Dancing with the Dark Side:

Exploring the Intersection of Monsters and MTV's Gothic Aesthetic

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Music videos of the MTV era often use gothic visual signifiers as decorative elements or creative expressions of the musician's star persona or latest record. But several video clips from the early 1980s adapt the figure of gothic monstrosity, and in particular, the images and stories of the undead or beastly Other, in ways that dramatize the music video's evolving aesthetic, commercial, and technological character and its unpredictable relation to Gothic. In this article, I look closely at the narrative elements of two important configurations of gothic-themed video clips: "Don't Go" (1982) by Yazoo, "Telefone (Long Distance Love Affair)" (1983) by Sheena Easton, and "Mary Jane's Last Dance" (1993) by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, which creatively adapt textual elements of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel Frankenstein and its various film adaptations and parodies and its cultural significance in the modern Western imaginary; and "Thriller" (1983) by Michael Jackson and "Heads Will Roll" (2009) by the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, which likewise adapt and reimagine aspects of John Landis's 1981 horror comedy film An American Werewolf in London and its afterlife in the modern media ecosystem. These videos, I argue, trouble conventional understandings of the practice of adaptation as a one-to-one line of inheritance between source material and destination text. In so doing, furthermore, these clips amplify and elaborate certain socio-cultural anxieties about gender and race, personal and professional identity and autonomy, and technological innovation and automation that animate their source materials.

Keywords: Adaptation; Monstrosity; Music Video; MTV; Werewolf; Zombie; Gothic Narrative

1. Monsters on the Move

Monsters are spectacles of fear, monumental figurations of a chaotic world threatening to erupt. Particularly in Gothic tradition, monsters activate repressed pasts, re-centering the marginalized or erased subject, defamiliarizing

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empirically known realities, and activating abjected and taboo human impulses. They are unrestrained in their power, uninhibited in their agency, and unrelenting in their refusal of our categorical schemes and binary constructions. Dr. Victor Frankenstein, the titular scientist of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel Frankenstein, harnesses all these anxieties in a singular fear—of an unpredictable and unmanageable proliferation of radical otherness—that drives him to destroy the bride and companion he had been creating for the Wretch. As Jeffrey Cohen reminds us, the monster "always escapes" the social body or cultural moment that gestates it (Cohen 1996, p. 4).

This is especially true of the gothic monster, which continues to raise the same concerns about marginalization and abjection today as it does in earlier centuries. The monstrous undead and the beastly Other, in particular, are two archetypal monsters of gothic tradition that migrate from their most prominent narrative showcases in nineteenth-century fiction and twentieth-century film and invade other corners of contemporary popular culture— including the music video, one of the gothic monster's most notable hiding places. Michael Jackson's video for "Thriller" (1983) is perhaps the best known of these videos, in which the star casts himself as both a werewolf and a zombie, but several other videos from the early 1980s—including "Jeopardy" (1983) by the Greg Kihn Band, Rockwell's "Somebody's Watching Me" (1984), and "Torture" (1984) by The Jacksons, to name but three—likewise tell visual stories about the unsettling appearance and unprecedented agency and vitality of gothic undead, shadowy phantoms, and feral or supernatural creatures. Circulating in heavy rotation during the MTV era, which begins with the launch of the twenty-four-hour music television network in 1981, these monster-centric videos formed a corpus of creative work that extends well into the post-MTV era of today and continues to engage timely questions about the agency, autonomy, and identity of the individual subject, particularly as she faces industry and institutional pressure to conform to the dictates of commodity capitalism and the drive for technological innovation, particularly at the digital turn. In this way, the gothic-themed music videos of the MTV and post-MTV eras challenge the conventional view of the video clip as the ubiquitous and disposable "Kleenex of popular culture" (Railton and Watson 2011, p. 1).

