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Author(s)	Dennis Yeo Kah Sin
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# “Did I scare you?": The Curious Case of Michael Jackson as Gothic narrative

Dennis Yeo Kah Sin

## INTRODUCTION

On June 25, 2009, Michael Jackson died.<sup>1</sup> Universally hailed as a musical genius and pop icon, Michael's tale is shrouded by rumor, speculation and mystery. Even as this article is written, controversy rages not only over the cause of his death but also the legacy he has left behind.<sup>2</sup> Michael manifested all that we loved and loathed of our humanity – a desire to restore the innocence of the world and yet a dark inclination towards deviant transgressions. He was very much an enigma that many imitated but few identified with. Although he was a hypersensitive recluse victimized by an abusive childhood, his transformations of physiognomy caused him to be the focus of uninterrupted media attention. He reportedly gave millions to charitable organizations yet left behind an inheritance of debt and lawsuits. Pursued by fans and paparazzi, persecuted by accusation and litigation, Michael was paranoid of exposure and betrayal. His eccentric behavior created such an aura of simulacra around him that no one could tell if what the tabloids were saying were authentic or made up. In short, his life read very much like a Gothic narrative, a haunting which was strange, fantastical and Other.

In the short film *Ghosts* (Winston, 1997), a mob of townsfolk who gather to chase away the local spook is confronted by a cloaked skeleton. The skull of the skeleton is a mask that is removed to reveal the Maestro played by Michael Jackson who says his first words “Did I scare you?”. This line does not merely parody the Gothic genre, but also playfully comments on Michael's own life. Following his death, the Special Commemorative Edition of *Time* (June 29, 2009) described him as a “creepy curiosity” but hardly made any mention of the influence of the Gothic in his music and short films.<sup>3</sup> From the maniacal laughter that begins the title track of *Off the Wall* to his *Thriller* and *Ghosts* videos, Michael established himself from the start as Dorian Gray, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Frankenstein's monster and Dracula rolled into one.<sup>4</sup> In many ways, Michael Jackson embodied the Gothic.<sup>5</sup> His surreal life was a fusion of fantasy, science-fiction and horror and revolved around “themes of abuse and parasitism, loneliness and terror” (Hirshey 223). The narrative of his life is a *bricolage* of his songs, music videos, interviews and short films. Likewise, his autobiography, other alternative biographies and articles written about him create an intertext of competing narratives and sub-texts about his life.<sup>6</sup> Michael's demise did not just spell the end of an era in pop culture; it also concluded a Gothic narrative.

## ANOTHER PART OF ME

The central backdrop of this Gothic world is Neverland Ranch. Both refuge and prison, the architectural configuration of the Gothic castle with its subterranean dungeons and forbidden rooms often parallel the internal psychological mindscape of its owner.<sup>7</sup> An oneiric other-world of wish-fulfillment, fantasy and imagination, Neverland was created as “a safe haven for him from an ever-pressing, ever-difficult world” (Taraborrelli 10). It was a far cry from the claustrophobic lodgings in Gary, Indiana, where Michael grew up with his numerous siblings. The trope of the castle with its narrow passages and gloomy interiors is also representative of the repressed secrets and claustrophobic isolation of the Gothic hero-villain. The *mise-en-scène* of Neverland reflected Michael's desire to redeem the innocence and frivolity of childhood but also contained his deepest,

darkest secrets – the alleged charges of sexual molestation. As a crime scene, Neverland turned from dream carnival to nightmarish farce. When the mansion was raided and searched, Michael was similarly violated in what he would describe as a “dehumanizing and humiliating examination” on December 22, 1993. This incursion into the surreal magic and mysterious sanctity of Neverland was parodied in the short film *Ghosts*. After the accusations of pedophilia, Neverland, like Michael’s career, lay in ruins and never regained its earlier glory.

Like the Gothic cosmos, Michael Jackson’s reality foregrounded the fantastic, the preternatural and the melodramatic. Michael lived in what Lisa-Marie Presley called a “world of wonder” (Taraborrelli 601). She told *Newsweek* (April 7, 2003), “when you go into his world you step into this whole other realm. I could tell you all about the craziness – all these things that were odd, different, evil or not cool”. Disillusioned by the real world around him, Michael seemed to want to retreat into the make-belief simulacra of theme parks like Disneyland and Universal Studios. This regression is displayed as well in his choice of movie projects like the children’s fantasy *The Wiz* (Lumet, 1978) and the science-fiction adventure *Captain Eo* (Coppola, 1986) in which a ragtag band led by the infamous Captain Eo fights “to bring freedom to the countless worlds of despair”. The fusion of animation and live-action to depict the fantastic in both films would feature prominently in his later videos. Listed as the “most successful music video” in the 2006 Guinness World Records, it could be argued that the short film for ‘Thriller’ (1983) single-handedly revived interest in the Gothic and the preternatural in pop culture. Directed by John Landis, who had just finished *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), the video spoofed the horror film genre. It features a cameo rap by horror film veteran Vincent Price and ends with a stylized zombie dance that has become trademark Michael Jackson. While alluding to a strong generic tradition, the video mocks its clichés by juxtaposing Michael’s werecat transformation with a jock jersey with a ‘M’ on it. Catherine Spooner observes “it is only a society that has stopped seriously believing in ghosts that is able to turn them into the stuff of entertainment” (24). Melodrama was a prominent feature of Michael’s ‘live’ concerts, whether he was stopping mock-up bulldozers in ‘Earth Song’, being embraced by an angelic being in ‘Will You Be There’ or standing still for several minutes as the crowd roared at the Super Bowl halftime show in 1993. Less a continuous narrative than a fragmented pastiche of images and videos, Michael’s movie *Moonwalker* (Kramer, 1988) begins with the hysterical pandemonium of tears, screams, swoons, fits and fainting spells reminiscent of Gothic narratives.<sup>8</sup> These three Gothic elements are combined in the ‘Smooth Criminal’ segment of *Moonwalker* (Chilvers, 1988) which borrows the visual style of film noir to express the fantastic in the anti-gravity lean in the dance sequence, the supernatural in the haunted café that comes alive and the melodramatic in the children’s amazement at Michael’s metamorphic nature.

