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# 'A DISMAL HOWLING':
# FORMULAIC DENSITY AND THE GOTHIC TABLEAU

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### ABSTRACT

Scant attention has been paid by critics to the formulaic diction that pervades the Gothic genre. This article continues an extended experiment aiming to analyse formulaicity in one of the less-known Gothic novels. Peter Teuthold's 1794 *The Necromancer* exhibits massive co-occurrence: textual units (lexemes, sounds, and both phrase and clause formations) regularly gravitate around other textual units, effectively clustering into *fields*. A field is defined as an open paradigm of items related by functional equivalence; the novel handles its components not as independent units but only in accordance with a 'fielding' principle, that is, only as paradigmatic elements which can be exchanged for or combined with other elements.

Previous work has established a distinction between the *formula* properly so called and the *formulaic pattern*, defined as a construct that attracts lexical, phonological, syntactic, and connotative fields into its orbit. The article argues that 'fielding' operates on at least one 'higher' level, the level where formulaic patterns combine to shape a charged moment in the narrative – a *tableau*. After selecting a fragment of text and illustrating the structure of a single formulaic pattern, the article isolates each phrase or clause segment in the fragment, outlines the pattern it belongs in, and shows that over seventy-five per cent of its textual matter is demonstrably formulaic. Analysis of several other excerpts suggests that formulaic density is not homogeneous but decreases or rises at different points in the novel. A rationale for high-density segments is then sought in the *ritualising* nature of the tableau itself.

Keywords: Co-occurrence; field; formulaic pattern; Gothic fiction; liminality; overpatterning; ritualisation; tableau.

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1. Introduction

This article is part of an ongoing series dealing with formulaic diction in Gothic literature. 'Gothic' will here designate a historical *genre* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The novel *The Necromancer* (1794), a rather free English translation from the German by Peter Teuthold,[2] exhibits massive amounts of formulaic diction, and its study has already furnished insights into several properties of Gothic writing. The present article seeks to show that formulaicity, already analysed on the levels of lexicon, phrase, and clause, is equally at work on the next level of composition, that of the tableau.

All formulaic diction must be dealt with in relation to a corpus, but we need to distinguish several corpora: the corpus of the English language, which provides the broader resonance box; the corpus of genre, which imposes its own codes; and the corpus of each given text. 'Formula' will designate a pair of lexemes that occurs more than once in a corpus with peripheral or no variation, characterised by (degrees of) *self-identity*. 'Formulaic pattern' will identify an open system of predictable lexical, syntactic, and phonological relations in a corpus, characterised by *variation* and (degrees of) *self-similarity*. The formula properly so called may be seen as an instance of the type of co-occurrence known in linguistics as *collocation*; in the more complex formulaic pattern, lexemes do not exist as independent elements but as members of a) lexical fields bonded by synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, etc. and roughly equivalent to the corpus-linguistics concept of *semantic preference* (cf. Sinclair 2004); b) syntactic fields (*colligation*) providing structural variations for the expression of a given idea; c) connotative fields (similar but perhaps not identical to *semantic prosody*), which comprise systems of 'secondary' meanings in context; and d) phonological fields built by alliteration, rhyme and other strategies.[3] Fields are defined as open paradigms held together by functional equivalence; they entail a *fractal* organisation of the text in which a single principle of composition, which I have tentatively labelled 'fielding', applies in a scalar manner on different levels of complexity – those of sound, lexis, phrase, clause, pattern and, as will be argued below, tableau.

A formulaic pattern must occur more than once in the corpus selected; it is *poly-lexemic* (it does not merely bind *pairs* of items), *polythetic* (it contains no true constants), and *acentric* (it possesses no central, original or prototypical form); it may be *scattered* over a considerable stretch of text (it is not constrained

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[2]    All references will be to the 1794 edition. As the book has no chapters, examples are identified by volume.page (e.g., 1.27). For the German, see Kahlert 1792.

[3]    Nothing that I know of in the linguistic theory of co-occurrence matches this last phenomenon, possibly because it is mainly to be found in poetry and poetic prose.

by the logic of semantics, word order, or clause- or sentence-boundaries); and it functions as a *dynamical system* that attracts numbers of fields into its orbit. The formula may be seen as a successful and thereby hardened variant of the formulaic pattern. These and other notions were established in earlier publications (Aguirre 2014, 2015, 2016); some of them will be further clarified below. This article argues that formulaic patterns, resulting from the braiding of various types of fields, may in turn combine with other patterns into *tableaux*. The term 'tableau' will designate a significant, charged moment in the narrative, or what *The Oxford English Dictionary* calls 'a striking or dramatic situation, a "scene"'. The article examines the structure of one tableau and tackles the issue of formulaic density, defined as the frequency of demonstrably formulaic elements relative to the number of words in a given segment of text; through comparison with other segments it will then attempt to explain the correlation between a high formulaic density and a tableau in light of the concept of *ritualised narrative*.

Arnold van Gennep's (1981 [1909]) analysis of the 'pre-liminal', 'liminal', and 'post-liminal' stages of *rites de passage* entailed an opposition between the ordinary and the liminal dimensions. In this it narrowly anticipated Durkheim's (1912: 49–58) now classic division of the real into the spheres of *the profane* and *the sacred*, but a further entailment of van Gennep's model is that the distinction between the sacred and the liminal blurs. All ritual can be said to involve some manner of passage (Parkin 1992: 12) inasmuch as all ritual is a liminal activity – one which takes place at threshold points (points of conflict, crisis or exchange) and elicits and governs role-shifts, encounters, and transformations. To enable the 'passage', ritual redefines the radical separation between the profane and the sacred as a continuum; but, because this is a *dangerous* continuum which threatens to engulf the profane, ritual simultaneously divides it into a series of 'phases' by means of a variety of thresholds which the ritual can then negotiate without excessive danger.[4] This *phasing* of space and time prevents a sudden contact with the Other and an equally sudden return to the profane, but generates an ambiguous zone which occupies and simultaneously transcends the limen – a threshold which is its own Other side. This liminal zone is fraught with both danger and promise, and characteristically exhibits *anti-structure*, an overturning or manipulation of conventional forms (Turner 1996 [1974]: 272–299) which charges it with intensity.

