

## *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies 2 (March 17, 2007)*

### **Contents**

#### ARTICLES

Richard Haslam: Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach

Patrica MacCormack: Baroque Intensity: Lovecraft, Le Fanu and the Fold

James Rose: The Dreaming and The Dreamt A Lexicon of Neil Jordan's The Company of Wolves

Joanne Watkiss: Ghosts in the Head: Mourning, Memory and Derridean 'Trace' in John Banville's The Sea

Niall Kitson: Rebel Yells: Genre Hybridity and Irishness in Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon's Preacher

#### BOOK REVIEWS

Strange Tales, ed. Rosalie Parker

Wormwood: Literature of the Fantastic, Supernatural & Decadent, 1-6, 2003-2006

Stephen King, Lisey's Story

Emma Tennant, Heathcliff's Tale

Patrick McCabe, Winterwood

Brian J Showers, Literary Walking Tours of Gothic Dublin

Arthur Machen, Tales of Horror and the Supernatural

Tom Weaver, Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes: Interviews with Actors, Directors, Producers and Writers of the 1940-1960s

#### FILMS REVIEWS

Hannibal Rising (Dir. Peter Webber, 2007)

The Innocents (Dir. Jack Clayton, BFI 2006)

'Don't Look Now' (Dir. Nicolas Roeg, Optimum Home Entertainment, 2006)

Pan's Labyrinth (El Laberinto del Fauno) (Dir. Guillermo del Toro, Optimum Home Entertainment, 2007)

Them (Ills) (Dir. David Moreau, Xavier Palud) France/Romania 2005

Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film (Rachel Belofsky, Mike Bohusz & Rudy Scalese, 2006)

Scream Queen: An Interview with Rachel Belofsky, producer of Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Movie & Festival Director of "Screamfest", Los Angeles

#### MULTI-MEDIA REVIEWS

The New Video Nasties?: Censorship and the Video Game

Rule of Rose (505 GameStreet: Playstation 2, Capcom, one player, X-Box 360)

Manhunt (Rockstar Games, Xbox/Playstation/PC)

Condemned (Sega: Xbox 360/PC)

Marvel Horror: Volume One (Written by Gary Frierich, Steve Gerber et al, Artwork by Tom Sutton, Jim Mooney et al)

### TELEVISION REVIEWS

Dracula (Dir. Bill Eagles, BBC Wales/WGBH Boston/Granada International, 2006)

Goldplated (Channel 4, Oct 2006)

Carnivàle (HBO 2003-2005 Seasons One and Two, Warner Home Video)

Number 13 (BBC 4, December 2006)

Garth Marengi's 'Darkplace' (Channel 4, 2004, DVD 2007)

### EVENTS REVIEWS

A Pleasing Terror: Two Ghost Stories by M. R. James. Performed by Robert Lloyd Parry on 3 March 2007  
at the Tinahely Courthouse Arts Centre

## Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach

Richard Haslam

Jarlath Killeen's invigorating essay in the first issue of this journal scrutinizes and re-envisions recent theorizations of that nebulous category— 'Irish Gothic.' In responding, I want to address the following questions: Is Irish Gothic better understood as a tradition or a mode? What are its distinctive components? How should we conceptualize interactions between literary texts and historical contexts? Is Irish Catholic Gothic a plausible and relevant sub-category of Irish Gothic?

My approach is guided by Steven Mailloux's concept of 'rhetorical hermeneutics,' in which "the hermeneutic problem of how text and reader interact" is 'ultimately inseparable' from 'the rhetorical problem of how interpreters interact with other interpreters in trying to argue for or against different meanings.' (1)

### TRADITION VERSUS MODE

As Killeen rightly notes, W. J. McCormack has been both canon-maker and canon-spiker in the critical formulation of Irish Gothic. (2) In 'Irish Gothic and After,' McCormack assembled for *The Field Day Anthology* extracts from works by Maturin, Le Fanu, Stoker, Wilde, and Bowen, and by less immediately obvious candidates, such as Owenson, Carleton, Synge, and Yeats. However, two years later, McCormack's *Dissolute Characters* emphatically rejected any idea of an Irish Gothic tradition. Killeen implies that McCormack's apparent reconsideration stemmed from negative criticism of the *Anthology*'s supposed political tendentiousness (3), but McCormack's reservations are already discernible in the *Anthology*, where he moves from asserting that this tradition (or mode) is 'fugitive,' 'discontinuous,' and 'slender' to hinting that it is non-existent: 'At the risk of paradox, it has to be said that while Irish gothic writing does not amount to a tradition, it is a distinctly protestant tradition' (my italics). (4) In *Dissolute Characters*, McCormack foregrounds continuities between his earlier and later misgivings by remarking that he has 'discussed at greater length' in the *Anthology* 'the difficulties involved in this notion of an Irish gothic tradition.' (5) However, he expresses his pre-existing skepticism more forthrightly in the later book, whose chapter 'Cashiering the gothic tradition' deprecates the theorization of a 'so-called', 'doubtful', and 'merely convenient' category. (6)

McCormack's qualms arise primarily from dissatisfaction with earlier critical incorporations of Le Fanu into an Irish Gothic 'genre,' 'strain,' 'line,' or "tradition." (7) McCormack recognizes that Maturin, Le Fanu, and Stoker remain the most frequently 'invoked' authors and authorizations of "a more substantial Irish gothic tradition" but contends that "the description 'gothic' can be applied to...[Le Fanu's] work only in a general and unsatisfactory way." (8) In *Dissolute Characters*, he refers to Le Fanu's 'uncertain place in what is uncertainly called an 'Irish gothic tradition'" and announces (in ironically quasi-Gothic language) his goal of 'liberating' and 'rescu[ing]' Le Fanu 'from the trammels of a gothic sub-tradition.' (9) Thus, McCormack interrogates an alleged Irish Gothic tradition because he is unhappy with Le Fanu's

terminological incarceration more than with representations of “Irish culture” as “an inward looking and self-generating force.’ (10)

Rebutting McCormack, Killeen advances a picturesque counter-claim: “...the kind of Irish Gothic line left after his deconstruction...[actually resembles a] Gothic edifice, full of suggestive gaps, obscure corners, imposing promontories (the ‘great’ works), fractures, fragments.” (11) For Killeen, ‘a literary tradition survives in the face of McCormack’s justifiable worries that ideology rather than history lies behind the positing of an Irish Gothic’ (my italics). (12) However, by differentiating between the existence of a tradition and the utilization of a mode, we can resolve disagreements about the appropriate literary category. (13) ‘Tradition’ denotes the handing across generations of sacred knowledge and rules; in literary critical contexts, the designation evokes the solemn architectonics of Eliot, Leavis, and Yeats. However, tradition is too weighty (and weighted) a word to describe the irregular development and deployment of Gothic forms and themes in the work of Irish writers over the course of three centuries. Instead, we should adopt the more accurate and flexible ‘mode,’ a term proposed in the early 1970s (14) and promoted again in the mid-1990s. (15) Indeed, Killeen has already gone halfway towards a modal perspective:

To assert a Gothic tradition in Ireland we need not be making a disguised claim to Irish self-sufficiency or even to a thematic coherence linking very different texts and authors, but merely suggesting that certain Irish writers pursued certain similar questions that were historically specific to the Irish situation, and in doing so they utilized the Gothic mode. (my italics) (16)

It may now be time to go all the way—retiring “the Irish Gothic tradition” and replacing it with “the Irish Gothic mode”—as long as the latter phrase is understood to be shorthand for a distinct but discontinuous disposition, a gradually evolving yet often intermittent suite of themes, motifs, devices, forms, and styles, selected in specific periods, locations, and rhetorical situations, by a succession of different writers. (17)

## DISTINCTIVE COMPONENTS AND HERMENEUTICAL COMPLEXITIES

Efforts to establish the Gothic mode’s distinctive features must be modestly provisional in the face of immense diversity, both historical (eighteenth-century, Romantic, Victorian, Modern, Postmodern) and geographical (English, Irish, Scottish, French, German, American, Canadian, and Australian—amongst others). Nevertheless, by exploring constituents of the broader Gothic mode, we can identify some characteristic features of Irish Gothic. Analyzing the first phase of Irish, English, and Scottish Gothic fiction (stretching from Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* [1764] to James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* [1824]), Chris Baldick argues that a tale’s “Gothic effect” combines “a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration.” (18) Baldick also notes that Gothic tales typically invoke “the tyranny of the past (a family curse, the survival of archaic forms of despotism and superstition) with such weight as to stifle the hopes of the present (the liberty of the heroine or hero) within the dead-end of physical incarceration (the dungeon, the locked room, or simply the confinements of a family house closing in upon itself).” (19)

This list of conventions is, of course, extendable. Recurrent characters, settings, and props in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction include Faust/Cain/Wandering Jew or Prometheus-like protagonists, Mephistophelean tempters, virtuous heroines, dysfunctional families, gloomy mansions, evil doubles, eerie portraits, wild landscapes, Inquisition prisons, incarcerating monasteries, malevolent monks, rampaging mobs, labyrinthine underground passages, graveyards, corpses, skeletons, crumbling buildings, and crumbling manuscripts (ruins and runes). Recurrent themes and situations include representation of physical and psychological violence, transgression and excess, explicit and implicit sectarianism, revolutionary anxieties, alluring wickedness, dangerous curiosity, threatened damnation, pursuit, persecution, and insanity; in addition to the unbalancing of (contemporaneously accepted) hierarchies of good and evil, free will and predestination, tyranny and liberty, and masculinity and femininity. Recurrent narrative devices include multiple narrators, interrupted—sometimes incomplete—manuscripts or accounts, (wholly or partly encased sub-narratives,) and the alternation of incidents designed to provoke terror with those designed to provoke horror.

Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) exhibits all of these conventions, confirming Maturin's tale as a representative exponent of the Anglophone, Romantic Gothic mode. (20) Where, then, should we locate the 'Irish' elements of Melmoth and any subsequent Irish Gothic mode? Killeen argues plausibly that "figures as substantial as Maturin, Le Fanu, Wilde, Stoker, Yeats, Synge, and Bowen...have a connection to the same political and geographical space...recourse to the same broadly defined conventions of Gothic...[and] some thematic associations..." (21) He also establishes that the 'Irishness' of Irish Gothic relates to its practitioners having 'had some important Irish connection,' having 'dealt with Irish issues,' and having been 'partially influenced by (or at least vaguely aware of) an Irish line of precursors.' (22) However, (as with most conceptual elaboration) the more one aspires to specificity, the more complicated the model becomes. (23)

Before addressing Killeen's suggested characteristics, we can consider another distinctive feature of Irish Gothic—its recurrent incorporation of folklore. In Melmoth, Irish folklore infiltrates the Big House, via the "withered Sybil" or fairy-doctor, Biddy Brannigan. (24) Like Maturin's "Leixlip Castle" (1825), Melmoth is knowledgeable about "the good people" and about techniques for conjuring up "the shadow of the phantom-spouse." (25) After his miserly uncle dies, young John Melmoth consults Biddy about "an odd story in the family." (26) As she initiates him into ancestral secrets, John learns that a family portrait depicts the elder brother of an officer in Cromwell's army who settled in Ireland, having obtained the confiscated property of a royalist Irish family. (27) The elder Melmoth—the Wanderer—traveled in Europe, dabbled in the occult, and exhibited apparently supernatural longevity. Biddy tells John that the Wanderer "had been frequently seen in Ireland even to the present century," but only at the approaching death of family members whose "evil passions or habits...had cast a shade of gloomy and fearful interest over their dying hour." (28) Popular belief "therefore judged no favourable augury for the spiritual destination" of John's uncle from the Wanderer's having "visited, or been imagined to visit, the house previous to his decease." (29) His habit of heralding and attending the deaths of morally dubious family members suggests that the Wanderer is, in folkloric terms, a malevolent banshee, or, more accurately, fear sidhe. Other folkloric dimensions include possible correspondences between Melmoth's evil eyes (30) and Biddy's counter-spells against the "evil eye" (31) and between Melmoth, the demon lover of the innocent

Immalee, and Biddy's instructions to young women about evoking the image of their destined "lover" and not a "demon." (32)

Le Fanu's short fiction also infuses folklore into Irish Gothic, through allusions to fairy abduction in "Ultor de Lacy" (1861) and through thematic and structural parallels between "The Child that Went with the Fairies" (1870) and "Carmilla" (1871-2). (33) In "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh" (1838), the first account is delivered in a folkloric idiom, a technique Le Fanu reproduces in late works like "The White Cat of Drumgunniol" (1870), "Stories of Lough Guir" (1870), and "Sir Dominic's Bargain" (1872). (34) Somerville and Ross also adapt native folklore for Irish Gothic, via the "dullahan" allusions in *An Irish Cousin* (1889) and the influence of *The Silver Fox's* mysterious eponym (1897-8). (35) As we shall see, folklore is also a key modal element of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish Catholic Gothic.

Investigating Irish Gothic's "peculiarly 'Irish'" (36) aspects, Killeen cites the prefatory claim of Maturin's *The Milesian Chief*: Ireland in 1812 "is the only country on earth, where, from the strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners, the extremes of refinement and barbarism are united, and the most wild and incredible situations of romantic story are hourly passing before modern eyes." (37) For Killeen, Maturin's assertion "references the reading of Ireland which was dominant: seen through the eyes of the English reading public for whom the Gothic authors were writing, Ireland was a spatial and temporal anomaly." (38) Other "central features" of Irish Gothic, for Killeen, are "[p]aranoia," "Protestantism," "a 'colonial' history," "the fear of marginalization—rather than marginalization itself," and "[t]he demonisation of both Catholics in general, and Catholicism as a theological and social system"—a strategy allied to an unacknowledged "Catholophilia." (39) Drawing upon Tzvetan Todorov's poetics, Killeen concludes that a "mode of hesitation...[and] psychological ambivalence, which Todorov believes central to the fantastic, is precisely what defines the Irish Protestant mentality." (40)

Killeen's use of Todorov in theorizing Irish Gothic is a stimulating extension of earlier critical efforts, but it also raises a methodological question. (41) Which rhetorical formulations and hermeneutic procedures best do justice to the complex relationships among (i) the virtual, textual worlds authors create, using the Irish Gothic mode; (ii) the worlds in which authors write their books; and (iii) the worlds in which their books are read? Killeen approaches this question indirectly, stating that "the burden of colonial history...is one of the main issues Irish Gothic revolves around"; that "Protestants compensated for their loss of power in the real world by re-investing their energies in another, more obscure, and yet more powerful domain"; that the "tortuous verbal and plot convolutions of the typical Gothic novel were perfect representations of the existential gymnastics forced upon the Anglo-Irish by history"; and that "[t]he Gothic ambivalence highlighted by Todorov was irresistible for such pathological prevaricators and perfectly represented the hesitancy of the Anglo-Irish between an 'English' realist embracing of the technological, the future, the rational, and an 'Irish' Catholic superstitiousness, anachrony, atavism" (my italics throughout). (42)

The theory underpinning such claims is encapsulated in Roy Foster's claim that the "occult preoccupations" of "marginalized Protestants" like Maturin, Le Fanu, Stoker, Bowen and Yeats "surely mirror a sense of displacement, a loss of social and psychological integration, and an escapism motivated

by the threat of a takeover by the Catholic middle classes..." (my italics). (43) Yet, just how "surely" does literature "mirror" its times? (44) To pose that question is not to argue for aesthetic autonomy but merely to advise that we slow down when approaching a junction—in this case the junction of story and history. (45)

In assuming unproblematic exchanges between texts and contexts, we may infer unwarrantedly, transforming contingencies into teleologies. Consider, for example, Killeen's declaration that the Wanderer "has been dispossessed by his Cromwellian brother." (46) Is there any evidence for this radical claim? We must first consider the confusing issue of Melmoth's national identity. As noted, the fairy-doctor described the Wanderer as elder brother of a Cromwellian settler and claimed that he had visited his younger sibling in Ireland only once, when he donated his mysterious portrait to the family. (47) But, despite being introduced as non-native and non-resident, Melmoth turns Irish as the tale unfolds. He is called "the Englishman" by the Spaniards he terrifies, but Stanton later claims to have discovered that Melmoth "had been born in Ireland." (48) According to Monçada, one of the tale's enclosed narrators, the Wanderer "in his happier moods" shared with Immalee "those wild and sweet songs of his country," which a footnote identifies as "Ireland." (49) In addition, not long before vanishing, the Wanderer sits in the Lodge (the Melmoth family property) and (echoing Jonathan Swift citing Job) declares, "In this apartment...I first drew breath, in this I must perhaps resign it, —would—would I had never been born!" (50)

Contradictory accounts of the Wanderer's origins arise most probably from authorial error: over the course of writing his excessive, digressive romance, Maturin forgets the fairy-doctor's genealogy. Those who would infer that the inconsistency is designed deliberately to function as a delayed-effect demonstration of the mendacity (or "sly civility") of the Irish Catholic lower classes must confront the apparent absence of authorial irony concerning the matter, never mind that John is unsurprised to learn, via Stanton, Monçada, or Melmoth himself, about the Wanderer's claims of Irish birth. (51)

In addition, the text presents no evidence that the Wanderer considers himself to have been dispossessed by his younger brother. Where, then, does Killeen's claim originate? Discussing the operation of "theological and genealogical uncertainty" in Melmoth, he argues that "[t]he theme of dispossession which runs through the novel reflects the circular return to the issue which has dogged Irish history—that primal scene when Irish Catholics were banished to 'hell or Connaught' to make way for their ethnic and religious superiors" (my italics). (52) The phrase "primal scene" indicates a psychoanalytically-inflected interpretation, and Killeen soon uncovers the narrative's supposed repression: the "dispossessed" Melmoth "is...in an equivalent position to that [in which] Irish Catholics found themselves," and "the central anxiety of the novel is the reappearance of the dispossessed Melmoth, a figure who might stand for all those demonic figures now also complaining of dispossession: Irish Catholics" (my italics). (53) This remarkable claim is followed by another one: "Melmoth is, after all, only a threat and a wanderer because he has been denied access to the Big House which is rightly his." (54) Again, there is no evidence in the tale to support the assertion either that Melmoth believed himself to have been "dispossessed," or that his decision to sell his soul might be related to such a belief.

Killeen's psychoanalytically-inflected reading of Irish history shapes his reading of an Irish story (Melmoth). His rhetorical and hermeneutical assumptions resemble those in Julian Moynahan's reading of Maturin's *Bertram* (1816): Maturin is not intentionally "squirreling away a political allegory in his Gothic melodrama," but the play is nonetheless an allegory, one written less by Maturin than by "the Anglo-Irish or Ascendancy literary imagination," which is "ineluctably haunted, cloven into duality by the cleavage in Irish society between expropriated and expropriators." (55) However, this interpretation substitutes allegoresis (a hermeneutic practice) for allegory (a rhetorical practice); in the former, a text lacking the conventionally accepted characteristics of theological, moralistic, historical, political, or personification allegory is explicated as if it were a deliberately designed allegory. (56)

As already noted, the definite article should be treated with caution and caveats when employed categorically ("the Irish Gothic mode"). Even more intellectual vigilance is necessary when "the" prefixes prosopopœia (Moynahan's "the Anglo-Irish or Ascendancy literary imagination"). Extreme caution is required when dealing with hazardous materials like Freudianism, especially when hypostasized creations like "the...Ascendancy literary imagination" are psychoanalyzed in order to expose "the return of the repressed." (See the sub-title of Moynahan's influential essay.) Thus, although presumably intended to function as historical shorthand, Killeen's references to entities entitled "the Protestant character", "the English mind" and "the Irish Protestant mentality" are distinctly problematic. (57) So too is his claim that "the dispossessed Melmoth" is "a figure who might stand for all those demonic figures now also complaining of dispossession: Irish Catholics" (my italics). (58) Who does the "standing for"—Maturin or Killeen? If Maturin, then he is engaged in allegory; if Killeen, then he is engaged in allegoresis. Either way, the relevant rhetorical and hermeneutical stances should be clarified and plausible evidence advanced.

Other readers of Melmoth also resort to historicizing allegoresis: Joseph Spence claims that Maturin's tales are "powerful political allegories" (my italics) and that "the story of the fall of Melmoth represented the fall of Anglo-Ireland" (my italics). (59) Terry Eagleton suggests that "Protestant Gothic might be dubbed the political unconscious of Anglo-Irish society, the place where its fears and fantasies most definitively emerge." (60) For Eagleton, "It is possible to read Maturin's astonishing novel as an allegory of this strange condition in which exploiters and victims are both strangers and comrades, and indeed in the person of Melmoth himself, inhabit the same personality." (61) It is possible, but is it plausible? Interpreters of Melmoth's historical contexts face undeniable challenges, but, in engaging those challenges, they should avoid the Faustian temptation of allegorizing textual contingencies into pseudo-Freudian parapraxes.

Less precipitately, we might consider the implications of Melmoth's announcement to the terrified John: "Your ancestor has come home...." (62) "Home" is the penultimate word of this 542-page romance: "Melmoth and Monçada exchanged looks of silent and unutterable horror, and returned slowly home." (63) Given the "horror" he has seen and heard, will young John Melmoth ever feel at home again? If, for Stephen Dedalus, the shortest way to Tara is via Holyhead, is John's shortest way back to the Lodge via the Indian Ocean? The answers are uncertain, as unhomed as those concerning his ancestor's nationality, or the degree of correspondence between the Gehenna-like "burning ocean" into which the Wanderer



dreams of being “flung” and the “wide, waste, engulfing ocean” of the Irish Sea (linker and divider of Ireland and Britain), into which he is apparently hurled by demons. (64) In Melmoth, unhomeliness is an emanation pervading form and content, a textually transmitted unease that circulates in the channels linking and dividing text and context, reader and read. Historical reference is unhomed as the tale’s period and location suddenly shift. Like Melmoth, the narrative is “independent of time and place” (65) yet frequently returns to Ireland across the centuries. (66) According to one footnote, Monçada’s reference to John Buffa’s *Travels* (1810) is an “Anachronism prepense”; according to another, a reference to “the Bartholomew bushel” of 1662 is an “Anachronism – n’importe.” (67) Neither reference is actually anachronistic, but the term highlights the aura of temporal unhomeliness suffusing Melmoth, discernible in the supernaturally prolonged life span of the Wanderer and in the time loops that occur in and between text and paratext. (68)

Geographical unhomeliness pervades an evening journey in Spain, when “grey and misty twilight hung over every object”: an internal narrator describes the route as lying “through a rocky road, that wound among mountains, or rather stony hills, bleak and bare as those which the weary traveller through the western isle sees rising amid the moors, to which they form a contrast without giving a relief.” (69) The phrase “western isle” is asterisked to a footnote, where the main narrator declares: “Ireland, —forsan [perhaps].” (70) The note’s note of uncertainty lingers in the margins of each page, whether it evokes English asylums and castles, Indian islands, and Spanish inns in the seventeenth century, or Irish houses and Spanish monasteries and prisons in the nineteenth. (71)

Uncertainty haunts the tale, and tales within the tale, like Stanton’s, which John’s uncle told him could be found “among some papers of no value, such as manuscript sermons, and pamphlets on the improvement of Ireland, and such stuff...” (72) Political and religious texts surround a memoir of terror: all are ironically dismissed as “of no value,” and all are enclosed in a drawer in a chest under the portrait of a damned ancestor hanging in the forbidden chamber of a crumbling Big House. But, the texts in the drawer are contiguous, not continuous. The allegoresis of Spence, Eagleton, and Killeen, however, transforms contiguity into continuity, thereby making itself a little too at home in the text. (73) In rushing to assert an unambiguous “correlation” between “the cultural hesitancy of the Protestant Irish” and “the Gothic mode” (74), we overlook the possibility that methodological wisdom may be found in hermeneutic “hesitancy.” He or she who hesitates is not necessarily lost. (75)

## TONE AND MOOD: THE RHETORIC OF IRISH GOTHIC

Another instance of the need to reduce speed occurs in Killeen’s claim that “[a] good example of the inability of the realist mode to dominate and overcome its Gothic counterpart is a novel like Maria Edgeworth’s *Ennui* (1804).” (76) From Killeen’s perspective, the novella explores “[t]he choice...between allowing the Irish to remain characters in a Gothic story, or gently translating them into a national bildungsroman.” In the so-called “easy reading,” *Ennui*’s “ideological weight...appears to come down on Mr. McLeod’s side,” indicating “that the spectre of the Gothic can be banished given enough reforms and patient application of reason and technology.” But, Killeen argues, this interpretation “ignores the energies of the text”:

...Lord Glenthorn is completely bored while in “rational” England and is only awakened to life’s possibilities when he meets Ellinor, his Irish former wet-nurse and a banshee-like figure straight out of a Gothic melodrama. His excitement continues once he arrives in Ireland and confronts its Gothic scenery and meets its Gothic cast list, and almost becomes involved in the 1798 Rebellion, organised by a secret society meeting near some sublime cliffs. (77) There is a sense...that recreating Ireland into a miniature version of England may well be industrially desirable and economically necessary, but that it will be disastrous from a psychological view and that cultural decadence and ennui will follow such a recreation. The plot of the novel certainly seems to opt for a reformable and possibly realist Ireland of the future; the energy of the novel lies completely with the Gothic melodrama Glenthorn finds being enacted when he migrates there. Ennui is a clear example of Gothic energy refusing to allow realist closure. Edgeworth may be intellectually on the side of English reform, but psychologically her novel is more attracted to Irish Gothic irreality. (78)

Killeen’s contrast between “plot” and “energy,” between authorial intellect and psychology, indicates another “depth” reading, psychoanalyzing Ennui and its author. However, let us explore the surface. (79) Ellinor, while nursing Glenthorn, undoubtedly entertains him with “inexhaustible...anecdotes” about his Irish “ancestors,” including “a large assortment of fairies and shadowless witches, and banshees...legions of spirits and ghosts, and haunted castles without end, my own castle of Glenthorn not excepted...” (80) And Glenthorn admits that her “extremely eloquent” account of the castle “absolutely excited in my mind some desire to see it” (my italics). (81) However, the older, wiser Glenthorn depicts his younger, more fatuous self as being equally “impressed” by “the idea of the sort of feudal power I should possess in my vast territory, over tenants who were almost vassals...”; and, in the survey of “[m]ixed motives” conducted by the mature Glenthorn, no Gothic dimension registers. (82)

During Glenthorn’s arrival at his Irish estate, flurries of sublimity do briefly whirl (anticipating the hurricane of Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* [1806]): Glenthorn Castle “seemed to rise from the sea, abrupt and insulated, in all the gloomy grandeur of ancient times, with turrets and battlements, and a huge gateway...” (83) In addition, Glenthorn’s “state tower” bedroom is “so like a room in a haunted castle, that if I had not been too much fatigued to think of any thing, I should certainly have thought of Mrs. Radcliffe.” (84) However, a crucial sentence follows, closing Chapter Six: “I am sorry to say that I have no mysteries, or even portentous omens, to record of this night; for the moment that I lay down in my antiquated bed, I fell into a profound sleep.” (85)

As this sentence crucially illustrates, Gothic fiction requires to be comprehended in terms of rhetoric as much as poetics: only if articulated in a particular narrative tone can the Gothic mode produce its intended mood—the rhetorical effect (and “moral function”) identified by Angela Carter as “provoking unease.” (86) By adopting a mildly parodic tone, however, Edgeworth deftly subverts any incipient Gothic mood and thereby reassures rather than unsettles her early nineteenth-century readers. (87)

Chapter Seven opens with a glance towards sublimity—the “prospect” from Glenthorn’s bedroom “bore an air of savage wildness” that “seized” his “imagination with the idea of remoteness from civilized society,” so that “the melancholy feeling of solitary grandeur took possession of my soul.” However, Ellinor’s “affectionate countenance” disperses “this feeling”, and by Chapter Thirteen, Glenthorn is “seized with a fit of yawning” in front of the supposedly “sublime spectacle” of “the Giants’ Causeway.” (88) In addition, the 1798 Rebellion is represented in distinctly non-Gothic terms (89), and an incident of post-Rebellion plotting is easily foiled: “I am sorry I have no bloody battle for the entertainment of such of my readers as like horrors; but so it was, that they yielded without a drop of blood being spilled, or a shot fired.” (90) This audience-teasing tone returns in the closing pages: “If, among those who may be tempted to peruse my history, there should be any mere novel readers, let me advise them to throw the book aside at the commencement of this chapter; for I have no more wonderful incidents to relate, no more changes at nurse, no more sudden turns of fortune.” (91)

According to Killeen, Glenthorn is among those who “reflected...that perhaps with the coming about of this new modern Ireland something frightening, fractious, dangerous, but exciting and stimulating had been lost.” (92) However, the novella tells us something very different: at the prospect of winning Cecilia Delamere’s hand, Glenthorn experiences “the commencement of a new existence,” performs a metaphorical auto-exorcism, and declares, “The enchantment of indolence was dissolved, and the demon of ennui was cast out for ever.” (93) Killeen claims that Ennui provides “a good example” of how novels that “offer putatively realist accounts of Ireland are continuously disrupted by the Gothic mode” (my italics) (94), but consider the following data: (i) over its 148 pages, only a handful of the novella’s sentences manifest a recognizably Gothic mode; (ii) even when it briefly appears, the mode is expressed in a parodic or muted tone; (iii) the principal tone of Ennui is undeniably, overwhelmingly homiletic. (95) If we accept these points, the argument that “Ennui is a clear example of Gothic energy refusing to allow realist closure” becomes implausible. (96) Claims that Ennui exhibits, in any significant manner, the Gothic mode risk making “Gothic,” via “[l]yrical flights of oratory, hasty generalizations, prophetic attitudes and recuperative manoeuvres,” a term “synonymous with almost everything.” (97) As I hope to show, however, that accusation need not apply to the concept of an Irish Catholic Gothic.

## IRISH CATHOLIC GOTHIC

Killeen’s essay implies agreement (concerning the nineteenth century) with McCormack’s claim that “Irish gothic writing” is “distinctly protestant.” (98) Killeen also appears to accept McCormack’s declaration that Melmoth Réconcilié (1835) (Balzac’s sequel to Melmoth) “jeopardises any easy declaration of Le Fanu as heir to Maturin.” (99) However, McCormack’s avowals that nineteenth-century Irish Gothic is resolutely Protestant and that Balzac is the disruptor of Irish Gothic continuities are significantly undermined by the work of James Mangan. Highlighting the Gothic mode in Mangan’s Autobiography, Seamus Deane first adumbrated the notion of an Irish “Catholic-nationalist Gothic.” (100) With regard to challenging McCormack’s theses, an equally significant text is Mangan’s “The Man in the Cloak,” which not only reworked Balzac’s Melmoth Réconcilié but also first appeared in the same edition of the Dublin University Magazine (November 1838) as “Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess,” the fifth of Le Fanu’s preponderantly Gothic Purcell Papers, and the prototype for Uncle Silas. (101)

More than a decade before Mangan's "Man in the Cloak," Irish Catholic Gothic emerged, in John Banim's "The Fetches" (1825), whose introduction includes a remarkably sophisticated exploration of rhetorical techniques for generating supernaturalist effects. (102) To understand precisely how Banim inflects the Gothic mode, we can turn again to Chris Baldick: conceding that all Gothic fiction is "concerned with extreme states of mental disturbance," he nonetheless distinguishes between "'full-dress' Gothic," which "decks out its essential psychological tremors in a uniform costume of lurid effects and trappings," and a "second unorthodox group," which "carries a much lighter cargo of chains and cowls, so that its similar obsessions with persecution and delusion stand out more clearly." (103) Novels of the second group (like Caleb Williams [1794], Frankenstein [1818, 1831], and Justified Sinner), Baldick argues, "tend to rely less on the evocation of atmosphere from a monastic or castellar setting than on a fabulous principle of transgression, usually involving the Faustian acquisition of forbidden knowledge." (104) Banim borrows this principle of "transgression" from Melmoth and fuses it with native folklore about doubles, or fetches. Allusions to Faustian pacts in "The Fetches" are echoed in Banim's story "The Ace of Clubs" (1838) and in his brother Michael's cruder *The Ghost Hunter and his Family* (1833). Space restrictions preclude a detailed discussion of early nineteenth-century Irish Catholic Gothic, so I shall merely note the melding of Gothic and folkloric modes in Michael Banim's "Crohoore of the Bill-Hook," William Carleton's "The Lianhan Shee" (1830/1833), and Gerald Griffin's "The Barber of Bantry" (1835). (105)

Towards the end of his essay, Killeen refers briefly to twentieth-century "Catholic Gothic narratives in which the cottage, the castle and the church merged as spaces attempting to block the nation's progress towards the rational, cosmopolitan future"; he also remarks that "Gothic imagery" recently "has been used to characterize the 1940s and 1950s, and its industrial schools and Magdalen laundries have all been imbued with an aura more common to the horror film than the history book." (106) However, he names no specific works, engaging instead in an intriguing, albeit non-literary excursus that depicts Charles Haughey as a Gothic anti-hero.

Yet, any attempt to theorize Irish Gothic must surely mention Seamus Deane, a vital force in the critical and creative institutionalization of Irish Gothic. In the 1980s, Deane promoted the concept of Irish Gothic (107); he was the prime mover of the *Anthology's* "Irish Gothic" section; he introduced the notion of Irish "Catholic-nationalist Gothic" (108); and, in his novel-memoir *Reading in the Dark* (1996), he explicitly merged Irish Gothic with folkloric modes. (109)

As Deane recognized early, John Banville's *Birchwood* (1973) played a major part in revitalizing late twentieth-century Irish Gothic. (110) The Mephistophelean Felix's words—"Ah, Melmoth, he said softly. We've been expecting you" (111)—echo through other allusions to the Wanderer in Banville's oeuvre. (112) The reinvigoration of Irish Catholic Gothic continues in the new millennium with Neil Jordan's *Shade* (2004), which introduces Irish mythology as well as folklore. Moving beyond the traditional "vampire story" or "tale of horror," and summoning the shades not only of Maturin, Le Fanu, Stoker, Bowen, and Yeats, but also Beckett, Jordan's novel explores "consciousness" as it confronts the unhomely "blankness of non-being." (113)

Thus, far from awaiting what Killeen calls “a dramatic and truly terrifying revival” (114), Irish Gothic walks amongst us still.

#### THE DISCIPLINARY SPIRIT

Frederick Crews usefully distinguishes between “two kinds of discourse...the disciplinary and the self-ratifying”; an “essential feature” of the former “is the give-and-take, largely conducted in journals, between proponents of new hypotheses and possessors of knowledge that may or may not have been successfully accounted for in those hypotheses.” (115) According to Crews, “[f]or the disciplinary spirit to operate, members of a given intellectual community must read one another’s work discriminatingly and try to show, through pointed reference to available facts, that certain apprehensions of those facts are more plausible than others.” (116)

It is in the spirit of such disciplinary solidarity that my disagreements with Killeen’s argument are presented. (117) On one point, however, we can certainly agree: “Irish Gothic” remains a worthwhile and fruitful category of criticism and creativity.

1. Mailloux, Steven, *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 50. As Mailloux notes, “[i]n some ways, rhetoric and interpretation are practical forms of the same extended human activity”:

Rhetoric is based on interpretation; interpretation is communicated through rhetoric. Furthermore, as reflections on practice, hermeneutics and rhetorical theory are mutually defining fields: hermeneutics is the rhetoric of establishing meaning, and rhetoric the hermeneutics of problematic linguistic situations. When we ask about the meaning of a text, we receive an interpretive argument; when we seek the means of persuasion, we interpret the situation. As theoretical practices, hermeneutics involves placing a text in a meaningful context, while rhetoric requires the contextualization of a text’s effects. (p. 4)

2. Killeen, Jarlath, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction.” *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*. 1 (October 2006).

3. Ibid. p. 1.

4. McCormack, W. J., “Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945)” [“IGA”]. In Deane, Seamus, ed. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, vol. II, pp. 831-949 (Derry: Field Day, 1991), pp. 831, 833, 837. As the quotation indicates, upper-case and lower-case orthography engender different nuances, since McCormack’s “Irish gothic” is not identical to Killeen’s (or my) “Irish Gothic.” In a later essay, McCormack reiterates his thesis but (perhaps following editorially-required conventions) capitalizes the crucial word: “[T]he idea of a coherent Irish Gothic fictional tradition, commencing in the late eighteenth century, is doubtful” (“Irish Gothic” p. 135).

5. McCormack, W. J., *Dissolute Characters: Irish literary history through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 11.

6. Ibid. pp. 2, 3, 3, 10.

7. For details concerning pre-Field Day formulations of Irish Gothic (by John Cronin, A. N. Jeffares, Julian Moynahan, Seamus Deane, and Roy Foster), see Haslam (“Irish Gothic”).

8. McCormack, “Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945),” p. 832. According to McCormack, “None of Le Fanu’s novels could be accurately described as gothic, though his shorter tales stand in some contrast with their explicit use of the supernatural” (“IGA” p. 840). McCormack’s dissatisfaction at Le Fanu’s inclusion in a gothic troika with Maturin and Stoker may spring from his belief that “Le Fanu has the best claim to be regarded as a writer of talent” (p. 832).

9. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, pp. viii, 7, 29.

10. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 1. This is not to deny that McCormack might repudiate such representations.

11. Ibid. p. 2.

12. Ibid. p. 2.

13. In the Anthology, McCormack appears to treat the terms "tradition" and "mode" equivalently—compare, for example, his references to "the Irish gothic mode" ("IGA" p. 852) and "the gothic mode" (pp. 831, 838, 842, 849, 850) with references to "this oft-remarked Irish gothic tradition" (p.832; for variations, see pp. 833, 842, and 846). In *Dissolute Characters*, McCormack sticks with "Irish gothic tradition" (p. 3; for variations, see pp. viii, 7, 10, 18, 29, 161, 189, and 198).

14. Platzner, Robert L. and Robert D. Hume. "'Gothic Versus Romantic': A Rejoinder." *PMLA* 86 (1971): pp. 266-74, p.273.

15. Botting, Fred, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 14.

16. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 2.

17. Greater conceptual rigor might result from referring to "an Irish Gothic mode" (or "sub-mode"), rather than "the," but it would be at the cost of stylistic awkwardness—better a few definite articles than a desert of indefinite particles. Nevertheless, although "the supernatural" may be a more intellectually pleasing and euphonious phrase than "supernaturalist effects," prudence is required when one employs the definite article to transform adjectives into nouns. Otherwise, hypothesizing can lead to hypostasizing. The broader and deeper the categorization's scope, the greater the circumspection "the" requires. With respect to such difficulties concerning a term like "the uncanny," see Masschelein, Anneleen, "The concept as ghost: Conceptualization of the uncanny in late-twentieth-century theory," *Mosaic* 35. 1 (2002): pp. 53-68. (I now direct similar suspicion at my own earlier use of terms like "the Calvinist sublime" [Haslam "Maturin"].)

18. Baldick, Chris, "Introduction," *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. xix.

19. Ibid.

20. Similar elements occur in Maturin's *Fatal Revenge* (1807), which incorporates other Gothic accessories (nuns and bandits) and throws in a volcanic eruption and some earthquakes for good measure. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, certain typical geographical locations (Spain and Italy), settings (castles and monasteries), and props (monks and nuns) have been used less frequently in worldwide Gothic fiction, but many of the listed themes and formal devices are regularly reanimated.

21. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 2. However, it must be noted that any shared "political and geographical space," literary "conventions," and "thematic associations" undergo numerous transformations between the early-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries.

22. Ibid.

23. Combining two well-known proverbs, we might say that God and the Devil are in the details, engaged in a long-running, dualistic duel.

24. Maturin, Charles, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 10. Except when indicated, Melmoth page references denote the Baldick edition.

25. Ibid. pp. 24, 11.

26. Ibid. p. 23.

27. Ibid. p. 26.

28. Ibid. pp.26-27.

29. Ibid. p. 27.

30. Ibid. pp. 17-18, 34, 54.

31. Ibid. p. 10; see also p. 24.

32. Ibid. p. 11.

33. Similarities between the latter two stories were first spotted by Nelson Browne (p. 87) and later discussed by Robert Tracy (pp. xxiii-iv).

34. This is noted by Ann Cahill, who also discusses Le Fanu's encounters with and debts to the Irish folklorist Patrick Kennedy (pp. 314-15). On Kennedy, and on Le Fanu's use of Irish folklore in later work, see also McCormack (*Le Fanu* pp. 238-43).

35. On connections between Irish folklore and the Transylvanian folklore of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), see Roy Foster (p. 226-7).

36. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 4.

37. Charles Maturin, *The Milesian Chief*, 4 vols (New York: Garland, 1979), I, v.



38. Ibid. p. 5. In a book-length analysis of “the auto-exoticist reflex” (p. 66), Leerssen also foregrounds this Maturin quotation (p. 48). For earlier citations of the passage in theorizations of Irish Gothic, see Moynahan (“Politics” p. 47) and Gibbons (pp. 23-4).

39. Ibid. pp. 3-4.

40. Ibid. p. 6.

41. Previous explorations of Todorov’s relevance for analyzing Irish Gothic occur in Gould, Haslam (“Fantastic Semantics”), Hassett, Morash (“The Time...”), and Stewart (“Our Proper Dark”); see also Morash (“Ever Under...”).

42. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, pp. 2, 2, 6, 6.

43 Foster, R. F., *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 220. Cited in Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, p. 3.

44. As noted above, Leerssen cites Maturin’s preface to *Milesian Chief*; his accompanying commentary exhibits similar theoretical assumptions to those of Foster: “Thus the political dividedness of Ireland, between fashionable life in viceregal circles and picturesque primitivism on the Atlantic cliffs, is reflected in the generic ambiguity of Irish romance/novels” (p. 48; my italics). Compare also Moynahan: “Maturin’s alienation from Irish Catholic culture and society, along with his difficulties vis-à-vis ecclesiastical superiors in his own Established Church are mirrored in the woes and frustrations of young Alonzo [Monçada]” (Anglo-Irish p. 127; my italics).

45. As I have argued elsewhere, reductive drives to historicize Irish Gothic can end up in “hermeneutic chasms” (“Fantastic Semantics” p. 275).

46. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, p. 4.

47. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, p. 26.

48. Ibid. pp. 34, 59.

49. Ibid. p. 334.

50. Ibid. p. 540. The Wanderer was rumored to have been “frequently seen” in his fear sidhe role, “in Ireland even to the present century” (p. 26). This might explain how he picked up a few Irish melodies along the way, but it does not solve the mystery of his birthplace.

51. On “sly civility,” see Bhabha (pp. 93-101). Ignoring possible authorial error on Maturin’s part, Joseph Spence rather implausibly assumes the conflicting versions of Melmoth’s national identity are part of an

intentional artistic strategy: “This succinctly betrayed Maturin’s conception of Irish nationality as a state which could be assumed by the Englishman, whenever he chose. With the depositing of his portrait in Wicklow, Melmoth donned the mantle of Irish nationality; henceforth he was an Irishman, without qualification, in his creator’s eyes” (p. 49).

52. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, p. 4.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Moynahan, Julian, “The Politics of Anglo-Irish Gothic: Maturin, Le Fanu and the Return of the Repressed.” In Kosok ed. *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982), p. 48.

56. See Haslam (“Irish Gothic”). As note 1 of the present essay indicates, rhetoric and hermeneutics are closely allied practices, but we should not confuse them. In *Anglo-Irish*, Moynahan returns to “allegory—that spectre!” (p. 178), suggesting now that Le Fanu and Somerville and Ross consciously chose to produce “allegorical or equivocal writing” as a result of “a sense of social guilt,” protests against English mainstream writing, and “an individual writer’s conflicted or double sense of identity” (pp. 178-9). The real “spectre” in Moynahan’s argument, however, remains allegoresis.

57. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, pp. 2, 5, 6.

58. Ibid. p. 4.

59. Spence, Joseph, “‘The Great Angelic Sin’: The Faust Legend in Irish Literature, 1820-1900.” *Bullán* 1. 2 (Autumn 1994): pp. 47-58, pp. 47, 50.

60. Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 187. Eagleton ascribes “political unconscious” to Fredric Jameson but confesses he has “adapted it somewhat freely here” (p. 187). (Perhaps it is better to say “diluted”—a Jameson with water?) Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* remains the explicit or implicit model for much recent literary-historical allegoresis of Irish Gothic. Dissecting Jameson’s rhetorical and hermeneutical ploys, Frederick Crews argued that the book is “openly devoted to articulating a modern version of the fourfold patristic method of imperious Christianization, with just one major change: Marxist ‘History’ now stands in Christ’s anagogical place as the ultimate sacred referent” (Skeptical p. 151). (Aijaz Ahmad has made an equally stringent critique of Jameson’s later experiments in allegoresis [pp. 95-122].)

Margaret Kelleher maintains that the “qualities” of Irish Gothic “as ‘political unconscious’ have certainly been overly generalized” (p. 473). However, the underlying problem is that Jameson’s book itself embodies a “generalized” system of allegoresis—see Haslam (“Fantastic Semantics” pp. 275-77).

61. Ibid. p. 190. Further examples from Eagleton include: “To read the diabolic Melmoth as a type of the Anglo-Irish ruling class is hardly extravagant...” (p. 190); “...it is not hard to read this [Melmoth’s selling his soul] as a metaphor of the original crime of forcible settlement and expulsion, which belongs to the period in which Melmoth’s bargain with the devil takes place, or to see his preying upon the dispossessed as a nightmarish image of the relations between the Ascendancy and the people” (p. 190); “But Melmoth is much more than some melodramatic stereotype of the dastardly landlords...” (p. 191); “...the great Satanic love scene between Melmoth and Immalee can be deciphered as the Ascendancy’s doomed pursuit of hegemony, its need for a loving consent on the part of its subjects which will in fact lead them to their ruin” (p. 192); “If Melmoth the Wanderer is in some sense an allegory of Ireland...” (p. 193; my italics throughout).

62. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, p. 537.

63. Ibid. p. 542.

64. Ibid. pp. 538, 542.

65. Ibid. p. 44

66. Ibid. pp. 27-26.

67. Ibid. pp. 91, 475.

68. On the references’ non-anachronism, see Hayter’s edition of *Melmoth* (pp. 709-10 and p. 719). For other reflections on anachronism and Gothic fiction, see Morash (“The Time...”) and Mighall (ubique). (Leerssen uses “Anachronism – n’importe” as an epigraph for *Remembrance and Imagination*.) On paratexts, see Genette.

69. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, p. 504.

70. Ibid.

71. On the function of Melmoth’s footnotes, see McCormack (*Dissolute* pp. 4-7) and Spence (p. 49).

72. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, p. 21. At various points in *Melmoth*, Maturin foregrounds radical uncertainty and contingency. Concerning uncertainty, the narrator declares that, while Melmoth addressed Immalee, “it was impossible to discover whether his predominant expression was that of irony or profound and sincere feeling” (p. 376; see also pp. 60, 297, and 309, and the footnote on p. 303). Concerning contingency, see the “trifling phenomenon” that “interfered to alter” Immalee’s “destiny” (p. 324; compare Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Book II, lines 927-38).

73. So, on the other hand, do more formalist readers, such as Jack Null, Kathleen Fowler, and Amy Elizabeth Smith, who sever the narrative almost completely from a historical context and insist that its lapses, lacunae, and loopholes are intentional.

74. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 7.

75. Donya Samara notes that Gothic fiction can bring "into question representational structures, including subjectivity and history, but also interpretation" (p. 243).

76. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 7.

77. Contrary to Killeen's account (p. 7), Glenthorn is threatened by a post-1798 Rebellion conspiracy.

78. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 7.

79. As Wilde reminds us, "Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril" (Dorian p. 3).

80. Edgeworth, Maria, *Ennui*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, Vol. 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. 175.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.* pp. 175, 182. Alternations between the focalization of the younger and older Glenthorn are occasionally highlighted: "But I am anticipating reflections which I made at a much later period of my life. To return to my history" (p. 207).

