



FIGURE 1. Leasho Johnson, *Sugar Daddy #2*, 2018. Oil paint and vinyl on paper, 22 × 30 in.

Marlon James and the Metafiction of the New Black Gothic

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Introduction

Marlon James began writing *John Crow's Devil* after growing up queer in a hypermasculine and homophobic society, at a time that he describes as having "reached the end of [him] self."¹ Taken from a sermon James heard at church in Kingston, this phrase describes the point "when you reached the limits of your own wisdom and the only person left with any answers was God."² This sentiment is imprinted on his approach to the literariness of Caribbean writing and greatly informs the apocalyptic endings of his first two novels. What happens when you reach the end of your ability to think through and cope with challenges rooted in the core of your being? Left deeply depressed and alienated, James rejects a doctor's offer of antidepressants and instead gets "saved." If reaching the limits of his ability to cope with being a gay man in Jamaica brought James to Christian salvation, it was covertly reading Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, while in church no less, that prompted him to start writing again. What he found inspiring about Rushdie's work is its quality of being "like a hand grenade inside a tulip. Its prose was so audacious, its reality so unhinged, that *you didn't see at first how pointedly political and just plain furious it was*. It made me realize that *the present was something I could write my way out of*. And so I started writing for the first time since college, but kept it quiet because none of it was holy."³

In many ways, particularly in the endings he creates, James reproduces the position he found himself

in, at the “end of self,” in his first two novels. *John Crow’s Devil* and *The Book of Night Women* both end shortly after an apocalyptic event in which a community has laid bare all the horrific hypocrisies that belie essentialized notions of raced and sexualized being, effectively reaching the end of itself. As I have suggested elsewhere, we might also think about James’s novels as figuratively simulating the end of West Indian writing’s ability to think through the intersecting problems of race, gender, and sexuality, particularly in West Indian writing’s focus on making queerness visible and opening spaces of inclusivity for non-heteronormative subjects *within* conceptualizations of national citizenship.⁴

Take, for example, the first anthology of Caribbean queer critical and creative writing, *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing*. Editor Thomas Glave describes the collection as “born out of the most extreme longing: the desire to know finally, and with certainty that a book such as this one actually existed and *could* exist. Could exist in spite of thundering condemnations from Christian fundamentalist ministers, and from those in churches, mosques, and other places. . . . Could exist despite proscriptions, banishments, ostracisms, and in more than a few cases, extreme violence.”⁵

This ethos of “presence and affirmation” pervades West Indian writing as a mode of recuperative historical redress for queer subjects who have been excluded from the nation because of their intersecting race, gender, and/or sexual identities.⁶ We see this in novels like Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*

(1987), H. Nigel Thompson’s *Spirits in the Dark* (1993), Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place Not Here* (1996), and Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996). While critical and creative texts like these “have worked to disrupt this silencing and expose the links between the construction of nation and the erasure of non-heteronormative sexuality through diasporic perspectives,” they “nonetheless seem to take national inclusivity and even settlement as a given” or desired end.⁷ The same is not true of James’s fiction. The apocalyptic ending in each novel produces a reset of sorts, but neither, to my mind, is unambiguously hopeful. These endings offer no vision of what a future beyond the horror would/could look like, beyond the puzzling parting visions of the abject figures of widow and slave woman. While it is beyond the purview of this essay, it is worth noting that the last vision from *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2014) is also of a woman, Nina Burgess, who like the widow and Lilith has also lived through a few apocalypses of sorts.

Violence is central to the disruptions James’s fiction produces. All three novels traffic in a (now signature) iconoclastic narrative style, liberally peppered with vulgar vernacular and graphic violence that is often discomfiting and puzzling, particularly in relation to other Anglophone Caribbean fiction. Across the three novels, James’s writing is equal parts horrifying and enthralling—for me at least. Others find its gender politics and sexual violence, in particular, intellectually and aesthetically unredeemable.⁸ To my mind, though, as I hope I will make clear throughout this essay, this is perhaps the response that James’s

narrative provocations intend. Indeed, what he says of Rushdie's *Shame* becomes true of his own "unhinged" writing. I argue here that the violent and graphic content of James's writing is largely presented as a concatenation of Gothic tropes—particularly those surrounding race, gender, and sexuality—and in turn enacts a metafictional critique of canon formation and literary criticism in discourses of anti-racism.

John Crow's Devil depicts a mid-twentieth-century rural community in Jamaica—a microcosm of the possibilities of independent nationhood—that is incited to unthinkable violence against itself by the inflammatory religious rhetoric of a syphilitic preacher named Lucas York. It presents readers familiar with national-ist narratives with a horrifying puzzle: How are we to understand its portrayal of pedophilia and bestiality, which are normalized yet ignored parts of rural Caribbean life? What should we make of the novel's public corporal punishment of adulterers with a whip that was used during slavery? Or a literal bout of syphilis that pathologizes homosexuality as a predatory disease? That *John Crow's Devil* functions on the level of satire is clear, but the targets of its critique are not immediately apparent. Similarly, in *The Book of Night Women*, teenaged slave protagonist Lilith departs from the slave narrative's standard plot by refusing to participate in an eighteenth-century slave rebellion. House slaves, who aspire to murder all the whites and establish an African-style village in Jamaica's mountainous interior, foment the rebellion. What is the reader to make of Lilith opting to protect her

Irish lover and white overseer father from marauding slaves, even killing her half sister in the process, instead of fighting for her freedom alongside her fellow slaves during the rebellion?

My own initial inability to identify what I deemed to be responsible politics in *John Crow's Devil* led me to dismiss that novel in frustration. To my mind, at first read-through, it was a poorly written book, and there was no need to think further about James or his salaciously offensive novel. By the end of *The Book of Night Women*, however, I began to take a more reflective approach to James's troubling of my assumptions about the proprieties and political imperatives Caribbean literature should be serving in the twenty-first century. Arguably, James's narrative investment in iconoclasm might more resemble modernist experimental writing by Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, or contemporary diasporic writing by Helen Oyeyemi and Jesmyn Ward, than other Jamaican, Caribbean, or even postcolonial fiction.⁹ This is not to say that James's writing is not preoccupied with questions of identity, race, and nationalism. Rather, James's novels all take up these issues in jarringly profanity-laced, prurient, graphic, and violent ways that upset the pieties and proprieties that have long characterized anticolonial and postcolonial discourses. While authors like Faulkner, Oyeyemi, and Ward modulate violence in ways that differ from each other and from James—with Ward perhaps coming the closest to James's explicitness—it is crucial to note that they all participate in a Gothic tradition that begins, in the novels of Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis, with

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graphic violence and an interest in taboo subjects like rape and incest. James, we might say, is among the neo-gothic authors most committed to these elements of the genre.

