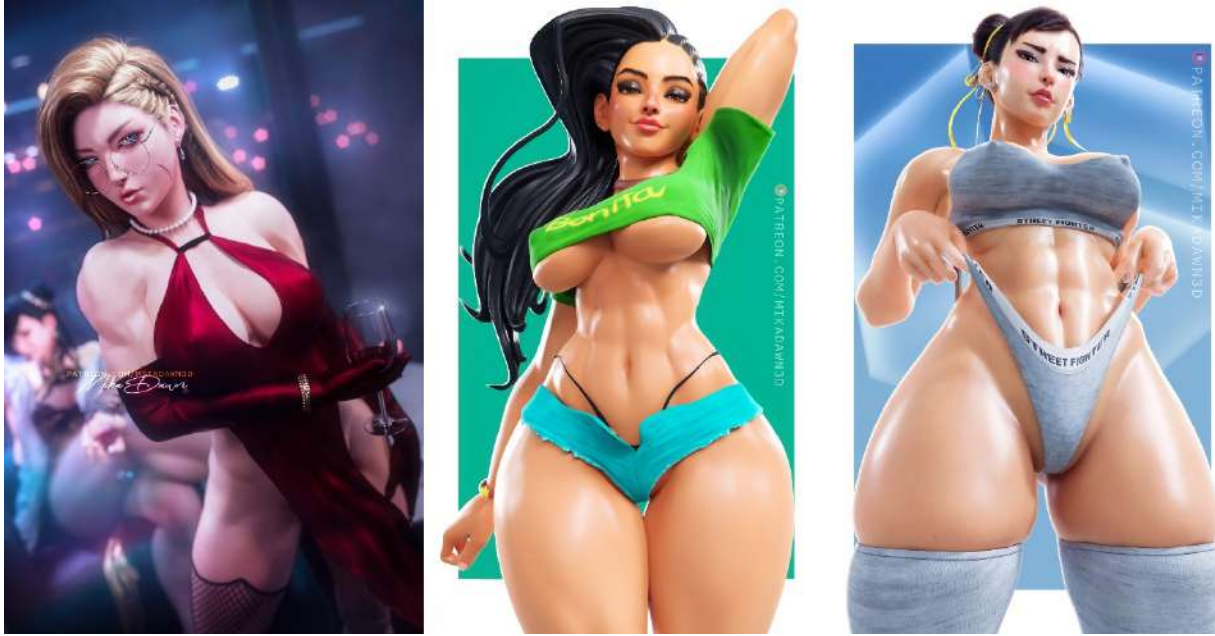
[artist: Mika Dawn 3D]

War has been rooted in tremendous theatre and deception since the time of the Caesars [whose hauntology 20th/21st century totalitarianism wishes to revive].
These deceptions have complicated under the neoliberal sphere. That is, the business of combat sports emulates the historically deceptive nature of actual war brought out of the imaginary ancient past into the modern world as a culture war fought with war-like aesthetics: the monomyth, also called the Hero's Journey, as a kind of orderly antidote to chaos as female. To this, class war unfurls via the battle of the sexes through sports as "man's domain," thus something to bar women from competing in against men for reasons of "fairness": women are hysterical beings of chaos and allowing them to compete would upset the delicate order of the universe, threatening their virtue and male egos [and profits]! This obviously effects gender-non-conforming people, going so far as to ban trans women from playing competitive chess as of 2023 [Caelan Conrad's "Were Trans Women Banned from Chess?!"]. In turn, the anomaly becomes costumed and fetishized as exceptional; i.e., "in a league of their own," one where the Sapphic lancer obliterates everyone in her own little cage. It's infantilizing.
Throughout the book, we'll revisit the monomyth and its deceptions in relation to class and culture war as "sport-like." For the moment, merely consider how the heteronormative segregation of sports mentality brings out some rather novel regressions that simply haven't existed before in Western politics or canon. One of these groups are TERFs, but also their disguise in the world of combat sports in the Internet Age through the waifu or wheyfu as a "girl boss/war boss" kind of puppet for the state; i.e., something to play out class betrayal and free market apologia during garden-variety war games. Whatever their form, the execution of these

games treats female strength—even monstrous-feminine variants—as wrought with multiple double standards. "Strong is sexy" translates to highly particular body types within fighting parlance: "built" within a Vitruvian, hourglass bod and the Amazon as materialized through the Male Gaze; i.e., to serve men by looking and acting a particular way within the theatre of war as indiscrete, globalized and sacred.

This extends to the virginal nerd as non-athletic in a physical sense, instead challenging the perceived dominance of men through the die-hard cliché of the female detective as having a "muscular" brain: the Nancy-Drew-type lesbian/ace person stemming from older tropes of a middle-class white girl undressed by the eyes of cis-het men while she gets to the bottom of the myth of male superiority through her domain: inside thinking-based games championed as yet-another-front for male dominance in culture war. This rebellious exchange is, itself, historically flawed—i.e., having bigoted roots by the men, but also the <u>women</u> doing the sleuthing as exceptional <u>white</u> sleuths. It's the shadow of fascism in feminism's bigoted past, dressed up as the underdog in a battle that reduces non-white/non-cis minorities to total invisibility or token status. Simply put, it becomes the white woman's "pick me" vibe/parade of old-school suffragettes billboarding <u>their</u> oppression; i.e., conveniently forgetting everyone else while being marketed not just as exceptional through manufactured [male] supremacy, scarcity and conflict, but <u>nostalgic</u> within the Gothic displacement of once-upon-a-time; e.g., Netflix' much-touted second-wave feminist pastiche in <u>The Queen's Gambit</u> [2020]: the hard-fought queen in the man's game, the prodigal child or pin-up doll whose exception proves the rule.

[artist, top-left: Blouson; bottom-left: Allie-Reol; bottom-right: East Sea Monster]

Regardless of their exact muscles or general look/vibe, I sometimes also call TERFs "TERF Amazons," "TERF Medusas," or "subjugated Hippolyta" through a poetic attempt to make the monstrous-feminine the Virgin or the Whore in <u>service</u> of state hegemony—i.e., the "monster mom" as fetishized during the monomyth [the succubus Slan, exhibit 51b1, or the xenomorph as a rapist ghost of the counterfeit who must die or be escaped from but also stared at and chased by bigots/privileged colonizers].

*Whereas Capitalism fosters a myopia that makes it difficult, if not impossible for people to imagine anything beyond Capitalism, Gothic Communism seeks to correct this cultural blindness in favor of imagining a better world through xenophilic monsters, rape play and all-around consent-non-consent, **voyeuristic peril** and various other transgressive liminalities; e.g., the monster mom as something to subvert through a gradient of gender parody propositions, my favorite being "Imagine Conan with a pussy" [and someone who wasn't a bigot]—i.e., non-binary gender trouble with a gradient of Amazon "monster moms" that are tough but*

nurturing while <u>not</u> endorsing the status quo: my OCs Ileana, Revana, Siobhan and Virago in exhibits 7d, 37f, 37g, 61a2, 84, etc; classical myths like the Medusa, 23b; and in subversive fanart like Corporal Ferro, Marisa, Chun Li and Zarya in exhibits 85, 104a2, 111b; etc.)

Also, beyond the duality of oppositional praxis/workers-versus-the state is **plurality** when you dive into the gradient between the two larger points. For us, "Gothic" is defined as oppositional praxis; i.e., during (anarcho-gay) Communist struggles against the state within a *proletarian* Gothic imagination, one whose liminal expressions consistently push and argue for equal human rights (and the rights of animals and the environment) for all workers expressed in *any* media type: gay Communist monsters (e.g., "fur fags," exhibit 10c2).

Third point: whenever I say "the state" in this book, I am referring to the state as both a current mechanism for capital, but also the status quo more broadly—a state of affairs that has evolved into its current form (including the Gothic castle as a hauntological advertisement for state hegemonic displacement and dissociation): nation-states, whose sense of national identity in relation to capital had to evolve into itself from the Cartesian Revolution onwards (bringing with them modern war and globalization as they currently exist). In the here and now, the status quo involves corporations and religious institutions that operate with the state, the elite uniting them to serve their material interests. "The state" is an umbrella term, then, one that highlights a relationship between all of these

factors. In the past, the status quo would have been the Church, or church-and-state as undivided—i.e., feudal enterprises and city states *prior* to the rise of nation-states that raised wealth through tithes or conquest (the Crusades). Conversely, the state as a traditional vector of exploitation by neoliberal agents/corporate bodies (taxes and commodities) can also be entirely bypassed by them—i.e., anarcho Capitalism and the accumulation of wealth through the creation and sale of privatized commodities (military and domestic) controlled *entirely* by corporations.

While these distinctions are important when explaining the past as it once existed or what the future could ultimately become, the elite have progressively sought to utilize *everything* in their power to achieve their goal: profit and global hegemony for profit, above all else. The foundational barbarism that post-fascism regresses towards (exploitation, genocide, fascist mercenaries, constant surveillance, torture, rape, drug abuse, lies, bribes, murder and pedophilia) is still there; it's just veiled, dressed up as "the market" in ways that glorify corporations and remove their accountability (which must be met with labor action, including unions; e.g., [Unscripted Casting Advocacy Network](#), 2023). Polities, corporations and churches—these factors are always working in concert to achieve profit; i.e., in some combination of state, corporation and church. Be this hybrid increasingly corporate/technocratic, fascist (a partial regression towards feudalism in defense of capital), theocratic, or some other bourgeois flavor, the outcome is always the same towards workers: exploitation, because that is what Capitalism is designed to do. Crisis and decay are both the functional gears of profit and part of the larger theatrical tableau.

As part of this masquerade, the black-and-blood-red ghost of fascism is constantly revived in pre-/current/post- flavors to combat the spectres of Marx within the psyches of the privileged; i.e., centrist media commonly reviving the Nazi as something to "protect" Americans and their emulators from—e.g., Skeletor (exhibit 40a1a/112a), Zombie Caesar (exhibit 39c) or Count Dracula (exhibit 41j) as a pre-/post-fascist, dark master emblem—while also keeping the same citizenry safe from the ghosts of Communism as a mutual enemy within the state at large. Indeed, fascists are either commonly summoned and scapegoated or dressed up in the antiquated, pre-fascist "vampy" aesthetic ("vamp" meaning "wielding the qualities of a confident, monstrous-feminine seductress") whose signifiers are to be blasted apart by monomythical, status-quo heroes, thus saving the world from the Greater of Two Evils: fascist "corruption" as conflated with Marxist-Leninists and anarcho-Communists in the same breath, but differentiated when it suits the elite, inviting fascists to defend capital from agents of post-scarcity (making the false rebellion of fascists a useful brand of idiocy for the state):

(exhibit 1a1c: Artist, top: [ChuckARTT](); bottom-left: [Arvalis](); bottom-middle: [Flyland](); bottom-right: [Pagong1]().

Fascism and Communism occupy the same space as "bad omens" in centrist monomyths until crisis demands a clear distinction be made by Pygmalions that defends capital beyond a shared persecution; i.e., fascism is the <u>lesser</u> of two evils because its perennial dark castle routinely crumbles to reveal a shiny <u>white</u> castle underneath, whereas the troubling presence of Communism threatens all of normalized existence: through a dark truth that cannot be cleansed because it denotes the castle [symbolic of the West, of Cartesian thought, of Capitalism] as harmful by design, not because it is "corrupt": ACAB. Indeed, the so-called shadow of "corruption" is common capitalist apologia, often relayed through a "vice character" scapegoat in neoliberal propaganda stemming from early-modern forms [e.g., <u>The Merchant of Venice</u>]. Videogames constitute a popular majority in this

field, wherein the boss archetype is a fascist or Communist scapegoat in the same general aesthetic. As such, there remains plenty of room for variation and double standards, enacted and remediated by weird canonical nerds in the Shadow of Pygmalion.

For example, the canonical "phallic" woman is "like a man" in that she is dark, mysterious and penetrative with her fangs and unquenchable desire, but remains the bride of a male, "Dark Father/Dragon Lord" tyrant [an allusion to the historical figure Vlad "the Impaler" Dracul and his patrilineal Order of the Dragon out of Eastern Europe] who holds her under his boss-like thrall; the canonical myth of the female <u>equivalent</u>, on the other hand, is the female-Beowulf who enters Archaic Mother territory—e.g., the place where the Countess [exhibit 41h] or Alien Queen/Mother Brain breed inside a site for abject sexual reproduction: the awesome majesty of her Numinous power offset by a voracious, <u>vagina-dentata</u> maw [what Barbara Creed calls the murderous womb] that both angrily spawns dragons and devours its own "children" blindly who, in turn, are forced to put her down in favor of a male hegemon; i.e., the Jungian slaying of the female chaos dragon to further the male questors "individuation" [itself a myth, given the genocidal commonality of all heroes in heteronormative canon: the knight defends property and the state, often by killing someone else and taking it from a fascist double after said double takes it from labor and minorities—capitalist DARVO in other words: "<u>You're</u> the gaping, always-hungry, self-cannibalizing maw, not us!"].

(artist: [Mizugi Buns](#))

*This being said, I don't want to focus on <u>vagina dentata</u> or literally breeding crises in the classical, Neo-Gothic sense; my book aims to go thoroughly beyond Barbara Creed's somewhat dated and limited, **biological-/cis-centric view** of the monstrous-feminine/"woman as other" [to be fair, she wrote <u>The Monstrous-Feminine</u> thirty years ago, so maybe she wrote something more recently[323] and I'm just late to the party]. So while it's true that the phrase "phallic woman" traditionally denotes a war-like woman, huntress or vengeful monstrous-feminine, I want to stress how subjugated Amazons aren't just aggressively and physically violent towards cis-het, sexist men; they've radicalized inside a "prison sex" mentality to become hostile towards "outsider" groups, including trans people, while seeing themselves as the universal victims that tacitly yield to their conquerors by emulating their worst habits [exhibit 41g1a2].*

*As such, I want to expand on how the monstrous-feminine can also non-binarize to illustrate the gender-non-conforming idea of a non-violent trans, intersex or **enby** person; i.e., someone who refuses to be a victim <u>without</u> embodying the standard-issue implements of violence and war from conventional stories [including TERF examples: the blind, <u>indiscriminate</u> Medusa]. Instead, they can be nymph-like and soft, their penis a reclaimed source of shame/codified rape [mine was] and their **monomorphic** body offering up other non-gender-conforming surprises to boot. They become a dark being of chaos to sincerely-but-ironically worship relative to how they camp current heteronormative standards that abject such beings; i.e., as would have been the case before Cartesian thought came and binarized everything: a drug-like, magic-themed "Ode to Psyche" [or Pan, Dionysus, Queen Maeb, Satan, the xenomorph, Medusa, etc] as wise in ancient, forgotten, "dark" ways; i.e., lost to Capitalism save in reimagined rebellious festivals [often with fairy-like flavors,*

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[323] *She did! <u>The Return of the Monstrous-Feminine</u> [2022] is a*

> *follow-up to the classic text of <u>The Monstrous-Feminine</u> analyses those contemporary films which explore social justice issues such as women's equality, violence against women, queer relationships, race and the plight of the planet and its multi-species. Examining a new movement – termed by Creed as Feminist New Wave Cinema […] Creed looks at a range of diverse films including <u>The Babadook</u>, <u>A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night</u>, <u>Nomadland</u>, <u>Carol</u>, <u>Raw</u>, <u>Revenge</u>, and the television series <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u>. These films center on different forms of revolt, from inner revolt to social, supernatural and violent revolt, which appear in Feminist New Wave Cinema. These relate in the main to the emergence of a range of social protest movements that have gathered momentum in the new millennium and given voice to new theoretical and critical discourses. These include: third and fourth wave feminism, the #MeToo movement, queer theory, race theory, the critique of anthropocentrism and human animal theory. [<u>source</u>: Routledge].*

Surprise, surprise, Creed's still focused on films, but she <u>does</u> include work from queer theory and fourth wave feminism and not just Freud! Well, that's great 'n all, but I <u>still</u> have a bone to pick with her older "classic" self and her dance partner, Freud!

exhibit 52a] that take black magic back as a culturally appreciative phenomenon. The "magic" stems from being different in morphological/gendered ways whose **chimeric** *andro/gynodiversity [exhibit 9b1] would have been worshipped in ancient and non-Western cultures in absence of unironic gender trouble; e.g., the "two-spirit" person, shaman or witch, but also the satyr or fawn of the ancient Western world [exhibit 52b] or the <u>angel</u> or <u>demon</u> of the non-Vitruvian model [exhibit 45b] as thoroughly Numinous.*

Even so, <u>contemporary</u> examples of "magic" also include the "sorcery" of gender-affirming care [from synthetic hormones to nail polish, ring lights and queer-coded hair dye] and its gynodiversity/androdiversity as heretical under the heteronormative/queernormative status quo, which merges with the celebration of the ancient, pagan and Sapphic [exhibit 41g1a1] as hauntologized in a sex-positive sense; i.e, to spread acceptance of, and adoration towards, the intersex as marginalized, as well as trans, non-binary and cross-dressing individuals. The penis becomes something to allow to exist alongside the vulva, labia and vagina, but also the breasts and other biological markers as decorated with various forms of demonic/undead/animalized code that camp the penis as a canonical symbol of rape: xenophilic genitals like the dragon dong [exhibit 37c] or zombie monster cock/"BBC" [exhibit 37b] but the wielder also decked out in various clothing and makeup whose general look/vibes actually fight queer panic/male stigma <u>and</u> show off the monstrous-feminine cock as both erect and often massive [exhibit 89b2b, 91b2] but also <u>not</u> toxically masculine/invasive:

(artist: *Galaad*)

Regardless of the size or usage—or even if the person is naked or not [exhibits 89b2a/2b]—the ludic-Gothic-BDSM goal stays the same: a chance between two [or more] parties to theatrically interrogate and negotiate, thus regain stolen worship and love that has been denied by Cartesian thought/scientists and their radicalized victims-turned-bad-faith activists; e.g., TERFs having been abused by a cis-het man and repeatedly conflating their former rapist with a trans woman through dogmatic propaganda they help write—i.e., destabilizing gossip/punching down. In response, punching up is generally done against a "Cotton Ceiling" [from Drew DeVeaux; source: Cassie Brighter's "The Often Misunderstood Premise of the Cotton Ceiling" 2019]. And such rioting absolutely should be allowed; calling it a "stone in a glass house" is to put property before people. The penis is generally associated with war-like brutality ["Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps…"] and advertised as monuments that are much larger than actual erect penises that promote

violence ["…And fix'd his head upon our battlements"]. Pornographic depictions of penises [as erect] are generally censored because they are indecent, but also because they expose the man's penis as a source of shame for failing to be "big enough."

As such, they are canonically presented as threatening and violent, transferring male stigma from person to person through the penis as implying the entire body and person as dangerous in **criminal-hauntological** *forms; i.e., the serial killer's* **dagger penis**, *but also the "incorrect" man as a cross-dressing killer advertised during Satanic panic; re: Matthew Lewis camping said panic in* The Monk *[1796] by having the male devil shapeshift into a female witch called Matilda, then crossdress as a nun crossdressing as a monk named Rosario before tempting Ambrosio with her "Satanic" body—all to place the false "woman" in the place of "biological" women's "real imprisonment"* and *fuck over the rapey priest. The class character residing in Lewis' queer voice, however nascent his 21-year-old self may have been, wasn't "just psychological" but campy* par excellence *in order to critique the resultant stigmas* begot *from material conditions; e.g., satire comparable to Shakespeare's* Titus Andronicus *or George Romero's zombie films! Comparatively his cis-het, WASP female "fencing partner," Ann Radcliffe, wrote* The Italian *having the heroine locked up in a convent with other AFAB nuns. Nary a demon faggot in sight:*

[artist: *Cute Femboy Faye*]

The point being, apart from Radcliffe's cloistered, naïve sexualizing of the surface of images [usually clothes; e.g., the nun's veil or the priest's robes] as she usually would, the <u>sighting</u> *of male balls [above] is a dead giveaway—i.e., a gendered*

"wrongness" with the picture, which strangely echoes in Matthew Lewis' hilarious description of Ambrosio apparently seeing a boob for the first time:

"His eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous orb. A sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight: a raging fire shot through every limb; the blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination" ([source](#)).

Taken a step further, the exposed "bodkin" would have been unthinkable for the Neo-Gothic period [and in some ways still very much is]. Lewis calls Ambrosio's boner "the full vigor of manhood" owned by a knife-wielding incel. Like a such dagger, then, the penis becomes something to hide not just out of shame, but in presumed bad faith while conflating sex with harm, leading many queer AMAB owners to a) guiltily conflate their penis with a weapon they cannot easily or safely remove [as I have felt] while b) also thinking their "bussy" is simply a hole filled with shit [as I have felt].
Conversely, the AFAB vagina-owners they encounter often live with their own psychosexual trauma or are otherwise taught to "clam up" to protect their modesty/virtue when they see a masculine threat: "no touch kitty!" To this, the female party might see Faye's balls [above] and envision penetration by the implied gender-non-conforming penis as automatically harmful and non-consensual, but also "false" in ways the dark lothario is not; his black garb, mask and rapier is absurdly viewed as more honest and safe. In other words, it is "correctly" dangerous in ways advertised through queernormative fiction, Gothic romances and "true crime/murder mysteries"; e.g., Ann Rice's Interview with the Vampire [1976] as the Female Gaze offering up the disposable queer man as a dark, sexy treat that either could rip your head off but doesn't or does rip "your" head off, albeit vicariously [which isn't automatically problematic, I should add; the paradox of Gothic fiction is that it allows for cartoonish, Mortal-Kombat levels of camp. But queer people need to be treated as more than abject toys by straight women writing about queer people as commodities; i.e., mutilation needs to be handled with irony and care, lest it fall into Radcliffe's trap of automatic, unironic mutilation for/of a xenophobic "demon"].)

If this categorical approach to "the state" (and its theatre) sounds too liquid, try to understand how single terms not only have multiple definitions; these definitions co-exist mid-discussion, when words are being contested—i.e., by colonizers forcing singular definitions on others despite enjoying multiple definitions when it suits them ("boundaries for me, not for thee") and reclaimers working with multiple definitions and code-switching to suit their revolutionary needs. A certain degree of intuition and good faith is vital if you want to make it through this book, which focuses on various ways to subvert and reclaim canon—especially canonical monster language—in defense of workers exploited by the state. As we proceed, some ideas will be mentioned far more than others. Some, like **abjection** or **chronotope**, will come up a lot; some, like *cryptomimesis* will have specialized chapters, but be less frequent overall; some, like "magic circle" or "ludic contract" are mentioned more "for flavor" and whose adjacent suggestions are meant to invite you, the reader, to form your own connections/constellations beyond the ones I decide to focus on. This book is full of stars, so make your own shapes in the sky using the tools and keywords I supply. As long as the journey and outcome are sex-positive within a broad ergodic sphere, the exact routes you take to get there don't really matter. So chart your own sequences. To that, revolution needs to be more than holistic; it needs to be *internalized* in its practitioners by exposing them to radical ideas and praxis as soon as possible, thus at as young an age as can be allowed (rest assured that fascists and centrists are doing the same thing).

Fourth point: I say "linguo-material" (or *socio*-material when stressing the social, interactive components) because language is a *natural* feature of humans that distinguishes them *socially-sexually* from other species through complicated, Gothic expressions that manifest inside the *material* world; i.e., the creation of

egregores, but also their sublimation and subversion during oppositional praxis under Capitalism. In other words, this process is *liminal*, again meaning re:

> both "a threshold to move through," in spatial terms, and "a conflict on the surface of the image of," in linguistic/ontological terms (the word can also denote to being "in between," insofar as a monster is canonical versus iconoclastic—with a particular spatial/personalized expression moving towards one pole or the other from its *de facto* starting point).

Our propaganda is iconoclastic sex work that develops Gothic Communism as the next stage of human development; *our* sex work is proletarian praxis, teamworking in opposition to Patriarchal Capitalism as the historical-material harbinger of death, slavery, war and rape in whatever form its canon may take—including bad-faith/moderate forms like tokenism, weird canonical nerds and/or TERFs, but also liminal gradients on a grand sliding scale of interrelated pairs during dialectical-material analysis: sex positivity vs sex coercion, the proletariat (workers) vs the bourgeoisie (the elite), iconoclasm vs canon, **good play** vs **bad play**, and manufactured us-versus-them vs collective worker action/slave cooperation against a common master, etc. Though often presented as "discrete" by those in or siding with power, these categories generally intersect; this book holistically explores these oscillating intersections in the Gothic mode as a living thing (Capitalism)—with legions of iconic monsters, castles and perilous scenarios that must be collectively altered into Communism by direct worker action and solidarity through iconoclastic art playfully geared towards that aim. It's a dicey proposition, not without risk; i.e., fascists kill activists, but so does the state and its proponents more broadly.

In Closing: A Gay New World

It's a mixed up, muddled up, shook up world
I don't wanna be a boy, I don't wanna be a girl
Breaking the rules as I sway and swirl
Shining like a diamond in glitter and pearl
So let's go out on the town (yeah)
Light a fire, burn it down

<div align="right">

—Orion Simprini and Linda Horwatt; "All Dolled Up" on The Orion
Experience's Fever Dream (2021)

</div>
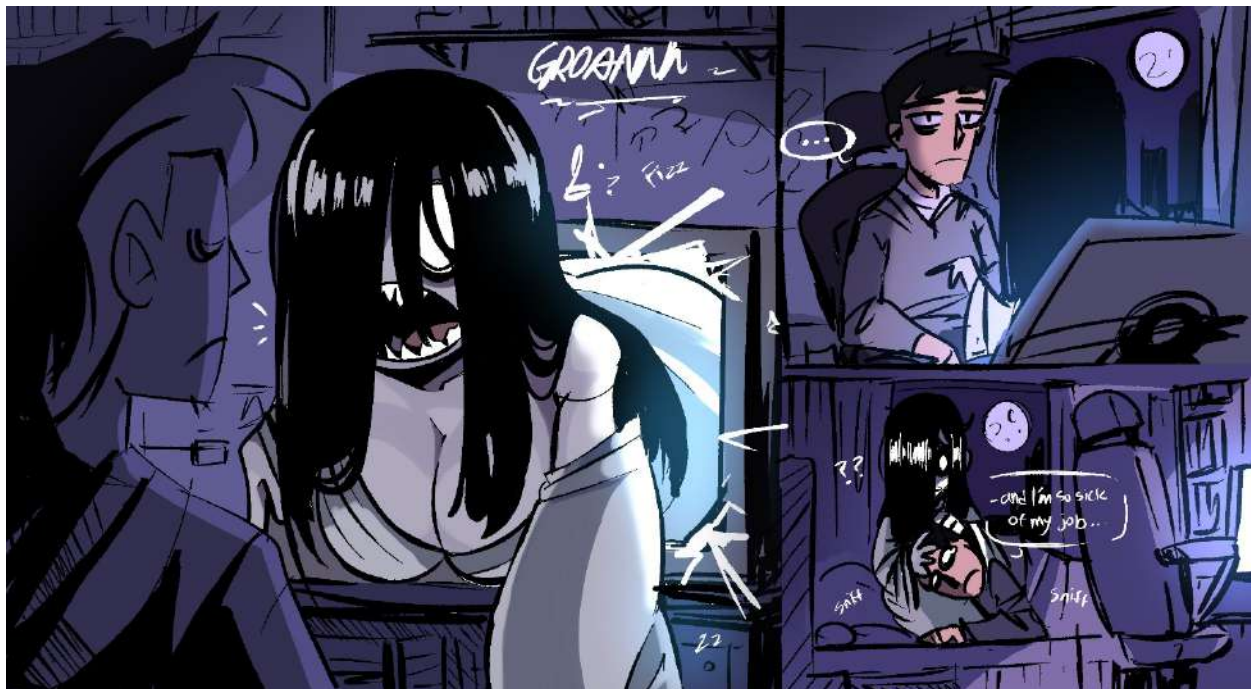
(artist: Pear)

This conclusion was originally written as a segue/introduction to my manifesto in Volume One. Seeing as that volume now has its own preface, I decided to move its former introduction here, to serve as my thesis volume's closing thoughts. —Perse

There is also a genderqueer paradox of sorts we'll need to acknowledge before we proceed into Volume One. Heteronormativity *divides* us from nature and ourselves, exploiting us in the process by forcing the human body, sexual orientation, and gender identity/performance *together*—i.e., canonizing worker division and sex-gender homogeny as biologically essentialized and sexually dimorphic. Conversely, Gothic Communism uses 4th wave feminism, genderqueer theory, ludic studies and Marxist thought to dismantle the heteronormative

standards of the state—i.e., to bring workers closer to nature through the material world as something to subvert by iconoclastic means. Our aim in doing so is to demonstrate that the assorted factors mentioned above are actually distinct and separate categories that can, but do not necessarily, hold undue influence over the others. For example, if someone is **AFAB** (assigned female at birth), they can gender-non-conform and present/perform as femme regardless if they have a natal penis or a girl-cock (which can still be a natal penis depending on how you look at it). Taken a step further, if someone is AFAB and femme and presents as a *vampire*, their gender role within society is not exclusively to be punished provided we subvert the canonical role of the vampire during oppositional praxis. To humanize traditionally persecuted monsters (on the receiving end of state violence) is to allow queer people to exist outside of the heteronormative binary.

We'll get to all of that. *Sex Positivity versus Sex Coercion, Or Gothic Communism* is not a short book (this thesis volume just by itself is ~785 pages). Funnily enough, it was originally intended as a chapter within my now-discontinued book, *Neoliberal and Fascist Propaganda in Yesterday's Heroes* (which explored notions of "heroic" body representation in popular American media; the first-now-only chapter was the aforementioned "Military Optimism" blogpost I've repeatedly cited so far). Over time, *Sex Positivity*'s length ballooned, leading me to treat it as a book unto itself. Alongside its written content, I have also revisited old pieces of my own artwork to feature within, as well as collaborate with various sex worker and model friends to create brand-new artworks for this project. Combined with publicly available sources, this book contains over 1,000 different worker-produced images (1,086 as of publishing this volume) to make its pro-worker arguments, hundreds of which are "exhibit-style" (often two or more images/collages meant to be viewed together to make a larger argument; or one "visual aid" image that I break down in relation to the arguments around it).

Beyond the thesis argument and its symposium, *Sex Positivity* takes its time—gradually launching into its complex (ergodic) arguments through concentric, staged roadmaps. Imagine a rocket launch into space: This requires multiple stages and "boosters," meaning there's always time to abort the launch if things get hairy. This book, then, has been divided into four volumes, including this one. Their combined content aims to revive past revolutionaries whose rage was anathema, thus buried; now coming to light through us—the current generation—their own forbidden praxis can be imbibed and repurposed by future generations in improvised, informed succession.

(artist: [Elisabetta Sirani](#))

However, while my emphasis is on artistic expression through the Gothic mode, there remains elements of dialectical-material verisimilitude that I want to convey through this book's academically *discouraged* content; i.e., "how people actually talk" as a means of combatting cognitive estrangement—not just using movie quotes, YouTube videos, music lyrics, bad jokes, *whakataukī*/proverbs, four letter Germanic swearwords (and their lengthier conjugations/gerunds), and (one or two) meme images (a literal, popularized form of mimesis), but also touches of me as a trans person and former "professional student" with an extensive Humanities education centered around the Gothic as something I (and many others) have consumed since childhood. This education includes my formal (read: financially exploited by neoliberal institutions) education: a BA in "English: Language, Literature and Writing" from Eastern Michigan University in 2016 [and an MA in "English Studies (the Gothic)" from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2018](#). However, it also includes my informal education and touches of me: personal anecdotes, "weird sexual metaphors" (re: Christine Neufeld, regarding my undergrad work), trans epiphanies, British Romantic poems, epigrams (a staple of Neo-Gothic novels), sexual/gender preferences (with my "type" leaning more towards the femme side of things [for boys] and allowing for a lot more total variety with female/intersex cuties) and just all-around nods to myself and my life's work/(a)sexual-gender exploration in art. Moving forward, all of this is delivered in

a seminar-like style meant to convey ideas (and people) as works-in-progress relating back and forth over space and time.