83. *Ibid.* p. 189.

84. *Ibid.* p. 191.

85. *Ibid.*

86. Cited in Mulvey Roberts, Marie, ed. *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. xvii, 35. As critics from I. A. Richards to Mikhail Bakhtin have indicated, tone signals an author's attitude to audience, narrator, characters, or subject. Concerning intended mood, Robert Hume argued long ago that "the serious Gothic works were written with effect very much in mind—terror, horror, mystery in a more than frivolous sense—and hence 'affective' groupings have some justification" (Platzner and Hume p. 274); Hume also notes the "vast difference between reading one's responses back into a work" (W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's so-called "affective fallacy") and the procedure of "seeking, on internal evidence, to determine the response it is apparently designed to elicit" (p. 274). See also Victor Sage's recommendation that "Le Fanu's Gothic" be "conceived, not as a

genre, but a rhetoric: a recurring set of designs on readers' security and pride in their own rationality...[creating] a range of different effects" (p. 4).

87. Compare the later incident when Glenthorn's "head was so full of visions, that I expected a ghost to enter—but it was only Ellinor" (p. 258). For the skilful use of the parodic tone in Gothic fiction, see Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost" (McCormack, "IGA," pp. 915-29.)

88. Edgeworth, Ennui in *The Novels and Selected Works*, pp. 191, 249.

89. Ibid. pp. 244-48.

90. Ibid. p. 263.

91. Ibid. p. 294.

92. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 8.

93. Edgeworth, Maria, Ennui in *The Novels and Selected Works*, p. 294.

94. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 7.

95. As Maria's father points out in the preface, Ennui is "intended to point out some of those errors to which the higher classes of society are disposed" (p. 159). The final two chapters, during which Glenthorn expands upon his claim that "[t]he loss of my estate continued the course of my education, made me know that I had a heart, and that I was capable of forming a character for myself" (p. 307), are scream-inducingly didactic.

96. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 7.

97. Levy, Maurice, "'Gothic' and the Critical Idiom." In Smith and Sage, eds. *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), p. 7. Similar neglect of mode and tone undermines efforts to portray important aspects of Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) as "quintessentially gothic" (Backus p. 105), as embodying "the Gothic past" (Killeen, Gothic, p. 200), or as "uncanny" (Connolly).

98. McCormack, "Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945)", p. 837.

99. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, p. 18; paraphrased in Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 1. McCormack later confesses that his "comparative study of Le Fanu and Balzac" cannot actually be substantiated (*Dissolute* p. 163; see also p. 189).

100. Deane, Seamus, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 126. Obviously, further levels of complexity abound: Catholic does not necessarily imply nationalist or republican, nor does Protestant necessarily imply unionist or loyalist.

101. While dismantling the Irish Gothic “tradition,” McCormack states that “twenty-five years elapse between the publication of *Melmoth* and that of Le Fanu’s first novel, *The Cock and Anchor*” (*Dissolute* p. 10). This claim is factually correct but rather misleading, since it omits the very Gothic Purcell Papers. On Mangan and Irish Gothic, see Haslam (“Broad Farce”).

102. By “supernaturalism,” I mean an aesthetic effect generated by a synthesis of tone, mode, and mood, occurring in fiction that engages with the possibility of intersections between natural and supernatural worlds.

103. Baldick, Chris. “Introduction.” In Maturin, *Melmoth*. p. x.

104. Ibid. Although *Melmoth* makes some use of monastic “trappings,” Baldick persuasively locates it in the more psychologically-inflected group (p. x).

105. McCormack places Carleton’s “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman” in the Anthology’s “Irish Gothic” section but characterizes it more as the work of an Anglican convert than a former Catholic (pp. 873-4). With respect to the politico-theological intricacies of Irish Catholic Gothic, Siobhán Kilfeather poses a pertinent question: “Is the Gothic always the nightmare of the oppressor, or can it be a vehicle for dissent from below?” (“Gothic Novel”).

106. Killeen, “Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction”, p. 7.

107. Deane, Seamus, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), pp. 99-100.

108. Deane, Seamus, *Strange Country*, p. 126.

109. On Deane’s promotion of and contribution to Irish Gothic, see Haslam (“Broad Farce,” “Entity,” “Ghost-Colonial,” and “Irish Gothic”). During a symposium on “The Gothic, the National, the Subversive,” held at Glucksman Ireland House, New York University (4 October 1998), McCormack identified Deane as *éminence grise* of the Anthology’s “Irish Gothic” section.

110. Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 225. Other significant transfusions include Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* (1939-40; 1967) (one of many novels that haunt Banville’s *Eclipse*), and Brian Moore’s *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979), which also alludes to Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890; 1891).

111. Banville, John, *Mefisto* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1999/1986), p. 222.

112. See *The Book of Evidence* (p. 98) and *Athena* (p. 122). Banville's citations of Melmoth simultaneously reference the apparitions of Melmoth in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955). In *Eclipse* (2000), Banville plays further postmodern variations on Irish Gothic and ghostly modes. In Banville, unhomeliness is sometimes imbued with a distinctly Heideggerian tinge, intimating the potential violence of its temptations: "It is being that he has encountered here, the thing itself, the pure, unmediated essence, in which, he thinks, he will at last find himself and his true home, his place in the world. Impossible, impossible dreams, but for a moment he allows himself to believe in them" (Banville, *Ghosts*, p. 85).

113. Jordan, Neil, *Shade* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), p. 84.

114. Killeen, "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction", p. 8.

115. Crews, Frederick, *Follies of the Wise: Dissenting Essays* (Emeryville: Shoemaker Hoard, 2006), p. 305.

116. *Ibid.*

117. I have focused on points of difference, but let me acknowledge that Killeen's essay includes (among many other insights) an astute discussion of Maturin and Le Fanu's Huguenot background (p. 2).

#### For Further Reference, A Complete List of Works Cited

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992.

Backus, Margot Gayle. *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

Baldick, Chris. "Introduction." In Maturin. *Melmoth*. vii-xix.

---. "Introduction." *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. xi-xxiii.

Banville, John. *Athena*. New York: Vintage, 1996. (1995.)

---. *Birchwood*. London: Panther, 1984. (1973.)

---. *Ghosts*. New York: Vintage, 1994. (1993.)

---. *Mefisto*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1999. (1986.)

---. *The Book of Evidence*. London: Minerva, 1990. (1989.)

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Browne, Nelson. *Sheridan Le Fanu*. London: Arthur Baker Ltd., 1951.

Cahill, Ann. "Irish Folktales and Supernatural Literature: Patrick Kennedy and Sheridan Le Fanu." In Stewart, Other, I, 307-19.

Connolly, Claire. "Uncanny Castle Rackrent." In Stewart, Other, I, 205-20.

Cosgrove, Brian, ed. *Literature and the Supernatural: Essays for the Maynooth Bicentenary*. Blackrock, Dublin: The Columba Press, 1995.

- Crews, Frederick. *Follies of the Wise: Dissenting Essays*. Emeryville: Shoemaker Hoard, 2006.
- . *Skeptical Engagements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Deane, Seamus, ed. *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. 3 vols. Derry: Field Day, 1991.
- . *Reading in the Dark*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1996.
- . *A Short History of Irish Literature*. London: Hutchinson, 1986.
- . *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. London: Verso, 1995.
- Edgeworth, Maria. *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*. Vol. 1. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999.
- Foster, J. W., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Forthcoming 2007.
- Foster, R. F. *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*. London: Penguin, 1993.
- Fowler, Kathleen. "Hieroglyphics in Fire: Melmoth the Wanderer." *Studies in Romanticism* XXV. 4 (Winter 1986): 521-39.
- Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. First published in French in 1987.
- Gibbons, Luke. *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture*. Galway, Ireland: Arlen House, 2004.
- Gould, Warwick. "Stranger Than Fiction: Yeats and the Visions Notebooks, 1898-1901." In Stewart (That Other World). II, 331-50.
- Haslam, Richard. "'Broad Farce and Thrilling Tragedy': Mangan's Fiction and Irish Gothic." *Éire-Ireland* 41: 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 2006): pp. 215-44.
- . "The Entity Called Ireland." *Review* 23 (2001): 87-105.
- . "Ghost-Colonial Ireland." *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal* V. 1 (Summer/Fall 2000): 63-80.
- . "Irish Gothic." In Spooner and McEvoy.
- . "Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and the Fantastic Semantics of Ghost-Colonial Ireland." In Stewart, Other, I, 268-86.
- . "Maturin and the 'Calvinist Sublime'." In Smith and Sage, 44-56.
- . "Melmoth (OW): Gothic Modes in The Picture of Dorian Gray." *Irish Studies Review* 12. 3 (December 2004): 303-14.
- Hassett, Joseph M. "Flann O'Brien's Other World of Fantasy." In Stewart, Other, II, 188-95.
- Jordan, Neil. *Shade*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Kelleher, Margaret. "Prose writing and drama in English, 1830-1890: from Catholic Emancipation to the fall of Parnell." In Kelleher and O'Leary, I, 449-499.
- and Philip O'Leary, eds. *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*. 2 vols.



- Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Kilfeather, Siobhán. "Gothic Novel." In J. W. Foster.
- Killeen, Jarlath. *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005.
- . "Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction." *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*. 1 (October 2006).
- Kosok, Heinz, ed. *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982.
- Le Fanu, Sheridan. *In A Glass Darkly*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. First published 1872.
- Leerssen, Joep. *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representations of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*. Notre Dame: Field Day, 1997.
- Levy, Maurice. "'Gothic' and the Critical Idiom." In Smith and Sage, 1-15.
- Mailloux, Steven. *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Masschelein, Anneleen. "The concept as ghost: Conceptualization of the uncanny in late-twentieth-century theory." *Mosaic* 35. 1 (2002): 53-68.
- Maturin, Charles. *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Ed. Chris Baldick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- . *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Ed. Alethea Hayter. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.
- . *The Milesian Chief*. 4 vols. New York: Garland, 1979.
- McCormack, W. J. *Dissolute Characters: Irish literary history through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- . "Irish Gothic." In Mulvey Roberts, 135-7.
- . "Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945)." In Deane, Field Day, II, 831-949.
- . *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*. Dublin: Lilliput, 1991. Expanded version of 1980 edition.
- Mighall, Robert. *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Morash, Christopher. "'Ever under some unnatural condition': Bram Stoker and the Colonial Fantastic." In Cosgrove. 95-119.
- . "The Time is Out of Joint (O Cursèd Spite): Towards a Definition of a Supernatural Narrative." In Stewart, Other, I, 123-42.
- Moynahan, Julian. *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- . "The Politics of Anglo-Irish Gothic: Maturin, Le Fanu and the Return of the Repressed." In Kosok, 43-53.
- Mulvey Roberts, Marie, ed. *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
- Null, Jack. "Structure and Theme in *Melmoth the Wanderer*." *Papers on Language and Literature* 13. 2 (Spring 1977): 131-47.
- Platzner, Robert L. and Robert D. Hume. "'Gothic Versus Romantic': A Rejoinder." *PMLA* 86 (1971): 266-74.

- Sage, Victor. *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness*. New York: Palgrave, 2004.
- Samara, Donya. "Gothic Criticism(s)." *Novel* 29. 2 (Winter 1996): 243-7.
- Smith, Allan Lloyd and Victor Sage, eds. *Gothick Origins and Innovations*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.
- Smith, Amy Elizabeth. "Experimentation and 'Horrid Curiosity' in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*." *English Studies*. 74. 6 (Dec. 1993): 524-35.
- Spence, Joseph. "'The Great Angelic Sin': The Faust Legend in Irish Literature, 1820-1900." *Bullán* 1. 2 (Autumn 1994): 47-58.
- Spooner, Catherine and Emma McEvoy, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*. London: Routledge. Forthcoming 2007.
- Stewart, Bruce. "'Our Proper Dark': A Chapter of Conclusions." In Stewart, Other, II, 365-85.
- - -, ed. *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*. 2 vols. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998.
- Tracy, Robert. "Introduction." In *Le Fanu*. vii-xxxiii.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1988.

## Baroque Intensity: Lovecraft, Le Fanu and the Fold

Patricia MacCormack

'Whether the dreams brought on the fever or the fever brought on the dreams Walter Gilman did not know.' – H.P. Lovecraft. (1)

'It was not a dream [...] I was in a different state - I felt differently and strangely; and yet it was all as real, as clear and vivid, as what I now see and hear – it was a reality.' – J. Sheridan Le Fanu. (2)

Gothic sensibility is a haunted one. Protagonists are haunted by memories, by ghosts and supernatural beings, by the uncanniness of the unfamiliar made familiar and the familiar made unfamiliar, and by their own selves – which are often alienated, not known to themselves, impressionable and frequently ill. However illnesses of the brain and of sanity - particularly those pathologies which conflate phantasy with reality or, worse still, elucidate reality as an arbitrary apprehension of experience and phenomena - make the crises of the Gothic protagonist more than just dark fairy tales, lamentations or nightmares from which they can escape. The incarnation of so-called hallucination as capable of effectuating action and physical transformation enacts a versimilitudious conflation which is that of the material and the perspectival, of thought as real and reality as always and already a version of thought – the sensible is material. Captain Barton's proclamation in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'The Familiar' that 'it was a reality' expresses the inherent multiplicity of reality (my italics). The haunted Gothic protagonist lives in a particular world, a world of agreement between rational people (usually men, women are constantly running off to enjoy cacodaemonic copulations with vampires, werewolves and other assorted hybrid incarnations of seductive turpitude.) This protagonist is alienated from that rational world, but not entirely within a world of delirium. Hallucination describes the presence of an unreal within the world of a real, an intrusion of a not-there into what is there, be it a feeling which manifests itself through paranoia, nostalgia, a haunting ghost, mourning or simply the idea that the protagonist himself is alienated from the world as not really there: 'The interior sense, it is true, is opened; but it has been and continues open by the action of disease.'(3)

Delirium is a complete colonisation of the real by phantasy. All becomes hallucination. Surely then if all becomes hallucination, hallucinations are reality. The memory of a former shared social real can either become the haunting ghost or a devolved mode of perception. Delirium does not refer to things in the world that are not there, or a covering of the world by a different world. Delirium is an altogether otherworldly perception of the world, or, more precisely, the acknowledgement of the world as multiple, as concurrent palimpsest, as a teeming multi-plateaued incarnation rather than a singular space which we occupy. Hallucinations are otherworlds intruding or slipping between the cracks and hollows of any one singular plane of perception. In Gothic these slips are the point of the supernatural or the horrific. They must be exorcised to reiterate the protagonist as a person within society. Baroque does something quite different with similar phenomena. Killeen emphasises that 'the fear of marginalisation – rather than marginalisation itself – [is a] central feature of the Irish Gothic tradition.'(4) Paranoia and the compulsion

to be cured of one's perspective-altering pathology show that marginalisation is not a threat but rather that inclusion is always a tentative and arbitrary phantasy. Marginalisation excludes, but the fear of marginalisation finds the protagonist teetering on that very margin, on the in-between, oscillating precariously within the crack and hollow. The protagonist is within the fold, a key idea of Baroque posited by Leibniz which will be extrapolated later in this article. In Gothic the protagonist encounters these other worlds, but rather than elements of those worlds intruding through singular symbols as hallucinations, the Baroque protagonist is folded within these worlds. These worlds are simultaneous with the real world but apprehensible at different frequencies, through different planes and via different streams of physics, and are thus folded with the real world. The question for the Baroque protagonist is not whether the hallucination as symptom can be cured, but to what extent the otherworld will be welcomed and thus entire perspective altered? The Baroque protagonist in Gothic fiction is the one that dies. There is no cure for the Gothic pathology, but the death of the Gothic protagonist is the birth of the Baroque. While the protagonist may 'die', there is rare evidence that this death is not the end. The Baroque protagonist is not haunted by a dead relative or friend, but at best haunts his own former world. Usually however, Baroque literature loses interest in the former worlds and seeks to explore these new worlds, or the stories cut off at the point of death of the protagonist because our perception from this world makes an encounter with any post-death/post-reality perception difficult at best. How can one describe the indescribable, show the entirely visible within the dark, explain form through non-Euclidian physics, or through systems where it is the in-between not the demarcated that constitutes communities of non-dividuated individuals? Baroque heroes love their symptoms, welcome their pathologies, and die only in order for their perception of what constitutes life to be reborn.

Great Gothic monsters come from alternate genealogies or, more correctly, they are non-genealogical. The vampire and werewolf are both hybrid and repeat cellularly through infection rather than reproduction. The created monster, such as Frankenstein's creature, is similarly hybrid, both alive and dead. This monster prefers the dead world but as he is already dead what he seeks is a world of dreaming. Vampires and werewolves perceive in the otherworlds and dream in this one. They awake at night because for them the real world is a phantasy, an ethereal adventure, lucid dreaming through monstrous bodies of light. Otherworldly monsters are Gothic from the perspective of a society that wishes to banish them, Baroque from the perspective of the protagonist relinquishing that society. Let's face it, most victims of these monsters are willing victims. The vampire does not repeat itself but brings the victim into a different mode of perceiving the world. The wolf is the becoming-animal of the human. Werewolves and vampires collapse the bifurcations which sustain social reality – male/female, human/animal, material/phantasmatic, repellent/attractive, monstrous/godly, devolved/evolved. Unsurprisingly the most willing victims of these monsters are frequently those who are to an extent already alienated from the normal or dominant perspectives of society – women, the solitary, the intellectual, the homosexual, the alienated, and the reclusive. All of these have, to an extent, already forsaken that reality which Baroque seductions redeem them from. Using two stories by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, 'Green Tea' and 'The Familiar' as examples of Irish Gothic stories, and reading them with the work of H.P. Lovecraft, particularly 'The Dreams in the Witch-House', this article will attempt to posit Le Fanu as, beyond a Gothic teller of tales, a great writer of the Baroque.

Baroque perspectives in all these stories come from hauntings which exceed entities. Buildings that could be seen as forerunners of the skewed angles of the skewed perspectives of the skewed mad-doctor Caligari in Robert Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) are present in all of the stories. These are buildings within this world but outside of traditional perspective. In Lovecraft's 'Dreams in the Witch-House', the protagonist Gilman lives in the town of Arkham, a town which exists on two layers, the present apprehensible and the simultaneously apocryphal:

He was in the changeless, legend-haunted city of Arkham, with its clustering gambrel roofs that sway and sag over attics [...The witch has told] of lines and curves that could be made to point out directions leading through walls of space to other spaces beyond. (5)

When 'Green Tea's' protagonist Mr Jennings

[...]breaks down quite, and beats a retreat from the vicarage, and returns to London, where, in a dark street off Piccadilly, he inhabits a very narrow house, Lady Mary says he is always perfectly well [...] Mr Jennings has a way of looking sidelong upon the carpet, as if his eye followed the movements of something there. (6)

London, like Arkham, is a mythic city, and must have been particularly so for the Gothic reader used to rolling hills and grand isolated houses. Arthur Machen matched the pagan lands of Wales, occupied by Pan and his acolytes celebrating saturnalia, with the streets of Holborn in a number of his tales. Piccadilly Circus is a point of multiple convergences from all directions. It is a place always in-between and in excess of a singular geographical point. Le Fanu's Mr Jennings and Captain Barton both die in their houses, and redemption of Lovecraft's Gilman comes with the fall of the witch house. While houses in Gothic have usually been associated with the uncanny, in Baroque they are neither familiar nor unfamiliar, but, through the contemplations and studies of the occupants, they evoke accesses to the other concurrent planes. Gilman's study of the *Necronomicon* and other grimoires teach him of 'abstract formulae on the properties of space and the linkage of dimensions known and unknown.'(7)

The most basic definition of what constitutes the Baroque is that of what, after Leibniz, Deleuze calls the fold. The great difference between the Gothic and the Baroque is that of relations. Leibniz writes: 'The reality of a corporeal substance consists in a certain individual nature; that is, not in mass, but in the power of acting and be acted upon.'(8) The Gothic protagonist exists as an entity who fears his potential and ability to be acted upon – paranoia comes from his desire to prevent such actuations and their effects. The Gothic protagonist is a form within the world who fears the world will come within them. The Gothic is alienated from and alien to, a dialectic relation which sees mass defined as form, where borders are more important than qualities. The nature of a thing is not self-authored. In the Baroque one's nature depends entirely on the forces and malleable, supple forms with which it folds, at every turn unique and unpredictable. Baroque interpretations see forms as made up of many smaller parts and being part of larger systems, always teeming as aspects rather than forms and infinitely multiple. The self is not known to the self because it is always more than a single expression and less than an individual. Baroque entities exist within what Deleuze calls a pleat of matter. Leibniz emphasises that through creating and existing

within relations or pleats all form and thus all reality is purely perspectival. Neither form nor substance can be apprehended as a totality. 'Each body has its degree of firmness and fluidity; It has its fluidity or divisibility of itself, but its firmness from the motion of bodies.'(9) This means that the plagued individuals are themselves constituted differently and as their forms are more and more effected by the otherworldly forms they are further extricated from the human world. In Baroque stories, transformation occurs when the affective bodies which constitute the form of the individuals are constructed through limits and firmness found in other structures – other incarnations of matter, via otherworldly versions of form and through other, non-Euclidian physics:

a baroque mathematical physics whose goal is curvilinearity. With Leibniz the curvature of the universe is prolonged according to three other fundamental notions; the fluidity of matter, the elasticity of bodies, and motivating spirit as a mechanism. First, clearly matter would not be extended following a twisting line. Rather it would follow a tangent. But the universe appears compressed by an active force that endows matter with a curvilinear or spinning movement, following an arc that ultimately has no tangent.'(10)

The art of Lovecraft's otherworldly entities is created with Baroque craftsmanship. The terrace upon which Gilman finds himself 'was a veined, polished stone beyond his power to identify, and the tiles were cut in bizarre-angled shapes which struck him as less asymmetrical than based on some unearthly symmetry whose laws he could not comprehend.'(11) Many of Lovecraft's otherworldly creatures and gods are based on conical or curvilinear physics. Lovecraft and Le Fanu's characters literally spiral out of control within a narrative chronocentric and linear world, a world based on single and dividuated tangents with either predictable or able to be contemplated retrospectively. These characters spiral as the multi-plateaued worlds exist within each other, compressed into a single substance of expression that is a spatial system of fluid forces and affects. Gilman, Barton and Jennings all die in an abstract way. In each case their deaths are unexplained but in Gilman and Jennings' cases explicitly material and gory – the form of their matter directly attacked as complete, opened up to create 'withins' of the body rather than a dead form. Death re-pleats and creates new pleats, symbolically evincing the within that the otherworlds have penetrated and the exit point by which the characters have folded entirely into those worlds through reorienting and re-expressing flesh through different force-form. Gilman's corpse is presented with 'virtually a tunnel through his body.'(12) Discovery of Jennings' body elicits a horrified response 'what I saw there I won't tell you. He had cut his throat with his razor. It was a frightful gash.'(13) Barton is found to have vacated his body, and near him on the bed is 'a deep indenture, as if caused by a heavy pressure, near the foot of the bed.'(14)

'Green Tea', 'The Familiar' and 'Dreams in the Witch-House' all describe certain hybrid creatures which act as the navigator gatekeepers between the two worlds. In 'Dreams' Gilman is terrified by the strange creature Brown Jenkin:

That object – no larger than a good-sized rat and quaintly called by the townspeople 'Brown Jenkin' – seemed to have been the fruit of a remarkable case of sympathetic herd-delusion, for in 1692 no less than eleven persons had testified to glimpsing it. There were recent rumours, too, with a baffling and disconcerting amount of agreement. Witnesses said it had long hair and the

shape of a rat but that its sharp-toothed, bearded face was evilly human while its paws were like tiny human hands [...] Its voice was a kind of loathsome titter, and it could speak all languages. Of all the bizarre monstrosities in Gilman's dreams, nothing filled him with greater panic and nausea than this blasphemous and diminutive hybrid. (15)

If enough people experience a sympathetic delusion how then can we constitute the reality from which this delusion departs? Is reality as perception based on aggregate verification or majority agreement? Baroque philosophy, with its emphasis on reality as perspectival rather than totalised, and things defined not through their material form but the forces of matter, breaks down the possibility of sanity bifurcated from insanity. If force is felt, reality has presented through material effectuations, whether or not these effects are caused through a clear causal relation that can be perceived from within and without or not. The hybrid monster is the symbol par excellence of any encounters between binaries as unnatural compositions. The werewolf for example is not half man-half wolf but a fold of man and wolf that creates a unique hybrid. The werewolf also creates a hybrid world, folding not simply animal and human form but animal and human kingdoms. Brown Jenkin has enough of man and animal to be disconcerting and not enough to give it an apprehensible or comprehensible form, thus its force and function are similarly unknowable. When Lovecraft states it speaks all languages he refers back to the access to these worlds via grimoires, as presumably infernal and occult languages form a large part of the lexicon. Jennings' gatekeeper being is a black monkey creature. The primate is the encounter between anthropomorphic animal and devolved human. But devolution can also refer to otherworldly evolution or nature. Stevenson's Dr Jekyll becomes ape-like when he transforms but not as a reference to regression. He is stronger and yet more diminutive and lithe. His turpitude seems more intellectual and refined than base. Jennings' monkey-familiar causes the most trauma when he speaks, but Jennings' access to meaning and perception itself has shifted to a different plane: 'The thing began to speak to me [...] Yes; speak in words and consecutive sentences, with perfect coherence and articulation; but there is a peculiarity. It is not like the tone of a human voice. It is not by my ears it reaches me - it comes like a singing through my head.'(16) To think is to invoke or access an unknowable. Knowledge comes by accessing the already present, knowable or encountered. According to Leibniz knowledge is not truth because the predicate always precedes the subject, or the predicate is the subject and so the unfolding of knowledge is causal but in the opposite direction to how we understand knowledge.(17) Truth is only navigated in a flawed manner through descriptions or definitions of material encounters and effects – retrospectively and chronologically. Truth is only found in the simultaneous and immanent, the encounter or event, through which material alterations testify. Jennings does not hear within a dialectic structure. Like Brown Jenkin, the monkey speaks in a way that comes to Jennings immanently, not as language as such – a singing or a multi-lingual tittering – but is nonetheless able to be 'heard' and understood. The monkey becomes particularly angry when Jennings says his prayers. The investment in language here is evident. The monkey speaks the most evolved of all languages, or at Le Fanu's time of writing, the most mystical, which is psychic or telepathic exchange. The demonic version of such discourse comes, we are told in Le Fanu's interpretation of Swedenborg 'when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by "correspondence," in the shape of the beast.'(18) Language is an indispensable tool for this creature, 'With wicked genii there is also a fluent speech, but harsh and grating. There is also among them a speech which is not fluent, wherein the dissent of the thoughts is perceived as something

secretly creeping along within it [...evil spirits] would speak to him, with the intention to destroy him.’(19) The simultaneity of the fluent with the influent doubles metonymic, and confuses metaphoric, linearity. The languages clearly avoid emphasising which is which and, as they are simultaneous, it is impossible to extricate them. The languages may be incommensurable but they are nonetheless ‘heard’ and understood. Jennings’ alternate mode of perception and the conflation of speech with song further pleats the elements of his linguistic relationship with the monkey, proliferating and making conical the linearity of dialectic communicative speech. ‘The formal element of the fold is not attained. This formal element appears only with infinity, in what is incommensurable and in excess, when the variable curve supersedes the circle.’(20) The fact that Jennings can hear the monkey already tells of his irreducible pleating with the creature, his openness to its force and the folding of worlds which occurs through his relation with the monkey.

Captain Barton’s elusive small man in the fur hat signs his notes ‘The Watcher’. Like Jennings and the Witch of the Witch-House, Barton has a familiar. His familiar is not a hybrid animal man, however, it is an uncanniness - as the stranger is both shadowing him as a doppelganger and facing him as an antagonist. ‘You may as well think, Captain Barton, to escape from your own shadow as from me; do what you may, I will see you as often as I please, and you shall see me; for I do not want to hide myself, as you fancy.’(21) Barton finds in this familiar a fellow citizen of a world with different gods. He exclaims ‘there is a God – a dreadful God’.(22) The majority of Lovecraft’s stories revolve around the otherworlds occupied by his pantheon of the elder gods and ancient ones which exist in other universes folded with ours and which are, sometimes, able to be perceived through slips in space. Barton does emphasise what he felt from the stranger was unlike anything human. Which makes Barton himself something beyond a human thing, as the familiar is familiar more as him than to him. In Lovecraft’s ‘The Outsider’ the protagonist announces ‘I dreamed and waited, though I knew not what I waited for.’ We discover that this protagonist is himself the outsider, the elder god who observes the world of humans in the half life of mirrors and window panes. (23) In ‘The Familiar’ the Watcher acts as the familiar who occupies the fold and reorients its inflections. The Watcher is not to be feared as he emphasises, but as Barton inflects within the new world or parallel vortex, the Watcher becomes more emphatically perceptible and his acts and powers more violently felt. At his first experience of the Watcher Barton sees nothing – ‘no form or kind was visible there’ (24) – but later laments his new sight: ‘if death could come without the dreadful sight I am doomed to see, I would gladly close my eyes this moment upon the world.’(25) We see here Barton’s is not the ordinary world occupied by ghosts but a world perceived entirely differently, just as so many of Lovecraft’s protagonists encounter madness not because of what they see but how they see. The ultimate deity of Lovecraft’s pantheon, the squid-dragon Cthulhu is ‘a darkness’ with ‘a positive quality’, ‘it moved anomalously in a diagonal way, so that all the rules of matter and perspective seemed upset’.(26) In Lovecraft’s ‘The Shadow Out of Time’, Peasley’s ‘disturbances were not visual at all, but concerned [...] more abstract matters.’ (27) Barton’s most telling revelation comes when he finally expresses his perception of the horror:

“The fact is” said Barton, “whatever may be my uncertainty as to the authenticity of what we are taught to call revelation, of one fact I am deeply and horribly convinced, that there does exist beyond this a spiritual world – a system whose workings are generally in mercy hidden from us -



a system which may be, and which is sometimes, partially and terribly revealed. I am sure - I know.”(28)

Revelation is both the point of apprehension and biblically of course the end of the world, the time of punishment. Barton is reminded frequently that his inflection within this new world comes as a punishment for an abstract or unclear indiscretion, which may or may not be breaking the heart of a young girl. Barton’s point of sight is not the revelation that brings to light something that pre-exists in the dark. This sight encounters the beyond, which is also the within, whose workings are non-Euclidean and only ever partially revealed because only ever able to be partially experienced and understood by current and former occupants of the ordinary world. Leibniz writes ‘for as there is an infinity of possible worlds, there is also an infinity of laws, some proper to one world, others to another; and each possible individual of any world includes in its notion the laws of its world.’(29) As the Baroque is a non-dialectic structure perception is never total, including perception of the self. The self’s own dark places encounter the otherworld without the self being able to observe them but which nonetheless expresses affects upon this other world. It is Barton’s effectuation of powers upon the world through the gate (which is the heart of his forsaken paramour) that proves this. Barton’s perception, like the perception of so many of Lovecraft’s protagonists, is a dream perception. It perceives in twilight, half awake, half asleep, half phantasy, half reality, half memory, and half nostalgia for a world that is not lost but present and inaccessible. Of course this is a nightmare form of dream perception. It is lucid dreaming, not a series of vague simulacra experienced in a paralysed body but the becoming-body-of-light. Lovecraft’s protagonists find their reality and identity through their ‘dream quests’ and dreams in the witch house. As cited in the prefix above, Barton observes: ‘It was not a dream [...] I was in a different state - I felt differently and strangely; and yet it was all as real, as clear and vivid, as what I now see and hear – it was a reality.’(30) Barton is inherently within his otherworld, and increasingly can only be perceived through that world. The laws of the world are within him as he is within them, and similarly the modes of possible apprehension are within him as he them. Thus when Barton is ‘found’ in his bed with the mark of the former, or possibly, current presence of an invisible entity, we are not sure if he has ‘died’ or is dead but dreaming, as is the Cthulhu of *The Necronomicon*. Lovecraft precludes ‘*The Outsider*’ with a quote from Keats’ ‘*Eve of St. Agnes*’:

That night the Baron dreamed of many a wo;  
And all his warrior guests, with shade and form  
Of witch, and demon and large coffin-worm,  
Were long be-nightmared (31)

In an extraordinary, but nonetheless fascinating, coincidence Le Fanu preceded Lovecraft’s daemonic pantheon with his story in reference to the figure of *The Watcher*. Rather than being a hybrid, *The Watcher* occupies hybrid space, the unrevealable revealed, the inapprehensible apprehended, the imperceptible perceived. To see and to perceive in a way that allows observation and description which can then be agreed upon and validated by other subjects comes only from irreducible extrication from that object. The dream state is a threshold which is not selected from either dreaming or waking but is everything to itself as ambiguous and ambivalent. The dream state is the pleat of the Baroque fold, like a

three-dimensional möebian band. The Necronomicon is an apocryphal grimoire often consulted in the stories of Lovecraft and is generally conceded to be a text written by Lovecraft himself and circulated as authentic. A grimoire is a book used to invoke demons, itself a form of gate or dream state, and involving rituals and sermons which, when spoken aloud, activate the inflecting of the human and daemonic worlds. Again the importance of speech is emphasised. In The Necronomicon the watcher is the entity which must be called up to act as intermediary between the human and the elder god or demon. The watcher both stands at the gate and is the gate: 'The Watcher comes from a Race different from that of Men and yet different from that of the Gods.' (32) According to The Necronomicon the watcher may appear sometimes as an animal and sometimes as a man. Le Fanu's watcher/familiars span both animal and man in his stories also, and Lovecraft's 'Dreams' shows us both at once. The rituals of The Necronomicon require passing through seven gates. Each gate is made up of the sigils, or seals, of the various deities and inhabitants of the otherworlds. Their names are incanted in a foreign language indescribable with human voices and thus their seals are their names. The watcher of 'The Familiar' expresses dread warnings to Barton (but in a friendly way), with his first note, not dissimilar to Abdul Alhazred's warnings to the reader of The Necronomicon. Barton seeks a reason or even a way to read this note and source its author:

Captain Barton read and reread this strange effusion; in every light and in every direction he turned it over and over; he examined the paper on which it was written, and scrutinized the handwriting once more. Defeated here, he turned to the seal; it was nothing but a patch of wax, upon which the accidental impression of a thumb was imperfectly visible. There was not the slightest mark, or clue of any kind, to lead him to even a guess of its possible origin. The writer's object seemed a friendly one, and yet he subscribed himself as one whom he had "reason to dread". Although the letter, its author, and its real purpose were to him an inexplicable puzzle, and one, moreover, unpleasantly suggestive, in his mind, of other associations connected with his last night's adventures. (33)

The Necronomicon's watchers are necessary friends to the human who performs invocations, but these watchers will nonetheless devour the human if the human departs the sacred realm. As an artifact, the strange letter with foreign paper and a signifying seal is reminiscent of the sculptures on the staircase of the witch-house which Gilman finds on the balustrade. Both Barton and Gilman don't know the meaning of what they are seeing because they don't know how to see or perceive them.

Le Fanu's 'The Familiar' and 'Green Tea' end enigmatically. Both stories are observed from an outsider's point of view where the recounting of experiences from the harangued protagonists becomes increasingly myopic. The final scenes of each seem particularly unresolved. Both end with the cadavers' of men, but men in their bedrooms – dead but dreaming – yet the corpses do not seem to herald the death of the entities or spirits which have occupied these men. The confusion of all witnesses, including the reader, to both the events and the death scenes is testament to the fact that it is not the story which is incomprehensible but the mode of comprehension that prevents encounters with the story. We get the feeling these men have escaped rather than died and we are left in a teeming world, but with an empty perception while they have achieved a higher, if nonetheless terrifying, state of awareness. If nothing else, it is this point of escape through dimensions which emphasizes the world of Le Fanu as Baroque. There is

no return of equilibrium - the summaries and diagnostic inferences about the cases by the medical author seem deeply unsatisfying - and no happy or sad ending as we seem to be minor points in an elaborate narrative of which the tales represent only a fragment. If we do not inflect ourselves, including our logic and our compulsion for a punctuated and resolved narrative, with Le Fanu's world we cannot encounter his writing. Gothic is concerned with structure, Baroque with substance that leaks without and proliferates within frames. 'The gothic underlines the elements of construction, closed frames, airy filling; Baroque underlines matter; either the frame disappears totally, or else it remains, but, despite the rough sketch, it does not suffice to contain the mass that spills over and passes above.' (34) Le Fanu's tales read like dream-work, they are lucid but only in an in-between state, to the extent we open ourselves up and fold with the perceptibilities and imperceptibilities of the stories. As the concurrent simultaneous spatialising of narrative is reflected in the stories, so too the Baroque becomes the mechanics of all possibilities in the moment, interacting within and through each other. 'Beyond time there is a sensation as of awaking from the utmost impossibility of existence from the mad dreams we call reality; the stupidities we call will.' (35)

1. H.P. Lovecraft, 'Dreams in the Witchhouse', *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels of Terror* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p.305.
2. J. Sheridan Le Fanu, 'The Familiar', *In a Glass Darkly* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p.62.
3. Le Fanu, 'Familiar,' p.33.
4. Killeen, Jarlath, 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction,' *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1: October 2006.
5. Lovecraft, 'Dreams', pp. 305-306.
6. Le Fanu, 'Green Tea', *In a Glass Darkly* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics), p. 5.
7. Lovecraft, 'Dreams', p.306.
8. Leibniz, W.G., *Philosophical Writings* (London: Everyman, 1995), p 81.
9. Leibniz, *Writings*, p.86.
10. Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Athlone, 2001), p.4.
11. Lovecraft, 'Dreams', p.323.
12. Lovecraft, 'Dreams', p.345.
13. Le Fanu, 'Green Tea', p.29.
14. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', p.67.
15. Lovecraft, 'Dreams' p.310.
16. Le Fanu, 'Green Tea', p.25.
17. Leibniz, *Writings*, p.75.
18. Le Fanu, 'Green Tea', p.12.
19. Le Fanu, 'Green Tea', pp.11-12.
20. Deleuze, *Fold*, p. 38.

21. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', p.40.
22. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', p.49.
23. Lovecraft, 'The Outsider', *The Haunter of the Dark and Other Tales* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p.12.
24. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', P. 37.
25. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', P. 62.
26. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu', *The Haunter of the Dark and Other Tales* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 95.
27. Lovecraft, 'The Shadow Out of Time', *The Haunter of the Dark and Other Tales* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 477.
28. Le Fanu. 'Familiar', p. 49.
29. Leibniz, *Writings*, pp. 53-54.
30. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', p. 40.
31. Lovecraft, 'Outsider', p. 11.
32. The Mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, *The Necronomicon* (New York: Harper Collins, 1977), pp. 69-70.
33. Le Fanu, 'Familiar', p. 39.
34. Wolfflin, Heinrich, 'Renaissance and Baroque,' cited in Deleuze, *Fold*, p. 123.
35. Austin Osman Spare, *The Focus of Life*: [brainwashed.com/nww/words/focus.html](http://brainwashed.com/nww/words/focus.html) accessed on 2 March 2007.

## **The Dreaming and The Dreamt A Lexicon of Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves***

**James Rose**

Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) is a film immersed in the symbolism of fairy tale narratives and imagery. Based upon three short stories from Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, the film functions as a revisionist text which blends Gothic motifs with Carter's own interpretations of classic fairy tales. For Carter, the original version(s) of Little Red Riding Hood operated as a structured agenda to warn young girls of the dangers of sexual maturity and implicates for them a passive family and societal role. By rewriting this and other traditional tales from a feminist perspective, both subtle and blatant inversions took place within Carter's stories: her versions of Little Red Riding Hood positively attack the wolf with a combination of hunting knife and sexual awareness, slaking his desire to eat her with sex. Jordan wrote the script for *The Company of Wolves* in collaboration with Carter, and as such, the film creates a symbolic world where the transition from child to adult - from girl to woman - is both a beautiful and dangerous moment, one to be both celebrated and feared. So layered and intertwined are these symbols that the most productive way to critically analyse them is to format them into a lexicon, giving definition to the representations and allowing for meaning to build up and repeat, as they do in the film, in between the layers of narrative and the viewer's mind.

Because there are two representations of the same character within the film, the text defines each persona through the terms the Dreaming Rosaleen and the Dreamt Rosaleen: the Dreaming Rosaleen is the protagonist who exists in the film's representation of the real world, whilst the Dreamt Rosaleen is her fictional, dreamt alter ego.

For those readers who are unfamiliar with the film, a full synopsis has been provided in an Appendix at the end of this text.

### **Dreams and Dreaming**

The film functions upon the narrative device of the dream: having argued with her older sister and locked herself in her bedroom, Rosaleen falls asleep and dreams the narrative, one in which she positions herself as a seemingly innocent Little Red Riding Hood figure. For Carole Zucker the context of placing the narrative within a dream allows for Rosaleen to see

herself as strong, fearless, powerful, and special; dreaming a dream that enables her to have control over the story and the fictive world in which it takes place. It is manifestly an anxiety dream of a young woman searching, in psychoanalytic terms, for the integrity of her psyche, questing for identity, independence and sexual fulfilment (1).

## Duality

The dream state of the narrative allows for the Gothic trait of duality to be made manifest. Aspects of the Dreaming Rosaleen's life – her mother, father, sister, family car and dog as well as the wealth of toys scattered about her bedroom – are symbolically or emotionally incorporated into the life of the Dreamt Rosaleen. In the establishing shots of the Dreaming Rosaleen's room, the camera steadily moves over her toys and then lingers on her dressing table before moving onto the sleeping girl. By the door is a doll of the dreamt Granny, her stuffed arms folded around a copy of Potter's *The Tale of Miss Tiggy Winkle*. Shelves are littered with books, and a doll dressed as a sailor sits on the window sill. A teddy bear rests against the wall. A doll with her hair tied back plays the mouth pipes. On the dressing table, amongst the tissues and hairbrushes are a pocket watch and a porcelain replica of a white Rolls Royce. All of these objects will, at some point, be incorporated into the dream. Some, such as the sailor and the teddy bear, will take on symbolic value whilst the others function as details within the narrative: the Rolls Royce appears in one of Granny's stories whilst the dolls mouth pipes erupt out of the earth of the forest to form part of its aberrant landscape.

See also Toys

Perhaps the most significant of the bedroom's content are those objects that rest upon the Dreaming Rosaleen's bed. By her hand lies a copy of *My Weekly*, the cover story being *The Shattered Dream*. Next to this is a hand mirror, its surface reflecting the darkening sky. This mirror will reappear throughout the narrative, its metaphoric value varying upon the context within which it is seen. Although the magazine doesn't manifest itself in the dream, its significance is obvious; it is the dream narrative itself, for the Dreaming Rosaleen will dream a shattered dream and, like the girl depicted on the gaudy cover of the magazine, she will, by the end, raise her bare arms to her face and scream.

See also Mirror

Like the duality that runs through most Gothic narratives, some of the doubles that operate within *The Company of Wolves* function as an inversion or opposite. The most obvious example of this element is the oppositional duality that exists between the Dreaming Rosaleen and the Dreamt Rosaleen. The sleeper is rich and spoilt, locking herself in her bedroom in a tantrum because, once again, she can not have things her own way. Conversely, the Dreamt Rosaleen is her creator's opposite – poor but strong, willing to explore the world and, at times, submit to its needs. Given this, the Dreamt Rosaleen is aware and steadily gaining confidence in her world, whereas the other simply hides herself from it.

Perhaps the most obvious opposite are the werewolves: regardless as to whether they are taken literally as animals hiding within the skins of men or as symbolic manifestations of masculine desire, dominance and power, the werewolves are visual opposites that, for *The Company of Wolves* at least, represent patriarchal order.

Later in the film, the Dreamt Rosaleen is given a red shawl which serves two symbolic purposes. It is primarily to keep Rosaleen warm but it also functions to conceal her developing body from the gaze of the village boys. Rosaleen makes her understanding of this duality clear in her dialogue. Upon receiving the shawl from Granny she says “soft as snow... red as blood”. With this function made apparent by Rosaleen it is possible that the shawl itself is symbolic of the adolescent girl. She is on the cusp of puberty, a girl who is pure; a virgin who is experiencing, for the first time, sexual attraction, desires and fantasies. The shawl’s colour is emotive of desire and of passion and, as will be identified later, menstrual blood.

Given the Dreamt Rosaleen’s narrative end, it is possible that the shawl’s symbolic value, like other symbols within the film, is in flux: in one context it may represent those concepts previously described whilst in others it may imply different, oppositional ideas. In her final confrontation with the werewolf Huntsman, she is encouraged to take off her shawl. Having taken off his own shirt and allowed her to see his muscular body, The Huntsman suggests that she too undress and throw the shawl into the fire as she “won’t need it again”. With only a moment’s hesitation, Rosaleen removes her shawl and throws it onto the fire. The removal of the shawl, the protective layer that it offers, makes Rosaleen’s clothed body available to The Huntsman’s gaze but also functions as a means of removing the patina of childhood from her. If the shawl in this scene represents childhood, then its destruction becomes for both Rosaleen and The Huntsman a symbolic act, marking the transition from girl to woman.

See also Red Cloak

### Eggs

Wrapped in her red shawl, Rosaleen climbs to the top of a tree in an effort to hide from one of the village boys. Once there she finds a bird’s nest. Resting within the woven structure are a circular hand mirror, lipstick and four eggs. She smiles and picks up the mirror and lipstick. As she applies the make up to her lips the eggs crack open, one by one. Inside each egg lies a small statuette of a baby.

The symbolic value of these eggs obviously lies within the notion of birth and so makes the nest in which the eggs rest a surrogate womb. As Rosaleen watches the eggs hatch an analogy is made between what she is witnessing and the bodily changes she is undergoing. The eggs can be seen to represent Rosaleen’s awareness for her capacity to give birth to not only to children but also to her adult self. Combined, these symbolic values imply the onset of her sexual awakening. These values are consolidated by the presence of the mirror and lipstick, both connotations of the adult that Rosaleen will eventually grow into.

See also Lipstick and Mirror

### Forest

Zucker comments upon the function of the forest in relation to Rosaleen’s Granny:

Before been devoured by the wolf she says, ‘Get back to Hell, where you came from’ to which the wolf/man replies ‘I don’t come from Hell, I come from the forest.’ But for Granny they are



one and the same: the primeval, the unknown, the fearful. Granny constantly cautions Rosaleen that when walking in the woods she must never ‘stray from the path’, a common interdiction in folk tales. The path signals the safety in obedience and virtue, whereas the forest signifies the dangers of defiance, and most especially of wantonness and sexual desire. (2)

See also Nature and Religion

#### Full Moon

An obvious symbol of transformation given the film’s antagonists are predominantly werewolves. For those creatures, the Full Moon signifies the period of transition from man to beast and, for the Dreamt Rosaleen it too signifies transformation: when trapped in Granny’s cottage with The Huntsman, she looks out of the small window and sees the full moon. As she stares at it, the moon’s bright white surface changes into a deep shade of red. Realising this moment’s symbolic value – that it is time to transform from a girl into a young woman – Rosaleen accepts her situation and, matching The Huntsman’s aggression and innuendo with her own, transforms into a wolf.

In addition to this, the full moon is part of the lunar cycle and so, given Rosaleen’s narrative trajectory, a parallel can be made between this cycle and the menstrual cycle which the film implies Rosaleen is beginning.

#### Granny

By the narrative’s end it becomes apparent that Granny never dared to stray from the path. Submitting to masculine authority and control has left her alone, with her only comforts being the log fire, her constant knitting and the stories she tells to Rosaleen. This persistent belief in the ‘correct’ path will be her final undoing.