In this essay, I offer close readings of two groupings of gothic-themed music videos whose creative adaptations of their gothic source materials showcase the unresolved en- tanglements between gender, race, sexuality, creativity, and technology. The first cluster consists of "Don't Go" (1982) by Yazoo, "Telefone (Long Distance Love Affair)" (1983) by Sheena Easton, and "Mary Jane's Last Dance" (1993) by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, which adapt, rearrange, and reimagine the textual elements of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel Frankenstein and its various film adaptations and parodies, as well as the story's cultural significance in the modern Western imaginary. The second

cluster consists of "Thriller" (1983) by Michael Jackson and "Heads Will Roll" (2009) by the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, which likewise adapt and reimagine aspects of another modern gothic classic, John Landis's 1981 film An American Werewolf in London, as well as its intersections with media coverage and cultural memories of Jackson himself as an icon of popular culture. I argue that these videos adapt the figurations, diegetic worlds, and cultural significance of their respective posthuman monsters, the reanimated human corpse and the werewolf, and reimagine them in ways that allow these videos to speak to contemporary concerns about cultural belonging, identity, commercial capitalism, and the fate of the artist in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

2. Adapting Gothic Tradition

The film theorist Timothy Corrigan reminds us that early cinema legitimized itself as an art form in part due to its adaptations of nineteenth-century literature, from the novels of Charles Dickens to the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe. Literature, for Corrigan, "provided an abundance of ready-made materials that could be transposed to film," thus allowing directors and studios to "[negotiate] a new, respectable cultural position for movies and their audiences" (Corrigan 1999, p. 17). His reading of early cinema is informed by Dudley Andrew's exploration of film adaptation, which has since become a critical touchstone in film scholarship. Andrew argues that film adaptations often incarnate three different "modes of relation" between source and destination text—borrowing, transformation, and intersection, which reaffirm the artistic primacy of either the literary source material, the filmic adaptation, or their shared co-equivalence as distinct narrative media (Andrew 1984, p. 98).

Music videos, however, complicate these lines of inheritance. According to Carol Vernallis, video clips can be compared to modern-day vignettes that tell a story, however incompletely and usually in the absence of diegetic sound or spoken dialogue (Vernallis 2004, p. 3). To this, I would add that the gothic-themed music video of the MTV era exacerbates the already prominent sense of visual spectacle that pervades the medium and manifests its visual logic in the figure of the recording artist who becomes the video's featured attraction and primary object of spectatorship. "Don't Go" (1982) by Yazoo and "Thriller" (1983) by Michael Jackson feature their respective stars performing in the guises of Shelley's and Landis's outlandish monsters and their famous intermedial recreations. These videos feature, among other things, carefully orchestrated camera movements and shot compositions, cutting patterns, set design, and costuming, all of which are informed by the visual spectacle the recording artist creates. In their creative adaptations gothic literature and cinema, furthermore, these videos often reframe, contradict, fetishize, and

fragment the lyrical sentiments and conceits that the songs evoke. As a result, the visual narrative of gothic videos often undermines, counters, or exceeds the stories and sentiments of its lyrical content.

As a site at which conventional adaptation gives way to an entire manner of diverse intertextual practices, the modern gothic music video aligns with what Megen de Bruin- Molé refers to as a Frankenfiction, or a "hybrid genre at the intersection of adaptation and remix" that "[inserts] fantastical monsters into public domain texts" (De Bruin-Molé 2020, p. 2). The gothic-themed music video emerges in the MTV and post-MTV eras as a textual site at which contemporary texts engage and extend Gothic through mashups, reboots, and other "appropriative responses" across different media (De Bruin-Molé 2020, p. 16). In the following section, I look more carefully at two constellations of music videos that adapt and reimagine gothic urtexts by Mary Shelley and John Landis. As I will go on to demonstrate, gothic-themed music-video narratives, which are marked by a lingering tendency to counter, undermine, and exceed the lyrical content of their respective songs, reinforce Misha Kavka's understanding of gothic tradition and its preoccupations with im- age and spectacle: "[t]here is, in fact, something peculiarly visual about the Gothic. . .[that] tantalizes us with fear" (Kavka 2002, p. 209). The monsters that circulate in these videos thus challenge the interpretive frame through which we might otherwise consume these texts and lead us to more harrowing meditations about identity, agency, and autonomy in an increasingly volatile social order and technologized landscape.