Where one can find it, the criticism tends to focus on violence in James's novels and how they contribute to our understanding of the formation of Jamaican, Caribbean, and/or African diasporic subjectivity. There is far more written about *The Book of Night Women* than there is about James's first and third novels. Where critical analysis of *John Crow's Devil* exists, it focuses on the allegorical implications of James's blasphemous debut. Joél Madore's heavily psychoanalytic analysis of the novel suggests that its "cultural context . . . provides an ideal opportunity to analyze the signature, avatar, and archetype of each of its four main characters."¹⁰ Moreover, Madore continues, "analyzing the situations in *John Crow's Devil* from the perspective of the widow's process of individuation enhances not only the reading of the text but also the understanding of self."¹¹ My own previous discussion of *John Crow's Devil* suggests that though the novel positions destruction/death, loss,

abandonment, and a new beginning as central to the recovery of a sovereign self, personhood, and even civil order and liberty, the absence of a concrete picture of the next step is particularly telling of the incapacity of the contemporary postcolonial moment to envision or articulate a sovereign existence beyond the heteronormatively defined nation."¹²

As Curdella Forbes notes, *The Book of Night Women* "typifies the new generation of Caribbean diaspora writers whose creative innovations are redrawing the map of Caribbean literature and forcing critics to search for alternative discursive paradigms."¹³ It does so by "reposition[ing] women and the female body in the discourse of history in ways that allow contemplation of the ambivalent image of women in contemporary Jamaica but does so by opening a window on women's sexual experience on the slave plantation."¹⁴ Moreover, in one of the only analyses of the novel that focuses specifically on the violence as horror, Forbes suggests that "by focusing on the horror of slavery, more specifically the female experience of it, James further casts a searchlight on the exclusionary foundation not only of modernity and the mod-

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ern nation-state but, by extension, of the postcolonial Caribbean state."¹⁵ Sam Vásquez focuses on mixed race and white women in *The Book of Night Women* "to contend that for these individuals, desire and difference are inextricably intertwined and analytically inseparable from the violence that contextualizes this intertwining, and that, out of necessity, these women have used such paradigms for survival."¹⁶ For Markus Nehl, *The Book of Night Women* "participate[s] in a transnational, cross-generational discussion about the meaning of black (counter-) violence in an anti-black world and, eventually, move[s] beyond an uncritical celebration of the liberating impact of violence for the oppressed."¹⁷ He also suggests that "one of James's central objectives is to foreground the utter destructiveness of Caribbean slavery by showing how slavery perverts the slaves' moral values and how Lilith turns into a victimizer."¹⁸ Nonetheless, Nehl is unconvinced by James's excesses: "*The Book of Night Women* shows no critical awareness of the ethical risks involved in putting the atrocities against slave women into words: James's novel is full of shock-images, gruesome passages and pornographic

scenes that 'subject the dead to new dangers and to a second order of violence,' to use Hartman's words from 'Venus in Two Acts.'"¹⁹

These critiques make important contributions to demystifying the oftentimes confounding method behind James's use of violence in his writing while also attending to its spheres of utility as well as its limitations in parsing the complexities of the historical rooting of the modern Caribbean nation-state. What is missing from this work, however, is a more extensive analysis of James's attention to formal matters. Of his work, James says, "You are supposed to be disoriented. You are supposed to be profoundly disturbed. You are supposed to lose your bearings."²⁰ This deliberate disorientation perhaps seems (wrongly) incongruous to the organization of formal and generic adherence. This is not only a deliberate deflection on James's part but is also ironically crucial to thinking about how his writing interacts with the history of Caribbean writing, as well as how it should be situated in African diasporic writing's contemplations of black life in the present. In terms of genre, James's traffic in horror makes it clear that his generic modus operandi is the Gothic.

In what follows, I demonstrate how thinking through some of the Gothic tropes in James's writing—excessive violence, doubling, and feminine abjection in particular—works to illuminate a metafictional critique of the notion that nationalism can produce equitable sovereign subjectivity. James turns to the Gothic because, with its interest in coercion, abjection, and the absence of choice, it offers a precise

frame for rendering a world structured by neoliberalism. But James also reworks the Gothic by offering a queerly affirmative version of its at times misogynistic interest in gender distinctions. According to Jerold Hogle, “The deep Feminine level, as the Gothic mode has developed, is but one major form of a primordial dissolution that can obscure the boundaries between all western oppositions.”²¹ In much Gothic writing, this leads to a version of the feminine as primal horror. But by ending all his novels with women as the figurative last person standing, James subverts the notion of the feminine abject as the Gothic trope associated with primordial chaos, presenting it instead as a possible way forward at a moment when the historical present is not seemingly graspable through paradigms such as nationalism.

Thus, I’d like to shift focus from the violence itself to the generic elements this violence engages or represents. More specifically, I discuss James’s use of Gothic tropes in *John Crow’s Devil* and *The Book of Night Women* to argue in part that both novels engage such tropes to offer critiques of canon formation in Caribbean writing. More specifically, I contend that these novels deploy Gothic tropes of violence and horror to convey metafictional concerns about the relationship between literature and black sovereignty. I suggest, moreover, that in taking this tack, James’s writing finds company with other contemporary African diasporic art—literature, music, television shows, and film—that constitutes a new iteration of the black Gothic aesthetic. This New Black Gothic functions through temporal collapses, in which as-

pects of a slave past disrupt the present, to demonstrate how and why disruptive and traumatic aspects of the slave past continue to manifest, and in fact are redoubled, in the neoliberal present of late capitalism. The voyeuristic whippings with a slave-style whip in *John Crow’s Devil* and the repetition of “every negro walk in a circle” throughout *The Book of Night Women* are examples of temporal collapse that wield elements from the past to say something about the present. The New Black Gothic is also heavily metafictional where literary genealogies of race, those drawing from Gothic literary tropes and traditions in particular, are concerned.