Michael’s physical metamorphosis expressed the familiar defamiliarised and demonstrated the horror of the grotesque body as “doubled, monstrous, deformed, excessive, and abject” (Russo 9). The interest of the Gothic in the vulnerability of the human body is central to its questioning of identity, humanity and existence. The body is the material, tangible, sensual experience of being human, the sign of one’s ontological reality. In the Gothic, the body is mutilated by distortion, penetration, engorgement, dismemberment or mutation. The “body genres” posited by Carol Clover express themselves in excessive images of emotion, sex and violence to convey the sensational effects of the melodramatic, erotic and grotesque. Like Dorian Gray, Michael was obsessed with his appearance and sought to perfect it. Michael had been fixated with the size of his nose since was called ‘Big Nose’ by his brothers when he was 13. This preoccupation was also a consequence of complexion problems as he became a teenager. He was ashamed of appearing publicly because of his acne and admits “I became subconsciously scarred by this ... the effect on me was so bad that it messed up my whole personality” (Taraborrelli 159). The rhinoplasty he received after breaking his nose in 1979 set off a series of plastic surgery operations that would radically transform his

face. This was further aggravated when his hair and scalp were burnt in an accident while filming a Pepsi commercial in 1984.<sup>9</sup> In 1986, he was diagnosed with vitiligo and discoid lupus which he counteracted with bleaching agents and hydroquinone. Like a vampire, he became petrified of exposure to the sun. The combination of plastic surgery and epidermal bleaching caused a public metamorphosis from a brown-skinned African-American boy to a grotesque white mask.<sup>10</sup> The fantastical physicality of Michael's body, not only as a dancer but in the facial fragmentation as he transforms into a gargantuan robot at the end of *Moonwalker* (1988), reflects in reality his own struggle with his appearance. The modifications were so excessive that eventually the structure of his nose collapsed and he wore a prosthetic nose-tip. The motivation for this reconstruction was however not just physical, but also psychological. Some doctors suggest that Michael suffered from body dysmorphic disorder. Taraborrelli believes that Michael made these alterations not to look like Diana Ross as some believed but so that he would look less like his father (206). In 'Threatened', Michael uses a Rod Serling sample to introduce himself as the "monster ... the living dead, the dark thoughts in your head ... your worst nightmare ... a human presence that you feel is strange". As the last song of the final album that Michael released, it is a poignantly accurate description of who Michael saw himself to be.

Michael's amorphous indeterminacy and freakishness characterized him as an abhuman that resisted definition and categorization.<sup>11</sup> The location of the Gothic monster on a borderline between conceptual oppositions like life and death, man and beast, and natural and supernatural threatens the order of society, exposes the relative arbitrariness of the system and demands a rethinking of traditional boundaries of normality. As the Other, who is marked by difference, liminality, fragmentation and monstrosity, Michael Jackson manifested the *unheimlich* return of the repressed that "disturbs the familiar, homely and secure sense of reality and normality" (Botting 1996: 11). The metamorphic body

retains traces of human identity but has become, or is in the process of becoming, something quite different. Alternatively, it may be some indefinable 'thing' that is mimicking the human, appropriating the human form. Either way, it is the integrity of human identity that is threatened; these are liminal bodies, occupying the space between the terms of such oppositions as human and beast, male and female, civilised and primitive. (Punter 2004: 41)

In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva describes abjection as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Neither this nor that and yet both at the same time, the monster exemplifies Derrida's *ce dangereux* supplement as its hybrid nature throws into doubt our easy classifications and offers "a site for social and cultural resistance and the exploration of alternative possibilities" (Bellin 175). By transgressing and blurring the boundaries of race, gender and age, Michael questioned the status quo constructions of identity.

Neither child nor adult, nor clearly either black or white, and with an androgynous image that is neither masculine nor feminine, Jackson's star image is a 'social hieroglyph' as Marx said of the commodity form, which demands, yet defies, decoding. (Ingis 124)

When he first came on the scene, some mistook him for a midget, or "an old soul, as if he had been a superstar in another life" (Joseph Jackson in Taraborrelli 37). However, it was Michael's transgression of the biological determiner of race that underscored his status as social pariah. Martin Scorsese eschews the use of colour in the 'Bad' video (1987) to convey how Daryl, the character played by Michael, an African-American studying in a 'white' school, cannot fit in with either 'whites' or 'blacks'. He morphs into a black panther in the 'Black or White' (Landis, 1991) video in which he raps "I've seen the bright get duller / I'm not going to spend my life being a color". In *Captain Eo* and *Moonwalker*, Michael's dance moves are juxtaposed with the movements

of a robot. These transhuman manifestations of manimal and android interrogate fundamental assumptions of our humanity and existence as

the horror of the artificial human, first proposed in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, re-emerges in an up-to-date form with the possibility of new kinds of simulated life, with cyborgs, animated machines, and reproduction by computer of genetic engineering. (Punter 24)

The terror of the Gothic monster lies precisely in its indeterminate constitution. The polymorphic shape-shifting potential of the mutant monster resists categorical containment and reinforces the indefinite shapeless mutability of the monstrous.

In their endeavor to define Michael, the tabloids unwittingly identified characters in his life to serve as alter egos – Joseph Jackson, who was all he did not want to become, Diana Ross, who it was said he increasingly resembled or Jordan Chandler, his epitome of innocent childhood that had been corrupted. The Other is an integral aspect of delineating boundaries between what an entity is and what it is not and thus allows for definition by comparison and opposition. The Double explores 'such themes as 'psychological evil', split identity, sexual perversion [and] pathological self-destructiveness without incurring the censure of a prurient and repressive society' (Schmid 13). In the Gothic, "doubling then is not simply a convention but is the essential reality of the self" (Day 21). This split identity manifests itself in twins, clones, mirror images, shadow selves and other forms of the double life. Although it may be said that celebrities are intrinsically conflicted by their private and public selves, the Jekyll-Hyde schizophrenia between the object and the image is particularly marked in Michael Jackson, the shy soft-spoken person behind the masks and disguises shunning the media spotlight in contrast to the attention-seeking onstage persona. Michael admits "Onstage is the only place I'm comfortable. I'm not comfortable around normal people" (Taraborrelli 177). The nature of the Doppelgänger draws also from the theories of psychoanalysis. As an incarnation of repressed eroticism, the Gothic Double is often misconceived to be a dark evil being as thwarted cravings for the forbidden are displaced and projected onto him but Michael's Doubles were, in reality, more fantastical. First, he identified with the Scarecrow he played in *The Wiz* (Lumet, 1978) saying "Everybody thinks he's very special, but, really, he's very sad. He's so, so sad." (Taraborrelli 178). He sought solace in the role "refusing to take off his make-up after shooting and sometimes going home in his full scarecrow costume" (Wilson & Wilson 188). By naming his home Neverland, Michael, as he told Martin Bashir, believed himself to be Peter Pan. He abhorred the idea of growing old and desired to be forever youthful. Michael also claimed he watched *The Elephant Man* (Lynch, 1980) thirty-five times, never once without weeping all the way through. It was evident that Michael could identify with this hideously deformed freak show performer and his search for acceptance and love.