3. It's Still Alive

Yazoo's "Don't Go" (1982) is a plaintive song that highlights the obsessive desperation of a lover for her beloved. It evokes lyrical images of love as an addiction and of her lover as a kind of killer. The video for the single, however, directed by the music photojournalist Chris Gabrin, transforms the feeling of a love so frighteningly deep and overwhelming into a gothic narrative that carefully follows the premise of both Mary Shelley's novel and its recreation in film by James Whale in 1931. The video also interpolates images from the adjacent gothic film Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror (1922), directed by F. W. Murnau and intended as an unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel Dracula (1897). As a visual narrative about the totalizing power of love to enthrall and consume, the video clip features lead singer Alison Moyet and songwriting partner and keyboardist Vincent Clarke adapting and recombining elements of what we might call the Frankenstein myth. Clarke plays the role of Victor Frankenstein, but his primary victim is not the Creature that he unleashes into the world, but rather, a female visitor played by Moyet who visits his castle and bears witness to his ambitions.

Moyet's presence in the video narrative raises gothic anxieties about contested female authorship and women's creative autonomy in the public space. As she runs from his Creature, who seems to chase her through hallways and corridors, she stumbles across Clarke's hidden cellar, redesigned as a subterranean cabinet of supernatural curiosities. There, she discovers a vampire—also played by Clarke, whose slicked-back hair and black opera cape with upturned collar evoke the image of Bela Lugosi's vampire in Tod Browning's film Dracula (1931). But as Clarke's vampire escapes the confines of the cellar with the first light of dawn, Moyet, who turns to the camera and flashes a pair of newly sprouted canine teeth, becomes trapped in the haunted mansion. The video concludes with an artful recreation of the famous shadow sequence from Nosferatu that suggests her prison sentence. In the original film, Murnau turns his camera to the wall and captures the image of Count Orlok's lank shadow towering phallically over the railing and moving slowly upstairs to attack Helen Hutter. The video, however, scrambles Murnau's sense of proportion by lengthening the shadow of the banister posts to the top of the frame, thus transforming the staircase into a set of shadowy bars behind which she is now confined, destined to slither and creep.

Moyet's characterization in the video as the scientist's victim reads as a modern corollary to Shelley's own story of contested literary acclaim. First published anonymously in three volumes and introduced with a preface by Percy, who posed as the novel's author, Frankenstein troped Shelley's public identity as a secret that would not be revealed until 1831, when she would write the introduction to the revised edition. Like Mary Shelley, whose public image remained in a doubled relationship with the Creature she invented, and who has in the years following the novel's publication occasioned debates about the extent of her authorship over that of her husband, Moyet mobilizes similarly conflicting perceptions of her own role in Yazoo as both artistic contributor and supporting vocalist, creator and creation. Yazoo lasted only eighteen months before disbanding in 1983, but the video perpetuates the view of Moyet as a relatively unknown artist and newcomer whose unexpected arrival at the mansion allegorizes her place in the band and her working relationship with the more professionally established Clarke, who had been a co-founding member of the New Wave group Depeche Mode and who went on to form the synth pop group Erasure in 1985. As Moyet once said in an interview about her collaboration with Clarke, "Vince is a famous songwriter, so the assumption was that I was the voice and he was the creator. It wasn't the case, but you get tired of trying to explain" (Majewski and Bernstein 2014, p. 170).

Clarke's monstrosity is also a prominent topos in the video narrative, but he manifests those tendencies most powerfully in the architecture and design of his surroundings. His mansion, a foreboding structure hidden away in the English countryside, is an extension of his own laboratory, which literally

