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‘Give it Welcome’: Gothic Inheritance and the Troubles in Contemporary Irish Fiction

Matthew Schultz

On April 10, 1998, the British and Irish governments signed the Good Friday Agreement, marking the official end of the Troubles in Northern Ireland—though not the cessation of violence. A year earlier, Jeffrey Glenn, a 46 year old librarian in Ballynahinch, County Down, submitted an essay for a retrospective collection, *Children of The Troubles: Our Lives in the Crossfire of Northern Ireland*. In it, he recalls the pangs of terror he regularly experienced while growing up in a Belfast suburb in the 1950s:

As a young child, I used to look carefully under my bed every night before saying my prayers. The Irish Republican Army campaign of the fifties was in full swing and I was checking for bombs. Even if I couldn’t see one, I still lay quaking with fear for what seemed like hours every night.(1)

Glenn’s variation on this common childhood anxiety of ‘monsters under the bed’ highlights the particular paranoia caused by Irish paramilitary violence that threatened to erupt into domestic spaces. Glenn was a prisoner in his own “suburban stronghold.”(2) Outside, he recalls, “Buses, trucks, cars, and construction equipment formed blazing barricades and groups of angry-faced men were busy hi-jacking more.”(3) Later, Belfast was to be divided by more permanent ‘peace lines’ constructed of iron, brick, and steel, and topped with metal netting that reached a height of twenty-five feet. These barriers separated Catholic from Protestant neighborhoods, and turned Belfast streets into labyrinthine passages flanked by crumbling, bombed-out buildings—Glenn uses Gothic tropes to describe the Belfast cityscape and the “endlessly repetitive pattern of attrition [throwing] their shadow[s] over everyday life....”(4)

Irish writers have long been obsessed with, and haunted by, Ireland’s troubled history, and have regularly turned to Gothic evocations of ghosts and vampires as a means of negotiating Ireland’s uncanny historical repetitions.(5) In 1996, historian Kevin Whelan observed, “In Ireland, an appeal to the past inevitably worried old wounds on which the scar tissue had never fully congealed.”(6) And in her 1999 study, *The Gothic Family Romance*, Margot Backus identified Ireland’s fascination with historical unrest as particularly Gothic: “In Ireland, the Gothic, with its necromantic interest in the transmission of things—property, capital, curses, guilt—across generations, has had precisely the effect of ‘worrying old wounds.’”(7) Contemporary Irish novelists, including John Banville, Emma Donoghue, and Neil Jordan, have turned to the Gothic as a vehicle for picking at Ireland’s colonial scabs. Two novelists, Seamus Deane in *Reading in the Dark* (1996) and Anna Burns in *No Bones* (2001), have employed elements of the Gothic to represent the psychological burden caused by the return of Ireland’s Troubles.(8)

In *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones*, Deane and Burns each use child narrators who, through Gothic tropes, relate their personal accounts of the Northern Troubles. This common narrative choice highlights recurrent psychological damage caused by transgenerational acts of retributive violence in the North. The contemporary Gothic in Ireland generally serves to shadow the progress of Irish modernity with narratives that expose the underside of postcolonial nationhood—the ongoing struggle for a thirty-two county Republic, and recurring debates about whether Protestantism or Catholicism constitutes the ‘true’ Irish national character. By re-imagining ancestral voices that endorse absolution rather than retribution, Deane and Burns break from popular political and social discourse that draws upon Ireland’s ghosts as a way of justifying recurrent political violence. Both authors employ the familiar trope of the-past-haunting-the-present, but reverse typical outcomes. By focusing on the domestic consequences of

the Troubles, specifically trauma experienced by children, both authors imagine a new generation of haunted individuals struggling to re-gain self-possession.

A Spectral Genre

The Gothic in Ireland is a spectral genre. Like the Troubles, a seemingly revenant historical event, the Gothic is ghostly: it is a genre obsessed with the eruption of the past into the present, and therefore it most accurately represents the historical ghosts that “remain always to come and to come-back.”(9) According to Kelly Hurley, “The Gothic is rightly, if partially, understood as a cyclical genre that reemerges in times of cultural stress in order to negotiate anxieties for its readership by working through them in displaced (sometimes supernaturalized) form.”(10) With its litany of recurrent characters, themes, and narrative devices, the Gothic began and continues as a narrative mode of responding to continual social crisis.

The earliest Gothic novels—Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1777)—established characters, settings, and props that quickly became the recurring and guiding tropes of the genre: gloomy mansions, evil doubles, wild landscapes, religious anxiety, psychosis, and rampaging mobs are used to comment on the sociopolitical anxiety over aristocratic privilege and the fear that the lower classes might overthrow the decadent and amoral aristocracy. Following the beginning of the French Revolution (1789-1799), additional conservative voices, like Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), continue the tradition of replacing “evil” aristocrats with their more gentle and mannered (i.e., English) counterparts. But while Radcliffe’s paragons of female virtue—Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ellena in *The Italian* (1797)—are members of aristocratic families, the values, ideals, and morals they display are clearly those of the rising English middle class. Recurrent themes of transgression and excess, threatened damnation, pursuit, persecution, and tyranny abound.(11) E.J. Cleary observes that the overtly didactic program of early Gothic literature is in line with the eighteenth century pragmatic theory of the novel: gothic novels aim to scare individuals into moral, virtuous behavior. Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), however, takes Walpole’s influence in another direction, crafting grotesque scenes meant not only to terrify, but also to disturb and titillate his readers. Jean Paul Riquelme notes that at the end of the 18th century, these established elements of the genre began to appear in national writing beyond the pale: after the French Revolution, “the characteristics and issues apparent in Gothic writing of the eighteenth century carry forward into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they are significantly transformed, intensified, and disseminated by interactions with national literatures and political events outside England.”(12) In Ireland, for instance, a number of 19th century novelists turn to the gothic as a useful narrative mode for commenting upon colonial oppression.

At the outset of the 19th century, Gothic modes crept into Irish fiction in works like Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806); both texts employed recurrent narrative devices such as multiple and unreliable narrators, opaque narratives, and use of the fantastic to evoke horror in order to deal with the anxieties of a usurped aristocracy. It is, however, Irish born Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), that many critics claim “as the last—and possibly the greatest—of the Gothic novels in the line from Walpole through Radcliffe and Lewis.”(13) Maturin’s novel, according to David Punter, “casts a bitter eye over the whole process of history and historical narration as he *and* Ireland have seen it.”(14) Maturin offers sociopolitical commentary on the inescapable suspension between theological and social narratives, as between Catholicism and Protestantism; on surveillance, suggesting Ireland’s colonial condition under English domination; and on historical uncertainty, highlighted by Ireland’s long, convoluted historiographical debate between nationalist and loyalist historians and fiction writers.

Later in the century, as a part of what has been termed the Second Wave Gothic, these same “themes about the unreliability of history and the perverseness of power”(15) run through works by Irish writers, including J.S. Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *In a Glass Darkly* (1872; site of the vampiric “Carmilla”), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/1891), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Each work “regularly present[s] aspects of the Gothic translated to locations in which agents of empire experience disturbing encounters with nature and with indigenous peoples that challenge their sanity and their ideas about civilization.”(16)

Stoker’s *Dracula*, perhaps the most popularly recognized Gothic novel, has undergone numerous permutations in modern film, has an uninterrupted print history, and maintains far-reaching influence over contemporary science fiction, fantasy, and horror narratives. But despite its popular success, its fantastic supernatural elements (the shape-shifting count), and its sensationalism (a trio of sexually aggressive vampiresses), *Dracula* also articulates serious sociopolitical agendas. As Raphael Ingelbien points out, the Count has been read by Irish Studies scholars such as Terry Eagleton and Seamus Deane as an aristocratic landlord of the failing Protestant Ascendancy, incapable of transitioning into modernity; conversely, Bruce Stewart casts the Count as a Catholic middle-class Land Leaguer intent on taking back Ireland through the use of political violence,(17) which reinforces Stephen Arata’s observation that *Dracula* relies upon traditional Gothic tropes such as wild landscapes, alluring wickedness, and the unbalancing of hierarchies of masculinity and femininity as well as of good and evil to comment upon the “Late-Victorian nightmare of reverse colonization.”(18)

In the opening chapter, Jonathan Harker’s description of the horrors of the Transylvanian forest, complete with wolves, darkness, a ghostly blue flame, and a mysterious coachman illustrate common English fears of Ireland ‘beyond the pale’—a space where numerous rebellions against the Act of Union had originated.(19) This fear of recurrence, of some thing *coming back*, is, according to Siobhán Kilfeather, the most distinctive feature of the Irish Gothic.(20) In Ireland, historical repetition (and the specters that accompany recurrence) is more horrifying than stock gothic machinery such as diabolical laughter, malevolent monks, or inquisition prisons. The Gothic, therefore, has remained particularly attractive to Irish novelists who have continued to use it throughout the 20th century as a vehicle for constructing and contesting distinctions between nationalists and unionists, Catholics and Protestants—cultural divisions that mere modernity cannot resolve.

A number of Irish texts concerned with the Northern Troubles employ the Gothic to express feelings of anxiety and inherited psychological trauma caused by the conflict’s “uncanny” return despite claims that the gothic genre was dying out at the end of the 20th century. I think of Patrick McCabe’s *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998) in which a Catholic priest rapes his housekeeper, who then gives birth to a son that grows up to be a self-proclaimed “high-class escort girl” looking to unravel the mystery of his ancestry. And Colm Tóibín’s *The Heather Blazing* (1992), which evokes Ireland’s wild coastal and political landscapes—equally treacherous—as setting for a series of haunting memories that conflate long-dead relatives with the living, and bygone wars with contemporary terrorism. Despite these and other examples of contemporary Irish Gothic texts, Fred Botting declares at the conclusion of his genre study, *Gothic* (1996), that Francis Ford Coppola’s filmed adaptation of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1992) unequivocally staked the heart of the genre: “With Coppola’s *Dracula*,” Botting argues, “Gothic dies, divested of its excesses, of its transgressions, horrors and diabolical laughter, of its brilliant gloom and rich darkness of its artificial and suggestive forms.”(21) He admits, however, that “dying, of course, might just be the prelude to other spectral returns,”(22) a clever echo of Jonathan Harker’s observation early on in Stoker’s novel that “the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill.”(23) The past—whether undead vampire, historical event, or literary form—is not static.

Seamus Deane and Anna Burns employ the standard machinery of the Gothic in their Troubles fiction, but set it in a recurring, transgenerational framework. Extreme mental disturbance emerges in both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* in the figure of the Gothic specter, a manifestation of psychological trauma caused by the inherited curse of transgenerational violence in Ireland. They therefore invoke critiques of inheritance offered by the Gothic in order to suggest alternate ways of imagining the narratives that come to us from the past. They use the necromantic capabilities of the Gothic to show how confrontation with the past (and the specters that are part and parcel of it) can possibly lead to a stoppage of unproductive, malevolent haunting.

As John Paul Riquelme notes, the Gothic “is frequently a vehicle for staging and challenging ideological thinking rather than a means of furthering it.”(24) In *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones*, the Gothic mode is used not merely to illuminate Ireland’s haunted predicament, but to stage encounters with Irish history that both haunt and exorcise contemporary Ireland at the same time. Both novels illustrate just how comprehensive and habitual the social machinery of vengeance has become in Northern Ireland, and offer requested haunting as a way of breaking the pattern of psychological trauma passed down from a troubled past that is anything but dead and gone.

A Question of Repetition

Officially, the Troubles in Northern Ireland can be said to have begun in 1966.(25) Yet, in “Sins of Our Fathers,” the aptly titled introduction to *‘We Wrecked the Place’: Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles*, Jonathan Stevenson observes that

As with everything Irish, centuries of history animate the present and recent past. The island’s heritage is speckled with violent events, which serve as justifications for more violence. Depending on the context, republicans and loyalists will assert that relevant history starts at the Norman conquest (1171), the Irish rebellion in Ulster against Protestants (1641), Oliver Cromwell’s evangelistic terror against Catholics (1649), King William’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne (1690), Wolfe Tone’s United Irishmen rebellion (1798), the Easter Rising (1916), partition (1921), the founding of the new UVF (1966), the Catholic civil rights movement (1968), the August riots in Belfast (1969), or the IRA split (1970).(26)

The popular assumption that unless we know the past, we are condemned to repeat it often appears reversed in Ireland. According to Irish historical novelist Tom Flanagan, “In Ireland, in fact, it could be argued that it is knowledge of history, history speaking in ancestral voices, rather than ignorance, which enforces its repetition.”(27) Stevenson’s list of retributive events certainly justifies Flanagan’s claim. The case of the past-haunting-the-present is often made to justify the escalating violence at the end of the 1960s.

For the purpose of this essay, which recognizes contemporary Irish novelists’ obsession with historical unrest and their call for the past to haunt the present, 1966—which marked the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, and saw the founding of the new UVF amidst rumors of the IRA revival—serves as a clear demarcation of both the return of overt anti-Catholic sentiment and of Ireland’s revolutionary spirit. And like previous conflicts in Ireland, the two warring factions bifurcated predominantly along Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist lines.(28)

Despite ideological division, however, both nationalist and unionist writers regularly couch their observations in terms of Gothic repetition and recurrence—the Northern Troubles are repeatedly

represented as a conflict from the past that will not stay past, the past that had in fact never disappeared. Such a pattern of recurrence becomes even more striking when viewed through Derrida's theories of spectral presence: "They are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet." (29) What this means for post-peace process Northern Ireland is that both the spirit of revolution (the desire for freedom) and the specter of revolution (the use of violence to obtain it) continue to contaminate the seemingly peaceful present.

For instance, at the end of Belfast-born playwright Anne Devlin's *The Long March* (1984), protagonist Helen Walsh reflects on the People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in 1969, and contemplates the spectral nature of Irish history:

I still remember that time when we thought we were beginning a new journey: the long march. What we didn't see was that it had begun a long time before with someone else's journey; we were simply getting through the steps in our own time. (30)

Walsh implies that her "long march" is a revenant event: a past act populated by present individuals. Devlin's play brings the specter of Irish oppression at the hands of British soldiers during the Irish Revolution (1916-1921) into the historical space of Catholic civil-rights protests in Northern Ireland in 1969 as a way of critiquing the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) attacks on peaceful demonstrators. Walsh's contemplation of historical return illustrates a consistent Gothic trope in contemporary Irish fiction, namely the use of historical ghosts—or being haunted by history—as a way of placing turn-of-the-century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Aestheticized responses to the Troubles, such as Devlin's play, present sectarian conflict as a revenant event that draws upon Ireland's traumatic colonial history. Seamus Deane and Anna Burns continue to employ the Gothic (its formal innovations, tropes, and critical register) as the most precise narrative mode through which to both depict and critique the conflict's "uncanny" reappearance. (31)

Reading in the Dark: Conjuring Spectres

Reading in the Dark is set near the border of Derry/Londonderry (Northern Ireland) and Donegal (Republic of Ireland) in post-World War II Northern Ireland, where the restless ghosts of the 1920s Troubles haunt geographical and generational borders. Against the backdrop of the impending Troubles, Deane's unnamed narrator spends his childhood trying to uncover his family's buried past by piecing together the incomplete and obfuscated facts of his Uncle's mysterious disappearance in April, 1922—facts that the boy's parents and grandparents have tried, and failed, to forget:

Hauntings are, in their own way, very specific. Everything has to be exact, even the vaguenesses. My family's history was like that too. It came to me in bits, from people who rarely recognized all they had told. Some of the things I remember, I don't really remember. I've just been told about them so now I feel I remember them, and want to the more because it is so important for others to forget them. (32)

The boy explains that his curiosity about familial ghosts was born of others' desire to forget them, or in Gothic terms, the boy's parents and grandparents have attempted to make the familiar history of their family unfamiliar.

Deane populates his novel with Gothicized figures from Celtic folklore (heroic ghosts, malevolent fairies, and secret passages) and juxtaposes them with more realistic, psychological hauntings (faded memory, violent trauma, and torturous uncertainty) as a way of compounding myth and reality, past and present,

and domestic and social conflicts. In Deane's novel, the Gothic acts as a spectral genre in which temporalities, events, or peoples are enjambed as a way of placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past to show how confrontation with the past might attenuate malevolent haunting in the present.

Reading in the Dark, originally published on October 3, 1996 in the midst of a stalled peace process, questions failed and failing attempts to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland.⁽³³⁾ Deane uses domestic anxieties—such as the feared, anticipated, and much hated return of familial specters which threaten to completely unravel the narrator's already dysfunctional family—to illustrate the more far-reaching social anxieties in Northern Ireland: the feared, anticipated, and much hated return of sectarian violence. Written at a time in Northern Ireland when peace still seemed elusive, *Reading in the Dark* illustrates the maddening escalation of transgenerational religious and political intolerance.

The novel's pointed and metatextual use of the Gothic shows that putting an end to the Troubles does not necessitate abandoning the past. In fact, in *Reading in the Dark*, Deane adopts standard Gothic machinery—ghosts, dysfunctional families, psychological violence, revolutionary anxieties, and dangerous curiosity—to argue the opposite. He calls forth specters from Ireland's past troubles to put more recent violent political conflict on full display. Doing so seems to exorcise or resist patterns of ideologically influenced retribution that have historically led to psychological and physical violence within the nation. In Ireland, looking backwards often uncovers a clear pattern of retributive violence stemming from colonial trauma. The first step towards ending this tradition, Deane's novel suggests, is to invite ancestral voices to speak in the present, to preserve the voices so that they are not forgotten, and to translate them so that they can speak with a revised significance to end, rather than continue, Ireland's unproductive Troubles.

Over the course of the novel, the narrator works to learn his family's secrets in order to reconstruct the truth about his paternal uncle Eddie's disappearance. The narrator's maternal grandfather, mother, and father have all produced theories concerning Eddie's whereabouts. The father assumes his brother died a hero of the IRA; the narrator's grandfather claims he absconded to America. The family secret—known only to the narrator's grandfather, mother, and a man named Crazy Joe, is that the grandfather (a lieutenant in the IRA during the earlier Troubles) ordered Eddie's execution because the narrator's mother had (inaccurately) fingered him as a police informant. "And then she had married [Eddie's brother], closing herself in forever, haunted forever."⁽³⁴⁾ She has incarcerated herself in that most gothic of prisons, her mind.

In the novel's opening scene, "Stairs: February 1945," Deane introduces stock Gothic conventions in order to attune his readers to the way in which he will use spectral tropes throughout the novel. Traditionally, the Gothic has been employed to arouse a strong affective response of anxiety, fear, and recoil from its readers; Deane, however, uses it to intrigue, thereby metacritically calling attention to its use in the novel as a generic convention.

Reading in the Dark begins with the narrator's description of the staircase upon which he first learns that his house is haunted: "It was a short staircase, fourteen steps in all, covered in lino from which the original pattern had been polished away to the point where it had the look of a faint memory."⁽³⁵⁾ The boy's description of the faded linoleum upon the stairs as resembling a faint memory both calls attention to the frustration he encounters while trying to conjure the ghost and betrays his mother's anxiety over the fact that the ghost is actually her faint memory of Eddie, which she cannot escape.

The novel illustrates that nervous abhorrence of the past versus intense curiosity as to how that past continues to influence the present is the difference between perpetual animosity and the possibility of healing old wounds. This distinction is important because it suggests that a careful examination and revision of history is necessary to successfully recalibrate the present. Steven Bruhm maintains, “The Gothic’s basic investment in ravaging history and fragmenting the past meshes with our own investments now as we attempt to reinvent history as a way of healing the perpetual loss in modern existence.”(36) Such examinations of the past are particularly poignant in Northern Ireland where, for so long, established patterns of loyalty and animosity have caused more violence to erupt.

Deane casts Northern Ireland as a place echoing with the cries of the past, where the individual and political are delicately interwoven, and personal and national histories rely upon both folklore and the supernatural as a means of explaining trauma. He exploits the Gothic’s recurrent structural devices that include interrupted and incomplete narratives, not to reinforce these inherited gaps or secrets, but to illustrate their latent dangers. In a recent article, Daniel Ross contrasts *Reading in the Dark* with traditional Irish bildungsromans such as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “Deane’s story inverts the pattern that we have come to expect from the Irish bildungsroman, where the son rebels against the mother.”(37) In Joyce’s text Stephen Dedalus flees from his biological mother and mother Ireland. Rather than flee, the boy in *Reading in the Dark* attempts to heroically exorcize the family ghosts by calling on them to make their secrets known, thereby neutralizing their ability to terrorize. Ross, therefore, identifies Joyce and Deane as unsuccessful exorcists:

Joyce’s highly autobiographical fiction testifies to his unsuccessful attempt to bury his Dublin past—replete with all its quarrels with family and friends—forever. It is little wonder that Deane, on whom the Joycean influences are clear, uses a similar technique.(38)

While Ross correctly notes Joyce’s influence on Deane, their similarity, I argue, is not that they both attempt to bury Irish history, but that they call forth Ireland’s specters to put them on full display. Both *A Portrait* and *Reading in the Dark* illustrate that what allows historical specters to terrorize the present is not necessarily forgetting the past, but ignoring it. Ultimately, Deane’s focus upon one family’s obscured past implies that Ireland’s political history is similarly opaque. *Reading in the Dark* therefore suggests that actively conjuring the spectral past in order to come to terms with it—to divest the past of its ability to terrorize and to re-imagine the way individuals interact with domestic and political history by suggesting, via the boy’s curiosity, that haunting can be productive. Individuals can call upon the past not to reinforce or justify acts of retributive violence, but to condemn them. This aesthetic maneuver resists the ways in which politicians and militants have used history to justify their campaigns.

Deane’s most poignant warning against abandoning the past takes shape in the character of the boy’s mother at the novel’s conclusion. Deane returns us to the stairs—the site of the first haunting:

She took to the lobby window again. But she disliked anyone standing with her there to talk, most especially me. There she was with her ghosts. Now the haunting meant something new to me—now I had become the shadow.(39)

At this point, her son is the only person left that knows her secret, and his presence becomes the haunting reminder of what she has done. She goes mad with anticipation that the boy will tell her secret, that she is responsible for the execution of an innocent man (Eddie) and for the escape of an informant (McIlhenny). Her son, guardian of this secret, is asked to leave. She hopes that his absence will mean the absence of

this ghost in the lobby window. The novel, however, does not endorse this view. Rather, it suggests that confronting one's ghosts is the key to exorcizing them.

In 1959, when all the other holders of her secret have died or been locked in the asylum at Gransha, the boy asked his mother what she would like for her birthday: "'Just for that day,' she answered, 'just for that one day, the seventeenth of May, to forget everything. Or at least not to be reminded of it. Can you give me that?'"(40) He cannot, for as Derrida's theory of spectrality reminds us, "they are always *there*, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet."(41) The Gothic signals the specter's imminent return: "This, the thing ('this thing') will end up coming. The *revenant* is going to come."(42) How one responds to the specter, with curiosity or recoil, dictates whether the return is productive—as represented by the boy's curiosity and use of the past as a healing agent—or destructive—as represented by the mother's fear of the past and ultimate insanity.

Worrying Those Old Wounds

Seamus Deane again juxtaposes these two opposing responses to specters—curiosity and madness—in his most consciously Gothic episode of the novel: "Grianan, September 1950." The boy spends his summer holidays racing around and staging mock battles at the Grianan Aileach, a stone fortress in County Donegal that dates back to the rule of early Irish chieftains (c. 800 B.C.E.).(43) "Once," he reports, "my friends—Moran, Harkin, Toland—locked me in [its] secret passage." (44) The boy's description of the place, combined with his incarceration in a secret, haunted passage, depicts the Irish architectural past in Gothic terms:

Grianan was a great stone ring with flights of worn steps on the inside leading to a parapet that overlooked the countryside in one direction and the coastal sands of the lough in the other. At the base of one inside wall, there was a secret passage, tight and black as you crawled in and then briefly higher at the end where there was a wishing-chair of slabbed stone. You sat there and closed your eyes and wished for what you wanted most, while you listened for the breathing of the sleeping warriors of the legendary Fianna who lay below.(45)

According to the Fenian (or Ossianic) myth Cycle, Finn MacCool, King Cormac's bravest soldier, rose to mythological status along with his band of warriors—the Fianna. They are said to have possessed extraordinary skill in battle, including the supernatural ability to communicate with the Celtic otherworld. In modern Ireland, the most popular mythology surrounding the Fianna is that they lie below Ireland, ready to reawaken and defend the land in the hour of its greatest need—usually perceived as the final battle between Ireland and England. This myth remains particularly attractive to those who see the Northern Troubles as the result of continued British occupation and governance.

The Fianna myth reverses the Gothic theme of the dreaded return as well as the Gothic image of corruption beneath a desirable façade. Whereas the undead are typically thought of as malevolent creatures to be feared, Deane draws upon a myth that establishes spectral warriors as the heroic defenders of Ireland. However, in a double-reversal, Deane's narrator, who has already been identified as one who invites ghosts to haunt him, admits that he fears those heroic ghosts who are believed to fight on behalf of Ireland and its people:

They were waiting there for the person who would make that one wish that would rouse them from their thousand-year sleep to make final war on the English and drive them from our shores forever.... I was terrified that I might, by accident, make that special wish and feel the ground buckle under me and see the dead faces rise, indistinct behind their definite axes and spears.(46)

The boy's anxiety that he might accidentally summon the Fianna seems uncharacteristic; yet, this scene is juxtaposed with his earlier motivation for actively calling forth ancestral voices to haunt from beyond the grave. He conjures the dead, such as his uncle Eddie, to gain insight into his family's and Ireland's troubled histories. Here, though, he is terrified of accidentally conjuring the Fianna because he does not want to "worry those old [colonial] wounds." (47) Deane's narrator, incarcerated in this Gothic passageway, offers an alternate reading of the Fianna myth that imagines a dreaded return rather than a desired final battle between Ireland and England. (48) For him, the Fianna represent a retributive force that would perpetuate the cycle of violence in the North, not bring it to an end. On the other hand, he believes that the conjuration of Eddie's ghost would at least ease the tensions between him and his parents, if not between his mother and father. The boy's knowledge of his uncle's fate, however, estranges him from both parents. He observes, "Every time [my mother] saw me she felt exposed, even though I made it clear I would never say anything...staying loyal to my mother made me disloyal to my father." (49) The absence of Eddie's ghost terrorizes the entire family: the mother because she fears the truth that its return might deliver, the father because he does not know the truth about his brother's whereabouts, and the boy because he knows the truth but cannot speak it. The narrator's fear of being responsible for perpetrating the continuation of Troubles-related violence (by accidentally wishing for the Fianna to return) testifies to his motivation for seeking out ghosts earlier in the novel, which was to deny them the power to terrorize. In short, exorcising the specter of the Irish past in one context can stop cycles of violence; in another it can perpetuate them.

Aware of the psychological dangers of repressing history and its attendant specters, the boy performs a sort of exorcism inside the secret passage. He refuses the Fianna legend's efficacy by calling it to haunt him and subsequently exorcizing it by deconstructing the mythology of the legend. His action serves as a direct critique of those who try to ignore their specters, and who therefore suffer psychological trauma.

While locked in the underground passage, he does not try to block out the haunting sounds of the Fianna as might be expected. Rather, he sits in the wishing-chair concentrating on the emaciated ghost sounds within the passage:

I imagined I could hear the breathing of the sleeping Fianna waiting for the trumpet call that would bring them to life again to fight the last battle... If you concentrated even further, you would scent the herbal perfumes of the Druid spells and you would hear the women sighing in sexual pleasure—yes-esss-yes-esss.... I could hear the wind, or maybe it was the far-off sea. That was the breathing Fianna. I could smell the heather and the gorse tinting the air; that was the Druid spells. I could hear the underground waters whispering; that was the women sighing. (50)

The boy conflates past myth and present reality by recognizing that the haunting sound of the breathing Fianna is also the wind, or perhaps the waves echoing in the underground passage; the perfumes are both the lingering presence of a supernatural spell, and the heather and gorse growing in the ground just above him; the sighing women are simultaneously the whispering waters of underground creeks. Like a palimpsest, two paintings on one canvas, the Gothic (this spectral genre) brings together two modalities and two temporalities in one moment—the myth is made real; the past is made present. The narrator instructs readers how to recognize, and perhaps more importantly how to accept, radical heterogeneity. (51)

Reading in the Dark suggests, therefore, that competing narratives always occupy the same space. Another example of this can be found in the "Reading in the Dark" chapter, which opens with an allusion

to James Murphy's *The Shan Van Vocht: A Story of the United Irishmen* (1889). Its green cover signals Irish heritage; the boy's mother's maiden name penned on the flyleaf signals domestic tradition. The two coalesce in the physical object of the book about Old Mother Ireland who calls for the men of the nation to fight for independence during the 1798 rebellion. Here Deane not only brings together social and domestic spheres (national troubles and familial troubles), but he also disrupts temporal boundaries by equating past failed rebellions with the current Troubles (1798, 1916, and 1966-1998).

Deane's novel does more than simply dramatize Northern Ireland's traumatic experience. By bringing the history of Celtic mythology into the historical space of the Northern Irish Troubles, the Grianan episode invites multiple competing and seemingly discordant narratives to co-exist.⁽⁵²⁾ This seems to be Deane's explicit argument that multiple political narratives must tolerate one another, for he refuses to enter the recurring debate about what constitutes the 'true' Irish national character because he rejects the notion that such a character exists. The novel's use of the Gothic return can be read as a critique of repetitive acts of violence aimed at defining Irishness. The return—of Eddie, of the Fianna, of the Troubles—is feared because these specters bring with them threats of intense psychological and physical violence. Deane puts the consequences of haunting on full display to argue for a new way of encountering the past. In the Grianan episode, Deane explores the possibility of pardoning those who do us wrong. He depicts the boy's incarceration, symbolic of constraining transgenerational violence, as a prank that does not require revenge: "Eventually, someone came and rolled the stone back and I scrambled out into the sunshine, dazed by the light, unsteady when I walked, as though all my blood had collected around my ankles."⁽⁵³⁾ He does not seek retribution; he simply rejoins the races and mock battles. The boy's willingness to call Ireland's ghosts into full view empowers him to deny their ability to haunt, thereby symbolically challenging the pattern of transgenerational violence into which he was born.

Deane then illustrates that by ignoring the past one inherits its specters. On their way home from Grianan, the boys encounter "water rats," which one of the friends, Brendan Moran, explains is the "nickname given to customs officers." The narrator then relates a story told to him by his father about a customs official who was also imprisoned in Grianan's haunted passageway. This incarceration, however, was not a joke among friends, but a violent political act—and as a result of the trauma, the official goes mad:

My father told me the smugglers caught [a customs officer] one night near Grianan and they took his customs jacket off, tied him up and closed him inside the passage. It was nearly two days before they found him, and he was stark, staring mad when they got him out. He's still in the asylum at Gransha and they say he's always cold; never warmed up since. Never will.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The customs official represents an older generation who, the novel suggests, typically ignores the repercussions of these repeated acts of violence, and is therefore driven mad by his incarceration. The boy reports, "He's always cold; never warmed up. Never will."⁽⁵⁵⁾ By first introducing us to the gothic passage through the eyes of the curious young boy, however, our experience is shaped by the boy's composure throughout a potentially maddening situation. And by inviting the ghosts within the passage to haunt, thereby denying them the ability to terrorize, the boy avoids common psychological trauma associated with Troubles violence.

The customs official's misery mirrors that of the boy's mother. Haunted by the knowledge that her husband's brother was mistakenly executed as an informant on the orders of her own father, this woman's guilt is illustrative of political conflict contaminating domestic space. The incident at Grianan serves as another example of political treachery that has been passed down unchecked through generations. The mistrust of public officials has been a recurring theme in Irish history, reaching back to the nationalist

hatred for fellow Irishmen who enlisted in the British Army during World War I, and who worked in the British run police force (Royal Irish Constabulary, RIC) after the war. The families of those who took jobs in the RIC have not been trusted since, never will.

The repetition of the word ‘never’ is at odds with the Fianna myth’s claim to an imminent “last battle” and “final war”: it insinuates Ireland’s continual subordination to England. Throughout the novel, only the narrator gives welcome to both familial and political pasts to haunt him; he actively seeks them out in order to make sense of them in relation to one another, and therefore is the only character in the novel that is able to reconcile the personal with the political.(56) The others—his family members, police officers, and clergy—refuse to let go of centuries old political and religious divisions that have become integral to their sense of Irishness. In actuality, Deane clearly warns against abandoning personal identity for political cooperation. His novel illustrates that the anxiety about adopting new identities is actually what perpetuates the conflict. Neither side wants to recalibrate their ideals of Irishness. *Reading in the Dark* suggests that this is in fact not the way to end the Troubles; in a *Fortnight* interview Deane insists, “[If we] forget the past, [we will] forget Ireland.”(57) Deane, therefore, draws upon spectral qualities of the Gothic that are indicative of productive (or didactic) haunting: haunting that suggests a non-violent, if still conflicted, response to acts of terror. His reversal of a repetitive aesthetic strategy—the Gothic return—counteracts common justification for continued violence in Northern Ireland.

No Bones: Ma’s Fighting Rules

Anna Burns’s debut novel, *No Bones*, combines the psychological terror and neuroses that Seamus Deane exploits in *Reading in the Dark* with the more sensational machinery on display in earlier Gothic novels such as *Dracula*: terrifying wilderness, extreme psychosis resulting in unstable narrative time and space, and graphic sexual aggression.(58) Like Deane’s eerie rural Derry, where the ghosts of executed IRA informants and the legendary Fianna continue to haunt the living, Burns transforms her native Belfast into a Gothic nightmare narrated (in part) by Amelia Lovett.(59) Chronologically, Burns’s novel begins where *Reading in the Dark* leaves off (at the “beginning” of the Troubles in Northern Ireland), and follows a similar coming-of-age structure that charts the maturation of Amelia from the age of seven in 1969 to the age of thirty-two in 1994. Over the course of twenty-five years, Amelia’s best friend is blown up by a car bomb, her sister commits suicide, and she is nearly the victim of an incestuous rape. By internalizing the violence experienced in Belfast’s Catholic neighborhood of Ardoyne, Amelia suffers severe anorexia and alcoholism, and finally a complete mental breakdown resulting in confinement at a London insane asylum. The novel, divided into twenty-three interrupted and incomplete episodes told through the eyes of multiple confused narrators, mirrors Amelia’s psychosis.

Burns’s use of the Gothic return highlights an ever-present historical narrative that is continuously written over by increasingly violent acts, thereby creating a culture of revenge in which the past manifests in the present. Burns’ protagonists metatextually recognize elements of the gothic in their surrounding, and are therefore able to undermine and reverse typical ‘revenge’ plots by exposing the machinery that produces unending acts of retribution. *No Bones* illustrates just how all-encompassing and internalized vengeance has become in Northern Ireland. Judith Grossman observes, “The driving force of *No Bones* is a passionate indictment of the decades-long rule of sociopathic killers in Belfast’s neighborhoods, and of the deluded families willing to pitch child after child into that deadly arena.”(60) This culture of revenge in Northern Ireland, which *No Bones* works to overturn, becomes particularly clear in an early chapter titled “Somethin’ Political” in which Amelia outlines her mother’s fighting rules: “Rule Number One: (a) Don’t start fights. (b) If someone else starts them, get stuck in, for you’ve got to save face no matter what. ... Rule Number Two: Never run away.”(61) Thus, as Margot Backus observes of Glenn Patterson’s

Burning Your Own (1988), *No Bones* is a novel that “explores the position of children within a transgenerational familial and national system that appropriates them into a priori patterns of loyalty and animosity.”(62) Children in the novel are made to suffer the consequences of their ancestors’ actions, a particularly Gothic plot device. Amelia and her siblings are ordered to “get stuck in” the cycle of sectarian violence. Both of Amelia’s older siblings—her brother, Mick, a PIRA operative, and her older sister, Lizzie, who solves every conflict with her fists—“very much resembled her parents, at least as they used to be, before they’d become useless and afraid.”(63) Amelia, on the other hand, refuses her role in the recurring drama.

In a narrative shift similar to that executed by Seamus Deane in *Reading in the Dark*, Burns’s use of the Gothic rejects firmly established patterns of Ireland’s historical unrest. She suggests an alternative way of dealing with the persistent call for retribution by placing Amelia at odds with familial ideology. Amelia questions Rule Number Two’s promotion of recurrent acts of retributive violence at any cost: “I just couldn’t come to grips with that Rule Number Two at all. It seemed to me there was something terribly wrong with it.”(64) Her mother admits, “It may not be much but when you’ve been murdered, and you will be, you’ll at least have done your best and you won’t have run away.”(65) But Amelia insists, “Grown-ups never understood. They were stupid, distracted, mindless sorts of beings. They never had a clue. They always got it wrong.”(66) Amelia attempts to break this transgenerational system of loyalty and animosity by simply ignoring the conflict around her.

Amelia’s refusal to participate in the conflict, however, initially results in psychotic fragmentation: Amelia experiences a mental breakdown that bifurcates her into what she refers to as “dual realities”—she simultaneously exists in Belfast and in London, in the past and in the present.(67) She refuses to be sacrificed to a transgenerational pattern of violence that would, at the very least, effectively kill her capacity to think and act independently. While Amelia successfully retreats from the physical dangers of numerous schoolyard and workplace riots, and later escapes from Ardoyne to Camden Town, she eventually goes mad. Her attempt to ignore the external political madness of troubled Belfast causes the physical violence from the streets to manifest as psychological violence.