Like Frankenstein's monster, Michael's exclusion tormented him with loneliness. By conferring a voice to Michael in his songs, the listener is given access to his emotions, struggles and humanity. In 'I Can't Stop Loving You', he sings "A lot of people misunderstand me/that's because they don't know me at all". The Gothic pariah is paradoxically the central protagonist of any Gothic tale. Michael's image as an alienated, isolated and brooding outsider reflected the intense melancholia of the Byronic hero, who possesses a tormented past and hides a dark secret. In truth, Michael shared the frenzied following and media attention of Byron, "the first European cultural celebrity of the modern age" (MacCarthy x). Like the Gothic hero-villain, Michael evoked both sympathy for being persecuted and victimized by the media and disgust for persisting in bunking with pubescent boys. Michael was intensely aware of his difference; he was always abject and conflicted, even as a child. The Jacksons were taunted by the other children in Gary, Indiana where they grew up and even had rocks hurled into their living room because they spent hours practicing instead of playing. His father Joseph Jackson was abusive and his mother Katherine Jackson was a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses, a cult group which Michael rejected only in 1987. Even as a member of

The Jackson Five, Michael was singled out both as the talented younger brother and as lead singer. Ironically, placing him in the spotlight marginalized him further and caused sibling rivalry between him and his brothers, especially Jermaine. With his hypersensitive personality, Michael felt this abjection more acutely. He once said, "I feel like I'm in a well and no one can reach me" (Taraborrelli 144). He kept life-size mannequins in his bedroom, which he wanted to bring to life in order to talk to them.<sup>12</sup> Michael personified the New Monster of the Gothic, the psychopathological freak, who is brutally aware of his pariah condition yet yearns to lead a normal life. Handcuffed by police, hounded by media, cross-examined by lawyers, mobbed by fans, scorned by his detractors, monitored by Child Services, Michael demonstrated Botting's observation that monstrous figures are no longer objects of hate or fear but have become

sites of identification, sympathy, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant monsters are rendered more humane while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes. (2002: 286)

The public flagellation of Michael Jackson explains how "often referred to as a 'freak of nature', the freak, it must be emphasized, is a freak of culture" (Stewart 109). This persecution and victimization leads to a state of distrust, claustrophobia and paranoia. The monster evokes our sympathy because it is plagued by his indelible past, obsessed by his demented fetishes and fettered to his repressed desires. Horror stories of Michael's childhood include one where their father Joseph woke his children at 2 am to practice and told Michael "that there were people in the audience with guns who wanted to shoot him" (Orth 325) if he did not dance fast enough. Taraborrelli recounts Michael's memories that "whenever the boys left their bedroom window open at night, [Joseph] would go outside and climb into their room and shout at them at the top of his lungs ... while wearing a fright mask ... Michael and Marlon would, for many years afterwards, suffer from vivid nightmares of being kidnapped from the safety of their bedrooms" (Taraborrelli 22). The experience of having to surrender the royalties of their recordings and having to pay \$2M to extricate themselves from their contract with Motown made Michael more aware of the need to acquire the business acumen of trusting no one. He exhibited this when he acquired Britain's Associated TeleVision (ATV) and the Beatles' publishing rights in 1985 in exchange for his friendship with Paul McCartney. The staff of Neverland also had to swear to secrecy and sign a contract of non-disclosure. Still, despite these precautions, Michael was betrayed by those he trusted. His fame and fortune attracted parasites like Evan Chandler who asked for millions instead of reporting Michael's actions, if any, to the authorities. In 'Money', Michael observes the charade of materialism around him

But I say it's just  
In the devil's game  
Of greed and lust  
They don't care  
They'd do me for the money

If you tell me to cry  
Then I will fake it  
If you give me a hand  
Then I will shake it

This extortion was repeated again with Gavin Arvizo who Michael had flaunted in his interview with Martin Bashir. It appears now that Michael may have paid with his life for his misjudgment of who he could trust when he put his life in the hands of his personal physician Dr Conrad Murray.

Besides offering remixed dance double versions of earlier songs from his *HIStory II* (1995)

album, *Blood on the Dance Floor: HIStory in the Mix* also featured two new songs 'Ghosts' and 'Is it Scary' which are noteworthy because they begin with largely the same four lines, thus identifying them as twin texts. While 'Ghosts', the title track for the short film, expresses his paranoia at "the ghost of jealousy" that seeks to destroy and usurp him, 'Is it Scary' asserts his individuality and interrogates the version of Michael that the media sees.

Am I amusing you  
Or just confusing you  
Am I the beast  
You visualised  
And if you wanna see  
Eccentricities  
I'll be grotesque  
Before your eyes

I'm gonna be  
Exactly what you gonna see  
So did you come to me  
To see your fantasies  
Performed before your very eyes

A haunting ghostly treat  
The foolish trickery  
And spirits dancing  
In the light

But if you came to see  
The truth the purity  
It's here inside  
A lonely heart

So let the performance start

These lyrics also parallel the action in the short film, more perhaps than 'Ghosts' does. Besides the Gothic *mise-en-scène*, the short film *Ghosts* depicts other horror motifs of shape-shifting, possession and subversion.<sup>13</sup> His magical powers convince the children while authority and social regulation represented by the Mayor is ridiculed and undermined. The lyrics go on to reverse the perspective that the Maestro is a disturbance to 'Normal Valley' by suggesting "See the evil one is you / you know the Stranger is you".

Am I scary for you  
I'm tired of being abused  
You know you're scaring me too  
I see the evil is you  
Is it scary for you baby

From this point of view, it is the freak who becomes real in comparison to the false and grotesque Mayor. The effect of this inversion is that, instead of being saved from the monster, the norm is seen to be that which is monstrous. This is doubly ironic as the Mayor is played by Michael as well creating a double inversion that compounds his commentary with ambivalence and open-endedness.