Colonial Gothic, Postcolonial Gothic, New Black Gothic

The Gothic has always been central to Caribbean literary discourse. Moreover, as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert suggests, “The Caribbean, it turns out, is a space that learned to ‘read’ itself in literature through Gothic fiction and thus continues to be an apt generic lens through which Caribbean writers can examine their societies.”²² Indeed, it is through the genre’s revival at the end of the nineteenth century that Caribbean colonial spaces enter British imagination as a place of horror. Maisha Wester cites Howard Malchow as the critic who “locates the predominance of gothic fiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain in connection to questions of race and ethnicity, given the rise of (anti)slavery debates and immigration from Ireland and other colonized nations. He further contends that gothic fiction and racial dis-

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courses were intertwined and influenced each other mutually."²³

The Caribbean enters literary imaginations in the eighteenth century in terms of horror, through Gothic representations of race. Indeed, as Paravisini-Gebert continues, "The fear of miscegenation, with the attendant horror of interracial sexuality, enters public discourse at about the time Walpole began the Gothic novel" in the late eighteenth century.²⁴ The eighteenth-century Gothic genre "often turned the colonial subject into the obscene cannibalistic personification of evil, through whom authors could bring revulsion and horror into the text, thereby mirroring political and social anxieties close to home."²⁵ Between 1790 and 1830, the Gothic novel began its rise alongside concerns and debates about slavery, stirring both sympathy with and hostility toward antislavery sentiment. According to Paravisini-Gebert, "Gothic literature would be invoked as often to give voice to fears awakened by colonial realities as it was used by abolitionists to dramatize the horrors and tortures of enslavement."²⁶

Indeed, slavery as a quintessential site of violence

and threat of miscegenation is central to the colonial Gothic. According to Wester, "The very life of a slave is also inevitably a gothic existence. The murders/suicides, rapes, entrapment and escape cycles, torture (brutal whippings), and familial secrets (illegitimate births) that make up numerous gothic plots constitute real, daily existence under slavery."²⁷ Slave rebellions are central to the perception of the Caribbean as a site of terror because contemporaneous with the rise of the Gothic novel and antislavery debates is also the Tacky Rebellion in 1760 and the Haitian Revolution that destroyed Saint Domingue as a French slave colony in 1789.

Today the contemporary revival of the Gothic among black writers across the diaspora also centers on how slavery continues to resonate in black life. *The Book of Night Women* is a neo-slave narrative, and the community in *John Crow's Devil* devolves into a totalitarian reality that is enforced by public whippings, reminiscent of slavery, with a whip that Brother Vixton's "great grandfather thief from white massa himself."²⁸ If, as Paravisini-Gebert suggests, the Caribbean encountered itself in literature through the

Gothic, when it sought to write itself it also appropriated the genre's tropes early on with adherence and later with subversion. She continues:

At first it appeared as the backdrop to terror, whether in travelogues, where it was depicted as the site of the mysterious and uncanny, or in histories that underscored the violent process that led to its colonization. But as the region's various literary traditions began to emerge during the final decades of the nineteenth century, Caribbean fiction—often through parody—mirrored the devices and generic conventions of their European models. The Caribbean Gothic has consequently entered into a complex interplay with its English and continental counterparts in a colonizer-colonized point-counterpoint whose foremost concern has finally become the very nature of colonialism itself.²⁹

Through its engagement with the mad West Indian woman in the attic of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is among the quintessential postcolonial Gothic texts that depict the literary and cultural clashing between the Caribbean and its Gothic representations in English literature. According to Paravisini-Gebert, "Rhys' opening of European texts to a new type of scrutiny—the very realization that the canon, particularly the ever-popular Gothic canon, can be so interpolated, accosted, defied, and even disregarded—has made *Wide Sargasso Sea* a 'mother text' in its turn, opening the way for some remarkable correspondence between it and other Caribbean texts."³⁰ I'd like to suggest that in his

own employment of Gothic techniques—and in *The Book of Night Women's* interpolation of Rhys's novel, which I will discuss in more detail shortly—Marlon James opens up Caribbean literature to new scrutiny, in a revival of the genre that functions to subvert the postcolonial Gothic's subversions. Put another way: if the colonial Gothic vented English fears and anxieties over how colonization impacted Britain by representing the Caribbean as a space of terror, horror, and threat to the British nation and body politic, and the postcolonial Gothic sought to redress this characterization, contemporary writers reach for Gothic tropes that circulate around slavery to work through the realities of freedom for black subjects in the neoliberal present.

As already suggested, James is not the only contemporary writer engaged in this Gothic revival; his work also participates in a larger New Black Gothic aesthetic movement.³¹ Unlike earlier black or postcolonial Gothic literature, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* or Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the current moment of Gothic revival is neither about recovery nor representation. Rather, among its unifying features are a dark humor that is not comedic but is instead horrifying or uncomfortable (sometimes both); a preoccupation with the enduring legacies of various forms of historical racialized oppression (colonization, slavery, and Jim Crow segregation, for example); and a sense of the inescapability of racialized oppression as well as an eschewal of hope for the future. It becomes imperative to think about James's writing amid this particular cohort, beyond Caribbean writ-

ing, because doing so illuminates a common concern with the obvious and sublimated ways race continues to constrain and marginalize black life in the present across the African diaspora.

One member of this narrative cohort, James Hannaham's *Delicious Foods* (2015), depicts a form of modern-day slavery on a southern factory farm worked by predominantly African American drug addicts. They have been transported to the farm from their precarious urban lives; crack is personified as a character named Scotty, who literally talks to one of the protagonists throughout the novel. Toward the end of Jesmyn Ward's novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, the main characters come upon a tree filled with the ghosts of black people brutalized from slavery to the present. In the novel's present, this tree manifests how the violence of slavery is transhistorical, joining the raced violence of the present—such as police brutality—with that of the past. In *The Icarus Girl* and *White Is for Witching*, Helen Oyeyemi writes about impish child ghosts and haunted houses in a manner that demonstrates the indeterminate nature of many of the elements we have come to see as fixed, even within discourses that thematize the hybrid, alienating, and dispossessing nature of diasporic realities. True to Gothic form, these authors and others explore black life by focusing on the spaces between the real and unreal, which are often featured in opposition to each other, as spaces of indeterminacy for things that are not as neatly separable as we imagine. While James's writing is embedded in and preoccupied with uniquely Caribbean concerns, such as the legacies of

slavery, colonization, and postcolonial nationalism, his writing is nonetheless part of a larger corpus of literature that engages the precarity of black life in the twenty-first century through Gothic terms.