Burns’s most direct commentary on the extreme states of mental disturbance caused by the inescapable recurring violence in Northern Ireland, and her clearest articulation of what she thinks will end Troubles-related psychosis, comes in two later chapters (“Triggers, 1991” and “No Bones, 1991-1992”) in which she draws heavily upon the Gothic to narrate the spectral return of two ghosts from Amelia’s past: her childhood friend Roberta, who was killed by a car bomb in 1975, and her sister, Lizzie, who committed suicide in 1989.

A Sad Tune. Repetitive

No Bones reinforces the popular assumption that Ireland is a place of recurrent traumas, a “strange country”(68) where “the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere ‘modernity’ cannot kill.”(69) The Troubles, after all, continuously (re)appear as a series of violent events, which serve as justifications for more violence. We can thus think of Burns’s use of the Gothic as a means of critiquing the unwillingness to challenge seemingly irrepressible forces from the past that continue to tyrannize the present; however, Amelia Lovett does offer a challenge of sorts—she escapes to London. Like the mother in Deane’s *Reading in the Dark*, Amelia hopes to ignore her past, and as a result suffers a mental breakdown. The specters from her Belfast past cross the Irish Sea as easily as they transgress temporal and metaphysical borders:

She was having dual realities again, right here in front of her. As well as being in Camden Town in London, she was also on Belfast's Crumlin Road. ... Something else was starting to bother her. It turned out to be Roberta McKeown who, at that moment, was walking by. Roberta shouldn't have been walking by and Amelia had no business to be seeing her, for Roberta'd been blown up by a car bomb in 1975. 'That can't be Roberta,' said Amelia, knowing it for a fact because she remembered that she'd forgotten, deliberately, to go to Roberta's funeral. After all, just how many funerals was one expected to attend?(70)

Here, Burns illustrates the danger of "looking the other way," by exposing her protagonist to the Gothic's "unwanted return." The return of Roberta's specter, in other words, is caused by Amelia's refusal to attend the funeral, or to even acknowledge the violent death of her friend at all. Therefore, Amelia, though not physically present in Belfast, is still mentally imprisoned there: haunted. She cannot escape from its terrifying atmosphere.

There seems to be multiple meanings for Roberta's return: personal, national, and transnational. Burns reminds her readers, via Amelia's haunting, that sectarian violence in Belfast was not restricted to Northern Ireland. In this passage, Burns equates 1975 Belfast with London in 1991, where the IRA detonated explosives on five different occasions.(71) At the time *No Bones* was published the violence had largely ended, yet the novel asks us to recognize that the legacy of the Troubles cannot simply be left behind. Amelia announces that she deliberately forgets to attend Roberta's funeral, insinuating that any life taken in the conflict was not martyred but squandered. *No Bones* implies that the victims of the Troubles want their deaths to be productive, not fruitless. To be productive, individuals such as Amelia will have to look at their ghosts and reflect on what has happened. As we will see, the ghosts in *No Bones* are not there to terrorize; they come back to warn against the dangers of continual acts of retribution.

Burns keys in on the Gothic mechanics of inheritance in which families sacrifice their children to the transgenerational conflict. Amelia recalls with horror the expectation (at both the familial and the national levels) that she become responsible for the "sins of her father." (72) The climax of her breakdown in a public shopping center in Camden Town is triggered by the presence of children:

Amelia panicked when she heard them. The sound of children was like the sound of terrorists. She hadn't known there were children and she knew that this was the time, if ever there was one, to run. Her brain and her nervous system, her heart, couldn't cope with children. They were the ones who became the adults and she slipped into powerless frightened childhood every time.(73)

Amelia is frozen with horror. It is at this moment in the novel that she realizes—despite being insane—that "she could never get away." (74) All of her defense mechanisms (alcohol, anorexia, sex, humor, and emigration) have failed to help her escape the Troubles' consuming system of compulsory violence, provoking the questions, "How could she fall to her knees? How could she surrender?" (75) The answer comes in the following chapter while Amelia is heavily drugged in a London asylum, and all of her ghosts come back to her.

Until this moment in the novel, Amelia is a character who orders ghosts away, or at least tries to do so. Here, Amelia begins the process of calling those ghosts back to her:

It was crowded. They were all in here with her, including her parents and her brother and all the others she had forgotten. Lizzie said, 'Ye've got to get it into your head Amelia. We can't do it all y'know. *We didn't come back to get you. You came back to get us.*' (76)

The realization that she requested her haunting cures Amelia of her psychosis. She awakes from the nightmares permanently, and in the novel's concluding chapters, "Safe House," and "A Peace Process," goes on to lead a relatively normal life. In both chapters, title and content are decidedly more optimistic, implying progress toward individual and national recovery. Amelia's regained sanity suggests that recovery from those 'old wounds' is dependent upon welcoming spirits of the dispossessed who have returned to argue, in words that echo historian Jonathan Stevenson, that "Northern Ireland needs to make room for the inevitable unforgiving,"(77) for "even without contrition, ceasefires are welcome."(78)

Burns uses the Gothic specter, specifically designed to rouse curiosity even as it terrifies, as a tool for grappling with larger questions of what it means to be a child of the Troubles: Is there a more treacherous and ambivalent virtue than that of inherited loyalty? This idea of loyalty underscores the larger issue of unending retributive acts of violence. Amelia breaks this cycle by re-imagining the way individuals interact with domestic and political tradition. She suggests, via her conjuration of Roberta and Lizzie, that haunting can be productive. Individuals can call upon the past not to reinforce or justify acts of retributive violence, but to condemn them. It is only after she confronts her specters and returns to Belfast that Amelia successfully removes herself from the conflict, and therefore regains her sanity. As I observed with reference to the narrator in *Reading in the Dark*, individuals are only ever terrorized by their own willingness to grant authority to that which haunts. Amelia realizes this, and refuses to grant her specters the authority to frighten her. Rather, she invites them to communicate with her. Central to Burns's challenge of the Gothic motif of involuntary recurrence, then, is the idea of invitation.

Conclusion

Literary historian Jim Hansen recently observed, "Literary genres participate in confronting and negating certain sociohistorical problems and, to some degree, in preserving those very problems in and for subsequent contexts."(79) This seems to be particularly evident in the genres artists manipulate in addressing the problems of Northern Ireland, including Deane and Burns, who turn to the Gothic to narrate the Troubles. Both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* take up and reverse a repetitive aesthetic strategy—the Gothic return—used, within political and social discourse by nationalists and loyalists alike, to justify violence in Ireland. Both novels argue for a new rhetoric of the past-haunted-present, one to be embraced, even called forth, rather than feared.

Recognizing Gothic tropes in contemporary Irish historical fiction can, at the minimum, sharpen one's reading of these works. The gothic provides us with both the theoretical framework and precise language for discussing Ireland's historical ghosts, and for placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Moreover, the Gothic points us to sites of imaginative reinvention of Ireland's historical narrative and cultural myths, giving iconic historical events new social meaning in the present. Such reinvention offers us insight into the psychology of contemporary Ireland more than it answers longstanding questions about complex historical events.

Gothic, as a theoretical lens, can also heighten our awareness of re-emergent cultural factors (colonial trauma, gender and sexual discrimination, political insularity) that originally led to the Irish artist's dual aesthetic and political identity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and give us a glimpse into how contemporary Irish writers use fiction to respond to the longstanding identification of the Irish artist as politically vested. Both *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* highlight the reciprocity between historical events and literary discourse to influence the complex ways in which Ireland is remembered, and therefore suggest a need for greater political tolerance in the future.

The casualties of the Troubles continue to haunt, and both novels explore productive ways of interacting with those specters. For as Carla Freccero maintains, “The goal of spectral thinking is [...] not to immure, but to allow to return, to be visited by a demand, a demand to mourn and a demand to organize.”(80) *Reading in the Dark* and *No Bones* offer a model of spectral thinking, a model for productively coming to terms with the consequences of the Troubles, as well as providing a lens through which to examine recurrent sociohistorical problems in Northern Ireland without prompting yet another cycle of violence. Ultimately, both novels illustrate how Ireland’s competing histories might be used in collaboration to re-inscribe the intricacies and contradictions and tragedies of the Irish national narrative that have been falsified and oversimplified by ideologically motivated historical writing, and challenge the reliability of any narrative (historical or fictional), which assumes authority.

1. Jefferey Glenn, "Surviving the Troubles: A View from the Suburbs" in *Children of 'The Troubles': Our Lives in the Crossfire of Northern Ireland*. Ed. Laurel Holliday (New York: Pocket Books, 1997), p. 79.
2. Ibid., p. 78.
3. Ibid., p. 80.
4. Ibid., p. 84.
5. Siobhán Kilfeather, "Terrific Register: The Gothicization of Atrocity in Irish Romanticism." *boundary 2* 31.1 (2004). p. 53.
6. Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism, and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830* (South Bend: U of Notre Dame P, 1996), p. 37.
7. Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1999), p. 243-44.
8. Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* is traditionally read as a neo-Gothic novel. In this article, I will offer further evidence in support of such readings, and introduce Anna Burns's *No Bones* as yet another example of the Irish Gothic revived.
9. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. 1993. Trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), p. 123.
10. Kelly Hurley, "British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p.194.
11. See, Richard Haslam, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 2 (2007) for an exhaustive list of Gothic conventions, themes, and narrative devices which he has collected from studies ranging from the rise in Gothic criticism during the 1970s through the present.
12. Jean Paul Riquelme "Toward a history of Gothic and Modernism: Dark Modernity from Bram Stoker to Samuel Beckett." *Modern Fiction Studies* 46.2 (2000), p. 586.
13. Chris Baldick, "Introduction" in *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Robert Maturin. Ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), p. ix.
14. David Punter, "Scottish and Irish Gothic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 123.
15. Ibid., p. 123.
16. Riquelme, "History of Gothic and Modernism," p. 588.
17. Bruce Stewart, "Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: Possessed by the Spirit of the Nation?" *Irish University Review* 29.2 (1999). p. 255.
18. Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" in *Dracula*. Ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 465.
19. The Pale was originally the fenced-in territory established around Dublin by the invading English in the medieval period, a border between English civilization and Celtic foreignness. In later usage, the phrase, "beyond the pale" came to have a purely metaphoric meaning—to stand outside the conventional boundaries of law, behavior, or social class.
20. Kilfeather, "Terrific Register," p. 71.
21. Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 180.
22. Ibid., p. 180.
23. Bram Stoker, *Dracula*. Ed. Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 41.
24. Riquelme, "History of Gothic and Modernism," p. 588.
25. The official beginning to the Troubles in Northern Ireland varies from historian to historian, but is traditionally accepted to be between 1966 and 1969.
26. Jonathan Stevenson, 'We Wrecked the Place': *Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 7.

27. Thomas Flanagan, *There You Are: Writings on Irish and American Literature and History*. Ed. Christopher Cahill (New York: New York Review Books, 2004), p. 444.
28. Nationalist historians tend to color the Troubles as the revived fight for Ireland's moral right to a thirty-two county sovereignty. This argument is laid out by historians and cultural theorists such as Desmond Fennell (*The State of the Nation: Ireland Since the Sixties* [1983]), Eamonn McCann (*McCann: War and Peace in Northern Ireland* [1998]), Tim Pat Coogan (*The Troubles* [2002]), and Peter Beresford Ellis (*Eyewitness to Irish History* [2004]). On the other hand, Revisionist accounts of the re-emergent violence in the North typically argue for Northern Ireland's justified struggle to retain union with the British commonwealth: Roy Foster's *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (1993), Garret Fitzgerald's *Towards a New Ireland* (1972), Conor Cruise O'Brien's *States of Ireland* (1974), Claire O'Halloran's *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism: An Ideology Under Stress* (1987), and Ruth Dudley Edwards's *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (2006).
29. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 221.
30. Anne Devlin, *The Long March. Ourselves Alone, with A Woman Calling and The Long March* (London: Faber, 1986), p. 155. The long march to which Walsh refers is the Belfast-Derry march that began on Wednesday January 1, 1969. According to reports, "Approximately 40 members of People's Democracy (PD) began a four-day march from Belfast across Northern Ireland to Derry. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and some nationalists in Derry had advised against the march. The march was modeled on Martin Luther King's Selma to Montgomery march. The first day involved a walk from Belfast to Antrim. [Over the next four days the number of people on the march grew to a few hundred. The march was confronted and attacked by Loyalist crowds on a number of occasions the most serious attack occurring on 4 January 1969.]" (Melaugh).
31. Sigmund Freud argues that the 'uncanny' evokes fear from individuals who are confronted by a repressed memory—in this case, memory of revolution. He writes, "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124), but has become (through repression) unfamiliarly horrifying. Revolution in Ireland evokes feelings of home and normalcy, while simultaneously illustrating that home has changed utterly, bringing with it a sense of uncertainty.
32. Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (New York: Vintage, 1996), p. 236-7.
33. The first IRA ceasefire of August 31, 1994 had ended on February 9, 1996 when the PIRA exploded a bomb in the London Docklands killing two and injuring forty people. The second, and permanent, ceasefire would not take place until July 19, 1997. At the time of the novel's publication, then, no one could be sure if the peace process had failed, and even with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998 and complete IRA disarmament on October 23, 2001, peace is still precarious. In the epilogue to his study of the Northern Irish peace process, *A Secret History of the IRA*, Irish journalist Ed Moloney observes, "After nineteen years of difficult, secret, and often dangerous diplomacy, Northern Ireland had finally arrived at a sort of peace. A new government, fairer than anything that had preceded it, was striving to make its roots grow, and Northern Ireland's deeply divided population was struggling to come to terms with a new political order, one in which each side had been obliged to abandon some strongly held beliefs in return for a chance at building stability (emphasis added, 492)."
34. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 242.
35. Ibid., p. 3.
36. Steven Bruhm, "Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 274.
37. Daniel Ross, "Oedipus in Derry: Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*." *New Hibernia Review* 11.1 (2007), p. 25.
38. Ibid., p. 26.
39. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 28.

40. Ibid., p. 235.
41. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 221.
42. Ibid., p. 4.
43. The original fortress was destroyed in 1101 by Muirchertach Ua Briain, then King of Munster, and was reconstructed in 1878 by Dr. Walter Bernard (Linke).
44. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 57.
45. Ibid., p. 56.
46. Ibid., p. 56.
47. Whelan *The Tree of Liberty*; Backus *Gothic Family Romance*
48. St. Columcille's prophecy foretells that the band of warriors would rise again to wage "the final war on the English" (Deane, *Strange Country* 56), "after which the one remaining English ship would sail out of Lough Foyle and away from Ireland forever" (Deane, *Strange Country* 57).
49. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, pp. 234-36.
50. Ibid., pp. 57-8.
51. Gothic critic Steven Bruhm maintains, We need [the Gothic] because the twentieth century has so forcefully taken away from us that which we once thought constituted us—a coherent psyche, a social order to which we can pledge allegiance in good faith, a sense of justice in the universe—and that wrenching withdrawal, that traumatic experience, is vividly dramatized in the Gothic. (273)
52. According to Peter Mahon, The reader-narrator of Deane's text stakes out a site where a non-hierarchical framework or system of incomplete narratives can flourish because no story has the ability to cancel out any other, and it is this site that marks the text's main contribution to the debate on the political situation in Northern Ireland. (118)
53. Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, p. 58.
54. Ibid., pp. 58-9.
55. Ibid., p. 59.
56. "Give it welcome" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.v. 164).
57. Carol Rumens, "Reading Deane." *Fortnight* July/August (1997), p. 30.
58. Anna Burns was born in Belfast in 1962 and moved to the Notting Hill district of London in 1987. *No Bones* is her first novel, and was shortlisted for the 2002 Orange Prize, which is awarded annually to a female author for the best original English language novel published in the United Kingdom.
59. The name Amelia Lovett calls to mind the fifteen-year-old Ann Lovett, who hid her pregnancy and died giving birth alone in a grotto for the Virgin Mary in 1984. Burns relies on this story, in which personal tragedy became national scandal, to suggest Amelia suffers similar horrors.
60. Judith Grossman. Rev. *No Bones*, by Anna Burns. *The Women's Review of Books* 20.1 (2002), p. 10.
61. Anna Burns, *No Bones* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), pp. 99-100.
62. Backus, *Gothic Family Romance*, p. 2.
63. Burns, *No Bones*, p. 148.
64. Ibid., p. 100.
65. Ibid., p. 100.
66. Ibid., p. 63.
67. Ibid., p. 284.
68. Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
69. Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 41.
70. Burns, *No Bones*, pp. 284-5.
71. February 7, at 10 Dowling Street; February 18, at Victorian Station; December 14, at a shopping center; December 15, at the National Gallery; December 16, at a railway line in South London.

72. This phrase is often used to represent the transgenerational nature of the Troubles. See, for instance, Jonathan Stevenson's introduction to *'We Wrecked the Place': Contemplating an End to the Northern Irish Troubles*. See also the 1998 film by Jim Sheridan, *In the Name of the Father*, in which the title refers both to the religious context of the Troubles, and also to the pattern of violence inherited by the main protagonist from his biological father.

73. Burns, *No Bones*, pp. 288-9.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 315, emphasis added.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

79. Jim Hansen, *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 7.

80. Carla Freccero, "Queer Spectrality: Haunting the Past" in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*. Ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2007), p. 196.

Survival Horrality: Analysis of a Videogame Genre (1)

Ewan Kirkland

Introduction

The title of this article is drawn from Philip Brophy's 1983 essay which coins the neologism 'horrality', a merging of horror, textuality, morality and hilarity. Like Brophy's original did of 1980s horror cinema, this article examines characteristics of survival horror videogames, seeking to illustrate the relationship between 'new' (media) horror and 'old' (media) horror. Brophy's term structures this investigation around key issues and aspects of survival horror videogames. *Horror* relates to generic parallels with similarly-labelled film and literature, including gothic fiction, American horror cinema and traditional Japanese culture. *Textuality* examines the aesthetic qualities of survival horror, including the games' use of narrative, their visual design and structuring of virtual spaces. *Morality* explores the genre's ideological characteristics, the nature of survival horror violence, the familial politics of these texts, and their reflection on issues of institutional and bodily control. *Hilarity* refers to moments of humour and self reflexivity, leading to consideration of survival horror's preoccupation with issues of vision, identification, and the nature of the videogame medium.

'Survival horror' as a game category is unusual for its prominence within videogame scholarship. Indicative of the amorphous nature of popular genres, Aphra Kerr notes: 'game genres are poorly defined and evolve as new technologies and fashions emerge';(2) an observation which applied as much to videogame academia as to the videogame industry. Within studies of the medium, various game types are commonly listed. These might include the shoot-'em-up, the racing game, the platform game, the God game, the real-time strategy game, and the puzzle game,(3) the simulation, role-playing, fighting/action, sports, traditional and "'edutainment'" game,(4) or action, adventure, strategy and 'process-orientated' games.(5) These clusters of game types tend to be broad, commonsensical, and under-theorized. In contrast, 'survival horror' seems to mean something quite specific for critics and game academics alike. All videogames, from *Tetris* to *Tomb Raider*, entail some form of *survival*, but the explicit use of the noun implies a fraught desperation of play involving 'surviving rather than thriving'.(6) Survival horror is also a particular kind of *horror* experience. The presence of supernatural or monstrous iconography such as vampires, zombies, haunted houses, gothic castles and demon slayers might make a game horror – as in the *House of the Dead* series, *Doom* franchise or many *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spin-offs – but *survival* horror involves the transformation of these characters and characteristics in the service of a particular form of gameplay. Game genres incorporate not only what digital texts look and sound like or the narratives they contain, but also, and here theories of genre drawn from traditional media cannot account for the specificities of the videogame form, how they play.

The lack of historical accounts of game genres, particularly horror, is observed by Carl Therrien,(7) yet survival horror is notable for the range of scholarly definitions available, many illustrating the ways visual iconography and gameplay combine to produce a particular participatory horror experience. Bernard Perron distinguishes between the plot level in which 'the hero/heroine investigates a hostile environment where he/she will be trapped... in order either to uncover the causes of strange and horrible events... or to find and rescue a loved one from an evil force', and the genre's gameplay dimensions where 'in a third-person perspective, the gamer has to find clues, gather objects... and solve puzzles.'(8) My own definition, in which 'a typically average character navigates a maze-like landscape, solving puzzles and fighting off monsters with limited ammunition, energy and means of replenishing it'(9) highlights both

the unremarkable nature of survival horror protagonists, and the resource-managing play qualities which make survival such a frantic experience. Matt Fox's videogame guide entry for *Alone in the Dark* (Infogames, 1992) emphasizes audiovisual aspects: 'cinematic camera angles... minimalistic sound effects... 3D items and characters set against hand-drawn 2D backgrounds, and zombies, lots and lots of zombies.' Fox also notes the unchanging structuring narrative situation of the genre. From its (disputable) advent in the early 1990s PC game, the basic premise remains: '... you're trapped in a mansion... or a small town... you're surrounded by horror, and you've got to survive'.⁽¹⁰⁾ In a recent overview of videogame studies, Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al succinctly define survival horror as games in which: 'the player controls a character who has to get out of some enclosed place solving puzzles and destroying horrific monsters along the way',⁽¹¹⁾ indicating the extent to which the genre has achieved canonical coherence and recognition within the emerging field of videogame scholarship.

The history of survival horror begins either with the text adventure game *Hunt the Wumpus* (Yorb, 1972) on 1970s home computers,⁽¹²⁾ with the Atari 2600's *Haunted House* (1982) or the Famicom's *Sweet Home* (Capcom, 1989) according to popular game websites,⁽¹³⁾ or with *Alone in the Dark* on the PC as both Fox⁽¹⁴⁾ and Jason Whittaker⁽¹⁵⁾ suggest. Yet the term itself was first coined in the original 1996 *Resident Evil* (Capcom), opening with the text: 'Welcome to the world of survival horror'. Since then the title has been retrospectively applied to games predating Capcom's classic, and attributed by reviewers and academics to subsequent games and series. At the level of production and promotion, given the disadvantages in employing too-specific labels to their products, many games subtly weave the words 'survival' and 'horror' into their cover blurbs as a means of signalling their association with the genre. As Tanya Krzywinska observes, *Resident Evil 2*'s (Capcom, 1998) cover challenges player with the question – "Can you *survive* the horror?"⁽¹⁶⁾ Similar discursive signposts appear in *The Thing*'s (Konami, 2002) advice that players maintain control of their military team and 'you might just *survive*', *Clock Tower 3*'s (Capcom, 2003) question 'Can Alyssa *survive* the horror before the clock strikes midnight?' or *Silent Hill 3*'s (Konami, 2003) claim that Heather 'has nothing to do but *survive*', references to the protagonists of *Forbidden Siren* (SCE, 2004) having to 'rely on instinct and fight to *survive*', and *Haunting Ground*'s (Capcom, 2005) assertion that flight and tactics are Fiona's 'only hope for *survival*' on their respective box covers (emphasis mine in all cases). *ObsCure*'s (DreamCatcher Interactive, 2004) claim – 'Survival horror hits the high school' – represents a rare example where the genre is explicitly referenced, here to indicate the unique selling point of the game's location, while the labelling of *Resident Evil 4* (Capcom, 2005) as 'new survival action' followed by the repost, 'Forget "survival horror", this is Resident Evil redefined', indicates the generic change of direction taken by this instalment, noted by many commentators.

As Tanya Krzywinska observes, there are many ways in which horror games are informed by horror cinema.⁽¹⁷⁾ Andrew Weise considers games like *Clock Tower* (Human Entertainment, 1995), *Resident Evil* and *Dead Rising* (Capcom, 2006), as videogame adaptations of stalker and zombie movies;⁽¹⁸⁾ while Laurie N. Taylor discusses survival horror's close relationship to gothic literature.⁽¹⁹⁾ Although this article also situates such digital texts in relation to traditional horror, as Susana Pajares Tosca asserts in her study of *Resident Evil: Code Veronica X* (Capcom, 2000), computer and videogames cannot necessarily be understood by simply mapping theoretical frameworks developed to explain other media formations.⁽²⁰⁾ Accordingly, Weise draws upon the language of videogame simulation⁽²¹⁾ and procedural rhetoric ⁽²²⁾ in arguing that *Resident Evil* reproduces not only the aesthetics of zombie cinema, but more specifically models the experience of being subject to zombie invasion; Taylor's 'ludic gothic' incorporates gameplay characteristics, such as counter-intuitive controls and preferred strategies of flight over combat; while for Krzywinska horror in horror videogames is all about withdrawal of player control. The audiovisual elements characterising the survival horror genre, the multiple media forms

through which its textual surface is constructed, its engagement with political and ideological issues, and the ways survival horror games self consciously comment on their own nature cannot be divorced from the videogame medium in which survival horror is located.

Horror

Like the films Brophy describes, survival horror might be considered a genre ‘whose primary aim ... is to generate suspense, shock and horror’, founded on experiences of ‘tension, fear, anxiety, sadism and masochism’, the pleasure of which is ‘getting the shit scared out of you – and loving it’.(23) In terms of narrative, settings, images, characters and player challenges, survival horror games draw upon familiar generic staples. The *Silent Hill* series takes place in a mist shrouded ghost town, while the many adversaries encountered by *Haunting Ground*’s heroine include a massive but dim-witted hunchback, a beautiful but insane cyborg woman, and an evil alchemist driven by the desire for eternal life. The streets of *Silent Hill* are named after horror and suspense writers like Bloch Koontz and Eldrich; the library of *Eternal Darkness: Sanity’s Requiem* (Nintendo, 2002) is full of Poe, Lovecraft and Blake; while *The Thing* is directly based on the Carpenter’s 1982 body horror classic. The presence of chain saws, shotguns and flame throwers throughout these games recognize the contemporary horror hero’s arsenal, although more traditional holy water, herbs and magically-endowed weapons may also feature. As well as western horror, many of these Japanese games reflect elements of Japanese horror cinema, together with more traditional Japanese culture. Ruth Goldberg writes of the ‘*bukimi-na haha-mono*’ or “‘Uncanny Mother” film’, a cycle which features ‘the nightmare mother who has a special link to madness or the supernatural’.(24) This figure is clearly evident in Dahlia Gillespie, leader of the cult of *Silent Hill* who tries to burn her own daughter, Alessa Gillespie, to death, and Alessa herself, an arcane mother figure straight from the pages of Barbara Creed’s *The Monstrous Feminine*.(25)

Various reasons suggest an affinity between the horror genre and the videogame. Brophy underlines the low cultural status of a genre concerned with ‘engaging the reader in a dialogue of textual manipulation that has no time for the critical ordinances of social realism, cultural enlightenment or emotional humanism’.(26) Such is the common perspective on the videogame medium. As James Newman(27) emphasizes in the opening chapter to his recent book, the medium shares horror genre associations with juvenilia, lack of sophistication and delinquency, the provision of easy automatic pleasures, a dumbing and numbing of the senses, and claims of senseless violence, misogyny and sadism. Fred Botting observes, there are similarities between attacks on eighteenth century Gothic fiction and criticism of contemporary videogames;(28) and many survival horror titles have significant parallels with this now-respected literary genre. *Silent Hill*’s mad woman in the basement of Alchemilea Hospital, *Haunting Ground*’s medieval castle setting and narrative investigation of its heroine’s family history, and the fragmented multi-character story of *Eternal Darkness* betray certain Gothic influences. The horror genre, with its rich and easily-identifiable aesthetics, suits perfectly what Henry Jenkins calls the ‘generic atmosphere’(29) or ‘environmental storytelling’(30) of space-centred videogames. The two-dimensional characterisations Andrew Lloyd Smith considers a convention of Gothic fiction(31) also serves well a medium in which, according to Andrew Darley, narrative and characterisation are subordinate to the kinaesthetic performance of game playing.(32) Tania Modleski(33) argues a form of ‘*anti-narcissistic identification*’ is produced between horror audience and the shallow unsympathetic characters who exist solely as chainsaw fodder. This arguably corresponds with the necessary under-engagement required between videogame player and avatar – the figure controlled by the gamer – who inevitably repeatedly dies throughout the course of a game’s completion.

However, despite survival horror’s generic labelling, Perron points to the fact that as in cinema, few videogame titles have actually horrified. (34) In an earlier paper, Perron suggests games of the

psychological variety might be more appropriately labelled ‘survival *terror*’ given the sense of dreadful anticipation these games generate. (35) Furthermore, notwithstanding claims made about minimal videogame characterisation, the playable protagonists of survival horror videogames are comparatively well-developed. They exist as characters within a narrative, defined by a combination of techniques discussed by Lankoski, Heliö and Ekman,(36) such as cut-scenes - brief non-participatory digital sequences employing Hollywood narrative techniques - avatar animation, game goals, and the reaction of other non-playable characters to protagonists. Jenny, the waif-like heroine of *Rule of Rose* (SCE, 2006) who creeps from room to room wringing her hands in distress, seems clearly designed to convey experiences of agitation inflecting upon player’s engagement with her circumstances. Without such detail, the videogame’s ubiquitous sense of survival has no horror.

Textuality

As this discussion of game characters suggests, story is a significant component of survival horror textuality. However, issues of narrative are extremely problematic in videogame scholarship. Early attempts to theorize the form seemingly divided academics discussing videogames as games, from those emphasising their relationship to traditional narrative media, mobilising frameworks drawn from film and literature. Central to this debate is the issue of whether videogames can be considered texts,(37) and therefore whether they might have ‘textuality’. Such early disputes still reverberate through the emerging discipline, evident in this article’s opening distinction between gameplay and audiovisual design as factors in videogame genre. The ludology/narratology debate incorporates a range of seemingly-antagonistic elements of the medium: game and story,(38) abstraction and representation,(39) interactivity and reading.(40) Survival horror videogames largely privilege the latter over the former – through cut-scenes, photorealistic locations, and written text. In *Fatal Frame* (Tecmo, 2001) Miku Hinasaki investigates the haunted Himuro Mansion searching for her lost brother. The game’s sense of horror emerges from the avatar’s construction as a psychologically-motivated protagonist in a desperate situation within a recognisable - if supernaturally-transformed - location, and the story she gradually uncovers. Narrative dimensions are foreground through publicity, trailers and videogame box blurbs. Promotions for *Silent Hill*, for example, largely prioritize character, narrative and visual design, over gameplay, action or puzzles.(41) Moreover, these games are full of texts for protagonists and players to read: diaries, newspapers, notebooks, inscriptions and documents, revealing past horrors and suggesting future perils. Santos and White argue that players of *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill* are frequently situated as detective, deciphering a narrative from the fragments the game environment provides. (42) *Forbidden Siren* features a number of protagonists at various points in time, trapped in a village patrolled by the living dead, the player informed that ‘only by piecing together their experiences can a reason for the nightmare be unearthed.’ This fragmented narrative, not dissimilar to that of traditional Gothic fiction, is a feature of survival horror textuality.

Visually, the survival horror videogame has much in common with horror literature, cinema and television. Two aspects Perron argues produce the sense of dread associated with survival horror include the use of darkness, mist and other techniques to obscure creatures within the hostile game space, and the flashlight which restricts the player’s view to immediately in front of the avatar.(43) Like horror B movies, survival horror distinct aesthetics are a consequence of scarce technical resources. This play of concealment, corresponding with a similar dialectic Dennis Giles observes in horror cinema, (44) suits the graphical limitations of a medium where every frame is drawn in real time, ensuring that what is visible can be realized in crackling detail. As a popular review of *Silent Hill 3* reads: ‘The visuals are beautifully detailed, except that doesn’t sound right when we’re talking about baths that overflow with sticky black blood, walls covered in seething flesh and lockers that swing open to reveal flayed torsos.’(45) Like horror films, survival horror games ‘remain exceptionally lovely to look at even when their point of view

is gloomy and their material sordid'.(46) Survival horror videogames traditionally view space through a series of fixed virtual cameras which pan and cut as the avatar moves through a defined route. Graphically illustrating the extent to which videogames use cinema as a medium template of realism,(47) the horror of survival horror requires an impression of verisimilitude rooted in a kind of 'camera reality'.(48) The restrictive 'cinematic camera angles'(49) through which the survival horror world is seen also create suspense and shock effects by withholding and controlling players' view of game space, as Perron(50) and Krzywinska(51) observe. A final textual feature of the genre is the unsettling suggestion of horrifying events through gamespaces, featuring bloodstained walls, wrecked furniture, or dismembered corpses. Places in survival horror tell of past events, like the house of *Silent Hill Homecoming* (Konami, 2009) which narrates a tale of sibling rivalry, patriarchal control and domestic abuse. Being rich with concealed or implied stories, such spaces differ from the explicit horror movies considered by Brophy as 'showing as opposed to telling', (52) returning to the more suggestive horror the critic identifies in previous eras of horror filmmaking.

Morality

The politics of survival horror are best situated within the context of videogames in general. Survival horror games are undoubtedly violent and gory, however in most examples of the genre this is a violence which is largely done to, rather than perpetrated by, the protagonist. In stark contrast to the popular stereotype of videogames which involve indiscriminate blasting and zapping,(53) or the kind of macho 'militaristic masculinity' rightfully criticized by Kline *et al*, (54) the focus of survival horror is much more strategic, driven by resource management, stealth, and the comparatively meek tactics of hiding and running away. If the imperialistic impetus which King and Krzywinska note informs the *Tomb Raider* series involves exploring exotic spaces, destroying exotic inhabitants and plundering exotic treasures,(55) such colonising characteristics are largely absent in survival horror. Instead, survival horror play commonly takes place in a familiar space, a shopping mall (*Silent Hill 3*), a family home (*Silent Hill Homecoming*), a school (*Obscure*), which has itself been invaded by monstrous creatures. As such, the player is positioned as the victim of colonisation, rather than its champion. The absence of sufficient weaponry, leading many game strategy guides to advise fleeing over fighting,(56) encourages a 'potentially more methodological attitude' towards combat.(57) *Clock Tower 3* offers only splashes of holy water as combat items which temporarily subdue pursuers, and requires players to evade adversaries by hiding behind curtains or in bathroom cubicles. While hardly pacifist in disposition, and certainly expressing an individualist dimension to their survivalism, these games are far from the violent bloodbaths commentators might suppose. Game endings, with many titles offering multiple closing sequences, frequently fail to restore the status quo, a component of games' political conservatism observed by Bolter and Grusin.(58)

Concerning moral elements more pertinent to Brody's essay, if 'pleasure in witnessing the Family being destroyed' is a key component of horror texts like *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), *The Amityville Horror* (Rosenberg, 1979) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (Craven, 1977),(59) such pleasures are only partially present in survival horror games, which often enact a more conservative process of familial reconciliation. Alissa is searching for her lost mother throughout *Clock Tower 3*, achieving idyllic reconciliation at the end, while reuniting various familial spirits along the way. Families in many survival horror remain spheres of horror – incest, murder, insanity and child abuse – yet in others, the family remains a privileged institution. *The Suffering's* (Midway Games, 2004) protagonist, Torque, is a condemned prisoner convicted of killing his wife and children. Throughout the game, apparitions of Torque's dead spouse and children appear as physical and spiritual guides, suggesting a moral authority to the family unit which persists even beyond the grave. Embodying the conventional good/evil dualism Krzywinska observes inform both horror games and horror cinema,(60) at various points throughout *The Suffering*, players are

presented with ethical choices, often to help, kill, or ignore various imperilled characters. These actions impact on the appearance of the family photograph the protagonist carries. Insofar as good actions ensure a clean Polaroid, while consistently bad actions turn the picture black and bloodied⁽⁶¹⁾ the family functions as an index of moral gameplay.

The world view of survival horror fits closely with Andrew Tudor's description of post-1960s 'paranoid horror' cinema – contrasting with the more 'secure horror' of previous eras. These games are characterized by unreliable authorities, malicious officials, and despicable institutions. The army are never coming to the hero/ine's rescue, Racoon City Police Station is a nest of zombies rather than a source of security, and the Umbrella Corporation, implying protection and safety, is ultimately responsible for hell on earth. Like the films Tudor discusses, survival horror games present 'a victim-orientated world in which embattled individuals and groups struggle for survival'.⁽⁶²⁾ Threats are internal rather than external, resulting from unscrupulous corporate bio-engineering, institutional cruelty, or familial repression. Like the contemporary cinema Peter Boss explores, survival horror also expresses 'concern with the self as body.'⁽⁶³⁾ The third person playable protagonist visibly present on the screen frequently registers the physical damage incurred through a limping, bleeding or bloodied avatar. Expressing a preoccupation with the discursive positioning and categorisation of the human experience within medical institutions; hospitals, asylums and medical centres are common settings of survival horror, and sites of torture, wrongful imprisonment, cruel and unusual treatments. A public announcement in *Silent Hill Origins* (Konami, 2007) apologises to patients for disruption caused by renovation work, while a confidential staff notice reveals imminent cuts in patient care. The note warns: "unless they're dying in your arms, don't book 'em in!" while assuring staff that the recreational budget will not be affected by this mismanagement.⁽⁶⁴⁾ As such, these games express a cynical perspective towards institutional authority consistent with the horror cinema Brophy and contemporaries discuss.