## THE WAY YOU MAKE ME FEEL

Sexuality in the Gothic is expressed in a transgression of sexual boundaries and a perverse eroticism. Michael's soft spoken falsetto voice and his effeminate demeanor fit the stereotype of homosexual behavior in the late 1970s. His "sexuality has been the subject of speculation since he was a teenager" (Taraborrelli 156). At 19, he was upset by rumors that he was in a homosexual relationship and was having a sex-change operation. In August 1984, it was alleged that he was in a relationship with Boy George, which Michael had to deny in a press conference. His character in the 'Thriller' video had inadvertently admitted "I'm not like other guys. I mean I'm different." Michael projected both the image of a macho heroic figure and the sensitive new age guy, for instance, in the 'Bad' video. It is interesting to note how the music videos for 'Bad' and 'Beat It' depict male confrontation in which Michael's machismo is questioned or taunted. "C'mon Big Man let me see what you got" he is told in the 'You Rock my World' video. Physical violence is defused by dance, which often emphasizes male sexuality and bravado. In this light, Michael's pelvic thrusts and crotch touching can be seen to be masturbatory, narcissistic and hyper-masculine. Still,

Michael was thought of as not only a virgin, but asexual ... he was an oddity, a brilliant performer and legendary recording artist whose image was perplexing and eccentric, but not sexual. Even when he grabbed his crotch during his performances, the action didn't have a sexual connotation to it as much as it did the imprint of another clever bit of choreography. (Taraborrelli 450)

He had to assert his heterosexuality by declaring his romantic involvement with Tatum O'Neal and Brooke Shields. When he married Lisa-Marie Presley, they even appeared semi-nude in a love scene in his 'You Are Not Alone' video (Isham, 1995) almost as if to convince the public of the authenticity of their love and the sexuality of their relationship. Despite the increasing openness to homosexuality and transvestitism and the acceptance of pop stars like Boy George in the 1980s, no other celebrity has had to go to such lengths to explain his or her sexuality than Michael Jackson.

The depiction of women in his music videos takes the form of the Gothic *femme fatale*, who is tempting, irresistible and potentially destructive. With dance as a metaphor for sex, *Off the Wall* featured songs about wanting to "rock with you all night" ('Rock with you') or expressing how he "would like to groove with you" ('Get on the Floor'). Still, these early songs possess a tinge of jealousy, betrayal and even blackmail. In 'Working Day and Night', he suspects that his lover is "seeing some other guy" while he is hard at work; in 'Girlfriend', the situation is reversed as he threatens to tell on his ex-girlfriend and "tell him what you do to me" and "show him how you feel inside". By the time *Dangerous* was released, the "woman to man" ('In the Closet') relationships were darker. The title track describes the seduction of a *femme fatale* that destroys him in "her web of sin". 'She drives me wild' depicts an uncontrolled fixation on his object of desire while 'In the Closet' suggests that passion must be repressed and "burn inside of me". The themes of emasculation and female deception and domination are also present. In 'Give in to me', the persona suffers in a psychologically abusive relationship in which "you always knew just how to make me cry ... it seems you get your kicks from hurting me" while he yearns for her "to give in to me" and "quench my desire". Likewise, in 'Who Is It', the persona is tormented by paranoia and duplicity as he speculates that his lover is having an affair. The tone of his music in 'Heartbreaker' is almost misogynist at times and acts like a warning to himself concerning his relationships with women, who are depicted as taunting, unfeeling, manipulative and malicious. More importantly, his songs describe how difficult it is to resist the sexual attraction of a woman. In 'Dirty Diana', the loud rock guitars are interwoven with somber violins to bring across the struggle not to yield to temptation. The pleading tone and persistent protests sound like desperate cries for strength to fight the lure of the fulfillment of his sexual fantasies. The ending – "She said he's not coming back / because he's sleeping with me" – is intentionally ambiguous and does not answer the question whether

he eventually succumbs to his lust and is resigned to his fate. This echoes 'Billie Jean'. Despite his protests that "Billie Jean is not my lover", the last verse suggests that he is intoxicated by her perfume.

She came and stood right by me  
Then the smell of sweet perfume  
This happened much too soon  
She called me to her room

The lack of irresolution and closure is typical of the Gothic narrative. Is Billie Jean telling the truth? The song warns

And Mother always told me be careful of who you love  
And be careful of what you do 'cause the lie becomes the truth

Raised to consider homosexuality sinful and aware of the media attention this might garner, Michael "knew that with any relationships he had – be it with a man or a woman – he ran the risk of the other person reporting the details to a newspaper or magazine" (Taraborrelli 158). Still, despite this paranoia and his experience of media scrutiny, Michael's decisions in this aspect of his life were to result in his downfall.

The Gothic roots repression and regression in one's childhood trauma resulting in nostalgia for a redeemed version of the past. As a child star who was much younger than his brothers, Michael's experience of sexuality was a premature and distressing one. Their tour of the Chitlin Circuit included adult bars and striptease nightclubs and part of their act was to have Michael playfully crawl under tables and lift women's skirts. Michael was repelled when his brothers indulged in the voyeurism of peeping into the ladies' bathroom and changing rooms. His brothers would even bed groupies beside him while he pretended to sleep. This distorted his view of sexuality and his own sexual identity. Furthermore, the dysfunction of his family led to a severe Oedipal Complex. He hated his father, whom he called 'the devil' (Orth 326), not just for his hard brutality but also for his infidelity and promiscuous lifestyle on the road. Carole Lieberman observes that "the father's infidelity would certainly have hit the youngest child exposed to it the hardest" (Taraborrelli 33). Michael also felt that he had betrayed his mother by not telling her and thus colluding with his father. The marked resemblance between Joseph Jackson and the monstrous head that Michael becomes in *Ghosts* indicates the extent of this demonization of his father. In contrast, Michael adored his mother whom he described as "my mother, my lover, and my sister all combined in one amazing person" (Inglis 124). However as he grew up, the conflicts he was having with his father as an adult drew him away from his mother and he created other surrogate models of femininity and maternity for himself in Diana Ross, Elizabeth Taylor and Princess Diana. The disgust he felt about his father's affairs coupled with the strict religious platitudes of his mother made sex a horror show for Michael. "He *must* have been conflicted: he had an overly rigid view of the world from his mother and an overly promiscuous view of the world from his father" (Taraborrelli 31). In his attempt to understand his sexuality, he even turned to prostitutes for conversation rather than for sex. Michael laments this lost childhood in his acceptance speech of the Grammy Legend Award in 1993.

