Uncovering the indicators of men’s authorship in the 18thC gothic: Putrefaction, caves, and incest

Predictive features of men’s and women’s 18thC Gothics at large (at scale? En masse?)

Critical reception of women / creative realms of men

Women aren’t weird, men are weird. (And we’re sexist.)

[This paper asks how to identify and discuss gendered trends.] This paper examines more than five hundred pre-Victorian Gothic works to ask whether female writers created categorically different works than their male peers, [looking for predictive power.] Two qualitative bibliographies of the Gothic provide “motifs” and “Gothic types” for computational modelling. [There’s no female gothic, but there is a male gothic.]

1. Introduction

The Gothic novel in the 1790s comes with its own conventional narrative. Ann Radcliffe, the “Great Enchantress,” enthrals audiences for a decade with literary blockbusters which are gobbled up by women who scribble their own novels in response. The marketplace is glutted with these unskilled copies of Radcliffe, written by authoresses eager for Radcliffe’s fame or her financial security, trying to replicate Radcliffe’s formula. The popularity of this “school of Radcliffe” is both its threat and its power: eighteenth century reviewers try to dismiss this swelling tide of women’s writing, or at least to condemn it, but the Gothic cannot be ignored. This conventional narrative of female Gothic excess hasn’t been taken as fully factual since those eighteenth century reviewers first coined it — the story of the great flood of women’s Gothic writing is more revelatory of eighteenth century anxieties than it is of eighteenth century print practice — but it is nonetheless a cornerstone of conversation about the Gothic. [And, as I will show, familiar misapprehensions are harder to remove from our thinking than we think.]

[It is necessary for new knowledge to be built upon the foundations of former knowledge; but equally it is necessary to re-investigate the truth of what is “known.”] This project revives two qualitative bibliographies from the 1980s to seek gendered patterns of writing among hundreds of early Gothic texts. I am particularly interested in trends that could have predictive power: rather than speculating about a book’s meaning based on its author’s gender, I set out to ask whether, in fast, there is anything in a book’s content that would allow us to speculate on its author’s gender.Implicit in this approach is a methodological critique: [for an aspect of writing to merit discussion in gendered terms, it ought to appear in more than a few texts]. Given the social reality of gender, it does not require gender essentialism to hypothesize that men and women might have [different horizons of publishability]. [The realities of gender are relevant to the work of feminist scholarship, and to the challenging of patriarchal narratives.] [But gender essentialism is equally dangerous to these aims.] [The middle path I chart takes a sociological[?] approach, at a larger scale than individual texts. I treat gender as only one possible (weak) factor of influence; indeed, I treat gendered difference itself as the [thing] to be proven.] [[Using bibliographies prevents me from re-inventing the wheel, and also lets me “check” past work to see how, and how much, we can repurpose older work.]] Although this paper will make its argument largely by way of numbers, in the newfangled methodology of the “digital humanities”, the technological intervention is incredibly simple: nothing more than a few bibliographies, turned to a new angle with a “pivot table.” The primary work of knowledge production took place thirty years ago, [when Ann Tracy and Frederick Frank wrote their qualitative bibliographies.] In the end, I find that, although Ann Tracy’s bibliography can be re-used, Frederick Frank’s bibliography is shaped inextricably and irretrievably by the sexism of the time. Even though we “already know” that older scholarship is sexist, this experiment shows how difficult it is to build on those foundations / correct them.

1.1. The Female Gothic

[The thing in past literary criticism that I wish to subject to scrutiny is the category of the Female Gothic.] The “obviously” female-associated phenomenon [of the previously mentioned conventional narrative] led to the critical category of the “Female Gothic” to discuss narratives of women in patriarchal distress. Ellen Ledoux lists off the standard requirements — “a distressed heroine, domestic incarceration, threats of sexual violence, anxiety about monstrous or absent mothers” (2) / “women’s domestic incarceration, sexual violence, economic disenfranchisement and spectral maternity” (2). [TODO: Throw in a couple other definitions here, esp Ellen Moers] A definition based on the theme of female persecution enabled work like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s Madwoman in the Attic (1979), Kate Ferguson Ellis’s The Contested Castle (1989), Eugenia DeLamotte’s Perils of the Night (1990), and Helene Meyers’s Femicidal Fears (2001) to [take seriously [specifically female experiences of the threats of patriarchy]]. As their titles show, these works [pursue [individual kinds of fears/themes/motifs] / use the particularity of [motifs?] to tie texts together.] Concurrently, [attention to gendered authorship][enables] Juliann Fleenor’s The Female Gothic (1983), Diane Long Hoeveler’s Gothic Feminism (1998), Emma Clery’s Women’s Gothic (2000), [Pickering and Chatto published a 5-volume series Varieties of Female Gothic (2002)] and Donna Heiland’s Gothic and Gender (2004) [to turn their attention to gender itself / make claims on the scale of gender.] [Make sure to show that both things are good: TODO: Cite whoever it is who praises whichever text it is for its ambitious chronological breadth enabled by the Female Gothic framework]