In other words, *Sex Positivity* is *my* "total codex." Like a medieval scriptorium or Renaissance commonplace book (e.g., Prince Hamlet's), it monastically and extensively compiles the Humanities as I know them through the work I've done with other people, my comrades and how I wish to cite ideas to them or from them to future comrades without too much academic *de rigueur* or straight-up torture porn (this being said, I signposted the absolute shit out of this fucker, organizing it into volumes, sections, chapters, and sub-chapters, but also providing as many bookmarks and exhibit markers as I could; you should be able to lose yourself in its arguments without feeling lost). As an international MA who tried her best to combine two different schools of thought into her own unique ideas, I find the notion of academic citation (and dealing with image copyright issues through official publishers) frankly traumatic. Having had four or five different citation methods foisted onto me in grad school (and being fairly certain MLA will mean absolutely nothing to a non-academic audience), I've decided to drop formal citations and an annotated bibliography and instead rely more on hyperlinks/footnotes[324] inside an ordinary book that contains extraordinary ideas; a broad, holistic understanding of the Gothic and its modular components (no offense to you specialists out there, but I prefer to *hybridize* my monsters; that's how natural language and the material world do it, but also what I think works best as a teaching device—a *flexible* "monster mode"). Also: pictures, lots of those—with as many links to the artists as I can supply (barring the odd example when an original source remains elusive, which I will comment on).

Sex Positivity invokes things that I have grappled with for many years. Monsters, Satanism, Romantic poetry and sex/gender fluidity have interested me since childhood (my lullaby as a child was Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn," 1816); Marxism has since undergrad; chronotopes, hauntology and cryptonymy have since grad school. None are easy to understand; despite acknowledging my lifelong fascination with "Sex, Metal, and Videogames" in 2021, I've continued to write about them over and over precisely because I want to try and understand how they coexist inside a material world. Now, this book—as an extension of my general approach to life—is shining a holistic, liminal flashlight on old things that evolve to survive Capitalism operating as intended, defending itself through neoliberalism/fascism; war, rape, national subterfuge, etc. Trans/non-binary people are not new, nor are our struggles; nor are the struggles of cis women, people of color, and other ethnic minorities, and the struggles of all workers intersecting and interacting back and forth under Capitalism. We have always been people (Step

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[324] The first edition of the thesis volume has footnotes. Due to time constraints, I probably will not be able to include footnotes in Volumes One, Two and Three until their second editions.

Back, 2023) and Capitalism has always exploited us according to how it deems us useful/not useful, thus superior/inferior inside the colonial binary and its heteronormative rubric/moderately normative offshoots.

   Sex Positivity illustrates this complex reality through what I've learned, reassembling it for you as a kind of monster compilation to play around with. As you play, experiment and learn, think about your own modes of monstrous self-expression and what you put back into the world: your *poiesis* and creative successes. In the end, we're all defined by what we leave behind. Wherever this book finds you, know it contains our stories as left for you to discover and learn from: our struggles to self-express through art that gives our traumas and oppression a voice. Life is short, so don't be afraid to take chances with sex, love and companionship. Yes, they're inherently risky but also modular activities that intersect with class warfare as a powerful, *playful* means of changing luck through *altered* material conditions. Emergent playfulness is a sign of intelligence, of being able to learn through creativity, language and games that challenge unironic abuse and enslavement (this book being predicated on equal parts disaster and serendipity through its inception). So give it a shot! You'll never know what you might learn about yourself in the process, or who you might befriend along the way:

(exhibit 1c: Top left: Mike Jittlov—an animation pioneer, special effects wizard and very creative person. I—like other artists have in the past—once had the pleasure of speaking to Mike. Not only is his classic film The Wizard of Speed and Time [1988] available on YouTube for free; it once dared to critique Hollywood only to be buried by the producer after a delayed production and laughably small distribution [made from 1983-1986, it was only ever released on VHS and Laserdisc]. Still, it lives on inside those of us who continue to critique the system in our own iconoclastic work [as does Mike's original, very-'90s-looking website]!

Top right: [Amouranth](#)—a sex worker abused by her own boyfriend, who coerced her into making privatized content for him. Now she is finally free of his awful influence while [using her face and her voice to talk about hidden, ubiquitous exploitation present within the sex worker industry](#).

Bottom: Persephone van der Waard in grad school with a Mancunian cutie—once lovers and friends, but now just a bittersweet, censored memory of me standing next to an emotionally abusive ex; i.e., someone who—after the slow breakup in 2019 followed by disillusion of our post-breakup friendship, in 2023—decided rather abruptly that they wanted nothing to do with me or this book in any official, unmasked capacity. It's the cliché of them asking <u>me</u> to tear up the polaroid. So, yeah, fuck them.)

This concludes the thesis volume. The other volumes—the full manifesto, Humanities primer and volume on proletarian praxis—are loosely scheduled for the rest of 2023 and all of 2024. I shall release them one at a time, announcing each when it becomes available on my website. Stay tuned! —Perse, 11/28/2023

(model: [Persephone van der Waard](#); photographer: Zeuhl)

Keyword Glossary

"You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

—Inigo Montoya, <u>The Princess Bride</u> *(1987)*

([source](): "The 430 Books in Marilyn Monroe's Library: How Many Have You Read?" 2014)

The companion glossary is dedicated to terms found in the thesis volume that nevertheless appear throughout all four volumes. It is divided into four sections:

- [Marxism and Politics](): Contains any terms that deals with Marxist theories or socio-political concepts.
- [Sex, Gender and Race: Language, Theory and Politics](): Covers the majority of gender theory used in this book.
- [Miscellaneous Terms, Game Theory](): Holds anything useful that isn't in the other sorting categories.
- [The Gothic, Kink, and BDSM](): Catalogues the various ideas/theories on the Gothic, kink and BDSM that, while used throughout this book, aren't listed in the manifesto.

Marxism and Politics

Marxism

Schools of thought stemming from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, trying historically to achieve Communism through the state first (Marxist-Leninism) instead of direct worker solidarity and action operating in opposition to the state and establishment politics (anarcho-Communism). As an anarcho-Communist, I borrow ideas from Marx, but shy away from calling myself a Marxist (any more than I'd call myself a postmodernist/deconstructionist despite borrowing from Derrida); throughout the book, I prefer to use the noun/adjective phrase "dialectical(-)material" in place of "Marxist." The reason being is that Gothic Communism, as we shall define it, deviates away from Marxist-Leninism (state Socialism) towards a democratized class consciousness/proletarian xenophilia that combats the historical-material abuses of the state in any configuration (fascist, neoliberal, Marxist-Leninist, etc).

material conditions

The factors that determine quality of life from a material standpoint; i.e., not an ethical/moral argument ("this is right/wrong"), but one that deals with access to various material conditions that reliably improve one's living conditions: housing, food, electricity, clothing, water, education, employment, loans/credit, transportation, internet, etc. The status quo reliably constricts material conditions to benefit the elite; this occurs within a societal hierarchy that structurally privileges marginalized groups from least- to most-marginalized along systemically coercive and phobic lines. Indeed, this arrangement is so concrete that future history can be readily predicted through the arrangement of material conditions already displayed in canonical works: historical materialism.

historical materialism

The normalized, vicious cycle that history is predicated on the material conditions that routinely bring them about. These conditions make genocide and sex worker exploitation a historical-material *fact*, something that weighs on the living through what Capitalism leaves behind—the endlessly doubled histories of the dead according to Karl Marx in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852):

> Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. [...] Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but

under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language ([source](#)).

dialectical materialism

The dialectical progress is the study of oppositional forces in relation to each other. For Marx, this involves the study of dialectical-*material* forces—i.e., the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in opposition, not harmony. "Harmony" is canonical pacification, which leads to genocide and endless exploitation of workers by the elite.

the means of production

Marx' Base, owned by the elite; the ability to (mass)produce material goods within capital/a living market. This operates on a mass-manufactured scale, but also through work performed at the individual level—labor. Workers seize the means of production by attempting to own the value of their own labor. Conversely, capitalists exploit workers by stealing worker labor, often through wage theft (wages under Capitalism being the creation of jobs, or revenue streams for the elite to structuralize then steal from, which they then credit themselves as giving back to people; i.e., "I created these jobs!" Translation: "I created a means of exploiting people through their labor during manufactured scarcity). Billionaires privatize labor through unethical means, "earning" their billions through wage theft/slavery as "owned" by them, meaning *used* by them specifically as exploited labor (which alienates workers from the products of their own labor).

(artist: Adolf Menzel)

private property

Not to be confused with personal property, private property is property that is privately owned, generally by the elite through privatization via state-corporate mechanisms. As Marx puts it in 1844, "Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., – in short, when it is used by us. Although private property itself again conceives all these direct realisations of possession only as means of life, and the life which they serve as means is the life of private property – labour and conversion into capital" ([source](#)).

privatization

If private property is property that is privately owned, *privatization* is the process that enables private ownership at a systemic, bourgeois level. Under Capitalism, the elite own means of production by encouraging negative freedom to "liberalize" (deregulate) the market. They do so by removing restrictions, allowing the owner class to privatize their assets. In class warfare, capitalists disguise this fact by deliberately conflating bourgeois ownership with "bougie" (middle-class) ownership:

- Owners, in the academic, bourgeois sense, own the means of mass production, thus individual production within capital. They privatize factories, territory, industrial sectors, the military, paramilitary (cops), and the means to print money. As a consequence, they also own workers, albeit by proxy (wage slavery).
- Middle-class ownership is merely an exchange of wages—direct purchases or taxes—for material goods aka *personal* property. These goods become something to defend, resulting in a great deal of punching down (reactionary/moderate politics).

functional Communism

The eventual (centuries from now) abolishment of privatization/private property. This process is called development, or Socialism; Socialism's historical-material "failure" to move beyond planned economies stems from foreign, bourgeois interference and internal strife begot from privatized interests—all related to Capitalism preserving itself as a structure.

nominal Communism

Nominal communism—i.e., Communism in name alone, sold to workers through canonical propaganda to scare them into upholding the bourgeois status quo.

Gothic (gay-anarcho) Communism

Coined by me, Gothic Communism is the deliberate, pointed critique of capital/Capitalism using a unique marriage of Gothic/queer/game theory and Marxist ideas synthesized by sex-positive workers during proletarian praxis. Meant to end neoliberal/fascist Capitalism in order to bring about anarcho-Communism, this liberation occurs through sex-positive labor (and monsters) reclaimed by sex workers (which Derrida called "spectres of Marx" in his eponymous book on hauntology as a Communist "ghost" that haunted language after the so-called "end of history").

anarcho-Communism

The gradual disillusion and transmutation of Capitalism into Socialism and finally Communism through direct worker solidarity and collective action, whereupon power is horizontally restructured—slowly rearranged into [anarcho-syndicalist communes](#) (which are historically more stable than Capitalism is, but also under attack/sabotaged by the elite every chance they can get—e.g., Cuba and U.S. sanctions for the past 70 years whitewashed by Red-Scare propaganda). To achieve

this, class warfare must be conducted against official/*de facto* agents of the state-corporate union devised by capitalists/neoliberal hegemons.

neoliberal Capitalism

The dominant strain of Capitalism operating in the world today—i.e., Capitalism employed by neoliberal canon, centrism, moderacy and personal responsibility rhetoric to achieve the greatest possible division between the owner/worker classes, as well as infinite growth and efficient profit (more on these during the manifesto proper). Neoliberal Capitalism is founded on a vertical arrangement of power through national-state-corporate leaders operating against worker interests by exploiting them to the fullest using capital.

capital/Capitalism

A system of exploiting workers, nature and the world, whose resultant genocide and vampiric devastation is synonymous with profit for capitalists/the elite. The elite parasitize everyone/thing else to generate profit through Capitalism; or to quote directly from Raj Patel and Jason Moore's *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (2017):

> Money isn't capital. Capital is journalism's shorthand for money or, worse, a stock of something that can be transformed into something else. If you've ever heard or used the terms *natural capital* or *social capital*, you've been part of a grand obfuscation. Capital isn't the dead stock of uncut trees or unused skill. For Marx and for us, capital happens only in the live transformation of money into commodities and back again. Money tucked under a mattress is as dead to capitalism as the mattress is itself. It is through the live circulation of this money, and in the relations around it, that capitalism happens.
>
> The process of exchange and circulation turn money into capital. At the heart of Marx's *Capital* is a simple, powerful model: in production and exchange, capitalists combine labor power, machines and raw material. The resulting commodities are then sold for money. If all goes well, there is a profit, which needs then to be reinvested into yet more labor power, machines and raw materials. Neither commodities nor money is capital. This circuit *becomes* capital when money is sunk into commodity production in an ever-expanding cycle. Capitalism is a process in which money flows through nature. The trouble here is that capital supposes infinite expansion [growth] within a finite web of life ([source](#)).

For our purposes, this "web of life" concerns the privatized, social-sexual exploitation of workers in monstrous language—something to be unironically defended by class traitors preserving Capitalism, thus the state as a means of maximizing capital for the elite (infinite growth); i.e., to serve and protect capital, not people, through the means of production/propaganda's current bourgeois hegemony under neoliberal Capitalism's personal responsibility rhetoric—to regulate the market and empower the state through concealed abuses that accrete out from the center in all directions. As anarcho-Communists, we much critique this canonizing process' profit motive through our own iconoclastic material.

capitalists

Those who own capital, the bourgeoisie. However, capital/Capitalism as a process actually alienates capitalists from their own wealth; there is seldom money "on hand"—largely positions within a structure operating in continuum in pursuit of neoliberal Capitalism's main objectives (very different from the dragon sitting on a pile of gold, which is closer to the fascist strongman stealing wealth by hijacking the mechanisms of the state).

An idiosyncrasy in terms of my writing: This book treats Capitalism and Communism as proper nouns; other words, like "state," "capitalist," "neoliberal," and "fascist" are not capitalized. The reasons are arbitrary but I've at least tried to be consistent. —Perse

Anthropocene/Capitalocene

The *Anthropocene* is unit of time used to describe the period in which human existence and interaction with the natural world has started to impact it negatively in terms of ecosystem proliferation and health, general climate operations, and various other factors that intersect and relate to the survival of all life on the planet—including humans—as threatened by human contributions to climate change. The *Capitalocene* (as used by Patel and Moore) applies this logic to Capitalism:

> Regardless of what humans decide to do, the twenty-first century will be a time of "abrupt and irreversible" changes in the web of life. Earth system scientists have a rather dry term for such a fundamental turning point in the life of a biospheric system: state shift. Unfortunately, the ecology from which this geological change has emerged has also produced humans who are ill-equipped to receive news of this state shift. Nietzsche's madman announcing the death of god was met in a similar fashion: although industrial Europe had reduced divine influence to the semicompulsory Sunday-morning church attendance, nineteenth-century society couldn't image a world without god. The twenty-first century has an analogue: it's easier for most people to imagine the end of the planet than to imagine the end of capitalism. […] Today's human activity isn't exterminating mammoths through centuries of overhunting. Some humans are currently killing everything, from megafauna to microbiota, at speeds one hundred times higher than the background rate. We argue what changed is capitalism, that modern history has, since the 1400s, unfolded in what is better termed the Capitalocene [than the Anthropocene] ([source](#)).

anthropocentrism/posthumanism

In *Posthuman Life* (2015), David Roden writes, "A humanist philosophy is anthropocentric if it accords humans a superlative status that all or most non-humans lack" ([source](#)). Posthumanism goes beyond traditional notions of Cartesian humanism to afford basic rights to humans, animals and the natural-material world as something not to exploit by Capitalism.

transhumanism

From Roden's *Posthuman Life*,

> Self-fashioning through culture and education is to be supplemented by technology. For this reason, transhumanists believe that we should add morphological freedom—the freedom of physical and mental form—to

the traditional liberal rights of freedom of movement and freedom of expression […] to discover new forms of embodiment in order to improve on the results on traditional humanism [and according to the World Transhumanist Association, 1999] "to use technology to extend their mental and physical (including reproductive) capacities and to improve their control over their own lives" ([source](#)).

accretion

Dissemination out from the center of a socio-material structure (similar to how planets form); i.e., the Symbolic Order, the mythic structure, etc; e.g., accretions of the Medusa as someone to kill or avoid, as "untamable" by men as the arm of the state and the law. To escape men, she turns to stone (or a tree)—a defense mechanism from those who unironically defend the structure in official/unofficial capacities.

the Superstructure
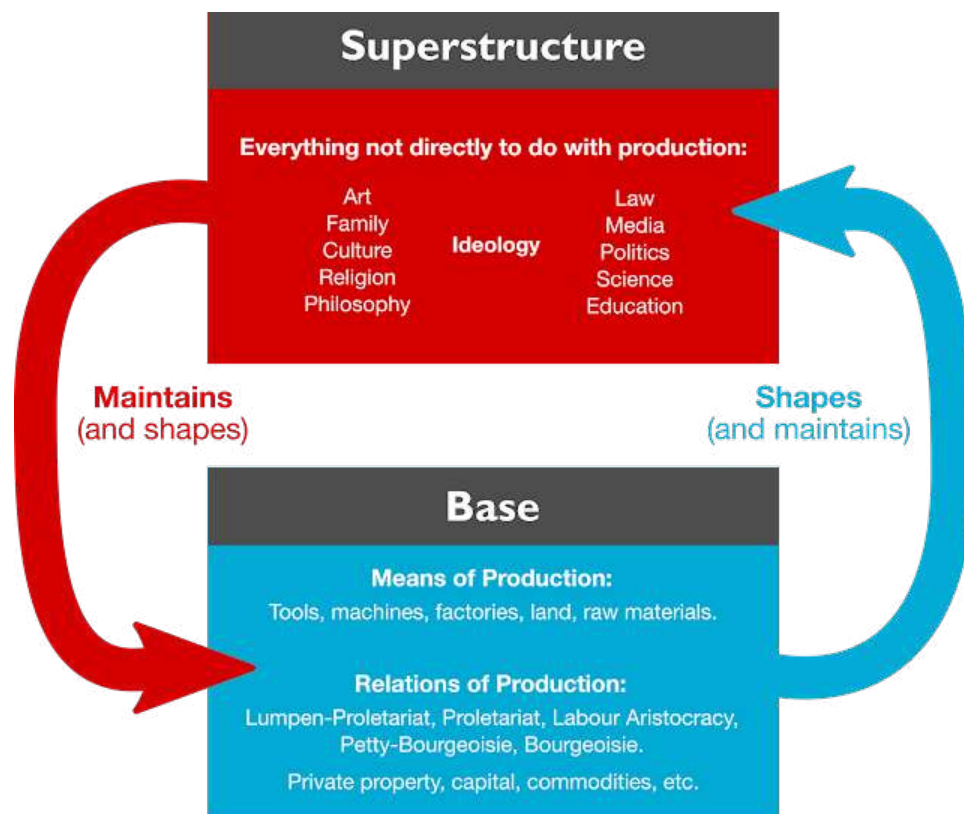
(exhibit 2)

Propaganda; that which, Rana Indrajit Singh writes in the International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, normally "grows out of the base and the ruling class' interests. As such, the superstructure justifies how the base operates and defends the power of the elite" ([source](): "Base and Superstructure Theory," 2013)—*normally* being the operative word, here. This book isn't a fan of what's normal because normal is the status quo and the status quo is bourgeois.

splendide mendax

The teller of splendid lies; e.g., [Jonathan Swift and *Gulliver's Travels*]() (1726); also applies to self-aware weavers of various genres of fiction, from Oscar Wilde to Luis Borges, but also non-white/American authors who have to reinvent their own cultures' lost histories—e.g., Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Michelle Cliff's [*Free Enterprise*]() (1993) and Charles Johnson's [*Middle Passage*]() (1998), etc. Furthermore, concerning bourgeois lies vs proletarian splendid lies, Gothic stories are concerned with recycled clichés in either case.

"archaeologies" of the future

[Fredric Jameson's titular 2005 idea](), *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, of an elaborate strategy of misdirection (an idea originally from his 1982 essay "[Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?]()") that breaks through the future of one moment that is now our own past, often through the fantasy and science fiction genres (the Gothic variant of this strategy as we shall discuss it is the Gothic castle/chronotope, discussed in the thesis proper). Canonical "archaeologies" sell this dead future back to workers to pacify them; iconoclastic variations devise ways of seeing beyond canonical illusions by "re-excavating" them, using what's left behind *again* to liberate worker bodies and minds in the process.

propaganda

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, *propaganda*

> is the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth). Deliberateness and a relatively heavy emphasis on manipulation distinguish propaganda from casual conversation or the free and easy exchange of ideas. Propagandists have a specified goal

or set of goals. To achieve these, they deliberately select facts, arguments, and displays of symbols and present them in ways they think will have the most effect. To maximize effect, they may omit or distort pertinent facts or simply lie, and they may try to divert the attention of the reactors (the people they are trying to sway) from everything but their own propaganda ([source](#)).

For us, propaganda is anything that cultivates the Superstructure, including splendid lies and elaborate strategies of misdirection. However, anything that goes against the interests of the state will be perceived of as terrorist lies by the state, making its abolishment by workers all the more pressing. However, state propaganda also *self-replicates*—with Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edwards Bernays, famously applying the principles of political propaganda to marketing in his 1928 capitalist apologia, *Propaganda*. The book argues for a rebranding of propaganda called "public relations," one where "invisible" people create knowledge and propaganda to rule over the masses, with a monopoly on the power to shape thoughts, values, and citizen responses; that "engineering consent" of the masses would be vital for the survival of democracy. In Bernays' own words, he explains:

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of.

Despite a patent rebrand filled with cheerful Liberalism, Bernays went on to inspire Hitler's minster of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, but also Hitler himself (as well as American propagandists during and following WW2). Hitler did his best to emulate American media, [seeing its coercive value by creating his own Hollywood](#) (see: Hilter's Hollywood, 2018). Helped from the likes of commercial-savvy artists like Goebbels, he copied Charlie Chaplin's toothbrush mustache, radicalized Bernays' ideas on propaganda, [and painstakingly toiled over the creation of the Nazi symbol itself](#) (Jim Edwards' "Hitler as Art Director: What the Nazis' Style Guide Says About the 'Power of Design,'" 2018). Behind the illusions, Hitler remained cutthroat, buoyed to chancellorship by the German elite defaulting on American loans, whereupon he promptly killed his political enemies and spent the next decade convincing his nation to fight to the death. In short, he was a bad capitalist (unlike the American elite).

praxis

The practical execution of theory. This can be achieved through different modes; e.g., ours is iconoclastic *poiesis*, or artwork tied to worker emancipation as something to creatively express, but also build upon as a collective, cultural understanding unified against the state. In other words, canon and iconoclasm are synonymous with praxis, but also *poiesis*.

poiesis/poetics

"To bring into being that which did not exist before." A commonplace example is "poetry," which historically has granted impoverished, exploited people idiosyncratic voices/parallel societies in times of struggle. *Poiesis* is not just pithy scribblings, in other words; it's a means of understanding the world and sharing that with others to cultivate countercultural movements in opposition to the state; i.e., by "playing god." For our purposes, canon and iconoclasm—as means of cultivating the Superstructure through creative artistic expression and sex work—are both forms of *poiesis*, but exist in dialectical-material opposition. One is a pedagogy of the oppressed; one is a pedagogy of the *oppressor*.

canon (dogma)

Marx's Superstructure as normally cultivated by the elite through official/unofficial, state-corporate icons and materials designed to control how people think, behave

and feel: heteronormative propaganda/dogma. Financially incentivized by the elite including billionaires, these mass-produced, privatized variants are generally accepted as genuine, legitimate and sacred by workers and typically produced by anyone who upholds the status quo. This includes corporations, but also financially-incentivized, bourgeois (often white, cis-het) authors and their beliefs/praxis furthered by pre-2000s, Internet-era media: [the TERF/neoliberal politics of *Harry Potter* creator J. K. Rowling](#) (Shaun's "Harry Potter," 2022), [decades-long racism and all-around horrible weirdness of Dilbert creator Scott Adams towards anyone different from himself](#) (Behind the Bastards' "How The Dilbert Guy Lost His Mind," 2023), [*Earth Worm Jim* Creator Doug TenNapel's own conservative praxis when interacting with awful chaser/soon-to-be-divorced dudes like Steven Crowder](#) ("Surviving the Leftist Mob," 2021) or Matt Groening's [proud, middle-of-the-road, smug-as-fuck centrism](#) (David Scheff's "Matt Groening," 2007) having already sold out, his unabashed playing of both sides against each other leading to Zombie Simpsons and a toleration of fascists/total inability to critique Capitalism (cashing in after doing the bare minimum with the first seven seasons completely undoes any activism those episodes achieved in their heyday):

> Playboy: When you spread a liberal message by way of Fox, do you feel subversive?
>
> Groening: It's fun anytime you can piss off a right-wing lunatic, but it's also fun to piss off a left-wing lunatic. In fact everybody on the show is concerned about not being preachy or heavy-handed. We try to mix it up.

American consumerism generally frames canon as "neutral," despite complicitly hiding sexist attitudes and ideologies in plain sight (usually through cheap, mass-produced, privatized likenesses/intellectual properties).

iconoclast/-clasm (camp)

Marx's Superstructure, counter-cultivated by an agent or image that attacks established variants, generally with the intent of transforming them in a deconstructive, sex-positive manner. Such a manner is treated as heretical by the elite, but also workers sympathetic to bourgeois hegemony. Deconstruction, aka Postmodernism—when harnessed by Marxists—seeks to move beyond Modernism; i.e., the Enlightenment, whose high-minded principles are really just excuses to enslave and control people through negative freedom for the elite. Generally, this happens by presenting things harmful, segregating binaries like civilization/nature, white/black, man/woman, mind/body, art/porn, etc.

hypercanon/-ical

Something so famous that it becomes recognizable by sight across generations; e.g., *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). However, a popular example is the cyberpunk of the hauntological retrofuture. Popularized by movies like *Blade Runner* (1982), *Ghost in the Shell* (1996) and *The Matrix* (1999), the cyberpunk comments on the future as dead (a concept we'll explore more in the Humanities Primer) as a means of providing a hypernormal, hyperreal illusion.

hyperreal/-ity

A distillation of Jean Baudrillard's broader notion of the simulation representing things that do not exist, yet, over time, have become more real than the reality behind them, which has decayed into a desert the hyperreal simulation has replaced in the eyes of its viewers—i.e., has covered it up. Baudrillard's Hyperreality comments on similar historical-material issues that the egregore or simulacrum do as occult creations and copies of older likenesses or illusions. The preservation of the illusion as Capitalism turns the natural world into an uninhabitable desert could be called *hypernormal*. As Nasrullah Mambrol writes (exhibit, theirs):

> Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality is closely linked to his idea of Simulacrum, which he defines as something which replaces reality with its representations. Baudrillard observes that the contemporary world is a simulacrum, where reality has been replaced by false images, to such an extent that one cannot distinguish between the real and the unreal. In this context, he made the controversial statement, "The Gulf war did not take place," pointing out that the "reality" of the Gulf War was presented to the world in terms of representations by the media [as inherently dishonest …]

4) There is no relationship between the reality and representation, because there is no real to reflect (the abstract paintings of Mark Rothko).

According to Baudrillard, Western society has entered this fourth phase of the hyperreal. In the age of the hyperreal, the image/simulation dominates. The age of production has given way to the age of simulation, where products are sold even before they exist. The Simulacrum pervades every level of existence. (source: "Baudrillard's Concept of Hyperreality," 2016).

hypernormal/-ity

A term that, according to Adam Curtis' *HyperNormalization* (2016), was originally used to describe the "whiplash" feelings of Soviet citizens during the 1980s—faced with the terrifying onset of societal collapse despite Soviet national propaganda having adopted neoliberal shock therapy while insisting that things were fine. The same idea can be applied to the uncanny sensation that things are *not* fine or even real despite how normal, foundational and concrete they seem; i.e., how they "pass" as normal despite a disquieting sense of decay (worker exploitation, for our purposes).

centrism

"There are no moral actions, only moral teams" (re: Shaun's "Harry Potter"). Centrism is the theatrical creation of good vs evil as existing within politically

"neutral" media—a dangerous preservation of orderly justice whose "moderate," white (or token) voice-of-reason/cloaked racism and discrimination pointedly maintain the status quo: Capitalism. To this, centrism displaces and cloaks two things:

- genocide as conducted by neoliberals/fascists on foreign/domestic lands.
- the neoliberal's codifying of Nazis as an essential part of Capitalism—where the state's bureaucracy fragments through the emergence of an ultranationalist strongman.

This return of the medieval—of the Imperium and Empire, Zombie Caesar, etc—is both "blind" nation pastiche, but also a cartoonish bourgeois parody that makes the Nazi and pastiche thereof tremendously useful to Capitalism and the elite's survival through genocide's continuation behind the veil.

war pastiche

The remediation of war as something to sell to the audience (for our purposes) as canon, generally in centrist forms. Whereas nation pastiche tends to denote a national character (e.g., James Cameron's colonial marines, but also the wholesale, staple choreography of Asian-to-American martial arts movies like *Ip Man 4: The Finale*, 2019), war pastiche simply communicates violent conflict as something to personify in various dramatic/comedic theatrical forms; e.g., Blizzard's *Warcraft* pastiche (orcs vs humans).

nation pastiche

Any kind of pastiche that ties war and combat to national identities, a common modern example being the *Street Fighter* franchise's nation pastiche and FGC (fighting game community). Said community employs a variety of stock characters tied to a signature nation-state, draped in a national flag and gifted with a statuesque (sexually dimorphic) physique, snappy costume and set of trademark special moves/super moves. Gamer apathy mirrors the apathy of wrestling fans, whose tentpole company regularly capitalizes off the global stage through geopolitical (nationalistic) dialogs performed using sanctioned, bread-and-circus violence; e.g., the WWE and its lucrative contract with Saudi Arabia (Renegade Cut's "WWE and the Saudi Royal Family," 2019).

([*source*](#))

heels/babyfaces

The centrist heroes and villains of staged, professional wrestling and American contact/combat sports—i.e., war personified—but commonly employed through combat e-sports like the *Street Fighter* FGC. Heels normally wear black, fight dirty and talk trash; babyfaces (often called "faces" for short) tend to wear white, fight fair and refuse to talk trash. A common narrative between the two is good overcoming the bullying of evil by deus ex machina "rallies," where upon the underdog babyface is able to prevail by the end of a particular war. The tragedy in doing so is the babyface always converts to a heel position. The theater and its evolution through modern sports parallel geopolitics in ways that deregulate the process of worker exploitation through sports contracts and ringleaders working adjacent, through their own distractions, to military contractors and arms manufacturers/dealers in the Military Industrial Complex; neoliberalism, in other words, promotes fascist as an essential part of centrist theater through post-fascist, Cold War stereotypical heels—the Nazi, Muslim or the Communist—versus the traditional babyface: the American crusader or "good" vigilante/exacter of righteous justice. The public's endorsement, tolerance or unironic worship—of what is generally become recognized as a highly scripted affair—is called "kayfabe."

kayfabe

The Wikipedia entry for "kayfabe" reads:

the portrayal of staged events within the industry as "real" or "true," specifically the portrayal of competition, rivalries, and relationships between participants as being genuine and not staged. The term kayfabe has evolved to also become a code word of sorts for maintaining this "reality" within the direct or indirect presence of the general public. Kayfabe, in the United States, is often seen as the suspension of disbelief that is used to create the non-wrestling aspects of promotions, such as feuds, angles, and gimmicks in a manner similar to other forms of fictional entertainment. In relative terms, a wrestler breaking kayfabe would be likened to an actor breaking character on-camera. Since wrestling is performed in front of a live audience, whose interaction with the show is crucial to its success, kayfabe can be compared to the fourth wall in acting, since hardly any conventional fourth wall exists to begin with. Because of this lack of conventional fourth wall, wrestlers were once expected to maintain their characters even out of the ring, and in other aspects of their lives that could be made public ([source](#)).