When you grow up as I did in front of 100 million people since the age of five, you're automatically different ... My childhood was completely taken away from me. It was not a normal childhood ... I cannot re-create that part of my life.

Unlike other child stars who have their fair share of growing pains and occasional drug use but eventually grow up to lead seemingly normal Hollywood lives, Michael yearned constantly to regain the childhood he never had. This Peter Pan syndrome is expressed in 'Childhood'

No one understands me  
They view it as such strange eccentricities...

'Cause I keep kidding around  
Like a child, but pardon me...  
Before you judge me, try hard to love me,  
Look within your heart then ask,  
Have you seen my Childhood?

This arrested development, however, became the excuse for all his subsequent actions, the root cause of all that Michael was to become and the reason for him acting immaturely, some might say irresponsibly, even in his 40s. As a 12-year old, Michael played pranks on his brothers but this childlike playfulness continued in adulthood with his practical jokes becoming more public. He would order room service for other hotel guests or impersonate Diana Ross on the phone. His attempt to get a female teenager to jump him on stage feigning hysteria during the 1986 Grammy Awards failed.<sup>14</sup> On one hand, his refusal to grow up was a rejection of adult responsibility; on the other, it was a quest for immortality, an escapist wish that his world was different from that offered by the reality he inhabited. Images of Michael playing soldier in full military regalia with an army of uniformed personnel running behind him or blasting off in a jetpack as an astronaut at the end of his *Dangerous* concert suggest this regressed state. In the prelude to his 'Heal the World' video, Michael proclaims that children are "a reminder of the preciousness of all life, especially young lives untouched by hatred, prejudice and greed". Little was he to know how his love for children would embroil him in a narrative of scandal, deceit and ruin.

To Michael, his greatest inspiration came from children who were his muse for creativity and imagination. His regression entrapped him as a child in an adult body.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between children and the Gothic has always been an ambiguous one. On one hand they are associated with an unsullied *tabula rasa* of purity and simplicity. On the other, they are seen to be deeply connected with the irrational unconscious of one's primordial being, thus making them a threat to adult society. In recent films like *Let the Right One In* (Alfredson, 2008) and *Orphan* (Collet-Serra, 2009), the device of using a deviant child to make contact through other children plays on the idea that children are more open and susceptible to fantasy, and thus the workings of the supernatural. Michael's prevalent use of children as signifiers in his videos and 'live' performances hearkens towards a lost innocence and a yearning to return to one's elemental origins. The enlistment of children to recapture that childhood proved to be his weakness. Like the Pied Piper, he lured them with a menagerie of zoo animals, candy, video games and rides on his ferris wheel. David Nordahl who captured Michael's grandiose designs and fairy-tale fantasies paints an idyllic idealization of this in *Field of Dreams*. His *Michael*, depicting a pale Michael in a loincloth surrounded by sylvan cherubs, was a memorable image from Bashir's documentary *Living with Michael Jackson* (Granada, 2003). Notions of pornography, fellatio and masturbation did not square with this gentle romanticized image of the Michael his fans knew. However, despite closing the Jordie Chandler case with out-of-court settlements amounting to over \$20M, Michael continued to brazenly associate himself with young boys. To Michael, the flaunting of these relationships demonstrated his innocence. His excessive insistence to carry on with this behavior was one of the causes of his failed marriage to Lisa-Marie. In his interview with Bashir, he naively held hands with Gavin Arvizo, as "he never imagined anyone would be shocked by it because he simply does not think he or his life is shocking" (Taraborrelli 602).<sup>16</sup> Michael's egocentricity caused him to behave like a spoilt child who was not allowed to have his way and was unable to see the point of view of others. To Michael, there was no transgression. As he "has done whatever he has wanted to do most of his life ... he has never understood the notion of 'appropriate behaviour' because, in truth, he's never had any reason to live appropriately" (Taraborrelli 533). His self-assured invincibility in insisting that there was nothing wrong with sleeping together with younger boys would cost him another lawsuit, ironically from Gavin Arvizo.

Gothic sexuality jettisons conventional notions of heterosexual relationships, monogamy and family. In like manner, the transient duration of celebrity marriages and the sexual openness of celebrity relationships both reinforce and challenge sexual roles. The history of marriage in the Jackson family is riddled with Janet's elopement, Marlon's secret marriage, affairs, divorce and prenuptial agreements. Although this may be seen to be common fare in the Hollywood community, Michael took it much further. Although he featured African-American models like Tyra Banks, Iman and Naomi Campbell in his music videos, he transgressed racial lines and chose a spouse who was beyond anyone's expectation or belief. The King of Pop's marriage to Lisa-Marie Presley, the daughter of the King of Rock and Roll, was read by many as a clever diversion from the ongoing trials. Many thought the union of Graceland and Neverland was a publicity gimmick but the marriage was confirmed albeit only two months later. In the song 'Break of Dawn', Michael dismisses how "people talk, people say what we have is just a game". Even though their love was, by all reports, authentic, the marriage failed on the issue of children – Lisa-Marie's refusal to have any and Michael's insistence in holidaying with boys. After their divorce, Michael had a surrogate mother carry his children, married her and then brought up the children without her before choosing another unknown surrogate mother for his third child, Blanket. Michael married Debbie Rowe at his mother's insistence as a social obligation to legalize her surrogacy and the children's legitimacy. This second marriage was met with public cynicism and his wacky exploits were no longer met with surprise but with ennui. Speculation concerning whether the children were begotten through sexual relations or through in-vitro fertilization again brought Michael's sexuality into the limelight. Michael's unconventional worldview exemplified by the surrogacy of his children displays a defiant attitude to social mores that is characteristic of Gothic subversion. It is this antithetical tendency to transgress normative perceptions and to partake of the forbidden, the illicit and the objectionable that evokes the ambivalent feelings of attraction and repulsion, and fascination and disgust in the Gothic protagonist.