Hilarity

The 'perverse and/or tasteless' humour Brophy identifies in recent horror cinema,⁽⁶⁵⁾ is largely absent in the videogames discussed throughout this article. While there are horror videogames with comic or cartoonish aesthetics, such as *Zombies Ate My Neighbours* (Konami, 1993), *Gregory Horror Show* (Capcom, 2003) or *Plants vs Zombies* (PopCap Games, 2009), these games are far from survival horror in gameplay or design. Overlooking the unintentional humour generated by poorly-presented cut-scenes, survival horror and comedy do not appear to mix. Although the generic clichés and borrowings of the videogame genre reflect the "postmodern" self-consciousness and pastiche Tudor observes in recent horror films,⁽⁶⁶⁾ the games' investment in realism means these aspects are rarely foregrounded or presented as humorous. References to *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) in the newspaper headlines of *Silent Hill* (Konami, 1999), the presence of Mushnik's Flower Shop or Berger Street subway station from *Little Shop of Horrors* (Oz, 1986) and *Jacob's Ladder* (Lyne, 1990) are obscure shout-outs to horror fans, or signs of the games' location within establishment horror, which do not conspicuously undermine the verisimilitude of the scenario. The *Silent Hill* series contains some moments of bizarre humour. The UFO ending, present in several episodes, where the protagonist is inexplicably abducted by aliens, constitutes the conspicuous comic book intrusion of one fantastic genre into another. Many games allow players the opportunity to dress up their avatars in alternative costumes; re-playing Fiona incongruously dressed as a frog, or Travis as a masked wrestler. Notably these added extras are accessible only after the game has been completed. Having once solved all puzzles, defeated all enemies and uncovered all narrative enigmas, on second play the sense of horror is already significantly less, the game perceived more as a ludic challenge than a narrative experience.

Brophy labels horror ‘a genre about genre’,(67) and it is possible to read many survival horror titles as commentaries on horror media. The Borley Mansion in *Silent Hill 3*, positioned in a corrupted theme park, is a horror simulation within a horror simulation which reflects upon the horror genre in general and the horror videogame in particular.(68) The setting is in this respect appropriate. There are many intriguing parallels between descriptions of horror spectatorship as a carnival or roller coaster ride,(69) and comparisons between videogame and theme park experiences(70) suggesting a correlation between the three. This parallel is reflected in stages of *Resident Evil 4*, when the protagonist finds himself on a ski lift or a railway cart shooting the various zombies that appear while remaining immobile, a literal embodiment of the ‘on rails’ gameplay of the *House of the Dead* action series. If the survival horror videogame ‘foregrounds the issues of vision and power’, aspects as central to the digital medium as Jeffrey Sconce argues they are to cinema,(71) such preoccupations are evident in *Forbidden Siren*, which requires players to ‘sight jack’ into nearby zombies, viewing the surrounding area from their point of view in order to escape unseen; or *Silent Hill 4* (Konami, 2004) which frequently interrogates power issues pertaining to subjects and objects of the gaze, most dramatically in a level set in a grizzly panopticon.

The same interrogation of spectator, or gamer, identification is evident in *Haunting Ground*, a game which explores the relationship between player, and avatar. Throughout the game, various villains seek Fiona’s body for their own purposes. The groundskeeper, Deblitas, clearly has designs on Fiona, an early scene equating Fiona’s body with a toy doll which he discards in favour of the more animate model. The maid, Daniella, has a fascination with Fiona approaching sexual desire. Riccardo is the steward who has captured the heroine and imprisoned her in the castle she spends the game trying to escape. Fiona’s ambivalent status as videogame avatar is reflected in numerous inanimate figures recurring throughout the game: a nursery full of dolls, a mummy on a sofa, a marionette room full of puppets, and a manikin neatly placed in a projection room where Fiona discovers she has been secretly filmed throughout her experiences. During the game Fiona interacts with non-playable characters in a similar manner as players interact with her own body. The dog Hewie can be ordered to retrieve objects, stay put, or attack adversaries, and a series of golems are directed through mazes using plates embossed with instructions (left, right, right, left) just as Fiona is controlled through manipulation of the joypad. Daniella, the maid, is herself an artificially-created woman whose obsession with Fiona stems from something within the heroine’s body but lacking in the non-playable adversary, something termed ‘azoth’ within the alchemic world of the game, yet analogous to the humanity players add in their cybernetic interfacing with the videogame avatar. Periodically the relationship between player and avatar is rudely ruptured through ‘panic modes’ activated if the heroine encounters an antagonist. Here the player momentarily loses control of Fiona, whose movements become erratic and involuntary, falling down stairs and running into walls. A strong trend Brophy identifies in 1980s horror cinema is ‘the fear of one’s own body, of how one controls and relates to it,’(72) a theme reflected in the dynamic of having, then losing, control which Krzywinska(73) sees as central to the horror game’s disturbing affect. While provoking a reaction more of hysteria than hilarity, such elements indicate further continuities between survival horror and more traditional examples of the genre, in their self reflexivity, interrogation of the form, and anxieties about the body.

Conclusion

This article has explored key aspects of the survival horror genre in relation to Philip Brophy’s notion of ‘horrorality’, a neologism with enough permutations to afford an overview of key characteristics of the videogame cycle. Throughout there has been an emphasis on continuities between new and old articulations of horror, parallels existing between *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill*, *Fatal Frame* and *Haunting Ground*, and 1980s slasher movies, Gothic literature, and Japanese horror. The textuality of horror

videogames involves an emphasis on story, representation, and reading. Central to survival horror's horror is the psychologically-defined protagonist negotiating a recognisable environment, incorporating fragments of written text which tell of diabolical past events. The use of mist and darkness, and the frequent presence of the flashlight provide survival horror's distinct textual aesthetic, as does the conspicuous use of simulated cameras. While survival horror titles are undoubtedly violent, they are not characterized by the militaristic, colonial, confrontational qualities associated with much videogame culture. A destruction of the family is unevenly evident across these games, which often position the institution as moral centre or site of redemption. Nevertheless, survival horror exhibits a sense of contemporary 'paranoid horror' in which persecuted individuals are besieged by the malignant consequences of unscrupulous organisations concerned with the regulation and categorisation of bodies. While the hilarity of many slasher movies is largely absent – notwithstanding alien abduction endings – there is a postmodern self-reflexivity about horror videogames which frequently comment upon their own processes, or exhibiting the same preoccupations with vision and the body observed in horror cinema.

As Jonathan Lake Crane observes, something in the nature of genre criticism imposes order, coherence and simplicity where there is chaos, incoherence and multiplicity.⁽⁷⁴⁾ A necessity of this article therefore has been an emphasis not only on connections between 'new' and 'old' media horror, but also on continuities across the amorphous collection of texts which might be labelled 'survival horror'. The videogame genre which has been the focus of this paper may well be one in decline, anticipated by the action-orientated turn of the *Resident Evil* franchises. The fashion for non-linearity, multiplayer capability, user generated content and expansive visual effects, do not fit the linear, single-player, author-dominated survival horror genre, reliant on atmospheric graphics, restricted vision, and a subtle sense of disquiet. *Silent Hill: Homecoming* retains the environmental storytelling, sickening graphics and narrative of familial betrayal, common in the series and genre, but in losing the fixed camera and becoming more action-orientated significant elements of the genre's aesthetic and gameplay have been compromised. Whether survival horror as a historical moment in videogame genre history will retain academic attention remains to be seen. Despite trends in console development, there is much to suggest an enduring partnership between the videogame medium and horror. Perron observes the extent to which the horror genre has been described in gaming terms.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Horror films' reference to previous horror texts or horror media, S. S. Prawer writes, expose how 'makers of the macabre film like to play all sorts of games with their audiences'.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Botting observes a postmodern 'playfulness and duplicity' in eighteenth-century Gothic writing⁽⁷⁷⁾, just as John C. Tibbetts argues 'the spooks that haunted old dark houses played a game with their readers'.⁽⁷⁸⁾ And Brophy himself considers horror 'a mode of fiction, a type of writing that in the fullest sense "plays" with its reader', spectatorship being 'a game that one plays *with* the text'.⁽⁷⁹⁾ While this game-like contract between text and reader might be an element of all popular genres, the regularity with which it is emphasized in such accounts indicates a close relationship between horror and the ludic intriguing for scholars of horror and of videogames alike.

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The Gothic Challenge to Victorian Realism: Buried Narratives in *Villette*, *Aurora Leigh*, and *Lady Audley's Secret*

Audrey Murfin

Live burial, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, is intrinsically reflective of fiction, representing as it does another reality concurrent with the world of the reader but entirely inaccessible.⁽¹⁾ The Gothic aesthetic changes in the Victorian period when it encounters the conventions of realism: it goes underground as realist novels use Gothic traditions if not in their plots then in their figurative language. In turn, this resurfacing of the aesthetic calls into question the generic distinction between realism and Gothic literature. More specifically, the intervention of the Gothic in the silencing of (mostly female) characters through metaphorical live burials in Victorian realist novels expresses skepticism about possibilities of narrative mimesis, and this skepticism runs counter to and contends with the very strategies that are otherwise at work in realist texts. In this article I will examine three texts that demonstrate the complex relationships between canonical literature and popular Gothic forms and structures that persist throughout the century: Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853),⁽²⁾ Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856),⁽³⁾ and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862).⁽⁴⁾ The Gothic challenges the Victorian realist project, and many of the canonical authors of the nineteenth century were influenced just as powerfully by the Gothic tradition as they were by the realist one. This subterranean influence, however, has often been obscured in favor of a history of realism that excludes genres associated with fantasy or romance.⁽⁵⁾

Through the limited perspective of its narrator, *Villette* repeatedly withholds from the reader any promise of certain knowledge, marking it as a text much more interested in obscurity than revelation—even to the extent that the narrator denies closure to her readers, pretending unwillingness to tell them the end of the story on its very last page. In *Villette* as in *Aurora Leigh* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, the Gothic motif of live burial signifies the inability of characters or narrators to communicate the truth.

To address the meaning of the Gothic in the Victorian period it is first necessary to reconcile two prevailing definitions of the genre: one that sees the Gothic as a literary-historical movement, and the second that sees "Gothic" as encompassing a set of identifiable conventions. Critics primarily interested in literary history have debated the appropriateness of using the label "Gothic" to refer to works written after 1820.⁽⁶⁾ Others have used the term to address literature of any period that demonstrates attention to a few key themes. According to Sedgwick, the term "Gothic" is characterized by certain specific and frequently repeated conventions. By reading these conventions, critics such as Cannon Schmitt and Patrick Brantlinger can talk about a nineteenth-century Gothic, identifying, for example, the works of the Brontës as Gothic, though their novels do not specifically come out of the time period of the Gothic novel proper. However, merely labeling nineteenth-century works as Gothic is not helpful for deriving a literary history that explains how the Victorian Gothic works because it does not acknowledge the changes that occur in the literary trends. A middle ground must be found: we must be able to look at certain works of Victorian literature as a continuation of a Gothic tradition without making the two periods coterminous. As Schmitt argues, the Victorian Gothic "requires in turn a double solution: the recognition that a given genre functions differently both in relation to other genres and in relation to itself over time."⁽⁷⁾ It does seem appropriate to talk about a Victorian Gothic, but with the awareness that this genre, like all genres, undergoes significant transformation over its long history.

The extent to which the Gothic does get incorporated into realist literature of the nineteenth century challenges the notion of a realist tradition and a Gothic counter-tradition. The nineteenth century shows a

tendency towards a unification of the realist viewpoint and its Gothic subversion. In the Victorian period, the Gothic becomes incorporated into realism in two different, but related ways. First, it gets updated to more modern settings and generally loses its supernatural elements, (as in the sensation novel). Second, it reimagines the terrors of the Gothic as metaphors.

As the Gothic novel changes into the nineteenth century's sensation novel there is a decreasing reliance on supernatural occurrences and an increasing reliance on mundane fears, such as crime.(8) In the nineteenth century, the source of Gothic fear is often institutional. Novels such as *The Woman in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins and *Uncle Silas* (1865) by J. Sheridan Le Fanu interrogate the complicity of the law with Gothic villainy, even English modern law—the Gothic sensation tradition increasingly prefers crime to the supernatural, and current time periods to ancient ones. The second way that the Gothic changes is that it becomes less separate from realist literature and more frequently incorporated into it. The principal way in which the Gothic reappears in the realist novel is through a metaphorical reincorporation of its phantasmagoria and supernatural imagery in the language rather than in the plot. This is particularly notable in the “dark *Bildungsroman*,” (such as *Jane Eyre*) where Gothic elements intermingle within the realist novel, which Carol Margaret Davison distinguishes from “the branch of the Victorian Gothic that lends credibility to the supernatural” such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.(9) When Gothic phantasms occur in the realist novel, they are likely to be in the imagination or psychology of a character. As George Haggerty notes, “Gothic form, then, is affective form” and reflects a “theoretical shift in interest from the object to the subject.”(10) According to Robert B. Heilman, Charlotte Brontë's work is so powerful because it achieves a synthesis of passion and rationality through the incorporation of Gothic forms into the realist novel. (11)

One element of the Gothic that does not change, however, from the eighteenth- to the nineteenth-century Gothic, is its epistemological uncertainty and resistance to objective attitudes towards representation and knowledge. Caroline Levine has argued that suspense in the Victorian novel is a result of the period's acute interest in scientific empiricism:

...the unsettling pleasures of suspense—as they emerged in science, politics, and fiction—were new to the nineteenth century. Of course, fiction and drama had used suspenseful devices for centuries, and eighteenth-century Gothic fiction was famous for its chilling suspense. But Victorian suspense relied on the model of the scientific experiment, uniting its skeptical epistemology with anxious pleasure in order to teach readers to enjoy a new approach to the realities of the world that extended well beyond the popular fiction of the time. This vision of suspense was new precisely in its claims to widespread and serious significance.(12)

In contrast to Levine's analysis, in which suspense operates in the service of scientific knowledge, I would argue that the Victorian Gothic (like Romantic era Gothic) more often buries its narratives, leaving them deferred, unknowable, or irrelevant.

George Levine, expanding on the eponymous metaphor in *Dying to Know: Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England*, writes that:

Part of the paradox of dying to know is, of course, that one cannot know anything when one is dead. The phrase implies, then, a kind of liminal position, at the edge of nonbeing, and it implies a persistent tragedy: only in death can one understand what it has meant to be alive.(13)

Levine is interested in a larger epistemological problem, but what is true of life is also true of narrative: once one knows what happens in a suspenseful novel, one has, by definition, already finished it. For example, in Catherine and Isabella's discussion of the black veil in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Catherine, after acknowledging that she is "wild to know" the secret of the veil, adds that she "would not be told on any account" and says "I should like to spend my whole life in reading [*The Mysteries of Udolpho*]." (14) Unlike the scientific experiment, the suspense of the Gothic novel often has no, or an unsatisfactory resolution. Catherine here is prescient, for as discussed above, the mystery of the black veil is famously disappointing. Revelation is irrelevant to suspense. In the Gothic roots of Victorian suspense we can see recurring structural devices that promote the atmospheric and the inconclusive, and minimize the importance of revelation and endings.

Following Eve Sedgwick, who identifies the Gothic by means of repeating structural and thematic elements, I wish to look at one of the defining motifs of the Gothic genre: live burial. The theme of being buried alive is a particularly central one in eighteenth-century Gothic literature, with its preponderance of crypts and dungeons. A live burial in a literal sense seems to occur in all of the major Gothic novels: for example, in *The Monk* (1796), Agnes is interred pregnant and ends up cradling the decaying body of her infant, while the other heroine, Antonia, is raped and killed in a crypt. In a large section of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) Monçada ends up interred in a dungeon. In America, too, Edgar Allan Poe's stories show a preoccupation with the theme, such as the imagined still-beating heart heard beneath the floorboards in "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) or the narrator of "The Premature Burial" (1844), who is obsessively afraid of being buried alive. This fascination with live burial outlives the Gothic period, however. Chris Willis documents that the Victorians too had a preoccupation with being buried alive, and represented it frequently in fiction. (15) Live burial, Sedgwick argues, is a metaphor for writing in that it "recreate[s] parallel representations at a distance from the original, subject to more or less frightening distortions." (16) Furthermore, she argues that the recurrence of live burial in gothic plot coincides with the "live burial" of gothic narrative (stories within stories), and is related as well to the unspeakable in that both live burial and the unspeakable are thematically linked by the idea of a self unable to communicate. Likewise, Julian Wolfreys finds that texts themselves are both alive and dead at the same time because, even while archived, their life extends beyond their borders. (17)

The motif of live burial functions in a variety of ways in the texts I will be examining, and its various meanings point to the way the Gothic functions within Victorian suspense literature to suppress knowledge and narrative possibilities. Most obviously, and most often commented upon, is that live burial functions as a symbol of sexual repression, especially where it is associated with cloistering, as it is explicitly in both *Villette* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. At the same time, live burial is also associated with the violation or corruption of the body, as in the example of Agnes above, where her incarceration highlights decay without her death. Where the buried body is a woman (as it most frequently is, with a few notable exceptions) live burial is an ironic reversal of the resurrection, a connection made explicit in *Aurora Leigh*, but relevant as well in *Villette* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. While all of these ways of reading live burial are possible, my own focus on this figure of the buried-alive woman highlights the way it closes off narrative possibilities, problematizes the connection between the reader and the fictional world, and suggests that the true subject of representation is unknowable. The buried woman is unable to communicate, meaning that live burial involves in all cases a suppression or submersion of narrative voice or narrative possibilities, occasionally opening the way for others. To re-invoke George Levine's metaphor of dying to know, live burial exposes the necessary ending of a plot (in death) but in a way that precludes revelation. In this manner it promotes obscurity rather than epistemological certainty. By looking at the convention of metaphoric live burial in three Victorian texts that make use of the Gothic—*Villette*, *Aurora Leigh*, and *Lady Audley's Secret*—I intend to demonstrate how the Gothic

intervenes in otherwise realist texts to alert the reader to the suppression of truths or narrative possibilities.

Through the limited perspective of its narrator, *Villette* repeatedly withholds from the reader any promise of certain knowledge, marking it as a text much more interested in obscurity than revelation—even to the extent that the narrator denies closure to her readers, feigning an unwillingness to tell them the end of the story on its very last page. Numerous critics, beginning with Heilman, have noted the Gothic undercurrents in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. According to Mary Jacobus:

Supernatural haunting and satanic revolt, delusion and dream, disrupt a text which can give no formal recognition to either Romantic or Gothic modes. The buried letter of Romanticism becomes the discourse of the Other, as the novel's unconscious—not just Lucy's—struggles for articulation within the confines of mid-nineteenth-century realism. (122)(18)

In *Villette*, the complete internalization of the Gothic experience is a psychological one. Through the world of Lucy's imagination, the psychological and metaphorical levels of the text come together. Tony Tanner, in his reading of reality and shadow in Brontë's novel, finds the Gothic occurs in *Villette* to indicate moments of “epistemological unease”(61), and that the actual occurrences in the story, during which very little may happen, contrast at times sharply with the metaphorical language, which is rife with violence.(19) In fact *Villette* takes all of the Gothic thrills of *Jane Eyre* and moves them inside the skull of the heroine (where a lot of critics of the Gothic would say they belong). Just like Catherine Morland with her expectation of Gothic horrors, Lucy Snowe creates her own gloomy reality.

Although she disingenuously denies the sensibility of the traditional Gothic heroine, Lucy is extremely superstitious, as when she predicts the death of Miss Marchmont from a sound on the wind:

The wind was wailing at the windows: it had wailed all day; but, as night deepened, it took a new tone—an accent keen, piercing, almost articulate to the ear; a plaint, piteous and disconsolate to the nerves, trilled in every gust.

“Oh, hush! hush!” I said in my disturbed mind, dropping my work, and making a vain effort to stop my ears against that subtle, searching cry. I had heard that very voice ere this, and compulsory observation had forced on me a theory as to what it boded. Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to live. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee.(20)

Lucy's magical thinking demonstrates a self-centeredness that moves the great terrors and violence of more dramatic lives into the limited sphere of her own life. Here, she moves from reading for natural signs that might predict great disorder and upheaval (“epidemic diseases”) to seeing these great omens as predicting her own sad, but hardly portentous tragedy: the death of the very elderly and infirm woman she works for. The omens in *Villette*, then, turn out to be predictors not of external changes and tragedies, but internal happenings.

In *Villette* the Gothic themes remain, but their application is mundane. In *Jane Eyre* Bertha Mason is locked in the attic. In *Villette* Lucy is also locked in the attic (with rats)—by M. Paul, who tells her, ““You will set me down as a species of tyrant and Blue-beard, starving women in a garret; whereas, after all, I am no such thing.””(21) In Heilman's influential reading of the Gothic in Charlotte Brontë, he defines “new Gothic” as “that discovery of passion, that rehabilitation of the extra-rational, which is the historical

office of the Gothic, is no longer oriented in marvelous circumstance but moves deeply into the lesser known realities of human life.”(22) Gothic becomes the psychological side of Brontë’s creation: the exploration of internal states of being that gives depth to her mimetic world. But, for Heilman, Brontë reinvigorates a form that has no value before her. By making it compatible with realism, she makes it worthy. This creates a bifurcated reading, however, that I wish to avoid, tempering Heilman’s disdain for the Gothic form with Susan Wolstenholme’s insistence that Brontë “writes [Gothic] into a reinforcing juxtaposition—not a depreciative opposition—of ‘realism’ and ‘romance.’”(23) And, as Alison Milbank points out, by ending her novels with a rational explanation of their supernatural elements, “Radcliffe had *already* undercut the marvelous in the interests of psychology.”(24)

Both *Villette* and the eighteenth-century Gothic novel *The Monk* respond to anti-Catholic fears, an important feature of earlier Gothic work and one which is related to fears of live burial, as I will discuss. In the central plotline of *The Monk*, Ambrosio (the eponymous monk) fixates on the naïve young virgin Antonia, plans her ruin, and then in the end rapes and kills her. Although she never meets any murderous monks or nuns, in *Villette*, the staunchly Protestant Lucy Snowe is as fearful of Catholics as any true Gothic heroine should be. Although in the end, Père Silas turns out to be mendacious, most of the terror Lucy has of Catholics derives from the meaning they take on in her own mind. Although critics such as Schmitt and Rosemary Clark-Beattie have looked at Catholic stereotypes in *Villette*,(25) the use of hyperbole in Lucy’s treatment of Catholicism throws *Villette*’s identity as an anti-Catholic novel into doubt. Lucy’s terror of Catholicism is personal to her because it is motivated by her own attraction to the figure of the cloistered nun, who represents all of Lucy’s own instincts towards burial and self-repression—the same instincts that lead her to withhold information from the reader.

Drawn in her unhappiness to go to confession, and having taken some comfort from the priest, Lucy responds to his invitation to meet with her again:

Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest’s reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonian furnace. That priest had arms which could influence me; he was naturally kind, with a sentimental French kindness, to whose softness I knew myself not wholly impervious.(26)

Lucy’s unreasonable terror in the face of a kind Catholic priest, her reference to the Babylonian furnace and her self-doubt show that what she fears most of all is that ‘evil’ is and can be seductive, and that she will submit to it rather than resist it. Unlike her literary predecessors, she is unlikely to be forcibly confined in a convent, (though the girls’ *ecole* at which she teaches it itself convent-like), but she imagines herself in a convent all the same, “counting [her] beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent on the Boulevard or Crécy in *Villette*.”(27) There is an element of sexual desire that makes the priest figure more threatening. That Lucy, who is so anti-Catholic, would even go to confession in the first place, is indicative of her strange fixation on the faith.

As Toni Wein has also discovered, Brontë draws on Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, particularly the story of Beatrice de las Cisternas, otherwise known as the “Bleeding Nun.”(28) In *The Monk*, the ghost of the nun comes into the story as Raymond and his lover Agnes are first plotting to run away together. Agnes plans to use the reputed ghost of the nun as a cover. She will disguise herself in a nun’s garments and march out of the house along the route that the ghostly nun is said to walk, at the time she usually does her hauntings. (Susan Wolstenholme calls the courtship between Ginevra Fanshawe and De Hamal “a comic revision of the “Bleeding Nun” episode in *The Monk*.”)(29) When Agnes can’t make it, however, Raymond meets the actual ghost, and binds himself to her in an impromptu vow before he realizes his

mistake. Beginning that night, the ghostly nun visits Raymond between one and two in the morning, repeating his vow back to him. As part of spell, Raymond lies in bed immobilized for the hour:

In this attitude she remained for a whole long hour without speaking or moving; nor was I able to do either. At length the clock struck two. The apparition rose from her seat, and approached the side of the bed. She grasped with her icy fingers my hand, which hung lifeless upon the coverture, and, pressing her cold lips to mine, again repeated,

“Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!

“Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!” &c.---

She then dropped my hand, quitted the chamber with slow steps, and the door closed after her. Till that moment the faculties of my body had been all suspended; those of my mind had alone been waking. The charm now ceased to operate; the blood which had been frozen in my veins rushed back to my heart with violence; I uttered a deep groan, and sunk lifeless upon my pillow.(30)

The same sequence repeats every night, and until Raymond, with the help of the Wandering Jew, can find a way to break the spell he falls into a depressed state.

The experience of night terrors and especially of lying awake unable to move, has been used to explain the myth of the incubus and succubus, demons who rape their victims while the victims are sleeping. This association of incubus/succubus with sleep paralysis can be seen in Henry Fuseli’s 1782 painting *The Nightmare*, a Gothic favorite, which depicts the ghostlike horse of the title peering through the bed curtains at an unconscious woman with a demon sitting on her chest.(31) Like the succubus, the Bleeding Nun becomes a faux lover who paralyzes Raymond during her nightly visits: “The spectre again pressed her lips to mine, again touched me with her rotting fingers, and, as on her first appearance, quitted the chamber as soon as the clock told ‘two.’” (173) (32)

Left alone at the boarding school while most of the other teachers and students have gone on break, Lucy has night terrors similar to Raymond’s in the midst of a nine day illness:

By the clock of St. Jean Baptiste, that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes—a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity. Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea. Suffering, brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, tastes not as this suffering tasted.(33)

Lucy’s description of her dream is impossibly obscure. As such, it corresponds to Sedgwick’s description of “the...half-submerged association that occurs in Gothic novels when a dream is, evidently casually, described as ‘unspeakable,’ or the past, equally casually, as ‘buried.’”(34) As in Sedgwick’s discussion of Thomas de Quincey, night-time paralysis is a form of being buried alive, which is the fear, or acknowledgement of the unspeakable, here materialized as Lucy’s inability to convey what it is exactly that she dreams. Her “anguish” is “unknown,” her experience is “nameless,” and she does not say that her dream is a “visitation from eternity” but that it had the “mien” of one, and the suffering caused is not “calculable.” Lucy purports to tell us the content of the dream, but her description is garbled and contradictory. For instance, Lucy tells us that her dream lasts fifteen minutes, but the “cup” she is forced to drink from lasts for an hour (just as it does for Lewis’ Raymond).(35)

After her dream, Lucy is haunted by Gothic visions of corpses:

One evening—and I was not delirious: I was in my sane mind, I got up—I dressed myself, weak and shaking. The solitude and the stillness of the long dormitory could not be borne any longer; the ghastly white beds were turning into spectres—the coronal of each became a death's head, huge and sun-bleached—dead dreams of an elder world and a mightier race lay frozen in their wide and gaping eye-holes.(36)

It is this dream that causes her to go to the priest. Notably, however, Lucy does not tell us what she says to the priest, beyond “je suis Protestante.” She tells him that she “had a pressure of affliction on [her] mind of which it would hardly any longer endure the weight,” but denies that the affliction is a sin (even though in her description of her dream she describes her despair, which is a sin). As explanation, she says simply “I showed him the mere outline of my experience,” but how she frames that experience, or if it is the same experiences she has been describing to the reader, she leaves us to imagine.(37) This elision has led Randa Helfield to observe that Lucy’s confession is “a synecdoche of the entire novel. For in *Villette* Lucy Snowe simultaneously reveals and conceals herself and her story.”(38) The Gothic tropes and metaphors throughout the novel, and particularly those related to being buried alive highlight the way in which the novel defies revelation.

More literally, the theme of live burial is introduced in the story of the nun “whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried, for some sin against her vow.”(39) According to Crosby, Lucy and Paul “both are buried alive, like the nun”(40); Lucy, because of her cloistering within the school, and Paul, because of his submerged and buried passion for his childhood sweetheart, Justine Marie.

The fear of live burial recurs, under the same pear tree when, later in the novel, Lucy buries her letters from, and consequently her passion for, Graham Bretton, which Sedgwick also finds is a form of live burial: “For the letters are buried in just the same place, and in just the same way, as the erring nun of tradition.”(41) Returning to the tree where she has buried the letters, she frets that she has been premature: “Was this feeling dead? I do not know, but it was buried. Sometimes I thought the tomb unquiet, and dreamed strangely of disturbed earth, and of hair, still golden and living, obtruded through coffin-chinks.”(42) Graham is associated in Lucy’s mind with life. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar link him to Apollo and the sun,(43) an apt figure here especially, where hope, represented by his golden hair, shines like sunshine through the holes in the coffin—her best effort to repress her attraction to him. In the end, he is too much alive for her burial—she can only minimize her affection for him, which at the end of the novel, she admits, like “the tent of Peri-Banou” could grow into “a tabernacle for a host.”(44) Instead, her live burial of her feelings for him doesn’t so much suppress those feelings as suppress the narrative possibilities that those feelings represent; the burial makes it impossible that *Villette* can further pursue any narrative about a courtship between Graham and Lucy.

Lucy herself is associated with death (and this polarity that must keep her apart from Graham). She describes him waiting to hear the result of his request to marry Paulina:

He was quite stirred up; his young hand trembled; a vital (I was going to write mortal, but such words ill apply to one all living like him)—a vital suspense now held, now hurried, his breath: in all this trouble his smile never faded.(45)

If indeed Graham’s suspense is always a vital suspense, then Lucy Snowe’s is a mortal suspense: Cassandra-like, she can only predict doom. This contrast between vital and mortal suspense also, in James

O'Rourke's reading of the biblical and angelic imagery in the text, expands the possibility of resolution beyond the lifespan:

Some angel will arrive, suspense will end, but its termination may not be an earthly fulfillment: "To how many maimed and mourning millions is the first and sole angel visitant, him easterns call Azrael"—the angel of death in Muslim theology. The deliverance from suspense can take two forms, each of which acquires an equivalent theological significance in Brontë's imagery: the fulfillment of sex-desire or death.(46)

Graham Bretton's suspense, like his fated place in life, is a romantic and therefore vital one, but Lucy sees herself as doomed. It is for this reason that we are able as readers to witness the novelistic unfolding of the courtship between Graham and Polly, but because Lucy's sense of suspense is more mortal than vital we are denied a novelistic resolution of the Lucy/ Paul relationship. Paul has promised to return to Lucy after three years away, managing an estate in the West Indies, but Lucy suggests, yet refuses to confirm, that he is killed when his returning ship sinks. Milbank writes "Brontë's imagination ultimately remains Gothic, in being jagged and ruined, unresolved, still only at trace with reason, wanting to escape from it, and not to collude in some tidy narrative ending." (47) Or rather, Lucy declines to speak the ending of the novel, which is not really ambiguous—no reader can be in doubt as to how the novel actually ends. Following the repeating imagery of live burial and under water scenes that runs through the entire novel, Lucy buries or sinks her narrative at the end of the novel. More important, even than her refusal to tell us about the death of Paul Emmanuel, is her refusal to tell us anything about the rest of her (long) life. She chooses instead to make the narrative of her own life end with the death of M. Paul (in her typical passive-aggressive way, she even ends by telling us about the futures of Madame Beck, Père Silas, and oddest of all, Madame Walravens, who isn't even a major character). The character who has spent most of her morbid imaginings drowning underwater or buried underground ends her own history with a sea burial that means a final simultaneous submerging of ship and narrative. Although Lucy's story ends, these themes of burial and submersion recur throughout the Victorian period.

It is a testament to the pervasiveness of the Gothic genre throughout the nineteenth century that we can even trace Gothic themes through Elizabeth Barrett Browning's classically inspired epic, *Aurora Leigh*. *Aurora Leigh* as a whole is more Bildungsroman than "dark Bildungsroman." However, critics have noted the presence of a variety of generic influences in the work. While much has been made of the classical tradition in *Aurora Leigh*, it also owes a significant debt to the Gothic novel, particularly in the poem's treatment of the character of Marian Erle.

Like a traditional Gothic heroine, Aurora struggles throughout the text to maintain her voice against her cousin Romney, who seeks to stifle, suppress, and discredit her poetry.(48) The fear of being silenced that Aurora struggles against becomes more gruesome and violent when she tells the story of Marian Erle. The Gothic is particularly evident in the sequence in which Marian describes to Aurora her flight from the planned marriage to Romney and her subsequent rape. Marian endures and embodies struggles and dangers to which Aurora is immune. The sequence in the poem that describes Marian Erle's flight from her marriage to Romney Leigh undermines the larger work's themes of Christian resurrection by replacing Christian iconography with a Gothic fixation on live burial.

Kathleen Renk examines the motif of live burial in *Aurora Leigh*, arguing that "*Aurora Leigh* claims that women are "buried alive" by society and that the way women are resurrected and society is transformed is through the attainment of a poetic vision of the seer." (49) However, although Renk calls attention to a number of times that Aurora herself is figuratively buried and resurrected, Linda Lewis has pointed out

that Marian Erle “never experiences the resurrection available to all other notable characters in the poem depicted as sometimes dead.”(50) By refusing the resurrection that Aurora and Romney demand of her, Lewis argues that “Marian’s insistence on her own unresurrected state seems to deny closure in a work where all other loose ends are neatly tied.”(51)

While Aurora is able to achieve artistic vision by the poem’s end, Marian becomes a shadow of Aurora’s success as her rape creates for her a life in death that is characterized by dramatically reduced roles and constrained self-expression.

When Aurora finds Marian in Paris, she is living with her baby in a “room/ Scarce larger than a grave, and near as bare.”(52) Marian figures her rape as a death: “I was not ever, as you say, seduced,/ But simply, murdered.”(53) However, although Marian speaks of herself as being dead, she still walks, talks, breathes. Comparing herself to Christ, she describes: “The great red stone upon my sepulchre,/ Which angels were too weak to roll away.”(54) A Christ who has not been resurrected, and a Christ who may perhaps be resurrected but is never freed from the tomb are, of course, different things, and suggest an especially gruesome interpretation of story of the Gospels.

Still, there is much death imagery that doesn’t add to a Christian interpretation, but instead adds to a Gothic one. Marian describes how a corpse may be carried to a pauper’s grave:

--then they leave it on the pit,
To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek
With him who stinks since Friday.
But suppose;
To go down half-dead, half-alive, I say,
And wake up with corruption,. cheek to cheek
With him who stinks since Friday! There it is,
And that’s the horror of’t, Miss Leigh.(55)

The vision of Christ’s tombstone contends with the more macabre image of being buried alive, here in the pauper’s grave, which Marian, a pauper herself, might come to expect. After she flees the scene of her rape, her disordered mind perceives gruesome Christ figures pursuing her (“every roadside Christ upon his cross/ Hung reddening through his gory wounds at me,/ And shook his nails in anger....”(56) Rather than being redemptive, these Christs merely accompany other types of living dead, the zombie-like trees that she flees from (zombies being another incarnation of the fear of being buried alive):

I went, by road and village, over tracts
Of open foreign country, large and strange,
Crossed everywhere by long thin poplar-lines
Like figures of some ghastly skeleton Hand
Through sunlight and through moonlight evermore
Pushed out from hell itself to pluck me back,
And resolute to get me, slow and sure.(57)

Because Marian is both dead and alive (the rape having figuratively killed her), Barrett Browning evokes the sepulchre of Christ, but her resurrection is not permitted. Marian lives on as a mother, but this is less a resurrection than it is a residue:

I'm not less dead for that: I'm nothing more
 But just a mother. Only for the child,
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and afraid,
 And smell the flowers a little, and see the sun,
 And speak still, and am silent,--just for him!
 I pray you therefore to mistake me not
 And treat me, haply, as I were alive.(58)

While Aurora fears being silenced by an early marriage to Romney, Marian experiences a stripping of her identity as a function of rape, and her entire being is subsumed into motherhood—like Lewis' Agnes, giving birth in a crypt. Her pariah status is expressed by Aurora herself, who, before learning she is rape victim, condemns her viciously for her out-of-wedlock child. Though she is restored in Aurora's eyes, Marian nevertheless loses the ability or the desire to determine her own fate or make meaning of her life, and continues to exist in a state both living and dead. Marian expresses sexual corruption as the physical corruption of the body after death, and sees it as just as inevitable. Invoking the Gothic figure of the ghostly bride (like Beatrice de la Cisternas, the Bleeding Nun), in the last canto Marian tells Romney

Once killed,..this ghost of Marian loves no more,
 No more..except the child!..no more at all.
 I told your cousin, sir, that I was dead;
 And now, she thinks I'll get up from my grave,
 And wear my chin-cloth for a wedding-veil,
 And glide along the churchyard like a bride,
 While all the dead keep whispering through the withes,
 'You would be better in your place with us,
 'You pitiful corruption!'(59)

In a poem so concerned with a woman's self-definition, Marian finds herself in a very constrained role. Whereas Aurora reclaims her poetic voice and vision, Marian is a zombie mother, limited in her identity and her scope by rape. A perpetual madonna, her role is fixed in both society and the text itself.