Work that complicates our image the Female Gothic — like work that challenges the conventional image of Radcliffean imitators — is not new. Almost as soon as the term came into use, scholars have been pushing against its boundaries, grappling with the true diversity of women’s Gothic writing. [TODO: Ellen Moers, and some hint from her regarding the limits.] An attention to the diversity of women’s gothic writing is picking up steam. The Female Gothic: New Directions (2009), edited by Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace. Avril Horner’s and Sue Zlosnik’s Edinburgh Companion on Women and the Gothic (2016) [both do things]. Nonetheless, however, even as Gothic studies grew more complex in other ways, this definition offered something useful in identifying and providing vocabulary for a particular set of texts, so it has been impressively stable. The terms “Female Gothic” and “women’s gothic” are both in currency. Emma Clery’s Women’s Gothic (2000). The Female Gothic: New Directions (2009). Wallace D (2013) \*Female Gothic Histories\*. Murphy P (2016) \*The New Woman Gothic\*. [TODO: Robert Miles, Alison Milbank]. Even Barbara Benedict’s “‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Novels?”, which questions the premise of gender division in its title, refers with assurance to “the subgenre of the female Gothic, which emphasized the uncertainties of perception that heroines suffer in an obscure, dangerous, patriarchal world”.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The continuing use of [Female / women’s Gothic] stands in a striking contrast to the dearth of work on the Male Gothic. Even in a context in which men are assumed to be famously outnumbered, [the status of “male” as “default” means] their works are “unmarked” or assumed to be defined by things other than gender. The Female Gothic is often treated as synonymous with the explained supernatural, or the ‘terror’ mode in the terror/horror distinction, but no terminology is used for the ‘unexplained supernatural,’ and horror works by men are called horror, rather than Male Gothic. The few explicit identifications of a male mode of writing begin with the female and define the male as its lack or opposite. Ellen Ledoux, for example, in the context of attaching the Female Gothic to “the ‘explained supernatural style’” (3), adds a definition for the Male Gothic, “in which ghosts, devils and other supernatural phenomena demand a willful suspension of disbelief from the reader” (3) David Richter provides definitions based on plot structures: “The ‘female Gothic’ is … a melodrama arousing sympathy and suspense through the unwarranted persecution of an innocent. The ‘male Gothic’ is a punitive tragedy…in which we are made both to desire and to expect the condign punishment of the central figure.”[[2]](#footnote-2) [TODO: Robert Miles’ definition] [TODO: more definitions of the male gothic (or places that fail to define it)] What none of these definitions of a male Gothic include, however, is a link between the literary techniques and the authors’ gendered experience.

From this literary history, Ledoux concludes that “the category “Female Gothic” more accurately reflects the ideological goals of second-wave feminist literary criticism than it represents the narratives of early women Gothic writers” (2) Despite many scholars’ work showing that “women’s early Gothic writing— a great deal of which is only accessible to us because of the recovery work of feminist scholars—is much more aesthetically, politically, thematically, and generically diverse than the Female Gothic categorization suggests,” and despite ongoing critical work to refine the term Female Gothic, she argues persuasively that “its usage has limited the ways in which scholars approach women’s Gothic writing” (2). Ledoux set out to “to explain why the discrepancy between available primary textual material and textual analysis exists and how it came to be,” (2) a task which she accomplishes successfully through a carefully close-read history of nineteenth and twentieth century literary politics. [My goal is to take up the work of correcting these discrepancies.] [I explore a “middle zone” between primary material and analysis: bibliography.] [TODO: connect more to broader context?]

1.2. Methods

I began by asking whether [I could actually tell men and women’s books apart]. [This approach asks about men’s and women’s gothics, rather than male and female gothics. It does not assume that either actually exists.] Based on my findings, I suggest that our attention to gender has been exactly the opposite of what is supported by the variety of texts produced under the Gothic umbrella. Although there are many Gothic features which are strongly predictive of male authorship, I find nothing that is the exclusive province of women. [I contradict the claim that “it is rare for male authors to write in the “female” style (Miles, 2000)” (Ledoux 3)] [I was deciding between two theories: Women have special license to express certain politics / sympathies? Men have special license to write gross books? I set aside the first matter (I can’t detect anything notably feminine), but find strong support for the second. Men have special license to be weird and gross.] [Make clear that it’s not biologically essential, it’s social: if a woman brought this manuscript to a printer, it would not get published] [In the field of Gothic studies, this work suggests that we can fold the “female Gothic” into the unmarked category of “the Gothic mainstream,” and begin an exploration of a “men’s Gothic.”] [Because only Tracy’s bibliography provided a reliable foundation for this research, my work also suggests [that we need increased skepticism of the biases built into the very data-collection of all research]] [Connect to broader context: must always remember that “data” is in fact “capta,” even/especially “data” which does not present itself as such. Especially crucial for feminist/anti-oppressive scholars]