A formalist outlook would find in anti-structure a near-equivalent of that *foregrounding* of the utterance which is the condition for defamiliarisation

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[4]     On the phases of ritual, see Leach (1982 [1961]: 134). On the applicability of ritual theory insights to narrative texts, see Aguirre (2007: 25–28, and passim).

(Shklovsky 1965 [1917]). A text may deploy anti-structural features similar to those found in ritual practices; stylisation, stereotyping, periodisation, phasing, distortion or inversion of linguistic rules *overpattern* text and endow it with a liminal quality (Aguirre 2017). If I use 'ritualisation' by the side of 'overpatterning' or 'foregrounding' (Aguirre 2007), I do so because the first carries important connotations of both the ceremonial and the predictable which are not directly present in the other terms, and because I wish to stress a key aspect – liminality – shared by both ritual practice and 'ritualised' text.[5] There is no question of simply applying anthropological theory to literary fiction; but it is plain that in his tripartite analysis of *rites de passage* van Gennep (1981 [1909]) was, perhaps unknowingly, bowing to an Aristotelian narrative poetics of beginning, middle, and end;[6] just as legitimate is it for the literary critic to borrow theoretical concepts from other disciplines.[7] All the same, the analysis of formal properties of text undertaken below pertains not to anthropology but to a broad domain of cultural studies inclusive of the cultic, the literary, and, most importantly, the folkloric.

It is in the performative, *oral* genres of folklore that textual overpatterning is most evident: proverb, ballad, or wondertale exhibit a decided preference for stylised performance and formulaic language.[8] Rather than being a mark of flawed writing, the pervasive presence of generic codes and formulaic diction in *The Necromancer* provides partial confirmation for a hypothesis I have advanced elsewhere to the effect that the Gothic occupies an interface between literature and folk narrative, not just thematically but also formally – for instance in its use of folk narrative structures (Aguirre 2013b), its heightened observance of genre conventions (Aguirre 2013a, 2017), or its recourse to formulaicity (Aguirre 2016). Wherever I write of Teuthold's 'style' this is meant to be shorthand for a *conventional*, genre-bound manner Teuthold adheres to rather than a suggestion as to the originality of his writing.[9]

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[5]   On 'ritualisation' strategies, see references and discussion in Aguirre (2014).

[6]   Technically, Aristotle's was a poetics of drama, and so not so much a narrative as a *performative* poetics – performance is the crucial link between ritual and theatre. See Turner (1982).

[7]   For an ethnography that models itself explicitly on literary criticism, see Geertz (1973: 9).

[8]   See, e.g., Gummere (1907), Olrik (1992 [1921]), Lord (1960), Dégh (1995). See my Conclusions below.

[9]   There is evidence, for instance, that Ann Radcliffe, at least in her early work, resorts to formulaic conventions similar to Teuthold's (Aguirre 2020).

## 2. The text

The fragment selected for analysis presents the dramatic moment of the ghost's entrance; though narrated sequentially, the various events are understood to take place largely simultaneously. Besides instancing a recurring episode in the narrative, it constitutes a representative example of the way tableaux are constructed in the novel; its analysis, furthermore, conveniently illustrates the methodology employed. The German original and my own literal translation are given first for the sake of contrast with Teuthold's version, given below:

> Kahlert.- *Tiefe Stille herrschte in unserem Zirkel. Noch wenige Minuten, und das schon vernommene Brausen erhob sich fürchterlicher, als vorher.Thür und Fenster sprangen zu gleicher Zeit mit solcher Heftigkeit auf, daß die Angeln rasselten, und die Scheiben klirrten. Alle Lichter verloschen. Ein Schlag geschah auf den Tisch, wobey wir saßen, daß das Punschgefäß erdröhnte, und die Gläser erklangen, und herab fielen. Zischend fuhr ein feuriger Blitz an den Wänden umher. Gekreisch und Geächze erscholl vor unsern Ohren. Ich sah den Geist, schrecklicher, als vor sieben Tagen, auf mich zu kommen.— Was weiter mit uns geworden, weiß ich nicht.* (Kahlert 1792: 159)

> Literally.- Profound silence ruled in our circle. A few more minutes, and the roaring we had previously heard arose more fearful than before. Doors and windows sprang open at the same time with such violence that the hinges rattled and the panes shook. All the lights went out. The table we sat at received such a blow that the punch bowl boomed and the glasses rang out and fell off. A fiery flash of lightning went hissing all over the walls. Screams and groans resounded in our ears. I saw the ghost advance upon me, more awful than seven days earlier.— What further became of us, I do not know.

Teuthold's rendering, given as Excerpt 1, adds, erases, and alters at will, and the formulaic rhetoric he employs differs from Kahlert's. If the hypothesis of a folklore-Gothic connection holds, it should be possible to apply to Gothic formulaicity strategies that have been found useful in the study of similar phenomena in oral or oral-derived compositions.[10] Adapting to my own needs a method employed by Parry and Lord in their investigations of formulaic language

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10     On 'oral-derived' cf. Foley (2012).

in the Homeric and South Slavic epics (cf. Lord 1960), a double continuous line indicates a formula properly so called, a single continuous line marks a formulaic pattern, and an intermittent line signals apparently looser constructs which are, as will be argued below, still formulaic.

## EXCERPT 1

A few moments more of profound silence, and then the dismal howling arose again with redoubled force; a sudden violent gust of wind threw the windows open, and the door from its hinges, extinguishing all the candles; a tremendous clap of thunder shook the house, a terrible flash of lightning hissed through the room, and prostrated us to the ground; an hideous lamenting noise assailed our ears, and lifting up my head I beheld the phantom that once had frightened me, advancing with a threatening grin; grisly was its shape, and its eyes rolling like two flaming comets. (1.215) (98 words)

3. An instance of patterning

Before analysing this fragment it will be needful to illustrate the nature of the formulaic pattern through a detailed examination of one single clause, *The dismal howling arose again*. The method involves providing sufficient clause-length instances to illustrate both similarity and variation in order to show that for our understanding of formulaic construction a mere analysis of *formulas* will not suffice.