John Crow's Devil and the Subversion of the Abject Feminine

If one considers Rushdie's *Shame* as James's progenitive literary model, particularly from the perspective of not noticing the novel's politics because of its deranged reality, the logic behind James's own literary excesses and their utility to his politics becomes much clearer. Indeed, as countless critics have noted, the Gothic is a form in which an excess of violence and terror functions to critique the ills of the contemporary order. It is in this vein that I continue to read what Nadia Ellis calls a "poetics of excess" as being inseparable from and thus central to the formal complexity of James's writing.³²

Ironically, as much as James's work is reminiscent of Rushdie's *Shame*—as is evident in the criticism of James's own work—the excesses of violence, sex, and sexual violence in James's novels serve as a distraction from the politics of form that is at work in his writing. The dearth of criticism on *John Crow's Devil* would suggest that it is too deranged to even be approached critically; indeed, my first impressions of the book bore out as much.

James is not being facetious when he describes the book he writes after his encounter with Jesus and Rushdie's *Shame* as unholy. In *John Crow's Devil*, the serpentine Apostle York brings about the violent

self-destruction of the village of Gibbeah through incendiary religious rhetoric. The novel's violence and brutality parallel the vehemence with which it criticizes the hypocrisy of a society that brandishes Christianity to endorse homophobia, while fostering toxic hypermasculinity that is contingent on (hetero)sexual prowess. We can understand this vehemence as rooted in James's own experiences of being a queer man and born-again Christian in Jamaica. Of his work environment before he became a writer, James tells us: "The entrance to my cubicle was blocked by a boss with curious eyebrows who asked why all my magazines showed men on the covers, what GQ meant, where was Playboy? Every man in the office had a woman on the side, whether he was married or not, and even monogamous men were considered gay."³³ This hyper-heterosexuality functions to deflect any suspicions of queerness, accurate or otherwise, while being silent on other sexual transgressions such as adultery, a tendency that James exaggerates to grotesque proportions in *John Crow's Devil*.

I have written at length elsewhere about *John Crow's Devil*, so in the interest of not covering already trod ground, my discussion of the novel here will focus on the ways in which it engages doubling and abjection, two recurring features of Gothic narratives, in a manner that subverts patriarchal order, redeems the abject feminine, and presents queerness as a site of potential regeneration rather than of devolution. The Gothic functions to disrupt absolutes, and *John Crow's Devil* takes this disruption to insane and terrifying heights through a community's response (or its

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lack of response) to various kinds of predatory sex. Indeed, all sex in the novel is depicted as predatory, be it incest, pedophilia, bestiality, or even heterosexual sex within the confines of marriage. When Brother Jakes is cured of his erectile dysfunction by Apostle York at the altar, the novel tells us "his blessing stood erect all the way home, where for the first time in two years he could violate his wife."³⁴ In this way, the novel suggests that it is not necessarily queerness or even sex that is the problem but rather patriarchal sexual predation.

Both doubling and abjection are recurrent features of Gothic imaginaries, functioning precisely as means of disrupting the essentialist absolutes upon which understandings of self, community, and freedom—through the logics of race, gender, and sexuality—depend. However, in James's hands, these tropes function in unexpected, obscuring, and disturbing, rather than illuminating, ways. In Gothic literature the trope of the double or doppelgänger recurs in order to demonstrate the uncanny; the uncanny's evocation

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of the strange and mysterious in turn is meant to be unsettling. As Wester tells us, "In the British tradition, the uncanny surfaces in a variety of ways and signals a variety of repressions including drives and desires repressed according to social mandate, and sexual awareness."³⁵ Uncanniness is likewise linked to abjection. For Julia Kristeva, "it is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection, but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."³⁶ As a state of in-betweenness and ambiguity, abjection is threatening and thus rejected yet ironically is also desired—because, as Jerrold Hogle suggests, what we abject "both threaten[s] to reengulf us and promise[s] to return us to our primal origins."³⁷ Throughout the plot of *John Crow's Devil*, James creates a Freudian purge of sorts, where doubling and abjection function to bring repressed desires to the fore and are vented through grotesque violence reminiscent of slavery. This, in turn, triggers a return of the community of Gibbeah to a kind of primal origin.

The novel's doubles include Lucas York and Hector Bligh, alongside Lucinda and the widow Mary Greenfield. Once York takes over the church, banishing Bligh, Lucinda ingratiates herself to York in the hopes of becoming his right-hand woman and sexual partner; likewise, the widow rescues and nurses Bligh back to health, developing similar desires in the process. While these pairings function as foils for each other—the narrative at times juxtaposes these storylines—both heterosexual couplings ultimately

fail in a manner that defamiliarizes and decenters consensual heterosexuality as the desired societal ideal. In earlier Gothic fiction, there was clear delineation of good and bad between a figure and her double/alter ego/doppelgänger—as with Jane Eyre and Bertha Rochester, for example. James’s contemporary deployment of the trope is not as clear-cut about what separates the doubles.

In a novel preoccupied with perverting traditional notions of right and wrong through the lens of religious fundamentalism, Hector “The Rum Preacher” Bligh is not an uncomplicated Christ figure to Apostle York’s Antichrist. He takes to drinking because of the guilt he feels over causing his father’s and brother’s deaths. His brother commits suicide after walking in on Bligh having sex with the brother’s wife. Their father dies of a broken heart, and Hector “joined the seminary soon after” his brother’s suicide.³⁸ This makes Bligh an ineffective preacher, perhaps precisely the morally compromised character a pedophile like Aloysius Garvey would hire to lead the church. As the narrator further speculates, “There were some who wondered why a man as rich as Aloysius Garvey would hire someone as worthless as Pastor Bligh, but there were others who felt they already knew.” Gibbeah’s moral consciousness is thus such a pastor: “People would say that if the Rum Preacher was all that stood between Heaven and Hell, then everybody had better stock up on asbestos.”³⁹ While the Gothic has taught us that even a flawed hero will triumph over that which threatens the community—see Jane Eyre and Rochester’s happy ending—Bligh does

not triumph over his foil Apostle York, and his death is not the sacrifice that brings about Gibbeah’s salvation. Instead, after a few violent and literally explosive clashes between the villagers and whoever Apostle York designates as sinners, Bligh is eventually stoned to death by the entire village. While “the double typically figures as an alter ego and articulates how cultural constraints define an individual against his or her base desires,”⁴⁰ in James’s hands there is nothing that successfully stands between an individual and his or her base desires. That which is abject becomes the norm.