churns out creations and ushers them out the door in ways that allegorize the compulsion to produce, a characteristic of modern labor that consumer capitalism enshrined as a Western virtue. A site of frantic production, Clarke's laboratory is an uncanny symbol of the recording studio, rendered in explicitly gothic terms as the place where humanity stages its tense encounters with the technological Other. The laboratory's power sources and keypads hearken back to the digital synthesizers, sequencers, and computer programs that Yazoo use to create the band's signature electronic sound. The mansion soon brims with increasingly volatile technological activity, as the pipe organ that Clarke plays at the beginning of the video continues to play the song's famous musical theme, without human hands guiding it. The image of the self-playing keyboard symbolizes our fear of and also our fascination with the technological and the machinic. It incarnates a thematic concern about human obsolescence that we might also find in "Gothic horror [that] now outlines the darkness of the postmodern condition" (Botting 2002, p. 281). "Don't Go" projects a model of adaptation that fragments and reimagines various elements of Shelley's novel, and indeed, the Frankenstein mythos it incarnates. It does so, furthermore, in a way that reframes the lyrical references of the song to obsessive love and desperation. Director Gabrin pushes the figure of the female lover, who pleads with her lover not to leave her side, into a video plot in which she is pushed into a contrary space, the space of immobilization, as she is now the one who cannot leave. The video, in other words, transforms a lyrical appeal to stay into a visual narrative of arrest. Consequently, "Don't Go" indicts the music industry at the dawn of MTV and its gradual turn to a culture of visual spectacle, which makes disproportionately large and contradictory demands on its female stars to play two roles at once: the featured attraction, larger than life, on the one hand, and the self-denying woman who retreats from the visual field, on the other.

Yazoo's engagement with Shelley's novel as well as its adaptations and remixes is part of a longer music-video tradition of radical retellings of the Frankenstein myth. The tradition also includes Scottish pop star Sheena Easton's video clip for "Telefone (Long Distance Love Affair)" (1983), directed by Steve Barron, which not only adapts certain story elements of Shelley's Frankenstein but also uses those elements to recast the Frankenstein myth in a similarly feminist mold and with particular attention to both Shelley herself and her tragic heroine, Elizabeth Lavenza. "Telefone" dramatizes the lyrical sentiments of the plaintive singer who fixates on her telephone as she waits for her lover to call. However, the narrative reframes Easton herself as a woman who is empowered rather than weighed down by her long-distance relationship. The story also relocates her, as a singer of Scottish origin, into an American landscape that is teeming with monsters. But these monsters have been de-fanged and now operate as caricatures of their horror archetypes. The list of endearing gothic creatures that are now vying for her erotic affections includes

Frankenstein's Creature, stumbling across the scene in much the same way that Peter Boyle's Creature delights and entertains in Mel Brooks' film Young Frankenstein (1974), which parodies James Whale's film adaptation of Shelley's novel1; an amputated and free- moving hand that parodies its television predecessor, Thing T. Thing, which was featured the 1964 television comedy series The Addams Family and inspired by the homicidal hand in the Herbert L. Strock horror film The Crawling Hand (1963); and King Kong, whose giant hand scoops her up and brings her closer to camera in the final moments of the video.

By featuring Eason as the object of monstrous affections far and wide and reimagining the Creature and other gothic monsters as potential suitors over whose appetites and temperaments she has considerable control, the video transforms the figure of the female lover into a more proactive and independent subject. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, she is better able to manage and direct the wild and unpredictable monsters in her gloomy castle; and unlike Victor's bride and adopted cousin Elizabeth, she meets a happier fate as she finds joy and self-conscious humor in these confrontations. The visual narrative also replaces the lyrical image of the telephone itself, a symbol of audio technology, with an audio-visual bestiary of screen monsters, many of which have been forged and repeatedly disseminated through science, industry, technology, and their most ambitious male actors. Easton is thus able to use elements of the Frankenstein myth in ways that allow her to forge her own multi-faceted star persona based on her enthusiastic and creative consumption of gothic fare; her attempt as a Scottish artist to situate herself in an American landscape of popular culture references and traditions; and her ability as a modern woman and visual artist to undercut and lampoon the stereotype of the helpless female victim.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' video for "Mary Jane's Last Dance" (1993), di- rected by Keir McFarlane, also confronts issues of gender and violence that are implicit in the Frankenstein myth. As another modern Frankenfiction, "Mary Jane's Last Dance" adapts certain unspoken elements of Shelley's original story and transforms them into a timely gothic tale about obsessive delusion and sexual assault, particularly against women. Although the video is ambiguous in its relation to Shelley's novel, the visual narrative establishes clear parallels between Petty's character—a mortuary assistant who sneaks the corpse of a beautiful young woman, played by the film actress Kim Basinger, out of the cold room and into his house—and the subconscious conflicts motivating Victor Frankenstein's strange behavior in the earliest and final pages of Frankenstein. Petty's social outcast is a delusional necrophiliac who stages a wedding scene as a pretext for his violation of a woman's remains. He dresses her in a bridal gown and slips into a tuxedo jacket and top hat himself. After presumably violating her body—we do not know this for certain, but the narrative certainly presents this as a strong possibility—Petty deposits