***Dismal howling*** is of a piece with the following:
- *a frightful howling filled our ears* (1.97)
- *wondering what could have caused that dreadful howling* (1.214)
- *they set up a dreadful howling* (2.247)

***Dismal*** plus a sound-word is also frequent:
- *the weather-cock's dismal creaking joined with the mournful dirge of the solitary owl* (1.1)
- *woful* [sic] *groans, lamentations, and the dismal clashing of chains, resounded through the spacious caverns (*1.91)
- *the phantom answered with a hollow dismal voice* (1.96)
- *We went [...] shouting and hollowing, discharging our pistols, but no sound was heard except the hollow echo repeating our shouts and the reports of our pistols, in a dismal accent* (1.107)

- *the dismal noise continued a few seconds* (1.214)
- *no sound was heard except the dismal dirge of the screech-owl* (1.217)
- *rough dismal voices vibrated in my ear* (2.63).

**The … *howling arose again*** belongs with the following:
- *a sudden hollow noise arose* (1.214)
- *a whispering arose* (2.220)
- *at once a sudden hollow noise struck our ears* (1.103)
- *a great noise struck my ears* (2.52)

These instances (the list is far from exhaustive) yield the formulaic pattern shown in Table 1. Examples are assigned a number between square brackets followed by (volume.page). Each lexical item is to be viewed as a member of a lexical field (LF); the pattern is comprised of six LFs;[11] the nodal noun field (LF2) is highlighted in bold type. For purposes of presentation and in order to bring out the resemblances among different realisations of the pattern, I have grouped instances (to the extent that I could) according to their use of node (LF2) and verb (LF3). Syntactically, three variants are observed: in the dominant form, (A), LF2 is Subject; in the causative (B), it is direct object; in (C), LF2 is the head of a prepositional phrase; the verb phrase changes accordingly. These three equivalent ways of combining the lexical fields shape the pattern's *syntactic field*, yielding a syntagma which engages a number of paradigms, with the proviso that the syntagma itself has a paradigmatic nature as it adopts three variant forms. The remarks following outline a number of its peculiarities.

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[11]  LF6 (HOSTILE FIGURE) appears only once in this pattern, but in the novel it includes 'phantom(s)' (x39), 'ghost(s)' (x36), 'spectre(s)' (x16) and others.

Table 1. The formulaic pattern of *The dismal howling arose again*

**A.**

|  | DET. | LF1 (Adj.) | LF2 (N[SOUND]) | LF3 (V[SOUND]) | LF4 (NP Direct Object) | LF5 (Adjunct) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [1] (2.220) | a |  | **whispering** | arose |  |  |
| [2] (1.214) | a | sudden hollow | **noise** | arose |  |  |
| [3] (1.215) | the | dismal | **howling** | arose |  | again |
| [4] (1.97) | a | frightful | **howling** | filled | our ears |  |
| [5] (1.103) | a | sudden hollow | **noise** | struck | our ears | at once |
| [6] (2.52) | a | great | **noise** | struck | my ears |  |
| [7] (1.214) | the | dismal | **noise** | continued |  | a few seconds |
| [8] (2.63) |  | rough dismal | **voices** | vibrated |  | in my ear |
| [9] (1.95) |  | woful | **groans, lamentations**, and |  |  |  |
|  | the | dismal | **clashing** of chains | resounded |  | through the spacious caverns |
| [10] (1.1) | the… | dismal | **creaking** | joined with |  |  |
|  | the | mournful | **dirge** of the solitary owl |  |  |  |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [11] (1.217) | no | | **sound** | was heard except | | | | | |
| | the | dismal | **dirge** of the screech-owl | | | | | | |
| [12] (1.107) | no | | **sound** | was heard except | | | | | |
| | the | hollow | **echo** | repeating | our **shouts** and | the **reports** of our pistols | in a dismal | | **accent** |

**B.**

| | PRON/REL | LF3 (V[causative]) | DET. | LF1 (Adj.) | LF2(N[SOUND]) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [13] (2.247) | they | set up | a | dreadful | **howling** |
| [14] (1.214) | what | could have caused | that | dreadful | **howling** |

**C.**

| | DET. | LF6 (NP) | LF3 (V[SPEECH]) | PREP. | DET. | LF1 (Adj.) | LF2 (N[SOUND]) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [15] (1.96) | the | phantom | answered | with | a | hollow dismal | voice |

REMARKS

a. 'Woful' in [9] qualifies a functional synonym of 'howling', while 'dismal' is assigned to a different (non-human) sound-word: items from LF1 can combine freely with items from LF2. The lexical field, not the individual lexeme, is our unit of analysis.

b. 'Hollow dismal voice' in [15] appears in a complement position; since the pattern is not tied to one single construction, a *syntactic field* – the set of possible syntactic arrangements the pattern adopts – must be posited.

c. 'Hollow dismal voice' redundantly combines two members of LF1 (emotionally-charged qualifiers for sound); this illustrates Jakobson's (1987 [1960]) proposition that the poetic function of language resides in projecting the principle of equivalence from the paradigmatic axis of selection onto the syntagmatic axis of combination so that, rather than just being *substituted for each other*, choices may be *made contiguous with each other*.[12] What this means is that the language of this novel (the phenomenon is pervasive) operates on a principle of metonymy and aspires to the condition of poetic prose.

d. 'Accent' [12] occurs only once in Table 1, but it appears 27 times in the book and generates its own pattern, mostly in constructions of the type 'in a hollow woeful accent', where the adjectival group can be replaced with 'tremulous hollow', 'faltering hollow', 'tremendous awful' and so on. 'Voice' occurs often in the construction 'with a thundering ('tremendous', 'faltering', etc.) voice' ('groan', 'sound', etc.). The patterns for 'accent' and 'voice' interact with that for 'dismal'; whereas such multiplication of variables rules out talk of formulas even on the level of phrase, the *catenation of patterns* (an essentially metonymic phenomenon) awaits study.

e. In several examples, 'hollow' offers a sort of *allitération riche* vis-à-vis the 'howling' found in others; further alliterations include 'dismal'-'dirge' [11], 'frightful'-'filled' [4], 'heard'-'hollow' [12]; elsewhere, 'noise' is replaced with the assonant 'voice' [8], [15]. Alliteration, rhyme, assonance, and rhythm both within and across LFs set up