According to Hogle, “The Gothic clearly exists, in part, to raise the possibility that all ‘abnormalities’ we would divorce from ourselves *are a part of ourselves*, deeply and pervasively (hence frighteningly), even while it provides quasi-antiquated methods to help us place such ‘deviations’ at a definite though haunting, distance from us.”⁴¹ The horror of *John Crow’s Devil* is that it depicts the ease with which the Apostle is able to manipulatively wield Christian rhetoric, ironically, deliberately, and conspicuously devoid of the word *Jesus*, to compel the community to mob violence against itself—as if that violence always lurked just under the surface. York tells the congregation that “the Lord was merciful, but also vengeful,” and thus, “woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin.” He exhorts, “Who’s ready to be violent for the Lord?”⁴² Preaching a separatist doctrine that sees the village eventually endorse the slavery-style public whippings of disobedient members and destroy the bridge that connects it to surrounding ar-

eas (in the name of cutting itself off from all that is sinful), York rallies the people into a violent and vengeful sense of righteousness. As the narrative voice of the village tells us, "After the Apostle done, we did want to kill the sinner man and sinner woman so bad that we did have to count to ten and then again."⁴³ The first "sinner" to catch the village's collective wrath/cleansing is Massa Fergie, who in the process of trying to free one of his cows from a fence is mistaken by the righteous mob as committing an act of bestiality. The chorus "he's under my feet" is interspersed with the description of how the crowd "hit, stomped, and burnt" Massa Fergie. The narrator notes that "it took the Apostle's holy thunder and a couple of verses from the Book of Daniel to mix the crowd's fear and rage into a mob."⁴⁴ When the mob pulls back, "Massa Fergie lay in the dirt, his skull crushed and ribs bashed in as if tramped by a bull."⁴⁵

In this instance, James exaggerates to horrific absurdity a community's anxieties surrounding queerness, to expose the tenuous nature of any sense of righteousness that is defined by sexuality. If the queerness of interracial sex threatens the essentialist eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of race upon which slavery and colonization are based, in later fiction queer sexuality that is nonreproductive challenges the essentialist notions of gender upon which patriarchy continues to depend. Predatory sexuality, in particular, is at the core of James's novel and demonstrates patriarchal perversion. Apostle York's secret, discovered by the widow toward the end of the novel, is that he is one of Mr. Garvey's "nephews,"

young boys who were kept and sexually abused by Garvey and other powerful men. In their final apocalyptic clash, York tells Bligh, "You know what he did when we got too strong for him? Send us off to boarding school for more men to fuck with us."⁴⁶ York returns to Gibbeah seeking revenge not only on Garvey but also on the village as a whole, which allowed a predator like Garvey to exist in their midst. As he tells Bligh, "I belong with these people. I belong with all these fuckers who suspected or even knew what my uncle was, but let their nigger ways allow it. And those same nigger ways now allowing me."⁴⁷ York thus comes in vengeance to ensure that the community is terrorized by violent sexual predation in the same way he once was.

After Bligh's execution, the apostle is able to fully install himself as perverse messiah in a completely isolated community. In his fenced-off dystopic kingdom of the righteous, children are separated from their parents—"There was no mother and father, only God the eternal Father and his son the divine apostle."⁴⁸ Boys are separated from girls, with the former attending school, the latter attending to cooking and cleaning; the rape and physical abuse of dissenters abounds. If the patriarchal structure of Gibbeah turns a blind eye to the sexual abuse of children, by the end the novel presents a feminine future as the only way forward, albeit an uncertain way. After York's right-hand man turned lover, Clarence, drowns him in a bathtub, the bereft villagers follow a flying dove—"a bird of promise, not judgement"—to the fence that cut Gibbeah off from the rest of the world,

"which was covered in greenery."⁴⁹ The novel's final image is of the remaining villagers, or those who had managed to escape the village during Bligh's execution, seeing the widow "through the spaces between the leaves." When looking at her, "They saw judgement and redemption, rescue and damnation, despair and hope."⁵⁰ Ending with this widow scene, the novel's subversion rests in the manner in which the abject becomes the only source of hope for the future. Once her husband dies, the widow leaves the church and seals herself off from the rest of the community. It is her liminal position as a woman unsexed, without a husband/sexual partner, that makes it both easier for her to leave Gibbeah and imbues her with power at the novel's end.

In this way, James's writing doesn't only subvert Gothic tropes, as other postcolonial writing does, in order to enact correctives to colonial stereotypes; it also subverts the latter subversiveness in order to implore how the abject feminine has functioned in fiction thus far. Indeed, both *John Crow's Devil* and *The Book of Night Women* end in a kind of unformed primordial chaos, with a woman at the boundary of each, symbolically, as a manifestation of the Gothic's deepest anxieties. As Jerrold Hogle suggests, "The repressed, archaic, and thus deeply unconscious Feminine is a fundamental level of being to which most Gothic finally refers, often in displacements of it that seem to be old patriarchal structures, and all the blurred oppositions that are abjected unto monsters or specters by Gothic characters face their ultimate dissolution into primal chaos as they approach this

JAMES EXAGGERATES TO HORRIFIC ABSURDITY A COMMUNITY'S ANXIETIES SURROUNDING QUEERNESS

feminized nadir that is both the ultimate Other and the basically groundless ground of self."⁵¹

Here the feminine Other is prefigured as ground zero of Gothic horror, or the site that symbolizes the devolution of order. Through the widow, James engages the abject feminine as a queer site of regeneration. There is no vision given of what the post-sex future will look like, but the apocalyptic valence of reaching the end of yourself and turning to the abject feminine for redemption is nonetheless also central to understanding the postapocalyptic ending of *The Book of Night Women*.