Just as Lucy Snowe imagines that one can be buried alive in a convent as well as a crypt, so the sensation fiction of the 1860s picked up the idea of live burial in the lunatic asylum, a theme that occurs in *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret* among others. According to Willis, "The sensation fiction equivalent is internment in a lunatic asylum: a figurative rather than literal form of burial alive." (60) The doctor who questions Lady Audley at the end of *Lady Audley's Secret* makes this explicit: "If you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations." (61) The novel contains two people who are buried alive: George Talboys, who is left to die in a well, and Lady Audley, who is "buried alive" in a lunatic asylum. Insistently tying live burial to the asylum and both burial and asylum to the cloister, the novel also figures this burial as an inability to communicate or persuade: those who are buried alive do not lose their lives, but they lose their ability to control the narrative.

Chapter titles throughout the novel reflect an obsession with live burial, even more insistently than the text itself, especially in the final third of the novel. Chapter ten in volume two, "Hidden in the Grave," has Robert Audley decrying the lack of peace and rest associated with the supposed death of his friend George as he looks at memorials in a church:

"If my poor friend, George Talboys, had died in my arms, and I had buried him in this quiet church, in one of the vaults over which I tread to-day, how much anguish of mind, vacillation, and torment I might have escaped,....I should have known his fate—I should have known his fate!"(62)

The contrast to the quiet dead in the church suggests that George is buried, but perhaps still suffering. Just as Raymond is haunted by the Bleeding Nun until he buries her bones in consecrated ground, Robert Audley worries, "What if he were henceforth to be haunted by the phantom of George Talboys?"(63) and becomes obsessed with the idea of burying him. The title of chapter eleven (volume two), "In the Lime Walk," refers to an avenue of lime, or linden trees, but also suggests the corrosive action of lime in burial (and thereby invokes ideas of bodily corruption and putrefaction). Other relevant chapter titles include "Preparing the Ground," (volume two, chapter twelve). Volume three, chapter six is entitled "Buried Alive," referring ostensibly to the fact that Lady Audley reveals at the end of the chapter that she has allowed George Talboys to be buried alive (in a well) but also referring to her own entombment in the institution.

The novel's final struggle between Robert and Lady Audley is over which of the two is "mad," for madness discredits their voice. Lady Audley's "secret" of the title is her madness, not that she has committed bigamy, or even murder: in a note to her father she writes "You should forgive me, for you know *why* I have been so. You know the secret which is the key to my life."(64) Lady Audley believes herself to be mad because her mother was, and as she frequently notes, madness is hereditary. The novel is ambiguous on the point. The doctor who examines her suggests that she is not, in fact, insane—that is just the way she rationalizes her own criminality. Despite the fact that she dramatically proclaims herself a "MADWOMAN!"(65) —in all capitals, she does not seem mad at all. As the doctor initially observes, "She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that."(66) In fact, what makes her so dangerous is that she is entirely rational, and it is this that makes her unsuitably feminine: without affection for her husband(s) or maternal attachment to her child, bigamy becomes a good way to game the system that awards status to women based on their husbands.

And so, it is Lady Audley who represents rationality, and Robert Audley who must act with subterfuge: in this case by burying her alive in a madhouse rather than going through the proper channels of the justice system. Doctor Mosgrave makes clear that a criminal trial would require more evidence: "no jury in the United Kingdom would condemn her upon such evidence as that," and furthermore, it would mean "exposure" and "*esclandre*."(67) Instead, by burying the story, it is kept out of the public eye and Lady Audley is silenced more effectively than she would be even were she tried, convicted, and condemned to capital punishment.

Just as in *Villette*, live burial is associated with Catholicism, which stands in for a Gothic past. Audley Court itself has Gothic/Catholic origins. Like the poor historical nun buried alive beneath the pear tree, Catholics have also been buried in the secret chambers of the Audley house, which contains

--a hiding place so small that he who hid there must have crouched on his hands and knees or lain at full length, and yet large enough to contain a quaint old carved oak chest half filled with priests' vestments which had been hidden away, no doubt, in those cruel days when the life of a man was in danger if he was discovered to have harboured a Roman Catholic priest, or to have had mass said in his house.(68)

Echoing numerous Gothic dungeons, the asylum to which Robert Audley takes Lady Audley used to be a monastery, and its crypt-like quality is evident in the description "the home which was to be her last upon

earth.”(69) Though her room is well-appointed because of the family money, it nevertheless is “of a dismal and cellarlike darkness; a saloon furnished with gloomy velvet draperies, and with a certain funereal splendour which is not particularly conducive to the elevation of the spirits.”(70) In case the reader misses the hint, Lady Audley reiterates ““You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley,’ she cried; ‘you have used your power cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave.”” Robert Audley retorts that what she sees as a living grave is “such a life as many a good and holy woman in this Catholic country freely takes upon herself and happily endures until the end.”(71) According to Diana Peschier’s study of anti-Catholicism of the period, the association of cloistering and mental asylum was widespread: “During the nineteenth century, the convent was closely associated with the asylum and actual mental hospitals in continental Europe were frequently identified as being managed by nuns”(72), (It is, in fact, in France that Lady Audley is imprisoned.) Robert Audley (a misogynist throughout the novel) associates cloistering with virtue in a restrictive feminine sphere, where Lady Audley associates it with burial. Madhouse, cloister and grave are all conflated.

With Lady Audley’s burial, her narrative is concealed, but others are revealed. George Talboys, whose own narrative truth has been suppressed though most of the novel, is disinterred. In a strange gender reversal that continues to revisit the link between the cloister and the grave, whereas Lady Audley is imprisoned in an old monastery, George Talboys is left to die in an “old convent well,”(73) one where in times past “busy nuns have perhaps drawn the cool water with their own fair hands.”(74) When he is thought dead, Robert Audley loses track of his story entirely. In another burial image, Robert Audley exclaims that it is “as if a trap-door had opened and in the solid earth, and let him through to the Antipodes,”(75) which is near being what happened, Talboys having sailed for Australia.

Previous critics of the Gothic generally and the Victorian Gothic specifically have made the argument that the Gothic is about irrationality and as such is a counter-argument to Victorian rationality, objectivity and empiricism. Critics such as Heilman began by making the point that Charlotte Brontë improves upon the rational, realistic novel by incorporating some of the irrational elements of the lower form of the Gothic. More recently, feminist critics such as Wolstenholme have accepted this argument in its basic form but responded by questioning Heilman’s hierarchy, suggesting that the irrational nature of the popular form of the Gothic may not be necessarily subordinate to rational realism, and there is some sense in that critique. But it is not enough to simply flip the terms of the dichotomy and to suggest that the irrational is equally valuable to, or more valuable than, the rational. Instead, what I want to suggest is that in countering empirical representation, the Gothic genre questions the very ability of narrative to represent human experience, and in that sense it questions the realist project, even within that project. This inability is philosophical, psychological and social: Lucy Snowe is a woman buried alive inside her own head. Just as she is detached emotionally from those around her, she is also persistently unable to tell her reader what it is like to be Lucy Snowe---what her dream is, what her confession is, what the early tragedies of her life are, even though the entire novel is about her attempt to make narrative sense of these things. Even more than that, she is buried alive in the sense that she is a fictional character who can never cross the boundaries of the novel she exists in and the possibilities that that novel permits her, nor can we as readers cross those boundaries. In both *Aurora Leigh* and in *Lady Audley’s Secret* narrative truth is exposed as social and (like in *Villette*) is affected by gender and social status. Aurora’s struggle is to attain the artist’s vision and the narrative control of her life and art. Her victory is her ability to see and represent reality as an artist, Marian’s failure to write her own story shows that the other alternative is a living death, determined by others. Finally, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, while it valorizes Robert Audley’s interpretation of events over Lady Audley’s, suggests a multiplicity of narratives and narrative possibilities in the way that it switches which characters are buried alive and which are allowed to speak (when George Talboys is

disinterred, and Lady Audley is silenced by being institutionalized), and in the ambiguity with which it treats the possibility of Lady Audley's madness.

The Gothic makes its influence felt in the Victorian period, not as an independent genre, but as the continuance of certain modes and conventions that permeate various genres. An analysis of the Victorian Gothic demonstrates that, rather than being separate from Victorian realism, it enters into Victorian realism in order to suggest unknowable possibilities and forces of suppression and repression. As in the figure of the person buried alive, this Gothic influence functions to suppress knowledge, narrative possibilities and the revelation of truths.

1. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1976, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986).
2. Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986).
3. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh, Aurora Leigh and Other Poems*, eds. John Robert Glorney Bolton and Julia Bolton Holloway (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).
4. Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987).
5. According to George Levine, "As we shall see with Austen and Thackeray, much nineteenth-century realism defined itself against romance because that form implied wish fulfillment rather than reality." George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981), 9. Cannon Schmitt elaborates: "Like romance, of which indeed it has often been seen as a sub-category, the Gothic was for much of the nineteenth century the feminized and derided antithesis of the realist novel" Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997), 7. Gothic novels, according to George E. Haggerty, despite some weaknesses, "achieve a generic revolution that changes the course of the history of fiction." George E. Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1989), 4.
6. See, for example, Elizabeth Napier, *The Failure of the Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987).
7. Schmitt, 6.
8. See Laurence Talairach, 'Behind the Scenes of Women's Beauty Parlours: From Gothicism to Sensationalism' in *Victorian Gothic*, eds. Karen Sayer and Rosemary Mitchell (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2003), 124-140, Kathleen Spencer, "Purity and Danger: Dracula, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis" in *ELH* 59 (1992), and Richard D. Altick, *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).
9. Carol Margaret Davison, "The Ghost of Genres Past: Theorizing the Gothic in the Victorian Novel" in *Victorian Gothic*, eds. Karen Sayer and Rosemary Mitchell (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2003), 24.
10. Haggerty, 8, 6.
11. Robert B. Heilman, "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic" in *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: Notes Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse*, eds. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (St. Paul: U of Minnesota, 1958), 118-132. 131-2.
12. Caroline Levine, *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2003), 52.
13. George Levine, *Dying to Know : Scientific Epistemology and Narrative in Victorian England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), 2.
14. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Claire Grogan (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 1996), 62.
15. Chris Willis, "A House for the Dead: Victorian Mausolea and Graveyard Gothic," *Victorian Gothic*, Eds. Karen Sayer and Rosemary Mitchell (Leeds: Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 2003): 155-165.
16. Sedgwick, 63.
17. Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), xi.
18. Mary Jacobus, "The Buried Letter: Feminism and Romanticism in *Villette*." 1986, reprinted in *New Casebooks: Villette*, ed. Pauline Nestor (New York: St. Martin's P, 1992).
19. Tony Tanner, "Substance and Shadow: Reading Reality in *Villette*," 1979, Reprinted in *New Casebooks: Villette*, Ed. Pauline Nestor (New York: St. Martin's P, 1992), 61, 64.
20. Brontë, 35.
21. *Ibid.*, 129.
22. Heilman, 123.

23. Susan Wolstenholme, *Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1993), 58.
24. Alison Milbank, "The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 153.
25. Rosemary Clark-Beattie, "Fables of Rebellion: Anti-Catholicism and the Structure of *Villette*," *ELH* 53 (1986): 821-847.
26. Brontë, 154.
27. *Ibid.*, 155.
28. Toni Wein, "Gothic Desire in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*" in *SEL: Studies in English Literature*, 39 (1999), 733-46.
29. Wolstenholme, 72.
30. Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk*, 1796, (New York: Grove P, 1952), 171.
31. See Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).
32. *Ibid.*, 173.
33. Brontë, 151.
34. Sedgwick, 52.
35. As Christina Crosby points out, Lucy will later, in her attack on the empty habit that lays upon her bed, refer to the nun as an "incubus." Brontë, 451. Christina Crosby, "Charlotte Brontë's Haunted Text" in *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24, 4 (1984), 708.
36. Brontë, 152.
37. *Ibid.*, 153.
38. Randa Helfield, "Confession as Cover-Up in Brontë's *Villette*" in *English Studies in Canada*, 23 (1997), 59.
39. Brontë, 99.
40. Crosby, 711.
41. Sedgwick, 130.
42. Brontë, 347.
43. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 412.
44. Brontë, 439.
45. *Ibid.*, 416.
46. James O'Rourke, *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography: The Ethics of Confession* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2006), 156.
47. Milbank, 157.
48. According to the Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective, "The condition for Aurora's marriage which Barrett Browning sets in her narrative is that she retain her position as speaking subject." The Marxist-Feminist Literature Collective. "Women's Writing: *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, *Villette*, *Aurora Leigh*," excerpted in *Critical Essays on Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, Ed. Sandra Donaldson (New York: G.K. & Hall, 1999), 102-111, 108.
49. Kathleen Renk, "Resurrecting the Living Dead: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Poetic Vision in *Aurora Leigh*" in *Studies in Browning and His Circle*, 23 (2000 May), 40-49, 40.
50. Linda M. Lewis, "Rape and Resurrection in *Aurora Leigh*," *Studies in Browning and His Circle*, 19 (1991), 56-65, 56.
51. *Ibid.*, 60.
52. Barrett Browning, 6.551-22.
53. *Ibid.*, 6.769-770.
54. Barrett Browning, 6.1272-3.

55. Ibid., 6.1195-1202.
56. Ibid., 6.1246-1248.
57. Ibid., 6.1239-1245.
58. Ibid., 6.822-828.
59. Ibid., 9.389-396.
60. Willis, 160.
61. Braddon, 381.
62. Ibid., 256.
63. Ibid., 402.
64. Ibid., 250.
65. Ibid., 345.
66. Ibid., 377.
67. Ibid., 379-80.
68. Ibid., 3.
69. Ibid., 385.
70. Ibid., 388.
71. Ibid., 391.
72. Diana Peschier, *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses: The Case of Charlotte Brontë* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 164.
73. Braddon, 395.
74. Ibid., 4.
75. Ibid., 151.

Massacres of Meaning: The Semiotic Value of Silence and Scream in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Halloween*

Kurt Fawver

Introduction – The Scream is Everything (Literally)

Within traditional psychological and psychobiological parlance, screaming is considered either an outlet for repressed pain and trauma or the simple effect of a chemical reaction to terrifying stimuli.⁽¹⁾ As an aesthetic device, however, the scream can function in a far less pragmatic manner; it may take on a level of unknowability, of pure symbolic value. Consider: in literature, the scream does not even have a constant textual representation. Authors often simply tell the reader that a character has screamed rather than attempt to render the utterance into a coherent string of signifiers. When the scream is transliterated, it may be variously written as “Ahhh,” “Aieee,” “Aaaaa,” or as any number of other vowel-centric combinations. It has no definite signifier, nor an absolute signified; in this sense, the aesthetic scream is, in effect, the cynosure of signification in that it can be represented in virtually any conceivable manner and, equally, it can represent an endless panoply of concepts, experiences, and individual states of being. This idea holds especially true for the scream in horror cinema which, often through inducement by marked silences that oppose the very concept of conventional signification, acts as the ultimate gesture of multivalency in meaning.

Horror films such as Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) and John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) knowingly employ certain auditory tropes in order to increase spectator tension, unease, and anxiety.⁽²⁾ Certainly, the unnatural groans or breathing of a monster or killer, the roar of a chainsaw or the sleek chink of a bladed weapon, and, most importantly, the scream of a victim all affect the experiential qualities of a horror movie; they draw the audience into a deeper emotional and psychological relationship with what is occurring on screen and, in essence, help to heighten the viscerally “frightening” aspects of the film.⁽³⁾ However, such auditory tropes do not stop at being technical devices utilized in the enhancement of atmosphere or the intensification of shock. Indeed, aural cues such as those mentioned above – the victim's scream, the sound of weapons and the monster/killer's particular noise or, as is more ripe for critical interpretation, silence – are actually semiotic registers of the battle between life and death, order and chaos, and, most importantly, meaning and the utterly incomprehensible. When employed in the confrontation of victim and monster/killer, otherwise pedestrian sounds take on increased importance and become indicative of an ongoing conflict between the entire symbolic order (full of energy and potentiality) and a vast *lack* (characterized by entropy and a totalizing absence of possibility). In this sense, the monster/killer and all its concomitant noises and silences are representations of non-being, of death, of an entire “shutting down” of the play of signification. Equally, the victim's scream is more than just a scream: it is the attempt to defeat this “shutting down” – which could be described as an ultimate “nothingness” – by forcing the entire realm of signification, all potential meaning – an “everythingness” – into one utterance. What is truly at stake in the auditory confrontation between victim and monster/killer is, therefore, nothing short of the continued propagation of meaning, of the universe of the signified, writ large.

Nothing Under the Roar – Silence and Screaming in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*

Potentially one of the most explicit illustrations of the confrontation between auditory signifiers in horror cinema occurs in the final scene of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. After the film's heroic

“final girl,” Sally, escapes from the serial killing family's house of horrors, she flees down their long, dusty driveway which, ultimately, leads to a public road.(4) As she runs, she is pursued by both Leatherface and the hitchhiker, neither of whom, apart from the monotone growl of Leatherface's chainsaw, make any noise.(5) Sally, however, is screaming the entire time; though on some level she must know that no one will hear her in the driveway, let alone come to her aid, she still employs the aural signifier of the scream. But why? If the sound will not elicit rescue or frighten away her pursuers, why does Sally not remain silent, saving her breath to run faster and harder? Within the world of the movie, it may be perfectly reasonable for Sally to scream and, in fact, one could easily attribute her vocal outbursts to unconscious, primal survival instincts in the face of fear – i.e., strictly psychological or psychobiological reactions. However, *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* does not seem to aspire toward acute realism in any other manner (indeed, many of the trappings of the family's home are bordering on the surreal), so it would be difficult to imagine that Sally's screams were a result of the filmmakers' striving for a more true-to-life character reaction. Rather, the impetus for her outbursts lies outside the narrative logic of the film, in the realm of signs and symbolic values. Sally's screams are primarily referential of abstract ideas that exist in a non-diegetic world, with the fear and fright she experiences in the narrative acting as only the surface layer of a much more complex and multiplicitous sphere of meaning.

Sally's piercing vocalization during her escape is especially notable given the silence of the hitchhiker and Leatherface during the scene. Indeed, in the auditory juxtaposition of monsters and victim, a clear oppositional binary becomes apparent. On one side lies the monstrous, equated with silence, and on the other side resides the victimized, equated with extreme, forceful sound. The monsters' silence is a signifier without a signified; that they do not speak, yell, or even grunt in their pursuit of Sally reveals that they have no true inner monologue, nothing within their beings (or, perhaps more appropriately, non-beings) prompts them to shout out to Sally in order to make her stop and, thereby, enter into the realm of signification-based communication.(6) Instead, Leatherface and the hitchhiker are driven, simply, monolithically, to kill, to end Sally's life. Their existence is predicated on ending other existences, on a totalizing ideology of silencing and closing down. They do not want life to exist, because life entails potentialities for change, diversity, and multiplicity; life is, at its base, brimming with signified meanings. The silence of the hitchhiker and Leatherface in this final scene flies in the face of life and, therefore, competes with potentiality and meaning. Their silence is utter lack; it is death and a dreadful, static meaninglessness. It has no referential, no signified thing that stands behind it, because to have such a signified would be to allow the world of meaning to creep in and, with the world of meaning, the possibility of change, something to which the murderous family in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is clearly opposed, as is evidenced by their familial isolationism and their obsessive need to preserve and memorialize the past (i.e., making furniture and other functional décor from bones, venerating “Grandpa,” consuming the dead, and wearing pieces of the dead).

Visual representations within the film bear out this reading of Leatherface and the hitchhiker's silence. Within their house are numerous strange, seemingly totemic items – skulls and feathers, random detritus of former killings – that serve no apparent purpose. The meaning of these objects is completely in question, as no family member addresses their existence. The family practices no known religion that would make functional sense of these items, nor do they seem to have any immediately discernible aesthetic value for their owners. Rather, it is as if the totems simply exist without meaning, as if they are signifiers devoid of the universe of the signified. Equally, Leatherface's very appearance is pure signifier; we know only of his surface, his presentation to the world, as his true face is eternally hidden beneath a mask of dried and tanned human flesh. Who is the person (or thing) behind this human mask? The audience never knows and, indeed, cannot know. Leatherface's actual face, which, presumably, would reveal something of his personality or, at very least, give him subtle characterization, is never shown.

Thus, the identity of Leatherface, even on a level as superficial as physical appearance, remains as blank, as lacking, as his silence.

Considering Sally's scream in relation to the nature of the silence of the killers, then, it is possible to see how she is locked in an auditory battle. The hitchhiker's and Leatherface's lack, their emptiness of meaning, threatens to subsume and destroy Sally. She has no choice but to flee – which she does, quite literally – or fight back – which is precisely wherein the scream becomes of critical importance. Against the absolute vacuum of meaning that Leatherface and the hitchhiker's silence encompasses, Sally deploys the only possible weapon she has: an utterance of unbridled meaning, of any and all possible meanings. Her scream is as indeterminate as the killers' silence, but for exactly the opposite reason – it signifies anything and everything; the scream is auditory raging against broken signification, an attempt to fill the killers' yawning lack of signified meaning with a vociferous everythingness. The scream signifies life and endless possibility, the continuation of the individual uttering the sound and of the entire world of ideas, objects, and beings. Thus, in actuality, the scream is a weapon of joyousness, a weapon constructed of the unfettered play of signification.⁽⁷⁾ Indeed, one of the final shots of the film shows Sally riding away in the back of a salvatory pickup truck, still screaming, but with the scream beginning to melt into a laugh, as if the two are, and always were, one utterance. Play has, seemingly, won the day and the symbolic order, signification as a universal communicative conception, survives.

But, of course, the movie does not close on Sally; it cuts back to a close shot of Leatherface, who is standing in the middle of the road, wildly swinging his roaring chainsaw without so much as a curse or a cry of frustration in his escaped victim's direction. Still maintaining an eerie silence, Leatherface appears to be purposelessly raging against unseen victims, his mindless drive to annihilate life and, therein, meaning, now scattered and unfocused due to Sally's disappearance. The play of signification may have temporarily escaped eradication, but the challenge to its existence from the lack of meaning and meaningful communication – what may be, in one regard, death – remains as pressing and immediate as ever before, as the tightness of the shot combined with Leatherface's manic fervor reveals. Indeed, it is notable that this final shot of loud, grating chainsaw is abruptly cut off, and the credits roll over absolute silence; no score fills in the auditory background, no chainsaw echoes across the scrawl, and no screams pierce the air. The film ends in total, almost unexpected, silence, providing only further evidence that the silencing force of death, nothingness, and semiotic shutting-down are omnipresent and can burst in upon the noise of signification and life at any moment.

One last point concerning the final scene – almost an addendum – revolves around the growl of Leatherface's chainsaw which, in the aforementioned ending shot, is indicative of the dualistic functionality of its sound throughout the entire movie. Leatherface, as remarked upon already, neither verbalizes nor even vocalizes an internal state; in the final shot, he continues to do essentially what he has done for most of the film – namely, brandish a weapon menacingly and without personal utterance. The character of Leatherface is synonymous with this action and, in contemporary cultural consciousness, he is rarely represented without his chainsaw. The tool of destruction and the destroyer himself have an inextricably symbiotic relationship, as one seems incomplete without the other. This melding and merging of the Leatherface with his chainsaw can be easily explained if the noise of the chainsaw is conceived of as a hollow signifier that stands in place of what should be Leatherface's meaning-filled voice. As Leatherface is the epitome of meaninglessness, of non-being and an eternal shutting down of signification, he can only present unto the world a series of signifiers. Anything that indicates Leatherface's “being” is necessarily surface appearance, as, at his core, is ultimate lack. Just as his blank, human flesh-mask stands in for a real face with true, meaningful features, so too does the roar of the chainsaw stand in for a real voice with meaningful speech acts. Its sound is a grating, monotonous growl

that never varies in pitch or tone but, instead, remains a static auditory field. This noise is the voice of absence; it is the roar of the void. Leatherface does not speak because he cannot, because he has no internal state to express, to signify. The sound of the chainsaw is his only auditory communication and it acts, quite simply, as a conduit through which the unchanging rage toward dynamic existence that lies beneath Leatherface's exterior is able to flow.⁽⁸⁾ Rather than scream obscenities or promises of reprisal toward Sally in the final moment of the film, Leatherface revs the chainsaw; in a time and place where some sort of frustrated vociferation would be expected, there exists only an angry metallic buzz. Here, then, the chainsaw's loud, feverish sound substitutes for Leatherface's voice. It is the weapon that "speaks" to the fleeing Sally rather than the killer, and what the chainsaw "says" is nothing coherent or remotely intelligible; it is, simply, the sound of meaninglessness, of the collapse of all play of signification into one grating, everlasting void.⁽⁹⁾ Like Leatherface's silence, the voice of the chainsaw (i.e., Leatherface's surrogate vociferation) is the constant aural form of a greater entropic force, a destructive tearing apart of meaning and shutting down of signification that perpetually lurks at the margins of normative, sign-filled existence.

In general, death scenes scattered throughout the film support – albeit somewhat less demonstrably than the final scene – the notion that killers and victims are locked in an auditory war of signification. Franklin's death, for instance, deals in the same formula of silence and scream. It occurs as he and Sally are wandering in the darkness, searching for their missing friends. As they traverse the murdering *Massacre* family's land, an overwhelming silence hangs in the air; there is no sound but for their crunching through twigs and leaves. Then, suddenly, Franklin tells Sally to stop because he "hears something." The audience is not privy to what this "something" might be, as nothing breaks the silence just yet. For a moment, indeed, no more than a brief second, all attention is aurally focused; the audience struggles to hear anything, but only silence comes from the darkness – the same disquieting silence of absolute nothingness that flows through Leatherface and Hitchhiker. Indeed, the audience listens closely for a sign of presence, but is greeted by nothing, a vast, uncontained absence. Out of this silence emerges Leatherface, the embodiment of semiotic hollowness, bearing his roaring tool of meaningless vociferation, the chainsaw. As in the final scene, Leatherface does not speak or laugh or make any communicative gesture other than to hack Franklin, now screaming, to pieces while Sally, also screaming, watches. Here, again, Leatherface has only one goal: the eradication of life and those who come bearing meaning and meaningful signification. He gives no reason for his killing nor does he show any emotion – pleasurable or otherwise – toward the act. Leatherface's entire being is here, as in the final scene, wrapped up in lack of signified meanings.

Equally, Sally's scream is also highlighted as a contrast to Leatherface's personal silence (and his chainsaw's monotone roar). As Franklin is being murdered, Sally stands in the shadowed background, subsumed, visually and sonically, by Leatherface's shutting down of Franklin's potential for signification. Initially, the action focuses on Leatherface and Franklin, with the darkness encompassing Sally, making her form indistinct, and the noise of the chainsaw drowns out her screams, all as if she is literally being swallowed into meaninglessness. Eventually, however, the scene cuts to Sally, alone, bathed in a dim light and screaming in a clear, piercing tone. This scream is blatantly juxtaposed with the prior silence and guttural chainsaw sounds; it is the antithesis to Leatherface's absolutely empty death-dealing and, as such, is the vociferation of life itself, the simultaneous assertion of every possible signified, every possible meaning in the communicative spectrum. Here, as in the film's final scene, Sally screams to ward off Leatherface's nothingness, his lack of signification. She attempts to fill the monstrous void with an utterance that can, and does, have any and all potential meanings.

The same sort of binary opposition between silence and scream plays out in other murders within the film as well – not the least of which is Pam's infamous meathook murder scene. However, to discuss each of these murder scenes in depth would be to only reiterate and belabor points already made. It will suffice to say that in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (and, indeed, perhaps in all other horror films that deploy silence against the victim), the confrontation between monster/killer and potential victim is not so much a struggle for mere life or death, but a struggle to end or propagate signified meaning.

The Silence of Eviscerated Meaning – *Halloween* and Layered Nothingness

Although the auditory battle of signification between monster/killer and victim exists within an extremely broad spectrum of horror films well beyond *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, few of these movies add any significant caveats or extensions to the general formula.⁽¹⁰⁾ John Carpenter's *Halloween* is one of the rare exceptions. In *Halloween*, the audience is presented with the inscrutable, ever-silent Michael Myers, a figure of absolute meaninglessness and nothingness in the same vein as Leatherface. Michael kills for no reason; he is, according to his psychiatrist Dr. Loomis, “pure evil.” In this case, pure evil most closely means destruction and violence without purpose. The reason Michael is so feared and so alien to Dr. Loomis and the broader swath of humanity is because there exists no meaning behind his actions, no signified object or thing that serves as motivation for his killing. Every one of Michael's murders is what it is – a killing, a cessation of life for the sake of the cessation of life. His actions are, therefore, well outside the realm of signification, as nothing whatsoever stands behind them as greater or deeper meaning for their existence.

Michael, as much as Leatherface (and, arguably, more so), embodies lack, the vast nothingness that seeks to usher in a totalizing universe of empty, static homogeneity. Indeed, from opening scene to the credits, Michael never utters a single syllable or even (unlike Leatherface) a cry of physical pain. In the final confrontation with Laurie, he is gored through the eye by a clothes hanger, stabbed with a butcher knife and, eventually, shot multiple times by Dr. Loomis. Yet, during all this physical punishment, nary an expletive or groan escapes Michael's lips; rather, he remains eerily, preternaturally, silent. Lynda's death earlier in the movie is also telling of Michael's drive to shut down signification, as he strangles her with a telephone cord, literally and figuratively breaking her line of communication to Laurie, with whom she is conversing when Michael strikes. After he has killed Lynda, Michael is offered an opportunity to talk to Laurie on the telephone, but he cannot do so. He picks up the receiver and places it next to his ear and mouth, but says nothing. Michael has no message to convey to Laurie, as a message entails meaning and signification. Instead, he can only offer up silence on the line, his nothingness rebounding against Laurie's urgent, and voiced, concern for Lynda. Michael is, therefore, existentially silent, having no internal state whatsoever (not even a state of biological internal normalcy, apparently) and no realm of deeper signified meaning to express. Michael is entirely without signified substance. The characters around him, Dr. Loomis and Laurie, for instance, try to give reasons for Michael's behavior and attempt to understand his being, but invariably fail and are forced to deal with Michael as a machine-like presence, a pure functionary of what they term “evil” – i.e., unmitigated destruction of life and signification.

That Michael is pure, absolute impersonality and meaninglessness is also represented visually. Through much of the movie Michael's true face is obscured, as he perpetually wears a pure white mask, a featureless, utterly blank false-face. His representation to the world is this lack of personality and definition, a complete and generic shallowness of being (and, even when the audience does see a clear shot of Michael's face in the opening scene, it is revealed to be that of an entirely average blond-haired, blue-eyed boy – a completely generic American child). Michael is not, therefore, a person, but a thing, a device by which entropic nothingness may assert its violence upon the world of meaningful signification.

His clothes are equally lacking in personality or meaningful feature, as, for the majority of the film, he wears a plain blue mechanic's jumpsuit, a garment devoid of any frills or aesthetic contrivances – it is, in essence, the garb of pure functionality. Indeed, as Michael is more a function (or machine) than an individual, it is only fitting that the jumpsuit he wears is one of a mechanic, a person who deals in the maintenance and propagation of lifeless, mechanized, and, for the most part, merely functional objects (i.e., vehicles).

One might be tempted to argue that Michael Myers does not fit the model of monster/killer without signified meaning because he is revealed to be a “real” person underneath his mask (once, in the opening scene, as a child and once, when he escapes from Dr. Loomis, as an adult). The idea that Michael's silence is not representation, but an actual auditory form of nothingness itself, hinges on support from the narrative and visual aspects of the movie (as was the case with Leatherface in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*). If Michael is a “real” person, a character with deep psychological motivations and a complex inner state, then his silence is indicative of some signified “thing” – an introversion or sociopathy, perhaps – rather than nothing whatsoever. However, this is not the case. Even though *Halloween's* opening scene shows Michael's true face (at least at a young age), this does not mean he has a substantial being. Indeed, Michael's appearance is extremely and disturbingly average, as if he is an everychild. As mentioned before, he is the prototypical blond-haired and blue-eyed Caucasian boy, a stock individual, an American archetype – the “boy next door,” if you will. When his clown mask is pulled from his face, he displays no expression, no emotion, no sign of thought or inner dynamism. He appears devoid of any specific set of psychological and emotional traits that might be thought of as “personality.” Thus, even in his supposed individuality, Michael is generic. As such, his blank mask is overlaid upon an equally blank “real” face; layers of meaningless signifiers stack one atop the other to create the illusion that Michael might be a “real” person on some as-yet-unseen level. (And, in fact, the layers are stacked even one higher when Michael drapes a ghost-sheet over himself and dons Bob's glasses just before he murders Lynda.) In reality, however, this multi-layering of signifiers only deepens Michael's insubstantiality, as his identity becomes like that of a Russian nesting doll, with the final, tiny figurine at the middle cracking open to reveal nothing but a yawning abyss of meaning. Michael's silence throughout the film is, therefore, of an even more impenetrable nothingness than the lack of meaning that Leatherface embodies. This complete and all-encompassing silence and its concomitant drive to destroy signification is reinforced by the nature of Michael's very being – that of nothing more an amalgam of hollow signifiers.

Michael's primary combatant in his auditory battle is *Halloween's* “final girl,” Laurie. Unlike Sally in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, Laurie does not scream when in direct confrontation with the monstrous Michael Myers (when he initially startles her after she finds the dead bodies of her friends, she screams, but this seems to be less in response to Michael than to the shock of the entire situation – i.e., seeing a room bursting with dead bodies then being accosted by a knife-wielding stranger). Rather than scream, Laurie whimpers. In the final sequence of scenes, as Michael continually attempts to murder her inside the Doyles' house, Laurie is unable to make any noise other than a frightened sound of desperation. She is clearly capable of screaming, as, before she ran into the Doyles' house, she pounded on a neighbor's door and screamed the word “help” repeatedly (a call to aid, which, tellingly, went unanswered – perhaps exhibiting the inefficacy of Laurie's screams). However, once she is in direct, face-to-face confrontation with Michael, Laurie cannot voice any meaningful communicative utterance. Her whimpers feel as though they are on the edge of louder, more forceful vociferation, and might grow into screams – especially in the scene in which she is hiding in an empty closet with Michael attempting to break through – were they not perpetually cut short or somehow retrained. That Laurie evinces this inability to scream, this stopping just short of deploying the signifier of everythingness, is testament to the overwhelming power of Michael's silence, his vast and all-consuming lack of signified meaning. Laurie cannot scream

because Michael's silence is too forceful, too pervasive; it shuts down signification to a substantial degree even without murder. Indeed, Michael cuts the phone lines in the DoYLES' house prior to stalking Laurie, thus silencing her in a broader manner by disallowing her communication with the outside world. Michael's multi-layered meaninglessness is, quite simply, all-pervasive within the film and shuts down signification at every possible turn, whether through killing (his means include, interestingly, slitting throats and strangulation – both forms of violence against the larynx and, hence, vociferation) or through the sheer force of his non-being in the world. Thus, due to the strength, the unfathomable depth, of Michael's silent meaninglessness, Laurie cannot do more than whimper during the confrontation. The last useful weapon against Michael's silence has been held at bay, and there can be no end to the invading nothingness, no gleeful “filling up” of the lack, as is evidenced by the fact that Michael is “filled up” with a knitting needle to the neck, a clothes hanger to the eye, a knife to the stomach, and several bullets to the chest yet still survives. No matter what weapon attempts to penetrate and disperse his silent lack, the result is the same: failure.⁽¹¹⁾ Michael Myers is, therefore, an ultimate figure of endless nothingness and hollow signification against which there may be no true escape, only brief, and quite temporary, abeyance.

All or Nothing – A Very Brief Conclusion

Sound in horror cinema has many uses. It can be utilized to heighten a visceral shock, enhance a disturbing or anxiety-provoking atmosphere, or even to foreshadow horrific events. Such spectator-centric functions of sound have been scholarly and critically recognized and explored. However, as is evinced in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Halloween*, certain sounds in the horror film also have value in terms of their semiotic capacity – a fact which has gone undeveloped within academic discourse. Horror movies that contain a silent killer or monster involve an auditory struggle between a force that seeks the total shutting down of signification, a vast lack of signified meaning – i.e., the killer/monster's silence – and the entire realm of the signified, an everythingness of meaning – i.e., the victim's scream. When silent monster and screaming victim collide, nothingness and everythingness meet, with the scream, the victim, and everythingness occasionally winning the day but, more often than not, the killer/monster's silence, the absolute lack of meaning (death and entropic destruction writ large), remaining an ever-present, ever-looming threat to the entire world of signification and meaningful communication. Thus, within horror films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Halloween*, the juxtaposition between monstrous silence and victimized scream is, in actuality, a perpetual battle between meaning and meaninglessness, with victims not only fighting for their lives but for the continued existence of signification.