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numerous *phonological fields* which, as will be shown below, play their own role in the construction of formulaic patterns.[13]

f.  Besides a large LF of sound-words in [12] we have i) the formulaic clause 'No sound was heard except…' (cf. [11], and 'no sound was heard but the screech of the owl', 2.228; 'no sound was heard, except the palpitating of their hearts', 1.77); ii) alliteration binding 'repeating'-'reports'-'pistols', 'dismal'-'dreary'; and iii) 'hollow' alliterating with 'heard' and replicating a homophone 'hollowing' (a variant of 'hallooing'). The novel operates on a veritable system of echoes.

g.  A co-textualisation of [2] proves enlightening; I underline three key clauses:

    *A sudden hollow noise arose. It was not unlike the howling of the tempest rushing through the chinks of an old ruinous building. The noise carried something frightful with it, which cannot be expressed by words. My hair rose up like bristles, an irresistible horror made my blood run chill, and my ridiculing friends became as serious as if a magic wand had touched them, gazing at each other in dumb astonishment. The dismal noise continued a few seconds […].*

The first underlined clause offers a version of the pattern ('hollow'-'noise'-'arose'), the second attributes 'howling' to the figurative term 'tempest', while fifty-eight words and three periods later, the third clause resorts to the familiar 'dismal noise', so that the constellation 'hollow'-'dismal'-'noise'-'howling'-'arose' surfaces in a *scattered* form. 'Howling', furthermore, is now the vehicle of a simile and, so, its ontological status differs from that of 'noise'. What matters in a formulaic pattern is not primarily a semantic construct but the correlation of the words themselves, even if kept asunder by sheer textual distance, syntax, punctuation, and different ontological levels.


4. Analysis of the tableau

Words are gathered into fields, and fields into formulaic patterns, but these may likewise combine into a superordinate 'field of patterns', so to speak – a tableau – and so analysis must go one level higher. To show to what extent a fragment of Gothic text can rely on formulaic diction, each formulaic element in Excerpt 1 will now be given in bold type; underlining follows the criteria used earlier; '(x9)'

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13    For further examples cf. Aguirre (2016).

means the group is a *formula* that appears nine times in all; a few selected variants are given below each entry to illustrate the *formulaic pattern* it belongs in. It is quite common for an item to constitute a formula *and* be part of a pattern. Some items such as 'A few moments more' are left out of the formulaic account as, though partially replicated elsewhere in the book, they display no markers (e.g., odd or striking diction, direct repetition, co-textual idiosyncrasies) that would allow us to class them as part of a specific rhetoric; they seem rather to belong in the corpus of English than in Teuthold's.

**profound silence** (x9)
> 'buried in profound silence' (1.217); 'profound silence swayed all around' (2.9); 'stared at me in profound silence' (1.211); 'soon all around was hushed in profound silence' (1.98); 'in dumb silence' (x5); 'in awful silence' (x4); 'Awful silence was still swaying around' (1.69).

**with redoubled force** (x4)
> 'with redoubled violence' (2.195); 'with redoubled anxiety' (2.46).

**a sudden violent gust of wind** (x4)
> 'A violent gust of wind' (2.12); 'A violent gust of wind rushed again in our faces' (2.13).

**threw the windows open**
> '[he] pushed the window open' (1.136); 'the first gust of wind threw the window and the door suddenly open' (2.163).

**threw…the door from its hinges**
> 'We made the utmost efforts to disengage the massy door from its rusty hinges' (1.194).
>
> Do two instances suffice to prove the existence of a formulaic pattern? This is of course in agreement with my definition of pattern above, but the question becomes a moot one when we view the phrase in a field perspective: the writer has simply selected items from a field of functionally equivalent verb phrases involving notions of OPENING, AGENCY, SWIFTNESS, and VIOLENCE variously realised, such as 'were suddenly forced open' (1.95), 'the door flew open' (1.88), 'flew suddenly open' (1.89), and 'was forced open with a thundering noise' (2.223). The field here is not lexical but phrasal.[14]

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[14]    We find substitutive rhyme between transitive 'threw' and intransitive 'flew', and substitutive alliteration between 'flew' and 'forced'. Certain sounds tend to recur in certain environments.

**extinguishing all the candles**

'The light in the lamp was now extinguished' (1.94); 'A gust of wind had extinguished our torches' (1.200); 'The extinguishing of the light in the lamp' (2.159). Some figurative uses occur: 'the few remaining sparks of honesty and virtue were extinguished by degrees' (2.146); 'the few remaining sparks of ambition were soon extinguished by ignominy' (2.181).[15]

Though 'candle' appears only once in this pattern, it belongs in a lexical field of SOURCES OF LIGHT any of which can be used as the direct object or passive subject of 'extinguish'; they can also be combined ('the light in the lamp'; see remark c. above).

**a tremendous clap of thunder** (x5)

'a tremendous peal of thunder' (1.97); 'roaring claps of thunder' (1.97); 'the roaring of thunder' (1.97); 'as if roused by a sudden clap of thunder' (2.97); 'the hollow voice of the thunder' (2.228); 'roared my friend with a thundering voice' (1.200); 'A tremendous voice roared like thunder' (2.47).

In this pattern the *scattered* correlation of the lexemes 'roar' (used as noun, adjective, and verb, and in substitutive alliteration with 'roused'), 'thunder' (noun, adjective) and 'voice' matters over and above their position, syntactic function, or figurative value.

**shook the house** (x2)

'a clap of thunder shook the subterraneous fabric' (1.95); 'a rising tempest, which shook the oaks around' (2.36); 'a rising tempest shook the tops of the lofty oaks' (2.228). In the following, the bond 'thunder'-'shook' reappears in a scattered construction and with a figurative use of the first: '[he] shook him now violently by the shoulder, thundering in his ears' (1.81).[16]

**a flash of lightning hissed through the room** (x2)

'a flash of lightning hissed suddenly through the dreary vault' (1.91); 'a flash of lightning illuminated the cellar' (1.97); 'flashes of lightning hissed through the vault' (1.97); 'flashes of lightning illuminated…the dark and dreary forest' (2.228); 'a sudden flash of vivid lightning illuminated my prison' (2.230).

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[15] Besides the alliterations 'torches'-'extinguished', 'light'-'lamp', mark the curious use of 'by' – syntactically different, positionally identical – in the last two examples. Words keep creating echoes, this time through parallelism (yielding zeugma).

[16] Note the alliterations 'rising'-'around', 'tempest'-'tops', 'shook'-'shoulder'.