## WHO IS IT

By composing the Gothic "in defiance of rules, critics and of philosophers", Horace Walpole had unwittingly established the Gothic as a mode of subversion.<sup>17</sup> The interrogation of established norms by an alternative sub-version produces a disequilibrium that triggers the fear, unease and dread that typify the effect of the Gothic. "Gothic remains non-, anti- and counter- by definition" (Williams 19). Michael was a ground-breaker, an over-reacher who traversed boundaries. Moreover, he was 'black'. Goddu writes "American authors turn to the Gothic mode in order to disclose the ghostly origins of the nation as issuing from the oppressive social structure of slavery" (Goddu 63). Although Frederick Douglass had commented on 'the myth of the black rapist', African-American men were still negatively stereotyped as criminal, violent, inferior and lower class. Gibbs writes, "Black males are portrayed by mass media in a limited number of roles, most often deviant, dangerous, and dysfunctional" (2). Although Michael and his brothers were marked as the demonic 'Other', it was largely due to Motown, Diana Ross and Michael's young charms that helped the Jackson Five infiltrate a predominantly 'white' control of the mass media. In 1976, the Jacksons were the first 'black' family to feature in a television series on CBS. The fact that they were Jehovah's Witnesses, a cult group known for its aggressive proselytizing, also caused them to be viewed suspiciously.<sup>18</sup> Michael's triumph in getting MTV to play his 'Billie Jean' video was a breakthrough for African-American artistes to come. Working with Eddie Van Halen and Slash, he blurred the boundaries of musical styles and fused Rhythm and Blues, soul, hip-hop and rock. He revolutionized music, video and dance and blurred the lines between the music video and the short film, often re-enacting his videos in his 'live' performances. The deviant tendencies of the Gothic anti-hero are a threat to society yet the audacity to defy conformity and assert individuality

is laudable. Nonetheless, as a purveyor of transgression and subversion, the anarchist must be contained and exiled to ensure the continuity of order and normalcy. Michael's trial was likened to a lynching and he exiled himself to Bahrain in 2005. The media circus became a travesty with Michael in the center-ring. "In identifying with the outcasts, victims and rebels, those 'othered' and 'monstered' by repressive state apparatuses, in regarding their very existence as resistance, they become charged with a romantic idea of freedom" (Botting 2004, Vol. 4, 8). Instead of being taboo, deviance is celebrated.

By parodying its own conventions and exaggerating its clichés, the Gothic subverts, mimics and celebrates itself. "Gothic horror is a highly self-conscious, self-reflexive genre that tends to call attention to its own conventions" (Hurley 142). This knowingness and self-mockery is evident in Michael's fondness for using his songs and music videos as platforms for self-portrayal and doubling. His music contains intentional echoes of previous tracks. For instance, Billie Jean is mentioned in 'Wanna be Startin' Somethin', the sequel of 'Bad', '2 Bad', appears in the *HIStory* album, the line 'Change the World' is used again in 'Cry' and the character Susie appears in 'Blood on the Dance Floor' and 'Little Susie'. Angela Carter, quoting Leslie Fiedler in her epigraph of *Heroes and Villains*, sees the Gothic as "essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness" (1). Michael's Thriller video parodies werewolf movies playing on clichés like the full moon, convulsive transformations and deserted houses. The playfulness is in realizing midway that Michael is watching a Double of himself in a movie theatre. While the rest of the audience cowers in fear, Michael is the only one who is obviously relishing the horror. Michael also alluded to actual personages in his life. In *Moonwalker*, the name of Mr. Big, Frankie Lideo (Joe Pesci), is a parody of Michael's manager's name, Frank DiLeo.<sup>19</sup> Michael's song 'D.S' is a caustic attack on Tom Sneddon, the District Attorney in the molestation trials. Concomitantly, Michael was not averse to parodying himself. A 'Badder' video was produced that featured children mimicking his 'Bad' video. In an episode of *The Simpsons* entitled 'Stark Raving Dad' (Season 3 Episode 36-1), Michael parodied himself as a lunatic in an asylum. He also did a cameo in *Men In Black II* (Sonnenfeld, 2002). This self-parody functions as a form of self-assertion, self-definition and self-interrogation. In his 'Leave Me Alone' video, Michael spoofs the media image of himself by framing himself with tabloids that headline sensational stories of himself as he sings. He then takes a theme park ride through a shrine for Elizabeth Taylor and a freak show which features him dancing with the skeleton of the Elephant Man. In his short films, Michael also mythologised his larger-than-life personality by creating imagined alter egos, zombie Michael in *Thriller*, robotic Michael in *Moonwalker* and grotesque Michael in *Ghosts*. In their 'Can You Feel It' video, the Jacksons are depicted as superhuman behemoths who smile benevolently as they rain down stardust on grateful children. For his *HIStory* album, Michael even erected huge statues of himself in a few European cities in 1995. In creating a history that revolved around himself, he exhibited the main identifying features of the Gothic hero which are "egotism and monomania" (Day 17). He named his sons Prince Michael and Prince Michael II. At the Brit Awards 1996, he was interrupted by Jarvis Cocker in a performance when Cocker felt that Michael was pretending to be Jesus. It goes without saying that Michael often posed with arms outstretched in a crucified pose, symbolically depicting the Messianic Complex he bore to heal the world or that he was being crucified by the media.<sup>20</sup>

This cloud of rumor and folklore is akin to the Gothic blurring of truth and falsehood, reality and fiction. The tabloids created a mythology around Michael "in which what is 'true' or 'false' has become largely irrelevant. In fact, the difficulty in distinguishing between actuality and gossip emphasizes the (racial and sexual) ambiguity contained within the Jackson persona" (Inglis 124). His celebrity status meant that he was perpetually in the public eye. His 'Black or White' video depicts a globe of newscasters reporting on his latest exploits and the controversy raised by the video.

In the 'You are not alone' video, he passes unfazed through a crowd of paparazzi depicting how distancing himself works as a coping mechanism that renders him 'Unbreakable'. Michael had an ambiguous relationship with the media, wanting them to print stories about him but acutely aware of the sensationalism, distortion and the excessive lies the tabloids were capable of. In songs like 'Scream' and 'Why You Wanna Trip On Me' Michael comments on how they find their "pleasure scandalizing every lie". The lyrics of 'Tabloid Junkie' go

Just because you read it in a magazine  
Or see it on the TV screen  
Don't make it factual  
Though everybody wants to read all about it  
Just because you read it in a magazine  
Or see it on the TV screen  
Don't make it factual, actual  
They say he's homosexual

Taking on a menacing defiant tone that is almost predatory, the song 'Privacy' begins

Ain't the pictures enough, why do you go through so much  
To get the story you need, so you can bury me

before he alludes to the death of Princess Diana and concludes

Now there's a lesson to learn, stories are twisted and turned  
Stop maliciously attacking my integrity