See also Forest, Religion and Stories

#### Independence

It is clear from the start that the Dreamt Rosaleen is a strong and independent girl. This status inverts the audience’s expectations of a character which they come to associate with Little Red Riding Hood; the girl of that narrative is, for a majority of its interpretations, passive and reliant upon a masculine presence to save her from the wolf. Carter and Jordan’s interpretation is clearly the opposite: at Alice’s funeral Granny says “Your only sister. All alone in the woods and nobody there to save her. Poor little lamb” to which Rosaleen replies “Why couldn’t she save herself?” This is a Little Red Riding Hood who, by the end of the film will have brandished a knife, knowingly flirted with a werewolf and used a shot gun to defend herself. As Zucker describes her, she is “tough, independent, and unsentimental” (3).

As the narrative develops Rosaleen gradually becomes aware of her impending maturity and steadily gains confidence in the world around her. Her needs (which consequentially become her desires) are simple enough and her maturing temperament encourages her to obtain those things on her own terms with little help. This independent strength seemingly comes from the constraints of control. The path

Granny tells her to follow, the one that is safe and righteous, becomes for Rosaleen a constriction of ever tightening bonds. Her desires, like the forest which represents them, are clearly not going to be obtained by following the path and so, independently, she strays.

### Kissing

The Dreamt Rosaleen kisses six times throughout the duration of her narrative. Of the six, only one – upon her mother’s cheek - is given through choice and with real love. The rest are given because they are requested by their recipient and, as a consequence, lack any sense of affection. These kisses are quick and rarely upon the lips and so lose any of their potential sexual quality. Her first kiss is upon the cheek of her dead sister (“Kiss your sister goodbye”), the second upon Granny’s cheek. The third kiss is given with love to her mother and as such represents the growing and strengthening bond between them. Her fourth kiss is given to the Village Boy when out walking with him in the forest. Although this kiss has some sexual charge (and so demonstrates the first real instance of Rosaleen signifying a willingness to stray from Granny’s path) it loses this quality because it is given in response to a childish dare. By kissing the boy she proves to both the boy and herself that she is capable of sexual contact. The boy asks her for another kiss but Rosaleen runs away from him saying “you’ll have to catch me first”. Rosaleen of course eludes him and so avoids having to kiss the boy again.

The fifth and sixth kisses are given to The Huntsman, again under some duress. The fifth kiss has some sexual charge but this is more so because she is kissing a man as opposed to a boy. This quality is enhanced by the flirtatious nature and innuendo laden conversation prior to the kiss (with The Huntsman offering to show Rosaleen “the most remarkable object in [his] pocket”) and so enhances the sexual nature of the contact. The sixth kiss is given in Granny’s cottage but it lacks any emotive overtones for it is merely what The Huntsman has ‘won’ from the bet he made with Rosaleen.

### Lipstick

When aroused, blood rushes to the lips so making them a deeper shade of red. In visually symbolic terms, red lipstick is meant to imitate that bodily reaction and so signifies passion, sexual attraction and arousal. Within the context of *The Company of Wolves*, the red lipstick Rosaleen applies serves a dual purpose: on a surface level the application of the make up is a means of pretending to be adult, of mimicking her mother and elder sister. When looking in the mirror Rosaleen is allowed the opportunity to see that fictional representation of one self engaged in adult activity. Given the colour value of the lipstick, the make-up can also be interpreted as blood and the awakening of sexuality. This is made apparent in the scenes involving the Dreamt Rosaleen climbing the tree to find a mirror, red lipstick and four eggs. Having allowed the viewer to witness Rosaleen applying the make up to her lips, Jordan cuts from a close up of her face to a close up of a panting wolf, its snout smeared in the blood of a fresh kill. The symbolic connections are evident, once again reinforcing the dangers of attraction and adulthood and, consequently, the death of childhood.

See also Mirror and Red

### Marriage

In the realities of the Dreaming Rosaleen and the Dreamt Rosaleen, marriage is both happy and harmonious with the respective parents seemingly functioning in a relationship of equality. The Dreamt Rosaleen's parents fulfil stereotyped roles: the mother as housewife and the father as protector/hunter. Although these roles may at times agitate the overall feminist quality of the narrative, the existing family structure is positive and supportive of Rosaleen, particularly the father who encourages her to involve herself with the village boys and, perhaps covertly, encouraging her to stray just a little off Granny's path.

The two other marriages depicted within the film are unsettled and corrupted. In Granny's story the wife is punished not just by the return of her first husband but also by her second husband, who having decapitated the werewolf within her first husband, turns and beats her. In Rosaleen's story the marriage is between an older man and younger woman. In the brief scene she affords the young bride, she looks terrified of all that is happening around her. As the newly weds cut the cake, the husband whispers a sexual promise which appears to frighten the young bride even more. As disturbing as this wedding appears to be, its façade of happiness is disrupted by the arrival of a pregnant woman who accuses the groom of being the father of her unborn child. Although in the world of the Dreamt Rosaleen marriage is a safe and ordered construct, fictional marriages are rife with anxieties, secrets and latent sexual threat. So, like Granny's other narratives, these stories function as moralistic tales, further warnings to the young Rosaleen of the terrors of men.

### Men

Initially the Dreamt Rosaleen seems to demonstrate a subordinate nature to the males in her village but as the narrative progresses and her sense of self strengthens her desire to be treated as an equal manifests itself. When Granny recounts the story of the marriage of the Travelling Man, Rosaleen's response is not one of horror but "I'd never let a man strike me". It is the inability of the story's female protagonist to defend herself that shocks her, not the werewolf who attacks her. This comment echoes Rosaleen's earlier comment about the death of her sister. Granny says that there was no one there to protect her in the forest (a comment that in itself reinforces the fairy tale subordination of females) to which Rosaleen responds "Why couldn't she save herself?" This answer works itself into Rosaleen's self confidence to the point where she herself must stand by that dictum. And, in the end, she does. When confronted with the transformed Huntsman she doesn't scream or allow herself to be eaten. Instead she becomes his equal by transforming herself into a she wolf.

### Mirror

Rosaleen is seen with two hand mirrors during the film. The first rests on the Dreaming Rosaleen's pillow and the other is found in a bird's nest by the Dreamt Rosaleen. Both function in relation to make-up, in particular lipstick. The Dreaming Rosaleen has, prior to the start of the film, applied her sister's lipstick to herself and has, one assumes, looked in the mirror whilst doing this. This act is repeated again when Rosaleen finds the mirror and lipstick in the birds nest. She applies the make-up and looks at herself, smiling as she turns her head back and forth to admire the lipstick's transformative qualities. By applying the make up Rosaleen temporarily 'becomes' adult and the mirror's reflective qualities allow her to see herself as an adult. As such, the mirror provides another instance of duality or doubling, a fictional representation of the future Rosaleen: mature, attractive, seductive, calm and powerful.

See also Eggs

### Mothers

Of the three dreamt mothers in the film, two are assertive and transgress their patriarchally defined roles. The Dreamt Rosaleen's mother is presented as a strong female, a woman who has gained equal authority and respect within her marriage. She is also a woman who has rejected the mythical warnings of her own mother and so represents a product of what can happen when one does stray from the path. Given this, the Dreamt Rosaleen's mother represents the modern condition for she has taken life on her terms and as a consequence is in a partnership of equality and responsibility. If this is accepted, then Granny – as a mother - clearly becomes a representation of the past, as a symbol that is bound up in the old orders and hierarchy of relationships. By implication this then implies that the Dreamt Rosaleen will, upon her final transformation into a wolf / woman come to represent the modern and, possibly, the future.

See also Religion

The second assertive mother is the protagonist of a story the Dreamt Rosaleen recounts to her own mother. Here the mother is poor and pregnant, with the rich father having left her to marry an equally rich (and much younger) woman. During the wedding reception, the mother arrives and curses the wedding party, transforming them into a pack of salivating wolves. If this were not punishment enough, she commands the wolves to serenade her child to sleep each night. Rosaleen's mother questions what pleasure can be gained from making the wolves howl, to which Rosaleen replies "from the power she had". As will be seen later, this story functions as an expression of Rosaleen's developing desire for independence and individual power; both desires which will separate her from the patriarchal control of the village and an implied society.

See also Stories

### Nature

Throughout the narrative, Nature is invested with both symbolic potential and power. The cycles of the moon, the mushrooms and trees, the presence of the wolves in the forest and their concealment within men, all suggest Nature as a metaphor, a cyclical concordance for the inevitable transformation of the Dreaming Rosaleen.

The werewolves themselves may form a further part of this interpretation as their hybrid status is the combination of man and Nature, with their interchangeability structured around the natural lunar cycle. It is ironic for them to be considered natural for they are, for the most part, considered to be unnatural - the cursed creations of superstition. Yet the wolf itself is the epitome of the wilderness; that untouched space of nature.

### Path

The clearly defined path that winds through the forest is mirrored in Granny's stories. Staying on that path will ensure safety through the woods and, symbolically, through life. The stories Granny tells are all really warnings to Rosaleen, veiled threats bound up in simple superstitious narratives, all which rest upon departing from that route of safety. Stepping off the path will lead to being seduced by the wolf's golden eyes, to be mesmerised whilst been attacked and eaten. And to be eaten in this narrative is to have sex. So it is, in Granny's dulling eyes at least; better to stay on that well trodden route.

Predictably Rosaleen, with her increasingly inquisitive thoughts and questions, sees the path not as a route of security but one of restriction. The forest on either side seems to her to be a far more fascinating and seductive place to be.

### Phallus

The forest Rosaleen dreams and in which her dream identity lives, is a construction of phallic symbols. Enlarged and bloated mushrooms grow out of patches of dense ferns and damp moss; thick cobwebs stretch across the branches of the giant, thick trunked redwoods or hang from branches like veils of mist. These symbols are obvious enough and simultaneously provide the film with an appropriate fairy tale locale as well as reinforcing the clear sexual overtones the forest implies.

### Red

As a single colour within the film, red continually appears against a backdrop of purity in an effort to visually amplify both its visceral qualities and its symbolic value. The colour is given consistent form in the spilling of blood, first in the decapitation of the Travelling Man and then later when The Huntsman drinks the blood of a pheasant. On both of these occasions, the blood soils a background of pure white – the severed head falls into a pail of milk while the pheasant's blood drips down from The Huntsman's fingers onto the unspoiled snow. The vivid red blood against the symbolic purity of the milk and snow implies the onset of the Dreamt Rosaleen's menstrual cycle, with the two colours reaching further union when the Dreamt Rosaleen recounts her second story to the transformed Huntsman. As she tells her story an image of a white rose appears, coming into bloom. As the petals slowly open, the rose 'bleeds' and steadily changes from a white bud into a red rose in full bloom. The symbolic nature of this image is obvious, particularly as the Dreamt Rosaleen's dialogue forms a voice-over to the image: "and the wound did heal for she was just a girl after all who had strayed from the path".

The most blatant of all the film's symbols, the Dreamt Rosaleen's red cloak clearly marks her out as an interpretation of Little Red Riding Hood. The assigning nature of the cloak brings with it the connotations of that narrative, lending to the Dreamt Rosaleen traits such as vanity and sin. For the Dreamt Rosaleen the cloak carries a more physically symbolic weight, its colour clearly aligning the garment with blood. As Rosaleen says when Granny gives it to her, it is as "soft as snow... red as blood" again making the parallel of colour between the purity of snow and the spoiling nature of blood. Here the blood is menstrual and it is of no coincidence that the cloak is given to Rosaleen over her dead sister's grave: the onset of the menstrual cycle marks the transition from girl to woman and so, given the fairy tale context of the narrative, is another signifier of the death of the child and of innocence.

By the narrative's conclusion, the symbolic value of the red shawl makes explicit Rosaleen's final transformation. Just as the wolves have shed their human skin to reveal their true selves, Rosaleen is encouraged to reveal herself by shedding her shawl. Trapped inside Granny's cottage with The Huntsman, he tells her to take off her shawl and throw it into the fire. By doing so Rosaleen destroys the physical protection the shawl offered and as a result reveals her physical self - her clothed pubescent body - to the gaze of the Hunts

## Religion

You can hurl your Bible at him and your apron after, granny, you thought that was a sure prophylactic against these infernal vermin... now call on Christ and his mother and all the angels in heaven to protect you but it won't do you any good. (4)

Although the villagers are seen to regularly attend church and hold a firm belief in God, it would seem that their daily lives are governed more by superstition than the instructions provided by the Bible. This is most apparently embodied in Granny who carries her Bible with her yet spins tales of immense superstition. On occasion these stories indicate a distrust of the clergy, particularly when she says "They say the priest's bastards often turn into wolves as they grow older". As a consequence of this duality of belief, Granny's dialogue and scenes successfully integrate folklore with religious belief, making both interchangeable and as powerful as each other.

But for all her belief in the power of superstition, it is her faith in God that Granny relies upon when she finally encounters a werewolf: as The Huntsman enters her cottage she recognises the signs of the werewolf and, holding up her Bible, says "God save us. Get ye back to Hell from which ye came". The Huntsman smiles and softly replies "I come not from Hell. I come from the forest". He snatches away Granny's Bible and, with ease, decapitates her. Within the context of this scene, Hell can be interpreted from The Huntsman's perspective as a fictional space, for the forest is, as Granny knows, a very real and tangible space. Perhaps, if this is true and for Granny at least, Hell is definitely on earth and it is right outside her front door.

Of all the religious symbols present within the film, the most prominent and most powerful is the Dreamt Rosaleen's silver crucifix. Taken from her sister's corpse and placed around her neck by her mother, the cross remains with her throughout the film. At times it is a source of comfort, with Rosaleen holding it tight when she is afraid or in the presence of what she perceives to be a supernatural event. The power of the cross will protect her, not Granny's superstitious charms and so aligns the Dreamt Rosaleen with the traditional structures and beliefs of religion as opposed to Folklore. Although this and the described instances have some value within the overall contextualisation of the film, it is the narrative's final scenes that place most emphasis upon Rosaleen's cross: Rosaleen's mother cautiously enters Granny's cottage to find a wolf sitting by the fire. Her husband enters and goes to shoot the animal. As he pulls the trigger, Rosaleen's mother knocks the gun out of the way. She looks down at the animal and gestures to the silver cross that hangs around the wolf's neck. It is a moment of dual recognition: the cross becomes a signifier for Rosaleen, functioning as her identifying object. Although her virtue may no longer be intact, her

morals - her personal code for living - is and so marks her implied intercourse with The Huntsman as one of accepting her maturity and an act of mutual agreement.

This moment of recognition is also one of personal reflection for her mother. By recognising Rosaleen in the wolf she is also recognising the wolf in herself: "If there is a beast in man it has met its match in woman".

An additional crucifix appears in the film when the Dreamt Rosaleen's father goes out with the other villagers to hunt down a wolf. As he takes up his gun, his wife offers him her own silver crucifix. Instead of taking the symbol, he pushes it away with the barrel of his gun saying "This is all those beasts understand. Kill them before they kill you". In the tangible world, for her farther at least, there is no value in religious symbols or superstitious ritual, yet this is typically inverted by Carter for he returns from the hunt in shock, unable to perceive the mythical event that has taken place before him: he stumbles back into the cottage and throws a bloodied bundle of rags onto the kitchen table. With caution, he peels back the layers exclaiming that it was a forepaw when he cut it from the wolf's corpse. Predictably, once the rags are fully removed, the paw is now a human hand, a wedding ring upon its finger. Once the hand has been seen by his family, to reassure himself that he is actually seeing what he thinks he is seeing, he relies upon superstition to 'undo' its symbolic power and throws it onto the fire.

#### Sisters

The initial part of the Dreaming Rosaleen's dream fulfils a simple revenge fantasy. In the waking world Rosaleen's sister, Alice, stands outside the locked bedroom door repeatedly whispering "Pest! Pest! Pest!" As Rosaleen slips into her dream the woodland outside of their country house becomes a dense forest shrouded in fog. Barefoot, her sister runs along its leaf strewn path. Although she attempts to stay on this path in an effort to reach some safe haven, she is forced off it by grotesquely enlarged versions of Rosaleen's toys. As she stumbles through the undergrowth she comes upon a pack of wolves that chase her and eventually corner her in the exposed roots of an equally enlarged tree. As they descend upon her she screams and screams, with Jordan cutting back to the Dreaming Rosaleen's grinning face just as the wolves consume her.

Within the symbolic index of the film, and given Granny's reason for Alice's death ("She strayed off the path"), this dream takes on a perverse edge; if the wolves represent sexual desire than a pack of wolves descending upon a single female possibly implies a violent gang rape. It is a brutal start to the Dreamt Rosaleen's narrative and in some ways acts as a 'bookend', for if the film begins with a physical death through sexual interaction then so the dream ends with the symbolic death of childhood and innocence through sexual interaction.

#### Stories

Just as Rosaleen dreams the narrative, so the dream punctuates itself with further fictions. Predominately recounted by Rosaleen's Granny, these tales are extensions of the central narrative, expanding upon, revising or reinterpreting the events of Little Red Riding Hood. As such, each story acts as a further cautionary tale for Rosaleen, prescribing to her an orthodox path to follow and one that will possibly

reduce her to passivity. The expectation is that Rosaleen will be effectively scared by such stories and that she will mature along a safe and predictable route into womanhood. Yet all of this is undermined by Rosaleen's imagination and curiosity. It is these personally inherent qualities that encourage her to take the less trodden path into maturity. And perhaps, by the end, it is the courage of her conviction that allows her to embrace her true self and transform into a wolf.

Approaching the film purely from the perspective of narrative and tangential narratives, the symbolic values of the film are again brought to the fore by the metaphor driven tales told by Rosaleen's Granny. The film becomes about storytelling, about the retelling of myths, of their elaboration and their deconstruction as well as their reconstruction for a more contemporary audience. Given this, *The Company of Wolves* can be interpreted as a visual text that quietly embraces the multiple versions of one story – Little Red Riding Hood – and celebrates its rich potential for positive metaphor.

As the film draws to a close, the Dreamt Rosaleen tells two stories; one to her mother and the other to the transformed Huntsman. On a surface level these stories allow Rosaleen to take on the role of storyteller, effectively taking Granny's place as the one who narrates the myths of folklore. By taking on this role, Rosaleen effectively replaces the old order and uses this position as a means of subverting those tired myths for her own ends. Granny's stories are full of repression in a covert attempt to maintain patriarchal order, whereas Rosaleen's stories are about expression and disruption of the established order. Perhaps more importantly, Granny's stories recount the punishments of sexual activity or transgression whereas Rosaleen's punishments are inflicted upon the aggressive males and the transgressive act is seen as a positive and healthy aspect of the maturing process.

Before discussing the symbolic value this clearly has for the Dreamt Rosaleen, it is worth noting that it is possible to make the equation between Rosaleen the Storyteller and Angela Carter the novelist. Within the context of *The Company of Wolves*, both women tell stories that are bound up in folklore, and those stories contain subtle narrative twists or inversions that allow for the presence of a strong, if not dominant, female character. As such, both Rosaleen and Carter's fairy tale narratives tell their listeners different stories, ones which construct positive feminine roles and identities.

In relation to the Dreamt Rosaleen's ongoing narrative, aspects of her desires (or by now what seems to be her developing capacity to become a woman/wolf or, to put it into the terms of Gothic critique, the Other) are also evident in the stories that she tells. Of the two stories she personally recounts in the film, the protagonists are women, one of whom exacts revenge upon men and betters them at their own seductive games – a role which Rosaleen herself will assume when she finally confronts The Huntsman. These stories give form to Rosaleen's growing awareness, not only of her sexual understanding and desires, but more so of her need to be an independent adult. She wants to actively engage in healthy sexual activity, but does not want to be oppressed by it nor by men. Interpreting her spoken narratives in this way implies that Rosaleen will, more than likely, mature into a woman that is not unlike her mother; by the film's end it indeed becomes apparent that Granny never strayed from the path (and as a consequence of this superstitious naivety, is killed by The Huntsman) yet her daughter has, hence Rosaleen's mother's comment "If there's a beast in men it meets its match in women too." It is this comment that gives the



Dreamt Rosaleen the confidence to take on those female roles she eloquently describes in her stories: if her mother has strayed from the path then why can't she?

Catherine Lappas interprets these two narratives from a different perspective. In the context of her essay, the revenge narrative is seen as a means of releasing “the repressed anger of women who are denied their own desire, such as they are in Granny’s tales” (5) and can be covertly reflected into the Dreamt Rosaleen’s straying from the path. Her curiosity and her increasingly overwhelming desires are initially repressed by Granny’s stories, yet her physical and symbolic encounters (kissing the village boy, climbing the tree and finding the eggs) coupled with her mother’s comment imply a possible release, one that she finally finds in *The Huntsman*.

The second narrative the Dreamt Rosaleen recounts concerns a she-wolf who enters the world above from the world below. Once there she is shot and wounded. Played naked by Goth icon Danielle Dax, the story again highlights for Lappas the increasing Otherness of Rosaleen:

Both Rosaleen and the she-wolf are trapped in hostile and unfamiliar land, encased in unfamiliar skins, ill-fitted for traditional gender roles, and shunned because of their differences. (6)

Here Lappas implies the inevitable transformation of the Dreamt Rosaleen, one who will shed both her clothes and skin before *The Huntsman* and become what she really is. As a consequence, the second of Rosaleen’s narratives equates her with the monster, or at least a version of it. Lappas discusses this later within her text, stating that Carter does not read “the monster as the embodiment of male sexuality alone... she focuses instead on the similarity and solidarity between monster and woman and sees the source of the monster’s difference and power as sexual” (7) and so strengthens the notion that Rosaleen’s stories are not just alternate versions of Folklore but another clear and unrepressed expression of her (sexual) desires.

See also *Werewolves*

### Toys

Although obvious symbols of the Dreaming Rosaleen’s childhood they also become objects that, by the end of the film, symbolise her past. Rosaleen sleeps as a child but wakes up to the ‘horrors’ of puberty, with the adult, masculine wolves breaking through the walls and windows of her bedroom, smashing her toys and dolls as they do so.

The most explicitly physical interpretation of transformation obviously lies within those men who are werewolves. Their painfully graphic mutation from man to animal is not typical of contemporary Horror cinema for within *The Company of Wolves* it is made apparent that those cursed are merely wolves in men’s clothing. It is appropriate that such symbolic imagery should take place for this is, after all, a retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood* and so wolves are expected to disguise themselves in order to obtain the flesh they desire. So instead of flesh rippling and contorting as bones bend and crack as the body

realigns itself, those wolves of The Company rip their way through the flesh and tear away the clothing of human skin to show their true selves.

See also Red Cloak

The idea of a pure beast being within a man is consolidated by Rosaleen's mother. Late one evening Rosaleen hears her parents having sex. The following morning Rosaleen asks her mother if father hurts her, to which she replies that "if there is a beast in man, it's met its match in women". The dialogue implies the taming potential of sexual activity in that the beast may well be a beast but it is soon pacified by the opposite sex. This dialogue has resonance near the end of the film when Rosaleen submits to the Huntsman, pacifying his aggression with a kiss and implied sexual intercourse.

As an image, the symbolic value of transformation is obvious as it is the revelation of the animal inside. Yet because of the visual strategy of transformation The Company of Wolves elects to use, this could be equally inverted to be revealing of the man on the outside. Given Rosaleen's Granny's many warnings about the exterior appearances of men ("Don't trust men whose eyebrows join") this interpretation has its value when reading the film as a whole.

Like the many werewolves in the film, Rosaleen is undergoing both a mental and physical transformation, changing from a child to an adult, from a girl into a woman. Given its parallel with the painful, skin shedding transformation of man into wolf, the narrative positions the onset of puberty and sexual awareness as a painful, frightening and a potentially horrific transition. Just as the werewolves bled from the shedding of their skins, so too will Rosaleen.

See also Blood, Full Moon and Red

It is interesting to note that in texts which provide general overviews of Carter and Jordan's oeuvres, the theme of transformation becomes a prevailing trait. For Carter, narratives often feature instances "where conventional boundaries between man and beast, between face and mask, between appearance and reality, bend and warp" (8). Whereas for Jordan this transformation "is the crossing and blurring of boundaries" which has taken form in "animal and human [in films such as] *The Company of Wolves*, *Interview with a Vampire* and, to a lesser extent, *The Butcher Boy*." (9) Although this may seem to be a surface appraisal of defining traits, Jordan's use of transformation is as much symbolic as it is physical, with these transitional states addressing "the constructedness, performativity and fluidity of identity, particularly gender and sexual identities. Throughout the film, characters are not what they seem." (10)

Werewolves

Fred Botting states that the contemporary Gothic's manifestation of the monster is one with whom sympathy may lie in that they are

sites of identification, sympathy, and self-recognition. Excluded figures once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant, monsters are [now] rendered more humane while the systems that exclude them assume terrifying, persecutory, and inhuman shapes. (11)

If the Dreamt Rosaleen represents the future and the modern, then Botting's reflections upon the Gothic Monster have resonance for the protagonist as she identifies with the narrative's monstrous element. For her increasing sexual awareness and desire, the werewolf becomes the site of identification; it is their very difference that attracts her. Their surface is human and when transformed they remain human for Rosaleen. Having shot The Huntsman, she witnesses his transformation. Instead of being repulsed she watches with fascination and curiosity. When the wolf stands before her she does not run like all the other women do. She crouches down beside the animal and says "I did not know that wolves could cry." Her dialogue humanises the monster and so, for this scene at least, collapses the werewolves duality into one unified whole. Whether man or animal, human or monster, Rosaleen perceives that simply to be their condition.

Given her narrative end, the Dreamt Rosaleen's sympathy is clearly based upon her identification with the Monster. Ultimately this sympathy is accepting herself for what she is becoming, a sexually aware and active young woman.

1. Carol Zucker, 'Sweetest Tongue has Sharpest Tooth: The Dangers of Dreaming in Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*' (*Literature Film Quarterly* Vol.28, No.1, 2000) p.67
2. Ibid, p.68
3. Ibid, p.67
4. Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Vintage, 1995)
5. Catherine Lappas, 'Seeing is Believing, but Touching is the Truth: Female Spectatorship and Sexuality' in *The Company of Wolves*' (*Women's Studies* Vol.25, No.2, January 1996)
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. David Punter & Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) p.102
9. Fidelma Farley, 'Neil Jordan' in *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*, Yvonne Tasker (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2002) p.187
10. Ibid, p.188
11. Fred Botting, *Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes* in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.286

## Appendix

A young girl, Rosaleen, has locked herself in her bedroom. Having read a magazine and experimented with some of her older sister's make up, she now lies in bed dreaming of a fairy tale world in which her alter ego lives: a small rural community built deep within the depths of a forest. The dream begins with Rosaleen's sister being chased by a pack of wolves who eventually catch and attack her. In what seems to be the following day, Rosaleen attends her sister's funeral. Before she is buried, Rosaleen is told to kiss the corpse and is then given her sister's silver crucifix. Instead of returning home with her mother and father, Rosaleen leaves the funeral with her Granny, walking through the forest to her home. As they walk, Granny offers Rosaleen superstitious advice, warning her not to trust men whose eyebrows meet and not to stray from the forest path or else she will fall prey to the wolves that attacked her sister.

Sitting in front of the open fire, Rosaleen helps her Granny to roll a ball of bright red wool. As they work together, Granny spins a tale about the marriage of a woman in the village to a travelling man: before their

marriage can be consummated, the groom steps out into the forest to answer the 'call of nature'. He doesn't return and, upon hearing the howling of wolves, his wife assumes he has been attacked and killed. Years pass and she remarries only for her former husband to return. Filthy from the years spent in the wilderness, he sits at her dining table and demands food. As he eats he realises that she has remarried and, in a fit of rage, begins to rip the skin from his face. Once naked of skin, his face and body contort, stretching and distending until he has transformed into a wolf. Before he can attack his wife, the second husband appears and decapitates the wolf. The severed head returns back to its human state. The husband assumes his wife is involved in an affair and so beats her.

The following morning Rosaleen returns to her parent's home. As she hangs out the bed sheets, one of the village boys approaches her and asks if she will walk through the forest with him after the Sunday service. He assures that he will look after her and that they will not stray from the path. That evening, Rosaleen is woken up by the sound of her parents having sex. She watches them for a moment, holding tightly to her sister's crucifix as she does. In the morning, when she is alone with her mother, Rosaleen asks if it hurts when they make love. Later in the day, Rosaleen visits her sister's grave. As Rosaleen lays fresh red roses on the grave, Granny finishes knitting a red shawl for Rosaleen.

Rosaleen's parents allow her to go into the forest with the boy. Wearing her red shawl, Rosaleen manages to avoid the boy's advances but, eventually, he manages to kiss her. When he tries to kiss her again, Rosaleen dodges him and runs off into the forest. As she runs off the path, she shouts out that he can kiss her but he has to catch her first. In an attempt to hide from the boy, Rosaleen climbs a tree. At the top she finds a stork's nest. Inside are four eggs, a hand mirror and lipstick. As she applies the make-up to her lips, the eggs crack open to reveal a statuette of a baby inside. Rosaleen takes one the babies and, when she shows it to her mother, it weeps.

Whilst her father is out hunting the wolves that killed his eldest daughter, Rosaleen tells her mother the story of a cursed revenge: a woman from the forest is made pregnant by an aristocrat who rejects her in favour of a wealthy young woman. On their wedding day, the forest woman enters the wedding tent and curses the newly weds and their families to be wolves forever. At the end of her story, Rosaleen's father returns with what he thought was a forepaw of a wolf. When he shows it to them it has transformed back into a human hand.

The next day Rosaleen decides to visit her Granny. Taking a kitchen knife for protection, she walks through the forest alone. Deep in the forest she encounters a handsome Huntsman, a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle. They sit and talk, their conversation concluding with a bet to see who can reach Granny's house first. They go their separate ways, with the Huntsman walking through the forest and Rosaleen following the path. The Huntsman wins and enters Granny's house. He quickly kills her, decapitating her and then burning her remains on the open fire. Rosaleen reaches Granny's house and finds the Huntsman sitting in her chair. Realising he has killed Granny, Rosaleen tries to shoot the Huntsman but only manages to wound him. The pain triggers his transformation and when in his wolf form he collapses and whimpers from the injury. Rosaleen kneels by him and, as she strokes his haunches, tells a story about an injured she-wolf.

The following morning, Rosaleen's parents search for her and, upon entering Granny's cottage, find only a wolf wearing a silver crucifix. The wolf looks at the adults and then jumps out of the window and into the forest. As the dream ends, the wolf that was Rosaleen joins a pack of wolves and they run out of the dream and into Rosaleen's reality. As the young girl wakes up screaming, the wolves burst through the windows and walls of her bedroom.

The author would like to thank Helen Rice for her criticism and support during the writing of this essay.

## **Ghosts in the Head: Mourning, Memory and Derridean 'Trace' in John Banville's *The Sea***

**Joanne Watkiss**

With the publication of his novel *Birchwood* in 1973, John Banville established himself as an eminent writer of modern Gothic fiction. Described as 'one of the most startling of the century's varied achievements in Irish writing', (1) Banville's novels have been pivotal to the emergence of a late twentieth-century Irish Gothic fiction in particular. His most recent novel, *The Sea* (winner of the Booker prize 2005) expands on many of the themes from his earlier work, and most especially, his 1993 novel *Ghosts*. *Ghosts* centres around Freddie Montgomery; a man recently released from jail for murder, charting his move to a remote island where he is haunted by the past events of his life:

Banquo was a dampener on the king's carousings, and Hamlet's father made what I cannot but think were excessive calls on filial piety. Yet, for myself, I know I would be grateful for any intercourse with the dead, no matter how baleful their stares or unavoidable their pale, pointing fingers. I feel I might be able, not to exonerate, but to explain myself, perhaps, to account for my neglectfulness, my failures, the things left unsaid, all those sins against the dead. (2)

There are no actual spectral sightings in *Ghosts* (just as there are none in *The Sea*) yet ghosts are central in both novels. Banville's postmodern Gothic is concerned with the idea of the ghost rather than the ghost itself; the importance of the ghost does not lie in its revelation, but the way it is understood (or not understood, as the case maybe). His focus is on hauntings where the ghost does not appear; the haunting of ourselves by ourselves. In *The Sea*, this concept of self-haunting is connected to the process of mourning.

*The Sea* is a torrent of pasts blended with the uncertain, ever-shifting present of Max Morden: a recently bereaved art-historian who relocates to a seaside village, Ballyless, where he once spent a childhood holiday. Having lost his wife Anna to cancer, he is left with his unsympathetic daughter Claire to pick up the pieces. It is after Anna's death that Max is drawn to Ballyless, where he met the Grace family as a child. The Graces' consist of Connie and Carlo, parents of Chloe and Myles: a set of twins who become good friends with Max. The novel follows his return to a variety of childhood and adult pasts, involving people and moments that have influenced his life. For Max, bereavement generates an episode of reflection which compels him to visit different places and people. Yet it is unclear exactly what or who Max is mourning, his youth, his wife, disappointments of his life, or perhaps his childhood friends, Chloe and Myles Grace, whose untimely death (as children, they walk into the sea and are lost forever) returns to him in perpetual collision with a tentative present. Max's mourning is initiated by Anna's death but soon transforms into a more generalised grief, forcing him to return to moments of loss in the past. The death of his wife has resurrected departed figures in a fluid interchange of assorted pasts. As a 'work of mourning' (3), Max writes 'a Book of the Dead' (4) in an effort to comprehend these events.

In a confrontation of mourning, Max is overcome with the desire to travel back into spaces of the past. *The Sea* is structured by the journey (or rather anti-journey) of remembrance that Max undertakes. There is no beginning or end to his travels, with the novel focusing primarily on his mental journey rather than his physical one, combining the two in a meditation on mourning. In this way, mental and physical representations of space intersect in an interrogation of spatial zones. Max, for example, begins the mourning process by revisiting the Cedars Hotel (where he met the Grace twins as a child) in an attempt to stimulate memories created there. However, as his recollections become more vivid, Max no longer needs to travel to such places; his memories have taken over his reality and can provide him with the relevant evocation of space.

*The Sea* shifts between different spaces erratically in a fluid narrative represented like tides of the sea (in the manner of a ghost). Because of this, an evaluation of Max's grief through spatial analysis is suggested. The mourning that drives Max to places of the past is caused by an obsession with memory. He is seeking out spaces that act as archives of his past: solid structures that contain firm memories for him to return to. As Jacques Derrida states in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, an archive is:

not only the history and the memory of singular events, of exemplary proper names, languages and filiations, but the deposition in an arkheion (which can be an ark or a temple), the consignment in a place of relative exteriority, whether it has to do with writings, documents, or ritualised marks on the body proper. (5)

The demarcation of space can act as a complex archiving mechanism, holding together histories and memories in a specific area. Derrida defines such a space as 'a house, a domicile, and an address.' (6) Max's saturation in the mourning process has compelled him to re-visit sites of the past, linking mourning inextricably to significant places in memory. Place instigates mourning and mourning instigates place. His memories are thus enriched by his journey through different spaces.

Alongside a complex form of reminiscent haunting, this concept of spatial mourning is pivotal in *The Sea*. Mourning prompts memories that are returned to by locating oneself spatially and mentally in moments that have passed. The return of events and figures of the past (even though they return psychologically and not physically) induces a kind of memorial haunting. In *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Julia Kristeva equates mourning with a kind of 'disenchantment that I experience here and now, cruel as it may be, appears, under scrutiny, to awaken echoes of old traumas, to which I realize I have never been able to resign myself.' (7) The grief experienced by the loss of his wife provokes past mournings to re-surface. Attempting to withdraw from his attachments to lost loved ones provokes a 'struggle that can be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues.' (8) For Max, reality becomes memorial in his undivided attention to the past. Kristeva remarks that in melancholia 'everything has gone by, they seem to say, but I am faithful to those bygone days, I am nailed down to them, no revolution is possible, there is no future.' (9) As a bereaved man in his sixties, the past is the most important tense for Max. The mourning present is intolerable and any possible future looks bleak. After an argument with his daughter, Claire, he curls up in a bed that was 'low and narrow, hardly more than a cot' (10) as if attempting to regress into the comfort of childhood. He allows his mind to be haunted by past ghosts conjured by space and memory. Place instigates haunting as the spectre is 'of some familial domesticity: haunting implies



places, a habitation, and always a haunted house.’ (11) Spaces of the past can evoke haunting memories that are as powerful as ghosts themselves due to the ghost’s ability to ‘invade all of space.’ (12) The sporadic narrative shifts the focus spatially and historically, permitting a return of the dead in a memorial haunting of past memories.

I use the term ‘haunting’ here as both noun and verb (as both an entity and an event) in the Derridean sense discussed in his 1994 book, *Specters of Marx*. In it, Derrida examines haunting by returning to spectres present in the writings of Shakespeare and Karl Marx. He discusses Marx’s notion of haunting: ‘Marx thought, to be sure, on his side, from the other side, that the dividing line between the ghost and actuality ought to be crossed...this dividing line as real limit and conceptual distinction.’ (13) This ‘line’ he suggests, is one that exists within the framework of Western metaphysics: a construction, a depiction of how things can be represented and interpreted. It is a comfort to designate the dead and the living as polar opposites to one another. As Hélène Cixous argues, ‘It is the between that is tainted with strangeness’ (14) as this space defines any potential overlapping realms. Its peculiarity is also found in the difficulty of articulating a meaning: as if neither our culture nor our psychology can allow for the middle space; there are no words available to describe it. ‘What is intolerable is that the Ghost erases the limit which exists between two states, neither alive nor dead.’ (15) In reference to Derrida’s work on ‘Différance’, Catherine Belsey proposes that ‘meaning is always the effect of the trace, paradoxically of the other in the selfsame.’ (16) In such an analysis, meaning depends upon a difference that is not accommodated for in binary oppositions. Articulating the ghost depends upon reference to an opposition, but in this case, this does not exist. The ghost is the middle point between opposite terms and so cannot be placed alongside any term that will provide any meaning. For example, ‘the difference between the specter and the spirit’ is ‘a différance’. (17) Hence, there is no specific discourse to rely on in order to articulate spectrality, and the space between two polarities is the only place the ghost belongs. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida describes the ‘work of mourning’ as an exorcism but also a conjuration. In light of this concept, I will now examine the actions of Max: a man whose mourning ‘work’ involves conjuring his dead through spaces of the past.

Derrida states that ‘to haunt does not mean to be present’ (18) suggesting – as in *The Sea* – how ghosts do not need to materialise to haunt. As mentioned above, place instigates mourning and vice versa, suggesting that existence and being are determined by an occupation of space. Max mourns by inhabiting different spaces because the departed used to occupy them. After death, the spaces the dead occupy are those we provide for them (in our memories, in our minds). In this novel, haunting is much more complex than the appearance of a ghost that haunts. Instead there is a kind of mental haunting (an archive) inside Max’s mind, ‘we carry the dead with us only until we die too.’ (19) Max permits his ghosts of the past to enter his head in an occupation of the space of the mind. It is implied that after Max’s death, he too will become a haunting memory present in someone else’s mind. As Derrida argues, this was also the case for Karl Marx, who ‘had ghosts in his head’ that ‘harassed, besieged and obsessed’ him. (20) Marx’s ghosts, like Max’s, haunt him from both inside and outside: ‘in him, but of course in order to repulse it, outside of him. In him outside of him: this is the place outside of place of ghosts wherever they feign to take up their abode’. Max is haunted by the spaces of the past that supply and enhance the memorial ghosts which have always been present inside his mind. Derrida states, ‘the living body is the space in which thoughts or

ideal, autonomized entities are gathered, is it not itself the “body of ghosts”?’ (21) The mind’s ability to remember (or archive) permits the production of a catalogue of spectres: concealed until mourning encourages their resurfacing. This interior and exterior haunting has caused Max to produce ‘a vulgate of the dead’ (22), acting as a memorial to those he has known and lost. Through writing, Max attempts to revive the dead physically, ‘Why have you not come back to haunt me? It is the least I would have expected of you.’ (23) Constructing a ‘Book of the Dead’ helps Max to visualise those he mourns, providing them with a type of ‘presence’ other than the memories inside his mind. As T.J. Lustig explains in *Henry James and the Ghostly*, ‘In a very general way all writing evokes, revives or resurrects what is not present’ (24), this is true not only in the resurrection of archives, but in the creation of them too. All writing produces a particular type of archive that is composed from other sources of documentation. In this way, written works are also haunted spaces: as they all refer back to other archives or literary works.

Because Max is haunted internally by memory and externally by space, *The Sea* is a novel that both haunts and is haunted in a manifestation of double spectrality. Max’s haunted recollections haunt the text, generating a dislocated narrative sequence (a shifting between different spaces erratically) that operates in the manner of a ghost. This double nature of haunting is further established by the two traumatic incidences in Max’s mind: the death of Anna and the Grace twins. ‘They were twins. I had never encountered twins before, in the flesh, and was fascinated and at the same time slightly repelled.’ (25) Max’s conflicting response is that of Freud’s ‘Uncanny’: a simultaneous attraction and repulsion to that which is familiar, yet unfamiliar and thus frightening. His response also calls to mind René Girard’s assertion that ‘twins inspire a particular terror’ in that they ‘often display a single social personality’ (26) and yet are individual subjects. The spectral representation of the twins in Max’s memory further enhances the uncanniness evident in this novel of doubles. The ‘doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self’ situates twins as ‘a thing of terror’ (27) and an object of curiosity. The Grace twins however, are unusual in addition to being twins. Myles cannot speak and has webbed feet, and Chloe is cruel and heartless (she, for example, is amused by watching grasshoppers boil ‘in their own fat’ (28)). Because Myles cannot speak, Max imagines Mr and Mrs Grace were ‘a little afraid of him. That is no wonder either. It must have been like living with an all too visible, all too tangible poltergeist.’ (29) Max’s description of Myles as a mischievous spirit is soon followed by a depiction of Chloe’s hair and appearance:

She wore it in a pageboy style, with a fringe at the front overhanging her handsome, high-domed, oddly convex forehead – like, it suddenly strikes me, remarkably like the forehead of that ghostly figure seen in profile hovering at the edge of Bonnard’s *Table in Front of the Window*. (30)

Only when reflecting on his past does it occur to Max that Chloe has the forehead of the ghostlike image in a Bonnard painting. It is through memory that Max can recollect her, but this comes at a price. Max can only remember the dead as spectral: Myles must be a poltergeist and Chloe a ghost, as they exist only in his thoughts. Memory, it emerges, is a practice of spectrality. Max considers Myles a poltergeist through another instance of recollection: a supernatural creature that moves objects around without sound. Max is categorising the dead twins as spectral, asserting their deceased-ness, in a classification of the dead inside his mind. Because he is so deeply immersed in mourning, Max is seeking out sites to restore lost

memories in order to accumulate a mental archive of the twins' lives. The containment of such psychological information allows Max to cling onto their existence in a conjuring of the dead.

Julia Kristeva suggests that 'melancholy persons settle the lost Thing or object within themselves, identifying with the loss's beneficial features on the one hand, with its maleficent ones on the other. This presents us with the first state of the self's doubling.' (31) After Anna's death, Max positions Anna within himself - 'we carry the dead with us' (32) – in an attempt to hold onto her memory. Like Chloe and Myles who were 'one mind and two bodies' (33), Max clings onto the memory of Anna in an attempt to preserve her memory inside of him. In his case, his double is the ghost of Anna who now only exists in the space of his mind; a place where death may be transcended, that is, 'until we die too.' (34) Such intimacy between the dead and the living has an intense effect on Max. Soon after Anna's death, he becomes more alert to the sensations of his own body: a testament to his being alive. 'It is as if I were being tested for vital signs; for signs of feeling; for signs of life.' (35) He goes on to note how,

I have developed too a queasy fascination with the processes of my body, the gradual ones, the way for instance my hair and my fingernails insistently keep growing, no matter what state I am in, what anguish I may be undergoing. It seems so inconsiderate, so heedless of circumstance, this relentless generation of matter that is already dead. (36)

His allegiance towards Anna's memory begins to affect his self-perception. Although his body is alive, he chooses to allow his mind to be persistently haunted by memory: resulting in the deduction that he too is dead. A glance in the mirror reveals he has 'definitely something of the look of a hanged man...not yet hanged perhaps but definitely on Death Row.' (37) The melancholia Max experiences after Anna's death is driven by a guilt originating from his own survival. Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' suggests that melancholia is 'a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity' containing 'self-reproaches' and 'delusional expectation of punishment.' (38) Max's impression of being a condemned man on Death Row is his punishment for surviving whilst Anna (and others in his life) has died. Max's mourning has become so extreme that he considers suicide in a sinister replication of the twins walking into the sea, further enhancing the double nature of this novel. Max seeks penance by moving to the site of trauma and death at Ballyless. His drunken meditation of re-enacting the Graces' deaths is 'not a disguised act of war but a merging with sadness and, beyond it, with that impossible love, never reached, always elsewhere, such as the promises of nothingness, of death.' (39) The oblivion offered by the sea's expanse provides an opportunity for forgetfulness and nothingness: an escape away from the melancholia of mourning. In the *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida proposes that 'to love in love or friendship would always mean: I can kill you, you can kill me, we can kill ourselves. Therefore, in all cases, we already are dead for one another.' (40) This bears a direct relation to Max's experience of love: for Max to love Anna, he must be prepared to end his own life for her. The resolution he achieves at the end of the book is accomplished by the realisation that his mourning is so intense that he would die for her. Losing his footing foils his attempt at suicide, knocking him unconscious by striking his 'temple on a stone.' (41) This is however, irrelevant, as he has proven to himself he would be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

As I have already suggested, place instigates the recollection of memories for Max to gather and archive in his mind. As Derrida states 'the structure of the archive is spectral. It is spectral a priori: neither present nor absent "in the flesh," neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met, no more than those of Hamlet's father, thanks to the possibility of the visor.' (42) What Max is looking for at the Cedars Hotel is not simply something to be found, but rather a trigger to awaken the forgotten past in his memory. 'The room was much as I remembered it, or looked as if it was as I remembered, for memories are always eager to match themselves seamlessly to the things and places of a revisited past.' (43) He acknowledges his desperation to rekindle moments of the past, becoming more and more frustrated as the reality in front of him is not what he remembered. The hotel becomes a disappointment to Max when he realises:

Everything was slightly out of scale, all angles slightly out of true. The staircase was steeper, the landing pokier, the lavatory window looked not on to the road, as I thought it should, but back across the fields. I experienced a sense almost of panic as the real, the crassly complacent real, took hold of the things I thought I remembered and shook them into its own shape. (44)

Max's disillusionment with the Cedars is represented in a bitter resentment towards the living for removing residues of the dead. He angrily acknowledges how the space of the hotel holds no sentimental value for him or his past. He may have thought the hotel would be an archive of memories, but it coldly proves itself to be a space that has changed over the years. The hotel is not the only space that has changed however, Max has not considered how he too has changed since he stayed there as a child. One possible explanation for the angles to seem 'out of scale' or for the small size of the landing would be that Max has grown into a man since his stay at the Cedars. Like Alice in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Max's experience of disproportion leaves him feeling anxious, as the Cedars Hotel is structured by the supplemental recollections that he holds in his mind (this will be expanded upon later). He is not yet aware that he does not need to find evidence of the Graces' existence, as all the evidence he needs is present in his psyche ('we carry the dead with us'). Even though all traces of the Graces' have been removed, the space of their dwelling is enough to activate archived memories. The traces may have gone, but the structure of the house and surrounding area is still in place.