her corpse in the ocean and walks away. In these actions, Petty brings to light the unspoken desires of Victor Frankenstein to displace women from the spheres of procreation and childbirth and, quite possibly, to destroy the very woman he loves—his wife Elizabeth, whom he exposes to the same threat of violence that the Creature promised to deliver on the scientist's wed- ding night. In this way, the video also amplifies the song's lyrical suggestions of sexual violence, particularly as Petty, who also wrote the song, describes the titular Mary Jane as an unnamed girl who "grew up tall and. . .grew up right/with them Indiana boys on an Indiana night".

As a manipulator of appearances who works closely with the dead, Petty's character transforms Victor's morbid fascination with corpses into a criminal fetish that feeds his sexual perversion and need for control. He acts on these impulses, furthermore, in the cold sobriety of premeditation and under the watchful eye of a coroner who throws a suspicious glance in his direction in the beginning of the video. His characterization as a violator of women's bodies reframes the lyrical suggestion that Mary Jane is merely a metaphor for marijuana, and his defilement of Basinger's splayed body transforms the video narrative from a gothic tale about necrophilia into a gothic allegory about incapacitated rape. In this way, the video's final shot—of Basinger's character opening her eyes and gazing directly, lifelessly, into the camera—hearkens back to the image of the bioengineered bride and companion that the lonely Wretch demands of Victor Frankenstein. Victor begins to assemble the corpse bride, but he also destroy her in a frantic fit of terror. Basinger revivifies the arrested figure of the destroyed bride by capturing our attention at the end of the video, when she stares into the camera as she floats in the water, refusing to wash away with the tide. Her opening eyes reads in this context as a gesture of self-emergence, a refusal to erase herself, a moment of awakening rather than a submission to male forces of creation and destruction. By looking directly into the camera, she entreats viewers to acknowledge the existence and problem of rape culture in general, within which, according to Nickie

D. Phillips, "violence against women is often ignored, implicitly condoned, or explicitly encouraged in the United States" (Phillips 2017, p. 2). The tale thus ends on a note of, a hope for, continued surveillance, as she summons us all to bear witness to a crime that is so often suppressed, a crime that she cannot declare herself.

These videos are creative rearrangements of certain aspects of Shelley's novel as well as the films and film parodies that extend the cultural afterlife of the ambitious scientist and his posthuman creation. As Frankenfictions with a unique aesthetic and commercial profile and an unpredictable relation to the songs they promote, these gothic-themed video clips highlight the figure of the bioengineered monster—as well as the monster's various cast of accessories—in

short but arresting visual dramas about the violence of science, technology, and the patriarchal systems and actors that build and weaponize them.

4. Dancing to the Bea(s)t

A second tradition of gothic-themed music videos that emerges in the MTV and post- MTV eras dramatizes human encounters with both undead and beastly Others. Michael Jackson's video for "Thriller" (1983) and The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' video for "Heads Will Roll" (Bruhm 2009) both emerge as creative adaptations and reformulations of John Landis's film An American Werewolf in London (1981), which features, in turn, the folkloric werewolf and the post-Romero zombie. These videos highlight and recombine certain aspects of Landis's werewolf and zombie in ways that expose larger patterns of cultural exclusion and invisibility, particularly those based on race and cultural identity, that emerge both within and outside the music industry throughout the MTV era.