1. Jeffrey Gray's *The Psychology of Fear and Stress* (1972) and, though somewhat controversial for its therapeutic suggestions, Arthur Janov's *The Primal Scream* (1970) both explore the implications of the scream as a device engaged in the subconscious management of horrifying or terrifying events.
2. Although audio in horror cinema remains a relatively underrepresented subfield of scholarly inquiry, works such as *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear* (2009), *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound, and Horror Cinema* (2009), and Thomas Sipos's *Horror Film Aesthetics: The Visual Language of Fear* (2010) all discuss the topic in significant depth. However, they primarily focus on the technical aspects of sound production and the experiential effects that such sounds have upon an audience.
3. In their "Developmental Differences in Response to Horror," Joanne Cantor and Mary Beth Oliver explain that the sounds of horror movies are "available to energize and intensify, via excitation transfer, the viewer's feelings of fear that are produced by the various plot elements [of the horror movie]" (228).
4. "Final girl" of course referring to Carol Clover's postulation of the recurring female figure – an ostensible heroine – who is the last person to face the killer of a horror film. For further explanation, see Clover's *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*.
5. In *Horror Film Aesthetics*, Sipos explains how the "sudden loss" of ambient sound – such as occurs in the final scene, with only Sally's screams echoing in the audience's ears – can "unsettle or terrify" due to the sudden and precipitous lack of what is normally present (228). From a filmmaking standpoint, this is logical and useful technique, but from a textual position, the silence defies explanation, as there should, seemingly, be no reason why practically all sound beyond Sally's scream (and eventually Leatherface's chainsaw) evaporate within the scene.
6. It should be noted that this idea of signifier with missing signified is not the same as Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra as posited in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985). In Baudrillard's philosophy, the signifier has no signified because the signifier is, in itself, its own signified; it has been mass produced and copied to the point where it has taken on a life of its own. The lack of signified here, in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, is total and, indeed, purposefully hostile toward the notion of signification-based communication. It is not merely a byproduct of rampant consumerism, but the embodiment of a system that stands in opposition to the generation of meaning.
7. It is interesting that audience members in a university study found Sally's screaming to be "the most freaky thing about the movie" (Nolan and Ryan 39). This might be explained by considering that the chainsaw, and, indeed, even absolute nothingness in the form of physical or existential death, have been within the general Western cultural consciousness for decades (and in the case of physical death, since time immemorial) while the scream as weapon and absolute everythingness is an fairly new and, therefore, unknown concept (indeed, the idea of an everythingness of signification has only been in common parlance since Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (1967)). Thus, being the lesser known quantity, the scream becomes the sound that evokes the most anxiety as audience members are not certain what it entails.
8. It is worth noting that monotone drones, such as the growl produced by the chainsaw, have been found to produce within listeners a heightened sense of suspense. Janet Halfyard in her essay "Mischievous Afoot: Supernatural Horror-comedies and the *Diabolus in Musica*" explores this issue in significant depth, examining the manner by which atonality and aural stasis affect the reception of horror film.
9. Scholars have also noted that simplistic, uncomplicated sounds – like the growl of a chainsaw – evoke a sense of visceral disturbance rather than an intellectual interest. Thus, the reaction to Leatherface's buzzing weapon is not one that queries why he might be using the device but, rather, one that simply flees from it, like Sally, in abhorrence. For further discussion of this issue, see Fiona Kelleghan's ICFA presentation "Sound Effects in Science Fiction and Horror Films."
10. James Wan's *Dead Silence*, for instance, provides another overt representation of monstrous desire to shut down signification, as the film's spectral monster, Mary Shaw, demands absolute silence of all around her (i.e., a complete shutting down of signification). If a victim screams in the face of her terrifying form,

she tears out that individual's tongue, thus silencing that individual literally and symbolically. Shaw abhors meaningful communication and, hence, seeks to destroy the entire symbolic order which allows for such communication. Although perfectly exemplifying the monster/killer's monolithic desire to silence and end the system of signification by destroying the scream, this film does not advance the idea in any novel manner and, ultimately, is simply an excellent example of the aforementioned rage against semiotic and symbolic communication. For further discussion of the more conventional ways in which *Dead Silence* uses sound and silence, see Brigid Cherry's *Horror: Routledge Film Guidebooks* (2009).

11. In *Nightmares in Red, White, and Blue: The Evolution of the American Horror Film*, Joseph Maddrey explains this insane fortitude as the all-pervasiveness of chaos and disorder in even the most orderly and socially well-organized places (i.e., the suburbs) (133).

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BOOK REVIEWS

“Satan, Thou Art Outdone!”

***The Pan Book of Horror Stories*, Herbert van Thal (ed.), with a new foreword by Johnny Mains
(London: Pan Books, 2010)**

What does it take to truly horrify? What particular qualities do readers look for when they choose a book of horror tales over a book of ghost stories, supernatural thrillers or gothic mysteries? What distinguishes a really horrific story from a tale with the power simply to scare or disturb in a world where one person's fears and phobias are another person's ideas of fun? These were questions that the legendary editor Herbert van Thal and publisher Clarence Paget confronted when, in 1957, they began conspiring to put together their first ever collection of horror stories. The result of their shadowy labours, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories*, was an immediate success and became the premiere volume in a series of collections which were published annually and which appeared, almost without interruption, for the next thirty years.

During its lifetime, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* became a literary institution as each year, van Thal and Paget did their best to assemble an even more sensational selection of horrifying tales. Many of the most celebrated names in contemporary horror, including Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch and Stephen King, made early appearances between the covers of these anthologies and the cycle proved massively influential on successive waves of horror writers, filmmakers and aficionados. All the same, there are generations of horror fans who have never known the peculiar, queasy pleasure of opening up one of these collections late at night and savouring the creepy imaginings that lie within. To make amends for this, and to mark the important contribution that the publishers' horror-story anthologies made to the culture of the uncanny, Pan has reprinted the original volume in all its gory glory.

It's an indication of the seriousness with which Herbert van Thal and Clarence Paget undertook the compilation of the first *Pan Book of Horror Stories* that, although they decided on the venture two years earlier, it did not appear until the 11th of December 1959. Both men were adamant that the collection should include the very best horror writing from the past and present and they trawled through innumerable books in search of material. Their patience was rewarded, as the list of names they managed to assemble was of the highest literary distinction. L.P. Hartley, Joan Aiken, Muriel Spark, Jack Finney, C.S. Forester, Bram Stoker, Angus Wilson and Nigel Kneale were among the twenty-two authors brought together for the initial collection. With talent like this, it was no mystery why *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* and its follow-ups went on to sell millions of copies and gave rise to numerous imitations.

One thing that was unexpected, however, was Herbert van Thal's sudden elevation to the position of high-priest of horror. A man known for his immaculate dress (which included a bow tie and a monocle) and a deep interest in literary history, it must have bemused him that he should become popularly known as “The Horror Man,” the editor whose name on the cover of an anthology was a personal guarantee of the high standard of the ghoulishness within. As the horror author and critic Johnny Mains writes in his new introduction, van Thal became “a trademark, the name you could trust to deliver the scares.” That van Thal knew the horror genre inside-out is clear from his own brief introductory note, in which he ponders why we read horror stories; “Is it not the memorable and age-long custom that we like ‘being taken out of ourselves?’ And is there not a slight feeling of smugness, that while sitting in our (we hope) comfortable armchairs we can safely read of the ingenious and terrifying things men do to men?” he asks. Mains maintains that it was due to van Thal's mostly impeccable judgement that *The Pan Book of Horror*

Stories gained such a following and why, more than fifty years later, it remains “ingrained in the nation’s psyche” as “the literary world’s dirty little secret.”

What kinds of horror story were people reading back in December 1959? The answer is surprisingly nasty ones. Van Thal warns readers that “these authors know their craft, and they have not hesitated to expound it with little thought of sparing you from the horrifying details.” If this initially sounds like a little bombastic showmanship, it seems less so the further into this collection one proceeds. For within these pages are tales involving lavish descriptions of torture, mutilation, brutal murder, operations going disastrously wrong, people being crushed, torn to shreds, entombed alive, squashed flat and pierced through by strange devices and falling to bits. Even by twenty-first century levels, the gore quotient is astonishingly high.

The only word which can do justice to the different approaches to horror represented in *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* is “random,” and the quality of the writing varies wildly. Some stories, like Hazel Heald’s “The Horror in the Museum,” Noel Langley’s “Serenade for Baboons,” Hester Holland’s “The Library,” Flavia Richardson’s “Behind the Yellow Door,” Peter Fleming’s “The Kill,” Anthony Vercoe’s “Flies,” Bram Stoker’s “The Squaw” and Seabury Quinn’s “The House of Horror,” are straightforward exercises in morbid suspense, often ending with a shockingly visceral denouement. Others follow a quieter, more intriguing path, like Fielden Hughes’ “The Mistake,” L.P. Hartley’s “W.S.,” Nigel Kneale’s “Oh, Mirror, Mirror” and Alan Wykes’ “Nightmare.” Some, like Angus Wilson’s “Raspberry Jam,” A.L. Barker’s “Submerged,” Jack Finney’s “Contents of the Dead Man’s Pockets” and Muriel Spark’s “The Portobello Road,” contain even less in the way of traditional horror while others, like Chris Massie’s extremely odd “A Fragment of Fact” and Hamilton Macallister’s surreal “The Lady Who Didn’t Waste Words,” only fall into the category only because it’s hard to imagine where else they could belong. Two of the tales, Joan Aiken’s “Jugged Hare” and Oscar Cook’s “His Beautiful Hands,” are basically sick jokes bloated out to eight pages apiece.

Van Thal and Paget were of the opinion that the collection should include something for everyone, from sedate and intricately structured chillers to full-blooded pulp sensationalism. Only in this book could a story as shamelessly exploitative as George Fielding Eliot’s “The Copper Bowl” (proof that sadistic, racist, misogynist trash of the “torture-porn” variety is by no means a new addition to the world of horror) be found alongside Muriel Spark’s troubling, elegiac tale. However, dividing these tales into high-brow and low-brow is not necessarily a reliable way of sorting the more successful short stories from the weaker ones. Angus Wilson’s tale, about an alienated young boy who realises that the two old ladies he has befriended have gone insane from isolation, is overlong and this dilutes the impact of its sickening ending. Beautifully rendered in sleek, ethereal prose, A.L. Barker’s “Submerged” is also a tale about a disturbed young adolescent encountering the cruelty of the adult world but, as with Wilson’s story, it loses its way due to its meandering pacing. L.P. Hartley’s “W.S.” is yet another horror story to feature a sinister double who turns out to be a manifestation of the narrator’s splintering personality, and even though Hartley gives the concept a clever meta-fictional twist, the conclusion is predictable. Joan Aiken’s tale is also a disappointment as it lacks a sufficient degree of psychological penetration to make it anything more than a classy revenge story.

On the deranged hokum front, *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* fares much better. Noel Langley’s “Serenade for Baboons” is a riveting piece set in South Africa, in which a doctor’s contempt for local customs leads him into a hellish predicament. Fielden Hughes’ “The Mistake,” about the vicar of a small parish whose vendetta with a local troublemaker brings on permanent insomnia, bears more than a passing resemblance to “The Tell-Tale Heart” but is a well-composed and disconcerting story. Seabury

Quinn's "The House of Horror," a tale reminiscent of the great Universal horror movies of the 'thirties and 'forties, involves a pair of Hercule Poirot and Captain Hastings-like medical men who seek shelter from a storm in the house of a crippled doctor. Trapped inside, they discover that their host is conducting some horrendous experiments and lurking in the dark of the basement are the poor unfortunates who have survived the first of his "operations." Best of all is Hazel Heald's fantastically bizarre "The Horror in the Museum," about the crazed proprietor of a wax museum who claims to have found creatures from other dimensions and whose exhibits are not as lifeless as they first appear.

Seeing that *The Pan Book of Horror Stories* is being marketed very much as a museum piece (it's worth buying just for the fabulous vintage cover art inspired by the monstrous cat which stalks the heroes of Bram Stoker's tale) and a nostalgia fix for those old enough to remember the series when it appeared originally, it is perhaps unfair, or even redundant, to say that few of these tales have dated well. However, there is no doubt that the four stories in this collection which have withstood the test of time best are those which eschew excessive literary stylisation and overt goriness and which instead engage directly with the very concept of terror. These are Alan Wykes' "Nightmare," Nigel Kneale's "Oh, Mirror, Mirror," Jack Finney's "The Contents of the Dead Man's Pockets" and C.S. Forester's "The Physiology of Fear."

Wykes' tale, about a man whose paranoid delusions prove infectious, asks whether fear is a necessary component of human nature, while Kneale's deceptively simple story prompts us to consider whether, in the right circumstances, all of us might become monsters. Jack Finney's superb story is perhaps the most gruelling eighteen pages anyone will ever read, and it is a tale that those who suffer from vertigo will be lucky to finish. Towering over all the other contributions is C.S. Forester's supremely ironic tale. It involves a world-weary concentration camp doctor who is brought in to observe his Nazi scientist nephew's barbaric investigations into the physical causes of fear, a project the scientist soon regrets embarking on. All four of these tales do what great horror does better than any other literary genre – they dare to ask what value and meaning there is in human life.

The Pan Book of Horror Stories is a truly mixed assortment and yet another reminder that horror comes in many forms. If anything, it is the print equivalent of one of the Amicus "every-face-a-name" portmanteau horror movies of the 60s and 70s, such as *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *Asylum* and *From Beyond the Grave*. The material has the same pot-luck factor and it is hard not to read these tales without doing one's own mental casting, deciding what characters would have made good roles for Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Britt Ekland, Herbert Lom, Donald Pleasence, Michael Gough and the other actors who invariably wound-up in such films. The world has seen plenty of real horror since Herbert van Thal and Clarence Paget assembled this anthology in 1959 but it's to their credit that even then they considered horror an important genre, if only for the fact that it provides us with a means of escaping the horror of everyday life. They knew what the necessary ingredients for a good horror tale were and they weren't being coy when they warned readers half a century ago that "the stories in this book are such that if your nerves are not of the strongest, then it is wise to read them in the daylight lest you should suffer nightmares."

EDWARD O'HARE

London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination

Lawrence Phillips & Anne Witchard (eds.)

(London: Continuum, 2010)

The sinister qualities of London – a city built as much on blood, greed and exploited labor as on measured political reform and enlightened rule – have solicited abundant critical expression in recent years. Envision, if you will, a snapshot of the current state of the discourse as told by one especially conversant essay from *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*.

In Alex Murray's essay in this volume "'This was Pale and Ghostly': Stewart Home, Horror and the Gothic Destruction of London," he voices a critique of the popular version of "London Gothic" implicitly shared by the book's other contributors. As he writes, "The idea of London Gothic is a pathetic fabulation of tourist operators, a deluded illusion of novelist and film-makers, the preserve of capitalism in its most vulgar and insubstantial forms. Its persistence is no doubt testament to the entwined stupidity of consumers and the greed of cultural producers (65)." Murray's chapter proceeds to argue against instantiations of London Gothic that over-privilege Derridean hauntology (a position first advanced by Julian Wolfreys, whose work is also herein represented), the touristic desire for authentic horror, and the specificities of place. Instead, he turns to Stewart Home's *Down and Out in Shoreditch and Hoxton* (2004) as a work that erases the familiar neo-gothic discourse in favor of the categorical boundlessness of the Lovecraftian "weird" tradition that is filtered through Home's confrontational penchant for leftist political critique (78). Murray's point is that the way forward for London Gothic rests not with "heritage" or with cheap and tawdry re-tellings of Jack the Ripper, but rather with a wholesale redefinition of how the term "Gothic" gets deployed by scholars of literature and visual culture. How can we rightly use a moniker like "gothic" to describe everything from the hallucinogenic writing of Thomas de Quincey to some of the scarier bits of *Harry Potter*? There seems to be little consensus as to how the contributors to this volume use "gothic." However, this observation has less to do with any sloppiness or oversight, than it is a marker of the currently lively state of discussions about London's ghostly traces.

It is probably clear by now that Lawrence Phillips and Anne Witchard's *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination*, a volume that gleefully dives into an on-going conversation about the literary and filmic representation of London, showcases a textual discourse that is both exciting and (by this point, and in this instance) incredibly rarefied. This is, in every sense, a specialist volume dedicated to reformatting the conversation on London's Gothic. The editors make this clear from the first: "While certain texts such as *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *Dracula* (1897) have become canonic, Gothic representations of London are to be found across a diverse array of texts, *not only those that correspond with the emergence of the genre in fiction and the industrial era's expansion of the capital*" (1: italics mine). A central concern is positing that aspects of a Gothic sensibility are found outside of that heady period from the mid-eighteenth century through the fin-de-siècle of the nineteenth. Thus, the book contains chapters that range from Jenny Bavidge's ecocritical meditation on the morphological comparisons between the figure of the rat (in the singular, and as a swarm) and monstrous humanity, to Fred Botting's wide-ranging chapter on the zombie re-purposing of London, especially as seen in *28 Days Later* (2002, Danny Boyle) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo). A fine chapter by Lawrence Phillips on horror movies set in the London Underground – specifically, *Raw Meat/ Deathline* (1972, Gary Sherman) and *Creep* (2004, Christopher Smith) – ties the history and infrastructure of the nineteenth century to the anxieties of today. In most cases, the goal seems to be to expand productively the remit of the term "Gothic" while at the same time telescoping onto multidisciplinary histories heretofore unrealised.

Thus, one real strength of the volume is its willingness to showcase unlikely methodologies, even when the individual chapters seem to be at odds with one another. Roger Luckhurst's "An Occult Gazetteer of Bloomsbury: An Experiment in Method" grounds itself in Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (1998) in that it attempts to situate a localised history of the occult into fixed geographical coordinates, a task that is implicitly critiqued by Alex Murray's argument. Luckhurst offers:

I want to explore whether it is possible to combine these competing methods and attempt to map what is claimed to be unmappable. Can you gazetteer the ghost? Can you map fugitive instances of supernatural phenomena or secret occult rituals, chart the oneric pathways of the London Gothic? Isn't the allure of these modes precisely in their refusal to be converted into positive knowledge? What does mapping do to them? (51)

A fascinating result of this exercise – which encompasses everything from spiritualist organisations to the addresses of prominent mediums – is that it maps the prevalence of irrationalisms in an area noted for its connections to officialised forms of knowledge. During the period in question (mid-to-late nineteenth into the twentieth century), Bloomsbury solidified its reputation as a seat of erudition. The growing student population, its locus as the site of the salons of the "Bloomsbury Group" of maudlin Cambridge intellectuals and artists, combined with the authority of the British Museum and its reading room, meant that it became associated with secular and humanistic study. But Luckhurst's proximal mapping of the hermetic sites in the same area reveals "what I [Luckhurst] have sometimes called the *supplemental occult*, the sense that wherever secular modernity exerts its power, a reserve of supernaturalism emerges with it" (60). This gels with what scholar James Webb's book *The Occult Establishment* (1976) consistently describes as the "flight from reason" that was born alongside the systematic embrace of industrial (rational, instrumentalist) modernity.

Although the obscurity of some of the texts discussed in *London Gothic* fits one of the general remits of the spectral Gothic sensibility – to reveal occult knowledge in all of its exceptional forms, if only in flashes – the most potentially off-putting aspect of the book is the *outré* nature of some of the objects of analysis. Since the editors and authors have decidedly moved outside of the canon of Gothic texts set in London, they turn to compelling (if marginalised) works such as Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black* (2005), the crime novels of Derek Raymond, and Arthur Machen's inexplicably neglected *The Hill of Dreams* (1907). This expanded field of vision ultimately works in the book's favor, but it limits its usefulness for readers with a general interest in the subject or for undergraduates writing research papers. The omission of essays that explicitly reposition the most canonical of London Gothic texts (*Dracula*), or that deal centrally with the current giants of the genre (Iain Sinclair, Peter Ackroyd), strikes as a missed opportunity. That said, this is an exciting collection of essays that productively unpacks a thriving area of academia's own doubts about itself. Our understanding of the term "Gothic" will greatly benefit from such an expansive consideration.

KEVIN M. FLANAGAN

Eaton Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine*, Avril Horner & Sue Zlosnik (eds.)
(Kansas: Valancourt Books, 2011)

Despite the renewed interest in Eaton Stannard Barrett (from, amongst others, Gary Kelly and Jim Shanahan), Barrett's novel *The Heroine* (1813) has not been treated to a modern edition in over eighty years. Prior editions have been somewhat amateurish if enthusiastic. Walter Raleigh's 1909 edition was a plain reprint with a rather weak introduction appended, while Michael Sadleir's 1927 edition lacked the scholarly rigour that this dense text demands. Horner and Zlosnik's edition is therefore, in the main, to be welcomed.

In spite of the fame he obtained during his life, biographical information concerning Barrett is scant. A native of Cork, Barrett went to Trinity College Dublin, graduating (BA) in 1805, two years after Robert Emmet's ill-fated Jacobin insurrection. Securely in the Tory camp, Barrett subsequently removed to London where he was admitted to the Middle Temple. Presumably he did not fulfil his terms as evidence would suggest that he was not called to the bar. In 1807 Barrett secured his first literary success with his poem, *All the Talents*, a satiric swipe at the coalition government then steering Britain rather ineptly through the Continental Wars. As an ideological ally of satirist and statesman George Canning (to whom *The Heroine* is dedicated), Barrett's novel quite clearly emerges from that cultural atmosphere typified by Canning's periodical *The Anti-Jacobin*.

Barrett's *The Heroine* falls into that not insignificant body of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fiction that nervously interrogates female readership and authorship. Cherry Wilkinson, daughter of a prosperous but self-made farmer, eagerly imbibes the fantasies of the Radcliffean school. Her brain turned by this diet of reading, Cherry begins to believe herself to be Cherubina, an aristocrat kidnapped during infancy. Intent on proving her "real" ancestry, she leaves her father's home for London. Here, she gathers around her an assortment of Jacobin misfits, from a former United Irishman to a poet in the Godwinian mould. After many Quixotic interludes (complete with Reevean backgrounds; crypts, lunatic asylums, subterranean prisons, etc.), she is reclaimed from her delusional state and marries the respectable bourgeois hero, Robert Stuart.

Horner and Zlosnick judiciously choose to reprint the first edition of Barrett's text. They quietly and deftly note the important deletions and additions made by Barrett in his subsequent editions (1814, 1815). Barrett's *The Heroine* is strongly allusive and the editors have, in general, glossed the text thoroughly and accurately (though some inaccuracies have crept in, ascribing the horror novel *Adelaide; Or, The Chateau de St. Pierre* to Maria Edgeworth being the most unfortunate).

Moreover, Horner and Zlosnick's introduction proves somewhat problematic. Over two pages they make some guarded but ill-advised conjectures on Barrett's sudden death in 1820. They argue that "given the financial difficulties Barrett experienced [...] it is quite possible (although yet to be proved) that he fled to America in order to escape his debtors." In order to facilitate this escape, Barrett may "have fake[d] his death" (viii-ix). The evidence given for this hypothesis rests upon the fact that in 1823, the Baltimore periodical *The American Farmer* published a poem, signed "Eaton Stannard Barrett," addressed to a father on the birth of his third daughter. The daughter in question, however, is in fact Byron's goddaughter, Olivia Moore (born 1814). This poem, variously attributed by modern scholarship to Joseph Atkinson or Barrett, had been published as far back as 1818 (in the Cork compendium *Harmonica*), and more than likely it debuted earlier. *The American Farmer* most probably lifted the poem out of an English or Irish periodical (in line with common early nineteenth century practices). The indisputable

fact is that Barrett died in Wales on the 20th of March 1820, something never denied either by his contemporaries nor questioned by any available extant evidence.

Beyond this, Horner and Zlosnik question the extent to which *The Heroine* ought to be seen as a reactionary text (as Gary Kelly, amongst others, has described it). They argue that Barrett, by allowing Cherubina the freedom of her peregrinations, both affirms the political economy of bourgeois values while simultaneously questioning the validity of their remit: “*The Heroine* rather cleverly has it both ways: it inscribes the values of the aspiring middle-class (as Kelly argues) but simultaneously exposes the constraints they impose on the imaginative young woman [...] Cherry’s adventures imprint quite firmly in the reader’s mind an imagined alternative world where women are rabble rousers and property owners and in which Frenchmen and Irishmen represent excitement and change rather than threat” (xix, xxiv). While it is true that, in order ultimately to restrain Cherubina, Barrett must let her loose, he at no time validates, or even casually explores, the possibilities of a liberated woman. While the twenty-first century reader may make such a reading, it is not one sanctioned by Barrett; it exists in spite of the author. The subgenre within which Barrett is working (the Quixotic tale as much as the Gothic) demands he allow the heroine freedom, but only as far as such freedom is shown to be perilous to female existence and female sanity. Barrett’s frequent vitriolic allusions to the strong independence of Glorvina (of *The Wild Irish Girl*, 1806) quite clearly demonstrate his antipathy towards female autonomy. Likewise, Cherubina’s marriage to Robert Stuart (who recommends to her the works of the arch anti-feminist Hannah More) more than crushes the memory of any liberation and draws the reclaimed heroine into the conservative and gendered domestic confines of Pittite Britain (contemporary readers could not but have made the link between Robert Stuart and the ultra-ministerialist Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh). In similar manner, Barrett’s 1810 poem, *Woman*, and his 1808 satire, *The Miss-Led General*, deny women any respectable existence beyond wedded home life and child rearing.

Despite these reservations, this new edition would be useful to various audiences: students of Austen, scholars of Irish Toryism and Irish Jacobinism, and those interested in contemporary accounts of the radical underworld of pre-Waterloo London as well as in the Gothic. Needless to say, Romantic Studies will benefit from this new edition. And lest we forget, *The Heroine* is also a rather good read. Horner and Zlosnik’s edition is reasonably priced at just under twenty dollars.

NIAL GILLESPIE

***Gothic Shakespeares*, John Drakakis & Dale Townshend (eds.)**
(Routledge, 2008)

No, this book does not argue that Shakespeare is the first “Goth”, but it comes close. After reading this book, you will be in no doubt about the wide array of interactions between Shakespeare and the Gothic. You may, however, be left wondering what exactly constitutes a “Gothic” canon.

Essays in this collection range from how Shakespeare himself problematises the term “Goth” in *Titus Andronicus* (by Steven Craig) to Stephanie Meyer’s use of *Romeo and Juliet* in her *Twilight* series (by Glennis Byron), with each contributor making a strong case for a real and ongoing engagement between discourses. I say “discourses” because this collection is very much about Shakespeare-as-discourse (as opposed to Shakespeare-the-man) and how that is bound up with Gothic fiction’s own discursive identity. The main drawback of the book is that while the links found are hard to dispute, the scholarship that goes with them can be a little fuzzy around the edges – a little more editorial cohesion would have gone a long way.

The idea of Shakespeare as “a legitimizing strategy” for the Gothic project is introduced in the opening paragraph by editor John Drakakis, and this becomes a recurring feature throughout. Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is taken by Drakakis as a founding moment of Gothicism, and this is of course a text which leans heavily on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. This linkage is then used to argue that Shakespeare is at once the authority Walpole calls on to defend his own use of the supernatural, and a figure in need of defence as England’s national poet: “Inextricably bound up in the work of cultural patriotism, Gothic appropriations of Shakespeare are inherently political from the start” (69). This political angle is well brought out in Dale Townshend’s essay on the appropriation of *Hamlet* and its fatherly yet disturbing ghost. In an ongoing aesthetic war between France and Britain, Shakespeare becomes the bastion of Britishness, with Voltaire playing the role of France’s heavy artillery. However, this initial idea is forgotten as Townshend moves on to discuss the importance of mourning in Gothic fiction more generally using Lacanian techniques. While this is very well argued, it has little to do with appropriation, France, or Shakespeare (whose name appears only once in the last three pages of the essay).

Such lack of focus is unfortunately not limited to Townshend’s piece (which is in fact the strongest essay of the entire collection). At least Townshend goes to the trouble of defining what precisely is meant by the term “Gothic” (66). The opening essay by Elisabeth Bronfen is entitled “Shakespeare’s Nocturnal World,” and while Bronfen makes a good case for the night as a time of transgression and passion in Shakespeare’s *oeuvre*, this does not automatically categorise the space of night as Gothic. She claims that lovers flee “into the night, and concomitant with this, into a Gothic state of mind” (23) without ever telling us of what this “Gothic state of mind” consists. Also her choice of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* seems slightly perverse, considering the infinitely more “Gothic” plays on offer like *Titus*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* (a play which never gets more than a passing mention in the book!). On the subject of missed opportunities, it seems a rather serious oversight that neither Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* nor Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* receive any extended investigation within the essays in the collection, despite the fact that the Introduction and the Afterword both list them as central texts in the Gothic canon. Indeed, the entire Victorian period and the first half of the twentieth century are passed over in silence.

Instead of *Dracula*, Glennis Byron opts to talk about the arguably more well-known vampire, Edward Cullen. Her piece is on Stephanie Meyer’s use of *Romeo and Juliet* as a model for the troubled and

troubling relationship between Bella and Edward, contending that “[i]n bringing the vampire together with the star-crossed lovers of Shakespeare’s play, Meyer’s ‘Twilight’ series continues both the simplification and the commodification of these iconic figures” (176). Byron argues well for the worrying dynamics of desire at work in Meyer’s fiction, where Edward is never real, always idealised, and Bella’s desire for him is the desire for death. She also acknowledges the mania surrounding the release of each of the books, opening with a countdown clock to the appearance of *Eclipse* in 2007. But this also points to the major flaw in the essay, which is that it seeks to theorise a relationship between Meyer’s work and Shakespeare’s, before knowing how the story of Bella and Edward ends. Writing an essay on the basis of only the first two books out of a series of four cannot hope to stand the test of time, critically speaking. Perhaps the commodification of culture Byron sees in Meyer’s work is also apparent in the pages of *Gothic Shakespeare*, which felt the need to show just how up-to-date it was by choosing Team Edward over Team Vlad.

Indeed, this book’s strengths lie at either end of the chronological spectrum, with excellent work on the birth of the Gothic and the veneration of the Bard at a time of nation-building in the eighteenth century (for example Sue Chaplin’s Derridean interpretation of Gothicism and the law), while Fred Botting and Scott Wilson’s post-modern take on “Gothspeak and the Origins of Cultural Studies” is refreshingly experimental in showing how “Shakespeare” continues to be a contested term in the twenty-first century (“If Shakespeare were alive today he’d be the Captain of the Starship Enterprise,” 196). Other essays that deserve a special mention include Michael Gamer and Robert Miles’ work on the apocryphal *Vortigern*. This play’s status as an original Shakespearean forgery is used to demonstrate just how politicised the ground of Shakespeare had become in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Indeed, the process of Bardolatry and Gothicism are shown to be uncomfortable bedfellows in this insightful and well-written piece. Finally, Peter Hutchings’s relatively short essay on Shakespeare and the horror film shows a real sense of two-way traffic between discourses, as well as raising questions about cultural legitimacy, high-brow/ low-brow binaries, and where exactly “Shakespeare” belongs in today’s entertainment industry.

On the whole, this book gives an unmistakable sense that, in Dale Townshend’s words, “[t]he Gothic revival and the renewal of interest in Shakespeare are two manifestations of the same cultural impulse” (72). This collection attests to a Gothicism with much in common with Shakespeare’s own knack for problematising cultural ideologies. It also shows how the Gothic can be seen to question the cultural hegemony of the Bard himself, as it “venerates *and* dismantles its intertexts at the same time” (14). Overall, this book does a good job of examining Shakespeare-as-cultural-capital and how this can be linked with incarnations of the Gothic, but more close textual engagement (with both Shakespeare and the Gothic texts discussed) is needed. It is surprising such a book has not been available before, and I have no doubt that it will spawn more in due course, as there are gaps here that are begging to be filled.

DEREK DUNNE

Sara Wasson, *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War*
(London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

London is an iconic space in Gothic studies, in particular the dark imperial metropolis of nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* fantasies and the post-war, post-imperial urban decay of late twentieth-century dystopias. Sara Wasson's ground-breaking page-turner *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War* fills the critical lacuna between these older and newer manifestations of Gothic London. Wasson turns to another iconic configuration of London, "The Blitz," which has been largely over-looked in Gothic criticism.

Dark London re-reads Blitz London in the historical and literary contexts of Gothic studies, drawing analogies between the fertile period of *fin de siècle* Gothic and World-War II Gothic. It necessarily extends the recent turn in Gothic criticism. Instead of reading Gothic as a genre focusing on vampires, demons and castles, new scholarship reads Gothic as a mode with two core characteristics: "a particular emotional colouring of the narrative filter, and a preoccupation with certain relationships to space." In keeping with this critical trend, Wasson persuasively argues for the significance of Blitz London in the continuum of British Gothic and the return of the past that it articulates. As Fred Botting and Chris Baldick assert, the claustrophobic settings of eighteenth-century Gothic, castles, monasteries, convents or forests, become in the nineteenth century the gloomy, labyrinthine, streets of London and its asylums. The city, with its underbelly of crime and prostitution, reflected anxieties around class, capital, gender and madness. Wasson introduces Blitz London as British Gothic's "*phantasmogenetic centre*" (Wasson uses Luckhurst's phrase for *fin-de-siècle* London) for locating the fractures in narratives of English history, national pride and sense of community. *Dark London*, which focuses on the twentieth century, brings home the horror and disorientating terror of a city and a people under siege.

Wasson argues for the first time that Gothic tropes and forms subvert mythologies of the wartime home, city and fellowship, in particular the "Blitz Myth" of British emotional resilience, which is still influential today. One of the many strengths of this book is that each chapter provides a historical and cultural context as well as unearthing instances of the Gothic in familiar and overlooked British writers during this period. The authors and painters she selects, who are admittedly all upper-middle-class, share a haunted and fractured relationship with London. Henry Green, Roy Fuller, Anna Kavan, Graham Greene, Inez Holden, Anne Ridler, Diane Murray Hill, Elizabeth Bowen, John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Mervyn Peake all recast the home front as a claustrophobic domestic arena veined with xenophobia, propaganda, psychic and bodily suffering. Hallucinatory and surreal moments become the norm, repeating the class and gender prejudices and divisions of earlier Gothic.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the urban Gothic of the home front, and the direction Wasson takes with her arguments – novices will find clear and concise definitions of the Gothic and the Uncanny, and how Gothic literature and criticism has undergone continual transformation since its inception, with discussion of the latest critical debates. In particular, Wasson intelligently revisits the important themes and modes of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic, including H. G. Wells, Max Nordau and degeneration, fear of incarceration and fear of invasion. She shows how the Gothic recurs in her chosen writers, or in fact never went away. Reality took on the characteristics of fiction, and the War government called on H. G. Wells for guidance. Significantly for Gothic studies, while Wasson stresses continuity, she also shows that wartime occupies a different time continuum to peace: she makes the important distinction that World-War-I Gothic is located in the trenches (which uncannily were named after London streets) while

World-War-II Gothic locates its horror in London, and reactivates the urban preoccupations of the *fin de siècle*.

Those more familiar with the Gothic will find fresh perspectives and social contexts for Gothic modes and instances, and for questions about gender, class and national identity. Wasson engages with Marxian theorists of modernity, such as Walter Benjamin, Ernest Renan, Perry Anderson and Homi Bhabha, alongside archival research and eye-witness accounts. Clearly divided into six inter-linked chapters, *Dark London* juxtaposes six inter-connected hallucinatory and incarcerating spaces characterising Blitz London. It is a space marked by the disintegration of capitalism, British imperialism and the sanctity of the home, at a particular historical moment. In vivid language (another strength), Wasson shows that Blitz London saw Gothic tropes become literal – where people were buried alive in their own homes; the night streets of the “Black Out” were turned into hallucinatory dreamscapes; “banshee” sirens wailed; death howled down from above; people took shelter in open coffins while underground tube shelters became coffins themselves. My favourite image is “ice cream vans commandeered to carry human blood.”

Chapter 2 links Blitz London with the Parisian arcades and the figure of Baudelaire’s *flâneur* of the previous century’s urban spectacle, but Blitz London becomes the dark double of this spectacle. Exploring fiction by Henry Green and poetry by Roy Fuller, Wasson reveals the shadow side of *flânerie* with its Gothic shades, which current criticism that focuses on a gendered binary ignores. Instead, Wasson examines these texts for fractures in capitalism’s grand narratives of consumption, in the context of the connections that Walter Benjamin makes between the *flâneur* and the commodity. By co-opting Benjamin, Wasson unearths a vampiric *flâneur/flâneuse* who is also vulnerable to what she or he sees, to the spectacle of “Bright, dead dolls” and psychological disintegration, where working-class fire fighters commit suicide and the docks are bombed as “imperial goods,” becoming deadly debris as the yoke of empire slips.