**prostrated us to the ground**

'found the poor fellow prostrated on the floor' (1.216); 'A strange sensation had fixed me to the floor' (1.21); 'Our valiant crew was still fixed to the ground' (1.78); 'we were fixed to the ground like so many statues' (2.8); 'our companions were still fixed to their places' (2.14).

**an hideous lamenting noise**

'an horrid humming noise' (1.154). 'Lamenting noise' is functionally equivalent to 'groans' or 'howling'. Like 'dismal', 'hideous' appears in combination with other sound-words: 'hideous groans' (1.188), 'hideous creaking' (1.194).

**assailed our ears**

'my ears being suddenly assailed by the sound of many voices' (2.44); 'the sound of horns assailing my ears' (2.63); 'his terrible voice assailed my ears' (2.197); 'a sudden hollow noise struck our ears' (1.103). 'Voice' and 'noise' keep taking each other's place in substitutive assonance; the alliteration 'sound'-'assail'-'sudden' recurs.

**lifting up my head**

'lifted his reverend head slowly up' (1.81); 'his looks being lifted up to heaven' (1.49); 'lifting up its emaciated hand' (1.24); 'lifting up his hands in a menacing manner' (1.135). Alliteration links 'lifting' and 'looks', 'menacing' and 'manner', but also, substitutively, 'head' and 'hand(s)'.

**I beheld the phantom … advancing**

'Lifting up my downcast looks, I beheld the funeral procession drawing near' (2.171); 'lifting up my eyes, I saw a savage looking man coming towards me' (2.197); 'As it [the ghost] entered the room, it advanced towards me' (1.23); 'I collected all the small relics of courage, advancing again some paces towards the dreadful phantom' (1.153). The LFs of PERCEPTION, HOSTILE FIGURE, and APPROACH co-occur polythetically (not all of them appear in every example) and in a scattered form (position and syntax vary; so does the semantics, as the advance is ascribed now to threatening figures, now to the narrator).[17]

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[17]    Mark the recurrent alliteration 'lifting'-'looks' and (chiastically) 'lifting'-'saw'-'savage'-'looking'.

**with a threatening grin**
> 'with a malicious grin' (1.174), 'with a ghastly grin' (2.16), 'with a ghastly look' (1.24), 'with a horrid grin' (2.198), 'with a threatening frowning aspect' (1.92).

**grisly was its shape**
> Such predicate inversions are uncommon, but compare 'Silent and motionless like a statue was he standing there' (1.40); 'Horrid to behold did now a second phantom appear' (1.96). 'Grisly' often qualifies APPEARANCE or APPARITIONS: 'she appeared a grisly ghastly figure' (1.138); 'a grisly human figure rose […] from the coffin' (1.92).

**its eyes rolling like two flaming comets**
> 'the eyes like two portentous comets!' (1.96).
>
> 'Eye(s)' associated with LIGHT, FIRE, or VIOLENCE abounds: 'the joy sparkling in their eyes' (1.2); 'menacing looks, and sparkling eyes' (2.47); 'His eye…flashed like lightning' (2.174), where 'flashed' alliterates substitutively with 'flaming'. The following occur in the space of four pages: 'his eyes flashing with anger' (2.15), 'his eyes flashed anger' (2.16), 'His eyes darted flashes of lightning' (2.18).

Formulas in Excerpt 1 amount to 21 out of 98 words, or 21.4 % of the passage. Counting both double and single continuous lines (formulas and formulaic patterns), 69 words belong in formulaic groupings – that is 70.4 % of the whole. Adding in the 9 words marked with a broken line yields a total of 78, or 79.5 %; what remains are mostly function words and adjectives. The evidence shows that Excerpt 1 is mostly made up of formulaic patterns, and that these correspond to minute traits or events that keep recurring throughout the book.

5. Density and rhetoric

Before examining Excerpt 1 in more detail let us, for comparison, consider the lines immediately following it, and Teuthold's rendering of them. As the methodology has already been made clear, I will be selective in my analysis of other excerpts. I have numbered the formulaic segments in Teuthold's translation.

EXCERPT 2

Kahlert.- *Man brachte uns Licht, und fand uns insgesammt auf unseren Plätzen leicheblaß und versteinert. Erst gegen Morgen waren wir*

*wieder fähig, uns zu besinnen, und den Rückweg nach unseren Quartieren anzutreten. Keiner hatte Lust, in der schauderhaften Herberge ferner zu übernachten.* (Kahlert 1792: 159) (41 words)

Literally.- Light was brought to us and found us altogether pale as corpses and petrified in our places. Not before morning were we again able to recollect ourselves and set out on the way back to our quarters. No-one wished to spend another night in that terrible inn.

Teuthold.- 1) I was the first who recovered the use of his senses and, calling in vain for the landlord, my companions started up, and we found 2) the poor fellow 3) prostrated on the floor, 4) half frantic with terror. 5) At length he also recovered a little from his fright, and 6) after many persuasions, ventured down stairs, accompanied by me, to strike a light. Every body in the house was snoring, except 7) our crest-fallen 8) fellow adventurers, 9) who exhibited a rueful ghastly group, being all as pale as ashes. Looking at our watches, we saw it was past two o'clock, 10) sat an hour longer without perceiving any thing farther, and returned against morning to our respective lodgings. (1.216) (112 words)

As so often, Teuthold seems to have found his source insufficient and decided to pad it up with additional incidents and data; but the language is less specifically his own. 'It was past two o'clock', or 'ventured down stairs' are formulaic in terms of the corpus of English even though variations on each of these may be found in the novel. On the other hand, (9) is formulaic vis-a-vis the corpus of this particular novel, not only because of its incongruous language but also because it echoes both 'who exhibited a ghastly picture of dismay and despondency' (2.103) and 'The vision stared at me […] with a ghastly rueful aspect' (1.153). (1) and (5) are functionally synonymous and belong to both corpora in equal measure in that, while they are plain clauses in the language and susceptible of iteration (a cursory Google search yields nineteen tokens of 'recovered a little from his/her fright'), they specifically echo other segments in the book: 'As soon as I had recovered a little from my fright' (2.43), 'When the credulous man had recovered a little from his astonishment' (2.134), 'at length he recovered his recollection' (2.14), or 'who had recovered his spirits first' (1.71). The remaining formulaic patterns follow below:

   2)     'the poor fellow' (1.66), (1.169), (2.5), (2.79).
   3)     'stretched on the floor' (1.136), (1.205); 'stretched lifeless on the floor' (2.89), 'fell lifeless on the floor' (2.14), 'fixed to the ground' (2.49), 'prostrated us to the ground' (1.215).