For a good introduction to the concept and its history in modern professional wrestling and popular media, consider Behind the Bastards' podcast episode, "[Part One: Vince McMahon, History's Greatest Monster](#)" (2023). The concept applies not just to wrestling but includes any professional sports—e.g., e-sports but also vigilante sports/action hero narratives with athletic crusaders such as the heteronormative avatars from *Streets of Rage* and *TMNT* or *Street Fighter* as something to endorse through their police violence of state-oriented criminals, potential subversives, revolutionaries and so-called "terrorists" threatening the existence of "correct" action heroes as something to perform (exhibit 34c2, 98a1, or 104a1); or to subvert these false revolutionaries in a variety of ways (exhibit 102a4, 111b).

moderacy

Famously outlined by Martin Luther King's 1963 "[Letter from the Birmingham Jail,](#)" excoriating the white moderate as more dangerous than the overt racist. Moderacy would evolve into the American neoliberal and its worldly doubles (1980s Soviet Russia or Great Britain) as willing to break bread/debate with fascists in the "free marketplace of ideas." To this, moderacy equals veiled white-cis-het-Western supremacy—generally upheld by centrist canon.

menticide/waves of terror

From Joost Meerloo's *The Rape of the Mind* (1956), menticide is the animal, "Pavlovian" conditioning through various forms of torture, namely "waves of terror" to achieve an ideal subject just not complacent with state abuse, but *complicit*. Of *menticide*, Meerloo writes,

> The variety of human reactions under infernal circumstances taught us an ugly truth: the spirit of most men can be broken; men can be reduced to the level of animal behaviour. Both torturer and victim finally lose all dignity […] The core of the strategy of menticide is the taking away of all hope, all anticipation, all belief in a future [which aligns with Mark Fisher's "hauntology," or inability to imagine a future beyond past forms supplied by Capitalism; i.e., a *myopia*]. It destroys the very elements which keep the mind alive. The victim is entirely alone ([source](#)).

Meerloo describes *waves of terror* as

> the use of well-planned, repeated successive waves of terror to bring the people into submission. Each wave of terrorizing cold war creates its effect more easily—after a breathing spell—than the one that preceded it because people are still disturbed by their previous experience. Morale becomes lower and lower, and the psychological effect of each new propaganda campaign becomes stronger; it reaches a public already softened up. Every dissenter becomes more and more frightened that he may be found out. Gradually people are no longer willing to participate in any sort of political discussion or to express their opinions. Inwardly they have already surrendered to the terrorizing dictatorial forces (*[ibid.](#)*).

the pedagogy of the oppressed

Radical empathy. [Coined by Paulo Freire in his 1968 book of the same name](#), the text is a warning to closeted (and active) moderates to stop talking down to people who know their own trauma far better than moderates do.

the banality of evil/desk murderers

Originally used to describe the fascist bureaucracy of the Third Reich during the Nuremberg trials, desk murder goes well beyond Adolf Eichmann; it is destructive greed minus all the gaudy bells and whistles: the men behind the curtain (canon). Whether fascist or neoliberal, those at the top abject (denormalize) truth, shaming dialectical-material analysis while venerating the uncritical consumption of canon.

In doing so, they hide, thus normalize, their owner status; the elite own everything through vertically-arranged power structures, deliberately constructed to exploit everyone else—not just by owning the means of production, but using said means at a corporate-national register to parade and venerate conspicuous shows of god-like wealth and endless consumerism.

neocons(ervatism)

Neoconservatives are liberal hawks who, exposed to menticidal propaganda over time, despise war protestors and promote peace through strength, including neocolonialism and proxy war. It's the centrist, oscillating phenomena of so-called Liberalism turned bloody, routinely demanding its blood sacrifice on the so-called altar of freedom (as Howard Zinn notes about the formation of the Americas during the American Revolution).

Liberalism

Not to be confused with neoliberalism (though the two generally go hand-in-hand), Liberalism is the disingenuous language of the Enlightenment becoming Americanized, then used alongside Cartesian dualism to obscure genocide under settler colonialism. In his *A People's History of the United States* (1980), Howard Zinn catalogs the various fears of the upper "master class"—of Native Americans and slaves rebelling together but also white indentured servants and African slaves as something to discourage using Liberalism:

> "What made Bacon's Rebellion especially fearsome for the rulers of Virginia was that black slaves and white servants joined forces [...] Those upper classes, to rule, needed to make concessions to the middle class, without damage to their own wealth or power, at the expense of slaves, Indians, and poor whites. This bought loyalty. And to bind that loyalty with something more powerful even than material advantage, the ruling group found, in the 1760s and 1770s, a wonderfully useful device. That device was the language of liberty and equality, which could unite just enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality" (source).

neoliberalism

The ideology of American exceptionalism (which extends to allies of America like Great Britain) that enforces global US hegemony through deregulated/"re-liberalized" Capitalism as a structural means of dishonest wealth accumulation for

the elite. Laterally enforced by state/corporate power abuse through a public conditioned by these groups to worship the free market, neoliberalism seeks to foster a centrist attitude. By preaching the lie of false hope* through an us-versus-them mentality and personal responsibility rhetoric, neoliberalism maintains the status quo by demonizing nominal Communism (Monty Python's "International Communism," 1969) and disguising the inner workings of Capitalism—how Capitalism is inherently unethical and unstable, and how it exploits nearly everyone (workers) to benefit the few (the elite). This framework, and the pervasive illusions that prop it up, eventually decay and lead to societal collapse. In the interim, common side effects of neoliberalism include: the gutting of unions, destruction of the welfare state, reinforcement of the prison system and strengthening of the police state.

*For a quick-and-dirty example of vintage American neoliberalism, consider the opening to Double Dribble (1987) for the NES: palm trees and skyscrapers in the background, a bare concrete lot and tight, manicured lawns in the foreground— where hordes of consumers flock to a giant stadium to "the Star Spangled Banner" while a Konami blimp emblazoned with an American flag soars overheard. This kind of canonical nostalgia traps workers inside a world they never experience because its constantly sold to them as an idealized past to escape into from their current environment; as Capitalism fails, they can't imagine anything beyond it, just whatever was shown to them as children: something to retreat into fondly like a lost childhood.

fascism

Capitalism-in-decay aka "zombie Capitalism." When Capitalism starts to fail (which it does by design), it creates power vacuums whose medievalist regressions reintroduce scapegoat mentalities on a state level; i.e., the village sacrifice of a manufactured outsider taken to national extremes during palingenesis ("national birth"), which ushers in a perceived former glory tied to a former *imaginary* past: a liminal hauntology of war against anyone different than the status quo; e.g., a witch/pagan, vampire (queer person) or similar target of state violence during moral panics stoked by fascist ringleaders. A radicalizing of the status quo, then, allow populist strongmen to foster unusual sympathies within the (white, cis-het) working class: the installation of a dogmatic (sexist, racist, transphobic, etc) hierarchy that intentionally abuses a designated underclass (the out-group), promising societal and material elevation for those following the leader (the in-group). Or as Michael Parenti wrote in *Blackshirts and Reds* (1997):

> Fascism is a false revolution. It cultivates the appearance of popular politics and a revolutionary aura without offering a genuine revolutionary class content. It propagates a "New Order" while serving the same old moneyed interests. Its leaders are not guilty of confusion but of deception. That they work hard to mislead the public does not mean they themselves are misled. ([source](#)).

Simply put, fascists are violent LARPers (live-action role-players) living in a death cult, reducing themselves and those around them to expendable, fetishized, zombie-like fodder. The in-group operates through fear, dogma and violence—cultivating the *perception* of strength through a coercive, revered worldview that leads to delusional overconfidence and ignominious death in service of the state through its same-old language (e.g., Monty Python's "[Black Knight](#)" skit, 1975).

pre-/post-fascism

Fascism is the generation of, regression back towards medieval, pre-civilized hauntologies that attempt to revive the glory of former times (usually the ghost of Rome) through the creation of, on various levels, a fearsome destroyer persona: the pagan Goth, but also the zombie tyrant (the Romans killed Christ). *Pre*-fascism is the Gothic imagination that historically was obsessed with the inheritance of a decaying system prior to the rise of fascism in the 18th and 19th centuries, which in turn has become *post*-fascism: the fear of fascism and systemic decay entertained through popular discourse and Gothic poetics in the 20th and 21st centuries, post-WW2. It's the ghost of tyranny—the skeleton king tapping his palm

with his cudgel-like scepter. Because fascism defends Capitalism (an inherently unstable system) the fear, then, becomes fear of sacrifice by the state to preserve the whole from an imaginary menace with historical-material validation for its own desire of revenge (the specters of Marx; i.e., a ghost battle between capitalist, thus fascist hauntology and Communist hauntology).

eco-fascism

The turn towards fascist rhetoric, stowed away inside nature conservatist rhetoric. When Capitalism fails, (some) humans become the virus inside the state of exception, *their* destruction pitched as "saving the planet" for the uninfected. This scapegoat is always Indigenous peoples (the go-to recipients of state exploitation) but can and will expand towards the center of American privilege (stopping short of the elite, of course) when things geopolitically and ecologically begin to worsen.

zombification/Zombie Capitalism+

The death of ethical parody and its replacement with "blind" forms; e.g., Zombie Simpsons. In "Zombie Simpsons: How the Best Show Ever Became the Broadcasting Undead" (2012), Dead Homer Society writes,

> *By almost any measurement, The Simpsons is the most influential television comedy ever created. It has been translated into every major language on Earth and dozens of minor ones; it has spawned entire genres of animation, and had more books written about it than all but a handful of American Presidents. Even its minor characters have become iconic, and the titular family is recognizable in almost every corner of the planet. It is a definitive and truly global cultural phenomenon, perhaps the biggest of the television age.*
>
> *As of this writing, if you flip on FOX at 8pm on Sundays, you will see a program that bills itself as The Simpsons. It is not The Simpsons. That show, the landmark piece of American culture that debuted on 17 December 1989, went off the air more than a decade ago. The replacement is a hopelessly mediocre imitation that bears only a superficial resemblance to the original. It is the unwanted sequel, the stale spinoff, the creative dry hole that is kept pumping in the endless search for more money. It is Zombie Simpsons ([source](#)).*

Zombification results from people living under Capitalism, a system that discourages them not to think for themselves, but also to violently attack people who try. *Zombie Capitalism* is when Capitalism becomes "feral," entering a fascist state of decay—whereupon, violent, pro-state zombies suddenly appear and attack rebellious workers, "eating their brains" (symbolizing an attack on the rebellious

mindset). Being the target of the state in this manner means you have fallen into the state of exception—disposable zombie fodder even more useless than the zombie heroes the state endlessly sends after you.

the Wisdom of the Ancients

A cultural understanding of the imaginary past. The past is always imaginary to some extent, but through less wise forms reliably leads to genocide and tremendous suffering (Marx' prophesied tragedy and farce) according to structures of power that preserve themselves through blind pastiche, parody and canonical art. These essentialize Capitalism's vicious cycle and cataclysmic arrangements of the imaginary past as something that is simultaneously Malthusian, but also paradoxically "as good as it gets" and threatened by the doomsday myopia of nominal Communism that Capitalism Realism affords. As their sense of agency and certitude collapse with the world around them, workers—but especially the middle class—are left feeling cheated or lied to, and either blame the system or scapegoats. Scapegoats are historically easier because you can shoot or kill them, implying the solution is a simple, straightforward one. It's the "tried-and-true" "wisdom" of the Roman fool, falling on their own sword while Rome burns not once, but over and over. Such "wisdom" is not wise, but a false power, which Gothic Communists seek to reclaim through our own doubling of the imaginary past—its monsters, castles and battles—as a kind of "living document" that can reclaim the Gothic imagination, thus our ability to think; i.e., through lost forms of knowledge retailored for the complexities of the modern world—its warring mentalities, sexualities, monsters (codified beliefs and actions) and praxis during class and culture war.

the Imperial Boomerang

"The thesis that governments that develop repressive techniques to control colonial territories will eventually deploy those same techniques domestically against their own citizens" (source: Wikipedia). In Foucault's own words during his lecture at "Il faut défendre la société" in 1975:

> [W]hile colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself (source: "Foucault's Boomerang: the New Military Urbanism," 2013).

Described by Stephen Graham as "military urbanism," this phenomenon accounts for the legion of dead futures popularized in American canon and its expanded, retro-future states of exception—hauntological narratives that present the future as dead and Capitalism as retro-futuristically decayed; i.e., Zombie Capitalism and zombie police states.

the state of exception

The state-of-emergency applied to recipients of state violence; or as Giorgio Agamben writes in *State of Exception* (2005),

> *"A special condition in which the juridical order is actually suspended due to an emergency or a serious crisis threatening the state. In such a situation, the sovereign, i.e. the executive power, prevails over the others and the basic laws and norms can be violated by the state while facing the crisis"* (*source*).

the state's monopoly of violence

Max Weber's maxim that "a state holds a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within its territory, meaning that violence perpetrated by other actors is illegitimate" (source; originally from "Politics as a Vocation," 1919). This applies to state-sanctioned witch hunts and scapegoating markers, which we'll examine much more thoroughly in Volume Three, Chapter Two.

the Protestant (work) ethic

From Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905). In it, "Weber asserted that Protestant ethics and values, along with the Calvinist doctrines of asceticism and predestination, enabled the rise and spread of capitalism" (source: Wikipedia)—a concept I've explored in my own Tolkien scholarship, for example; e.g., '"Dragon Sickness": The Problem of Greed,' (2015).

Umberto Eco's 14 Points of Fascism (from "Ur-Fascism," 1995)+

A handy guide for spotting fascism, which tends to conceal itself or idiosyncratically manifest. We won't go over all of them in this book, but there are a few that I like to focus on.

Sex, Gender and Race: Language, Theory and Politics

sexualized media

Media that contains sexual and gendered components—of cis-het men and women, but also queer persons/other marginalized groups for or against the state. However, the treatment of sexuality and gender—how it is sexualized by "the Media" or in media more broadly—depends on if it is sex-positive or sex-coercive (some examples, below):

(exhibit 3a1: Artist, top-left: Frank Frazetta; top-middle-to-right: Sveta Shubina; bottom-left: J. Howard Miller; bottom-middle: Norman Rockwell; bottom-right: Michelangelo.

Artistic mimicry through homage is a common phenomenon of art, with women being illustrated historically by men for various purposes. A common reason for doing so was to illustrate their place in a man's world; e.g., as wives, mistresses [the Virgin or the Whore] but also as workers. Whereas open fascism historically relegates women to traditional modes of women's work, American propaganda temporarily made various concessions during WW2. These occurred to support the overall war effort and the material interests of the elite. After the war ended, women's rights were quickly rescinded in favor of a return to the status quo, female workers being demonized by the same male employers and patrons who formerly promoted them [and fetishized by the likes of Frazetta, who started his career during a regression towards female re-enslavement after the war].

Mimesis is a back-and-forth process, borrowing images and symbols for new purposes during oppositional praxis. In Rosie the Riveter's case, promotions of female "equality" were themselves guided by an American sense of righteousness that went on to be co-opted for social movements long after the original pieces aired. Indeed, Rosie only became a cultural icon of feminism in the 1970s—i.e., as a symbol of female empowerment that eclipsed Rockwell's Christianized mimesis of Michelangelo's Isaiah. On Rockwell, Christina Branham writes in "Rosie the Riveter" (2016),

> *The pose she strikes seems a bit awkward, but it too conveys a message: it was inspired by Michelangelo's portrayal of the prophet Isaiah on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Why? As stated during a Sotheby's 2002 sale of the original art, "Righteousness is described throughout Isaiah's prophecy as God's strong right arm." Rockwell's Rosie is certainly sporting some strong man-arms, but I would say the bigger message is that America was on the side of righteousness [[source](#)].*

After Rockwell's upstaging by Miller's latter-day revival, the image of Rosie took on a life of its own. The image itself went on to convey the nostalgia of a reimagined past: the rights of cis-het white women [which second wave feminism primarily represented through its arguments]. In the works of future artists, nostalgia becomes something to reclaim, but also regress towards depending on the context and political leanings of the creator.)

(exhibit 3a2: Assorted pieces by Milo Manara and Luis Royo; middle-right: Olsen; far-top-right: Morry Evans. Hauntology presses women into different forms of transgressive servitude—i.e., more about titillating the cis-het male gaze within risky positions of appropriative peril and high imagination/adventure that women are expected not just to perform, but compete for under male Pygmalions. Indeed, white, cis-het women assimilate and promote these roles, focusing on the unironic torture of a highly specific and prescriptive industry body type, versus catharsis for women forced to do certain forms of coercively humiliating labor regardless of the genre. Reduced to blind pastiche, these can perpetuate various harmful stereotypes within transgressive media as a means of submitting to formal power rather than resisting and reclaiming it through the same rituals as subverted; e.g., Morry Evan's work of a servile giant for the counterfeit of a nun; or Sveta Shubina's Bowser and Peach, below. We'll examine more iconoclastic subversions throughout the book; e.g., the aforementioned size difference as something to appreciate in different monster types, such as the Amazon/mommy dom, exhibit 51d2.)

(exhibit 3a3: Artist, left: [Sveta Shubina](#); right: Don Bluth. The desire to separate the art from the artist and aesthetics from ideology is understandable/possible, but it remains important to remember that when emulating a given style, said style in the past was associated with a problematic belief system and its symbolism; e.g., Don Bluth's damsel-in-distress, Princess Daphne, "needing" to be rescued from the dragon by a man who is still draconian themselves [the knight and the dragon being dichotomized variations of the "walking castle"/human tank]. Shubina is clearly emulating Bluth's visual style but subverts the relationship between the princess and the dragon—i.e., like King Kong but seemingly negotiated through the topos of the power of women [to attract men] as something to toy with. This context, of course, is difficult to glean from the base drawing itself, all but requiring a bit of imagination from us to reinterpret the same old clichés. But even if these stereotypes are subverted, their own work will remain haunted by the sexism of past idols that people unironically love in the present.

The woman as "emasculator" ties to the ironic cuckolder of men, having them figuratively "by the balls": "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." This historically unenviable position becomes canonically enviable among women forced to compete for limited husbands with wealth, being judged by men as "gold diggers" and judged by other women jealously fighting over the same heteronormative prize. Conventionally pretty women become viewed through various double standards: the treacherous beauty as a user of everyone around her to get what she wants; i.e., sex as a weapon. While the narrative reduces the woman to a singular role and personality type, it's one where their intelligence is treated like a concealed weapon behind their sexuality as front-and-center. They're forced into uncomfortable clothes and pitted against other women wearing the same princess-style uniform; i.e., the historical-material reality of women competing for the same bloodline: to be the king's prized broodmare.

This includes Bowser in BDSM circles, [a prime candidate for the "daddy dom" or queer "Bear" stereotype](#) [artist, above: Taran Fiddler]. The paradox of the spiked collar is canonized as the master's sigil that simultaneously is an anti-predation device for a large, powerful pet in iconoclastic circles.)

sex work

Any work centered around sexuality and gender roles, including art*work*. More commonly thought of as "prostitution," patriarchal sexism under Capitalism extends sex work to the broader division of sexualized labor within a colonial gender binary: men's work versus women's work. While the former focuses on war, violence and promotion through socio-material dominance, the latter involves submissive, traditionalized modes of sexual-reproductive labor towards a male authority figure—often a boss, parent or husband. So, while many sex workers perform strictly eroticized acts in this manner, many more are secretarial or marital in nature, performed inside traditional sites of women's work like kitchens, bedrooms, or laundromats, but also banks or hospitals. In the creative world, sexist employers compel female creators (musicians, models, illustrators and writers, etc) to promote prescriptive notions of coercive sexuality and gender tied to heteronormative beauty standards, fashion and music. Regardless of the work, sex-positive workers will resist sex coercion through their own labor.

sex positivity

Sexual/asexual expression that enables individual self-expression (thus self-empowerment) by relatively ethical means—the right to do sex work or partake in sexual activity *if one so desires*. In other words, it is a *positive freedom*; i.e., freedom *for* people to do what they want, specifically "the possession of the power and resources (material conditions) to act in the context of the structural limitations of the broader society which impacts a person's ability to act." Apart from being morally good and materially beneficial, sex positivity empowers marginalized communities (who, amongst other things, are generally exploited for sex as a form of labor); it does so by arguing for mutual consent, descriptive sexuality and cultural appreciation using historically regulated language: bodies and biology, gender identity/performance and (a)sexual orientation.

sex coercion

Sexist, heteronormative argumentation, work and artistry that compels and upholds sexual and gendered norms by abolishing others through various unethical means. This includes corporations downplaying their harmful actions as benign, or fascists framing their openly harmful actions as justified. This freedom to act is a *negative freedom*; i.e., freedom *from* external restraint on one's actions. It is generally repressive towards marginalized communities, the elite exploiting them on a material level while also denying them their basic human rights.

Small idiosyncrasy in terms of my writing: When using "sex positivity" or "sex coercion" (nouns) as adjectives, they will be hyphenated; e.g., "The sex-positive fog crept in on little sex-coercive feet." This is completely arbitrary but my aim is to be consistent. —Perse

basic/civil human rights

The Communist idea that all human/animal workers deserve fair and equal treatment, which nation-states and corporations historically do not give (they are bourgeois and exploit workers). In Marxist terms, these rights are administered through Communism not according to profit, but "From each according to [their] ability, to each according to [their] needs." According to LeiLani Dowell at the Worker's World Forum in 2012, [this existence is planned and achieved through the development phase, aka Socialism](): "...to each according to their *work*."

ethics, ethical, ethicality

This book treats *universal ethicality* not as canonical societal norms (what is prescriptively "correct" or "morally right" according to canon), but that humans, animals and the environment have basic, unalienable rights. The universality of

these rights is what is correct. Anyone's hypothetical ability to systemically "question" or undermine these rights—including the bourgeoisie—is fundamentally incorrect/unethical (what moderates call "compromise").

(artist: Kasia Babis)

-phobia/-philia

In Gothic-Communist terms, a *phobia* isn't raw, animal fear—e.g., fear of death or the unknown—but an actionable, social-sexual stigma, bias or taboo assigned to a particular out-group or historical-material victim under the status quo/inside the state of exception: xenophobia, pedophilia, necrophilia, etc. This extends to various moral panics—e.g., Satanic panic, Red Scares, or the fascist revenge phobia of the backstabbing Jew, etc. Phobias are canonically fetishized. Philias are often deliberate/accidental misnomers insofar as abuse euphemisms are concerned (again, necrophilia, pedophilia, zoophilia); i.e., used to describe acts of abuse wherein the abuser is acting on a sexual attraction or otherwise abusive compulsion but is acting it out on a party that cannot actually consent (the dead, children, or animals; slaves, wives and other humans legally regarded as property in some shape or form).

purity arguments

A type of reactionary, fascist argumentation tied to manufactured scarcity, consent and conflict as radicalized during moral panics under police states/ethnostates. Think "boundaries for me, not for thee," but attached to limited-time waivers for those who best fit whatever soldiers those in fascist seats of power are looking for (with Himmler anything but "Nordic"). This tends to historically-materially manifest in racial-purity pseudoscience and aggressive recruitment tactics, defending the "purity" of a nation (and its children and women) through racialized supermen, generally with the descriptor "ethnic" attached to them—e.g., ethnic Germans (in Nazi Germany) or Jews (in Israel).

moral panic, morals, and morality

This book views personal morals as being shaped by broader social codes—folkways, mores and taboos that determine "good from bad" or "right from wrong" at a societal level. For conservatives, this involves reactionary politics administered through bad-faith, "moral panic" arguments; for neoliberals, there are no moral *actions*, only moral *teams* (re: "centrism," a concept we'll explore much more deeply in Volume Three, Chapter Four). Calling others immoral in either sense is actually immoral/unethical* relative to people's basic human rights.

I would consider the difference between ethical and moral to be a matter of scope and scale. As Cydney Grannan writes in "What's the Difference Between Morality and Ethics?" for Encyclopedia Britannica (2023), the terms are often used interchangeably even in academic circles.

Please note, dialectical-materialism focuses on ethics through material relations—hence why I prefer to describe things not as "good or bad," but as bourgeois or proletarian (exceptions will be observed as they arise). —Perse

the Pygmalion effect

The patriarchal vision of those knowing-better "kings" of male-dominated industries, wherein "Pygmalion" means "from a male king's mind." Male "kings" author imaginary visions of the past, present and future, including the monomyth/Cycle of Kings, infernal concentric pattern and its heteronormative legion of monsters, invasion scenarios and escape fantasies; their reasoned, Cartesian treatment of women is heteronormative, thus abjectly hysterical.

hysteria/the wandering womb

Hysteria is a form of moderate condescension/reactionary control tied to Cartesian dualism, but also the gaslight, gatekeep and girl-boss trifecta that argues women

are "less rational" than men; it tends to diagnose them with bizarre, completely absurd medical conditions to keep them inactive and scared, but also under men's power (e.g., bicycle face is one [source: Joseph Stromberg's "'Bicycle face': A 19th-Century Health Problem Made Up to Scare Women away from Biking," 2021] but here's a whole list of odd disorders/female causes of ignominious death invented by male "Pygmalions," including "night brain" and "drawing-room anguish"; source tweet: Dr. Daniel Cook, 2021). However, it also tends to frame women as mythical monsters/mothers that need to be killed for men to "progress": Medusas, Archaic Mothers, Amazons, etc.

the creation of sexual difference

Popularized by Luce Irigaray, her flagship concept is summarized by Sarah K. Donovan as follows,

> In other words, while women are not considered full subjects, society itself could not function without their contributions. Irigaray ultimately states that Western culture itself is founded upon a primary sacrifice of the mother, and all women through her.
>
> Based on this analysis, Irigaray says that sexual difference does not exist. True sexual difference would require that men and women are equally able to achieve subjectivity. As is, Irigaray believes that men are subjects (e.g., self-conscious, self-same entities) and women are "the other" of these subjects (e.g., the non-subjective, supporting matter). Only one form of subjectivity exists in Western culture and it is male (source: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

the Male Gaze (appropriative voyeurism/exhibitionism)

Popularized by Laura Mulvey in her 1973 essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," the Male Gaze goes well beyond cinema; according to Sarah Vanbuskirk in "What Is the Male Gaze?" (2022), it deals with female objectification under Capitalism:

> The male gaze describes a way of portraying and looking at women that empowers men while sexualizing and diminishing women. […] first popularized in relation to the depiction of female characters in film as inactive, often overtly sexualized objects of male desire. However, the influence of the male gaze is not limited to how women and girls are featured in the movies. Rather, it extends to the experience of being seen in this way, both for the female figures on screen, the viewers, and by extension, to all girls and women at large. Naturally, the influence of the male gaze seeps into

female self-perception and [self-esteem](#). It's as much about the impact of seeing other women relegated to these supporting roles as it is about the way women are conditioned to fill them in real life. The pressure to conform to this patriarchal view (or to simply accept or humor it) and endure being seen in this way shapes how women think about [their own bodies](#), capabilities, and place in the world—and that of other women.

In essence, the male gaze [discourages female empowerment](#) and self-advocacy while encouraging [self-objectification](#) and deference to men and the patriarchy at large ([source](#)).

Appropriative performances of voyeurism/exhibitionism (watching or showing sexual activities) that cater to this Gaze uphold the status quo. Those that do not are appreciative (thus sex-positive) in nature, but generally remain liminal and ambivalent.

exhibitionism/voyeurism

A desire to show off or to look, generally tied to kink and BDSM (which we'll define in the Gothic section of terms). As with those, these activities can be sex-positive or -coercive; i.e., rebellious/furious flashing (exhibit 53, 62c, 89a, 101a1, etc) vs cat-calling/scopophilia from a totally unwanted audience (Norman Bates and Marion Crane) vs the liminal, half-invited Peeping Tom (Jimmy Stuart and Miss Torso from *Rear Window*, 1954; George McFly and Lorainne Bates from *Back to the Future*, 1985; or these two tennis guys [above] and an anonymous female streaker—source tweet: Peach Crush, 2023) vs the transphobic flasher (exhibit 62c) vs fully consensual voyeurism/exhibitionism (exhibit 101c2).
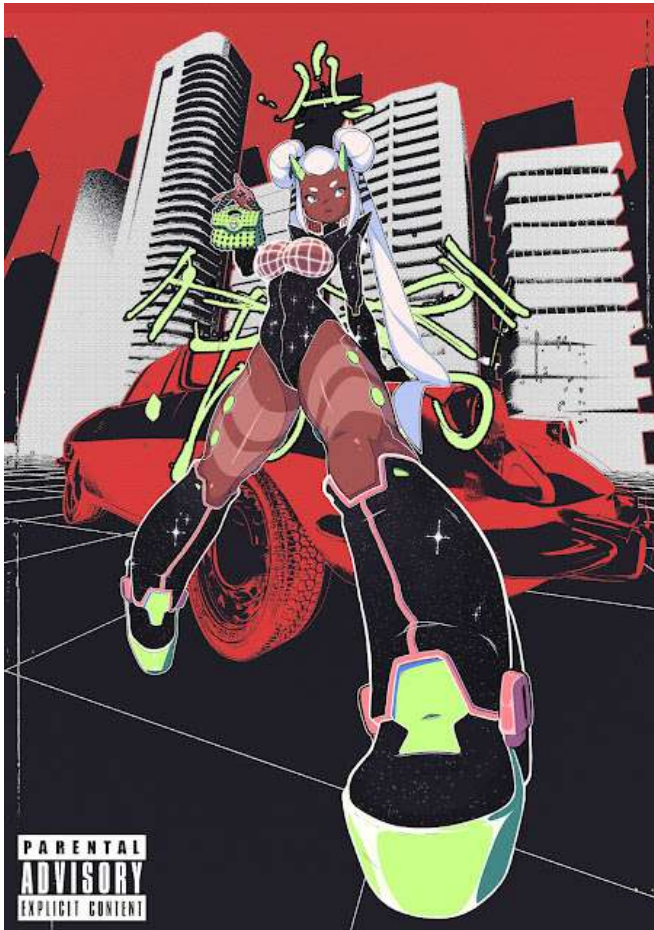
(artist: [Moika](#))

cultural appropriation (verb: "to appropriate"/adjective: "appropriative"):

Taking one (or more) aspect(s) of a culture, identity or group that is not your own and using it for your own personal interests. Although this can occur individually for reasons unrelated to profit, Capitalism deliberately appropriates workers/marginalized groups for profit; the act of these groups playing along is called assimilation.

cultural appreciation (verb: "to appreciate"/adjective: "appreciative"):

Attempting to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden one's perspective and connect with others cross-culturally. The Gothic-Communism aim is to humanized these groups and prevent their exploitation through one's own work.

lip service

Empty endorsements, generally performed by establishment politicians; a moderate tactic of playing both sides (always to the detriment of workers).

queer-baiting/pacification/in-fighting

Empty commercial appeals/"representation" that are generally cliché, stigmatized, or dubiously underwritten/funeral—the "[bury your gays](#)" trope (defined and

explored by Haley Hulan's 2017 "Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context") except employed by neoliberal corporations who expect marginalized groups to be grateful for scraps, but also fight over/about them: "They're fighting/killing each other" is music to the elite's ears regarding all marginalized groups (class sabotage).

"bury your gays"

The heteronormative sublimation, violence and moral-panic scapegoating of anything that doesn't fit the colonial binary model. Historically this would have been homosexual men (with queer cis women appropriated by cis-het men as exotic sex toys existing purely for male pleasure); however, it extends to trans/non-binary people or gender non-conforming persons more broadly (with various minorities being assigned heteronormatively atypically gendered qualities, like women of color being seen as more masculine and sexual voracious/aggressive than white women, for example).