Max stays at the Cedars for another reason - to escape the house he shared with his wife. It seems to the mourning Max that their family home takes on a hostile stance towards the living:

I had not yet had the heart to put it on the market, but I could not have stayed there a moment longer. After Anna's death it went hollow, became a vast echo-chamber. There was something hostile in the air too. (45)

The space of the house takes on a distinct enmity when one of its inhabitants dies, as if death produces traces of presence that no longer exist. There can be no recollection of a form of presence (Anna) without an admission of spectrality. Anna's absence produces an angry atmosphere in the house that Max unconsciously directs towards himself: he is angry at his own survival. Max is then wary to take on the house of the Cedars for fear of a present absence where the Graces' should be. 'I was nervous of this

moment, the moment when I would have to take on the house, to put it on, as it were, like something I had worn in another, prelapsarian life.’ (46) Max’s description of the hotel as clothing hints at how living spaces may not be as solid as we assume them to be. They are spaces that people live and die in: all that remains is a haunting supplement to memory:

There was an impression of general, tight-lipped awkwardness, of all these homely things – jars on the shelves, saucepans on the stove, that breadboard with its jagged knife – averting their gaze from our all at once unfamiliar, afflicted presence in their midst. (47)

The contents of their home have become a supplement; an addition to what has been lost. The saucepans and jars were used by Anna in a particular space, and so have become an alternative mechanism to induce haunting within their house.

Important events of the past happen in spaces, so in order to recall the memory, it is necessary to recall the space it occurred in. Max recalls an excursion to a picture-house by trying to remember where his and Chloe’s first kiss took place:

Chloe and I were sitting in the middle of a bench near the front, so close to the screen that it seemed to tilt out over us at the top and even the most benign of the black-and-white phantoms flickering across it loomed with a manic intensity. (48)

The memory of a picture-house is spectral because it exists in the past, but also because ‘cinema is the art of phantoms; it is neither image nor perception.’ (49) The picture-house is an old one: ‘a barn-like structure set on a bit of scrubby waste-land.’ (50) The film quality in such a picture-house would doubtless be rather poor, making the outlines of the images blurred and indistinct, akin to a ghost. Cinematic spectrality consists of the reproduction of images that is secondary to actual events. The filming of the film has already been done, the events have already occurred. In this sense, the cinema projects events not dissimilar to how they are recalled in memory. ‘Above us the screen retained a throbbing grey penumbral glow that lasted a long moment before fading, and of which something seemed to remain even when it was gone, the ghost of a ghost.’ (51) The double nature of the novel returns in Max’s recalling of a memory that appears like a memory itself. His description of the place where they went to see films as a ‘picture-house’ refers back to my earlier discussion on spaces. Unlike the term ‘cinema’, ‘picture-house’ reminds Max that he is again, inhabiting a variety of house. In any form of house, the structure has contained what has happened within it. In this sense, a house, hotel or picture-house is an archive of events, a place quite simply, ‘where things commence.’ (52) As Mark Wigley explains, all spaces can be determined by ‘a line that produces an inside opposed to an outside, a line that acts as a mechanism of domestication.’ (53) Control within a house’s structure is the structure itself as ‘to constrain the unruly play of representations is to house them, to domesticate them.’ (54) Records relating to a house are contained in local councils and governments to ensure a house is ‘housed’ through a variety of different archives. Similarly, deaths that occur in houses are recorded in detail and archived extensively. Deaths that occur in the sea however (as in the case of Chloe and Myles), are much more difficult to record.

The realm of the sea is a persistent image in the novel, initially as a site for play between Max and the Grace twins. The location of a picnic on the beach faces out ‘desperately toward the horizon as if in mute search for a sign of rescue.’ (55) It is suggested that by walking into the sea, Chloe and Myles took an opportunity offered by the water, ‘their backs turned to the world’ (56), to escape a reprimand from their governess. The twins were (albeit willingly) swallowed up by the sea’s expanse. The sea, as Jonathan Raban writes, is ‘swollen with historical significance’ (57) as a battleground for international disputes (‘the little waves before me at the water’s edge speak with an animate voice, whispering eagerly of some ancient catastrophe’ (58)). ‘The sea is a realm of danger and death’ (59) that has taken many lives and produced an impressive expanse of history beneath its surface. ‘The sea interests for its depth, for the quality of its bottom as a holding-ground.’ (60) The sea may contain a deep history and have claimed an extensive amount of lives, but it does not reveal its secrets. It extends endlessly, unlimited in its incalculable expanse. In *Ghosts*, the protagonist describes how ‘I like the sea; I am afraid of it, but all the same I like it, its strangeness, its indifferent thereness; in all that space I can forget for a while who and what I am.’ (61) Its expanse suggests a forgetfulness about its history that extends to an uncannily impenetrable depth. Its endlessness also produces a placelessness: there is no locating the sea. Because it cannot be located, it would be an impossibility to archive the events and history contained within it. The sea is a respected zone: memories or lives contained within it are not interfered with. The bodies of Chloe and Myles Grace cannot be retrieved from the sea and archived in the usual death register. As a space, the sea is not definite; it is not contained within a particular zone. It cannot be ‘housed’, like other spaces depicted in the novel. It is undomesticated, sublime, uncanny. It is essentially, a non-place or anti-space, which can be seen but is never fully present. The sea is also permanent: it remains in a defiance of infinite time. As a place of movement and voyage, the sea is an in-between space that has no discernable barriers. The ‘sea and the land interpenetrate’ (62) in a mergence of two states: rather like the status of the ghost, both alive and dead.

The sea forms part of a renewal process, as footprints or impressions on the shore are removed daily by its tides. The traces of the Grace family for example, have been removed from the beach, just like they have been removed from the Cedars Hotel:

It had retained hardly anything of the past, of the part of the past that I knew here. I had hoped for something definite of the Graces, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, a faded photo, say, forgotten in a drawer, a lock of hair, or even a hair-pin, lodged between the floorboards, but there was nothing, nothing like that. No remembered atmosphere, either, to speak of. I suppose so many of the living passing through – it is a lodging house, after all – have worn away all traces of the dead. (63)

Just like the sea has removed the traces of Chloe and Myles Grace from its shores after they walked into it, the Cedars too has lost the memory of the Grace family. The living, who have passed through the Hotel, have removed marks of the dead: evidence that Max is seeking to support his own existence (and archive in his writing). Discussing the archive, Derrida states that archivization is to ‘protect marks from being erased’ (64), just as Max’s archiving attempts to do. To record is to remember traces of specific moments that time and progress attempt to erase. Such impressions of the past are analogous to the

Derridean sense of trace: considered as a rupture of Western Metaphysics. (65) By examining binary oppositions that act as the foundation to our culture, deconstruction exposes traces of incongruity: ‘the trace, paradoxically of the other in the selfsame.’ (66) There are, for example, traces of presence within absence, in the case of the ghost. Every element in a system bears traces of other elements. As Belsey explains, ‘These traces are nothing other than the absence of the other “element”...No element is anywhere present (nor simply absent), there are only traces.’ (67) Within the haunted spaces of mourning, traces of the past are exposed into the present, and the deceased into the lives of the living. This is only possible through memory and archivization, as traces of the dead ultimately become absences if unrecorded. This is why Max is overcome by absences in most of the spaces he encounters: he regrets there has been no documental recording of those he mourns; as our feet touch ‘the ground, the foot, the leg, the ash and earth below serve together as a sort of machine, a momentary printing press that will leave the archive even as it disappears forever.’ (68) The fleeting occurrence of the instant allows such moments to be lost unless archived. The archive is after all, ‘a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met.’ (69) In the promotion of archivization, Derrida attempts to expose traces that are lost all too easily. Perhaps this is why traces are removed the instant they are created: as a necessity to enable the binary oppositions our western culture depends upon. The living must erode traces of the dead, as their existence (dasein) dismantles the life/death opposition. Traces of the dead in living spaces reveal the possible existence of a presence outside of a constructed notion of being. The sea is a natural mechanism of removing traces in its sweeping away of the Grace twins’ bodies.

In an attempt to prevent himself from forgetting traces of the dead, Max’s mind becomes a mourning space that accommodates the memories contained in the spaces we have looked at so far. The spaces of the Cedars, the picture-house, the family home and the sea have invaded Max’s mind in an internalisation of spatially stimulated memories. In *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida suggests ‘a possible mourning which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives only in us.’ (70) Max is living within his own archives, archivizing the spaces of his life, and experiencing them, re-living them. In writing an archive, Max’s internal space is becoming one. The structure of this novel can be understood as the flowing and ebbing of a gradual tidal progression into a memorial spectral realm. As a permanent feature of the book, the sea suggests how through mourning, Max is increasingly becoming a haunted space. As Eric Prenowitz states in his note to *Archive Fever*, ‘an event [Max’s journey] is always archiving; [Max’s writings] an event is an archiving act even if there may not be a “proper” archive and even if the archive of an event, as its interpretation, must always remain open.’ (71) As we read Max’s writings, his travels are archiving themselves continuously: his archive also remains permanently open and unfinished, until of course he will ‘die too’.

In Max’s case, bereavement can result in a kind of supplemental haunting with all the symptoms of a ghostly encounter that operate through memory. The term ‘supplement’ is a Derridean one applied to that which ‘is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness’ just like the word or ‘the sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.’ (72) As mentioned earlier, memory can supplement spaces of the past by recalling what occurred there. For Max, his memories are spectral due to the mourning process he is experiencing. The supplement takes the place of a presence, initiating a present absence: in this case, Max’s haunting

memories supplement the reality he perceives. The places he visits (and avoids) are incomplete without the addition of memory to understand their significance. The opposite of this is also true: Max needs reality to decipher his memories. Either way, the reality we perceive is haunted by memories that mourning draws attention to. This is the importance of the mourning process: to recognize how haunting (in memorial form in this case) supplements a partial version of reality. In other words, the dead return to disturb the equilibrium of the living. As mentioned earlier in my discussion of trace, binary oppositions require stability to maintain their structure. The trace of the deceased in the realm of the living (the dead supplementing the living) is dangerous and 'seductive; it leads desire away from the good path, makes it err far from natural ways, guides it towards its loss or fall and therefore it is a sort of lapse or scandal.' (73) Like the trace, the supplement is a rupture, a fracturing of traditional systems to expose discontinuity within them.

The concept of the supplementing trace is constituted by difference. As the haunting presence in the novel, the accuracy of memory is questioned. An encounter with a woman named Avril in Duignan's Lane disappoints Max when he learns that the Duignan's have moved away from the area, and that the past now exists only in memory:

All at once my gloom gathered itself into a surge of sour resentment against her, as if she had for some fell reason of her own set herself up here, in this unconvincing disguise – that hennaed hair, those old lady's bootees – intentionally to usurp a corner of my mythic past. (74)

Max's mythic past appears to be comprised of constructions produced like paintings by 'applying a dab of colour here, scumbling a detail there', referring to memories of people or places as his 'handiwork.' (75) These creations are destructive to the actual past, as 'the result of all this close work is that my focus on them is blurred rather than sharpened.' (76) Such a statement leaves the reader in doubt as to the accuracy of Max's recollections. 'I keep going up close to them, the two Graces, now mother, now daughter, applying a dab of colour here, scumbling a detail there.' (77) However, we may interpret Max's inability to accurately recollect in light of Derrida's remark that 'failure of memory is not a failure; we can also interpret its apparent negativity, its very finitude, what affects its experience of discontinuity and distance, as a power, as the very opening of difference.' (78) Difference is articulated through inaccuracies, as disarticulation is the very essence of the ghost: 'the specter is also, among other things, what one imagines.' (79) The process of writing or 'archivization, produces as much as it records the event' (80) as ultimately, memory is inaccurate. Derrida's examination of Freud's archive reveals that 'we will always wonder what he [Freud] may have burned' (81), as archivization relies upon what has and hasn't been recorded. Memory and imagination are wrought together so tightly in Banville's novel that even Max cannot tell one from the other: 'if it is Memory herself who is at work here and not some other, more fanciful muse.' (82) The reminiscence of Mrs Grace's washing line containing a 'black swimsuit, hanging by its shoulder straps', becomes 'limp and scandalously empty' (83); a trace of Mrs Grace's life in Max's memory. It is 'on the frontiers of life and death [that] occasionally I have the arrogant feeling of being witness to the meaninglessness of Being, of revealing the absurdity of bonds and beings.' (84) The haunting nature of mourning provokes traces to be revealed, resulting in a questioning of metaphysics.



Due to the supplemental traces of memory contained within his mind, Max learns that the departed can return. This overturns the western metaphysical belief of what Geoffrey Bennington refers to as 'constructing things on an unquestioned value: presence.' (85) Instead, Max's mourning induces an interaction between memory and haunting. It suggests that presence is not a set concept providing the foundation for western thought. In Max's recollections for example, he begins to see himself not in the preferred category of the living: as a 'presence', but as an 'absence':

I had a sudden image of myself as a sort of large dark simian something slumped there at the table, or not a something but a nothing, rather, a hole in the room, a palpable absence, a darkness visible. It was very strange. I saw the scene as if from outside myself [...] and I this big dark indistinct shape, like the shape that no one at the séance sees until the daguerreotype is developed. I think I am becoming my own ghost. (86)

This division of Max's self begins with the unease at his existence (mentioned earlier in 'the look of a hanged man'), and develops into perceiving himself as a ghost. His remembered response to the twins' death is moving 'among the rooms as if I were myself a thing of air, a drifting spirit, Ariel set free and at a loss.' (87) Max's existence after mourning is problematic for him, as he can no longer rely upon the discourse of presence to distinguish himself from the dead. The Sea reveals how complex the mourning subject can be. 'I am' becomes 'I am haunted: I am haunted by myself' (88) as to live is to house (archive) memorial hauntings within the space of the mind.

In this sense, mourning can be instructive: it can teach that there is no such notion as absolute presence, in the living or the dead. Each binary is present and absent in different instances. In Max's case, he also learns that remnants of the dead remain in memory and space: preventing them from achieving absolute absence. Due to this, mourning encourages a consideration of the self in such terms: How present am I? How absent am I? Like Max's contemplation of the twins 'having one mind and two bodies' (89), grief forces a doubling of the self as the bereaved struggle to come to terms with present absences that surround them. In *Memoires for Paul de Man*, Derrida poses the question: 'what if there were a memory of the present and that far from fitting the present to itself, it divided the instant?' (90) The whole concept of the instant is divided for Max, between different spaces, time, but also forms of existence. In the instant of re-visiting the Cedars, Max recalls how

standing with Mrs Grace in that sunlit living room, or sitting with Chloe in the dark of the picture-house, I was there and not there, myself and revenant, immured in the moment and yet hovering somehow on the point of departure. (91)

After his double loss, Max feels that he is 'learning to live amongst the living again.' (92) Derrida states how 'the time of the "learning to live"' amounts to learning to 'live with ghosts. In any case from the other at the edge of life.' (93) Learning to be alive is taught by others, by memories and experiences the dead have left behind. Max is learning to live in the presence of ghostly memories, but also with the knowledge of a trace that deconstructs the systems of thought around him.

As the narrative comes to an end, Max 'recalls another moment' in Ballyless when 'the whole sea surged, it was not a wave, but a smooth rolling swell that seemed to come up from the deeps, as if something vast down there had stirred itself, and I was lifted briefly and carried a little way toward the shore and then was set down on my feet as before, as if nothing had happened.' (94) This memory enters Max's mind at exactly the right time. Faced with the death of his wife, he reminds himself of the sea: an escape into oblivion and a return to a past trauma in the search of atonement. After this recollection, a 'happy lightness' appears before Max, 'as if I had stepped suddenly out of the dark into a splash of pale, salt-washed sunlight'. The past has 'told me what to do, and where I must go.' (95) Escaping his daughter, the house he shared with his wife, and numerous sympathetic friends and relatives, Max retreats into his own memorial archive. Division between time and space provides an opening void for the creation of a ghost: or quite simply, a man in mourning.

1. Deane, Seamus, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, (London: Routledge, 1986), p.223.
2. Banville, John, *Frames Trilogy: Athena, The Book of Evidence, Ghosts*, (London: Picador, 2001), p.264.
3. Derrida, Jacques, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, and the New International*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.9.
4. Banville, *The Sea*, (London: Picador, 2005), p.237.
5. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.45.
6. *Ibid.*, p.2.
7. Kristeva, Julia, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1989), pp.4-5.
8. Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p.166.
9. Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, p.60.
10. Banville, *The Sea*, p.68.
11. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, p.86.
12. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.135.
13. *Ibid.*, p.39.
14. Cixous, Hélène, 'Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's The Uncanny'. *New Literary History* 7 (1976) p.543.
15. *Ibid.*, p.543.
16. Belsey, Catherine, *Post-structuralism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.83.
17. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.136.
18. *Ibid.*, p.161.

19. Banville, *The Sea*, p.119.
20. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.106.
21. *Ibid.*, p.129.
22. Banville, *The Sea*, p.260.
23. *Ibid.*, p.247.
24. Lustig, T.J. , *Henry James and the Ghostly*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.1.
25. Banville, *The Sea*, p.80.
26. Girard, René, *The Violence and the Sacred*, (London: John Hopkins Press, 1972), p.56.
27. Freud, 'The Uncanny' in Vincent, C. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, (London: Norton, 2001), p.940.
28. Banville, *The Sea*, p.116.
29. *Ibid.*, p.84.
30. *Ibid.*, p.137.
31. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p.167.
32. Banville, *The Sea*, p.119.
33. *Ibid.*, p.80.
34. *Ibid.*, p.119.
35. *Ibid.*, p.42.
36. *Ibid.*, p.70.
37. *Ibid.*, pp.128-9.
38. Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', p.165.
39. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p.12.

40. Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, (London: Verso, 1997), p.122.
41. Banville, *The Sea*, p.254.
42. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.84.
43. Banville, *The Sea*, p.148.
44. *Ibid.*, p.156.
45. *Ibid.*, p.146.
46. *Ibid.*, p.156.
47. *Ibid.*, pp.18-19.
48. *Ibid.*, p.143.
49. Derrida, 'Ghost Dance: An Interview with Jacques Derrida'. *Public 2* (1989) p.61.
50. Banville, *The Sea*, p.143.
51. *Ibid.*, p.143.
52. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.1.
53. Wigley, Mark, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*, (London: MIT Press, 1993), p.104.
54. *Ibid.*, p.106.
55. Banville, *The Sea*, p.112.
56. *Ibid.*, p.244.
57. Raban, Jonathan, ed., *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.20.
58. Banville, *The Sea*, p.132.
59. Raban, *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, p.23.

60. Ibid., p.4.
61. Banville, *Ghosts*, p.368.
62. Raban, *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, p.27.
63. Banville, *The Sea*, p.39.
64. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.26.
65. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997).
66. Belsey, *Post-structuralism*, p.83.
67. Bennington, Geoffrey, Jacques Derrida, (London, University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.75.
68. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.111.
69. Ibid., p.85.
70. Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.6.
71. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.111.
72. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.145.
73. Ibid., p.151.
74. Banville, *The Sea*, p.57.
75. Ibid., p.224.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, pp.57-8.
79. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.100.
80. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.17.

81. Ibid., p.101.
82. Banville, *The Sea*, p.163.
83. Ibid., p.76.
84. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p.4.
85. Bennington, Jacques Derrida, pp.16-18.
86. Banville, *The Sea*, p.193.
87. Ibid., p.247.
88. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.133.
89. Banville, *The Sea*, p.80.
90. Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, p.60.
91. Banville, *The Sea*, p.98.
92. Ibid., p.192
93. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p.xviii.
94. Banville, *The Sea*, p.264.
95. Ibid., p.26.

## **Rebel Yells: Genre Hybridity and Irishness in Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon's Preacher**

**Niall Kitson**

For those readers who are unfamiliar with Preacher, a brief synopsis has been provided in an Appendix at the end of this text.

Splatterpunk Western; religious satire; treatise on gender politics; philosophical meditation on the nature of good versus evil; shit-kicking romp through the heartlands of America - Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon's Preacher covered more ideological ground in its sixty-six issues than any other comic of its time. Running from 1995 to 2000, the story of Jesse Custer - reluctant man of god and even more reluctant carrier of the demon/angel hybrid Genesis - marked a step up for D.C.'s adult comic imprint Vertigo in terms of sex, violence and blasphemy and would become the standard by which future titles were judged. (1) Ostensibly a hero's journey beginning and ending in the great state of Texas, Ennis & Dillon's tale is an exhilarating saga of petty angels, failed suicides, redneck intolerance, international conspiracies, an insecure God and occasional meetings with The Duke. But while the iconography is pure Americana, the ideological engine of the story is a debate on the nature of faith, with a lilting accent hailing all the way from Belfast. The secret of Preacher's success, it will be argued, is its outsiders' perspective; a perspective which allows a free and easy splicing of the traditional Western with old school Gothic; all bound together with a double helix of the arcane. While its title hearkens back to simpler times on the frontier and its historical interludes originate from the Old West, the Vietnam War and the Irish Diaspora; the mechanics of Ennis & Dillon's diegesis is distinctly Irish in its construction of premise and character. As Joe R. Lansdale put it "there aren't two just like it." (2) It is this uniqueness of vision and style coming from Preacher's unifying Irish component that comes under examination here.

Beginning his writing career with Fleetway Publications' challenging hardened anthology Crisis, Garth Ennis' earliest published work Troubled Souls marked the first of a number of collaborations with artist John McCrae. Appearing in 1989 (and published as a collected work in 1990) Ennis' drama of a young Catholic pressed into service with the IRA caught the interest of editor Steve MacManus, who was drawn to it as a story set in Northern Ireland - at the time, uncharted territory for the magazine and a site of contemporary tensions sure to cut close to the bone. As one critic noted: "Troubled Souls is the superior work of two prodigiously talented creators and excels as a suspense story, as a political statement, and as a depiction of life in a particular place and time." (3)

Ennis continued to court controversy with his second work for Crisis. True Faith took dead aim at the Church when another disaffected loner comes under the wing of a psychotic toilet salesman who is aligned with a subversive organisation. Drawn by Warren Pleece (now working for DC), the less-than-respectful tone of the work led to controversy in the press and the pulping of the collected edition by Fleetway (later restored by Vertigo). A sequel to Troubled Souls, For a Few Troubles More, appeared in Crisis in 1990 and marked Ennis' final, currently unavailable, contribution - while a short



story, *Suburban Hell: A Dog & His Bastard*, appeared in a special edition of *Revolver* with artwork by Philip Swarbrick.

Later that year, Ennis went to work for 2000AD, writing the 6-part series *Chopper* (again with McCrea), before graduating to *Judge Dredd* where he had an extended run including the 6-issue *Emerald Isle*, which saw the eponymous lawman take a tour of a futuristic Ireland populated by a more sociable breed of policeman than he was accustomed to. Ennis' contribution to "The Galaxy's Greatest Comic" would last only a year before he began work on another *Revolver* special and a one-shot for *Comic Relief* and then joined DC/Vertigo full-time as a replacement for Jamie Delano on the ongoing series *Hellblazer* – a move that would prove pivotal in his career.

In *Hellblazer*, the story of paranormal investigator John Constantine (who originally appeared as a recurring character in Alan Moore's horror comic *Swamp Thing*), Delano's school of hard knocks approach set a precedent for bleak, adult story-telling. Ennis took up the challenge of having to maintain the high standards of the series with a number audacious moves: giving his protagonist lung cancer, for example, thereby compounding Constantine's ills by merging his mystical troubles with physical ones - not to mention a few scrapes involving his friends' drug habits, experiences in prostitution and rough treatment by the BNP (the fascistic British National Party).

Ennis' run on *Hellblazer* was also marked by a burgeoning interest in fallen angels and ultraviolence as well as his first collaboration with artist Steve Dillon. The end of the Ennis/Dillon run in 1994 was followed by a brief return to 2000AD before the release of the first issue of *Preacher* in 1995 – a project on which Ennis and Dillon had full creative control and would, in time, be widely acclaimed as their masterwork. (4)

Collecting issues 1-7, the initial trade paperback *Gone to Texas* acts as both the first movement of the narrative but also as a statement of intent; introducing narrative, plot and perspective in short order. Most importantly it sets the tone in terms of genre; an understanding of which is necessary in assessing the wider structure of the work.

Although sometimes derided as more of a straight-jacket than a launch-pad for creativity, the understanding of genre, particularly in the realm of cinema, is an important part of engaging and subverting audience expectations. Schatz, for example, argues that in film genres there is a contract between creator and audience, each type of story bringing with it a set of constructs and the baggage of previous works and, as such, a sense of the familiar (5). Expectation being half the battle, the other half is the delivery of the unexpected to balance the repetitive with the novel, yet such mechanistic approaches to writing are often criticised as valuing repetition over innovation in what is already deemed a restrictive canon. As Buscombe notes: "Many people wish to avoid the whole question of genre because it is held that it will lead to the laying down of rules and regulations which will arbitrarily restrict the freedom of the artist to create what he likes, or the freedom of the critic to talk about anything he wants to." (6)

The current understanding of genre, at the level of the audience at least, has moved on to treating convention as a language, in itself, capable of being subverted and reinvented through the manipulation of basic genre elements, such as iconography, setting and structure. In 1942, and somewhat ahead of their time, Welleck & Warren (7) argued that genre should be conceived in terms of a collection of works based upon a common 'inner form' and 'outer form'. The argument continues that 'inner form' goes to the deeper levels of thematics, subject matter and wider emotional, political and/or philosophical resonances. By contrast, the outer structure consists of elements such as setting, wardrobe and other miscellaneous qualities unique to the specific genre type. As a hybrid form of American Western and Gothic tale however, *Preacher* needs to be analysed first in terms of its separate parts in order to make sense of the whole.

A genre unique to American culture, the Western is a celebration of history and the human will to tame the land, as well an affirmation of rigid moral codes in which goodness triumphs. As the character Van der Pol puts it in Book 6, *Salvation*: "The myth of America: That simple, honest men, born of her Great Plains and woods and skies have made a nation of her, and will prove worthy of her when the time is right." (8)

For *Kitses* the Western reveals and celebrates the dichotomy that exists between the pastoral ideal and the realism of the city, the former with its wide open spaces full of possibilities, the latter with its poverty, vice and corruption. (9) Depicting the urban way of life as restrictive and rife with vices and excessive intellectualism, the untamed West speaks to different qualities in the American mind; a value system of freedom, honour, self-knowledge and a sense of tradition. Yet, this is of course counterbalanced by a brutality and violence, where the law has yet to take a foothold. The more formulaic Western often has no time for moral ambiguity: its plots are traditional linear narratives of revenge, reluctant heroes and high plains romance. (10) The visual structure of the Western is immediately recognisable - inhospitable settings, half-formed towns, chapels, saloons, jails, courthouses, outhouses and cathouses – garrison towns linking coast to coast. The wardrobe is similarly identifiable - ten gallon hats, dusty gingham, spurs and ladies' necklines which match their moral standing - the lower they go, the looser they get. Tools of the trade begin and end (almost) with the ubiquitous firearm, from Derringers, Colts and Winchester shotguns for the cowboys to knives, axes and bows for the "injuns". Playing second fiddle to the arsenal are the horses and the simple etiquette of saddled for men, side-saddled for ladies. Add to this the plot tensions of homesteader versus rancher and/or the civilising effect of the railroad, all of which mark the beginning of the end for the Western's archetypal lone hero. As powerful as any of the above may be, however, the addition of one potent quality seals the deal in identifying a Western: the iconography of its male stars; Henry Fonda, Jimmy Stewart, Roy Rogers and, it goes without saying, John Wayne – good bad men all (11).

In *Preacher* all of the above can be found in full effect. (12) Dillon's character designs generally sport a simple wardrobe of chinos, blue jeans and open collared shirts, not to mention the wide brimmed hats of every yokel trooper south of the Mason Dixon line – the character of Sheriff Root in Book 1 seems to walk straight out of Dodge and onto the page, via the X-Files. Dillon compounds the familiarity of this environment with a series of no-horse-towns such as *Salvation*, desert-scapes purpose built for

showdowns with a brigade of tanks and helicopters (13) (as in Book 6) and The Alamo itself (in Book 9) – the only real place Custer's story can end. All of this is hemmed in with splintery panelling virtually creaking at the seams with the weight of detail.

Jesse Custer is a paragon of the Western ideal, a man of principle he is quick to action and has no problem with lethal force, either from the barrel of a gun or the back of his hand.

He values friendship above all else and will go to the ends of the Earth for his 'pardner' Cassidy, as shown in Book 3 where the action shifts to France and Jesse rescues Cassidy from the clutches of The Grail. Custer is also, for better or worse, mired in old-fashioned chivalry, much to the chagrin of his beloved Tulip, herself a gun for hire. The final straw in the matter of affiliations with the Western is the constant reappearance of The Duke (quite obviously John Wayne although never actually name checked), as Custer's spirit guide.

While Preacher's representation of Custer's psychosis aligns his character with the Gothic it also helps position him as the quintessential cowboy. As Warshow notes "Where the Westerner lives it is always 1870". Custer is by design the embodiment of this ideal but, as will be shown later, he is also a hypocritical relic, out of time. (14) This leads back to the idea of the mythic in the Western. Central to the genre is a core of rational, upstanding, Protestant values, balanced out by a belief in the almost supernatural powers of its icons. Kitses summarises the evolving mindset of the Western as: "a] romantic narrative which insisted on the idealisation of characters who wielded near magical powers. Recurrent confrontations between the personified forces of good and evil, testimony to the grip of New England Calvinist ethic, had soon focused the tales in the direction of morality play." (15)

This warping of history into a national myth of 'great men' and faith-based expansionism takes the Western into the realms of genre proper, where conventions can be moulded and refit according to the premise and demands of the story, its creator and its audience. Salisbury's interview with Ennis confirms the important role of genre convention in this regard: "The idea of the Western was important to me because it allows you to have archetypal characters: the hero, the girlfriend, the roguish sidekick, the comic relief, the villain who's a total, horrible shit." (16)

While the 'idea' of the Western forms one half of the genre play that is Preacher the second strand brings in a strong element of the supernatural; allowing for deeper analysis of the concepts of institutional corruption, faith and redemption in the form of the Gothic. Predating the Western era by some 100 years, Gothic literature has generally been treated as a salacious brand of fiction riddled with inconsistency, superstition, and blasphemy. (17) Working off the mantra of 'excess, ruin and death' Gothic fiction has a history of exploring the nature and the cause of evil. Using melodramatic imagery and scenarios to evoke a sense of the sublime – the Gothic often goes against the grain of rationality to do so, aiming for emotional resonance over intellectual debate. The interpretation of Gothic fiction has ranged from a dismissal of the canon as mere sensationalism to a celebration of the genre as subversive and experimental form which challenges the reader's experience through a combination of uncanniness and

horror. (18) Botting writes of the Gothic's appeal in terms of its aesthetic of illogic, superstition and subversion:

Drawing on myths, legends and folklore of medieval romances, Gothic conjured up magical worlds, and tales of knights, monsters, ghosts...untamed by reason and unrestrained by conventional 18th century demands for simplicity....Gothic fictions seemed to promote vice and violence, giving free reign to selfish ambitions and desires beyond the proscriptions of law or family duty.(19)

Applying the Welleck & Warner model of inner and outer form to the Gothic garner throws up with it a number of preconceptions and narrative conventions solidified over hundreds of years. Sedgwick, in her post-Freudian reading of the genre, lists the constants in Gothic fiction as follows:

[plots are] likely to be discontinuous and involuted, incorporating tales within tales, changes of narration, such framing devices as found manuscripts or interpolated histories. You know that certain characteristic preoccupations will be aired. These will include the priesthood and monastic institutions, sleep-like and death-like states, subterranean spaces and live burial, doubles, the discovery of obscured family ties, affinities between narrative and pictorial art, possibilities of incest, unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, the unspeakable, the poisonous effects of guilt or shame, nocturnal landscapes or dreams, apparitions from the past, Faustian pacts, wandering Jew-like figures, civil insurrections and fires, the charnel house and the mad house.(20)

Already from the above a veritable checklist of the Preacher formula can be put together; its meandering journey narrative with an array of tributaries; the partnering of the sexual private detectives; the inimitable Jesus de Sade; the serial killer, Serial Si; Custer's profession as a man of God; the Grail; Tulip's downward spiral into self-pity; the disfigured Arseface's odyssey to superstardom and back again, Cassidy doomed existence as an immortal wandering-jew, all fit the model. (21)

A further Gothic component in the narrative is that of the Big House family drama. Book 2, *Until The End Of The World*, explores Custer's childhood but also depicts the first interaction between the Almighty and the protagonists; the first of many interactions fraught with scheming tension and hostility. This slice of distinctively Southern Gothic is accentuated by the addition of a grotesque matriarch, cross burning rednecks, bestiality and deformed children.

Supplementary Gothic elements in the story include the iconography of supernatural beings such as demons and vampires as well as settings of ruins, crumbling mansions and forbidding landscapes - often used as metaphors for darker places of the psyche. (22) Straddling elements of both core genres, the chilling character of The Saint of Killers is a perfect hybrid construct, matching the single-minded menace of the high plains drifter with guns that never empty, shots that never go astray and the ghosts of hundreds following in his wake. Similarly, Cassidy who is one part Doc Holliday and one part Shane MacGowan has a foot in both the Western and the Gothic. However, he also acts as the linchpin holding Ennis' world together – a role that shall be examined in due course.

Thematically, the Gothic has long been preoccupied with questions about the nature of evil and its presence in the world, the primacy of the soul, and Man's relationship with God, one only has to think of such canonical texts as Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), James Hogg's *Memoirs of A Justified Sinner* (1824), and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). As Journet writes "There can be no deep knowledge of evil without a deep knowledge of God." (23) In *Preacher* this "deep knowledge" goes beyond a conversation with the finer points of Christian thought, turning instead into a full-blown critique of the concept of faith. Ennis' motive in this regard stems from his own childhood experiences:

I remember the first time I ran across religion. I have this memory of the teacher sitting us all down and telling us about God, who was a special friend and lived in our heart and knew what we were doing always. He loved us and watched us and if we loved him back...then he would reward us...I was so freaked by the idea of him being in your heart and seeing everything you do...That was my first exposure to the idea of religion and I suppose its never made more sense than that. (24)

Similarly short shrift is given to the costume-drama hysterics of Book 2, when sexual deviant Jesus De Sade is beaten to a pulp for videotaping child abuse during an orgy and, in Book 5, when Cassidy kills the solipsistic vampire leader of a cabal of fetishists.

Contemporary critics have argued that, as the world runs out of mystery, horror has gradually crept inside the psyche and taken a firm foothold in the mind. Botting, for example, traces a progression of terrors from without to terrors from within as societal norms become more liberal. Fantasy, madness, the loss of freedom and the uncanny are recurring features in the modern Gothic and all are made use of in *Preacher*, particularly in Book 2, where the Langelles' clan's twisted regime becomes responsible for Jesse's continued visits with The Duke as well as his parents' murder. Another aspect of more contemporary Gothic is also represented here; a body-horror and brutality of the violence in which bodies are made seem like little more than turgid water-balloons ready to pop at a moment's notice. The effect of splatter for sheer shock-value (and occasionally slapstick) can never be understated.

While both the Western and the Gothic are evoked in equal measure in *Preacher*, "on paper" the mix should not work. The Western as a modern, secular (albeit it Protestant-fuelled) genre, comes with it a realism based on the concrete, agrarian reality of American history...the more realistic the better. In the other corner broods the Gothic; a romantic genre concerned with flights of fancy, emotional effect and the supernatural with a conflicted religious identity- here heavy leaning toward Catholic iconography including angels, demons and gods - valuing effect over rationality... the scarier the better. Appearing inherently incompatible the argument for genre plasticity would seem to be imperilled but for a vital third element which binds these genres together with a decidedly green streak of arcane Gaelic mythology and history. It is here that the "Irishness" of *Preacher* comes to the fore, legitimising the link of the Gothic and the Western through a mythic structure which predates both genres and is introduced by a combination of back-story and plot through the character of Cassidy.

Predating the printed word and characterised by a level field of interaction between man and the gods, the introduction of the Irish element in the narrative creates a space where Custer can spit in the face of the Almighty not as a contrivance but as a legitimate course of action. As O’Cathaisigh argues: “Irish myth is primarily concerned with the relationship between man and the Gods and that the myth of the hero is used as a vehicle for exploring this relationship.”(25)

The genius of Ennis & Dillon here lies in the creation of Custer, the rational hero, and the placing of him in direct contact with God, in a relationship not defined by shock and awe but by contempt and loathing. For this relationship to work however there has to be a link from Custer’s rational, Western viewpoint to the supernatural world of the Almighty; because, as a preacher in the rational world, this relationship with God cannot exist. This is where the character of Cassidy comes into play. In terms of construction, Cassidy represents the addition of a Catholic culture of faith and mischief with its assorted cast of angels, an interventionist God and the presence of miracles. A flawed sidekick, in the tradition of Doc Holliday, Cassidy is a creature of compulsion damned by his need for blood but also for more worldly drugs such as alcohol and heroin. Here he is beholden to the world of the primeval but also to the world of men. He is unmistakably Irish but is deeply in love with his adopted home. His friendship with Custer is unshakable but his love for Tulip (and those before her) is toxic. This duality of character goes straight to the heart of the Western/Gothic, secular/supernatural relationship in *Preacher* but also echoes Ennis’ own perspective on the America he is writing about. Where authenticity may falter in the Texan idiom he emulates, Ennis can only succeed in balancing the scales through Cassidy. As a narrative construction Cassidy provides continuity between the world of men and God. (26) Proof of his pivotal function is easily identifiable in *Salvation* where Custer’s story takes on a distinctly realistic tone when he separates from Tulip and Cassidy. Ennis’ challenge here is to make Cassidy an organic part of the story as opposed to a contrivance designed to knit narrative disparities together. This problem is resolved by providing him with a detailed backstory covering not just Cassidy’s own life in America but also the wider social and political climate of the times, turning the vampire into an everyman for the Ellis Island generation.

Much of the groundwork for Cassidy’s backstory is provided in the latter stages of Book 3, *Proud Americans*, which covers his involvement in the 1916 rising and his rebirth as a creature of the night. Cassidy’s brother, Patrick, who has led Cassidy out through a side-door of the GPO in the midst of the fighting, rails against the political naiveté of the rebellion. Shocked at the solipsistic ramblings of Pádraig Pearse and his lust for a ‘blood sacrifice’, Patrick eschews the notion that “a terrible beauty is born”, and leads his brother to escape through the streets of Dublin, swimming the River Liffey to the South Side and to safety. In conversation on the way to a safe-house, somewhere west of the city, it emerges Cassidy’s parents were of a mixed marriage and that Patrick had only gone to fight to protect his brother from certain death at the hands of the British. Such a pragmatic streak may have been enough to keep them out of harms way from the political forces of the time however it is an unfortunate encounter with a decidedly otherworldly creature that claims young Cassidy’s (human) life and brings about his rebirth as a vampire.

What sets Cassidy’s demonic siring apart from the other vampires who pop up from time to time in the series is that his experience is not based on a decadence and consent but rather is the result of a feral compulsion entirely bereft of romance. Cassidy is attacked by a silent creature of spindly, haggard

appearance vanishes into the night at the first sign of resistance. This kind of subhuman undead demon operates in direct contrast to the posturing deviants of Book 5; Cassidy's is an experience more like that depicted in *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) than in *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Conventional narratives of vampire attacks may have gone on to include a romantic courtship; a lengthy apprenticeship; a coming to terms with new-found abilities and appetites, but keeping the plot lean and mean here Ennis leaves Cassidy to fend for himself before a chance meeting necessitates an escape from the Old Country to America and the start of the next movement in Cassidy's biography; the migration narrative.

Continuing Cassidy's journey by transferring him to America brings with it a whole other set of cultural baggage, effectively changing his story from the tale of a hopeless outsider to a free agent with the world at his feet. The significance of exile and the reversal of status as a means to broaden character is not lost on Ennis either, who further uses the change of scenery to eschew the conventions of vampire fiction for a more sober account of the (still) New World. The effect of a different shore on the complexion can be rebirth in itself: "By virtue of its conceptual status, exile becomes and aesthetic agent, an imaginative resource capable of both influencing and rereading a text's intellectual presuppositions and formal attainments." (27)

Cassidy's New York is also an archetypal account of Irish experience marked with the pitfalls of the time. Dillon's cityscapes by lamplight offer a sepia tinted look of a towering city, as imposing as it is impressive, filled with dangers and unexpected friendships within a block of each other. As Coogan writes: "The emigrant faced a variety of dangers: improper lodging houses, illusive advertisements, crooked contractors, dishonest prospectors and remitted sharpers." (28)

The Irish emigrant in these circumstances often did not have the benefit of financial backing or educational qualifications, instead relying on a work ethic to get by. Furthermore, the majority of Irish emigrants were single, generally youthful and unskilled. Indeed for the duration of Cassidy's stay in New York his status as a creature out-of-step with the march of time only becomes an issue as his immortality becomes more apparent in contrast to his drinking buddies' ageing. The lack of curiosity on their part is also indicative of the mood of the time, when the migrant population could be described as: "a variegated and discordant clan of emigrants, expatriates and escapees of one kind or another." (29)

Cassidy (his immortality a constant double-edged sword), finds himself even out of this loop. Leaving New York, he brings his charms to Texas and into the company of one gun-toting Tulip O'Hare and her ex-boyfriend, the Rev. Jesse Custer. Thus the central cast is assembled.

The synthesis of the Western and the Gothic accordingly completed, there remains an element not yet accounted for in the linear coming together of form and their construction as a narrative; that element is character. Every character in Ennis' work has a value system, those who appear good have an innate darkness to them and even the blackest of demons is capable of acting to a moral code – only the simpering Almighty refuses to demonstrate any depth beyond a craven need for affection and validation. The roots of such irreverent (pun intended) writing can be traced back to the Irish tradition where the

rebel is romanticised despite a prevailing moral conservatism. Actor Aidan Quinn has summed up this quality as follows:

Many people in Ireland with this incredibly strong conservative strain to them – they never do this and they never do that and never say a bad word and then there's this wildness, the love of life, this love of song and dance and laughter...And both sides of the character are revered and held up as something you're supposed to be. It's slightly schizophrenic.(30)

This double standard rings true with each character in *Preacher*. Custer is capable of great violence and tenderness within the confines of his moral code but he is also an outlaw with an evil eye Balor would have been proud of. Cassidy rides a knife edge from the savage to the sarcastic on a whim, and even The Saint of Killers has a background steeped in pathos and is not averse to making a deal when it suits his needs.

Cassidy's dualistic nature is perhaps the most apparent in terms of audience sympathy, as he goes from hellraiser to innocent abroad, before becoming a junkie and a leech capable of the grossest acts of violence against women; he will even sacrifice his own self-respect to feed his habit, when heroin addiction sends him through a string of lovers, each one left emotionally and physically battered by his habit. Believing Custer to be dead, Tulip becomes increasingly dependant on Cassidy. However, with it is the revelation of Cassidy's true nature which spurs Custer on to avenge tenfold the harm done to Tulip through months of soul-destroying substance abuse.

The inevitable conclusion for the series lies in the strongest culmination of the Western, the Gothic and Irish myth: a showdown at The Alamo. The finale also ties together the three strands of the story: Tulip and The Grail, Cassidy and Custer, The Saint of Killers and God. (31) For all who deserve it, redemption is at hand as Cassidy makes a Faustian pact with The Almighty to save Custer's life in exchange for the release of Genesis. This act of selflessness rescues Cassidy from his compulsions and offers him a chance of personal salvation. Artistically, these final confrontations are depicted in a series of splash pages (32) including handwritten letters, a harsh landscape finally at peace with itself, and lastly the quintessential ride into the sunset under a desert sky.

In the final analysis, *Preacher's* Irish accent turns up a series of Ellis' own preoccupations with his experience of religion as a child, yet these are filtered through a national obsession with the American Western and a rich history of cultural exchange and integration through the experiences of the Irish diaspora. As a dramatic device the character of Cassidy acts as a cipher, linking together both nations and also their respective literary traditions. It is also the figure of Cassidy which enables Ennis' to access and fully realise his status as an outsider writing within an American idiom. Linking genres through a shared cultural history; linking the real and the unreal through vampirism and drug addiction; linking the spiritual and the blasphemous through personal experience, *Preacher's* narrative may very aptly be described as a story "out of Ireland, dragged through Texas with a bloody hard-on, wrapped in barbed wire and rose thorns."(33) Through no small measure of invention Ennis and Dillon have constructed a mythical world



of outlaws, demons and deities that would feel every bit at home in the Irish midlands as on the open range. Almost.

1. Founded in 1993, Vertigo is an imprint of DC comics established to publish material of a less mainstream and more adult-orientated bent. To date Vertigo titles have been characterised by realistic depictions of violence, sex and other “mature” content and generally do not cover superheroes or any material associated with the mainstream “DC Universe” of Batman, Superman etc. Its first title, *Saga of The Swamp Thing* was published in 1993 followed by *Hellblazer* and *Sandman*. Unlike its parent company, who relies on monthly sales, Vertigo secured its market share in collected works or “trade paperbacks” (often mistaken for graphic novels proper). Vertigo has recently expanded its remit into film with involvement in *Constantine* (2005), *V for Vendetta* (2005) and *A History of Violence* (2005), originally published by Paradox Press. Current popular books include Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra’s *Y: The Last Man* and Brian Wood and Riccardo Burchielli’s *DMZ*.
2. Lansdale, Joe R. in Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Gone to Texas*. (New York: DC/Vertigo, 1996) p.1
3. Osborne, S.L. 27 September 1998. “Drinking With the Boys: An Evening with Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon” 3 January 2007 <[www.sequentialart.com](http://www.sequentialart.com)>
4. A complete Garth Ennis bibliography can be found at Michael Karpas, *Garth Ennis Bibliography*. 3 January 2007. <[www.enjolasworld.com/HTML%20Bibliographies/Garth%20Ennis%20Bibliography.htm](http://www.enjolasworld.com/HTML%20Bibliographies/Garth%20Ennis%20Bibliography.htm)>
5. Schatz, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and The Studio System*. (New York: Random House, 1981)
6. Buscombe, E. “The idea of Genre in American Cinema” *Screen* 11(2) March/April 1970 p.6
7. Welleck, R. & Warren, A. *Theory of Literature*. (1942, 3rd. ed., New York: Harcourt, 1956)
8. Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Salvation*. (New York: DC/Vertigo, 1999) p.95
9. Kitses, Jim. *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: BFI, 1969)
10. As described in Johnson, G. *The Western in Images* 6 <[www.imagesjournal.com/issue06/infocus/western](http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue06/infocus/western)> 16/2/2007 p.1
11. *Ibid* p.5, p.2

12. This is not to say the Western begins and ends with these same elements. The so-called 'Spaghetti Westerns' of Sergio Leone introduced a mud-caked realism while Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) depicted a landscape of casual violence and misogyny completely at odds with "tradition". Clint Eastwoods' *Unforgiven* (1992) and Jonathan Hillcoat's *The Proposition* (2005) added moral complexities worthy of any contemporary drama but these do not figure in Ennis & Dillon's world.
13. Specifically Monument Valley where *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956) were filmed.
14. Warshow, Robert, *The Immediate Experience Movies, Comics, Theatre, and Other Aspects of Popular Culture*. (New York: Athenium Books, 1970)
15. Kitses, 1969 p.5
16. Salisbury, M., *Writers on Comics Scriptwriting* (London: Titan, 1999) p.90
17. Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* was published in 1764 laying down a historical marker for the establishment of Gothic fiction. By contrast Westerns in print and film are primarily interested in the period 1850-1900.
18. Sedgwick, Eve. Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. (New York: Arno, 1980)
19. Botting, Fred. *Gothic (The New Critical Idiom)*. (Oxford: Routledge, 1995) pp3-4
20. Sedgwick, p.8
21. Freddy and Bob (Sexual Investigators) appear in books 2 and 8 while decadent pervert Jesus de Sade appears Book 2. Serial Si is a serial killer appearing in Book 1. Arseface is a deformed failed suicide who devotes himself to exacting revenge on Custer for the death of his father.
22. McAndrew, Elizabeth. *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*. (New York: Columbia, 1924)
23. Journet, Charles Cardinal C. *The Meaning of Evil*. (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1963) p.26
24. Salisbury, p.77
25. Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, 'The Concept of the Hero in Irish Mythology', in *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Richard Kearney (Wolfhound; Dublin, 1985), p. 79
26. The same could be said of *The Saint of Killers* but for the fact that his origins remain undisclosed until later in the narrative and his character as gun for hire only later transforms in a sympathetic loner with a mission. The representation of Cassidy's character, in contrast, is a constant.