Landis's film turns on the trope of the dangerous and eventually monstrous outsider that causes chaos within affirmed borders. Two American college students, David Kessler (David Naughton) and Jack Goodman (Griffin Dunne), arrive in Yorkshire, only to be sent to the moors by an enclave of unwelcoming patrons at a local pub. As they patrol the dark and foreboding expanses of the moors, they are attacked by a roaming werewolf. David, rushed to a hospital in London, sustains a bite that infects him and causes him to transform at every full moon into a werewolf, attacking unsuspecting passers-by in the streets and subway tunnels of the urban metropole. David's reign of terror culminates in a final showdown at an adult theater in London's Piccadilly Circus, resulting in a shockingly quick cascade of violent collisions between pedestrians, drivers, automobiles, and double-decker buses. Jack, meanwhile, dies from his mauling, but he returns to David in a series of feverish hallucinations as a progressively deteriorating undead monster. He implores David to end his own life, thereby releasing them both from a potentially endless life of suffering.

Michael Jackson's "Thriller", also directed by Landis, takes up the movie's original preoccupations with space and belonging, but the video transplants the geographies of terror from modern England to suburban Los Angeles. The narrative opens with a 1950s- inspired werewolf film starring Jackson and his co-star, the actress Ola Ray, who play a high school couple whose date in the park descends into violence after he transforms into a werewolf and attacks her. The video then cuts to a different level of diegetic reality as Jackson and Ray also play spectators watching the film at the neighborhood theater. As they make their way home and stroll past a graveyard, reanimated corpses emerge from their resting places and gather around Jackson,

who has suddenly transformed into a zombie himself. After a prolonged dance sequence, Jackson and the zombies follow Ray into an abandoned house at the top of a hill, bursting through doors and shattering windows and floorboards. Suddenly, Ray awakens from what appears to have been a zombie nightmare, and a reassuring Jackson offers to take her home.

"Thriller" erases the film's original entanglement with what William Hughes might describe as village Gothic, a tradition of gothic stories focused on small rural communities, their insularity, and their suspicion of both outsiders and urban dwellers (Hughes 2016, p. 719). In fact, the video abandons the divide between the country and the city altogether, focusing instead on the liminal space of the American suburb and subverting its traditional associations with safety and familiarity. In this way, "Thriller" gravitates toward what Bernice M. Murphy might describe as suburban Gothic, which takes as its thematic impetus the "lingering suspicion that even the most ordinary-looking neighbourhood, or house, or family, has something to hide, and that no matter how calm and settled a place looks, it is only ever a moment away from dramatic (and generally sinister) incident" (Murphy 2009, p. 2). The video transforms the image of suburban Los Angeles into a triangulated space that locates the movie theater and the home, domains of the living, in uncomfortable proximity to the cemetery, which breeds intrusive and destructive undeath.

But the neighborhoods of "Thriller" are not just suburban wastelands infested with existential threats to human life. They are socio-cultural landscapes that highlight both the degrading perceptions that Jackson fields as a black male recording artist in the 1980s and the systemic patterns of exclusion that industry executives implemented at the dawn of the MTV era. Filmed in the neighborhoods of East Los Angeles, home to a predominantly Hispanic and Latinx population, "Thriller" conjures a gothic sense of the singer's own hometown of Gary, Indiana. Joshua K. Wright describes Gary as poor, predominantly black, and a budding center of interest during the 1960s for members of the civil rights movement (Wright 2022, p. 71), and glosses the city as an important breeding ground for the young artist's emerging awareness of the politics of racial identity. Jackson's monsters crystallize and amplify tacit industry concerns about artists of color becoming prominent fixtures on the MTV airwaves. Histories of MTV document such programming practices. According to Maureen Mahon, for instance, MTV executives and programmers were initially reluctant to grant Jackson and other African American artists the same visibility they reserved for white artists: "MTV focused on rock, to the exclusion of R&B, funk, and disco, music associated with black performers" (Mahon 2004, pp. 167–68). Mahon goes on to say that "MTV's de facto color bar came down in 1983 when MTV executives programmed 'Billie Jean,' the first single from Michael Jackson's CBS/Epic Records album, Thriller. . . [after] CBS threatened to deny MTV access to any CBS artists" (ibid., p. 169). These

patterns of exclusion and response shape the way we might read Jackson's own self-presentation in "Thriller" as both werewolf and zombie. Jackson's werewolf and zombie are both amplified projections of industry fears of the marginalized artist taking over the network as well as the singer's own refusal to allow those perceptions to limit his movements and decisions. In this way, Jackson's monsters are revolutionary creatures, destroying and reshaping the order of the entertainment landscape that his suburban Gothic allegorizes.