Michael, however, was himself a publicist who manipulated the press and manufactured his own rumors in order to be portrayed in an absurd, bizarre way. Despite his seemingly shy personality, Michael enjoyed the limelight. According to Margo Jefferson, Michael was influenced by P. T. Barnum who often built up hype in order to promote his material. Michael wanted his "whole career to be the greatest show on earth" (Taraborrelli 357). When he was 10 years old, he had already learnt to mix falsehood and truth. He was asked to lie that he was 8 and that Diana Ross had discovered the Jackson Five in order to generate interest in the group. He says, "I figured out at an early age that if someone said something about me that wasn't true, it was a lie. But if someone said something about my image that wasn't true, then it was okay. Because then it wasn't a lie, it was public relations" (Taraborrelli 54). The blurring of truth and falsehood created a signifier with no objective signified. No one could tell which tabloid report was rumor and which fact any longer. Michael himself created the story that he slept in a hyperbaric chamber so that he could live longer as a publicity stunt for *Captain Eo*. Looking like a Snow White in a glass coffin, the photograph of him in the chamber was ample proof that 'Wacko Jacko', a moniker he disliked, had gone off the edge. This resembled the extreme states of mind in the Gothic and the resulting inability to tell reality from the fake. Spurred by his eccentric behavior, the tabloids invented other fictitious but credible tales. Michael had proposed to Elizabeth Taylor. He bathed in Evian water. He had encountered Lennon's ghost and had seen Jesus while performing. He was romantically linked to Tatiana Thumbtzen and Princess Diana and "since Michael refused to do any interviews in an effort to maintain his inscrutability, the stories just spread without contradiction or explanation" (Taraborrelli 364). In response, Michael exacted his revenge by creating a hoax that he had proposed to buy the skeleton of Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man. During the 1993 Soul Train Award he performed 'Remember the Time' sitting down, claiming that he had twisted his ankle during rehearsal when he actually had not. In some aspects, truth was stranger than fiction as when he dangled Blanket over a balcony. His children became merely one aspect of the spectacle. Although it suggested a delusional madness that sometimes accompanied genius, the footage of Michael and his children in Bashir's interview was equally discomfiting. Up to the present, there is still speculation on whose children they really are.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the veils that shielded them from public

scrutiny drew more attention to themselves and their father's peculiar methods of parenthood.

Michael was fully aware of himself as a performer and media phenomenon and, like the Gothic, thrived on exhibition, sensationalism and performance. The extreme emotions, melodramatic heroics and hyperbolic experience of Michael's 'live' concerts are hyper-real spectacles. With reference to his performance at Motown 25, Kooijman observes that Michael's lip-synching was overlooked by the visual illusion of his moonwalk and that Michael had shifted the emphasis "from musical performance to visual presentation" (Kooijman 119).<sup>22</sup> Even as late as 2004, music critic Nelson George writes "It's difficult to hear the songs from *Thriller* and disengage them from the videos. For most of us the images define the songs. In fact it could be argued that Michael is the first artist of the MTV age to have an entire album so intimately connected in the public imagination with its imagery". Bellin opines that "the history of the freak is a history of visual exploitation" (169). Michael's penchant for disguise and masquerade further emphasizes the surface fakery of public perception. "The Gothic is first and foremost a spectacle" (Kavka 226) and tantalises us "not through action, character, ideas, or language, but through spectacle" (Day 63). The adulation of his fans and the attention of the media suggest scopophilia, voyeurism, objectification and fetishism. The spectacle of his transformations from plastic surgery and pigmentation pale in comparison to the intense coverage of his trials, which were re-enacted daily on E! Cable Channel.<sup>23</sup> It is significant that for the artwork of the *Dangerous* album, Michael empowers himself with the gaze as his eyes stare out at the spectator from a cover depicting freak shows and circus acts. The artificiality of reality is thus flouted by exposing the artifice of the constructedness of these representations. The *mise-en-abyme* of the *Thriller* video replicates the Gothic heterotopia transporting the viewer from the movie to the nightmare to the real world. In the 'Black or White' video, Michael leaps from a scene in Africa onto a soundstage with Asian dancers and while dancing with Red Indians, a screen is removed to reveal the desert backdrop. At the end of the morphing sequence, the camera draws back to reveal the set. Likewise, the 'Liberian Girl' video features celebrity cameos who await the arrival of Michael who reveals himself at the end as the director of the video. *Dangerous – The Short Films* (1993) also includes 'Making of' videos overtly displaying the contrivance so that the spectator "is not only seeing differently, but is aware of himself/herself see" (Degli-Esposti 5).

The proliferation of images and the prominence of signs have rendered the Gothic a mirage, a simulation of representation that exists in what Rosemary Jackson calls "a 'paraxial' realm" (135), a penumbra that lies between the reality of the object and the unreality of the image. The phenomenon of celebrity epitomises the fusion of public self, private self and projected self and the bifurcation of object and image. "Gothic devices are all signs of the superficiality, deception and duplicity of narratives and verbal or visual images" (Botting 1996: 14). The commodification, circulation and consumption of celebrity are dependent on image as a saleable commodity. "The freak is exhibited, reflected and reproduced" (Bellin 190) in tabloids and on the Internet blurring the boundary between factual news reporting and fictional invention for entertainment. "What they sell is a sign" (Izod 79). Michael further immortalized himself by associating himself with global concerns and historical figures. By interspersing his own image with those of war, poverty, children and champions of peace like Mother Teresa, Gandhi and Martin Luther King in his 'Man in the Mirror' video, Michael demonstrated that "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Debord 12). These images were merely symbolic rather than representative of any actual engagement with the real world. In 'Bad', for instance, the studs, chains and leather buckles were more characteristic of a Goth subculture than that of a streetwise tough 'black' neighborhood. "Michael Jackson had become a postmodern sign" (Inglis 129). Because film has "the capacity to simulate the experience of presence" (Smith 121), the resurrection of the ghost of a person's image in film although he is dead creates a simulacrum of his person. Seeing the dead live on in film is simultaneously heart-rending and comforting as

the virtual presence of the person is simulated. With his death, the spectralization and proliferation of images of Michael Jackson in a digital afterlife will continue to create a cyber-Gothic haunting in our collective cultural memory. Like the Gothic icons before him, Michael Jackson will now be immortalized in endless imitation, multiplication and virtualization.