Rainbow Capitalism

Capitalism appropriating queerness, generally through surface-level, inauthentic representation and queer-baiting. Marketing-wise, this involves slapping a fucking rainbow on every product in sight during Pride Month, diluting its cultural significance as a sign of solidarity and rebellion in the process.

recuperation/controlled opposition

"The process by which politically radical ideas and images are twisted, co-opted, absorbed, defused, incorporated, annexed or commodified within media culture and bourgeois society, and thus become interpreted through a neutralized, innocuous or more socially conventional perspective. More broadly, it may refer to the cultural appropriation of any subversive symbols or ideas by mainstream culture" (source: Wikipedia). Perhaps the most common example is "corruption" (the evil cop, company or executive, etc) and the "defanging" of oppositional forces (rap, punk rock, antiwar protests, Black Lives Matter and other activists groups, etc as commodified by Rainbow Capitalism; more on this concept in Volume Three, Chapter One) but also "demonization" (e.g., the rebellion of the xenomorph or zombies turned into mindless rage that marines can shoot at with impunity).

sublimation

The process by which socially unacceptable impulses or idealizations are transformed into socially acceptable actions or behavior. Unlike Nietzsche or Freud, I explore sublimation as something that can either be bourgeois or proletarian. For either man, sublimation was a mature, "healthy" defense mechanism by which the modern individual could turn a blind eye, thus function in assimilative ways. I

disagree about the "healthy" part, thinking this kind of repressing is to conceal Capitalism as an expressly tyrannical and exploitative system towards workers— "healthy" meaning "working as intended *for the elite*." Sublimation has to go beyond exploitation if workers are to liberate themselves in ways Nietzsche generally called "envious." It is not envy that drives people to rebel, but a desire to not be exploited like chattel. To this, the recuperation of the activist—into a killer demon or zombie that cannot speak and must instead be shot—is generally seen as a good thing to do; it sublimates them into something that can be logically dealt with; i.e, through violence.

prescriptive sexuality (and gender)

Sexuality and gender as prescribed according to various explicit or tacit mandates; i.e., sex, orientation and gender performance/identity are not separate and exist within a cis-gendered, heteronormative colonial binary. This can come from corporations or groups that produce media on a geopolitical scale, or from individual artists/thinkers who uphold the status quo (TERFs, for example). Generally illustrated through propaganda that appropriates marginalized groups.

descriptive sexuality (and gender)

Sexuality and gender as describing actual persons, be they sexual and/or asexual. This includes their bodies, orientations and identities, etc, as things to appreciate, not appropriate (thus exploit). For queer people, their existence is generally ironic to canonical, historical-material norms because they do not confirm to these norms or their prescriptions. Doing so requires genderqueer expression during oppositional praxis through *appreciative irony* as a kind of gender trouble/parody under heteronormative conditions (exhibit 3b).

appreciative irony

Simply put, a descriptive sexuality that culturally appreciates the irony of queer existence in various forms: trans people, non-binary persons, homosexuals, pansexuals, bisexuals, intersex persons, femboys, catgirls, etc. Often, portrayed through countercultural performance art, including sex-positive BDSM in iconoclastic forms of Gothic media.

asexuality

A gradient of expressions that includes *demisexual/grey ace* and *aromantic* persons, asexuality displays orientations and performances or gender identities that diverge from sexual attraction, generally in favor of romantic, spiritual and emotional connections; i.e., a neurodivergent condition, not a disease that needs to be repressed, shamed or attacked.

neurodivergence

A quality of brain conditions that diverge from neurotypical persons and brains. Neurodivergent people tend to be demonized, but also shamed as disabled, insane or mendacious. However, NeuroClastic's Autistic Science Person writes in "Autistic People Care Too Much, Research Says" (2020) that autistic people on average tend to be more selfless and open-minded than neurotypical persons. This isn't an automatic endorsement of us (I am neurodivergent) nor *carte blanche*, but it does help explain the ways in which Capitalism devalues people who don't toe the line (e.g., the C.S. Lewis trilemma: lunatic, liar, lord; source: Essence of Thought, 2022): Neurodivergent people tend to be anti-work knowing that many jobs and forms of consumption are incredibly unethical; while there is no ethical consumption under Capitalism, we recognize that some forms of consumption actively contribute to an economy of genocide; e.g., purchasing sugar in slavery-era Great Britain before 1833, or playing *Hogwarts Legacy* in 2023 despite knowing J.K. Rowling is a TERF and her brand is anti-trans (Renegade Cut's "Don't Play Hogwarts Legacy," 2023).

plurality/multiplicity

Generally demonized in Gothic canon, "Plurality or multiplicity is the psychological phenomenon in which a body can feature multiple distinct or overlapping consciousnesses, each with their own degree of individuality. This phenomenon can feature in identity disturbance, dissociative identity disorder, and other specified dissociative disorders. Some individuals describe their experience of plurality as a form of neurodiversity, rather than something that demands a diagnosis" (source). It's not automatically an ailment or begot from trauma, though it will canonically be presented as such (the same goes for asexual/neurodivergent peoples).

sex-repulsed

Not to be confused with *sex-negative*/reactionary politics, *sex-repulsed* is the quality through which persons—whether through nature or nurture; i.e., hereditary or environmental trauma factors (for these tend to overlap)—are repulsed by sex. This can be partial—can amount to gradient indifference or outright trauma/triggering status depending on its severity. *Important: Sex-repulsion is not strictly a symptom, but a <u>neurodivergent condition</u> with congenital/comorbid factors operating within the brain as <u>neuroplastic</u> (concepts we'll explore in depth in Volume Three, Chapter Three).*

comorbid/congenital

The simultaneous presence of two or more diseases *or* medical conditions in a patient—congenital meaning "present at birth," inherited. In gendered terms, this can present in people who are non-conforming or neurotypical; in Marxist terms, this extends into the material world as an extension of the human mind—i.e., the Gothic imagination as comorbid.

LGBTQ+

Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, and various other non-gender-conforming groups.

queer

A general, all-purpose label reclaimed from its colonizer origins. For example, I identify as queer/am a queer person. While terms like trans, queer, gay and so on most certainly have specific definitions, in everyday queer parlance they tend to be used *interchangeably* (with idiosyncratic boundaries being drawn up when the need arises); forced conformity/division is to "make things weird" (though marginalized gatekeeping/sectarianism is definitely a thing)

genderqueer

Challenging gender norms; also called "questioning" or "gender non-conforming."

monogamy/-ous

The performance of a singular, happy relationship, canonically structured around marriage, reproductive sex and the nuclear family structure. In Gothic canon, this structure is often threatened by a Gothic villain—e.g., Count Ardolph from Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. When Ardolph cuckolds the husband with said husband's unfaithful,

susceptible-to-vice wife (the Original Sin argument), our unhappy husband—thoroughly chagrined—literally dies of shame. It's heteronormative and white supremacist, foisting societal fears onto a foreign, not-quite-West, not-quite-East scapegoat: those god-damn Italians! This form of xenophobic displacement would be revisited in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*—with her Germanic, asexual scapegoat, Victor, not only cock-blocking his own kid as a proponent of the Enlightenment's version of unnatural reproduction ("I will be with you on your wedding night!"), but mad science being historically-materially Germanized in canonical fictional and non-fictional forms (e.g., Operation Paperclip and the American privatization/weaponization of mad science from irrational, hauntologized lands like Nazi Germany)!

poly(amory/-ous)

Non-normative family/open relationship structures that break with the heteronormative structure/cycle of compelled marriage; historically conflated with swinging or serial monogamy (which are really their own heteronormative practices; i.e., "We're not *poly*, we're *serially monogamous*!"). Note how poly relationships tend to be framed as poly*amorous*, not polygamous (unless you're a Mormon or cult leader, although certain traditions in non-Western societies allowed for polygamy as well—though not many were exclusively matriarchal in function). Polyamory *can* include marriage, though the basic idea is any (a)sexual relationship with multiple partners. Pairs within this arrangement are
called *couples* (*thruple* being a popular term even in mainstream fiction, though canon reduces it to a destructive/"bury your gays" love triangle/square, etc); the entire social-sexual structure of a given poly arrangement is called
a *polycule*. *Note: As part of the "bury your gays trope," poly couples are often viewed as "homewreckers," conflated with wanton societal destruction of the familial household (re: Count Ardolph from Zofloya); heteronormativity demands that they die—e.g., Shari and Cary (a pun for "sharing and caring," if I had to guess) from You (2018) being ritualistically sacrificed by the writers of the show, who have them murdered by the codependent, horribly selfish, duplicitous and perfidious compulsive liars/pattern-killers, Joe Goldberg and Love Quinn. —Perse*

"friends of Dorothy"

Historically a method of queer concealment in the 1980s but also appropriated under Rainbow Capitalism; can be appreciated under Gothic Communism, as well.

beards

A relationship of convenience to appear straight, heteronormative, monogamous, nuclear, "Roman," etc. The nuptial variant of a beard is the *lavender marriage*.

heteronormativity

HETERONORMATIVITY

An extremely helpful concept in queer theory, which encapsulates a lot of what we've just covered is *heteronormativity*. Queer theorist Michael Warner popularized this term in 1991, drawing on Rubin's sex hierarchy and Rich's compulsory heterosexuality.

Heteronormativity refers to a set of related cultural assumptions:

- The "normal" or "natural" form of attraction and relationships is one man and one woman who:
  - Normally or naturally embody conventional gender roles and norms; and
  - Have sex whereby the man's penis penetrates the woman's vagina (PIV sex).

OH, JANET!

OH, BRAD!

- Other forms of sexuality and gender are less normal or natural than this (or not normal or natural at all).

- Thus, people are assumed heterosexual unless proven otherwise.

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(exhibit 3b: Author/artist: Meg-Jon Barker from "What's wrong with heteronormativity?" featuring their 2016 book, Queer: A Graphic History.)

Heteronormativity is both highly unnatural and normalized by capital. It is the supremely harmful idea wherein heterosexuality and its relative gender norms are prescribed/enforced to normalized, institutional extremes by those in power—i.e.,

the Patriarchy. In Marxist terms, capitalists and state agents own, thus control, the media, using it to enforce heterosexuality and the colonial (cis-)gender binary through advertisement on a grand scale (re: the canonical Superstructure). This influence reliably affects how people respond, helping them recognize "the social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law"—re: [Lacan's Symbolic Order](). Acceptance of this Order when it is decidedly harmful is manufactured consent, leading to basic human rights abuses perpetrated by the state and its bourgeois actors. Pro-bourgeois abuses happen through various concentric lenses of normativity—heteronormativity, [amatonormativity](), [Afronormativity](), homonormativity and queernormativity, etc—that appeal tokenistically to the same colonial binary and its heteronormative mythic structure; i.e., that which conflates human biology (sex and skin color), thus sex and gender roles within a transgenerational curse: the king saw the black, queer and/or female monster and went mad because he had been alienated from them and himself. The curse of the castle and the Shadow of Pygmalion, then, is reliable decay and socio-material madness felt through this engineered tension as being ultimately profitable for the elite and detrimental to everyone else (whether they're defending the institution or not). Heteronormativity doesn't just explain away ignominious death, but essentializes and endorses it; i.e., the hallmark couple looks happy so the system must work, right? All you have to do is conform, consume and obey…

queernormativity/homonormativity

Normative queerness centers queerness in *sexualized* spheres (erasing ace people) centered around the nuclear family unit/sexual
reproduction. *Homonormativity* takes the same idea and applies it to cis-gendered homosexual men/women (the "two dads/two moms" appropriative trope as queer-baiting/lip service).

gender trouble

Coined by Judith Butler, gender trouble is the social tension and reactions that result when the heteronormative, binary view of sexuality and gender is disrupted. This trouble can happen through the parody of social-sexual norms through ironic or appreciative (counterculture) reverse-abjection, whose reactionary abjection occurs by an increasingly unstable status quo as it impedes or threatens disintegration (moral panics under Capitalism's intended cycles of decay and restoration). Such threatening is generally of the heteronormative side reacting negatively towards the very things it abjects, which can be as simple as boys wearing pink instead of blue(!). Such a binary and similar socio-material schemes have only recently solidified under neoliberal Capitalism; e.g., now, pink is very much canonically treated as feminine/female in cis-coded, heteronormative ways

(for an extensive, funny chronicling of this entire tragedy as it historically-materially unfolds, refer to Tirrrb's 2023 video: "[The Yassification Of Masculinity](#)").

girl-cock (exhibit 7c) or boy pussy (exhibit 52c)/gender parody

Genitals or genitalia-like artifacts that fulfill an ironic/gender parody cultural role that interrogates heteronormative gender assignment, performance or identity, as well as sexual orientation. They can be informed by one's biological sex in coercive ways (exhibit 30/31). However, no one in non-normative/proletarian circles wants to be "defined" by biological sex—i.e., forced conformity. This leads to the creation of various sex toys (exhibits 38a) and aliases useful to our existence, as well as actively operating as sex-positive workers (this being said, sex-positive workers *are* active by default—attacked for being different from what the state prescribes, but also allowed to exist by the elite because *we're* the fuel that Capitalism needs to operate).

natural assignment

Accident of birth—i.e., the natural assignment of one's biological sex (and conditions to form one's gender identity around, whether through conformity or struggle); one's birth sex/genitals: male, female, and intersex.

AFAB/AMABs

Assigned-Female/Male-at-Birth—i.e., one's birth sex. Can be used as a noun or adjective; e.g., "AFABs dislike this" or "an AFAB person," etc. Intersex people are their own category.

what is INTERSEX?

The term "intersex" is used to describe an individual whose chromosomes, hormones, or sexual organs are not in line with the perceived male/female sex binary.

SEX is not binary: SEX is a spectrum:

Sex is determined by a doctor upon birth using the following guidelines: *(according to the infant's genitals)*

it's a girl! (under 3/8")   it's a boy! (over 1")

Phall-O-Meter®

unacceptable!

Babies with "ambiguous genitals" often undergo inhumane, dangerous, and unnecessary surgeries to "normalize" their genitals, many times without parental consent!

INTERSEX PEOPLE...
>> are about as common as redheads!
>> can have any sexual orientation or gender identity.
>> should never be called "hermaphrodites."
>> should have their privacy respected.
>> should not have to be ashamed of their bodies.
>> deserve to be treated like anybody else.

INTERSEX AWARENESS DAY // october 26
sources: isna.org, actuallyintersex.tumblr.com, sexandgender.net, apcdaily.wordpress.com

intersex

(exhibit 3c1: source)

The existence on a biological gradient between the qualifiers male and female, amounting to a variable "third sex" that presents mixed features of either sex to varying degrees; except, the umbrella term doesn't represent one particular manifestation as a strict third, but all of them together on a vast, complicated spectrum of genotypical and phenotypical elements. They are often depicted as angels or demons in the classically androgynous sense, or stigmatized/fetishized in porn as "shemales," "he-shes" and other canonically pejorative labels; a common, non-insulting label is "androgyne" (though this can apply to trans people and mixed gender performance, too). A common intersex example in Gothic media is the phallic woman or Archaic Mother—e.g., the xenomorph.

non-binary

From the Human Rights Campaign's "Glossary of Terms" (2023):

> An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, *not all non-binary people do*. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid (source).

Non-binary can mean a lot of different things. A femboy can be a cis femboy AMAB who feels femme but still identifies as a man; or someone who identifies through the femboy gender role as a performance that constitutes their identity label (similar to drag queens); or someone whose AFAB who non-binarizes the femboy label. To non-binarize is to remove the binary component of something but generally preserve the aesthetic and power structure within the arrangement (e.g., cis-gendered catgirls and femboys as things to non-binarize: exhibits 91a1 and 91c).

sexual/asexual orientation

How people orient (a)sexually/"float their boats" in relation to gender identity and performance. A double helix of two gradients, each having two theoretical "poles," wherein both ribbons descriptively intertwine/intersect within the socio-material world (more on this in Volume Three, Chapter Three).

heterosexuality

Orienting towards the *opposite* gender. Classically called "opposite-sex attraction," gender-non-conformity (GNC) treats heterosexuality as orienting towards the gender opposite to *oneself*. This being said, pure opposites do not generally exist outside of heteronormative enforcement (which compels binaries in service of the profit motive/process of abjection) so heterosexual people also tend to be cis; i.e., cis-het, or "straight."

homosexuality

Orienting towards the *same* gender. Classically called "same-sex attraction," gender-non-conformity treats homosexuality as orienting towards the same gender as *oneself*. No binary is required, and the term is generally synonymous with "gay" or "lesbian."

bisexuality

Orienting towards *two or more* genders. Classically called "both-sex attraction" (or something along those lines), gender-non-conformity treats bisexuality as orienting towards the gender opposite to and the same as *oneself*.

pansexuality

Orienting towards someone else *regardless of* their gender. However, this does not preclude exceptions and the phrase is generally used interchangeably with bisexuality in everyday parlance.

heteronormative assignment (cis gender roles)

Accident of birth in relation to one's "birth gender" as socially constructed by the state in relation to one's genitals. For example, if you're reading this on planet Earth, you're both literate and fluent in English. This means your birth gender is heteronormatively connected to/essentialized with your birth sex by reactionaries and moderates alike, who will collectively die on the hill of assigning you a social-sexual/worker role based *entirely* on your genitals ("It is against free speech to stop us from fixating on the genitals," writes the Onion in their 2023 article, "It is Journalism's Sacred Duty to Endanger the Lives of as Many Trans People as Possible"). Commonly seen as "cis-het," it can also be cis-queer (e.g., a homosexual or bisexual cis-gendered man or woman). Not all cis-queer people are moderates/reactionaries, though class conflict turns potential trans allies into class traitors working for the elite. Likewise, heteronormativity is binarized, thus connecting gender to sex in order to create sexually dimorphic gender roles for "both" worker sexes (all while ignoring intersex people).

transgender reassignment (transgender identity)

Simply put, Being trans is gender identity wherein one feels, and hopefully one day decides to recognize, that one isn't cis. For example, I have always been trans, but felt closeted about it; for a long time, I identified as genderfluid/as a femboy before deciding that I aligned best within the idea of being a binary trans woman. However, words like "gay," "trans," and "non-binary" can also be used interchangeable to some extent in basic conversation—in short, because the definitions overlap. A non-binary person isn't cis, so calling them "trans" isn't wrong. However, there is a preference with which labels they'll use in basic conversation and which one's they'll wave a flag to (i.e., I *am* an atheist and a feminist, but would rather call myself a gay space Communist/Satanist any day of the week).

gender identity

One's conforming or nonconforming gender identity as a (sub)conscious act; i.e., how one identifies, be that passively or actively. This act of identifying intersect with their birth sex/gender, their orientation, while also competing dialectically-materially for or against the state during various performances. This can be passive/active, but remains a socio-political position that changes over time (sex,

gender and politics, etc, are fluid). In the past, people were more likely to be "true neutral," unaware of things as the state oppressed information outright. Now, misinformation and factionalism are the bourgeois name of the game—gaslight, gatekeep, girl boss; so is denial (for those who don't want to get involved in active politic affairs; aka state-sponsored apathy) and overt genocide (when moderacy fails, doing so by design and allowing fascists to get their hands bloody so the elite can deny involvement): neglect, ignorance and abuse, respectively.

gender performance

Gender performance is coded in relation to oneself, their identity/orientation, and to society's in-groups and out-groups, aka formal/informal gender roles. Whether one's gender *identity* is assigned to them at birth, or is self-assigned through various non-gender-conforming types—e.g., trans man/woman, non-binary, femboy, agender, etc—their gender *performance* amounts to a coded set of social behaviors (and corresponding materials and language) that adhere to performative rules meant to reinforces one's gender as either self-assigned, or assigned heteronormatively by the state. To that, these concepts do not exist in a vacuum, but intersect and often conflict (which leads to gender parody and gender trouble during subversive exercises). The higher you go in vertical power structures, the more patriarchal someone behaves. This varies per socio-material register. The elite will push buttons to calmly genocide entire peoples for profit (for them, it's business-as-usual, conducted over time inside a structure built to accommodate them); those whose positions are more fragile (fascists) will behave more extremely as they defend the nation-state (with moderacy trying to conceal/downplay this). E.g., Bill Gates is a total dweeb who hangs out with pedophiles but dresses like your creepy uncle; Matt Walsh and Hitler both have to overperform to keep up with their fragile, hypermasculine gender roles, thus maintain their veneer of invincibility.

(artist, left: [Mark Bryan](#); right: [Cursed Arachnid](#))

gender performance as identity

Some identities involve broader gender performances to identify around or as. Common sex-coercive examples include the *Einsatzgruppen* (death squads) of Nazi Germany's *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (the Death's Head units); despite being a paramilitary group in a fascist (thus heteronormative) regime, the appearance of these groups was literally tailored by Hugo Boss around fetishistic (then and now) Nazi aesthetics; i.e., as examined by Leftist Youtuber, Yugopnik, in "Aesthetics of Evil - The Fascist Uniform" (2021): [Nazis uniforms were patently designed to evoke the heroic spirit of palingenetic ultranationalism inside a cult of death](#), one whose dimorphic gender roles were deliberately affixed to fear and dogma (whose sex-coercive stamp on canonical BDSM we'll examine in Volume Three). Sex-positive examples include drag queens or femboys. To that, someone doesn't have to identify as either of these terms. And yet, while drag queens are predominantly cis men, they also belong to a cultural movement that is so large and specific in its as to justify identify as someone who belongs to such a group. It takes on a life of its own. Similarly, femboys belong to a group of people who identify according to the word "femboy" as something to live by through its canonical subversion by iconoclastic method; i.e., appreciative irony as a means of reclaiming the word and making it sex-positive through latter-day examples of the word (which we'll examine in Volume Three, Chapter Three).

a woman

That depends ("Beware the elves for they will say both yea and nay"). Keeping the above terms in mind, a woman is multiple things at once. On the *bourgeois* side, she's anything a man isn't—i.e., a cis-het sex slave/employee/girl boss, etc (note the gradient of euphemisms to disguise the deliberate marital role of unpaid women's work under Capitalism); on the proletariat side, she's however someone identifies in relation to the state as a worker—for or against it to various, liminal degrees (this includes personas, alter-egos, egregores and various other disguises). To reduce it to "an adult, human female" is super gross, Nazi-level shit (and while I *want* to seriously feel sorry for Matt Walsh's probably-battered housewife, assuming she's entirely ignorant of her husband's abuse would assume that she actually puts in the work; however, if she does, it would take total isolation of anything not supplied to her in advance by her "big, strong, powerful, caretaker" husband. That's quite sad and pathetic). I hate Nazis, Matt Walsh; my grandfather fought them during WW2 after they raped and destroyed his homeland and killed most of his friends and family. They prey on fear yet instantly run away like Brave Ser Robin when they're outed as perfidiously and ignominiously stupid. You're cut from the same cloth, you giant, callow man-child.

To be good-faith and holistic, I've tried to include the most fundamental and basic queer language as comprehensively as I can for all readers (this anticipates cryptofascists like Matt Walsh, who only asks "What is a Woman?" in bad faith to reactionarily maintain the status quo—the feckless backstabber). Other terms that we haven't mentioned here will come up during the book as we build off our main arguments. —Perse

the (settler-)colonial binary

Nadi Tofighian writes in *Blurring the Colonial Binary* (2013) that, having evolved beyond Rome's master/slave dynamic, colonialism and Imperialism "separated people into different classes of people, ruler and ruled, white and non-white, thereby creating and widening a colonial binary" ([source](#)). To this, the cis-het, white European/Christian male is superior to all other workers. This binary extends to token marginalizations and infiltrated and assimilated/normalized activist groups, thought/political leaders or public intellectuals, who serve as class traitors, but also functional police for their respective domains.

Cartesian dualism/the Cartesian Revolution

The rising of a dividing system of thought by René Descartes that led to settler colonialism. As Raj Patel and Jason Moore write in *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*:

The inventors of Nature were philosophers as well as conquerors and profiteers. In 1641, Descartes offered what would become the first two laws of capitalist ecology. The first is seemingly innocent. Descartes distinguished between mind and body, using the Latin *res cogitans* and *res extensa* to refer to them. Reality, in this view, is composed of discrete "thinking things" and "extended things." Humans (but not all humans) were thinking things; Nature was full of extended things. The era's ruling classes saw most human beings—women, peoples of color, Indigenous Peoples—as extended, not thinking, beings. This means that Descartes' philosophical abstractions were practical instruments of domination: they were real abstractions with tremendous material force. And this leads us to Descartes' second law of capitalist ecology: European civilization (or "we," in Descartes' word) must become "the masters and possessors of nature." Society and Nature were not just existentially separate; Nature was something to be controlled and dominated by Society. The Cartesian outlook, in other words, shaped modern logics of power as well as thought.

[...] The invention of Nature and Society was gendered at every turn. The binaries of Man and Woman, Nature and Society, drank from the same cup. Nature, and its boundary with Society, was "gyn/ecological" from the outset. Through this radically new mode of organizing life and thought, Nature became not a thing but a strategy that allowed for the ethical and economic cheapening of life. Cartesian dualism was and remains far more than a descriptive statement: it is a normative statement of how to best organize power and hierarchy, Humanity and Nature, Man and Woman, Colonizer and Colonized. Although the credit (and blame) is shared by many, it makes sense to call this a Cartesian revolution. Here was an intellectual movement that shaped not only ways of thinking but also ways of conquering, commodifying and living [... that] made thinking, and doable, the colonial project of mapping and domination.

Finally, the Cartesian revolution was made thinkable, and doable, the colonial project of mapping and domination. […] Cartesian rationalism is predicated on the distinction between the inner reality of the mind and the outer reality of objects; the latter could be brought into the former only through a neutral, disembodied gazed situated outside of space and time. That gaze always belonged to the Enlightened European colonist—and the empires that backed him. Descartes' *cogito* funneled vision and thought into a spectator's view of the world, one that rendered the emerging surfaces of modernity visible and measurable and the viewer bodiless and placeless. Medieval multiple vantage points in art and literature were displaced by a single, disembodied, omniscient and panoptic eye. In geometry, Renaissance painting, and especially cartography, the new thinking represented reality as

if one were standing outside of it. As the social critic Lewis Mumford noted, the Renaissance perspective "turned the symbolic relation of objects into a visual relation: the visual in turn became a quantitative relation. In the new picture of the world, size meant not human or divine importance, but distance." And that distance could be measured, catalogued, mapped, and owned.

The modern map did not merely describe the world; it was a technology of conquest ([source](#)).

(artist: [Allan Ramsay](#))

patrilineal descent

In medieval terms, patrilineal descent is generally expressed as Divine Right (what Mikhail Bakhtin comments on through the Gothic chronotope as dynastic power exchange and hereditary rites—the time of the historical past); i.e., the bloodline of kings. Under Capitalism, this applies to socio-material privileges accreting outwards from the nation-state/corporations through state-corporate propaganda (canon) in monomythic terms—a Symbolic Order that workers submit to once pacified.

the mythic structure

The Symbolic Order of Western canon: "Oh, look, it's a king or a god! Guess I'll bend the knee and turn off my brain!" Originally disrupted by the "mythic method"

as coined by T.S. Eliot, who "Jerry" from GLR Archive writes in "Eliot and the Mythic Method" (2004),

> defines what he exemplifies in *The Waste Land* [1922] – i.e., the "mythic method" – in his essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" [1923]. The mythic method looked to the past to glean meaning and understanding for what has been lost or destroyed in the present. This method emphasizes the underlying commonality of ostensibly disparate times and locations by employing a comparative mythology to transcend the temporal narrative. By stressing the mythical, anthropological, historical, and the literary, this method becomes at once (1) satirical by showing how much the present has fallen; (2) comparative to highlight similarities structurally; (3) historically neutral to escape the present to a revived future; (4) confused in its fusion of the realistic and the phantasmagoric; (5) ordering in its approach to morality and imaginative passion. The mythic method does not offer an escape to a better past, but an entry to a confusing present ([source](#)).

Eliot's 20th century modernist shenanigans (not to be confused with Modernism, aka the Enlightenment) fly directly in the face of James Campbell's "[monomyth](#)." Canonized as "the hero's journey" in popular Western fiction and formative to new fictions, the monomyth is central to state hegemony through worker pacification. Perhaps not entirely aware of this, Eliot still chose not to retreat into a "better" past in search of individuation (to borrow from Carl Jung); he addressed the present as a modern confusion that *needs* to be faced. In socio-political terms, this can be spaces that house abject/reverse things (with proletarian/reverse-abject variants, of course): the parallel space.

the monomyth (shortened, from the thesis volume)

Also called the Hero's Journey, the monomyth is a rite of passage wherein a (traditionally male) child finds himself offered the "rare" opportunity to elevate through the seemingly divine provision of a sword or some such masterful weapon. There's many steps and moving parts following the Call to Adventure (often categorized between [twelve](#) and [seventeen](#)), but the basic gist is: offer adventure, refuse, change mind, get sword, cross boundaries, overcome trials and ordeals, kill the (corrupt, monstrous-feminine) monster, return in some shape or form changed by the quest, get the girl. Joseph Campbell is more prescriptive and optimistic, writing in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949):

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive

victory is won: the Hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man ["bros before hoes," I guess].

Personally, I find this whole notion incredibly dubious; i.e., harmful wish fulfillment/guilty pleasure that is generally trapped within a space for which there *is* no escape and which the fear of colonial inheritance runs deep in Neo-Gothic fiction. Through this questioning of the heroic quest, we can spot disempowering patterns beyond that of canonical empowerment tied to material conditions and dogma: the Cycle of Kings as a *Promethean* ordeal the state exploits to recruit soldiers to either send abroad and commit genocide, or to (re)colonize the homefront (the Imperial Boomerang, from Foucault) in the name of the father and one's bloodline through patrilineal descent.

the Cycle of Kings (shortened, from the thesis volume)

The centrist monomyth; i.e., the good and bad kings and all the kings' white cis-het Christian men or those *acting like these men*, thus warrior-minded good cops and bad cops in hauntological (from Derrida, trapped between the past and present; anachronistic with an emphasis on the imaginary past/retro-future) copaganda apologizing for state genocide—i.e., TERFs and other token groups. In turn, the calamity of war-as-an-*apologetic*-business—of canonically whitewashing culture, war and class war/culture war personified in theatrical war, as well as total war and shadow/proxy war on the global stage (or its return home via the Imperial Boomerang/military urbanism)—reeks from Capitalism like a Promethean "exhaust" during an infernal concentric pattern*.

infernal concentric pattern (from the thesis volume)

Described by Manuel Aguirre in "Geometries of Terror" (2008) as the final room, or rather a room that conveys finality through the exhaustion of military optimism in the face of an endless, yawning dead;

> where the hero crosses a series of doors and spaces until he reaches a central chamber, there to witness the collapse of his hopes; [this infernal concentric pattern has] in Gothic one and the same function: to destabilize assumptions as to the physical, ontological or moral order of the cosmos [... It is like a Mandelbrot set:] finite, and yet from within we cannot reach its end; it is a labyrinth that delves "down" instead of pushing outwards. From the outside it looks simple enough: bounded, finite, closed; from the inside, however, it is inextricable. It is a very precise graphic replica of the Gothic space in *The Italian* […] Needless to say, the technique whereby physical or figurative space is endlessly fragmented and so seems both to repeat itself and to stall resolution is not restricted to *The Italian*: almost every major

Gothic author (Walpole, Beckford, Lee, Lewis, Godwin, Mary Shelley, Maturin, Hogg) uses it in his or her own way. *Nor does it die out with the metamorphosis of historical Gothic into other forms of fiction* (emphasis, me; [source](#)).

i.e., the infernal concentric pattern is the smoke of the ignominious dead used as a myopic screen of Capitalist Realism, one that hides the obvious function of the free market and exploitation as a man-made, but brutal Cartesian model: profit, by any means necessary.

totalitarian(ism)

A state condition towards the total consolidation of power at one point. For example, in respect to Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia, Richard Overy writes in *The Dictators* (2004), "'Totalitarian' does not mean that they were 'total' parties, either all-inclusive or wielding complete power; it means they were concerned with the 'totality' of the societies in which they worked."

parallel space

Parallel space (or language) works off the anti-totalitarian notion of "[parallel societies](#)" (Academy of Idea's "The Parallel Society vs Totalitarianism," 2022): "A [society] <u>not</u> dependent on official channels of communications, or on the hierarchy of values of the establishment." For our purposes, though, parallel space can be *either* canonical or iconoclastic, operating through bourgeois/proletarian means; i.e., to dissociate/displace socio-material critiques for or against the state, and usually to a faraway "Gothic" place: e.g., a castle in a mythical, semi-earthly land of madness like Ann Radcliffe's fictionalized Italy or the 1980s, neoliberal "danger disco" of James Cameron's *Terminator* (exhibit 15b2). The role of such Gothic examples is, again, the infernal concentric pattern as inescapable/uncanny.

class warfare

Class war for/against the state-corporate hegemony and its collective bourgeois interests. Proletarian solidarity and collective action fight an uphill battle against fractured/pulverized variants—i.e., worker division and in-fighting through tokenism, assimilation (gaslight, gatekeep, girl-boss) and token normativity as a means of generating class traitors to stall/prevent/regress rebellion and maintain Capitalism.

class traitors/cops

Workers who betray the working class in defense of capital, namely the state as capital, often the military or paramilitary (cops) but also those who take on the same bourgeois function by dividing workers in defense of capital, thus the state. Traitors and exploitation takes many, many forms because all workers are exploited to varying degrees and qualities—e.g., [Justin Eric King lying/downplaying about his active role in exploiting foreign/migrant workers](#) (Bad Empanada 2, 2023) smuggled into the U.S. and exploited like basement chattel slaves, only to be given a slap on the wrist by the state. Regardless of whom, the structure defends itself through manufacture, subterfuge and coercion in defense of capital from whistleblowers and activists as fundamental/*de facto* enemies of the state. "Those with power will be there."