Johanna Drucker has given compelling warnings about the dangers of treating constructed information as empirically objective “data” which may then be passively “visualized”.[[3]](#footnote-3) Willard McCarty’s discussion of models as both “pragmatic” and “fictive” is more accurate to the scholarly process of gathering, classifying, correlating, and interpreting information.[[4]](#footnote-4) Whether a model is a reading or a bar chart, the worth of that model must be judged by its “fruitfulness”[[5]](#footnote-5), a term for which Stephen Ramsay provides a useful definition: “the robustness of the discussion that a particular procedure annunciates”[[6]](#footnote-6). In other words, whether or not the model has revealed what we expected to see, it has revealed something with which we must now engage. Exact correspondence is thus less of a “fundamental principle”[[7]](#footnote-7), and more of an imagined destination which spurs valuable journeys. This flexibility allows us to cope with the fact that as a model is constructed, it becomes sensitive to some areas of difference while eliding others. No model needs to be accurate in all points, so long as it is sensitive to the desired area of differences. It is also worth noting that not all models are computational, as is evidenced by the meticulous historical research of Leah Price, whose monograph The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel argues that any edited text — ‘elaborate’ or not — produces, not a flawed or distorted copy of the original, but a new text.[[8]](#footnote-8) As Price observes, when scholars examine texts — when we take notes on them, extract quotes for close reading, summarize of categorize scenes, chapters of books — our act of reading is also one of editing. McCarty allows us to recognize that this mental editing is not a sign of scholarly weakness, but a model, made necessary by the limits of human memory.

My theoretical approach emphasizes the continuities between computational approaches to literature and the the venerable tradition of archival bibliographical research. Heather Love has notably turned to sociological microanalysis as a model for 'thin description' close-but-not-deep reading methods; I employ qualitative computational modelling as another method which seeks the same goals. Love emphasizes thin description as not just “fine-grained” but “exhaustive” (and possibly exhausting)[[9]](#footnote-9) but with the reward that “one could—at least ideally—pay equal attention to every aspect … and record it faithfully.”[[10]](#footnote-10) I add to this that good descriptions offer themselves up for reuse and recombination, by rendering somehow graspable that which they describe. Downplaying the importance of close interpretation, Love says that “Good descriptions … account for the real variety that is already there.”[[11]](#footnote-11) It is the work of accounting for real variety that both bibliography and computation demand: the system must have a way to cope with odd cases. Even if one simply makes an exception to otherwise-established rules, or adds an explanatory footnote or a comment within one’s code, outliers must be acknowledged and grappled with. I use computational interventions to interrogate the literary models represented in two older bibliographies. In so doing, I argue, I demonstrate the utility of qualitative description, as a promising avenue toward revisiting older scholarships and re-forging connections with the work that has come before.

My two ‘texts’ — bibliographies by Ann Tracy and Frederick Frank — are thus themselves models of “The Gothic Novel.” Because, as Price observes, the process of editing a text must always reveal the editor’s “unspoken assumptions about the most efficient way to convey information, and indeed what counts as information at all,”[[12]](#footnote-12) the editorial processes behind each bibliography makes each one sensitive to very different concerns.[[13]](#footnote-13) Ann Tracy’s The Gothic Novel 1790-1830: Plot Summaries and Index to Motifs emphasizes dramatic events and singular images, with recurring details systematically tallied in the index. In contrast, Frederick Frank’s The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel emphasizes each work’s overall tone and provides qualitative and subtle evaluations of its critical reception. Although only 178 works are shared between the two, they usefully complement each other in the search for gendered Gothic writing traditions. The process of computationally re-rendering each bibliography amplifies each bibliographer’s choices, allowing me to see whether their distinctions are fruitful, and whether their models point toward distinct men’s and women’s Gothics.

Over the course of three literary experiments, in which I model the early Gothic novel by means of bibliographic data, I ask whether the hundreds of women writing Gothic novels wrote observably different books than the hundreds of men doing the same. This project ultimately reinforces Ledoux’s argument that the Female Gothic is a retroactive critical creation. Frederick Frank’s critical categories paint a picture of Radcliffe as the centre of a group of female, sentimental copiers. But Ann Tracy’s less-critically-mediated details present us with a largely undifferentiated gothic mainstream, in which the only gendered pocket is a group of male writers whose gender gives them license to go to extremes.