27. O'Brien, George, "The Aesthetics of Exile" in *Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories*, ed. Liam Harte and Michael Parker. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Dublin: Macmillan, 2000) p.36
28. Coogan, T.P., *Wherever Green is Worn: the story of the Irish Diaspora* (Surrey: Arrow, 2000) p.284
29. O'Brien, p.35
30. Coogan, p.350
31. An overview of the historical significance of The Alamo in Texan history can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Alamo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Alamo) 18/1/2007
32. A page(s) containing a single large image.
33. Lansdale, 1996 p.4

Books in the Preacher Series:

- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Gone to Texas*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1996
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Proud Americans*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1997
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Until the End of The World*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1997
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Ancient History*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1998
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Dixie Fried*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1998
- Ennis, G. Dillon, S. & Snejbjerg, P. *Preacher: War In The Sun*. New York: DC/Vertigo 1999
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: Salvation*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 1999
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. *Preacher: All Hells A-Coming*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 2000
- Ennis, G. & Dillon, S. (2001) *Preacher: Alamo*. New York: DC/Vertigo, 2001

## Appendix

A product of the union between an angel and a Demon “Genesis” escapes heaven, prompting God to leave his throne in the care of the archangel, Seraphi caste. Quickly the lesser Adephi caste, originally charged with containing Genesis, dispatches The Saint of Killers to retrieve it and kill whatever human host it finds. Merging with the soul of Jesse Custer, a disillusioned minister working in the town of Annville, Genesis destroys both church and congregation, leaving only rubble behind. By chance Custer is found unconscious in the ruins by his ex-girlfriend and gun for hire Tulip O’Hare and an Irish vampire named Cassidy. Custer learns that Genesis has given him a power equal to that of God in the “The Word” allowing him manipulate people’s actions around him. In a standoff with The Saint of Killers and an Adephi, the truth about God’s escape from Heaven is revealed and Custer resolves to find the Lord and hold him accountable for the state of the world.

Jesse and Tulip are kidnapped by his redneck uncles, TC and Jody, and brought to the family home, Angelville. Reliving the trauma of an unhappy childhood at the hands of his uncles and the malevolent matriarch Ms Marie L’Angelle, Custer deals with memories of the deaths of his parents, friends and pet dog, as well as his hallucinations of John Wayne. In L’Angelville God appears to Ms Marie and entrusts her with the mission to dissuade Custer from his quest. Jody shoots Tulip in the head, killing her instantly only to be resurrected by the Lord as a sign of his love. Custer and Tulip destroy Angelville and continue more resolute than ever to hold God to account.

Rumours of Custer’s power spreads to Starr, a member of the secret society, The Grail, entrusted with the bloodline of Jesus. With the current ancestor of Christ exposed as a 16 year old, retarded after generations of inbreeding, Starr sets his sights on Custer as a true messiah, a plan which quickly turns into a personal vendetta leading to the destruction of the grail.

Custer travels across America to New Orleans where a voodoo ritual tells him the exact nature of Genesis and the history of The Saint of Killers as a mortal man rendered sociopath by the death of his family – later attributed to direct intervention from God.

Starr tries to capture Custer during a showdown in Monument Valley at which The Saint of Killers decimates what is left of the Grail’s private army. A nuclear device is set off in an attempt to kill The Saint, failing but Custer cannot escape the blast and is feared dead. Cassidy lures Tulip into a world of drug addiction while Custer, minus an eye, makes his own way from coast to coast.

Reunited with Tulip, Custer makes Cassidy his enemy and a deal with The Saint of Killers. A showdown at the Alamo sees Starr, Custer and Cassidy all dead and the release of Genesis while The Saint of Killers takes the throne in Heaven, shooting the Lord in the process. Having already made a deal with God however Custer is brought back to life and Cassidy himself returns to Earth as a mortal.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Tartarus Press**

**Strange Tales, ed. Rosalie Parker (North Yorkshire: Tartarus, 2003)**

**&**

**Wormwood: Literature of the Fantastic, Supernatural & Decadent, 1-6, 2003-2006**

**Dara Downey**

the horror genre is extremely limber, extremely adaptable, extremely useful; the author or filmmaker can use it as a crowbar to lever open locked doors or a small, slim pick to tease the tumblers into giving. The genre can thus be used to open almost any lock on the fears which lie behind the door [...].

(Stephen King, *Danse Macabre* (1982), 163)

When King is at his best, he can be remarkably adept at cutting to the core of the genre of which he is the self-proclaimed “King”. Nevertheless, however astute such isolated observations as the above comment might be, it is always possible to find another, equally astute observation, that both contradicts what he is saying and undermines whatever favourable impression of his analytical skills we may have. Elsewhere in *Danse Macabre*, for example, King states confidently that Henry James’ “The Turn of the Screw, with its elegant drawing-room prose and its tightly woven psychological logic, has had very little influence on the American masscult” of mainstream horror (*Danse Macabre*, 66). What this suggests is that the flexibility which he sees as the defining characteristic of horror has (for him at any rate) a breaking point, a suggestion well in line with his near-hysterical insistence that aesthetic values and intellectual rigour are antithetical to the aims and effects of the genre.

It is precisely this sort of inverted snobbery that Tartarus Press are striving to overthrow. Their journal, *Wormwood*, includes articles on Algernon Blackwood and Oliver Onions in the same context as studies of Ray Bradbury and Joyce Carol Oates. It also includes authors more accurately categorised as “decadent”, but who, through this juxtaposition, are revealed as indispensable to an understanding of horror in general. In a somewhat different manner, Tartarus’ collection of new short stories, *Strange Tales*, is a timely reminder that “elegant drawing-room prose” and “tightly woven psychological logic” are perfect vehicles for the peculiar amorphousness of twenty-first century fear, ranging as it does from nameless dread to physical revulsion, and encompassing everything in between - much like the volume itself. Both *Wormwood* and *Strange Tales* make perfectly clear what King - despite, or perhaps because of his currently status within horror fiction - seems to have forgotten. When Gothic and horror narratives are most successful, it is due primarily to their power to unsettle their readers profoundly, whatever their content, approach or style. *Wormwood* and *Strange Tales*, as I shall argue, reinstate one of the most central aspects of “traditional”, Radcliffean Gothic - the realisation that, in order to give shape and voice to the fears of the present, we must plunder and rework the images and terrors of the past. In this way, Tartarus Press’ oeuvre seems both more modern and more radical than most of King’s writing (and certainly more so than much of his recent work), unafraid as Tartarus is of finding horror in unlikely places.

Far from being confined to simply trawling the back catalogue of August Derleth and William Hope Hodgson, in search of something other than blood, guts and psycho-murderer types, *Wormwood*, subtitled *Literature of the Fantastic, Supernatural & Decadent*, is admirably capacious. Reviewing and critiquing thrillers and mysteries alongside works that fit neatly under the heading of “fantastic and supernatural” fiction, this biannual journal shows up as arbitrary and even damaging the strict enforcement of such categorisations; and indirectly hints that, by refusing and undermining them, a better understanding can be gained of fiction in general. This is achieved primarily through three forms of articles - literary biographies of little-known writers; scholarly articles on specific texts or authors; and reprints of obscure stories and other writings. In my opinion, it is in the area of literary biography that *Wormwood* most fully succeeds. *Wormwood* 5, from Autumn 2005, for example, features a fascinating article on the life and work of Victor Benjamin Neuberg, who is described by Richard Neff as follows:

At the age of sixteen he joined the family firm, which imported canes, fibres and rattans, but it quickly became apparent that a conventional life was not for him. He felt the call to be a poet and dabbled with agnosticism and vegetarianism until he settled on the paganism and ritual magic of Aleister Crowley. (33)

The assured and fluid quality of the writing here, along with careful research and the insightful but by no means reverential reading of Neuberg’s own writings with which the article concludes, far from being isolated to this particular article, characterise *Wormwood* as a whole. Notable examples include Jeff Gardiner’s plangent piece on forgotten fantasist Francis Stevens, who influenced H.P. Lovecraft, among others (No. 2, Spring 2004); and Brian R. Banks’ massively detailed and philosophically complex ‘Trajectory of a Comet: Poland’s Arch-Decadent, Stanislaw Przybyszewski’ (No. 6, Spring 2006). My personal favourite is Adam Daly’s essay on Lionel Erskine Britton, whose 1984-esque *Brain: A Play of the Whole Earth* (1930) comes across as pleasantly surreal and radical, the kind of angry science fiction that doesn’t seem to get written any more. All three articles are poignant reminders of how easily an author, however famous during his or her own lifetime, can slip into the murky waters of the great unread (Mr. King take note). At the same time, and for this reason, they constitute a call to arms for academics, and in particular those who see the very purpose of studying supernatural, Gothic and horror fiction to be to expand and even dismantle the concept of a canon. If this is the case, then surely it is to authors such as those featured in *Wormwood* that we should be turning in order to get beyond the notion of the genre as monolithic - indeed, as an unproblematically coherent genre at all.

The quality, however, is not always so high, primarily due to the fact that (surprisingly for a journal so very dedicated to the recreation of the milieux in which authors lived) many of the articles offering readings of texts rather than of writers are characterised by a somewhat unexamined, not to mention outmoded, acceptance of psychoanalysis as an ideal tool for “demystifying” supernatural fiction. In particular, Stephen Sennitt’s article ‘Phantom Doubles: A Freudian Reading of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” and Hoffman’s “The Sandman”’ (No. 5, Autumn 2005) is at once naïve and commonplace, as well as being exemplary of the kind of laziness that characterises so many commentators on horror and the fantastic. Apart from any other possible objections to such a reading,

Freud himself has already read 'The Sandman' in this manner in his essay 'The "Uncanny"', and to do so again only serves to repeat the tendency of critics, uncomfortable with the implications of horror and Gothic fiction, to confine these tales firmly within the individual psyche, thereby denying whatever potentially subversive comments they might make about society, culture and hegemonic power. Along the same lines, only much better, is Jeff Gardiner's 'Some Dark Ancestral Sense: Awe in the Work of Algernon Blackwood' (No. 5, Autumn 2005), which has some interesting things to say about the supernatural origins of fear. Similar concerns underlie Jyri-Pekka Luoma's 'Phantasmagoria & Psyche in Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde,' (No. 2, Spring 2004) which displays considerable critical daring and subtlety, an impressive feat in the face of well-worn material.

The highlight of the whole journal, however (for me at any rate) is the inclusion in Wormwood 5 of Robert Aikman's previously unpublished short tale 'The Fully Conducted Story'. Recounting the narrator/protagonist's strange experience at a stately home while on holiday in Tuscany, the story begins as he leaves his ailing wife alone at their hotel. It is only at the very close of the tale itself we discover that she in fact dies soon after they have left Italy. This chilling little aside suggests a comparison with Ray Bradbury's sublime 'The Next in Line' (a tale Joel Lane praises repeatedly in his two-part article on Bradbury, which appears in Wormwood 5 & 6). While it may not quite live up to such a comparison, Aikman's offering is certainly a satisfyingly creepy little tale unmarred by cheap explanations or gaudy special effects. What raises it to the level of greatness, however, is Glen Cavaliero's stunning reading of the story which follows. Somewhat chary of Aikman's quality as a writer, Cavaliero nonetheless praises where praise is due, and asserts astutely:

the truly frightening thing about Aikman's best work is that it posits the conclusion that the uncanny intrusions are in fact irruptions, evidences of where we are at, and of what we are producing. His "ghosts" are self-generating elements in a material world that we regard as stable and unchanging. They are demons of matter. (8)

Not only does this neatly sidestep the ho-hum conventionality of a cheap Freudian reading, it does so while still focusing on the inner workings of the protagonist's mind. Cavaliero carries off the tricky feat of problematising the superficially self-effacing first-person narrator, who initially appears to be Aikman himself, but who, in Cavaliero's hands, becomes a slippery customer whose narrative strategies and callous attitude towards his wife collude in a complex act of dissembling and omission. When considered together with Douglas A. Anderson's introduction to William Hope Hodgson's pseudo-scientific piece 'The Psychology of Species' in No. 6 (Spring 2006), which displays a similar lack of reverence and cutting but insightful analysis, it becomes clear that this is certainly where Wormwood's talents lie - in close readings of obscure texts, informed by detailed knowledge of the authors and their work. By printing the texts themselves alongside masterly interpretations, the reader is invited to do likewise, thereby encouraging new scholarship and iconoclasm.

Hopefully, this may also prove to be the case with *Strange Tales*. Few of the contributions to Rosalie Parker's beautifully presented collection of new short stories fail to unsettle or disturb, and yet, as a whole, the volume's success can be attributed to the sheer variety of tone, effect and subject matter. The

blurb on the inside dust-cover (made of a lovely creamy vellum, complete with a suggestively sinister line drawing) is commendably reluctant to place the stories under a single defining banner, stating only that they belong to “the fields of supernatural, fantasy, and horror, [and that] they will entertain, chill, and delight in equal measure.”

What *Strange Tales* does in particular is not only pay frequent homage to the kind of stories discussed in the journal - evoking a sense of creeping dread that can frequently (if not always) prove more effective than quantities of gore - but also make use of the violence and viscerality so central to twenty-first century conceptions of horror (and even of Gothic) and do so well. In particular, I refer to Adam Daly's six-page exercise in testing the limits of what a reader can stand, 'The Self-Eater' which does exactly what its title promises (or threatens). It recounts how a man, out of little more than curiosity and a desire for power, very calmly and methodically consumes his own body. The process is described in excruciating but exquisite detail and, as far as sheer “gross-out” factor goes, gives Chuck Palahnuik's story 'Guts' (from his novel *Haunted*) more than a run for its money, primarily as a result of the eerie detachment of the narrator's tone, and the undeniable quality of the writing. Somewhat less obviously graphic but far more suggestively so is Len Maynard and Mick Sims' 'Between the Dead Men and the Blind', the disordered notes of an equally disordered mind. Yet another first-person narrator begins by telling us in a somewhat desultory manner of his unsuccessful relationship with his father and his sense of having been denied maternal affection, particularly in the form of breast feeding. The story ends with the appalling suggestion that he cannibalises the women he sleeps with while actually making love to them. Equally horrific is David Rix's "Number 18", the story of a young girl haunted - and eventually, or so it seems, consumed body and soul - by the face of the man who has sexually abused her. Less graphic again is the opening story, Quentin S. Crisp's 'Cousin X', a deeply atmospheric piece most of which is devoted to detailing the growing bond between a little girl and her mentally disturbed cousin, who enjoys taking apart radios and watches so that he can put them back together. Creating an enchanted world around the two of them, he leads her to believe that he has power over the physical and indeed the spiritual universe, culminating in an intense experience when they seem to float out of their bodies. The idyll is shattered, however, when he does to a small animal what he has been doing to mechanical objects, and the little girl, who can't stop screaming, is forbidden by her parents ever to see Cousin X again. Years later, however, they meet at a wedding, their bond seemingly unbroken by the childhood trauma; the girl isolated from life and wishing for escape, and the all-too-inevitable result of this meeting is at once horrifying and oddly touching.

Inevitably, in a collection of fourteen tales, there will be a certain unevenness of quality, and I would not wish to suggest that this is not the case here. In particular, Mark Valentine and John Howard's 'The Descent of the Fire', a fairly straightforward M.R. James homage, leaves the reader somewhat unsatisfied. This initially promising tale of an elderly (and, unusually, female) academic's obsession with studying a peculiar roof ornament she encounters in the usual secretive small town unfortunately breaks apart on the narrative level as events come to a climax. I suspect that this is because the narrative fails to establish enough hints for the dénouement to make sense - at any rate, the ending feels rushed and sketchily conceived. That said, this was certainly enjoyable, particularly for the gentle fun that it pokes at academic pretensions.



Somewhat similarly, Brendan Connell's story 'The Maker of Fine Instruments' is a sort of reworking of HP Lovecraft's 'Pickman's Model', in the sense that the musically gifted protagonist is introduced gradually to the full extent of his new teacher's collection of musical instruments, crafted from the bodies of animals. In the innermost room of Martens' house he keeps his most precious creations, which are constructed by inserting strings, pipes and so on into the living flesh of various creatures, which, he claims, is the secret of playing truly great music. There is of course (perhaps rather predictably) one final step that can be taken in this direction (I won't give it away), and take it the central character most certainly does, finally turning what begins as a somewhat derivative and conventional piece of fiction into a nightmare about the limits of post-human physicality. Equally concerned with hybridity is Tina Rath's 'Mr. Manpferdit', an amusing little tale detailing what might have happened had Samuel Johnson and John Boswell gone to see a reputed centaur living in London, a visit which exposes Johnson's smug pomposity and Boswell's inner leech. Slight, and hardly the most frightening of stories, this is nonetheless a nice example of what weird fiction can do when it concerns itself with unsettling our sense of what constitutes reality without resorting to outright scare tactics.

This collection is at its best, however, when it wallows unashamedly in the atmospheric and the suggestive. My personal favourites are Rhys Hughes' 'The Itchy Skin of Creepy Aplomb' (because it's hilarious), Nina Allan's 'Terminus' (because I'm terrified of train stations) and William Charlton's 'Grand Hotel' (because it pits a creepy vampire girl against her lover's nasty capitalist father). I would not wish to spoil the effect of these excellent stories by further elaboration - you'll just have to go and read them for yourself. Each serves to demonstrate, I think, the general philosophy of the Tartarus Press as a whole, which seems to adhere to Rosemary Jackson and Tvetzan Todorov's conception of the fantastic as a genre balancing precariously between the possible and the impossible, between the straightforward supernaturalism of the likes of H.P. Lovecraft and the (to me, rather disappointing) rationality of Ann Radcliffe, who ruthlessly exposed her phantoms as fakes and tricks of the imagination in an effort to evacuate the world of all suggestions that man cannot know everything. The name Tartarus itself is appropriate, recalling the sheer diversity of sins and punishments which the Sybil shows Aeneas in Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*. The precursor of Dante's *Inferno*, Virgil's Tartarus acts as a holding cell for the Titans, the defeated gods whom Zeus cast down from Mount Olympus when he seized his father's throne. In Tartarus, therefore, languishes all that is seen as outmoded, everything that has no place in the new dispensation, which is at once more civilised and more tyrannical than the rule of the Titans.

The subjects which the Tartarus Press see fit to include in both their journal and their collection of short stories serves much the same purpose as Tartarus does for Zeus, and indeed, in much the same way, functions as a testament to the despotism of current definitions of the genre. King's novels, films such as the *Saw* franchise, and the cultural miasma surrounding the current Bush administration all see violence and fear as invading the world of the normal from without, dragging people from their everyday lives and plunging them into nightmares of mass death and personal mutilation. Conversely, Tartarus Press' offerings posit the normal as containing and indeed fostering the horrific. Perhaps more radically, stories such as Charlton's 'Grand Hotel' and Crisp's 'Cousin X' depict individuals and places which ought to evoke dread as the last bastions of resistance and even of sanity in an overly rationalised world. If, as King would have it, some novels and stories, such as those by Henry James, M.R. James and Edith

Wharton, are simply too genteel to reside with him in the hallowed halls of the horror canon, then perhaps it's time that we went back down to Tartarus and got them out.

DARA DOWNEY

**Stephen King, *Lisey's Story*  
London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006**

Even by King's standards, *Lisey's Story* is a remarkably quick follow-up to *Cell*, his recent fast-paced techno thriller which delivered the same kind of thrills and spills as a Michael Crichton novel with an overt (and explicit) horror aesthetic, handled in King's trademark creepy fashion. This latest novel is its polar opposite. Opening this rather weighty tome reveals that King has chosen to use the subtitle 'A Novel'. This is indeed a novel; almost six hundred pages long, King uses the space to draw out the character of Lisa "Lisey" Landon, delving deep into her psyche as well as multifarious aspects of domestic life. Although Lisey is the protagonist of the novel, the plot revolves around the death of her husband Scott, a famous writer (surprise, surprise, King fans...) and all-round enigmatic individual. Through exploring her own memories Lisey discovers the dark otherworld of "Boo'ya Moon" where Scott (like all writers, King suggests) went to get his ideas.

The first thing to make clear about this novel is that unlike *Cell*, this is largely a chore to read. To be fair, the point is that *Lisey's Story* is full of experimentation with language, and displays a love of the quirky ways that we humans use words, but sadly not all experiments are a success; it's just that King's get published. Probably the main flaw is that King has clearly been inspired by the private language that people in long-term relationships tend to develop with each other. This is indeed a topic which potentially evokes deeply personal emotion, but as anyone who has overheard a couple's private conversation knows (and there are always certain couples who can't seem to keep these things private), the usual reaction involves a great deal of cringing. Here the chief culprits include Lisey's use of the word "smuck" (yes, for fuck), "SOWISA" (her mantra of courage: "Strap On Whenever It Seems Appropriate"), "African" (for Afghan, as in rug), and "bad-gunky" (Scott's word for evil). Expressions such as these are repeated ad nauseum during Lisey's frequent stream-of-consciousness rants. The intention is presumably, by giving access to "their marriage's interior language" (71) to make the reader feel like they are part of Lisey and Scott's private world, but we are never given a good reason to want to be.

Lisey herself is the kind of character King would usually admit to having problems writing. The figure of a fifty year-old widow dealing with the emotional repercussions of having had a famous husband, while working out her feelings towards her sisters, might come alive in the hands of someone like Joyce Carol Oates, but this is clearly not King's comfort zone. The positive potential of this choice as a feminist move is swept away by Lisey's reliance on her husband and her general uselessness: "Two years, and she still hadn't quite got used to the idea that there was no man around to read the instructions and puzzle out the meaning of Fig 1 and Fig 2" (220-221). She is also sorely lacking in linguistic skills, as demonstrated in a conversation with Scott:

He bursts out laughing. "See? See? A perfect example. You take the holistic approach."  
"I don't know that word," she says frowning. (136)

Not only does this portray her as a dumb broad, but a limited vocabulary is not what one generally wants from a narrative focaliser. Although Scott is dead, his presence looms large throughout the novel, the strength of his personality dominating Lisey's actions and very thoughts. Despite the fact that this is

clearly the point, it doesn't take away from the disappointment of not being given a believable female protagonist who we can identify or sympathise with.

Such ideological considerations aside, we are forcibly removed at times from the believability of Lisey's character by some shockingly awful turns of phrase. Take for example her description of Scott:

She liked his stories, but she liked how his hair looked in the spill of the lamplight just as much. She thought his hair in the lamplight was its own story, he just didn't know it. She liked how his skin felt under her hand, too. Forehead or foreskin, both were good. She would not have traded one for the other. What worked for her was the whole package. (71)

This is surely taking the holistic approach too far. The frustrating thing is that in between wincing with embarrassment it is possible to see what King was trying to do. The novel is filled with descriptions of peculiar thoughts and habits the likes of which everyone has, but crucially not these specific ones. Just as the most hysterically funny private jokes are utterly uninteresting to outsiders, Lisey's way of seeing things comes across as simply annoying more often than it achieves the intended emotional intensity.

As far as plot is concerned, it is difficult to wonder whether King has taken the theme of creativity itself as far as he can take it. Much of his work deals explicitly with the notion of authorship, and this has produced at least two excellent novels in the form of *The Shining* (1977), and *Misery* (1987). To this we could certainly add 'Secret Window, Secret Garden', from *Four Past Midnight* (1990), a short story 'from which King unashamedly reuses a major plot device, in that the character of Dooley seems to be a mutation of the menacing "John Shooter" from his earlier story (the redneck who turns up on the main character's door step and accuses him of plagiarism). Yet there is only so much self-indulgence a reader can take, especially when King has recently shown, with *Cell*, that he can turn his hand to external issues to such enjoyable effect. Enjoyable is an appropriate word, as King frequently (and indeed here) protests against academic snobbery and literary pretensions in favour of a model of fiction that puts storytelling at its heart, yet Lisey's Story does not satisfy on this level. The pace of plot advancement is glacial, yet the tone is rarely compellingly contemplative either. Instead, Lisey rants and raves, switching constantly between her inner thoughts and mundane everyday concerns like finding headache tablets. We are confronted throughout with a scattergun assortment of italics and brackets, breaking up the flow of the story and serving only to frustrate.

What seems to be the essential problem with Lisey's Story is a failure to execute a potentially fascinating premise. It takes as its central conceit the concept of a world beyond our own - a premise from the weird tales of H.P. Lovecraft, or perhaps more directly Arthur Machen - and spins it out within the context of a domestic drama. Although King has shown himself to be the master of juxtaposing such horrors with the everyday, Lisey's Story does not match up to the imaginative efforts of, say, Clive Barker, who manages to juggle the demands of realism and fantasy without resorting to a ridiculous invented vocabulary. More damning still is a comparison with Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), likewise a novel about death, marriage, memory and the act of storytelling. Although *House of Leaves* is clearly in debt to King's past work, Danielewski combines moments of terror with the kind of literary merit that Lisey's

Story aspires to but fails to achieve. Despite all this, there are hints of King's proven ability to write horror here, such as the following description of a creature in *Boo'ya Moon*:

Lisey saw an eye, dead yet aware, black as wellwater and as wide as a sinkhole, peering through the foliage. She saw an opening in the meat of its vast questing blunt head and intuited that the things it took in through that vast straw of flesh did not precisely die but lived and screamed ... lived and screamed ... lived and screamed. (493)

The story of Scott Landon's childhood, when uncovered, is likewise brutally compelling. Such moments, however, are few and far between, and overall we are confronted not so much with a sense of horror at the darkness that lurks inside the human imagination, but with a prevailing sense of disenchantment that King is not, it transpires, at his best when he lets his own imagination run completely wild into these dark recesses.

KEVIN CORSTORPHINE

**Emma Tennant, *Heathcliff's Tale*  
Tartarus Press, 2005**

Independent publishing house Tartarus Press has been undertaking the promotion of supernatural fiction for nearly two decades now, and in that time they have produced a wide array of handsome editions of new fiction and forgotten classics. It is unsurprising, then, that Emma Tennant's *Heathcliff's Tale* should find a home there: it is a new fiction that dramatises the re-appropriation and reconstruction of lost fictions, taking as its premise the possible discovery of a forgotten sequel to (or alternative version of) *Wuthering Heights*. There is certainly scope here for an interrogation of the processes by which textual and biographical fictions are constructed, and in this respect the novel certainly posits some pertinent questions. What a shame, then, that it ends up tackling that old chestnut that should have been put to bed long before now: that Branwell, not Emily Brontë, may have been the real author of *Wuthering Heights*.

The premise of the novel is an intriguing one: it is New Year's Eve, 1848, and "Ellis Bell", author of *Wuthering Heights*, has been dead for less than a fortnight. Henry Newby, a young solicitor's clerk, is dispatched to Haworth by his publisher uncle to retrieve the manuscript of Bell's second novel. Newby professes that he is not "a literary man", and so has no prior knowledge of the novel or novelist whose work he has been sent to recover (nor, of course, would a contemporary audience have known that the author was Emily Brontë). Unsurprisingly, he is confused when the directions to the house of "Ellis Bell" bring him to the Haworth Parsonage and the household of Reverend Patrick Brontë and his daughter Charlotte, who are mourning the recent deaths of both Branwell and Emily Brontë (there's still no room for the "other sister" here, the much-neglected Anne). Luckily, he arrives just in time to rescue some manuscript pages from the fire, which he soon starts to read. So begins his introduction to the brutal and passionate world of *Wuthering Heights*. The unfortunate Newby, however, is not well-versed in separating fact from fiction, and reads the story (as narrated by Heathcliff) as the true memoirs and confessions of a murderous and treacherous fiend. As he becomes more and more engrossed in the fiction that he is reading, he also becomes haunted by the characters of *Wuthering Heights* itself and by the ghostly memories of Emily and Branwell Brontë. He then begins the process of turning his impressions into a fiction of his own. Tennant's novel comprises the fusion of a series of related narratives: Newby's various attempts at writing his own fictions; the alternative manuscript of *Wuthering Heights* recovered from the fire at Haworth; the correspondence between Newby and his increasingly-frustrated, profit-hungry uncle; and the editorial hand which collates this mass of information and manuscripts into an account of Newby's development as an author.

It's in the confusion of narrative perspectives that the novel best seems to capture the spirit of Brontë's original: the multiple narrations of *Heathcliff's Tale* inevitably recall the dual narration of *Wuthering Heights*, in which Lockwood narrates Nelly Dean's story for the reader. In Tennant's novel, the flurry of perspectives similarly disorients and maroons the reader (along with Newby) in the world of Haworth and its lost manuscripts, and leaves them faced with the desire to establish the relationship between the "facts" of Haworth and the "fiction" of the manuscripts. However, this distinction is deliberately blurred throughout as Newby himself begins to develop into an author and turn his experiences into the stuff of fiction. It is here that the novel starts to unravel somewhat: the reader can no longer identify with Newby

as reader of the manuscripts and must now reinterpret him as author of another set of manuscripts. However, this reinterpretation is hindered by the fact that, as an author, Newby's skills are somewhat limited: he is an apprentice writer, after all, and not quite up to the task of turning his own haunting experiences at Haworth into a successful fiction.

Eventually, the fragmentation of different narrative voices proves a problematic device within the novel as a whole. The awkward epistolary and manuscript style proves increasingly distracting: why, for example, do Newby's letters to his uncle always end on exquisitely-constructed cliff-hangers? Is the invisible hand of the editor at work here? Perhaps so, but the editorial voice of *Heathcliff's Tale* is in itself an ambiguous one: it doesn't serve to synthesize the various voices and perspectives which jostle for position in Newby's narrative. Instead, in a satirical swipe at the academic disciplines of Brontë studies and manuscript studies, Tennant deliberately presents a flawed and misguided editorial framework. This is definitely a bold move, and clearly aims to emphasise further the difficulties of establishing an authoritative text within this conglomeration of manuscripts. However, by the time the Freemasons enter the fray and demand that Newby write a biography of Branwell Brontë and prove his identity as the real author of *Wuthering Heights*, the reader will be crying out for a voice of reason to help decode these fictional experiments.

The multiple narrative and authorial perspectives of Tennant's novel may not prove entirely successful, but they do at least indicate that *Heathcliff's Tale* aims to elevate itself above the status of a straightforward sequel or prequel to a classic text. This is a genre in which Tennant has specialised, as the author of such works as *Pemberley*, or *Pride and Prejudice Continued* (and its sequel), *Emma in Love*, and *Adèle: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story*. By far the least successful portions of *Heathcliff's Tale* might be read as examples of these kinds of rewrites: the manuscript rescued from the Haworth fire in which is posited an alternative *Wuthering Heights* (as narrated by Heathcliff himself to Lockwood), and also Isabella Linton's story. In these sections, Heathcliff fills the reader in on his ambiguous origins and accounts for his missing three years after overhearing Catherine's confession that it would degrade her to marry him. Meanwhile, Isabella Linton treats us to such cringe-worthy descriptions of Heathcliff and Catherine's adulterous couplings as:

Cathy lay on her back on the four-poster bed, her petticoats billowing out around her [...] Her cheeks were flushed - that I did see - and her hair as messed as if the moor wind had blown it out forever from the constraints of curlers and fine coiffure [...] Heathcliff, naked and brown-skinned as a child that has bathed in rock pools and lain in heather to dry - lay astride her.

Whether "Branwell Brontë" or "Henry Newby" is the author of such passages is of course redundant, because fundamentally Tennant's novel seems to suggest the need to focus less on the teller and more on the tale itself. Ultimately, the tale told by Henry Newby in *Heathcliff's Tale* certainly raises pertinent questions about the ways in which literary works are created; the answers to these questions, however, will probably have to wait for another rewrite.

JENNY McDONNELL

**Patrick McCabe's, Winterwood**  
**London: Bloomsbury, 2006**

Wading through the first fifty or sixty pages McCabe's latest novel, *Winterwood*, my sense of disappointment was acute. Having heard rather good things about it, I was then seduced by its slickly creepy cover and the fact that I had somehow managed to buy a signed copy. Its apparent slavish (and far from original) adherence to notions of some kind of mythic Irish past - where everyone wore tweed caps and spoke like extras from *Darby O'Gill & the Little People* - was therefore profoundly depressing. As I read on, however, I began to realise, with a deepening sense of unexpected pleasure, that McCabe sets up this atmosphere at the beginning of *Winterwood* only in order to poke fun (though the word seems massively out of place considering what is to follow) at that most over-exposed of species - the jeep-driving, super-groomed glummy mammy of the post-Celtic Tiger "New Ireland". The opening sections of the novel are largely devoted to a vicious lampooning of said mummies' shameless fawning over the walking cliché that is Ned Strange, an aging musician who tells tall tales liberally peppered with quaint old expressions and takes the little darlings of the up-and-coming town of Slievenageeha for organised Irish dancing lessons, thereby helping the nouveaux riches to assuage their cultural guilt and their parental guilt in one fell swoop. McCabe is after bigger fish than this, however, and it isn't long before Redmond Hatch, the often exasperatingly trite first-person narrator, who is just as much under Ned's spell as everyone else, lets us know (in his own round-about way) that Ned's picture is splashed all over the newspapers for molesting and murdering a little boy who has been attending his classes.

It is here that *Winterwood* begins to show its true colours, and the bland predictability of the opening is not merely redeemed but shown to be vital to the unfolding of the plot as a whole. After a lot of moaning about having been cheated on and divorced by his beautiful wife, Redmond (more often known simply as "Red" as the story progresses) eventually remembers to let us know that Ned is found dead, hanging in the men's shower of the prison where he has been incarcerated. Shockingly, he shows up in Redmond's hostel room in the middle of the night (or so he tells us) and rapes him, at which point the relative positions which the two men occupy in the narrative begin to come into focus. Indeed, most of the rest of the novel is concerned with making this relationship as clear and uncomfortably sharp as a piece of broken glass. Ned, we begin to understand, is not simply Kurtz to Red's Marlow, or Gatsby to Red's Nick Carraway. Apart from the similarity between their first names, their surnames also echo one another in a bilingual pun that is perhaps one of the cleverest aspects of the book. Ned tells Red that his surname, Hatch, comes from the Irish word "ait", which means both "place" and "strange". This pivotal confluence of meanings is alluded to time and again to suggest that the two men may somehow be related - something, we are led to believe, not altogether unlikely in the literally inbred backwoods that is Slievenageeha, Red's home town to which he has returned in an effort, it would appear, to rediscover a lost sense of who he is. If he has succeeded, then the self that he finds there is violent and unstable, a self given horrifying shape through deliberately poorly veiled hints, which he lets slip into his narrative with an increasingly chilling frequency, regarding his obsessive and often brutal behaviour towards his wife and child. Similar hints about Ned's alleged murder of his wife and other women in America mean that the two men are quickly revealed to be fully-fledged doubles, and quite possibly the same person. McCabe's novel joins the ranks of such canonical horrors as Edgar Allan Poe's 'William Wilson', Charles



Brockden Brown's *Wieland*, Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan*, James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and Chuck Palahnuik's *Fight Club*, and the relationship between the narrator and his dead alter ego is just as abusive and destructive as those depicted in its illustrious antecedents.

Above and beyond all of this, however, the complex pun within their names acts as a critique of the ideological foundations upon which the notion of the New Ireland, in all its prosperity and optimism, is built. Since the Anglo-Irish Revival at the beginning of the twentieth century, an emphasis upon the local - exemplified by GAA town rivalries, Patrick Kavanagh's use of place names in his poetry and the attention to local colour and stable locations in the plays of JM Synge - has been brought to bear on the diversity of Irish culture. This emphasis has as its central impetus the creation of unity through the discovery of an "authentic" Ireland populated by "real people" rather than by types, abstractions or generalisations. The rather faceless folk of Slievenageeha are on a quest not dissimilar to Red's, seeking to ground the newly mobile and ever-changing Irish landscape in some sort of stable past by allowing Ned to embody all of the "Irishness" to which they are no longer connected and, as is all too clear, in which they have little if any real interest. The pun does not so much undermine these people's efforts to find a sense of place in a country where such terms are fast becoming meaningless, as expose the superficiality of their efforts. The word "ait" itself is unstable, slipping far too easily from the sense of "place" to that of "strange", but also into Anglicised versions of itself such as "Hatch" and "Strange", which are accepted without question simply as surnames, apparently unburdened by meaning or etymology. Moreover, what the pun suggests is that a sense of place in the novel isn't so much disrupted by a strangeness which comes from without, in the form of child abuse and murder, but itself contains that sense of the strange. The illusion which the novel thoroughly shatters is not simply that golf courses and expensive cars have allowed us to break with the wife-beating darkness of the past, or that it is possible to re-write that past, to turn a social history depicted as steeped in alcoholism, murder, incest and misogyny, into an eternal idyll of love, dancing and fairy-tales. It suggests, more worryingly, that the New Ireland itself has created its own darkness, its own monsters, and that there is little that can be done to exorcise them.

If I have a quibble with this book, it is along the lines of the quibbles which I have with many books - its attitude towards women. On the surface, *Winterwood* acts as a critique of the kind of attitude which sets women on pedestals, assuming their physical and moral perfection is a given, a form of worship which can lead all too easily to obsessive and possessive violence on the parts of the men whose standards are impossibly high. Ned and Red are equally guilty both of such adoration and of such violence, savagely if not always successfully editing their memories of conversations with their respective beloveds until all that is left are declarations of undying love and enduring happiness, interspersed, occasionally brilliantly on McCabe's part, with comments about how wrong it is to raise one's hand to one's wife and intimations of ongoing arguments and discontent on both sides. Ultimately, this critique breaks apart somewhat when Red's mental decay; his sense of being haunted by Ned's insidious voice; his growing obsession with his estranged wife and his daughter's love of My Little Pony toys and videos coalesce in appalling acts of kidnapping and murder. Here, the book comes close to repeating its characters' idolatry of women, depicting them as perfect, beautiful, distant statues in need of protection, angelic victims who are possessed of little interiority or agency, somewhere between Helen of Troy and Poe's Ligeia. The first-person narrative vacillates on the edge of being another "crisis of masculinity" tract, freighted as it is

with Red's self-justifications and complaints for having been beaten down by a hostile world, and recounting how, in the wake of his bitter divorce, he is left to fend for himself in the increasingly unfamiliar and unwelcoming streets of 1990s Dublin. It is important to remember that this is more or less the purpose of the book, and the sheer unlikeableness of Redmond Hatch is proof enough against the reader identifying with him (though perhaps I speak only for myself here). Nonetheless, with none of the women or girls killed by Red and Ned permitted to truly speak, the word "phallogocentric" hovers ominously at the back of my mind, no matter how carefully the book tries to undermine and destabilise the narrating male voice and his sense of what it is to be a man.

This aside, however, I would not wish to deny this book its due as the first, in quite some time, to leave me thoroughly spooked. Winterwood, like Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory*, assaults the reader with a vision of a world and a protagonist that are not simply fallen but irredeemable, crawling with horrors that we refuse to acknowledge. Purely on the level of content, there may be nothing especially new or unusual in McCabe's book - indeed, the spectre of child abuse has hung all too palpably over Ireland in the past decade or so - but it is this very familiarity, the fact that overexposure to such things has reduced them to the level almost of banality, that makes it such uncomfortable reading.

DARA DOWNEY

**Brian J. Showers, *Literary Walking Tours of Gothic Dublin*  
Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006**

In this guide to Dublin city's Gothic literary past, Brian J. Showers focuses on three of the most notable Irish writers of this tradition - Charles Maturin (1782-1824), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) and Bram Stoker (1847-1912). As has been noted by several critics, including Terry Eagleton, W. J. McCormack and Jarlath Killeen, exponents of the Gothic horror tale seem to number highly in any list of important Irish writers, and Showers harnesses this Irish predilection for the supernatural to provide his thematic guide to Dublin's past. M. R. James, who acknowledged Le Fanu as a key influence in his own writing, noted in a lecture on Le Fanu's works to the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1923, "[t]he indefinable melancholy which the air of Ireland and its colouring inspire - a melancholy which inspires many Irish writers." Three complementary versions of this melancholy nineteenth-century Dublin emerge as Showers documents the locations inhabited, and frequently fictionalised, by all three writers throughout their overlapping lifetimes.

Firstly, Showers tracks Maturin's progress through early-Victorian Dublin and its influence on the macabre and miserable Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) and on Maturin's only known short story "Leixlip Castle" (1825). Next is Le Fanu, whose writing provides a wealth of material, as many of his stories are set in Dublin and contain direct references to several of notable sites, such as Phoenix Park and Trinity College, which Showers describes. Lastly, Stoker's formative years in late-Victorian Dublin are charted, and their possible influence on his work explored. A representative short story from each writer is also included. Despite its literary theme, the book is not designed to be a work of literary criticism, although its author is plainly well acquainted with his subject. It is instead intended to be a practical aid to exploring the locations it documents, complete with addresses of, and directions to, all the chosen sites, along with other useful information about them. As such, it is an excellent guide both to well-known tourist sites like St. Patrick's Cathedral, and to more obscure sites such as the Hell-Fire Club Lodge in the Dublin mountains. It is also full of macabre revelations about everyday locations: for instance, St. Stephen's Green, a well-kept public amenity taken for granted by all Dubliners who might be very surprised to discover that the site of their lunchtime picnic formerly sported stocks and a gallows.

Each of Showers' three featured writers were members of the Protestant professional classes: consequently, there is a certain degree of overlap in the places they frequented. For example, all three attended Trinity College in Dublin and Showers builds up a picture of the Trinity's current attractions, and suggested grisly past, in separate sections outlining each writer's relationship to the College. The grisly past does not extend much beyond the somewhat sensationalised revelation that "mass graves" were uncovered on campus in 1999, with many of the bones featuring saw marks - no doubt the leavings of centuries of medical students.... An additional Gothic feature of the College that Showers uncharacteristically omits to mention is the Department of Anatomy museum which has a small nineteenth-century collection of mounted dissections, including the skeleton of the Irish giant Cornelius McGrath (1736-1760) who reached the then shocking height of 7 feet 2.25 inches.

Another consequence of the analogous Anglo-Irish backgrounds of the three writers was a shared sense of their embattled position in the face of the threat posed by growing demands for Irish nationalism. All, in some way, feared that the Protestant ruling class would be displaced by the burgeoning Catholic middle classes, just as the old Catholic aristocracy itself had originally been dispossessed. Roy Foster, in his 1995 work *Paddy and Mr. Punch*, posits this threat as the inspiration for their Gothic fiction, where Gothic monsters embodied and gave a materiality (albeit a spectral one) to this growing threat of the Catholic Other. There is a recurrent sense of loss throughout Showers' book which mirrors this threat: this sense of loss is most notable in the disappearance of the old architecture of the city, largely the architecture of the ruling colonial class to which the three writers belonged. Just as the streetscapes of the old city have been destroyed or absorbed into the architecture of the modern city, so too has the old ruling class been submerged first within a re-ascendant Catholic middle class and now within a new "multi-cultural" Ireland. Thus the fears embodied in the texts of each writer were in a certain sense realised.

While one does not like to join the ranks of the "they-just-don't-make-them-like-they-used-to" whingers, one cannot read a work like this without lamenting the destruction of so much of the old city. Showers refers to this destruction throughout with admirable restraint, noting remorsefully the levelling of numerous Georgian vistas to make way for functional office blocks. He even refrains from mentioning, in connection with Le Fanu's 'The Familiar', the well-known gripe that the glorious view of the Gandon-designed Custom House (completed in 1791 just three years before the story is set), presumably visible on Captain Barton's walk home through the initial construction of Gardiner Street, is now obscured by an ugly, utilitarian railway bridge. The decay of old architecture is also a recurrent motif in Le Fanu's stories: he characteristically laments in 'Ghost Stories of Chapelizod' (1851) the "very changed and forlorn condition" of Chapelizod's great old buildings, "some of them [...] superseded, though not obliterated by modern erections [...] the rest forsaken by the order who originally raised them, and delivered up to poverty, and in some cases to absolute decay." In some ways, Showers' book itself is an attempt to see something that just isn't there anymore, to force a Gothic character on to a modern city; but in other ways it is an excellent endeavour to note the still-extant markers of this past while they yet survive. Unfortunately, however, this work will probably be of most interest to tourists, primarily because, as Killeen notes regretfully in the conclusion to his article on Irish Gothic in the first issue of this journal, "Gothic Ireland now exists only as a tourist virtual reality." (Killeen, 2006)

This book is relatively short at 160 pages (including three short stories by Maturin, Le Fanu and Stoker) and it assumes a good deal of familiarity with the authors' biographies and their works. Neither does it give any but a passing insight into their individual characters. It is also a little light in its analysis of the connections between the locations documented and the texts produced. It does not constitute, therefore, an introduction to the lives and works of any of the writers in question, but it is an excellent guide for anyone wishing to gain an insight into one important aspect of its main subject, the city of Dublin itself. And all criticisms aside, I will certainly be taking my copy in hand and acquainting myself with some of the fascinating and overlooked sites elaborated therein, that, as a Dubliner, I so frequently walk heedlessly by. (Literary Walking Tours of Gothic Dublin is available in Irish book stores and at [www.brianjshowers.com](http://www.brianjshowers.com))

AILISE BULFIN

**Arthur Machen, *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural*  
Tartarus Press, 2006**

Welsh author and journalist Arthur Machen's (1863-1947) finest tales tend to be in the novella format, and most typically feature protagonists who, either by accident or design, find themselves breaching what he termed the "veil" between this world and the next. This well-presented volume from Tartarus Press is a welcome reprint of the 1946 Knopf edition of Machen's collected works, and features stories from every stage of his career. Whilst the quality occasionally wavers, particularly in some of the later stories, at his best, Machen captured a sense of the terrifying "otherness" of the supernatural and the otherworldly better than any other horror author except perhaps H.P. Lovecraft, with whom he has much in common. Machen's effect can probably best be summed up by a well-known exchange from one of his most famous stories, 'The White People':

"We have quite forgotten the awfulness of real sin."

"And what is sin?" said Cotgrave.

"I think I must reply to your question by another. What would your feelings be, seriously, if your cat or dog began to talk to you, and to dispute with you in human accents? You would be overwhelmed with horror, I am sure of it. And if the roses in your garden sang a weird song, you would go mad. And suppose the stones in the road began to swell and grow before your eyes, and if the pebble that you had noticed at night had shot out stony blossoms in the morning? (M 113)

Sin is therefore, according to Machen, "unnatural in a much deeper sense than good", as he puts it later in the same story, and it is this sense of acute wrongness which pervades his most powerful tales. In Machen's frequently disturbing fictional universe even the most harmless-seeming objects and incidental discoveries ultimately have an awful significance which we can only ever begin to truly appreciate. In the first story printed here, 'The Novel of the Black Seal', an arrogant academic's fascination with "a lump of black stone, rudely annotated with queer marks and scratches" is merely the prelude to his death on "a wild and savage hillside" (an appellation which could easily be applied to almost all of Machen's rural landscapes). Death of an even more unpleasant variety arises in 'The Novel of the White Powder' because of a foolish mistake made by a doddering old chemist; while flint stones arranged for some unknown purpose on a patch of grass again lead to strange and shocking revelations in 'The Shining Pyramid'. As in Lovecraft, in Machen we are often privy to revelations of a highly disturbing nature - but the threat here comes not from cosmic forces beyond rational comprehension, but from a world parallel to this one, a savage realm populated by a degenerate and malevolent civilisation long dismissed as mere myth.