The progression of monsters in the video, furthermore, signals the socio-cultural significance of the video. In the film-within-the-video, Jackson initially appears as a lupine Other. His feral power highlights the abject marginalization he endures as an artist of color confronting an unwelcoming industry, and his appearance in a film that appears to be set in the 1950s reflects historical realities2. Later in the video, however, he morphs into an even more disruptive zombie, one that demonstrates an intuitive ability to draw other zombies from their resting places, gathering them into a coordinated horde and directing their movements toward a shared end: making room in a crowded entertainment landscape with a larger community of excluded artists. In this way, Jackson's creatures stand in sharp contrast to Landis's monsters, whose attempts to counter what Robert Mighall calls the "curse formula" of gothic fiction—the trope of the ancestral curse that can only be dissipated by the "noble sacrifice of the male heir who pulls down the ancestral edifice symbolizing centuries of misery" (Mighall 1999, p. 83)—leads to their self-authored erasure from Landis's Britain. Not only are Jackson's monsters part of the soft architecture of Los Angeles; they are also fecund, forward-looking, and ferociously adamant to become part of the visible landscape.

There is, however, a second and more sinister element to Jackson's parade of monsters in the video. In the final moments of "Thriller", Jackson places his hand around Ray and offers to take her home, only to turn to the camera one last time and flash the same yellow eyes that marked his earlier transformation into a werewolf. This final freeze-frame problematizes Steven Bruhm's otherwise compelling reading of the werewolf and the zombie as markers of the "developmental temporality" (Bruhm 2009, p. 167) of Jackson's public image. These monsters, in other words, mark the star symbolically at different age-related crossroads: the first, an aggressive and sexually dangerous werewolf, alludes to Jackson's sexual maturity, and the second, a zombie that lumbers at the end of human life, evokes his later public associations with asexuality. According this reading, the video offers a linear procession of monsters that exaggerate those sexualities to abject and even violent disproportion. This last shot, however, suggests not a progressive evolution of the star's persona but rather a more gothically labyrinthine view of Jackson's position in the popular culture landscape, particularly in later years as the singer faced allegations of child molestation and the press characterized him as a reclusive and eternal

child and sole inhabitant of his Neverland ranch. As his character in the video becomes locked in an infinite play of monstrous subject positions in his own suburban Gothic, so, too, does the star himself become mired in the scandal of these two types of monstrous sexual deviancy, the one explosively violent and the other curiously suppressed.

The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' "Heads Will Roll" (2009), directed by Richard Ayoade3, likewise participates in the elaboration of the Jackson myth, particularly through the lens of source texts including Landis's original film as well as Jackson's "Thriller" and overall media image. The video presents an exaggerated image of Jackson as a public performer who has outlived his value as an entertainer. However, "Heads Will Roll" also conflates the figures of the werewolf and the zombie, so clearly demarcated in form and function in both Landis's film and Jackson's video, into a singular spectacle of menace and disaster. Part wolf, driven to feral violence from seemingly ambient triggers, and part metaphorical zombie, moldering from a previous era, the Jackson monster approximates what we might recognize as a wolf-man, a hybrid figure suspended in a state of arrested development. After almost one minute of screen absence, the monstrous wolf-man finally arrives on scene at an underground nightclub where The Yeah Yeah Yeahs mime their performance of the song. His arrival is troped as something of an impromptu spectacle. He joins the band on stage like an uninvited special guest and dances spontaneously to the music, as subdued audience members watch him from their tables. Growing suddenly sensitive to the spectacle he has created, the wolf-man flashes the same red eyes that illuminated the keyboardist's hands in the opening close-up shot of the video and attacks everyone in the club, including the band members themselves. In the chaos that ensues, Jackson-as-wolf- man strikes stylized poses with his body as he attacks the patrons and musicians, sending ribbons of red glitter into the air and dismembering the band members whose heads and bodies continue to perform to the very end.