***The Book of Night Women* and Metafictional Self-Reflexivity**

Both *John Crow's Devil* and *The Book of Night Women* end, puzzlingly, with women who have managed to escape the horrific tyranny that destroyed their community and ways of life, surviving at the edge of the smoldering chaos. In the case of the former novel, this escape comes through the death of the grotesque Apostle who led the community on a campaign of horrifically violent self-destruction as spurred by religious fervor. The latter is hardly differ-

ent; *The Book of Night Women* ends just after a failed multi-estate slave rebellion reduces Montpelier estate to smoldering cane fields and rubble. The last woman standing, one of the plotters, is Lilith, who rather than fight for the rebellion fights instead to defend herself and her overseer father, Jack Wilkins. The novel explains Lilith's strange choice as an entirely personal and individual one that stands in stark contrast to the needs of the collective: "He save her from the field and he stop them from whipping her—even Quinn didn't do that. And he be her pappy. She don't know what that mean. Mayhaps it mean nothing, especially today. But she shed enough blood already, including Hypollita, who be her own kin. She not shedding no more."⁵² As puzzling as her allegiances may seem, even to herself, Lilith's motivations and approaches to violence in particular offer an alternate way of thinking about freedom that is contrary to how raced and gendered resistance have been imagined thus far. Moreover, *The Book of Night Women* does not end with formal or legal freedom for Lilith, and this isn't because Lilith runs away and lives as a fugitive until emancipation, as is standard in the narratives of her nonfictional slave compatriots. Instead the novel ends in 1819, more than a decade before emancipation. The narrator tells us that despite the fact that "Lilith didn't get any free paper . . . she act like a free negro. She work in the kitchen and cook and clean for Jack Wilkins and do her own thing as be her mood."⁵³

Thus, after the suppression of a slave rebellion and a rebuilding of the plantation, Lilith remains on Montpelier estate, on a British colony where slavery

still exists. This is the very picture of personal and political in-betweenness, which in turn draws attention to the constructed nature of freedom. If the fact of slave authorship compromised eighteenth-century notions of what constituted a rational being and thus humanity, notions of freedom also rested on similarly tenuous ground. As Wester suggests, "Freedom is an idea, a nameable concept, but not necessarily a material reality. For slaves, recognizing freedom as an arbitrary notion proves as threatening as white recognition of race as constructed."⁵⁴ Conceptually, freedom is a fluid term; leaving Lilith in legal limbo unsettles its unimpeachable position as the objective goal of resistance and rebellion.

But what would be the point of questioning the very grounds of freedom? Indeed, the neo-slave narrative form is particularly suited to this kind of inquiry. Arlene Keizer tells us that

in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and anticolonial movements in the Caribbean, black writers' orientation to slavery has undergone a sea change. Rather than using representations of slavery primarily to protest past and present oppression—this is how slavery figured in most African American and Caribbean works through the early 1960s—black writers have begun to represent slavery in order to explore the process of self-creating under extremely oppressive conditions.⁵⁵

Moreover, among the effects of this shift from protest to self-creation, as Keizer suggests, is a forced "rethinking of the unitary black subject that

white supremacist and black nationalist ideologies find necessary for their mobilization in the present.”⁵⁶ Here one sees the ways in which unitary raced subjectivity, rooted in slavery, remains a part of both contemporary oppression and resistance. In this way, we can think of James’s adoption of the slave narrative form as a means of interrogating the notion of the unitary black subject often represented in previous generations of Caribbean writing and the nationalist ideologies this subject served. Lilith’s refusal to form alliances or acquiesce to allegiances simply on the basis of race, gender, or common status is a critique of essentialist race and gender-based resistance as a primary means of liberation that continues to underlie black subject formation across the diaspora.

Taken individually or together, Marlon James’s novels participate in a paradigm shift impacting literary and critical intervention in not only Caribbean fiction but also contemporary fiction more generally. This intervention has everything to do with how the form of the Anglophone novel treats the now normalized identity politics that have attended narrative projects of imagining political sovereignty through cultural nationalisms for postcolonial subjects and communities. While identity politics are central facets of all of James’s novels, they do not serve the now conventionalized function as the delimiter of good or progressive cultural politics. Instead James turns to Gothic techniques to render the identity politics that often undergird cultural-nationalist narratives as horrifyingly irresponsible, ineffective, destructive, and

ultimately irrelevant to any project of achieving more equitable individual and communal realities. Jamaica’s debt to GDP ratio of 103 percent in 2017, for example, materially conveys the limitations of conflating identity with freedom and free markets with equity. Thus, while James’s novels do deploy identity politics, they do so to expose their ineffectiveness in securing more equitable and sovereign realities for postcolonial nations like Jamaica. Lilith’s “freedom” at the end of *The Book of Night Women* thus functions to allegorically represent the ways identity politics obscures material realities.

In order to make this point clear, the novel effects self-reflexive and metafictional retrospection on the progenitive forms of racialized discourses while always keeping sex central through allusions to scandalous and pornographic eighteenth-century fiction such as Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*, John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill*, and Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and *Political History of the Devil*, as well as rewritings of two of Caribbean literature’s canonical female-authored Gothic texts, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* and Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Moreover, all these allusions to the literariness of Caribbean literature as rooted in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writing converge in the section of the novel where Lilith spends time at Coulibre Estate, where Isobel Roget and her family reside. That an estate called Coulibre is the setting of all this metafictional activity grounds James’s novel in a genealogical and dialogic framework that includes *Wide Sargasso Sea*’s interpolation of *Jane Eyre*.

The relationship between Lilith and Isobel, both colony-born but different racially, is an analogue of Antoinette and Tia's relationship from *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This particular interracial relationship between island-born children provides a prototype for exploring the complexities of identity and sovereignty in contexts still influenced by cultural ordering established on slave plantations. We learn early in the novel that as a child, Lilith has a "white playmate from Coulibre Estate."⁵⁷ At the beginning of Lilith's fourteenth year, predictably, she is apprised of her status as slave and is ordered to the fields, while Isobel becomes a lady, and their paths diverge until later in the novel. From what we know of Isobel's family structure at Coulibre, circumstantially, I assume that she is Lilith's childhood playmate, though the novel never names her as such. Moreover, the word *Coulibre* itself, as the name of the estate that gets destroyed by fire in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, constitutes a solid allusion to Rhys's novel and its Gothic eighteenth-century progenitor, *Jane Eyre*.