4) 'half frantic with joy' (1.104), (1.106), 'half frantic with rapture' (2.123).

6) 'After many persuasions' (1.148), 'after many fruitless efforts' (2.72), (2.245), 'after many fruitless researches' (2.231).

7) our crest-fallen spirits (2.4).

8) my /my three/ their fellow adventurers (x8). Mark the *scattered* blend of 'fellow adventurers' and 'spirits' in 'None of them were able to distinguish whether we were ghosts or their fellow adventurers; however, they recovered their spirits by degrees' (1.78).

10) 'Without perceiving any thing uncommon' (1.126), 'had watched already three successive nights, without either hearing or seeing any thing uncommon' (2.162).

Though much in Excerpt 2 is predictably formulaic, only 54 out of 112 words are part of some formulaic segment: density is down to 48.2 %. The writing is on the whole more prosaic than in Excerpt 1, which is congruent with the fact that this is not so much a tableau as a series of brief descriptions and little moves, a linker.[18] At moments of suspense or horror, however, the narrative habit of lengthening and enhancing through formulaic diction reasserts itself:

EXCERPT 3

Kahlert.- *Wir folgten seinem Beyspiele, und traten auch hinein. Kalter Schauer durchbebte meine Glieder: wir waren in einer Gruft. Hin und wieder standen verfallene Särge. Schädel, Gebeine und zerbrochene Urnen prasselten unter unseren Füssen.* (Kahlert 1792: 69) (33 words).

Literally.- *We followed his example, and stepped in too. A cold shudder shook my limbs: we were in a crypt. Here and there stood fallen coffins. Skulls, bones and broken urns rattled beneath our feet.*

Teuthold.- We did the same, 1) standing by his side in trembling expectation, 2) awed by the solemnity that reigned around us; 3) a dreadful chillness seized us, we felt the grasp of the icy fangs of horror, being 4) in a burying vault surrounded with rotten coffins: Skulls and mouldered bones 5) rattled beneath our feet, 6) the grisly phantom of death stared in our faces from every side, 7) with a grim ghastly aspect. (1.89) (68 words)

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18    Even so, we should reckon with alliteration ('found'-'fellow'-'floor'-'frantic'; 'fallen'-'fellow'; 'ghastly'-'group').

That Teuthold's additions here do not just echo predictable clusters of English but are part of his own corpus appears from the following illustrative samples:

1)   'standing by the corpse in a kind of stupefaction' (2.193); 'standing by the door like lifeless statues' (1.153); 'fixed to the ground like so many statues, thrilled with anxious expectation' (2.9).

2)   'silence reigned around a while' (2.122); 'awed in solemn silence' (2.63); 'Awful silence reigned around' (2.13).

3)   'I started up, seized by the chilly fangs of terror' (2.46); 'We were seized by the chilly hand of horror' (1.136); 'grasped by horror's icy fangs' (2.14). The co-occurrence of 'chill' and 'dread' is frequent: 'made my blood run chill with awful dread' (2.124); 'made my blood run chill as I beheld the dreadful pile' (2.171).

4)   'In the burying vault' (1.95), 'in the deep vault' (1.104), 'into the deep vault' (1.105), 'in the subterraneous vaults' (2.157).

5)   'the floor seemed to shake beneath our feet' (2.11); 'the worm that is creeping beneath our feet' (2.26); 'the ground gave way beneath my feet' (2.229)

6)   'the grim spectre of a lingering death stared us grisly in the face' (1.102); 'a thousand grisly phantoms tortured my fancy' (2.195).

7)   'with a ghastly rueful aspect' (1.153); 'The ghost of my mother hovered before my eyes, with a grim ghastly look' (1.42); 'staring me in the face, with a ghastly look' (1.24)

A description such as 'Here and there stood…' will not suffice for Teuthold, and he will replace it with '[we were] surrounded with…' which both multiplies the number of coffins and arranges them in an ominous manner around the protagonists. Notice, too, that (1–2) describe the speaker's awe, (3) offers two perfectly equivalent, chiastically ordered  clauses ('dread', 'chill', 'seized' vs. 'grasp', 'icy', 'horror'), while the rest lists parallel objects of fear ('vault', 'coffins', 'skulls…bones', 'phantom') affecting the group. Teuthold's version contains fifty-two formulaic words, or 76.4 % of the fragment. His expansions have little to do with plot, rather they seek to magnify atmosphere and mood. Every item in the original invites from him an often figurative convolution which slows down or halts the narrative progress of his source; this, providing stasis, is one major function of the tableau. Consider an instance associated in the original

with mere reflection, but which Teuthold's formulaic expansions manage to transform into a moment of horror (I have underlined and numbered formulaic segments in the first paragraph only):

## EXCERPT 4

Kahlert.- *Noch außer mir von dem Gesehenen und Gehörten, war ich lange Zeit nicht vermögend, ein Wort zu reden. Der Österreicher sprach viel, und sein Vorhaben, mich zu zerstreuen, gelang*. (Kahlert 1792: 141) (29 words)

Literally.- Still beside myself because of what I had seen and heard, I was for a long time unable to utter a word. The Austrian talked much, and succeeded in his purpose to take my mind off the subject.

Teuthold.- But, alas! 1) I could not escape the hideous spectre of self reproach, 2) pursuing me with icy fangs: 3) The scene of misery which my eyes had witnessed hovered constantly before my gloomy fancy, the 4) groans of woe which I had heard 5) still vibrated in my ears, the 6) haggard looks of these unhappy people, undone by my heedlessness, 7) stared me in the face ever and anon, and 8) I struggled in vain to shake off 9) the grisly spectre pursuing me with unrelent [sic] resentment. 'How comfortless and miserable is the man,' 10) said I to myself, 'whom conscience accuses of 11) having plunged into the gaping gulph of misery a fellow creature!'
　　The Austrian saw the painful workings of my soul, kindly striving to dispel the gloomy clouds hovering over my brow. 'How can you accuse yourself,' spoke the reverend veteran, '[…].'
　　I listened with eager attention to the soothing speech of comfort flowing from the reverend lips of my sage companion, and an heavy load was taken from my heart, when he had finished, the clouds of gloominess dispersed by degrees, and a ray of cheerfulness darted through my mind. (1.189)

Teuthold's version (no less than 339 words) offers a veritable tableau of grim remorse and consolation complete with a long speech by the Austrian (154 words, not reproduced here). The annotations below are again selective:

(1–2) and (8–9) are functionally equivalent (and so, redundant), and chiastically enwrap three clauses which in parallel fashion show events affecting the speaker's fancy, ears, and eyes ('face'). This overpatterning is much as in Excerpt 3. Excerpt 2, by contrast,

displayed little or no chiasmus, parallelism, or redundancy – as was to be expected. We shall consider Excerpt 1 presently.