Chapter 3 moves from the “Blacked-out” streets and commercial disarray, to Anna Kavan and Graham Greene’s dark vision of a carceral city viewed from the helpless subject positions of immigrants, refugees, and psychiatric patients. It revisits two traditional Gothic tropes: imprisonment and the struggle to decipher elusive signs. Wasson gives a clear definition of Michel Foucault’s “heterotopia” which she applies to the asylums and internment camps, and reveals the home front as a labyrinth of surveillance, prohibitions and control. She relates Greene’s *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) and its fifth columnists to Lew Lander’s film, *Return of the Vampire* (1944). Anna Kavan’s real life has the characteristics of her Gothic fiction *I am Lazurus* (1945) and *Sleep Has His House* (1948). She changes her name and identity as a writer after her release from a mental asylum, following the end of her marriage.

Wasson’s next two chapters explore two inter-connected threads of gender and class, which have been central to Gothic since its inception. Chapter 4 explores mechanised ghosts in wartime factories. Instead of being spaces of sisterhood and liberty, as promulgated in government propaganda, these factories isolate and dehumanise the women working there. Repeating the conditions of the nineteenth century, they become Gothic spaces. However, the disintegrating narratives of Inez Holden, Anne Ridler and Diana Murray Hill (all upper-class women) change the classic female Gothic persecution narrative to comment on war-time modernity. The diabolic villain is now faceless state authority. Chapter 5 moves from the factory to the domestic and the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen’s uncanny homes. Bowen gets a chapter to herself, because on top of Gothic tropes Bowen also uses Gothic modes of writing: febrile narrative voices and presences, with linear time and imperialism challenged. This is most fully illustrated in Bowen’s magnificent short story “Mysterious Kôr”, which Bowen based on Rider Haggard’s

She. Wasson argues that Bowen's London homes are continually in dialogue with the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish "big house," with its dark colonial inheritance and sense of loss and decay, and thereby draw attention to the complex ways gender, class and national affiliations are mutually constituted and unravelled.

The final chapter fittingly disinters the nation's Gothic abject "The Rubbish Pile and the Grave" in the haunting paintings and poetry of John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Mervyn Peake. Wasson critically opens up the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Westminster, revealing how the war dead underpin all nations' narratives of themselves. However, if there is a slight weakness in this book, it is that Wasson makes a riveting leap from the Unknown Soldier to international reportage of concentration camps and Londoners' xenophobic slowness in accepting the holocaust's mass corpses, which she does not fully explain in the context of *Dark London*'s argument. But perhaps this is the start of another book.

Overall, *Dark London: Urban Gothic of the Second World War* is a must read for anyone interested in twentieth-century Gothic, urban Gothic, and the after-life of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic. It is also relevant for anyone interested in modernity, modernism, World War II and the literature of the home front, and post-imperial English decline. It is a scholarly and engaging work with enlightening historical research and literary analysis of Gothic modes. Wasson accomplishes what she sets out to do for Gothic studies, showing that "the texts of wartime London are a rich resource for critical exploration" and show that their Gothic tropes "speak to specific forms of fraught subjectivity" generated by the material conditions of London under siege.

EDWINA KEOWN

Sara Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*
(Oxford University Press, 2009)

On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears presents itself as a comprehensive analysis of the cultural and symbolic value of the monster throughout recorded history. The epigraphs to the book are well chosen. Of these, particularly poignant is Montaigne's "I have never seen a greater monster or miracle than myself." This introduces the human dimension of Asma's evolutionary approach to the monster figure, and places the study in relation to that difficult binary that society and culture has always been ready to enforce between human and "other."

From the outset, the perspective of the work is nuanced and acutely directed, although not original, in approaching the term and concept of the monster as "a prototype category." Asma takes a somewhat structuralist approach in claiming that "we may even draw up a general taxonomy of types [...] crawlers, slitherers, collosals, hybrids" and so on. The author also claims that the functions of these categories is in "helping us to navigate the dangers of our environment" and to provide a simulation for potentially real dangers (282). Consequently, "the specific face of the monster will vary from culture to culture but the universal dimension seems undeniable" (284). And so the study is founded on the idea that the monster, in some way, transcends cultural differences in its intricate relationship to basic human fears.

So, with this approach stated, the introduction begins with Asma's *raison d'être* for the study: to trace the evolution and anatomy of the various metaphorical archetypes presented by Western monsters. In doing this, one can certainly say that the book achieves its goal. Significantly, it carefully offers, here at the beginning, a valid excuse for avoiding the monsters of Eastern traditions. This avoidance is based in the author's anxiety that such a project – to include and compare Eastern and Western monsters – would be too big to allow for in-depth analysis. This I can certainly agree with, but I did read on with a little disappointment as Asma suggested that this project, should someone undertake it, would no doubt make a highly valuable and exciting research project. Nonetheless, Asma writes that he has chosen only a slightly less daunting endeavour (15) and I came to agree with this also toward the end of the book as the difficulties of his chosen task were revealed.

On Monsters is divided into five sections, outlining the histories of ancient monsters, medieval monsters, scientific monsters, psychological monsters and contemporary monsters, in that order. Throughout, Asma insists on an ironic use of the term "monster," since it is no longer employed in a literal sense and so his individual case studies follow the introduction with a distinctive humorous tone. Much of the first half of the book deals with how the "three literatures of monsters and beasts – poetry, travel tales and natural history – continued to feed each other all the way down to the seventeenth century" (27), after which the study moves on to scientific and psychoanalytic readings of monsters in culture, and so the five sections are divided between the medieval/ mythical, and the modern/ scientific.

Without doubt, each individual section and chapter offers, in its own right, a fascinating and highly informative study of its designated topic, whether it be hermaphrodites, man-headed oxen, monstrous mother figures, headless children or disembodied minds, and Asma's breadth of knowledge is impressive. He often branches out of history and into philosophy, theology, sociology, evolutionary theory, psychoanalysis, literature, and film studies, to name quite a few. However, this sometimes leads to a superficial engagement with the given disciplines and Asma's reference to and use of particular ideas can at times be cursory. His haphazard use of Darwinian theories is a notable case in point. While summarising the ideas of many scientists and critics in relation to Darwin, he concludes that "applying

this Darwinian notion to our perception of monsters, it seems useful for humans to see a creature as more dangerous than it really is" (23). These kind of overstated and, arguably, unsubstantiated claims are common in the book and sometimes do not, in any real way, contribute to a straightforward argument made by the author. The issue seems to be that Asma has included such a vast amount of citation and referencing (interesting as they may be) that the book becomes encyclopaedic and lacking in definitive conclusions.

But this does not really take away from the value of the book. I would argue that it is part of a solid attempt at offering a comprehensive study of an extremely versatile topic where comprehensiveness is quite possibly an unachievable goal. Where *On Monsters* succeeds then (and one does get the feeling that Asma is aware of this) is in its *reportage* style which engages the reader in an absorbing report of teratology covering a period from the Old Testament, right through to modern seafaring tales of monsters from the deep, and our responses to contemporary serial killers and terrorists. Asma's individual and trans-historical studies are accompanied by a collection of historical photographs and intriguing illustrations often hand-drawn by the author himself. It is an academic study with a difference: a reference work that is quite humorous in its approach and driven by enthusiasm and personal fascination. At the close of his introduction, he even goes so far as disclaiming: "no disrespect intended by the author to any particular monsters, living or dead" (15).

One way of considering this book would be to compare it to a study such as Richard Kearney's *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, or David Gilmore's *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*, both from 2003. While it is a very different kind of study to Kearney's, it shares the same interest as its impetus. It does not, however, seek to achieve the depth of philosophical and theoretical insight that can be found in Kearney's wide-ranging book. On the other hand, it is quite a similar study to that undertaken by David Gilmore. Following the same chronological approach, it shares a similar perspective in terms of arguing, as Gilmore does, that "the mind needs monsters" (Gilmore 2003, 1). However, while Gilmore claims that monsters serve to embody all that is horrible in the human imagination, functioning as a sort of projection and catharsis of our fears, Asma seems to lean more toward the opinions of evolutionary theory in viewing our fear of monsters as derivative of primal fears. Although he doesn't argue for this in the study, from this perspective, he presents a chronicle of mankind's greatest imaginary creations and how they have evolved and developed right up until today.

The most interesting part of the study, in my opinion, is the section on biblical monsters, which outlines how the many free monsters of early civilisations were reined in by the institutionalism of monotheistic religion. Asma points out that when monotheism became "the dominant premise of religious culture, monsters had to be brought under the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God" (62). They came to be explained within the framework of the ideas surrounding a universal creator and subsequently became "God's Lackeys." What Asma refers to here is the biblical ambivalence in relation to the monstrous, which includes creatures who are often demonised as evil but who also are orchestrators of divine will, sometimes serving as a narrative foil to God's righteous and superior power. In this section, Asma offers an intriguing account of the various religious representations of the figure of St. Christopher. Originally presented as a dog-head or *Cynocephalus*, St. Christopher transforms over time in the records from being an alleged cannibal and monster to a Christian convert and Catholic Saint. This example illustrates the idea that, around this time, the monster gained a soul in religious discourse, and this was to have a significant impact on all future representations, literary and artistic or otherwise, of "the monster."

Without revealing too much about the book, at this point I should conclude by saying that although the book could certainly be improved upon, I definitely recommend it to anyone who is interested in the idea

of the monster and its evolution throughout modern civilisation. As a testament to my recommendation, my own copy now appears more than a little tatty, and notes and page-markings sprawl over every section. While the book doesn't offer any definitive theories or arguments about our relationship to the monster or the monstrous, in its excessive and far-reaching content, it will most probably tell you everything you always wanted to know about monsters. More than that, it is an uncanny and enjoyable read that finds its way into at least one if not more of the sources of each reader's worst and most terrifying fears.

MARIA BEVILLE

Stephenie Meyer, *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner: An Eclipse Novella*
(London: Atom, 2010)

Vampires are back in Forks: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels have not concluded! And this time the author of the four-book bestselling saga introduces the reader to the evil side of vampirism in her 2010 novella *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner*, which focuses on a secondary character who has a marginal role near the end of her novel *Eclipse*. Bree is a young teenager who is transformed into a vampire to be part of the army created by Victoria with the intention of wreaking revenge on the Cullen family and Bella Swan, the protagonists of the *Twilight* series. This captivating narrative on vampires is well-written and definitely of the same quality as the previous books. As in the *Twilight* novels proper, not all the elements of the story are properly Gothic: the narrative is more about the personality of a young girl than about typical Gothic environments, props and conventions. On the other hand, Gothic elements are exemplified by the behaviour of the newborn vampires, by the revenge plot unknown to the protagonist and by the tragic conclusion of the narrative.

The novella is narrated by Bree herself, in a plain and simple style. As happens in the *Twilight* novels, the reader is guided throughout the story from the point of view of a teenager, who is naïve about the supernatural world and questions its mechanics. Nevertheless, as specified by Meyer in the Introduction to the novella, for the first time in the saga the perspective is that of a “‘real’ vampire – a hunter, a monster.” On the one hand, this would seem to contradict the primacy given to “vegetarian” vampires in the four previous novels and their representation as alternative human(e) beings who care for the welfare of the human community and follow its ethical rules and behavioural norms. On the other hand, the choice of Bree as the narrator of the story finally allows the reader access to a supernatural creature's perspective on humans, who are seen in this novella as weak, “unlucky” and “oblivious” cattle by the newborn vampires. Bree is effectively a god in comparison with them, “stronger, faster and *better*” than her prey, but she never assumes an attitude of superiority or feels derisive contempt for them (as in the case of Anne Rice's novel *Queen of the Damned* and its 2002 cinematographic adaptation by Michael Rymer, for example). She therefore appears nicer than the other newborn vampires, probably because she hunts humans with the mere intention of sedating the thirst for blood rather than with a sadistic glee.

In this way, the novella apparently does not create a Gothic atmosphere: the reader does not follow the characters through the dark tunnels or castles usually associated with vampires. There is no enactment of extreme behaviours or the derangement of human subjectivity on the part of the protagonist. Meyer does not focus on the range of excesses and transgressions that, according to Fred Botting, characterises Gothic works (*Gothic*, 180) and that could be found in the majority of literary and cinematographic adaptations on the figure of the vampire from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to recent films such as Patrick Lussier's *Dracula 2001*, Stephen Sommers's 2004 *Van Helsing* and the *Blade* trilogy (1998-2004). The main suspense experienced by the reader is that created by our concern for Bree's continued existence, although we already know from *Eclipse* as well as from the book's Introduction that she is condemned to a premature destruction as a vampire. On the other hand, what is definitely Gothic is the fact that Bree is a young girl who is dragged too early in a cruel world of life and death, and who comprehends only too late that she has been lied and deceived in favour of a larger game of power, revenge and laws (those of the Volturi) that she ignores.

The story begins at night, as the newborn vampires are hunting: this immediately introduces the reader to the savage rage of the uncontrollable creatures and their exclusive focus on the sensory (especially olfactory) aspect of the hunt. The vampires' thirst for blood is specifically described as burning and

painful, which seems to reprise Anne Rice's depiction of the vampire's blood-lust in *The Vampire Chronicles*. Bree has become a vampire three months earlier and remembers very few details of her previous life as a human being. She even defines it as "unimportant." We discover only that she had been a troubled fifteen-year-old teenager, had left her home and a father who used to ill-treat her, and was starving on the road when Riley approached and Victoria then transformed her. She subsequently finds herself in the middle of the violent and deadly battles of the newborns against each other, where she is in constant dread of injury and mutilation.

Bree creates a bond with Diego, the only newborn who is not convinced of Riley's orders and rules. The two characters simultaneously develop a mutual attraction and an urge to know more about both their condition as vampires and the reason for their creation. Much like the pitiable monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Bree and Diego have been abandoned and neglected by Victoria, who never assumes any responsibility for their education and whom they mainly refer to as their "creator." After Diego demands some explanations from Riley, he does not return to the newborns' subterranean shelter. Bree thus becomes all the more vulnerable and we begin to suspect that it is already too late for her.

The battle against the Cullens rapidly approaches: we already know of its outcome and are aware of the forthcoming massacre, but eagerly consume the remaining pages of the book with inquisitorial curiosity. This is due to the fact that the novella is so well-plotted that we finally care about Bree, perhaps because we already know the conclusion of the story. In spite of this knowledge, we wonder: what happened to Diego? Shall we see the action on the battle field? Is Riley conscious of Victoria's lies? Has Meyer changed the ending and finally saved Bree? The latter hopes to meet Diego again and begin a new life with him, but by the time that she realises the truth about Diego (which I do not want to spoil for the reader) she is already in the middle of the fight, caught between the curling smoke of the burning corpses and the horrible noises of the final struggles.

Bree is captured by the Cullens, whose names we discover again one by one, slowly recognising their traits and identifying them from another character's point of view – a real treat for *Twilight* fans, but slightly confusing for a reader unfamiliar with the series. It is from the Cullens that, for the first time, we explicitly hear Bree being called "a child" and we are further reminded of how young she is, how unfulfilled her aspirations and possibilities are, particularly if we consider that the few remaining pages of the book mark the irremediable end of the novella *and* the end of her existence as a vampire too. When Bree herself says "I could feel that my time had run out," we have almost accepted her fate, the end of both the young girl and the story.

For a reader who has never read the other books in the series, this could be a rather shocking ending, abruptly destroying any hope for a positive resolution. For an avid reader of the *Twilight* saga, however, the novella satisfactorily completes some obscure parts of the narrative of *Eclipse* (such as the development of Victoria's plan and the Volturi's passive involvement in and approval of it). The story rapidly runs to the unavoidable end: it is a foretold tragedy that cannot be avoided and leaves a bitter taste for the injustice of Bree's murder. This novella will probably conquer the attention and affection of readers who are "newborn" to Meyer's fictional universe: I would definitely suggest it as a good introduction to the saga at large, especially if we consider its brevity (180 pages). Needless to say, *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner* will definitely fill with enthusiasm and involvement the fans of the *Twilight* series, satisfying their curiosity about many actions and characters unseen by Bella but gravitating around her.

ANTONIO SANNA

“The Evolution of the Vampire”

Dracula's Guest: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Vampire Stories, Michael Sims, (ed.)

(London: Bloomsbury, 2010)

The vampire has been a figure of terror in world culture for well over three hundred years. Tales of the un-dead can be found in the folk traditions of Romania, France, Russia and Greece and some scholars speculate that the vampire myth could even date back as far as the Middle Ages. Vampires have been appearing in print since the early eighteenth century and have proven one of the most potent and durable modern metaphors. However, the author and anthologist Michael Sims believes that the Victorian era was decisive in the development of vampires as we know them today. Long before Bram Stoker set to work on *Dracula*, other Victorian writers had begun to see the potential of the vampire. By adding to the vampire's symbolic power, increasing their psychological complexity and generally refining their mythos, these authors helped turn them into the ultimate horror icon.

Sim's aim in editing *Dracula's Guest* is therefore to illustrate the evolution of the vampire and to show readers how rich and diverse the body of vampire literature is. This anthology of twenty-two pieces of fiction and non-fiction contains passages from travel memoirs and histories of the supernatural as well as many complete short stories by authors both famous and obscure. Sims explains that he chose *Dracula's Guest* as the title for this anthology not just because Bram Stoker's short story (originally thought to be an excised episode from *Dracula* but now considered to be part of an early draft of the novel) is included but because the seductive power of the vampire, “the betrayal of innocence” that occurs when we allow them into our lives, is an over-arching theme which spans the whole of vampire literary history.

In his well-informed and passionate introduction, “The Cost of Living,” Sims explains his fascination with vampire tales. He then traces the vampire's origins back to the ancient cultural taboo on the consumption of blood, something forbidden by the Talmud, the Koran and the Bible. He agrees with the view that the vampire's habit of drinking blood is a distorted version of transubstantiation and a corruption of Christianity's central message – “the magical value of blood sacrifice.” Sims also links the vampire's state of living death and its association with plague and pestilence with the Christian view that the bodies of the excommunicated do not decompose but defy natural laws and pollute the earth.

Sims observes that, as “its own species of supernatural fiction,” the vampire story has “certain taxonomic peculiarities the reader learns to expect,” but as a genre its form is not as rigid as might be assumed. One of the most intriguing features of this anthology is that it reveals vampire lore to be wildly inconsistent and shows that the vampire legend has been reinterpreted in countless ways. The shape a vampire may take; the role they may play in a narrative; the degree to which they can be sympathetic: all of these vary from author to author.

Dracula's Guest is made up of three sections: pieces written prior to the Victorian era, those written during it and those written just after it. Section one opens with two pieces of non-fiction, the philosopher Jean-Baptiste de Boyer's account of “A Scene of Vampirism” from his 1738 work *Jewish Letters* and a description of “Dead Persons in Hungary” by the monk Antoine Augustin Calmet from his 1746 compendium of supernatural phenomena *The Phantom World*. The vampires in these pieces are a far cry from Bela Lugosi, Christopher Lee, effeminate young men wearing too much glitter and most of the other images that are unearthed when we think of the un-dead. These vampires from Silesia, Moravia and Poland are boisterous, rampaging cadavers, liable to burst in on a convivial scene demanding to be fed or foretelling somebody's doom. An interesting characteristic that distinguishes these eastern-European

vampires from the usual Hollywood portrayal of them is that they prey upon their own families, who then have to undertake the grisly task of making sure they stay in the grave.

The first offering of fiction comes from the quill of none other than George Gordon, Lord Byron. “The End of My Journey” was Byron’s entry for the ghost-story writing competition held at the Villa Diodati, which famously gave rise to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. It involves a traveller who journeys to Smyrna in the company of the enigmatic Darvell. There, amid the ruins of ancient temples, Darvell is revealed to be a vampire who has grown tired of endlessly wandering the Earth and now wishes to die. This story is followed by John Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, an extension and elaboration of Byron’s tale. When the two are placed side by side, it’s ironic that Byron’s rather anaemic and flaccid story is easily eclipsed by Polidori’s fantastically overblown, barely comprehensible and outrageously homoerotic tale, especially since it was clearly inspired by his adventures with Byron. Lord Ruthven, Polidori’s vampiric version of Byron, is also the first recognisable forerunner of Count Dracula.

Even more decadent and morbid is “Wake Not the Dead,” an 1823 work by the German Romantic novelist Johann Ludwig Tieck. Written in a tortuous, quasi-poetic style, it records the awful miseries that result when anguished lover Walther unwisely asks a sorcerer to bring his deceased beloved Brunhilda back to life. Following on from this interminable tale is another story to feature a deadly, if slightly less horrific, femme fatale. “The Deathly Lover” (1843), by the French author and aesthete Theophile Gautier, is the amusing recollection of an elderly priest who looks back on the day of his ordination, when his roving eye fell upon a woman whose exquisite beauty hid a dark secret.

The second section sees mythology and folklore left behind as the vampire becomes a fully fledged literary archetype. Starting it off is the 1839 story “The Family of Vourdalak,” by Aleksei Tolstoy, a cousin of Leo. This is another tale with an engaging narrator, the wily old Marquis d’Urfe, who tells his listeners of the time when, as a young diplomat, he was sent to Moldavia and found himself living in the house of a family who came under attack from vampires. Genuinely creepy, intelligent and smouldering with sexual tension, this fine tale, translated here by Christopher Frayling, is one of the star attractions of this anthology. From the sublime we duly move to the ridiculous. *Varney the Vampire*, by Victorian super-hack James Malcolm Rymer, must always have seemed laughable, even to the readers of 1845. The brief, delirious extract included here, packed with howling storms, heaving bosoms, glowing eyes and glistening fangs, is written in such a breathless, eager-to-please style that it’s hard not to feel some affection for it. The next tale is a true oddity. “What Was It?” (1859) is by the Irish-American poet and short-story writer Fitz-James O’Brien, a figure whose peculiar life and innovative work are owed some new critical attention. “What Was It?” tells of a group of opium-addled drop-outs who elect to spend a night in a haunted boarding house and find themselves menaced by an invisible monstrosity intent on feasting on their blood. Although the tale’s narrative thrust is clogged by too much exposition, and loses direction altogether once O’Brien has unveiled his vampire, the slowly mounting horror and sheer strangeness of “What Was It?” means that it will not be easily forgotten.

Although its author has never been identified “The Mysterious Stranger” (1860) is a story whose influence on Bram Stoker seems undeniable. Set in the Carpathian Mountains, it contains many elements later to appear in *Dracula*, such as a pathetic hero and two feisty, powerful young women who are preyed upon by an aristocratic vampire who lives in a castle. It also makes mention of the vampire’s need to be invited freely into the company of the living and to rest in a coffin filled with his native soil during the hours of daylight. Still more nascent aspects of the modern vampire mythos are found in Anne Crawford’s “A Mystery of the Campagna” (1886), the first vampire story to use multiple narrators in a

similar fashion to *Dracula* and which features a vampiress who has waited for her revenge since the days of the Roman Empire.

Emily Gerard's 1888 travel memoir *The Land Beyond the Forest* is a book which Stoker is known to have consulted. What is fascinating about this extract is not so much finding the material that Stoker did use but that which he didn't. For example, he overlooked the more curious parts of the Romanian folk tradition which state that a vampire is the illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate people; and that it can be kept in the grave if a person shoots a pistol into its coffin, lays a thorny branch of a rose-bush across it, walks around it while smoking or rubs the un-dead corpse with the fat of a pig killed on the Feast of St. Ignatius. What a different reputation Stoker might have today if he decided to incorporate some of these rites into the plot of *Dracula*.

After this come two uneasy attempts to make the vampire a comic figure, "Let Loose" (1890) by Mary Cholmondeley and "A True Story of a Vampire" (1894) by the Swedish Count Eric Stenbock. "Let Loose" involves an architect whose determination to see some frescoes in a locked crypt in the tiny Yorkshire village of Wet Waste-on-the-Wolds has awful consequences. Stenbock (who was described by W.B. Yeats as a "Scholar, connoisseur, drunkard, poet, pervert, most charming of men") makes a slightly better fist of finding comedy in the vampire legend and his blonde, talkative, piano-playing bloodsucker is an unusual creation.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's late work "Good Lady Ducayne" (1896) is an original tale which must represent the first attempt to meld the myth of the vampire with science fiction. Augustus Hare's "And the Creature Came In" (1896), about a trio of siblings sharing a house that is invaded by a Max-Schreck type vampire, has been included in numberless anthologies but is still a good, spine-chilling read. "The Tomb of Sarah" (1897), by the little-known author F.G. Loring is a very accomplished and atmospheric British horror story about an architect wise in supernatural knowledge who must vanquish a vampiress who has been woken by the restoration of the West Country church in which her tomb lies. Rounding off this section is Scottish novelist James Hume Nisbet's "The Vampire Maid" (1900), a lurid tale of an artist who seeks peace at a holiday cottage only to fall victim to his landlady's vampire daughter. The third section comprises four tales, all told with the utmost restraint and subtlety. Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's "Luella Miller" (1902) is easily the most haunting tale in the collection and features an all-too-human vampire who may be the subject of a curse or of a terrible chain of coincidences and who ultimately suffers more than anyone else. "Count Magnus", among the most terrifying tales that M.R. James ever wrote, is rightfully included, as is one of the adventures of Alice and Claude Askew's Aylmer Vance, in which the supernatural investigator is pitted against a vampire. Finally, there is Stoker's embryonic version of *Dracula* itself.

Dracula's Guest is an outstanding anthology which really does serve a higher purpose. Not only does it allow the reader to observe the development of two distinct kinds of vampire story, those in which the vampire is a mostly unseen force terrorising the community and those in which the vampire passes unnoticed in ordinary society and is revealed only in the tale's closing pages; it also reveals how quickly writers of all nationalities were to recognise the value of the vampire in the mid to late nineteenth century, and to turn it into a symbol for everything from the fading away of the old aristocratic order to homosexuality. Above all, *Dracula's Guest* is a testament to the genius of Bram Stoker, the first, and so far only, writer to incarnate almost all vampire lore in a single character and whose strange masterpiece still retains a unique hold on our collective imagination.

JAMES MORIARTY

FILM REVIEWS

Kill List

(Dir. Ben Wheatley) UK 2011

Optimum Releasing

Note: This review contains extensive spoilers

Kill List is the best British horror film since *The Descent* (Dir. Neil Marshall, 2005). Mind you, you wouldn't know that from the opening half-hour or so. Although it opens with an eerie scratching noise and the sight of a cryptic rune that can't help but evoke the unnerving stick figure from *The Blair Witch Project* (Dir. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999), we're then plunged straight into a series of compellingly naturalistic scenes of domestic discord which, as several other reviews have rightly pointed out, evoke nothing so much as the films of Mike Leigh. (The fact that much of the film's dialogue is supplied by the cast also adds to this feeling.) But what Leigh's work doesn't have is the sense of claustrophobic dread that simmers in the background throughout Wheatley's film (his second, after 2009's *Down Terrace*). Nor have any of them – to date at least – had an ending as devastating and intriguing as this. Yet the preliminary scenes in *Kill List* are in no sense meant to misdirect, or wrong-foot the audience: rather, they're absolutely pivotal to the narrative as a whole, even if many of the questions it raises remain tantalisingly unresolved.

Jay (Neil Maskell) and his wife Shel (MyAnna Buring) live in a spacious, well-appointed suburban home (complete with jacuzzi) and have a sweet little boy, but theirs is clearly a marriage on the rocks, and even the most seemingly innocuous exchange between them is charged with hostility and mutual misunderstanding. "You're in danger of becoming a miserable cow, Shel", Jay says, in the opening minutes, and then grins, in a characteristically futile effort to defuse his innate air of tamped-down violence. The family seem to have been used to a certain standard of living, but we're soon made aware that Jay has not worked in 8 months, and that the money is rapidly running out. (These sequences have much in common with another recent, but criminally under-looked, British horror film, Dom Rotheroe's *Exhibit A* [2007].)

Jay is a former soldier who spent time in Iraq, and evidently suffers from some form of post-traumatic stress disorder; even his bed-time story to his son turns into a thinly fictionalised account of a Baghdad car-bombing. The strain of trying to keep some façade of normality in front of his wife and child is clearly becoming too much for him, and he only feels free to reveal some of how he is feeling to his best friend, business partner, and former comrade-in-arms Gal (the excellent Michael Smiley). Gal is a charming, kind-hearted and witty Irishman whose ability to defuse Jay's turbulent mood swings proves particularly useful during a strained dinner party at the latter's home which starts off awkwardly and climaxes in a particularly vicious slanging match between the hosts. Gal has brought along his new girlfriend, Fiona (Emma Fryer), who claims to work in human resources, and who says of her job – which, as she readily admits, mainly entails sacking people – that "It's nothing personal". It's an utterance, that like many in the film, will take on rather more sinister connotations as the film goes on, as does Jay's reply that "There's a lot of dirty work to be done". The fact that she etches the strange symbol seen at the very beginning of the film into the back of the bathroom mirror and pockets a used tissue stained with Jay's blood slightly later on leaves us in no doubt that she knows more than she's letting on.

Though they claim to work in “sales”, it’s fairly obvious from the outset that Jay and Gal aren’t exactly “legitimate” businessmen. It’s a suspicion confirmed when Jay shows off his shiny new assault rifle to Gal in the garage, and casually mentions that Shel bought it for him. In fact, the friends are killers-for-hire who have been out of commission ever since some never-explained incident in Kiev. At Gal’s request, however, and with the aid of some sustained nagging from Shel (who is not only privy to their profession, but actually seems to handle the admin for them), Jay reluctantly agrees to get back in the game.

It’s at this point that the film transitions from being a tense domestic drama to a grittily mundane thriller with horror undertones. Jay and Gal meet up with their mysterious boss, “The Client” (Struan Rodger), who presents them with a “Kill List” of targets and a large wad of cash, sealing the deal with blood when he slices Jay’s hand with a large knife. They carry out a series of professionally executed and (thanks to Jay’s rapidly disintegrating mental state) increasingly brutal killings. What makes matters even more unsettling, both for Jay and the audience, is the fact that their victims seem not only to have to have expected their deaths, but actually welcome them: they even say “Thank You”.

Each episodic encounter is preceded by a Tarantino-esque title screen (as in, “The Priest”, “The Librarian”, “The M.P.”, and last of all, “The Hunchback”), but there’s absolutely nothing smugly post-modern or self-consciously stylish about their exploits. Rather, Wheatley’s violence is always brutal, harrowingly realistic and disturbing, not least in what is perhaps the most difficult sequence to watch. Having discovered that “The Librarian” is also a child pornographer, Jay tortures the man until he gives up the name of his accomplice, in scenes reminiscent of Australian revenge flick *The Horseman* (Dir. Steven Kastrissios, 2008). Even Gal is shocked by Jay’s brutality and unsettled by his willingness to deviate from the plan. A more obvious film might use Jay’s actions here as a means of showing the audience that, despite his murderous profession, he’s a “good” killer. *Kill List* opts for something a lot murkier, though, and his behaviour further confirms that he is a deeply disturbed and violent man looking for any excuse to vent his rage. He’s not a vigilante: he’s a nasty piece of work.

Yet despite all this, the fact that Jay has such a close and apparently genuine connection with Gal means that we always retain a certain amount of empathy for him. One of the best things about this film is the fact that it essays such a touching and yet unsentimental portrait of male friendship. When they’re not off shooting strangers in the back of the head, Jay and Gal’s “trip” could be any tedious work assignment. They spend a lot of time on the motorways and in dull car parks, and sleep and eat in anonymous mid-range hotels. Though it’s an intensely serious film, there are some genuinely humorous moments in *Kill List*, most of which come courtesy of the constant stream of mock-serious patter that comes from Smiley’s character, who is always trying to make his pal feel a bit better about himself. You really do get the sense that these men enjoy one another’s company, but it’s also obvious that Gal is becoming increasingly concerned about Jay’s unpredictable behaviour. The standout scene as regards this element in their relationship comes when they eat dinner in a dreary hotel dining room whose only other customers are a large table full of relentlessly happy evangelical Christians who decide to start a sing-song. Jay’s response – and Gal’s reaction to it – is undeniably humorous, but we also know that it will take very little for the situation to become very unpleasant indeed. Underlining the film’s attention to detail is the fact that the song the evangelicals try to sing is none other than “Onward Christian Soldiers”, one of many references to the Knights Templar, the Crusades, and the job of the soldier that recur throughout the film. Furthermore, the fact that the protagonist’s targets each represent some powerful sector of society – religion, politics, and scholarship – also give us the sense that a conspiracy of much wider ramifications than we might previously have suspected is unfolding around the protagonists.

It is surely the final act of the film that will be most talked about, and which has attracted the many *Wicker Man* (1973) compassions which surround the film. Certainly, there are undeniable similarities between this film and Robin Hardy's, in terms of plotting, iconography, and, perhaps most importantly of all, as regards the mythological trappings that underpin the story (let's just say that anyone familiar with James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* will have a sense of where all this is going). Yet despite all this, *Kill List*, is an intensely original and striking effort in its own right. It evokes other films – not least a particular strain of paranoid conspiracy thriller – but it carves out its own unique path as well. From the moment that their effort to infiltrate the country estate of “The M.P.” goes horribly awry, Jay and Gal enter the world of nightmare, in which each escape route leads inexorably to a dead end, and terrifying (and possibly supernatural) antagonists dog each step. It's also here that Jay's domestic life, and his relationship with Shel, once more take centre stage, and combine with the more obviously horrific “conspiracy” plot to create a gut-wrenchingly unexpected, yet somehow inevitable, climax. It's a pleasure to see a genre film in which the often throwaway role of “the wife” is imbued with real importance and mystery, as it is here. Shel (herself a former soldier who knows how to handle a firearm) has secrets of her own, even if they ultimately remain unknowable – as do many of the questions that the film presents. While some viewers may find the film's fundamental reluctance to pin anything down deeply frustrating, and even cynically evasive, I believe that this lack of definitive answers only adds to the narrative's deeply disturbing effect.

In the end, then, *Kill List* is lots of things at once. On the most realistic level, it's a story of masculinity in crisis and family breakdown, and of the hugely damaging after-effects of military service during an inherently unjust war. It's also a compelling conspiracy thriller/horror film to rival anything that 1970s-era Roman Polanski could have come up with. In its final scenes, as domestic discord and paranoid horror story combine to create a surreal final reckoning that is simultaneously chilling and perplexing, the film demonstrates just why it is that it has been rightly acclaimed as the most effective British horror film in years.

Bernice M. Murphy

The Night of the Hunter
(Dir. Charles Laughton) USA 1955
 Criterion (November, 2010)

Reviewing *The Night of the Hunter* is like reviewing a Grimm Brothers' fairytale. It's mythic, it's monumental, it's so a part of the collective consciousness that telling people about it seems utterly redundant. So what am I doing it for? Well, there's always an outside chance that some unfortunate individuals out there have not, as yet, experienced what director Charles Laughton referred to as his "nightmarish... Mother Goose tale." To those individuals I would simply state, get it now, skip the next few meals if you have to, but get it now. To those who have seen the film, I say, get this new Criterion version now, skip the next few meals....etc.

As if in penance for the film's resounding critical and commercial failure upon its release in 1955, *The Night of the Hunter* has, in more recent times, received acclaim from every quarter. In 1992, the United States Library of Congress deemed the film to be "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and selected it for preservation in its National Film Registry. It was rated #34 on AFI's 100 Years... 100 Thrills ranking, and #90 on Bravo's 100 Scariest Movie Moments. In a 2007 listing of the 100 Most Beautiful Films, *Cahiers du cinéma* ranked *The Night of the Hunter* No. 2. It is among the top ten in the BFI list of the 50 films you should see by the age of 14. It ranked as the 71st greatest movie of all time on *Empire Magazine's* 500 Greatest Films list. And Robert Mitchum's Harry Powell was ranked No. 29 in the villains column in AFI's 100 Years...100 Heroes and Villains. Impressive? Well, I suppose, but when you consider that these same lists include the likes of *The Barefoot Contessa* (Dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1954), *Arthur* (Dir. Steve Gordon, 1981), *Forrest Gump* (Dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1994), *Heat* (Dir. Michael Mann, 1995) and *Billy Elliot* (Dir. Stephen Daldry, 2000), one is reminded how pointless and inane such interminable list-making is.

I can't help but wonder how Charles Laughton would feel about all this. Along with, presumably, thinking it was a bit late in the day for such accolades, I think Laughton would be really quite tickled. At the time of the film's release Laughton was known as a distinguished and mildly eccentric actor in films such as *The Old Dark House* (Dir. James Whale, 1932), *Island of Lost Souls* (Dir. Erle C. Kenton, 1933), *The Private Life of Henry VIII*. (Dir. Alexander Korda, 1933), *Ruggles of Red Gap* (Dir. Leo McCarey, 1935), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Dir. William Dieterle, 1939), *The Big Clock* (Dir. John Farrow, 1948) and *Hobson's Choice* (Dir. David Lean, 1954). He invested a tremendous amount of heart and soul into the project, which was his first attempt at directing, and when it bombed he never directed again. If sources close to him (including his wife, Elsa Lanchester) are to be believed, and I don't see why not, Laughton was devastated by the poor response.

It's not difficult to see why the film was so poorly received upon its initial release. It's a lyrical, expressionistic, beautiful, and highly original work. In other words, it's art, and the American cinema-going public don't like art on their movie screens – it belongs in galleries, not places of entertainment. Most film critics aren't too keen on art either, unless it limits itself to the "artistry" of technical innovation.