Admittedly, it can take the modern reader a little while to adapt to the generally rather formal, stiff cadences of Machen's prose. His dialogue often consists of earnest, M.R. James-style discussions on weighty topics between educated gentlemen (often over a glass of port) and tends to bear little resemblance to actual human conversation, whilst his protagonists are generally rather bland. Furthermore, Machen's tales tend to be quite episodic (although this can often add to their impact) and plotting does not seem to have been his strong point. However, despite a somewhat over-written quality at

times, his writing also approaches real beauty in many instances, and few have matched his ability to conjure up scenes of genuine unease and outright revulsion.

Related to us by a “Young Lady of Leicester Square”, ‘The Novel of the Black Seal’ gets proceedings off to a fine start. It features the kind of framing narrative so frequent in Machen, whose tales are generally pieced together from letters, old manuscripts and, most commonly, chance conversations on profound issues which are interspersed by recollections of a dreadful and pertinent nature. ‘The Black Seal’ is the story of a young woman, found collapsed in a “thick white fog” (both fog and “whiteness” are frequent danger signs in Machen) by an apparently kind Professor who brings her home to his children and soon employs her as a governess and ad-hoc research assistant. Professor Gregg, her rescuer, is a rather typical Machen protagonist, an academic obsessed with legends of a world existing alongside our own; a world to which the mysterious black seal in his possession seems to be connected. In a bid to further his studies, Gregg moves his household to a remote farm deep in the Welsh countryside, and investigates strong rumours of the so-called “little people” who, as one ancient inscription has it, “dwell in remote and secret places, and celebrate foul mysteries on savage hills.” (M 15) He also hires a local “idiot boy” born in bizarre circumstances named Gervase Craddock to aid him in mysterious experiments. Significantly, Craddock is described as having dark features and “olive skin” - “foreignness” in a character is generally a dangerous sign in Machen, as with the similarly “olive-skinned” Helen Vaughn in ‘The White People’. As Miss Lally and the rest of the household soon observe, the Professor is unhealthily fascinated by the boy, and in particular by his tendency to suffer violent fits.

It eventually transpires that Professor Gregg is convinced that much of the folklore of the area is in fact a true if exaggerated account of actual events - and that the fairies are in reality “a race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution,” but have retained “as a survival, certain powers which to us would be wholly miraculous.” (M 31) It is a conceit (combining both Celtic folklore and crude dollops of pseudo-evolutionary theory) which arises many times in Machen’s work, and which, as here, inevitably leads to revelations of the most disturbing kind. Sure enough, ‘The Novel of the Black Seal’ concludes with a genuinely hideous description of the disgusting transformation undergone by Craddock behind closed doors. Machen was by no means averse to adding a little of what Stephen King no doubt would term “the gross out” to his stories, albeit to rather finer effect.

Another repulsive transformation furnishes the climax to the next story, ‘The Novel of the White Powder’, an effective Jekyll and Hyde-style tale narrated by yet another orphaned young woman. Here, the naïve narrator is a doting sister who observes with increasing unease the worrying changes undergone by her much-loved older brother Francis, who has just been prescribed a tonic to alleviate fatigue. Needless to say, the “innocent-looking white powder” given to him by the careless local chemist does much more than that: it isn’t long before Francis is enjoying the nightlife in town rather too much, and enthusing about the sunset in decidedly ominous terms: “Look at that afterglow: why it is as if a great city were burning in flames!” (M 42) Soon, a rapidly-spreading black spot appearing on his hand, Francis shuts himself away in his room, and it becomes horribly clear that he has been prescribed the wrong drug. Again, the most unspeakable things here occur behind closed doors, at least initially that is. The local G.P. is so horrified by his patient’s mental and physical degeneration that he flees, and like Francis’ sister, we

too can only guess at what is happening to him. When his bedroom door is finally forced open, we cannot help but wish that it had remained closed, for it is here that Machen provides us with yet another hideous description of bodily and spiritual dissolution. Whilst Lovecraft usually stopped at the locked door, Machen could open it as well:

There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone the burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm. (M 52)

One of Machen's best-known works, *The Great God Pan*, gets off to an intriguing start as another unethical academic, Dr Raymond - a surgeon convinced that the real world is "but an illusion" - prepares to operate. The subject of this experimental surgery is Mary Clarke, a young girl upon whom he intends to inflict a "slight lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells". Raymond is an arrogant monster with a deeply callous disregard for his unfortunate ward's welfare. He explains to Clarke, his friend and the disturbingly detached observer of the experiment to follow, "As you know, I rescued Mary from the gutter, and from almost certain starvation... I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit". (M 60) As Jervase Craddock was to Gregg in 'The Black Seal', Mary is to Raymond here: the unwitting conduit to another plane of existence. There are also certain disturbing hints regarding the exact nature of his relationship to the girl; for she refers to the much older man as "dear" and asks for "a kiss before you begin".

Mary ends up a "hopeless idiot", an outcome to which her erstwhile guardian matter-of-factly responds, "However, it could not be helped, and after all, she has seen the Great God Pan." The plot advances when Clarke is told of a mysterious girl named "Helen Vaughn" who will prove to be of pivotal importance in the narratives that follow. Machen certainly knew how to withhold information until the right moment: the second chapter suddenly stops mid-sentence, when we are about to be told a terrible secret, and next thing we know, Machen is telling us about a young gentleman ruined by "a girl of the most wonderful and strange beauty", who, on their wedding night, "spoke of things which even now I would not dare whisper in blackest night" - "things" which, as ever, remain tantalisingly unspoken. Pieces of the puzzle are assembled gradually - the death of an artist who painted Helen Vaughn; a series of mysterious suicides amongst well-bred gentlemen within a matter of weeks - all leading up to a chilling explanation of what really happened to Mary Clarke and a gripping final reckoning. Justifiably considered a masterpiece of supernatural fiction, *The Great God Pan* remains a compelling at times, infuriating tale, which is, along with the tale that follows, 'The White People', one of the best stories that Machen ever wrote. Indeed, it's worth buying this collection for these two stories alone. In this latter story, the discovery of a young girl's diary wedged at the back of an old bureau is the device by which Machen most ambitiously explores his contention that "evil is unnatural in a much deeper sense than good."

The stream-of-consciousness style narrative found in the so-called "green book" is an immensely skilful, impressionistic tale of corrupted innocence, all the more effective for being relayed to us in a young girl's chatty and excitable language:

I must not write down the real names of the days and months which I found out a year ago, nor the way to make Aklo letters, or the Chian language, nor the chief songs [...] All these are the most secret secrets, and I am glad when I remember what they are, and how many wonderful languages I know, but there are some things that I call the secrets of the secrets of the secrets that I dare not think of unless I am alone. (M 119)

Gradually, it becomes clear that the young girl's nurse is initiating her into mysteries of an arcane and disturbing nature. The story is interspersed with suggestions of dark intent and sexual menace, most particularly in Machen's portrayal of the "White Day", in which a simple walk in the countryside rapidly becomes, as Roger Dobson aptly puts it in his description, "Alice in Wonderland on LSD". Particularly suggestive is the scene in which the nurse shapes clay into a strange doll:

So she did all kinds of queer things with the little clay man, and I noticed that she was all streaming with perspiration, though we had walked so slowly, and then she told me to "pay my respects", and I did everything she did, because I liked her, and it was such an odd game. (M 135)

Such episodes are all the more suggestive when we are told of the nurse, "she knew how to do all the awful things, how to destroy young men, and other things that I could not understand". Like the young girl, the reader ultimately feels that they have undergone a terrible journey of some great significance which they have yet to fully grasp.

In the other tales in this volume, we see Machen's preoccupation with strange other worlds occur again and again. In 'The Inner Light', the sudden glimpse of an "indescribable" face at a passing window leads to a distinctly Lovecraftian tale of forbidden knowledge and moral and physical degeneration, in which the female body once more becomes a conduit to the unknown. 'The Shining Pyramid' is another story of strange happenings in the Welsh countryside which must be investigated by Machen's rather bland recurring detective-figure Dyson. Also printed here are several of Machen's rather slight wartime stories, including 'The Bowmen' (which famously gave rise to a lingering urban legend) and 'The Great Return', in which Machen wryly cameos as a curious journalist investigating strange and ultimately benevolent Grail-related happenings in a Welsh church.

Aptly, the collection comes to a close with Machen's extraordinary late tale 'The Terror', a novella set during World War I, which has a deeply disturbing and effectively employed premise. The inevitable paranoia of a nation at war is here channelled into this well-wrought tale of paranoia and hidden menace. The plot is episodic, and, to begin with, straightforward enough. A series of mysterious and violent deaths in the remote countryside soon escalate until rumours and panic are rife. The police suspect that a roving maniac is at work in the locality - there are dark rumours of German agents and secret weapons, of strange vibrations in the air. The rumour mill is further excited by the local coroner refusal to allow a proper inquest: "people were being killed in an inscrutable manner by some inscrutable means, day after day, and no one asked 'why' and 'how', and there seemed no answer." (M 378)



‘The Terror’ reaches its climax with the terrible fate of a farming family besieged in their home by (to us) unknown assailants. I won’t reveal who (or what) is behind the murders for the sake of those who have yet to read this gripping story, save to note that, as in several of Machen’s other tales, Darwin has a lot to answer for. To sum up then, this is an excellent collection, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with Machen’s work, which at its best is as good as anything the genre has to offer.

BERNICE M. MURPHY

**Tom Weaver, Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes: Interviews with Actors, Directors,  
Producers and Writers of the 1940-1960s  
McFarland, 2006**

When someone uses the term “King of the Monster Hunters”, which someone inevitably does in the course of an evening, I always picture Robert Armstrong cajoling the natives on Skull Island or Richard Denning, harpoon in hand and snorkel mask on, ready to brave the depths of the Black Lagoon in search of Gill-man (aka the Creature from the Black Lagoon). Denning’s character in this classic Universal creature feature is... (how shall I put it?) keen, very keen to bag himself a prehistoric monster. And who wouldn’t be? Assuming the odds aren’t completely in the monster’s favour that is.

But not all monster hunters need underwater skills or a big net to go about their business. Tom Weaver, described by USA TODAY as, yes, the “King of the Monster Hunters”, braves the den of Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes to bring us this collection of interviews with actors, directors, producers and writers of the 1940s-1960s, and not a tranquiliser dart in sight. To say I don’t envy him his task would be a complete lie. Weaver has spent the last 20 years or more tracking down and interviewing the denizens of Hollywood B movies from the Golden, the Silver and even the Bronze era of filmmaking. Along with his studies of Classic and almost classic, Universal and Poverty Row Horror movies from the 30s and 40s, Weaver has produced an invaluable archive of interviews with some of the best- and some of the least-known horror and science fiction actors and filmmakers of the first half of the 20th century. His current IMDb bio reports that he has interviewed in the region of 500 actors, writers, producers and directors. It’s probably more. You name them, chances are Weaver’s interviewed them. His extensive publications - whose titles alone are enough to whet the appetite of any Monster Movie Kid – include *They Fought in the Creature Features* (1995), *I Was a Monster Movie Maker* (2001), *Monsters, Mutants and Heavenly Creatures* (2001) *Science Fiction Confidential* (2002) and *It Came from Horrorwood* (2004).

Like all of Weaver’s published interviews, this excellent new edition of his *Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes* (a reprint from the library bound edition of 1991) is a real treat. Hazel Court, Louis M. Heyward, Herk Harvey, Kim Hunter, Phyllis Coates, Richard Matheson and Janet Leigh are among the 28 stars, movie makers and writers featured here, along with plenty of rare photos and production stills. There is a wealth of little-known facts, “behind the scenes” details and fascinating rumours to be gleaned from their conversations with Weaver, whose skill as an interviewer rests in his ability to draw his subjects into conversation through a combination of candour, tact, good humour and those two essentials - genuine enthusiasm and impeccable research.

Richard Matheson’s interview is one of the longest in the collection; it’s also one of the most rewarding. He talks about his initial disappointment with Jack Arnold’s 1957 film version of his novel *The Shrinking Man*; his script for a sequel, *The Fantastic Little Girl*, which sees the shrinking man’s wife shrink too, eventually joining him in the “submicroscopic world”. The film was never made, however, despite Universal’s desire to reuse all the expensive sets and giant props which featured in the original. Through the course of the interview we also learn how Sam Arkoff (co-founder of film production company AIP)

wasn't too hot on the idea of making *House of Usher* (which Matheson was scriptwriter for) because there was no monster in it, no real selling point, as Weaver puts it. Seemingly he came round to the idea when encouraged to see the house itself as the monster. Now why didn't I think of that?!

With great charm and good humour, Kim Hunter discusses her early film experiences working with Val Lewton, William Castle, Powell and Pressburger. Even when asked the question "Do you remember what your initial reaction was when you were asked to play a chimpanzee in *Planet of the Apes*?" Hunter manages to maintain her poise, humour and honesty. She explains that herself and co-star Roddy MacDowell were suitably short for the role of the chimps and also talks about the strain of the four hour make-up sittings and the general stress all the simian actors felt while shooting the films. She took Valium during shooting of the first film, and remembers how "One of the gorillas came up to me once and said, 'My wife tells me I've started talking in my sleep, and I've never done that before in my life!' One of the gorillas [laughs]!" It must have been some tough gig alright, if it could make a gorilla break down.

In her interview with Weaver, Janet Leigh, once again, confirms the old rumour that after filming *Psycho* she always took baths rather than showers and, more intriguingly, reveals that Hitchcock was not happy with Leigh's co-star, John Gavin (the second-rate Rock Hudson), because his love scenes with Leigh were so unconvincing. Broaching the subject of her later forays in the horror genre, particularly the 1972 stinker *Night of the Lepus* (a film about mutant killer bunnies that wasn't meant to be a joke), Weaver asks if she and the rest of the cast and crew realised from day one it was a losing battle (not with the rabbits but the film's general hopelessness). She figures day four or five sealed the deal - whichever day it was that they shot their first scenes with the man in the giant bunny costume.

Herk Harvey, the director, producer and incredibly creepy lead ghoul of *Carnival of Souls* (1962) discusses how he made this surreal and groundbreaking cinematic tour de force on a 3-week holiday from his job as an industrial filmmaker, with a \$30,000 budget and a crew of six. Gordon Hessler, director at AIP in the late 1960s who carried on their Poe/Price cycle when Corman left, tells the story of the wrap party for *Cry of the Banshee*, involving fancy-dress, a naked girl in a cake and a roaring drunk and angry Vincent Price. Hazel Court talks of her fondness for playing scheming vixens in Corman films: "I loved them – I liked sacrificing myself to the Devil and branding myself in *The Masque of the Red Death* and all that. But that's not me at all!" Quoting part of *Time* magazine's review for the film - "The sexy, lusty redhead is played by the English actress Miss Hazel Court, in whose cleavage you could sink the entire works of Edgar Allan Poe and a bottle of his favourite booze at the same time" – she laughingly admits "I – I rather like that one!" Court also recalls that at the time of making *Red Death* her co-star Jane Asher was dating Paul McCartney and all through filming kept herself busy knitting balaclavas for the Fab Four so they could go out at night and not be recognised.

There are so many more great stars and great stories here. I've saved my personal favourite till last. Acquanetta starred in 1940s Universal films like *Captive Wild Woman* and *Jungle Woman*, playing both an exotic beauty and enraged she-Ape. She was born on an "Indian" reservation in Wyoming; her mother was Arapaho, but, on her father's side, she also claims descent from the Royal House (which one isn't clear). I'm not quite sure how Weaver managed to keep his composure for this interview, which is at times

quite hilarious, and occasionally jaw-dropping. Although she had many powerful male friends in high places, including Walter Winchell, William Randolph Hearst, J. Edgar Hoover and the 32nd President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Acquanetta was known in Hollywood as Miss Innocent, and according to her, when she left they still called her that. Without a birth certificate, she could not get a passport, but Hoover, “a personal friend”, sorted that out for her. She remembers, “He was a curious man. Although he had interesting stories around him, because he was never married, he still was attracted to certain types of women, he liked to photograph them. And he would come to New York and photograph us.” Acquanetta also tells of the so-called feud between her and that other exotic actress Maria Montez, who always seemed to pip her at the post for starring roles in lush Technicolor A pictures. Mimicking Montez’s Spanish accent Acquanetta explains how Montez would not “geev up thees role” in the 1942 *Arabian Nights* so that Acquanetta could have it instead. She follows this by telling Weaver “She later drowned in a bathtub...”, as though the two events were connected. They could be, as Acquanetta admits, she has certain gifts - an ability to see into the future and to channel psychic powers.

One can’t but feel a tremendous warmth and goodwill towards many of the interviewees. A few are bitter, a few are a bit nuts, and a few are haunted by regrets, but their memories of filmmaking are touching, insightful and hugely entertaining. A good part of this fond feeling is undoubtedly connected to a deep sense of nostalgia and an awareness that the days they speak of are gone forever and that they themselves will perhaps not be with us much longer. Indeed, a depressing number of the stars and filmmakers in this collection have since passed away; Herk Harvey, Janet Leigh, Kim Hunter and Acquanetta are among them. In his opening to the collection Weaver notes how “Efforts to locate and interview the older filmmakers are becoming more of a race against time than ever... The history of these pictures has to be written because these people are not going to be around forever.” No one said a monster hunter’s job is always an easy one but I’m very glad someone is doing it.

ELIZABETH McCARTHY

## FILM REVIEWS

### HANNIBAL: THE EARLY YEARS

**Hannibal Rising (Dir. Peter Webber) France/UK/USA 2007  
& Thomas Harris, Hannibal Rising (London: William Heinemann, 2006)**

From Varney the Vampyre in the 1840s onwards, producers of horror have always been in thrall to the economics of the franchise. Sir Francis Varney, having returned from innumerable deaths, implausibly revived time and again by the light of the pale moon, was finally killed off by his publisher, Edward Lloyd, when the series stopped making money. As those of us who spent our youths watching slasher movies can testify, horror icons never really died, no matter how final it seemed – they could always be counted on to return for One More Heave, provided the conditions were right, if there was a buck to be made. And so Hannibal Lecter is back! And what an icon! Positioned precisely half way between Freddy Krueger and George Steiner, the Baltimore Renaissance Man – gourmand, psychiatrist, anatomist, artist, musician, orientalist, historian of high culture, patron of the arts, serial killer, cannibal, demon – has been giving a grateful world his mordant shtick for over a quarter of a century now, and I suppose we should always be glad to see him back. I have to say, though, that Thomas Harris's heart doesn't really seem to be in it this time around.

Also not in it is Anthony Hopkins. There is of course a Law of Diminishing Returns that tends to apply when sequels become franchises, so that, say, Steve McQueen and Charles Bronson in Part I become Warren Oates and Robert Fuller in II, then George Kennedy and Joe Don Baker in III, only to settle on Ralph Waite and James B. Sikking by IV (as Joe Queenan once observed, there's a whole repertory company of actors – Martin Kove, Richard Roundtree, Patrick Macnee – whose entire later careers consist of Part IIIs). Now, there are some purists who will tell you that the only real Hannibal Lecter is Hannibal Lecktor, as played by Brian Cox in Michael Mann's *Manhunter* (1986), but they're wrong. Not that *Manhunter* isn't a great film – it is – or that Cox doesn't give a great performance – he does. No, his status as an icon means that Hannibal Lecter belongs at large in the cultural imaginary, and he doesn't enter our collective memory palace (as Harris might grandly put it) until brave Jodie Foster, who wears Evian skin cream and *L'Air du Temps*, but not today, takes her trepidatious walk along the dark corridor of the supermax dungeon, down past Multiple Miggs ("I can smell your cunt!"). There, waiting for her, at the very end of the line, last stop, is the Worst Man in the World. There are few things in contemporary cinema to match this scene from Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), and for once the Academy made good decisions in awarding the Best Actor Oscar to Hopkins (in spite of minimal screen time), and Best Actress to Foster. Hopkins claims to have forsworn Hannibal Lecter for good, but he's a famously capricious man, so you never know. I was really hoping for a cameo appearance from Hopkins, or even Brian Cox, in *Hannibal Rising*, perhaps there in the closing scene, cackling though his muzzle. Alas, no – but in compensation we do get not one but two villainous Welshmen, Rhys Ifans as the vile Grutas, and Richard Brake as his sidekick Dortlich, which must count for something.

In fairness, this is the first Lecter movie for which the Law of Diminishing Sequels has really applied. Everyone knows that *Manhunter* is a terrific movie – even if Mann’s 80s chic makes everything look like a Level 42 video, there’s still Cox and, even better, Tom Noonan, a Lost Soul if ever there was one, as Dolarhyde, complete with hare-lip, stocking mask, shortie kimono, and sawn-off shotgun, blasting suburban families away to the sound of Iron Butterfly’s ‘In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida’. It’s my favourite scene in the film, and one of the great moments of 80s cinema. And am I the only person who loves Ridley Scott’s 2001 *Hannibal*? Scott was well up for adapting the novel’s unremittingly vulgar commodity-fetishism – so many types of expensive cologne! – so many chichi Italian fountain pens! (you don’t get this stuff in Wal-Mart, you know). This is, to paraphrase Ezra Pound, Thomas Harris’s *Guide to Kulchur*, red in tooth and claw. What’s more, Hopkins has Lecter develop a bizarre fondness for using the phrase ‘okey-dokey’ at inopportune moments, and, well, who hasn’t wanted to see Ray Liotta eat his own brain? So much to love, so much. For *Red Dragon* (2002), the remake of *Manhunter*, producer Dino di Laurentiis gathered together as good a cast as it’s possible to assemble in a contemporary film – Hopkins, plus Edward Norton, Ralph Fiennes, Emily Watson, Harvey Keitel, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Mary-Louise Parker – and then saddled them with a director, Brett Ratner, who’d be out of his depth working with Martin Kove, Richard Roundtree and Patrick Macnee. The result is a dull mess, from Hopkins sporting a ponytail as the ‘young’ Hannibal Lecter, to Ralph Fiennes’s decidedly un-deformed Dolarhyde, turning a character whom Harris’s novel calls “cunt-face” (he likes that word, Thomas Harris) into a mere Joaquin Phoenix, rather than the full Tom Noonan. They should have left it there, but they didn’t.

What we have here, then, is a prequel. *Hannibal Rising* is Hannibal, the Early Years. Lecter is a Lithuanian aristocrat, traumatized by witnessing his sister being eaten by starving irregulars on the Eastern Front. This we knew already from *Hannibal*, but *Rising* fills in some crunchy details. Hannibal is brought up in Lecter Castle, last of the Lecters, warriors and artists, descendents of Hannibal the Grim (1365-1428). Young Lecter witnesses the death of his parents in a Stuka attack, and then is imprisoned by the irregulars, wannabe Nazis who, being Lithuanians, have names which Harris clearly relishes as fantastically villainous – Vladis Grutas, Enrikas Dortlich, Petras Kolnas, Bronys Gentz, Zigmias Milko. After liberation by the Russians, little Hannibal walks out of the snow with a chain around his neck. He is returned to Lecter Castle, now a Stalinist orphanage, where he “does not observe the pecking order” and instead hurts the bullies “very quickly and sometimes severely”. Escaping (in the film) or being rescued by his uncle (in the book), Hannibal is brought up in a French chateau, under the tutelage of his glamorous Japanese aunt, Lady Murasaki, whom he loves.

Hannibal becomes the youngest student ever admitted to medical school in Paris, where he is always top of his class, and earns his scholarship through drawing anatomical illustrations. He discovers the identities of the evil Lithuanians, all wanted for war crimes, tracks them down, and kills them all, at the same time losing whatever little humanity remains in him. As Inspector Popil, the policeman/war crimes investigator who pursues him ineffectually throughout the second half of the novel, muses:

The little boy Hannibal died in 1945 out there in the snow, trying to save his sister. His heart died with Mischa. What is he now? There’s not a word for it yet. For lack of a better word, we’ll call him a monster.

Like *Hannibal* before it, *Hannibal Rising* causes Harris some serious narrative and ethical problems, which he is unable to resolve. As novels, *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* were basically police procedural thrillers, focused around the (admittedly often somewhat wacky) FBI serial killer division at Quantico, where both Will Graham and Clarice Starling are based. Lecter, like Dolarhyde and Buffalo Bill, lurks in the background of these works, emerging only occasionally from the narrative shadows, but with truly startling effect. Less really is more here, as John Carpenter knew when he conceived of that other great serial-killer monster, Michael Myers. In *Hannibal*, Lecter is elevated to full heroic status, front of house. The novel succeeds – just – because of the sheer energy of its riotous baroque excess: Harris abandons all pretence of realism to create one of the maddest books I know. But even here, *Hannibal* is now only the Second Worst Man in the World, as we're rooting for him against an Even Worse one, Mason Verger, his billionaire nemesis/victim, who drinks martinis made from the tears of children (how evil is that!). In *Rising*, *Hannibal* has become a kind of righteous avenger. Set in post-war Paris, all *Hannibal*'s victims are war criminals, profiteers, Vichy informers. They deserve to die; they even deserve to be eaten. Lecter is a one-man war-crimes tribunal, far more effective, and at least as just, as his official counterpart, Popil.

In *Hannibal*, Thomas Harris seemed to have decided that Hannibal Lecter, his Man of Wealth and Taste, was in fact the devil himself after all. That novel is steeped in Satanic imagery, and while *Rising* tones this down a little, there are still a few Faustian allusions and epigraphs thrown in for good measure. In keeping with all this, the makers of *Hannibal Rising* cast in the title role Gaspard Ulliel, a young French actor with the most Satanic-sounding name this side of Louis Cyphre. He also leers and gurns brilliantly. Towards the end of the film, it struck me that both Ulliel and Ifans were in fact involved in a secret David Bowie lookalike competition. Both chose the Berlin-period look, in dress and hairstyle, which could have been worse.

So where do we go from here? If Sylvester Stallone can return to the big screen as a geriatric Rocky (and, soon, a geriatric Rambo), then, as a matter of principle, we should rule nothing out – like Fu Manchu, that other Devil Doctor, the world may well hear from Hannibal Lecter again. You may remember that *Hannibal* the novel closed with Lecter and Clarice eloping together to set up a new life in Buenos Aires, where they are occasionally glimpsed at the opera house. My sources tell me that, as I write this, Thomas Harris and Dino de Laurentiis are cooking up the next *Hannibal* movie. It's a musical, to be directed by Alan Parker, in which Hannibal Lecter (Rhys Ifans) and his diva wife Clarice (Madonna) set themselves up as his'n'hers fascist dictators of Argentina. When it comes out, I'll be first in the queue, but until then, adios amigo! Okey-dokey?

Darryl Jones

**The Innocents (Dir. Jack Clayton) UK 1961**  
**BFI 2006**

Since its first publication in 1898, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, in addition to being acclaimed as one of the finest ghost stories ever written, has proved a veritable battleground for chin-stroking literary academics. Is it a ghost story pure and simple, in which a young, unnamed governess contends for the souls of her charges, Miles and Flora, with the spectral apparitions of her predecessor, Miss Jessel, and her lover, the sinister former valet, Peter Quint? Or is it, as Edmund Wilson insisted in his 1934 essay, 'The Ambiguity of Henry James', a study in sexual repression in which the governess projects her own desires and fears onto the children, inadvertently destroying them in the process?

The question of how to interpret James's deliberate ambiguities was perhaps the most pressing problem facing film-maker Jack Clayton and his scriptwriters, William Archibald, Truman Capote, and John Mortimer, when they came to adapt the story for their 1961 film, *The Innocents*, now released on DVD by the BFI (£19.99/€29.99) with a splendidly informative and enthusiastic commentary and introduction by film historian (and, entirely coincidentally, fellow IJGHS editorial board member), Sir Christopher Frayling, who recalls being suitably traumatised by the film as a fourteen-year-old.

Cinema, of course, does not lend itself happily to ambiguity: objects, ghostly or otherwise, are either seen or they are not. In this respect, Clayton and his colleagues opted to follow the precedent set by the American stage adaptation, in which the ghosts were "real", while also appropriating its name for the governess (Miss Giddens), and its title, *The Innocents*. The resultant film, though wonderfully creepy and boasting fine performances, fell victim to a not dissimilar divergence of critical opinion as the original novella, with more literary-minded critics opining that it was too unsubtle, while the more bloody-minded (in the literal sense) considered that, though it shared some stylistic similarities with the then-booming Hammer output, it fell somewhat short in the shock-horror department. Clayton himself, it transpires, was in two minds about how best to present things going bump in the night, and was not entirely satisfied with the results either. Certainly, the appearances of Quint and Miss Jessel, while genuinely eerie and unsettling, tend to suffer from the law of diminishing returns – the more we see of them, the less frightening they become – and by the time of the film's delirious climax, Quint has indeed been reduced to little more than a Hammer-style monster.

As to the vexed question of interpretation, the key scenes in support of a literal reading of *The Turn of the Screw* occur when the governess first sees a figure standing on one of the towers of Bly House and looking directly at her. The governess can, apparently, discern it quite distinctly; later, after encountering the apparition again, she gives a detailed description, right down to the colour of its chin whiskers, to the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, who identifies it as the late, unlamented Peter Quint. From this point on, in theory, one is obliged to accept that the governess has indeed seen the ghost of the former valet. In *The Innocents*, however, Clayton handles this sequence quite differently. Initially, Miss Giddens sees only a silhouette on the tower. Later on, during a game of hide-and-seek, she finds a miniature portrait of Quint in the attic, and is soon after terrified by his second appearance, in leering close-up, through a window. When she asks Mrs. Grose (Megs Jenkins) how she could have described Quint so accurately, the



housekeeper points out that Miss Giddens has recently seen the miniature, implying that she may have imagined the whole episode.

However, just as James provides a sticking point by having the governess describe Quint so accurately (without, as far as the reader is aware, having previously seen an image of him), so Clayton does the same, through composition. Miss Giddens' first vision of Quint (Peter Wyngarde) is shown from her point of view, thereby allowing the viewer, if so inclined, to question if what she is seeing is "real". But with Quint's second appearance, Clayton shows both the ghost and Miss Giddens in the same shot, at which point the viewer is obliged, by the grammar of cinema, to accept that he or she is indeed seeing a "real" apparition. Later on in the film, Clayton repeats this effect in a scene with Miss Jessel (Clytie Jessop). In the brilliant, skin-crawling shots of the former governess standing in the reeds across the lake, she is seen only from Miss Giddens' point of view, but during her appearance in the schoolroom, she is shown in the same shot as Miss Giddens. (This is followed by a highly suspect moment in which Miss Giddens discovers a distinctly corporeal teardrop on the desk, the inclusion of which, Capote later admitted, was a mistake.) And in the climactic scene, where Quint appears on a pedestal above Miss Giddens and Miles, Clayton includes a high-angle shot in which all three appear in the same frame. The deliberate use of these objective shots means, in effect, that it is not possible to view *The Innocents* solely as a psychological portrait of a repressed spinster, as claimed, for instance, in *The Aurum Film Encyclopedia*. Indeed, rather than presenting "the very psychological narrative which James' writing painstakingly invalidated and avoided", Clayton may be said to have found a perfect visual metaphor for the central ambiguity of the original work.

In James's novella, the governess is an inexperienced twenty-year-old, "the youngest of several daughters of a poor country parson." Her story, though ostensibly told in her own words, is filtered through several other characters (a narrator retells the story as he remembers having heard it being read aloud by a man who knew the governess in later life, and to whom she sent her memoir), thereby allowing the reader to question the reliability of the entire narrative. Having provided the afore-mentioned sticking point, James then proceeds to undermine the governess's credibility. Utterly convinced of her own rightness and unattractively self-laudatory, she proves frighteningly quick to jump to conclusions and to impose her interpretation of events on others. By story's end, with young Miles dead, one is entitled to wonder whether the governess's recollections might not be an entirely delusional exercise in retrospective self-justification.

In *The Innocents*, Miss Giddens is played by Deborah Kerr, who was then in her fortieth year, a fact which, on one level, makes the "sexual repression" interpretation more plausible than when applied to James's much younger governess (whom, one may assume, has no reason to suppose she might not make "a good match" at some point in the future). Nonetheless, the casting of Kerr only tends to strengthen the case for a literal reading of the film; her screen image (*From Here to Eternity* notwithstanding) was one of well-bred competence, composure, and common sense, and viewers, certainly in 1961 (and not least due to the exigencies of the Hollywood star system), would have been unlikely to question the veracity of her character's impressions.

In one major area, the depiction of Miles and Flora, Clayton and his colleagues may be said to have vastly improved on James's original. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the children are ill-defined characters, seen only through the increasingly hysterical eyes of the governess. Their actions give little support to the latter's conviction that they are somehow in league with the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel, who allegedly wish to possess them, and the reader is more inclined than not to conclude that they are indeed "innocents". In the film, however, a clever use of lighting and editing – highlighting a quick, exchanged glance, a secret smile, a long-held look – allows Clayton to bring a real ambiguity to their characters, and one is constantly forced to remind oneself that it is only Miss Giddens' interpretation of certain events or gestures, such as Miles's seeming invocation of Quint during a fancy-dress performance or Flora's disposition to reverie, that makes the children seem actively sinister. Clayton's casting of Martin Stephens (who had already made his mark the year before in *Village of the Damned*) as the creepily self-possessed yet vulnerable Miles, and of débutante Pamela Franklin as Flora was little short of inspired.

To a large extent, then, and given the fact that the medium of cinema itself militates against adapting James's novella entirely satisfactorily, Clayton and his team must be credited with intelligently navigating the problems inherent in such an undertaking. If the director's approach is occasionally rather ponderous (a tendency often displayed in his other films, all literary adaptations), it is a failing of which, at least in this instance, he seems to have been aware. Nonetheless, *The Innocents* remains, along with Jacques Tourneur's *Night of the Demon* (1957), Sidney Hayers's *Night of the Eagle* (1961) and Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (1963), not only one of the best attempts to present the supernatural in an adult manner, but also, perhaps, the most satisfying and successful.

John Exshaw

**‘Don’t Look Now’ (Dir. Nicolas Roeg) Italy/UK 1973**  
**Optimum Home Entertainment 2006**

‘Don’t Look Now’, Nicolas Roeg’s 1973 horror masterpiece, has been spruced up for a new generation of cinephiles with its November 2006 special edition DVD release by Optimum Home Entertainment (in association with Studio Canal). The film has been given a digitally-restored widescreen transfer and now comes equipped with a series of extras that will further appeal to those who are already fans of Roeg’s work. These include an appraisal of the film by the critic and author of *The Rough Guide to Horror* Alan Jones; an exclusive audio commentary by the director himself; a ‘making-of’ documentary which features contributions from Roeg, cinematographer Anthony B. Richmond and editor Graeme Clifford; and an interview with the composer Pino Donnagio, who scored the haunting and foreboding music for the film. The package is rounded out by an informative sixteen-page booklet which includes a new essay on the film by critic Ryan Gilbey and behind-the-scenes stills.

Having made his reputation working as a cinematographer for directors such as Roger Corman on *The Masque of the Red Death* and for François Truffaut on *Fahrenheit 451*, Nicolas Roeg turned to directing in 1970 with the controversial *Performance*, which he followed with Aboriginal thriller *Walkabout* (1971). ‘Don’t Look Now’ was his third film, an adaptation of the Daphne Du Maurier short story of the same name. Roeg’s attraction to Du Maurier’s story centred on what he felt was its illustration of the lack of control one has over one’s own fate. The film recounts the tale of grief-stricken couple John and Laura Baxter (played by Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie). Following the tragic death of their young daughter Christine in the film’s opening sequence, they travel to Venice where John has been given the job of restoring an old church. There, they encounter a pair of old sisters, one is a blind psychic who tells Laura that she can see Christine and also warns that John is in imminent danger if he continues to remain in Venice. John, a sceptic and disbeliever in ESP, ignores the warning and so the tension builds as he moves towards his own death at the hands of the red-hooded, dwarf-crone whom he mistakes for Christine.

‘Don’t Look Now’ is perhaps one of the most finely-executed examples of psychological horror, which Roeg in part achieves through clever editing and the repetition of the key motifs of water, shattered glass and the colour red throughout the film. The images of Christine in her red raincoat and the red-hooded figure that John sees in Venice, for example, provides the horror genre with one of its most chilling doubles. However, the film’s continuing resonance also lies in its subtle and tender treatment of loss, grief and mourning. Bereavement is explored through a contemplation of time and space, a theme which is evident from the opening moments of the film. Throughout this remarkable opening sequence, Laura sits reading a book entitled *Beyond the Fragile Geometry of Space*, a title that captures the essence of the film as a whole. As she attempts to find the answer to a question of Christine’s – “If the world is round why is a frozen pond flat?” – she discovers that “Lake Ontario curves three degrees”, prompting John to respond that “Nothing is what it seems”. And indeed nothing is what it seems, for moments later Christine drowns in a small pond in the family garden, and with this event John and Christine’s lives take on an increasingly unstable direction. Throughout the film time tends to overlap and become confused. Life and

death co-exist in the psychic visions of the blind sister; in John's premonition of his own death; and in the multiple montage sequences which inter-cut the past, present and future. The labyrinthine space of Venice further highlights the underlying fragility of life and the fragile boundaries of existence. Shot out of season, the city takes on a character of its own. With its dark, damp, dead-end alleys and confusing network of narrow streets, the watery city disorients both characters and viewers alike. Constantly folding in on itself through the repetition of streets and bridges, Venice challenges and defies concepts of stability, space and time, effectively mirroring the narrative techniques and themes of 'Don't Look Now' itself.

Another notable element of the film is, of course, the infamous love scene between John and Laura (which was actually the first scene shot). The scene caused controversy at the time of its release on both sides of the Atlantic because – as Julie Christie comments – “People didn't do scenes like that in those days”. However, Roeg insists that the scene was pivotal. The suggestion is that this is the first time the couple have made love since the death of their daughter, and by the end of the film it is further implied that indeed Laura may, as a result, be pregnant again, adding yet another layer to the film's meditation on life and death.

On viewing the film, Daphne Du Maurier wrote to the director: “Dear Mr Roeg, I saw your film of my story and your John and Laura reminded me so much of a couple I saw in Torcello having lunch together. They looked so handsome and beautiful and yet they seemed to have a terrible problem and I watched them with sadness.” It is this perceptive treatment of grief and sadness of a couple coming to terms with the death of a child, along with the psychological dimension of unease and horror, which makes 'Don't Look Now' such a powerful film, and firmly establishes it as a classic of horror cinema. This re-release on DVD should continue to keep the film at the fore of cinema's greats, a position it undoubtedly deserves, both within the genre of horror and beyond.

Maria Parsons

**Pan's Labyrinth (El Laberinto del Fauno)(Dir. Guillermo del Toro) Mexico/Spain/USA 2006**

**Optimum Home Entertainment**

This review contains spoilers

Oscar night, 2004: the bespectacled, bearded and portly director of an effects-laden fantasy film takes the stage. Peter Jackson has just added Best Picture to his Best Director gong in an awards ceremony which has seen *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* make Oscar history by winning in each of the eleven categories for which it had been nominated. It has taken Jackson three films and nearly ten hours of screen-time, but Oscar has finally acknowledged fantasy filmmaking. Fast forward three years, and another bespectacled, bearded and portly director has delivered a new fantasy film which has been rewarded with a more modest six nominations. Admittedly, Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* (*El Laberinto del Fauno*) had lost out on the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film to *Letters from Iwo Jima*; but Oscar had nominated Clint Eastwood's film in the Best Picture category, and del Toro had scooped the BAFTA and practically every Film Critics Association award going. In the year of the safe bets (Helen Mirren for Best Actress; Forest Whitaker for Best Actor; Martin Scorsese for Best Director), surely del Toro's fusion of fairy-tale and historical drama would be a shoe-in. But *Pan's Labyrinth* will end the night with a respectable three awards (for Make-up, Cinematography and Art Direction), making it the second biggest winner at the 79th Oscar ceremony. However, del Toro himself will go home empty-handed, losing out for both Best Original Screenplay and Best Foreign language Film. Oscar, it seems, still isn't fully comfortable with rewarding fantasy filmmakers.

The real strength of *Pan's Labyrinth* lies, of course, in its use of memorable and unsettling fantasy sequences as a means of dramatising the rise of Fascist Spain under Franco. Set in 1944, it follows the story of Ofélia (Ivana Baquero) as she and Carmen, her recently-married and heavily-pregnant mother (Ariadna Gil), adjust to a new life under the regime of her dictatorial stepfather, Captain Vidal (Sergi López). Vidal has been charged with locating and suppressing resistance forces hidden in the mountains which surround the family home, and governs young Ofélia and her mother with a similarly iron fist. The imaginative Ofélia is immediately drawn to a mysterious labyrinth that adjoins the house, despite having been warned to stay away from it by kindly housekeeper Mercedes (Maribel Verdú). Here she encounters a faun (Doug Jones) who informs her that she is a long-lost princess of the underworld and gives her a "Book of Crossroads" as a means to guide her through three increasingly dangerous tasks. Should she successfully complete them, she will be permitted to return to her kingdom. As she fulfils these tasks, the fantasy world and the real world of Fascist Spain collide and influence one another, with devastating end effects.

On an initial viewing, the crossover between these two worlds appears to be introduced quite gradually; a repeat viewing, however, reveals just how closely they are linked from the opening frame on. The film opens with a caption which locates the story in historical terms, and fades into the opening shot of a dying Ofélia, gasping for breath, and with blood pooling from her nose. This segues into the fairytale prologue which tells of Princess Moanna's escape from the underworld into the blinding light of the "real" world. From here, the camera pans over a ruined church and a devastated post-Civil War landscape, before

introducing us to Ofélia and her mother en route to their new life. The opening of the film does not so much alternate between fantasy and reality, then, as present them as one continuous narrative in which these boundaries are permanently blurred. This merging of the two worlds is continued throughout in subtle details: the image of the faun, for example, is engraved on the banister inside the house and is echoed in the carvings on the headboard of Carmen's bed, while uterine imagery is prevalent throughout the film, from the faun's horns to the dying tree to the bloody premonition in the Book of Crossroads of Carmen's troubled pregnancy.

Similarly, keys and knives prove significant in each narrative. The key retrieved by Ofélia in her first task leads her to the second in which she must collect a dagger and avoid waking the eerie and brutal Pale Man (again played by Doug Jones). \*\*\*\*SPOILER FOLLOWS\*\*\*\* Significantly, in this sequence Ofélia refuses to obey her three fairy companions' insistence that the dagger lies behind the centre door, and trusts her instincts in choosing for herself where the dagger lies. Through the imagery of the key and the knife, Ofélia's disobedience here is linked to the revolutionary acts of Mercedes throughout the film. She acts as an informer in Vidal's household, assisting the resistance fighters who hide in the surrounding hills. It is Mercedes who provides these rebels with a key with which to open the locked storeroom and liberate supplies from the grip of the fascist Vidal; and later in the film (in the same storeroom) she puts a knife of her own to effective use in disfiguring the vain Captain. \*\*\*\*SPOILER ENDS\*\*\*\*

Vidal himself is the character that best bridges the fantastical and realistic realms within the film. On a first viewing, his fascist Captain arguably appeared a little too stereotypical to function in a "realist" realm. However, with the more layered interpretation that repeated viewings allow, Vidal's direct links with the fantastical realm become more and more apparent. This is particularly notable in the careful set design that places him at the head of a table that is laden with food as he hypocritically sets out his plans to ration supplies more strictly for the surrounding households. This scene has its direct counterpart in the Pale Man sequence: he too sits at the head of a long table overflowing with food which Ofélia is not permitted to share. The setting of the two sequences closely mirror one another, and the Pale Man and Vidal ultimately combine as two related images of faceless and violent authority. \*\*\*\*SPOILER FOLLOWS\*\*\*\* (It is no coincidence, then, that Mercedes's most gruesome knife attack is to Vidal's face.) \*\*\*\*SPOILER ENDS\*\*\*\* Together, they embody an ogre made flesh, a figure that transcends both fantasy and reality. It is an effective narrative technique that characterises Pan's Labyrinth as a whole.

The film more than comfortably makes the transition from the big screen for this DVD release; indeed, when viewed on a smaller scale, it feels more like the personal film that del Toro has often described it as. The subtleties of the story and set design become more apparent, and the texture of the colour schemes and cinematography are more tangible with repeated viewings. In the "real world", Ofélia is always dressed in green, for example, linking her throughout with the organic costume of the faun; and the light schemes of the two worlds gradually mesh throughout the film as the "real" and the "fantasy" elements combine. These technical riches are showcased in a series of informative documentaries, featurettes and interviews on an extras-packed second disc; while the film itself comes equipped with an entertaining and revealing commentary from del Toro. All combine to demonstrate that Pan's Labyrinth is del Toro's most

assured film to date, the product of a director and his collaborative team at the height of their creative and imaginative powers. This is genre filmmaking at its inventive and challenging best.

Jenny McDonnell

**Them (Ils) (Dir: David Moreau, Xavier Palud) France/Romania 2005**

This review contains spoilers

Although it received several positive reviews and a widespread release, French-made, Romanian-set horror movie *Them* is a tedious, hackneyed disappointment; which in spite of a lean running time (76 minutes), still manages to overstay its welcome. Its only notable accomplishment may be in furthering the suspicion that for budding European horror directors, the former Eastern block is currently fulfilling the same unsavoury role that the American south so often did for genre filmmakers across the Atlantic during the 1970s. Where they once used states such as Texas (*The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*), Georgia (*Deliverance*) and Louisiana (*Southern Comfort*) as the prime location for narratives which pivoted upon the contrast between educated, naïve (and often arrogant) city folk and inbred, savage and aggressive hicks, in recent years European-set horror has begun to use the Eastern perimeter of Europe for much the same purpose, albeit to somewhat different effect. Noting this tendency in American films, Carol J. Clover suggested that such narratives were tacitly founded upon the assumption that “People from the city are people like us. People from the country...are people not like us” (Clover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws*, 124). So far as recent European-set horror is concerned, the consensus seems to be that “People from the West are people like us. People from the East are not like us”.

2006 saw two major horror films based upon this premise. In *Severance* a band of quirky British and American white-collar workers found themselves picked off one by one by a vengeful band of psychotic ex-paramilitaries in a location which was wisely never explicitly named, but was clearly somewhere in the former Yugoslavia. American director Eli Roth’s cynical, xenophobic and deeply unpleasant *Hostel* (filmed in the Czech Republic, but set in Slovakia) suggested that impoverished Eastern Europeans will do absolutely anything to make a quick buck. Now we have *Them*, in which yet another pair of educated, naïve Westerners are terrorised by the psychotic residents of a former Communist country.

French schoolteacher Clementine and her boyfriend Lucas have settled in Romania. She teaches her native language in a busy secondary school in Bucharest (itself a nightmarish vista of ugly, repetitive tower blocks), whilst he is a writer. We don’t really get to find out much more about them than that (a fact that makes it difficult to care much for their struggles to survive: much of the Australian film *Wolf Creek*’s effectiveness came from the fact that almost half the film was spent gradually getting to know the ill-fated victims before the inevitable “hapless foreigners versus psychotic local” dynamic presented itself). Clementine commutes from work to their rural home, a large hunting lodge rather like the one in which vile former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were tried before being unceremoniously executed by revolutionaries. The young couple have no idea that only the night before – in the typically clichéd broken-down-car-on-a-dark-country-road scene which opens the film, and isn’t referred to again – a mother and her surly teenage daughter were brutally murdered. Clementine and Lucas make love, eat, watch TV, and finally go to bed for the night, only to be awoken a couple of hours later by strange noises. When he ventures outside to investigate, Lucas discovers that their car has been broken into, and the surrounding woods are filled with shadowy assailants. The rest of film is an allegedly tense succession of cat-and-mouse scenes in which the couple desperately try to escape their attackers,



punctuated by the oh-so-familiar kinds of moments that are a staple of this kind of horror film. The dog is barking! The lights are off! The phone is dead! There's someone in the house!