Military Industrial Complex

(from [Wikipedia](#)): the relationship between a country's military and the defense industry that supplies it, seen together as a vested interest which influences public policy. A driving factor behind the relationship between the military and the defense-minded corporations is that both sides benefit—one side from obtaining war weapons, and the other from being paid to supply them. The term is most often used in reference to the system behind the armed forces of the United States, where the relationship is most prevalent due to close links among defense contractors, the Pentagon, and politicians. The expression gained popularity after a warning of the relationship's detrimental effects, in [the farewell address](#) of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 17, 1961.

In the context of the United States, the appellation is sometimes extended to **military–industrial–congressional complex** (**MICC**), adding the US Congress to form a three-sided relationship termed an "iron triangle." Its three legs include political contributions, political approval for military spending, lobbying to support bureaucracies, and oversight of the industry; or more broadly, the entire network of contracts and flows of money and resources among individuals as well as corporations and institutions of the defense contractors, private military contractors, the Pentagon, Congress, and the executive branch.

(source: Matthew Byrne's "Police Departments Attempt a Charm Offensive Amid Uprisings," 2020)

copaganda

Any form of canonical media that defends state abuse through official or functional police agents, but especially their monopoly of violence against those living in the state of exception under crisis as meant to recognize and worship/submit to them like gods. The state is always, to some degree, in crisis, leading to the generation of myriad monomyth stories that express this fact—i.e., as a dividing line between the police and everyone else. Skip Intro, a YouTuber with an extensive series on copaganda, explores how this phenomenon goes well beyond planet Earth, going so far as to call it a Faustian bargain. This bargain manifesting in many different kinds of fiction genres that endorse the status quo. For example, the "witch cops" and vice characters of fantasy narratives (war chiefs, Amazon war bosses; white and black "wolves") either attack orcs, Drow or some other enemy of the state during oppositional praxis, or they rally them in doomed rebellions and

futile/misunderstood attacks of revenge. One assimilates, the other is destroyed and vilified.

weird canonical nerds

A toxic subset of nerd culture. Whereas nerd culture is for those who present an increased intellectual interest in a given topic—often in literature, but popular media more broadly as something to consume, critique, or create—weird canonical nerds are those who substitute intellectualism for consumerism and negative freedom for the elite as something to blindly enjoy/endorse through faithful, uncritical consumption; i.e., the monomyth and Cycle of Kings as "good war"; e.g., Gamergate, 2014, but also TERFs and their emergence in the late 2010s. Not only is this group is very wide—encompassing white, cis-het male consumers, but also women, and assimilated, "minority police," token class traitors [cops are class traitors who betray the class interests of the working class/proletariat for the owner class/bourgeoisie]; but it unironically leads to fascism as the infernal concentric pattern (with Gamergate endorsed by weird canonical nerds into the 2016 election of Donald Trump, and neoliberal-fascist sentiments through coercive economics and "blind" pastiche/parody consumption outside of American establishment politics). Weird canonical nerds are systemically bigoted, pertaining to Man Box culture as something to openly endorse, or "resist" in ways that do nothing to change the status quo/avoid the infernal concentric pattern/Cycle of Kings; e.g., TERF Amazons, but also proudly "apolitical" non-feminist nerds who embody a particular status within the nerd pantheon of canonical heroes: Mega Man as a go-to centrist male hero, but also Eren Yeager as the "incel fascist" with mommy issues, or Samus Aran as the Galactic Federation's singular girl boss, etc. All become something to endorse within critically blind portions of nerd culture that ape their prescriptive, colonial heroes within culture war dressed up as "apolitical" (the *fascist* ideology being secondary to the pursuit and claiming of personal power by changing one's shape and language to fit those aims; e.g., Reinhardt Heydrich as a fascist war pig [to combine Umberto Eco with Black Sabbath] who would say whatever he could to justify his own iron grip on the minds of the populace: the foreign plot inside the house, once and forever). To this, the Gothic and its various intersections, contradictions and conflicts are embroiled within oppositional praxis for or against weird canonical nerds and their depictions/endorsements of different monster types (that, in the white, cis-het male tradition of privilege, routinely "fail up"—as success, like women or a nice house, is something they are taught to believe is owed to them; which extends to token minorities allowed a slice of the pie, but also must surrender their pie when the time comes [for which the real "Indian givers" are the settler colonist bearing false gifts: the Trojan Horse, aka the Faustian bargain, in Gothic circles]).

incels

An extreme form of rape culture, "involuntarily celibate" persons are those whose false victimization blames women instead of the system that alienates them by design. [The term was originally coined by a lonely woman in the '90s](#), but has since gone on to be used almost exclusively by the alt-right; i.e., stemming from grifters like Andrew Tate who market "self-help" snake oil to them, and authors like Hajime Isayama who make incel heroes tied to palingenetic ultranationalism dressed up as standard-issue war/national pastiche: "weeb" food.

weeaboo

Often shorted to "weeb," the term "weeaboo" is used in anime and manga communities to stereotype fans who show a set of extreme and obnoxious characteristics, generally tied to alt-right circles and belief systems. This includes eco-fascism and "waifus" (the videogame equivalent of a culture war bride promised to men or token proponents of the status quo), but also *moe*, *ahegao* and incest.

class character

The idea of making critical appeals/arguments that have "class character"/are class conscious. Though this notion is modular, it intersects with race, gender and religion, etc (the deliberate attempt to segregate/prioritize them called reductionism; e.g., "race/class reductionism").

gentrification

The process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, typically displacing current inhabitants in the process; from a social standpoint, gentrification is the process of making someone or something more refined, polite, or respectable; e.g., Jane Eyre and Adèle (exhibit 21c1). For example, housing crises are instigated by gentrification as the "invention" of exploitable housing arrangements between owners and workers: apartments. The larger socio-material process generally intersects racial tensions in impoverished, redlined neighborhoods shared between intraracial in-fighting (*Boyz n the Hood*, 1991); or between different racial groups encouraged to divide by the elite through fascist/moderate, good cop/bad cop "peacekeepers" (*Lonestar*, 1996): the disillusionment of police culture as being functionally no different than highway bandits, accidental incest (stolen generations), and a border romance (it's practically a Gothic novel, minus the aesthetic).

tokenism/assimilation fantasy/minority police
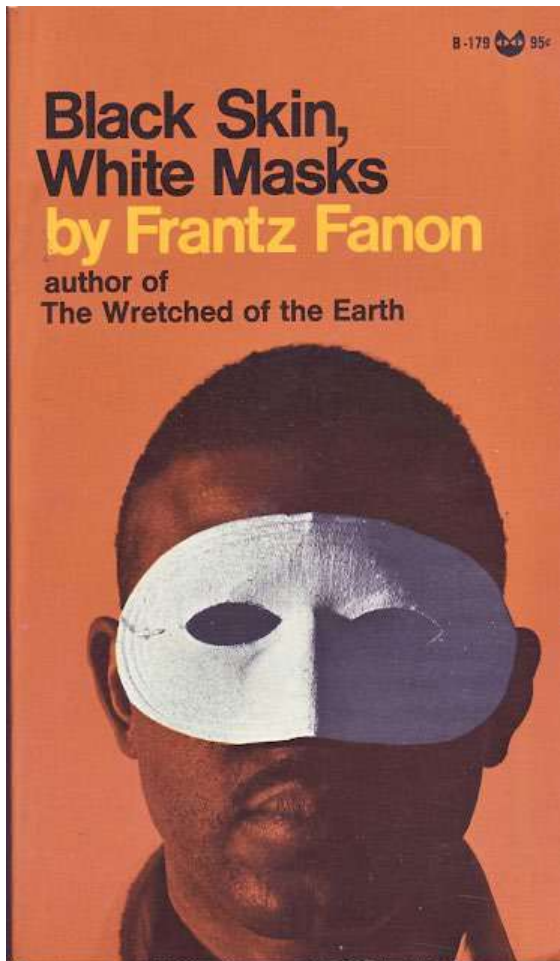
Assimilated/appropriated forms of "emancipation" that turn minorities into race/class traitors aka "minority cops" (and/or renders them myopic towards the suffering of other groups through *Afrocentrism*). A common example is Frantz Fanon's "black skin, white masks," whose *Afronormativity* to various forms of the assimilated token servant desires to escape genocide by emulating their oppressors' genocidal/carceral qualities. This just doesn't apply to people of color, but *any* minority desiring to assimilate the in-group by selling out the rest of their out-group for clemency (which is always a brief reprieve). Tokenism is also intersectional, leading to preferential mistreatment—meaning "less punishment," not zero punishment the closer you are to the in-group colonial standard/status quo: the cis-het, white European/Christian male. In doing so, the status quo infiltrates activists groups, sublimating/assimilating them into the colonial binary along a gradient of gatekept barriers.

gaslight, gatekeep...

Two common parts of socio-economic oppression employed by fascists and neoliberals. Gaslighting is a means of making abuse victims doubt the veracity of their own abuse (and their claims of abuse). Gatekeeping is a tactic more generally employed by those with formal power, denying various groups gainful employment (thus actual material advantage) or working platforms that allow them to effectively communicate systemic injustices perpetrated against them.

...girl-boss (tokenism)

A popular moderate MO, girl bosses are usually neoliberal symbols of "equality," a strong woman of authority who defends the status quo (an overtly fascist girl

boss [would be someone like Captain Israel](#); source: Bad Empanada 2's "Marvel's Israeli Superhero 'Sabra,'" 2022). This can be the female "suit," in corporate *de rigueur*, but also Amazons or orcs as corporate commodities (*war bosses*). Suits present Capitalism as "neutral," but also ubiquitous; Amazons and orcs (and all of their gradients) centralize the perceived order of good-versus-evil language in mass-media entertainment. *Queer bosses* are the same idea, but slightly more progressive: a strong queer person of authority whose *queernormativity* upholds the status quo. When this becomes cis-supremacist, the boss is a TERF—an assimilated war boss who regresses to a war bride herself when decay sets in, removing token privileges from most-marginalized token to least-marginalized (canonically speaking).

war brides (submissive class traitors/collaborators)

Persons, usually women, [who historically slept/fraternized with the enemy to survive](#) (Reddit, 2015). However, it's hardly that simple. More actively bourgeois "brides" would collaborate with their conquerors against the conquered (exhibit 2); proletarian "brides" [would kill their "husbands" for the Cause](#). This includes the Dutch *moffenmeiden* (women from Holland who slept with Nazis during the WW2 occupation, exhibit 2) and *gastarbeiters* (foreign exchange laborers forced to uproot and work in West Germany during early post-Stalin years). In class warfare, unironic "sleeping with the enemy" amounts to "breaking bread" with them; i.e., accepting their material gifts and financial backing in exchange for political compromise. Proletarian warriors should never compromise in this manner, as it leads to continued exploitation; i.e., "kicking the can down the road."

(exhibit 4a: Top left: a French woman, publicly humiliated after France's liberation, [source](#); top right: Truus Oversteegen, a Dutch Resistance fighter known for killing Nazi officials; bottom: photos of Carice van Houten, show in [Black Book](#) [2006] as the fictional Rachel Stein—a Dutch-Jewish singer-turned-spy who eludes capture, kills Nazis, and foils Dutch double-agents in the process [the movie was based off real-life accounts of Dutch resistance members, however. Point in fact, my own grandfather, [Henri van der Waard II](#), was one such person].)

TERFs/SWERFs/NERFs

TERFs are Trans Exclusionary Radical (fascist) Feminists; SWERFs and NERFs exclude sex workers and non-binary people, policing them but also members of their own "in"-groups (fandoms). It's true that older feminist movements were/are racist, exclusionary and cis-supremacist, etc; so I don't like to call TERFs "non-feminists" (though I can understand the temptation). To make the distinction between these older groups and feminism in solidarity with other oppressed groups, I call TERFs fascist "feminists." To be fair, they can be neoliberal, operating through national/corporate exceptionalism obscured by a moderate veneer (centrist media). However, neoliberals still lead to Capitalism-in-crisis, aka fascism, which adopts racist/sexist dogma and rape culture/"prison sex" mentalities in more overtly hierarchical ways. Not all TERFs are SWERFs/NERFs (or vice versa) but there's generally overlap. All compromise in ways harmful to worker solidarity and emancipation.

punching down

Reactionary political action, generally acts of passive or active aggression against a lower class by a higher class. For our purposes, middle-class people are afforded less total oppression through better material conditions (wages, but also healthcare, promotions, etc) by the elite—a divide-and-conquer strategy that renders them dependent on the status quo. This dependency allows the elite to demonize the poor in the eyes of the middle class. The elite antagonize the poor because the poor have the most incentive to punch up. This reliably engenders prejudice against them as a target, often to violent extremes. This is especially true in neoliberal canon:

(*source*)

punching up

Emancipatory politics. Whereas punching down aligns with systemic power, punching up moves against these structures and their proponents through *de facto* roles. This owes itself to how Capitalism works: The system exploits workers and targets of genocide for the elite, requiring them to demonize *potential threats*, not just active ones. Asking for basic human rights might not be a conscious act of rebellion; it *automatically* becomes one in the eyes of the elite (who discourage human rights). The louder these voices grow, the harder they punch up. This forces the elite to "correct the market" with extreme prejudice, which they disguise through various bad-faith measures (and political "neutral language).

reactive abuse

Systemic/social abuse that provokes a genuine self-defense reaction from the victim, whereupon the expectant abuser "self-defends" in extreme prejudice through DARVO. Reactive abuse correlates with reactionaries defending the state— i.e., reactionary politics being a form of white, cis-het fragility (moderacy being a veiled form of this).

white (cis-het, Christian male) fragility

A reactionary tendency for state proponents to become easily frightened, angry and violent when exposed to activist criticism; i.e., criticisms that concern the socio-material realities of systemic racism, heteronormative and other institutional bigotries and biases. These factors (and their material conditions) reliably lead to widespread mistreatment against targeted minorities that white and/or cis-het Christian men/people are normally excluded from; i.e., their privilege affords them *preferential* mistreatment—less exploitation, making them historically more prone to side with power in defense of the status quo (which is white, cis-het, patriarchal and Christian). Power aggregates against slave rebellions, financially incentivizing a middle class of variable size (and inclusion) to *exclude* and attack minorities that are simply fighting for their basic human rights. White and/or cis-het fragility, then, is a useful way to weaponize a violent, defensive mentality against activism as a whole; it is applied differently cross different groups, intersecting within race, class and gender as things to either enforce by white, cis-het agents in Christian *and* secular circles, or assimilate by tokenized subordinates; e.g., girl bosses, black capitalists, and other sell-outs/class traitors.

DARVO

A common abuser tactic at any register, DARVO stands for "Deny, Accuse, Reverse, Victim, Offender." It is meant to be used in bad faith, generally by punching down against activists at a socio-political level.

bad(-)faith

The act of concealing one's true intentions, presenting a false willingness (the opposite of good faith) to discuss ideas openly while deliberately seeking to cause harm to the opposite party. This performance can be fascist "defensive maneuvers" or neoliberal dogma; it can also be beards and various queer/Afronormative masks appropriated by TERFs and other assimilated groups.

virtue-signaling/white-knighting

False solidarity or alliances geared towards "clout" or personal brownie-point-farming. Think "brown-nosing" or "ass-kissing" but towards marginalized groups and their leaders with a desire to de-fang them: "Join us."

tone-policing

Speech- and thought-regulation of activist groups—often through admonishment/open condescension by moderates.

dogwhistles

Coded language, generally presented as innocuous or unrelated to those using it, meant to disguise the user's true ideology or political identity. A popular tactic amongst cryptofascists, but also TERFS. For example, Rational Wiki lists dozens of TERF dogwhistles, including the colors purple, white, green in square emoji for:

> Another emoji-based dog whistle used by TERFS on social media. Used primarily by UK-based TERFs, it seems to have emerged in the first half of 2021, and has largely replaced the chequered flag and red square. The colour scheme is based on the historical tri-color used by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), an organization that campaigned for women's suffrage in the United Kingdom from 1903 to 1918. This is yet another example of TERFs trying to cast themselves as the political successors of suffragettes. It also co-opts the colour scheme used in the genderqueer pride

flag designed by Marilyn Roxie in 2010 (source: Rational Wiki's "TERF Glossary," 2023).

Nazis use their own dogwhistles as well, meant to be seen by fellow club members to identify each other while hiding in plain sight. Many of these symbols are only used by the alt-right, at this stage, but in case there is overlap, the context of the subterfuge and its hauntologies can flush fascists out into the open:

(exhibit 4b: original source, unknown)

cryptofascists

Fascists by any other name or code. These fascists deliberately mislabel themselves and employ obscurantism to avoid the all-purpose "Nazis" label, thus preserve their negative freedom by normalizing themselves. This includes white nationalists, Western Chauvinists, and pro-Europeans; it also includes TERFs like Meghan Murphy spuriously decrying the "TERF" label as "hate speech" in 2017 (a flashpoint for TERF politics). I write "spurious" because hate speech is committed by groups in power, or sanctioned by those in power, against systemically marginalized targets. *Please note: TERFs claiming self-persecution in bad faith (a standard fascist tactic) does not make them a legitimate target for systemic violence beyond what their relative privilege affords; it just makes them dishonest.*

obscurantism

The act of deliberately concealing one's true self (usually an ideology or political stance) through deliberately deceptive ambiguity. The classic, 20th century

example are the Nazis, who called themselves "national-socialists" by intentionally disguising their true motives behind stolen, deliberately inaccurate language; e.g., The Holocaust Encyclopedia's 2017 exhibit on the inverted swastika as a current-day religious symbol thousands of years old that has been co-opted and profaned by a fascist state (similar to the Star of David being co-opted by the enthostate of Israel in their state-sanctioned, American-backed genocide of the Palestinians). However, any sex-coercive group constantly employs concealment as a means of negative freedom: freedom from social justice. Neoliberal corporations routinely frame themselves as "neutral" and exceptional in the same breath, lying and denying the historio-material consequences of their own propaganda every chance they get; fascists celebrate dogwhistles (sans admitting to them as bad-faith) but condemn whistle-blowing as "censorship." TERFs can be neoliberal or fascist, but as Katelyn Burns notes in 2019, still call themselves "gender-critical" in either case (similar to white supremacists calling themselves "race realists"). Despite whitewashing themselves, TERFs function as sporadically moderate bigots, dodging legitimate, sex-positive criticism. They generally accomplish this through DARVO obscurantism, a strategy of playing the victim while blaming actual victims by gaslighting them.

For more examples of cryptofascism and obscurantism, consider watching Renegade Cut's "What Is (and Is Not) Anti-Fascism?" (2022). This will come in handy when we examine fascism and TERFs in Volume Three—Perse

(exhibit 5a: Source, "Cancel culture: the road to obscurantism" [2021]; note: the author, Stefano Braghiroli of New Europe, actually blames iconoclasts for viciously condemning the Greats of Western Civilization to oblivion, itself a form of DARVO obscurantism: The West is built on settler colonialism, Imperialism, and genocide.)

Miscellaneous Terms, Game Theory

accommodated intellectuals

Inspired by [Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*](#) (1993), an accommodated intellectual is—by my measure—a public-speaker, intellectual or thinker socio-materially accommodated by a formal institution of power. Though often corporatized (e.g., the think tank), this traditionally extends to tenured professors, who—even when their ideas *are* useful to Communism—tend to become far more concerned with cataloguing these ideas than spreading them to a wider public (so-called "academic paywalls" and general gatekeeping behaviors). Such individuals are, as I like to call them, giant chickenshits.

cognitive estrangement

The consequence of overspecialized language alienating anyone but a hyperspecific target audience, or an audience being so specialized that they cannot easily understand anything outside of their wheelhouse (a common fatality among academics or specialized researchers).

cognitive dissonance

A "psychomachic" conflict between one's feelings and thoughts, often stemming from an ideology that practices harm against particular groups that another aspect of the person is unable to face, practice or otherwise acknowledge.

anisotropic

The alteration of meaning depending on the flow of exchange—e.g., the white savior vs the black criminal (despite both being violent) vs *the white oppressor vs the black victim*. For our purposes, this means "for or against capital/canon," etc— i.e., bourgeois heroic action is benevolent in one direction (from the hero's point of view) and terrifying from the victim's point of view, the assigned scapegoat made to suffer as the state's chosen target of sanctioned violence inside the state of exception (more on this in the manifesto). Likewise, this remains a common phenomenon during the Promethean hero's journey inside the closed/parallel space.

concentric

"The Russian doll effect," an endless procession of mirrors, foes, doors, etc—i.e., the Promethean Quest never ends; the war, carnage and rape never cease; the confusion and utter destitution, etc.

intersectionality

When multiple bourgeois/proletarian codifiers align within a particular social group; e.g., cis-het white women or trans women of color, etc. Intersectionality tends to be canonically abjected or gaslit, gatekept, girl-bossed, fetishized, etc. This book thoroughly examines intersectionality under Capitalism as either bourgeois or proletarian.

liminality

A linguo-material position of conflict or transition, liminality is ontologically a state of being "in between," usually through failed sublimation/uncanniness; it invokes a "grey area" generally demonized in Western canon as "chaos." In truth, semantic disorder can be used to escape the perpetual exploitation and decay caused all around us by Capitalism and its giant lies (a concept we'll explore throughout this book). Liminality also occurs when working with highly canonical/colonized material, like the Western, European fantasy or highly exploitative material like canonical porn (with the word "pornography" being criminalized, thus something iconoclasts must reclaim). Gothic examples include monsters and parallel spaces, which tend to oscillate in liminal fashion.

anachronistic

Spatio-temporally incongruous; for our purposes, this applies to hauntology (a linguo-material sensation between the past and the present, but also a total inability to imagine a future beyond past forms of the future—two concepts we'll unpack during the manifesto at length).

blank/blind parody

(source: the Vaporwave Aesthetic)

In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Frederic Jameson writes,

"Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs" (source).

Personally, I think Jameson's "normality" echoes Nietzsche's or Freud's. As such, I envision pastiche and parody as likewise having bourgeois and proletarian qualities, much like sublimation does. They *can* be blank under bourgeois (centrist) forms. Likewise, though, "perceptive pastiche" can adopt the appearance of a false "blankness/blindness" (see, above: "Vaporwave," a hauntological subgenre) in the face of power—a tactic vital to revolutionaries' continued funding from different sources, as well as keeping them safe from violent reactionaries.

Vaporwave/Laborwave and cyberpunk

Hauntological *cryptomimesis* that has the subversive potential to challenge established, status-quo nostalgias through the decay of corporate hegemony as expressed through "corporate mood." This encapsulates a gradient of aesthetics through countercultural music, art and the Gothic mode: *Star Wars*, *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, *Mad Max*, *Children of Man*, etc (which Capitalism will try to recuperate through by canonizing these stories, thus robbing them of their revolutionary potential; i.e., controlled opposition through Capitalist Realism).

Capitalist Realism

Fisher's adage, "It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of Capitalism," which comments on a profound, widespread inability to imagine a

world beyond Capitalism. This often presents the end-of-the-world as the end-all, be-all; i.e., a kind of vanishing point under Hogle's narrative of the crypt: not a door to pass imaginarily through but a black gate whose inaccessible threshold cannot be surpassed by corporate design. The elite don't want people to cross it, focusing instead on canonical doubles of neoliberal entropy as part of the illusion: violence, death and decay as an "empowering" distraction from the global exploitation and destruction neoliberalism is committing against the Earth and its inhabitants. In ludic terms, engagement with this space requires occupying a space between reality and fiction, and of choosing to break the rules without our own "magic circles."

half-real

[From Jesper Juul's 2005 book of the same name](#); i.e., "A half-real zone between the fiction and the rules" that allows for emergent forms of transformative play. This can apply to sexual artwork (exhibit 93), Gothic liminalities like ghosts (exhibit 43c), live performances like a ball or masque (exhibit 75a), or Jesper's typical ludonarrative (videogames, exhibit 64c), etc.

ludic contract (spoilsports)

An agreement between the player and the game to be played; or as Chris Pratt writes in "[In Praise of Spoil Sports](#)" (2010): "the more traditional definition of the ludic contract [is] an agreement on the part of players that they will forgo some of their agency in order to experience an activity that they enjoy." Yet, inventive players like speedrunners (which Pratt calls "spoilsports") converge upon intended gameplay with unintended, emergent forms. In other words, the ludic contract is less a formal, rigid contract and more a negotiated compromise occurring between the two; i.e., where players have some sense of agency in deciding how *they* want to play the game even while adhering to its rules and, in effect, being mastered by it (see: *Seth Giddings and Helen Kennedy's "[Little Jesuses and *@#?-off Robots](#)," 2008, exhibit 0a2c).*

the magic circle

The space where a game takes place, be that a social game, a sport, a dialog or gender performance onstage, and videogames, etc. The founder of the idea, Eric Zimmerman, writes in "[Jerked Around by the Magic Circle](#)" (2012):

> The "magic circle" is not a particularly prominent phrase in *Homo Ludens*, and although Huizinga certainly advocates the idea that games can be understood as separate from everyday life, he never takes the full-blown magic circle point of view that games are ultimately separate from

everything else in life or that rules are the sole fundamental unit of games. In fact, Huizinga's thesis is much more ambivalent on these issues and he actually closes his seminal book with a passionate argument against a strict separation between life and games. The magic circle is not something that comes wholly from Huizinga. To be perfectly honest, Katie and I more or less invented the concept, inheriting its use from my work with Frank, cobbling together ideas from Huizinga and Caillois, clarifying key elements that were important for our book, and reframing it in terms of semiotics and design – two disciplines that certainly lie outside the realm of Huizinga's own scholarly work. But that is what scholarship often is – sampling and remixing ideas in order to come to a new synthesis.

emergent play

Unintended gameplay discovered and utilized by players that wasn't intended by developers; optimal variants are called "metaplay" or simply "the meta."

intended play

Gameplay intended by the developers; in Marxist terms, this can be considered the bourgeoisie or their proponents.

framed (concentric) narratives

A story-within-a-story (aka *mise-en-abyme* in artistic circles, whose translation "placement in abyss" takes on more spooky liminalities in Gothic circles), generally a perspective contained within an unreliable narrator's point-of-view. A famous example is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which tells the story from the shipmaster's perspective, who learns everything about Victor and the Creature from Victor. Victor is a giant, colonial douchebag who lies constantly and does his very patriarchal best to whitewash *everything*. The Creature, meanwhile, is reactively abused constantly and forced to defend his position after Victor has dragged his name through the mud for most of the novel.

unreliable narratives/narrators/spaces (monsters)

A narrator or narrative that is untrustworthy or epistemologically/phenomenologically dubious; in Gothic stories, these rely on ambiguous, historically-contested/-conflicting spaces with liminal markers.
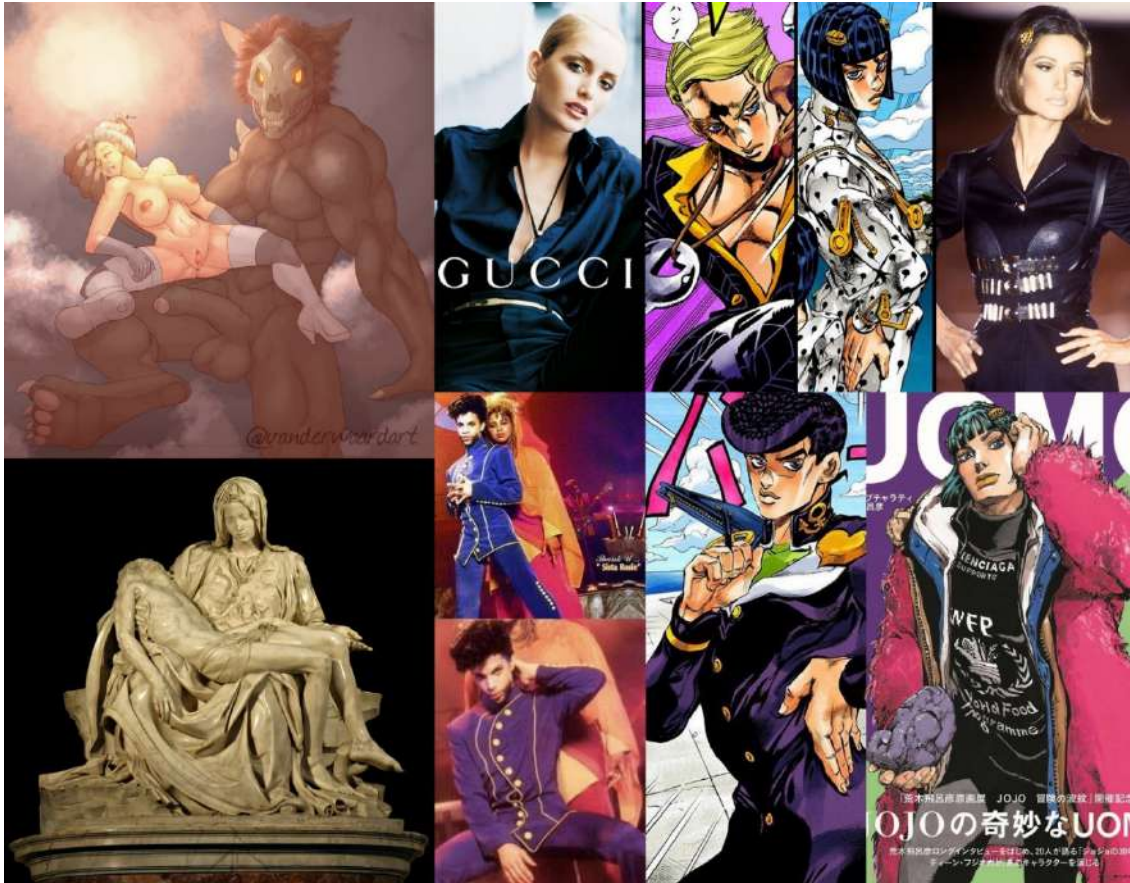
(exhibit 5b: Artist, top-left: [Persephone van der Waard](); bottom-left: Michelangelo; right side: Hirohiko Araki, his Jojo's Bizarre Adventure manga/anime [1987/2012] inspired by a variety of real-life musicians and clothing brands.)

palimpsest

"A manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing but of which traces remain"—common in Gothic stories, which amount to a cycle of lies; i.e., historical materialism: bourgeois history is unreliable, treacherous, like a Gothic lover or a concentric chest/midden of unreliable materials (cryptonyms). It can apply to a variety of media or formats: sculpture, music, clothes, videogames, etc (exhibit 5b, 43a/43b).

universal adaptability

[A concept borrowed from Slavoj Zizek's *A Pervert's Guide to Ideology*](https://) (2012), which outlines the ways in which a piece of media (in his case, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy") can be utilized universally by different groups to promote their own ideologies—all in spite of the original source material, including the author's socio-political stance.