(1) 'the dreadful spectre of famine' (2.230); 'a thousand grisly phantoms [of conscience]' (2.195); 'I could not escape the hand of punishing Justice' (2.210); and compare (6) in Excerpt 3.

(3) Let this clause be (a), and compare (b) 'the horrible scene of terror my eye beheld' (1.212); (c) 'all the horrid scenes of the adventure at the castle hovered before my imagination' (1.121); (d) 'the nocturnal horrid spectre hovered still before my eyes, haunting me with gloomy thoughts' (1.29); (e) 'I was haunted without rest, by the gloomy offsprings of my fancy' (2.31). The polythetic nature of this pattern is obvious: 'scene(s)' appears in (a)–(c); 'gloomy', in (a), (d), and (e); 'hovered', in (a), (c), and (d); 'haunting'/'haunted' in (d)–(e); 'horrid'/'horrible' in (b)–(d); 'fancy' in (a) and (e), but 'imagination' in (b) and 'thoughts' in (d) take its place. Alliteration creates additional braiding effects.

(4) 'woful groans, lamentations' (1.95); 'the lamentations and the woful groans' (1.95).

(5) 'rough dismal voices vibrated in my ear' (2.63); 'the hallooing of two huntsmen vibrated in my ear' (2.226).

'Icy fangs', 'stared me in the face', 'hideous/grisly spectre', 'haggard looks', 'plunged into the gulph of' and so on are all formulas and/or enter other formulaic patterns in the novel; 68.8% of the first paragraph is formulaic, but all the rhetoric, and the imagery, are Teuthold's own.[19] It rather looks as if he were content with a less resounding diction when penning the necessary though unimposing intervals between dramatic moments and reserved his heaviest formulaic ord'nance for grand occasions of pomp and circumstance. Such are tableaux, scenes of heightened ceremonial intensity.

6. 'Ritualisation' and the tableau

To return to Excerpt 1, the ritualisation or overpatterning of language begins with alliteration: 'few'-'profound'; 'moments'-'more'; 'dismal'-'redoubled'; 'wind'-'windows'; 'head'-'beheld'; 'phantom'-'frightened'; 'grin'-'grisly'. It is not that

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[19]   So are the alliterations, particularly in the last sentence of the first paragraph: 'miserable'-'man'-'misery'; comfortless'-'conscience'-'accuses'-'creature'; 'gaping'-'gulph'.

these have semantic value – perhaps they only reveal that the writer felt an irrepressible impulse to use phonological echoes; but the net result is that our attention is drawn to the way language is foregrounded and, against ordinary expectations, rendered opaque.

Overpatterning continues on the level of syntax, with one major structure organising most of the formulaic patterns examined in the excerpt into a set of parallel forms. The first verb ('arose') signals an emergence; thereafter 'a gust of wind', 'a peal of thunder', 'a flash of lightning', and 'a noise' (each preceded by emotionally charged adjectives) appear as agents impinging violently ('threw', 'extinguishing', 'shook', 'hissed', 'prostrated', 'assailed') upon, first, the environment ('the windows', 'the door', 'the candles', 'the house'), then its occupants ('us', 'our ears'); lastly we are given the narrator's own experience ('I beheld…'). The five formulaic patterns, sharing the same lexical fields and correlated by syntactic parallelism, constitute a 'pattern-field' – a tableau. Rather than selecting one of them over the others, the writer metonymically combines them, which accounts for the iterative quality of the fragment. Alliteration, order, parallelism, iteration are so many 'ritualising' strategies reinforced by an iambic-anapaestic rhythm (though the 'wind' clause has a decidedly trochaic-dactylic feel), as shown in Table 2.

Structurally, the emergence of the Numinous is *phased* into five events which make the process visible and provide sequence and rising intensity. Thematically, disruption and contrast rule our tableau. The earlier howls are replaced by 'profound silence', which in turn yields to louder howling; closed doors and windows are forcibly opened; lights go out; exposure, darkness, and the storm destabilise both space (the house is shaken, lightning invades the room) and human beings (whose prostration is redolent of the awe due to the Numen); lastly, the company faint (we are told elliptically), then recover consciousness. The whole is chiastically preceded and topped by animal and human sounds ('howling', 'lamenting noise'). Devices with an anti-structural value in narrative prose (rhythm, alliteration, phasing, parallelism, chiasmus and so on) violently yet ceremoniously build up a suitable atmosphere towards the climax of a ghostly apparition. The transitions from sound to silence to sound or from light to darkness to lightning replace the ordinary with the numinous, the homely with the *Unheimlich*. Such mutabilities stress the mercurial nature of human reality, and it is at this juncture that formulaic density matters. Given that the fragment liminalises space, time, and events by depicting a moment of stasis which yet generates profound change, it is no coincidence that the heaviest degree of formulaicity should obtain here: 'ritualisation' both defamiliarises the text and exerts an intense control over the transit, such as will ensure 'safety' for the reader in the face of the alien, one and the same discourse creating and containing chaos.