It is the revelation about who these attackers are – something which should take a viewer of average intelligence all of say, ten minutes to figure out – which supplies Them with its supposedly resonant twist. \*\*\*\*SPOILER FOLLOWS\*\*\*\* For the killers who stalk Clementine and Lucas come not from Romania's supernatural or folkloric past, but are rather a legacy of the much more recent Communist era: a group of grubby, near-feral kids, aged between ten and fifteen, clad in trainers and hooded tops, sorely in need of a few ASBOs to sort them out. This potentially interesting, but not-particularly-subtle, East versus West dichotomy may be linked to the opposition between adults and children first hinted at in the opening scenes of the film, in which the doomed mother and daughter bicker with one another. It's also further highlighted by Clementine's drive home from the classroom, which takes her past the monstrously vast presidential palace built by the same dictator whose ruthlessly anti-birth control policies resulted in thousands and thousands of unwanted children being sent to squalid state-run orphanages. In addition, given the current level of anxiety in the tabloid press about out-of-control teenagers, the notion of helpless grown-ups menaced by sinister adolescents is a particularly timely one. Anyone who has ever stood in front of an uncooperative secondary school class knows firsthand that hostile teenagers can be genuinely intimidating, especially when you're not armed with a poker, as Lucas is. So what we have is three apparently pertinent, if fairly familiar, elements meshing here: educated foreigners menaced in a backwards and unfamiliar country; adults set upon by evil children; and city folk being terrorised in the woods. Whilst the unusual setting is interesting at first, and the 'evil-hoodies' revelation at the end sounds appropriately timely, in actuality this is a hackneyed, tedious and predictable viewing experience which only brings to mind the superior films from which it so obviously draws inspiration – The Blair Witch Project and Halloween amongst them.

While the performances are serviceable (if uninspired), the actual look of the film (at least in the print I saw) is unpleasantly grainy and cheap-looking, in a manner that detracts from, rather than adds to, the negligible atmosphere; an overhead shot of Clementine's car winding its way through Bucharest is so poorly composed that it looks as though it was filmed on a mobile phone. One of the very few moments of inspired direction here comes in a scene which is practically a direct lift of the infamous "splinter/eyeball" scene from Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, whilst the supposedly chilling coda is more laughable than disturbing, as we are told by the onscreen-scrrawl that the children, when arrested a few days later, said that they "only wanted to play". The fact is, although mildly unsettling, at least at first, the threat faced by the couple simply isn't made half as frightening as it could so easily have been. There have been several interesting and effective European horror movies released in the past decade, unfortunately Them cannot be included in their ranks. Those interested in movies which feature genuinely scary children should go watch glassy-eyed moppet Dakota Fanning simper her way through Charlotte's Web instead.

Bernice M. Murphy

**Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film**  
**(Rachel Belofsky , Mike Bohusz & Rudy Scalese)**  
**USA 2006**

While attending last year's 'Horrorthon' at the Irish Film Institute in Dublin, I encountered something rather special: *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film*. Most horror documentaries leave one with the distinct impression that interviews have been cut too short, or that any form of in-depth analysis has been removed for the sake of showing some over-familiar and conventionally 'shocking' footage. By contrast, *Going to Pieces* presented itself as a fully-realised documentary from its elaborate opening sequence, which was a visual cross-section of horror's finest directors, actors, producers and writers commenting on the nature of the slasher sub-genre. The film is based on Adam Rockoff's book of the same name, the definitive academic study of the development of the slasher film from John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) to its misunderstood and poorly-received finale in *April Fool's Day* (1986). To date, there is no other guide to this controversial sub-category within the horror genre which rivals the sheer scope and depth of Rockoff's book. The film's structure mirrors the book's chapters and arguments, and is interspersed with illustrative extracts from the slasher films under discussion, making it a worthy companion piece to Rockoff's study.

The documentary begins by examining the roots of the slasher genre, placing them firmly at the heart of the real 'American Nightmare': the Vietnam War. In particular, make-up artist Tom Savini - whose most notable work includes George A. Romero's zombie films and Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* - draws on his experiences in Vietnam as a combat photographer who documented the devastation of the region and its inhabitants. Savini recalls seeing severed limbs, torture victims and badly decomposing bodies strewn around like garbage, an experience which profoundly affected him. Wes Craven similarly recollects the effects of the era's political upheavals, paraphrasing Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* to encapsulate end results of this ongoing national trauma: "All that bad Karma has to go somewhere". He describes his graphic rape/revenge film *Last House on the Left* (1972) as an immediate response to the Vietnam crisis, illustrating the violation of a vulnerable America from within. Another excellent horror documentary - Adam Simon's *The American Nightmare* (2000) - examines these social and political contexts for 1960s and 1970s horror in more detail. In contrast, *Going To Pieces* builds on Simon's work by acknowledging the contributions of such forefathers as Wes Craven, but focuses more specifically on the rise of the slasher sub-genre from *Halloween* on. Once Carpenter succeeded in securing a regional release for *Halloween*, the film began to gain unprecedented momentum, grossing over \$50 million at the US box office: the slasher sub-genre was officially born. Carpenter's interviews in *Going to Pieces* are often poignant, especially when he speaks about his long-time producer (and former girlfriend) Debra Hill, who passed away in early 2006. In following the specific history of the slasher sub-genre, the film focuses on the immediate aftermath of Carpenter's success, particularly on the release of bandwagon-hopping films such as Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (1980) and the franchise it generated. As *Going to Pieces* suggests, no national or cultural holiday was safe from the genre's creative clutches once the films of Cunningham and Carpenter had established the basic conventions of the slasher, and subsequent filmmakers drew further inspiration from Bob Clark's influential (and prescient) *Black Christmas* (1974). Other films which receive notable mentions in the documentary include *My*

Bloody Valentine; New Year's Evil; Silent Night, Deadly Night; Sleepaway Camp; and Happy Birthday to Me.

Going to Pieces is not merely concerned with the most popular films of the genre, but also showcases a litany of 'B'-roster slasher films that attempted to cash in on the sub-genre's newfound popularity. These often boasted unintentionally hilarious or virtually non-existent plot lines, as well as a healthy dose of cringe-worthy dialogue and imaginative onscreen deaths. A series of revealing clips merges classics of the sub-genre and its many imitators, and adds to our appreciation of the whole. A notable and often forgotten scene from *Silent Night, Deadly Night* (1984) is included, in which a maniacal Grandpa (Will Hare) informs young Billy (a genuinely traumatised Danny Wagner) that Santa Claus murders naughty children on Christmas Eve with an axe, a clip which helps illustrate both the genre's ludicrous studio spin-offs and the controversies that emerged as a response to the slasher's popularity. Protests over the film's content sparked a litany of criticisms of the genre and brought the slasher to the public's attention as a medium of low culture and bad taste. And as the documentary correctly chronicles, the slasher was to suffer badly from the studio's demand for sequels, a trend which helped turn a genuinely interesting sub-genre of horror into a cash-cow of mediocrity.

Going to Pieces is a very glossy, well-researched documentary that leaves the viewer thirsty for more. The film is stylishly presented, making memorable use of music throughout its thematically and historically structured segments, and is edited in such a way that there is a sense of real excitement in viewing it for the first time, even if one is already an aficionado of the sub-genre. At ninety minutes, the documentary does necessarily under-represent some sub-categories, and it would perhaps have benefited from some elaboration on the "spaghetti splatter" movies of Italian filmmakers like Mario Bava and Dario Argento. However, as the slasher sub-genre is recognised as a predominantly American phenomenon which often dramatises overtly American issues and anxieties, one can forgive this omission of a topic which surely deserves a documentary of its own anyway.

It is a documentary that is indispensable for both scholars and loyal fans of the genre, and an interesting medium with which to recruit a new fan base to horror overall. As the horror genre is finding itself in a state of legitimacy in both academic studies and mainstream taste, this documentary fulfils two important functions: it promotes and encourages horror filmmakers of the future (in keeping with producer Rachel Belofsky's work with her annual "Screamfest" festival in Los Angeles) and it successfully and compellingly narrates the history and the cultural importance of a neglected but fascinating sub-genre. As yet, no release date has been set for the documentary in Ireland or the UK (although Swiss-based distribution company Ascot Elite Entertainment Group has recently acquired the rights for German-speaking territories); however, it is available through online American retailers. *Going to Pieces* has received critical acclaim in the US and richly deserves further attention in Europe. It offers invaluable insights, lots of humour and rare archive footage, which is in itself a treat for any hardcore fan. Overall, it is a delightfully bloodthirsty pleasure.

Sorcha Ní Fhlainn

**Scream Queen: An Interview with Rachel Belofsky:  
Producer of Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Movie & Festival Director of  
“Screamfest”, Los Angeles**

Ní Fhlainn: How did the project come together?

Belofsky: Rudy Scalese had previously read the book. At the time, he was working at a management company that represented a director that was in “Screamfest” 2003. Rudy and I kept in touch during the following Spring 2004 and he asked me if I would be interested in producing a documentary based on the book. He knew that I had previously produced the documentary, *Fast Women: The Ladies of Nascar*, and had documentary experience. Also, due to “Screamfest”, I have relationships with the vast majority of people we interviewed. During the summer of 2004 the company Rudy was working for closed its doors. I hired Rudy to work for “Screamfest” and my production company. Shortly after he was hired we secured the rights to the book from the publisher. We shopped it around and it ended up at Starz [entertainment media group and distribution company]. Actually Adam Rockoff made the introduction for us at Starz. Ironically, Rudy and I had met Michael Ruggiero [executive producer] a few months prior to him joining Starz and told him about the project. He loved the idea back then. Once Michael joined Starz he championed the project at Starz and was able to get a greenlight in the summer of 2005. We began production in January 2006. Michael Bohusz is a 2001 winning “Screamfest” director. He joined our team in June 2006 and edited the documentary. The wonderful tongue-in-cheek humour is definitely Mike Bohusz’s style. He did a fantastic job.

Ní Fhlainn: Was Adam Rockoff (author of the book *Going to Pieces*) closely involved with the film?

Belofsky: Adam was not closely involved with the film. We did speak with him early in the development stage. He came up with a few of the segment title cards that we used. However, the narrative flow, the interview questions, the interviewees, the clip selections, the graphics and overall theme was all created by us. Adam did an amazing job writing the book and it gave us great joy to bring it to the screen.

Ní Fhlainn: While this film is an obvious labour of love, was it difficult to bring it to the screen?

Belofsky: *Going to Pieces* was indeed a labour of love and it was very difficult to bring to the screen. We had a limited production budget and had to get as many people as we could in the allotted days. Unfortunately there were several people we just could not schedule. Another chore was tracking down the rights to some of the older films. That proved to be quite tedious. The studios gave us great deals but it was still extremely expensive and took quite a chunk out of the budget. There are film clips we simply could not feature due to licensing issues.

Ní Fhlainn: Did the experience change any of your perspectives or opinions on the Horror genre?

Belofsky: It did not change my perspective or opinion on horror because I already love it!

Ní Fhlainn: Do you have a personal favourite interview and experience from the film?

Belofsky: My personal favourite interview from *Going to Pieces* would either be Greg Nicotero or Felissa Rose. Greg had such great knowledge and insight on the genre. Felissa Rose gave such a fun, energetic and at times comedic interview. When she referenced her role in *Sleepaway Camp* as the “chick with the d\*ck”, the audience roared with laughter. The way she describes the Italian horror is quite poetic. She is a true passionate fan. My favourite experience from the film was definitely working with Mike Bohusz. It was a great experience to work with “Screamfest” alumni and we are looking to team up again, this time Mike will direct.

Ní Fhlainn: Did you encounter any personal heroes during the filming of the movie?

Belofsky: Meeting Bob Shaye (head of New Line Cinema) was a thrill. I admire the fact that he risked everything to make *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. His gamble paid off, and it made New Line Cinema what it is today.

Ní Fhlainn: In your own opinion, what kind of reception is horror receiving in the US?

Belofsky: The genre fans love horror. I think the studios are embracing it more because it is such a money-maker for them. However, I do still feel that horror is looked down upon. Horror is never going to go away, it may have its ups and downs but it is here to stay.

Ní Fhlainn: And what do you think about the 1970s horror remakes currently being churned out by Hollywood?

Belofsky: I wish Hollywood would stop remaking the classic films and create some new and inventive films. It seems now when you reference one of the classic films such as *Black Christmas* or *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* that you have to clarify by either saying the remake or the classic. There are so many talented writers in Hollywood that do have great new ideas and those are the films I would personally like to see on the screen.

Ní Fhlainn: What kind of reception did *Going to Pieces* receive in the US? It was very popular at “Horrorthon”, Dublin.

Belofsky: *Going to Pieces* was very well received in the US. *Entertainment Weekly* chose it as the “What to Watch of the Week”. The *Hollywood Reporter* also gave it a glowing review.

Ní Fhlainn: Do you have any upcoming projects in the horror genre?

Belofsky: I do have upcoming projects in the horror genre. My festival, “Screamfest Horror Film Festival”, will celebrate its seventh anniversary this October. As well, we have a few horror features we hope to begin production on in the later part of 2007.

Ní Fhlainn: And finally, just for fun: if you could star in any slasher film, which film would it be and why?

Belofsky: I would have to say either Halloween or A Nightmare on Elm Street. I like strong female characters. I think Nancy is a much stronger character than Laurie but either character would be great to play.

Sorcha Ní Fhlainn

Many thanks to Rachel Belofsky for her time, and to Ed King who facilitated this interview.

## MULTIMEDIA REVIEWS

### Video Games and Censorship – The Bogeyman of the 21st Century

Eoin Murphy

This edition of the video games review section takes a special look at banned and censored games, with reviews of Rule Of Rose (banned across Europe and memorably described by no less than the Mayor of Rome as the product of “perverse minds.”) and Manhunt, a game cited in the media as the trigger for the murder of an English school boy.

In addition, David Egan, a first time reviewer for the journal, will take a look at Condemned as a counter point between games that are banned for their violent and sexual content and those that are applauded for their innovative look at the world of criminals, yet still retain excessive violence (and lead pipes...).

To open this section we have an article about the effect the media can have on the public response to videogames and how these games are slowly being turned into ‘the new video nasties’.

#### The New Video Nasties?: Censorship and the Video Game

Videogames have been around since the 1960s (albeit initially in a severely limited form), but it is only in the last decade and a half that they’ve fully entered into mainstream society as an acceptable hobby, career and conversation topic. This change is reflected most obviously in the age of the average gamer, which has been rising steadily for years. At the present time you’re more likely to find someone in their mid-twenties or early thirties playing a games’ console than a 14 year old. This has resulted in a boom in adult-oriented games (for example, there’s even a game where you take on the role of a young Hugh Hefner as he builds the Playboy Empire!). The relatively new level of popularity and exposure has also led videogames into the media spotlight, with many games falling under the intense scrutiny of a suspicious media keen to uncover scandal and shock within this rapidly evolving activity.

This article will discuss the effect the media coverage can have on videogames. It will examine the way in which adverse reporting can shape the perceptions of the general public and consider whether there is any concrete proof that videogames can cause violence. As part of this assessment the games Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (which was heavily criticised and pulled off shelves after the discovery of the mini-game ‘Hot Coffee’) and Manhunt, which was cited in the media as the cause of a teenager’s murder, will be discussed in particular detail, with an exploration of the facts behind the media frenzy.

The current treatment of games in the media is remarkably similar to that received by horror films in the 1980s, when the video nasty scare dominated headlines for the best part of the decade; with tabloid editorials and band-wagon hopping M.P’s like David Mellor calling for the ban of controversial films such as The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Last House on the Left, I Spit on Your Grave and many others

(some of which, ironically, are now being released in DVD box sets which explicitly play up their previously banned status on the cover).

However, unlike the video nasty scare, which was generally restricted to low budget films made by relatively obscure directors and producers, the media targeting of videogames is affecting a multi-billion dollar industry, and a single bad headline is enough to influence a game's release or its age rating.

One of the games best known to both the general public and videogame players is Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas. GTA: SA follows the main character CJ as he returns to his 'Los Santos' home to discover that his neighbourhood is under siege, his mother is dead and rival gangs are selling crack all across the city. The plot follows CJ as he travels across the fictional cities of Los Santos, San Fernando and Las Venturas, seeking revenge and trying to avoid the machinations of corrupt cops, who are voiced by stars such as Samuel L. Jackson and the late Chris Penn.

The game follows a 'sand-box' format, with a large game world allowing players to immerse themselves in the gameplay. Unlike other games, the GTA franchise avoids load screens wherever possible, doing away with them entirely in GTA: SA. The sand box format means that gamers can essentially go anywhere and do pretty much anything, unlike most other videogames which follow a linear pathway to ensure the players move from the start to the end. In GTA:SA you can play for hours on end and not move the plot on one iota, but rather just have fun with mini-games, assorted challenges and driving cars very, very fast through city streets. While not a horror game as such, GTA has never been a series to avoid bloodshed, as gamers are able to arm themselves with everything from brass knuckles to a flamethrower (with victims running around screaming as they slowly burn to death).

The sheer premise of the game (criminal tries to gain control of cities whilst wiping out his rivals) means gamers are exposed to the kind of gameplay not normally employed within the medium, as the requirements of the plot encourage you to regularly perform car-jackings, thefts (it has a sub-game where you can break into people's houses and steal their belongings) and pimp female prostitutes.

Unsurprisingly, GTA: SA, like all the GTA games, was released to a chorus of complaints from concerned parents, politicians and church groups alike. They argued that the exposure of children and teenagers to a game like GTA would result in delinquents roaming the streets inflicting GTA style violence on the innocent. Despite these protests, the game flourished as a must-have purchase on multiple platforms and PCs: predictably; the media furor actually did much to add to the game's appeal. Rockstar Games had previously made excellent use of the media to help generate interest in their games and GTA:SA was no exception. However, the media's typical short term interest soon saw the storm of controversy fade as the press moved on to newer moral outrages.

That was, of course, until 'Hot Coffee'...

One of the more intriguing aspects of GTA: SA was C.J.'s ability to get himself a girlfriend within the game (a dream of many pasty-faced, mostly male gamers). Gamers could wine and dine the



mentioned female, and if they were lucky they could get invited into her abode for a bit of extra curricular activity. This was implied by little more than a few suggestive sounds and the sight of a slightly happier CJ leaving the house.

However, an enterprising Dutch 'modder' (someone who hacks into the code of games for the purpose of modifying the code, generally to add weapons, characters, etc) discovered a hidden code within the game that unlocked another mini-game. To access this mini-game it was necessary to hack into the code of the game, a notoriously difficult task on a console, but much easier on a PC. The code was then made freely available on the Internet: a simple download onto the appropriate PC and the gamer was able to unlock the mini-game. Within a few weeks of the game being released on the PC, videos of 'Hot Coffee' began to appear all across the Internet.

The 'Hot Coffee' mod allowed gamers to actually take part in the bedroom hi-jinks of CJ and his latest girlfriend, with the player able to control CJ's actions and the camera angles. Once they successfully completed the mini-game, the player gained extra 'respect' points. Unsurprisingly, as soon as videos of the mod began to appear on the Internet, Take-Two interactive and Rockstar Games - the game's publisher and developer respectively - came under intense scrutiny by the ESRB (the games industry regulator) and the world's media.

Suffice to say, the same groups who had campaigned against the game's release in the first place again demanded that it be banned. The game and its developers were widely vilified, with a number of countries (including Australia) banning its sale or altering its age certification to reflect the 'Hot Coffee' mod.

As a result of the mod, GTA:SA was given an increased age limit in the US, going from a mature 17+ game to an 1+ adults only game from the ESRB. Take Two interactive itself reduced its expected profit margin from the game from \$170 million to \$160 million. This change to just a small section within the game cost the company \$10 million dollars (Source: [www.gamespot.com](http://www.gamespot.com)).

It must be said that the mini-game it is fairly graphic and could easily offend the "uninitiated". But while it might have left little to the imagination, was the distinctly hysterical reaction from the world's media justified? This mod can only be downloaded via the Internet and loaded on to a PC. In Ireland and the UK, GTA: SA is rated as 18s only.

With the augmented power of next generation consoles, games are attaining greater levels of realism. Such superior levels of realism are, in turn, creating greater difficulties for games in achieving release in markets throughout the world. This is especially the case in light of various groups, including right-wing conservatives in the US and the Australian government, calling for the banning or censorship of specific games.

The argument presented by many of these bodies is that violent videogames played by children will have a subsequent effect on the child's behaviour, creating a greater tendency towards violence.

Research, supporting this contention, was conducted in 2000 by psychologists Craig Anderson and Karen Dill and published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2000, Vol. 78. The research was conducted via two separate studies on college students, one conducted into videogame violence in the real world and the other on videogame violence in the lab. Upon completion of the studies, the researchers stated that:

The present research demonstrated that in both a correlational investigation using self-reports of real-world aggressive behaviours and an experimental investigation using a standard, objective laboratory measure of aggression, violent video game play was positively related to increases in aggressive behaviour. In the laboratory, college students who played a violent video game behaved more aggressively toward an opponent than did students who had played a non-violent video game. Outside the laboratory, students who reported playing more violent video games over a period of years also engaged in more aggressive behaviour in their own lives. Both types of studies—correlational—real delinquent behaviours and experimental—laboratory aggressive behaviours have their strengths and weaknesses. The convergence of findings across such disparate methods lends considerable strength to the main hypothesis that exposure to violent video games can increase aggressive behaviour.

(Anderson & Dill, 2000)

The researchers then went on to point out that the high school students who carried out the Columbine Massacre (Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold) in April 1999 were regular players of videogames, with Harris having redesigned a copy of the videogame *Doom* so that it featured two players and unarmed enemies; a scenario that is disturbingly reminiscent of the Columbine Massacre.

Further research conducted in 2005 (which involved a review of research and studies conducted on the topic over the previous 20 years) showed that youths who regularly played violent videogames were classed as more hostile and aggressive towards fellow pupils (Six-hundred 8th and 9th Graders, rated by their teachers). Teachers also noted their pupils' tendency to replicate moves played out by game characters (one teacher cited the example of a pupil who was prone to Karate chopping others.). As stated on the website [www.mentalhealth.about.com](http://www.mentalhealth.about.com): "The researchers warn about more serious violent behaviour if children played this type of video game over and over again".

However, it must be noted that there is a counterpoint to such arguments. As a child I spent many a happy day wandering the playground acting out scenes from *Robocop*, one of the more violent films of the 1980s, and I have yet to carry out any mass murders.

The research cited above, although thought-provoking, nevertheless does not prove that violent videogames lead to violence in the real world. Children may copy what they see, whether it is in the real world or a virtual one, but whether they carry these actions to a violent and deadly conclusion is an entirely different matter, reliant on many other factors both psychological and environmental in origin.

The charge of inciting violence and/or anti-social behaviour has been laid at the feet of many forms of media (for instance, consider the banning of films like *The Evil Dead* in the early 80s, now a cult favourite, or the controversy often attached to Rock 'n' Roll - the Devil's music - in the 1950s). It seems videogames have taken on the role of media scapegoat for the present.

This tendency came to particular pre-eminence in the case of Stefan Pakeerah, a 15 year old boy who was lured into a park by his 18 year old 'friend' Warren LeBlanc and brutally stabbed to death.

The murder provoked an extreme media response when it was reported that a copy of *Manhunt*, a so-called 'stealth-'em-up' involving the hunting and killing of gang members, was found at the home of the teenage murderer. Reports suggested that he was obsessed with the game.

This sparked a media and public outcry, calling for the game to be banned, with headlines emblazoned across the tabloids:

"Rockstar accused of "providing a template for murder"

- The Inquirer, July 2004

"Video game 'sparked hammer murder'"

- CNN, July 2004

"Teenager gets life for 'Manhunt murder'"

- Daily Mail, September 2004

It was only in the following weeks that it was revealed that not only were the police not considering the game as a motive for the boy's death but that it was actually in the possession of the victim rather than the murderer.

As stated by the Leicestershire Constabulary: "Leicestershire Constabulary stands by its response that police investigations did not uncover any connections to the video game, the motive for the incident was robbery." ([www.gamesindustry.biz](http://www.gamesindustry.biz), August 2004)

The media uproar, which included predictably vehement commentary from the notoriously pro-censorship Daily Mail, (which waged an intense battle to have the likes of David Cronenberg's *Crash* banned during the late 1990s) provoked widespread reaction, with infamous 'anti-violence in games' lawyer Jack Thompson offering to represent the Pakeerah family in bringing a law suit against Rockstar Games. A scenario remarkably similar to the furor which followed the murder of toddler James Bulger, when the film *Child's Play 3* was cited as a possible inspiration for the toddler's murder by two other children. This was despite the fact that there was no direct evidence that the boys involved had even seen the film. Nevertheless, the implication resulted in certain horror films being removed from video stores and pulled from TV schedules. The UK channel, ITV, for example had been running a series of horror films on Saturday nights (screened post-watershed): following the Bulger controversy, they were pulled.

Similarly, even following revelations that the Pakeerah murder was fuelled by the need to pay a drug debt, the Daily Mail continued to refer to the case as the “Manhunt Murder” (Daily Mail, 3rd September 2004). The game was pulled from the shelves by both Game (one of the largest videogame retailers in Ireland and the UK) and Dixons. However, a statement from Virgin Megastores announced that:

“While we take a level of responsibility, ultimately, censorship decisions are up to the consumer.”

And surely this is the crux of the matter. Violent acts have been blamed on all forms of popular culture, from Rock ‘n’ Roll and Heavy Metal music to the satanic influence of 1970s Role-Playing board-game Dungeons and Dragons, but at the end of the day, many of the video games cited as the cause of violent actions already have 18+ ratings, especially in Ireland and the UK, which stick to strict guidelines. Interestingly, while the BBFC imposes these restrictions in the UK, the Irish Film Board, unlike most other countries, does not have any role in censoring games. The Republic of Ireland is signed up to PEGI (Pan European Games Information) but does not impose its age ratings. Instead there is a reliance on retailers to enforce these age restrictions.

Censorship as a concept is important to any society. While it may, arguably, be imprudent to call for no censorship or banning of any kind, placing a ban on something such as a videogame on the basis of limited research, generally inconclusive evidence and a well-orchestrated media uproar is hardly the right response.

Rather, it is in the home that these parameters must be initiated, with parents being aware of just what it is their children are playing. Not, may it be stated, to stop them from becoming mass murders in the years ahead – as stated previously the average gamer is aged somewhere between their late twenties and earlier thirties, and thus outside of parental control if not the parental home – but to ensure they only view images that are appropriate to their age. This is applicable not just to video games but to television, movies and books. If it has a large red 18+ on it there is a good chance that an 11 year old shouldn’t be watching it, and a responsible parent shouldn’t give them the money to buy it. Except if it’s Robocop, as it has educational value...

Eoin Murphy

## Rule of Rose

Rule of Rose

Publisher: 505 GameStreet

Number of Players: 1

Format: Playstation 2

As controversial games go, Rule of Rose is right up there with the greats. On its release the Mayor of Rome called for its banning as it ‘promoted lesbianism’ and allegedly contained sadomasochistic images. It was pulled from distribution in the UK and Europe by its publisher before it even got its release rating (16+ by the way). In Australia, again the publisher didn’t release the game, preferring not to put it up against the country’s certification board (OFLC) which has banned a number of games from distribution in the past including Manhunt and a game version of the Quentin Tarantino movie Reservoir Dogs. In the USA, Sony Computer Entertainment America refused to pick it up, with a smaller distribution company more willing to take on the risk of raising the public ire.

The question is, is Rule of Rose all that horrifying? Surely a game that sparks this much of an uproar must be the most grotesque ever produced? Before I get into that, here’s a brief run down of the plot:

Rule of Rose opens in the 1930’s England, with Jennifer, a teenage girl whose parents have recently died in a tragic accident, on her way to an orphanage. While on the bus taking her to her “new home”, a little boy runs up to her and requests a story, the story of a Princess whose parents have just died. Jennifer takes the book from the boy’s hands and then, rather foolishly, follows him off the bus, quickly becoming lost along a dirt track road.

Jennifer soon finds herself at a strangely empty orphanage where she is greeted by the sight of figures with paper bags on their heads beating something in a sack (a sack that moves and yelps...).

After a brief wander around the orphanage, Jennifer is thrown into a homemade casket and wakes up on an airship.

It’s here that the game really starts to get strange... Jennifer is inducted into the ‘Red Crayon Aristocrats Club’, a group of girls who bring a monthly tribute to their mysterious overlord. Jennifer is forced to join in or be killed, all the while trying to solve the mysteries that surround her in this new and strange environment. Mysteries such as just who are the Red Crayon Aristocrats? How did they end up on a Zeppelin? And just who (or what) is the Stray Dog people keep mentioning?

Gameplay in Rule of Rose follows the by now standard format for RPG’s, with Jennifer searching through the Airship for tribute, unlocking areas by completing puzzles and finding keys, a formula that has been employed since the days of Resident Evil. The only relatively original aspect to the gameplay is Brown, a Labrador that Jennifer discovers relatively early (he was in the sack that was getting beaten at the start of the game). Brown can be used to find items scattered across the Zeppelin. Simply get him to smell a

connected item and he will track it down for you, taking much of the mindless search elements out of the game (for the first hour and a half you don't have Brown and spend your time randomly checking doors and vainly searching for items to move the plot along).

The sound in the game is particularly good, with an atmospheric orchestral feel: violins scream to a high pitch when you come under attack from enemies and help develop the feel of the game's 1930's setting. The voice acting is ok, with relatively well done English accents, although at times you can envision a 40 year old woman attempting to do a 12 year-old-boy's voice.

Combat is the weakest element of the game, feeling like an added on attempt to make it more exciting. Jennifer can weakly stab at enemies using a variety of household cutlery (the first weapon you pick up is a fork and the second is a paring knife). Unlike games, such as *Silent Hill*, which also employ physical melee weapons, Jennifer's attacks have little impact and it is much simpler just to run around and avoid opponents in the game. The adversaries themselves are child-sized monstrosities with the heads of animals. The first creature you come across has the face of Munch's *Scream* and subsequent bad guys have the heads of rats, fish, and pigs. Throughout the game, Jennifer comes across a number of Boss enemies, including a woman who vomits acid on you, the animalistic *Stray Dog* and a large man who attacks whilst running on all fours. While you never come into open conflict with the other members of the Aristocracy, throughout the game Jennifer suffers repeated humiliations at their hands and has a tendency do things like meet them, faint and then wake up tied to a post.

The graphics for the game are quite good but are nothing spectacular, similar in vein to the graphics for *Silent Hill*, with a slight grainy quality to the screen to emphasise the fact that it takes place in the past. The character models are good, with Jennifer's Labrador companion particularly well animated, barking at your commands and wagging his tail when he gets attention or finds a clue to the next puzzle. The FMV (Full Motion Video) sequences are also quite effective; adding to the slightly disturbing feel of the game, with award winning cut scenes (Official Selection of the Annecy 2006 International Animated Film Festival).

Whilst viewing such sequences the controversy surrounding the game can almost be understood, with many non-player controlled characters taking overt pleasure in the physical and psychological subjugation of others. Another scene has one of the few adults in the game seemingly beaten to death by Imps. While there is no outright gore, the final shot is of a corpse being shoved under a bed, her neck twisted round to face the wrong way.

*Rule of Rose* does not add much to the RPG horror genre. Rather it regurgitates the standard methods of gameplay, adds a dog and relies upon its more controversial elements to sell it. If it had been released three years ago, *Rule of Rose* may have been a bestseller, its graphics and unusual premise acting as a draw to gamers, but in the day and age of next generation platforms it doesn't do enough, simply rehashing old gameplay elements.

The controversy surrounding the game is warranted however; with FMV scenes making the player squirm (Just think of Takeshi Miike's notorious 1999 film *Audition* and you'll understand what I mean). A prime example of this is when Jennifer first meets the Red Crayon Aristocrats and is subjected to vicious and repeated humiliations at their hands, with her nearest rival on the Aristocracy Hierarchy poking her in the face with a live rat on a stick. While this is decidedly creepy as is, it is made more disturbing by the obvious pleasure Amanda (her rival) gets from the experience, making for decidedly uncomfortable viewing.

The hierarchy presented by the Red Crayon Aristocrats leads almost automatically to thoughts of *Lord of the Flies*, with the isolation of young people similarly resulting in the development of a subculture displaying its own disturbing goals and values (in this case climbing the ladder of the Red Crayon Aristocrats through the presentation of gifts).

*Rule of Rose* and *Lord of the Flies* differ however in the important respect that that world of *Rule of Rose* also contains adults who are as much at the mercy of the bizarre rules that govern the *Zeppelin* as the rest of its young inhabitants. Also the world of *Rule of Rose* is populated primarily by girls not boys.

It is most likely this gender element, coupled with the young age of many of the protagonists, which lends the game its sense of taboo. The fact that the people precipitating in random and sadistic acts of violence are young women and girls, rather than the more typical male avatar certainly seems to be a highly significant factor in the game's negative reception. This would explain why, for example, the game *Canis Canem Edit* (or *Bully* as it was known before yet another media outcry), which regularly has its main male character beating up other school children, did not receive the same treatment as *Rule of Rose*. For although, *Canis Canem Edit* did provoke a predictably negative media reaction, the end result was simply a name change and increased sales for the game's publishers. However, *Rule of Rose*, with its largely female cast, was banned across the world and its publisher in Europe pulled it from the shelves just weeks prior to its launch, despite the fact that it received a PEGI rating of 16+.

Notwithstanding the fact that *Rule of Rose* sparked the beginning of yet another round of public debate regarding the effect of videogames on children, it doesn't introduce any truly new elements to the genre, other than having female leads and a tendency to dawdle on the edge of sadomasochism. The lack of innovation in gameplay and the tacked on combat system lets it down, not doing enough to encourage you to play to the next FMV sequence. Rather, in between the disturbing FMV you find yourself half-heartedly opening doors and getting Brown to sniff objects. Given the difficulty in actually getting a copy of this game in Ireland and the UK and its unrewarding nature it is best forgotten about. If you're looking for a game that leaves you slightly disturbed and won't cost you an arm and a leg, you're better off spending your money on *Manhunt* or *Fahrenheit*.

*Rule of Rose*

Graphics - 7

Sound – 8

Game play - 6

Replay value – 5

Average – 6.5

Eoin Murphy



## **Manhunt**

Publisher: Rockstar Games

Number of Players: 1

Format: Xbox/Playstation/PC

The first of the banned games to be discussed in this review is Manhunt, a game that faced criticism when it was first released and then came under intense scrutiny following the murder of Stefan Pakeerah (see The New Video Nasties?: Censorship and the Video Game article above).

Manhunt follows the story of James Earl Cash and his descent into the hellish nightmare of forced participation in snuff movies. But don't feel sorry for him. The game opens just a few hours after his apparent execution in prison.

Manhunt takes the novel approach of having the game's plot introduced by the screaming voice of film director, Mr. Starkweather (namesake of the notorious 1950s spree killer Charles Starkweather), who yells at you through an earpiece demanding that you to kill an unsuspecting gang member with a plastic bag. And you do...

The game incorporates some of the same tricks employed in Grand Theft Auto, which isn't altogether surprising as it was made by the same publisher, Rockstar. The game guide is presented as a catalogue for "Valiant Video Enterprises" (the snuff movie distributor), with details presented on enemies and weapons in a particularly engaging fashion, much in the same way as the game guides for Grand Theft Auto and Canis Cadet Edit (formerly Bully).

The game itself is well made, with decent graphics which, although they're starting to show their age (especially compared to those seen on the next gen consoles), can still hold their own. There is some blocking and moments of poor collision control (I spent 5 minutes trying to extract Cash from the corpse of a victim and came dangerously close to hitting the off button...)

Character models are well detailed, with gangs such as the 'smilies' and the 'innocents' adding a decidedly creepy edge to the game. Being hunted through the empty streets of a city is bad enough, but when they wear smiley faces it just gets a bit odd.

The screen is presented in a slightly grainy fashion, giving the effect of watching proceedings through CCTV. Stealth kills are conducted through short FMV sequences that show the gore in spectacular detail. The sight of a man struggling to tear a plastic bag off his face is one of the most disturbing of the game.

Controls for the game are quite intuitive. For example, a gentle push on the left analogue stick makes Cash creep forward and a bit more force nudges him into a walking pace. Running is controlled via the right trigger but drains the stamina bar. My one gripe regarding the control system is the occasionally annoying first person camera. It can become quite disorienting at times, with a certain disjointedness to it.

It does take a while to get used to and even after a few hours of gameplay you will find yourself cursing its awkwardness.

Where the game really comes into its own is through the use of sound. As *Manhunt* primarily relies upon stealth, anything that exposes your position is a bad thing. This can amount to walking over gravel to quickly or bumping into a garbage can. Even your choice of weapon can affect proceedings. The louder the method of attack you choose (be it a glass shard, baseball bat or sawn off shotgun) the more likely you are to attract gang members to your location and that's the last thing you want. Your position is displayed on a small mini map on the screen, with any sounds you make displayed as a red circular wave. Any gang members that are within this circle will immediately lock onto your position and you quickly find yourself fighting for your life.

Voice acting is good, with the character of Mr. Starkweather voiced brilliantly by Brian Cox of (appropriately enough) *Manhunter* and *X-Men 2* fame. Throughout the game it is his voice which directs you to your objectives and screams at you to kill. The grumbling tone of his voice help sets the mood of the game. Other parts of the game have you listen to various gang members discussing their plans for the rest of the night, from culinary titbits ("When I get home I'm gonna eat a bowl of pasta this high!") to spousal alcohol abuse ("If she's been drinking again when I get home...").

The absence of music in the game adds to the realism of the set pieces. This is good on a technical basis (it would be hard to listen out for approaching gang members if you couldn't hear them over the soundtrack) and it also adds an edge to the proceedings, with the gamer straining to hear the laughter of gang members or the cries of victims.

Unlike many games, the odds are stacked firmly in the bad guy's favour, with each enemy having a similar level of health as Cash, access to the same weapons and a tendency to move in groups. *Manhunt* rewards you for stealth activities and punishes you for gung-ho activities that have you blasting away like a spree killer on a bad day.

A game like this would, however, get quite boring after a while without a decent plot. There are only so many vicious psychopaths you can strangle with wire before it begins to get old. Rockstar, as always, delivers admirably, with the introduction of a female police detective.

Look away for a \*\*\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*\*\*

...half way through the game, Cash joins forces with the detective to bring down the director, turning from the hunted to the hunter...

\*\*\*\*SPOILER ENDS\*\*\*\*

It is of course typical of Rockstar; to produce a game that actively courts controversy and then turn the plot on its head. Many games have started with the premise that you must overthrow a madman

controlling gangs across a city (such as Urban Chaos). With the main character actively involved in the crimes themselves, Rockstar has the gamer testing their own morals and motivations when there is something “personal” at stake especially in sections where Cash’s family members are tortured to death if you take to long getting to plot objectives.

It is easy to see where the controversy attached to Manhunt comes from. The first half of the game has you hunting down people and killing them for the amusement of others and many of these deaths are particularly vicious. Unlike other games such as The Punisher (which faced criticism for its torturing of victims for information, including the memorable use of a wood chipper...), Manhunt has the gamer decide on how victims are killed (plastic bag, glass shard, crowbar through the neck...), while the longer you hold the triangle button the more vicious the kill becomes. Added to this, if you botch your stealth attack you find yourself facing a hunter in hand to hand combat. If you knock them to the ground they’ll then start to beg for mercy, which given the nature of the game, is in short supply.

Manhunt is a good game, with solid graphics and an excellent use of sound. Whilst it does have some controversial elements this is much more to do with the philosophical connotations of the game than the gameplay itself. It is no more violent than Hitman or The Suffering, but the fact that it is based around the concept of snuff movies seems to have, unsurprisingly, aroused the ire of various members of the tabloids, many of which have called for its banning or censorship. Perhaps the most discomforting aspect of Manhunt’s use of the snuff movie as its context is the way in which snuff’s use of violence and sex for entertainment might be comparable to the more violent and sexually explicit videogames. It could of course be argued that the reason for the general controversy surrounding the game was simply a reaction against the excessive brutality it depicts, and its distinct lack of squeamishness in showing death scenes. However, other games are equally brutal, especially Hitman which allows players to make use of Cheesewire amongst other things. Indeed, the main difference between Manhunt and other games of this nature is that the killings that occur in the game are directly linked with entertainment, conducted, as they are, for the amusement of other characters within the game itself - the Director squealing in delight at each successful stealth murder – this direct association with violence and entertainment seemingly crossing an invisible line that only an irate news media can see ( I wonder why).

It must be stated however, that Rockstar is not averse to creating a bit of controversy itself prior to launching a game, as with the launch of the Grand Theft Auto series when Taketwo Interactive, the game’s publisher, hired Max Clifford to deliberately generate debate about the game. As they say – there’s no such thing as bad publicity...

Manhunt:

Graphics - 7

Sound – 9

Gameplay -8

Replay value – 7

Average - 8

Eoin Murphy

## Condemned

Publisher: Sega

Number of Players: 1

Format: Xbox 360/PC

The third and final games review of this edition is *Condemned* (released in the US as *Condemned: Criminal Origins*, a counter point to the previous two games. One of the first games released on a so-called 'next gen' (next generation) console (in this case the XBOX 360), *Condemned* is set in a harsh world of insane homeless people and sociopathic serial killers who haunt a dark cityscape filled with abandoned factories and desolate slums. However, unlike *Manhunt* or *Rule of Rose*, *Condemned* was, despite its extremely controversial content, lauded on its release as one of the best next gen games available and as David Egan points out below, it can still hold its own against newer releases.

*Condemned* places you in the role of FBI Agent Ethan Thomas, a crime scene investigator on the trail of several serial killers. During his latest investigation things go badly awry. Following a chase through a derelict building, a crazed serial killer wrestles Ethan's gun away from him and proceeds to kill two police officers. With no witnesses to clear him of the shooting, Ethan becomes a fugitive from justice. While on the run, and with the help of his partner Rose, he trails 'Serial Killer X' in the hope of clearing his name. However, all is not as it seems. Ethan soon begins to experience frightening flashbacks that place him in the role of the serial killer's victims, forced to relive the last moments of their lives.

Gameplay is controlled from a first person perspective. Unlike other games in this genre, most fighting is done with melee weapons such as 2x4s, lead pipes and axes - whilst guns do crop up from time to time, they always have very limited ammo. Attacking is assigned to the right trigger while the left trigger controls blocking. These must always be used in tandem as the only effective way to fight enemies is to block their first strike and quickly retaliate with your own while being prepared to block their almost immediate second attack.

While this makes for frantic battles it can also make things a bit on the unfair side when the player is confronted with more than one foe, with each enemy taking it in turn to strike you with its preferred weapon, giving them an above average advantage. In addition to the standard melee weapons, Ethan has access to items such as a stun gun which can momentarily incapacitate any of the enemies you come up against, thus evening the score somewhat.

An innovative gameplay element here is the use of forensic detection tools. Blood samples can be collected, fingerprints can be analysed, and photographs can be taken; all are then sent to Rose via your cell phone for further lab analysis.

However, while all of this is new and interesting in the initial sections of the game, it soon becomes somewhat repetitious as nothing new presents itself. You simply go from evidence location to evidence location, fighting off enemies as you go. While this is not enough to completely spoil the game, it is disappointing considering the rich premise of the plot and the opportunities that are presented later in the body of the game.

The four shoulder buttons control all aspects of melee fighting while the face buttons control any other abilities the player has, such as turning a flashlight on and checking a gun's ammo. Movement is controlled by the left analogue stick while the ability to look around the environments is mapped to the right analogue stick. If the player finds these controls awkward or unfamiliar there are 2 other preset configurations to choose from. Altogether the controls work really well: the button placement will never frustrate or confuse and won't cause you to lose a fight while scrambling to press a button combination quickly.

The environments in which you play are stunning, especially for a first generation 360 game. Suiting the style of the game to a T, the player must travel through a large range of derelict locations, each one surpassing the one before it. Early on in the game the player will find him/herself in a Metro City Subway, travelling hundreds of feet below the city, complete with damp walls and wet floors, dust clinging to the air and the rumbling of the surroundings as trains pass close by. An abandoned department store presents the player with the scariest level in the game; hundreds of mannequins line the walls as your flashlight illuminates creepy Christmas decorations. The effect the flashlight has on location creates a consummate sense of suspense and tension. The light plays across the walls, floor and ceilings, revealing very little of your surroundings, while still creating enough light to continue. Because the scene is illuminated by just one light source shadows are cast along the walls and enemies faces come into view just a few feet from you as they prepare to strike. The scariest moments are saved for later on in the game when your flashlight's batteries suddenly die and you find yourself slowly inching forward in almost complete darkness.

Sound effects are put to fantastic use. As you creep through an old building a far off shout or scream can be heard which quite literally makes you stop in your tracks and wait for a good 30 seconds, frantically looking around the environment for the source of the sound. Often you won't be able to see the enemy and you'll be forced to carry on, wary that someone could be around any corner. Coupled with the dark shadows in the poorly lit building, the sound effects rival anything that a horror game has done previously. Weapons all create their own unique sound, with the hollow thump of a 2x4 or the clanging of metal on metal as you block an enemy's weapon; all of which helps draw you into the numerous battles.

Enemies consist of "crazies", homeless and deformed people prowling the streets at night, attacking anything and everything that crosses their path. While the enemy AI isn't incredibly bright (they'll often repeat the same formula of running ten feet away from you and then running back to hit you), at times their sheer numbers can make for very pressing battles. Unfortunately there is a lot of repetition in the character models so you'll find yourself facing twins or even triplets on far too many occasions. Aside from one or two notable exceptions they all present the same challenge, even later in the game. This leads to a lot of repetition which drags the game down in the later stages.

While the game would have been a must-have title at launch, there are games available now with much more variety and longevity, leaving *Condemned* to be categorised as a must-rent title only. The gameplay is great and the graphics and sound superb, not to mention the scariness factor, but the game stumbles after a few hours by settling for repetition. That said, it's still a lot better than most 360 games and shouldn't be passed up, especially for fans of horror games such as *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*.

Condemned:

Graphics: 8/10

Sound: 9/10

Story: 6/10

Replay Value: 4/10

Average: 7

David Egan

## **Marvel Horror: Volume 1**

Writers: Gary Frierich, Steve Gerber, Chris Claremont, John Warner, Bill Mantlo, Gerry Conway, Roy Thomas, Tony Isabella

Artwork: Tom Sutton, Jim Mooney, Herb Trimpe, Gene Colan, Sal Buscema, Sonny Trinidad, Ed Hannigan, Russ Heath, John Romita, Pablo Marcos, Enrique Romero, Pat Broderick, George Evans, Vincent Alcazar, Mike Vosburg, The Tribe and The Crusty Bunkers.

Marvel Comics,  
Parental Advisory

Marvel Horror: Volume 1 brings together a collection of comics from the Marvel stable of the 1970s. Nine different publications are presented in the book, including Ghost Rider, Marvel Spotlight and Haunt of Horror.

The collection focuses on three Marvel characters, only one of whom is still instantly recognisable, this being the Anti-hero Ghost Rider, whose story has just been “re-imagined” in the film of the same name now on general release (with the irrepressible Johnny Blaze portrayed by Nicholas Cage, much to the fear of many comics fans...).