2. Frederick Frank's "Gothic types"

[Frederick Frank has an important role on the literary history of the Gothic.] [TODO: summarize his bibliography; nod to the importance of these contributions] The First Gothics was published in 1987 [TODO: contextualize in his output] and provides listings for 499 works, [YEARS]. He offers a “Gothic Type” and a “Critical Synopsis” of each text to place it within the critical consensus. His “Critical Synopsis” often provides very few plot details in favour of describing the work’s literary borrowings, narrative structure, and historical reception.[[14]](#footnote-14) These miniature essays are always at least a paragraph long, and often exceed a full page; they capture impressive nuance and context. His Gothic “types” are not stable overarching categories: for his 500 texts, Frank provides 309 unique classifications.[[15]](#footnote-15) In their flexibility and detail, Frank’s “types” reflect [Frow’s](scrivcmt://79C1C286-81B0-4864-A056-12FA8632433F) understanding of genre: it is impossible to classify each text into the genre to which it “belongs”; instead, Frank describes the generic expectations which each text uses[[16]](#footnote-16). His Gothic type for Sophia Lee’s *The Recess*, for example, labels the novel as “Gothified history (terror and sentimental elements), connecting it simultaneously to the “Gothified history” of William Godwin’s St. Leon, the “terror mode” of Radcliffe’s novels, and the “sentimental Gothic” of Charlotte Dacre’s The Libertine and The Passions. These threads cannot be traced systematically — he provides no index or definition of the types themselves. They are hardly even deterministic: The Mysteries of Ferney Castle is listed twice, once under each of its disputed authors, and receives a different Gothic type in each entry (“Pure or high Gothic (terror mode)” at entry 188 by Robert Huish, and “Gothified history (Radcliffean imitation)” at entry 222 by G. Lambe). Instead, his Gothic types model the Gothic as a shifting history, with each novel as the temporary centre of influences that stretch both forward and backward in time.

Adapting Frank’s model for my own, then, required working somewhat against the grain of his assumptions. However, I have avoided simply assigning each text one simple genre. Instead, I have separated out each strand of influence within his complex “Gothic types” by dividing each “type” into a set of tags, and tallied the uses of each tag.[[17]](#footnote-17) This process generated 190 unique tags, most of which only apply to one or two works. By rendering the tags individually listable, my model imposes a more systematic ontology than Frank’s. However, because each work is “tagged” numerous times, my model retains the details of each work’s often-idiosyncratic combinations of influences. My approach treats each “tag” as an independent object of inquiry, informative of one small facet of a work’s participation in its generic context. I ask whether the association of a given tag with a work constitutes meaningful information regarding the probable gender of that work’s author.

Figure 1: [TODO: add a table of these most widespread tags.]

For the most part, however, Frank’s bibliography resists division into a gendered binary. As Figure 1 shows, the two most prevalent tags in the corpus as a whole are “Gothic” (83% of all works) and “pure/high” (39%), both of which have the same gendered distribution of the sample as a whole. Our only hint of a gendered trend among the most widespread tags is the third most prevalent tag, “terror” (34% of works), which, at 50% female, is somewhat above the female baseline of 43%. [Instead, the most prevalent tags highlight the subjectivity of interpretation [/multiplicity of Frank’s assessments?] built into Frank’s “gothic types”]. The tags “mode” and “elements” are each applied to 27% of all works in the sample. These terms appear as qualifiers for his other assessments, as in “terror mode” or “sentimental elements,” and accordingly remind us to modify the implied force of “terror” and “sentimental” as tags. Indeed, many of Frank’s tags are essentially qualifiers: “mode”, “effects”, “Gothified”, and “imitation,” for example. In Frank’s Gothic typology, then, the Gothic is not monolithic: each work assembles multiple elements, which have their sources elsewhere, and are all interconnected. Nothing for Frank is just one genre.

Even horror and terror are far from mutually exclusive. Of the 53 “horror” works, 26 (49%) are also tagged “terror”. These 26 are 50% by men, making the horror-terror mode more predictive of male authorship than horror alone. Of the remaining 27 works which are purely horror, no terror, there are 9 by women, 9 by men, and 9 unknown — a far cry from the horror Gothic as the exclusive province of men. The only part that’s consistent with the conventional narrative is that terror vastly outnumbers horror.

[Transition: mathematically, the norm is always going to be dominated by that which both sexes can participate in. (The maximum prevalence an exclusively-female trait can have is 50%). So let’s look at tags for which women or men are overrepresented.]

Figure 2: [TODO: add a table of tags in which women are over-represented.]

The demographics of Frank’s genre tags seem to support a category of the “Female Gothic,” and even point toward a definition of it.

Frank’s indexes slightly more female authors than male[[18]](#footnote-18). Three of the most popular tags are even more female-dominated than his woman-heavy sample would lead us to expect: [43% of Frank’s corpus is written by women, but that 43% is responsible for 50% of the “terror” works, 65% of the “Radcliffean” works, and a striking 77% of the “sentimental.”](scrivcmt://D792CDEF-F3E5-4FC0-A26D-DF3513CC6F52) Frank thus implicitly describes a Radcliffean, sentimental, terror Gothic which is also a women’s Gothic. The conventional narrative of sentimental literature is strikingly similar to that of Gothic literature. [Quote some folks about sentimental literature.] To find the sentimental tied to the female Gothic here initially points toward a revival of an older history of the Gothic. [TODO: pull in all that stuff from my previous drafts]

Figure 3: [TODO: add a table of tags in which men are over-represented.]

Men outnumber women in the “Germanic” tag (which encompasses “German”, “Germanic”, “Schauerroman”, “Rauberroman”, and “Ritterroman”) — of these 29 Germanic Gothics, 18 are by men (62%). “Horror”, too, is disproportionately male: 42% of “horror” works are by men, a proportion that is solidly above their baseline 31%, though not astonishing. “Lewisite” is about the same (46% male).