I'm reluctant to offer a plot synopsis, for the reason stated at the beginning of this review but I will, if only a very brief one. It's West Virginia in the 1930s. Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) is a woman-hater; he hates "perfume-smellin' things, lacy things, things with curly hair". Posing as a preacher, 'Reverend'

Powell seeks out lonely women (widows “with a little wad of bills hid away in a sugar bowl”), murders them and steals their money. While in prison for the theft of a car, Powell discovers that his cellmate, Ben Harper (Peter Graves), has hidden \$10,000 from his last robbery. Harper is executed and, upon his release from prison, Powell seeks out, woos and eventually marries his cellmate’s widow, Willa (Shelley Winters), in the hope that he will discover where Harper hid the money. Powell becomes convinced that Willa’s children, John (Billy Chapin) and Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce), know the whereabouts of the money and he persistently and menacingly questions them about it, “and the little child shall lead them”. Willa eventually discovers Powell’s intentions and he murders her. The children go “a runnin’” and Powell embarks on a hunt for them. When the destitute children find refuge in the home of Rachel Cooper (Lillian Gish), a tiny but tough old woman who looks after stray children (outcasts of the Great Depression), they discover her to be an invaluable protector and the first truly dependable adult they have known. When the ‘Preacher’ appears at her door, to reclaim his little ones, Rachel immediately sees Harry Powell for what he really is and the battle between Good and Evil begins.

As one commentator has phrased it, *The Night of the Hunter* is “cinema’s most eccentric rendering of the battle between good and evil”. Its story, like a twisted fairytale, paints its figures large and with little regard for realism. But, like a fairytale or a child’s nightmare, the film has its own inherent reality and truth. Told from a child’s point of view, *The Night of the Hunter* speaks of childhood fears and fantasies: the difficulty of keeping a secret, the vulnerability and confusion of living in an adult world, the bonds (both good and bad) of family, and the longing for a magical journey which will lead to safety. Like a fairytale or, indeed, a Biblical story, Laughton’s film deals with elemental dualities: God and the Devil, heaven and earth (or Hell), male and female, light and dark, good and evil, knowingness and innocence.

Stylistically, the film owes a debt to German Expressionism, with surreal sets, bizarre shadows, unusual camera angles and distorted perspectives, all of which echo and resonate with the film’s narrative and thematic concerns. In keeping with the Biblical or fable-like quality of the story, much of the acting and dialogue is stylized with more than a touch of American Southern Gothic. The acting has also been referred to as Brechtian. Laughton had worked closely with Brecht on the American stage version of his play *Galileo*, playing the title role, as well as editing and translating the play along with Brecht. *The Night of the Hunter*’s connection to Southern Gothic can also be found in its origins; it is based on Davis Grubb’s 1953 novel of the same name, and adapted for the screen by James Agee. But these Southern Gothic origins go even further than this; Grubb’s plot was based on the true story of Harry Powers, who was hanged in 1932 for the murders of two widows and three children in Moundsville, West Virginia. Known as the West Virginia or the Appalachian Bluebeard, Powers lured his victims through ‘Lonely Hearts’ ads saying he was looking for love, but in reality he had the intentions of taking these women’s money and then murdering them. Echoed in scenes in Grubb’s novel, which would also become a part of the film, the crime scene of Powers’ murders was a basement (four rooms under a garage), where bloody matted hair and clothing, a partially burnt bank book and a small bloody footprint of a child were discovered. During his imprisonment a mob surrounded the jail where Powers was held demanding he be lynched.

The most notable and powerful addition that the novel and, subsequently the film, made to this real-life Southern Gothic story is the theme of religion. Based in the Bible Belt during the Great Depression, in an environment of socially conservative evangelical Protestantism, the story of Harry Powell is far more than the story of a bogus preacher, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” Powell does not simply don the clothes and manners of a religious man to disguise his true intentions; he practices and believes in a warped form of religion, “The religion the Almighty and me worked out betwixt us”. What is immediately clear is that, through religion, Powell

has discovered a path and a justification for his murderous hatred of women. Using religion as a template for his twisted sexual desires, Powell finds, within the pages of the Bible, both a validation and a language for his profound hatred, “You whores of Babylon!”

But *The Night of the Hunter* (novel and film) complicates this dark depiction of religion with the character of Rachel Cooper, who uses her knowledge and understanding of the Bible to practice acceptance and love, and instil these same values in the children under her care. Thus, the struggle between good and evil is not to be found in the characters’ acceptance or rejection of certain moral teachings but in the way they have interpreted them and applied them to their lives, “by their fruits you will know them.”

During Mitchum’s ‘audition’ (Laughton didn’t really audition his actors, he talked with them and instinctively knew who would work in the part), Laughton described ‘The Preacher’ as “a diabolical shit”, to which Mitchum shouted back, “Present!” Indeed, Mitchum seems so right in the role of Harry Powell, it’s nigh on impossible to imagine that at one point Laurence Olivier was considered for the part. The scene in which Mitchum tells “the little story of Right Hand-Left Hand – the story of good and evil”, wrestling his interlocking hands (the knuckles tattooed with the “G-O-O-D” and “E-V-I-L”), is one of cinema’s most delectably iconic moments.

Taking into consideration the amount of commentators that have referred to the film and, in particular Mitchum’s performance, as terrifying, some viewers may be bewildered by what could be construed as the actor’s playful, occasionally even hokey and slapstick, performance (especially as the narrative reaches its close). But this rendering is in keeping with the highly stylized nature of the entire film. More specifically, it is in keeping with the black humour of Southern Gothic and its fable-like quality. In this film, as in many fables, the figure of evil is a dissembler and once he has lost his power to trick people, he rapidly becomes an object of ridicule. It should be noted that while Mitchum is magnificent as Harry Powell, Shelley Winters and Lillian Gish are equally brilliant, as the gullible and slightly unhinged young widow Willa and the benevolent and fearless matriarch Rachel, respectively. The children, played by Billy Chapin and Sally Jane Bruce, are wonderful. They carry you with them every step of the way; their world is your world. You share their fears and hopes, and come to understand exactly what Rachel means when she observes, “Children are humanity’s strongest. They abide... and they endure.”

This Criterion edition of *The Night of the Hunter* (both on DVD and Blu-Ray) looks and sounds exceptional. Stanley Cortez’s stark and poetic cinematography looks stunning and the film’s score, composed and arranged by Walter Schumann (in close association with Laughton), has never sounded better. Considering that, before this release, DVDs of *The Night of the Hunter* had nothing but a trailer as an extra, this Criterion edition of the film is an absolute joy. It is literally stacked with treats. We get an excellent audio commentary featuring second-unit director Terry Sanders, film critic F.X. Feeney, archivist Robert Gitt, and author Preston Neal Jones. There is also a new documentary, featuring interviews with producer Paul Gregory, Sanders, Feeney, Jones, and author Jeffrey Couchman, and a new video interview with Laughton biographer Simon Callow. We also get a clip from *The Ed Sullivan Show*, 1955, in which cast members perform a scene deleted from the film. There is a 15-minute episode of the BBC show *Moving Pictures* about the film, an archival interview (1984) with cinematographer Stanley Cortez, and a gallery of wonderful sketches by author Davis Grubb. But best of all, this Criterion edition contains a two-and-a-half hour documentary, ‘Charles Laughton Directs *The Night of the Hunter*’. Restored and edited, over a 20 year period, by film archivists Robert Gitt and Anthony Slide, from over 80,000 feet of rushes and outtakes that Laughton had lovingly kept, this is a breathtaking treasure trove of outtakes, ‘rushes’, and behind-the-scenes footage. To accompany this, there is a new 17-minute video conversation between Gitt and film critic Leonard Maltin about the documentary and the discovery and restoration of

the material used to make it. Lastly, we get a 30-page liner notes booklet featuring essays by critics Terrence Rafferty and Michael Sragow. Criterion are well known for the high standard of supplements included with their releases, but they have outdone themselves with this incredible selection of extra features. Finally, *The Night of the Hunter* has been given a release that is worthy of it and Harry Powell is back amongst us, as he promised; “you haven't heard the last of Harry Powell yet. The Lord God Jehovah will guide my hand in vengeance. Devil! You whores of Babylon! I'll be back, when it's dark.”

Elizabeth McCarthy

The Damned
(Dir. Joseph Losey) UK 1963
 Columbia/Hammer
 Sony Pictures Home Entertainment (2010)

One of the most unusual horror films ever to emerge from the Hammer Studios, *The Damned* is set, not in a distant corner of Europe at some indeterminate point in history, but in a British sea-side resort in what was then the present day of 1960. It doesn't feature Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, or any of the other Hammer stalwarts and there is not a cobweb-strewn crypt or a blood-splattered laboratory in sight. Neither is there any sign of a vampire, one of Baron Frankenstein's creations or any other species of monster, except perhaps those who wear a human guise. Instead, *The Damned* deals with a very real fear, one that came to consume the whole world in the years between this film's production and its release. This was the fear of impending nuclear war and the belief that the human race was running rapidly out of time.

A co-production between Columbia Pictures and Hammer, made by the acclaimed American director Joseph Losey and adapted from the now obscure science-fiction novel *The Children of Light* by H.L. Lawrence, it's immensely ironic that this, one of the most subtle and intelligent films Hammer ever produced, suffered a fate far worse than many of its more unpleasant and worthless offerings. Butchered in the editing room, kept waiting almost two years for its release and then withdrawn from cinemas before it had a chance to make any impact, *The Damned* was treated with total disdain, even by the studios that financed it. In many ways *The Damned's* DVD release now represents the first opportunity an audience has had really to appreciate this accomplished, conscientious and alarmingly ahead-of-its-time horror movie.

Based in and around the Dorset town of Weymouth, *The Damned's* central character is American former insurance executive Simon Wells (Macdonald Carey) who has decided to go "on holiday from everything." Entranced by a young girl called Joan (Shirley Anne Field), Wells is lured into a trap set by Joan's psychotic brother, King (Oliver Reed), and his gang of vicious thugs. Robbed and badly beaten, Wells is helped to a hotel by two military men. There he meets their boss, Bernard (Alexander Knox), and his mistress, the sculptress Freya (Viveca Lindfors). Bernard warns Simon that "The age of senseless violence has caught up with us too" and the American returns to the dock and prepares to depart in his boat. Suddenly Joan appears and, after another encounter with King, Wells encourages her to leap aboard his ship and the two head out to sea. Enraged that Joan has escaped his obsessive, incestuous hold, King and his hoodlums set off in pursuit.

Hunted along the coast by the relentless King, Simon and Joan are forced to break into a mysterious military base. Chased by security guards they fall into the sea and are swept inside a cave. Within they find themselves surrounded by a group of children who claim never to have seen the outside world and who live in a specially constructed bunker beneath the base. Simon and Joan are horrified by the children's plight and vow to help them. Then they discover something. All of the children have skin which is ice-cold to the touch.

It transpires that the children were born in the aftermath of a nuclear accident and that they are able to withstand extremely high levels of radiation. Bernard is implanting in them all of human history, science and culture so that "When the time comes," the children shall be the inheritors of the Earth. The danger is that the children are highly radioactive and prolonged exposure to them is fatal, hence the fact that they

must be educated by remote control. Failing to understand why the children are being held prisoner in their shadowy underworld, Wells and Joan plot their release. Unfortunately, King has followed them and, in the desperate struggle for survival that follows, the future of the human race is put in jeopardy.

What distinguishes *The Damned* as a horror film is the elegance with which it intertwines so many themes, including questions of progression and regression, the role of science and the value of art. At its heart is the concept of violence as both a creative and destructive force. King and his thugs commit crimes because they are an outlet for their talent and natural energy, and they execute them with the skill and precision of artists. The deadly children, themselves the unforeseen result of a form of violence, could now prove to be the key to the continuation of life on Earth. The accelerated destruction of civilization might allow an entirely new world, and a new evolutionary age, to begin. In fact, *The Damned* even dares to suggest that violence may be the motive power behind history, the necessary evil that is the ultimate cause of all change.

There is little doubt that the world presented in *The Damned* is crying out for change. The viewer is left under no illusion that Britain's great imperial project is anything other than dead and buried. One of the film's earliest images is of a monument commemorating Queen Victoria's Jubilee gaudily decked out in amusement arcade lights and when we first see King and his gang they are sprawled on the base of statue to George III. This is a stagnant, decaying world in which the talent of the young is no longer being harnessed. "What else is there to do?" replies one of the gang when asked why he behaves as he does. The military too seem to be at a loss. With no real enemies left to fight they have had to content themselves with the mindless posturing which has now brought civilization to the brink of destruction. Cooped up in the base, Bernard's team of scientists bicker and, indifferent to the suffering of the children, they merely complain that their abilities are being wasted. In this way, Losey argues that there is no fundamental difference between the cowardly and imbecile activities of King and his gang and the faceless institutional violence of the military and those who serve them.

The conflict at the centre of *The Damned* is not one between good and evil but between old and new values. Simon is a man who knows that his traditional values have ceased to be relevant but he doesn't know what else to do other than uphold them. Bernard explains that he became a public servant because the imminent catastrophe meant that "it was too late to do anything in private life. "Self-reliance, character, gentility. Do you think these values will mean anything?" ponders one of Bernard's educational experts, thinking aloud about the wasteland the children shall inherit. Freya alone refuses to lose faith in mankind's capacity to grow but she can only really express herself by creating artworks which no-one understands and fatally underestimates man's savagery. Even King has an ethical system, thoroughly twisted though it is, and accuses the modern world of having no morals.

Since they both connect the cruelty of the individual with the barbarism of the state and assess the relationship between art and violence many critics have drawn comparisons between Losey's film and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and it's true that at times *The Damned* feels like a dry run for Kubrick's movie. Neither is their similarity simply a thematic one. King and Kubrick's Alex share many stylistic traits, such as the peculiar patchwork language they speak, their adoption of dapper attire for their crime-sprees and their use of a sword-stick, or in King's case a sword-umbrella. It's also a peculiar coincidence that it was on the beach of a sea-side resort much like Weymouth that the author of *A Clockwork Orange*, Anthony Burgess, saw the gang warfare of the Mods and Rockers and conceived the notion of a novel on that subject. However, *The Damned* is a far more sensitive and profound study of the omnipresence of violence in modern society than Kubrick's film.

That *The Damned* is such a harmonious piece of cinema is no small achievement on Losey's part when you consider the battle for control that raged behind the scenes. Drawn to the movie by its anti-nuclear message, Losey secretly commissioned a new version of the script and began shooting this without the studio's knowledge. When the producers at Hammer learned what was happening they were stunned, but too much of the script had already been shot. Losey's revised script ended with an elaborate chase between a sports car and two helicopters and necessitated much aerial photography and stunt work. This led the film's budget to spiral to £170,000. Although filming was completed in September 1961, *The Damned* was held back by Hammer's executives, who believed that its inflammatory political message might do the company harm. It was only in May 1963 that the film was finally released as the lower half of a double bill, and even then with a full seven minutes cut. Some film historians now believe that it was due to *The Damned* that Hammer rarely ventured outside of Gothic territory again.

That *The Damned* was treated so deplorably is tragic because there is much in it that impresses today. Losey's direction has the same vitality and earnestness here that it does in the films he would later make with Harold Pinter. Evan Jones's screenplay is witty and sophisticated. Arthur Grant's beautiful black-and-white photography makes the most of the Weymouth and the Portland Bill locations and Hammer regular James Bernard's music is mournful and subdued and even his theme for King's gang is catchy. The production design by Bernard Robinson, particularly the children's subterranean lair, is striking and as good as anything Ken Adam would later visualise.

As for the cast, Macdonald Carey does his best to make his patronising hero likeable. The 23 year-old Oliver Reed uses both his voice and physicality to great menacing effect, and it's fascinating to see how his character reverts to a snivelling child by the end. Alexander Knox is credible as the frosty, fanatical Bernard but it's Viveca Lindfors as the enigmatic Feyra who makes the strongest impression. Constantly putting an interesting spin on even the most routine dialogue (the movie's best moment is her reaction to Bernard's news that it's too late to prevent the world's destruction), she gives a stunning performance and invests the film with a real emotional centre. Completing the cast are the familiar British movie actors Walter Gotell, James Villiers and Kenneth Cope of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* fame.

Losey also manages to come up with some legitimately scary scenes, most notably the radiation-suited security guard prowling silently through the darkened classroom towards the sleeping children, King chasing Simon and Joan across a derelict and moonlit churchyard and the children leading them into the strange netherworld they have put together from the flotsam and jetsam which has drifted into their cave. Overall, though, this is a film which uses implication to convey the horror it deals with. Nothing helps to achieve this more than the use of the work of the brilliant British sculptress Elisabeth Frink. Frink was famous for her terrifying, jagged sculptures of sinister, elongated and winged figures, mutilated soldiers with truncated limbs and especially predatory birds. Frink's "graveyard bird" and the rest of her sculptures are used in the film as both a fearful reminder of the violence inherent in nature and as harbingers of the nightmarish life-forms the world may spawn in the wake of a nuclear winter.

A horror film with both a head and a heart, *The Damned* is a disturbing and haunting work which anticipates more recent movies like *Eden Lake* (Dir. James Watkins, 2008) and this year's *Never Let Me Go* (Dir. Mark Romanek). More than any other film it convincingly depicts a world in which most of the characters see Armageddon as inescapable and gives us an unforgettable image of a cycle of destructiveness that has gone totally out of control. A flawless, crisp print with a gallery and extensive notes by Marcus Hearn, *The Damned* is a release to be welcomed.

Edward O'Hare

Insidious
(Dir. James Wan) USA 2011
 Film District/Alliance Films

From its promotional materials, one would assume that *Insidious* is yet another entry in the “creepy kid” subgenre of horror, initiated by *The Bad Seed* (Dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1956) and still present in such recent films as *Joshua* (Dir. George Ratliff, 2007) and *Orphan* (Dir. Jaume Collet-Serra, 2009). In fact, Dalton Lambert (played by Ty Simpkins), the possessed child of *Insidious*, spends most of his time comatose in a hospital bed in a back bedroom, where he proves considerably less active than Linda Blair’s Regan in *The Exorcist* (Dir. William Friedkin, 1973), another film that the marketing campaign for *Insidious* strives to evoke. Instead, James Wan’s film is closer in structure and spirit (pardon the pun) to *The Amityville Horror* (Dir. Stuart Rosenberg, 1979) and *Poltergeist* (Dir. Tobe Hooper, 1982), simultaneously paying homage to the “haunted house” subgenre and attempting to subvert its characteristic narrative and conventions.

Insidious is the collaboration of producer Oren Peli (director of *Paranormal Activity* and producer of *Paranormal Activity 2*) and director James Wan and writer Leigh Whannell (director and writer of *Saw*, respectively). Here, they eschew the “found footage” aspect of *Paranormal Activity* (2007) and the graphic violence and gore of the *Saw* films in favour of supernatural horror, steeped in family melodrama and focused more on a gathering sense of dread as, for the Lambert family, the implausible increasingly becomes entirely too plausible. Like *Poltergeist*, *Insidious* is somewhat episodic in nature and can be divided into four distinct acts, the first involving the family’s terrifying experiences in their first home. In the second act, the activity follows the family as they attempt to escape by moving to another home, while the third depicts the intervention of authorities dealing in the paranormal. Finally, the film’s fourth act takes the form of a coda that should feel entirely predictable and gratuitous, but ultimately manages to leave even the most hardened horror fan in need of a few moments for personal collection while the end credits roll.

As the film opens, Josh and Renai Lambert (Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne) are still unpacking following their move into a new house. In short order, we discover that Josh is a high school teacher while Renai is a stay-at-home mom, looking after their three young children. One morning, their eldest son, Dalton, fails to awake, entering a comatose state that doctors are unable to explain. As symptoms of a haunting begin to accumulate as well, Josh and Renai’s marriage shows signs of strain and an emotionally exhausted Renai insists that the family move to a smaller home, considerably less spooky than the last. Before long, however, Renai once again encounters a sinister apparition and seeks the counsel of her sympathetic mother-in-law, Lorraine (Barbara Hershey), who brings in a powerful medium (Lin Shaye). Accompanied by two bickering ghost hunter types (screenwriter Whannell and Angus Sampson), the medium visits the house and helps the family to determine what they are really dealing with. It seems that neither house has been haunted: it is Dalton who is being haunted, the target of a handful of malevolent entities seeking to take control of his unattended body (his coma is explained as the result of astral projection, a dangerous practice inherited from his father). As the film nears its climax, Josh must come to terms with his own childhood encounter with an insidious spirit, undergoing hypnosis and venturing into the spiritual netherworld known as “The Further” in order to rescue his son from a demonic captor.

What differentiates *Insidious* from the majority of contemporary horror cinema is its emphasis on atmosphere, with some of the film's scariest moments taking place in broad daylight. Wan's film also cleverly collects the conventions of the haunted house subgenre even as it subverts them: for example, the first half is set in a pre-war home, suitably gothic in appearance, and every inch the classic haunted house of both film and literature. In the film's second half, however, the family resides in a markedly smaller and more modern home in which they presume they will be safe. However, this fleeting sense of security on their part (and ours) is quickly shown to be false. The film features a number of brutally effective scenes, with the most striking occurring shortly after the family's move into the second house. Taking out the garbage, Renai is surprised to hear, through an open window, the phonograph that she left playing inside being tampered with and the sedate piano music of her choosing replaced by Tiny Tim's truly sepulchral rendition of "Tiptoe through the Tulips." Peering in the window, she sees the gray-faced phantom of a small boy in outdated fashions dancing a macabre jig in her living room. It is at this moment that both Renai and the audience realize that the family is dealing with something much worse than a haunting. Like *Poltergeist*, *Insidious* places a young family in jeopardy, with the paranormal activity centering around one of the children (instead of being abducted into the television set ala Carol Anne in *Poltergeist*, Dalton enters a mysterious comatose state). Yet whereas *Poltergeist* presents a reasonably straightforward motivation for its haunting (the family home is built over a desecrated graveyard, and the dead are angry), *Insidious* attempts to differentiate itself by featuring not only ghosts but the demonic as well. Once astral projection is also thrown into the mix, *Insidious* begins to veer away from the simple but efficacious ghost story it initially appears to be, with too many supernatural elements at play and too many questions left unanswered.

The film also suffers issues of plausibility (the ability to support a large family and afford the first house on the father's sole income as a high school teacher), as well as pacing: the film's second half seems to switch gears too suddenly, introducing the concept of inherited capabilities of astral projection as an explanation for Dalton's possession, while Renai, the heroic mother of the film's first half, becomes a mere supporting character, as her husband Josh becomes the film's protagonist. The odious comic relief offered by the ghost hunters arriving halfway through the film doesn't mesh well with the relentless suspense worked up to by that point, and the twist that closes the film, while suitably frightening on its own, seems almost obligatory at this point in the genre. Nevertheless, *Insidious* succeeds in its attempt at updating an established subgenre and offering something other than the remakes and torture porn into which the horror genre has descended in the past decade. That I had to see it twice in order to write this review, because most of my first viewing was done with my eyes covered, is an endorsement in and of itself.

Drew Beard

MULTI-MEDIA REVIEWS

Dead Space 2

*Developer: Europcom Visceral Games, Publisher: Electronic Arts
(reviewed on XBOX 360)*

As any deep-space traveller knows, going into cold sleep/hibernation/sus-an/insert cliché here/ after a prolonged fight against aliens never ends well. Ripley found herself 57 years in the future fighting the same aliens she thought she'd blown out an airlock in the first film; in Event Horizon (Dir. Paul W.S. Anderson, 1997) Laurence Fishburne's character ended up trapped on a space ship with Sam Neill (The Horror!) that was being sucked into a black hole, and in Dead Space 2, Isaac Clark (the hero of the first game) awakens to discover that he has no memory of the last three years, he's on a space station called "The Sprawl" which is hollowed out of the Saturn moon, Titan, and said station is being quickly overrun with necromorphs.

Not the best way to wake up after a long sleep, but what are you going to do? In Isaac's case, grab a Plasma cutter and go slice up some reanimated mutant corpses.

The gamer takes control of Isaac as he tries to escape the Sprawl, only to become embroiled in a plot by the Unitologists (who seem vaguely similar to a certain new "religion" that has lots of celebrity members including one quite short one who likes impossible missions. Although as far as I'm aware they're not involved in a plot to become immortal by building an alien monolith and reanimating corpses, but you never know) to begin a new phase of human evolution by building a new Marker (a sacred artifact which had been the cause of all the trouble in the first game).

Running with the original game's previous mechanics, the gamer is embroiled in a survival horror in which resource management is combined with the need to slice off the limbs of enemies in order to kill them. Weapons are made up of various engineering tools, although new types are added to the fray, including a nifty Javelin and a mine layer that also comes in very handy.

Graphically DS 2 exceeds the first game, with new, even more gruesome, enemies. Character models are also improved with the added bonus of the player actually getting to see Isaac's face as he speaks to other survivors on Titan.

Also improved is the running of the game. In DS Isaac was shuttled from one repair job to the next as an excuse for fighting the Necromorphs. In DS 2 the plot flows much more naturally and feels more like a story being told than a bullet point presentation.

The horror elements in Dead Space 2 are both obvious and subtle. The more obviously horrific, of course, involve the reanimated and mutated corpses of the dead. The attacks by necromorphs come from out of nowhere and with a large variety of bad guys, allowing for sudden changes in mood. For example, the Pack are a mass of small, humanoid enemies who swarm you. The multiple enemies require quick bursts of rapid fire to be killed down. Other enemies, such as "The Brute" requires sustained and heavy gun fire to take down. In this way, the player is kept constantly off guard and the player's selection of weapons can become a matter of life and death.

However, the real horror comes as the player realises the true nature of the necromorphs. It is easy to dismiss the larger monsters as just being your standard video game cannon fodder. However, some still retain human characteristics, with Slashers having a human face and The Pack obviously being children.

Indeed, at one point in the game (and please note, spoilers follow), Isaac finds himself in a school. Nothing attacks and it is eerily quiet, until he reaches the nursery. Watched through a window, a woman calls out to something out of sight and a necromorph crawls into her lap and explodes. It takes a little while but the realisation eventually sets in that the necromorphs have been through the nursery and reanimated the corpses of infants. It's particularly unsettling and, from a personal point of view, not the best moment to have your pregnant wife watching you play.

This is a shift from the more familiar fear of infection that permeates the Resident Evil games and the psychological warfare that Silent Hill plays on you. If anything, the Dead Space series is going all out for body horror, with the necromorphs' victims twisted into grotesque parodies of themselves and sent out to convert more to the Marker's malevolent cause. If Resident Evil is the Contagion (Dir. Steven Soderbergh, 2011) of the game world, then Dead Space is quickly filling the role of District 9 (Dir. Neill Blomkamp, 2009) or even Human Centipede (Dir. Tom Six, 2010) (without all the faeces).

The game also has additional gameplay elements - at one point it takes a slight break, in which, instead of running around trying not to get eaten, you have to steer a needle into your own cornea (in the game, not in real life – I can see the Daily Mail's headline already...) Gods help you if you push it too far...

Also of note is the multiplayer format for the game. You play either as part of a security detail (in groups of four), trying to stop the necromorphs or you play as the necromorphs. The security detail plays much like Isaac in the main game, but playing as a necromorph is where the fun is. You can play as one of four types of necromorph allowing you to slice, shot and vomit acid on those pesky humans as much as you want.

Dead Space 2 is an excellent sequel to the original game, adding to the background of the universe and new gameplay elements that mean it never feels stale to play. Added to this is the genuine horror of some of the plot; doing away with reliance on the cheap thrill of having something leap out from hiding to attack you and, instead, giving you the unsettling notion, that whilst it's still a videogame, the monster you just killed is the reanimated corpse of a child.

If you are a fan of the series, then this is definitely one to get. It carries on with the excellent gameplay of Dead Space and builds the mythos of the universe. Added to this is the ramping up of the terror and the unsettling feeling that permeates many of the best horror films -that the creature you just sliced into pieces could, just possibly, be you at some point.

Eoin Murphy

Dead Space 2

Graphics: 9

Gameplay: 9

Sound: 9

Replay Value: 9

Overall Score: 9

F.E.A.R 3

Developer: Day 1 Studios, Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
(reviewed on XBOX 360)

Okay, this one needs a recap...

In *F.E.A.R* you played as 'Point Man', part of the First Encounter Assault Recon team (you have to wonder how long it took the developers to come up with that one), sent in to stop Paxton Fettel, a soldier who, having being involved in secret government experiments (working with Armachem, your standard unscrupulous OCP style multinational Company) which psychically enhanced him to control an army of clones, has gone rogue and started to murder company executives and eat them. As you do.

Point Man successfully stops Paxton but discovers along the way (after being chased throughout the game by a scary little girl in a red dress) that he is not only Paxton's brother but is also the son of Alma, the little girl who in reality is a full grown woman who has been experimented on in order to create the perfect soldiers. These soldiers include Point Man and Paxton, who, it turns out, in best soap opera style, are her children. The game ends with Point Man killing Paxton, an explosion, and Alma continuing her quest for revenge.

In *F.E.A.R 2* (reviewed in Issue 6 of the Journal) you play as Michael Beckett, a Delta forces operative. Long story short, there's lots of shooting, things jumping out of the shadows, scary little girls who aren't really little girls and Beckett who Alma forces into having sex with her thereby getting her pregnant in time for the third game.

F.E.A.R 3 (I'm exhausted now) takes the gamer back to Point Man, now languishing in a privately run prison, suffering visions of his dead brother Paxton. Point Man is rescued by his dead brother's ghost and escapes and upon discovering that not only is Alma pregnant but that the birth of her child will result in the creation of a new and devastating evil, sets off to kill her, leading to all kinds of shenanigans involving cultists, mercenaries, teleporting bad guys and some sort of a monster lizard thing that tries to eat you every so often.

F.E.A.R 2 did not get a great review in this Journal. It relied heavily on pop up scares, was unrelentingly dark (not in atmosphere, you just couldn't see anything) and for this reviewer it was just a tad boring. *F.E.A.R 3* on the other hand, is a definite step up.

It is, admittedly, very light on the horror elements. Besides the odd glimpse of Alma and the occasional demon dog attack it's a standard First Person Shooter (FPS). However, it is an excellent FPS. The Artificial Intelligence of the various enemies is well executed. They flank you, recognise your tactics and try different methods to take you down, amounting to a tough and rewarding game that is becoming rarer in today's market, where you can pay over €50 for a game and have it competed in a day (I'm looking at you, *Call of Duty...*).

F.E.A.R 3 will take you a lot longer than a day to complete and for a real challenge, putting it on the highest difficulty level will keep you occupied for a couple of weeks.

Graphically, the game is excellent, with good character models, varied locations (thankfully moving away from the offices you seemed to spend most of the previous two games in) and a multitude of enemy types just itching to gun you down.

Added to this is the extensive multi- and co-operative player modes. The main campaign can be played either as a single player or co-operative game, with gamers selecting either Point Man or Paxton as their character of choice. Which one you choose will drastically alter gameplay, with Point Man fulfilling the standard FPS role of running around shooting things. Paxton, on the other hand, is a disembodied spirit who specialises in sneaking and possessing the bodies of enemies (stay too long in a corpse however and it explodes in a bloody mess).

The life of the game is extended through its extensive multiplayer, which have a number of different modes including the standard Death match variation. *F.E.A.R 3* also has its own version of the *Gears of Wars Horde* mood, where you and any additional players are holed up in a building defending it from constant attack. The joyously named “Fucking Run” is another multiplayer mode, where not only are you under attack from enemies but also have to outrun a giant wall of psychic death as it rolls across the level and if it touches you, you die.

Whilst a good shooter, *F.E.A.R 3* is massively disappointing as a horror game. It is just not scary in any way and despite the developers’ best efforts those that are there appear more tagged on than anything else. This is even more disappointing when you consider that both Steve Niles, the artist for Graphic Novels such as *Thirty Days of Night* and the horror maestro John Carpenter were involved in developing the look and story of the game. Nowhere is this apparent. There are only two types of supernatural enemies in the entire game (demon dogs and the aforementioned monster lizard), which appear only occasionally and plot-wise there is nothing particularly groundbreaking or frightening going on here. Although, given Carpenter’s current form, perhaps this isn’t a surprise (*Ghosts of Mars* (2001)? *The Ward* (2010)? Really?).

F.E.A.R 3 is an excellent first person game, unfortunately, it’s about as frightening as *Lego Star Wars*...

Eoin Murphy

F.E.A.R 3

Graphics: 8

Gameplay: 9

Sound: 9

Replay Value: 8

Overall Score: 8

Roísín Dubh

Publisher: Atomic Diner

Writer: Maura McHugh

Art: Stephen Daly

The first of our reviews of new Irish-created horror comics is *Roísín Dubh*. Set in 1899, the protagonist is Roísín Sheridan, a young woman with big dreams seeking to escape the bonds created by society and become something more than her station denotes; in this case, an actress.

The story opens on the road to Garvagh (in Derry) when an argument between Roísín and her parents over her future is rudely interrupted by the attack of a Neamh-Mharibh (in scientific speak an undead vampire type thing).

Rather than ruin the comic for you, I'll won't give away the plot details. Suffice to say, as with most publications to date from Atomic Diner, this is a good, solid comic. The writing is tight, with the characters introduced quickly and effectively, and without recourse to stereotypes. Indeed, a quick Google search reveals that Roísín's mother is a fan of esoteric philosophy (she's reading *Isis Unveiled*) and that her father is more worried about his daughter than their social standing (a nice reversal of the more common tendency in period-based popular fiction). In the limited space available it also manages to hint at a larger conspiracy, with a group of mysterious men releasing the Neamh-Maribh (Irish walking dead) from its prison.

The art also stands out. Excellent use of black and white results in dynamic storytelling, with the Neamh-Maribh suitably unpleasant and the atmospheric art setting the tone for the story.

It should also be noted that the cover art by Stephen Byrne is excellent and is something you would be happy to frame and put on the wall.

Whilst this is a review of only the first issue of *Roísín Dubh* (the only one available at the time of writing), the creative team behind the comic have done an excellent job of hooking the reader. Although it could be said that it is essentially a turn-of the century *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Roísín Dubh* does enough to distinguish itself from the hordes of young woman versus vampire tales that sprang up following the critical and cult success of everyone's favourite cheerleader (certainly not that indestructible one from *Heroes...*) . The use of Celtic mythology within a comic's context is refreshing, with ancient druids, old Irish Gods and a talking brooch all helping make this a uniquely Hibernian page turner.

Indeed, *Roísín Dubh* strongly reminds me of some of the best stories in *2000 AD* (the art is reminiscent of *Nikolai Dante* and early *Sinister Dexter*, and the classic story of Celts that is *Slaine*) and it would not be out of place in the *Galaxy's Greatest Comic*. If you're a fan of horror comics – especially those with a home-grown twist- this is definitely be one to check out.

Eoin Murphy

Zombies Hi

Publisher: Uproar Comics

Writer: Danny McLaughlin

Pencils: Kevin Gio Logue

Ink: John Campbell

Further Stories by: Holly Stinson, Ursula Duddy, David Campbell, Darren McCay

Issues reviewed: 1 and 2

We're back in Derry again, this time in the city that has given rise to all manner of creation, from dodgy accents, Presidential candidates with murky pasts (both Provisional and Eurovisional) and more place names than Constantinople (or is it Istanbul?). The latest innovation from the Walled City is a new series of comics produced by the comics collective Uproar. *Zombies Hi* (its name playing up on the rather unique dialect of English spoken in the far north west of Ireland) is a monthly publication that tells the story of a zombie plague in their home city.

Told in a series of comic strips and short stories, *Zombies Hi* follows multiple characters (apart from one short strip in Issue One which involves Druids and Halloween) as they try to survive a epidemic of the undead, with the majority of survivors holed up behind the walls of the city, which is, after all, no stranger to sieges.

The art in *Zombie Hi* is not quite up to the quality of that in publications produced by the larger publishers, and nor perhaps should it be expected to be. Small press publications face a number of inevitable technical limitations and don't quite have the high-end computer technology that is used these days to generate mass produced comics. And let's face it, there's only one Alex Ross. Despite these limitations, however, the artwork is relatively good, clearly telling the story and making good use of varied panels.

The writing in the strips is also passable, with some interesting takes on the zombie plague trope, and isn't too reliant on the standard Northern Ireland stereotypes (although one of the main characters is, predictably, a Catholic PSNI officer with father issues). It should be noted, however, that dialogue in some places is clichéd and awkward. The Druid story in Issue One is definitely the weakest in both issues One and Two, and the colour art used here jars with the black and white in the comic.

Its depiction of Northern Ireland is an interesting one, and leads to some nice touches, such as a scene in which a group of politicians, who trying to figure out where to house the survivors, attempt to segregate them into different parts of the city based on their religion. Even a Zombie apocalypse still hasn't healed the old wounds, apparently.

Where *Zombies Hi* does fall down is in the short story sections of the publication. All the stories featured in the first two issues would have benefited greatly from a redraft and the hand of a skilled editor. In a number of places words are repeated in the same sentence, the plots are confused and the writing prone to jumping tenses.

All of these problems could be eliminated with proofreading and redrafting but it just does not seem to have been done and, ultimately, it detracts from the publication.