The Gothic, BDSM and Kink

Gothic narrators/narratives

For its hero, narrators, spaces and speakers, a Gothic tale regularly involves unreliable/conflicting artificers and imposters, but also the patriarchal bloodline or castle as invented; i.e., as a series of concentric, sedimentary palimpsests. In the canonical sense, everything is fetishized, valorized and disseminated, then spread far and wide to cover up the ghost of the counterfeit (the circular lie of the West) with more ghosts that further the lie. Iconoclastic variants challenge this myopia with their own counterfeits' opposing class character inside a shared, contested midden.

Gothic doubling

The black mirror of historical materialism's all our yesterdays. It is the fated, ominous premonition of endless circuituity—that everything has already occurred before, or things that have already occurred will occur again from the same materials that occur out of what has already occurred; i.e., for everything that exists, there must (somewhere in the universe) be a dialectical-material "shadow" whose coinciding status as former-or-future counterfeit is actually historical materialism's circular approach to space and time felt in the current moment: everything that has ever existed will exist again or things that will exist have already existed in ways that offer up a prior version's dialectical-material opposition to it—a castle or soldier as "evil" twin, uncanny and undead, replicated like an echo, a virus, a shade; the civil war of black infinity. There is no automatic moral character, merely the presence of infinite possibility amid crushing gravity and decay.

the Gothic heroine

(exhibit 5e1: Left: an old drawing of Samus Aran from <u>Metroid Dread</u>, 2021, by <u>Persephone van der Waard</u>; right: <u>a more recent version of the same drawing— made to be more gay and less colonial</u>.

Note: Many of the drawings in this book are actually modified versions from my own portfolio— updated using collage/airbrushing techniques that I've been using for years. —Perse)

The oft-female (or at least feminine) protagonist of Gothic stories. Classically a passive sex object/detective/damsel-in-distress, which became increasingly masculine, active and warlike in the 20th century onwards (though Charlotte Dacre beat everyone to the punch in 1806 when she wrote *Zofloya*, <u>having the masculine-yet-trammeled Victoria de Loredani stab Lilla, the archetypal Gothic heroine, to death</u>). Unlike their male counterparts, who *tend* to default to soldiers or scientists (violent/mentally fragile men of war and reason with—at least in America—closeted ties to Nazi Germany and parallel conservative movements wearing a liberal guise), women within the colonial binary are relegated to spheres of domesticated ignorance; i.e., "Something is wacky about my residence, my guest, my wardrobe, etc. Guess I'll go investigate (exhibit 48a)!" Ann Radcliffe treated the protecting of female virtue as an "armoring" (exhibit 30c) process that commonly worked through a swooning mechanism; though somewhat problematic on its face due to its pro-European origins, the idea of armoring one's virtue still presents the notion of feminine flexibility as facing monstrous-feminine things that male, or at least "phallic," heroes cannot rationalize or stab/shoot to death; i.e., the paradox of terror as something to reclaim through counterterror devices that, yes, include a fair bit of rape, taboo sex, and murderous stereotypes. In other words, it's entirely possible to have the Great Destroyer persona without being bigoted, but you have to camp it, first.

xenophobia

Monster-slaying. A fear of the unknown as something to exude or endure, which may take sex-positive or sex-coercive forms. Inside Gothic circles, theatrical xenophobia sits between fear of and fascination towards "the other" as a social-sexual construct; i.e., inherited either by privileged workers acting out unironic gender trouble, or minorities surviving it through their own ironic variation of gender trouble and gender parody in monstrous forms. As such, *harmful* xenophobia fearfully dogmatizes outsider groups, presenting them as beings to hate, abject and kill, but also fetishize: monstrous-feminine women ("woman is other") but also witches, Amazons, queer/feminine people (trans, intersex and non-binary) and various sodomic ritual metaphors (vampirism, exhibit 41g3; crossdress, exhibit 55b; and lycanthropy/werewolves, exhibit 87a; etc) for non-heteronormative/gender-non-conforming sexual orientations, performances, and identities as deserving of violence by assimilated minorities/token police (e.g., TERFs). Because of the sexual nature of stigma and bias, harmful xenophobia crosses over into harmful xenophilia, and their combined liminal expression elides with cathartic variants of either approach in the same theatrical territories.

monstrous-feminine

(exhibit 5d1: Artist, top-left: [Gabriele Dell'Otto](#); artist, top-left and bottom: [Persephone van der Waard](#) and a model who wishes to remain anonymous; I'll henceforth refer to them as Jericho. When healing from trauma, queerness is often

symbolized as abjectly insect-like/uncanny as something queer people are forced into—i.e., a psychosexual, "corrupt," medievalized ontology whose canonical role they don't want to play but also desire to escape from using the same language: the queer/sodomite whose gender-non-conformity is synonymized with the "rape" of heteronormativity by the monstrous-feminine and whose beauty is feared by fearful-fascinated straight people conflating queerness as a universal symbol of unironic rape and madness. We <u>do</u> sometimes want to express our own trauma in relation to what we're made out to be by our abusers, but ultimately we desire to be butterflies unto ourselves: free from trauma, from judgement, from harm.)

A term lifted from Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine*. While Creed focuses on the desire for the *cis* woman not to be a victim, thus terrifying men in abject, monstrous ways (which are often then crucified by heteronormative agents, including token ones like Ellen Ripley), the fact remains that the monstrous-feminine extends to a much broader persecution network; i.e., of any "feminine" force that falls outside of what is acceptable within the Patriarchy's heteronormative colonial binary. I have placed *feminine* in quotes to account for anything perceived as "feminine" thus "not correctly "male"; i.e., "woman is other" expanded to trans, intersex and non-binary persons (and the animals associated with them: bunnies, butterflies, cats, dogs, foxes, etc). This can be a male twink or vampire; the cis-queer bear's expression of tenderness and love towards another man (or whoever they're intimate with in whatever way constitutes intimacy for them); a female Amazon that rebels against the state, whether cis, or genderqueer in binary/non-binary ways. The possibilities for heteronormative conformity are narrow and brutal inside a vast historical-material tableau of the same-old patterns; gender-non-conformity's ironies go on endlessly.

xenophilia

Monster-fucking. A love of the unknown as something to exude or endure, which may take sex-positive or sex-coercive forms. Whereas harmful (sex-coercive) xenophobia bleeds into harmful xeno*philia*, the sex-positive reversal of abjection and canonical xenophobia/xenophilia resists state power through covert, proletarian means; e.g., "Trojan" monsters and monster-slaying/-fucking rituals that hide revolutionary intent during liminal expressions of oppositional praxis as oft-pornographic. The monster isn't simply someone to fuck (though it can be); it's also someone to potentially love asexually as an "ace" friend/co-conspirator—e.g., *Nimona* (exhibit 56d2). As such, cathartic xenophilia extends to empathy for the wretched, whose medievalized trauma often overlaps with their sexuality and gender but doesn't synonymize with it; indeed, cathartic xenophilia seeks to understand their rage at, and medieval alienation by, state powers (the xenomorph

being a queer icon we shall examine many, many times throughout this book, but especially in Volume Two's "Demon" section of chapters).

psychosexuality ("battle sex")

The adjacent placement of pleasurable pain and other euphoric sensations next to unironic harm; i.e., rape fantasy or theatre. Just as canon and camp exist in the same shadow zone, performative irony and its absence are equally liminal using the same shared aesthetics of power and resistance, death and rape, heroic (monstrous) violence: the colors of stigma, vice, power and sin. Canonical psychosexuality conflates pleasure with genuine harm, including bigoted stereotypes that further this pathology. These result in widespread misconceptions about healthy BDSM as a result of sex-coercive BDSM (through unironic "demon BDSM" examples, including criminal hauntology news cycles or "true crime" in other mediums besides television), and genuine pluralities that seek out dangerous sex (hard kink) due to confused pleasure responses resulting from extreme prey mechanisms/posttraumatic stress disorder that compel victims to unironically spifflicate; i.e., "to be self-destroyed or disposed of by violence" in an unironic sense. As something to unironically or ironically seek out on and offstage, abuse manifests differently per person relative to congenital and environmental factors which are often accident-of-birth. But general psychosexuality manifests through the Destroyer persona and their utterly devastated victim as part of the same social-sexual equation; i.e., a cultural pathology or ironic, informed interrogation regarding the proliferation of this extremism in normalized, canonical depictions of heroic sexuality as embattled: as sex-coercive, hence unironically violent and rapacious through warring factions thereof (and against camp in the larger meta conversation).

calculated risk/risk reduction exercise

A calculated risk minimizes harm but mimics the feeling of being out of control; e.g., consent-non-consent/informed consent.

fetishization

A fetish, or the act of making something into a fetish, is "a form of sexual desire in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, item of clothing, or part of the body." Generally, fetishes are pre-existing social-sexual trends that people either embrace or reject. They aren't explicitly sexist (e.g., mutually consenting to show feet), but become sexist when used in exploitative ways (e.g., sex workers forced to show their feet to generate profit for someone else).

rape culture and "prison sex" mentalities

Learned power abuses taught by state-corporate propaganda and power relations through "Pavlovian/Pygmalion" conditioning that breaks the recipient's mind, bending them towards automatic, violent behaviors towards state targets during moral panics. This response can be men mistreating women, but also women mistreating each other or their fellow exploited workers: TERFs abusing trans people and ethnic minorities. When executed and learned on a societal level, these sex-coercive practices become codified as "bad play" in canonical BDSM narratives.

Man Box/"prison sex" culture

What I call "the prison sex phenomena," Mark Greene—in his 2023 podcast, *Remaking Manhood: The Healthy Masculinity Podcast*—refers to "Man Box culture" as:

> For generations, men have been conditioned to compete for status, forever struggling to rise to the top of a vast Darwinian pyramid framed by a simple but ruthless set of rules. But the men who compete to win in our dominant culture of manhood are collectively doomed to fail, because the game itself is rigged against us. We're wasting our lives chasing a fake rabbit around a track, all the while convinced there's meat to be had. There is no meat. We are the meat. Our dominant culture of manhood is often referred to as *the man box*, a phrase coined by Tony Porter of A Call to Men based on Paul Kivel's work, *The Act Like a Man Box,* which Kivel and others at the Oakland Men's Project first conceptualized over forty years ago.
>
> The man box refers to the brutal enforcement of a narrowly defined set of traditional rules for being a man. These rules are enforced through shaming and bullying, as well as promises of rewards, the purpose of which is to force conformity to our dominant culture of masculinity. The number one rule of the man box? Don't show your emotions. Accordingly, boys three and four years old begin suppressing their own naturally occurring capacities for emotional acuity and relational connection, thus setting them on the path to a lifetime of social isolation (Chu, 2014). The damage is done before we are even old enough to understand what is happening.
>
> Man box culture also suppresses empathy. The suppression of boys' and men's empathy is no accident. It is the suppression of empathy that makes a culture of ruthless competition, bullying and codified inequality possible. It is in the absence of empathy that men fail to see women's equality and many other social issues for what they are: simple and easily enacted moral imperatives. Instead, our sons buy into bullying and abuse as central mechanisms for forming and expressing male status and identity (source: Mark Greene's "How the Man Box Poisons Our Sons," 2019).

"Prison sex" is the same idea as Man Box culture, except it chooses to focus less on men and more on the unequal power dynamics that occur between dimorphized workers trained not just to rape and kill one another in literal terms, but also theatrical language; i.e., any form of expression that ties into the bigoted, colonial-binary of a divided class of male and female labor within entertainment (sports and porn), the household, the workplace, and Gothic iterations of any of these things. Any cis-het man that fails to live up to the heteronormative standard of manliness (which is an impossible feat to begin with), must be weak but also strong in a manner threatening towards the status quo—i.e., womanly/monstrous-feminine.

good play vs bad play

Forms of power exchange during oppositional praxis; i.e., sex-positive BDSM and other social-sexual practices and code built on mutual/informed consent vs sex coercion and harmful BDSM/rape culture. Bad play is the emulation of white, cis-het men as the unironic performers of coercive sex, bondage, murder and rape (e.g., TERFs dominating members of their own group).

chaser/bait

Trans women are often seen as "bait" within a "prison sex" mentality—i.e., forbidden, monstrous-feminine fruit for reactionaries (including regressive feminists) to publicly condemn and privately "chase." A "chaser" is someone a person who outwardly rejects the pursuit of "sodomy" (non-reproductive, monstrous-feminine sex, in the medieval sense) but secretly pursues it in private in relation to various out-group types associated with it: the twink, femboy or ladyboy, or trans women more broadly (or the remainder of classic gay man's lexicon of animalized/body hair terms: hunk, twunk, otter, bear or polar bear. Queer sexuality tends to be much more adjective-based then straight orientation descriptors, "I'm a straight" being about it). "Baiting" can be inverted, with trans women and similar groups also being policed in the sex worker community by AFAB workers who, likewise, brand or otherwise treat us as "false women" who aren't monstrous like they are, thus become worthy of attack to earn clemency from men amid their own self-hatred; i.e., we're "luring" *their* customers away from them like cis-male sex workers do and should be regarded with suspicion and contempt (to be clear, neither we nor cis-male sex workers should be treated this way but our treatment—as non-gender-conforming AMAB persons by AFAB sex workers—is transphobic).
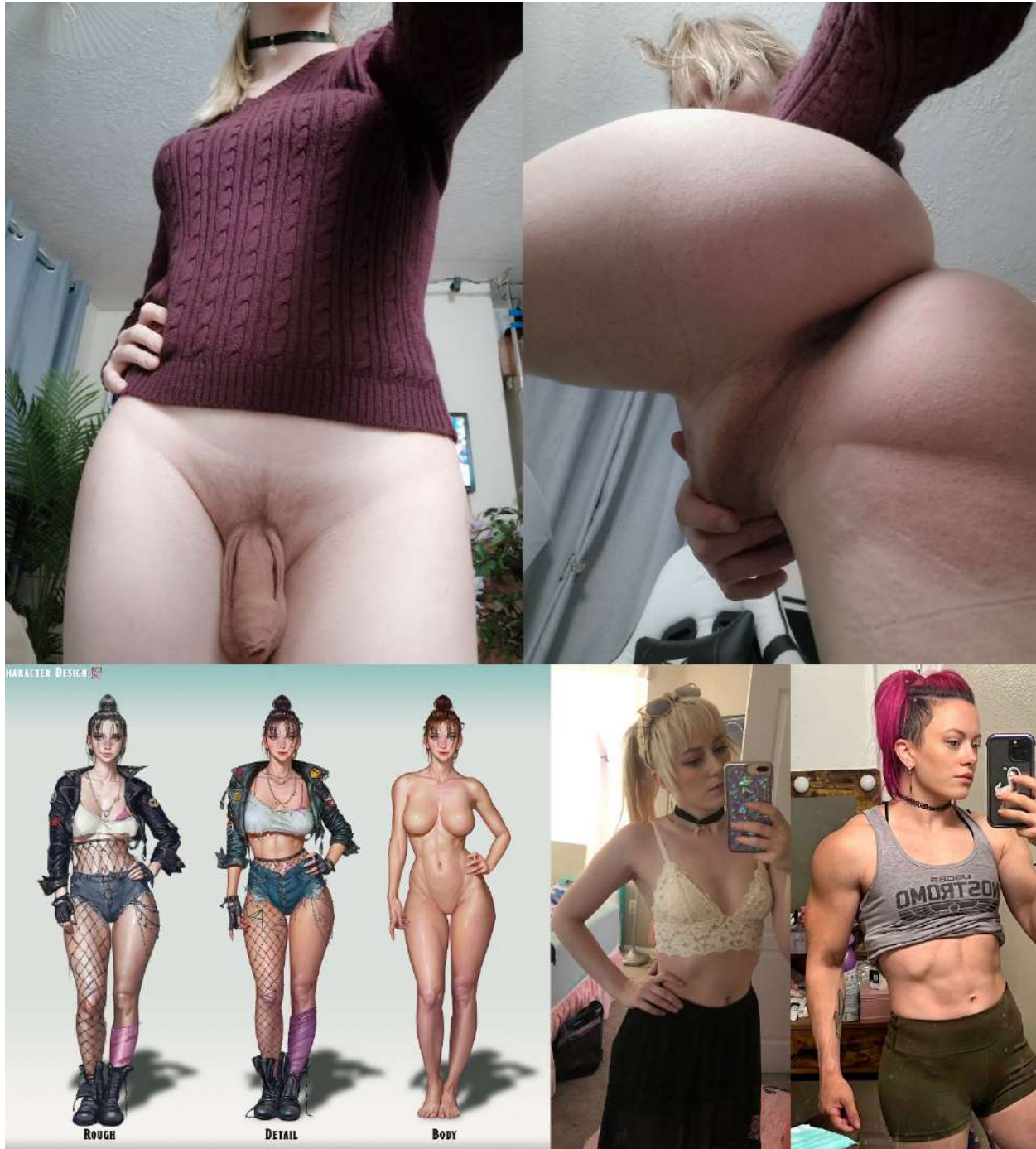
(exhibit 5d2: Artist, top: [Olivia Robin](#); bottom-left: [Kyu Yong Eom](#); bottom-right: [Claire Max](#). The feminine cock as something to show and hide becomes a dangerous game of undress for many traps; the masculine-feminine becomes an advertisement of "incorrect," monstrous-feminine masculinity on the surface of female-appearing bodies before the clothes come off [although such bodies are habitually undressed by the Male Gaze; said gaze can be emulated by TERFs policing male and female bodies]. Either liminality is dangerous for gender-non-conforming AMAB/AFAB sex workers, but also workers in general seeking to express

themselves as different from, thus in resistance to, the canonical standard and its Symbolic Order/mythic structure.

trap/twink-in-peril/bait

A slur directed at homosexual men/non-gender-conforming AMABs, who are fetishized/coercively demonized by cis-het men during gender trouble when the nation-state cannot provide them heteronormative sex ("war brides"). Often, queer fiction comments on this exploitative side of the "bury your gays" trope through an abject, queer damsel-in-distress: the *twink-in-peril*, perhaps articulated mostly nakedly (with raw exploitation, but also exceptional nuance) in Dennis Cooper's *Frisk* (1991) or Gregg Araki's *The Doom Generation* (1995). Gentler, less-brutalized versions of this monstrous-feminine can be found sprinkled all throughout popular fiction, including Cloud-in-a-dress from *Final Fantasy 7* (1997) and "Gerudo Link" from the *Zelda* series (which we'll explore more in Volume Three, Chapter Three, exhibit 93). "Traps" in quotes is something that could be supplied to AFAB workers, whose appearance beyond heteronormative standards leads them to becoming demonized as a queer "bait," or trick (no pun intended) that leads chases down queerer and queerer rabbit holes.

bears, otters, hunks/twunks/twinks; lesbians and femmes

The traditionally homosexual male/female language of the 1970s, '80s and 90s. It doesn't exclusively apply to homosexuality and can be non-binarized in order to describe body preferences, orientations and performances (e.g., Link is a twink/twunk depending on the game or scenario); all the same, it has been historically utilized by cis queer people as a movement that ostensibly predates the trans, nonbinary and intersex movements of the Internet Age (with these groups having existed for just as long—i.e., before Western Civilization). Furthermore, some words, like "twink," "dyke," and obviously "faggot" have a pejorative, monstrous-feminine flavor within their own communities, being reclaimed throughout the '90s into the new millennium. There is also cis bias against gender-non-conforming usage of these words, seeing it as "colonization" of the monstrous-feminine from an incorrect variant (a thought pattern of self-hatred that, once internalized, is used to divided and conquer minority groups by having them police themselves).

femboys, ladyboys, catboys; catgirls, [anything] girls

The application of something "femme" next to "boy" historically has an emasculating quality towards men who, in cis-conforming circles (straight or gay/bi), are expected to dominate the feminine, thus weaker party. Obviously this has been slowly reclaimed since the '90s, but cis-queer assimilation still leads to

Man Box culture within homosexual and bisexual men and women, but also tokens (a "butch," female, cis/token domme can abuse her smaller "femme" partner in a queernormative sense; or internalized bigotry can lead trans, intersex or non-binary parties to emulate these behaviors as the giver or receiver). In heteronormative circles, adding the suffix, "girl," to the end of a word sexualizes or feminizes them in a dimorphic way—i.e., a cat girl is (from a cis standpoint) a girl, thus coded as such ("cat" curiously being a "femme" entity for precisely this collocation, leading catboys to being seen as femme gay men; e.g., "neko" meaning a male "bottom" in Japanese slang). These terms are often qualified with various other descriptors in public discourse at large, including sex work; e.g., a "pastel goth non-binary catgirl brat": aesthetic descriptors + gender + gender performance + BDSM type. The soft or cuddly is still feminine, thus a monster that must be dominated to preserve patrilineal descent, authority and conquest against a prescribed enemy.

moe

Described by Mateusz Urbanowicz as an infantilized art style of women popular in Japan, generally to make them look physically and emotionally younger—historically a form of female exploitation by male artists.

ahegao

A facial expression tied to *hentai* ("perversion") Japanese culture and the abject sexual objectification of women; i.e., the "little death" of the so-called "O face" made during orgasm, especially achieved by rough sex and rape play. While its "death face" is historically attached to rape culture and unironic rape porn, latter-day variants have become blind parodies (exhibit 104d) to the buried historical trauma (appreciative forms can also be enjoyed in private/public exhibitions, however).

live burial

The Gothic master-trope, live burial—as marked by Eve Segewick in her introduction to *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986)—is expressed in the language of live burial as an endless metaphor for the buried libido within concentric structures as something to punish "digging into" (which includes investigating the false family's incestuous/abjectly monstrous bloodline; source). To move beyond psychoanalytical models and into Marxist territories, I would describe live burial as incentivized by power structures in ways that threaten abuse (often death, incarceration or rape) to those who go looking into hereditary and dynastic power structures, especially their psychosexual abuse and worker exploitation: the fate of the horny detective, but also the *whistleblower*.

kink

Nontraditional forms of sexual activity that don't necessarily involve forms of power exchange between partners (unequal or otherwise).

roleplay

The playing of roles in social-sexual situations, usually with a dominant/submissive element (as many come from classic stories which tend to be heteronormative; but even iconoclastic stories transmute BDSM, fetishes and kinks to be sex-positive within dominant/submissive models).

cuckolding

In sex-positive roleplay terms, cuckolding is watching someone fuck your SO (significant other) or having someone watch will you fuck *their* SO; i.e., a mutually consensual, negotiated activity.

negotiation

The drawing up of power levels, exchange limits, boundaries and comfort levels (soft and hard limits) before social-sexual BDSM activities.

safe word(s)

Permission/boundary words used (often by a submissive but not always) to stall/stop whatever BDSM activities are unfolding. A common example is the traffic light system; i.e., "Green light, yellow light, red light."

consent-non-consent

Negotiated social-sexual scenarios through informed consent, consent-non-consent where one party surrenders total control over to the other party trusting that party to not betray said agreement or trust; aka "RACK" (Risk-Aware Consensual Kink) in relation to risky BDSM; i.e., bodily harm; e.g., public beatings, rape scenarios, whippings, knife play and blood-letting.

(demon) BDSM

Bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism—seemingly nontraditional forms of sexual activity that involve unequal power exchange that has actually been canonized and must be camped in doubled forms. Both involve power, but non-consensual (sex-coercive) variants canonically involve power *abuse*—generally of women and other marginalized workers by white, cis-het men/arguably token queers in romanticized tales thereof (e.g., Stoker's vampire, Barker's Cenobite) that often, according to Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism" (1974), invoke not just the "master scenario" whose purely sexual experience is "severed from personhood, from relationships, from love," but also the fascist language of death: "The color is black [and red], the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death" (source). In a sex-positive sense, such rituals regularly invoke demons as a Gothicized means of catharsis, but also practicing impulse and power control during non-harmful euphoria whose painful, physical, emotional, and/or sexual activities occur between good-faith participants; i.e., ironic variants of Radcliffe's classically **xenophobic** and dubiously "consensual" **Black Veil** (hiding the threat badly), **demon lover** (the xenophobic/xenophilic threat of unironic mutilation and rape), and **exquisite "torture"** (rape play).

dom(inator/-inatrix)

A BDSM actor who performs a dominant role—traditionally masculine (especially in Gothic canon: Mr. Rochester, Edward Cullen, Christian Grey and all the million monster variants of these kinds of characters) thus ostensibly having more power. However, in honored realms of mutual consent, they actually have less power than the sub, who only has to say no/red light, etc (for a good example of sub power, watch the 2014 Gothic-erotic thriller, *The Duke of Burgundy*); the sub controls the action by giving the dom permission according to negotiated boundaries.

sub(missive)

A BDSM actor who performs a submissive role—traditionally feminine (especially in Gothic canon: Jane Eyre, Bella Swan, Anastasia Steele and all the million monster variants of these kinds of characters) thus ostensibly having less power. However, in sex-positive scenarios, the sub calls the shots from moment-to-moment (except in consent-non-consent, where they only agreed to everything up front and sign everything over ahead of time—a useful tactic for certain rape fantasies and regression scenarios).

"strict/gentle"

A BDSM flavor or style generally affixed to the dom in terms of their delivery. A "strict" dominatrix, for example, will administer discipline much more authoritatively than a "gentle" variant will; i.e., she will deny succor as a theatrical device to supply through the ritual, whereas the gentle dominatrix will be far more nurturing and supportive from the offset.

topping/a top vs "bottoming"/a bottom

These terms generally refer to dominant/submissive sexual activity in which someone "tops"; i.e., "rides"/is rode. However, they can refer to BDSM/social-sexual arrangements with various, historically-materially ironic configurations; e.g., "power bottoms" or "topping from the bottom" (which can be literal, in terms of the

execution of physical sex, but also have BDSM implications/monster personages, too).

regression

In terms of mental health, regression is a form of dissociation, often tied to trauma or healing from trauma. Common in rituals of appreciative peril, which include Big/little roles daddy/mommy doms and boy/girl subs, etc. However, regression is also something that sex-coercive predation keys off of through *regressive politics*; i.e., to regress socio-politically towards a conservative medieval when Capitalism enters decay.

rape fantasies

Fantasies tied to sexual/power abuse (rape isn't about sex at all; it's about coercive power control and abuse). This kind of performative peril can be appreciative/appropriative, thus bourgeois/canonical or proletarian/iconoclastic. Common in Gothic narratives, which tend to project trauma, rape and power abuse onto displaced, dissociative scenarios: man vs nature, Jack-London-style; the lady vs the rapist or the slave vs the master in numerous articulations (racialized, but also in BDSM-monster frameworks), etc.

aftercare

Rituals supplied after BDSM (or frankly just rough sex/emotional bonding moments and other social-sexual exchanges) that help the affected party recover better than they would if left unattended ("rode hard and put away wet" as it were).

the ghost of the counterfeit

Coined by Jerrold Hogle, this abject reality or hidden barbarity is a hauntological process of abjection that, according to David Punter in *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (1980), "displaces the hidden violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and falls promptly under their spell" ([source](#)). I would add that it is a privileged, liminal position that endears a sheltered consumer to the barbaric past as reinvented as consumable.

the narrative of the crypt

According to Cynthia Sugars' entry for David Punter's the *Encyclopedia of the Gothic* (2012), this narrative is described by Jerrold Hogle as the *only* thing that survives—a narrative of a narrative to a hidden curse announced by things displaced from the former cause. Sugars determines, the closer one gets to the

problem, the more the space itself abruptly announces a vanishing point, a procession of fragmented illusions tied to a transgenerational curse: "a place of concealment that stands on mere ashes of something not fully present," Hogle writes of Otranto (the first "gothic" castle, reassembled for Horace Walpole's 1764 "archaeology").

cryptomimesis

Defined by Jodey Castricano in *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing* as,

> A writing practice that, like certain Gothic conventions [e.g., Segewick's commentary on live burial as a timeless fixture of Gothic literature] generates its uncanny effects through the production of what Nicholas Rand might call a "contradictory 'topography of inside-outside'" [from Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* …] Moreover, the term *cryptomimesis* draws attention to a writing predicated upon encryption: the play of revelation and concealment lodged within parts of individual words ([source](#)).

Castricano further describes this process as "writing with ghosts," referring to their nature as linguistic devices that adhere the sense of being haunted in domestic spaces: the house as inside, familiar and inherited by the living from the dead.

rememory

From Tony Morrison's 1987 novel, *Beloved*, to which Morrison herself shares in a 2019 interview, "as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past. And it was the struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, that became the device of the narrative [in *Beloved*]" ([source](#)).

ghosts

Ghosts are ontologically complicated, thus can be a variety of things all at once: a sentient ghost of something or someone, a ghostly memory or their own unique entity that resembles the original as a historical-material coincidence (the chronotope), a friendly/unfriendly disguise, or creative egregore. E.g., Hamlet's dad, Hamlet's memory of his dad as triggered by the space around him; or someone painting Hamlet's dad as its own thing that isn't Shakespeare's version despite the likeness. This applies to other famous ghosts in media—e.g., King Boo from *Mario*, the monster from *It Follows*, 2014; or my own friendly ghost of Jadis from exhibit 43c—i.e., Derrida's Marxist spectres.

the Promethean Quest/awesome mystery

Gothic stories enjoy a sense of awesome power tied to the chronotope or awesome ruin (what Percy Shelley calls "the colossal Wreck," exhibit 5e, 64c, etc). In the wake of a great calamity is the presence of intimations of power that must be uncovered in pursuit of the truth—i.e., the Promethean (self-destructive) Quest. We'll examine several in the Humanities primer, including Edmund Burke's Sublime, Mary Shelley's "playing god," Rudolph Otto's Numinous/*mysterium tremendum*, and Lovecraft's cosmic nihilism, etc. All indicate the Gothic pursuit of a big power that blasts the finder to bits; or, in Radcliffe's case, is explained away during the conclusion of an explained supernatural/rationalized event; i.e., the explained supernatural (exhibit 22, *Scooby Doo* and Velma).

"playing god"

In iconoclastic terms, "playing god" is the ability to self-fashion (aka "self-*determination*" in geopolitics). It is generally resented by the status quo, or demonized for being too dangerous; e.g., Satan from *Paradise Lost* as a self-fashioning devil moving away from God's heteronormative, colonial-binarized image.

(exhibit 5c: Two examples of the Promethean Quest/awesome mystery—from *Event Horizon* [top and bottom, 1997] and *Alien* [middle, 1979].)

the Black Veil

([source](): "The Rise of the Gothic Novel" by Stephen Carver)

Radcliffe's famous "cloaking device" from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, delayed until the end of the book (over 500 pages) to reveal behind a great terrible thing that made our heroine swoon; i.e., her immodest desire to look upon something that threatens her virtue and fragile mind. It remains a common device used in horror media today—e.g., as I note in "Gothic themes in The *Vanishing / Spoorloos* (1988)," the Black Veil is present all throughout that film.

demon lover

To that, Cynthia Wolff writes on Radcliffe's process in "The Radcliffean Gothic Model":

Cynthia Wolff writes on Radcliffe's process in "The Radcliffean Gothic Model":

Let us say that when an individual reads a fully realized piece of fiction, he (or she) will "identify" primarily with one character, probably the principal character, and that this character will bear the principal weight of the reader's projected feelings. Naturally, an intelligent reader will balance this identification; to some extent there will be identification with each major character—even, perhaps, with a narrative voice. But these will be distributed appropriately throughout the fiction. Now a Gothic novel presents us with a different kind of situation. It is but a partially realized piece of fiction: it is formulaic (a moderately sophisticated reader already knows more

or less exactly what to expect in its plot); it has little or no sense of particularized "place," and it offers a heroine with whom only a very few would wish to identify. Its fascination lies in the predictable interaction between the heroine and the other main characters. The reader identifies (broadly and loosely) with the predicament as a totality: the ritualized conflict that takes place among the major figures of a Gothic fiction (within the significant boundaries of that "enclosed space") represents in externalized form the conflict any single woman might experience. The reader will project her feelings into several characters, each one of whom will carry some element of her divided "self." A woman pictures herself as trapped between the demands of two sorts of men—a "chaste" lover and a "demon" lover—each of whom is really a reflection of one portion of her own longing. Her rite of passage takes the form of (1) proclaiming her right to preside as mistress over the Gothic structure and (2) deciding which man (which form of "love") may penetrate its recesses!