When a tag is strongly male dominated, it generally applies to only a few novels [TODO: FOR EXAMPLE…], giving the impression of a one-off rather than a gendered school.

[But these could just be Frank’s biases in how to categorize, rather than something meaningful.]

More strikingly male-dominated are two characteristics [which come down almost entirely to personal assessment]: “prototypical” and “polemical” works. [Twelve](scrivcmt://48675305-CE8E-47FA-9F68-39F52C2AC7B2) works are identified as “proto” or “early” forms of something else; of those 12, 7 are by men (58%). This evocative detail could either suggest that the Gothic’s roots are more masculine than its popular flourishing, or that critical attention is more likely to credit male authors with originating important literary forms. A slightly larger group of works exists with the tags “polemical,” “philosophical,” “political,” and “radical/revolutionary” — of these 19, 13 are by men (68%).

The highest male percentage that applies to more than one work is for “polemical” Gothics, which fiercely flog some viewpoint or another: 83% of the six “polemical” works are by men. The male correlation with “polemical” works is particularly suggestive in light of the numbers for “didactic” works, which are entirely [neutral (50% each)](scrivcmt://B12756B6-258F-4563-80D0-AF44ACABAC62). “Didactic” works are the only works with a persuasive agenda in which men do not dominate, suggesting a qualitative distinction: men can produce confrontational political works, whereas the didactic is a more equal-opportunity field in which women, too, can promote their ideas under the aegis of instruction. [OR, women’s opinions are treated as nurturing/“teaching” … This one could genuinely be either 18thC social pressures or 20thC interpretive bias.]

Takeaway: Frank’s assessments are critical artefacts

There are gendered currents, but none of them are striking enough to start making predictions about the many unsigned works.

3. Ann Tracy's "Gothic motifs"

TODO: add contrasts to Frank, begin with explanation of Tracy

Tracy’s bibliography is built to be more like a particularly helpful finding aid than a comprehensive check-list. Her most unusual qualitative bibliographical work is her ten-page “Index to Motifs” identifying the books in which 208 different “motifs” appear. Tracy uses the term “motif” broadly to encompass a wide range of plot elements, images, and character types. The index is intended for “scholars with particular interests”[[19]](#footnote-19), who wish to locate and read books containing individual story elements, such as “doppelganger” or “garden as scene of temptation”. Accordingly, Tracy prioritizes presenting a wide range of highly distinctive motifs rather than those that constitute the norm. Indeed, she intentionally excluded the most popular motifs: “the abundance of murders,” she says, “argued for the retention… of specialized murders only,”[[20]](#footnote-20) and castles have similarly been ignored. In addition to the motifs, Tracy provides a plot summary of each novel. Her summaries, too, emphasize distinctive details, pointing out things like “a particularly interesting Satan, with molten insides”.[[21]](#footnote-21) As a model of the Gothic, Tracy’s bibliography elides continuities to increase its sensitivity to points of difference. It treats each novel as a collection of discrete elements, only one of which is likely to be of interest to a given scholar. The motifs themselves — Satans, murders, doppelgangers, gardens — are thus constructed as the stable objects of study, which must be examined through the filter of individual novels.

I take Tracy’s model to its logical extension by foregrounding her motifs. I distilled her index of 208 motifs into 92 charts of motifs which appear in at least 20 works.[[22]](#footnote-22) Using her model to investigate the possibility of a women’s Gothic, I examine the potential predictive power of each motif. I ask whether the presence of any given motif in a work constitutes meaningful information regarding the probable gender of that work’s author. A series of procedural design choices emphasizes the qualitative interpretation inherent in my framing of this question.[[23]](#footnote-23) An identifiable gendered school immediately emerges: 38 distinctly male-authored motifs[[24]](#footnote-24) indicate a men’s Gothic, defined by extreme horror tropes.

Comparing these male-dominated motifs to the neutral or female-dominated motifs involves constant escalation. Women may write about libertines (64% female), whose seductions may be coercive and almost always end poorly for their victims, but men write about the act of rape itself (75% male). Tracy’s motifs suggest that the darkest side of the Gothic was primarily the province of men: death is female-dominated when it is sad or pious (61% female), but murder is male-dominated (64% male), as are blood (68% male), corpses (70% male), and skeletons and skulls (73% male). When male authors write about death, then, it seems that they dwell not on its emotional impact, but on its more vivid physical results. Similarly, human sacrifice (64% male), starvation (67% male), torture (67% male), and putrefaction (74% male), all involve directly depicting that which other novels might merely imply. The masculine impulse to “go farther,” to replace coy allusions with unflinching enactments, is most evident in these novels’ treatment of incest. General themes of incest are widespread, appearing in 51 of the 208 novels under consideration — nearly a quarter of the works. However, in 45 of those novels, there are no cases of what Tracy terms “actual” incest, only “incest, literary flirtation with (including false alarms, foiled attempts, threats, and unconsummated incestuous passion).” The narrative discretion behind a literary flirtation with incest is employed roughly equally by both male and female authors (54% male / 46% female), and makes up the vast majority of all depictions of incest. However, six cases of actual, no-narrative-flinching incest are documented— and all six are by men. To force one’s readers to look directly at the horrors depicted, rather than allowing them to become terrified by their own imaginations, is, of course, the technique of the horror Gothic, as contrasted with the terror Gothic. Identifying the horror Gothic as a predominantly male affair comes as no surprise, and accords nicely with the critical tradition of identifying Matthew Lewis as the quintessential horror Gothic writer. Together, these motifs point to a distinct men’s Gothic in the Lewisian horror tradition.