It is always good to see Irish comics being produced, and in the case of *Zombies Hi*, it's intriguing to see the creators taking the standard zombie apocalypse trope and applying it to a local context. Whilst it's still early days in terms of the overall plot it will be interesting to see where it all goes.

However, *Zombies Hi* is certainly the weaker of the two Irish publications reviewed here, with the greater experience of the Atomic Diner team ultimately shining through in *Roísín Dubh*. *Zombies Hi* may evolve into a similarly solid comic but it will need a steady and experienced editor to deal with the prose and script problems that crop up here in order to do so.

Eoin Murphy

TELEVISION REVIEWS

Sympathy for the Devil?

Appropriate Adult

(ITV 1, September 2011)

Not much feted previously for the quality of its dramas (unless it was by fans of outlandish psycho thrillers about the perils of adultery), ITV has recently been enjoying a renaissance in quality that has made even the BBC sit up and take notice, as witnessed by last-year's much hyped *Downtown Abbey* / *Upstairs Downstairs* face-off (the enjoyably preposterous *Downtown Abbey* walked away with all the prizes and plaudits). However, producing a drama based on events surrounding one of the most notorious crime stories of the 1990s – the serial killing exploits of gruesome twosome Fred and Rosemary West – was always going to be a rather more delicate proposition than assembling an assortment of noted Thesps in a stately home and letting them get on with talking ponderously about how “War changes things...”

Let's face it, the serial killer biopic is a particularly debased format, as epitomised most vividly in the distasteful antics of the now defunct (but much lamented, at least until its partial reincarnation as Palisades/Tartan) Tartan Metro company, which was a respectful and intelligent distributor of international and hard-to-get genre films but which also helped bankroll three particularly regrettable movies of this type. These were; the sordid, workmanlike *Ed Gein* (2000), the deeply offensive (on many levels) *Ted Bundy* (2003) – which actually sound-tracked a montage sequence depicting Bundy's peripatetic assaults on dozens of young women with comedy music and the supposedly “hilarious” sound of his victims being hit on the head – and the equally repugnant *The Hillside Strangler* (2006). As the abject failure of this loose “trilogy” indicates, films about real-life killers all too often sensationalise and (perhaps) unintentionally glamorise the activities of their nefarious subjects even as they pretend to be presenting hard-hitting and insightful portraits of individuals for whom human life has ceased to have any value at all. To be fair, at least the Gein film made some attempt to depict the deeply disturbed Wisconsinite as the pathetic, socially inadequate loser that he actually was, even if it did plump for the predictable “blame it all on the mother” explanation for his necrophiliac proclivities, but the other films are sleazy, voyeuristic, and sorely misjudged disasters which display no genuine feeling at all for the victims of their central characters, and the Bundy biopic's monumentally misjudged final moments have to be seen to be believed.

Rather like another high-quality drama based on the exploits of a real-life serial killing couple – Channel 4's equally excellent *Longford* (2009) – *Appropriate Adult* avoids many of the pitfalls of the subgenre by focusing not on the period during which the crimes took place, but rather on events which took place in the aftermath of their discovery, and by concentrating on the complex relationship between one of the killers and an outsider who is pulled into their orbit.

Closely based upon real-life events during the West investigation, the story's central character, Janet Leach (a notably wan and vulnerable-looking Emily Watson), is a trainee social worker whose unremarkable life - juggling her partner, children, and college work - is disrupted when she receives a call asking her to assist a suspect at the local police station. (Apparently, when a suspect is assessed as being a “vulnerable” adult, this is a legal requirement, and there is a register of specially trained volunteers for the police to call upon). Initially believing, naturally enough, that the affable, scruffy man whose interview she's sitting in on is in for something run-of-the mill crime, Watson's character is stunned when

he matter-of-factly starts explaining, a couple of minutes into the interview, how he murdered his own daughter and dismembered her body, before dumping her head in a wheelie bin. The suspect is, of course, none other than Fred West (Dominic West), and neither Leach nor the police know that they are about to uncover some of the most profoundly disturbing crimes in modern British history.

Seen just a few weeks ago in the BBC 2's *The Hour* as a charming, caddish 50s newsman, Dominic West is transformed here into an unkempt, garish-jumper-wearing, buck-toothed West Country yokel who is additionally terrifying because he genuinely seems to see himself as a put-upon good guy. Though considered to have a low-IQ (hence the *Appropriate Adult*), he's a florid liar, with a gift for the gab, who pretends to be helpful but is in fact doing everything he can to postpone the inevitable discovery of the full extent of his crimes; as much out of misguided loyalty to his equally monstrous wife Rose (Monica Dolan, in a small but chilling role) and a deeply twisted sense of responsibility for his much-abused "family" (two of whom were murdered by the pair).

As happened in real life, West here is quick to see an opportunity to manipulate Leach by broadly hinting at information crucial to the investigation that he knows she cannot tell the police because she is bound by advisor/client confidentiality. Whereas a lesser drama might have made this into yet another variation on the predictable Machiavellian male killer/vulnerable woman dynamic seen so often in the wake of *The Silence of the Lambs*, the relationship here, between West and Leach, develops into something a great deal more realistic and complex. He is constantly looking for sympathy from her, seeing himself and Rose as the real victims, yet able only to cry crocodile tears for the many young women the two of them have tortured and killed.

Leach, rather bafflingly, it must be said, puts up with his queasy over-familiarity and cloying sentimentality, perhaps out of a sense of duty, or perhaps even because her peripheral involvement in such a huge media story gives her a feeling of self-importance. Whilst she realises very quickly that West is getting a sick thrill out of dropping hints as to the true magnitude of his crimes (the first half of the drama ends in just such a moment), she's also all too aware that she cannot tell the police, and that even if she did, such information would render the evidence gathered inadmissible in court. It's a remarkable situation for any normal person to find herself in, and whilst Watson has the less obviously showy of the two central roles, hers is a quietly compelling portrait of an everyday woman coping with remarkable events as best she can, and failing miserably.

Apart from her duty of care to the odious West, who has become notably dependent on her (in a way that hints at the nature of the relationship between him and Rose), Leach finds herself under considerable pressure at home also, as her children suffer from her protracted absence, and her mentally delicate partner (Robert Glenister) gets dangerously caught up in the excitement of the case, pressuring her to sell her story to the newspapers. The fact that both Leach and West are each, in their own ways, trying to keep their families together (albeit in the face of very different obstacles) is emphasised, but to the drama's credit, never rammed down our throats.

There are some moments of likely poetic licence (I doubt very much that the police would leave a member of the public locked in a cell, on her own, with a suspect known to enjoy murdering young women), and while Fred West, to be fair, is depicted as an odious, sordid manipulator, he is granted a modicum of reluctant empathy entirely absent in the drama's depiction of Rose West. This may be somewhat unavoidable, given that Fred's relationship with Leach serves to humanise him in our eyes, whereas Rose is only ever glimpsed in brief scenes which emphasise her profound unpleasantness and inhumanity.

The most notable moment in this respect comes when the couple meet in the dock for a court hearing, during the second instalment. Fred, devastated by the fact that Rose has not been answering his letters, or made eye contact with him in the dock on previous occasions, has been coached by Leach to preserve his dignity by making no effort at all to communicate with her this time round. It's a testament to the relative complexity of the way in which the drama is written and acted that when West, having managed to keep up the act for a few moments, gives in to his desperate desire for acknowledgement and frantically begs Rose to look at him, the viewer, like Watson's character, actually momentarily feels sorry for him.

The whole thing is filmed in the de-saturated colour scheme which is now overwhelmingly associated with 70s/early 80s set dramas like *Life on Mars* or the more recent (and much more outlandish) fictional serial-killer thriller *Fields of Blood*, and whilst I don't remember everything being quite as brown in the mid-1990s as the series suggests, it does help bring home the sense of the sordidly mundane horror that the West's long spree of sexual violence and murder inspires. The grim details of the police investigation and of the murders themselves are treated with an admirable degree of restraint, even though the despicable nature of the killings themselves certainly isn't glossed over.

There are also some nice visual flourishes from director Julian Jarrold (previously responsible for an instalment of the *Red Riding* trilogy), such as the moment when West rings Leach at home over Christmas, to disconsolately ask why she won't come visit him in remand anymore. As she makes her awkward excuses – her natural goodness and sense of duty meaning that she feels bad even for letting down a loathsome serial killer – we see that the phone cord has gradually knotted itself around her neck. The symbolism, though admittedly unsubtle, has at least three pay offs: we know that Fred strangled many of the young women that he killed (and that he believes that Leach is a kind of reincarnation of one of them); he hangs himself in his cell shortly after the phone call; and finally, his death means that Leach will soon be very reluctantly dragged back into the case, this time as the main witness for the prosecution case against Rose, because her pact of confidentiality no longer applies after his death.

The courtroom scenes that conclude the drama, though relatively brief, are genuinely harrowing, both because they mean that Leach much describe in detail the weirdly co-dependent nature of her relationship with Fred West, and because, like her, we're waiting for the moment when her one act of fairly understandable weakness – when she discusses the case with a reporter from the *Mirror*, with a view to selling her story later – will be revealed. Like Fred, she lies to the authorities, and like him, quickly finds that her deception has been exposed. Furthermore, whilst in the witness stand she unwillingly serves as Fred's surrogate, repeating his account of Rose's behaviour and proving that the couple acted together during many of the murders. Though Leach's testimony ultimately does prove vital in convincing the jury that Rose was a full and willing partner in what transpired in 25 Cromwell Street, the experience has obviously been a deeply damaging one. After all, "The thing is, you can't *unknow* something, can you?"

Appropriate Adult is a compelling, respectful take on crimes which could easily have been treated with ghoulish sensationalism, and features sensitive, effective performances from both the film-star leads and the capable supporting cast (in particular, Sylvester Le Touzel as DC Hazel Savage, the no-nonsense female detective who was, in real life, as here, suspicious of the West's before anyone else). Those interested in another well-handled serial killer dramatisation which tells the story from the perspective of the victims and their families should seek out the poignant 2009 BBC mini-series *Five Daughters*, which depicts the lives of the deeply vulnerable young women murdered by Ipswich serial killer Steve Wright.

BERNICE M. MURPHY

Torchwood: Miracle Day
(Starz: US and BBC: UK, 2011)

The 1980s sketch show *Alas Smith and Jones* featured a regular parody of *After Dark*, Channel 4's late night discussion show. One spoof discussion about euthanasia contained a question about what constituted the physical point of death. A panellist answered: "what's the point of death? Surely it's to stop old people cluttering up the world." This line occurred to me periodically while watching *Torchwood: Miracle Day*, whose teaser line was "one day... no one dies. Next day... no one dies. And the next, and the next, and the next..." followed by a counter showing a rapidly increasing world population.

Miracle Day is *Torchwood*'s first outing since creator Russell T. Davies left BBC Wales and took the show to the United States, as a co-production of BBC Worldwide and the Starz cable channel. This move not only allowed for transatlantic location shooting and improved production values, but also the inclusion of established American television writers, most notably Jane Espenson (*Buffy* and *Battlestar Galactica*). Notwithstanding any scepticism about the effect of the show's relocation, *Miracle Day* was also going to find it a challenge to surpass 2009's acclaimed and award winning *Torchwood: Children of Earth*. This was the story of what were essentially a race of alien paedophile junkies, who demanded a tribute of millions of human children, to be used as narcotics. *Miracle Day*, by contrast, eschews alien involvement and explores the refusal of the old, infirm, and the mortally ill and wounded to shuffle off this mortal coil. This threatens a Malthusian disaster of overpopulation with a consequent spread of famine, disease and societal breakdown. Antibiotics become useless against viruses that no longer kill, and effective pain relief becomes the new medical Holy Grail. This entire scenario has been engineered by a shadowy conspiracy called the Three Families, who intend to use the resulting economic and social chaos to remake the world.

The truly terrifying aspect of *Children of Earth* was how the arrival of the aliens led to the amplification of processes already immanent within British society: extended anti-terror laws, the demonization of working class children, standardised testing and academic streaming, etc. Despite a loss of momentum towards the end, the narrative always felt as if these processes could be pursued to their logical, grisly conclusion: the forced abduction, by the state, of millions of children. The conspiracy was concocted and carried out by an elected government, using existing legislation. By contrast, the conspiracy in *Miracle Day* feels generically shadowy, more *The X-Files* than *The Wire*. The attempt to attribute the seemingly imminent collapse of capitalist society to an external force fails to evoke any feeling beyond a shrug of "so what". At one point, a CIA analyst announces that Greece and Ireland have gone bankrupt and are taking the rest of the EU with them. The problem is that this plausible, even very likely scenario is terrifying enough without the existence of a group of conspirators, who may (or may not) have engineered the financial crisis of 2008.

The arrival of the titular 'Miracle' coincides with the planned execution of murderer and paedophile, Oswald Danes (Bill Pullman), and with a car accident involving a CIA agent, Rex Matheson (Mekhi Phifer). Danes survives lethal injection, and Matheson survives having a pole driven through his chest. The former theatrically repents on television and becomes a spokesperson for Phicorp, a pharmaceutical corporation who are attempting to exploit the Miracle by supplanting the state's role in healthcare. The latter subjects Gwen Cooper and Captain Jack Harkness to extraordinary rendition from Britain to the United States, but later joins them in their fight to expose Phicorp.

Numerous subtextual elements hang over *Miracle Day*, but paradoxically it wears them simultaneously too thinly and too heavily. Topical comments and plot elements pile in thick and fast, but often to no more purpose than to emphasise the drama's topicality. There are references to the global economic collapse, healthcare reform, NHS privatisation in Britain and the "Tea Party" movement in the United States. China flexes its financial muscles as the world economy approaches a population-boom-accelerated collapse. The problem of what to do with those who should be dead (Category Ones) is dealt with by setting up holding camps, which are a cover for the incineration of "living corpses". This is referred to as "a new age of care and compassion" by an unnamed British prime minister. The accompanying crematoria and smoke-belching chimneys evoke the Nazi extermination camps and the standard tropes of banal and bureaucratic evil. When Doctor Juarez confronts a San Pedro camp administrator over the inhuman treatment of uninsured Category Ones, he defends himself by telling her he's under budget.

The real revelation in *Miracle Day* is Lauren Ambrose (*Six Feet Under*) as the malicious, narcissistic and misanthropic PR woman, Jilly Kitzinger. She dominates every scene she appears in, and Ambrose plays the part almost entirely through facial expressions capable of expressing every negative human emotion. She describes a woman accidentally reduced to a torso as being "made up of positive thinking and colostomy bags". Elsewhere, of the two remaining original Torchwood members, Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) continues her ongoing transformation into a female action hero. This culminates in her blowing up an incineration camp in Wales and declaring: "I don't care if the whole of society bends over and takes this like a dog. I'm saying no." In fact, in terms of character, the only superfluous note is struck by Captain Jack himself (John Barrowman), a lead character reduced to the status of a McGuffin. The conspiracy that leads to *Miracle Day* stems from the theft of his blood in a search for the secret to his immortality. When *Torchwood* was originally posited as a "grown-up" *Doctor Who*, this simply seemed to mean that the characters had sex. By the time of *Children of Earth*, this had changed, and the show differentiated itself by concentrating on more visceral science fiction at the expense of *Doctor Who*'s camp and kitsch elements. Consequently, the constant presence of Captain Jack in his vintage coat has become progressively more ridiculous. The possibility that the relatively more serious Rex Matheson survives into a further series suggests that he may be intended as either a supplement to, or a replacement for, the captain.

Ultimately, as Gwen Cooper points out, "it's always about blood". An extended flashback shows the immortal Jack being repeatedly killed, so the supposedly unique characteristics of his blood can be harnessed. The *Miracle* begins when this blood is introduced into something called "The Blessing", which regulates the planet's life/death balance. This resembles nothing so much as a giant lump of kebab meat reaching through the centre of the earth. There are few moments of visceral, visual horror in the series. In the first episode, a body that has been blown apart by an explosion continues to move and exhibit consciousness, even after the head is severed from its last connecting tendon, at Jack's suggestion. Helicopters and cars explode with people inside, but their undying occupants seem to suffer in silence. The burning of still-living Category Ones is initially a closely guarded secret but after its exposure by Torchwood is shrugged off by governments as a necessary and pragmatic solution. There is no outrage. It is in these moments of recognisable apathy and impotence that the series is at its most effective, if also at its most pessimistic. There is no philosophical agonising about what happens to the soul or to human consciousness. Like the torments suffered by those in burning vehicles, there are just implications, left hanging in the air.

The problem with apocalyptic television series is that they run into a contradiction, as *Children of Earth* showed. You cannot properly, and convincingly, destroy society if you need to come back for a new season; the possibility of return needs to be denied, but the demands of popular television dictate

otherwise. The inevitable, if unconvincing, last-minute resolutions to both *Miracle Day* and *Children of Earth* devalue the physical and psychological horror, and the ideas, built up over their initial episodes. But they left the principals in place for a future return, in a world that more or less still resembles our own. One cannot help but wonder if the hasty and tidy resolution in *Miracle Day* restores not only the mortal balance, but also the world economy. Aside from an inevitable boom in funerals, we have no idea.

SHEAMUS SWEENEY

I Was a Teenage Remake
Teen Wolf
 (MTV, 2009)

Back in 1985, the thought of Michael J. Fox turning into a werewolf right there on screen was probably quite rightly terrifying. While some of us were shielded from such horrors by overprotective parents or older siblings, even said elders and betters must have got something of a shock at the spectacle of an actor better known either as the chirpy hero of the *Back to the Future* series (1985 – 1990) or as the neat, studious, conservative little know-it-all, Alex, in *Family Ties* (1982 – 1989), suddenly transformed into his polar opposite. Sprouting copious amounts of facial and body hair, growing at least a foot in height and putting on some serious muscle, and subsequently winning basketball games single-handed, being seduced by scantily clad blond girls and getting aggressive during a school dance, his character in the original *Teen Wolf* film (Rod Daniel, 1985), coming out just months after the first *Back to the Future* film, imaged a fairly unsubtle rejection of his on-screen person to date.

At any rate, it's to be hoped that this radical transformation provided that particular generation of adolescents with some sort of frisson of fear at the disruption of normality that Fox's lycanthropic turn embodied – and not just because more of his wiry, strangely shiny skin was on display than one should ever have to see. Otherwise, it is difficult to comprehend the extent to which the film has entered the popular consciousness – spawning both a 1987 sequel *Teen Wolf Too* (starring a clearly embarrassed Jason Bateman) and an animated television series (CBS, 1986 – 1987), despite modest box-office success and the fact that it transforms inexplicably into a basketball movie towards the end. A possible explanation can be found in the sheer sunny optimism of the films, which renders them little more than cheap attempts to borrow some of the imagery of the horror genre that had long been closely bound up with teen cinema, and that evidently provided a lucrative market. They therefore bear only a superficial resemblance to films such as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (starring Michael Landon, 1957), rejecting the violence, pessimism and engagement with the actually frightening aspects of the genre that the earlier film embraces.

Whatever one might think of the original *Teen Wolf*, proof of its enduring legacy comes in the form of a 2011 MTV reimagining developed by Jeff Davis, which upgrades the basic concept for the *Twilight* generation, while retaining enough features of the MJF vehicle to lure in the more mature fans of the earlier film's dubious charms. So, Scott Howard has become Scott McCall (possibly to add a certain Celtic mystique to the monster) and is, we are assured, still geeky and awkward (though believing this of the improbably pretty and equally improbably monikered Tyler Posey requires something of a stretch of the imaginative faculties). More successfully, Scott's best buddy Rupert "Stiles" Stilinski (played by Jerry Levine in the film) is now merely Stiles Stilinski (Dylan O'Brien, giving a screen-stealing performance in his very first acting role). This particular name change provides one of the show's more humorous moments, especially for anyone familiar with the original, and the glaring fact that no-one ever calls Stiles "Rupert". In a rather tense parent-teacher meeting scene (yes, this is that kind of programme), a teacher asks Stiles' dad, the local sheriff, what his son's real first name is, assuming that it could only, rationally, be an abbreviation of the patronymic, and is dumb-struck by the response that they'd named him "Stiles" because his mother liked the name. Silly fan stuff aside, Stiles is probably the best thing about the entire show, a worthy descendant of the secondary characters of *Buffy* in his bumbling-but-not-unbearably-quirky take on what could have been a rather hackneyed long-suffering best-friend role.

Indeed, much like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, to which it appears (rather inevitably) to owe something of a debt, the shiny new *Teen Wolf* is primarily about the heady world of adolescence. We are treated to a by-now rather familiar parade of looming academic failure, repeated painful rejection by members of the opposite (or indeed the same) sex, endemic bullying by muscular athletic types, and rapidly crumbling friendships, made all the more trying by a constant struggle to work out what to do about the monsters your parents seem not to know exist – especially if one of those monsters is your closest friend, your potential boyfriend, or, worse still, yourself. This, however, is precisely where *Teen Wolf* becomes somewhat more interesting, because, in a reversal of the usual situation in supernatural horror, the father and aunt of Scott's love interest, Allison (Crystal Reed, whose parents were clearly even crueler than those of the fictional Stiles), actually know about the existence of werewolves. Indeed, as we quickly learn, her family has for generations hunted and killed the beasts they consider to be monsters. Cue a series of somewhat predictable complications as Allison comes ever closer to discovering the truth about the inner beast her boyfriend is barely keeping at bay every time they kiss – a truth which would (and ultimately does) make it all too clear that her wolf-hunting ancestry renders her his mortal enemy.

This may all sound less than inspired or inspiring, and, in many ways, *Teen Wolf* is indeed little more than another cynical attempt on the part of MTV to tap into the ever-burgeoning young-adult market, where horror iconography, mixed with drawn-out story arcs driven by sexual denial and moodily-lit emotional longing, is now guaranteed to draw in audiences – and cash. Nevertheless, the result is a fairly competent and, in places, really rather charming exercise in producing low-level scares that acknowledge and extend some of the best things about the teen-horror subgenre. Again, like *Buffy*, it insists that sex is frightening, not because it might result in punishment meted out by some external authority figure (as occurs in classic 1970's and '80's slasher films like *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*), but because it renders one almost unbearably vulnerable, both to the other person and to oneself. The show therefore deals, more or less head on, with a world where adolescent sexual activity may still make parents uncomfortable, but where the responsibility for protecting both oneself and one's partner from possible dangers (whether physical or emotional) is now placed squarely on the still-narrow shoulders of young people themselves.

Beyond this, the vast improvement, since the time of the ur-*Teen Wolf* and its sequel, in the portrayal of female characters is glaringly evident. The alluring bimbos our heroes must resist, originally distinguished sharply from the jumper-wearing, studious brunettes with their best interests at heart, are effectively merged in the figure of the hard-working yet popular and attractive Allison, and avoiding situations in which her physical presence causes the violent, hirsute wolf to erupt from beneath Scott's smooth, barely pubescent exterior provides the central conflict of the programme. Even her rather more come-hither friend Lydia (Holland Roden) is gradually revealed to have hidden depths, leaving only her jerk-of-a-jock boyfriend Jackson (Colton Haynes) to bear the brunt of the stereotyping that normally dominates shows of this kind. Moreover, in a move that, along with the knowing allusions to the original films, broadens the audience appeal beyond the teen market, much of the plot revolves around the character of Derek Hale (Tyler Hoechlin). Derek is an experienced werewolf, in his late twenties, who vacillates between trying to train the recently bitten Scott to protect himself from the mysterious "Alpha" werewolf (who wants to recruit Scott and/ or kill his friends), and becoming the Alpha's bitch – almost literally. Caught between adulthood and adolescence, apparently unemployed and homeless, he is unsure whether he needs an authority figure or to be an authority figure. Played with a smidgen of dangerous but sympathetic homoeroticism, Derek is an apt representative of a generation betrayed by an adult world they were about to enter when the financial structures that supported it came crashing down.

In line with this, the programme as a whole is far more focused on the fragility of the status quo on which the televisual and cinematic representation of small-town America rests – the ease with which the apparent safety of the locale can be shattered by malignant forces, whether external or internal – than the earlier *Teen Wolf* films, which revolved primarily around a distinctly uneasy relationship with ambition, success and fame. Both films censure their heroes for temporarily choosing sex, popularity and partying over love, friendship and modestly good grades, and order is all too easily restored when they decide to abandon the wolf persona in favour of “being themselves.” Considering that the 1980’s incarnations posited the werewolf as a hereditary trait rather than the result of being bitten, this message is less than coherent, and implies that self-control might take some work, but is ultimately attainable and sustainable. Jeff Davis’ rethinking of the concept, by contrast, and following the considerably less optimistic *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, highlights the victim status of the werewolf, even those like Derek who hail from werewolf families. The result is an imaginative universe that, like that of the Landon film, is rarely stable, predictable, mirrored by the darker look and grimmer atmosphere of the programme compared to the *Teen Wolf* films, which goes hand-in-hand with more animalistic, uncontrollable lupine forms and surprising amounts of gore. Add to this the very real peril and confusion in which the protagonists often find themselves; and the compromised nature of moral authority, provided mainly by the dubious actions of Allison’s wolf-hunting family, and what we have here is a properly Gothic piece of television. Even if the scares are admittedly limited in number and impact, the vague sense of cosy nostalgia for 1950’s America that pervaded the *Teen Wolf* films (and that is made explicit in *Back to the Future*) has been largely swept away, in favour of what is, arguably, a return to the angst-ridden universe presented in Landon’s offering, where death, violence and the dangerous nature of both authority and intimate relationships are all too real and immediate.

It would be putting it too strongly to assert that all of this makes *Teen Wolf* into something ground-breaking or even genuinely thoughtful, nor would many horror aficionados wish to claim it as a legitimate contribution to a genre that is increasingly focused on more bodily dismemberment and disgust than on slowly creeping feelings of discomfort and insecurity – or indeed (some might argue) on character or story. Indeed, where the latter is concerned, it might be better served by a slightly more episodic format than it is by the relentless plot arc that leaves little room for anything else. Nonetheless, it’s entertaining to watch, affectionately written and produced, and a good bit grittier than most recent, small-screen, young-adult offerings featuring supernatural monsters. Compared to the flock of glossy, soulful vampires who have been pouting their way across our screens of late, *Teen Wolf*’s heroes, villains and anti-heroes are hairier, scarier and just a bit more like us.

DARA DOWNEY

EVENT REVIEW

The Double Life of Catherine Street; Gothic theory in action **Catherine Street, Limerick, 13th -15th of May 2011**

Tracy Fahey

An old-fashioned news vendor stands on the pavement, urging passers-by to take his ink-stained broadsheets, people drift to swell a growing crowd for a guided tour, the costumed guide pointing out buildings of interest, tourists peer in bemusement at the series of plaques dotted along walls, and a steadily-growing mass of people begin to assemble outside a boutique, holding simple, white masks and waiting for the signal to begin a waltz.

People turn to each other. “What on earth is going on?” asks one baffled passer-by.
 Welcome to *The Double Life of Catherine Street*.

The Double Life of Catherine Street is a piece of participative Gothic psychogeographical myth-making which was finalized and performed over the weekend of the 13th to the 15th of May 2011; the culmination of a project carried out by *gothicise*, a Limerick-based, Gothic, interdisciplinary art practice with a floating membership. *The Double Life* is a story of imagined identity situated in a geographical location, conveyed through visual means, and located in invented narratives. For this project, the *gothicise* team was composed of twelve students, graduates and staff of the Limerick School of Art and Design, in collaboration with the street traders on Catherine Street, Limerick. In 2010 a local socially-engaged art practice, *SpiritStore* (1), had directed a cultural Dig on the street for an interactive Limerick art festival *ev+a* (2); this Dig was a festival of dance, readings, art, all celebrating the culture and heritage surrounding the street. The street itself is a typical Limerick city street, a hotchpotch of bars, boutiques, Georgian houses, alleyways and the butchers’ shops for which the city centre is famous. For this 2010 weekend-long event, *gothicise* was involved in a performance entitled *ghostwalk/ghosttalk*; an interactive historiographic piece consisting of a walking tour of local myths and legends, followed by an informal, participative session of telling ghost stories. When the approach came from the street traders to participate in the 2011 Catherine Street Dig, the original invitation was to replicate the *ghostwalk/ghosttalk* event of 2010. However, *gothicise* undertook to create a different project that would nonetheless still engage with psychogeography, narrative and the uncanny but which would also probe the notion of constructed or falsified history. There was also another interesting layer to this proposed project. The street traders had assumed leadership of the Catherine Street Dig (in true socially-engaged fashion, *SpiritStore* had handed the directorship of the Dig over to the street; while still maintaining a curatorial presence). This posed another collaborative opportunity, to engage with the dwellers and traders from the street, thereby adding another layer of legitimacy to the project, and to conspire with them to create some kind of alternative reality for Catherine Street.

Slowly, slowly, meeting by meeting, e-mail by e-mail, the *Double Life of Catherine Street* was born. The name itself referred to the Gothic notion of the Other, the *doppelgänger*. The idiom of the Gothic therefore became “the perfect anonymous language for the unwillingness of the past to go away.” (Spooner 2006) It was important to the group to reinterpret the spaces on Catherine Street as *unheimlich* or uncanny in order to create a sense of dislocation, of the familiar grown unfamiliar. In order to stay faithful to the historical roots of the street, a principle was agreed that each invented story would have an element of truth (3) but would suffer from “the inevitability of historical and chronological distortion which has always been the cornerstone of the Gothic perspective.” (Punter 1999)

Together gothicise walked the street, met on it, and mapped it. The store of stories grew as the art school members began to drift off individually to find their own street collaborators and construct their own legends. Gradually six coherent myths began to emerge – *The Magic Bush*, *The Tale of Miss Christy*, *The Butcher's Bride*, *The True Story of the Foundation of the Republic*, *The Masked Ball of Catherine Street* and *The Visit from Iressia*. The *Masked Ball* was an invented legend that sprung from the collaborator's particular interest in masks within the fine art and filmic tradition; this project offered her the chance to combine this with her own background in dance, while the idea for *The True Story of the Foundation of the Republic* project came directly from a trader/collaborator who offered the story as his personal fantasy about the history of his establishment. For more information on this individual stories and their origin see <http://doublelifecatherinestreet.weebly.com/stories.html>.

If the *Double Life* was a conspiracy with the street and its inhabitants, then how would its imagined identity become 'real'? An authoritative voice was needed; one that purported to use 'official' language and forms in order to verify the false. Assuming an imagined street identity that would be collaborative and communal in its construction, four 'umbrella' identity projects came into being. The aim in all of these was to subvert trusted badges of identity and history in order to lead to a sense of fractured identity and dislocation in the spectator. One such project was the *Limerusian Gazette* (Fig. 1), a broadsheet purportedly from the early 20th century that presented the street stories together in an authorial manner. In fact, the idea of a constructed history itself is deeply embedded in the roots of literary Gothic – "The construction of fake histories is integral to Gothic texts...This manuscript is often in poor condition, fragmented, missing important information. The narrator may be unreliable or inarticulate. It is often framed by supporting narratives that elaborate on or question the story told inside." (Spooner 2006) Another text-based work was the creation of historical plaques on strategic locations along the street what gravely commemorated fictive stories. The concept of the plaques was created in a socially engaged way, the invented history negotiated between art school participant and street collaborator. The web-site of the project constituted a third over-arching project; the final one being a direct reference to the *ghostwalk/ghosttalk* of 2010, a guided tour of the fictive history of the street, given by a known local figure of authority, a librarian and folklorist.

This project carried with it a final challenge – how to convey the essence of the *Double Life* through participative projects carried out in real time in a defined space on the street? Certain of the visual aspects – such as the *Gazette* and the plaques – would be read and viewed throughout the duration of the festival. However, others lent themselves to performative pieces – three events in total – the *Catherine Street Masked Ball Flash Mob*, the launch of the film of *The Secret History of the Republic* and the guided tour of the *Double Life*. Putting the work into the public sphere involved anticipating the possible reactions and contributions of another important stakeholder – the spectator, the outside participant in this weekend-long festival. These outsiders, these accidental *flâneurs*, would be integral to the coalescing identity of the street. Their presence – looking at the plaques, reading the broadsheet, joining the guided tour, would add a layer of authenticity to the performed reality of the project. Would they perceive the conspiracy or accept the invented reality?

The *Catherine Street Masked Ball Flash Mob* was a short piece involving a contemporary mirror of the 'original' dance via the medium of flash-mobbing. The instructions were clear – people would assemble, a whistle would sound, participants would put on the masks, waltz music would be piped out onto the street, the masked figures would grasp partners and then whirl them around for a two-minute waltz. Simple. However, the event became much larger than anticipated. Passers-by demanded masks, children joined in, the dance moved off the safe space of the footpath onto the middle of the road (Fig. 3), people

took out their phones and cameras to record it, and the noise rose – a compendium of waltz music, car horns, and the shouts and laughter of the dancers and the spectators; a gloriously happy cacophony.

Part of the reason for this unification of history was the prevalence of the mask designed for the Masked Ball Flash Mob. Boutique owners on the street agreed to put the masks on their mannequins – the act an allusion to Freud's classification of the *unheimlich* as including the uncanny effect created by "waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata", so for the duration of the festival, participants were watched from the windows by the blank stare of the masks. Collaborators involved in other projects began wearing them; a commemorative photograph taken for outside a bar, intended to showcase the plaque for *The Secret History of the Republic* was subverted by the pub owner's insistence on wearing a mask (Fig. 4).

Opening up participation to the street transformed the project, and extended its ownership from *gothicise* and their trader/collaborators to the general public. Insofar as possible, the events were designed to flow around the street rather than interfere with it; while crafting the *Double Life*, the group was conscious of its brighter twin, the real life of the street, and whenever possible worked to integrate them in the realization of projects, such as participation in the *Magic Bush* 'invented' custom of inscribing stories.

Throughout the planning, development and realization of this project, the *Double Life* succeeded in embedding itself on Catherine Street. Working with the traders in evolving a shared system of signification; the plaques, the *Gazette*, the flash-mob, the display of masks in the boutiques, the launch of the film, the guided tour, was an exercise in collaborative myth-making, involving co-creators from outside the art college sphere. This led to additional learning from the different communities of practice working together, and helped foster a new sense of identity in the working group that emerged. It also helped create another, mysterious form of identity for the street. For like the Gothic itself, Catherine Street "has a history, over which it has changed, developed and accrued multiple layers of meaning." (Spooner 2006)

Creating stories from the grains of historical truth allowed the group to experiment, mixing a layer of authenticity with fictional backdrops in helping to create a new history for the street and the city of Limerick - "For Gothic of a city rather than just in a city, that city needs a concentration on memories and historical associations." (Mighall 2007) Working on the street, in the spaces of transition, the myths merged to create a whole new species of identities where the collaborators' identities became fictional, and the stories, even in their realization as art events or project outputs, became intertextual, building the collaborative, uncanny myth of the *Double Life*. The success of the project can be measured in the enthusiastic reception of the *Double Life* as part of the Catherine Street Dig 2011, in terms of the numbers who participated and attended and in terms of the further invitation for *gothicise* to participate in next year's Catherine Street Dig. During the 2011 Dig, the group were also, where the group have been invited to create a work based on Limerick spectral history, for an event to be organized by Limerick City Council in October 2011. This is a fitting future project for this group who have begun to carve out an identity of their own; as urban operators and interdisciplinary myth-makers creating psychogeographic Gothic projects within the city of Limerick.

Postscript

It's the evening of the 15th of May. The street has fallen silent, apart from the far-off laughter of smokers outside Bourke's Bar. A few *Limerusian Gazettes* lie discarded on a windowsill. The crowds have dispersed, carrying with them their memories and interpretations of the events, the life and stories of Catherine Street's shadowy doppelganger. On the quiet street, a lone spectator wanders down, inspecting

the plaques that have now formally passed over to the street traders who own the buildings. As the shiny patina of newness wears off these plaques, as they weather in the Limerick rain, they will grow more authentic in appearance, claiming parallel historical identities for the street they inhabit.

The Double Life of Catherine Street continues.

Formal thanks to the other members of the *gothicise* collective who created *The Double Life of Catherine Street* – Anastasia Artemesia, Steve Maher, Lotte Bender, Aimee Lally, Anne Culhane, Owen Kelleher, David Bowe, Elena Bezberodova, Kira Kelly, Josie O'Connor, Evin Dennehy – and also Paul Tarpey of SpiritStore and Niall Bourke of Bourke's Bar. Full details of the projects and the collaborators at <http://doublelifecatherinestreet.weebly.com/>

Notes

1. SpiritStore is “SpiritStore is an ongoing Limerick based art project. It has evolved practicing within a broad understanding of cultural work, articulated through a number of working methods. The project operates in conjunction with groups, from cultural practitioners and institutes, to business owners and organisations, and invites audiences and collaborators to interact or participate on a personal level.” <http://spiritstorelimerick.blogspot.com/> (Last accessed 14.5.11)
2. ev+a – exhibition of visual art – Ireland’s pre-eminent annual exhibition of contemporary art - <http://www.eva.ie/> (Last accessed 14.5.11)
3. The actual history of the street was diligently researched by local Limerick historian John Elliot for the 2010 Dig who kindly made his research available to the team.

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