There have been two distinct waves of Radcliffean Gothic fiction: one that began in the late eighteenth century and one that began in this century between the World Wars… ([source](#)).

exquisite "torture"

Exquisite "torture" is a Radcliffe staple, and classically pits the imperiled heroine inside a complicated, but generally unironic rape fantasy within the Gothic castle. Somewhere in the castle is a demon lover who is both more exciting than the boring-ass hero, and someone who speaks to the heroine's inheritance anxiety and/or lived trauma inside the chronotope. The fantasy on the page is a form of controlled risk, but Radcliffe's forms are "proto-vanilla" in that they emerged at the very beginnings of feminism/female discourse and whose imaginary safe spaces are actually didactically *unsafe*. According to Wolff,

Two hundred years ago Ann Radcliffe introduced Gothic conventions into the mainstream of English fiction. For the first time the process of feminine sexual initiation found respectable, secular expression. Yet the terms of this expression were ultimately limiting. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the heritage of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic tradition; it is even more important now to move on and invent other, less mutilating conventions for the rendering of feminine sexual desire ([source](#)).

the explained supernatural

The sensation of a seemingly profound or Numinous in Radcliffe's stories, often linked to fear of unironic rape and death, but also boring material disputes that involve these things. The threat—like her mischievous pirates—are dressed up as ghosts or monsters to fool the detective so they can rob the state (and maybe the heroine) of their goods (the heroine and her modesty being "priceless treasure" in the eyes of themselves having internalized these bigotries, but also the men "protecting" them).

ludo-Gothic BDSM

My combining of an older academic term, "ludic-Gothic" (Gothic videogames), with sex-positive BDSM theatrics as a potent means of camp. The emphasis is less about "how can videogames be Gothic" and more how the playfulness in videogames is commonly used to allow players to camp canon in and out of videogames as a form of negotiated power exchange established in playful, game-like forms (theatre and rules). Commonly gleaned through Metroidvania as I envision it, but frankly performed in any kind of Gothic poetics—i.e., to playfully attain what I call "the palliative Numinous," or the Gothic quest for self-destructive power as something to camp.

ludic-Gothic

Gothic videogames. "The ludic-gothic is created when the Gothic is transformed by the video game medium, and is a kindred genre to survival horror" (source: Laurie Taylor's "Gothic Bloodlines in Survival Horror Gaming," 2009).

the palliative Numinous

A term I designed to describe the pain-/stress-relieving effect achieved from, and relayed through, intense Gothic poetics and theatrics of various kinds (my preference being Metroidvania castle-narrative *vis-à-vis* Bakhtin's chronotope applied to videogames out from novels and cinema and into Metroidvania; re: my master's thesis).

the closed space

A self-contained, claustrophobic, Gothic parallel space—generally a site of seemingly awesome power, age and danger (usually occupied by something sinister, if only the viewer's piqued curiosity/imperiled imagination): churches, abbeys, monasteries, castles, mad laboratories, (war/urban crime scenes), insane asylums, etc.

 The term is reworked from Cynthia Griffin Wolff's concept of "enclosed space" from her 1979 essay, "The Radcliffean Gothic Model: A Form for Feminine Sexuality"

> Now a Gothic novel presents us with a different kind of situation. It is but a partially realized piece of fiction: it is formulaic (a moderately sophisticated reader already knows more or less exactly what to expect in its plot); it has little or no sense of particularized "place," and it offers a heroine with whom only a very few would wish to identify. Its fascination lies in the predictable

interaction between the heroine and the other main characters. The reader identifies (broadly and loosely) with the predicament as a totality: the ritualized conflict that takes place among the major figures of a Gothic fiction (within the significant boundaries of that "enclosed space") represents in externalized form the conflict any single woman might experience ([source](#)).

in that I've extended it beyond the purely psychological models (and psyches) of a traditional Gothic readership (white, cis-het women) and now-outmoded school of thought (the Female Gothic of the 1970s). I do so in connection to how the Gothic mode generally employs deeply confusing and overwhelming time-spaces (chronotopes)—what Manuel Aguirre, in 2008, referred to as "[Geometries of Terror](#)" (exhibit 64b/64c)—that, along with their ambiguous, perplexing inhabitants (exhibit 64a), phenomenologically disrupt the monomyth in pointedly deconstructive, hauntological ways: the Promethean (self-destructive) hero's quest as something that undermines patrilineal descent and dynastic power exchange/hereditary rites in a never-ending cycle of war crimes, lies and blood sacrifice (a fearful critique of medieval feudalism).

Metroidvania as closed space

In the past, my academic/postgraduate work has thoroughly examined the Metroidvania ludonarrative (including speedruns) as a closed/parallel *ergodic* space; while my critical voice has changed considerably since 2018, I want to show the evolution of my work/gender identity leading into *Sex Positivity*'s genesis by listing my entire Metroidvania corpus (not including my *entire* book volumes, but citing some salient essays from those books):

- my master's thesis, which studies the ways in which speedrunners create castle-narrative through recursive motion inside the Metroidvania as a Gothic chronotope: "[Lost in Necropolis: The Continuation of Castle-Narrative beyond the Novel or Cinema, and into Metroidvania](#)" (2018)
- a YouTube video summarizing Metroidvania and its spatial qualities (sort of a precursor to the 2021 "Mazes and Labyrinths" abstract): "[Metroidvania Series #2: Mazes and Labyrinths](#)" (accompanied by its original script, [on Google Docs](#); both 2019)
- a BDSM reflection on ludo-Gothic themes in *Metroid*: "[Revisiting My Masters' Thesis on Metroidvania—Our Ludic Masters: The Dominating Game Space](#)" (2021)
- a deeper follow-up to "Our Ludic Masters": "[Why I Submit: A Subby Gothicist's Attitudes on Metroidvania, Mommy Doms, and Sexual Persecution](#)" (2021)

- a study of abjection and traditional gender theory *vis-à-vis* Barbara Creed in Metroidvania: "War Vaginas: Phallic Women, Vaginal Spaces and Archaic Mothers in *Metroid*" (2021)
- a Q&A interview series that interviews *Metroid* speedrunners about Metroidvania for my postgrad work: the abstract for "Mazes and Labyrinths: Disempowerment in Metroidvania and Survival Horror" (2021)
- a chapter I wrote about *Metroid* for an unfinished book: "The Promethean Quest and James Cameron's Military Optimism in *Metroid* [exhibit 5e]" (2021)
- a chapter on Metroidvania from my PhD, aka Volume Zero of *Sex Positivity* (2023), which details extensively my history with Metroidvania from childhood to my graduate and postgraduate work: "'Make it gay,' part two: Camping Tolkien's Refrain using Metroidvania, or the Map is a Lie: the Quest for Power inside Cameron's Closed Space (and other shooters)" (2023)
- an essay from Volume Two, part one, which conceptualizes the middle class' constant inheritance and exploring of the imaginary past through a privileged "savior" position, but one that can develop ludo-Gothic BDSM as a sex positive force; features Samus Aran as a "white Indian": "'In Search of the Secret Spell': Digging Our Own Graves; or, Playing with Dead Things (the Imaginary Past) as Verboten and Carte-Blanche (feat. Samus Aran)" (2024)
- an essay from Volume Two, part one, which critiques Jeremy Parish as a Metroidvania research inspiration of mine: "Monsters, Magic and Myth": Modularity and Class (feat. Jeremy Parish and Sorcha Ní Fhlainn)" (2024)
- an essay from Volume Two, part one, which reflects on how the Gothic is queer as realized through my Metroidvania work and beyond: "Facing Death: What I Learned Mastering Metroidvania, thus the Abject '90s" (2024)
- a three-part book chapter* on Metroidvania from Volume Two, part two, which covers *Frankenstein* (aka *The Modern Prometheus*) and talks extensively about the Promethean Quest as it appears in popular media after Shelley's novel—Metroidvania, of course (with close-reads of *Hollow Knight* and *Axiom Verge*), but also movies like *Forbidden Planet* and *Alien*: "'She Fucks Back'; or, Revisiting *The Modern Prometheus* through Astronoetics: the Man of Reason and Cartesian Hubris versus the Womb of Nature in Metroidvania" (2024).

Said chapter combines my PhD research after writing my PhD, making "She Fucks Back" a culmination of my life's work on the subject; I'm very proud of it!

Last but not least, I wanted to share my favorite essay about Metroidvania. Already the culmination of my life's work, I wanted to cap off my magnum opus [re: "She Fucks Back"] with a fun little announcement, letting you all know the last

part of that chapter is now on my website: "Sleeping Beauties: Policing the Whore; or, Topping from Below to Rise from the Ashes" (2024)!

(source: Materia Collective)

Normally it'd just be another post in my book sample series for Volume Two, part two, "Searching for Secrets" (2024). However, "Sleeping Beauties" is extra special because it's the capstone to my Metroidvania work after my PhD and what I esteem to be my crowning achievement; i.e., I write about rape play a great deal, talking about it outside of Metroidvania all the time (e.g., "Into the Toy Chest, part zero: A Note about Rape/Rape Play; or, Facing the Great Destroyer," 2024), but "Beauties" complements that work by marrying it to one of my favorite games, *Hollow Knight*, and its secret final boss, the Radiance! There's just so much fun academic stuff to unpack (e.g., Manuel Aguirre, Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin, to name a few)—with me doing so in a way that's hopefully more accessible, sexy and fun than those authors to read!

To summarize the piece, itself, my website describes it as, "Articulates Aguirre and Bakhtin's ideas per my evolution of ludo-Gothic BDSM after my master's thesis and into my graduate work, then considers the Promethean Quest as something that presents the whore as normally hunted by police forces, only to escape their subjugation and imprisonment by acting out her own rape; i.e., as *Hollow Knight*'s final boss, the Radiance, does" (source). In short, girl's a freak, but camps her abuse at the hero's hands to say something not just about the Pale King, but Capitalism, too, and why *it* sucks. Maybe in reading "Beauties," you'll change how you view not just the game and its approach to sexual violence in Gothic forms, but also the world at large...

In any event, it's a huge relief to have "Beauties" out there, and I'm very proud of it. Give it a look and let me know what you think!

Though imperfect, these older pieces try to show how the poststructuralist method—when taken beyond its somewhat limited 1960s/70s praxial scope (the '70s being the emergence of academic Gothic thought)—can be critically empowered in dialectical-material ways; i.e., to actually critique capital through iconoclastic monsters, BDSM/power exchange and spaces in Metroidvania, but also immensely creative interpretations/responses to those variables as already existing for me to rediscover in my own work: speedrunning as a communal effect for solving complex puzzles and telling Gothic ludonarratives in highly inventive ways. As we'll see moving forward, this strategy isn't just limited to videogames, but applies to <u>any</u> poetic endeavor during oppositional praxis. —Perse

Metroidvania

A type of Gothic videogame, one involving the exploration of castles and other closed spaces in an ergodic framework; i.e., the struggle of investigating past trauma as expressed through the Gothic castle and its monstrous caverns (which is the author poetically hinting at systemic abuses in real life). Scott Sharkey insists he coined the term (source tweet: evilsharkey, 2023) —ostensibly in the early 2000s while working with Jeremy Parish for 1-Ups.com:

> **← Post**
>
> **sharkey.bsky**
> @evilsharkey
>
> For the record, and probably for the last time, that was just a smartass way to refer to symphony of the night in particular and later to differentiate the more metroidy castlevanias in general.
>
> > **Bobby Schroeder** @ponettplus · May 31, 2023
> > the thing about the genre name "metroidvania" is that people keep calling it dumb and saying we need to come up with a better term, but none of the alternatives i've seen suggested are as clear and to-the-point as going "it's like metroid or symphony of the night"
>
> 2:58 PM · Jun 1, 2023 · **13.9K** Views
>
> ○ 9   ⇄ 21   ♥ 98   🔖 5   ↑
>
> ○ Post your reply   Reply
>
> **sharkey.bsky** @evilsharkey · Jun 1, 2023
> It's on me for using it in some indie game columns to refer to stuff like Knytt and Cave Story but Jeremy ran with it. End of story.
> ○ 3   ⇄   ♡ 23   �_I 1.3K   🔖 ↑
>
> **sharkey.bsky** @evilsharkey · Jun 1, 2023
> I mean, yeah, it kind of sucks, probably on account of it wasn't supposed to be a broad genre descriptor in the first place. But sometimes shit sticks and everything else sucks more. And now it's going to be relitigated every month until the sun burns out.
> ○ 2   ⇄   ♡ 21   �_I 1.2K   🔖 ↑
>
> **Writing My Book** 🏳️‍🌈🏳️‍⚧️ @NicksMovInsight · Jun 10, 2023
> You tweeted this on my birthday! Awesome! I know you hate the term, but I absolutely love it. I'm actually finishing my book on Sex Positivity and BDSM, monsters, etc, which includes my postgrad work on Metroidvania inspired by your work and @gamespite. Metroidvania lives on...
> ○   ⇄   ♡ 1   �_I 75   🔖 ↑

However, the term was probably being used before that in the late '90s to casually describe the 1997 PSOne game, *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*; records of it being used can be found [as early as 2001](#) (this *[Circle of the Moon Amazon review](#)* is from 2003). By 2006, though, Jeremy Parish had a personalized definition on his own blog, "GameSpite | Compendium of Old and Useless Information" (2012):

"Metroidvania" is a stupid word for a wonderful thing. It's basically a really terrible neologism that describes a videogame genre which combines 2D side-scrolling action with free-roaming exploration and progressive skill and item collection to enable further, uh, progress. As in *Metroid* and Koji Igarashi-developed *Castlevania* games. Thus the name ([source](#)).

My own postgrad research ("Mazes and Labyrinths") has expanded/narrowed the definition quite a bit:

> Metroidvania are a location-based videogame genre that combines 2D, 2.5D, or 3D platforming [e.g., *Dark Souls*, 2009] and ranged/melee combat— usually in the 3rd person—inside a giant, closed space. This space communicates Gothic themes of various kinds; encourages exploration*

depending on how non-linear the space is; includes progressive skill and item collection, mandatory boss keys and variable gating mechanics (bosses, items, doors); and requires movement powerups in some shape or form, though these can be supplied through RPG elements as an optional alternative.

Exploration pertains to the deliberate navigation of space beyond that of obvious, linear routes—to search for objects, objectives or secrets off the beaten path ([source](#)).

Also from "Mazes and Labyrinths":

Mazes and Labyrinths: I treat space as essential when defining Metroidvania. Mazes and labyrinths are closed space; their contents exist within a closed structure, either a maze or a labyrinth. A classical labyrinth is a linear system with one set, unicursal path towards an end point; a maze is a non-linear system with multiple paths to an end point [classical texts often treated the words as interchangeable].

Metroidvania, etymology: As its most basic interpretation, Metroidvania is a portmanteau of *Metroid* and *Castlevania*, specifically "Metroid" + "-vania." However, the term has no singular, universally-agreed-upon definition. Because I focus on space, my definitions—of the individual portmanteau components—are as follows:

"Metroid" =/= the franchise, *Metroid*; "Metroid" = that franchise's unique treatment of closed space—the maze.

"-vania" =/= the franchise, *Castlevania*; "castlevania" equals that franchise's unique treatment of closed space—the labyrinth.

At the same time, "Metroid," or "metro" + "-oid" means "android city." "Castlevania" or "castle" + "-vania" means "other castle," "demon castle," or "castle Dracula." The portmanteau, "Metroidvania" ≈ "android city" + "demon castle" + "maze" + "labyrinth."

Further Distinctions: There are further ways to identify if a Metroidvania space is a maze or not. As I explain in my 2019 YouTube video, "[Metroidvania Series #2: Mazes and Labyrinths](#)":

What ultimately determines a Metroidvania's maze-ness are three sequences: the start, the middle, and the end. The start is what I

consider to be the collection of essential items—power-ups you'll need to use for the entire game. Mid-game is the meat of the experience. The end sequence makes the win condition available to the player.

I mention item collection relative to these sequences because they are a core element of Metroidvania play, hence determine what kind of space the player is dealing with. In *Metroid*, for example, the Morph Ball, Bomb and Missiles are essential, and the player can acquire all of them rather quickly. Apart from those, however, there are few items you actually need to complete the game. One of them is Ice Beam, which is required to kill metroids, thus gain access to Mother Brain (the game's end condition). Large portions of the game can be played without it, though. Like many Metroid power-ups, it is a mid-game collectible.

Item collection allows the player to leave the start and enter the middle. This section, I argue, determines whether or not a Metroidvania is a maze. If the majority of the game allows for sequence breaks, RBO (reverse boss order) and low-percent, then it is a maze; if not, it is a labyrinth. A Metroidvania can be either ([source](): the original script on Google Docs).

In terms of appearance, a Metroidvania's audiovisual presentation can range from retro-future sci-fi to Neo-Gothic fantasy. Nevertheless, their spaces typically function as Gothic castles; replete with hauntological monsters, demons, and ghosts, they guide whatever action the hero must perform when navigating the world and dealing with its threats (*[ibid.]()*)

ergodic

As defined by Espen J. Aarseth in *[Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature]()* (1997): "During the cybertextual process, the user will have effectuated a semiotic sequence, and this selective movement is a work of physical construction that the various concepts of 'reading' do not account for. [...] In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to traverse the text," meaning effort beyond eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages; spatially there is more than one route to take, or multiple ways one can take the same route to complete an objective or series of objectives (which in Metroidvania, are generally unspoken; *Super Metroid* is famous for its lack of narration, open-ended world, and non-linear fragmented narrative).

liminal space

Liminal spaces, in architectural terms, are spaces designed to be moved through; in Gothic terms, these amount to Bakhtin's chronotopes as museum-like times spaces that, when moved through, help past legends come alive, animating in literal and figuratively Gothic/medieval ways. Classically these include the animated portrait, miniature, gargoyle, (often giant) suit of armor, effigy and double, etc; more modern variants include Tool's early music videos (exhibit 43a), Trent Reznor's 1994 music video for "Closer" (exhibit 43b) and *Mario 64*'s own liminal spaces as outlined by Marilyn Roxie's "Marilyn Roxie presents … The Inescapable Weirdness of *Super Mario 64*" (2020).

(*source*)

liminal monsters (expression)/monster girls

Monsters are generally liminal, but some more than others openly convey a partial, ambivalent, oscillating sense of conflict on the surface of their imagery. A hopelessly common example is the monster girl, as AFAB persons are generally fetishized/demonized "waifu" in canon and must be reclaimed in sex-positive forms (exhibit 5e; 23a, the Medusa; 49, phallic women; 50, furries; 62e, cavewomen, etc). The advanced degree of this trope is the monster mother, which expects the women to exist in ways that cater to men that are both loved and feared in fetishizing ways, but also sacrificed (exhibits 51b1, 87b1 and 102b, etc). Akin to a black mirror, Eve Segewick, in 1981, called this mimesis "the character in the veil [or] imagery of the surface in the Gothic novel." The basic gist, they argue, is the sexualizing of a surfaces in Gothic media (their example being the nun's veil); i.e., a "shallow pattern" literally on the surface of paper or a screen or glass that can evoke a deeper systemic problem that spans space and time.
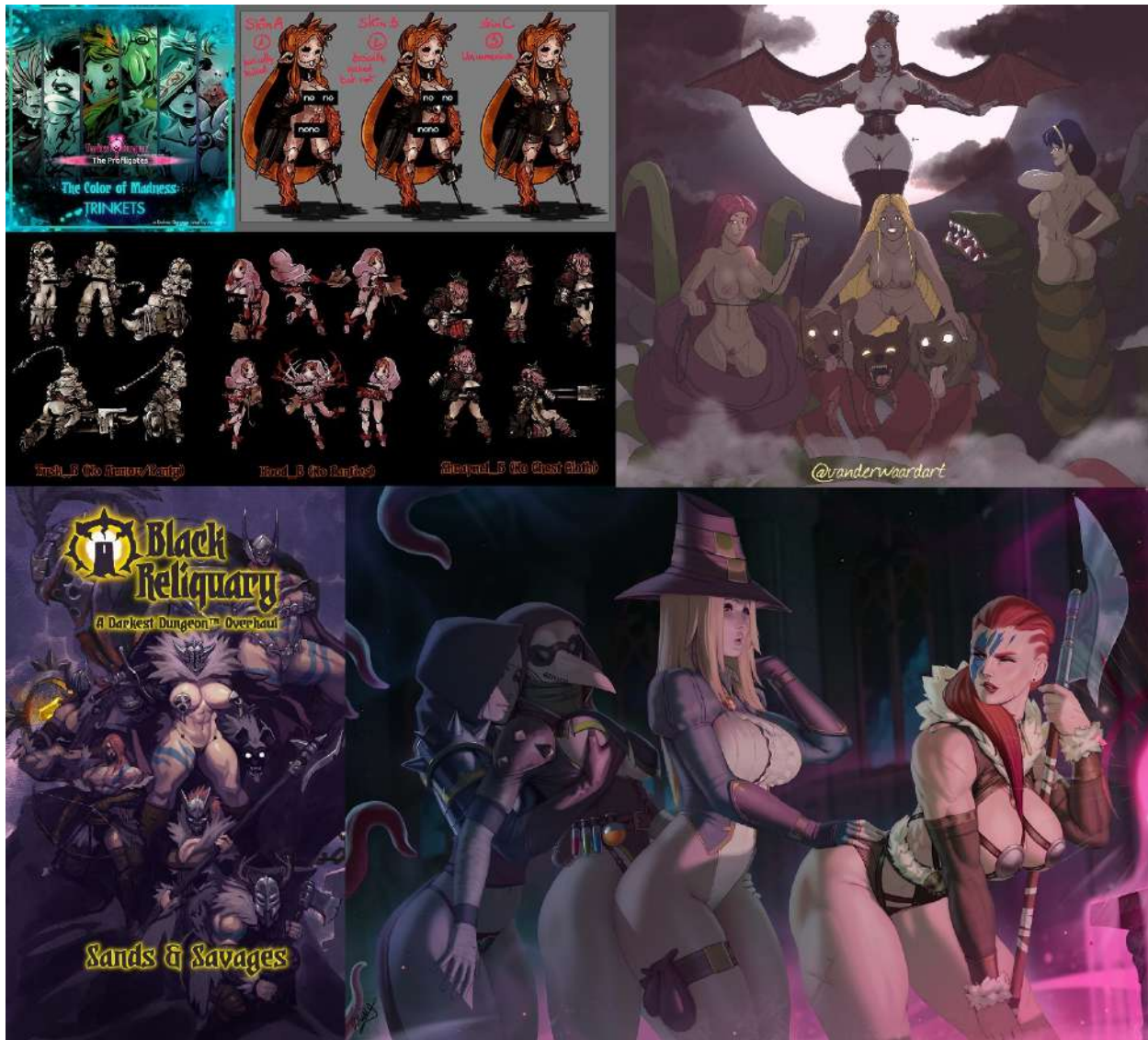
*(exhibit 5e2: Top-far-left: Muscarine's "Profligates" [from the Darkest Dungeon [2016] mod workshop](). Top-far-left: Muscarine's "Profligates" [from the Darkest Dungeon [2016] mod workshop](). Top-far-left: Muscarine's "Profligates" [from the Darkest Dungeon [2016] mod workshop](). The "Great Waifu Renaissance" of <u>The Darkest Dungeon</u> portrays the monstrous-feminine as waifus to control and embody as much during an ontological power trip as simply being a proverbial dragon to "slay." Often, they walk the tightrope between the cutesy and the profane, subverting stereotypes while simultaneously being chased after by weird canonical nerds: **waifu/wheyfu monster-girl war brides**. Procured and dressed by powerful greedy companies [e.g., Blizzard's "thirst-trap" catalog of Amazon gradients] and given to apolitical consumers, the latter fight the culture war <u>for</u> the former as tied to the state through capital. And yet weird iconoclastic nerds can weaponize these self-same monstrous-feminine to our purposes.*

The Tusk, for example, is a sexy cavegirl who iconoclastically stinks—i.e., with body odor being historically-materially denied to women despite their armpits smelling just as much as guys' do, let alone their vaginas, which guys do not have and can have <u>all sorts</u> of smells: e.g., Zeuhl once asked me to smell their panties, saying incredulously, "Isn't that <u>crazy</u>?" because their cootchie smelled rather strong [and to which my look of shock, post-smelling it, utterly betrayed me. To be fair, it <u>was</u> rather pungent from us simply walking around my hometown. All the same, bodies smell because they're designed to; e.g., that same night, we had doggystyle sex and for the first time I could suddenly smell the natural "musk" from Zeuhl's asshole: a vestigial throwback to a time when humans communicated more by smells than with words]. Apart from the Tusk, the Hood is a slutty Red Riding Hood, and the Fawn is a patchwork animal-girl ninja, etc.

Lower-top-left: [nude mods for Muscarine's Profligates, by JOMO=1](). Fan mods operate as "fan fiction," thus tend to be far hornier [see: <u>Black Reliquary</u>'s (2023) many Amazon thirst traps, bottom-left] than official canon does. Generally the official art/content for the main game or "faithful" fan art tends to be less overtly sexualized, but no less canonical or sexually dimorphic; e.g., the Countess [exhibit 1a1c] as an Archaic Bug Mom slain by the bad-faith Ancestor [who is frankly a giant dick for the whole game].

Top-right: Persephone van der Waard's illustrations of four monster girls from <u>Castlevania</u> (a franchise with a whole bestiary of female monsters; [source](): Fandom). These four are all from <u>Castlevania: Symphony of the Night</u>—[Alraune](), [Succubus](), [Scylla]() and [Amphisbaena]().

Bottom-left: Promo art [[source tweet](): Reliquary Mod, 2021] for <u>The Darkest Dungeon</u> overhaul, <u>The Black Reliquary</u>].

Bottom-right: Fan art for <u>The Darkest Dungeon</u> by [Maestro Noob](), depicting what are basically heroic female monsters: the virgin/whore, but also the damsel/demon and the Amazon with a BDSM flavor.

chimeras/furries:

(exhibit 5f: Artist, left: [William Mai](#); artist, right: [Blush Brush](#). Examples of furries. "Furry" is an incredibly diverse art style. For more examples, consider Volume Two's "Call of the Wild" chapter, as well as exhibits 65 or 68 from Volume Three.)

A **chimera** isn't simply the Greek monster, but any kind of composite body or entity, often with elements of multiplicity or plurality (e.g., [the Gerasene demon](#)]. Conversely, furries are humanoid [commonly called "anthro") personas that tend to have humanoid bodies, but semi-animalistic limbs and intersex components tied to ancient rituals of fertility but also gender expression relating to/identifying with nature. While Greek myths are commonly more animalistic, the (mainstream) furries of today are often closer to the Ancient Egyptian variety: an animal "headdress" or mask over a mostly-human body. There's plenty of morphological gradients, of course—with "feral" or "bestial" variants being more and more animalistic; and the "Giger variety" being more xenomorphic and Gothically surreal (the xenomorph [exhibit 51a/60c] being one of the most famous, if contested, chimeras in modern times). A general rule of thumb, however, is the genitals tend to be human; however, "monster-fucker" variants very quickly move away from humanoid bodies (and/or genitals) altogether, often with abject, stigma animals like the insect, leech, reptile, or worm. Likewise, while "fursonas" (furry personas) tend to be sexualized, they aren't always; in fact, they primarily function as alter-

egos with many different functions: the political (see: [alt-right furries](#) as well as "[furry panic](#)"), [the dramatic](#) (Fredrik Knudsen, 2019), the horror genre (see: pretty much anything by Junji Ito, but also <u>Five Nights at Freddy's</u>, 2014; [or its various wacky clones](#), source: Space Ice, 2023) and also for general fandom purposes; i.e., furries are [not automatically fetishes](#) (Vice, 2018) but are criminalized similar to Bronies (though any popular fandom that has a large underage audience is going to attract sexual predators *and* outsider bias; see: Turkey Tom's 2023 [admittedly problematic] "Degenerate" series on [Bronies](#) or [Five Nights at Freddy's](#); or Lily Orchard's [pedophile escapades, hidden behind sexualized Brony fan fiction](#)—Essence of Thought, 2021).

monster-fucking

The mutually consensual act of fucking monsters; i.e., sex-positive, Gothicized kink. However, as this tends to involve inhuman, animal-esque creatures beyond just werewolves, Frankensteinian creatures, or vampires, make sure to refer to the Harkness test (exhibit 38c) to avoid conducting/depicting bestiality or pedophilia! *Note: While sexual abuse does happen in furry communities, these communities are ultimately quite small and those behaviors are not the norm within any more than in the LGBTQ community at large. However, in the tradition of moral panics, this won't stop reactionary groups from scapegoating furries and similar out-groups, the persecutors hypocritically overlooking widespread systemic abuse by paramilitaries and communities leaders in the bargain. —Perse*

Satanism

(exhibit 5h: [The Satanic Temple website](). I never joined, but they seem like an alright bunch—[especially compared to the anti-feminist moderacy of the YouTube Skeptics/atheist Community]() [source: The Kavernacle, 2021]. To that, "skepticism" often dogwhistles a common moderate/reactionary tactic; i.e., to "just ask questions." This maneuver is bad-faith more often than not, as seen in the "gender critical" community [a TERF cryptonym meant to conceal the fascist nature of regressive "activism," <u>Amazonomachia</u> and cryptomimesis] or the so-called race "realists," [but also the transphobia of cis-skeptics defending the "fairness" of professional sports]() by excluding trans people; source: Essence of Thought, 2019.)