## CONCLUSION

The fetishization, aesthesizing and ritualizing of death in the Gothic aims consistently to defer the final definitive ending of death and the state of non-existence. The Internet almost crashed with the volume of traffic when news broke on Michael's death. Many felt it was another hoax or prank that Michael had generated to promote his "final curtain call", the upcoming *This Is It* concerts. His memorial service was watched by millions across the world. His ghost supposedly appeared on the Larry King show. Others persist in believing he used a body double to fake his death. In another way, Michael has been resurrected in new editions of his albums, record-breaking sales and through his imitators around the world. For the past two months, Michael has lived on in re-runs of archival footage while his body remains cryogenically frozen awaiting burial. Meanwhile, his estate is being divided and found heavily in debt. It is rumored that Jordan Chandler has confessed that he lied about the molestation.<sup>24</sup> The godfather of Michael's children Mark Lester has claimed he is the real father of Paris. His death has been declared a homicide although the lethal cocktail of drugs was reportedly administered at Michael's own request. In the Gothic, "the end is always deferred ... mysteries are effaced or denied rather than resolved" (Ingebretsen 197). In death, Michael is still a spectacle, a figure of indeterminate speculation.

In his acceptance speech in 1993 for the Grammy Legend Award, Michael claims "I wasn't aware that the world thought I was so weird and bizarre". The schizophrenic doubling of Michael Jackson is most evident in the juxtaposition of aggression and despair in the almost prophetic song 'Morphine'. Although some remain uncomfortable at the thought of him sleeping with young boys, Michael's transgressions, if any, have been mostly forgotten. In his new book, Ian Halperin, while claiming that Michael was a gay cross-dresser, writes "I could not find a single shred of evidence suggesting that Jackson had molested a child. In contrast, I found significant evidence demonstrating that most, if not all, of his accusers lacked any credibility" (Halperin 227).<sup>25</sup> David Punter opines "tabooed objects are those to which we summon up not a simple emotional reaction but a dialectical one in which the mind oscillates between attraction and repulsion, worship and condemnation" (Punter 1996 Vol 2, 190). No other celebrity blurred truth or falsehood to the point that we know almost everything about him yet almost know nothing of him. As he leaves the cinema in the 'Thriller' video, Michael asks his girlfriend, "You were scared, weren't you?". In this sense, Michael Jackson will always remain a "creepy curiosity" who lived a Gothic narrative.

## NOTES

1. Michael Jackson will be referred to as Michael throughout this article in order not to confuse him with other members of the Jackson family.
2. This paper was written in the two months after Michael's death and submitted for publication at the end of August 2009 on what would have been his 51st birthday.
3. This essay studies Michael Jackson's life in light of the Gothic and cultural studies, as opposed to the Goth subculture. To learn more about Goth, see Dunja Brill's *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality and Style*.
4. This article will only study songs from Michael's solo career beginning with the *Off the Wall* album. It does not suggest that the Gothic is a predominant theme in all of Michael's songs but posits a general trajectory of Gothic elements in his songs, especially those written by Michael himself.
5. Mark Edmundson, in his book *Nightmare on Main Street*, mentions Michael Jackson briefly but dismisses the idea of making "an aristocratic hero-villain out of a gorgeously lit lounge act" (13).
6. This article is heavily indebted to Michael's biography written by Taraborrelli who is regarded as an authority in the subject. Michael's own autobiography is an unreliable narrative since it was written by Michael himself.
7. James DeBarge, who was married to Janet Jackson for a year in September 1984, coined Michael's house in Encino "The House of Fears" and described Michael as "a ghost, wandering around the place looking for friendship" (Taraborrelli 322).
8. *Dangerous: The Short Films* (1993) begins in the same manner. The videos of his 'live' performances also often cut between his onstage performance and the frenzied response of the audience.
9. As a result, Michael was set on a course that made him increasingly dependent on drugs, steroids, tranquilisers (Valium, Xanax, Ativan) and painkillers (Percodan, Demerol, Codeine) that some suspect may have contributed to his untimely death.
10. The combination of his almost cadaverous skeletal facial structure and his dark aviator sunglasses as Michael rehearsed in *This Is It* brought to the writer's mind Jack Skellington from Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Michael's gaunt frame was accentuated by his boots and a jacket with upturned shoulder pads, a wide collar and rhinestones
11. See Kelly Hurley (1996) for more on the concept of the abhuman.
12. In an interview with Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, writer of *The Michael Jackson Tapes: A Tragic Icon* reveals his soul in intimate conversation, on NBC (September 15, 2009), it is revealed that Michael once said "I was too shy to be around real people ... but it makes me feel like I am in a room with people."
13. For an in-depth study of the "death-ridden, sexually explicit choreography" of Michael's "*danse macabre*, or dance of the dead" in the short films for *Thriller* and *Ghosts*, see Steven Bruhm's "Michael Jackson: Queer Funk".
14. Upon hearing the news of Michael's death, this writer had thought that the reports were another one of his pranks. Although his death certificate has been issued, it will almost come as no surprise if he somehow suddenly turns up alive.
15. In *This Is It*, Michael is sucking a lollipop as he watches the 3-D footage for the 'Thriller' segment of his concert.
16. See Debbie Epstein and Deborah Lynn Steinberg to see how documentaries that were produced contributed to sensationalize the speculation and implication of Michael's guilt while appearing to appear objective.
17. The quote is from a letter from Walpole to Madame du Deffand dated 13 March 1767.
18. In order to assure his fans that he was not associated with the occult, Michael included a preface to his *Thriller* video that read "Due to my strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this film in no way endorses a belief in the occult".

19. This is a running joke in the movie as Joe Pesci repeatedly laments that his name Frankie Lideo is constantly being mispronounced.
20. In the 'Thriller' sequence in his *This Is It* concert, Michael ends the song with outstretched arms as what appears to be crucified ghosts fall from Heaven on the screen behind him.
21. As this article is being written, their godfather Mark Lester has publicly announced that he had donated his sperm to Michael and that Paris is his daughter.
22. Although the concert celebrated the 25th year of Motown, 'Billie Jean' was released by Epic and was the only non-Motown song performed that night.
23. In the same manner, there has been daily coverage of news reports over the past two months since his death.
24. The saga of Michael Jackson's story has continued to play itself out. On 5 Nov 2009, Evan Chandler was found dead with a gunshot to the head in an apparent suicide.
25. Maureen Orth writes for *Vanity Fair* and is convinced of Michael's guilt as she writes "In the hundred of interviews I have conducted, I have yet to hear about any female child who has shared his bed" (Orth 349).

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