Add close-reading: read some depictions of incest??

TODO: Revise this paragraph so evidence more strongly points to argument

*The “horror” tag, certainly, is associated with a number of motifs. Predictably, too, the “horror” motifs look similar to the men’s motifs. At the top of the list of “horror” motifs is “Inquisition” — 63% of “horror” Gothics include the Inquisition, an enormous increase over the baseline 15% presence of that motif. This striking result lends credence to the work of scholars like Robert Miles who take conspiracy as a central horror-Gothic concern. Next, less expectedly, are secret doors, at the exact same level of increase — 48% more secret doors in “horror” novels than in the corpus as a whole. “Horror” Gothics also have 47% more prophetic dreams, 46% more corpses, 40% more drugging, and 39% more banishment than the corpus as a whole. These motifs remain distinctly associated with “horror” when we instead compare “horror” directly to “terror,” rather than comparing the corpus as a whole: all of these occur two to three times more often with the “horror” tag than with “terror”. Horror and terror are most sharply distinguished from each other, though, by “actual incest”, which occurs five times more often with “horror” than with “terror”. As when Tracy was considered alone, this minor motif has strong predictive power.[[25]](#footnote-25) The next strongest distinguishing motifs are “Satan and lesser demons” and “loose woman”, both of which appear four times more frequently in “horror” than in “terror”. Three times more frequent in “horror” works are “rape”, “pre-nuptial death”, and “banishment.” All of these motifs paint a distinct horror tradition, which our earlier models also allow us to see as male. But they also complicate our understanding of “horror” by introducing motifs which were previously not male-dominated enough to become part of the categorical definition.*

TODO: Revise this paragraph so evidence more strongly points to argument:

*The “terror” tag, as expected, is less strongly defined by its motifs. Several motifs do appear with slightly higher frequency within “terror” works than in the baseline, but generally only by a few percentage points. 43 motifs appear in “horror” works with a 20% or greater increase in frequency over their baseline prevalence, but not one motif crosses that threshold for “terror.” If we examine the top of the “terror” list anyway, the tag shows an anemic increase in fainting (19% more than baseline), suicide mentions (18%), female fainting (18%), and secret doors (18%) compared to the overall corpus, but all of these mostifs appear more in “horror” works than they do in “terror.” Fainting, suicide, and secret doors might allow us to spot terror or horror Gothics against a background of sentimental Gothics or other modes, but they are not useful in defining a terror/horror divide. We can more directly seek that distinction by comparing “terror” only to “horror,” but from this view too, however, there are fewer motifs, with weaker correlations. Whereas there were three motifs which appeared four or five times more often in horror works than terror works, there are no motifs which distinguish terror that strongly. One motif does appear with triple frequency in terror works compared to horror: “speech, unfinished, on deathbed.”  Appearing a little more than twice as often are “good abbess”, and “good clergyman,” and a little less than twice are “attempted or contemplated suicide” and “lunacy.” None of these motifs drew our attention when we examined Tracy alone, because they are not strongly gendered. It is potentially fruitful to see them distinguished now, and consider them as potential markers of a terror Gothic as distinct from a women’s Gothic. But they ultimately reaffirm that the terror Gothic itself is simply the Gothic mainstream.*

TODO: Revise this paragraph so evidence more strongly points to argument

*More than half of the motifs under consideration are not strongly gendered in either direction. Four are even perfect ties: elopement (all subcategories); duelling and other single combat; fainting, female; and rediscovery of lost relatives. Moreover, the more popular a motif is — that is, the larger a role it plays in constituting the default expectations of the genre — the more likely it is to be non-gendered. Indeed, all of the strongly male-dominated motifs are much less common than the more neutral motifs. The neutrality of the most popular motifs is essentially a mathematical inevitability: nothing can achieve more than 50% popularity while being used by only 50% of authors. The Gothic mainstream must be defined by that which is available to all authors within the genre. In terms of sheer prevalence, the defining features of the Gothic[[26]](#footnote-26) appear to be fainting (present in 77% of all novels), confinement (66% of novels), abduction (57%), references to suicide (47%), and storms (44%). Only one of those five motifs, suicide (61% male), shows hints of a gendered divide.*