Like furries, Satanism is generally treated as a regular scapegoat during moral panic (with "Satanic" [historically being used to scapegoat members of the LGBTQ community as "groomers" during the 1980s into the present](); source: Caelan Conrad, 2022). However, Satan is a complex figure and can personify different forms of persecution and rebellion. For example, I have explored Satanism before—in my own past time ("[Dreadful Discourse, ep. 7: Satan]()") as well as [my own living experiences](): "I, Satanist; Atheist: A Gothicist's Thoughts on Atheism, Religion, and Sex" (2021). Satanic churches aren't ecclesiastical in the traditional sense, but their implementation in Western culture isn't always implemented well. [Anton LaVey's Church of Satan]() is a bit overly hedonistic and dated, sounding painfully cliché and sexist. [The Satanic Temple](), on the other hand, is far more accessible, while refusing to compromise on the humanitarian issues they seek to confront in society as structured on organized religion (America wasn't simply founded by the Puritans, but founded on their awful principles, too).

uncanny

From Freud's *unheimlich*, meaning "unhomely," the uncanny actually has many different academic applications. One of the most famous (and canonically outmoded) is the liminal/parallel space (the "danger disco/cyberpunk," exhibit 15b2; the haunted music video, 43a; the Nostromo from *Alien*, 64c). Another common example is the *uncanny valley*, which—while generally applied to animation techniques—can also apply to ghosts, egregores and other Gothic imitations (the unfriendly disguise/pastiche, exhibit 43b; the friendly, iconoclastic variant 43c) or humanoid likenesses that fail to "pass the test" (for a diegetic example of this concept, [refer to the Voight-Kampff test from Blade Runner](), 1982). In the Gothic sense, the animate-inanimate presents the subject as now-alive but once-not, but also faced within bad copies they cannot safely distinguish themselves from; e.g., the knight from *Hollow Knight* (exhibit 40h1) but also the xenomorph (exhibit 60d) and living latex, leather and death fetishes (exhibits exhibit 9b2, 50b, 60e1, 101c2), or golems/succubae (exhibits 38c1b/51b1), etc, as one subtype of animated miniature whose ghost of the counterfeit is historically-

materially abject. The intimation is one of death in proximity with sensations that we are merely clay simulacra within the Gothic spell and that, at any moment, the spell could end and our dancing in the ruins suddenly stop as we cease to be once more; motionless we become, as Monty Python puts it, "ex-parrots."

terror and horror

Gothic schools begot from the Neo-Gothic period (the 1790s, in particular, between Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis) largely concerned with looking—specifically showing and hiding violence, monsters, taboo sex and other abject things (this lends it a voyeuristic, exhibitionist quality). Defined posthumously by Radcliffe in her 1826 essay, "On The Supernatural In Poetry":

> Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them […] and where lies the great difference between terror and horror but in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil? ([source](#)).

phallic women

The cock of the state. A monstrous-feminine archetype predicated on active, penetrative violence (or scapegoated for it; e.g., the trans woman as a "woman with a penis" trope). Canonical phallic women are female characters, villains, and monsters (often Amazons, Medusas or something comparable) who behave in a traditional masculine way—though generally in response to patriarchal structures with an air of female revenge; e.g., Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth*; Victoria de Loredani from *Zofloya*, 1806; Rumi from *Perfect Blue*, 1997, and Ripley/Samus Aran from *Aliens/Metroid*. When Dale Townshend introduced the term "phallic women" to me, he referenced Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth:

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
> Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose ([source](#)).

In non-fiction, this encompasses TERFs, who adopt violent, minority-police roles post-trauma, accepting further "prison sex" conditioning by reactionaries during moral panics. The phallic power of women is canonically treated as hysterically fleeting (e.g., Lady Galadriel's "dark queen" moment; or Dani's fall from grace as

the dark mother of dragons, in *Game of Thrones*, 2009, her self-defeating hysteria supplied by the authors of the show to justify male rule during the final season). She is expected to perform, then put away her sword and wear the dress.

Archaic Mothers (and vaginal spaces)

The womb of nature. An ancient, monstrous-feminine symbol of female/matriarchal power. In Gothic stories, the Archaic Mother (and her space) is generally something for the canonically male/phallic woman to slay and rape (as per the Cartesian Revolution)—e.g., Samus being the "space" variant of a knight or Amazon, specifically a subjugated, *TERF* Amazon killing Mother Brain, the Dark Mother, in service of the Galactic Federation and "the Man" (the entire Red Scare's class character dialog being displaced to outer space); for a more detailed writeup about these concepts in *Metroid*, consider "War Vaginas":

> To summarize those terms, a phallic woman resists sexist conventions by behaving in a masculine (often war-like) fashion in Gothic stories. An Archaic Mother is a powerful, ancient, female mythic figure tied to abject images of motherhood and/or numinous authority. Her power is womb-centric, stemming from her actual womb, or the womb-like space she uses to attack the hero with" ([source](#)).

One of the most famous Archaic Mothers is the Medusa, but she takes many similar forms: the transgenerational undead preserved as living latex, leather or clay that comes alive like a gargoyle to seek indiscriminate vengeance against the living for having been wronged by proponents of capital, Cartesian thought, patriarchs, etc.

(artist: Patrick Brown)

Amazonomachia (Amazon pastiche)

"Amazon battle" is an ancient form of classical, monstrous-feminine art whose pastiche was historically used to *enforce* the status quo; i.e., Theseus subjugating Hippolyta the Amazon Queen to police other women (making regressive/canonical *Amazonomachia* a form of monstrous-feminine copaganda). With the rise of queer discourse and identity starting in arguably the late 18th century, later canonical variations in the 20th century (e.g., Marsden's Wonder Woman) would seek to move the goalpost *incrementally*—less of a concession, in neoliberal variants (every Blizzard heroine ever—exhibits 45a, 76, 72), and more an attempt to recruit from dissident marginalized groups. The offer is always the same: to become badass, strong and "empowered." In truth, these regressive Amazons become assimilated token cops; i.e., the fetishized witch cop/war boss as a "blind Medusa" who hates her own kind by seeing herself as different than them, thus acting like a white, cis-het man towards them (the "Rambo problem"). In the business of violent cartoons (disguised variants of the state's enemies), characters like Ripley or Samus become lucrative token gladiators for the elite by fighting similar to men (active, lethal violence) *for* male state-corporate hegemony. To that, their symbolism colonizes

revolutionary variations of the Amazon, Medusa, etc, during subversive Amazonomachia within genderqueer discourse.

witch cops/war boss

A class, gender or race traitor dressed up in the heroic-victimized language of warrior variants of past victims. Their baleful gaze is diverted away from the elite, instead punching down at their fellow workers to break up their strikes, unions and riots; but also to tease disempowered women with the "carrot" of active, physical violence they're conditioned to use against the state's enemies. There are male/Man Box variants and token variants (the weird canonical nerd of course, exhibit 93b; the war chief, 98b1; the Afrocentrist; the centrist Amazon, exhibit 98b1/100c4; the LGBA's bad-faith bears, otters, dykes and femmes; or the queer boss, exhibit 100c10) and the praxis allows for flexible gender roles within and outside of the heteronormative binary as long as it serves the profit motive. But subversive variants (exhibit 111b) are generally forced to work within notoriously bigoted and oppressive structures: the patriarchal world of professional, competitive sports or the porn industry as things to subvert ("make love, not war" as a hard stance, not conflating Marisa's "love" [exhibit 98a3] with genuine, class-conscious praxis). This makes TERF amazons, Medusas, *et al*, Judas-level "prison guards" inside Man Box culture; they assimilate their conquerors and use their cudgels, slurs and shackles, but also their fetish/power outfits like they do—without countercultural irony during blood libel (even while trying to disguise this function through false rebellion) while being paid in blood money by the state and forced to ignominiously marry people they wouldn't be caught dead with under non-oppressive conditions.

waifus/wheyfus

The waifu is a war bride in *shonen* media; i.e., the promise of sex, generally through marriage as emblematized in Japanese cultural exports that fuse with Western bigotries to make similar promises to entitled, young male consumers (and older bigots and tokens). While the "waifu," then, is any bride you want—be she big and strong, short and stacked, skinny-thicc, tall and slender, or some other "monster girl" combination dressed up as a pin-up Hippolyta, Medusa or some other hauntological trope—the "wheyfu" is conspicuously burly and chased after by entitled fans (this relationship can get performatively complicated, but the basic difference is coercion versus mutual consent). Within oppositional praxis, then, the waifu/wheyfu becomes yet another disguise within class war for operatives on either basic side to utilize.

the Male/Female Gothic

Stemming from earlier periods of Gothic academic (1970s), the Male and Female Gothic are gendered ideas of the Gothic school or work connected to older, Neo-Gothic schools: Ann Radcliffe's *de facto* School of Terror and Matthew Lewis' School of Horror ([outlined as such in Devendra Varma's *The Gothic Flame*](#), 1923; though perhaps articulated earlier than that). Radcliffe's school focused on terror concealing the "dreaded evil," the explained supernatural and raising the imagination through carefully maintained suspense. Lewis's contributions to the so-called Male Gothic focused more on the living dead, overtly supernatural rituals, black magic, and sex with demons, murder, and so on. Frankly Male Gothic is a bit outmoded, [with Colin Broadmoor in 2021 making a strong argument for Lewis' Gothic camp being far more queer than strictly "male" in *The Monk*](#) despite the lack of sexuality and gender functioning as identity when he wrote it (similar to Tolkien or Milton, despite their own intentions).

egregore/tulpa (simulacrum)

(exhibit 5i: Artist: [Mole and Thomas](.).)

An occult or monstrous concept representing a non-physical entity that arises from the collective thoughts of a distinct group of people ([what Plato and other philosophers have called the simulacrum](.) through various hair-splittings; e.g., "identical copies of that which never existed" being touched upon by Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality). The distinction between egregore and tulpa is largely

etymological, with "egregore" stemming from French and Greek and "tulpa" being a Tibetan idea:

> *Since the 1970s, tulpas have been a feature of Western paranormal lore. In contemporary paranormal discourse, a tulpa is a being that begins in the imagination but acquires a tangible reality and sentience. Tulpas are created either through a deliberate act of individual will or unintentionally from the thoughts of numerous people. The tulpa was first described by Alexandra David-Néel (1868–1969) in Magic and Mystery in Tibet (1929) and is still regarded as a Tibetan concept. However, the idea of the tulpa is more indebted to Theosophy than to Tibetan Buddhism [source: Natasha L. Mikles and Joseph P. Laycock's "Tracking the Tulpa: Exploring the "Tibetan" Origins of a Contemporary Paranormal Idea," 2015].*

The shared idea, here, is that monsters tend to represent social ideas begot from a public imagination according to fearful biases that are not always controlled or conscious in their crypto*genesis*/-mimesis. In Gothic-Communist terms, this invokes historical-material warnings of codified power or trauma—including totems, effigies, fatal portraits, suits of armor, or gargoyles—projected back onto superstitious workers through ambiguous, cryptonymic illusions. For our purposes, these illusions are primarily fascist/neoliberal, as Capitalism encompasses the material world. It must be parsed/transmuted.

ghosts/*Yokai*

An ontologically complex category of either a former dead person, an *artifact/reminder* of them (their legend as an effigy or "statue" of themselves; e.g., a suit of armor or fatal portrait) or a discrete, wholly unique entity that shares only the resemblance but not the context of a former person or their legend. If hamlet's father is a famous Western example of this idea, then *Yokai* are the Eastern variant of this notion.

For a holistic example of many of these Gothic ideas in action, check out The Babadook (2014); it combine crypt narrative, Black Veils, Gothic heroines, chronotopes, liminal space/monsters et al into a singular narrative in a fairly iconoclastic (queer) way (it's also one of my favorite films and I love to analyze it; e.g., "Close-reading Gothic Theory in The Babadook," 2019)! —Perse

Acknowledgments

"I don't know half of you half as well as I should like; and I like less than half of you half as well as you deserve."

—*J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring (1954)*

(artist: Joseph Severn)

The British Romantic, John Keats, once described William Wordsworth's poetry as indicative of the "egotistical sublime"; i.e., pertaining to an isolated genius whose self-centered nature makes the truth of their work self-evident. In reality, Wordsworth's poems were based on the diary of his less-famous and - celebrated sister, Dorothy, whose meticulous chronicling of their various "wanders" (1798) laid the foundation for her brother's Romantic canon. As Gavin Andre Sukhu writes on the subject in 2013,

When reading the Grasmere Journal in conjunction with the poetry of William Wordsworth, Dorothy's journal appears to be a set of notes written especially for him by her. As a matter of fact, Dorothy made it quite clear in the beginning of her journals that she was writing them for William's "pleasure" ([source](#)).

Simply put, Keats was wrong. Wordsworth could *not* have written his famous poetry without his sister, whose close friendship and watchful eye he greatly cherished.

Like Wordsworth's poems, *Sex Positivity* could *not* have been written alone; I needed the help of various friends, associates, and enemies. While I arguably wouldn't be a Marxist without the eye-opening abuse of neoliberal Capitalism, I also wouldn't be openly trans without the many lovers and friends who taught me the value of things *beyond* Capitalism ("If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world..."). It is the latter group—those friends who stood by my side and didn't abuse me—that I wish to honor.

Special thanks, then, to those people. Not only did their knowledge, bravery, generosity and love make this book possible in its current form; they made it fun, too. Yet, as I am blessed to have many different kinds of friends, I'll thank each in turn. Please excuse my lists and organizing; I just like to be thorough and complete in my thanksgivings!

First, to my fifteen muses—[Casper Clock](#), [Crow](#), [Sinead](#), [Bay](#), [Mugiwara Art](#), [Harmony Corrupted](#), [Romantic Rose](#), Angel Witch, [Mercedes the Muse](#), Krispy Tofuuu, [Ms. Reefer & Ayla](#), [Quinnvincible](#), [Blxxd Bunny](#) and [Itzel](#): You've all lent me tremendous emotional support and helped me through some really hard times. Your solidarity during our combined struggle helped make this book possible. To each of you, I wanted to give an extra-special thank you:

- *To Bay*: Thank you for your invaluable contributions to *Sex Positivity*, puppy, and for being such a wonderful partner. Meeting you so late into the book's construction was incredibly serendipitous, but also fortunate in that you gave excellent daily feedback, provided many interesting (and germane) ideas to explore, and just frankly inspired and motivated me in so many different ways that, combined, transformed and expanded the landscape of this book more than anyone else (who all, I should add, pitched in a great amount). For example, from the date that we met (June 14th, 2023) until the altering of this entry (July 19th) you inspired me to create over *fifty* new, collage-style exhibits (about 25% of my book's total exhibits up to this point); on top of that, from July 24th to August 16th, the book increased another 150 pages, gaining an additional 88,000 words and 123 new images (many of which were exhibits). You're a person of great *mana*—incredibly loving and sweet, but also gorgeous, cultured and diverse in your many interests and passions; our minds also think very much alike and I absolutely love it and

adore you for it while having weaved your contributions into this book like a tapestry with your assistance. I cannot imagine this project (or my life) without you in it, injecting into both things of yourself that have changed how I see the world in ways I cannot imagine being different or without. I love you so very, very much, muffin, and am glad to have met you the way that we did!

(artist: Angel Witch)

- *To Angel Witch*: Thank you for being so much fun to work with, cutie, and all around just a very nice person and beautiful friend! You're absolutely gorgeous and incredibly sweet—someone who's very good about communicating their boundaries while respecting mine, and I feel proud to include you in my book!
- *To Sinead*: Thank you, fae, for being an excellent communicator, teacher and friend. Your careful, nuanced instruction has helped me grasp and maintain the nuances of fat positivity versus fat liberation, and I feel the project has only benefited from your targeted, informative contributions (and zine suggestions). Also thank you for appreciating my work, embodying it through the example that you clearly set for yourself and effortlessly lead by! You're

incredibly fun to talk to but also work/play with, and your ample, flawless body is the very stuff that dreams are made of!

- *To Crow*: Thank you, puppy, for being such a game and receptive collaborator, and for treating me as well as you do; you're a wonderful partner—gorgeous, delightful, and sweet—and spending time with you has been so, so much fun! You've given me so much to enjoy and look forward to: making someone I love feel good. It delights me that I've found a sweetie who I can pour my boundless love (and cum) into. So all the kisses and snuggles, baby!
- *To Mercedes*: Thank you, mommy, for inspiring my work. It meant so much when you first approached me and asked to be drawn, as I'd never had an artist/model do that before. But I absolutely love and respect what you stand for and think that you're incredibly legitimate, hot and valid. Thank you for being you!
- *To Itzel*: Thank you, daddy, for making me feel so pretty and special, but also offering me guidance and protection—like the little princess I always to be!
- *To Bunny*: Thank you, bun-bun, for your financial support and monumental kindness as a friend, but also offering as much reference material as you did—i.e., the collaborative shoots whose images grace the front and back covers of this book, but also your impressive galleries to inspire the illustrations on its inner pages. Know that the additional exhibits based on your excellent OF shoots inspired many artworks by me, a commission by someone else, and multiple write-ups.
- *To Krispy and Quinn*: You are both incredibly gorgeous and friendly to work with—treating me like a person and an equal, first and foremost. That means so, so much!
- *To Casper Clock*: Thank you, Casper—for having such an amazing ass and work ethic, and for just being all-around so wonderful to work with! You're the best!
- *To Mugiwara Art*: Thank you, Mugi, for being so fun to play with and talk to, and for working together despite some initial confusions (and for helping me address them as well as you did). Thank you as well, then, for teaching me about plural people and for giving me a chance to represent them more in my work (re: sex-positive demons).
- *To Harmony Corrupted*: Thank you, mommy, for being so fun to talk to deeply about different complicated subjects and expressing a continued interest in my work (which led to an entire module[!] for Volume Two, doubling it in size), but also for being so easy to work and play with. You're amazing in bed, have the world's best ass (so peachy and fuckable), and are fascinating to talk to. I love watching your SO fuck you with his big dick, and am grateful for him being so kind to you. I feel like you're a dark spirit,

overall; i.e., different, but alluring and sweet inside your beautiful darkness. Also, while we have a lot of common interests, you're also very nice and good about communicating (in and out of bed). I really value that!

- *To Chryssi (Ms. Reefer) & Ayla*: Thank you both for being so wonderful to work with. You were my first AMAB couple (which, as a trans woman, I really appreciate), and playing and working with you both has been so much fun! To Chryssi, in particular—thank you, mommy, for being so good in bed; both of you are wonderful people and it was an absolute pleasure meeting you both, but you make my girl cock feel amazing! To Ayla—thank you for fucking Chryssi so nicely with your huge dick! You're both adorable!
- *To Rose*: Thank you for communicating so quickly and well, but also for producing such lovely content on short notice. You're absolutely gorgeous and working with you was an absolute treat!

Moreover, all fifteen of you treated me like I had genuine value—that I wasn't "just" an artist whose work was "free" during our exchanges. That means the world, really. I will cherish your priceless contributions and immeasurable kindness beyond words. From the bottom of my heart, thank you, babes!

(artist: [Persephone van der Waard](#), of Ginger. Originally illustrated to celebrate their coming out as trans, but revised in a more devilish form for this book.)

Second, to my long-time friends and associates and diamonds in the rough:

- *To Ginger, first and foremost*: My best friend—who's been there for me more times than I can count—thank you from the bottom of my heart; more than anyone else, your deep support, crucial humor and endless hours talking together about shared ideas, struggles and solutions have been foundational—about sex positivity as a virtue have been essential to shaping the writing inside these pages. Thank you, for saving me from Jadis and other abusers who either meant me harm or otherwise took advantage; and for teaching me about figure drawing, including but not limited to: drawing boobs and faces, but rib cages and pelvises. You are a saint, as fierce as a dragon in a pinch, and a most excellent hobbit all-around; may the hair on your toes never fall out; may the rest of your days be plentiful, memorable and comfortable!
- *To Fen*: For teaching me about animals, empathizing with them, and how to draw their floofy tails, but also for being there for me in a crucial moment. Like Ginger, you saved me from Jadis and for that, I will always be grateful. But you're also incredibly chill and fun to spend time with and I appreciate that greatly. Never change, my friend.
- *To Lydia*: A mega-special thank you for your friendship over the years (over ten at this point) and for your own special help with this project. While you were less direct in your overall engagement with the manuscript, your contributions still made a difference. For one, you were someone I felt comfortable coming out to, who—when I realized for myself that I was trans—was able to drip-feed it to you. And when I finally said, "I probably seem different to you now," you replied that I was the third person who told you that: "No, you seem exactly the same; you seem different to yourself." As it turns out, you explained that I wasn't the first; I was third out of three people who came out to you (and as you said to another person who came out to you, to which you added, "You don't have to feel bad about it or like I wouldn't want to talk to you anymore. True be told, as the sole girl in a classful of boys, it kind of made me want to talk to you even more!"). Likewise, our conversations about horror, science fiction and fantasy are something I always enjoy and draw inspiration from, spiced by your endless grit and "give zero fucks" sense of humor. Thank you, my friend.
- *To Odie*: Thank you for generously supporting my work over the years and for always asking me to draw unique, interesting and diverse things! You've made a huge difference in my life and I appreciate your patronage and friendship very much!
- *To Doctors Craig Dionne, Bernard Miller, Xavi Reyes, Paul Wake, Sam Hirst, Dale Townshend, Eric Acton, and David Calonne*: Thank you for staying in touch over the years and giving me feedback, encouragement and ideas. To

Craig, in particular—I wouldn't have pushed so hard to go to grad school if not for your initial glowing praise and support. Thank you for that! And to the rest of the Humanities faculty at EMU and MMU I haven't mentioned by name—I enjoyed all of your classes and the opportunity to absorb and learn from what you had to offer!

- *To Doctor Sorcha Ní Fhlainn*: Thank you for recommending *The Monstrous-Feminine* to me at MMU; it inspired me a lot in writing this book!

- *To Dr. Sandy Norton*: Thank you for lending me tremendous emotional/material support and kindness in the most trying of times. You always encouraged me to write, too, and valued my "great heart." Per your instructions, I've poured as much of it as I could into this book—to better help those in need (also, thank you for your 1968 copy of *The Pearl: A Journal of Facetive and Voluptuous Reading*. It's everything I wished Austen had been and provided a much-needed "other side of the coin" to consider when writing my own book about such matters).

(artist: Angel)

- *To Angel*: Thank you for being a really wonderful friend and for showing me a lot of cool things to include in *Sex Positivity* that I wouldn't have otherwise! Meeting you was a delight I can scarce express and working with you—on my art, or helping you with yours—has been an absolute treat.

- *To my good friend, Seren*: You were, are, and always will be best girl. Not only have you always had my back, but your dress sense is impeccable and your sweet kindness knows no bounds (also, you have great taste in literature and in horror). Thank you for being so understanding and wonderful, babydoll. Kisses and hugs galore!

Of course, the painful knowledge of my enemies also went into the melting pot—i.e., older abusive lovers, which include the likes of Zeuhl, Jadis, and Cuwu. While I am leery of giving too much credit, I do have some thoughts to impart to these individuals:

- *To Zeuhl*: My scarecrow. A small part of me will always miss you the most—for being one of the most interesting and cool people I've ever met—yet also recognizes how, seemingly on a whim, you selfishly hurt me worse than anyone else (and offered the most brainless explanation imaginable); no bullshit, you did some really fucked up stuff and basically turned into a shadow of your former self, but I'll still cherish the love we shared, overseas. It was fun while it lasted!
- *To Jadis*: My tinman *and* wicked witch. Though you hurt me badly, I still learned a great deal from you and your beautiful wickedness. I have no desire to see you again, though, and write this message as a final parting gift: I wrote *Sex Positivity* to heal from what you did; your heartless abuse was my dragon to slay and now I have. After countless nights of terror spent under your thrall, I can safely say with joy and pride, "You have no power over me!"
- *And to Cuwu*: My cowardly lion. Our friendship may have been brief, and you were pretty shitty and callow towards the end, but it was still hella saucy and helped pushed me to come out as trans and write this book (which contains many Marxist terms/colloquialisms that I learned personally from you); also thank you for lending me your copy of *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* and for introducing me to SpongeBob. It really was a good show.

(artist: Ronin Dude)

Special thanks to all of the other models involved; their efforts breathed tremendous beauty, inspiration and meaning into my work. To Dani—thank you for modeling specifically for this project on short notice and for generally being cool and sweet! Meowing from Hell, thank you for the abundance of reference material early on and for sharing my work as much as you did; it made a giant difference (even if you ultimately disagreed with my politics/identity and treated me fairly poorly because of it)! Emma, thank you for keeping my spirits (and other things) up during this book's creation!

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Thanks to the various content creators, actors, speedrunners, and streamers I've interviewed over the years for my various interview series, whose reflections have helped me rethink what the Gothic even is. Without your contributions, this book as it currently exists would not be possible:

- "From Vintage to Retro: An FPS Q&A series" (2021): This Q&A series centers on power and how it's arranged in FPS between the player and the game. In it, interview Twitch streamers and speedrunners, but also several game developers who play and create FPS games: Jrmhd91, Cynic the Original, Alec and Stuff, Frosty Xen, Yellow Swerve, and James Towne.

- "'Mazes and Labyrinths' Q&A, Interview Compendium" (2021): A series of Q&A interviews I give, interviewing speedrunners of the *Metroid* franchise: CScottyW, Behemoth87, ShinyZeni.

- "Hell-blazers: Speedrunning *Doom Eternal*" (2020): I created this series when *Doom Eternal* was new. It interviews Twitch streamers and speedrunners about the game and why they play it: DraQu, Under the Mayo, Byte Me, The Spud Hunter, King Dime, Your Mate Devo, and Frosty Xen.

- "Giving My Two Cents: A Metal Compendium" (2020): I love heavy metal, and have made a name for myself by commenting on videos by Metallica remixers on YouTube. Eventually I decided to interview these remixers in a *post hoc* Q&A series: Creblestar, Bryce Barilla, State of Mercury, and of course, Ahdy Khairat (rock on, dude; your remixes absolutely rule).

Kailey (to the left) and Sam (to the right) on-set (courtesy of Greg Massie)

- "The 'Alien: Ore' Interview Project" (2019): My first interview series, this project centers around the Spear sisters' *Alien* short film, "Alien: Ore." Originally I loved "Ore" so much I did my own extensive analysis of it ("Alien Ore: Explained (Spoilers)!" 2019). Kailey and Sam Spear enjoyed that so much they agreed to be interviewed. It includes numerous interviews from the cast and crew, all of whom are total rockstars: Mikela Jay, the star, and her co-stars Tara Pratt, Steven Stiller, Ambrose Gardener; Dallas Harvey of Vancouver FX; and Rose Hastreiter and Gerry Plant, the composers of Leonty Music Group.

Thanks to Boss Ross, Frank Frazetta, Zdzisław Beksinski, Stephen Gemmell, and Ridley Scott (and associate artists; e.g., Mobius, Giger and Cobb, etc) for having a profound and lasting influence on my artwork, imagination and life. Some of you haunted my childhood; others came later and blew my mind. But you're all rockstars.

Lastly, thank you to the many, many other artists hitherto unmentioned whose work is featured all throughout *Sex Positivity*. Some of you are recent discoveries, be they models from the present or masters from the past. However, I have followed and studied some of you for many years, and now feel very

differently than I did once upon a time! For example, I can see the sexist, racist and otherwise xenophobic/fascist undertones in Frazetta. All the same, his canon is still worthy of dialectical-material study—to learn from the past and appreciate the sex-positive lessons in his work, however imperfect! May they shape the world into something better.

Thank you all very much for reading! Be brave and don't be afraid to learn! Nazi pigs and neoliberals, fuck off.

—Persephone van der Waard

(artist: *Persephone van der Waard*)
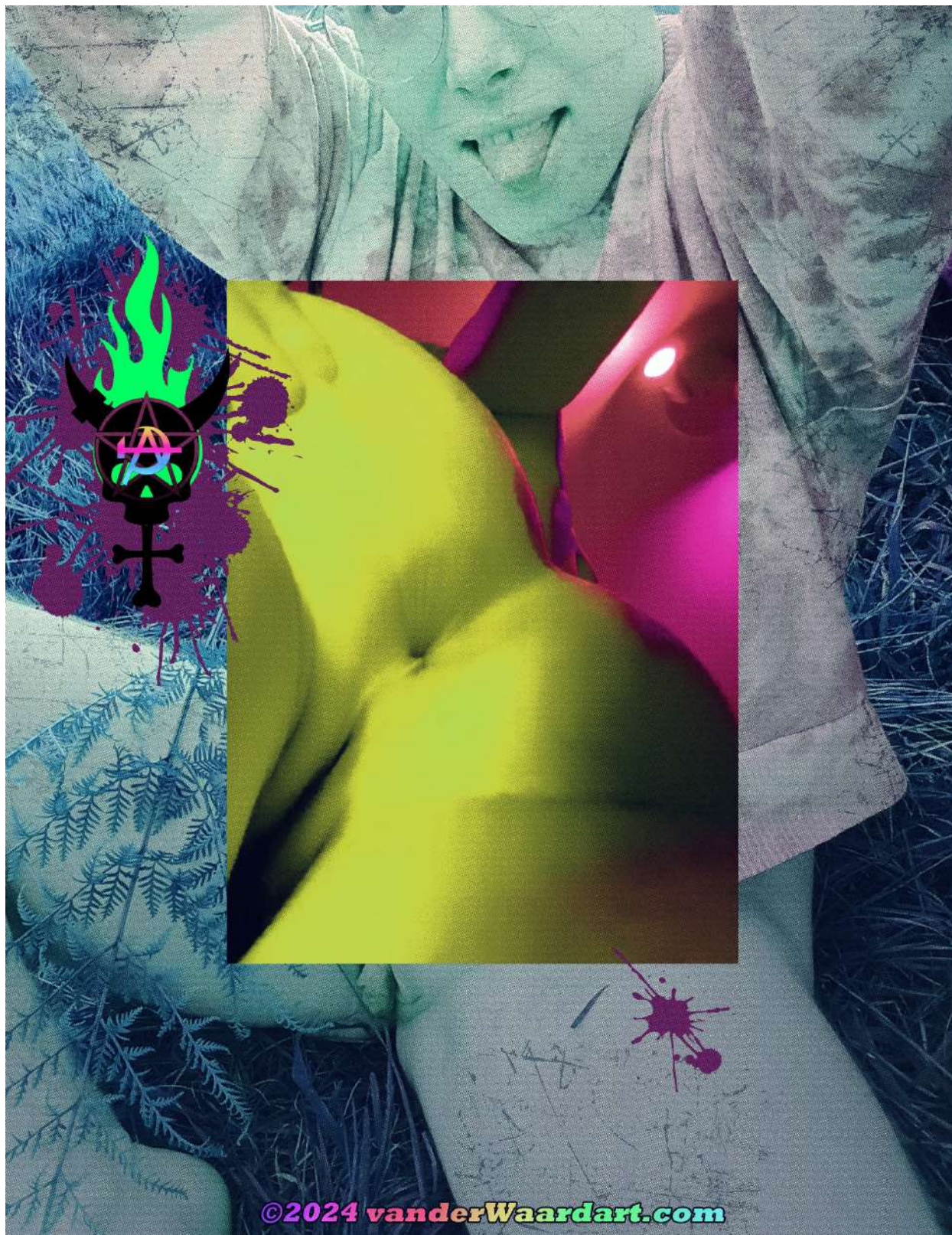
(model and artist: *Bay* and *Persephone van der Waard*)

About the Author

I've walked a path of darkness
Just to open up my mind
I've learned of hidden secrets
Scattered through the depths of time
And at my father's side I witnessed
Things I can't describe
"They must be evil!"
The people cried

So when the prince went missing
And the mob was at our door
The king would not see reason
Only vengeance, only war
My father's neck held in his grip
Until he was no more
But the prince was still alive

And I said
May never a noble of your murderous line
Survive to reach a greater age than thine

Because I'm the Alchemist creator of your fears
I'm the Sorcerer, a curse throughout the years
And I won't rest 'til no one's left
The ending of your line
Their lives are a prison of my design

  —Eric Bloom; "The Alchemist," on Blue Öyster Cult's The Symbol Remains (2020)

(model and photographer: [Persephone van der Waard](#) and Zeuhl)

Persephone van der Waard is the author of *Sex Positivity*—its art director, sole invigilator, and primary editor (the other co-writer/co-editor being [Bay Ryan](#)). She is a MtF trans woman, atheist/Satanist, poly/pan kinkster [with two partners](#). Including her multiple [playmates/friends and collaborators](#), Persephone and her thirteen muses work/play together on *Sex Positivity* and on her artwork at large as a sex-positive force. First and foremost, she is a sex work activist, fighting for sex worker liberation through iconoclastic/sex-positive artwork. To that, she is an anarcho-Communist writer, illustrator, BDSM educator, sex worker, genderqueer/environmental activist and Gothic ludologist—with her (independent) PhD having been written on Metroidvania combined with the above variables; i.e., to coin and articulate ludo-Gothic BDSM as a sex-positive poetic device. [She sometimes writes reviews, Gothic analyses, and interviews for fun on her old blog](#); or [does continual independent research on Metroidvania and speedrunning](#) every now and again. If you're interested in her work or curious about illustrated or written commissions, [please refer to her commissions page for more information](#).

[Click here to see a condensed example of Persephone's wide portfolio.](#)