The Ghost Rider section forms a minor part of the collection as a whole, serving more as an introduction to ‘Daimon Hellstrom, Son Of Satan’ – but more about him later.

Ghost Rider is the demonic form taken by stunt biker Johnny Blaze, who is coerced into selling his soul to Satan in order to save his beloved girlfriend, Roxanne. Johnny takes up the offer, gaining a flaming skull for a head and a motorbike which can drive up walls. Much like Todd McFarland’s Spawn, Johnny is given the role of Satan’s herald on Earth, with the anti-hero almost instantly rejecting this position and forever earning the Lord of Hell’s enmity.

The Ghost Rider stories follow on from the initial introduction of the character in issues not provided in this collection. Very much a bad guy here, Ghost Rider is chased by police and superheroes alike, who try to bring the demonic character to justice (unlike many other comic-book heroes, Ghost Rider is not afraid to kill or maim his enemies).

The issues presented in this collection depict the gradual change of the character from evil to good, with Johnny Blaze trying to save the life of his poisoned girlfriend. On the way, he faces off against a biker gang and a possessed Indian girl. This also introduces some of the greatest lines ever committed to paper (See Horror Quotes below).

Throughout the Ghost Rider stories a mysterious figure, only ever glimpsed in shadow and a trench coat, makes his way to the home of a possessed Indian girl, called there by the girl's family to exorcise her from demonic possession.

Cleverly interspersed within the Ghost Rider segment, this serves as the introduction to the next set of stories and the next character of the collection, when this mysterious figure turns out to be none other than Daimon Hellstrom, Son of Satan!

The Son of Satan stories somehow manage to be both cheesy and excellent at the same time. Daimon is the product of a liaison between Satan and a human woman, an arrangement that lasted until his mother discovered her daughter (who is, rather suggestively, named Satana) trying to sacrifice a cat in the basement at her evil father's behest.

Damion spends the next few years in an orphanage, joins the priesthood and then comes face to face with his dad, Satan, who encourages Damion to claim his rightful place as The Son of Satan.

Rejecting all his father stands for, Daimon decides to use his supernatural gifts to become an exorcist and to work towards the ultimate defeat of his father.

Whilst the Son of Satan stories could have been quite dull (superhero fights dark side and helps the innocent), Steve Gerber has introduced a true dual identity to Daimon Maelstrom's character, with Daimon having to regularly fight his demonic self and its irrational urges (at one point he's in a room full of academics and has to try and resist the urge to kill them all as they won't stop pestering him with annoying questions).

The stories can also be quite nasty. Dogs are decapitated in one issue while another rather unpleasant section has Daimon unable to tell reality from illusion as he cuts a swathe through friends and enemies alike.

Daimon must confront a number of threats throughout the collection, including the Ice Demon Ikthalon, and, my personal favourites, the Legion of Nihilists (who believe in nothing and dress like Roman Legionnaires!).

The third character in the collection is Daimon's sister, 'Satana, the Devil's Daughter', who despite her early cat-killing ways, has turned from the Devil's path and instead spends her time hunting evil much like her brother, except slightly more violently.

The artwork throughout the collection is consistently good, with the Satana stories the best of the lot, featuring excellent ink work and dramatic use of shading and light, especially in the Haunt of Horror stories, with artwork by Pablo Marcos and Enrique Romero.



In addition the collection provides the occasional short story (part of the Marvel Preview stories), some of them penned by the man responsible for the X-Men's classic Phoenix saga, Chris Claremont.

What's also particularly interesting about the stories (apart from the notably dark subject matter and excessive violence) is the now distinctly un-politically correct tendency of their male characters to be misogynistic. In particular, Daimon Hellstrom is prone to being highly dismissive of his female sidekick and (almost) love interest parapsychologist Dr. Katherine Reynolds, who he at one point slaps in the face for putting herself in danger (see Horror Quotes): a vivid reminder of the fact that the stories were originally published at a time when every good hero knew how to put a meddlesome woman in her place.

The Marvel Horror collection is an excellent read and great fun. It also shows another, now almost forgotten, side to the Marvel Universe, and acts as a good introduction to a number of characters who haven't been heard from in almost 40 years - except for Ghost Rider, whose upcoming movie antics are likely to both sicken and amuse viewers in all the wrong ways.

Horror Quotes:

"Suddenly, the past explodes into oblivion—and the present comes rushing toward him like the Grim Reaper on a jet powered cycle—a roadblock—the Law"

"Like Hell-Spawned demons they come, roaring across the rain-soaked desert sands astride powerful iron steeds—the Hordes of Attila the Hun circa 1973!... Big Daddy Dawson's Ruthless Riders--!!"

Damion Hellstrom upon saving the life of Dr. Katherine Reynolds from the Demon Ikthalon:

"'But' nothing fool! You broke your vow to me—and by doing so almost doomed the human race!" (he smacks her on the side of the head) "You are beneath contempt, my good Doctor!"

Eoin Murphy

## TELEVISION REVIEWS

### Dracula

BBC Wales/WGBH Boston/Granada International

Transmitted 28/12/06

Residents in the vicinity of Golders Green Crematorium should consider themselves fortunate that Bram Stoker's earthly remains were cremated; otherwise, the sound of the author's body spinning in its grave during the transmission of the BBC's latest adaptation of *Dracula* would surely have constituted a severe breach of the peace. Indeed, to describe this travesty as an "adaptation" at all is to be as guilty of gross distortion as the benighted programme makers themselves - a friend's condemnation of it as "a brutalisation" of the original work is considerably more accurate.

To enumerate here the wilful inaccuracies of narrative and characterisation inflicted on Stoker would require more space than is practicable, even allowing for the freedom provided by an on-line journal. Nonetheless, one cannot fail to mention such choice examples of "reinterpretation" as having Jonathan Harker simply wake up in a carriage outside Castle Dracula - no mysterious driver, no wolves, and the door to the castle helpfully wide open. To say nothing of the gratuitous imposition of a Lord Holmwood suffering from syphilis, a band of black magic loonies called "The Brotherhood of the Undead", Harker being killed in Transylvania, Van Helsing being presented as a gibbering, credulous cretin, and, most preposterously of all, a puerile "surprise ending" in which Dracula survives a stake through the heart and subsequent dissolution.

No doubt, those responsible for this wholesale traducement of Stoker's novel would argue that none of the major adaptations of *Dracula* have been particularly faithful to the original. This may well be true, but whatever their shortcomings in narrative accuracy, no earlier version has ever deviated from the spirit of Stoker's work quite as shamelessly as this one.

So just what did these people imagine they were doing? A visit to the BBC's website vouchsafes us the following: "Returning to the original novel for his inspiration, Stewart Harcourt's script draws both on elements of Bram Stoker's own life and Victorian society to give this version of the vampire classic a new, modern sensibility."

Overlooking the ghastly Blairite tone of that sentence ("New Labour, New *Dracula*"?), one can only conclude that Mr. Harcourt returned to the original solely to decide what he could most usefully discard, and how best to distort what little remained. As for the laughable claim that his script drew on elements of Stoker's life, what do we find? Oh, yes, there is an unsubstantiated (and unproveable) theory that Stoker may have suffered from syphilis. Well, bully for Mr. Harcourt; that certainly justifies inserting it into the narrative of *Dracula*, doesn't it? And Bram Stoker lived in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where Mr. Harcourt sets the headquarters of the afore-mentioned loonies. And that's it. Such glib - and meaningless -

connections to Stoker's life will have carried as much weight with the general viewer as the suggestion that Mr. Harcourt may have got the job because Bram Stoker once lived in Harcourt Street, Dublin.

But wait, as they say, there's more! Here's Julie Gardner, Head of BBC Wales Drama: "Stewart Harcourt's adaptation is a visceral, sexy and bold re-telling of Bram Stoker's classic chiller which will blow the cobwebs off traditional period drama. And we've brought together a cast of thrilling young talent to bring it to life." What such fat-headed utterances from a TV executive really mean, of course, is "We have taken a much-loved classic - which happily for us is out of copyright - and stomped all over it in our Jimmy Choo shoes, while at the same time implying that anyone who might object to our bold sexiness is both a hidebound traditionalist and, like, so not cool." Yeah, baby, yeah, as Austin Powers would say. Right on.

As for the cast of "thrilling young talent", one can only say that while it may be possible, theoretically at least, that we were watching the heirs to Grant, Winslet, Fiennes, et al., on the evidence of this production, the whole bunch would be given the bum's rush by the casting director of any self-respecting amateur dramatics society. That said, however, the villain of the piece remains Mr. Harcourt, whose characterisations (to use the term in its loosest sense) may certainly be said to have left the cast well and truly up a certain creek of malodorous renown without a paddle in sight.

Jonathan Harker was presented as a disposable dweeb, while Mina got all bug-eyed and breathless whenever the dread subject of SEX! was raised, fingering her crucifix with the neurotic devotion of a true Bride of Christ. Lucy, by trite and predictable contrast, fairly burst out of her bodice in her eagerness to be Fulfilled as a Woman, while otherwise proving bossy and disagreeable. Van Helsing, described by Stoker as possessing "an iron nerve, a temper of the icebrook, an indomitable resolution, self-command and toleration", was portrayed as a babbling wreck in a fright wig by David Suchet, who joins Laurence Olivier and Anthony Hopkins as the latest illustrious actor to play the character - badly.

As for the Count himself, we knew, from the moment we saw Marc Warren sedulously aping Gary Oldman's performance in Francis Ford Coppola's bloated 1992 adaptation, that things were only going to get worse. Played with all the aristocratic bearing of a Canning Town costermonger, this was Count Dracula as compulsive bed-wetter, a creep of the first water, with dirty fingernails to boot. Attempts to make him Byronic and fascinating while mouthing fatuous inanities ("Then you deny the heart's resilience. Its strength is to cope with loss. Without it, grief would kill us all.") were risible and ill-judged - "I am Count Dracula. I feel your pain."

Since its publication in 1897, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has never been out of print, and it has been suggested elsewhere that this is due more to the many screen adaptations (and representations in other media) than to the inherent merit of Stoker's work. Vaguely plausible as this may initially seem, it is worth remembering that *Dracula* survived in print for more than thirty years before its first widely-seen film adaptation in 1931. Indeed, it could be argued that *Dracula* has survived despite its many screen adaptations, none of which, as noted before, have been models of accuracy. The only positive outcome of the BBC's latest attempt to have its cake and eat it - raising co-production money on the strength of

Stoker's creation, then treating it with an utter lack of respect matched only by an epic contempt for its audience - will be to ensure that people continue to keep Stoker's work in print – not least to convince themselves that the original could not possibly be as awful as this version on which their licence fees have been so spectacularly squandered.

John Exshaw

### **“All That Glisters...”: Channel 4’s Goldplated and the Secular Gothic**

Channel 4 - October 2006

In the process of coming up with a definition of what exactly the Gothic is or does, the critic Richard Davenport-Hines, in his fabulously titled study *Gothic: 400 Years of Excess, Horror, Evil & Ruin*, runs through a list of basic elements essential to any Gothic romance worth its salt. Producing the convenient side-effect of demonstrating exactly how much capacious the Gothic manages to be, encompassing a wide range of disparate elements, even in stories as perfectly concise as those of Edgar Allan Poe, this list includes:

landscapes evoking the primordial battles of good and evil; wild weather and lonely ruins evoking the puniness of human powers, [...] a castle which oppresses, intimidates and frightens [...]; a tyrant who ruins the lives of the young but whose dominion is broken by the uncontrolled excesses of his own passions; the villain more interesting than the hero; [...] death-like trances or uncanny dreams; enclosed, subterranean spaces where live burial is a metaphor for human isolation. (Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic*, 141)

What this list of course entirely fails to capture is the sense of creeping dread and inexorable doom without which *Macbeth* would just another history play about the trials and tribulations of a forgotten king, and *Jane Eyre* would be little more than a version of what *Pride & Prejudice* might have been like if Elizabeth Bennett had had to get a job. It is precisely this dread - and the viewer’s inability to pinpoint quite where it emanates from, even after the final devastating catastrophe - that glowers formlessly over Channel 4’s recent take on the *Footballers’ Wives* phenomenon. *Goldplated*, which ran for 8 episodes beginning in late October 2006, tells the story of the White family, who occupy a pivotal position in the nouveau riche world of Cheshire’s late-1990s property development boom. Despite several early reviewers dismissing it as little more than hyperbolic trash, the sort of programme that gets churned out regularly and cheaply by channels looking to boost their ratings, *Goldplated* actually performed badly. Originally occupying a prime time 10pm slot, which was followed each week by a “preview” of the next episode on E4 (a spin-off channel), half way through the series the entire show was quickly moved to E4 altogether, where it languished in late-night obscurity. What this suggests is that Channel 4 seem to have misjudged both the show itself and its audience. The advertising campaign was deliberately tacky, featuring close-ups of lines of cocaine, platinum credit cards and pouty lips thick with scarlet lip-gloss. Having watched the programme avidly, I can only conclude that the postmodern irony with which these ads were laden was somehow lost on many who tuned in expecting that it would actually be *Footballers’ Wives*. Unfortunately, *Goldplated* not only displays subtlety and depth of observation, but also offers a damning critique of any attempts to separate the public and the private and of what ensues when such attempts fail, nuances which potentially sit uneasily with the kind of mindless entertainment, the superficial attributes of which it has borrowed and subverted to its own purposes, and with which, therefore, it has so thoughtlessly been compared.

What it certain, however, is that television's definitions of what is and is not Gothic – or even simply horror – are becoming increasingly rigid, and tend to focus almost exclusively on mildly jingoistic quests undertaken by outsider heroes (rarely heroines), resulting in offerings distinguished only from 24 by the inclusion of supernatural elements. Possibly the worst offender on this score is *Supernatural*, which always seems to be on almost every channel right now. No matter how I try to force myself to sit through more than ten minutes of it, *Supernatural*'s commitment to the violent death (usually, somewhat arbitrarily, the spontaneous combustion) of blond, scantily-clad ladies of a clearly and narrowly defined body shape and age group continues to irritate me beyond measure. Things are only made worse by the fact that all of this is employed in the service of prompting bland, unconvincingly stubbly men to avenge the deaths of their womenfolk by killing as many (equally clearly if worryingly less narrowly defined) “bad guys” as they possibly can, bad guys whose status as “demons” or occasionally gifted psychics leaves one with the uncomfortable feeling that a profound xenophobia and mistrust of difference in general underlies what is already an appallingly conservative programme.

Apart from all of this, however, *Supernatural* simply fails to unsettle its audience in any kind of lasting way, and this failure appears all the more pathetic in the light of the spectacular success of *Goldplated* on this score. All the special effects, raven-haired temptresses and high-octane scares in the world are to this what Harry Potter's arch-nemesis Voldemort is to Ted Bundy - cheap, tame and slightly snigger-inducing, not to mention somewhat irresponsibly naïve, especially where the representation of absolute evil is concerned. The plot of *Goldplated* might superficially resemble the convoluted and contrived morass of endless complications so central to soap opera and to lengthier television series such as *Dream Team*. Its brevity, however, and relatively small cast, means that it is as tightly structured as *Phaedre*, Jean Racine's seventeenth-century tragedy of lust and betrayal (or, indeed, as *Dallas*), and just as concerned with the dangerous proximity forced upon powerful families in pressure-cooker situations, when business and personal relationships collide.

To summarise briefly, the plot is as follows. John White, the owner of a large building firm, has been mysteriously visiting a young girl in hospital for quite some time now, and we soon find out that he was instrumental in deliberately burning down the block of flats where she lived as a child, a fire which cost several lives, as it stood in the way of his plans for developing the area. Gradually we discover that John was a close friend of the girl's father, and that he saved her (but not her father) by throwing her out of a window. The girl, Naomi, is physically recovered but remembers nothing, and John is determined to atone for his crime by taking care of her and bringing her into his family. That family, however, is far from straightforward, since he has only just left his wife and taken up with Cassidy, a beautiful but socially gauche young thing from the nearby council estate, who has just given birth to his baby and who (the three evil blond trophy wives who rule the social scene whisper, not very quietly) is nothing more than a gold-digger. John's elder son Darren is involved in attempting to take over the family business with his mother Beth, in the face of his father's impending bankruptcy and the local council's suspicions about his involvement with the fire. At the same time, Darren also very nearly manages to conduct an extra-marital affair with his daughter's art teacher, until his wife Terese spreads malicious rumours which lose the teacher her job and force her to leave the area. Terese is, incidentally, pregnant by her golf instructor, and contrives to make Darren believe that it is his, but fails to win back his affection or trust. Meanwhile,

youngest daughter Lauren's boyfriend (a bona fide footballer - well, they had to get one in somewhere) commits suicide when she leaves him, and she takes dubious solace in drugs, drink- driving, and untimely revelations regarding her underage sex with her mother's new lover who just happens to be her father's greatest business rival.

There's a lot more of this, but further elaboration is unnecessary. What raises *Goldplated* above the level of its antecedents is not simply the show's grittiness and its sharp awareness of class and personal conflicts. It also graphically dramatises a tension central to the Gothic project since its inception - the survival of darker elements of the past in an apparently bright future of progress and prosperity, held against the crumbling of old institutions and of those who uphold and symbolise them. No character comes across as uncomplicatedly likeable or "good" - all are motivated either by greed, selfishness, misguidedness or simply by their own inability to know what to do. What is more, the manner in which it is edited - one scene cutting quickly to another in which the words, phrases and even minor actions shown in the previous scene are echoed, such as holding out glasses to be filled or sitting in identical attitudes - suggests similarities in the behaviour of characters in apparently unrelated situations. Marital infidelity comes to seem not far removed from Cassidy's treatment of her drug-addicted mother, who is still living in the council estate, which in turn is uncomfortably similar to John's attempts - too little too late - to give Naomi a better life, since it is a life for which nothing has prepared her. The final coup comes in the form of a refusal on the part of the narrative to allow its audience any kind of comfortable closure. Intercut with shots of Darren and Beth publicly celebrating their takeover of the firm are slow-motion shots of John being hit repeatedly by bricks thrown at him by a group of youngsters in the council estate, where he has wandered in despair after uncovering their betrayal, desperately trying to convince the old men in the local bar that he was once like them, that his expensive clothes mean nothing. Although the two events are paralleled, suggesting that somehow Darren and Beth have effectively killed him, professionally and personally (a suggestion heightened by the suggestions of a ritual stoning that overlay the scene), nonetheless the randomness of the attack refuses true or linear narrative logic. This has simply happened, even if it is metaphorically linked to other events, and, as Cassidy runs to rescue him, John dies alone and evidently in great pain, his horrified expression reflected distortedly in the perfectly cleaned windows of his top-of-the-range car.

John's death is brought about partially by his growing awareness that all that he has striven for has been destroyed by the revelation of his past actions but also of his inability to maintain his old-fashioned business in the newly clean but cut-throat world of real estate and town planning. All of this is aptly symbolised in the spectre of the profoundly ironically named Redstart flats, which, despite no longer standing, hover over the entire action and blight the lives of every character, whether directly or indirectly. The archetypal Gothic ruin, "intimidating, oppressing, and frightening", as Davenport-Hines would put it, the flats are a genuinely postmodern form of haunted house, tyrannising over innocent and not so innocent lives alike, not by its looming presence, but by the appalling fact that it is no longer standing and that John, the patriarchal figure of power and authority, has been instrumental in its destruction and that of its inhabitants. Gesturing, therefore, towards the possibility of a new era of what might be referred to as "secular Gothic", which exposes the darkness within the everyday rather than the evil which attacks the

everyday in the shape of blond girls, Goldplated, whatever the ratings might say, is undoubtedly among the best of what television has recently seen fit to offer.

Dara Downey



## Carnivàle

HBO 2003-2005 Seasons One and Two (Warner Home Video)

HBO's *Carnivàle* follows the winding and biblical path of a travelling sideshow as it weaves its way across the dusty plains of America. From dustbowl Oklahoma to depression-era California, the entourage of the carnival use their hidden gifts and talents as a means of surviving their harsh environment. Set in the 1930s, *Carnivàle* explores the desperation of the American people during a desperate time; from the Okies to the New Deal-ers, all segments of society are portrayed in a survivalist mode.

What is immediately apparent to even the casual viewer is the investment placed in the show's look and authenticity. From the use of news footage in the lavish tarot card opening credits to the well-known cast (which includes Clea Duvall, co-star of *Girl, Interrupted*, Clancy Brown of *The Shawshank Redemption* and Nick Stahl, post-*Terminator 3*), it was quite clear that the show was intended to be the flagship for the HBO Network. Unfortunately, it was only to last two seasons (twenty four episodes in all), ending on 11 May 2005 despite an enormous Internet-based campaign to save it. The most frequent argument made for the show's return being the necessity to complete its sprawling and intricate plot, perhaps finally giving the viewer a sense of conclusion. While the show had in some capacity completed the first of its story arcs (each two seasons were designed to comprise of a 'book' and writer/creator Daniel Knauf envisioned three 'books' for the show) it is by no means a complete mythology, and thus leaves many unanswered questions.

The series centres on Ben Hawkins (Nick Stahl) who begins travelling with the carnival after the death of his mother. Although he does not perform in the show, he aids the leader of the troupe, dwarf Samson (Michael J. Anderson of *Twin Peaks* fame), much to the annoyance of everyone else. Hawkins is presumed untrustworthy and is marginalized by the group, who are unaware of his ability to heal and restore life. 'Management', the mysterious and unseen patriarch whose visions predict Ben's importance, insists that he stays with the carnival to fulfil his destiny with the preacher, Brother Justin Crowe (Clancy Brown).

The preacher, who becomes corrupted by visions of leading his people into the desert and, there, assuming absolute power, also becomes aware of the existence of a young boy who can thwart his apocalyptic designs. His vision of a new church with vested political interests and bizarre ethics leaves an eerie imprint on the viewer's mind, reminiscent of the tragic events surrounding David Koresh and the Branch Davidian's siege in Waco, Texas in 1993. This adds to the overall sense of eeriness and strangeness so imbedded in *Carnivàle*, as though this particular archetype is rooted in American identity from the country's violent beginnings. Tracing back from its puritan beginnings, the apocalyptic narrative of America is still with us, whether it is revealed through news media and political rhetoric or network television shows like *Carnivàle*.

Among *Carnivàle*'s litany of characters are Sofie (Clea Duvall), the tarot reader able to psychically communicate with her mute mother Apollonia; Stumpy and Rita Sue Dreifuss, who run the cootch show

(strip show), and the elusive Henry Scudder, who acts as the avatar for the foreseen apocalypse. Eighteen characters regularly feature in this series, which has continuous plot arcs that trace the mythological path of Brother Justin and his followers, and the carnival itself. In particular, Sofie's character is central to the mythology of the show, which links the fates of Ben Hawkins and the Preacher Brother Justin Crowe. \*\*\*SPOILER BEGINS \*\*\* Acting as a crucial link to Brother Justin's past, Sofie discovers that she is the product of Brother Justin's rape of her still traumatised mother Apollonia. In addition, as the love interest of the Christ-like Ben, she draws out both nemeses to evoke their powers and inherits their gifts herself. \*\*\*SPOILER ENDS\*\*\*

The history and mythology of the series, rooted in a mixture of Christian, Gnostic and Masonic lore, is so complex and far-reaching that demand spread for online guides to aid viewers. Paring away these complex outer plotlines, it is a show that draws upon biblical prophecies about the coming of a Christ-like boy (Hawkins) who must face a scripture savvy Anti-Christ (Brother Justin). It is laced with Gothic imagery, such as bleeding trees, blackened eyes, demonic possessions and apocalyptic explosions, while also depicting uncomfortable realities of rape, torture, war, abuse and murder. A sense of historical displacement is felt throughout the show, as though its setting in the Great Depression is largely coincidental within the framework of the American landscape. This series could be set at any time or place in history but it finds itself in Roosevelt's New Deal era due to creator Daniel Knauf's desire for originality and to narrate a period which arguably, despite its mythical status, has been long overshadowed by the two World Wars which bookend the era.

This matter aside, credit is due to the show's creative team who consulted carnival historians and language experts to gain a sense of accuracy, rather than demeaning the characters and setting by resorting to clichés or mere stereotypes. The use of colloquialisms from the era provides a sense of authenticity which greatly enhances the feel of the series. Visually, the show is very rich and colourful, with particular emphasis placed on blood reds and sandy yellows, and tatty costumes for the carnival's many sideshows. When the narrative leaves the carnival and brings us to the psychic visions of Brother Justin, Management and Ben Hawkins we are presented with aesthetically astounding, beautifully captured and always intriguing shots: fragmentary, hallucinatory and gothically artistic in a style inspired by Francis Bacon. This visual complexity is reflected in the carnival shows themselves. For instance, an episode entitled "Babylon" (season 1, ep.5) deepens the show's mystical and disturbing side, when one of the crotch dancers, Dora Mae, is murdered by a group of ghostly miners. After the carnies seek retribution for her murder at the hands of the town's only living soul, Frank (John Hannah in a surprisingly dark role), it emerges that Dora Mae has crossed over to the realm of the undead and is kept by the miners for sexual gratification. Her damnation is to spend eternity in Babylon, Texas (which biblically translates as confusion and distortion) for her onstage promiscuity. This episode breaks away from the show's main story arc and reveals the 'cheapness' of carnie life. It also adds considerable horror to the show by revisiting the theme of rape as a form of eternal punishment.

Such intricate plotting needed time to develop its vast and complex vision, but perhaps for that very reason, the show missed the wider audience it was hoping to draw in and it was, therefore, undervalued by the network.

In many ways, the show is an inverse of Ray Bradbury's 1962 novel, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, where a battle of good and evil is centred on the gathering of souls through the promise of eternal youth. When the Faustian pact is complete, the patrons are damned to spend eternity at the carnival as freak-show attractions. This show celebrates the carnie culture and the strange code of ethics that work within this enclosed community. With its bearded women, snake charmers, tarot readers and mystics, *Carnivàle* seeks to embrace the marginalized as a group of good people within a fractured society that rejects them. *Carnivàle* is not a casual viewing experience or for those who interpret the supernatural as primarily benevolent. With its provocative and intelligent use of violent imagery and haunting quality, the potential of the show is very clear and inevitably leaves the viewer regretting what might have been. Unfortunately the viewer will have to content him/herself with the extra features on season two's beautifully designed DVDs which explore the factors behind the show's cancellation in detail and also include a series of interviews with both the cast and the writing team. For more information on the show, episode indexes and trivia, HBO's homepage on the show is very comprehensive: [www.hbo.com/carnivale](http://www.hbo.com/carnivale). Alternatively, you may go and have your tarot read by Sofie online at [www.hbocarnivaletarot.com](http://www.hbocarnivaletarot.com)!

Sorcha Ní Fhlainn

## Number 13

BBC4, December 2006

Following the success of a short BBC4 season at Christmas 2004 centred around the 1970s Ghost Story for Christmas strand, it was little surprise that the channel relaunched the strand the following year with a new M.R.James adaptation, *A View From a Hill*. Christmas 2006's seasonal offering, *Number 13*, adapts another James story and, like *A View From a Hill*, draws not only upon the original narrative, but also upon nostalgia for the original 1970s Ghost Story for Christmas.

The story of *Number 13* centres on the academic Anderson, who is working on the history of the Reformation. His study leads him to visit a small cathedral town so that he may authentic some historical papers. Anderson stays at a local guest house in room number 12. Noticing that his neighbouring room is number 14, he puts the absence of a room numbered 13 down to provincial superstition. However, in the middle of the night, when he is disturbed by a series of noises emanating from the room beside him, he goes to investigate only to discover that there is now a room 13, and it is from behind this door that the strange sounds come. Much to Anderson's astonishment, in the morning, room number 13 is, once again, absent. A series of further nightly disturbances, the strange alterations in the proportions of Anderson's own room and the uncovering of a centuries-old witchcraft scandal bring the academic face to face with the mystery of room number 13.

The original Ghost Story for Christmas TV series ran from 1971 to 1978 with one new production each year. Four of these were M.R.James adaptations, with one Dickens story and two original narratives. These new stories moved away from the Victorian/Edwardian period of the other productions into a modern setting, and brought the series to a close. However, these modern-set stories seem largely forgotten in discussions of the Ghost Story for Christmas series, suggesting that the identity of the strand as a period adaptation was more important than its identity as a ghost story slot. This is further suggested by the fact that the Omnibus episode *Schalcken the Painter*, which filled the same slot as the Ghost Story for Christmas in 1979, itself a period-set adaptation, is regularly mistaken for part of the series.

The new productions in the series have both returned to a period setting and to M.R.James' stories, recognising these as core to the series' identity in the memories of many viewers. The producers are consciously appealing to the viewers' nostalgia, in line with much of BBC4's output. Interestingly, the original productions also appealed to nostalgia, but nostalgia for the Victorian/Edwardian setting, when the world seemed (at least to the 1970s viewer) simpler, with everything in its place. This set the protagonists of the stories against the comfortable status quo, as they sought to dig too deeply and too enthusiastically into the past and so had to be brought to judgement for their excessive curiosity.

The more recent TV productions of James' stories have continued this pattern to an extent, although less so with *Number 13*, where it is implied that the supernatural activity has been conquered rather than simply being returned to dormancy. However, the shows' appeal to nostalgia for the 1970s productions extends to direct references, knowing nods for those who remember the original productions. But even

more than the 1970s episodes, the new adaptations have looked to a previous M.R. James adaptation: the 1968 Omnibus episode, *Whistle and I'll Come to You*, adapted and directed by Jonathan Miller. This programme used the adaptation as a reflection on James' work and a meditation upon James himself, transforming the youthful protagonist of the original story into the aged and rambling Professor Parkins (Michael Horden), on the verge of a breakdown due to sexual repression.

This is the interpretation that has been carried into both *A View From a Hill* and *Number 13*, although they present their events as definitely supernatural, unlike Miller, who tried to indicate that the manifestations were all in the protagonist's mind. Nevertheless, both of the new productions have included scenes where the protagonist carefully lays out and squares up their belongings as they settle into their new lodgings, exactly as the Obsessive Compulsive Professor Parkins does in *Whistle and I'll Come To You*. The protagonists of both *A View From a Hill* and *Number 13* are shown as being rather Parkins-like uptight scholars, proud and defensive of their academic position. And all overstep the mark in their investigations of things that should not be disturbed.

Some of this comes from James, of course, but the reading of sexual repression as a major characteristic of these protagonists is very much Miller's reading. While it doesn't appear in *A View From a Hill*, it has been added to *Number 13*. Where the original story, like virtually all of James' tales, included no women beyond the passing mention of a chambermaid, the new production focuses on Anderson's repressed state. His room now comes complete with a print of Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights," and there is now a female guest at the hotel, Alice, to whom Anderson is attracted. He even dreams of her coming to him while he sleeps. Yet he never talks to her during the day, and harrumphs disapprovingly at the flirtatious behaviour between her and a fellow guest, Jenkins. This clear repression is emphasised by the fact that Anderson reacts most strongly to the sound of male and female laughter coming from the next room (which he believes to be Jenkins and a female companion). The laughter, though, is an echo of the Satanic debauchery of the past which Anderson uncovers in documents at the local cathedral archives, and is actually taking place in the otherwise absent room number 13.

To further comply with the model of the 1970s Ghost Story for Christmas, the location of *Number 13* is no longer Viborg in Denmark, but somewhere in Cambridgeshire. *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968) and *A Warning to the Curious* (1972) were both explicitly set in East Anglia, while *The Stalls of Barchester* (1971) and *The Treasure of Abbot Thomas* (1974) both filmed there, making the region the M.R.James setting of choice as far as television adaptations are concerned. As the change of setting has no real effect on the narrative, beyond excusing the actors from attempting Danish accents, this would again seem to be a choice made to more closely emulate the 1970s productions.

*Number 13* is more of a creepy tale than a particularly scary one, and the one scare of the original story is treated in a more atmospheric than startling way in this adaptation. Indeed, atmosphere is essential to the identity of these productions, alongside the recurring central narrative of the over-curious academic disrupting the status quo. Important clues as to what is happening are passed along subtly in visuals; there is no undue focus on the way that Anderson's room loses some of its volume at night, for example. Like James' story, *Number 13* instead relies on an encroaching sense of that something has gone awry in a

seemingly stable world. While this is not the best of the Ghost Story for Christmas strand, it is a worthy entry, and hopefully an indication that there will be more to follow.

Derek Johnston

### Garth Marengi's 'Darkplace'

Channel 4 2004 (Region 2 DVD)

First screened on Channel 4 in early 2004, Garth Marengi's *Darkplace* was originally shown just before another cheesy hospital-set supernatural drama, Stephen King's rambling and self-indulgent *Kingdom Hospital*, an ill-advised remake of Danish director Lars Von Trier's acclaimed original miniseries. Unfortunately for *Kingdom Hospital*, *Darkplace*'s winning, witty piss-take of the worst excesses of 1980s British television and of the self-importance of certain prominent horror writers meant that anyone who watched even five minutes of it hadn't a hope of taking King's bloated misfire seriously: the unlikely spoof was actually much more enjoyable than the genuine article.

Written by (and starring) Mathew Holness and Richard Ayoade, and based upon their 2001 Perrier Award-winning stage show Garth Marengi's *Netherhead*, *Darkplace* consists of six highly entertaining thirty-minute episodes, each of them a comic gem in their own right. It must be said though that the degree of enjoyment you derive from the show's spot-on spoofery depends to a certain extent upon your familiarity with the generic and dramatic conventions it so deftly lampoons.

The show's conceit is a promising one. Holness appears at the beginning of each episode as self-aggrandising, pompous horror writer Garth Marengi, the author of dodgy sounding novels such as *Black Fang* (which, according to Marengi, asked the question, "What if a rat could drive a bus?"), *Afterbirth*, *Crab!!* and *Slicer* (clearly, Marengi seems to belong to the James Herbert/Sean Huston/Guy N. Smith school of British horror). He is also proudly self-described as "one of the few people you'll meet who has written more books than they've read". As well as treating to us to a few selected extracts from his novels, Marengi is there to present each episode of *Darkplace*, "a hospital based horror medical drama set in pre-apocalyptic Romford" made in the 1980s but, according to its creator, considered so radical by the powers-that-be that it was suppressed for twenty years, and only received a brief run in Peru.

Of course, the series itself is all one massive in-joke, a pitch-perfect spoof of the very crappiest type of 1980s genre television, complete with cardboard sets, delightfully wooden acting, overblown dialogue, casual sexism and artfully risible special effects. Each episode also features self-important behind-the-scenes style commentary from Marengi and surviving co-stars Todd Rivers and Dean Learner (who is also Marengi's publisher).

Marengi, modestly described as "author, visionary, dream weaver, plus actor" of course plays the hero of the show, ex-Warlock "Dr Rick Dagless M.D.", veteran of both 'Nam and the Falklands. His fellow Vet and best buddy, Lucien Sanchez (Todd Rivers/the multi-talented Matt Berry) is a debonair ladies' man and hot-shot surgeon, whilst the other main players are ball-busting bureaucrat Thornton Reed (Dean Learner/ Richard Ayoade) and Liz Asher (Madeline Wool/Alice Lowe) "a lady doctor with psychic powers" whose arrival in *Darkplace* kicks off the first episode, "Once Upon A Beginning". Liz, who is prone to deliberately cheesy visions of the sort experienced by Amy Irving in Brian De Palma's *The Fury*,

soon realises that something is terribly wrong in Darkplace Hospital, which experiences far more than its fair share of supernatural incident.

Much of the pleasure in watching the show comes from the wealth of incidental detail on display in each scene – the authentically dire synth soundtrack, 80s hairstyles and fashion, erratic continuity, and bad acting (at which Ayoade in particular excels: as non-actor-Dean Cain-playing-Thornton Reed he's forever looking slightly to one side in each scene, as if desperately seeking a prompt from off stage. It's worth watching the show for his calculatedly awful delivery of dialogue alone). The writing itself is often very funny, in much the same way that the original *Airplane* movie was funny. Many of the best lines in the show derive from deadpan "Surely you can't be serious?" "I am serious, and don't call me Shirley" style exchanges, as when Sanchez introduces himself to his new colleague:

Sanchez (with mild disbelief): "I'm Dr Sanchez. You're a woman"

Liz Asher (in a tone of absolute earnestness): "Yes. I hope that's not a problem".

Or when Marengi-as-Dagless, in his role as a pioneering paediatrician, does his best to comfort a small boy in the "Kiddie Ward": "We're doing all we can. But I'm not Jesus Christ" (slight pause). "I've come to accept that now." Or when he explains the reasons for his cynical demeanour: "Maybe if everyone close to you had died, you'd be sarcastic too".

During the first episode, we learn that Dagless and his old friend Larry (later dispatched in spectacularly gory fashion via a shovel to the head), once opened a Buffy-style gate to hell in the canteen, which is the cause of all the trouble. The period-authentic sexism present here is further played for laughs in Episode Two, "Hell Hath Fury", a genuinely funny Carrie rip-off in which Liz's repressed psychokinetic abilities are violently unleashed and a number of bit-players (including Steve Merchant of *The Office* and *Extras*' fame) are killed by household implements. We also learn that the goal of the "Garth Marengi Foundation" is to harness psychic abilities in underprivileged children. Episode Three, "Skipper the Eye Child" is even better, particularly when Marengi explains to us at the beginning of the episode that the story was inspired by the fact that "I was told when I was 16 that my balls didn't work", and that the anxieties which resulted were funnelled into this unlikely tale of a giant mutant eyeball (created when the eye of a sex offender fell into a nuclear reactor during experimental gamma-ray therapy, apparently). Rather than kill the gruesome "eye child" which results, Dagless, still traumatised by the tragic death of his own mutant son (born with the head of a grasshopper) goes on the run, and names the thing "Skipper". As Marengi solemnly explains during the story, "this episode is about my own desire to have a son. I have four daughters, and whilst I don't blame them as such, I don't feel that they're on my side". I'm not quite sure why, but I find the dedication at the end of the episode – which consists of a photo of a golden retriever and the words, "In memory of Skipper. Killed by wasps" one of the funniest things about the whole show.

"Apes of Wrath" is a rather obvious but gloriously inept variation on *Planet of the Apes*, in which contaminated water supplies cause cast members to revert to a prehistoric state (in fact, this plot line has also been used, even more ridiculously, because



it's done in all seriousness, in practically every incarnation of Star Trek, as well as shows like Stargate: SG 1). We also learn from the commentaries here that actress Madeline Wool went missing shortly after the filming of the last episode, and that she is now believed dead, "possibly somewhere in the former Eastern Block", as Dean Learner matter-of-a-factly informs us. Perhaps best of the lot is Episode Five, "Scotch Mist", a hilarious spoof of John Carpenter's *The Fog* in which ghostly Scottish warriors descend upon Darkplace in order to "kill the Queen and end our way of life – what every Scotchman wants". Along the way, we get some extended banter between Sanch and Liz about the pitfalls of cheap batteries, and, funniest of all, we are treated to Dag's deeply xenophobic monologue about an unintended stop-over in Glasgow, the reason for the haunting in the first place.

Darkplace concludes, perhaps inevitably, with Lovecraftian spoof "The Creeping Moss from the Shores of Shuggoth", in which Sanchez unwisely falls in love with a patient infected by cosmic spores which are gradually turning her into broccoli. The highlights here are a gleefully inept bar-fight scene, the musical number "One Track Lover", performed by a love-sick Sanchez, and the unforgettable lines: "Boil Linda? Over my dead body, you bastard!" We also get a photographic montage (due to missing footage which now rests at the bottom of the Thames) of the climactic scene in which Dagless and Reed have to remove Sanchez's broccoli-infected penis.

The recent DVD release of the show comes with a wealth of bonus material, including in-character, crisp-munching, beer-drinking commentary on every episode by Garth Marengi, Dean Learner and Todd Rivers, and two amusing supplementary documentaries, "Darkplace Illuminata" and "Horrificata Illuminata" in which the main players are interviewed in more extensive detail, as well as several other witty items (including the extended "One Track Lover" single, which "sold over twelve copies") and equally amusing in-character radio ads. As a knowing spoof-within-a-spoof, one could see how the joke may well have worn off had the show lasted much longer than six episodes, but as it stands, Garth Marengi's *Darkplace* is a pleasure to watch, for the piss-taking at work here clearly derives from a real affection towards, and appreciation of, the horror genre's guiltier pleasures. It may not change the course of human evolution, as Marengi confidently predicts at the beginning of the first episode, but *Darkplace* will definitely make you laugh.

Bernice M. Murphy

EVENTS REVIEW

## A PLEASING TERROR: TWO GHOST STORIES BY M.R. JAMES

Performed by Robert Lloyd Parry on 3 March 2007 at the Tinahely Courthouse Arts Centre

. . . If any of my stories succeed in causing their readers to feel pleasantly uncomfortable when walking along a solitary road at nightfall, or sitting over a dying fire in the small hours, my purpose in writing them will have been attained . . .

-M.R. James

ON THE NIGHT I LEFT my south Dublin flat for a tiny theatre in the deepest, remotest part of County Wicklow, an orange, almost reddish, moon hung low in the sky just beyond the Rathmines clock tower, awaiting that night's lunar eclipse. As we travelled further into the rural countryside—with an entire mountain range between us and the nearest proper city—the roads narrowed, the trees and shrubbery crowded in on us, and a fog pressed itself like thin gauze across the low fields and valleys. From the safety of the car I wondered what I might encounter if I walked alone into any one of those mist-shrouded and presumably vacant fields. My spine tingled as it became apparent that this was a night perfectly suited for what M.R. James aptly termed in his landmark essay 'Some Remarks on Ghost Stories', "a pleasing terror".

For those who keep their ears firmly pressed to the unhallowed ground, the name Robert Lloyd Parry is not entirely unfamiliar. Since September 2006, Mr. Lloyd Parry, the sole member of the Nunkie Theatre Company ([www.nunkie.co.uk](http://www.nunkie.co.uk)), has toured England and Ireland with his much lauded, one-man show *A Pleasing Terror: Two Ghost Stories by M.R. James*. Christmas-time saw an impressive 20-date run at London's New End Theatre, and on the night of March 3rd the show was booked for the Courthouse Arts Centre in rural Tinahely, Wicklow. On that night we had crossed the lonesome wild to see Lloyd Parry perform two of James's most celebrated stories: 'Canon Alberic's Scrapbook' and 'The Mezzotint'.

Upon entering the venue, I was greeted by the faint sound of a cathedral choir. Indeed, Tinahely's Arts Centre, with its flagstone floor and exposed timber beams, reminded me of a modern Swedish church. And for being such an out of the way village, I wondered from whence the fifty plus people had arrived. But there they were, quietly chatting and hardly taking notice of the cowed figure sitting in a great armchair at the centre of the stage—that is until the lights dim and we are left with the sole illumination of a candelabra. A monastic Pyrenean chant drowns out the choir, and the hitherto motionless figure slowly raises its head. We expect something ghastly, but are collectively relieved to see the kind expression of a scholarly looking gentleman who is but steaming his face over an enamel bowl of hot water and friar's balsam. We are no longer in a modern theatre, but transported to the Provost's drawing room at King's College, Cambridge and into the presence of the storyteller himself as he might have been when he first told 'Canon Alberic's Scrapbook' to the Chitchat Society in October of 1893. For an instant we feel like voyeurs as we watch James sniffle away a cold and wipe the steam from his circular, gold-rimmed glasses, but the moment of discomfort passes when, with an air of welcoming familiarity, he begins his tale: "St. Bertrand de Comminges is a decayed town on the spurs of the Pyrenees, not very far from Toulouse, and still nearer to Bagnères-de-Luchon . . ."

In addition to writing some of the finest ghost stories in the English language, Dr James was a noted antiquarian and bibliophile. He knew first hand the thrill of discovering ancient manuscripts or long lost tomes in secluded corners of the world, so it is not at all surprising when his stories draw on his own experiences. In ‘Canon Alberic’s Scrapbook’, a Cambridge man (“let us call him Dennistoun”!) discovers a medieval scrapbook in a tiny French village, which he acquires for a pittance. Its leaves are filled with pages collected from various priceless illuminated manuscripts, a singular treasure! But it is from the pages of this curious scrapbook that Dennistoun begins to understand why the French sacristan does not wish for anyone to be left alone in the old church. M.R. James, channelled by Lloyd Parry, describes St. Bertrand de Comminges and its old hilltop church with a keen antiquarian eye, though one that infuses an excitement into details that are never reduced to a dry catalogue-like recitation; and the absolute giddiness with which Dennistoun discovers the Canon’s scrapbook is palpable. James had a knack for these sorts of details and they lend his stories a sort of exotic erudition; Lloyd Parry seizes on these finer points and brings them to exquisite life in the re-telling.

And anyone who thinks James is a stuffy and reserved Edwardian, or pulls his punches when it comes to the ghastlier details, should just wait until the climax’s unsettling description of a biblical demon. After the show I overheard one audience member tell Lloyd Parry that she did not expect to be scared during the performance and was surprised to find that she had not only moved to the edge of her seat during ‘Canon Alberic’, but even had to wipe the sweat from her palms when the lights came up at intermission. I myself am a horror stalwart and am happy to report that I too experienced a keen sense of being pleasantly uncomfortable during the aforementioned scene. I think James would have been pleased.

My previous familiarity with ‘Canon Alberic’ and ‘The Mezzotint’ did not detract from my enjoyment in the slightest. In fact, I almost felt as if I were hearing them for the first time. I always knew that James had a sly sense of humour, but to hear an audience respond to it is a revelation. This humour is particularly evident in the night’s second story ‘The Mezzotint’, one of my personal favourites. In this story a museum curator named Williams obtains a thoroughly unremarkable mezzotint depicting an unidentified, moonlit manor house: “All that remained were the ends of two lines of writing: the first had the letters --ngley Hall; the second, --ssex.” But the mezzotint takes on a horrifying significance when a hooded figure appears that was not there before: “. . . black drapery hung down over its face so that only hints of that could be seen, and what was visible made the spectators profoundly thankful that they could see no more than a white dome-like forehead and a few straggling hairs.” The tone of ‘The Mezzotint’ differs greatly to ‘Canon Alberic’ in that it is a ghostly mystery confined to the drawing room where academic logic is king; and the rational witnesses to the mezzotint’s ghostly scene are helpless in their terror. Again, one gets the impression that any one of the drawing room gentlemen could be James himself, and indeed Lloyd Parry retains the same accent for Mr. Williams that he uses for James.

M.R. James was known for his mastery of many accents and never hesitated to employ them in the telling. The same is true of Mr. Lloyd Parry who deftly switches between James’s almost larger than life received pronunciation, the meek French accent of the haunted sacristan, and the cockney accent of the college skip Mr. Filcher in ‘The Mezzotint’. James’s stories were written to be read aloud, and A Pleasing Terror

is as close to an authentic recreation as we are likely to come—unless you are lucky enough to see Lloyd Parry perform in James's rooms at Eton, King's or the Fitzwilliam Museum. He should be applauded for his attention to detail in bringing these frighteningly fun stories to the stage.

Those who missed *A Pleasing Terror* at its three sold out shows at the Cork Theatre Festival last summer, or who were too timid to venture beyond the pale to Tinahely, will be pleased to hear that Robert Lloyd Parry will be performing his show this spring at the Andrews Lane Theatre Studio ([www.andrewslane.com](http://www.andrewslane.com)) in Dublin from Monday the 16th through Saturday the 21st of April. Having thoroughly enjoyed *A Pleasing Terror* myself, I enthusiastically recommend it to those who appreciate the time-honoured tradition of the ghost story or indeed to anyone who looks upon a moonlit field with unexplained nervousness.

Brian J. Showers