4. Radcliffe & the Female Gothic

TODO: Revise this paragraph so evidence more strongly points to argument

In contrast to this abundance of male-dominated tropes, female-authored tropes are elusive. The Radcliffean plot elements of subterranean passages (61% male), caves (61% male), and secret doors (59% male) turn out to be firmly correlated with male authors, not female. This is not to say that these motifs are not Radcliffean: Radcliffe alone accounts for 7% of all caves, 11% of all secret doors, and an astonishing 15% of all subterranean passages. Indeed, she is the top author for both subterranean passages and secret doors. But beyond Radcliffe, these tropes have been disproportionately adopted by men, not women. The critical emphasis on subterranean passages and caves as crucial Gothic tropes can likely be explained by who makes the “top 10” lists of their use:

Subterranenan Passages

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Radcliffe, Ann | 6 |
| Ireland, William Henry | 3 |
| Curties, T. J. Horsley | 3 |
| unsigned | 2 |
| Sleath, Eleanor | 2 |
| Maturin, Charles Robert | 2 |
| Lewis, Matthew | 2 |
| Yorke, Mrs. R. M. P. | 1 |
| Wilkinson, Sarah | 1 |
| Walpole, Horace | 1 |

Caves

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Lewis, Matthew | 4 |
| Roche, Regina Maria | 3 |
| Radcliffe, Ann | 3 |
| unsigned | 2 |
| Maturin, Charles Robert | 2 |
| Ireland, William Henry | 2 |
| Green, William Child | 2 |
| Curties, T. J. Horsley | 2 |
| Wilkinson, Sarah | 1 |
| Walpole, Horace | 1 |

Although neither motif appears widely throughout the Gothic, they repeat within the works of all four authors typically taken as the landmark writers of the genre: Walpole for the Gothic’s birth, Radcliffe and Lewis for its flourishing, and Maturin for its end. Anything prominently used by all four is surely ripe for closely-read comparison. But those comparisons illuminate more about the individual authors than the Gothic’s general usage; and, in the case of subterranean passages, they tell us more about Radcliffe than they do a women’s Gothic.

Add close-reading: read some subterranean passages?

TODO: Revise this paragraph so evidence more strongly points to argument

Instead, in this model of the genre, the women’s Gothic seems to be defined by only four things: libertines (64% female), forced weddings (62% female), sad or pious deaths (61% female), and miniature portraits (61% female). The libertines and miniature portraits in particular, as the most common female motifs, immediately suggest a women’s Gothic that is in striking conversation with novels like Jane Austen’s, whose ordered and rational novels are nonetheless replete with rakes and miniatures. Or, looking at their prominence in the top ten for each of these tropes, one might be tempted to investigate Regina Maria Roche and Louisa Sidney Stanhope as the unexpected representatives of the women’s Gothic. However, narrow margin of [dominance] for each motif suggests that defining a genre here may be too hasty. The male motifs represented a variety of elements used by many different men, such that no one author could be responsible for its gendered uptake. These female motifs are far less robust: if we ignore either Roche or Stanhope, we are down to just two female-dominated motifs, and if we ignore both, we are left with zero. When it comes to the inclusion of particular story elements, then, this women’s Gothic is outnumbered not just by the men’s Gothic but also by the mainstream Gothic.

5. conclusion

6. Works Cited

Ellen Ledoux

Robert Miles (wherever I get his male/female gothics definitions)

David Richter The Gothic Novel and the Lingering Appeal of Romance

Barbara Benedict “‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Novels?”

Ellen Moers

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s Madwoman in the Attic (1979), Kate Ferguson Ellis’s The Contested Castle (1989), Eugenia DeLamotte’s Perils of the Night (1990), and Helene Meyers’s Femicidal Fears (2001)

Juliann Fleenor’s The Female Gothic (1983), Diane Long Hoeveler’s Gothic Feminism (1998), Emma Clery’s Women’s Gothic (2000), [Pickering and Chatto published a 5-volume series Varieties of Female Gothic (2002)] and Donna Heiland’s Gothic and Gender (2004)

The Female Gothic: New Directions (2009), edited by Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace. Avril Horner’s and Sue Zlosnik’s Edinburgh Companion on Women and the Gothic (2016).

Emma Clery’s Women’s Gothic (2000). The Female Gothic: New Directions (2009). Wallace D (2013) \*Female Gothic Histories\*. Murphy P (2016) \*The New Woman Gothic\*.

Heather Love Thin Description

Johanna Drucker

Willard McCarty

Stephen Ramsay

Leah Price, The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel

Ann Tracy and Frederick Frank

? Frow, Genre

1. CITE p 364 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CITE The Gothic Novel and the Lingering Appeal of Romance p 479 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. cite Drucker [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. cite McCarty [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. cite McCarty [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. cite Ramsay [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. cite McCarty [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. cite Leah Price [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. CITE Heather Love, Thin Description, p. 404 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. CITE Heather Love, Thin Description. p. 407 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. CITE Love 377 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. cite Price 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The Garside bibliography, too, is a model, with its own particular concerns. It emphasizes “the full title given to the work, the imprint of the original publisher(s), and unmediated information as to how authorship was first signified,” reflecting an interest in “the ways in which novels were first projected at their readers” (“‘Ordering’ Novels: Describing Prose Fiction, 1770-1832” p. 388), and so the notes include information about dedicatees, issue variations, subscription lists, included advertisements, subsequent editions, translations, and attributions. The key editorial intervention is the inclusion of contemporary reviews. Together, these details build a model of a public sphere of letters, in which the Gothic is just one of many markets. [As such, it is a magnificent reference, but one ill-suited to this particular project.] [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The two bibliographies’ treatments of Grenville Fletcher’s *Rosalviva, Or, The Demon Dwarf*, for example, serves as a useful illustration of their differences. Tracy’s summary is a litany of events: it begins matter-of-factly with the sentence “Leontini loves Viola di Morini, but she marries someone else,” and is equally unfazed when the titular “demon dwarf” arrives in the third act and when the dwarven appearance turns out to be false (51). Frank, in contrast, spends more than half his words on context, as in his first sentence:

    “From Rumplestilskin in the fairytale to the comic evil of Dickens’s Daniel Quilp in The Old Curiosity Shop (1841), the figure of the dwarf was often called upon to perform such demonic services as vengeance, prophecy, child possession, and transformation.” (107)

    To this broad literary history he adds Mary Shelley’s story “Transformation” as potential precursor for the disguise in Fletcher’s novel, and includes several assessments of the Gothic’s particular embellishments of “the dwarf as a resolver of dilemmas of identity” (107) and “dwarfs... spin[ning] webs of murderous intrigue for diabolic ladies” (108). All of these details stand in stark contrast to Tracy’s unembellished list of seven novels under the index entry “dwarf” (199), which treats the sinister disguise in *Rosalviva* as interchangeable with depictions of non-supernatural and even non-evil little people. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Most of these are “unique” primarily from the point of view of a spreadsheet: “Domestic fiction (various Gothic elements)” and “Domestic fiction (intermittent Gothic elements),” for example, are distinguished only by a slight gradation of degree. But this interest in slight qualitative gradations is what distinguishes Frank’s model from Tracy’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. cite Frow and genre [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. First, Frank’s phrases were split so that each word became one tag. Radcliffe’s The Italian, listed as “Pure or high Gothic (terror and horror modes)” becomes “Pure”, “or”, “high”, “Gothic”, “terror”, “horror”, and “modes.” Then, conjunctions were deleted, and synonyms combined. Frank always uses the phrase “Pure or high” in its entirety, for example, so the tags “Pure”, “or”, and “high” were merged into one tag “Pure;high”. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. His corpus is 43% female, 31% male, 26% unknown. Tracy’s is 50% female,  45% male, 5% unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. cite Tracy 195 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. cite tracy 195 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. cite tracy 74 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Due to Tracy’s interest in uniqueness, 138 of the 208 motifs she indexes appear in fewer than 20 novels, and have thus been excluded from this study. Most motifs contain a number of sub-categories. In most cases, I further distilled each motif to its simplest form by ignoring these sub-categories. “Poison,” for example, is indexed with categories for “blade,” “chaplet,” “kiss,” “letter,” “orange,” “plant on grave,” and “sacrificial wine”, but I have elided these nuances in favor of a broader motif of “poison (all subcategories),” which applies to 30 novels. In cases where a sub-category contains more than 20 novels in and of itself, I have graphed that sub-category as if it were its own motif. “Death,” for example, is divided into the sub-categories “emotionally induced,” “pre-nuptial,” and “sad and/or pious,” of which both “emotionally induced” and “sad/pious” include more than 20 novels. Ultimately, the 70 key motifs generated 92 charts. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. I chose pie charts, one per motif, to visually represent Tracy’s treatment of each motif as a self-contained field which may or may not have distinct divisions within it. The size of each circle reflects the prevalence of the motif within the body of indexed novels as whole. More subtly, the difference between the two shades of gray in each chart reflects the difference between the two percentages. I wished to avoid graphs whose labels said that a motif featured a 50/50 split, but whose stark contrast nonetheless implied that books by male versus female authors could be easily distinguished from each other. Instead, I wanted my reader's ease in distinguishing between male and female authors to be directly connected to the ease with which a reader in the 1790s might have been able to accomplish the same task if given only the information that a certain motif was present. Accordingly, if the motif itself is not useful as a tool to distinguish between two gendered camps, its chart doesn’t show two camps. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. I interpret a motif to be “distinctly male” if 60% or more of its authors are male. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Interestingly, this represents 3 “horror” tagged works and 2 “terror” tagged works. One of those “terror” works is Matthew Lewis’s The Monk, which is tagged as both “horror” and “terror”, but the other is Ancient Records, Or, The Abbey Of Saint Oswythe, by T. J. Horsley Curties, which is only tagged “terror”. Two other works containing “incest, actual” are not tagged as either “horror” nor “terror”. Having reached clusters of only two or three texts, however, these samples are too small to bear sustained statistical scrutiny. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. That is, the defining features of the Gothic which nonetheless struck Ann Tracy as singular enough to be worth indexing — castles, for example, might have topped this list, if they hadn’t been considered too common to index. However, convents, ghosts, and corpses were all in the running for defining motifs, but were insuffiiently prevalent. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)