The video paints a horrific picture of both Jackson's lumbering star persona in the post- MTV era and the increasingly volatile landscape of entertainment spectacle that performers like Jackson helped to shape. The creature is an anachronistic visitor in an industry setting that seems to have outgrown him, and his renewed awareness of that exclusion triggers a violent impulse that he directs to club patrons, including a young man wearing a Union Jack on his shirt, a symbolic representation of Landis's source material that the video now explodes. The wolf-man's abjection from the world of pop is further emphasized by his cosmetic appearance. The creature's black suit, white socks and black fedora, fashion signifiers reminiscent of Jackson's increasingly aggrandized stage persona during the 1980s, conjure paradoxical views of the wolf-man as both an outcast that aged out of the industry and a dangerous monster—a predator, in effect—whose elaborate acrobatics reveal him to be

more agile than ever. Jackson, we recall, famously wore a similar outfit in 1983 during a live performance of his single "Billie Jean" when he debuted his signature dance move, the gravity-defying moonwalk, to an astonished audience of fans. His movements in the video are now are even sharper, more controlled, more spectacularized in nature than ever before. His hair, tied into a loose ponytail, likewise emulates the star in his later years, and his blood-red eyes and claw-like nails suggest the posthuman alterity of a wild animal or aging corpse. The wolf-man's monstrosity, furthermore, is an abstraction and an amplification of the swift and furious punishments that the Queen of Hearts, the tyrannical antagonist of Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel Alice in Wonderland, metes out and marks with the same phrase that lead singer, Karen O., repeats in the bridge of the song.

The video's most powerful symbol of a society of the spectacle, to use Guy Debord's term, is the spotlight that triggers the wolf-man's violent outburst. A technological device much like Yazoo's self-playing pipe organ, the spotlight makes him acutely aware of his role as trained performer and object of an unrelenting public gaze. It also functions in the same way the light of the full moon triggers David's lycanthropic transformations in An American Werewolf in London. This spotlight is, in essence, a human-engineered technology that inherits the moon's regulatory influences over the natural landscape and fuels newer and more intensely surveillance technologies that become a dominant mode of American entertainment; we watch reality unfold because reality is often stranger than fiction.

5. The Funk of Forty Thousand More Years

In this article, I trace two traditions of music videos in the MTV era that adapt, rearrange, and creatively reimagine textual and mythic elements of their source materials to draw attention to the complex entanglement of gender, race, sexuality, creativity, and technology that so often animate gothic texts. My aim in spotlighting the gothic figures and themes percolating in music videos of the MTV and post-MTV eras is to extend the work of scholars like Isabella Van Elferen and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, who already explore the vital connections between Gothic and modern and contemporary music, style, lyrics, performance, and subculture, and bring that work to bear on the visual aspects of the music-video narrative and their unpredictable relations to the lyrical content of the songs that music videos promote. Complicating the view that adaptation is a direct line of textual inheritance from source to destination, these videos engage gothic source materials in the fullness of their cultural impact, and they continue to revisit the social anxieties of erasure, marginalization, and disempowerment that so often coalesce around the archetypal figure of the monster. In so doing, these video clips recapitulate one of the fundamental features of Gothic that David Puntner describes so succinctly. He describes

Gothic as showcasing "series of texts which are always dependent on other texts" and "a revival of a revival" (Punter 2012, p. 3). By focusing on the figure of the undead and beastly other that so often rears its head in the gothic-themed music-video narrative, and exploring those images in relation to larger questions about identity, agency, autonomy, and creativity, I hope to establish the importance of the music video overall in considerations of contemporary Gothic and to invite further reflection about the video clip's "appropriative responses" (De Bruin-Molé 2020, p. 16) to other gothic figures, including the haunted house, the ancestral curse, and even other forms of monstrous technology.

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