This metatextual structure is further diversified when Lilith discovers scandalous eighteenth-century texts hidden behind others in Massa Roget's library. She "pull out four to see which books hiding behind them. One say *Fanny Hill*, one say *Moll Flanders*, and one say something that look like it write by the devil."⁵⁸ By having Lilith find these particular texts, notorious for their pornographic nature, James rewrites two of the more graphic and disturbing scenes of sexual violence from *The History of Mary Prince*, which

both represent the horrors and violence slave women face as subjects of sexual attention by white masters and overseers. The first of James's scenes involves the brutal murder of the house slave Hetty, and the second features Mr. D— forcing Mary to bathe him in a tub of water. In his rewriting of Hetty's demise, James presents far more graphic details than would have been permitted in the slave narrative's attempts to secure the sympathies of the pious for the antislavery cause and in the process orchestrates an illuminating contrast between heavily censored slave narratives and the salaciousness of what Lilith finds hidden in the library. As Moira Ferguson suggests, while the sexuality of female slaves is "an issue more overtly discussed in later African American slave narratives," *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* was censored by the editor Thomas Pringle or even Mary Prince herself, in recognition of Pringle's desire to launder or morally and psychologically simplify the *History*. The fact that children are never mentioned—highly unusual in a female slave narrative—raises questions, understandably not mentioned by Mary Prince (or permitted to be mentioned by Pringle).⁵⁹

The Book of Night Women's narrative voice observes no such niceties as it relates the sexual and reproductive lives of enslaved men and women and thus signals a separation between a realistic narrative of slavery in its own right and a narrative of slavery utilized as antislavery propaganda. One of the effects of separating a narrative of slavery from emancipatory

agendas is the release of the slave subject from the burdens of a morally circumspect signification in the interest of political mobilization.

Like Hetty, James's *Dulcimena* is described as the slave "who do everything, including all the kitchen work, cooking, and whatever the other niggers forget to do."⁶⁰ When she dies from a severe whipping, "all her duty fall on Lilith."⁶¹ Similarly, Hetty is also brutally whipped, and, Prince notes, "after Hetty died all her labours fell upon me, in addition to my own."⁶² Both Hetty and *Dulcimena* get brutally whipped when a commotion between their masters and mistresses is followed by a query about whether or not the slave women had completed a task. If this incident ever so vaguely communicates the sexual and physical violence endured by nineteenth-century slave women as a result of jealous mistresses and guilty masters, James's recasting of this slave-narrative trope makes it all the more obvious how deliberately crafted for their audiences such accounts of sexual transgression in slave narratives were. Drawing from the scene alluded to in Prince's narrative, which depicts Mr. D—'s "ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water," James writes his scene as one in which Lilith drowns Massa Roget as she bathes him, which in turn sets off a chain of events wherein she murders everyone in the house—slaves, masters, and children—leaving only Isobel alive. This enacts not only a horrifying destruction of human life and property but also, more symbolically, a violent destruction of the pieties of the

A VIOLENT DESTRUCTION OF THE PIETIES OF THE SLAVE NARRATIVE FORM AND THE ASEXUAL POSITIONS THEIR FEMALE AUTHORS WERE FORCED TO OCCUPY

slave narrative form and the asexual positions their female authors were forced to occupy.⁶³

Through its Gothic rendering of the violence, horrors, and sexual excesses of slavery in disturbingly explicit terms, *The Book of Night Women* draws attention to how discourses of race- and gender-based resistance have become conventionalized and circular rather than progressive. Moreover, through the repetition of the sentences “Every negro walk in a circle. Take that and make of it what you will,” which appear at the beginning of five chapters, the novel effects a temporal collapse that brings the horrific relations of race-based oppression and the Gothic terrors of slavery into the present. In their first appearance, these two sentences not only grant and acknowledge the reader’s autonomy over her interpretations but also introduce the routine of lives lived in race-based bondage: “A circle like the sun, a circle like the moon, a circle like bad tidings that seem gone but always come back.”⁶⁴ Circularity, as it is introduced here, conveys not only confinement and interminability but also, paradoxically—as suggested by “walk”—movement and progression. In a novel about slavery, the use of “negro” as the subject rather than slave, lends itself to nonspecificity, extending the sentiment to those descended from slaves. These sentences, as they are repeated throughout the novel, draw attention to an interminable circularity in the progression of negroes in bondage, while the use of the adjective every extends this interminable circularity beyond the historical context of slavery into the racialized oppositional work of literary discourses.

The second repetition of these lines, moreover, implies circularity in “the negro’s” lack of insight into his or her strategies for gaining freedom. The narrator suggests a “negro” “never see that he walking round and round and always comeback to where he leave first. That be why the negro not free. He can’t walk like freeman and no matter where he walk the road take he right back to the chain, the branding iron, the cat-o’-nine or the noose.”⁶⁵ At issue here are the modes of securing freedom, what freedom means, and whether or not “every negro” has access to the prevailing understanding of freedom. Throughout the novel Lilith’s actions pose challenges to how freedom has been imagined, defined, and experienced across a history of literary forms, Gothic novels and slave narratives included. As the narrator suggests, “the negro’s” concept of the journey to freedom is one that ironically and frustratingly reinscribes implements of bondage and, as such, becomes part of the reason “why the negro not free.”

In “every negro’s” third appearance in the novel, the ethos of interminable circularity grounded in the historical context of slavery shifts to reveal the possibility not necessarily of breaking the circularity but of making it manageable enough to surmount. Accordingly “sometimes that circle start to squeeze in on itself and get smaller and smaller and smaller like a mark or a head. A head so small that the negro have one chance to stomp it with her foot and stomp it good.”⁶⁶ Appearing midway through the novel, these sentences accompany a turning point in the plot when Lilith is able to shift the terms of her brutalizing con-

finement. The “head stomping” that heralds Lilith’s literal murder of the Roget family (a white magistrate, his wife, their young sons, and a slave woman) and destruction of their Coulibre estate house figuratively invokes the development of alternate possibilities for understanding oppositionality within literary practices. Of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, I have suggested that “Bertha’s razing of Thornfield Hall can . . . be read as an assertion of sovereignty, one that liberates her from her attic prison while destroying the material and symbolic trappings of her captivity in the process.”⁶⁷ If this is the case, the fact that James does not present self-immolation as the only path for Lilith’s empowerment offers an iconoclastic rewriting of the possibilities for resistance among Caribbean women. In this instance the repeated sentences hint at the possibility of surmounting the problems within contemporary oppositional discourses by first apprehending where circular conventionalization occurs and then deliberately trampling or standing on top of these conventions. The novel enacts this trampling and surmounting in its at times violent reinhabitation of traditional forms like the slave narrative and in its revisions of Gothic techniques.