Table 2. The anapestic rhythm of Excerpt 1.

| 1) | the dismal howling arose again with redoubled force |
| | X / X / X / X / X / X / X / |
| 2) | a sudden violent gust of wind threw the windows open and the door from its hinges, |
| | X / X / X / (X) / X / X / X X / X X / X / X |
| 3) | a tremendous clap of thunder shook the house, |
| | X X / X / X / X / X / |
| 4) | a terrible flash of lightning hissed through the room, and prostrated us to the ground; |
| | X / X X / X / X / X / X X / X / X X / |
| 5) | an hideous lamenting noise assailed our ears |
| | X / X / X / X / X / |

7. Conclusions

This article has been concerned with the analysis of certain formal aspects of a Gothic novel and with the hypothesis that the forms of the Gothic yield semantic value. It should be clear that the complexities identified by this analysis do not make *The Necromancer* a 'better' text. This said, it is all too easy to berate its author for not being aware, as we are, that he was using clichés and that clichés are to be avoided; in point of fact, one might be tempted to hold the contrary view, that his iterations are *deliberate*. Neither of these claims, though, would do justice to what seems to be happening here: without necessarily *intending* this construction, Teuthold is not simply letting himself be carried away by 'bad writing', rather he follows a codified style of composition. Whatever we may think of the quality of the writing, much more than mere shoddiness is at work here – there is strategy: alliteration, an iterative syntactic structure, or a systematic use of formulaic patterns evince a determination to bestow visibility upon the telling. But this is not so much something a writer *does* as something that *takes place* in his book: it is a diction we deal with, not an author. *The Necromancer* is not fully an individual's composition; rather it displays marks of a 'communal' product, one to a considerable extent dictated by convention.[20]

This 'conventionality' – this strong adherence to compositional codes – is one argument in support of the hypothesis that the Gothic lies much closer to folklore than might have been supposed. In the words of folklorist Max Lüthi,

> Many [oral] storytellers avoid variation, not out of incompetence but because of stylistic demands. Strict word-for-word repetition, when it occurs, is an element of the folktale's abstract style. …The fixed metrical and rhyming tags and the opening and closing formulas of the folktale likewise serve to stabilise its form. …[In the Homeric epic,] the recurrence of identical elements intensifies the impression of solidity and reliability that is produced by the epic style. Behind what is transitory the listener senses what is permanent (Lüthi 1981 [1947]: 33–34, 46–47).

And this surely is the point of Gothic formulaic language. This genre, born in the shadow of Burke's (1987 [1757]) reflections on the Sublime and the terrible, places itself on the threshold of rationality and leans over to peer into an Other side where disorder and terror are thought to reign; and formulaic discourse helps stabilise and contain the potential for chaos inherent in this enterprise. It does, however, also do something not often seen in folk narratives, though the key is found in another of Lüthi's terms: for the overpatterning of Gothic points indeed

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20 To begin with, it is the result of an interaction between a novelist and his translator (cf. Stillinger 1991); but the *codes* they adhere to also make the genre prevail upon individual intentions (cf. Sedgwick 1981; Aguirre 2017).

at 'what is permanent' – but the permanent in *The Necromancer* is precisely the moments of disruption, the tableaux where one or other of the deep-set assumptions by which we measure our reality is violated and where, as a result, horror is met with (Aguirre 2013a). On the one hand, the book threatens constant upheaval through the irruption of the Numinous; on the other, it wraps this threat in carefully controlled language; like ritual, formulaic diction serves the equivocal purpose of ushering in the Other while containing it.

The Gothic tableau – besides the ten apparition tableaux, instances include the storm, the prisoner in his dungeon, or the agonising search for an exit from the vaults – can be defined formally as a narrative segment composed of clusters of formulaic patterns. But some further peculiarities of the tableau – particularly its *recurrence* – may only become evident in a broader perspective. After considering field, pattern, and tableau, we therefore need to go yet one level 'higher' in the overall composition of the novel and look in detail at the way these and other tableaux are 'fielded', in effect building yet more complex textual units.

This is one of several lines of enquiry opened up by the analysis of formulaicity; others concern genre and reception. Research so far invites the conclusion that formulaic language serves at least two functions: one is to render the experience of the Numinous visible while subjecting it to control; the other, to give visibility to the Gothic genre by providing it with anti-structure, i.e., with formal devices that ensure recognition through differentiation. If formulaicity grants visibility on two levels, 'fielding' operates across the levels of lexis, syntax, formulaic pattern and – in my conjecture – tableau; in both cases a key formal aspect replicates itself on different planes. Such a self-similar construct can be investigated for its *fractal* properties. Fractality in biological formations provides redundancy and thereby resilience against forces threatening dissolution (Goldberger, Rigney & West 1990). This function is also noticeable in oral tradition, where the text exists only in performance and – but for its overpatterned texture – would be exposed to erosion by faulty memory, execution, or reception.[21] Formulaicity may then be seen as a strategy that similarly allows Gothic to withstand the formal, thematic, and ideological pressures of the literary canon of the day (Aguirre 2017), and so as a feature – like that 'horrid' element Catherine Morland sought for in books in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* – expected by contemporary readers of the genre. If so, it would pay to probe other Gothic narratives for special versions of oral-derived formulaic language.

A further issue touches upon authorship. Teuthold's identity remains a matter of controversy: was he a 'factory translator' for Minerva Press, or perhaps just a 'house name'? Conger (1980) has established that Teuthold (skilfully, one may add) interpolated a full novella by Schiller (*Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre*,

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[21]     For discussion and references cf. Aguirre 2007.

1786) into Kahlert's novel in what constitutes the earliest known English rendering of Schiller's narrative: are we to assume that Teuthold translated it in order to insert it into his version of Kahlert's book? This seems hardly a task a 'factory translator' might undertake. Summers (1927), Cass (2007), and Murnane (2010) believe Teuthold to be a German expatriate in London; but it is interesting that the German name 'Hermann' (single *r*, double *n*) should be misspelled (all twenty-two times) in the translation as 'Herrman' (double *r*, single *n*); it is not clear what logic would impel a German speaker (who for the rest retains German names) to resort to such an odd spelling. Furthermore, Teuthold's massive use of alliteration raises the not inconsiderable question whether we could expect a non-British writer to display this degree of practical familiarity with English prosodic effects. Then again, since the formula 'the icy fang(s)' (which appears four times in *The Necromancer*) is Shakespeare's (*As You Like It*, II.i.6), Teuthold's insistence on using 'icy/ chilly/ ruthless/ burning/ merciless fangs' as a formulaic pattern (x14, all metaphorical) betokens a desire to produce not just an English rendering but an *English book*. Are these tokens of the translator's nationality, or was he – as Conger (1980) and Murnane (2010) suggest – trying to cater to 'English taste'? These matters require further investigation.[22]

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