In their penultimate appearance in chapter 25, the repeated sentences draw attention to how a circularity imposed on the lives of slaves for the plantation’s productivity also functions in the lives of masters: “Black man wake up to find circle make for him, beginning with the shackle that lock round him neck. White man circle come by him own choosing.” The narrator warns, “if you the negro get take up in

the white man life, you travel in circle too.”⁶⁸ On the surface, this appears to be a warning to avoid the same elements used to enact domination while attempting to escape it. Up until this point, walking in a circle implies not only confinement in a system of literal slavery but also the confinement of the means through which opposition to these systems has been articulated. Reiterated here is the need to assume a more suspicious stance toward racial prescriptivism as it is manifested and conventionalized in oppositional frameworks.

With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the final repetition of these sentences in the last chapter of the novel appears at the beginning of a paragraph that once again inscribes the circularity of negro life, in this instance with the suggestion of generational perpetuity. Thus “sometimes when a negro die and another negro take him place, even if that negro not be blood, they still fall in step with the same circle.”⁶⁹ The sentences literally describe the fantasy of trans-individual transmission underlying race consciousness, even as they performatively enact it. At the same time, the five repetitions call attention to this process—and to the book’s formal strategies more generally—in ways that potentially undermine the frustrating ossification of initially vital strategies for resistance. Thus traveling in a circle implies not only confinement in a system of literal slavery but also the confinement of the means through which opposition to these systems has been articulated. In repeating these sentences five times, circularity takes center stage on multiple levels: that of the text itself, that

WHAT DO THESE FREEDOMS MEAN WHEN THEY ARE ENTRENCHED IN A LARGER SYSTEM OF CONFINEMENT AND INEQUALITY, AND OUR EFFORTS TO ESCAPE THIS SYSTEM REMAIN FIXED IN INDIVIDUAL ENDEAVORS?

of the themes we associate with narratives of slavery (racialized discourses of freedom and resistance), and that of literary practices. Circularity on all three levels (form, theme, and practice) is illuminated by the final aspect of the novel's radical race critique of neoliberal anti-racism: its ending.

If official anti-racisms, via liberal race narratives, have contributed to disconnecting race from material conditions and limiting the horizon of social possibility for overcoming racism, then leaving Lilith on the estate as property at the end of the novel—where she is free but for the formal papers—both forecloses the sentimentalism of self-actualization and forces us to see how race and material conditions remain imbricated. Indeed, this is the inescapability of race-based oppression that the New Black Gothic emphasizes. Neoliberalism teaches us to value our individual freedoms, but what do these freedoms mean when they are entrenched in a larger system of confinement and inequality and our efforts to escape this system remain fixed in individual endeavors? If neoliberalism remains committed to creative destruction

as a form of constant revolution without content, “every negro walk in a circle” that goes far beyond the plantation. ■

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Notes

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1 James, “From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself.”

- 2** James, "From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself."
- 3** James, "From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself"; emphasis added.
- 4** See Harrison, *Jamaica's Difficult Subjects*.
- 5** Glave, *Our Caribbean*, 1.
- 6** According to Eng, "End(s) of Race," 1484, the ethnic literary text "has often been said to function as a proxy for history. This has placed particular pressure and urgency on the literary form to perform what is 'missing' in history and to represent otherwise unrepresented communities."
- 7** Harrison, *Jamaica's Difficult Subjects*, 152.
- 8** Ellis, "Marlon James's Savage Business," describes being "rather less convinced that understanding Jamaica requires quite this much of everything: pages, characters, violence, sex."
- 9** James himself notes his affinity for modernist writing—Faulkner and Woolf specifically—in both interviews and the acknowledgments in his novels.
- 10** Madore, "Jamaican Signatures," 70.
- 11** Madore, "Jamaican Signatures," 75.
- 12** Harrison, *Jamaica's Difficult Subjects*, 146.
- 13** Forbes, "Bodies of Horror," 1.
- 14** Forbes, "Bodies of Horror," 2.
- 15** Forbes, "Bodies of Horror," 2.
- 16** Vásquez, "Violent Liaisons," 2.
- 17** Nehl, *Transnational Black Dialogues*, 188.
- 18** Nehl, *Transnational Black Dialogues*, 181.
- 19** Nehl, *Transnational Black Dialogues*, 180.
- 20** Blake, "Violently Wrought."
- 21** Hogle, introduction, 11. Within the Gothic tradition, the Western binary oppositions whose boundaries are threatened by the feminine include masculine/feminine, life/death, natural/supernatural, ancient/modern, realistic/artificial, and unconscious/conscious (9).
- 22** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 233.
- 23** Wester, *African American Gothic*, 13.
- 24** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 203.
- 25** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 231.
- 26** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 231.
- 27** Wester, *African American Gothic*, 35.
- 28** James, *John Crow's Devil*, 117.
- 29** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 233.
- 30** Paravisini-Gebert, "Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic," 253.
- 31** Harrison, "New Black Gothic."
- 32** Ellis, "Marlon James's Savage Business."
- 33** James, "From Jamaica to Minnesota to Myself."
- 34** James, *John Crow's Devil*, 47.
- 35** Wester, *African American Gothic*, 12.
- 36** Kristeva, "Powers of Horror," 4.
- 37** Hogle, introduction, 7.
- 38** James, *John Crow's Devil*, 23.
- 39** James, *John Crow's Devil*, 23.
- 40** Wester, *African American Gothic*, 12.
- 41** Hogle, introduction, 12.
- 42** James, *John Crow's Devil*, 98.

- 43 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 100.
- 44 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 126.
- 45 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 128.
- 46 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 213.
- 47 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 213.
- 48 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 224.
- 49 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 230.
- 50 James, *John Crow's Devil*, 230.
- 51 Hogle, introduction, 11.
- 52 James, *Book of Night Women*, 398–99.
- 53 James, *Book of Night Women*, 412.
- 54 Wester, *African American Gothic*, 55.
- 55 Keizer, *Black Subjects*, 11.
- 56 Keizer, *Black Subjects*, 11.
- 57 James, *Book of Night Women*, 4.
- 58 James, *Book of Night Women*, 202. With thanks to my colleague Emily Friedman for help identifying the latter text as Defoe's.
- 59 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 14.
- 60 James, *Book of Night Women*, 184.
- 61 James, *Book of Night Women*, 200.
- 62 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 67
- 63 Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 77
- 64 James, *Book of Night Women*, 32.
- 65 James, *Book of Night Women*, 119.
- 66 James, *Book of Night Women*, 218.

- 67 Harrison, *Jamaica's Difficult Subjects*, 121.
- 68 James, *Book of Night Women*, 304.
- 69 James, *Book of Night Women*, 412.

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